

Georgian Poetry 1911-12

Various

Edited by Sir Edward Marsh

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GEORGIAN POETRY

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1911-1912

DEDICATED

TO

ROBERT BRIDGES

BY THE WRITERS

AND THE EDITOR

PREFATORY NOTE

This volume is issued in the belief that English poetry is now once again putting on a new strength and beauty.

Few readers have the leisure or the zeal to investigate each volume as it appears; and the process of recognition is often slow. This collection, drawn entirely from the publications of the past two years, may if it is fortunate help the lovers of poetry to realize that we are at the beginning of another "Georgian period" which may take rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past.

It has no pretension to cover the field. Every reader will notice the absence of poets whose work would be a necessary ornament of any anthology not limited by a definite aim. Two years ago some of the writers represented had published nothing; and only a very few of the others were known except to the eagerest "watchers of the skies." Those few are here because within the chosen period their work seemed to have gained some accession of power.

My grateful thanks are due to the writers who have lent me their poems, and to the publishers (Messrs Elkin Mathews, Sidgwick and Jackson, Methuen, Fiffeld, Constable, Nutt, Dent, Duckworth, Longmans, and Maunsel, and the Editors of 'Basileon', 'Rhythm', and the 'English Review') under whose imprint they have appeared.

E.M.

Oct. 1912.

"Of all materials for labour, dreams are the hardest; and the artificer in ideas is the chief of workers, who out of nothing will make a piece of work that may stop a child from crying or lead nations to higher things. For what is it to be a poet? It is to see at a glance the glory of the world, to see beauty in all its forms and manifestations, to feel ugliness like a pain, to resent the wrongs of others as bitterly as one's own, to know mankind as others know single men, to know Nature as botanists know a flower, to be thought a fool, to hear at moments the clear voice of God."

DUNSANY

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LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

THE SALE OF SAINT THOMAS

[A quay with vessels moored]

Thomas:

To India! Yea, here I may take ship;
From here the courses go over the seas,
Along which the intent prowls wonderfully
Nose like lean hounds, and track their journeys out,
Making for harbours as some sleuth was laid

For them to follow on their shifting road.
Again I front my appointed ministry.--
But why the Indian lot to me? Why mine
Such fearful gospelling? For the Lord knew
What a frail soul He gave me, and a heart
Lame and unlikely for the large events.--
And this is worse than Baghdad! though that was
A fearful brink of travel. But if the lots,
That gave to me the Indian duty, were
Shuffled by the unseen skill of Heaven, surely
That fear of mine in Baghdad was the same
Marvellous Hand working again, to guard
The landward gate of India from me. There
I stood, waiting in the weak early dawn
To start my journey; the great caravan's
Strange cattle with their snoring breaths made steam
Upon the air, and (as I thought) sadly
The beasts at market-booths and awnings gay
Of shops, the city's comfortable trade,
Lookt, and then into months of plodding lookt.
And swiftly on my brain there came a wind
Of vision; and I saw the road mapt out
Along the desert with a chalk of bones;
I saw a famine and the Afghan greed
Waiting for us, spears at our throats, all we
Made women by our hunger; and I saw
Gigantic thirst grieving our mouths with dust,
Scattering up against our breathing salt
Of blown dried dung, till the taste eat like fires
Of a wild vinegar into our sheathed marrows;
And a sudden decay thicken'd all our bloods
As rotten leaves in fall will baulk a stream;
Then my kill'd life the muncht food of jackals.--
The wind of vision died in my brain; and lo,
The jangling of the caravan's long gait
Was small as the luting of a breeze in grass
Upon my ears. Into the waiting thirst
Camels and merchants all were gone, while I
Had been in my amazement. Was this not
A sign? God with a vision tript me, lest
Those tall fiends that ken for my approach
In middle Asia, Thirst and his grisly band
Of plagues, should with their brigand fingers stop
His message in my mouth. Therefore I said,
If India is the place where I must preach,
I am to go by ship, not overland.
And here my ship is berthed. But worse, far worse
Than Baghdad, is this roadstead, the brown sails,
All the enginery of going on sea,
The tackle and the rigging, tholes and sweeps,
The prows built to put by the waves, the masts
Stayed for a hurricane; and lo, that line
Of gilded water there! the sun has drawn
In a long narrow band of shining oil
His light over the sea; how evilly move
Ripples along that golden skin!--the gleam
Works like a muscular thing! like the half-gorged
Sleepy swallowing of a serpent's neck.
The sea lives, surely! My eyes swear to it;

And, like a murderous smile that glimpses through
A villain's courtesy, that twitching dazzle
Parts the kind mood of weather to bewray
The feasted waters of the sea, stretched out
In lazy gluttony, expecting prey.
How fearful is this trade of sailing! Worse
Than all land-evils is the water-way
Before me now.--What, cowardice? Nay, why
Trouble myself with ugly words? 'Tis prudence,
And prudence is an admirable thing.
Yet here's much cost--these packages piled up,
Ivory doubtless, emeralds, gums, and silks,
All these they trust on shipboard? Ah, but I,
I who have seen God, I to put myself
Amid the heathen outrage of the sea
In a deal-wood box! It were plain folly.
There is naught more precious in the world than I:
I carry God in me, to give to men.
And when has the sea been friendly unto man?
Let it but guess my errand, it will call
The dangers of the air to wreak upon me,
Winds to juggle the puny boat and pinch
The water into unbelievable creases.
And shall my soul, and God in my soul, drown?
Or venture drowning?--But no, no; I am safe.
Smooth as believing souls over their deaths
And over agonies shall slide henceforth
To God, so shall my way be blest amid
The quiet crouching terrors of the sea,
Like panthers when a fire weakens their hearts;
Ay, this huge sin of nature, the salt sea,
Shall be afraid of me, and of the mind
Within me, that with gesture, speech and eyes
Of the Messiah flames. What element
Dare snarl against my going, what incubus dare
Remember to be fiendish, when I light
My whole being with memory of Him?
The malice of the sea will slink from me,
And the air be harmless as a muzzled wolf;
For I am a torch, and the flame of me is God.

A Ship's Captain:

You are my man, my passenger?

Thomas:

I am.

I go to India with you.

Captain:

Well, I hope so.

There's threatening in the weather. Have you a mind
To hug your belly to the slanted deck,
Like a louse on a whip-top, when the boat
Spins on an axle in the hissing gales?

Thomas:

Fear not. 'Tis likely indeed that storms are now
Plotting against our voyage; ay, no doubt
The very bottom of the sea prepares
To stand up mountainous or reach a limb
Out of his night of water and huge shingles,
That he and the waves may break our keel. Fear not;
Like those who manage horses, I've a word
Will fasten up within their evil natures
The meanings of the winds and waves and reefs.

Captain:

You have a talisman? I have one too;
I know not if the storms think much of it.
I may be shark's meat yet. And would your spell
Be daunting to a cuttle, think you now?
We had a bout with one on our way here;
It had green lidless eyes like lanterns, arms
As many as the branches of a tree,
But limber, and each one of them wise as a snake.
It laid hold of our bulwarks, and with three
Long knowing arms, slimy, and of a flesh
So tough they'd fool a hatchet, searcht the ship,
And stole out of the midst of us all a man;
Yes, and he the proudest man upon the seas
For the rare powerful talisman he'd got.
And would yours have done better?

Thomas:

I am one
Not easily frightened. I'm for India.
You will not put me from my way with talk.

Captain:

My heart, I never thought of frightening you.--
Well, here's both tide and wind, and we may not start.

Thomas:

Not start? I pray you, do.

Captain:

It's no use praying;
I dare not. I've not half my cargo yet.

Thomas:

What do you wait for, then?

Captain: A carpenter.

Thomas:

You are talking strangely.

Captain:

But not idly.

I might as well broach all my blood at once
Here as I stand, as sail to India back
Without a carpenter on board;--O strangely
Wise are our kings in the killing of men!

Thomas:

But does your king then need a carpenter?

Captain:

Yes, for he dreamed a dream; and like a man
Who, having eaten poison, and with all
Force of his life turned out the crazing drug,
Has only a weak and wrestled nature left
That gives in foolishly to some bad desire
A healthy man would laugh at; so our king
Is left desiring by his venomous dream.
But, being a king, the whole land aches with him.

Thomas:

What dream was that?

Captain:

A palace made of souls;--

Ay, there's a folly for a man to dream!
He saw a palace covering all the land,
Big as the day itself, made of a stone
That answered with a better gleam than glass
To the sun's greeting, fashioned like the sound
Of laughter copied into shining shape:
So the king said. And with him in the dream
There was a voice that fleered upon the king:
'This is the man who makes much of himself
For filling the common eyes with palaces
Gorgeously bragging out his royalty:
Whereas he hath not one that seemeth not
In work, in height, in posture on the ground,
A hut, a peasant's dingy shed, to mine.
And all his excellent woods, metals, and stones,
The things he's filched out of the earth's old pockets
And hoised up into walls and domes; the gold,
Ebony, agate stairs, wainscots of jade,
The windows of jargoon, and heavenly lofts

Of marble, all the stuff he takes to be wealth,
Reckons like savage mud and wattle against
The matter of my building.'--And the king,
Gloating upon the white sheen of that palace,
And weeping like a girl ashamed, inquired
'What is that stone?' And the voice answered him,
'Soul.' 'But in my palaces too,' said he,
'There should be soul built: I have driven nations,
What with quarrying, what with craning, down
To death, and sure their souls stay in my work.'
And 'Mud and wattle' sneered the voice again;
But added, 'In the west there is a man,
A slave, a carpenter, whose heart has been
Apprenticed to the skill that built my reign,
This beauty; and were he master of your gangs,
He'd build you a palace that would look like mine.'--
So now no ship may sail from India,
Since the king's scornful dream, unless it bring
A carpenter among its homeward lading:
And carpenters are getting hard to find.

Thomas:

And have none made for the king his desire?

Captain:

Many have tried, with roasting living men
In queer huge kilns, and other sleights, to found
A glass of human souls; and others seek
With marvellous stone to please our desperate king.
Always at last their own tormented bodies
Delight the cruelty of the king's heart.

Thomas:

Well then, I hope you'll find your carpenter,
And soon. I would not that we wait too long;
I loathe a dallying journey.--I should suppose
We'd have good sailing at this season, now?

Captain:

Why, you were looking, a few minutes gone,
For rare wild storms: I hope we'll have them too;
I want to see you work that talisman
You boast about: I've a great love for spells.

Thomas:

Let it be storm or calm, so we be sailing.
I long have wished to voyage into mid sea,
To give my senses rest from wondering
On this perplexed grammar of the land

Written in men and women, the strange trees,
Herbs, and those things so like to souls, the beasts.
My wilful senses will keep perilously
Employed with these my brain, and weary it
Still to be asking. But on the high seas
Such throng'd reality is left behind,--
Only vast air and water, and the hue
That always seems like special news of God.
Surely 'tis half way to eternity
To go where only size and colour live;
And I could purify my mind from all
Worldly amazement by imagining
Beyond my senses into God's great Heaven,
If I were in mid sea. I have dreamed of this.
Wondrous too, I think, to sail at night,
While shoals of moonlight flickers dance beside,
Like swimming glee of fishes scaled in gold,
Curvetting in thwart bounds over the swell;
The perceiving flesh, in bliss of such a beauty,
Must sure feel fine as spiritual sight.--
Moods have been on me, too, when I would be
Sailing recklessly through wild darkness, where
Gigantic whispers of a harassed sea
Fill the whole world of air, and I stand up
To breast the danger of the loosen'd sky,
And feel my immortality like music,--
Yea, I alone in the broken world, firm things
All gone to monstrous flurry, knowing myself
An indestructible word spoken by God.--
This is a small, small boat?

Captain:

Small is nothing,
A bucket will do, so it know how to ride
Top upward: cleverness is the thing in boats.
And I wish this were cleverer: she goes crank
At times just when she should go sober.
But what? Boats are but girls for whimsies: men
Must let them have their freaks.

Thomas:

Have you good skill
In seamanship?

Captain:

Well, I am not drowned yet,
Though I'm a grey man and have been at sea
Longer than you've been walking. My old sight
Can tell Mizar from Alcor still.

Thomas:

Ay, so;
Doubtless you'll bring me safe to India.
But being there--tell me now of the land:
How use they strangers there?

Captain:

Queerly, sometimes.

If the king's moody, and tired of feeling nerves
Mildly made happy with soft jewel of silk,
Odours and wines and slim lascivious girls,
And yearns for sharper thrills to pierce his brain,
He often finds a stranger handy then.

Thomas:

Why, what do you mean?

Captain:

There was a merchant came
To Travancore, and could not speak our talk;
And, it chanced, he was brought before the throne
Just when the king was weary of sweet pleasures.
So, to better his tongue, a rope was bent
Beneath his oxters, up he was hauled, and fire
Let singe the soles of his feet, until his legs
Wriggled like frying eels; then the king's dogs
Were set to hunt the hirpling man. The king
Laught greatly and cried, 'But give the dogs words they know,
And they'll be tame.'--Have you the Indian speech?

Thomas:

Not yet: it will be given me, I trust.

Captain:

You'd best make sure of the gift. Another stranger,
Who swore he knew of better gods than ours,
Seemed to the king troubled with fleas, and slaves
Were told to groom him smartly, which they did
Thoroughly with steel combs, until at last
They curried the living flesh from off his bones
And stript his face of gristle, till he was
Skull and half skeleton and yet alive.
You're not for dealing in new gods?

Thomas:

Not I.

Was the man killed?

Captain:

He lived a little while;
But the flies killed him.

Thomas:

Flies? I hope India
Is not a fly-plagued land? I abhor flies.

Captain:

You will see strange ones, for our Indian life
Hath wonderful fierce breeding. Common earth
With us quickens to buzzing flights of wings
As readily as a week-old carcase here
Thrown in a sunny marsh. Why, we have wasps
That make your hornets seem like pretty midges;
And there be flies in India will drink
Not only blood of bulls, tigers, and bears,
But pierce the river-horses' creasy leather,
Ay, worry crocodiles through their cuirasses
And prick the metal fishes when they bask.
You'll feel them soon, with beaks like sturdy pins,
Treating their stinging thirsts with your best blood.
A man can't walk a mile in India
Without being the business of a throng'd
And moving town of flies; they hawk at a man
As bold as little eagles, and as wild.
And, I suppose, only a fool will blame them.
Flies have the right to sink wells in our skin
All as men to bore parcht earth for water.
But I must do a job on board, and then
Search the town afresh for a carpenter.

Thomas: (alone)

Ay, loose tongue, I know how thou art prompted.
Satan's cunning device thou art, to sap
My heart with chatter'd fears. How easy it is
For a stiff mind to hold itself upright
Against the cords of devilish suggestion
Tackled about it, though kept downward strained
With sly, masterful winches made of fear.
Yea, when the mind is warned what engines mean
To ply it into grovelling, and thought set firm,
The tugging strings fail like a cobweb-stuff.
Not as in Baghdad is it with me now;
Nor canst thou, Satan, by a prating mouth
Fell my tall purpose to a flatlong scorn.
I can divide the check of God's own hand
From tempting such as this: India is mine!--
Ay, fiend, and if thou utter thy storming heart
Into the ocean sea, as into mob
A rebel utters turbulence and rage,
And raise before my path swelling barriers
Of hatred soul'd in water, yet will I strike
My purpose, and God's purpose, clean through all
The ridges of thy power. And I will show
This mask that the devil wears, this old shipman,
A thing to make his proud heart of evil
Writhe like a trodden snake; yea, he shall see
How godly faith can go upon the huge
Fury of forces bursting out of law,
Easily as a boy goes on windy grass.--
O marvel! that my little life of mind
Can by mere thinking the unsizeable
Creature of sea enslave! I must believe it.
The mind hath many powers beyond name
Deep womb'd within it, and can shoot strange vigours:

Men there have been who could so grimly look
That soldiers' hearts went out like candle flames
Before their eyes, and the blood perisht in them.--
But I--could I do that? Would I not feel
The power in me if 'twas there? And yet
'Twere a child's game to what I have to do,
For days and days with sleepless faith oppress
And terrorise the demon sea. I think
A man might, as I saw my Master once,
Pass unharmed through a storm of men, yet fail
At this that lies before me: men are mind,
And mind can conquer mind; but how can it quell
The unappointed purpose of great waters?--
Well, say the sea is past: why, then I have
My feet but on the threshold of my task,
To gospel India,--my single heart
To seize into the order of its beat
All the strange blood of India, my brain
To lord the dark thought of that tann'd mankind!--
O horrible those sweltry places are,
Where the sun comes so close, it makes the earth
Burn in a frenzy of breeding,--smoke and flame
Of lives burning up from agoniz'd loam!
Those monstrous sappy jungles of clutcht growth,
Enormous weed hugging enormous weed,
What can such fearful increase have to do
With prospering bounty? A rage works in the ground,
Incurably, like frantic lechery,
Pouring its passion out in crops and spawns.
'Tis as the mighty spirit of life, that here
Walketh beautifully praising, glad of God,
Should, stepping on the poison'd Indian shore,
Breathing the Indian air of fire and steams,
Fling herself into a craze of hideous dancing,
The green gown whipping her swift limbs, all her body
Writhen to speak inutterable desire,
Tormented by a glee of hating God.
Nay, it must be, to visit India,
That frantic pomp and hurrying forth of life,
As if a man should enter at unawares
The dreaming mind of Satan, gorgeously
Imagining his eternal hell of lust.--

They say the land is full of apes, which have
Their own gods and worship; how ghastly, this!--
That demons (for it must be so) should build,
In mockery of man's upward faith, the souls
Of monkeys, those lewd mammets of mankind,
Into a dreadful farce of adoration!
And flies! a land of flies! where the hot soil
Foul with ceaseless decay steams into flies!
So thick they pile themselves in the air above
Their meal of filth, they seem like breathing heaps
Of formless life mounded upon the earth;
And buzzing always like the pipes and strings
Of solemn music made for sorcerers.--
I abhor flies,--to see them stare upon me
Out of their little faces of gibbous eyes;
To feel the dry cool skin of their bodies alight

Perching upon my lips!--O yea, a dream,
A dream of impious obscene Satan, this
Monstrous frenzy of life, the Indian being!
And there are men in the dream! What men are they?
I've heard, naught relishes their brains so much
As to tie down a man and tease his flesh
Infamously, until a hundred pains
Hound the desiring life out of his body,
Filling his nerves with such a fearful zest
That the soul overstrained shatters beneath it.
Must I preach God to these murderous hearts?
I would my lot had fallen to go and dare
Death from the silent dealing of Northern cold!--

O, but I would face all these Indian fears,
The horror of the huge power of life,
The beasts all fierce and venomous, the men
With cruel souls, learned to invent pain,
All these and more, if I had any hope
That, braving them, Lord Christ prosper'd through me.
If Christ desired India, He had sent
The band of us, soldier'd in one great purpose,
To strike His message through those dark vast tribes
But one man!--O surely it is folly,
And we misread the lot! One man, to thrust,
Even though in his soul the lamp was kindled
At God's own hands, one man's lit soul to thrust
The immense Indian darkness out of the world!
For human flesh there breeds as furiously
As the green things and the cattle; and it is all,
All this enormity of measureless folk,
Penn'd in a land so close to the devil's reign
The very apes have faith in him.--No, no;
Impetuous brains mistake the signs of God
Too easily. God would not have me waste
My zeal for Him in this wild enterprise,
Of going alone to swarming India;--one man,
One mortal voice, to charm those myriad ears
Away from the fiendish clamour of Indian gods,
One man preaching the truth against the huge
Bray of the gongs and horns of the Indian priests!
A cup of wine poured in the sea were not
More surely lost in the green and brackish depths,
Than the fire and fragrance of my doctrine poured
Into that multitudinous pond of men,
India.--Shipman! Master of the ship!--
I have thought better of this journey; now
I find I am not meant to go.

