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SCOTTISH BOOKS

BY THE AUTHOR

1779

POEMS IN CAPTIVITY

1779

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A PRISONER
IN TURKEY

AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S
EXPERIENCES DURING OVER
THREE YEARS IN TURKISH
PRISON CAMPS

THE BODLEY HEAD

REVIEW COPY
WITH JOHN LANE'S

POEMS IN CAPTIVITY

BY JOHN STILL



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TO
MY WIFE

FOREWORD

IN the long years of captivity in Turkey, where each one of us was driven to seek inside himself some alleviation of the daily dullness, many of us there found things we had not suspected to exist. For, to find distraction, we were thrown back more upon our own creative powers, and were helped less by our surroundings than ever is the case in normal life. Some found the wit to write plays, and others the talent to play them. Some discovered the power to draw; and one at least found much music in his mental storehouse. Some developed into expert carpenters, and others, less profitably, into hardly less expert splitters of hairs! Some found in others a depth of kindness more durable I think than the depths of hate this war has generated. I found these verses, all of which were written there, and their discovery made more happy many of the eleven hundred and seventy-nine days I spent as a prisoner of war. Few there were who found no resource, and they perhaps found the more endurance.

A few notes at the end of this book may serve to explain some lines which might otherwise be obscure to those who do not know any tropical forest, with its

FOREWORD

human, sub-human and super-human peoples. There are also references to a little-known history, and they too have to be made clear. And finally, a note here and there is necessary to throw light upon several episodes of captivity.

J. S.

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PART I
PRISON VERSES

CAPTIVITY

I SAW a flight of herons cross the sky,
Borne by slow-beating multitudinous wings ;
Spread in a twinkling crescent, flying high,
They travelled eastward, seeking many things.

I watched a thousand swallows in the air
Weaving wide patterns with invisible thread,
Speeding and fleeting swiftly here and there,
And seeking in the heavens their daily bread.

I saw a hanging hawk above a spire,
Outspread and motionless while wind rushed past,
Suddenly stoop deep deep down to inquire
Into some stir that promised to end his fast.

Now that my passage-way is barred with steel
All free and wingéd things seem doubly rare,
Objects of envy that I will not feel,
Emblems of liberty I cannot share.

With bayonets fixed the sentries pace below,
With bayonet fixed one stands beside my door.
The days drag on, the hours seem strangely slow.
The sentry's footsteps clump along the floor.

CAPTIVITY

One day I saw a sentry kiss his blade,
Longing to find it some more worthy sheath ;
Or hoping haply I might be afraid,
I who so lately had been friends with death !

Yet freedom is and ever will remain
Moral, not physical, and those are free
Who can rise morally above their pain,
Their minds uncrippled by captivity.

More free by far than any bird that flies,
My mind is free to climb among the stars,
My soul is free to wander o'er the skies,
Only my body lies behind the bars.

CONSTANTINOPLE, 19.viii.1915.

EVENING PRAYER

FROM each tall minaret the voices call,
Floating above the roofs in waves of sound,
That ebb and swell as he who cries moves round
So that his voice may seek the ears of all.
Into the deep dim streets the voices fall,
And here and there men bow themselves and pray,
Heedless of others, kneeling where they may,
Beside the path or by some market stall.
And so this wave of prayer moves round the world
Wherever this stern fervent faith yet lives
To make men's hearts hard as the stones of hell.
This is their lesson, and they learn it well.
This is the gift that rugged Islam gives
To those for whom its standard was unfurled.

ANGORA, 20.xii.1915.

BIRTHDAY IN PRISON

WHAT though the wind blow cold !
The rum is old.
And even we can still feel free
Drink we but bold.

What though the snow lie deep !
We still can keep
Our feast to-day, until we pay
In dreamless sleep.

What though the morning break !
And we awake !
We still can sing " We've had our fling,
We'll pay our stake."

ANGORA, 6.i.1916.

FAREWELL, ANGORA

SIX months ago they brought us here, prisoners
under guard,
And put us in a strange old place built round a central
yard,
From which there led one low square gate, and that
was always barred.

Our eastern limit was a church, and west, and south,
and north
Monastic buildings hemmed us in, we could not issue
forth
Save by that one strong low square gate, guarded by
men of wrath.

Across the courtyard, to and fro, we paced the cobble
stones,
And sometimes tried to read the dates above the
buried bones
Of monks, beside their church that once echoed their
solemn tones.

They rested peacefully enough, each in his graven
tomb,

FAREWELL, ANGORA

With mitre and with crozier carved, unconscious of the
gloom
Of their successors' exodus, or of their sudden doom.

Beside this dismal prison house there flowed a little
stream,
With pollard willows on the bank that almost made it
seem
A scrap of England dimly known through some
forgotten dream.

And sometimes they would let us out, while, for an
hour of grace,
We'd whittle willow walking-sticks and back and
forward pace,
While sentries with fixed bayonets guarded our narrow
space.

And once or twice they led us down where the old
garden spread,
A rough, untended wilderness where goats and sheep
were fed
To furnish food in turn for us, now that the monks
were dead.

The country all around was hills, arable upland down,
A lovely, sunny, smiling land where splendid crops
were grown ;
And that which made us wretched was captivity alone.

FAREWELL, ANGORA

'Tis easy for philosophers to talk of liberty ;
I know, for I myself have talked as though one could
be free
In soul and mind and spirit yet despite captivity.

But when the days drag on and on 'tis a heroic soul
(Or else a merry, empty mind) that still can face the
goal
Indefinitely far away while the slow months unroll.

Across the stream, a mile away, there was an ancient
town,
That from a hill-top fortalice had gradually crept down
The slopes on to the plain below, and there had
spread and grown.

And when the autumn days drew short and nights
were growing cold,
They moved us, as they move their sheep, into a
warmer fold ;
" You shall have perfect liberty " politely we were
told.

And, strange as it may seem, in fact their words proved
almost true ;
They let us wander where we would, we rambled
through and through
Those crumbling walls and battlements, just as we
wished to do.

FAREWELL, ANGORA

A golden autumn beamed upon that favoured fertile
land,
And expeditions far afield into the hills were planned ;
When suddenly our janitors all further freedom banned.

O walls of old Angora town, frowning, austere, and
grey ;
Full of the stones of older times, of Greek or Roman
day ;
Within your grip how many souls have groaned and
learned to pray ?

Roman and Greek and Saracen each held you for a
while ;
Carvings, inscriptions, capitals, fragments of every style
Known in the last two thousand years unite to raise
your pile.

O old grey walls and narrow streets, sinuous, deep,
and dim,
What awful tales could you relate had you the tatter's
whim.
But silently you hold them fast : silent, and old, and
grim.

How often have your annals been deep stained with
human blood !
How many thousand victims have been trampled in
your mud ;
Your narrow, winding alley-ways running in murderous
flood !

FAREWELL, ANGORA

Even while we, a mile away, selfishly moaned our fate,
The latest of your tragedies let loose this old red spate;
And, among others, our poor monks passed through
their last cold gate.

When the sun sets beyond the hills, the spiring wreaths
of smoke
Clothe your steep roofs with mystery till, to unknowing
folk,
You seem a peaceful, sleeping town, with darkness for
a cloak.

When all the hills that gird you round are crowned
with gleaming snow,
When gorgeous colours wrap the sky in splendid robes
that glow,
You lie in quiet hypocrisy, hiding the deeds you know.

Good-bye, Angora. Fare thee well, fare better than
of yore ;
I pray to God my feet may tread your cruel stones no
more.
But in my heart your grim impress remains for
evermore.

ANGORA, 12.ii.1916.

A VISION OF WASTE

I

IN prison, when the night grew dark,
My mind grew quiet, and my soul
Rose from my body like a lark
And saw the world as one round whole.

II

I saw a world that lay all dim
Beneath the dust of fighting hosts,
Whose cruel pathway, stark and grim,
Was followed by sad throngs of ghosts.
These were the souls of all the dead
Who strove to utter one last word
To that old world from which they'd fled,
And wept because they were not heard.
"We do not think," they cried, "we know!
This side, half knowledge, has no place.
If we but had some means to show!
Some way to lead your eyes to peace!"
But none could hear their bitter cry,
Nor could they compass human tones;
So one by one, in misery,
Crept back and lay beside his bones.

A VISION OF WASTE

III

And still the guns went rumbling on :
Gallant attacks were vainly hurled.
The trench the shrapnel burst upon
Stretched like a scar across the world.
For those who thought they still had life
Were deader than the very dead
To aught but the incessant strife
Whose thunder shattered overhead.
Deaf were their ears and blind their eyes
To all but sounds and sights of war ;
But each, as he was slain, grew wise,
Passing from dark through death's bright door
And few there were who did not try
To help their comrades left behind
To see their efforts' vanity.
But each in turn this hope resigned.

IV

Then over all this maddened world
Drew a dark veil of racing cloud,
In which cyclonic whirlwinds swirled,
And thunder crashed its message loud.
Down came the rain like a falling sky
And cleansed the earth of crusted blood ;
But still they fought in agony,
Lost in a hell of purple mud.

V

It seemed as though some god of old,
Some little god of little worth,

A VISION OF WASTE

Like those of whom men once were told,
Were playing soldiers with the earth.
For both sides cried upon his name ;
Each claimed he fought upon their side :
Which, were it true, were cause for shame,
Though trumpeted with rabid pride.

VI

If among all the gods there be,
Among the thousands men have feared,
But one who still has eyes to see,
But one whose voice may still be heard,
Now is the time for him to speak !
Now is the time to light the blind,
To save the strong, protect the weak,
And gain the worship of mankind !

VII

Is there a godling small enough
To care for little things like us,
To feel a sympathetic love
Ev'n for our highest genius ?
Or is the only god there is
Immeasurably far too great
Even to know the world is his,
To know we live, and love, and hate ?
The whole, of which we are a part,
But so infinitesimal
We must not hope to find a heart,
Nor think our anguish counts at all.

A VISION OF WASTE

Perhaps this war is some disease
Among the microbes in his blood,
Preventing their undue increase :
Or, maybe, 'tis his passing mood.

VIII

Then when I turned and looked again
The darkness seemed to me less black ;
And while I watched the pelting rain
I saw the tide of battle slack.
The rain-clouds racing o'er the sky
Cleft their ranks like a flock of birds,
And from an aureole on high
The rays flamed down like golden swords.

IX

It ended as it had begun,
As ends the fever of a night ;
The godling ceased his witless fun,
The fighters found again their sight ;
And like an ant-hill newly mended
Men soon forgot the war just ended.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 24.iv.1916.

THE MIRAGE

ABOUT the plain the dotted trees
Quivering danced in empty air,
And through the heat the lazy breeze
Seemed from the sun his rays to bear.
I crossed the plain when the morn had sped,
And ever the mirage moved ahead.

The sun-hot pebbles burned my feet,
The shimmering heat-rays made my eyes
Too tired to judge, too prone to greet
The vision wisdom still denies.
And like a lake that moved ahead
Before my feet the mirage fled.

The tussock grass and tamarisk
Were mirrored in the water's gleam.
My flagging footsteps grew more brisk ;
But, like some tantalizing dream,
Each step I took ahead I found
The mirage moved one step beyond.

I halted, and the fantom lake
Still smiled its welcome in the heat.
I tried by flight the spell to break,
The vision followed my retreat ;

THE MIRAGE

And when I turned to look, I saw
The mirage smiling as before.

No craft or cunning could obtain
One cup of water from that pool :
No speed or lasting power could gain
One plunge beneath those wavelets cool.
The constant distance that I saw
Was fixed by some eternal law.

57
The years have passed away until
Such mirage can no more deceive ;
But in my mind there lingers still
Some inclination to believe ;
And, as a prisoner of war,
I still detect that puzzling law.

Before our eyes no trembling trees,
No shining mere that falsely lures ;
But ever on before us flees
One hope that all our dullness cures ;
For like the mirage on the plain
It offers happiness again.

As the months move there moves before,
At distance that does not decrease,
A vision of the end of war,
A dream of home, and love, and peace.
The mirage that moved on in space
Follows through time instead its race.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 26.iv.1916.

KARA HISSAR

THIS morning when the dew was chill
I stood and watched the towering hill,
The tooth-topped battlements above,
The blue-winged, flutt'ring, wild rock-dove ;
And the cliff looked cold in the morning.

The cliff looked cold, the cliff looked brown :
I watched the swifts come pouring down,
Their squadrons swinging out in chains
That shrilled like steel above the plains,
While their speed rejoiced in the morning.

Then suddenly the turquoise sky
Gave forth a strident, clanging cry,
And five great geese flew overhead,
Their voices sounding as they fled
Away to the North through the morning.

I saw the vulture on the crag
Rise broad and steady as a flag
Flung out above the cliff's sheer face,
And soaring gain his pride of place
As lord of the glorious morning.

KARA HISSAR

Far, far above me on the rock
I saw a climbing mountain flock :
I could not see the shepherd boy,
But heard his piping voice with joy
As he sang the song of the morning.

Then in the sunshine of the day
The brown crag changed to gold and grey :
The swifts still flew in screaming strings,
And this old sanctuary of wings
Shone bright in the light of the morning.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 8.v.1916.

THE POPPY FIELDS

ABOVE the waving poppy fields,
The shining meadows of insane desire,
There stands an ancient fort that shields
The town from sack or fire.

Like some great pillar in the plain,
Like some bold finger pointing to the sky,
The cliffs upspring the clouds to gain
And hold their rampart high.

Walls crown it as a king is crowned :
From out the crag their grinning teeth have grown.
And high above the fields around
The eagle reigns alone.

An empty shell of ancient wall,
A melancholy relic of old days,
When men marched forth for faith to fall,
To fight for Jesu's praise.

To fight for him who never fought,
To make a path to heav'n with bleaching bones ;
Claiming the praise of him who sought
To lessen human groans.

THE POPPY FIELDS

Oh ! fitting emblem of their pride !
Oh ! biting symbol of their mad desire !
That opium poppies now wave wide
Where they spread sword and fire !

The fury of the first crusade,
That wild obsession of the noblest mind,
Stormed through the pass their valour made,
No crown but death to find.

The watchers on the citadel
Saw the vast straggling host go winding past,
Watched the bright plain become a hell
Where vultures follow fast.

The shining armour of the knights,
Their honour which they held more shining still,
Were dimmed alike by savage fights,
By cruel lust to kill.

Led by a mad, ecstatic priest,
The vows of all their highest chivalry
Were vain to chain the raving beast
That man can sink to be.

Yet in their fury gleamed a vein
Of gold that lent its purity to all
Who sought by faith a crown to gain,
Nor feared for faith to fall.

For though they made their Prince of Peace
Lend them his cross to hilt their thirsty sword,

THE POPPY FIELDS

They strove his glory to increase,
They fought to spread his word.

Not less devout were those who held
The hardy citadel upon the rock :
Fixed in their minds, they would not yield
Before the Christian shock.

Those desperate days of faith and fire
Have left their mark upon this wasted land,
But still the goal of old desire
Stands fast in Islam's hand.

The old grey coronet of wall
Watches the centuries go racing by,
While one by one its stones still fall
Down where their brothers lie.

While from the starry fields of white,
When rain leaves tears in all their glistening eyes,
The bitter breath of strange delight
Floats upward to the skies.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 9.V.1916.

Afion means Opium, and Kara Hissar means The Black Fort. The town crouches under the ruined fortress on the crag, and is surrounded by opium poppy fields.

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

THE prisoners are herded in a church ;
An hundred camped together on the floor ;
And through this wondrous world a man might search
Yet fail to find a group that varied more
In travel and in strange experience.
Over the world, from Ireland to Japan
Wandering, they have burned their first incense
Before the face of girl, or god, or man,
And for themselves found out the truth of things,
Or else the falseness, picking each his road,
Now on his bended knees, and now on wings ;
Learning the lightest way to bear the load
That each man carries when he's cut his teeth :
The long dark gallery of women's faces,
Each with her story, some all veiled in grief
Borne silently, some smiling in their places,
And some turned to the wall that none may see
Their scornful, hateful, scorned Medusa eyes.

From Ireland to Japan they've wandered free,
And east again to Ireland, till surprise
No longer fills one at the tongues they speak.
Full twenty languages I counted here,
Turkish, Ukrainian, Spanish, Finnish, Greek,
And other tongues, whose very names I fear

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Would fill more lines than I can well afford.
And as the hill beyond this Turkish town
With little network paths and tracks is scored,
Where grazing sheep have wandered up and down,
Were all their journeys over sea and land
Plotted in lines, so would the world be crossed
By all the tracks of this adventurous band.
This stranded wreckage of the fighting host
Drawn from three mighty empires in their wrath,
And flung as new crusaders on the shore
Whence, since the dimmest past, has issued forth
The thoughts which men have taken for God's law.
The lands where Jesus and Mahomet preached
Their different doctrines, seeming both so fresh,
But each with old long roots that clearly reached
Into a vague and mystic tangled mesh
Of older roots of people still more old.
Chaldean, Syrian, Hittite, Medean lore,
Branch beyond branch, their mysteries unfold
To daze the minds of men for evermore.
But if this tree still grows, it is not here,
For now long centuries have held this land
In bondage, where free thought has died from fear,
And cruelty killed all that once was grand.

Out of the South came some, across the bar
Passed by the Israelites in days gone by,
The wilderness of desert stretching far
Under the cloudless glare of tropic sky,
Where shade can offer no abiding place,
Where the sun governs as a tyrant king.

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Some of us found an unexpected grace
From the rough Arab hands that lightly fling
The gift of life, the gift of death, nor care
Which of the two great gifts they give, or find.
So in due course these few have harboured here,
While those who drew the blanks were left behind.
Others among us hammered at the gate
That guards this Empire's outpost in the West,
Where Europe had unwillingly to mate
With Asia, tossing in her troubled rest,
And struggling through the ages for divorce.
Up through the rocks among the prickly oak
A bloody passageway we strove to force,
Till on those iron hills our effort broke ;
And from the bullets' blind destroying hail
But few escaped to gain the crest alive,
The flotsam of a wave but flung to fail.
Of every hundred missing, barely five
Have reached this strange menagerie of men,
Leaving their comrades dead upon the ground.
The Eastern front has sent a travelled ten
Whose feet have wandered past the mighty mound
That covers all the pomp of Nineveh.
Some of them taken on the Tigris bank,
And others human birds who sought to fly,
And fell to earth, and so have joined our rank.
For very many weary weeks and days,
Driven like dogs along the ancient track,
Burned by the sun that scourged their desert ways,
At last they reached us. Now they scarce look back

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Without they feel their anger smould'ring still.
Out of the giant North still others come ;
Large simple-hearted Russians, with a voice
That sings incessantly sweet songs of home :
Music that loves to mourn, and can rejoice
Only when Bacchus gladdens them at heart.

In North and South, on land and in the air,
In East and West, each one has played some part ;
Each has seen death's dread face, each has known fear,
And each has left some aching heart behind.
Perhaps of all the terrors they have met,
That which looked grimmest, for it seemed most blind,
Was the long struggle in the deadly net
That barred the passage of the submarine
Who fought the wires all through an endless day,
Slow strangled by a force that, all unseen,
Gradually wore their strength, and seemed to play
As fishers play a trout with rod and line ;
While on their hull they heard the tapping lead
Feel for their depth and guide the sinking mine,
Whose loud explosion thundered overhead,
But left them scatheless, so that even they
Came out alive from underneath the sea
Into the clean fresh air and light of day,
Only to find themselves no longer free.

So all the herd of captives in this place,
With all divergence of their temp'rament,
Of caste, and kind, of faith, and creed, and race,
Of tongue, and habit, age, and taste, and bent,
Find one strong bond of union that will last ;

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

For each has seen the face of death unveiled ;
Each one has seen the scythe go sweeping past ;
And in his heart each knoweth if he quailed.

We live in an Armenian church,
The walls are thick, the windows barred.
We sleep, and eat, and sleep again,
We box, and play about the yard,
And curse the smelling of the drain,
And fate that left us in the lurch.

A narrow alley up the floor,
With crowded beds on either hand,
In rows and groups, with stools and chairs
All in a jumble quite unplanned,
Where like wild beasts we all have lairs,
Full from the altar to the door.

Bottles, books, and boxing gloves,
Tables, basins, trunks, and jugs,
Biscuit tins, and plates, and lamps,
" Poudre Insecticide " for bugs,
Refuse of successive camps,
Relics of our frequent moves.

Coats are hung all round the walls,
Photographs of pretty children
Stand on tables, nailed on pillars
Picture cards of wanton women
Leer and vainly try to thrill us,
Even their attraction palls.

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Up and down the alley way,
Men in pairs walk to and fro,
Talking as they promenade
In an intermittent flow
Which they often interlard
With the words they've learned to-day.

High upon the altar platform
Dining-tables find a place ;
There it is we hold our concerts,
Where the painted smiling face
Of an angel deems us converts,
Ready for a new reform.

Eating, reading, smoking, sleeping,
Singing, shouting, playing poker,
Quite a lot of heavy drinking,
Ragging with some other joker ;
Loafing, moping, dreaming, thinking,
Waiting while the months are creeping.

But I find this story falter :
One day is so like another
That our only compensation,
Only change from all this bother,
Comes when the great Russian nation
Gives a concert on the altar.

Overhead the sacred dove,
Painted on the roof above,
Typifies eternal love.
Hear the Russian voices boom !

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Angels painted on the sky
Watch our pageant passing by,
Wonder at our minstrelsy,
Wonder at the hollow boom.

Painted on the altar side,
Signifying sin defied,
Lamb with banner, gazing wide,
Gazing while the Russians boom.

In the centre of the stage
Sits a ruminating sage
With a man of lesser age,
Chatting while the voices boom.

Crouching where the ruddy gleams
Of the fire throw fitful beams,
Far beyond them, as in dreams,
They can hear the distant boom.

One can sense they're in a wood,
For the acting is so good
That it seems as though we stood
Deep in forest with the boom.

Almost can we see the trees
Swaying in the winter breeze,
Almost can we feel it freeze,
List'ning to the hollow boom.

Now the sound approaches nearer,
Voices can be heard far clearer,

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Till they fill the silent hearer
With the echo of the boom.

From the darkness on the right,
Slowly filing into sight
By the camp-fire's lurid light,
Come the authors of the boom.

Boom ! Boom ! Boom ! Boom
 The haunting gloom,
Gloom, gloom, gloom, gloom,
 That seems to loom,
Loom, loom, loom, loom,
 Foretells some doom,
Doom, doom, doom, doom.

Fuller now the chorus flows,
Louder yet the booming grows,
More and more the sound increasing,
Though the words at last are ceasing ;
But the booming still goes ringing,
Through the wood its echo flinging.
Though the tone is slowly dropping,
And is gradually stopping,
You can hear it ringing still,
But it can no longer fill
All the forest round,
Yet its hollow sound
Still is calling,
Still is falling ;

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Still its note
Seems to float
And sound
Around :
Boom !
Boom !
Boom !

This introduced the troupe,
Harmonious brigands,
And the fire-lit group,
Bedecked with ribands,
Rouged, with their eyebrows black,
Sang sweetly on and on.
The hollow roof gave back
Their ringing song.
Their sense I could not tell,
But in the tune
Great sadness seemed to dwell.
Some ancient rune
Chanted by Northern wizard,
Sung in a cave.
Cold, cold blows the blizzard
Freezing the wave.
Rush dark clouds overhead,
Dumb fly the birds ;
Now is the time the dead
Utter great words.
Over the mountain side
Mantle of snow,

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Veil for the winter bride.
Seek not to know
All the weird mysteries
Drawn from the moon,
All the wild histories
Locked in this rune.

Across the silent snow between the pines
There comes a shadow black that runs and whines,
And on a hundred eyes the moonlight shines.

Drive on ! Drive on the sledge ! Let the whip crack !
Yet anxious eyes keep looking, looking back
Where the dark shadow gathers on our track.

Tirelessly galloping over the snow,
Silent, implacable, galloping foe ;
Watch how the horses plunge ! See the sledge go !

Speed ! Speed ! For the pack breaks into cry !
Speed ! Speed ! With the forest rushing by !
Speed ! Speed ! Speed till we seem to fly !

Now like a wave comes the crash of the pack.
Dead are the horses. I fall on my back.
Swiftly the white turns red. Then all is black.

Then like an aurochs in the chase
We hear the booming of the bass,
While still the tenor floating clear
Sings like a swallow through the air,

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Mounting higher ! higher ! higher !
Like a golden flame of fire.
Music we can understand,
Folk-songs of a simple land.

Item next, the mandolin,
Played so delicately, neatly,
While his fingers fly so featly,
That our heart is won completely
By the tong, tang, ting
Of the tympanitic string.

Artist of the mandolin
Touching all the chords so lightly,
Making music sound so sprightly ;
Picking merrily and brightly
From the strong, strung, string
All the melody you fling.

When the concert reached an end
All the artists had a feast,
Thoroughly enjoying life.
For an hour they never ceased
Plying busy fork and knife,
Eating all the gods may send.

See their faces growing bright
As the bottles circulate !
Now they start again to sing,

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

While their merry, mellow state
To their voices gives a ring
Of a jovial delight.

Pass it faster ! Pass it round !
Quicker let the bottle fly !
For each jolly smiling face
Somehow feels he's getting dry.
Round and round the bottles race,
Pass them round ! Pass them round !

Wilder, wilder now they shout,
All their words fly out on wings.
Out they send a robber band
Which a willing captive brings.
Hold him up ! Let him stand !
Sing a song, and sing it out !

Out again the raiders go,
Bringing many captives in ;
Each must make a speech or sing ;
And a veritable din
Through the church begins to ring.
Pass the drink ! It moves too slow !

Standing up with naked legs
We can see a little man,
Dressed in nothing but a shirt,
Singing loudly as he can.
Drink it down, it will not hurt !
Drink it empty to the dregs !

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

How they sing and how they shout !
Yet they never lose the tune,
Drunk or sober no mistakes,
An inestimable boon
Is the harmony that makes
All the songs come gushing out.

At last the voices die away,
And one by one the lamps are dead,
Till only one remains to light
The gloomy roof above our head.
Then that goes out and failing sight
Drowns away, away, away.

AFION KARA HISSAR, II.V.1916.

THE CAPTIVE'S A B C

IN a crowd more mixed than ever were drinks
The verb " I sleep, Thou shoutest, He thinks "
Is not very easy to conjugate.
But don't put off learning the lesson too late ;
For very slight practice will show that you can
Loathe a man's habits and yet like the man.

A man may seem lead with a heart full of gold,
His veins may run lava, his face appear cold ;
For facial expression's a matter of luck,
And some who look timid are bursting with pluck.
So learn the great lesson they teach in this school,
" A man may be foolish and yet not a fool."

A man may be clever and yet far from wise,
A man may be stupid and yet may surprise
By the sense he displays when another is ill.
For it takes more than brains a man's nature to fill.
So take it for granted there dwells in each man
Some lesson you'll profit to learn : if you can.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 12.V.1916.

THE CUCKOO

BELOW the group of rocks that crown
The hill above this Turkish town,
Across the roof-tops flat and brown,
I heard a voice come floating down ;
I heard a cuckoo cuckooing.

I'd sell my soul, if but I could,
To stand with Alice where we stood
Among the hazels in the wood,
And heard his song, and deemed it good
To hear the cuckoo cuckooing.

For in that other brighter May
'Twas there we saw the nesting jay,
And watched the squirrels at their play.
It serves to light a captive's day
To hear its echo echoing.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 17.V.1916.

RUMOURS OF PEACE

ABOVE the snow the faintest glow
Tells that the polar darkness ends.
The splendid sun his fight has won,
And even now his message sends
To say that winter's race is run.
Oh ! hasten sun, be not too slow !

Now once again across the rain
Hover the colours of the bow.
The hanging shroud of thunder cloud
Is melting, and the fields below
Lift up the blossoms that they bowed.
Shine out, brave sun, with might and main !

Upon our walls the sunlight falls
And lightens every captive's breast.
We see the beam and dare to dream
That once again the world will rest.
Shine on, bright sun, and send your gleam
To glow into our statesmen's halls.

Oh ! Wilson, you must know it true
That if you lead the world to peace

RUMOURS OF PEACE

You'll crown your name with deathless fame :
While we to whom you bring release
Will sing your praise and count it shame
To let a man belittle you.

AFION KARA HISSAR, I.vi.1916.

THE STORKS

A CROSS the cloudless sapphire of the day
Long streams of storks go by in summer flight,
Soaring in whirling spirals to a height
From which again they glide and pass away,
Drawn to the North by laws that they obey
O'er land and sea, in spite of wind or rain ;
While we wait on in impotent delay,
Not even knowing whether once again
The storks will leave us on their Southward course ;
Still prisoners, still hoping for a date
To mark upon our calendar with red.
Captivity would lose its deadening force
If there were but a day, however late,
To cross our way to through the months ahead.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 3.vi.1916.

THE GREAT OFFENSIVE

IN this dim cloister of captivity
We hear the echo of the Western world,
The distant shouting of the masses hurled
With shock that follows shock incessantly
To break upon the trench as breaks the sea
Where living waves lift up their force and fall
With sounding crash upon the stubborn wall
That must be shattered e'er we can be free
Even to hope or pray for liberty.
For liberty will be a bitter prize,
Won at the cost of all this tragedy,
If still the pain behind each mother's eyes
Darkens with wondering if all her sons
Must hear in turn the thunder of the guns.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 7.vii.1916.

THE WIND IN THE PRISON CHIMNEY

THE wind blows cold, the waters freeze,
The plain is white with snow ;
The branches shake in the bitter breeze,
And I watch the darkness grow ;
While the wind howls in the chimney :
My feet are aching numbly :
But my thoughts have flown to the hearts I own
While the wind howls in the chimney.

Lit by the leap of a dancing flame,
I see a mother sitting,
Teaching her baby its father's name,
While her hands are busy knitting.
And the wind howls in the chimney :
The sentry's form looms dimly :
But her thoughts of me fly far and free
While the wind howls in the chimney.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 8.xii.1916.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

THE LANDING

A BELL rang in the engine-room,
And with the ceasing of the sound
Small noises sprang to life all round.
Across the water, in the gloom,
We saw the coast like a long low mound.