Captain: Not meant?

Thomas:
I would say, I had forgotten Indian air
Is full of fevers; and my health is bad
For holding out against fever.

Captain:
As you please.
I keep your fare, though.

Thomas: O, 'tis yours.--Good sailing!

[As he makes to depart, a Noble Stranger is seen approaching along the quay.]

Captain:
Well, here's a marvel: 'Tis a king, for sure!
'Twould take the taxes of a world to dress
A man in that silken gold, and all those gems.
What a flash the light makes of him; nay, he burns;
And he's here on the quay all by himself,
Not even a slave to fan him!--Man, you're ailing!
You look like death; is it the falling sickness?
Or has the mere thought of the Indian journey
Made your marrow quail with a cold fever?

The Stranger: (to the Captain)

You are the master of this ship?

Captain: I am.

Stranger:
This huddled man belongs to me: a slave
Escaped my service.

Captain:
Lord, I knew not that.
But you are in good time.

Stranger:
And was the slave
For putting out with you? Where are you bound?

Captain:
To India. First he would sail, and then
Again he would not. But, my Lord, I swear
I never guesst he was a runaway.

Stranger:
Well, he shall have his mind and go with you
To India: a good slave he is, but bears
A restless thought. He has slipt off before,
And vexes me still to be watching him.
We'll make a bargain of him.

Captain:

I, my Lord?

I have no need of slaves: I am too poor.

Stranger:

For twenty silver pieces he is yours.

Captain:

That's cheap, if he has skill. Yes, there might be
Profit in him at that. Has he a trade?

Stranger:

He is a carpenter.

Captain:

A carpenter!

Why, for a good one I'd give all my purse.

Stranger:

No, twenty silver pieces is the price;
Though 'tis a slave a king might joy to own.
I've taught him to imagine palaces
So high, and tower'd so nobly, they might seem
The marvelling of a God-delighted heart
Escaping into ecstasy; he knows,
Moreover, of a stuff so rare it makes
Smaragdus and the dragon-stone despised;
And yet the quarries whereof he is wise
Would yield enough to house the tribes of the world
In palaces of beautiful shining work.

Captain

Lo there! why, that is it: the carpenter
I am to bring is needed for to build
The king's new palace.

Stranger: Yea? He is your man.

Captain:

Come on, my man. I'll put your cunning heels
Where they'll not budge more than a shuffled inch.
My lord, if you'll bide with the rascal here
I'll get the irons ready. Here's your sum.--

Stranger:

Now, Thomas, know thy sin. It was not fear;
Easily may a man crouch down for fear,
And yet rise up on firmer knees, and face

The hailing storm of the world with graver courage.
But prudence, prudence is the deadly sin,
And one that groweth deep into a life,
With hardening roots that clutch about the breast.
For this refuses faith in the unknown powers
Within man's nature; shrewdly bringeth all
Their inspiration of strange eagerness
To a judgment bought by safe experience;
Narrows desire into the scope of thought.
But it is written in the heart of man,
Thou shalt no larger be than thy desire.
Thou must not therefore stoop thy spirit's sight
To pore only within the candle-gleam
Of conscious wit and reasonable brain;
But search into the sacred darkness lying
Outside thy knowledge of thyself, the vast
Measureless fate, full of the power of stars,
The outer noiseless heavens of thy soul.
Keep thy desire closed in the room of light
The labouring fires of thy mind have made,
And thou shalt find the vision of thy spirit
Pitifully dazzled to so shrunk a ken,
There are no spacious puissances about it,
But send desire often forth to scan
The immense night which is thy greater soul;
Knowing the possible, see thou try beyond it
Into impossible things, unlikely ends;
And thou shalt find thy knowledgeable desire
Grow large as all the regions of thy soul,
Whose firmament doth cover the whole of Being,
And of created purpose reach the ends.

* * * * *

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

THE END OF THE WORLD

The snow had fallen many nights and days;
The sky was come upon the earth at last,
Sifting thinly down as endlessly
As though within the system of blind planets
Something had been forgot or overdriven.
The dawn now seemed neglected in the grey
Where mountains were unbuilt and shadowless trees
Rootlessly paused or hung upon the air.
There was no wind, but now and then a sigh
Crossed that dry falling dust and rifted it
Through crevices of slate and door and casement.
Perhaps the new moon's time was even past.

Outside, the first white twilights were too void
Until a sheep called once, as to a lamb,
And tenderness crept everywhere from it;
But now the flock must have strayed far away.
The lights across the valley must be veiled,
The smoke lost in the greyness or the dusk.
For more than three days now the snow had thatched
That cow-house roof where it had ever melted
With yellow stains from the beasts' breath inside;
But yet a dog howled there, though not quite lately.
Someone passed down the valley swift and singing.
Yes, with locks spreaded like a son of morning;
But if he seemed too tall to be a man
It was that men had been so long unseen,
Or shapes loom larger through a moving snow.
And he was gone and food had not been given him.
When snow slid from an overweighted leaf,
Shaking the tree, it might have been a bird
Slipping in sleep or shelter, whirring wings;
Yet never bird fell out, save once a dead one--
And in two days the snow had covered it.
The dog had howled again--or thus it seemed
Until a lean fox passed and cried no more.
All was so safe indoors where life went on
Glad of the close enfolding snow--O glad
To be so safe and secret at its heart,
Watching the strangeness of familiar things.
They knew not what dim hours went on, went by,
For while they slept the clock stopt newly wound
As the cold hardened. Once they watched the road,
Thinking to be remembered. Once they doubted
If they had kept the sequence of the days,
Because they heard not any sound of bells.
A butterfly, that hid until the Spring
Under a ceiling's shadow, dropt, was dead.
The coldness seemed more nigh, the coldness deepened
As a sound deepens into silences;
It was of earth and came not by the air;
The earth was cooling and drew down the sky.
The air was crumbling. There was no more sky.
Rails of a broken bed charred in the grate,
And when he touched the bars he thought the sting
Came from their heat--he could not feel such cold ...
She said 'O, do not sleep,
Heart, heart of mine, keep near me. No, no; sleep.
I will not lift his fallen, quiet eyelids,
Although I know he would awaken then--
He closed them thus but now of his own will.
He can stay with me while I do not lift them.'

BABEL: THE GATE OF THE GOD

Lost towers impend, copeless primeval props
Of the new threatening sky, and first rude digits
Of awe remonstrance and uneasy power
Thrust out by man when speech sank back in his throat:

Then had the last rocks ended bubbling up
And rhythms of change within the heart begun
By a blind need that would make Springs and Winters;
Pylons and monoliths went on by ages,
Mycenae and Great Zimbabwe came about;
Cowed hearts in This conceived a pyramid
That leaned to hold itself upright, a thing
Foredoomed to limits, death and an easy apex;
Then postulants for the stars' previous wisdom
Standing on Carthage must get nearer still;
While in Chaldea an altitude of god
Being mooted, and a saurian unearthed
Upon a mountain stirring a surmise
Of floods and alterations of the sea,
A round-walled tower must rise upon Senaar
Temple and escape to god the ascertained.
These are decayed like Time's teeth in his mouth,
Black cavities and gaps, yet earth is darkened
By their deep-sunken and unfounded shadows
And memories of man's earliest theme of towers.

Space--the old source of time--should be undone,
Eternity defined, by men who trusted
Another tier would equal them with god.
A city of grimed brick-kilns, squat truncations,
Hunched like spread toads yet high beneath their circles
Of low packed smoke, assemblages of thunder
That glowed upon their under sides by night
And lit like storm small shadowless workmen's toil.
Meaningless stumps, upturned bare roots, remained
In fields of mashy mud and trampled leaves;
While, if a horse died hauling, plasterers
Knelt on a flank to clip its sweaty coat.

A builder leans across the last wide courses;
His unadjustable unreaching eyes
Fail under him before his glances sink
On the clouds' upper layers of sooty curls
Where some long lightning goes like swallows downward,
But at the wider gallery next below
Recognise master-masons with pricked parchments:
That builder then, as one who condescends
Unto the sea and all that is beneath him,
His hairy breast on the wet mortar, calls
'How many fathoms is it yet to heaven!'
On the next eminence the orgulous king
Nimroud stands up conceiving he shall live
To conquer god, now that he knows where god is:
His eager hands push up the tower in thought ...
Again, his shaggy inhuman height strides down
Among the carpenters because he has seen
One shape an eagle-woman on a door-post:
He drives his spear-beam through him for wasted day.

Little men hurrying, running here and there,
Within the dark and stifling walls, dissent
From every sound, and shoulder empty hods:
'The god's great altar should stand in the crypt
Among our earth's foundations'--'The god's great altar

Must be the last far coping of our work'--
It should inaugurate the broad main stair'--
'Or end it'--'It must stand toward the East!'
But here a grave contemptuous youth cries out
'Womanish babblers, how can we build god's altar
Ere we divine its foreordained true shape?'
Then one 'It is a pedestal for deeds'--
"Tis more and should be hewn like the king's brow'--
'It has the nature of a woman's bosom'--
'The tortoise, first created, signifies it'--
'A blind and rudimentary navel shows
The source of worship better than horned moons.'
Then a lean giant 'Is not a calyx needful?'--
'Because round grapes on statues well expressed
Become the nadir of incense, nodal lamps,
Yet apes have hands that cut and carved red crystal'--
'Birds molten, touchly talc veins bronze buds crumble
Ablid ublai ghan isz rad eighar ghaur! ...'
Words said too often seemed such ancient sounds
That men forgot them or were lost in them;
The guttural glottis-chasms of language reached,
A rhythm, a gasp, were curves of immortal thought.

Man with his bricks was building, building yet,
Where dawn and midnight mingled and woke no birds,
In the last courses, building past his knowledge
A wall that swung--for towers can have no tops,
No chord can mete the universal segment,
Earth has not basis. Yet the yielding sky,
Invincible vacancy, was there discovered--
Though piled-up bricks should pulp the sappy balks,
Weight generate a secrecy of heat,
Cankorous charring, crevices' fronds of flame.

* * * * *

RUPERT BROOKE

THE OLD VICARAGE, GRANTCHESTER

[Cafe des Westens, Berlin]

Just now the lilac is in bloom,
All before my little room;
And in my flower-beds, I think,
Smile the carnation and the pink;
And down the borders, well I know,

The poppy and the pansy blow ...
Oh! there the chestnuts, summer through,
Beside the river make for you
A tunnel of green gloom, and sleep
Deeply above; and green and deep
The stream mysterious glides beneath,
Green as a dream and deep as death.--
Oh, damn! I know it! and I know
How the May fields all golden show,
And when the day is young and sweet,
Gild gloriously the bare feet
That run to bathe ...
 'Du lieber Gott!'

Here am I, sweating, sick, and hot,
And there the shadowed waters fresh
Lean up to embrace the naked flesh.
'Temperamentvoll' German Jews
Drink beer around; and 'there' the dews
Are soft beneath a morn of gold.
Here tulips bloom as they are told;
Unkempt about those hedges blows
An English unofficial rose;
And there the unregulated sun
Slopes down to rest when day is done,
And wakes a vague unpunctual star,
A slippered Hesper; and there are
Meads towards Haslingfield and Coton
Where 'das Betreten's' not 'verboten' ...

[Greek: eithe genoimaen] ... would I were
In Grantchester, in Grantchester!--
Some, it may be, can get in touch
With Nature there, or Earth, or such.
And clever modern men have seen
A Faun a-peeping through the green,
And felt the Classics were not dead,
To glimpse a Naiad's reedy head,
Or hear the Goat-foot piping low ...
But these are things I do not know.
I only know that you may lie
Day long and watch the Cambridge sky,
And, flower-lulled in sleepy grass,
Hear the cool lapse of hours pass,
Until the centuries blend and blur
In Grantchester, in Grantchester ...
Still in the dawnlit waters cool
His ghostly Lordship swims his pool,
And tries the strokes, essays the tricks,
Long learnt on Hellespont, or Styx;
Dan Chaucer hears his river still
Chatter beneath a phantom mill;
Tennyson notes, with studious eye,
How Cambridge waters hurry by ...
And in that garden, black and white
Creep whispers through the grass all night;
And spectral dance, before the dawn,
A hundred Vicars down the lawn;
Curates, long dust, will come and go

On lissom, clerical, printless toe;
And oft between the boughs is seen
The sly shade of a Rural Dean ...
Till, at a shiver in the skies,
Vanishing with Satanic cries,
The prim ecclesiastic rout
Leaves but a startled sleeper-out,
Grey heavens, the first bird's drowsy calls,
The falling house that never falls.

* * * *

God! I will pack, and take a train,
And get me to England once again!
For England's the one land, I know,
Where men with Splendid Hearts may go;
And Cambridgeshire, of all England,
The shire for Men who Understand;
And of 'that' district I prefer
The lovely hamlet Grantchester.
For Cambridge people rarely smile,
Being urban, squat, and packed with guile;
And Royston men in the far South
Are black and fierce and strange of mouth;
At Over they fling oaths at one,
And worse than oaths at Trumpington,
And Ditton girls are mean and dirty,
And there's none in Harston under thirty,
And folks in Shelford and those parts
Have twisted lips and twisted hearts,
And Barton men make cockney rhymes,
And Coton's full of nameless crimes,
And things are done you'd not believe
At Madingley on Christmas Eve.
Strong men have run for miles and miles
When one from Cherry Hinton smiles;
Strong men have blanched and shot their wives
Rather than send them to St. Ives;
Strong men have cried like babes, bydam,
To hear what happened at Babraham.
But Grantchester! ah, Grantchester!
There's peace and holy quiet there,
Great clouds along pacific skies,
And men and women with straight eyes,
Lithe children lovelier than a dream,
A bosky wood, a slumbrous stream,
And little kindly winds that creep
Round twilight corners, half asleep.
In Grantchester their skins are white,
They bathe by day, they bathe by night;
The women there do all they ought;
The men observe the Rules of Thought.
They love the Good; they worship Truth;
They laugh uproariously in youth;
(And when they get to feeling old,
They up and shoot themselves, I'm told)...

Ah God! to see the branches stir
Across the moon at Grantchester!

To smell the thrilling-sweet and rotten
Unforgettable, unforgotten
River smell, and hear the breeze
Sobbing in the little trees.
Say, do the elm-clumps greatly stand,
Still guardians of that holy land?
The chestnuts shade, in reverend dream,
The yet unacademic stream?
Is dawn a secret shy and cold
Anadyomene, silver-gold?
And sunset still a golden sea
From Haslingfield to Madingley?
And after, ere the night is born,
Do hares come out about the corn?
Oh, is the water sweet and cool
Gentle and brown, above the pool?
And laughs the immortal river still
Under the mill, under the mill?
Say, is there Beauty yet to find?
And Certainty? and Quiet kind?
Deep meadows yet, for to forget
The lies, and truths, and pain? ... oh! yet
Stands the Church clock at ten to three?
And is there honey still for tea?

DUST

When the white flame in us is gone,
And we that lost the world's delight
Stiffen in darkness, left alone
To crumble in our separate night;

When your swift hair is quiet in death,
And through the lips corruption thrust
Has stilled the labour of my breath--
When we are dust, when we are dust!--

Not dead, not undesirous yet,
Still sentient, still unsatisfied,
We'll ride the air, and shine, and flit,
Around the places where we died,

And dance as dust before the sun,
And light of foot, and unconfined,
Hurry from road to road, and run
About the errands of the wind.

And every mote, on earth or air,
Will speed and gleam, down later days.
And like a secret pilgrim fare
By eager and invisible ways,

Nor ever rest, nor ever lie,
Till, beyond thinking, out of view,
One mote of all the dust that's I
Shall meet one atom that was you.