The water babbled along the hull,
The scent of thyme was in the air,
Borne from the shore just over there,
And in that momentary lull
To me the world seemed very fair.

The sweetly-scented starlit hills
Breathed of bees and summer flowers
Dreaming through the midnight hours,
While fate's slow-grinding mills
Rolled their resistless powers.

Suddenly shots rang out, and flashes
Shattered the dark with stabbing stings,
And bullets borne on whistling wings
Rang on the hull, or made small splashes
Like living, eager, evil things.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

Then a rally of shots cut the air,
A rattle, and then a shout ;
And we who looked eagerly out
Heard the roar of a British cheer,
So we knew that the Yorkshires were there.

Then at last it was our turn to land
From the slow panting barge, crammed as tight
As a theatre, and all full of fight
We sprang out on the enemy strand,
In the dark of that wonderful night.

Deep in my mind and ever bright
Remains that first impress of war ;
The feeling of that foreign shore ;
The sounds, the scents, and the starry night ;
Fresh from that hour for evermore.

The breath of the thyme that we crushed ;
The bodies that lay as in sleep ;
The noises that made our hearts leap
When we thought we were going to be rushed
As the slow-paced columns creep.

The rumbling guns of Sed-ul-Bahr
Roared and muttered, we heard the crash
Of high explosive, and saw the flash
That lit the hills with magnesium star
To guard from a sudden dash.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

But these were all too far away
To claim our wonder very long ;
The glow in the east was waxing strong,
And we knew that with dawning day
We should join in the deep-voiced song.

SHRAPNEL

Out on the sunlit, bare hill-side,
Above the sea, where the world looked big,
We were caught by shrapnel and had to dig.
Scourged with fear and helped by pride,
Under the sky that seemed so wide.

Hard, and stony, and stubborn ground,
Bitterly hard, and slow to yield ;
But the men dug in on that sun-scorched field,
Crouched and dug and raised a mound,
While the bullets whined like an eager hound.

These are the signs of a modern hell :
First the bang of the hidden guns,
The droning tone of a shell that runs,
Then the crack of the bursting shell,
And puffs of dust where the bullets fell.

Tufts of white on a clear blue sky ;
Flecks of smoke like cotton wool,
Pretty to watch, but their hearts are full
Of pain and death that rains from high,
And I watched with fear, but they passed me by.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

No one to shoot. Nowhere to go.
Through all the digging there's time to think :
Digging our graves on eternity's brink :
Dig like the devil, yet time goes slow,
And death we see, but never a foe.

THE PAYMENT

Over the hill where the breezes blow
I wandered out as the sun sank low.
I climbed the ridge where the trenches ran
That guarded the coast when the fight began
And the bay was blue below.

Here, where the Yorkshires stormed the crest,
Sleep the dead who had fought the best ;
The foremost foes, whose hearts were large,
And the fair-haired boy who led the charge,
Under the summer sky at rest.

Far away ; far away,
Will fly the news of this fateful day.
Far away in some English park
Some woman waits in the growing dark
To learn the price that she must pay.

Far away ; far away,
Some Turkish peasant whose beard is grey,
Trudging home from his daily toil,
Tired of tilling the sun-baked soil,
Will learn that his son is clay.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

Here they lie where their work was done.
I hear the cough of a distant gun ;
The growling bass of an awful song.
Dead they lie who were late so strong ;
And each of the dead was some one's son.

CHOCOLATE HILL

Above the sea and above the plain,
We stood on Lâla Bâba's side,
And watched the battle while the strain
Gripped our hearts with a sense of pain,
But pain upheld by pride.

With shrapnel bursting overhead
We saw the troops move out below,
Across the plain and the dry lake bed,
Under the storm of screaming lead,
Across in the evening glow.

Extended order, line by line,
Like toy tin soldiers on a board ;
We felt with pride that the sight was fine
To see those men move out in line
While the enemy battery roared.

The British cruisers in the bay,
The monitors out at sea,
Joined the battle from far away,
Spat grim death from their sides of grey,
And roared with a deep-voiced glee.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

The lake was white with crusted salt,
The lines moved on and marched away,
Moved out, moved on without a fault,
Moved steadily on without a halt,
Marched out as though to play.

'Twas grand to see our own brigade
Go marching onward, line by line,
Steady and straight as on parade,
Advancing on, all unafraid,
By God ! the sight was fine !

The glow was fading from the sky
When they plunged into the trees ;
We heard the Maxim's rattling cry,
And a British cheer, as the enemy fly,
Came floating down the breeze.

Then up and up to the big redoubt,
Our guns have curbed their powers :
Our fellows are turning the enemy out :
Hark ! They're cheering ! We hear them shout !
And Chocolate Hill is ours.

THE BRIGADIER

News has come of the Brigadier ;
At first we heard that he was dead,
But a late report from the staff in rear
Tells that life is safe, though the shave was near,
And he lost a leg instead.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

Out on the left, in a shifting fight,
Through thorn and bracken as dry as straw,
Where a man, once hit, sank out of sight,
The enemy shells set the scrub alight,
And Sam was there and saw.

Right in the open where shells fell fast,
He took his stand to direct the work ;
The shrapnel bullets went screaming past ;
But there he stayed till the very last,
Too brave a man to shirk.

Is it wise to be doing a junior's turn
When so much depends on you ?
Not at all. But to watch the wounded burn
Is wisdom the English find hard to learn,
And a damned poor wisdom too !

ON THE RIDGE

The morning came of the second day,
And we got orders to move away :
Over the fields, across the dunes,
We marched in column of platoons
Up to the hills where the enemy lay.

Not a sign, not a sound, not a single shot ;
The men grew thirsty ; the sun was hot.
On through the scrub in open line,
We waited to hear the bullets whine :
Is the enemy here or not ?

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

The scrub was thorny, and thick, and dense,
Stiff and thick as a quick-set fence ;
Rocks and a deep-cut dry stream bed :
They must be holding the ridge ahead !
Push on and end suspense.

The top of the ridge was dark with thorn :
A sergeant said, " 'Ave the beggars gawn ? "
When : Bang ! Bang ! A crackling sound,
And bullets piping all around,
Like spirits that fly forlorn.

The enemy fired from a higher crest,
And we fought all day without a rest ;
All day long we dug and fired,
The work was hard, and the men grew tired,
While the sun sloped to the west.

Under the burning summer sun
Thirst was bad, and the men were done.
All day long the snipers sniped,
All day long the bullets piped,
And men dropped one by one.

Over our heads the bullets flew
With eerie whistle, Tiu ! Tiu ! Tiu !
Or the singing tone of a ricochet,
A humming boom that dies away ;
And at first they each seem straight for you.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

All through the thirsty afternoon
A couple of men from each platoon
Carried the bottles to the spring.
Off they'd go with a happy swing :
But you send again if they don't come soon.

For the enemy knew the day was hot ;
The enemy snipers marked the spot.
Those hellish snipers' hearts were hard,
And they knew the range to a single yard,
So we paid for water by getting shot.

What a ghastly tragedy warfare seems !
Here and there are heroic gleams ;
But most of this dark and evil thing
Is the blackest kind of murdering,
Foul as a madman's vilest dreams.

The sun sank low and the veil of night
Was flecked with flashes and stabs of light,
Each with its messenger of ill
Speeding forth to maim or kill,
Howling to join the fight.

Late in the night an order came,
Read by a carefully shaded flame :
Without support we could not stay ;
So we left our dead and came away
From off that ridge without a name.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

Some five and twenty were left behind
To keep on volleying for a blind ;
While, more by instinct than by sight,
We crept away in the black of night,
And the rearguard managed our track to find.

This to my friend who is lying there :
You who were born to do and dare,
Witness this tale of mine is true ;
Remember I often think of you,
If, where you rest, you know or care.

HILL 971

Short of water and blind for sleep,
After that night the men felt done
As we watched the dawn begin to creep ;
But orders reached us on the run
To move and take Hill nine seven one.

By some mischance it reached us late,
So we lost the dark of a precious hour,
Lost first trick in the game with fate ;
While against the sky the hill's black tower
Loomed with a sinister sense of power.

Time was short, and orders pressed ;
D Company moved on alone,
While the major stayed to bring up the rest,
Across the fields where the bullets moan,
Into the rough of tumbled stone.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

We marched across the twilit slopes,
Eight officers and some seven score men ;
It looked the most forlorn of hopes,
And in my heart I wondered then
How many would ever come back again.

Two officers fell in the first half mile
To dropping shots from the eastern flank,
And sadly thinned were the rank and file
When we breathed in cover a little while
And left our packs on a rocky bank.

Then up, up by the winding ways,
Through streams of boulders and clumps of thorn ;
The weary body its brain obeys ;
And the men pushed up through the stony maze,
Pushed on in the grey of dawn.

Up ! Up ! while the bullets sing.
The fire comes faster as up we go ;
Hitting the rocks with a vicious sting,
Echo re-echo the gullies ring,
And the plain looks flat below.

The line grew thinner and straggled wide
As one by one our fellows dropped
To a flanking fire from either side ;
But the rest climbed on like a flowing tide,
And only the wounded stopped.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

Still up and up, yet higher and higher,
Over the rocks, an endless climb,
Under an ever-increasing fire,
Hot with the glow of helpless ire,
Lost to all sense of time.

The enemy fired without a rest,
From right, from left, from straight ahead ;
The bullets sang like a hornet's nest,
And swept our men from the open crest,
Till many were wounded and most were dead.

So we drew away and turned to go,
For we only mustered about a score ;
And we looked right down a mile below,
Where the fight, like a moving picture show,
Sent up a distant roar.

Then down that dreadful mountain-side
The Colonel went with broken pride,
Finding a way with the handful left
Where a gully cut a winding cleft
That helped our path to hide.

The Turks fired down on the beaten men :
Half-way down we had shrunk to ten ;
And they claimed as prisoners only five ;
These were all who came out alive
At the foot of that winding glen.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

EPITAPHS

I. JAMES DINGLE

Broad, and simple, and great of heart,
Strenuous soul in a stalwart frame ;
Whatever the work, he took his part,
With energy strung from the very start
To learn the rules and play the game.

He played for an English side before ;
And all unspoiled by the crowd's applause,
He took for his side their greeting roar :
And so in the greater game of war
He gave his life for the greater cause.

II. N. D. PRINGLE

Not very strong, but straight and tall,
A mild pursuer of simple joys,
Loved by his pupils and liked by all,
He left his desk at his country's call,
Left quiet for ever who hated noise.

A lover of children, a kindly soul,
Who taught, by living, a gentle life,
That death has crowned a gallant whole,
He marched unfaltering to the goal,
And rose, by dying, above the strife.

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

III. STEPHEN JALLAND

Cheery and mellow, and quick of wit ;
Lovable too, with his twinkling eye,
His wicked jest, and his caustic hit,
A merry philosopher, full of grit,
Whose fund of gaiety never ran dry.

One of the best of companions true ;
The happiest heart when things were bad ;
Stephen, we often long for you
To help our dull captivity through ;
But, wherever you are, you can't be sad.

IV

Still with these, on the steep hill-side,
Rest their friends and the men they led :
Sleeping there, where they fought and died,
Under the sky that spreads so wide,
Under the stars that watch the dead.

Over the hills round Suvla Bay,
Where life was vivid, and swift, and strong,
Memory lingers and loves to stay.
Those I knew are not far away
As I try to write their song.

REQUIEM

Around the shores of Suvla Bay
The larks are trilling their songs to-day ;

THE BALLAD OF SUVLA BAY

The bees are humming about the thyme,
And over the hills the shepherds climb ;
For death's dark shadow has passed away.

Here, where the hills were laced with scars,
Where the stubborn trenches cut their bars,
And the veil of night was torn by shells,
The voice of the nightingale weaves its spells
To win a smile from the list'ning stars.

The lazy waves of the Southern sea
Break on the beach in laughing glee
Beneath the blue of the summer sky,
And sea-gulls utter a cheerful cry,
For the ships have gone and the bay is free.

Mothers of those who are lying there,
Know that their resting-place is fair,
Fair and fresh as a field in May :
The sunlight smiles on the dancing bay,
So mourn no more for the sons ye bare.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 9-14.xii.1916.

WITH THE REARGUARD

THE mist crept down the shell-scarred hill,
Crept down, crept out across the plain ;
The enemy trenches all were still,
Our lashes dripped, and our cheeks were chill,
For the creeping mist was wet as rain.

Our line was thin as a line can be,
A skeleton rearguard left behind
To try and deceive the enemy,
Or hold him back while the rest win free,
And we prayed that the mist might keep him blind.

If the mist once lifts our fate is sealed :
We stay as an offering to the gods ;
For if the retreat is once revealed,
Whatever happens we may not yield,
But fight to the death whate'er the odds.

If all but one of us were slain,
And if that one were wounded sore,
And offered quarter in his pain,
He must fight on and try to gain
One minute more : one minute more.

WITH THE REARGUARD

We hear the thud of moving men,
More vibration than open sound ;
Then it fades away, and once again
We are left with one in the place of ten,
With clinging blindness round.

Without the glow of victory,
Without the honour of a wreath,
Without our friends of yesterday,
With nothing left but memory,
We wait for orders—or for death.

Is the enemy still sleeping ?
What was that stealthy sound ?
It seemed like some one creeping !
And the mist fills my eyes with weeping
As I strain my gaze around.

What if they know it already !
Even now are preparing assault !
We have nothing to do but stand steady,
With our bayonets held at the ready,
And die for another's fault.

Still silence. Cold silence. And mist :
With the strain on the eyes at its worst :
And my rifle is freezing my fist.
How long will this silence persist ?
Will it last till my ear-drums burst ?

WITH THE REARGUARD

Will it end with a savage rush,
Swift shots, and a pain that's bad,
Then oblivion, and out of the crush
Into death? Then what? Is this hush
Making me slowly go mad?

Will it end with a death all gory;
A martyr's fame, and a crown;
A place in old England's story;
A seat at the table of glory;
A brass in my native town?

Still silence. Cold silence. And mist:
And dripping, and bitterly chilled,
Cold splashes fall down on my wrist.
When they make up to-morrow's list
Shall we figure as missing, or killed?

And what of the enemy too?
I will bet that their list beats ours!
I reckon we'll settle a few
Before they can break their way through.
We can hold them for hours.

What is this? Oh! We move.
All right. I have passed it along.
Gently behind there! Don't shove!
The fog's getting thinner above;
It will clear before long.

WITH THE REARGUARD

So we left in the mist and the cold :
Ambition lay buried behind :
And there in the ship as she rolled
I thought of my comrades of old,
And no hope did I find.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 9.xii.1916.

HOPE

O H, it's hard to seem fearless of death,
And it's hard to be patient of pain ;
It's hard to face danger with even breath,
Or to carry a captive's chain.
But harder than all, in a weary while,
Is to face new hope with a steady smile.

For many can front a defeat
With a rigid, unshaken nerve,
And many find strength with a smile to greet
A great shock that calls up their reserve.
But few can look straight with unblinking eyes
At hope when it comes as a grand surprise.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 19.xii.1916.

DREAMS

AS I lie a-sleeping,
A-sleeping in my bed,
Bright visions come a-leaping
Like flames about my head.
Summer lightning across the sky
Changes never so swift as I ;
Fleet adventure goes racing by,
As I lie a-sleeping,
A-sleeping in my bed.

As I lie a-dreaming,
A-dreaming all the night,
Gay fantasies come teeming,
Come riding into sight.
Over the mountains, fair and free,
Through the woods, and across the lea,
Each with a merry smile for me,
As I lie a-dreaming,
A-dreaming all the night.

Then off we go a-playing,
A-playing through the world ;
The hounds run a-baying,
The banners are unfurled.

DAWN

Far away on adventure high,
Glitter and colour go flashing by,
And all the stories end happily,
For I'm a child a-playing,
A-playing through the world.

DAWN

Dawn comes stealing up the sky ;
One by one the stars go out ;
Far away the shepherds shout ;
Country carts go creaking by.

In the yard the sentries call ;
Rustling mice creep back to bed ;
Sultan Dàgh is touched with red ;
Light shines grey upon the wall.

Fading from my memory,
Dreamland colours pale away ;
All my world grows dull and grey ;
Friends of the night, good-bye !

AFION KARA HISSAR, 23.xii.1916.

CHRISTMAS DAY

YEARS ago. Years ago.
Three years ago on Christmas day,
Out in a forest far away,
The monkeys watched me down below,
And saw me hide in the waving grass
While the elephant herd went trampling past.
Oh, the great wild herd that Christmas day !
And I as wild and free as they,
As free as the winds that blow.

Christmas day. Christmas day.
Across the yard with footsteps slow
The sentries pace the mud below ;
The wind is cold, the sky is grey ;
Christmas day in a prison camp,
With freedom dead as a burnt-out lamp.
The lions eat and the lions rage,
Three steps and a turn in a narrow cage,
And I am as free as they.

Rich and poor. Rich and poor.
Poor as a sparrow or rich as a king,
This world can offer but one good thing,
And my heart is sick to be free once more.

CHRISTMAS DAY

For the sun may shine in a sapphire sky,
But give me freedom or let me die :
Free and fresh is the forest breeze
Whose spirit rides on the tossing trees,
And the waves break free on the shore.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 25.xii.1916.

THE PASSING OF 1916

TOLL ! toll, the passing bell ;
 Ring out the year !
Toll for the dead who fell—
 Fell, facing fear.
Let solemn organs swell ;
Toll on, your sounding knell ;
 Toll for the year.
 Toll for the passing year.

Hear while the hollow boom
 Tells out the hour ;
Black in the midnight gloom
 Stands the great tower ;
Deep shades of passing doom
Out in the darkness loom,
 Mourning their power.

Toll † toll for all our dead,
 Ring out the year !
Toll for the tears we shed,
 Time draweth near.
Toll while the year is sped,
Passing with solemn tread ;
 Toll out the year.
 Toll out the dying year.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 27.xii.1916.

WHEN ALL THIS IS OVER

OH ! How will it feel to be free ?
Oh ! What will it seem like to see
Through the shadows that hover ?
Will it dazzle our atrophied sight ?
Will it hurt to come out of the night ?
Shall we dare to look straight at the light
When all this is over ?

Oh ! The wind that blows over the fen !
Oh ! The song of the shy willow wren !
And the cry of the plover !
Where the larks carol high in the blue,
And the river winds lazily through ;
Will they seem far too good to be true,
When all this is over ?

Oh ! The mothers who wistfully pray !
Oh ! The daughters who live for the Day,
And long for their lover !
And the children who wait for their Dad ;
All the hearts that have learned to be sad ;
Can they bear to be suddenly glad,
When all this is over ?

WHEN ALL THIS IS OVER

Oh ! The freedom that sings in the breeze,
When it rides on the crests of the seas,

By the white cliffs of Dover !

Oh ! The sea-gulls that scream as they fly,
While the banks of the river glide by !

Let me live to see those, if I die

When all this is over !

AFION KARA HISSAR, 31.xii.1916.

TO EILEEN

O Baby, my baby I never have seen,
Don't grow too fast till I come home.
When the birds make love and the hedges are green,
My ship will race through the roaring foam ;
So wait awhile till I come home.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 8.i.1917.

IN THE WOODED CARPATHIANS

THE sky was clouded, and the biting cold
Crept like a shadow through the darkening
 pines,
While all along the foremost fighting lines
The sullen thunder of the rifles rolled.
But, with the darkness, distances were lost ;
The firing slackened till it died away,
Waiting to wake again with dawning day.
And with the night-fall came an iron frost,
That silenced all the streams with crystal chains,
Till in the stillness of that forest-place
The pine-trees cracked in Winter's keen embrace,
As ice crept slowly through their frozen veins.
Then from his mountain home the wind rushed
 forth,
And swept the clouds with him in wild career,
While the dark forest moaned as though in fear ;
And snow came driving swiftly from the north.
The pines were blanketed in virgin white ;
The blood-stains faded from the war-worn ground ;
The snow fell steadily without a sound,
And left no record of the human fight,
Where men lay buried in the trench below.

IN THE WOODED CARPATHIANS

The dawn broke in a city far away,
And people glancing through the news that day
Grumbled because the war went on so slow,
And cursed because the telegrams were short,
“ In the Carpathians : Nothing to report.”

AFION KARA HISSAR, 23.i.1917.

TO EILEEN, AGED ONE

THE fairest prize the diver pearled
Beneath the sunlight on the sea,
O little friend of all the World,
Were not so beautiful to me,
Nor yet the sapphire of the skies
So welcome as your smiling eyes.

The snow lay white upon your birth,
But even purer than the snows,
O little friend of all the Earth,
Your dawning soul whose wonder glows
So bright upon the face I see,
And smiles across the World to me.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 7.ii.1917.

THE FOURTH MAN

ON, and up, and over the hill,
Across the rocks of the ridge ahead ;
Weary to death, but watchful still,
We struggled on with dragging tread.
But where we should have been but three,
A phantom fourth kept pace with me !

Our shoulders ached from the pressing pack,
But life itself lay in the load ;
Our hunted eyes kept glancing back,
But no one trod our lonely road.
Yet who is this with tireless stride
Who keeps his place upon my side ?

I watched him sidelong all that day,
Wondering, if he would but speak,
What message he would find to say,
Or whom it was he came to seek.
We struggled onward till we dropped,
And where we halted, there he stopped.

There, as we stretched ourselves to rest,
One of the others turned and said

THE FOURTH MAN

Some words to me, but he addressed
Me by the name of one long dead.
Then he who walked with us turned round,
As though at some expected sound.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 15.ii.1917.

AFTER THE WAR

WHAT will the changes be, after the war ?
Nothing can ever be quite as before.
Not the great movements of vast populations ;
Not the new boundaries carved out for nations ;
But the fresh balance of human relations.
What will their future see, after the war ?

Shall we be merciful, after the war ?
Or shall we close our eyes, just as before ?
Turn with distaste from the horrors of poverty ;
Fingers in ears at the moaning of misery ;
Preening ourselves that we battled for liberty ;
Shall we be satisfied, after the war ?

Can we be brotherly, after the war ?
Kind to the broken, the wretched, the whore ?
Not with a sense of our own vast disparity ;
Not with a Pharisee's frost-bitten charity ;
But with the warmth of a newer humanity ;
Can we thus pay the World back for the war ?

One thing seems certainty, after the war ;
We shall see clearer than ever before.
Under the paint of the clown in the pantomime ;

AFTER THE WAR

Under the rags of the tramp in the winter-time ;
In the deep windows all pasted with soot and grime ;
We shall see something that tells of the war.

They, like ourselves, will have been through the war:
Some doing less than we, some greatly more.
Some facing death at their perilous station ;
Some growing thin with a grim population ;
Each of them part of a new-welded nation ;
Worthy to eat of the fruits of the war.

How can we ripen the fruits of the war ?
Out of its whirlpool what prize can we draw ?
We can be friends to the growing humanity,
Built on the rocks of the old Christianity,
Training our eyes to look forward with sanity
Through the dark veil that is reft by the war.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 3.iii.1917.

THE LITTLE OWL

IN the dark, when quiet reigns,
Through the night, while all is still,
While silence broods upon the plains,
I hear you hooting on the hill.
Though the snow lies over all,
Spring is in the note you call.

Weird and wild the song you sing,
Passing by with silent flight,
Calling to the coming Spring
Through the darkness of the night.
First are you of birds to know
Love comes swift behind the snow.

Welcome to your hopeful song,
For the message that you bring.
Were old Winter twice as strong,
Yield he must before young Spring ;
As the bitter night of sorrow
Flies before the sun to-morrow.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 9.iii.1917.

SPRING AND HARVEST

IN Autumn late, when fields were brown,
I watched a man in a hooded cap
Casting seed on the earth's cold lap.
Across the field, and up, and down,
He swung his arm, and cast the grain,
With faith that life would rise again.

Oh ! Black and hard was Winter's frost,
Smooth and white was the lifeless snow,
While the grain lay fast asleep below ;
Lay and dreamed that the sun was lost,
Nor felt the Winter's freezing breath
As it lay in sleep as still as death.

The world sped on, and the sun crept north ;
Soft rain swept by in a ghost of grey,
And the wheat awoke again one day,
Thrusting its spearheads boldly forth,
Till all the brown was charmed to green,
And life shone bright where death had been.

When I who watched this wondrous thing,
Who live a life more dull than death,
Who sleep, and eat, and draw my breath,

SPRING AND HARVEST

When I look out and see the Spring,
I wonder when the race of men
Will wake to wisdom once again.

For deep and wantonly we've sown,
And wide have cast our very best.
But can it be that those who rest
Can die in truth until we've grown
The crop for which their lives were lent,
And harvested where they were spent ?

The harvest of their sacrifice
Must crown the winter of their pain
Before they turn to dust again ;
Then, well content to pay the price,
Dissolve into the deathless whole,
Made nobler by their dauntless soul.

Deep in our soil their seed is set,
Deep in the hearts of us who live ;
Trusted to us that we may give
Fulfilment to their harvest yet,
That those who gave their lives may gain
The one reward that crowns their pain.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 3.iv.1917.

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

IF you have a cool swift brain that never hurries,
Then you should hide
From all the world outside,
From the poor old muddling world with all its worries,
Your certain pride ;
Lest, in desire that men should deem you great,
You earn not love, but hate.

If you have eyes that see, an ear that hearkens,
Then you should share
All that you see and hear,
Pluck flowers from your mind for those whom dumb-
ness darkens,
Whose joys are rare,
And give them to the dull, and deaf, and blind,
For love of humankind.

For in those struggling minds are dimly muttered
Their deep confession,
Sad in its dumb suppression,
Thoughts just as wide and deep as those you've uttered,
And their expression
Wants but the words to loose the things they see,
The things that you set free.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 5.iv.1917.

LETTERS FROM HOME

H OPE, like a swallow flying free,
Comes seeking me from the West :
War on the hills and war at sea
Have both conspired to sunder me
From all that I love the best.
But hope comes flying fast and free,
And the object of her quest
Is to blow the spark of liberty
That smoulders in my breast.

So wake my heart, for the world is young,
The April sunlight beams ;
The sweetest songs are not all sung,
And the dullest day has gleams ;
For the bells of peace will yet be rung
When hopes are not all dreams.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 6.iv.1917.

A PRISONER'S SONG

COULD I only go a-swimming
Where the rollers hit the reef,
Where the rock-bound pools are brimming,
I could wash away my grief.
Could I only go a-swimming
Where the wild sea horses roll,
All that prison is a-dimming
Might win back into my soul.

Could I hear the monkeys calling
In the forest, all alone ;
Could I see the torrent falling,
Mist and thunder, on the stone ;
Could I hear the jungle calling,
Where the storm-torn boughs are tossed,
I would soon forget the galling
Of the years that I have lost.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 27.viii.1917.

BEYOND THE WALLS

THERE are days on end when I live apart,
Beyond the walls : beyond the walls :
In the wider world of my inner heart,
Beyond the sound of the sentry's calls.

I live alone in a land of dreams,
Beyond the walls : beyond the walls :
And I sing where the summer sunlight's beams
Spin rainbows round the waterfalls.

But the day will dawn when the dreams come true,
Beyond the walls : beyond the walls :
Once more, my love, I shall live with you,
Nor ever again hear the sentry's calls.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 27.viii.1917.

RELEASE

I

LET me out and away from this town where endeavour is dead,
Where the horrible houses are crumbling, whence freedom has fled ;
Where mental stagnation grows stale, and the rays of the sun,
Staring down, can find nothing achieved, and but little begun.
Let me leave this dull prison of hope e'er its captive has died,
To go out on the hills, where the earth and the air are still wide.
I will lie on the turf, and feel life moving under my hand ;
I will watch the small creatures that burrow their homes in the sand ;
I will breathe the sweet freshness of earth, all unspoiled by the town ;
I will follow the shadows of clouds racing over the down.
For the tiniest flower that peeps out to find Winter has fled
Is worth more than a huddle of houses whose timber is dead ;

RELEASE

And the hum of the bees who hang hovering over its
bell
Is the song of a joy that my language is useless to tell.
Oh, give me one chance to be free, were it but for a day ;
Let the penalty even be death, I am willing to pay.

II

When he woke on the slope of the hill, he was lying
alone,
So he turned, and he looked to the west, where the
boulders were strewn,
And saw clouds like a cowl drawn across from the
face of the moon,
While the shadows all hurried away and hid, each by
a stone.

Then once more to his body came stealing the presence
of pain,
And the fire of his wound drove a pulse of red flame
through his blood,
Till consciousness came with the rush of a turbulent
flood,
And remembrance of all that had happened crept back
to his brain.

It was hopeless to move, so he lay and looked over the
hill,
While the shades that stole out from the stones as
the moon sank to rest

RELEASE

Gathered round him and pointed their silent dark
hands at his breast,
Till the night was all shadowy menace, all horror and
chill.

Then far in the valley below him was uttered a cry,
And the voices of men on the move, and the sound
of their feet
Hurried over the hill, and passed on, and he heard
the dull beat
Of the hoofs of a body of horse that went cantering by.

When the footsteps and voices were gone, as he looked
at the stars,
Came a feeling that told him he stood on the
threshold of death ;
But an hour on the slope of the hill, where he
breathed the earth's breath,
Held more life than the years he had lived while he
looked through the bars.

For he knew in his soul it were better to die on the
slope
Than again to be cast in the bondage he'd suffered
for years,
So he welcomed the wound that it opened a door for
his fears
To fly out through the portals of pain, and make room
for new hope.

RELEASE

Then the eye of the morning was opened to look on the
earth,
And the gold of the sunlight crept down to the place
where he lay ;
But his eyes opened wide to a glory more splendid
than day,
For he knew that he stood at the gate, not of death,
but of birth.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 15.ii.1918.

THE DOOR

MY poetry has been to me a door,
Not to be opened always when I would ;
For obstinately fastened it has stood,
Till I have feared it would not open more.
Then have I wakened in the lonely night,
And found it wide, and passed straight through the wall
Out to the forest where the hornbills call ;
Where trees reach up their faces to the light,
And, spreading, strive in noble rivalry
To make more beautiful their woodland home.
There have I wandered, free among the free,
Until the time to close the door has come ;
And like a shadow I have turned and passed,
Still hopeful I shall live beyond at last.

AFION KARA HISSAR, 27.ii.1918.

PART II
WOODCRAFT AND FOREST
LORE

FEAR IN THE FOREST

ALONE upon a wooded hill I lay,
Beneath a pale blue sky, where swifts did fly,
And listened while the voices of the day
Rose from the rustling woods and mounted high.
The talk of monkeys, and a whistling bird,
The tireless tolling of the barbet's bell,
The singing of the insects that I heard,
Had no strange tale to tell.

Then far away I heard a sambhur stag
Blurt sudden challenge in the plain beneath,
And at his signal 'twas as though a flag
Warned the whole forest of the walking death.
For, stealing through the woods came silent fear,
Its path betrayed before its footsteps passed ;
And soon the belling of the spotted-deer
Told that it travelled fast.

The lower regions of the list'ning hill
Next gave their signal of that moving dread,
The squirrel's indignation ringing shrill,
Thrilling his warning through the woods ahead,
Hanging head downward in his frantic wrath,
With throat pulsating, while a chain of sound,

FEAR IN THE FOREST

In high-pitched clinking, link by link sped forth,
The squirrel cursed the ground.

Still, of the thing itself that came so fast
I heard no single sound of voice or tread ;
Only each signal station, as it passed,
An urgent message through the forest sped.
And next the monkeys, close below my stone,
Hooted in fury, dashing to and fro,
And in the frightened forest I alone
Knew not what passed below.

On soundless pad there passed that silent fear,
Around the wooded contour of the hill,
While in a glade below piped loud and clear
A plover's cry denouncing it as ill.
Down in the woods a nervous muntjak barked ;
A crane rose squawking from a hidden pond ;
And floating far I heard new sounds that marked
Fear in the plain beyond.

THE LOTUS POOL

WHEN daylight voices of the darkening woods
Have died away, and happy silence broods,
While the dark creatures of the night still sleep,
Then may one almost hear the shadows creep.

The running water ripples on the rocks ;
The singing herd boys driving home their flocks
Adown the mellow afterglow of day
Sound clear, and very small, and far away.

Clothed round by leafy forest in a ring,
The laughing waters of the little spring
Babble their song and plunge into a pool,
Bestarred with lotus lilies white and cool.

And in that magic hour the maiden chose
To linger where the tiny streamlet flows ;
But all the time she thought herself alone,
The hidden fairies watched behind a stone.

Secure from any roving human eye,
She broke the mirror of the glowing sky,
And flowing water's silver veil made dim
The lovely lines of every shapely limb.

THE LOTUS POOL

The water lilies closed their starry eyes,
And when the water felt with mild surprise
The burning love that filled her veins with fire,
The swallows changed their course and circled higher.

Then, as the colours faded from the day,
Even the fairies softly stole away,
And left her in that cloister of the wood
All clothed in purity and maidenhood.

IN THE FOREST

THE leaves were singing softly overhead,
Fluttering lightly in the evening breeze,
When down the shady tunnel of the trees
A thirsty leopard came on silent tread.
The monkeys hooted, and the squirrels shrilled,
The spotted-deer were belling in the glade ;
But in the sand beneath the marbled shade
He dug a hole and waited while it filled.
Watchful and wary, while his steadfast gaze
Probed the deep shadows of the forest round,
This lovely terror of the jungle ways
Stood waiting there without a single sound
Until the water filtered through at last,
Then, still in silence, to the shades he passed.

HEARD ON A HILL

AFTER the rain had ceased, the clouds moved slow,
Sweeping between the shoulders of the hills ;
While all the music of the mountain rills
Came floating from the valleys far below.
The rhododendrons dropped their lovely flowers,
Who found new splendour where the fallen blooms
Caught in the tangle of the mosses' plumes,
And lent them lamps to light their fairy bowers.
Then from the woods below there rushed a cry,
As though some giant hunting horn were wound :
Wild and exultant rang the pealing sound,
Its echo rolling from the cliffs around,
Where some great elephant triumphantly
Flung forth a challenge to his enemy.

RAIN

THE woods were hushed and very still from dawn.
Once and again the nervous peafowl squalled,

And once, from bough to bough, the monkeys called
Across the tree-tops, dismal and forlorn.

The birds were silent in the growing heat.

I heard the deer move by with rustling feet,

Stirring the leaves upon the forest floor.

They passed me voiceless, and I heard no more

But distant thunder's deep vibrating growl,

Rumbling upon the mountains in the north,

Whose head was veiled behind an inky cowl,

With diamond points of lightning flashing forth.

Over the slopes I heard it rolling slowly :

In grand procession down across the plain

The storm moved on, and then I saw how holy

The thirsty forest held the falling rain.

It was as though the trees awoke and prayed.

And there I wondered, while the thunder thundered,

Why, like the forest, men had never made

A god of rain. It seemed to me they blundered

In making thunderstorms march forth to fight :

Rain should have been God's tears of pure delight.

MONKEYS

THE boughs above the stream are slowly stirring ;
The waters lap and flow,
The shadows down below
Melt where the liquid slope goes gently purring
Above its bed of stones.
I hear the murmuring of almost human tones :
Low secret tones, the water's voice is blurring.
And while I strain my ear, I seem to hear
The voices of an age preceding man's ;
Soft conversation in the branches near,
And muttered monosyllables discussing plans :
Sub-human language, at the early end
Of history, and a million years before ;
Voices of which I only apprehend
The mystery, but fail to follow more.
For they who stir the branches do not know me ;
They move among the trees, and only show me
Their outer life, and hide its secret core.

THE HORNBILL

OUT in the solemn wilderness alone,
Where ghosts of ages sleep,
And shadows creep,
From mossy bole to bole, from stone to stone,
Just as they crept a thousand years before ;
Where you may hear the wind arise and moan,
Whisper and sigh, and sink to rest once more,
In that dim place,
I heard a sudden hollow laughter peal,
The merriment of some inhuman race,
Who seemed to steal,
On velvet padded feet from shade to shade,
Watching me, mocking me, just out of sight ;
For when I turned to look, they laughed again,
Though nothing stirred, except the secret flight
Of one large bird,
Who disappeared among the deeper trees.
Then, from afar, re-echoed down the breeze
That wicked demon laughter I had heard.

THE LONG-TAILED ROBIN

A MONG the underbrush I hear you,
Softly piping, and so sweetly trilling,
While the darkening woods are slowly filling
With the melody that ever hovers near you,
Welling on, swelling on, as you sing, as you ring,
And now I hear the flutter of your wing,
While yet another thicket bursts in voice,
Tender and wistful tones that seem half sad,
Rounded and mellow notes that sound all glad,
And be you sad or glad I must rejoice
While your clear voice
Pours on, and still has powers
To sing the feelings of the silent flowers.

THE LORIS

IN the forest, in the moonlight,
When the boughs are lacing black against the sky,
And all the stirrings of a tropic night
Encompass me with magic out of sight,
I hear your thin weird cry :
I sense you passing by.
Softly and silently your tiny palms
Cleave to the bosses of your secret way,
On where the bearded moss hangs thick and grey,
Up where the silver moonlight glints and charms,
You slowly creep,
While the geckos cheep,
And your enemy, the owl, on silent wing,
Sweeps through the dusky passes of the trees ;
Sweeps and is gone, while the cicadas sing.
And still your fretful wailing haunts the breeze
That soughs among the tree-tops where you weep.
Good-night, my little kinsman, I must sleep.

BEARS

LYING upon a rock beneath the moon,
Through the dark trees I heard a whining cry
Call from the woods near by,
A fretful, childish whimpering, and soon
I heard a rustling on the forest floor,
While close at hand the cry broke out once more,
The plaintive wailing of a baby ailing,
And the rough mother's gruff enough reply.
Footsteps and voices of a fiercer race,
Close by my hiding-place,
Shuffling among the leaves so crisp and dry,
Passed on their thirsty way
Down to the hollow where the water lay.

JACKALS

IN the glades where the grass is dying,
Grey in the twilight :
Silver in the moonlight :
I can hear the jackals crying.
Full misery is in their haunting tone,
As though by them in all the world alone
Were borne the burthen of the dying spring,
Almost too sad to sing ;
A dreary, melancholy, long-drawn moan,
Growing in volume while it swells,
In wild cacophony of yells,
Burst from a hundred hells,
Calling, howling, clamouring again,
Claiming delivery, proclaiming pain,
To final savage ecstasy of hate.
Then it breaks short and stops :
And silence comes amain.

THE CLIFF OF WINGS

THE face of the painted cliff is high.
Dark is the forest far below.
I see a speck in the western sky,
A moving speck on the sunset's eye ;
And the peregrine whirrs as he flashes by.
O ! Fly fleet swallows !
Speed on the wings of light !
Swift your wings, and the feathers roar,
As down from the upper caves you pour.
Scream ! Scream in your wild delight !
Scream with joy in the maddening race,
As you pour your cataracts into space !
And the echo sings to the whirr of wings,
That cleave the air of this splendid place.
For the sinking sun sees your place of birth,
Half-way to heaven and high above earth.

BAMBARA-GALA

THE rock looks down on the woods below,
Green, and bronze, and red, and grey ;
And the sun sinks down at the end of day
Behind the hills, in a molten glow.
Gold, and copper, and crimson sheen,
With a pale-blue lake of sky between ;
Till the west grows cool, and the woodland pool
Mirrors the rock in a ring of green.
It lies on the pool where the fishes splash,
Their rippling circles rolling wide,
Dead and grey as a thing of ash,
A jutting tooth on the mountain-side.

This is the time to climb the steep ;
Up through the shadowy woods to grope ;
Over the stones where the lichens creep ;
On, to the crag that crowns the slope ;
To the wild bees' stronghold hushed in sleep.

Very silent and soft are our feet,
As we cling to the ledge ;
Very soft and slow, as we look below,
From the narrow edge,
And feel the rock's radiant heat
Give back the sunset's glow.

BAMBARA-GALA

Under the shelf where the combs point down,
They hang in sheets of shimmering brown,
In moving banners above our head ;
And the place is sharp with their acrid breath,
And tense with the sense of lurking death,
Where the tree-tops wait to catch the dead.
Even in sleep you hear them humming,
Softly, gently, deep, and low ;
A murmuring song that seems to grow
Into a distant muffled drumming ;
Myriads of sleeping bees,
Dreaming of the flowery trees.
Be not restless lest you shake them !
Silence, while the evening breeze
Passes by, across the sky ;
Bear in mind that, if you wake them,
You must die.

BY SINKING-GARDENS

BY Sinking-gardens the woods are still ;
For this is an enchanted place,
Unhaunted by the human race,
A secret hollow in the hill,
A misty garden, green and damp,
Where flowers burn bright upon the swamp,
And wanton glow-worms light their love-lorn lamp.

By Sinking-gardens the birds pipe low,
And rustle on the leaf-strewn ground.
Like ruined pillars stand around
Old rotting logs where orchids grow.
Deep in the valley of the stones,
You hear the river where it moans,
And sombre monkeys' melancholy tones.

On Sinking-gardens the flowers are bright :
They haunt the woods with honeyed smells,
And turn their tiny coloured bells
Like pilgrim faces to the light.
But deep below their carpet spread
There lie the bones of all the dead
Who loved the dainty blossoms overhead.

BY SINKING-GARDENS

On Sinking-gardens our steps are slow.

Tread gently on that spangled green,

That smiling face which looks so clean,

For slime is bottomless below.

Tread light, and soft, and tenderly ;

Pluck swift, and sure, and warily ;

Lest the flowers bloom more wistfully, for thee.

WAVE-AWAY-STONES

WAVE-AWAY-STONES are bright and wet,
And the water swirling past
Leaps at the feet that are lightly set,
But the feet fly by too fast.

Above the stones, and below the stones,
The waters foam and shout ;
But over their hungry roar the tones
Of the children still ring out.

Ring out, sing out like a silver reed
In the music of a dream,
Where the surging song of the waters freed
Is the organ of the stream.

The dripping ferns have lent their tongue,
The clusters of wild bamboo
Sway their heads to the song that's sung,
Where the water charges through.

Wave-away-stones are bright and wet,
And the leaping waves are strong ;
But they have not caught the children yet,
And the children love their song.

WAVE-AWAY STONES

When you grow old and your hair turns grey,
Adventurous children three,
Look back with smiles where the waters play,
And sometimes think of me.

THE DAWN-CHILD

WHILE in a wilderness of woods I lay
My counterpane of stars was drawn away,
And there upon the breast of drowsy earth
I watched the tresses of old Night turn grey.

The eastern hills were rimmed with saffron light,
And on their ridge, in burning robes bedight,
The Dawn-child with his rounded, rosy cheeks
Blew on the embers in the camp of Night.

Down in the valley of the sleeping lake,
Below the mist, I heard a heron wake ;
The startled challenge of a sambhur stag
Belled from the dripping tangle of the brake.

Then all the jungle cocks awoke and crew,
While still the Dawn-child at his camp-fire blew,
Until the monkeys huddled on the boughs
Hooted and shook upon me showers of dew.

Night moved away before triumphant morn
Decked in the gold his dying sire had worn ;
But still the deeper secrets of the wood
Were clothed in shadows from her mantle torn.

THE DAWN-CHILD

The Dawn-child's footsteps on the sky gave birth
To roses where they pressed, and from the earth
Sprang dewy scents as blossoms oped their eyes,
And steam from camp-fires, and a song of mirth.

SONG OF THE MOSQUITOES

THERE were reeds and lotus beds not far from
camp ;
And mosquitoes were so thick,
That the very air seemed quick,
As they danced a dizzy halo round my lamp.

Where they spired like singing smoke above the swamp,
I could hear their cheerless song
Of the doom that smites the strong,
And Malaria, the demon of the damp.

When the elephant, the leopard, and the bear
Move away before mankind,
The mosquitoes stay behind,
Fanning fever through the circles of the air.

O Great King, who fifteen centuries ago,
Where the lilies now grow rank,
Built your palace by the tank,
Did you think to fall before so mean a foe !

Did you dream, in all the splendour of your pride,
That your city, with its wall,

SONG OF THE MOSQUITOES

To the wilderness would fall,
Breathing poison from its waters far and wide !

For the power of man is nothing, after all :
 And the glory of his state,
 Though it stand before the great,
Must go down before the infinitely small.

THE BRIDGE OF TIME

THE old forgotten town lies wrapped in woods ;
From roofs, and floors, and walls great trees
are sprouting ;
Where princes played, the pea-hen leads her broods ;
And choirs have sung where Wanduru are shouting.

The lake that once poured life into the plain,
Now breeds but fever in its swampy shallow ;
And where the temples saw their towers again,
Their hollow windows watch the wild swine wallow.

Out from the ruined sluice there slowly crawls
A sluggish-moving stream, half choked by sedges,
That snake-like winds along the crumbling walls,
And hides the coots that nest about its edges.

Into the wilderness of woods it flows,
Until all semblance of a stream has perished,
And in its bed unstinted forest grows,
Where nothing tells the schemes that men had
cherished.

Here stands the bridge ; built out of old grey stone,
Half hidden by the mantle of the grasses ;

THE BRIDGE OF TIME

Linked by no road ; used but by time alone,
Whose silent footsteps through the forest passes.

And where time's feet pursue their tireless track,
This old forsaken milestone of the ages
Has still the power to guide my footsteps back
With speed that takes the centuries as stages.

Your road, old bridge, is gone ; your stream is dead ;
The stone that crowns your arch will soon be rotten :
No longer now you point the way ahead,
But ease our path to ages long forgotten.

Memory flows more swift beneath your arch
Than ever flowed the water silver gleaming,
And he whose feet upon your roadway march
May find the path that leads from now to dreaming.

THE RUINED CITY

A LITTLE jungle child once guided me
Into a forest-covered ruined town,
Where, on a broken pillar lying down,
Fell the dark shadow of a huge old tree.

Letters were cut upon its granite side ;
An edict ringing with the splendid boast
Of some great king whom memory has lost,
Now lying broken in forsaken pride.

Thus ran the words of that forgotten king :
“ So long as earth, and sun, and moon endure,
Let no man dare from now for evermore
To slight this edict in the smallest thing.”

But in his city by the shining lake,
Where he had deemed his law might fitly stand,
Wild were the woods that spread on every hand,
And none were left his laws to guard or break.

Even the forest beasts were not more blind,
More ignorant of all those old decrees,
Than my small guide who lived among the trees
With half a hundred of his kin and kind.

THE RUINED CITY

Our ways and wonderings were each our own ;
For while he scanned the woods with restless eyes,
With ears and nostrils wide against surprise,
I rested pondering upon the stone.

For he was thinking through his ears and nose ;
While I was dreaming of a long-dead fear :
He caught the sounds and scents that floated near,
And I the battle-cries of ancient foes.

The wild ixora blossoms glowing red,
The wild white jasmine's garlands twining wide,
Bowered in beauty the deserted pride
Of that forsaken city of the dead.

Here where the garnered wealth of centuries
Had long lain stored in temple and in tower,
Wild desolation reigned since savage power
Swept like a storm of God across the seas.

Before the fierce invaders of the North,
Glory and beauty faded as the grass
Fades where a myriad swarm of locusts pass,
And left a writhing wilderness of wrath.

Here mutilated men had screamed and died ;
Women had slain themselves for biting shame,
Too broken to excuse what had no name,
Too sick to live, bereft of women's pride.

THE RUINED CITY

I seemed to hear the drums' deep thundering,
The trump of elephants, the fighting hosts,
The wood's dark corridors seemed thronged with
ghosts
Who gathered round me, watching, wondering.

Far, far in time, yet in a manner near,
There came to me a vision of the past,
Gathered, may be, from some who found at last
Way to express the loss they felt so dear.

As night's dark shadow swept across the world,
When Buddha's rays were melting from the sky,
Over the city solemn herons cry
"Wake, for the cloak of darkness is unfurled !"

Wake, people of the night, and claim your hour.
Abbot and prince must tremble for their wealth,
While their defenders move away by stealth,
And anarchy usurps the place of power.

Lone with the howling of deserted dogs,
Who fouled the rooms where queens had lain of late,
The city's streets lay void and desolate,
Where crowds of ghosts passed by like drifting fogs.

Huge crocodiles, with ruthless marbled eyes,
Watched the dark jungle creep along their shore ;
They saw the city die away once more,
Even as in their youth they saw its rise.

THE RUINED CITY

Born of the forest, wood, and stone, and clay,
The city lived its life like any man,
Without fulfilling half its widening plan ;
Grew to its greatest strength, and passed away.

Soon, in the empty palace, painted walls
Echo the belling of the startled deer,
And as their leader stamps in sudden fear,
His footstep hollow on the pavement falls.

Flowers once bloomed where now they crop the grass,
Stepping as daintily as though on wings,
In bitter mocking of bygone kings,
Who, from these windows, watched their horsemen
pass.

The troops of monkeys hoot among the trees,
And cast their refuse on the marble floors,
Scared by the hollow boom of wooden doors
That slam behind the ghosts who ride the breeze.

The clustered sculptures ranged about the dome
Of each old temple, bowered in forest green,
That marks the monument of some great queen,
Offer to hornets an abiding home.

When moonlight gleams upon the high old walls,
And shadowed courts seem fraught with mystery,
All the deep secrets of their history
Are whispered by the wind through empty halls.

THE RUINED CITY

Here, where the temples crumble stone by stone,
Yielding before the forest more and more,
The confidence of culture melts in awe,
Lest such a fate as this may be our own.

For, in the story of that ancient race,
The causes of their ultimate decline
Are plain to read for those who would divine
How ruthless fate moves on with steady pace.

And, looking at that little jungle child,
As free and naked as a baby bear,
I wondered whether some far future year
Would find my own descendants just as wild.

Perhaps in that far distant day some sage
May trace the seeds of ultimate decay,
Growing relentlessly, despite delay,
Through all the glory of our present age.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE LAND

A BOUNDLESS plain that spreads from sky to sky,
Where dappled clouds are floating in the blue ;
A boundless forest showing every hue
Of green and grey, of green and brown, and green.
The scattered little hills that once have been
The homes of hermits in days long gone by,
And now are homes of porcupines and bears,
Whose playground in the rocks is snug and dry.
Happy is he who casts away his cares,
To plunge into the jungle for a change,
A transmigration to another age,
Where all is wonderful, but nothing strange,
For all is painted on some former page ;
In some great record of the common past
We share with nature, and rejoin at last.

THE RIVER

The river running through the tunnelled trees,
Murmurs among the boulders with delight
To find the wood so green, the sun so bright,
Where, smiling through the interlacing leaves,
Over the running stream a web he weaves

THE KINGDOM OF AYANAR

Of light and shade that shimmers when the breeze
Tosses the tangled branches overhead.
Far through the whispering woods the river flees,
Feeding the forest, by the forest fed ;
In form eternal, and in self the same,
Though ever changing, never standing still ;
Not giving birth, not dying, with no aim
To win and die, no destiny to fill,
But to flow on and on and evermore
Into the summer sea its life to pour.

THE TREES

The trees in endless ranks and armies stand,
Fighting a battle that was first begun
When little feeble arms yearned for the sun,
And stretched toward him, thrusting to the side
The tiny rivals of their mighty pride
In endless warfare, on a scale so grand
That their eternal patience seems sublime.
For through long centuries each tree has planned
To reach the light, and climb, and climb, and climb
Out of the lower world of gloom and shade,
Up through the struggle of the growing boughs,
Into the light among the splendid band
Of those who have accomplished all their vows.
And there to live, and die, and rot, and fall,
Till once more re-absorbed into the All.

THE ROCKS

Deep in the forest there are rocky caves,
Haunted by hermits in those ancient days

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

When first men faltered in the misty maze
Of wonder whence we came, and why we are
Spread on the surface of this whirling star.
There, where the forest builds dark solemn naves,
They left behind them human joy and grief,
Waiting while wisdom came in pulsing waves
To fill the hollows of their grand belief
That with the rocks that rot, the leaves that fall,
The running river, and the crumbling hills,
They too in time would reach again the All :
Once more to share the wisdom that instils
Peace to the whole. They passed away, and bears
Find in the cells they made their warmest lairs.

THE GLADES

Where the dark forest opens out in glades,
The waving grasses drink the fervid rays
Poured by the lavish sun for endless days,
And perish slowly in his scorching breath.
Born of the sun, they take from him their death,
And yield again the green he gave their blades.
Their harvest festival glows ripe with gold,
All crowned with seeds that drop before it fades.
Yet, truly seen, the grasses are as old
As any rugged, hoary, moss-grown tree.
Their still dividing, everlasting cell
Can claim long lineage as well as we.
So all are old, yet all are young as well ;
And all might share the honest pride that thrills
To feel our only elders are the hills.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE HEAT

And when the grasses in the glades are dead,
The sun invades the forest's secret heart.
Into the deepest shade his arrows dart,
Slaying the leaves as once they slew the grass.
But when galvanic, spinning breezes pass,
These rise again and ghostly measures tread.
Through the denuded mantle of the trees
The heat strikes deep into the forest bed.
Out of the pools it drinks the very lees,
Leaving their muddy margin starred with tracks,
A rigid record of the last to drink.
Even in deeper shade there gape great cracks
That gradually spread and interlink,
Making a thirsty network of the earth
Till the monsoon to rain again gives birth.

THE POOLS

And yet the animals remain alive :
For here and there they find some precious pool
Deep in the rocks, where water sweet and cool
Defies the longest drought and never fails.
These are the final goals of all the trails ;
The points of peril, where the creatures strive
To pass the watchful sentinels of death.
For every leopard knows that thirst must drive
The deer to drink, though every panting breath
Carry the warning taint of lurking foe.
So death haunts all the pools on silent pad,

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

And deer approach them stepping soft and slow,
Receding, waiting while thirst drives them mad,
Then they rush in, and drink, and drink, and drink,
Till sudden terror bids them fly the brink.

THE RAIN

The jungle feels as though a dome of glass
Covers it in, and keeps away the air :
The atmosphere intensifies the glare :
Low rumbling thunder grumbles all the morn :
The trees by fitful circling gusts are torn.
A grey wet veil of shadow seems to pass,
And all at once the miracle is done.
Sweet fragrance rises steaming from the grass.
Down all the tree trunks little trickles run.
The deer and buffaloes all throng the glade.
Among the higher branches monkeys hoot.
Old yellow tortoises come out and wade.
Great herds of pig appear, and grunt, and root.
Ten thousand frogs their strident chorus raise.
The buzzing insects sing their psalm of praise.

THE WIND

The dim arcades that pierce the underworld,
Where gloomy pillars stand in endless rows,
Remain untroubled by the wind that blows
Across the world of tree-tops overhead.
The monkeys hoot their hollow cries of dread,
And hide themselves before the storm is hurled.
The sudden eddies that outride the breeze

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

Speed on ahead, and all the boughs are swirled
In leafy whirlpools, tearing at the trees
That creak and groan as though they were in pain.
For this is warfare where the strongest win ;
And when the height of tempest brings full strain
The strength of grand old trees cracks in the din :
Tearing great boughs from rivals as they fall,
They die, and rot, and go to join the All.

THE NIGHT

When the great moon is full, and lights the east,
Soon as the setting sun has sunk below
The fringe of trees so black against the glow,
The creatures wander in the glades all night,
Cropping the dewy grass that gleams so bright.
The trumpeting of elephants who feast
Echo afar like some tremendous horn,
While the shrill challenge of each lesser beast
Makes the night seem more vast and more forlorn
Than ever is the jungle in the day.
The plaintive crying of a baby bear,
The squeaking of the porcupines at play,
The notes of joy and love, the cries of fear,
The mournful hooting of a hidden owl,
The glamour of a distant jackal's howl.

THE DAWN

But for an hour or two before the dawn
The woods are silent while the creatures sleep,
Until the pale pure light begins to creep

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

Across the sky behind the lacing boughs.
Then night-jars gurgle softly and arouse
Those cheerful heralds of a forest morn,
The jungle-cocks, whose loudly ringing voice
From every thicket round expresses scorn
For those who sleep, and cries " Rejoice ! Rejoice !"
The eastern sky is flushed with palest rose
Where leaves and twigs are sharp defined in black.
In all the dells around the chorus grows,
From out the sky a heron answers back ;
The world once more awakes refreshed and strong,
The jungle rings with melody and song.

THE FLOWERS

Out in the glade the grass is waving high,
All lined by lanes where elephants have trod ;
And like the breath of some pervading god
The fragrance of ehala fills the air,
Its blossom glowing golden in the glare.
Down from a flowering tree-top in the sky
There comes the humming of a hundred moths,
Who probe the waxy bells and suck them dry.
Great sheets of blue spread out like drying cloths,
Alluring busy swarms of buzzing bees
Where tiny flowers their honey gardens grow.
Like jewels on the arms of wealthy trees
The orchid blossoms pearl and sapphire show.
Creepers hold woody castles in their power,
Flaunting their crimson flag upon the tower.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE INSECTS

Deep in the forest of the dying grass
The harvesters are busily at work,
Dodging grim insect ogres where they lurk
Buried in little pits of sliding sand
Their execrable engineers have planned
To trap the footsteps of the ants who pass.
A web of yellow silk across the gap
Where a great bumble bee in belted brass
Comes blustering through, has caught him in its trap,
And deftly he's enveloped in his shroud
By a great yellow spider barred with black.
In this long war no quarter is allowed :
They never cease from working, nor look back,
But aim ahead at far eternity,
Some day, perhaps, to be as wise as we.

THE REPTILES

Among the leaves there moves a cord of green
Where a long whip-snake ripples on his way
With blank, unblinking eyes of cruel grey.
The python sets his spring among the weeds,
And waits until the pig on which he feeds
Comes near, and is engulfed, and no more seen.
In a dark cavern under hanging roots
A crocodile is hiding, ever keen
To watch the monkeys feeding on young fruits
And playing in the trees above the stream.
This is a watchful people, full of gloom ;

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

For almost all the hungry reptiles seem
To gape dispassionately like a tomb.
They live so slowly and they grow so old
That all their appetites are grim and cold.

THE BIRDS

Beside the stream, upon a pointed stone,
There shines a little jewel in the light,
Sapphire and ruby never shone more bright ;
Yet in that lovely head there's but one wish,
For this most brilliant gem but lives to fish ;
The eagle circles in the sky above,
Seeking to kill that he and his may live ;
The green-winged, orange-breasted, whistling dove
Pipes in the " damba " tree, whose branches give
Their purple staining fruit to him to sow ;
The blue-winged roller flashes as he flies ;
The flame-like flycatcher darts to and fro,
Chasing the bright enamelled butterflies ;
Till, tiring of the sun, they dream away
The drowsy stillness of the heat of day.

THE DEER

Who loves the lovely nation of the deer ?
In the deep thicket of the flowering thorn
One starry night the little deer was born,
And so familiar found the leopard's roar,
It was as though he once had lived before
In that same thicket, with the self-same fear ;

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

For instinct serves the deer instead of brains,
And in the woods, from being all so near
To some great whole, of which they all are grains,
They share by right the knowledge of the herd.
The fawn lay silent while the leopard passed
And knew by nature what it was that stirred.
So he grew up to lead the herd at last,
A stag of beauty, dainty, full of grace,
King of his kind, and father of his race.

THE BUFFALO

All through the hottest watches of the day
The buffalo lie soaking in a pool,
Where the deep yielding mud feels soft and cool,
Chewing the cud and thinking—do they think?—
Of what they like to eat, and where to drink.
At last they lumber out, all clothed in clay,
And spread about the open, cropping grass.
Fearless of all the jungle, come what may,
They will not even let a leopard pass,
But charge him fiercely, putting him to flight.
And should a crocodile approach their calves
The whole great angry host will charge on sight.
A headstrong people, doing naught by halves,
Homely, contented, very simple folk,
Who horn each other roughly for a joke.

THE LEOPARDS

Lying along a branch the leopard waits,
Watching the jungle trail that runs below.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

The timid deer suspect their deadly foe,
And in the forest you can hear their bell.
Suddenly, like a blow, the leopard fell,
Striking a pig that strayed behind his mates,
Crushing its broken neck upon the ground.
And now his savage roaring harshly grates,
Spreading wild terror in the jungle round.
Then like a shadow lightly leaping forth
A second leopard springs into the track.
The growling victor snarls in jealous wrath,
And she as fiercely growls her answer back :
But waits her turn to taste the bleeding meal ;
Then both together through the twilight steal.