Then in some garden hushed from wind,
Warm in a sunset's afterglow,
The lovers in the flowers will find
A sweet and strange unquiet grow

Upon the peace; and, past desiring,
So high a beauty in the air,
And such a light, and such a quiring,
And such a radiant ecstasy there,

They'll know not if it's fire, or dew,
Or out of earth, or in the height,
Singing, or flame, or scent, or hue,
Or two that pass, in light, to light,

Out of the garden, higher, higher ...
But in that instant they shall learn
The shattering fury of our fire,
And the weak passionless hearts will burn

And faint in that amazing glow,
Until the darkness close above;
And they will know--poor fools, they'll know!--
One moment, what it is to love.

THE FISH

In a cool curving world he lies
And ripples with dark ecstasies.
The kind luxurious lapse and steal
Shapes all his universe to feel
And know and be; the clinging stream
Closes his memory, glooms his dream,
Who lips the roots o' the shore, and glides
Superb on unreturning tides.
Those silent waters weave for him
A fluctuant mutable world and dim,
Where wavering masses bulge and gape
Mysterious, and shape to shape
Dies momentarily through whorl and hollow,
And form and line and solid follow
Solid and line and form to dream
Fantastic down the eternal stream;
An obscure world, a shifting world,
Bulbous, or pulled to thin, or curled,
Or serpentine, or driving arrows,
Or serene slidings, or March narrows.
There slipping wave and shore are one,
And weed and mud. No ray of sun,
But glow to glow fades down the deep
(As dream to unknown dream in sleep);
Shaken translucency illumines
The hyaline of drifting glooms;
The strange soft-handed depth subdues
Drowned colour there, but black to hues,

As death to living, decomposes--
Red darkness of the heart of roses,
Blue brilliant from dead starless skies,
And gold that lies behind the eyes,
The unknown unnameable sightless white
That is the essential flame of night,
Lustreless purple, hooded green,
The myriad hues that lie between
Darkness and darkness! ...

And all's one,
Gentle, embracing, quiet, dun,
The world he rests in, world he knows,
Perpetual curving. Only--grows
An eddy in that ordered falling,
A knowledge from the gloom, a calling
Weed in the wave, gleam in the mud--
The dark fire leaps along his blood;
Dateless and deathless, blind and still,
The intricate impulse works its will;
His woven world drops back; and he,
Sans providence, sans memory,
Unconscious and directly driven,
Fades to some dark sufficient heaven.

O world of lips, O world of laughter,
Where hope is fleet and thought flies after,
Of lights in the clear night, of cries
That drift along the wave and rise
Thin to the glittering stars above,
You know the hands, the eyes of love!
The strife of limbs, the sightless clinging,
The infinite distance, and the singing
Blown by the wind, a flame of sound,
The gleam, the flowers, and vast around
The horizon, and the heights above--
You know the sigh, the song of love!

But there the night is close, and there
Darkness is cold and strange and bare;
And the secret deeps are whisperless;
And rhythm is all deliciousness;
And joy is in the throbbing tide,
Whose intricate fingers beat and glide
In felt bewildering harmonies
Of trembling touch; and music is
The exquisite knocking of the blood.
Space is no more, under the mud;
His bliss is older than the sun.
Silent and straight the waters run,
The lights, the cries, the willows dim,
And the dark tide are one with him.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

Here, where love's stuff is body, arm and side

Are stabbing-sweet 'gainst chair and lamp and wall.
In every touch more intimate meanings hide;
And flaming brains are the white heart of all.

Here, million pulses to one centre beat:
Closed in by men's vast friendliness, alone,
Two can be drunk with solitude, and meet
On the sheer point where sense with knowing's one.

Here the green-purple clanging royal night,
And the straight lines and silent walls of town,
And roar, and glare, and dust, and myriad white
Undying passers, pinnacle and crown

Intensest heavens between close-lying faces
By the lamp's airless fierce ecstatic fire;
And we've found love in little hidden places,
Under great shades, between the mist and mire.

Stay! though the woods are quiet, and you've heard
Night creep along the hedges. Never go
Where tangled foliage shrouds the crying bird,
And the remote winds sigh, and waters flow!

Lest--as our words fall dumb on windless noons,
Or hearts grow hushed and solitary, beneath
Unheeding stars and unfamiliar moons,
Or boughs bend over, close and quiet as death,--

Unconscious and unpassionate and still,
Cloud-like we lean and stare as bright leaves stare,
And gradually along the stranger hill
Our unvalled loves thin out on vacuous air,

And suddenly there's no meaning in our kiss,
And your lit upward face grows, where we lie,
Lonelier and dreadfuller than sunlight is,
And dumb and mad and eyeless like the sky.

DINING-ROOM TEA

When you were there, and you, and you,
Happiness crowned the night; I too,
Laughing and looking, one of all,
I watched the quivering lamplight fall
On plate and flowers and pouring tea
And cup and cloth; and they and we
Flung all the dancing moments by
With jest and glitter. Lip and eye
Flashed on the glory, shone and cried,
Improvident, unmemoried;
And fitfully and like a flame
The light of laughter went and came.
Proud in their careless transience moved
The changing faces that I loved.

Till suddenly, and otherwhence,
I looked upon your innocence;
For lifted clear and still and strange
From the dark woven flow of change
Under a vast and starless sky
I saw the immortal moment lie.
One instant I, an instant, knew
As God knows all. And it and you
I, above Time, oh, blind! could see
In witless immortality.
I saw the marble cup; the tea,
Hung on the air, an amber stream;
I saw the fire's unglittering gleam,
The painted flame, the frozen smoke.
No more the flooding lamplight broke
On flying eyes and lips and hair;
But lay, but slept unbroken there,
On stiller flesh, and body breathless,
And lips and laughter stayed and deathless,
And words on which no silence grew.
Light was more alive than you.

For suddenly, and otherwhence,
I looked on your magnificence.
I saw the stillness and the light,
And you, august, immortal, white,
Holy and strange; and every glint
Posture and jest and thought and tint
Freed from the mask of transiency,
Triumphant in eternity,
Immote, immortal.

Dazed at length
Human eyes grew, mortal strength
Wearied; and Time began to creep.
Change closed about me like a sleep.
Light glinted on the eyes I loved.
The cup was filled. The bodies moved.
The drifting petal came to ground.
The laughter chimed its perfect round.
The broken syllable was ended.
And I, so certain and so friended,
How could I cloud, or how distress,
The heaven of your unconsciousness?
Or shake at Time's sufficient spell,
Stammering of lights unutterable?
The eternal holiness of you,
The timeless end, you never knew,
The peace that lay, the light that shone.
You never knew that I had gone
A million miles away, and stayed
A million years. The laughter played
Unbroken round me; and the jest
Flashed on. And we that knew the best
Down wonderful hours grew happier yet.
I sang at heart, and talked, and eat,
And lived from laugh to laugh, I too,
When you were there, and you, and you.

* * * * *

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON

THE SONG OF ELF

Blue-eyed was Elf the minstrel,
With womanish hair and ring,
Yet heavy was his hand on sword,
Though light upon the string.

And as he stirred the strings of the harp
To notes but four or five,
The heart of each man moved in him
Like a babe buried alive.

And they felt the land of the folk-songs
Spread southward of the Dane,
And they heard the good Rhine flowing
In the heart of all Allemagne.

They felt the land of the folk-songs,
Where the gifts hang on the tree,
Where the girls give ale at morning
And the tears come easily,

The mighty people, womanlike,
That have pleasure in their pain;
As he sang of Balder beautiful,
Whom the heavens loved in vain.

As he sang of Balder beautiful,
Whom the heavens could not save,
Till the world was like a sea of tears
And every soul a wave.

'There is always a thing forgotten
When all the world goes well;
A thing forgotten, as long ago
When the gods forgot the mistletoe,
And soundless as an arrow of snow
The arrow of anguish fell.

'The thing on the blind side of the heart,
On the wrong side of the door;
The green plant groweth, menacing
Almighty lovers in the spring;
There is always a forgotten thing,

And love is not secure.'

* * * * *

WILLIAM H. DAVIES

THE CHILD AND THE MARINER

A dear old couple my grandparents were,
And kind to all dumb things; they saw in Heaven
The lamb that Jesus petted when a child;
Their faith was never draped by Doubt: to them
Death was a rainbow in Eternity,
That promised everlasting brightness soon.
An old seafaring man was he; a rough
Old man, but kind; and hairy, like the nut
Full of sweet milk. All day on shore he watched
The winds for sailors' wives, and told what ships
Enjoyed fair weather, and what ships had storms;
He watched the sky, and he could tell for sure
What afternoons would follow stormy morns,
If quiet nights would end wild afternoons.
He leapt away from scandal with a roar,
And if a whisper still possessed his mind,
He walked about and cursed it for a plague.
He took offence at Heaven when beggars passed,
And sternly called them back to give them help.
In this old captain's house I lived, and things
That house contained were in ships' cabins once;
Sea-shells and charts and pebbles, model ships;
Green weeds, dried fishes stuffed, and coral stalks;
Old wooden trunks with handles of spliced rope,
With copper saucers full of monies strange,
That seemed the savings of dead men, not touched
To keep them warm since their real owners died;
Strings of red beads, methought were dipped in blood,
And swinging lamps, as though the house might move;
An ivory lighthouse built on ivory rocks,
The bones of fishes and three bottled ships.
And many a thing was there which sailors make
In idle hours, when on long voyages,
Of marvellous patience, to no lovely end.
And on those charts I saw the small black dots
That were called islands, and I knew they had
Turtles and palms, and pirates' buried gold.
There came a stranger to my granddad's house,
The old man's nephew, a seafarer too;
A big, strong able man who could have walked

Twm Barlum's hill all clad in iron mail;
So strong he could have made one man his club
To knock down others--Henry was his name,
No other name was uttered by his kin.
And here he was, insooth illclad, but oh,
Thought I, what secrets of the sea are his!
This man knows coral islands in the sea,
And dusky girls heartbroken for white men;
This sailor knows of wondrous lands afar,
More rich than Spain, when the Phoenicians shipped
Silver for common ballast, and they saw
Horses at silver mangers eating grain;
This man has seen the wind blow up a mermaid's hair
Which, like a golden serpent, reared and stretched
To feel the air away beyond her head.
He begged my pennies, which I gave with joy--
He will most certainly return some time
A self-made king of some new land, and rich.
Alas that he, the hero of my dreams,
Should be his people's scorn; for they had rose
To proud command of ships, whilst he had toiled
Before the mast for years, and well content;
Him they despised, and only Death could bring
A likeness in his face to show like them.
For he drank all his pay, nor went to sea
As long as ale was easy got on shore.
Now, in his last long voyage he had sailed
From Plymouth Sound to where sweet odours fan
The Cingalese at work, and then back home--
But came not near his kin till pay was spent.
He was not old, yet seemed so; for his face
Looked like the drowned man's in the morgue, when it
Has struck the wooden wharves and keels of ships.
And all his flesh was pricked with Indian ink,
His body marked as rare and delicate
As dead men struck by lightning under trees,
And pictured with fine twigs and curled ferns;
Chains on his neck and anchors on his arms;
Rings on his fingers, bracelets on his wrist;
And on his breast the Jane of Appledore
Was schooner rigged, and in full sail at sea.
He could not whisper with his strong hoarse voice,
No more than could a horse creep quietly;
He laughed to scorn the men that muffled close
For fear of wind, till all their neck was hid,
Like Indian corn wrapped up in long green leaves;
He knew no flowers but seaweeds brown and green,
He knew no birds but those that followed ships.
Full well he knew the water-world; he heard
A grander music there than we on land,
When organ shakes a church; swore he would make
The sea his home, though it was always roused
By such wild storms as never leave Cape Horn;
Happy to hear the tempest grunt and squeal
Like pigs heard dying in a slaughterhouse.
A true-born mariner, and this his hope--
His coffin would be what his cradle was,
A boat to drown in and be sunk at sea;
To drown at sea and lie a dainty corpse

Salted and iced in Neptune's larder deep.
This man despised small coasters, fishing-smacks;
He scorned those sailors who at night and morn
Can see the coast, when in their little boats
They go a six days' voyage and are back
Home with their wives for every Sabbath day.
Much did he talk of tankards of old beer,
And bottled stuff he drank in other lands,
Which was a liquid fire like Hell to gulp,
But Paradise to sip.

And so he talked;
Nor did those people listen with more awe
To Lazarus--whom they had seen stone dead--
Than did we urchins to that seaman's voice.
He many a tale of wonder told: of where,
At Argostoli, Cephalonia's sea
Ran over the earth's lip in heavy floods;
And then again of how the strange Chinese
Conversed much as our homely Blackbirds sing.
He told us how he sailed in one old ship
Near that volcano Martinique, whose power
Shook like dry leaves the whole Carribean seas;
And made the sun set in a sea of fire
Which only half was his; and dust was thick
On deck, and stones were pelted at the mast.
So, as we walked along, that seaman dropped
Into my greedy ears such words that sleep
Stood at my pillow half the night perplexed.
He told how isles sprang up and sank again,
Between short voyages, to his amaze;
How they did come and go, and cheated charts;
Told how a crew was cursed when one man killed
A bird that perched upon a moving barque;
And how the sea's sharp needles, firm and strong,
Ripped open the bellies of big, iron ships;
Of mighty icebergs in the Northern seas,
That haunt the far horizon like white ghosts,
He told of waves that lift a ship so high
That birds could pass from starboard unto port
Under her dripping keel.

Oh, it was sweet
To hear that seaman tell such wondrous tales:
How deep the sea in parts, that drowned men
Must go a long way to their graves and sink
Day after day, and wander with the tides.
He spake of his own deeds; of how he sailed
One summer's night along the Bosphorus,
And he--who knew no music like the wash
Of waves against a ship, or wind in shrouds--
Heard then the music on that woody shore
Of nightingales, and feared to leave the deck,
He thought 'twas sailing into Paradise.
To hear these stories all we urchins placed
Our pennies in that seaman's ready hand;
Until one morn he signed for a long cruise,
And sailed away--we never saw him more.
Could such a man sink in the sea unknown?

Nay, he had found a land with something rich,
That kept his eyes turned inland for his life.
'A damn bad sailor and a landshark too,
No good in port or out'--my granddad said.

DAYS TOO SHORT

When primroses are out in Spring,
And small, blue violets come between;
When merry birds sing on boughs green,
And rills, as soon as born, must sing;

When butterflies will make side-leaps,
As though escaped from Nature's hand
Ere perfect quite; and bees will stand
Upon their heads in fragrant deeps;

When small clouds are so silvery white
Each seems a broken rimmed moon--
When such things are, this world too soon,
For me, doth wear the veil of Night.

IN MAY

Yes, I will spend the livelong day
With Nature in this month of May;
And sit beneath the trees, and share
My bread with birds whose homes are there;
While cows lie down to eat, and sheep
Stand to their necks in grass so deep;
While birds do sing with all their might,
As though they felt the earth in flight.
This is the hour I dreamed of, when
I sat surrounded by poor men;
And thought of how the Arab sat
Alone at evening, gazing at
The stars that bubbled in clear skies;

And of young dreamers, when their eyes
Enjoyed methought a precious boon
In the adventures of the Moon
Whose light, behind the Clouds' dark bars,
Searched for her stolen flocks of stars.
When I, hemmed in by wrecks of men,
Thought of some lonely cottage then,
Full of sweet books; and miles of sea,
With passing ships, in front of me;
And having, on the other hand,
A flowery, green, bird-singing land.

THE HEAP OF RAGS

One night when I went down
Thames' side, in London Town,
A heap of rags saw I,
And sat me down close by.
That thing could shout and bawl,
But showed no face at all;
When any steamer passed
And blew a loud shrill blast,
That heap of rags would sit
And make a sound like it;
When struck the clock's deep bell,
It made those peals as well.
When winds did moan around,
It mocked them with that sound;
When all was quiet, it
Fell into a strange fit;
Would sigh, and moan and roar,
It laughed, and blessed, and swore.
Yet that poor thing, I know,
Had neither friend nor foe;
Its blessing or its curse
Made no one better or worse.
I left it in that place--
The thing that showed no face,
Was it a man that had
Suffered till he went mad?
So many showers and not
One rainbow in the lot;
Too many bitter fears
To make a pearl from tears.

THE KINGFISHER

It was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
And left thee all her lovely hues;
And, as her mother's name was Tears,
So runs it in thy blood to choose
For haunts the lonely pools, and keep
In company with trees that weep.

Go you and, with such glorious hues,
Live with proud Peacocks in green parks;
On lawns as smooth as shining glass,
Let every feather show its marks;
Get thee on boughs and clap thy wings
Before the windows of proud kings.

Nay, lovely Bird, thou art not vain;
Thou hast no proud, ambitious mind;
I also love a quiet place
That's green, away from all mankind;
A lonely pool, and let a tree
Sigh with her bosom over me.

* * * * *

WALTER DE LA MARE

ARABIA

Far are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night.

They haunt me--her lutes and her forests;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
Her loveliness to me:
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say--
He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
'They have stolen his wits away.'

THE SLEEPER

As Ann came in one summer's day,
She felt that she must creep,
So silent was the clear cool house,
It seemed a house of sleep.
And sure, when she pushed open the door,
Rapt in the stillness there,
Her mother sat, with stooping head,
Asleep upon a chair;
Fast--fast asleep; her two hands laid
Loose-folded on her knee,

So that her small unconscious face
Looked half unreal to be:
So calmly lit with sleep's pale light
Each feature was; so fair
Her forehead--every trouble was
Smooth'd out beneath her hair.

But though her mind in dream now moved,
Still seemed her gaze to rest
From out beneath her fast-sealed lids,
Above her moving breast,
On Ann, as quite, quite still she stood;
Yet slumber lay so deep
Even her hands upon her lap
Seemed saturate with sleep.
And as Ann peeped, a cloudlike dread
Stole over her, and then,
On stealthy, mouselike feet she trod,
And tiptoed out again.

WINTER DUSK

Dark frost was in the air without,
The dusk was still with cold and gloom,
When less than even a shadow came
And stood within the room.