THE GLEANERS

As they move off on silent padded feet
Two flitting shapes of grey come circling round,
Cautiously scouting lest they should be found.
Finally they descend upon the kill,
With lank eternal hunger hard to fill,
Though every leopard's kill were jackal's meat.
So these two gorge themselves upon the pig
And flit away to some secure retreat.
Then, on the forest floor, a snapping twig
Betrays some other hungry for the feast,
And next a small striped cat goes burrowing
Into the very bowels of the beast.
All through the night come gleaners hurrying,
And each in turn gets gorged and flees away,
Leaving the ants to end the work next day.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE ELEPHANTS

Like huge black rocks among the greater trees
The elephants are resting in the shade ;
Their giant forms from side to side are swayed,
And there they wait until the light slants low ;
Then to the glade in solemn file they go,
Crushing the grass that reaches to their knees.
From out the dusk there blares a trumpet call,
And by the afterglow their leader sees
Approaching her the greatest bull of all,
Who lives alone and shuns the social herd,
Ranging in solitude the river bank,
Until once more his vast desire is stirred.
So she went out before her sister's rank,
Stroking him with her trunk in fond caress,
While those great lovers sought the wilderness.

THE BEARS

Black groups of rocks are scattered o'er the plain,
And each is dense with scrub and tangled thorn,
With narrow labyrinthine pathways worn
Into the stony stronghold of the bears.
Soft is the dust that carpets all their lairs,
And fresh the scent of jungle after rain.
The furry babies playing in the cave
Bark till the rocks re-echo once again,
While their stern mother watches, looking grave.
Then when the evening falls she takes her cub,
And teaches him the tracks, and scents, and sounds,

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

Where to find " Palu " fruit, and how to grub
The termites from their castellated mounds.
And when he tires he climbs upon her back,
And clings among the fur so long and black.

THE BATS

In a dim corridor between the rocks
There lives a restless multitude of bats.
High on the walls and safe from jungle cats
They hang head downward, shrouded in their wings.
All through the light of day this army clings,
Waiting the dark, to pour in teeming flocks
Into the soft warm night above the trees.
Their miracle of mazy flying mocks
The efforts of the moth, who vainly flees.
They draw their moving net across the sky,
Sweeping up insect lives in myriads,
Gathering in its meshes all that fly ;
So they go on for endless periods,
While still the vast fecundity of earth
To further countless myriads gives birth.

THE MONKEYS

The monkeys move among the higher ways,
Along the roads that link the larger trees,
The restless road set swinging by the breeze.
Among the leafy boughs their home is found,
But yet they love to linger on the ground
Through the long afternoons of sunny days.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

At any sign of peril up they spring,
Racing across the ground to reach the maze
Of branches, where they sit and safely swing,
Uttering hollow, melancholy tones.
But sometimes fate is swifter than they trow.
Then while the leopard strips their brother's bones
They hoot and dash about from bough to bough
With frantic, impotent, pathetic rage,
Like half-formed men of some remoter age.

THE LORIS

More like a little man than even they,
A tiny, hairy dwarf with saucer eyes
That stare intently with an air so wise
One finds it hard to think he cannot speak,
Is the slow loris, who, though small and weak,
Lives on sedately, scorning idle play,
Holding himself in dignity aloof.
Timidly shrinking from the light of day,
He dwells among the tangled twigs that roof
The gloomy corridors beneath the leaves.
There, when the sunset paints the sky with red,
He creeps about the web the forest weaves,
And catches sleeping bulbuls by the head.
These tailless little folk, so like ourselves,
Are nothing else than furry woodland elves.

THE MEN

Among the many nations of the wood
Are those self-called the people of the bow.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

More than a score of centuries ago
Their ancient forbears wandered far and free,
Until one day there came up from the sea
A stronger people, spreading fire and blood,
Who drove them back into remoter wild,
Where still they hunt, and roam about the wood.
Dark-bearded, slight of build, in feature mild,
These simple people live so near to earth
That they have never practised to deceive ;
Yet even they take pride in ancient birth,
For in the past some monkey, they believe,
Came down and left off roving through the trees,
And so became a human by degrees.

THE GOD

At all the frontiers of this wide domain,
The little narrow tracks of jungle men
Pass by great trees whose spreading boughs o'erspan
Broad mossy places, shot with light and shade,
Where on their branches small green twigs are laid.
These are the simple tribute paid to gain
Rights of protection from old Ayanâr,
Whose spirit, like the scent that follows rain,
Pervades the wilderness both near and far,
Guarding his faithful people of the bow.
No temple hath he : neither form nor face
Has ever yet been carved by those who know
His haunting presence in this mystic place ;
But when before his eyes they wish to be,
His people pray before a hollow tree.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE SPIRIT OF THE FOREST

Out in the woodland wilderness alone
The people of the bow have felt him pass,
His rustling footsteps pressing on the grass
Light as the ripple of the evening breeze.
The gentle humming of the little bees,
Building their waxen, sweet, inverted cone,
Safe in the cavern of a hollow tree ;
The golden oriole's full mellow tone ;
The brave strong flute of eagles soaring free ;
The distant clarion of elephants ;
And all the hundred voices of the wood,
These are the organ of his sacraments.
His spirit is the soul of all the good
Loved by the little people of the bow,
Who bow before the grandest thing they know.

THE CLAN OF THE BOW

THE MAN

A little toughened man with grizzled beard
Sat hafting a stone knife upon a stick.
The hair upon his head was long and thick,
The wrinkles on his face were dark with dirt,
His naked form with one brown rag was girt,
And under bushy brows his eyes appeared
Alert and watchful, like two little bees.
He seemed a man who had not often feared
To meet on equal terms among the trees

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

The beasts that share with man his sovrantry ;
The elephant, the leopard, and the bear,
They with their strength and great agility,
He with his brains, his bow, his knife, his spear.
This active man was known as Undiya,
One of the people of great Ayanâr.

THE BOW

After the knife was sharpened, next the bow
With a new cord of twisted bark was strung.
And as he laboured Undiya softly sang
Songs of the whispering woods and falling leaves,
Sung in a minor voice, like one who grieves
With lingering sweetness o'er some ancient woe,
Too deep to die, too far away to pain.
And as his voice drew out the notes all slow
He plucked the bow-string till it twanged again.
Wrinkling his forehead, while his puzzled eyes
Gazed at the string whose note rang out so true,
With dawning wisdom shining through surprise,
He said, " This song has entered into you !
You hold the spirit of some ancient man !
The soul of some old father of the clan."

THE CLAN

That night the moon beamed blandly in the sky,
And all the clan was gathered in a glade
Where Undiya a leafy hut had made.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

A score of men and boys were seated round,
Their bows and arrows laid upon the ground ;
But Undiya held up his bow on high,
Plucking a string and sounding forth a note
That seemed to all the people seated by
To bring the tone of something far remote,
The voice of some old hunter long since dead.
Within the leafy shrine the bow was hung,
A bow no longer, but a spirit fled
Out of the void into the music sung
By the new sounding cord that thrilled so low,
And charmed the simple people of the bow.

THE DREAM

The moon sank, and the people lay asleep
Around the ashes of a dying fire ;
But in his dreams came ringing like a lyre
To Undiya the sounding of the bow
That gave to him a message clear and slow,
Telling that time was ripe a feast to keep
In honour of that hunter long since dead.
Out of the dying fire the flickering leap
Of little flames glowed through his eyelids red,
And in his dream it seemed that some great fight
Loomed in the future, but the battle's end
He could not see, for blood obscured his sight.
But still he trusted Ayanâr would send
Some mighty victim for the coming feast,
And hold him harmless from the dying beast.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE MESSAGE

Soon as the nightjar hailed the coming dawn
That spread pale yellow in the chilly sky,
Undiya rose with purpose in his eye,
Took a new bow, and fitted a new string,
Trying its balance, feeling if the spring
Curved evenly along from horn to horn ;
While, like an echo of the sleeping wood,
Winged by the murmuring wind was faintly borne
The distant trumpet of the mighty herd
Of elephants who wandered in the wood.
Then by the bole of an enormous tree
He laid the bow and arrows, while he stood
With eyes uplifted in an ecstasy,
And told old Ayanâr about the feast,
And thanked him for the message from the beast.

THE PRAYER

I lay this bow, these arrows, and my knife
Before thy tree, beneath these spreading boughs.
Here, where my people pay to thee their vows,
I pray thee, Ayanâr, to bless this bow :
Swifter than swallows let its arrows go !
And when thou watchest me in mortal strife,
Desperately fighting with some savage beast,
Oh ! Aid me, Ayanâr ! Leave me my life !
Leave me to live that I may make a feast
For all thy people of the sounding bow.
For in my dream a vision came to me,

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

And since I heard the challenge of my foe
Come ringing like a trumpet through this tree
Thy meaning is made plain, and now I know
The elephant will soon be lying low.

THE VICTIM

The sun was getting high when Undiya
Heard once again that mighty trumpeting
Peal through the woods in hollow echoing.
Standing between two lofty walls of rock
Once and again he heard the echo mock
From wall to wall in wild acoustic play,
That grew in swelling volume as a wave
Of sudden sound, and slowly died away,
Leaving the rocks as quiet as the grave.
Beyond the narrow gate of the defile
He knew that he would find a waterhole,
So he crept forward, peering all the while
Through the thick bushes, as he softly stole
On silent feet, until his eyes could see
The angry eyes of his great enemy.

THE WATERHOLE

The distance that a man might cast a stone
Divided him from where the other wall
Of forest raised a barrier as tall
As where he stood. And all the space between
Was bare, black, burning rock, all flat and clean.
The surface of the rock was cleft alone
By one deep narrow hole with shelving sides

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

Worn smooth by feet, until the lip had grown
Polished like stones where running water glides.
And now long drought had left the water low
The waterhole became a deadly trap ;
For thirsty animals were bound to go
Right to the very edge of it to lap,
While those who slipped might well abandon hope
Of ever climbing up that polished slope.

THE PRISONER

There in the hole he found the beast he sought,
Vanquished by fate and robbed of all his pride.
The trumpet of his wrath had served to guide
Undiya's footsteps to this living tomb.
The elephant had just sufficient room
To turn within the trap where he was caught,
To take four paces to the further end,
To turn and take four paces back, but naught
That he could do would serve his case to mend.
In vain he strove some higher stance to win ;
Vainly he beat his trunk upon the stone ;
And vainly called upon his absent kin
To give the help he could not gain alone.
But when the man stepped from the forest dim
He charged the length and trumpeted at him.

THE PRISON

The sun had reached the apex of the sky,
And all the rocks were shimmering with heat.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

Undiya felt them burn his naked feet,
And wondered if the elephant were cool.
But when he ventured nearer to the pool,
Looking if there were any chance to try
And draw a gourd of water fit to drink,
The angry captive uttered such a cry
Of rage and fury that it made him shrink
Back to the forest edge in swift retreat.
But soon he saw the elephant was bound
Most strictly by the limits of his beat,
Four paces either way, before he found
His egress barred by slippery walls of stone
Impossible to scale by strength alone.

THE PITY

So Undiya came out and stood again
Gazing in wonder at the elephant,
Who, he felt doubly certain, had been sent
To help in the fulfilment of his dream :
Yet deep within his soul he felt some gleam
Of sorrow for the mighty creature's pain.
He looked into the angry little eyes,
And slowly formed within his puzzled brain
Some pity that a creature of such size
Should come to so inglorious an end.
Where would so very vast a spirit fly ?
He almost felt as though it were some friend
Whose death drew sadly near. Yet all things die :
And this must die by Undiya's bow and spear ;
So from his heart he drove all ruth and fear.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE ATTACK

Undiya drew an arrow to his ear
And loosed it at the elephant's grey flank
Behind the shoulder, where it struck, and sank
Full mid-shaft deep, dyeing his wrinkled side
With oozing red that bubbled as he cried
In helpless anger, almost mad with fear,
While with his trunk he plucked the shaft and broke
A piece away. Then Undiya stepped near
And drove an arrow with so swift a stroke
That nothing but the feather could be seen.
Shaft after shaft flew stinging from his bow ;
Red was the water which had once been green ;
Slowly the elephant sank low, sank low,
Sank to his knees, and yet refused to die,
But fixed his puny foe with baleful eye.

THE DEATH

And now the elephant was tufted o'er
With little clumps of feathers where his hide
Was pierced with welling wounds, while up his side
The crimson water-line did slowly creep
As he sank lower while the shafts worked deep.
His voice was silent and he cried no more ;
But still he did not die, and every shaft
Had now been sped. So Undiya stood before
His humbled foe and gripped the toughened haft,
Poising his spear to give the final stroke.
But every time he tried to thrust the spear

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

The dying elephant his purpose broke,
Foiling it with his trunk when he drew near ;
Till Undiya got through the guard at last
And in that mighty heart the spear stood fast.

THE WATCHERS

While Undiya stood gazing at the dead
The branches of the trees were softly stirred
And something moving through the leaves was heard.
Swiftly he turned and searched the forest round
With eager eyes, and suddenly he found
His heart possessed by palpitating dread :
Blind superstition gripped his mystic soul,
And from that place of death he turned and fled.
Yet still the jungle stirred and something stole
Out of the shadow circle of the trees
Into the silence where the sunlight blazed ;
Others crept softly out and by degrees
A ring of great grey monkeys sat and gazed
In wordless wondering and silent awe
At death in form unknown to them before.

THE FIRE

Along the forest path that afternoon
The heavy-laden people of the bow
Filed singly forward in procession slow
To where their women waited in the glade,
Where preparations for the feast were made.
A heap of firewood from the forest hewn

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

Lay waiting for the right auspicious hour,
And now the time was coming very soon ;
For by the entrance of a leafy bower
Undiya sat and held between his hands
A little rod of wood he twirled and twirled
Upon another stick until the strands
Of shredded bark took fire, and up there curled
A little spiring wreath of bluish smoke,
While from their age-long sleep the flames awoke.

THE FEAST

Merrily hissed the pots upon the fire,
Savoury rose the appetising steam,
In splendid harvest of the hunter's dream.
And now the rising moon looked down and smiled
To see the happy people of the wild,
From youngest infant to the whitest sire,
Eat steadily while hour ran into hour,
Gorge till the climbing moon could mount no higher,
But passed her zenith wond'ring at their power.
Thus was accomplished Undiya's great feast :
But while his people lay in dreamless sleep,
Undiya pondered over the huge beast
Who died so hardly ; and he scarce could keep
From thinking that he heard that trumpet note
Through the dark silence of the forest float.

THE FEAR

All through the autumn of that famous year
Undiya carried in his misty brain

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

A thought that with the coming of the rain,
When all the greenery was growing rife,
The elephant would rise again to life.
This filled his nights and days with haunting fear
That dogged his footsteps like unswerving fate,
Till in perplexion he sought out a seer
And prayed of him this terror to abate.
There he was counselled to set out next morn
And seek again the waterhole alone,
Himself to see how foragers had torn
The carcass limb from limb, and bone from bone :
For only in this way, the ancient said,
Could he be certain it was surely dead.

THE FIGHT

So Undiya approached the pool to stare
Once more upon the place of his great fight ;
And as he mused there came a footstep light,
Reminding him of how the forest stirred
Behind him once before, and now he heard
The clicking claws of an approaching bear.
Swiftly he faced around and there he saw
A she-bear with a cub who stood too near
For him to flee. Then with a sudden roar
She sprang upon him while he drew his knife
And lunged to meet her, striking for her neck,
Battling her fighting paws to save his life,
And disengaging with a wrench so quick
That he was able to thrust home again
While from her open mouth burst roars of pain.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

THE FINISH

She bore him to the ground, and soon her breath
Beat hot upon his face while still he gripped
Her throat full strongly, though her talons ripped
Into the muscles of his heaving chest ;
And now he felt her rough and hairy breast
Crush close to his, but still from underneath
He stabbed again until his weapon broke,
And she sank down and lay quite still in death.
Then for a while he fainted : but awoke
To see the great grey monkeys in a ring
Silent and solemn, daring no advance,
But waiting, watching, thinking, wondering,
While his strong spirit ebbed away in trance ;
Till far and faint the bowstring seemed to call,
And he too passed away to join the All.

THE DRAMA

When man first views the woods with eyes that see,
With ears that hear, and with a heart to feel,
The pain and waste of life makes more appeal
To his too tender senses than is just.
He only sees that every creature must
Live on in fear and end in tragedy.
For all the things that live, men, beasts, and trees,
Form food in time for others, none are free
From fate that follows all in their degrees.
For all are preying, all are preyed upon,
And when the feeble fail they find no ruth.

THE KINGDOM OF AYANÂR

Yet few are ever ill, for they are gone
Before their illness hurts them, and the truth
Shows there can be no bitterness in sorrow
Where none can form clear vision of the morrow.

THE ALL

And what is life that we should fear its end ?
This something every being cherishes
Is but a dream, for nothing perishes.
The trees that die, again grow into trees ;
The hive lives on despite the deaths of bees ;
Death simply changes life, and oft may mend
That which has only failed from evil chance.
We are not separate as we pretend,
But parts of one great whole, and though we dance
A round or two alone, as plants or men,
We soon return and mingle with the throng.
Some live a century, and others ten,
But all the wise and foolish, weak and strong,
Reach in their time the day when they must fall
And melt into the ocean of the All.

PART III
TALES
FROM THE MAHAWANSA

THE MESSENGER

TISSA the King fell dead, but Abhaya
Cried in a voice above the battle's shout,
And bade them force his elephant to charge.
Then he who sat astride the mighty neck
Lifted his goad and drove it fiercely in,
Yelling aloud a shrill old fighting song
That lit some flame within the gallant beast.
Wild rang the trumpet of the elephant,
As like a living thunderbolt he drove
Right through the swarming legions of the foe,
Cleaving their squadrons with a crimson lane
Where writhing men lay screaming in the mud,
Straight through the lightning of the flashing spears,
Over the rampart of the clashing swords,
Reckless of all except to win a way,
Abhaya charged, and so came bleeding through,
And gained the shelter of the friendly woods.

There, in the sudden stillness of the trees,
They halted while the driver soothed his beast,
And plucked the arrows from his reeking side.
The woods were silent in the hush of noon,
And naught of life they saw save butterflies,
Dipping their dainty way along the rides,

THE MESSENGER

Or fluttering above some lovely flower
Less brilliant only than their jewelled wings.
From out the distance came a sullen roar
Where the last lees of battle ebbed and swung
Along the muddy margin of the lake.
But as they waited breathing in the wood,
The battle ended, and the sound died down.
Then Abhaya moved on, and passed away
To bear his heavy message to the Queen.

Late in the afternoon they reached the hills ;
And still the driver urged his weary beast
Along the winding road that climbed the slopes.
Swift as he might, the elephant moved on,
His silent footsteps printing in the dust
Great wrinkled circles spotted with his blood.
They left the miles behind, and far below
They left the pale blue haze upon the plain ;
And now they pierced a narrow cliff-bound gorge
Whose walls hung high above the toiling track,
Clouded with colour where the lichen crept,
And lined with white and scarlet where each ledge
Was fringed with narrow strips of jungle flowers ;
While hanging on their brow, like matted hair,
The forest crowned the cliffs with dusky green.

They turned at length an angle of the way ;
And high above them, piled among the rocks,
They saw the shining whiteness of the walls
That girt about the royal nunnery.

THE MESSENGER

Above the walls rose clustered finials
That crowned red roofs with graceful symmetry ;
And over those again, a golden spire,
Tapering upward like a living flame ;
And higher still there hung the mountain crags,
Slow sculpted by a thousand thousand rains
In wild fantastic pinnacles and towers.
And as Prince Abhaya looked up and saw
The jutting cliffs uprise against the sky,
It seemed as though the mountain slowly sloped
To fall upon him, bearing on its way
The buildings of the peaceful nunnery.
"Would that it might !" he thought. "That I might die
Before I give my message to the Queen."

He left the elephant beside a pool,
Fed by the sparkling water of a spring
That welled from underneath a little arch,
Where some fond hand had carved in days gone by :
*"O ! Carter, driving bulls along this way,
By my cool water rest a while and pray.
Drink, and be merciful to those that thirst ;
For you may be the last, and they the first,
When some new life recalls you from the soil.
Sleep, and be pitiful to those that toil."*
Abhaya washed away the dust and blood,
And drank, and turned to face the mountain-side,
Where, like a ribbon running up the cliff,
A narrow rough-hewn flight of grey stone steps
Led on and upward to the outer wall.

THE MESSENGER

And as he climbed he heard a silver bell
Ring slow and sweetly, while its mellow tone,
Calling the nunnery to evening prayer,
Re-echoed round the hollows of the hills.

Then, for a moment, at the outer gate,
Where carven dragons writhed and intertwined
Their scaly limbs in strange, tormented shapes,
Abhaya passed, and turned to look away.
Far, far below, the winding of the gorge
Cleft a black gulf of shadow through the hills ;
And out beyond its end there lay the plain,
Bathed in the glory of the afterglow
That flooded all the sky with blazing light,
Turquoise and ruby, amethyst and gold ;
While clouds like purple turrets in the west
Were rimmed with fiery parapets, that burned
And cast their glamour on the distant lake,
Changing its surface to a blood-red shield.
But still the gentle calling of the bell,
Seeming no louder now that it was near,
Rang on, and drew him slowly to his fate.
So Abhaya passed in to meet his Queen.

She saw the dread that smouldered in his eyes :
She read the message in his haggard face ;
But with her woman's power to thrust aside,
From out the inner harbour of her heart,
The tragedy she would not feel as yet,
She willed herself to wait another hour ;

THE MESSENGER

Knowing, yet disbelieving what she knew.
For, with a woman, will can govern mind,
While man can be convinced against his will ;
So she delayed, and called the King alive,
While deep within herself she knew him dead.
And while Prince Abhaya lay prone without,
In wordless prayer before the sacred tree
That whispered counsel from its restless leaves,
The Queen passed in to service with the nuns,
Bearing sweet-scented blossoms in her hand
To lay upon the altar of the Lord.
And clear among the voices of the nuns
He heard her chanting in the litany :

Buddhang saranang gachâri.

Buddha ! We put our trust in Thee !

Dhammam saranang gachâri.

Virtue ! We place our faith in thee !

Sanghang saranang gachâri.

O ! Church ! We build our hope on thee !

The Queen stayed in the stillness of her room,
And bade them send to her Prince Abhaya ;
Whom, when he came, she greeted graciously,
Bidding him sit and tell her all he knew.
So all reluctantly he told the tale :
How, through the starry watches of the night,
Their forces lay exhausted by the lake,
And saw the crescent of investing fires,
Like flaming eyes that watched to greet the dawn ;
While all the time the throbbing of the drums

THE MESSENGER

Heralded reinforcements hurrying
To swell the numbers of the waiting foe.
How, in the night, a small canoe was found
Hid in the tangled reed-bed by the shore ;
And how they urged the King to take to flight,
Leaving his followers to meet the foe.

“ And he refused ! ” she cried. “ Oh ! Am I glad
To know my Lord could die for such a deed ;
Or must I weep the more to know how vain
He reckoned life, how small he counted me
Beside the honour that he prized so high ? ”

“ Yes, he refused, ” said Abhaya. “ And then
We sat together on a little mound,
Watching the stars die out before the dawn ;
And there he laid on me the tragic charge
Of bearing you the story of the end.
He ordered me to hold myself in leash,
To save my elephant as best I could,
So that the moment when he met his death
Would find me fresh and ready to charge through
And win my way to bring you his last love.
All this he laid on me with many oaths,
Binding me by the love that he and I
Had cherished since as little baby friends
We played together in the sliding sand. ”

And then he told of how the flush of dawn
Saw the beginning of a hopeless fight ;
Till, when the sun stood high, the royal force

THE MESSENGER

Gave way before their multitude of foes.
And how the enemy, in arrogance,
Shouted that they would take the King alive.
And so he told her of the latter end.

“ Then, as a Prince of Lanka should, he died,
Not by the hand of any out-caste dog,
But at his own desire, and time, and place.

He sat as squarely on his elephant

As I sit firmly here before you now.

He drew his dagger from its jewelled sheath,

As I draw mine, that was a gift from him.

He plunged it in his throat——”

He spake no more,

But fell upon his face before the Queen,

His message flowing red around her feet.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

PERIOD.—About the year 511 A.D.

PLACE.—Lanka, now called Ceylon.

I

KING DHÂTUSENA, Lord of Lanka's Isle,
Stood on the sacred mountain by a priest,
An aged, shrivelled man in yellow robes,
Whose keen ascetic face and brilliant eyes
Showed him to be no ordinary monk
Living in fatness on a nation's needs,
But one whose thoughts had lured his soul away
Far from the turmoil of a scheming court.
Human ambition seemed a thing so vain
Compared with peace and freedom from desire,
That strife of men was as the strife of flies,
No less, no more, a sorrowful mistake.
Long meditation in a lonely cave
Had shaken off the shackles of the world,
And freed old Mâhânâma from the wheel,
Certain that Kârma's bonds were loosed at last.
Men called him Râhât, meaning one whose lives,
Lived in the form of beast or god or man,
Had been so selfless, so sincere and pure,
That all desire had now been purged right out

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Until rebirth no longer claimed his soul ;
So that when this life ended he would merge
One with the infinite for evermore.

II

Below their feet the stony mountain-side
Was carved in terraces, all red with roofs
Of monasteries high above the palms
That covered all the ground with patterned shapes
Of their light feathery leaves ; a pleasant space
Where monks could linger till the sun grew fierce.
But now the monks were perched in yellow groups
On the black rocks that roofed their ancient caves.
Gossiping, wondering why the old Râhât
Had come so far afield to meet the King.
And had the King looked down he would have seen
Yellow and black the rocks, red roofs, green trees,
Mingling their mellow colours in the sun.
But Dhâtusena never glanced below,
While Mâhânâma only watched the King.
And had the King looked up he would have seen,
As though the heavens themselves had burst in flower
Squadrons of small white clouds in even rank
Sailing like ships across the sunny blue
Sped by the breezes of the fresh monsoon,
Their flying shadows racing o'er the plain.
But the King's eyes were fixed, and only saw
His mighty city spread beside its lakes :
And Mâhânâma only saw his friend.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

III

Far as the eye could see spread out the plain,
Dotted with single forest-covered hills,
Like islands floating on a sea of green,
And speckled over all with pale blue lakes
Made by the piety of many kings.
While, in the centre of this sunny land,
That ancient city, Anurâdha's town,
Lay like a jewel upon Lanka's breast,
Its roofs all shining red, and blue, and gold.
Guarded by lakes, and bowered among palms,
The swelling domes of holy dâgabas,
Topped by their lofty golden pinnacles,
Towered in the sky above the gardens round.
No marvel that the sight held Dhâtusen
In meditation on the mountain top,
Where all was silent save for the rustling breeze
And the cicada's faint eternal buzz,
Noises so endless in monotony
As to remain unnoticed till they cease.

IV

The wisdom born of many thoughtful years
Warned Mâhânâma not to break the spell,
And still he waited for the King to speak.
But for a while the King stood still and gazed
With eyes that saw but little of the scene,
Deep eyes that saw the future all too clear :
Till a thought came that called him back to earth,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

And Mâhânâma saw that he would speak.
“ All this is mine,” he said. “ I set it free,
Driving the Cholan from the land he crushed,
Fighting him day by day and mile by mile.
First I flung back the forces he had sent
To pluck me from my refuge in the hills,
Where their great rampart bars the southern way.
I roused my people from their lethargy,
Taught them to fight again, and to believe
That spear for spear, sword upon sword, their arms
Were able to stand firm against a foe
Whose years of cruelty so cowed their hearts
That courage in their race was almost dead.
I roused a fallen people by the pride
I felt in them, and made them feel in me :
Took callow herd boys, wandering hunters, thieves,
Monks who'd abjured their vows, outlaws, and all
Who in our broken nation felt the glow
That taught them they were still old Lanka's sons.
I took them all and made them into men ;
And with this force I held my southern hills.
Then one great noble joined me, at the price
Of losing all his lands, and even his son,
Kept by the Cholan in the capital
As a fond hostage for his father's faith.
And, with his force to aid, I left my hills,
Harrying all the border of the plain,
Freeing the villages upon the slopes,
And gaining followers with every blow.
Many of them had never seen a sword

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Save in the hands of savage Cholan bands,
Who strode across the fields in search of wealth,
Where even poverty could hardly live.
Those who had once been free were now too old
To carry weapons or to break their chains
Welded by years of cruel servitude.
I took their children and I made them men.
This was the greatest of my victories,
This conquest of my own poor people's hearts ;
And the success that followed in its turn
Over the stubborn, hateful enemy
Followed as sure as grass will follow rain
When the long drought drinks in the glad monsoon.
I shared their dangers then, and they my joys
When triumph crowned me in that city there.
Now tell me, Mâhânâma, did I well ? ”

v

“ My king,” the priest replied, “ you had done well :
Up to the hour when you were crowned a king,
You had done mightily, and all your life
You have wrought mightily both good and ill.
For, though all strife and fury seem to me
Fertile of evil, worse than ignorance,
Almost as powerful as even lust
To lure the soul from following the light,
Yet in this case I say you did right well
To rid your country of a conqueror
Whose cruelty had left itself no bounds

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

But those imposed by human power to feel.
For he derided justice, hated peace,
And strove to crush religion in their hearts
As in men's bodies he had crushed their strength.
When, as a child, they placed you in my charge,
And told me that of all the Solar race
You were the only prince, the only hope
Still left to Lanka from her ancient kings,
I watched you from the first with this in view.
For even then I saw that many lives
Must yet be lived to loose you from the wheel.
I saw that Kârma bound your soul as yet
With bonds of strong, unquenchable desire.
When as an acolyte you swept my cell
I hardly thought you would become a monk ;
But in that quiet solitude of caves,
Like wells of coolness on the hottest day,
Where birds and insects and the rustling palms
Made our sole music from the outer world,
Your heart found peace. Then for a few short years
You sought true wisdom, and attained the stage
Of first enlightenment, which Buddha taught
Must come to those who seek to know the truth,
The simple stage of willingness to know.
And in that will to know there sleeps a seed,
Not dead, but waiting for its day to break.
So for a little while you took the vows :
But in the ripeness of the fruit of time
There came a man who clamoured at our gate,
Crying, ' Come out you Prince, if Prince you be,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Come out and see the wickednesses wrought
By foreign masters of this land of yours.'
You went straight out, and in the sunlight met
The first real horror you had ever seen ;
For the poor man who cried had lost his eyes,
Whose bloody hollows fixed you as with sight,
And in his arms he carried a dead child.
Straightway you put away from you your vows,
And crying you'd revenge this man or die,
You left the cave and entered it no more."

VI

Said Dhâtusen, " Those eyes can haunt me yet.
Not even the poor wretches I have seen
Impaled and writhing to climb up the stake
Had power to move me as those red blind holes
That looked, and looked, and looked, and never saw ;
While all the time the voice was crying, ' Prince,
Come out and rule your people if you can.'
I went and followed that poor dreadful man,
Who trod the path as though he still could see,
Down to a village nestling in its palms,
Where all the children ran away in fear,
The men all cringed to see a stranger come,
And all the women hid, for fear of shame :
Till the poor horror who had led me there
Cried to them all to come and greet their prince.
So one by one they crept out and believed
That I had come to rule the land at last.
Then I first tasted the wild joys that stir

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

The man whom men will follow from the first,
Follow, and give their lives, and ask no hope
Or yet reward, except to follow him.
For seven of them joined me then and there,
With whom I sought the tyrant of their lands,
And found him armed, and took his sword away,
And slew him with my own unpractised hand."

VII

Then, for a while, the King was lost in thought :
And, for a time, he spoke not any more,
But gazed with vacant eyes across the plain :
While deep within himself that inner thing,
That thing which asks us questions, and demands
Immediate answers, giving none itself,
But only asking, clamouring for reply ;
That thing, which is so small that it lies hid
In the most secret self we can unroll,
Pursued his heart with urgent questioning ;
While still from scene to scene his mind fled on,
Borne on the wings of flying memory,
Until the present hour was reached once more.
Then turning to the priest he spoke again :
" Of all my friends I think you are the last,
As, in the days gone by, you were the first."
Then said the priest, " I am indeed your friend,
Seeing your faults and virtues equally,
Trying to grasp and know you as a whole,
A living man, shaped by the hand of fate.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

For this is in the essence of a friend
That he can see and yet appreciate ;
Not judging where he cannot understand,
But waiting, hoping, knowing time will show
How to forgive the sin of him he loves.
Bound as a child of passion by past lives,
Lived before ignorance had been dispelled,
Violent energy has been your rule.
For when by force of character and arms
You drove the Cholan out and took his place,
Those nobles who to save their lands and lives
Had sworn allegiance to the foreign lord
Were next the victims of your violence.
From their high places close below the throne
You cast them headlong down and made them slaves :
Men once so proud they would not use their hands
Except to grasp the jewelled hilts of swords,
You bound as servants to their former serfs.
They might have borne this awful chastisement
In silent knowledge of the purity
Of countless generations running back
With blood unsullied into mythic times.
But you broke down their very pride of caste,
And gave their daughters to the sweeper's sons.”
The King exclaimed, “ They well deserved it all ! ”
But Mâhânâma said, “ We cannot tell
What they deserved, for they were tempted much.
Your punishment was evil and unjust,
And sowed the seeds of mortal enmity
That you must reap and suffer in the end.”

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

VIII

Then Dhâtusena struggled with himself :
For ever since he had been called a king
None had rebuked him, and no man had dared
To tell him to his face that he was wrong.
Tyrannous power so girded him about
That honest truth had seldom reached his ear :
But in his heart he knew the priest was true.
Slowly and with proud reticence he spoke :
“ Confession comes not easily to kings.
It is not simple to allow a fault
Where none can punish and where none dare blame ;
And I have never justified myself
To any man in all my life before :
Reluctantly my lips betray my heart :
So, when I tell you frankly I was wrong,
I tell you what no other man shall hear.
That is enough, and all that I can say.”

IX

“ Evil and good,” said Mâhânâma then,
“ Balance unequally in most men’s lives.
Those who sin fearfully do little good,
For lack of courage limits all their deeds,
And in the end they are no better men
Than those whose energy for good or ill
Urges their lives along a wider path.
After the glamour of the fight was gone
You set your face before a nobler goal ;

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

And among all the princes who have ruled
Old Lanka since the first great conqueror
Few equalled you, and hardly one excelled
Your just administration of your charge.
Look at those lakes that brighten all the plain,
Each with a grove of palms, and fair green fields
Won from the forest and preserved from drought !
Some of the very greatest of them all
Found their conception in your fertile brain.
Their execution followed from your hand,
And all the toiling multitude you freed
Were set to labour for their country's good.
Look at the monasteries that crowd this hill !
Look where the temple gardens flaunt their flowers,
Girding the city with a fragrant belt !
Look at the trees you planted. See the roads
That open up the valleys in the hills !
Look in the faces of the villagers !
Are those the faces that first met your eyes
When you flung off the robes and left your cell ?
These, and the teeming children in the streets,
These are your witness that your rule is wise."

x

"Old Mâhânâma," said King Dhâtusen,
"Do you believe I brought you here so far
From your quiet monastery by the lake
To talk of days gone by and former deeds,
Just to extract from you some words of praise ?
Something has stirred my heart these last few days.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

I am more puzzled than my tongue can tell,
And would have sought your spiritual help ;
But now I see I knew my mind too ill ;
My spirit finds itself too hard to bend.
You have my leave to go."

XI

" One word before I leave you, Dhâtusen :
Perhaps you would have sought my help in vain ;
For when deep trouble struggles in a man
His only help lies in his own true self.
Little has reached my ears to tell me why
You wished to meet me in this holy place,
For rumours seldom pierce my solitude ;
But in your eyes I read a wealth of pain.
Will you go on unbending to the end ?
For now I think the end not far away.
So I will go, but will not say farewell,
For something warns me we shall meet once more
By Kalâwewa's wide and shining waves,
Where, as a child, you lived with me in peace."
So Mâhânâma parted from the King,
And moving through the yellow crowd of monks,
Who silently made way for him, he passed
Down the broad flight of steps below the caves
Past the great alms-hall, down into the plain,
Where his attendants waited his return.
And on the second day he reached the lake,
Wide Kalâwewa built by Dhâtusen.
All blue and clear the sunny waters shone,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Mile upon mile of little rocking waves,
A sight to make a man burst into song ;
But Mâhânâma's heart was heavy still.
They followed the wide path along the bund
Until the monastery roofs were seen,
Half hidden in a grove of graceful palms,
With one white dâgaba above them all,
Its gilded finial twinkling in the sun.
And there old Mâhânâma sat in peace,
Soothed by the whispering of the gentle breeze
That stirred the moving fingers of the fronds,
Weaving a shimmering shadow on the sand.
While far before him waved the green young fields,
Touched by the flying footsteps of the wind.

XII

In the great garden where the palace stood
It was the midday hour of peace and rest :
But for the buzzing of the questing bees
And the cicada's never-ending song,
No sound was heard in that secluded place.
Even the lotus blossoms in the pool
Closed their white chalices and dreamed away
Some of the few short hours they had to live.
The sunlight blazed so bright upon the lawns
That to the dazzled eye the deeper shades
Seemed yawning corridors as dark as caves,
And sandy paths took patterns of the trees
In leafy shadow fretted black on gold.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

The palace slept in silence for the time,
Its courtyards all deserted but for guards
Drowsily leaning back against the walls.
This was the hour of the triumphant sun.
The palace seemed the very home of peace,
When suddenly the silver trumpets rang ;
The guards all sprang to arms, and serving men
Came running out from doors on every hand,
While a great elephant came rolling in,
Bearing upon his back King Dhâtusen.
The King passed in, the elephant swung out,
Once more the sentries leaned against the walls,
And for another hour or two of heat
Again the palace seemed the home of peace.

XIII

But shady halls within the women's wing
Were full of cautious secret whispering.
Sedition seethed within those hidden rooms ;
And half the household plotted on one side,
Half on the other, while the rival queens
Breathed enmity, like rival queens of bees,
But masked it with a grace and courtesy
Not found in hives that are not human built.
Queens and their rivals, royal favourites,
Fought fiercely with smooth weapons for a place
In the bright circle nearest to the King.
Sudden disgrace and still more sudden death
Were not uncommon in that endless war,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

And lovely faces, blooming like the flowers,
Had their short hour, were plucked, and thrown away.
But two among them now for many years
Held the chief places in high rivalry ;
For each had borne a son to Dhâтусen,
Of whom but one could count on being king.
So Moggallâna and young Kâsyapa
Lived from their childhood in two rival camps.
And now this rivalry had reached a height
That threatened to divide the court in two.
The subtle intrigues of the mother queens
Spread from the palace over all the land
And split the nation into separate clans.
It grew more dangerous with every day
That saw the two young princes growing up,
For every noble knew the time would come
When all who wielded power would have to choose
Which way to turn it and which side to take.
Great Anurâdhapura and the North
Favoured Prince Kâsyapa and watched the time
When, through his children, they could strike the King.
The nobles of Ruhuna and the South
Held for themselves, and waited for the war.
Beyond the rampart of the mountain range,
Clothed in dark forest, held by outlawed men,
And pierced by narrow, winding, rocky paths,
Ruhuna's separate principedom lay secure.
Unconquered by the Cholan, it had paid
Reluctant tribute to King Dhâтусen,
Owning allegiance only when the King

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Was strong enough to claim it as a right ;
And caring little which young prince prevailed,
Stood armed and ready to fling off the yoke.

XIV

Save Mâhânâma and Lilâvati,
The King's fair daughter, few in all the land
Owed Dhâtusena real unselfish love ;
For he himself loved seldom. In the throng
Of courtiers in the shadow of the throne
There was not one to whom he would unbend ;
His pride was higher than the pride of kings ;
For one who knew him wise ten judged him cold ;
Men who had fought with fury by his hand
Had been repelled and frozen by his pride ;
And those who knew a hero in his youth
Found him a rock of granite in his age.
The early cruelties that dimmed his fame
Had left a seed of lasting bitterness
That only waited chance to germinate.
Even the building of the mighty lakes
Made many people grumble at the toil ;
For peasants have small power to look ahead.
So the whole country lingered in suspense,
And Lanka waited for the storm to break,
While the King's pride refused to let him bend.

XV

After the triumph of the Cholan war,
To guard his new domains the King had kept

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

A standing army in the capital,
And for some years had been their actual chief.
But later he entrusted the command
To Prince Migâra, being well content
To leave the army to his loyalty.
For to Migâra he had given as wife
His favourite daughter, fair Lilâvati,
A damsel lovely as a lotus bud,
And graceful as a young areca palm,
Sweet as the champak in the evening breeze,
And more melodious than the oriole,
Sung by the poets of her father's court
As rival of the goddess Lakshimi.
She was the being Dhâtusena loved
With all the pent-up ardour of a heart
That loved with fury where it loved at all.
Hard as a crystal to his fellow-men,
To her he was a father and a friend.
Migâra was a secret, stubborn man,
A silent reservoir of waiting force,
More feared than loved, but instantly obeyed.
And gradually he had grown in power,
Till now he held the balance in his hand.

XVI

When the sun sloped behind the higher palms,
Shining more mildly through their quivering leaves,
It was the custom of King Dhâtusen
To leave the palace, almost by himself,
And watch the sunset from a summer-house

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Built on the margin of the Baya lake.

Often he called to him Lilâvati,

And, sitting by her, told of other days,

Nearly a thousand years before their time,

When Baya had been built by some old king.

But on this evening she had failed to come,

And he was followed by Prince Kâsyapa,

His handsome, clever, rather crafty son.

While they sat there and watched the glowing sky,

Rosily mirrored in the sleeping lake,

The King talked easily with Kâsyapa,

More like his father and less like his lord.

For an unusual gentleness of heart

Moved him that day ; while, half unconsciously,

Some memory eluded all attempt

To be lured out and led into the light.

And, though he knew it not, that " will to know,"

Which Mâhânâma spoke of as a seed,

Had started to thrust out a growing bud.

XVII

Beside the lake a pillar had been set,

Bearing an edict of some former king

Carved in deep ancient letters on its face.

And Dhâtusena told his son to try

To read the old inscription if he could.

And Kâsyapa read it easily,

Winning some kindly praise from Dhâtusen,

Who said, " Since Tissa reigned in olden time

Our kings have carved their wisdom deep in stone,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

So that, as one king said, it may remain
Long as the sun and moon shall yet endure,
Long as the singing birds shall build their nests,
Not like a line on running water drawn.

So every prince should learn to read this script,
For much is hidden in these carven stones
Worthy of recollection by a prince.

See what is written here, it seems to tell
Of gentler days than those we live in now ;
For here this king of old extends goodwill
Even to all the fishes in this lake,
Decreeing they forever shall be free
From fear of being preyed upon by man ;
And to this very day the edict stands.”

“ Look,” said the Prince, and pointed to the lake
Where fish were leaping in a startled spray
Before the rush of hunting crocodiles :

“ Nature is greater than the power of kings,
And death by violence is nature’s rule.”

Then, as they looked, a kite that winged his way
Over the shining surface of the lake
Suddenly stooped and caught a leaping fish
In his sharp talons, and flew off with him.

And Kâsyapa smiled and said again,

“ Death strikes with very sudden swiftness still
Despite the edict of that ancient king.”

But Dhâtusena sat and mused a while
Till the bright colours in the lake and sky
Paled rapidly and faded into grey,
And suddenly it seemed the day was dead.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

The bats flew out from hollows in the trees,
Circling and squeaking as they hunted flies,
The night-jars gurgled as they looked for moths,
And high up in the darkness overhead
A flight of bitterns uttered solemn cries.
" Yet that old king was right," said Dhâtusen,
" For these have only hunger as their guide,
And we the words of the Enlightened One
Teaching that life is sacred in all forms,
Whether they run, or creep, or swim, or fly ;
For all are equally upon the wheel.
Now call for torches, for the night grows dark."
And while they waited for the lights to come,
Kâsyapa marvelled at his father's mood.

XVIII

While torches shed a flaming, smoky glare
Into the shadows of the summer-house,
Two women, hurrying along the bank,
Suddenly broke the circle of the light
And flung themselves at Dhâtusena's feet.
" Justice ! " they cried. " The justice of the King !
A great injustice has been done your house ! "
Then one stood up and showed the lovely face
Of fair Lilâvati all streaked with tears.
" Justice ! " she cried. " Your daughter has been
wronged,
Vilely accused, blamed, and condemned, and struck !
Am I the daughter of a line of kings
Just to be beaten like a thieving maid ?

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Look ! ” and she threw a cloth upon the floor :
“ Look at my blood that stains that linen cloth ! ”

So suddenly they came, so swift she broke
Into the meditation of the King,
Shattering the silence with a whirl of words,
That for a moment he could find no speech,
But stared bewildered ; while Prince Kâsyapa
Picked up the cloth and saw the blood was wet.
Then, flaming into sudden, savage rage,
He cried, “ Whoever did this thing shall die !
Peace, daughter, think of him already dead.”
And all the time the woman on the floor
Cried out and filled the place with frantic noise,
Till Kâsyapa touched her on the head,
Saying, “ Get up and stop your clamouring.”
So she abated.

Then said the King to his daughter, “ Tell his name,
That he may die before your blood has dried.”
But she stood motionless and could not tell :
So her attendant answered in her stead,
“ Migâra did it ! ”

Then Dhâtusena shouted in his rage,
His body trembling and his eyes ablaze :
“ Go, Kâsyapa ! Go and seize this man !
Bring him alive, for I desire his life
To spill it drop by drop before my eyes.
The honour of the daughter of a king
Should be more precious than a thousand lives.
She calls for justice, she shall have revenge.”
Kâsyapa waited for no other word,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

But took his sword and hastened on his way,
While the King turned toward the palace gates.
And on the way there, incoherently,
They told him how Migâra had been led,
By scandal poured into his jealous ear,
To judge unjustly, hearing no excuse,
Believing all his mother's evil tales,
Refusing to believe Lilâvati.

XIX

In the great audience hall, upon his throne,
The King awaited Kâsyapa's return,
His wrath less violent but more profound.
So terrible and bitter was his face
That people shuddered when they looked at him,
And some indeed thought he had gone stark mad.
Perhaps he had, for this tremendous blow,
This insult to the only thing he loved,
Had struck him at a moment when his heart
Shed for a moment its protecting pride.
Without the door, the executioners
Stood in grim order, showing in their eyes
The horrid cunning of their dreadful trade ;
And in the courtyard, a great elephant,
Trained to tear evil-doers limb from limb,
Swayed his enormous body to and fro.
Within the hall a deadly silence reigned,
For those who waited scarcely dared to breathe,
Lest they should draw the glare of those fell eyes.
At last a step approached the open door,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Less stealthy and obsequious than the rest,
And whispering voices said, "They come ! they come !"
Then Kâsyapa walked straight into the hall,
Bowed low, and waited for the King to speak.
"Where is the traitor ?" asked a rasping voice.
"Sir ! he had fled before I came," he said.
"Fetch me Migâra's mother," said the King,
Turning to one who stood behind the throne.
And once again a silent tension reigned.

XX

When she had poured into her mother's ear
The tragic story of Migâra's rage,
Lilâvati grew calmer, and her wrath
Slowly gave way before a milder mood ;
For she was really generous at heart,
And seldom nursed a quarrel for an hour.
All in the palace knew that Dhâtusen,
Under the hardness of his granite front,
Felt for Lilâvati a mighty love ;
And both her mother and Lilâvati
Wished the unhappy words could be unsaid.
But the King's anger was so terrible
They did not dare to speak to him again :
For deeds, like ripples in a troubled pool,
Must run their course and cannot be recalled.

XXI

Another chamber in the women's wing
Was witness of a very different scene,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Where Kâsyapa's mother met her son
After he told his message to the King.
"The word I took him was untrue," said he ;
"I warned Migâra and advised his flight.
Swift was my hand to seize the flying chance ;
For this man's influence will serve me well
In the decisive days that loom ahead.
The time is ripe for action. I must go.
When I return, if I am not a corpse,
I'll be a king."

XXII

It would be happier far to leave untold
The dreadful tale of Dhâtusena's rage.
But history has told it nakedly ;
And to pursue this story to its end
The springs must be revealed that fed the source
Of great events that followed in their train.
Another reason for less reticence
Is that to show these times in all their truth
Their horrors and their beauties must be drawn
All intermingled as they were in life.
For this old nation, in its lovely isle,
Under the glamour, and magnificence,
And love of art, and mild philosophy,
Hid in its bosom a most savage soul
That ever and again flamed fiercely forth
And marred the mirror of a golden age.
Let it suffice to say that Dhâtusen,
Who was the very pattern of his day,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Ordered Migâra's mother to be burnt.
But while she waited for this awful death,
A hand pressed hers, and passed her a small bag
Containing opium, while a whispering voice
Said, "This is a gift from sad Lilâvati."
So the red glow that horrified the night,
Claiming her body whence the soul had fled,
Paid but the honour of a funeral pyre.

XXIII

All through the darkness of that fevered night
The soldiers who kept watch along the wall
Heard the great city stirring in its sleep ;
And a low whispered message to the troops
Followed the ringing watchword of the guard.
"Move out at dawn. The orders are to wait
Migâra's coming at Pankuliya,
Where, in the fields beside the river bank,
He gathers force."
All through the night the sentries on the wall
Heard stealthy footsteps passing through the gates,
Where men in twos, or threes, or little groups,
Whispered the watchword and went swiftly forth ;
While spear points and the eager eyes of men
Shone in the glittering light of countless stars.
And all around the wall from hour to hour
There circled floating fragments of the news :
"The army as a whole declares for us."
"What of the palace guards ?"
"They have come over with Prince Kâsyapa."

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

“ Has he too left the King ? ”

“ He passed an hour ago. There are none left
Except Prince Moggallâna, and a few
Kept in the palace to prevent escape.
They say the King is sleeping in his room,
All unsuspecting of the breaking storm.”

XXIV

When the pale yellow of the eastern sky
Awaked the morning chorus of the birds,
Ringing the palace round with melody,
Prince Moggallâna burst into the dreams
That lulled the sleeping conscience of the King.

“ Migâra with a force is on the way
To seize the throne for Kâsyapa ! ” he cried.

“ The army has gone over, and the guards
Who still patrol the palace only wait
Their orders from the rebels.” Dhâtsen,
Waked from his slumbers over suddenly,
Said, “ Has Migâra come, and Kâsyapa ?
I waited for them long enough last night.”

So the Prince told him all the tale again
Of Kâsyapa's rebellion, and of how
The livelong night the city poured out men.

“ There is one gate,” he said, “ not guarded yet
By enemies, but faithful still to me.

Come, father, let us fly at once and gain
The safety of the hills.”

But Dhâtsena said, “ I am the King :
Shall I be driven by a rebel son

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

To leave the throne where I have sat so long ?
Nothing that you can urge shall make me move.
But you must go. Gather your power with speed.
I shall abide what fate may have to give.”
So Moggallâna fled into the North,
Where the great forest offered sanctuary ;
But failing even there to find support,
Took ship and sailed across the narrow strait
Dividing Lanka from the neighbouring land,
Where he took counsel of the Pândiya king,
And found a safe retreat in Madura.

XXV

Deep in the palace garden, in the shade,
Where a great tree, with crimson blossoms crowned,
Shed its bright flowers and carpeted the lawn,
There was a little arbour built of stone :
Shrubberies shut it in on every side,
And sunshine flecked the ground with light and shade.
Here Dhâtusena waited for the end ;
Caring nor fearing little for his life ;
Knowing the days were short he had to live ;
But musing over Mâhânâma's words,
When, on the mountain, he had prophesied
That they would meet once more beside the waves
Of Kalâwewa sparkling in the sun.
For deep within his heart there lay the hope
Of finding peace of mind before the last.
So, for a while, he dreamed of future lives
Lived purely, following the single aim

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Of seeking freedom from the flying wheel.
And while he sat alone there came a voice,
Carolling lightly in the garden near,
And slowly drawing nearer to his side :
A song that waked old memories of days
When soldiers chanted it in praise of him.
So Dhâtusena listened while the voice
Sang clearly on.

XXVI

Down from the peaks that touch the sky,
Down from the mountain valley,
Down from the hills where the eagles fly,
We made a sudden sally.
Away with fear, for the Prince is here !
We'll scatter the foe if we once get near !

Over the plains that spread below,
Over the thorny bushes,
Over the fields where the wild flowers grow,
We moved in rapid rushes.
The Cholans fly, for the Prince is nigh :
We'll follow him forward till we die !

Round the city there stand great walls,
Round the walls are trenches ;
Round the ramp the trumpet calls,
Death to him that blenches !
Quicken the pace, for the Prince's face
Brightens with joy as we onward race.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Up the slope where the javelins sing !
Up the stream of arrows !
Up the wall where the helmets ring,
And room for fighting narrows !
Now rally all, to the Prince's call,
And hurl the Cholan off the wall !

Into the street where the Cholans fly !
Into the golden city !
Into the crush where foemen die,
And fury feels no pity !
Our voices ring, and the song we sing
Hails the Prince as our country's king.

XXVII

The branches parted, and a man came out,
And lowly bowed himself before the King :
He was a bushy man, all clothed in hair
That throve as thickly on his naked chest
As on his head. " Who are you ? " said the King.
" Why do you sing that song I have not heard
For half a lifetime ? " And the man replied,
" My Lord the King, I am the honest carter.
I served Your Majesty a soldier, years ago,
And now I come to serve you once again.
That's why I sing that song."
" Can you be ignorant," said Dhâtusen,
" Of all the happenings of yesterday ?
Or do you bear me some old grudging hate,
Nursed since those moving days of which you sing,

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And come to jeer my fall ? ”

“ I am the honest carter,” said the man ;

“ That is the name men call me by in town ;

And having earned it, I live up to it.

I never yet have stole or lost a load

Entrusted me, nor overcharged one cent,

Nor ever turned my back upon a friend.”

“ Friend ! ” said the King, “ you have too rare a heart

To risk it here. Go while you yet have time ;

And carry with you as your recompense

The heartfelt gratitude of Dhâtusen.”

But the man stayed, and said, “ I beg your leave

To stay a little while, for who can tell

When you may find some use to put me to ? ”

Then said the King, “ Sing me another song :

For you have got a voice that takes me back

Far from the trouble of the present day.”

“ I know a mort of songs,” the man replied :

“ For travelling alone along the roads,

And eating in a hundred different inns,

Songs come to me by nature, day by day,

As easily as fortune comes to kings.

I cheer my bulls along their patient way

By singing songs of golden fields of corn,

And cheer myself by singing of fair maids,

While, at the halting stage, I cheer them all

By singing choruses for all to join.

So if Your Majesty will condescend

To tell me what was passing in your mind,

Why, then I'll sing a song about it now.”

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Then the King smiled and said, " My thoughts had
flown

Far from the dangers that encircled me,
And I was lost in wonder at the lives
Of those who live for purity alone."

" That means no monks," replied the hairy man ;
" For monks love purity as I love them.

Yet some there are, and one I used to know,
Who lived, a hermit, in a lonely cave,
For years and years, for no one knows how long,
He was the highest man I ever knew.

Even the beasts that wandered in the woods
Knew that old man, and loved him as a friend.

But one dark day a leopard struck him dead.
I hunted down that beast, and made this song
That now I sing to you."

XXVIII

Laughing wave. Laughing wave.
A hermit lives in the forest cave.
Calm and cool. Calm and cool.
The lotus lies on the forest pool.

Sweet and clear. Sweet and clear.
The birds sing low in the forest near.
Light and shade. Light and shade.
The deer peep out of the forest glade.

Rustling trees. Rustling trees.
Whisper the tale of the forest breeze.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Steep and strong. Steep and strong.
The hills re-echo the forest song.

Leaf and flower. Leaf and flower,
The orchids bloom in the forest bower.
Swift and grim. Swift and grim.
The leopard leaps from the forest dim.

Silver bell. Silver bell.
The pilgrims come to the hermit's cell.
Sounding knell. Sounding knell.
Bury him deep in the forest dell.

XXIX

While the last note that closed the song still rang,
They heard the feet and voices of some men
Coming toward them. And the clash of steel
Told they were armed.
"Hide in the bushes! Quick!" said Dhâtusen.
"You will be put to death if found with me."
So he obeyed and left the King alone.
Then a loud voice cried out, "The King has gone!
The servants say he left soon after dawn,
And has not since been seen. In some disguise
He must have passed the walls and fled away."
Another voice replied with the command,
"Search all the grounds! He may be hiding here."
Feet were heard scurrying the fallen leaves,
And, of a sudden, a tall bearded man
Thrust through the bushes and beheld the King

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Seated in quiet dignity alone.
Startled to find what he so eager sought,
For a full moment he was left amazed,
Only his face in sight, all framed by leaves.
Then softly he withdrew, and passed the word
To others, till it reached Migâra's ear :
And led by him they all came on and stood
Silently looking at their enemy.

XXX

The crimson blossoms strewn upon the lawn
Were bruised by footsteps falling on the grass,
Letting the fragrance prisoned in their cups
Fill all the air with wafts of memory,
As scents alone have subtle power to do.
And there they stood in awe before the King.
For he so long had been their dream of power
That even now they hardly could believe
His power had gone.
Crowned with an aspect so serene and calm,
So still, so free from any sign of fear,
He seemed the emblem of high majesty ;
A royal soul in god-like form of man.
And none, not ev'n Migâra, dared to break
The silence of the King.
Thus Dhâtusena was the first to speak.
Ignoring all the rest, with regal right,
He spoke to one who hid behind the group :
" Kâsyapa, are you seeking me, my son ? "
But Kâsyapa could not meet his eyes ;

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

And muttering, " Bring him to the audience hall,"
He turned and left that silent scented lawn.
The spell was broken, and Migâra's voice
Cried, " By my mother's ashes, he shall die ! "

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XXXI

In all the jewelled splendour of a King
Kâsyapa sat upon his father's throne :
Upon his head he wore his father's crown ;
While Dhâtusen stood in a space alone,
Seeming half conscious of the people there.
Foremost of all the nobles in the room,
Migâra passionately claimed revenge ;
While the new king appeared to judge his words,
And when he finished, turned to Dhâtusen
To hear his answer.
But the old king declined to meet a charge
Brought by a subject.
" If I am king, I reign ; if not, I die.
All trial of a king is mockery ;
And trial of a man who has been king
Is more an insult than an act of grace.
Waste no more time on idle forms of law,
But make an end."
Migâra straightway would have slain him then,
Had not a courtier asked for leave to speak.
Bowing to Kâsyapa he said, " My Lord,
Before you rid your throne of rivalry
Would it not be as well to ascertain

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Where the vast treasures known to have been saved
Have been deposited ? ”

So once again King Dhâtusena's fate
Hung for a time in doubt. And still he thought
Of Mâhânâma's words upon the hill ;
Until an overpowering desire
Possessed his soul to see the priest once more :
So that when Kâsyapa came alone,
Offering to barter him his life for gold,
He promised him to show the treasure stored
At Kalâwewa.

XXXII

Breaking his slumber when the morning mist
Steamed from the surface of the sleeping lake,
An escort took the royal prisoner,
Condemned to travel in a country cart,
To Kalâwewa, where his treasure lay.
Through broad green fields of budding rice they passed
By an old temple fashioned among rocks,
Re-echoing the mellow sound of bells,
Where a great monastery had grown and grown,
Until it swallowed all the rocks and caves.
Then, across fields, mile upon mile of green,
Where sleepy buffaloes stood watching them,
With milk-white egrets perched upon their backs.
Something there is within the heart of man
That gladdens at the happy harmony
Of simple birds and beasts and boundless fields :
And even captives feel their hearts rejoice
Before the waving acres of young corn.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

The fields moved by them, and the winding road
Pierced through a world of intertangled boughs
Before King Dhâtusen began to feel
More than a passing thought for other men.
Then he began to hear the soldiers' talk,
And noticed that the carter on the pole
Had hairy arms, though still he wore a shawl
Muffling his head and hiding half his face.
One of the soldiers called upon the man
To sing a song to wile away the time ;
And turning round, the man asked Dhâtusen
For his permission, saying, with a smile,
" Your Majesty has heard me sing before."
And having taken leave, the man inquired
What kind of song the men would have him sing.
" Sing of a lovely virgin," said the first.
" No, sing a drinking song," the second said.
Another, " Sing a song of crocodiles,
For our Migâra lies like one of those,
Silent and watchful till he gets his grip."
" Crocodiles be it," said the hairy man.
" One song I sing for you, and if again,
'Twill be to sing a song to please the King.
This talk of crocodiles may scare the bulls."