But of the three around the fire,
None turned a questioning head to look,
Still read a clear voice, on and on,
Still stooped they o'er their book.

The children watched their mother's eyes
Moving on softly line to line;
It seemed to listen too--that shade,
Yet made no outward sign.

The fire-flames crooned a tiny song,
No cold wind moved the wintry tree;
The children both in Faerie dreamed
Beside their mother's knee.

And nearer yet that spirit drew
Above that heedless one, intent
Only on what the simple words
Of her small story meant.

No voiceless sorrow grieved her mind,
No memory her bosom stirred,
Nor dreamed she, as she read to two,
'Twas surely three who heard.

Yet when, the story done, she smiled
From face to face, serene and clear,
A love, half dread, sprang up, as she
Leaned close and drew them near.

MISS LOO

When thin-strewn memory I look through,
I see most clearly poor Miss Loo,
Her tabby cat, her cage of birds,
Her nose, her hair--her muffled words,
And how she'd open her green eyes,
As if in some immense surprise,
Whenever as we sat at tea,
She made some small remark to me.

It's always drowsy summer when
From out the past she comes again;
The westering sunshine in a pool
Floats in her parlour still and cool;
While the slim bird its lean wires shakes,
As into piercing song it breaks;
Till Peter's pale-green eyes ajar
Dream, wake; wake, dream, in one brief bar;
And I am sitting, dull and shy,
And she with gaze of vacancy,
And large hands folded on the tray,
Musing the afternoon away;
Her satin bosom heaving slow
With sighs that softly ebb and flow,
And her plain face in such dismay,
It seems unkind to look her way:
Until all cheerful back will come
Her cheerful gleaming spirit home:
And one would think that poor Miss Loo
Asked nothing else, if she had you.

THE LISTENERS

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,

Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:--
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

* * * * *

JOHN DRINKWATER

THE FIRES OF GOD

I

Time gathers to my name;
Along the ways wheredown my feet have passed
I see the years with little triumph crowned,
Exulting not for perils dared, downcast
And weary-eyed and desolate for shame
Of having been unstirred of all the sound
Of the deep music of the men that move
Through the world's days in suffering and love.

Poor barren years that brooded over-much
On your own burden, pale and stricken years--
Go down to your oblivion, we part
With no reproach or ceremonial tears.
Henceforth my hands are lifted to the touch
Of hands that labour with me, and my heart
Hereafter to the world's heart shall be set
And its own pain forget.
Time gathers to my name--
Days dead are dark; the days to be, a flame
Of wonder and of promise, and great cries
Of travelling people reach me--I must rise.

II

Was I not man? Could I not rise alone
Above the shifting of the things that be,
Rise to the crest of all the stars and see
The ways of all the world as from a throne?
Was I not man, with proud imperial will
To cancel all the secrets of high heaven?
Should not my sole unbridled purpose fill
All hidden paths with light when once was riven
God's veil by my indomitable will?
So dreamt I, little man of little vision,
Great only in unconsecrated pride;
Man's pity grew from pity to derision,
And still I thought, 'Albeit they deride,
Yet is it mine uncharted ways to dare
Unknown to these,
And they shall stumble darkly, unaware
Of solemn mysteries
Whereof the key is mine alone to bear.'

So I forgot my God, and I forgot
The holy sweet communion of men,
And moved in desolate places, where are not
Meek hands held out with patient healing when
The hours are heavy with uncharitable pain;
No company but vain
And arrogant thoughts were with me at my side.
And ever to myself I lied,
Saying 'Apart from all men thus I go
To know the things that they may never know.'

III

Then a great change befell:
Long time I stood
In witless hardihood
With eyes on one sole changeless vision set--
The deep disturbed fret
Of men who made brief tarrying in hell
On their earth-travelling.
It was as though the lives of men should be
Set circle-wise, whereof one little span
Through which all passed was blackened with the wing
Of perilous evil, bateless misery.
But all beyond, making the whole complete
O'er which the travelling feet
Of every man
Made way or ever he might come to death,
Was odorous with the breath
Of honey-laden flowers, and alive
With sacrificial ministrations sweet
Of man to man, and swift and holy loves,
And large heroic hopes, whereby should thrive
Man's spirit as he moves
From dawn of life to the great dawn of death.

It was as though mine eyes were set alone
Upon that woeful passage of despair,
Until I held that life had never known
Dominion but in this most troubled place
Where many a ruined grace
And many a friendless care
Ran to and fro in sorrowful unrest.
Still in my hand I pressed
Hope's fragile chalice, whence I drew deep draughts
Shaping belief that even yet should grow
Out of this dread confusion, as of broken crafts
Driven along ungovernable seas,
Some threads of order, and that I should know
After long vigil all the mysteries
Of human wonder and of human fate.

O fool, O only great
In pride unhallowed, O most blind of heart!
Confusion but more dark confusion bred,
Grief nurtured grief, I cried aloud and said,
'Through trackless ways the soul of man is hurled,
No sign upon the forehead of the skies,
No beacon, and no chart
Are given to him, and the inscrutable world
But mocks his scars and fills his mouth with dust.'

'And lies bore lies
And lust bore lust,
And the world was heavy with flowerless rods,
And pride outran
The strength of a man
Who had set himself in the place of gods'.

IV

Soon was I then to gather bitter shame
Of spirit, I had been most wildly proud--
Yet in my pride had been
Some little courage, formless as a cloud,
Unpiloted save by the vagrant wind,
But still an earnest of the bonds that tame
The legionary hates, of sacred loves that lean
From the high soul of man towards his kind.
And all my grief
Had been for those I watched go to and fro
In uncompassioned woe
Along that little span my unbelief
Had fashioned in my vision as all life.
Now even this so little virtue waned,
For I became caught up into the strife
That I had pitied, and my soul was stained
At last by that most venomous despair,
Self-pity.

I no longer was aware
Of any will to heal the world's unrest,
I suffered as it suffered, and I grew
Troubled in all my daily trafficking,
Not with the large heroic trouble known

By proud adventurous men who would atone
With their own passionate pity for the sting
And anguish of a world of peril and snares;
It was the trouble of a soul in thrall
To mean despairs,
Driven about a waste where neither fall
Of words from lips of love, nor consolation
Of grave eyes comforting, nor ministration
Of hand or heart could pierce the deadly wall
Of self--of self,--I was a living shame--
A broken purpose. I had stood apart
With pride rebellious and defiant heart,
And now my pride had perished in the flame.
I cried for succour as a little child
Might supplicate whose days are undefiled--
For tutored pride and innocence are one.

'To the gloom has won
A gleam of the sun
And into the barren desolate ways
A scent is blown
As of meadows mown
By cooling rivers in clover days'.

V

I turned me from that place in humble wise,
And fingers soft were laid upon mine eyes,
And I beheld the fruitful earth, with store
Of odorous treasure, full and golden grain,
Ripe orchard bounty, slender stalks that bore
Their flowered beauty with a meek content,
The prosperous leaves that loved the sun and rain,
Shy creatures unproved that came and went
In garrulous joy among the fostering green.
And, over all, the changes of the day
And ordered year their mutable glory laid--
Expectant winter soberly arrayed,
The prudent diligent spring whose eyes have seen
The beauty of the roses uncreate,
Imperial June, magnificent, elate
Beholding all the ripening loves that stray
Among her blossoms, and the golden time
Of the full ear and bounty of the boughs,--
And the great hills and solemn chanting seas
And prodigal meadows, answering to the chime
Of God's good year, and bearing on their brows
The glory of processional mysteries
From dawn to dawn, the woven shadow and shine
Of the high moon, the twilight secrecies,
And the inscrutable wonder of the stars
Flung out along the reaches of the night.

'And, the ancient might
Of the binding bars
Waned, as I woke to a new desire
For the choric song
Of exultant, strong

Earth-passionate men with souls of fire'.

VI

'Twas given me to hear. As I beheld--
With a new wisdom, tranquil, asking not
For mystic revelation--this glory long forgot,
This re-discovered triumph of the earth
In high creative will and beauty's pride
Established beyond the assaulting years,
It came to me, a music that compelled
Surrender of all tributary fears,
Full-throated, fierce and rhythmic with the wide
Beat of the pilgrim winds and labouring seas,
Sent up from all the harbouring ways of earth
Wherein the travelling feet of men have trod,
Mounting the firmamental silences
And challenging the golden gates of God.

'We bear the burden of the years
Clean-limbed, clear-hearted, open-browed;
Albeit sacramental tears
Have dimmed our eyes, we know the proud
Content of men who sweep unbowed
Before the legionary fears;
In sorrow we have grown to be
The masters of adversity.

Long ere from immanent silence leapt
Obedient hands and fashioning will,
The giant god within us slept,
And dreamt of seasons to fulfil
The shaping of our souls that still
Expectant earthward vigil kept;
Our wisdom grew from secrets drawn
From that far-off dim-memoried dawn.

Wise of the storied ages we,
Of perils dared and crosses borne,
Of heroes bound by no decree
Of laws defiled or faiths outworn,
Of poets who have held in scorn
All mean and tyrannous things that be;
We prophesy with lips that sped
The songs of the prophetic dead.

Wise of the brief beloved span
Of this our glad earth-travelling,
Of beauty's bloom and ordered plan,
Of love and love's compassioning,
Of all the dear delights that spring
From man's communion with man;
We cherish every hour that strays
Adown the cataract of the days.'

'We see the dear untroubled skies,
We see the glory of the rose,
And, laugh, nor grieve that clouds will rise
And wax with every wind that blows,
Nor that the blossoming time will close,

For beauty seen of humble eyes
Immortal habitation has
Though beauty's form may pale and pass.

Wise of the great unshapen age,
To which we move with measured tread
All girt with passionate truth to wage
High battle for the word unsaid,
The song unsung, the cause unled,
The freedom that no hope can gauge;
Strong-armed, sure-footed, iron-willed
We sift and weave, we break and build.

Into one hour we gather all
The years gone down, the years unwrought,
Upon our ears brave measures fall
Across uncharted spaces brought,
Upon our lips the words are caught
Wherewith the dead the unborn call;
From love to love, from height to height
We press and none may curb our might.'

VII

O blessed voices, O compassionate hands,
Calling and healing, O great-hearted brothers!
I come to you. Ring out across the lands
Your benediction, and I too will sing
With you, and haply kindle in another's
Dark desolate hour the flame you stirred in me.
O bountiful earth, in adoration meet
I bow to you; O glory of years to be,
I too will labour to your fashioning.
Go down, go down, unweariable feet,
Together we will march towards the ways
Wherein the marshalled hosts of morning wait
In sleepless watch, with banners wide unfurled
Across the skies in ceremonial state,
To greet the men who lived triumphant days,
And stormed the secret beauty of the world.

* * * * *

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

JOSEPH AND MARY

Joseph:

Mary, art thou the little maid
Who plucked me flowers in Spring?
I know thee not; I feel afraid:
Thou'rt strange this evening.

A sweet and rustic girl I won
What time the woods were green;
No woman with deep eyes that shone,
And the pale brows of a Queen.

Mary: (inattentive to his words)

A stranger came with feet of flame
And told me this strange thing,--
For all I was a village maid
My son should be a King.

Joseph:

A King, dear wife? Who ever knew
Of Kings in stables born!

Mary:

Do you hear, in the dark and starlit blue
The clarion and the horn?

Joseph:

Mary, alas, lest grief and joy
Have sent thy wits astray;
But let me look on this my boy,
And take the wraps away.

Mary:

Behold the lad.

Joseph:

I dare not gaze:
Light streams from every limb.

Mary:

The winter sun has stored his rays,
And passed the fire to him.

Look Eastward, look! I hear a sound.
O Joseph, what do you see?

Joseph:

The snow lies quiet on the ground
And glistens on the tree;

The sky is bright with a star's great light,
And clearly I behold
Three Kings descending yonder hill,
Whose crowns are crowns of gold.

O Mary, what do you hear and see
With your brow toward the West?

Mary:

The snow lies glistening on the tree
And silent on Earth's breast;

And strong and tall, with lifted eyes
Seven shepherds walk this way,
And angels breaking from the skies
Dance, and sing hymns, and pray.

Joseph:

I wonder much at these bright Kings;
The shepherds I despise.

Mary:

You know not what a shepherd sings,
Nor see his shining eyes.

THE QUEEN'S SONG

Had I the power
To Midas given of old
To touch a flower
And leave the petals gold,
I then might touch thy face,
Delightful boy,
And leave a metal grace,
A graven joy.

Thus would I slay--
Ah, desperate device!
The vital day
That trembles in thine eyes,
And let the red lips close
Which sang so well,
And drive away the rose

To leave a shell.

Then I myself,
Rising austere and dumb,
On the high shelf
Of my half-lighted room,
Would place the shining bust
And wait alone,
Until I was but dust,
Buried unknown.

Thus in my love
For nations yet unborn,
I would remove
From our two lives the morn,
And muse on loveliness
In mine armchair,
Content should Time confess
How sweet you were.

* * * * *

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

THE HARE

My hands were hot upon a hare,
Half-strangled, struggling in a snare---
My knuckles at her warm wind-pipe--
When suddenly, her eyes shot back,
Big, fearful, staggering and black;
And ere I knew, my grip was slack;
And I was clutching empty air,
Half-mad, half-glad at my lost luck ...
When I awoke beside the stack.

'Twas just the minute when the snipe
As though clock-wakened, every jack,
An hour ere dawn, dart in and out
The mist-wreaths filling syke and slack,
And flutter wheeling round about,
And drumming out the Summer night.
I lay star-gazing yet a bit;
Then, chilly-skinned, I sat upright,
To shrug the shivers from my back;
And, drawing out a straw to suck,
My teeth nipped through it at a bite ...
The liveliest lad is out of pluck

An hour ere dawn--a tame cock-sparrow--
When cold stars shiver through his marrow,
And wet mist soaks his mother-wit.

But, as the snipe dropped, one by one;
And one by one the stars blinked out;
I knew 'twould only need the sun
To send the shudders right about:
And as the clear East faded white,
I watched and wearied for the sun--
The jolly, welcome, friendly sun--
The sleepy sluggard of a sun
That still kept snoozing out of sight,
Though well he knew the night was done ...
And after all, he caught me dozing,
And leapt up, laughing, in the sky
Just as my lazy eyes were closing:
And it was good as gold to lie
Full-length among the straw, and feel
The day wax warmer every minute,
As, glowing glad, from head to heel.
I soaked, and rolled rejoicing in it ...
When from, the corner of my eye,
Upon a heathery knowe hard-by,
With long lugs cocked, and eyes astare,
Yet all serene, I saw a hare.

Upon my belly in the straw,
I lay, and watched her sleek her fur,
As, daintily, with well-licked paw,
She washed her face and neck and ears:
Then, clean and comely in the sun,
She kicked her heels up, full of fun,
As if she did not care a pin
Though she should jump out of her skin,
And leapt and lolloped, free of fears,
Until my heart frisked round with her.

'And yet, if I but lift my head,
You'll scamper off, young Puss,' I said.
'Still, I can't lie, and watch you play,
Upon my belly half the day.
The Lord alone knows where I'm going:
But, I had best be getting there.
Last night I loosed you from the snare--
Asleep, or waking, who's for knowing!--
So, I shall thank you now for showing
Which art to take to bring me where
My luck awaits me. When you're ready
To start, I'll follow on your track.
Though slow of foot, I'm sure and steady ...'
She pricked her ears, then set them back;
And like a shot was out of sight:
And, with a happy heart and light,
As quickly I was on my feet;
And following the way she went,
Keen as a lurcher on the scent,
Across the heather and the bent,
Across the quaking moss and peat.

Of course, I lost her soon enough,
For moorland tracks are steep and rough;
And hares are made of nimbler stuff
Than any lad of seventeen,
However lanky-legged and tough,
However kestrel-eyed and keen:
And I'd at last to stop and eat
The little bit of bread and meat
Left in my pocket overnight.
So, in a hollow, snug and green,
I sat beside a burn, and dipped
The dry bread in an icy pool;
And munched a breakfast fresh and cool ...
And then sat gaping like a fool ...
For, right before my very eyes,
With lugs acock and eyes astare,
I saw again the selfsame hare.

So, up I jumped, and off she slipped;
And I kept sight of her until
I stumbled in a hole, and tripped,
And came a heavy, headlong spill;
And she, ere I'd the wit to rise,
Was o'er the hill, and out of sight:
And, sore and shaken with the tumbling,
And sicker at my foot for stumbling,
I cursed my luck, and went on, grumbling,
The way her flying heels had fled.

The sky was cloudless overhead,
And just alive with larks asinging;
And in a twinkling I was swinging
Across the windy hills, lighthearted.
A kestrel at my footstep started,
Just pouncing on a frightened mouse,
And hung o'er head with wings a-hover;
Through rustling heath an adder darted:
A hundred rabbits bobbed to cover:
A weasel, sleek and rusty-red,
Popped out of sight as quick as winking:
I saw a grizzled vixen slinking
Behind a clucking brood of grouse
That rose and cackled at my coming:
And all about my way were flying
The peewit, with their slow wings creaking;
And little jack-snipe darted, drumming:
And now and then a golden plover
Or redshank piped with reedy whistle.
But never shaken bent or thistle
Betrayed the quarry I was seeking;
And not an instant, anywhere
Did I clap eyes upon a hare.