XXXIII

On the mirror of the pool
Lotus lilies lay ;
And the water looked so cool,
In the drought of day,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

That a deer ventured near,
Treading tremulous with fear.

Ringling ripples on the pool
Lapped along the brink ;
O, you pretty, dappled fool,
Look before you drink !
When in doubt, go without,
Lilies hide a cruel snout.

Grey old heron spiking frogs,
With a practised guile,
Warn him that those sunken logs
Are a crocodile.
But the bird never stirred,
And no warning cry was heard.

Then a sudden, snapping rush
Woke the startled pool ;
And an agonizing crush
Dragged the thirsty fool
To the gloom of his tomb,
While the heron cleaned a plume.

XXXIV

The soldiers praised him, but the singer said,
“ That was a rough song fit for such as you,
But I prefer the gentle ones myself.”
“ You have a gift,” the leading soldier said ;
“ To hear you sing gives pleasure to a man.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Who taught you how to make such songs as these ? ”
“ My eyes and ears have taught me, and the birds
That sing each morning to the rising sun.
But once I had a lesson from a man
Who was a poet, and who drove a trade
Of writing rhymes for wealthy folk in town.
He hired my cart to go and see his aunt
Out in the country, and revealed his art.
‘ Mine is a melancholy muse,’ said he ;
‘ The less my liver works, the more my pen ;
And while I get four hearty meals a day,
And never walk abroad, but stew at home,
I can spout verses as a cloud spouts rain.
So meals breed poetry and rhymes breed meals.
But now the jolting of this cursed cart
Will ruin my production for a month,
And I shall have no cash to pay your hire.’
So, as he stuck to that, I turned him out,
And never met that kind of fool again.”

XXXV

With song and story all the morning fled,
While with it fled the gloom of Dhâtusen
Before the honest carter’s gift of cheer.
Never, he thought, in all his life before
Had he encountered such a happy man.
And then he realized the lonely path
That he had followed, even as a child,
And ever since, up to the present time.
For men had been to him as instruments,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Used, or discarded, as his judgment urged.
But now he seemed to know them suddenly
As human beings, vital as himself.
Ever since childhood he had grown to think
Of kings and princes as a race apart ;
As different from ordinary men
As from the buffaloes that tread the grain.
But now he saw them all with clearer view,
And felt a sudden glow of happiness
To feel he too was of the human race.
The sun grew hotter as the morning wore :
In all the wilderness the birds were mute.
Like pools of darkness in the road ahead
Lay welcome shadows under giant trees ;
Marking the chosen halting-place for noon.
And presently the bulls were taken out ;
The camp-fires flickered, and the pots of rice
Cheerily bubbled on their hearth of stones.
The officer commanding sat apart,
Leaving the King in freedom to look on
With new enjoyment of a rustic scene,
Till all was ready for the midday meal.
Then the good carter brought a share of his,
Served on a broad green leaf he freshly picked,
And waited while the King was satisfied.
Then all was silent, while the mighty sun
Compassed his brazen journey through the sky ;
Until the birds again began to chirp,
While troops of monkeys moved among the trees,
Following airy tracks along the boughs

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

That interlaced across the jungle road.
All through the night the cart moved slowly on,
The soldiers treading softly in the dust,
The carter singing gently to himself.

XXXVI

They left the forest as the morning sun
Was lighting all the surface of the lake,
Spangled with lilies as the sky with stars ;
While flocks of whistling teal went circling round
In clouds that changed their colours with their course.
And from the reed-beds and the lily-leaves
There rose the babbling talk of water-birds,
An incoherent medley of quaint sounds.
Crocodiles lay in scores along the bank,
Their yellow yawning mouths like open traps,
Scurrying off in swift ungainly flight
Soon as the soldiers' voices reached their ears.
In all the shallow bays that fringed the lake
Gaunt trees stood in the water, ashy white,
The ghosts of forests swallowed by the lake ;
Their naked branches bleached by the fervid sun,
All crowded now by strings of cormorants
Holding their jetty wings outspread to dry :
While high above them, in the dome of heaven,
A white-tailed osprey, sailing in the blue,
Cried to its mate a clear melodious call.
Great gladness filled the heart of Dhâtusen ;
For, looking back across the space of years,
He could remember all this shining lake

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

A gloomy valley, dark with forest trees :
And his had been the brain to cause the change !
The road they travelled mounted up the bund
That bound the lake within its valley bed ;
Strung like a cord across from horn to horn,
Joining the little hills on either side.
And far below them spread the sunny fields,
In endless miles of rippling waves of green,
Shot with their channels as with silver threads ;
All from wide Kalâwewa's bounty fed,
Where foaming water leaped from the open sluice.
These too, thought Dhâtusena, are my work :
This is the greatest thing that I have done."

XXXVII

Then, of a sudden, something seemed to break,
Flooding the world with a wild symphony
Of glorious swelling music, far and near ;
While a sweet fragrance filled the open air,
Like that exhaled from all the grateful earth
When the first shower soaks through sunbaked soil.
And light was everywhere, bright blinding light ;
Not blazing from some brilliant centre point,
But all diffused, less like the light of day
Than like a splendid higher power to see.
Dhâtusen felt no inclination then
To try and analyse this new delight,
Contented just to breathe great depths of joy ;
For higher consciousness invaded him,
And palpitating life enclosed him round.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

The osprey gliding high above the lake
He now not only saw, but felt as well,
Sharing the joy of sailing through the gulf.
And with the forest and the rippling fields
He shared the happiness of growing things ;
While, of the calm of the eternal hills
He felt a partner in their perfect peace.
For he was part of all, and they of him ;
None greater, and none smaller, but the same.
And then, at last, they reached their journey's end.

XXXVIII

Under the shadow of a sacred tree
Old Mâhânâma waited for the King,
And greeted him with graceful courtesy.
Long were the hours, although they seemed too brief,
That held them talking there, in harmony
Each with the other, and with all the world.
And when at last the time of grace was done
They stood together in the chequered shade
And spoke intently that which filled their hearts.
“ It is not so uncommon,” said the priest,
“ To find a man whose life is spent as mine,
In quiet meditation and in peace,
Suddenly finding that his eyes are clear,
And that the truth is plain for all to see.
But with a man whose life is very full,
As yours has been, of great activity,
It is so rare that I can bring to mind
No other case so sudden and complete.”

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

“Yesterday,” said the King, “I should have thought
It quite impossible that I should feel
A common sympathy with other men.
I did not even wonder what I missed :
But now it seems as though a sudden light
Had blazed into my heart, and burnt right out
The pride and anger that I felt before.
It is no use repenting what I did.
Even a weary life of penitence
Could not recall a single action sped.
My eyes are dazzled as I look and see
That all this universe is only one,
One single, glorious whole, and I am part,
Sharing a cosmic higher consciousness
More comprehensive than the mind of man
Can realize by reasoning alone.
I feel this greater joy pervade me through
As scent pervades a wood when nilu flowers.
For birds, and beasts, and rocks, and trees, and stars,
Are only parts of one harmonious whole.
Now let me die as soon as death shall come !
It cannot hurt the whole, and I am part,
Not to be separated from the whole
Even by death.”

“Son,” said the priest, “your soul has leaped a cliff
That others climb, in slow laborious steps.
The path our founder taught, the middle way,
Is but a way to guide the average mind ;
And other paths, by other sages taught,
Are but the spokes of one eternal wheel,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

All leading to the centre in the end.
The time has come to part for this short life :
Without regret or fear, I say farewell."

XXXIX

So the King left the priest and moved away
Where Prince Migâra waited on the bund,
Mounted upon a noble Persian horse.
"Where are your promised treasures, King?" he cried ;
"Tell me, for I have ridden far to-day,
And now must see them before daylight fails."
King Dhâtusena looked him in the face.
"Prince," said the King, "these are my only wealth,
The friend I honour, and this lake I built."
Then Prince Migâra cursed him where he stood,
His face all grey with hatred and with rage.
"Return," he shouted, "by the road you came,
Death will await you at the other end";
And, wheeling round his horse, he galloped off.
So they returned along the jungle road.
And while they travelled through the murky night,
A sudden storm lashed all the forest trees,
Filling the air with flying clouds of leaves,
Till rain fell like a wall and beat them flat ;
While thunder in reverberating roll
Re-echoed rumbling through the hollow vault.
Then in the storm the honest carter's voice
Rang shrilly, singing to the trembling bulls,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

And in the coruscating blackness there
The King sat listening to the carter's song.

XL

The jutting crags of the mountain
I roamed across in vain ;
I rambled through the crowded towns
That gem the golden plain.
Through the woodland of the west,
Beside the summer sea,
I wandered seeking peace of mind,
But there was none for me.
No, there was none for me.

The luxury of the simple,
The calm of the lonely cell,
The lazy life of the temple,
The call of the silver bell.
Monks find peace in holy shade,
Shade of the sacred tree,
So all their paths I tried in turn,
But they were not for me.
No, they were not for me.

One day the god of the open air
Gave of his gathered wealth,
And after seeking everywhere
I looked within myself.

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

There I found my peace of mind,
And now where'er I be,
Wherever I drive my cart along
I carry it on with me.
I carry it on with me.

XLI

"You are a strange man," said King Dhâtusen.
"I was a stranger monk," the man replied,
"Before I left my cell to join my prince."
Then said the King to him, "This song of yours
Fits rarely close to that which fills my mind."
"Yes," said the man. "I knew it would, and so
I sang it for you to show sympathy.
For I can tell what hides behind your face ;
And, like your Majesty, I found the light
Blaze suddenly, and glorify the world."
Then the strange fellow turned away again,
And through the night crooned softly to his bulls,
While the cart creaked along the muddy road.

XLII

In the dim stillness of the audience hall
Dhâtusen stood for the last time in life,
Calm and unmoved before the traitor there,
Who judged a father from that father's throne,
And now pronounced the solemn words of doom :
"Take this man out, and build him in a wall,
Standing him there to face the rising sun,

THE UNVEILING OF DHÂTUSENA

Which he shall wait to see for evermore.”
Then to Migâra turned King Dhâtusen,
And to him said, “ Friend, I forgive you all.”
And Prince Migâra uttered not a word,
But turned his head and left that place in shame.
The soldiers led King Dhâtusen away ;
The nobles melted from the hall in awe ;
But Kâsyapa sat on immovable,
While horror harboured in his haunted eyes,
To leave them nevermore.

KÂSYAPA

A Sequel to The Unveiling of Dhâтусena

TIME.—Sixth century A.D. Eighteen years after the death of Dhâтусena.

PLACE.—Lanka, now called Ceylon.

THE RIDE

I

KÂSYAPA, son of great King Dhâтусen,
Built him a citadel upon a crag ;
A palace like Alakamanda's halls,
The mythical abode of Kuvera,
The Indian god of wealth and luxury ;
And there he dwelt in ever-haunting fear
Both of his brother and the world to come.
Thrice had he sent assassins oversea
To slay Prince Moggallâna, so to end
The vague suspense that hovered over him :
But failed. And now his fate was drawing near,
For rumours reached him from the southern hills
Of Moggallâna's landing on the coast.
From his high battlements upon the cliff
He looked across the country spread below,

KÂSYAPA

And saw with ominous, prophetic eye
The racing shadow of the darkening storm,
Till haunting horror drove him forth to ride
Among the far-spread forests of the plain,
Where he would brood along at funeral pace
For miles and miles, and then in sudden rage
Strike spurs into his steed and gallop off,
Followed by all his straggling retinue.
And ever close along his master's side
There rode Migâra with his traitor face.

II

The sun was slanting low behind the trees,
Lighting the branches where the monkeys moved,
While the dim forest aisles below the leaves
Were darkened by the shade of coming night.
The whistling of the pigeons in the boughs
Had ceased, and they had fled away and left
The soft-winged night-jar with his bubbling cry
Flitting along the lonely jungle path.
Among the leaves that littered all the way
There came the rustling steps of moving bulls ;
The gentle creaking of the cart they drew
Made music with the crickets' piping trill
That filled the forest with their evening song,
A chorus waiting for some master tone
To blend the tune and harmonize the whole.
And now above the creaking of the cart
There rose the voice of him who rode the pole,

KÂSYAPA

A shaggy, long-haired, simple-looking man
With broad and naked breast all bushed with white.
Above the varied hum of woodland sound
His song rang sweetly out upon the air.

III

For eighteen years, for eighteen years,
I drove my cart, and dried my tears,
Singing a song that no one hears,
For eighteen years to-morrow.

For on that day, for on that day
They led King Dhâтусen away,
And built him in a wall of clay,
Come eighteen years to-morrow.

His son the king, his son the king
Hath felt within his heart the sting,
Hath feared the fate that time will bring,
For eighteen years to-morrow.

He builds high walls, he builds high walls,
But still he hears the voice that calls,
And still repents the sin that galls
Since eighteen years to-morrow.

IV

He stopped, but still the bulls went rustling on ;
The crickets trilled their intermittent song ;

KÂSYAPA

The night-jar fluttered gurgling down the path ;
And from within the cart there came a voice :
“ Is your song ended, carter, with that verse ?
Is there no more to sing, no more to say ?
Have you no words to greet your lawful King,
Whose exile ended when he set his foot
On Lanka's shore ? ”

“ My lord,” the man replied,
“ Prince Moggallâna will have earned my praise
When he has shown himself a gallant son
Of that brave father whom we served so well.
For eighteen years he let his brother reign
And stirred no hand to rid this wretched land
Of Kâsyapa, king and parricide.
And even now his landing in the South,
In safe Ruhuna, guarded by the hills,
May mean no more than some attempt to gain
The southern country, while his brother reigns,
Holding his matchless castle on the cliff
Until he dies.”

“ My son,” replied the voice,
“ This is no idle effort made in haste.
Prince Moggallâna made appeal to me,
Calling me forth from my abode of peace
To join his court beyond the southern hills,
So that all those who hear and trust my voice
May know that I, the friend of Dhâtusen,
That I, old Mâhânâma, love not peace
More than I love that justice should prevail.
So after taking long and earnest thought

KÂSYAPA

I sent him word that I would join his power
If he would swear to rule this ancient realm
In truth and justice, following the laws
Made by the wisest of the kings of old,
Who looked upon religion as the light
To guide their way through all the toils that set
So many perils in the path of kings.
And he in turn sent back to me and swore
To rule right, to walk straight, to follow those
Whose lives had lain most closely to the law,
And not to flinch or rest until he gained
Full power to realize these vows of his.
So then I sent for you, and now we go
To join the prince who soon will be our king."
"Then," said the carter, "I will sing again,
And add new verses to this song of mine.
So, in a louder voice, he raised his song,
And drove the bulls more swiftly on their way.

v

A few days more. A few days more.
Soon shall we hear the battle's roar :
The Prince's heel is on the shore,
Soon shall he reap to-morrow !

And he who built his walls on high ;
Who sent his father forth to die ;
His death comes creeping, creeping nigh :
He too shall reap to-morrow !

KÂSYAPA

VI

Along the path there came the jingling noise
Of chains and bits, the trampling of the hooves
Of many horses ; and the tones of men
Came floating down the winding jungle way.
The carter stopped his singing, and the priest
Drew back within the shadow of the cart ;
For he had seen the leader of the troop,
And recognized the son of Dhâtsusen.
But if they hoped the cavalcade would pass,
Their wish was foiled, for he who rode ahead
Drew rein and said, “ Migâra, ask this man
Whether his journeys over all the land
Have brought him any knowledge of this tale
Of Moggallâna’s landing in the South.”
At that a lean grey man whose cruel eyes
Seemed to hide secret counsel in their pools
Advanced, and speaking so that all might hear,
Said, “ Tell me, carter, have you heard men speak
Of any other king than Kâsyapa
Claiming to rule Ruhuna in the South ? ”
The carter looked the Prince between the eyes
And gave no sign of knowing whom he saw,
But granted him the title of respect
Due to a man who rode so fine a horse
And wore such splendid jewels on his throat.
“ My lord,” he said, “ I journey from the west,
And have not seen Ruhuna for a year.
King Kâsyapa, men say, is ruling still,

KĀSYAPA

Son of great Dhātusen, who entered rest
Just eighteen years ago, all but a day.
And good Prince Moggallāna, so men say,
Has dwelt for eighteen years in Madura.
I know no other kings, for those who reigned
In wickedness and cruelty before
Were slain by Dhātusen long years ago,
Who later built wide Kalāwewa lake,
And gave old Lanka many years of peace.
Men say it was great pity that he died
Before his age had whitened——”

“ Hold your peace ! ”

Cried he who spoke the first. Then struck his horse,
And galloped madly down the jungle road,
Pursued by all his mounted followers.

VII

All but Migāra, who had seen the priest,
And recognized his aged, wrinkled face
As that of one of those uncommon men
Whose very purity of life had led
To such a clarity of thought and word
That from his cell there radiated forth
A subtle influence throughout the realm ;
So that when men debated some great thing,
Controversy was calmed and set aside
By message of what Māhānāma thought.
During the lifetime of King Dhātusen
Old Māhānāma gave but slender thought

KÂSYAPA

To mundane policy, while all intrigue
To him was hateful, and a thing too low
To exercise his transcendental mind.
But when that friend and pupil of his youth
Had met his death by sudden violence,
The priest bethought him of the prototype,
Recalling how Siddattha had returned
Out of the realm of concentrated thought
And shown himself as Buddha to mankind,
Sharing his wisdom with the humblest men.
So Mâhânâma gradually grew
To live more openly and less aloof
From all the moving passions of his day ;
Retaining all his purity of mind,
Yet comprehending well how other men
Might be invaluable in their way,
Although so far from his ideal life
That he and they could never hope to meet
Save on a plane so low that its foul air
Stifled him by its palpable ill taint.
Yet he choked bravely and worked steadfastly
To bring enlightenment to those who sought
Some clearer light to lighten their dull days.
So, broader now in mind, and not less deep,
He grew in power that came to him unsought,
Wielding his wisdom worthily and well,
Till in the mellow ripeness of his age,
Though seldom moving from his quiet cave,
He held a great position in the state.
And though the King had never cared to call

KÂSYAPA

This counsellor to heal his troubled heart,
Even the King would not have dared to kill
The wisest subject of his wide domain,
The indicator of the nation's mind.

VIII

Migâra waited while the cavalcade
Swept swiftly round the angle of the road,
And then dismounted quickly from his horse
Saying to Mâhânâma, " Will you grant
A moment's private interview with me ? "
So the old priest descended from the cart
And walked a little distance down the way,
While Prince Migâra followed with his horse.
" I recognised your face within the cart.
You go to Moggallâna in the south ?
Then take him word from me that no attack
On Sîgiri can hope to help his cause.
The walls of that great fortress on the cliff
Hang in the sky too high for arrow flight.
A score of men could hold that citadel
Against ten thousand, for a thousand years.
Tell him the rock will never fall by force.
Warn him to waste no portion of his men
In holding it beleaguered ; for all vain
Would be the effort made to starve it out.
But tell him that the King would never brook
To see his brother laying waste the land,
For I will be for ever at his ear

KÂSYAPA

Urging bold action till he venture forth
To fight an even battle on the plain.
Then, on the day of battle, let the Prince
Strike hardily, relying on my help
As I rely on him when all is done
To place me on the right hand of the throne.”
Then, without waiting for the priest’s reply,
He mounted all at once and galloped off.

IX

The priest looked after his retreating form,
Wondering how a man could be so base.
“The man is blind,” he thought, “see how he adds
Burthen on burthen to the heavy load
His future lives already have to bear !
Traitor to him he traitorously placed
In false security upon a throne
Guarded by cliffs and crags all powerful
To save a life, half willing to be saved,
Half wishful to be ended ; since the end
Might bring him peace, but might be worse than life.
For cliff-bound battlements are impotent
To raise a barrier before the wraith
Of long dead cruelty and living fear.
More base,” he thought, “is he who instigates
Than he who does an act of infamy.
For no man acts without some inner thought
Of daring all the consequence to come
If all his subterfuge shall chance to fail ;

KĀSYAPA

While he who whispers in another's ear
And stands aside to see his agent sin
Has never formed within his coward heart
Even that low concept of honesty."
Then slowly he turned back and joined the cart,
And slowly they went creaking on their way,
The bulls' feet shuffling through the rustling leaves.
Then, while the moonlight trickled through the trees,
Pouring its pools of light upon the path,
The carter raised his voice again in song.

x

The King passed down :
The King passed down the steps between the walls.
But in his ear the voice of fear
Its endless message calls.

The King rode out :
The King rode out and left his haunted halls.
But by his side there still doth ride
The stifled voice that calls.

The King rides by :
The King rides by, and swift his hoof-beat falls.
With equal pace there still doth race
The bitter voice that calls.

The traitor smiles :
The traitor smiles to hide the thought that thralls.

KÂSYAPA

His subtle sting shall wound the King
More than the voice that calls.

XI

And then in silence for a while he stayed
While the moon rode serenely through the sky,
Till Mâhânâma broke into his thoughts
By asking whether he had chanced to hear
Migâra's message for his private ear.
"No," said the carter. "But I know the man."
So on they went in silence once again,
Lulled by the ceaseless whisp'ring of the woods.

THE ROCK

XII

Kâsyapa galloped on along the road,
Dashing across the chequered light and shade,
Now white in light, now black beneath the gloom
Of overhanging trees that shroud the way,
Till the woods ended like a sudden wall
And out he flashed into the moonlit fields.
There he drew rein, and looked across the space
To where his mighty castle on the cliff
Cut the deep azure of the cloudless sky.
The moon shone white upon the towering walls,
And black were all the shadows of the crag
Where the rock face was scarped and overhung.
High on the northern face the gallery

KÂSYAPA

Crept round the curve and climbed the topmost ledge,
Like some white shining ribbon on the rock
Five hundred feet above the plain below.
This was the sole approach, the only way
By which the royal eyrie could be gained ;
For all around the cliffs were overhung,
And nothing wanting wings could hope to climb,
Save by the winding gallery alone.
Sheer from the very margin rose the walls,
Line above line, like shining ivory.
And higher still the clustered pinnacles
Grew in a teeming forest from the roofs.
The King still sat and gazed at them a while,
Bitterly thinking of the time and toil
Lavishly squandered to keep out his foe ;
For now his citadel a prison seemed
Where he and fear together were immured.

XIII

Then slowly Kâsyapa moved round the rock,
Along the road which skirted by the wall
That girdled in the city with its belt.
High on his left the chill grey stones shut out
All vision of the palaces within ;
And on the parapet the sentinels
Stood with their arms presented as he passed,
Each man and spear a clear-cut silhouette
Painted in black upon the moonlit sky.
Then, when the gate was reached the word was called,

KÂSYAPA

The drawbridge lowered on its groaning chains ;
The King rode over, and his horse's hooves
Rang hard and hollow on the sounding boards,
While, from the ramp, the silver trumpet pealed,
And round the frowning cliff the echo rolled
From rock to rock in mocking waves of sound.
The streets were quiet as the horsemen rode,
The houses shuttered, and the folk asleep ;
Though here and there a little group of men
Was seen dispersing as the King drew nigh :
And once from out a narrow alley-way
He heard some voices raised in loud dispute,
While, from the words he caught, it seemed as though
He and his brother were debated there.

XIV

On horseback still he passed along the street.
He rode across the narrow neck of stone
Between the walls of silent moated keeps
That formed the second circle of defence.
He reached the ring of the outlying rocks,
Vast boulders cleft from off the cliff above
More than a thousand thousand years before,
When it had burst all glowing through the plain,
Thrust by titanic forces from below.
Between these boulders shadowed pathways ran,
And up their rugged sides steep narrow steps
Led to the towers that studded all their tops
With separate strongholds high above the roofs.

KÂSYAPA

This was the third of the encircling belts
Of outworks round the peerless citadel.
And here the King descended from his horse
To thread the labyrinth between the rocks.
He mounted flight by flight the stony steps
That pierced their winding way through terraces,
Flat above flat, each guarded by a wall,
Up to the level space where all the flights
Converged as tributaries to a stair
Of shining marble leading to the cliff
That loomed above them like a hanging cloud.
Higher and higher still King Kâsyapa
Mounted the stair until at last he stood
On a small platform built into the rock.
And there he paused and looked upon the town,
Lying asleep, all silvered by the moon ;
Where, far below his feet, the narrow streets
Cut their black channels through the maze of roofs.
Well might he deem his fort impregnable ;
For though he stood so high above the town
The crag rose higher still above his head.

XV

From the small terrace built above the stair
There ran a gallery across the cliff,
Built into grooves carved in the living rock,
And over this the shadow of the crag
Hung leaning out, and made a lofty roof.
The outer flanking wall was raised so high
That men might march along in fours abreast

KÂSYAPA

Invisible to all the town below
And safe from flight of arrow or of stone.
And now King Kâsyapa passed along
This passage till he reached the northern end,
Where the last terrace clung against the cliff.
Here there were buildings high above the town,
Yet far below the summit of the crag,
For here began the steepest climb of all.
Built where the terrace backed against the rock
There stood a lion of colossal form,
With paws extended out on either side,
Where a broad flight of steps pierced through his breast
And, twisting in a spire, came out at last
Against the cliff above the lion's head.
This was the single point in all the ring
That was not overhung by cliffs above ;
The solitary way a man might scale
The rocky face. And here a hanging cage
Was fixed into the rocks by solid beams
That made a trap-door for a single man
To pass at once.

The King passed through the door
Where a last gallery crept from the cage
And mounted steeply, clinging to the rock
As cling the muddy cells of mason bees.
Flight after flight of steps led up at last
To the great circle of white walls that crowned
The head of Sîgiri the Lion Rock.
Then Kâsyapa passed in, and once again
The silver trumpet pealed to welcome him.

KÂSYAPA

THE CITADEL

XVI

The wind blew freshly over Sîgiri,
And in a corner of the palace ground
There sat two maidens, daughters of the King,
Bôdhi and Uppala, whose ripening years
Under the Southern summer of that sky
Had made them grow apace while still their minds
Were those of children, whom their nurse's tales
Left unashamed and innocent as birds.
The world to them was but the citadel,
With all its panorama spreading far,
An ever-changing picture-book that lay
For ever open to their wond'ring eyes.
The city with its girdle of high walls
Lay like an ant's-nest underneath their feet,
A thing of mystery that they beheld
Inhabited by many sorts of men
Who crawled like insects on its narrow streets,
And hummed like insects too, at festivals,
When all came out in colours bright and gay.
The lake that lapped the southern terraces
Lay like a sheet of sapphire in the plain,
Changing in colour with the changing winds
That ruffled all its waters as they fled.
While to the south the rampart of the hills
Towered in the sky, and mothered many storms
That swept across the plain their dim grey veils.

KÂSYAPA

XVII

East, north and west, the plain lay like a plate,
Dappled with light and shade, with green and blue,
Where fields and forests, lakes and rivers lay,
While far away they saw the mighty domes
Of dâgabâs that stood against the glow
When sunset painted all the west with gold.
These were the limits of the life they led :
To know their servants and a few of those
Who stood most closely to their father's throne ;
To know a host of others but as men
Whose duties placed them nearer for a time ;
To know the palace and the citadel ;
And, for the rest, to gaze across the plain
Wondering, dreaming of the things that hid
Their essence in its many-coloured face.
Yet even they had felt the vague unrest
That permeated all the palace staff ;
And often they had seen their father's face
Clouded when all the shining sky was clear.
They never tried to analyse the gloom
That settled over Kâsyapa's court ;
But yet they vaguely felt that some day soon
All this would end, and they would pass away
Into the teeming life that filled the plain.
And now her sister said to Uppala,
“ Let us sing songs to wile away the time
Until our father comes to give the news
He promised us to-day.”

KÂSYAPA

Then a clear voice
Sang of the shady woods where fairies dwell.

XVIII

The orchids hanging from the tree
Set all their wealth of fragrance free,
And when they flower the fairies' bower
Is changed by their enchanted power
Into a wizard's magic tower
Such as we dream but never see.

The fairies in their forest lair
Find jewels in the torrents there.
The dusky green of tourmaline,
The moonstone's opalescent sheen,
The rubies fit to grace a queen,
They weave into their shining hair.

And where they see the sapphires gleam
They dive into the jungle stream.
The shining hue of pebbles blue,
The golden-hearted topaz too
They gather in, and fling a few
Into a poor princess' dream.

XIX

After her sister, Bôdhi sang in turn
A song she learned from listening to the girl

KÂSYAPA

Who used to teach them their embroidery ;
A song she did not wholly understand,
But liked to sing because the melody
Was sweet and haunting to her childish ear ;
And partly too because she liked to think
That even young princesses sometimes loved
Like other people in the outer world.

XX

The princess stood on the castle wall
And saw the world was fair ;
She dropped a pebble and watched it fall
Down to the ledge where the falcons call
Their love-note when they pair.

The clouds fly over the mountain peak,
Their shadows race below ;
And if the shadows could only speak
They'd tell princesses what they seek
And where they wish to go.

The princess stood in her father's hall
With jewels in her hair ;
She saw that the prince was straight and tall,
And vowed to love him whate'er befall,
Resolved her fate to dare.

The wind blows out of the empty sky
And no one sees him pass ;

KÂSYAPA

Over the fields where he races by
You see the path where his footsteps fly
Across the silvered grass.

The prince climbed up by a silken cord
And pressed her in his arms ;
Closely she clung to her chosen lord,
While into her willing ear he poured
The story of her charms.

The storms sweep down from the southern hills
Across the steaming ground ;
The breath of their galloping outpost chills :
The rolling roar of the thunder stills
All other lesser sound.

The princess cried till her eyes were red,
And raged against her fate ;
Her heart was racked by a haunting dread ;
She called for the prince, but the prince was dead :
Her message came too late.

The lightning struck on the castle wall
In sudden blinding flash ;
The scared attendants rushed to the call
Of the maid who had seen the princess fall
Dead in the thunder's crash.

The stone that fell, and the clouds that flew,
The lightning stroke so blind,

KÂSYAPA

The storm that swept and the wind that blew
Are gone, princess, and where are you,
Who found the flash so kind ?

XXI

When Bôdhi finished singing, Uppala
Went to the wall and dropped a pebble down ;
For sheer below the palace on this side
There lay no houses, but a maze of stones.
Then round the rock there came a flying bird
Who swept across their vision in a curve
With wings bent sharply back, with feet and head
Held tightly in. He passed beneath their eyes
Without a single wing-beat, and without
Moving a feather from its rigid line.
“ This is the very place she dropped the stone,
For here the falcon lives ! ” cried Uppala.
“ And even now, ” said Bôdhi, “ shadows chase
Below the clouds that race across the sky.
Who knows ? The next verse may be true as well,
For here come footsteps down the garden steps.
Hark, Uppala ! Perhaps it is the prince ! ”
Out of the flowering shrubs there came a man
Dressed all in yellow, with a yellow face
Seamed with a hundred little smiling lines,
The gentle strokes of wisdom’s graving tool
Where sun, and wind, and thought, and character
Had signed their share of all the kindly work.
He was a Chinaman, a wand’ring monk,
Who now for many years had spent his time

KÂSYAPA

In making copies of the sacred books,
Laboriously toiling day by day,
Writing on palm leaves with a pointed style,
After the manner of the Sinhalas.
For he had vowed his work for thirty years
To this great object, that he might return
To his old monastery far away
And make a gift of all his precious books.
And he alone of all the host of monks
Who came to visit the great citadel
Had gained the friendship of King Kâsyapa,
Who granted him the freedom of the grounds.
With the two children he would often sit,
Telling them tales of strange and wondrous lands
That he had travelled over since the day
When, years ago, he left the flowery land.
So now the children hailed him with delight,
And Uppala cried out, " You are my prince ! "
Not comprehending what she meant, but pleased,
As aged people always are to find
Their coming welcomed by a pretty child,
The old monk took a seat upon the wall,
Saying, " And you, my dear, are my princess. "
" Then tell us stories of your wanderings, "
Said both princesses. " Tell us how you came
To cross the mountains of the snowy north. "

XXII

" Long years ago, " he said, " when I was young,
As young as you, my little Uppala,

KÂSYAPA

My father took me to a holy hill,
Clothed in dark forest from the lower slopes
Up to the cap of everlasting snow
That shone in rivalry among the clouds.
For a whole day we clambered up the steps
Until my legs gave way from weariness,
And there we rested in a little hut
That looked across the miles of misty blue.
Early next morning we went on again
Until we reached a gloomy place of caves,
Dark hollows under overhanging rocks,
Where lived a thousand men in yellow robes.
And there my father left me with a monk,
And told me not to fear, and kissed my face
Before he turned again and passed away
Out of my sight and life, though memory
Retains his picture fresher every year.
So there I stayed. They took away my clothes
And dressed me in a little yellow robe.
For years and years I lived among the caves,
Seeing no strangers but the few who climbed
To worship for a day and to depart.
I had no knowledge of the outer world
Except my recollection of the days
When I and other children used to play.
All was so still and peaceful that my mind
Grew calm and even as a stream that flows
Between the level meadows full of flowers.
Part of my duty was to meditate,
And sometimes, sitting in my shady cell,

KÂSYAPA

I felt as though the mountain and the woods
Were part of me, and I were part of them.
And so for many years I lived in peace :
But in the end there came a wondrous change.

XXIII

“ There was a jutting boulder, rising high
Above the forest and above the caves ;
And there, from time to time I used to sit,
Watching the changing colours of the plain.
Far, far below, beyond the mountain foot,
Beside a winding strand of silver cord
There spread a vivid patch of red and white.
They said it was a city, though to me
It merely seemed to be a sort of stain ;
For what a city was, I hardly knew,
But often longed to know. At last one day
I told the oldest of the yellow monks
This great desire that occupied my mind,
Making my meditations almost vain.
He was a man as wise as he was old
And kind as he was wise : for those who know
The inner working of the human soul
Are very nearly always good and kind.
He took me to the temple library,
Where the old volumes stood in serried rows,
And told me how a monk of olden time
Had spent his life in copying the tomes
Preserved in distant lands, where Buddha's word

KÂSYAPA

Was known more early and received more pure
Than we had ever had the chance to gain :
How he had travelled on for years and years,
And in the end returned to make a gift
Of all his learning and his store of books.
So, in due course, he sent me on my way,
And after travelling for several years
I settled in this city on the rock,
And learned your tongue, and learned to love your land.
For two years more I have this work to do
Before I end my toil and seek my rest
Among the caves beneath the cap of snow.”

XXIV

Bôhdi and Uppala were so absorbed
They never noticed that their father stood
Beside them, till he spoke, and said, “ I too
Have come to tell my daughters of a place
Where weary minds may find eternal rest
From all the turmoil of this troubled world.
When in the west you see the setting sun
Descend in flames behind the burning rim
Of this wide plain, you see the mighty domes
Of dâgabas like bubbles on the earth,
Raising their bulk against the western glow.
And there, my children, you have often heard,
Lies Anurâdhapura, that great town
Where, for a thousand years, your ancestors
Reigned as the kings of Lanka. To the south

KÂSYAPA

Of the most southern dâgaba you see,
There is a labyrinth of old black rocks
With ancient caves, where holy men of old
Cut deep inscriptions few can read to-day.
But these old caves had fallen in disuse
Till their sole habitants had come to be
A tribe of porcupines and hosts of bats.
Wishing to mark my reign by memories
Of pious institutions, I have cleared
The tangle of the thorns that overran
This ancient site, and built a nunnery,
Including all the cells among the rocks
With other buildings in one ordered scheme.
And on the rock beside the largest cave
I bid them carve the names of those to whom
Posterity will give the praise it owes.
There, on the rock, are cut the names of these :
Uppala, Bôdhi, and King Kâsyapa :
In letters that will last a thousand years.”
He kissed the children and dismissed them then,
Proud that their names should be so proudly carved
That for a thousand years the pious nuns
Might read and bless the founders of their home.
So the two children, smiling, went away,
Leaving the monk with Kâsyapa alone.

XXV

Then the King turned toward the foreign monk
And looked at him in silence for a while ;
Till, seeming satisfied by what he saw,

KÂSYAPA

He said, "The lady who has taken charge
Of this new nunnery among the rocks
Is named Lilâvati. And even you
Must know her for my sister, and the wife
Of Prince Migâra : but she left the Prince
Just eighteen years ago."

He waited then
As though desirous that the monk should speak.
But still the Chinaman sat silently.
So Kâsyapa continued : "When I came
To hold the dignity I occupy
Great trouble threatened Lanka, for a feud
Divided Moggallâna and myself.
And now once more the danger comes apace,
For Moggallâna landed in the south
Some days ago. I do not wish to hear
How much you know of that old tragedy ;
But in your hands I place a sacred trust.
If, in the battle that will surely come,
Victory turns her face away from me,
Then swiftly take my children in your care.
Take them in secret to Lilâvati
And leave their innocence to win her love.
Of those about the court, trust not one soul,
For kings are only kings when victory
Shows that the gods are willing they should reign.
And, above all, Migâra must be foiled :
For if a horrid traitor ever lived,
It is Migâra."

KÂSYAPA

XXVI

While he heard the King
The monk had moved no muscle of his face,
But now the net of wrinkles round his eyes
Seemed like a thousand marks of honesty.
"All other things," he said, "shall be as naught
Until I have succeeded in my charge.
For in this sterile monkish breast of mine
The love of children lieth very deep,
And of all children I have ever known
Yours are the very closest to my heart.
None will suspect an aged foreigner ;
So feel no fear your trust in me will fail.
I too have watched the dark'ning of the storm
And wished there were some way for me to pay
The kindness you have ever shown to me.
The favour that you ask me is a gift
I shall accept with heartfelt gratitude
Should fate decide against you in the field."
Then Kâsyapa grasped him by the hand
And went away without another word,
For he loved those two children more than life.

THE CAMP

XXVII

Where a wide shallow river reached the sea
Prince Moggallâna tarried for a time ;
While through Ruhuna his ambassadors

KÂSYAPA

Sounded the chiefs and princes of the south.
Memory sifts and purifies so well
That few were left who knew King Dhâtusen
That did not think his reign a golden age,
A time of noble and heroic deeds
Following after years of foreign yoke.
Even the least of men in looking back
Felt he had moved in days when kings were strong,
And, in imagination, lived again
The stirring chapters of his lusty youth.
For thus old memory can paint with gold
And glorify with distance all the past.
Kâsyapa had not sought his people's love,
But neither, in his day, had Dhâtusen ;
While Moggallâna still remained unknown
Save to a faithful few who crossed the sea
To share his exile in a foreign town.
Thus many were inclined to let things rest
So to avoid a cruel civil war.
But all the power wielded by the Church
Was thrown into the scale against the King,
Who cared not much for monast'ries and monks.
So, through the land from all the monast'ries
There moved an army of determined priests
Urging the nobles to take up their arms
To seat Prince Moggallâna on the throne.
But still the greater princes held aloof,
Until one day there crept a creaking cart
Into the royal camp beside the sea,
And word went forth that Mâhânâma came

KĀSYAPA

To lend the Prince his counsel and his aid,
So high his wisdom stood in men's esteem
That his adherence to the Prince's cause
Determined all Ruhuna to his side,
And men came pouring forth from all the hills
To swell the army on the southern shore.

XXVIII

The camp was pitched beside the river bank,
Where sandy dunes, all grey with tufted grass,
Spread out for miles an undulating waste.
And far away across the plain there rose
The long blue line of mountains in the north.
The piping notes of birds along the shore,
The curlews with their melancholy cries
Made music with the thunder of the sea,
Where long blue waves reared up their heads and roared
To find their rolling path across the deep
Barred by the rampart of the coral reef.
Here Moggallāna sat with the old priest
Watching the muddy river spread its fan
Of tawny stain that fouled the sunny blue,
And cut a passage through the coral wall
By smothering the teeming architects
Who built the reef of their cementing cells.

XXIX

And now old Māhānāma told the Prince
The message of Migāra in the wood.

KÂSYAPA

“ It is for you to judge,” said he, “ the worth
Of his assistance, for the man is vile.
Already twice a traitor, he may turn
And stab once more the son of him he killed.”
So Moggallâna pondered for a while
Before he answered.

“ I have never seen
This citadel upon the rock,” he said.
Is Sîgiri indeed so great a fort,
Impregnable to all the arts of siege,
That I must lay my people’s country waste
To lure my brother from his eagle’s nest ?
I hate Migâra’s subtle, wicked scheme
Even as I detest the man himself ;
And I mistrust as much as I detest
This plan of laying waste the countryside.
Better it were to guard my people’s lands
And gain their love by honest openness.
For if my enemy declines to move
While I destroy their homes, my men may deem
A tyrant cooped within a citadel
Less hateful than a tyrant on their lands.
Perhaps Migâra would destroy me thus !
If I attack at once with all my force
And hurl these mountain men against its heights,
Sîgiri may not prove inviolate.”

“ My prince,” said Mâhânâma, “ if you saw,
As I have seen, that ring of frowning rock,
You would not dare to entertain a hope
Of storming it. If you could only stand,

KÂSYAPA

As I have stood, beneath those hanging crags,
You could not help but gaze in wondering
At the most mighty work a king has wrought
In all this island for a thousand years.
Even a squirrel could not scale those cliffs
Save by the single one appointed path.
Either accept this help, however vile,
Or spare your country from the storm of war.
It is for you to judge, for only you
Can bear the burthen of decision now."

xxx

Old Mâhânâma had not lived so long
Without observing that the minds of kings
Must seem to settle of their own accord,
Even when asking for direct advice.
And he repeated, "Only you can judge."
So Moggallâna looked across the reef
Where breakers waged their everlasting war,
But gained, or seemed to gain, no inch of ground.
Travelling over miles of rolling sea
They struck the barrier with sounding crash,
And flung their force upon the velvet face
Of living cells that multiplied too fast
To weary of the ceaseless battering.
"So might I fling my living waves," he thought,
"Against the reef that Kâsyapa has built.
Even the sea does not disdain the aid
Of this brown sluggish stream that pours its mud

KÂSYAPA

Upon the little builders of the reef,
And wins a way by foulness through the walls
That stand the shock of all the beating waves.
My ships sailed through the passage cut by mud ;
And rather than relinquish all my hope
I too will sink my pride and pay the price
The traitor asks me."

XXXI

Then he turned and said,
" A messenger shall leave the camp to-night
To seek Migâra. Tell me whom to trust,
For I am still a stranger to the men
I come to rule. The messenger must be
A man unknown to those about the court."
Then Mâhânâma said, " I know a man
Whose sterling character has gained the name
Of Honest Carter, given him by those
With whom he deals. He is a man of worth
Whom I have trusted now for eighteen years.
Long years ago he used to be a monk,
But left his cell to follow in the wars
When Dhâтусen drove out the Chôlan hordes.
And on that last sad journey to the lake
He drove your father, and became his friend
As far as such a man as he might gain
The friendship of a king."

So late that night
The Honest Carter started on his way,

KASYAPA

And while he wound along the forest road,
Through the dark passes of the mountain range,
He raised his voice in song.

I guided once a King upon his way ;
I helped him see the sun shine through the grey ;
And sang to soothe the sorrow of the King.

I saw him break from darkness into day ;
I watched his cloud of sorrow melt away ;
And sang from joy of living with the King.

They buried him alive within a wall ;
For eighteen years I watched for fate to fall ;
And vowed a vow of vengeance for the King.

And now I hear the singing of the sword ;
Soon will my vow of vengeance for my lord
Be paid in service to his son the King.

A wanderer without a known abode,
Who drives alone along the jungle road,
Yet can I yield my service to the King.

For all the maze of paths among the hills,
And all the little rivers and the rills
Are known to me, and I can guide the King.

KÂSYAPA

THE KING

XXXIII

Out from the palace in the citadel
A narrow gallery ran down the rock,
Where in the western face of Sîgiri
A little shallow cavern had been shaped
To form a seat upon the very verge
Below the walls that crowned the cliff above.
And here the King was wont to sit and watch
The screaming swallows pouring from the rock
Like living streams of flying arrow-heads.
For something in their wild activity
Drew him away from all his brooding thoughts,
Until he almost felt as though he shared
The freedom of their whirling stream of flight.
But now the swallows had come home to rest,
And still he sat and scanned the distant hills
Where watch-fires flickered all along the spurs,
Marking the lines of Moggallâna's host.
His heart was bitter while he watched the fires ;
For now he knew himself to be betrayed,
And dared no longer hope to hold the rock
Where half the garrison would yield the gates
Rather than risk their lives in his defence.
A week had passed since Prince Migâra came,
Urging him forth to drive his brother back.
The traitor's smooth and subtle arguments
Had stung the King to answer him in wrath,

KĀSYAPA

Bidding him serve his brother openly.
That night Migāra left with all his force,
And Kāsyapa knew his cause was doomed.
He was not utterly an evil man,
Though weak and vain, and he had been the tool
Migāra used to carve his way to power.
Galling enough it seemed to think that he,
The King, had now been used and cast away :
But in his heart he knew it to be true.
He bitterly repented of the crime
That placed him on his murdered father's throne,
And ever in his dreams he heard the voice
Of his dead father calling in his ear,
Until he now no longer wished to live.

XXXIV

In Kāsyapa the faculty of joy
Was greater than among the common run,
But balanced by a higher power to feel
All other strong emotions, good or ill.
And whether it is happier for us
To traverse evenly one placid plane,
Or to walk now with gods, and now with fiends,
Revelling in the blaze that lights the peak,
Groveling in the darkness of the pit,
No man can tell ; for none hath trod both paths.
So when the cruel hardness of his heart
That sent his father to his dreadful end
Relaxed once more, Kāsyapa's soul was torn

KÂSYAPA

By all the tortures of profound remorse.
Night after night he paced the garden paths,
A moonlit spectre haunted by unrest,
Striding as though he trusted to outpace
The ghost he carried in his inner mind.
And often, in the palace corridors,
They saw him standing looking to the east,
Where palest lemon spread across the sky,
Repeating to himself in weary tones
The words he uttered in the audience hall
When bidding Dhâtusen go forth to die :
“ And stand him there to face the rising sun,
Which he shall wait to see for evermore.”

XXXV

At last the phantom of insomnia
Drove him with sudden energy to move
The court and seat of all his government
To Sîgiri ; where occupation healed
His mental trouble, and at last he found
The joy that comes of using all one's wits.
From all the districts round a host of men
Toiled day by day to build the citadel ;
While from the early morning till the night
Kâsyapa drove them fiercely to their work,
Until the architects and engineers
Dreaded his presence as a pestilence.
But even they were forced to praise his taste,
And to acknowledge all the skill he showed

KÂSYAPA

In utilizing all their faculties,
Playing upon their brains with certain touch.
His was the master mind that chose the plan,
Though theirs the training skilled to give effect ;
So when the citadel at last was built,
It bore the signet of his genius,
And was by far the noblest work of art
Their nation had created from the first.
But, when the work was ended, once again
The old obsession seized upon his mind,
And round the balcony that ringed the rock
He used to pace all night in search of sleep.

XXXVI

Now all the palaces of Lanka's kings
Held lovely faces waiting for their time
In readiness to please the King at will.
And when the King had found his old remorse
Once more upon him, he looked round in fear
To find some more effective anodyne.
It was not far to seek, and for a time
He plunged into the wildest of excess
And ranged the gamut of relaxing vice.
But this too failed in time, and once again
The spectre hovered in his sleepless eyes.
Then one day in the palace library
He happened on the ancient Chinaman,
And came in time to find in him a friend.
The monk had often watched the restless King,

KÂSYAPA

Knowing full well the cause of his distress ;
But had not dared to offer him advice
Until one day he told a parable.
“ There was a king,” he said, “ who could not sleep
Because a sort of madness seized his mind ;
And after he had wandered through the maze
Of many kinds of mental agony,
He happened to be walking in a wood
When silver laughter fell upon his ear,
And peering through the bushes there he saw
Two pretty children playing with the flowers.
Who can these be that seem so full of joy ?
He asked the courtier standing by his side.
Your Majesty, these children are your own,
The man replied. And from that very day
The King began to love their happy minds,
And found his melancholy melt away.”
Kâsyapa smiled to hear the simple monk
Set gravely forward his transparent tale,
But tried in turn this remedy himself,
Nor, like the others, did he find it fail.

XXXVII

This was the purest joy of all his life,
The altruism of unselfish love ;
For while he hardly cared or hoped to live
During the days he wallowed in his vice,
This friendship formed within his very home
Had raised again his hopes of happiness.

KĀSYAPA

In strict proportion as a man can hope,
So can he fear, and now the haunted King
Dreaded that Moggallāna might invade
The land, and shatter all his dream of peace.
The echo of his murdered father's voice
Had only passed away to give its place
To aching fear of violence and war.
So now the King built mighty outer walls,
And inner rings of forts among the rocks ;
While oversea he sent a trusted man
To try and stab his brother in the street,
Who failed, and under torture gave the names
Of those who had involved him in the crime,
Plunging the King once more in vain regret.
This was an age when superstition reigned ;
For Buddhism had fallen from the height
The earlier disciples had maintained.
The modern monks cared less about their souls
Than that their bodies should be richly housed.
The King was tainted with the same belief,
And tried by building temples to absolve
And clear his conscience of this new remorse.
'Twas thus he came to found the nunnery ;
And looking forward with uncertain gaze,
He saw in that calm refuge from the world
A haven for his children in the end.

XXXVIII

The watch-fires twinkled on among the hills,
While Kāsyapa lived again the past,

KÂSYAPA

Gazing with eyes half dazzled by their light,
But seeing nothing but the living thoughts
That followed one another through his mind.
Then all at once he heard a gentle voice,
And looking round he saw the Chinaman.
“ The moon is rising and the time has come,
We must be moving very shortly now.”
Silently they climbed up the narrow stair,
And all in silence passed the little door
That led into the chamber of the King.
Bôdhi and Uppala were waiting there
With keen excitement sparkling in their eyes.
Then Kâsyapa took them in his arms
And said, “ My children, you are going now
To see the nunnery I built for you.
Whatever the monk tells you, you must do.
Farewell my Bôdhi. Farewell Uppala.
Never forget that you and I were friends ;
Never remember me as aught but kind ;
Never believe I did not love you both
More than the wealth of all the world beside.”
He kissed them, and they parted from his sight,
Thinking with wonder at his final words,
And drinking in the glamour of the night
That brought such strange adventure to their lives.

XXXIX

Since Moggallâna landed in the south
The King had watched Migâra narrowly.

KĀSYAPA

The pause with Māhānāma in the wood
Had not escaped him, for he too had seen
The figure of the priest within the cart.
And when Migāra urged him to march out
He hid his feeling, for he knew the Prince
Believed no argument would make him move.
Then, suddenly unmasking half his mind,
He bade Migāra lie no more, but go.
He did not care to reign upon the cliff
While Moggallāna ruled the land all round ;
Nor did he dare to leave the citadel
With such a traitor in its very heart ;
While to march out, Migāra by his side,
Were to court treachery within his camp.
So he deceived Migāra till the time
Was ripe for action. Then he let him go
To carry his deception to the hills,
And baffle Moggallāna in his plans.
The King was not a coward in the field :
Action of any kind excited him,
And danger lighted up his gloomy mind
With a fierce burning flame of energy.
Now that the time was ripe he felt no fear,
But swiftly ranged his forces for attack,
Hoping by speed to balance greater strength,
And to strike Moggallāna such a blow
As would for once and all decide the war.
So on the night that followed the farewell
Bade to his children, he came down the rock
And personally led his striking force

KÂSYAPA

Along the causeway traversing the lake,
Out by a forest track but little used,
Into the mountains where the watch-fires flared.
Higher and higher up the mountain side
They climbed until the ring of winking fires
All lay below. And there they waited dawn.

THE BATTLE

XL

Below the ridges where the ring of fires
Flickered with dancing flames against the sky
Prince Moggallâna lay with all his troops,
Camped on the western slope above a stream
That trickled sluggishly between the fern.
Migâra's army now had swelled his force
To such a strength that hopes ran very high,
And on the morrow he had fixed to move
Nearer to Sîgiri. For still he thought
The rock might yet be stormed if Kâsyapa
Sullenly waited, circled by his walls.
Even Migâra counselled him to march,
For Kâsyapa, he thought, would never leave
The prison safety of the citadel.
Beyond the stream there lay a belt of flat,
Where rushes grew and bracken stood so high
That men could walk erect and yet be hid.
And all the night the raucous song of frogs
And humming of a myriad of gnats
Warned that the swampy ground was not yet dry.

KÂSYAPA

XL I

The jagged outline of the higher hills
Was thrown in black relief against the glow
Of palest yellow creeping up the sky,
When from the men at watch along the ridge
There suddenly arose a warning cry :
Then men came pouring down the further slope.
The camp broke into swift activity,
And all around an uproar mounted high,
A din of shouts and orders intermixed
With clashing arms and hurried trampling feet.
Hither and thither ran the startled men,
Confusing all the camp in chaos wild.
Elephants trumpeted along their lines,
And through the throng there forged a mighty beast,
Brought by his faithful rider to the Prince.
Across the marsh they saw the enemy
Come charging madly down the further slope,
Leaping the bushes, shouting, waving swords,
And calling out the name of Kâsyapa.

XLII

Prince Moggallâna mounted the great beast,
Calling on all to rally by his side ;
And now some order entered in the whirl.
The wild confusion checked, and streams of men
Poured out upon the slopes on either flank,
Extending like a hedge along the stream,
Where glittering spears awaited the attack.

KÂSYAPA

Arrows came shrilling swiftly through the air,
Quivering where they struck into the soil,
And cutting breaches in the hedge of men.
Away upon the right they heard the roar
Of battle coming nearer, and the clang
Of sword on shield, the cries of fighting men,
The scream of elephants, the twang of bows ;
And now the battle-cry of enemies
Came surging ever nearer than before.
Right in the front, beyond the little stream,
The King pressed forward on an elephant,
Forcing a way across the yielding swamp
And followed by the pick of all his men,
Who soon were hidden by the moving fern.
Into the tangle flights of arrows poured,
Calling out screams and yells, while Kâsyapa
Drove through and through, as though he meant to
break
The thickset hedge of men around the Prince.

XLIII

But now the elephant was seen to sink,
Until his heaving back alone arose
An island in the sea of moving fern.
The savage goad was reddened in his blood,
But in the marsh he could not feel his feet,
Wallowing helplessly in yielding mud :
Till Kâsyapa turned his head again
To seek a firmer path for his advance,

KÂSYAPA

And for the moment showing them his back.
Then from the struggling wings of the attack
There rose a cry, "The King has turned and fled!"
Now Moggallâna saw his time had come,
And urged his elephant along the front,
Dividing all his force to right and left,
So as to charge around the fickle swamp.

XLIV

King Kâsyapa hardly had emerged
From out the fatal tangle of the fern,
When right and left he saw his wings bent back
Before the pressure of the charging foe.
While some fought stubbornly for every yard,
Others already broke in dastard flight:
And soon he saw his brother's elephant
Pressing against the line of struggling men.
The slopes behind were thick with flying forms,
And bitterly he cursed them as they fled.
"But for the marsh," he cried, "I would have won!
It now remains to finish as a King!"
With that he drove his elephant apace
Straight at the line where Moggallâna rode.
But as he came his men gave way and broke.
Soon he was circled in on every side.
His elephant was wounded, and his shield
Was dinted over with the stabs of spears.
Then from his weary hand there fell his sword:

KÂSYAPA

From out his belt he drew a dagger forth
And plunged it fiercely deep into his throat.
Slowly he sank upon the elephant,
Bowing his head upon its reeking neck.
And so he died : unconquered to the end.

XLV

They took the diadem from off the dead
And placed it on his brother's living brow,
Who gazed upon the corpse, and turned and said,
“ His death was worthy of his royal blood.
Carry him out with honour to the place
Where kings of Lanka from the mist of time
Have all been burned upon their funeral pyres,
And there perform the rites of ancient days.”

XLVI

So Moggallâna passed across the plain
To Anurâdhapura in the north,
And there ascended his forefather's throne.
The peerless citadel of Sîgiri
Was handed over as a splendid gift
To honour the community of monks ;
And the first abbot of the mighty rock
Was Mâhânâma. There he lived his days
Writing the history of all the past
Since the first founder of the Sinhalas,

KĀSYAPA

Till he too passed away and joined the whole,
Of which he had so worthily formed part.
The Honest Carter met with just reward,
For Moggallāna placed him in the court
As the chief keeper of the palace gate,
Where for the evening of his lengthy days
He used to sit and sing his endless songs,
The friend of all the children in the place.

XLVII

The bitterness sown by a king
Must grow at last.
The harvest of weeds with their deadly sting
Will be ripe before summer is past.
We must wait until summer is past.

The harvest of weeds was too strong
For us to reap.
The king was choked and we laboured long,
But the seed had been planted too deep.
Yes, the roots had grown down far too deep.

The son of the king brought his sword
To aid our fight.
We followed the lead of our gracious lord,
And cut a path through to the light.
Yes, we fought our way out to the light.

KÂSYAPA

The seed that was set in the soil
No more is sown.
The reapers rest from their weary toil,
And the king has come back to his own.
May the gods hold him safe in his own.

PART IV
VARIOUS SONGS AND
SKETCHES

PATHS

There are paths that pierce the maze of tangled lies
Which rings the hidden temple of the true ;
And every conscious being some path tries,
But few indeed are worthy to win through.

THE PATH OF PAIN

I

THE hills above the waterfall
Are dark with forest from the brink
Up to the towering marble wall
Of shining cliffs, whose coral pink
Borrows from sunset stains like blood,
Where sleepless echo hears and mocks
The sullen thunder of the flood
'Tumbling among the sounding rocks,
And rows of dim and ancient caves
Hide some forgotten people's graves.

II

Down where the waters take their leap
The trees lean out and fret and toss,
While all along their branches creep
White shaggy beards of hanging moss
That drip into the pool beneath,
Where clouds of spray float out in steam
That fills the forest with its breath,
Clothing the boulders by the stream
With filagree of flowers and ferns,
Where balsam's glowing scarlet burns.

THE PATH OF PAIN

III

The people of the jungle round
Hold these old caves in nameless dread,
Taking the echo's endless sound
To be the voices of the dead ;
So, for perhaps a thousand years,
No foot had trod their dim retreat,
Until one day his scorn of fears
Led a strange man their gloom to greet
As a fit setting for his own,
And in their depth he lived alone.

IV

He knew no more than all the rest,
He feared no less the power of ghosts,
And chilling terror stabbed his breast
To hear the seething of the hosts
Of bats within the haunted caves,
When, in the evening, out they poured,
Fluttering forth in dusky waves.
It was not that his mind was broad,
But that he scorned all fear as vain
And chose to tread the path of pain.

V

To him the ghosts were real and true,
A veritable cause for fear,
For in the echo as it flew
He often thought that he could hear

THE PATH OF PAIN

The muttering of tones that fled
Around that lonely solemn place
As fly the spirits of the dead.
Then he would sit with stiffened face
And fortify his rigid will
These panic fears to face and still.

VI

But only while those fears were new ;
And soon he heard the echo play
Around the rocks, and through and through
The hollow caverns, dark and day,
Without a qualm of any kind.
The rumbling voices did no harm,
So he dismissed them from his mind,
Forgetting all his old alarm,
And with more vigour than before
Followed his chosen path once more.

VII

Few were the pleasures of the lot
That life had offered him at birth,
But those few things a man has got
Often appear of greater worth
As relatively they are small,
Or reckoned small except by those
To whom they seem as all in all.
Yet he deliberately chose

THE PATH OF PAIN

To hold all pleasure in disdain,
That he might seek the path of pain.

VIII

To render all a man may give,
To suffer all a man can feel
While yet continuing to live,
While yet endeavouring to steel
His frame to further sacrifice,
Were the strange tenets of his sect
Who paid in misery the price
That ranked their souls with the elect,
Who garner in another life
The harvest of this world of strife.