So, travelling still, the twilight caught me;
And as I stumbled on, I muttered:
'A deal of luck the hare has brought me!
The wind and I must spend together
A hungry night among the heather.
If I'd her here ...' And as I uttered,

I tripped, and heard a frightened squeal;
And dropped my hands in time to feel
The hare just bolting 'twixt my feet.
She slipped my clutch: and I stood there
And cursed that devil-littered hare,
That left me stranded in the dark
In that wide waste of quaggy peat
Beneath black night without a spark:
When, looking up, I saw a flare
Upon a far-off hill, and said:
'By God, the heather is afire!
It's mischief at this time of year ...'
And then, as one bright flame shot higher,
And booths and vans stood out quite clear,
My wits came back into my head;
And I remembered Brough Hill Fair.
And as I stumbled towards the glare
I knew the sudden kindling meant
The Fair was over for the day;
And all the cattle-folk away;
And gipsy folk and tinkers now
Were lighting supper-fires without
Each caravan and booth and tent.
And as I climbed the stiff hill-brow
I quite forgot my lucky hare.
I'd something else to think about:
For well I knew there's broken meat
For empty bellies after fair-time;
And looked to have a royal rare time
With something rich and prime to eat;
And then to lie and toast my feet
All night beside the biggest fire.
But, even as I neared the first,
A pleasant whiff of stewing burst
From out a smoking pot a-bubble:
And as I stopped behind the folk
Who sprawled around, and watched it seething,
A woman heard my eager breathing,
And, turning, caught my hungry eye:
And called out to me: 'Draw in nigher,
Unless you find it too much trouble;
Or you've a nose for better fare,
And go to supper with the Squire ...
You've got the hungry parson's air!'
And all looked up, and took the joke,
As I dropped gladly to the ground
Among them, where they all lay gazing
Upon the bubbling and the blazing.
My eyes were dazzled by the fire
At first; and then I glanced around;
And in those swarthy, fire-lit faces--
Though drowsing in the glare and heat
And snuffing the warm savour in,
Dead-certain of their fill of meat--
I felt the bit between the teeth,
The flying heels, the broken traces,
And heard the highroad ring beneath
The trampling hoofs; and knew them kin.
Then for the first time, standing there

Behind the woman who had hailed me,
I saw a girl with eyes astare
That looked in terror o'er my head;
And, all at once, my courage failed me ...
For now again, and sore-adread,
My hands were hot upon a hare,
That struggled, strangling in the snare ...
Then once more as the girl stood clear,
Before me--quaking cold with fear--
I saw the hare look from her eyes ...

And when, at last, I turned to see
What held her scared, I saw a man--
A fat man with dull eyes aleer--
Within the shadow of the van;
And I was on the point to rise
To send him spinning 'mid the wheels
And stop his leering grin with mud ...
And would have done it in a tick ...
When, suddenly, alive with fright,
She started, with red, parted lips,
As though she guessed we'd come to grips,
And turned her black eyes full on me ...
And as I looked into their light
My heart forgot the lust of fight,
And something shot me to the quick,
And ran like wildfire through my blood,
And tingled to my finger-tips ...
And, in a dazzling flash, I knew
I'd never been alive before ...
And she was mine for evermore.

While all the others slept asnore
In caravan and tent that night,
I lay alone beside the fire;
And stared into its blazing core,
With eyes that would not shut or tire,
Because the best of all was true,
And they looked still into the light
Of her eyes, burning ever bright.
Within the brightest coal for me ...
Once more, I saw her, as she started,
And glanced at me with red lips parted:
And as she looked, the frightened hare
Had fled her eyes; and merrily,
She smiled, with fine teeth flashing white,
As though she, too, were happy-hearted ...
Then she had trembled suddenly,
And dropped her eyes, as that fat man
Stepped from the shadow of the van,
And joined the circle, as the pot
Was lifted off, and, piping-hot,
The supper steamed in wooden bowls.
Yet, she had hardly touched a bite;
And never raised her eyes all night
To mine again; but on the coals,
As I sat staring, she had stared--
The black curls, shining round her head
From under the red kerchief, tied

So nattily beneath her chin--
And she had stolen off to bed
Quite early, looking dazed and scared.
Then, all agape and sleepy-eyed,
Ere long the others had turned in:
And I was rid of that fat man,
Who slouched away to his own van.

And now, before her van, I lay,
With sleepless eyes, awaiting day;
And as I gazed upon the glare
I heard, behind, a gentle stir:
And, turning round, I looked on her
Where she stood on the little stair
Outside the van, with listening air--
And, in her eyes, the hunted hare ...
And then, I saw her slip away,
A bundle underneath her arm,
Without a single glance at me.
I lay a moment wondering,
My heart a-thump like anything,
Then, fearing she should come to harm,
I rose, and followed speedily
Where she had vanished in the night.
And as she heard my step behind
She started, and stopt dead with fright;
Then blundered on as if struck blind:
And now as I caught up with her,
Just as she took the moorland track,
I saw the hare's eyes, big and black ...
She made as though she'd double back ...
But when she looked into my eyes,
She stood quite still and did not stir ...
And picking up her fallen pack
I tucked it 'neath my arm; and she
Just took her luck quite quietly,
As she must take what chance might come,
And would not have it otherwise,
And walked into the night with me,
Without a word across the fells.

And all about us, through the night,
The mists were stealing, cold and white,
Down every rushy syke or slack:
But, soon the moon swung into sight;
And as we went my heart was light.
And singing like a burn in flood:
And in my ears were tinkling bells;
My body was a rattled drum:
And fifes were shrilling through my blood
That summer night, to think that she
Was walking through the world with me.

But when the air with dawn was chill.
As we were travelling down a hill,
She broke her silence with low-sobbing;
And told her tale, her bosom throbbing
As though her very heart were shaken
With fear she'd yet be overtaken ...

She'd always lived in caravans--
Her father's, gay as any man's,
Grass-green, picked out with red and yellow
And glittering brave with burnished brass
That sparkled in the sun like flame,
And window curtains, white as snow ...
But, they had died, ten years ago,
Her parents both, when fever came ...
And they were buried, side by side.
Somewhere beneath the wayside grass ...
In times of sickness, they kept wide
Of towns and busybodies, so
No parson's or policeman's tricks
Should bother them when in a fix ...
Her father never could abide
A black coat or a blue, poor man ...
And so, Long Dick, a kindly fellow,
When you could keep him from the can,
And Meg, his easy-going wife,
Had taken her into their van;
And kept her since her parents died ...
And she had lived a happy life,
Until Fat Pete's young wife was taken ...
But, ever since, he'd pestered her ...
And she dared scarcely breathe or stir,
Lest she should see his eyes aleer ...
And many a night she'd lain and shaken,
And very nearly died of fear--
Though safe enough within the van
With Mother Meg and her good-man--
For, since Fat Pete was Long Dick's friend,
And they were thick and sweet as honey,
And Dick owed Pete a pot of money,
She knew too well how it must end ...
And she would rather lie stone dead
Beneath the wayside grass than wed
With leering Pete, and live the life,
And die the death, of his first wife ...
And so, last night, clean-daft with dread,
She'd bundled up a pack and fled ...

When all the sobbing tale was out,
She dried her eyes, and looked about,
As though she'd left all fear behind,
And out of sight were out of mind,
Then, when the dawn was burning red,
'I'm hungry as a hawk!' she said:
And from the bundle took out bread,
And at the happy end of night
We sat together by a burn:
And ate a thick slice, turn by turn;
And laughed and kissed between each bite.

Then, up again, and on our way
We went; and tramped the livelong day
The moorland trackways, steep and rough,
Though there was little fear enough
That they would follow on our flight.

And then again a shiny night
Among the honey-scented heather,
We wandered in the moonblaze bright,
Together through a land of light,
A lad and lass alone with life.
And merrily we laughed together,
When, starting up from sleep, we heard
The cock-grouse talking to his wife ...
And 'Old Fat Pete' she called the bird.

Six months and more have cantered by:
And, Winter past, we're out again--
We've left the fat and weatherwise
To keep their coops and reeking sties.
And eat their fill of oven-pies,
While we win free and out again
To take potluck beneath the sky
With sun and moon and wind and rain.
Six happy months ... and yet, at night,
I've often wakened in affright,
And looked upon her lying there,
Beside me sleeping quietly,
Adread that when she waked, I'd see
The hunted hare within her eyes.

And only last night, as I slept
Beneath the shelter of a stack ...
My hands were hot upon a hare,
Half-strangled, struggling in the snare,
When, suddenly, her eyes shot back,
Big, fearful, staggering and black;
And ere I knew, my grip was slack,
And I was clutching empty air ...
Bolt-upright from my sleep I leapt ...
Her place was empty in the straw ...
And then, with quaking heart, I saw
That she was standing in the night,
A leveret cuddled to her breast ...

I spoke no word; but as the light
Through banks of Eastern cloud was breaking,
She turned, and saw that I was waking:
And told me how she could not rest;
And, rising in the night, she'd found
This baby-hare crouched on the ground;
And she had nursed it quite a while;
But, now, she'd better let it go ...
Its mother would be fretting so ...
A mother's heart ...

 I saw her smile,
And look at me with tender eyes;
And as I looked into their light,
My foolish, fearful heart grew wise ...
And now, I knew that never there
I'd see again the startled hare,
Or need to dread the dreams of night.

GERANIUMS

Stuck in a bottle on the window-sill,
In the cold gaslight burning gaily red
Against the luminous blue of London night,
These flowers are mine: while somewhere out of sight
In some black-throated alley's stench and heat,
Oblivious of the racket of the street,
A poor old weary woman lies in bed.

Broken with lust and drink, blear-eyed and ill,
Her battered bonnet nodding on her head,
From a dark arch she clutched my sleeve and said:
'I've sold no bunch to-day, nor touched a bite ...
Son, buy six-pennorth; and 't will mean a bed.'

So blazing gaily red
Against the luminous deeps
Of starless London night,
They burn for my delight:
While somewhere, snug in bed,
A worn old woman sleeps.

And yet to-morrow will these blooms be dead
With all their lively beauty; and to-morrow
May end the light lusts and the heavy sorrow
Of that old body with the nodding head.
The last oath muttered, the last pint drained deep,
She'll sink, as Cleopatra sank, to sleep;
Nor need to barter blossoms for a bed.

DEVIL'S EDGE

All night I lay on Devil's Edge,
Along an overhanging ledge
Between the sky and sea:
And as I rested 'waiting sleep,
The windless sky and soundless deep
In one dim, blue infinity
Of starry peace encompassed me.

And I remembered, drowsily,
How 'mid the hills last night I'd lain
Beside a singing moorland burn;
And waked at dawn, to feel the rain
Fall on my face, as on the fern
That drooped about my heather-bed;
And how by noon the wind had blown
The last grey shred from out the sky,
And blew my homespun jacket dry,
As I stood on the topmost stone
That crowns the cairn on Hawkshaw Head,
And caught a gleam of far-off sea;
And heard the wind sing in the bent
Like those far waters calling me:

When, my heart answering to the call,
I followed down the seaward stream,
By silent pool and singing fall;
Till with a quiet, keen content,
I watched the sun, a crimson ball,
Shoot through grey seas a fiery gleam,
Then sink in opal deeps from sight.

And with the coming on of night,
The wind had dropped: and as I lay,
Retracing all the happy day,
And gazing long and dreamily
Across the dim, unsounding sea,
Over the far horizon came
A sudden sail of amber flame;
And soon the new moon rode on high
Through cloudless deeps of crystal sky.

Too holy seemed the night for sleep;
And yet, I must have slept, it seems;
For, suddenly, I woke to hear
A strange voice singing, shrill and clear,
Down in a gully black and deep
That cleft the beetling crag in twain.
It seemed the very voice of dreams
That drive hag-ridden souls in fear
Through echoing, unearthly vales,
To plunge in black, slow-crawling streams,
Seeking to drown that cry, in vain ...
Or some sea creature's voice that wails
Through blind, white banks of fog unlifting
To God-forgotten sailors drifting
Rudderless to death ...
And as I heard,
Though no wind stirred,
An icy breath
Was in my hair ...
And clutched my heart with cold despair ...
But, as the wild song died away,
There came a faltering break
That shivered to a sobbing fall;
And seemed half-human, after all ...

And yet, what foot could find a track
In that deep gully, sheer and black ...
And singing wildly in the night!
So, wondering I lay awake,
Until the coming of the light
Brought day's familiar presence back.

Down by the harbour-mouth that day.
A fisher told the tale to me.
Three months before, while out at sea,
Young Philip Burn was lost, though how,
None knew, and none would ever know.
The boat becalmed at noonday lay ...
And not a ripple on the sea ...
And Philip standing in the bow,
When his six comrades went below

To sleep away an hour or so,
Dog-tired with working day and night,
While he kept watch ... and not a sound
They heard, until, at set of sun
They woke; and coming up they found
The deck was empty, Philip gone ...
Yet not another boat in sight ...
And not a ripple on the sea.
How he had vanished, none could tell.
They only knew the lad was dead
They'd left but now, alive and well ...
And he, poor fellow, newly-wed ...
And when they broke the news to her,
She spoke no word to anyone:
But sat all day, and would not stir--
Just staring, staring in the fire,
With eyes that never seemed to tire;
Until, at last, the day was done,
And darkness came; when she would rise,
And seek the door with queer, wild eyes;
And wander singing all the night
Unearthly songs beside the sea:
But always the first blink of light
Would find her back at her own door.

'Twas Winter when I came once more
To that old village by the shore;
And as, at night, I climbed the street,
I heard a singing, low and sweet,
Within a cottage near at hand:
And I was glad awhile to stand
And listen by the glowing pane:
And as I hearkened, that sweet strain
Brought back the night when I had lain
Awake on Devil's Edge ...
And now I knew the voice again,
So different, free of pain and fear--
Its terror turned to tenderness--
And yet the same voice none the less,
Though singing now so true and clear:
And drawing nigh the window-ledge,
I watched the mother sing to rest
The baby snuggling to her breast.

* * * * *

D.H. LAWRENCE

SNAP-DRAGON

She bade me follow to her garden where
The mellow sunlight stood as in a cup
Between the old grey walls; I did not dare
To raise my face, I did not dare look up
Lest her bright eyes like sparrows should fly in
My windows of discovery and shrill 'Sin!'

So with a downcast mien and laughing voice
I followed, followed the swing of her white dress
That rocked in a lilt along: I watched the poise
Of her feet as they flew for a space, then paused to press
The grass deep down with the royal burden of her:
And gladly I'd offered my breast to the tread of her.

'I like to see,' she said, and she crouched her down,
She sunk into my sight like a settling bird;
And her bosom couched in the confines of her gown
Like heavy birds at rest there, softly stirred
By her measured breaths: 'I like to see,' said she,
'The snap-dragon put out his tongue at me.'

She laughed, she reached her hand out to the flower
Closing its crimson throat: my own throat in her power
Strangled, my heart swelled up so full
As if it would burst its wineskin in my throat,
Choke me in my own crimson; I watched her pull
The gorge of the gaping flower, till the blood did float

Over my eyes and I was blind--
Her large brown hand stretched over
The windows of my mind,
And in the dark I did discover
Things I was out to find:
My grail, a brown bowl twined
With swollen veins that met in the wrist,
Under whose brown the amethyst
I longed to taste: and I longed to turn
My heart's red measure in her cup,
I longed to feel my hot blood burn
With the lambent amethyst in her cup.

Then suddenly she looked up
And I was blind in a tawny-gold day
Till she took her eyes away.

So she came down from above
And emptied my heart of love ...
So I held my heart aloft
To the cuckoo that fluttered above,
And she settled soft.

It seemed that I and the morning world
Were pressed cup-shape to take this reiver
Bird who was weary to have furled
Her wings on us,
As we were weary to receive her:

This bird, this rich
Sumptuous central grain,
This mutable witch,
This one refrain.
This laugh in the fight,
This clot of light,
This core of night.

She spoke, and I closed my eyes
To shut hallucinations out.
I echoed with surprise
Hearing my mere lips shout
The answer they did devise.

Again, I saw a brown bird hover
Over the flowers at my feet;
I felt a brown bird hover
Over my heart, and sweet
Its shadow lay on my heart.
I thought I saw on the clover
A brown bee pulling apart
The closed flesh of the clover
And burrowing in its heart.

She moved her hand, and again
I felt the brown bird hover
Over my heart ... and then
The bird came down on my heart,
As on a nest the rover
Cuckoo comes, and shoves over
The brim each careful part
Of love, takes possession and settles her down,
With her wings and her feathers does drown
The nest in a heat of love.

She turned her flushed face to me for the glint
Of a moment. 'See,' she laughed, 'if you also
Can make them yawn.' I put my hand to the dint
In the flower's throat, and the flower gaped wide with woe.
She watched, she went of a sudden intensely still,
She watched my hand, and I let her watch her fill.

I pressed the wretched, throttled flower between
My fingers, till its head lay back, its fangs
Poised at her: like a weapon my hand stood white and keen,
And I held the choked flower-serpent in its pangs
Of mordant anguish till she ceased to laugh,
Until her pride's flag, smitten, cleaved down to the staff.

She hid her face, she murmured between her lips
The low word 'Don't!' I let the flower fall,
But held my hand afloat still towards the slips
Of blossom she fingered, and my crisp fingers all
Put forth to her: she did not move, nor I,
For my hand like a snake watched hers that could not fly.
Then I laughed in the dark of my heart, I did exult
Like a sudden chuckling of music: I bade her eyes
Meet mine, I opened her helpless eyes to consult
Their fear, their shame, their joy that underlies

Defeat in such a battle: in the dark of her eyes
My heart was fierce to make her laughter rise ...
Till her dark deeps shook with convulsive thrills, and the dark
Of her spirit wavered like water thrilled with light,
And my heart leaped up in longing to plunge its stark
Fervour within the pool of her twilight:
Within her spacious gloom, in the mystery
Of her barbarous soul, to grope with ecstasy ...

And I do not care though the large hands of revenge
Shall get my throat at last--shall get it soon,
If the joy that they are lifted to avenge
Have risen red on my night as a harvest moon,
Which even Death can only put out for me,
And death I know is better than not-to-be.

* * * * *

JOHN MASEFIELD

BIOGRAPHY

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
And none will know the gleam there used to be
About the feast days freshly kept by me,
But men will call the golden hour of bliss
'About this time,' or 'shortly after this.'

Men do not heed the rungs by which men climb
Those glittering steps, those milestones upon time,
Those tombstones of dead selves, those hours of birth,
Those moments of the soul in years of earth.
They mark the height achieved, the main result,
The power of freedom in the perished cult,
The power of boredom in the dead man's deeds
Not the bright moments of the sprinkled seeds.

By many waters and on many ways
I have known golden instants and bright days;
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;
The summer day on which in heart's delight
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white,
The glittering day when all the waves wore flags
And the ship Wanderer came with sails in rags;

That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk
When life became more splendid than its husk,
When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains
Shone with a doorway opening beyond brains;
The dawn when, with a brace-block's creaking cry,
Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of red,
Then gone, with one raised hand and one turned head;
The howling evening when the spindrift's mists
Broke to display the four Evangelists,
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by breakers,
Wind-beaten bones of long-since-buried acres;
The night alone near water when I heard
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird;
The English dusk when I beheld once more
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citted shore,
The lines of masts, the streets so cheerly trod
In happier seasons, and gave thanks to God.
All had their beauty, their bright moments' gift,
Their something caught from Time, the ever-swift.

All of those gleams were golden; but life's hands
Have given more constant gifts in changing lands;
And when I count those gifts, I think them such
As no man's bounty could have bettered much:
The gift of country life, near hills and woods
Where happy waters sing in solitudes,
The gift of being near ships, of seeing each day
A city of ships with great ships under weigh,
The great street paved with water, filled with shipping,
And all the world's flags flying and seagulls dipping.

Yet when I am dust my penman may not know
Those water-trampling ships which made me glow,
But think my wonder mad and fail to find,
Their glory, even dimly, from my mind,
And yet they made me:

 not alone the ships
But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to whips,
The two close friends of nearly twenty years
Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-peers,
Whose feet with mine wore many a bolthead bright
Treading the decks beneath the riding light.
Yet death will make that warmth of friendship cold,
And who'll know what one said and what one told,
Our hearts' communion, and the broken spells
When the loud call blew at the strike of bells?
No one, I know, yet let me be believed--
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a word
Live in the soul to make the being stirred;
Towns can be prisons where the spirit dulls
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,
Away from all bright water and great hills
And sheep-walks where the curlews cry their fills;
Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see
But dead museums and miles of misery
And floating life un-rooted from man's need

And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed
And life made wretched out of human ken
And miles of shopping women served by men.
So, if the penman sums my London days,
Let him but say that there were holy ways,
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old
With stinking doors where women stood to scold
And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born;
And windy gas lamps and the wet roads shining
And that old carol of the midnight whining,
And that old room above the noisy slum
Where there was wine and fire and talk with some
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and those friends,
Those glittering moments that a spirit lends,
That all may be imagined from the flash,
The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning gash;
Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took
Light to send out to men in song or book;
Those friends who heard St. Pancras' bells strike two,
Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew,
Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's best,
The thought beyond great poets not expressed,
The glory of mood where human frailty failed,
The forts of human light not yet assailed,
Till the dim room had mind and seemed to brood,
Binding our wills to mental brotherhood;
Till we became a college, and each night
Was discipline and manhood and delight;
Till our farewells and winding down the stairs
At each gray dawn had meaning that Time spares
That we, so linked, should roam the whole world round
Teaching the ways our brooding minds had found,
Making that room our Chapter, our one mind
Where all that this world soiled should be refined.

Often at night I tread those streets again
And see the alleys glimmering in the rain,
Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps,
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under lamps,
The secret house where once a beggar stood,
Trembling and blind, to show his woe for food.
And now I miss that friend who used to walk
Home to my lodgings with me, deep in talk,
Wearing the last of night out in still streets
Trodden by us and policemen on their beats
And cats, but else deserted; now I miss
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his
And that strange way he had of making gleam,
Like something real, the art we used to dream.
London has been my prison; but my books
Hills and great waters, labouring men and brooks,
Ships and deep friendships and remembered days
Which even now set all my mind ablaze--
As that June day when, in the red bricks' chinks
I saw the old Roman ruins white with pinks

And felt the hillside haunted even then
By not dead memory of the Roman men;
And felt the hillside thronged by souls unseen
Who knew the interest in me, and were keen
That man alive should understand man dead
So many centuries since the blood was shed,
And quickened with strange hush because this comer
Sensed a strange soul alive behind the summer.
That other day on Ercall when the stones
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied bones,
While the bees droned and all the air was sweet
From honey buried underneath my feet,
Honey of purple heather and white clover
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's over.
Then other days by water, by bright sea,
Clear as clean glass, and my bright friend with me;
The cove clean bottomed where we saw the brown
Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet down,
And saw the long fronds waving, white with shells,
Waving, unfolding, drooping, to the swells;
That sadder day when we beheld the great
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great cliff's gaps,
Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,
While drenching clouds drove by and every sense
Was water roaring or rushing or in offence,
And mountain sheep stood huddled and blown gaps gleamed
Where torn white hair of torrents shook and streamed.
That sadder day when we beheld again
A spate going down in sunshine after rain
When the blue reach of water leaping bright
Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked with white.
And that far day, that never blotted page
When youth was bright like flowers about old age,
Fair generations bringing thanks for life
To that old kindly man and trembling wife
After their sixty years: Time never made
A better beauty since the Earth was laid,
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair
For the great gift of life which brought them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the days
Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise.
The day they led my cutter at the turn,
Yet could not keep the lead, and dropped astern;
The moment in the spurt when both boats' oars
Dipped in each other's wash, and throats grew hoarse,
And teeth ground into teeth, and both strokes quickened
Lashing the sea, and gasps came, and hearts sickened,
And coxswains damned us, dancing, banking stroke,
To put our weights on, though our hearts were broke,
And both boats seemed to stick and sea seemed glue,
The tide a mill race we were struggling through;
And every quick recover gave us squints
Of them still there, and oar-tossed water-glints,
And cheering came, our friends, our foemen cheering,
A long, wild, rallying murmur on the hearing,
'Port Fore!' and 'Starboard Fore!' 'Port Fore' 'Port Fore,'
'Up with her,' 'Starboard'; and at that each oar

Lightened, though arms were bursting, and eyes shut,
And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut,
And the curse quickened from the cox, our bows
Crashed, and drove talking water, we made vows,
Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain
We numbered things we'd never eat again
If we could only win; then came the yell
'Starboard,' 'Port Fore,' and then a beaten bell
Rung as for fire to cheer us. 'Now.' Oars bent,
Soul took the looms now body's bolt was spent,
'Damn it, come on now.' 'On now,' 'On now,' 'Starboard.'
'Port Fore,' 'Up with her, Port'; each cutter harboured
Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, 'Heave, oh heave,'
Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking sheave.
'Heave,' and I saw a back, then two. 'Port Fore,'
'Starboard,' 'Come on'; I saw the midship oar,
And knew we had done them. 'Port Fore,' 'Starboard,' 'Now.'
I saw bright water spurting at their bow,
Their cox' full face an instant. They were done.
The watchers' cheering almost drowned the gun.
We had hardly strength to toss our oars; our cry
Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.

Other bright days of action have seemed great:
Wild days in a pampero off the Plate;
Good swimming days, at Hog Back or the Coves
Which the young gannet and the corbie loves;
Surf-swimming between rollers, catching breath
Between the advancing grave and breaking death,
Then shooting up into the sunbright smooth
To watch the advancing roller bare her tooth;
And days of labour also, loading, hauling;
Long days at winch or capstan, heaving, pawling;
The days with oxen, dragging stone from blasting,
And dusty days in mills, and hot days masting.
Trucking on dust-dry deckings smooth like ice,
And hunts in mighty wool-racks after mice;
Mornings with buckwheat when the fields did blanch
With White Leghorns come from the chicken ranch;
Days near the spring upon the sunburnt hill,
Plying the maul or gripping tight the drill;
Delights of work most real, delights that change
The headache life of towns to rapture strange
Not known by townsmen, nor imagined; health
That puts new glory upon mental wealth
And makes the poor man rich.

But that ends, too.

Health, with its thoughts of life; and that bright view,
That sunny landscape from life's peak, that glory,
And all a glad man's comments on life's story,
And thoughts of marvellous towns and living men,
And what pens tell, and all beyond the pen,
End, and are summed in words so truly dead
They raise no image of the heart and head,
The life, the man alive, the friend we knew,
The minds ours argued with or listened to,
None; but are dead, and all life's keenness, all,
Is dead as print before the funeral;
Even deader after, when the dates are sought,

And cold minds disagree with what we thought.

This many-pictured world of many passions
Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,
And what life is is much to very few;
Men being so strange, so mad, and what men do
So good to watch or share; but when men count
Those hours of life that were a bursting fount
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,
Gated by golden moments, each bright time
Opening to show the city white like lime,
High-towered and many-peopled. This made sure,
Work that obscures those moments seems impure,
Making our not-returning time of breath
Dull with the ritual and records of death,
That frost of fact by which our wisdom gives
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

Best trust the happy moments. What they gave
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,
And gives his work compassion and new eyes.
The days that make us happy make us wise.

* * * * *

HAROLD MONRO

CHILD OF DAWN

O gentle vision in the dawn:
My spirit over faint cool water glides.
Child of the day,
To thee;
And thou art drawn
By kindred impulse over silver tides
The dreamy way
To me.

I need thy hands, O gentle wonder-child,
For they are moulded unto all repose;
Thy lips are frail,
And thou art cooler than an April rose;
White are thy words and mild:
Child of the morning, hail!

Breathe thus upon mine eyelids--that we twain
May build the day together out of dreams.

Life, with thy breath upon my eyelids, seems
Exquisite to the utmost bounds of pain.
I cannot live, except as I may be
Compelled for love of thee.
O let us drift,
Frail as the floating silver of a star,
Or like the summer humming of a bee,
Or stream-reflected sunlight through a rift.

I will not hope, because I know, alas,
Morning will glide, and noon, and then the night
Will take thee from me. Everything must pass
Swiftly--but nought so swift as dawn-delight.
If I could hold thee till the day,
Is broad on sea and hill,
Child of repose,
What god can say,
What god or mortal knows,
What dream thou mightest not in me fulfil?

O gentle vision in the dawn:
My spirit over faint cool water glides,
Child of the day,
To thee;
And thou art drawn
By kindred impulse over silver tides
The dreamy way
To me.

LAKE LEMAN

It is the sacred hour: above the far
Low emerald hills that northward fold,
Calmly, upon the blue the evening star
Floats, wreathed in dusky gold.
The winds have sung all day; but now they lie
Faint, sleeping; and the evening sounds awake.
The slow bell tolls across the water: I
Am haunted by the spirit of the lake.
It seems as though the sounding of the bell
Intoned the low song of the water-soul,
And at some moments I can hardly tell
The long-resounding echo from the toll.
O thou mysterious lake, thy spell
Holds all who round thy fruitful margin dwell.
Oft have I seen home-going peasants' eyes
Lit with the peace that emanates from thee.
Those who among thy waters plunge, arise
Filled with new wisdom and serenity.
Thy veins are in the mountains. I have heard,
Down-stretched beside thee at the silent noon,
With leaning head attentive to thy word,
A secret and delicious mountain-tune,
Proceeding as from many shadowed hours
In ancient forests carpeted with flowers,
Or far, where hidden waters, wandering

Through banks of snow, trickle, and meet, and sing.
Ah, what repose at noon to go,
Lean on thy bosom, hold thee with wide hands,
And listen for the music of the snow!
But most, as now,
When harvest covers thy surrounding lands,
I love thee, with a coronal of sheaves
Crowned regent of the day;
And on the air thy placid breathing leaves
A scent of corn and hay.
For thou hast gathered (as a mother will
The sayings of her children in her heart)
The harvest-thoughts of reapers on the hill,
When the cool rose and honeysuckle fill
The air, and fruit is laden on the cart.
Thou breathest the delight
Of summer evening at the deep-roofed farm,
And meditation of the summer night,
When the enravished earth is lying warm
From recent kisses of the conquering sun.

Dwell as a spirit in me, O thou one
Sweet natural presence. In the years to be
When all the mortal loves perchance are done,
Them I will bid farewell, but, oh, not thee.
I love thee. When the youthful visions fade,
Fade thou not also in the hopeless past.
Be constant and delightful, as a maid
Sought over all the world, and found at last.

* * * * *

T. STURGE MOORE

A SICILIAN IDYLL

(FIRST SCENE)

Damon:

I thank thee, no;
Already have I drunk a bowl of wine ...
Nay, nay, why wouldst thou rise?
There rolls thy ball of worsted! Sit thee down;
Come, sit thee down, Cydilla,
And let me fetch thy ball, rewind the wool,
And tell thee all that happened yesterday.

Cydilla:

Thanks, Damon; now, by Zeus, thou art so brisk,
It shames me that to stoop should try my bones.

Damon:

We both are old,
And if we may have peaceful days are blessed;
Few hours of buoyancy will come to break
The sure withdrawal from us of life's flood.

Cydilla:

True, true, youth looks a great way off! To think
It once was age did lie quite out of sight!

Damon:

Not many days have been so beautiful
As yesterday, Cydilla; yet one was;
And I with thee broke tranced on its fine spell;
Thou dost remember? yes? but not with tears,
Ah, not with tears, Cydilla, pray, oh, pray!

Cydilla:

Pardon me, Damon,
'Tis many years since thou hast touched thereon;
And something stirs about thee--
Such air of eagerness as was thine when
I was more foolish than in my life, I hope
To ever have been at another time.

Damon:

Pooh! foolish?--thou wast then so very wise
That, often having seen thee foolish since,
Wonder has made me faint that thou shouldst err.

Cydilla:

Nay, then I erred, dear Damon; and remorse
Was not so slow to find me as thou deemst.

Damon:

There, mop those dear wet eyes, or thou'lt ne'er hear
What it was filled my heart full yesterday.

Cydilla:

Tell, Damon; since I well know that regrets
Hang like dull gossips round another's ear.

Damon:

First, thou must know that oftentimes I rise,--
Not heeding or not finding sleep, of watching
Afraid no longer to be prodigal,--
And gaze upon the beauty of the night.
Quiet hours, while dawn absorbs the waning stars,
Are like cold water sipped between our cups
Washing the jaded palate till it taste
The wine again. Ere the sun rose, I sat
Within my garden porch; my lamp was left
Burning beside my bed, though it would be
Broad day before I should return upstairs.
I let it burn, willing to waste some oil
Rather than to disturb my tranquil mood;
But, as the Fates determined, it was seen.--
Suddenly, running round the dovecote, came
A young man naked, breathless, through the dawn,
Florid with haste and wine; it was Hipparchus.
Yes, there he stood before me panting, rubbing
His heated flesh which felt the cold at once.
When he had breath enough he begged me straight
To put the lamp out; and himself had done it
Ere I was on the stair.
Flung all along my bed, his gasping shook it
When I at length could sit down by his side:
'What cause, young sir, brings you here in this plight
At such an hour?' He shuddered, sighed and rolled
My blanket round him; then came a gush of words:
'The first of causes, Damon, namely Love,
Eldest and least resigned and most unblushing
Of all the turbulent impulsive gods.
A quarter of an hour scarce has flown
Since lovely arms clung round me, and my head
Asleep lay nested in a woman's hair;
My cheek still bears print of its ample coils.'
Athwart its burning flush he drew my fingers
And their tips felt it might be as he said.
'Oh I have had a night, a night, a night!
Had Paris so much bliss?
And oh! was Helen's kiss
To be compared with those I tasted?
Which but for me had all been wasted
On a bald man, a fat man, a gross man, a beast
To scare the best guest from the very best feast!'
Cydilla need not hear half that he said,
For he was mad awhile.
But having given rein to hot caprice,
And satyr jest, and the distempered male,
At length, I heard his story.
At sun-down certain miles without the town.
He'd chanced upon a light-wheeled litter-car,

And in it there stood one
Yet more a woman than her garb was rich,
With more of youth and health than elegance.
'The mules,' he said, 'were beauties: she was one,
And cried directions to the neighbour field:
"O catch that big bough! Fool, not that, the next!
Clumsy, you've let it go! O stop it swaying,
The eggs will jolt out!" From the road,' said he,
'I could not see who thus was rated; so
Sprang up beside her and beheld her husband,
Lover or keeper, what you like to call him;--
A middle-aged stout man upon whose shoulders
Kneeled up a scraggy mule-boy slave, who was
The fool that could not reach a thrush's nest
Which they, while plucking almond, had revealed.
Before she knew who it could be, I said
"Why yes, he is a fool, but we, fair friend,
Were we not foolish waiting for such fools?
Let us be off!" I stooped, took, shook the reins
With one hand, while the other clasped her waist.
"Ah, who?" she turned; I smiled like amorous Zeus;
A certain vagueness clouded her wild eyes
As though she saw a swan, a bull, a shower
Of hurried flames, and felt divinely pleased.
I cracked the whip and we were jolted down;
A kiss was snatched getting the ribbons straight;
We hardly heard them first begin to bawl,
So great our expedition towards the town:
We flew. I pulled up at an inn, then bid them
Stable my mules and chariot and prepare
A meal for Dives; meanwhile we would stroll
Down to the market. Took her arm in mine,
And, out of sight, hurried her through cross-lanes,
Bade her choose, now at a fruit, now pastry booth.
Until we gained my lodging she spoke little
But often laughed, tittering from time to time,
"O Bacchus, what a prank!--Just think of Cymon,
So stout as he is, at least five miles to walk
Without a carriage!--well you take things coolly"--
Or such appreciation nice of gifts
I need not boast of, since I had them gratis.
When my stiff door creaked open grudgingly
Her face first fell; the room looked bare enough.
Still we brought with us food and cakes; I owned
A little cellar of delicious wine;
An unasked neighbour's garden furnished flowers;
Jests helped me nimbly, I surpassed myself;
So we were friends and, having laughed, we drank,
Ate, sang, danced, grew wild. Soon both had one
Desire, effort, goal,
One bed, one sleep, one dream ...
O Damon, Damon, both had one alarm,
When woken by the door forced rudely open,
Lit from the stair, bedazzled, glowered at, hated!
She clung to me; her master, husband, uncle
(I know not which or what he was) stood there;
It crossed my mind he might have been her father.
Naked, unarmed, I rose, and did assume
What dignity is not derived from clothes,

Bid them to quit my room, my private dwelling.
It was no use, for that gross beast was rich;
Had his been neither legal right nor moral,
My natural right was nought, for his she was
In eyes of those bribed catchpolls. Brute revenge
Seethed in his pimpled face: "To gaol with him!"
He shouted huskily. I wrapped some clothes
About my shuddering bed-fellow, a sheet
Flung round myself; ere she was led away,
Had whispered to her "Shriek, faint on the stairs!"
Then I was seized by two dog officers.
That girl was worth her keep, for, going down,
She suddenly writhed, gasped, and had a fit.
My chance occurred, and I whipped through the casement;
All they could do was catch away the sheet;
I dropped a dozen feet into a bush,
Soon found my heels and plied them; here I am.'