IX

Narrow and rigid as a cleft
Deep fissured in an ancient rock
That some internal force has reft,
His mind retained its meagre stock
Of fixed ideas that never changed
Nor modified a single view,
However far his body ranged,
As though in search of something new.
He sought not love, nor rest, nor gain,
But followed on his path of pain.

THE PATH OF PAIN

X

Within the darkest of the caves
He built himself a bed of thorn
Among the terror-haunted graves,
Laying his body there with scorn,
To find that still his flesh could quail
As once his spirit quailed before :
But soon he found this penance fail,
As once had failed the echo's roar,
To mortify his tortured soul,
Urging it nearer to the goal.

XI

The little food that he could glean
From leaves of trees and fallen fruits
Had rendered him as hard and lean
As any of the savage brutes
That shared with him the wilderness,
But could not share the iron mind
That seemed his body to obsess
With urgent madness of a kind
That drove his hardly human brain
Along the bitter path of pain.

XII

For forty years, by day and night,
He lay upon his thorny bed,
Or sat and fixed his feeble sight
Upon the clouds of spray that fled

THE PATH OF PAIN

Like steam above the waterfall,
Thundering down the headlong drop ;
While round the ringing rocky wall
The endless echoes never stop.
For forty years of sun and rain
He followed on his path of pain.

XIII

The thunder of the waterfall
Fell fainter on his older ears ;
But fainter still he heard the call
Of strong desire of former years.
The battle he had fought was won ;
Pain could no longer rack his soul ;
Yet now his race was nearly run
He felt no nearer to the goal,
No wiser by the merest grain,
From following the path of pain.

XIV

Then in the cavern chill and dim
He felt a new and biting fear,
For subtle doubt invaded him,
And in his heart he heard it jeer,
Laughing to scorn the idle end
That claimed and wasted all his days,
Now that it was too late to mend,
While pointing out the wiser ways

THE PATH OF PAIN

That, following a path more sane,
Led further than the path of pain.

XV

The voice cried out, " Men have but one
Short life to live before they die,
And yours is very nearly done,
You lured yourself to live a lie,
Wasting the sweetness of your age
In wretched misery alone ;
As full of pride as any sage,
As void of wisdom as a stone.
Seek out the mirror of a pool
And drown your image for a fool ! "

XVI

At this his resolution gave,
And, standing high above the fall,
He watched the eager waters rave,
And heard their hollow booming call
To everlasting painless peace.
For now his life had lost its zest,
Their promise of a swift release,
Calling his weary heart to rest,
Seemed to be drawing him to leap
And drown his pain in dreamless sleep.

THE PATH OF PAIN

XVII

Then habit of long years of pain
Came to defend his wild distress ;
His will determined once again
To struggle till he could suppress
This latest frailty of the mind,
This latest yielding to desire,
Attacking him in novel kind
More sharp than thorns, more fierce than fire ;
So in the end he conquered this
The strongest of his enemies.

XVIII

Yet pondering upon the thought
That had so deeply troubled him,
He wondered if the fight he fought
Were bound perforce to be so grim,
Or whether other paths as well
Led to the purity he hoped
Would save him from the depth of hell.
And while his mind thus dimly groped,
It was as though a shaft of light
Suddenly cleft the black of night.

XIX

He saw that neither heav'n nor hell
Had place within the scheme of things
Except as tales for priests to tell.
He saw that common men and kings

THE PATH OF PAIN

Alike march forward on their way
To one great future that they share
With bird and beast, with night and day,
With those who shrink and those who dare,
With tempest and with waterfall
To be absorbed into the All.

XX

He saw that all was one great soul,
And that a man when he was dead
Became united to the whole,
Whatever path he chose to tread ;
Just as the living lightning flash
Is reabsorbed into the earth,
Just as the waters where they crash
Flow to the sea that gave them birth,
Just as the trees that die and rot
Make soil where others are begot.

XXI

For this he saw was not the end,
This death that fills the world with fear,
But rather is a newer blend
Of all that changes year by year,
Going to join the central soul,
And neither doth subtract nor add
One least iota of the whole.
Why should this change appear so sad ?

THE PATH OF PAIN

Why should there be such endless strife
'Twixt rival schools of after-life ?

XXII

He saw the path he trod was true,
For it had led him to the truth ;
But still he saw that others too
Were wider, happier paths for youth
To march with comrades hand in hand ;
Instead of seeking solitude,
To feel their nature still expand,
To see their failing force renewed
In children springing from their strength,
And so to pass in peace at length.

XXIII

Now he had found his peace at last,
He sat immovable all day
And heard the waters rushing past
Beneath the film of floating spray ;
He saw the branches toss and fret
As he himself had fretted too
Before the truth had reached him yet.
He felt the hours were very few,
And by that night he hoped to gain
The end of his long path of pain.

THE PATH OF WISDOM

I

BENEATH a feathery tamarind
That cast a patch of dense black shade,
And murmured softly when the wind
Blew hot across the scorching plain,
A mat of rushes had been laid
Where lived for years an aged man.
Through storm and sunshine, wind or rain,
Since first his course of thought began,
There he sat on beneath the tree
Till death should come to set him free.

II

Plunged in impenetrable thought,
Immovable for hours and days,
While still his soul flew on and sought
To find some way of passing through
The doors that bar the different ways
Leading from darkness into day,
Where all the mysteries come true ;
While round his feet the squirrels play
And monkeys chatter overhead
His body rests as rest the dead.

THE PATH OF WISDOM

III

The children shouting at their play
Disturb him not, he never knows
Whether the time is night or day,
Until his wand'ring mind returns,
And once again the wind that blows
Finds him alive beneath the tree.
Once more he feels the heat that burns,
And once again the children see
Their Yôgi's eyes have opened wide
To seek the water by his side.

IV

Then to the village off they fly
And fetch the best their homes can find,
Nor give one thought to wonder why
The Yôgi's life should be so strange :
It was the manner of his kind
To die and come to life again,
To sleep and let his spirit range,
To sit in sun and wind and rain.
The man was holy in their eyes,
They only knew him good and wise.

V

The peasants were content to plod
Along the way their fathers went ;
But still the path the Yôgi trod,
The path of wisdom, made them hope

THE PATH OF WISDOM

That one among their gods had sent
So wise a man to be their guide ;
And they would wander up the slope
To sit for hours by his side,
Taking him problems to resolve
And points of village law to solve.

VI

All this he did with kindly heart,
Deciding justly every case,
And freely trying to impart
Some of the principles he found
Common to all the human race ;
While his admirers spread his name
Throughout the villages around,
Till he who sought it not found fame,
And simple folk from far and near
Brought troubles for his words to clear.

VII

Even the children felt no fear
Of this old man whose clear bright eyes
Smiled welcome when they ventured near.
But when his spirit fled away
To some far distant paradise,
They looked with awe upon his face,
So wise and old, so thin and grey,
And kept due distance from the place

THE PATH OF WISDOM

Where he sat on in sun and rain
Until his soul returned again.

VIII

The Yôgi long had lost all grief,
With other weakness cast aside,
When first he shed his crude belief
In all the devils having power
To trouble humans by their pride,
Jealous of all the strength they wield,
And claiming thanks for every shower
That falls upon a thirsty field.
Old superstitions dropped away,
Letting in wisdom like a ray.

IX

The misty fears of childish hours
In all the hundred kinds of ghost,
And other supernatural powers
That hover in the twilight round,
A countless wonder-working host,
Are easy for a man to kill
Where he sees other men have found
Their impotence for good or ill ;
But his enlightenment is slow
Whose fellows' range of thought is low.

THE PATH OF WISDOM

X

But where the Yôgi lived his days
The people wandered all their lives
In an inexplicable maze,
Where ghosts and bogies, imps and spooks,
Infest their fields and haunt their wives,
Dogging their feet with cold alarms ;
And where, in half a hundred books,
Are written rows and rows of charms,
Believed alike by young and old
To cure each evil life can hold.

XI

The leopard who attacks their herds
Is no more real than evil eye
That blasts their crops, while flocks of birds
Who peck their fruit cause less dismay
Than imps who make the cows run dry.
The woods that whisper in the breeze
Are just as full by night or day
Of devils as they are of trees.
And these beliefs the Yôgi shared
Until his path of thought he dared.

XII

When he had cleansed his soul of fear
He sat and thought with open mind

THE PATH OF WISDOM

In concentration long and clear
Whether there be a god at all,
Or whether puzzled human-kind
Invented god to give them hope
That, like the ripened seeds that fall,
They rise again, once more to grope
In blind pursuit of fleeing peace,
Till a new death brings new release.

XIII

And here he passed in wide review
The gods his people most revered,
Judging that none of them were true,
But vain creations, made by man
To hold ideas he loved or feared
In concrete form before his eyes
Ever since abstract thought began
To interest the dimly wise.
So he dismissed them from his mind
And sought some greater god to find.

XIV

Some god too wise to make mistakes,
Too high to know, and too immense
To care what course a human takes
Within the laws he gave the earth.
Some god whose thought is so intense
As irresistibly to act,

THE PATH OF WISDOM

Causing each concept, from its birth,
To be a living, concrete fact ;
So that if he conceived a sun
Straightway through space its course would run.

xv

He sought in vain for any sign
That he could show as final proof
Pointing to such a soul divine.
But here he felt himself at fault ;
For if the god were more aloof
And high above his faculty
Than all the stars that fill the vault,
Well might he seek in vain to see
Some sign so small he could pretend
Its inwardness to apprehend.

xvi

All was too great for man to hold
Within the limit of his brain,
And be the seeker ev'n so bold
As to endeavour forcibly
To climb the stars and thus to gain
A wider vision in the end ;
While he climbed higher, steadily
The far horizon would extend
Out and beyond for evermore,
Leaving him further than before.

THE PATH OF WISDOM

XVII

So then he wondered, " Who am I
In whom these mysteries revolve ?
Are these thoughts mine, or did they fly
Looking for minds to enter in,
Seeking some medium to resolve
Them into one resultant thought
Whence, purified, again they win
Back to the mind where they were wrought ?
If they are from the soul divine,
Then who am I now they are mine ?

XVIII

" How can I tell indeed if I
Am but a thought within a frame,
Caught by a mind when passing by,
And struggling hopelessly to free
Itself from that which has no claim
To hold it thus a prisoner
In impotent captivity ?
Perhaps it is this wanderer
Who urged me to the path I trod
That he might re-unite with God !

XIX

" If I am then the thought that flew,
And I the frame he occupied,

THE PATH OF WISDOM

And I the mind in which there grew
This power thus strangely to array
These different ' I's ' all side by side
Before a fourth ' I,' judging all,
It seems impossible to say
If there be any ' I ' at all ;
For if a god there really be,
I am of him, and he of me."

XX

From this he formed a new idea
Which, as he pondered for a time,
Slowly gained shape and shone out clear
That " god " is just a word for " soul " ;
That which in all things is sublime,
Whether an insect or a world ;
The subtle spirit of the whole
Which only slowly is unfurled
To those who seek for something grand
And build up power to understand.

XXI

At that his chain of reasoning
Broke, and his soul came dropping down,
As stoops a falcon on the wing,
Into his mind so far below.
His brows were knitted in a frown
That passed and left his opened eyes,

THE PATH OF WISDOM

With dawning comprehension slow,
Shine in a smile of faint surprise
To find his body as before
Far from the god he nearly saw.

XXII

The squirrels nibbled at the food
Placed by the people near his hand ;
He saw a partridge lead her brood,
Teaching them how to pick up ants ;
He heard the moving monkey band
Stir in the boughs above his head ;
He breathed the scent of growing plants.
“ Am I indeed so far,” he said,
“ From the great mind whose thought made these,
Who all their laws of life decrees ?

XXIII

“ If all that lives is really one,
Who made that one, and where is he
Now his creative task is done ?
If all creation sprang from thought,
What can that great creator be
Who first conceived the thought that made
His own existence out of naught ?
If each required another's aid
Some old creative force to lend,
Then is the chain without an end !

THE PATH OF WISDOM

XXIV

“ I find the path of wisdom pall,
For I am wise enough to see
That wisdom is not all in all.
Many are wise who are not kind,
And simple folk can often be
As kind or kinder than the wise.
The long retreat that made me blind
At last has opened my old eyes ;
I shall pursue the path of love
And look on wisdom from above ! ”

XXV

The children playing near his tree
Were startled by the aged voice
That called, “ Come, little ones, to me !
Come sit by me and I will tell
A tale to make your hearts rejoice ! ”
They gathered by the Yôgi's side,
And in the glamour of his spell
Their eyes awoke in wonder wide
At seeing such a shining story
Of kings and princes, gold and glory.

THE PATH OF LOVE

I TRIED to write the path of love,
But found it far too high for me
Who cannot feel, yet dimly see
A path go mounting high above
All I have felt of purest joy,
All I have gained from keenest pain,
All I have gathered since, a boy,
I first trod wisdom's path in vain
To find an everlasting wall
Veiling my vision of the All.

I failed to find the path I sought
Because the path was not in me,
But purer, higher, mounting free,
And trod by those whom love has taught
More wisdom than the wise have known,
More joy than they can hope to find
Whose eyes are fixed on joy alone,
More pain to comfort in mankind
Than they have felt who vainly hope
Blindly through pain for truth to grope.

This path is still too hard to know,
But yet the fleeting glimpse I gain

THE PATH OF LOVE

Through others' eyes is not all vain,
And leaves some hope that there may grow
A higher power in higher men
To follow newer, truer things
Now far above our human ken,
To circle wider on new wings
Until the mind of man at last
Shall in the soul of truth stand fast.

BLIND BEGGAR'S PATTERN

FOR Virtue's sake ! Oh, you that climb so high,
Hurrying on to seek the topmost shrine,
Hearken, for Virtue's sake, and heed my cry.
Give for the love of God, if not for mine !
For Virtue's sake ! My voice is hoarse with years,
Wearied with calling to the feet that fly ;
The footsteps and the voices that one hears,
While ah ! how few hear me, but hasten by
Where I sit on in sunshine and in rain ;
Forming strange pictures in my stunted mind
Of those whose feet move past, nor turn again
To greet the beggar whom they leave behind.
Listen, for Virtue's sake ! Just pause and think !
Think what it is to be forever blind !
To live my life alone ! To feel men shrink !
To be so severed from my fellow-kind
That they and I can find no common ground
On which to stand and change experience,
Except the shifting pattern of swift sound
That rings my life around as by a fence.
Think what it is to be forever bound
To feel before I dare to set my feet ;
And, when I stray, to wait till I am found,
And guided back to where I take my seat

BLIND BEGGAR'S PATTER

Beside the pilgrim path. To call and call,
Begging from those whose footsteps hurry by,
The while I strive to judge the feet that fall,
To form some concept of their kind, and try
To tune my beggar's patter to their heart.
How can we reach one heaven, you and I,
When, on this earth, you have so great a start ?
And where is heaven ? And what is the sky,
Which men describe as beautiful and great ?
Great is a word that I can comprehend,
But beauty seems to mean some sort of state
My wisdom cannot grasp, though I pretend
To know its meaning when I praise a maid.
My ill is one no wealth nor power could mend ;
For, owning wealth, I still should feel afraid
Of being robbed of what I could not spend.
Give ! For the love of Virtue ! You that go
To lay before some god your offerings.
Leave but a tithe to minimize my woe.
Am I less worthy than those cold stone things
That sit in state, while men pass to and fro
To worship what was made by human hand ?
Ah ! How the stone would laugh if it could know !
Give, for the love of God ! And I will stand
Your proxy, and will pour my tireless prayer
Into the ears of that great god of stone,
Who, being blind as I, will surely hear.
Speak to me kindly ! 'Tis not food alone,
Nor money tinkling in my shallow dish
That satisfies the soul. Nor would I own

BLIND BEGGAR'S PATTERN

This temple, were I master of one wish ;
But I would claim a friend whose life had grown
A twin with mine, whose every passing thought
Was free for me to share, and loyal to me.
I weary calling. Yet you answer naught.
Speak ! For the love of God ! What can you be
That hurry past, nor stop to throw one word
To him the gods have marked with misery ?
In name of righteousness ! Hast thou not heard ?
Then may the gods no more pay heed to thee !

SUN WORSHIP

THE mountain slopes were dark with wood,
Its rock-bound head was grey,
When, from the temple where I stood,
The bells resounded through the wood.
I heard them hail the dawn of day ;
I heard their solemn echo roll away

Deep, deep was the booming call ;
The triumph of its pride
Reverberated round the wall,
And as in answer to the call
The gates of heaven were opened wide,
To pour their gold upon the mountain-side.

The daily miracle of dawn
Broke through the mists that hung :
Another child to Hope was born ;
To Hope, the daughter of the dawn ;
Another hymn of praise was sung ;
Another gift of happiness was flung.

Fly, fogs, from the mountain's face,
Winged by the winds that blow,

SUN WORSHIP

The wakening winds that joyful race,
Exulting over earth's new face,
 While eastward all our turrets glow,
 And flash their message to the plains below.

Then high upon the temple wall,
 Arrayed in gold and white,
The priests obeyed the belfry's call,
Their anthem pealing from the wall,
 To hail the deathless god of light
 Who rose above the mountains in his might.

MOLOCH

ALL day long the fire had burned,
Slowly growing to full heat ;
All day long new idlers turned,
From the narrow crowded street,
Through the gateway of the court.
There they lounged away the hours,
Wondering if they too ought
To take the vow and brave its powers.

All the time that man-made hell
Burned more fiercely through the day,
Bound within a shallow well
Scalloped in the courtyard's clay.
Stick by stick, and log by log,
Blackened, whitened, burned to coal,
Sank into that molten bog ;
Sank, and spread, and filled the hole,
Till the weary evening sun
Sloped to rest behind the earth,
Thankful that this day was done.
Then the furnace found new birth,
Showed more redly in the dark,
Shone like phosphorus on foam,
Glowed, while each exploding spark

MOLOCH

Briefly showed the curving dome
Looming black above the fire,
Showed the trembling heat-blown palms,
Showed each slender pointed spire
Reaching up to heaven, as arms
Reach for what they most desire.

Midnight found the crowd more dense,
Vibrant with fanatic wrath,
Self-suppressed, and more intense,
More expectant to rush forth
Than the flames the logs had hidden,
Bound within them through the ages,
Till for this strange purpose bidden
Leap to life and loose their rages.
Through the body of the crowd
Quivered keen electric force,
Humming in a tone not loud,
Deep, and muttering, and hoarse.
Just as though the whole were forged
Into some exultant beast,
Growling till his rage were gorged,
Waiting fiercely for his feast.
Human feeling seemed all merged
In foul appetite for death,
Sunk in savage glee that urged
All the crowd to breathe one breath.

Flames still flickered in the well,
One step down, and four across,

MOLOCH

Four short steps to win through hell :
Who could fail so short a course ?
Only four, yet feel the heat
Striking upward from the ground !
Feel the stifling waves that beat
On the faces watching round !
One step down, and then but four,
Naked on that burning floor.

Midnight strikes, the hollow gong,
Booming loud beneath the vaulting,
Rings the signal for the song ;
Voices of the vowed exalting,
Marching slowly to their fate
Through the slow unfolding gate.

Now the priests bring forth their god,
Slowly moving, deeply chanting ;
On their shoulders see him nod,
Blind and deaf to all their vaunting,
Smiling at their boundless claims,
Smiling at the flickering flames.

Round the furnace in a ring,
Past that silent smiling figure,
Round the fire they move and sing,
Praise his wisdom, praise his vigour.
Why should men their voices raise ;
Would god die without their praise ?

MOLOCH

Round, and round, and round they file,
Round, and round, with speed increasing ;
Still their god does naught but smile,
Smiles as he has smiled unceasing
For a thousand silent years,
Smiled at praise, at love, at tears.

Faster ! Faster ! Faster now !
Faster, while the leaping flames
Glance upon the god's calm brow.
Faster while they shout his names :
Names of splendour, names of power.
Will names help them in this hour ?

Once again the hollow gong
Lends the impulse of its thunder.
Louder peals the triumph song.
Forward, in a wave of wonder,
Sway the people, while their hum
Murmurs like a distant drum.

Suddenly a boy steps down.
One step down. They smell the burning.
Will he gain the victor's crown ?
Four across. The faces turning
Watch him licked by hungry flame,
Shout their god's most awful name.

Now that one has led the way,
Others very swiftly follow,

MOLOCH

Follow through like lads at play,
Track him through that flaming hollow ;
Follow through, and all the while
God looks on with god-like smile.

Scorched and blind they struggle through.
Boom the gongs with deaf'ning rumble.
All have gained their god but two :
Two whose shrinking footsteps stumble :
Two whose souls were not quite pure :
Two whose feet were not quite sure.

Loud the priests new chorus raise ;
Damned are those who fall through terror !
Great is god who can appraise,
Judge and punish human error !
Shout ye people of the crowd !
Just is god, and strong, and proud !

The people parted to their homes,
The priests withdrew beneath their domes,
The fire glowed red upon the palms,
The stars looked down and saw the arms
Of all the high uplifted spires
Yearn for the love of their far fires.
Deep in his shrine the god still smiled.
But one poor soul who sought her child
Wept by that hell, nor ceased to mourn
Till chased away by priests at dawn.

A LOST ART

WHEN I was a child not ten years old
I loved to lie in the grass,
While sunlight flecked my face with gold,
I harked to the tales the breezes told,
As they sauntered softly past.

And free from servitude to words,
Feelings and thoughts flew by,
Flew swiftly by like flocks of birds,
Or the wild white clouds whose silent herds
Speed o'er the fields of sky.

I lay and let my senses steep
In the rays of the living sun,
While there grew a peace more sweet than sleep,
Till self was sunk in the soundless deep
Where I and the world were one.

HIDE AND SEEK

A Duet for Eileen

O WHERE shall I hide you, my little smiling child?
Whither shall we hie ourselves away?
Down among the rushes, by the river running wild,
Where the water-birds are calling all the day.

O what if they pry in the rushes with a boat?
Tell me, if we hear the hunter's call:
We'll sit upon the lily leaves, and down the river float
To the shadows where the forest flowers fall.

O what if they follow down the river flowing free?
Tell me how to leave them far behind.
We'll hide among the blossoms on the tallest forest tree,
In the happy swinging gardens of the wind.

There where the bees suck the honey from the flowers,
Where the butterflies are shining in the sun,
Where the birds all warble through the summer's
smiling hours,
We will hide until the twilight has begun.

A CHILD'S TALE

AND one dark evening when the wind blew wild,
Howling around the hills behind the house,
She sat as silent as a little mouse,
Watching the flickering flames, while he beguiled
Her childish terror with an endless tale.
Then, as he turned the pages of the years,
Conquering smiles broke through and dried her tears ;
While he grew younger with the rising gale ;
Until the two of them flew hand in hand,
Where scarlet streamers floated from the towers,
And waves came riding up the golden sand,
Where children bathed, and played among the flowers
Till she sped on across the land of dreams,
While he came back and watched the fire's last gleams.

TRUE CLAIRVOYANCE

THERE are days when thought comes clear, and
 swift, and keen,
Beautiful days, too short, and ah ! too rare,
When words may rest in sleep, for thoughts are seen
In coloured pictures cast upon the air.

Problems of misery, or want, or wrong,
Unfold themselves, resolving view by view,
And self is but a note in some great song
Of courage. But, alas, such days are few.

On days like these, we have but one desire,
To give our uttermost for human-kind,
And faith shines forth in flames of living fire,
That all is clearly good, though sadly blind.

These days, that come but after we have mused,
With sleeping life in trust, for weary hours,
Ought to be seized upon and boldly used ;
For days of vision give men god-like powers.

And when they fade, and ignorance returns,
With clinging fogs that stupefy the soul,

TRUE CLAIRVOYANCE

'Tis hard to feed the flame that dimly burns,
And harder still to steer toward the goal.

So, while they last, they should be given free,
For giving freely leaves the soul more clean ;
And in their memory we sadly see
The higher sort of man we might have been.

THE FISHERMAN

BETWEEN the reefs that guard the shore,
The waves roll through and break ahead,
And there upon a rock I saw
A man who sought his daily bread.

He stood upon the rock alone :
The waves rolled up and thundered by :
But still he stood upon the stone,
Engraved against the western sky.

White were the rocks with whistling spray :
The waves rolled in and thundered past :
And homeward to the darkening bay
The long canoes came flying fast.

Adown the golden afterglow
The boats flew by and raced for home,
But still he watched his line below,
And cast it on the hissing foam.

Bright was the moonlight on the palms :
The waves rolled on and thundered through :
When, heedless all of other charms,
Out from the deep a fish he drew.

THE FISHERMAN

So was accomplished his great end :
The waves roll on their thunder still :
I wish the gods to each would send
Some aim as easy to fulfil.

THE REEF

OUT on the reef where the rollers break
There stands a lonely rock ;
And fishing there, I have felt it quake
To the sea's relentless shock.

Swift things like spiders wander there,
In the wrath of the breaker's comb ;
In the shattering crash 'twixt sea and air
They fix their sleepless home.

The nimble spiny-legged crabs,
Like ghouls of an older age,
Swarm on the outer sea-swept slabs,
In the path of the ocean's rage.

The waves sink down, and the rocks rise black,
Alive with things that crawl :
The smothering roar of the waves sweep back,
And thunder to their fall.

Savage and wild on their border fief
The rock-born creatures range :
The life that clings to the smitten reef
Is wild, and fierce, and strange.

THE REEF

Behind the rock, on the inner side,
The sea is still and warm :
In coral gardens branching wide
The coloured fishes swarm.

Among the sea-anemones,
Among the coral scrolls,
As delicate as butterflies,
There flit the tinted shoals.

Those creatures of the outer rocks
Seem more remote to me
Than seem these dainty painted flocks
In the gardens of the sea.

But those wild, restless, savage things
Are more advanced than flowers ;
Some chord within their nature rings
To some deep note in ours.

Although we share no single thought,
We seek some common goal.
Enough that they are fairly wrought,
And worthy of the whole.

NOTES

Farewell, Angora.—We were kept in the old Armenian monastery, called The Wank, at Angora. A strange, rambling building, half stronghold and half farm, four-square and containing several large paved courts. The Armenian massacres were, I believe, still proceeding in and near the town, but we saw nothing of them. We were too closely kept. In the valleys near-by were a number of deserted Armenian houses and vineyards. The graveyard attached to The Wank contained the tombstones of several wanderers, English, French, and Danish, the oldest being that of William Black, Mercator Anglii, dated 1681 A.D.

The Armenian Church.—At the end of March 1916 three British naval officers escaped from Afion Kara Hissar. The remainder of us, British, French, and Russians, were cast forthwith into an empty Armenian church, and kept there for seven weeks. We filled it completely with our property, for even prisoners acquire property extraordinarily quickly, and the floor looked like some strange encampment without tents. The first night the Russians kept watch, tramping up and down until dawn, so as to be ready when the Turks came to cut our throats. The French and English slept.

The Ballad of Swula Bay—The Brigadier.—Since coming home I am glad to hear that the Brigadier's leg was saved for him after all. Long may he enjoy the use of it.

NOTES

The Fourth Man.—Members of two escape parties, one unsuccessful from Turkey, and one successful from Germany, have told me that they *and their companions* shared a delusion that an extra and friendly person accompanied them. In each case there were the same accompaniments of fatigue, nervous strain, and short food.

The Kingdom of Ayanâr.—Ayanâr is a wood-god who rules in the wild Willachiya Korale, a district in the North Central Province of Ceylon. He is worshipped by the Sinhalese and Veddhas of that forest, but has neither image nor temple. He is a benevolent deity on the whole, though a trifle malicious if ignored. He is a personal friend of the writer, or supposed to be, but I know little of him save what is written here.

The Clan of the Bow, the Dunnagatwarigé, is a clan of Veddhas inhabiting Ayanâr's country. There are very few of them left. I saw myself an elephant captive in a waterhole exactly as described, and while I was watching him three bears came out from the forest. But, unlike Undiya, I had a rifle. One of these Veddhas taught me how to make fire by stick friction.

Tales from the Mahawansa.—The Mahawansa is one of the most remarkable books in the world. It was a chronicle of the Kings of Lanka (Ceylon) originally compiled in about the fifth century A.D. from earlier legends and from written books now lost. Mâhânâma, the original author, brought it up to near his own times, from nearly 1000 years before. Subsequent monks added to Mâhânâma's work, and the book was continued until 1815 A.D., when the British, at the request of the Kandiyân Sinhalese, took over their government.

Writing in captivity I had perforce to trust only to my memory for these tales, but I believe them to be substantially correct, though in several instances I have given names to people who were not named in the

NOTES

chronicle. I have not yet had a chance of checking my remembrances, and trust that any hypercritical scholar will bear the circumstances in mind.

The Messenger.—To the best of my recollection this took place in about the ninth century A.D. I don't think the messenger's name was given, but ABHAYA means "the fearless."

The Unveiling of Dhātusena.—This story is historical and is to be found in the thirty-eighth chapter of the Sinhalese history named the Māhāwansa, a book which was written by a priest named Māhānāma, who may have been the very man described herein. All the places described exist as described, and all the people bear their own names except the princess. Her name is not stated, so, as a name was essential, I took for her the name of another princess of Lanka. The cartman lived on until the end of Kāsyapa's reign of eighteen years, and then was made a doorkeeper of the palace by Moggallāna.

Kāsyapa.—With the exception of the Chinaman, the characters in this story are historical, and the facts and actions attributed to them are in the main drawn from genuine old Sinhalese records of those times. Several Chinese book-collecting monks visited Ceylon, the most famous being Fa Hien, who sojourned in Anurādhapura for some years in the fifth century A.D., and who, on his return to China, wrote a very entertaining book describing his travels. Hiuen Tsang, in the seventh century A.D., also gave some account of Ceylon in his most interesting book, but did not cross the sea from South India, as the island kingdom was at that time in a troublous state. Migāra fell into disgrace, later on, in Moggallāna's court. The remains of Kāsyapa's citadel and its galleries at Sīgiriya are still among the most remarkable ruins in Asia. The ruins of the nunnery were excavated in the year 1906 by the Archæological Survey, of which I was then a member:

J. S.





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Still, John
Poems in captivity