Cydilla:

A strange tale, Damon, this to tell to me
And introduce as thou at first began.

Damon:

Thy life, Cydilla, has at all times been
A ceremony: this young man's
Discovered by free impulse, not couched in forms
Worn and made smooth by prudent folk long dead.
I love Hipparchus for his wave-like brightness;
He wastes himself, but till his flash is gone
I shall be ever glad to hear him laugh:
Nor could one make a Spartan of him even
Were one the Spartan with a will to do it.
Yet had there been no more than what is told,
Thou wouldst not now be lending ear to me.

Cydilla:

Hearing such things, I think of my poor son,
Which makes me far too sad to smile at folly.

Damon:

There, let me tell thee all just as it happened,
And of thy son I shall be speaking soon.

Cydilla:

Delphis! Alas, are his companions still
No better than such ne'er-do-wells? I thought
His life was sager now, though he has killed
My hopes of seeing him a councillor.

Damon:

How thou art quick to lay claim to a sorrow!
Should I have come so eagerly to thee
If all there was to tell thee were such poor news?

Cydilla:

Forgive me; well know I there is no end
To Damon's kindness; my poor boy has proved it;
Could but his father so have understood him!

Damon:

Let lie the sad contents of vanished years;
Why with complaints reproach the helpless dead?
Thy husband ne'er will cross thy hopes again.
Come, think of what a sky made yesterday
The worthy dream of thrice divine Apollo!
Hipparchus' plan was, we should take the road
(As, when such mornings tempt me, is my wont)
And cross the hills, along the coast, toward Mylae.
He in disguise, a younger handier Chloe,
Would lead my mule; must brown his face and arms:
And thereon straight to wake her he was gone.
Their voices from her cabin crossed the yard;
He swears those parts of her are still well made
Which she keeps too well hidden when about;--
And she, no little pleased; that interlards,
Between her exclamations at his figure,
Reproof of gallantries half-laughed at hers.
Anon she titters as he dons her dress
Doubtless with pantomime--
Head-carriage and hip-swagger.
A wench, more conscious of her sex than grace,
He then rejoined me, changed beyond belief,
Roguish as vintage makes them; bustling helps
Or hinders Chloe harness to the mule;--
In fine bewitching both her age and mine.
The life that in such fellows runs to waste
Is like a gust that pulls about spring trees
And spoils your hope of fruit, while it delights
The sense with bloom and odour scattered, mingled
With salt spume savours from a crested offing.
The sun was not long up when we set forth
And, coming to the deeply shadowed gate,
Found catchpolls lurked there, true to his surmise.
Then he, his beard disguised like face-ache, sauced;
(Too gaily for that bandaged cheek, thought I);
But they, whose business was to think,
Were quite contented, let the hussy pass,
Returned her kisses blown back down the road,
And crowned the mirth of their outwitter's heart.
As the steep road wound clear above the town,
Fewer became those little comedies
To which encounters roused him: till, at last,

He scarcely knew we passed some vine-dressers:
And I could see the sun's heat, lack of sleep,
And his late orgy would defeat his powers.
So, where the road grows level and must soon
Descend, I bade him climb into the car;
On which the mule went slower still and slower.
This creature who, upon occasions, shows
Taste very like her master's, left the highway
And took a grass-grown wheel-track that led down
Zigzag athwart the broad curved banks of lawn
Coating a valley between rounded hills
Which faced the sea abruptly in huge crags.
Each slope grew steeper till I left my seat
And led the mule; for now Hipparchus' snore
Tuned with the crooning waves heard from below.
We passed two narrow belts of wood and then
The sea, that first showed blue above their tops,
Was spread before us chequered with white waves
Breaking beneath on boulders which choked up
The narrowed issue seawards of the glen.
The steep path would no more admit of wheels:
I took the beast and tethered her to graze
Within the shade of a stunt ilex clump,--
Returned to find a vacant car; Hipparchus,
Uneasy on my tilting down the shafts,
And heated with strange clothes, had roused himself
And lay asleep upon his late disguise,
Naked 'neath the cool eaves of one huge rock
That stood alone, much higher up than those
Over, and through, and under which, the waves
Made music or forced milk-white floods of foam.
There I reclined, while vision, sound and scent
Won on my willing soul like sleep on joy,
Till all accustomed thoughts were far away
As from a happy child the cares of men.
The hour was sacred to those earlier gods
Who are not active, but divinely wait
The consummation of their first great deeds,
Unfolding still and blessing hours serene.
Presently I was gazing on a boy,
(Though whence he came my mind had not perceived).
Twelve or thirteen he seemed, with clinging feet
Poised on a boulder, and against the sea
Set off. His wide-brimmed hat of straw was arched
Over his massed black and abundant curls
By orange ribbon tied beneath his chin;
Around his arms and shoulders his sole dress,
A cloak, was all bunched up. He leapt, and lighted
Upon the boulder just beneath; there swayed,
Re-poised,
And perked his head like an inquisitive bird,
As gravely happy; of all unconscious save
His body's aptness for its then employment;
His eyes intent on shells in some clear pool
Or choosing where he next will plant his feet.
Again he leaps, his curls against his hat
Bounce up behind. The daintiest thing alive,
He rocks awhile, turned from me towards the sea;
Unseen I might devour him with my eyes.

At last he stood upon a ledge each wave
Spread with a sheet of foam four inches deep;
He gazing at them saw them disappear
And reappear all shining and refreshed:
Then raised his head, beheld the ocean stretched
Alive before him in its magnitude.
None but a child could have been so absorbed
As to escape its spell till then, none else
Could so have voiced glad wonder in a song:--
All the waves of the sea are there!
In at my eyes they crush.
Till my head holds as fair a sea:
Though I shut my eyes, they are there!
Now towards my lids they rush,
Mad to burst forth from me
Back to the open air!--
To follow them my heart needs,
O white-maned steeds, to ride you;
Lithe-shouldered steeds,
To the western isles astride you
Amyntas speeds!
'Damon!' said a voice quite close to me
And looking up ... as might have stood Apollo
In one vast garment such as shepherds wear
And leaning on such tall staff stood ... Thou guessest,
Whose majesty as vainly was disguised
As must have been Apollo's minding sheep.

Cydilla:

Delphis! I know, dear Damon, it was Delphis!
Healthy life in the country having chased
His haggard looks; his speech is not wild now,
Nor wicked with exceptions to things honest:
Thy face a kindlier way than speech tells this.

Damon:

Yea, dear Cydilla, he was altogether
What mountaineers might dream of for a king.

Cydilla:

But tell me, is he tutor to that boy?

Damon:

He is an elder brother to the lad.

Cydilla:

Nay, nay, hide nothing, speak the worst at once.

Damon:

I meant no hint of ill;
A god in love with young Amyntas might
Look as he did; fathers alone feel like him:
Could I convey his calm and happy speech
Thy last suspicion would be laid to rest.

Cydilla:

Damon, see, my glad tears have drowned all fear;
Think'st thou he may come back and win renown,
And fill his father's place?
Not as his father filled it,
But with an inward spirit correspondent
To that contained and high imposing mien
Which made his father honoured before men
Of greater wisdom, more integrity.

Damon:

And loved before men of more kindliness!

Cydilla:

O Damon, far too happy am I now
To grace thy naughtiness by showing pain.
My Delphis 'owns the brains and presence too
That make a Pericles!' ... (the words are thine)
Had he but the will; and has he now?
Good Damon, tell me quick?

Damon:

He dreams not of the court, and city life
Is what he rails at.

Cydilla:

Well, if he now be wise and sober-souled
And loved for goodness, I can rest content.

Damon:

My brain lights up to see thee happy! wait,
It may be I can give some notion how
Our poet spoke:
'Damon, the best of life is in thine eyes--
Worship of promise-laden beauty. Seems he not
The god of this fair scene?
Those waves claim such a master as that boy;
And these green slopes have waited till his feet
Should wander them, to prove they were not spread

In wantonness. What were this flower's prayer
Had it a voice? The place behind his ear
Would brim its cup with bliss and overbrim;
Oh, to be worn and fade beside his cheek!--
'In love and happy, Delphis; and the boy?--
'Loves and is happy'--

You hale from?'--

'Aetna;

We have been out two days and crossed this ridge,
West of Mount Mycon's head. I serve his father,
A farmer well-to-do and full of sense,
Who owns a grass-farm cleared among the pines
North-west the cone, where even at noon in summer,
The slope it falls on lengthens a tree's shade.
To play the lyre, read and write and dance
I teach this lad; in all their country toil
Join, nor ask better fare than cheese, black bread,
Butter or curds, and milk, nor better bed
Than litter of dried fern or lentisk yields,
Such as they all sleep soundly on and dream,
(If e'er they dream) of places where it grew,--
Where they have gathered mushrooms, eaten berries,
Or found the sheep they lost, or killed a fox,
Or snared the kestrel, or so played their pipes
Some maid showed pleasure, sighed, nay even wept.
There to be poet need involve no strain,
For though enough of coarseness, dung--nay, nay,
And suffering too, be mingled with the life,
'Tis wedded to such air,
Such water and sound health!
What else might jar or fret chimes in attuned
Like satyr's cloven hoof or lorn nymph's grief
In a choice ode. Though lust, disease and death,
As everywhere, are cruel tyrants, yet
They all wear flowers, and each sings a song
Such as the hilly echo loves to learn.'
'At last then even Delphis knows content?'
'Damon, not so:
This life has brought me health but not content.
That boy, whose shouts ring round us while he flings
Intent each stone toward yon shining object
Afloat inshore ... I eat my heart to think
How all which makes him worthy of more love
Must train his ear to catch the siren croon
That never else had reached his upland home!
And he who failed in proof, how should he arm
Another against perils? Ah, false hope
And credulous enjoyment! How should I,
Life's fool, while wakening ready wit in him,
Teach how to shun applause and those bright eyes
Of women who pour in the lap of spring
Their whole year's substance? They can offer
To fill the day much fuller than I could,
And yet teach night surpass it. Can my means
Prevent the ruin of the thing I cherish?
What cares Zeus for him? Fate despises love.
Why, lads more exquisite, brimming with promise,
A thousand times have been lost for the lack
Of just the help a watchful god might give;

But which the best of fathers, best of mothers,
Of friends, of lovers cannot quite supply.
Powers, who swathe man's virtue up in weakness,
Then plunge his delicate mind in hot desire,
Preparing pleasure first and after shame
To bandage round his eyes,--these gods are not
The friends of men.'

The Delphis of old days before me stood,
Passionate, stormy, teeming with black thought,
His back turned on that sparkling summer sea,
His back turned on his love; and wilder words
And less coherent thought poured from him now.
Hipparchus waking took stock of the scene.
I watched him wend down, rubbing sleepy lids,
To where the boy was busy throwing stones.
He joined the work, but even his stronger arm
And heavier flints he hurled would not suffice
To drive that floating object nearer shore:
And, ere the rebel Delphis had expressed
Enough of anger and contempt for gods,
(Who, he asserted, were the dreams of men),
I saw the stone-throwers both take the water
And swimming easily attain their end.
The way they held their noses proved the thing
A tunny, belly floating upward, dead;
Both towed it till the current caught and swept it
Out far from that sweet cove; they laughing watched:
Then, suddenly, Amyntas screamed and Delphis
Turned to see him sink
Locked in Hipparchus' arms.
The god Apollo never
Burst through a cloud with more ease than thy son
Poured from his homespun garb
The rapid glory of his naked limbs,
And like a streak of lightning reached the waves:--
Wherein his thwarted speed appeared more awful
As, brought within the scope of comprehension,
Its progress and its purpose could be gauged.
Spluttering Amyntas rose, Hipparchus near him
Who cried 'Why coy of kisses, lovely lad?
I ne'er would harm thee; art thou not ashamed
To treat thy conquest thus?'

He shouted partly to drown the sea's noise, chiefly
The nearing Delphis to disarm.
His voice lost its assurance while he spoke,
And, as he finished, quick to escape he turned;
Thy son's eyes and that steady coming on,
As he might see them over ruffled crests,
Far better helped him swim
Than ever in his life he swam before.
Delphis passed by Amyntas;
Hipparchus was o'ertaken,
Cuffed, ducked and shaken;
In vain he clung about his angry foe;
Held under he perforce let go:
I, fearing for his life, set up a whoop
To bring cause and effect to thy son's mind,
And in dire rage's room his sense returned.
He towed Hipparchus back like one he'd saved

From drowning, laid him out upon that ledge
Where late Amyntas stood, where now he kneeled
Shivering, alarmed and mute.
Delphis next set the drowned man's mouth to drain;
We worked his arms, for I had joined them; soon
His breathing recommenced; we laid him higher
On sun-warmed turf to come back to himself;
Then we climbed to the cart without a word.
The sun had dried their limbs; they, putting on
Their clothes, sat down; at length, I asked the lad
What made him keen to pelt a stinking fish.
Blushing he said, 'I wondered what it was.
But that man, when he came to help, declared
'Twould prove a dead sea-nymph, and we might see,
By swimming out, how finely she was made.
I did not half believe, yet when we found
That foul stale fish, it made us laugh.' He smiled
And watched Hipparchus spit and cough and groan.
I moved to the car and unpacked bread and meat,
A cheese, some fruit, a skin of wine, two bowls.
Amyntas was all joy to see such things;
Ran off and pulled acanthus for our plates;
Chattering, he helped me set all forth,--was keen
To choose rock basin where the wine might cool;
Approved, was full as happy as I to praise:
And most he pleased me, when he set a place
For poor Hipparchus. Thus our eager work,
While Delphis, in his thoughts retired, sat frowning,
Grew like a home-conspiracy to trap
The one who bears the brunt of outside cares
Into the glow of cheerfulness that bathes
The children and the mother,--happy not
To foresee winter, short-commons or long debts,
Since they are busied for the present meal,--
Too young, too weak, too kind, to peer ahead,
Or probe the dark horizon bleak with storms.
Oh! I have sometimes thought there is a god
Who helps with lucky accidents when folk
Join with the little ones to chase such gloom.
That chance which left Hipparchus with no clothes,
Surely divinity was ambushed in it?
When he must put on Chloe's, Amyntas rocked
With laughter, and Hipparchus, quick to use
A favourable gust, pretends confusion
Such as a farmer's daughter red-faced shows
If in the dance her dress has come unpinned.
She suddenly grows grave; yet, seeing there
Friends only, stoops behind a sister-skirt.
Then, having set to rights the small mishap,
Holding her screener's elbows, round her shoulder
Peeps, to bob back meeting a young man's eye.
All, grateful for such laughs, give Hermes thanks.
And even Delphis at Hipparchus smiled
When, from behind me, he peeped bashful forth;
Amyntas called him Baucis every time,
Laughing because he was or was not like
Some wench ...

Why, Delphis, in the name of Zeus
How come you here?

Cydilla:

What can have happened, Delphis?
Be brief for pity!

Delphis:

Nothing, mother, nothing
That has not happened time on time before
To thee, to Damon, when the life ye thought
With pride and pleasure yours, has proved a dream.
They strike down on us from the top of heaven,
Bear us up in their talons, up and up,
Drop us: we fall, are crippled, maimed for life.
'Our dreams'? nay, we are theirs for sport, for prey,
And life is the King Eagle,
The strongest, highest flyer, from whose clutch
The fall is fatal always.

Cydilla:

Delphis, Delphis,
Good Damon had been making me so happy
By telling ...

Delphis:

How he watched me near the zenith?
Three years back
That dream pounced on me and began to soar;
Having been sick, my heart had found new lies;
The only thoughts I then had ears for were
Healthy, virtuous, sweet;
Jaded town-wastrel,
A country setting was the sole could take me
Three years back.
Damon might have guessed
From such a dizzy height
What fall was coming.

Cydilla:

Ah my boy, my boy!

Damon:

Sit down, be patient, let us hear and aid;--
Has aught befallen Amyntas?

Delphis:

Would he were dead!
Would that I had been brute enough to slay him!--
Great Zeus, Hipparchus had so turned his head,
His every smile and word
As we sat by our fire, stung my fool's heart.--
How we laughed to see him curtsy,
Fidget strings about his waist,--
Giggle, his beard caught in the chlamys' hem
Drawing it tight about his neck, 'just like
Our Baucis.' Could not sleep
For thinking of the life they lead in towns;
He said so: when, at last,
He sighed from dreamland, thoughts
I had been day-long brooding
Broke into vision.

A child, a girl,
Beautiful, nay more than others beautiful,
Not meant for marriage, not for one man meant,
You know what she will be;
At six years old or seven her life is round her;
A company, all ages, old men, young men,
Whose vices she must prey on.
And the bent crone she will be is there too,
Patting her head and chuckling prophecies.--
O cherry lips, O wild bird eyes,
O gay invulnerable setter-at-nought
Of will, of virtue--
Thou art as constant a cause as is the sea,
As is the sun, as are the winds, as night,
Of opportunities not only but events;--
The unalterable past
Is full of thy contrivance,
Aphrodite,
Goddess of ruin!

No girl; nay, nay,
Amyntas is young,
Is gay,
Has beauty and health--and yet
In his sleep I have seen him smile
And known that his dream was vile;
Those eyes which brimmed over with glee
Till my life flowed as fresh as the sea--
Those eyes, gloved each in a warm live lid,
May be glad that their visions are hid.

I taught myself to rhyme; the trick will cling.
Ah, Damon, day-lit vision is more dread
Than those which suddenly replace the dark!
When the dawn filtered through our tent of boughs
I saw him closely wrapped in his grey cloak,
His head upon a pile of caked thin leaves
Whose life had dried up full two years ago.
Their flakes shook in the breath from those moist lips;
The vow his kiss would seal must prove, I knew
As friable as that pale ashen fritter;
It had more body than reason dare expect
From that so beautiful creature's best intent.

He waking found me no more there; and wanders
Through AEtna's woods to-day
Calling at times, or questioning charcoal burners,
Till he shall strike a road shall lead him home;
Yet all his life must be spent as he spends
This day in whistling, wondering, singing, chatting,
In the great wood, vacant and amiable.

Damon:

Can it be possible that thou desertest
Thy love, thy ward, the work of three long years,
Because chance, on an April holiday
Has filled this boy's talk with another man,
And wonder at another way of life?
Worse than a woman's is such jealousy;
The lad must live!

Delphis:

Live, live! to be sure, he must live!
I have lived, am a fool for my pains!
And yet, and yet,
This heart has ached to play the god for him:--
Mine eyes for his had sifted visible things;
Speech had been filtered ere it reached his ear;
Not in the world should he have lived, but breathed
Humanity's distilled quintessences;
The indiscriminate multitude sorted should yield him
Acquaintance and friend discerned, chosen by me:--
By me, who failed, wrecked my youth's prime, and dragged
More wonderful than his gifts in the mire!

Damon:

Yet if experience could not teach and save
Others from ignorance, why, towns would be
Ruins, and civil men like outlaws thief,
Stab, riot, ere two generations passed.

Delphis:

Where is the Athens that Pericles loved?
Where are the youths that were Socrates' friends?
There was a town where all learnt
What the wisest had taught!
Why had crude Sparta such treasonous force?
Could Philip of Macedon
Breed a true Greek of his son?
What honour to conquer a world
Where Alcibiades failed,
Lead half-drilled highland hordes
Whose lust would inherit the wise?
There is nothing art's industry shaped
But their idleness praising it mocked.

Thus Fate re-assumed her command
And laughed at experienced law.
What ails man to love with such pains?
Why toil to create in the mind
Of those who shall close in his grave
The best that he is and has hoped?
The longer permission he has,
The nobler the structure so raised,
The greater its downfall. Fools, fools,
Where is a town such as Pericles ruled?
Where youths to replace those whom Socrates loved?

Wise Damon, thou art silent;--Mother, thou
Hast only arms to cling about thy son.--
Who can descry the purpose of a god
With eyes wide-open? shut them, every fool
Can conjure up a world arriving somewhere,
Resulting in what he may call perfection.
Evil must soon or late succeed to good.
There well may once have been a golden age:
Why should we treat it as a poet's tale?
Yet, in those hills that hung o'er Arcady,
Some roving inebriate Daimon
Begot him fair children
On nymphs of the vineyard,
On nymphs of the rock:--
And in the heart of the forest
Lay bound in white arms,
In action creative a father
Without a thought for his child:--
A purposeless god,
The forbear of men
To corrupt, ape, inherit and spoil
That fine race beforehand with doom!

No, Damon, what's an answer worth to one
Whose mind has been flung open?
Only last night,
The gates of my spirit gave entrance
Unto the great light;
And I saw how virtue seduceth,
Not ended today or tomorrow
Like the passion for love,
Like the passion for life--
But perennial pain
And age-long effort.
Dead deeds are the teeth that shine
In the mouth that repeateth praise,
That spurs men to do high things
Since their fathers did higher before--
To give more than they hope to receive,
To slave and to die in a secular cause!
The mouth that smiles over-praise
Eats out the heart of each fool
To feed the great dream of a race.

Yet wearied peoples each in turn awake
From virtue, as a man from his brief love,
And, roughly shaken, face the useless truth;

No answer to brute fact has e'er been found.
Slaves of your slaves, caged in your furnished rooms,
Ushered to meals when reft of appetite--
Though hungry, bound to wait a stated hour--
Your dearest contemplation broken off
By the appointed summons to your bath;
Racked with more thought for those whom you may flog
Than for those dear; obsessed by your possessions
With a dull round of stale anxieties;--
Soon maintenance grows the extreme reach of hope
For those held in respect, as in a vice,
By citizens of whom they are the pick.
Of men the least bond is the roving seaman
Who hires himself to merchantman or pirate
For single voyages, stays where he may please,
Lives his purse empty in a dozen ports,
And ne'er obeys the ghost of what once was!
His laugh chimes readily; his kiss, no symbol
Of aught to come, but cordial, eager, hot,
Leaves his tomorrow free. With him for comrade
Each day shall be enough, and what is good
Enjoyed, and what is evil borne or cursed.
I go, because I will not have a home,
Or here prefer to there, or near to far.
I go, because I will not have a friend
Lay claim upon my leisure this day week.
I will be melted by each smile that takes me;
What though a hundred lips should meet with mine!
A vagabond I shall be as the moon is.
The sun, the waves, the winds, all birds, all beasts,
Are ever on the move, and take what comes;
They are not parasites like plants and men
Rooted in that which fed them yesterday.
Not even Memory shall follow Delphis,
For I will yield to all impulse save hers,
Therein alone subject to prescient rigour;
Lest she should lure me back among the dying--
Pilfer the present for the beggar past.
Free minds must bargain with each greedy moment
And seize the most that lies to hand at once.
Ye are too old to understand my words;
I yet have youth enough, and can escape
From that which sucks each individual man
Into the common dream.

Cydilla:

Stay, Delphis, hear what Damon has to say!
He is mad!

Damon:

Mad--yes--mad as cruelty!

* * * * *

Poor, poor Cydilla! was it then to this
That all my tale was prologue?
Think of Amyntas, think of that poor boy,

Bereaved as we are both bereaved! Come, come,
Find him, and say that Love himself has sent us
To offer our poor service in his stead.

Cydilla:

Good Damon, help me find my wool; my eyes
Are blind with tears; then I will come at once!
We must be doing something, for I feel
We both shall drown our hearts with time to spare.

* * * * *

RONALD ROSS

HESPERUS

Ah whither dost thou float, sweet silent star,
In yonder floods of evening's dying light?
Before the fanning wings of rising night,
Methinks thy silvery bark is driven far
To some lone isle or calmly havened shore,
Where the lorn eye of man can follow thee no more.

How many a one hath watched thee even as I,
And unto thee and thy receding ray
Poured forth his thoughts with many a treasured sigh
Too sweet and strange for the remorseless day;
But thou hast gone and left unto their sight
Too great a host of stars, and yet too black a night.

E'en as I gaze upon thee, thy bright form
Doth sail away among the cloudy isles
Around whose shores the sea of sunlight smiles.
On thee may break no black and boisterous storm
To turn the tenour of thy calm career.
As thou wert long ago so now thou dost appear.

Art thou a tear left by the exiled day
Upon the dusky cheek of drowsy night?
Or dost thou as a lark carol alway
Full in the liquid glow of heavenly light?
Or, bent on discord and angelic wars,
As some bright spirit tread before the trooping stars?

The disenchanted vapours hide thee fast;
The watery twilight fades and night comes on;

One lingering moment more and thou art gone,
Lost in the rising sea of clouds that cast
Their inundations o'er the darkening air;
And wild the night wind wails the lightless world's despair.

* * * * *

EDMUND BEALE SARGANT

THE CUCKOO WOOD

Cuckoo, are you calling me,
Or is it a voice of wizardry?
In these woodlands I am lost,
From glade to glade of flowers tost.
Seven times I held my way,
And seven times the voice did say,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from this underwood,
Half of green and half of brown,
Unless he laid his senses down.
Only let him chance to see
The snows of the anemone
Heaped above its greenery;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from the master wood.

Magic paths there are that cross;
Some beset with jewelled moss
And boughs all bare; where others run,
Bluebells bathe in mist and sun
Past a clearing filled with clumps
Of primrose round the nutwood stumps;
All as gay as gay can be,
And bordered with dog-mercury,
The wizard flower, the wizard green,
Like a Persian carpet seen.
Brown, dead bracken lies between,
And wrinkled leaves, whence fronds of fern
Still untwist and upward turn.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from this wizard wood,
Half of green, and half of brown,
Unless he laid his senses down.

Seven times I held my way
Where new heaps of brushwood lay,
All with withies loosely bound,

And never heard a human sound.
Yet men have toiled and men have rested
By yon hurdles darkly-breasted,
Woven in and woven out,
Piled four-square, and turned about
To show their white and sharpened stakes
Like teeth of hounds or fangs of snakes.
The men are homeward sped, for none
Loves silence and a sinking sun.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Woodmen know
Souls are lost that hear it so,
Seven times upon the wind,
To lull the watch-dogs of the mind.

A stranger wood you shall not find!
Beech and birch and oak agree
Here to dwell in company.
Hazel, elder, few men could
Name the kinds of underwood.
Summer and winter haunt together,
And golden light with misty weather.
'Tis summer where this beech is seen
Defenceless in its virgin green;
All its leaves are smooth and thin,
And the sunlight passes in,
Passes in and filters through
To a green heaven below the blue.
Low the branches fall and trace
A circle round that mystic place,
Guarded on its outward side
By hyacinths in all their pride;
And within dim moons appear,
Wax and wane--I go not near!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! How we fear
Sights and sounds that come and go
Without a cause for men to know!

Why for a whispered doubt should I
Shun that other beech-tree high,
Red and watchful, still and bare,
With a thousand spears in air,
Guarding yet its treasured leaf
From storm and hail and winter's grief?
Unregarded on the ground
Leaves of yester-year abound,
For what is autumn's gold to one
That hoards a life scarce yet begun?
Let me so renew my youth,
I defend it, nail and tooth,
Rooting deep and lifting high.
For this my dead leaves hiss and sigh
And glow as on the downward road
To the dog-snake's dread abode.
Noxious things of earth and air,
Get you hence, for I prepare
To flaunt my beauty in the sun
When all beside me are undone.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Pan shall see
The surge of my virginity

Overtop the sobered glade.
Luminous and unafraid
Near his sacred oak I'll spread
Lures to tempt him from his bed:
His couch, his lair his form shall be
By none but by the fair beech-tree.

O cunning Oak! What is your skill
To hold the god against my will?
Keep your favours back like me,
With disfavour he shall see
Orange hues of jealousy:
Show your leaf in early prime,
It shall be dark before its time:
Me you shall not rival ever.
Silver Birch, would you endeavour,
Trembling in your bridal dress,
To win at last a dog's caress?
Through your twigs so thin and dark
Shows the black and ashen bark,
Like a face that underneath
Tightened eyebrows looks on death.
Think not, dwarf, that Pan shall find
Aught about you to his mind.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! All shall try
To win him. But the beech and I,
Man and tree made one at last,
Alone have power to hold him fast.

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Forth I creep,
When the flowers fall asleep,
And upgather odours rare
Floating on the misty air,
All to be imprisoned where
My sap is rising till they reach
The swelling twigs, and thence shall each
Separate scent be shaken free
As my flowers and leaves agree.
Rare in sooth those flowers shall be:
Cunningly will I devise
Colours to delight the eyes,
Slipping from my fissured stem
To get by stealth or stratagem
The glory of the morning petal.
Where the bees at noontide settle,
Mine to rifle all their sweets:
Honey and bee-bread on the teats
Of my blossoms shall be spread,
Till the lime-trees shake with dread
Of the marvels still to come
When their bees about me hum.

Welcome, welcome, cloudless night,
Is our labour ended quite?
Are the mortal and the tree
Now made one in ecstasy,
One in foretaste of the dawn?
Crescent moon, sink, sink outworn!
Stars be buried, stars be born,

Mount and dip to tell aright
The doings of the morrow's light!
Mists, assemble, hide me quite,
Till the sun with growing strength
Grips your veils, and length by length
Tears them down from head to foot;
Then to the challenge I am put!

Tell me busy, busy glade,
Half in light and half in shade,
Is your world of wood-folk there?
All are come but the mole and hare;
One is blind, and underground
Of that tumult hears no sound;
The other Pan has crept within,
To bask afield in the hare-skin.
All are come of woodland fowl
But the cuckoo and the owl;
The owl's asleep, and the cuckoo-bird
Nowhere seen is eachwhere heard.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Those that see
The leafing of this great beech-tree,
And its flowers of every kind,
Woodland lovers have in mind;
Those that breathe the scented wind
Or touch this bark of satin, could
Never issue from our wood.

Tell me, busy, busy glade,
Are little flying things afraid?
All are come of aery folk,
Gnats that hover like a smoke,
Butterflies and humble-bees,
Insects winged in all degrees,
Honey-toilers, pleasure-makers,
Of labours and of joys forsakers,
Round these boughs to live and die.
Only the moth and the dragon-fly
Keep their haunts and come not nigh:
The moth is moonstruck, she must creep
With twitching wings, and half-asleep,
Through folds of darkness; and that other,
The dragon-fly, Narcissus' brother,
Flashes all his burnished mail
In a still pool adown the dale.

Tell me, busy, busy glade,
Shifting aye in light and shade,
Are the dryads peeping forth,
More in wonder than in wrath,
Each beneath her own dear tree
Parting her hair that she may see
How queens put on their sovereignty?
All are come of Pan's own race,
Nymphs and satyrs fill the place,
Necks outstretched and ears a-twitching,
That Pan may know of all this witching.
Heedless stumble the goatfeet
Till four-footed things retreat.

Cries of Ah! and Ay! and Eh!
Scare the forest birds away,
And their notes that rang so clear
At dawn, you now shall rarely hear:
Only a robin here and there
Pitches high his trembling voice
In a challenge to rejoice.

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! How two notes
Stolen from all woodland throats
Make the satyrs stand like stone,
Waiting for Pan to call his own!
How the couching dryads seem
To root themselves as in a dream,
And the naiads, wan and whist,
To melt into an evening mist!

Tell me, silent, silent glade,
All in light that once was shade,
All in shade that once was light,
How went the creatures from my sight?
Where are the shapes that turned to stone,
And my tree that reigned alone?
Red and watchful, still and bare,
With a thousand spears in air,
Stands the beech that you would bind
Unlawfully to human mind.
Gone is every woodland elf
To the mighty god himself.
Mortal! You yourself are fast!
Doubt not Pan shall come at last
To put a leer within your eyes
That pry into his mysteries.
He shall touch the busy brain
Lest it ever teem again;
Point the ears and twist the feet,
Till by day you dare not meet
Men, or in the failing light
Mutter more than, Friend, good-night!

Tell me, whispering, whispering glade,
Am I eager or afraid?
Do I wish the god to come?
What shall I say if he be dumb?
Tell me, wherefore hiss and sigh
Those shrivelled leaves? Has Pan gone by?
Why do your thousand pools of light
Gaze like eyes that fade at night?
Pan has but twain, Pan's eyes are bright!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! See, yon stakes
Gape and grin like fangs of snakes;
Not snakes nor hounds are mouthing thus;
Pan himself is watching us.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Now
The god is breasting the hill-brow.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Pan is near:
Joy runs trembling back to fear.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! All my blood
Knocks through the heart whose every thud

Chokes me, blinds me, drains my madness.
As one half-drowned, I feel life's gladness
Ooze from each pore. Towards the sun
Downhill I reel that fain would run.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Thornless seem
Briars that part as in a dream.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Hazel-boughs
Hurt not though they blood the brows.

Cuckoo! In a meadow prone
At last I lie, my wits my own;
And in my hand I clasp the flower
To counteract that magic power;
The cuckoo-flower, in a lilac sheet
Under body, head and feet.
Above me apple-blossoms fleck
The cloudless sky, a neighbouring beck
With many a happy gurgle goes
Down to the farm through alder-rows.
Strange it is, and it is sweet,
To hear the distant mill-wheel beat,
And the kindly cries of men
Turning the cattle home again,
The clank of pails and all the shades
Of laughter of the busy maids.
Now is come the evening star,
And my limbs new-blooded are.
So beside the stream I choose
A path that patient anglers use,
Which with many twists and turns
Brings me where a candle burns,
A lowly light, through cottage pane
Seen and hid and seen again.
Cuckoo! Now you call in vain.
I am far and I am free
From all woodland wizardry!

* * * * *

JAMES STEPHENS

IN THE POPPY FIELD

Mad Patsy said, he said to me,
That every morning he could see
An angel walking on the sky;
Across the sunny skies of morn
He threw great handfuls far and nigh

Of poppy seed among the corn;
And then, he said, the angels run
To see the poppies in the sun.

A poppy is a devil weed,
I said to him--he disagreed;
He said the devil had no hand
In spreading flowers tall and fair
Through corn and rye and meadow land,
By garth and barrow everywhere:
The devil has not any flower,
But only money in his power.

And then he stretched out in the sun
And rolled upon his back for fun:
He kicked his legs and roared for joy
Because the sun was shining down,
He said he was a little boy
And would not work for any clown:
He ran and laughed behind a bee,
And danced for very ecstasy.

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

I thought I heard Him calling. Did you hear
A sound, a little sound? My curious ear
Is dinned with flying noises, and the tree
Goes--whisper, whisper, whisper silently
Till all its whispers spread into the sound
Of a dull roar. Lie closer to the ground,
The shade is deep and He may pass us by.
We are so very small, and His great eye,
Customed to starry majesties, may gaze
Too wide to spy us hiding in the maze;
Ah, misery! the sun has not yet gone
And we are naked: He will look upon
Our crouching shame, may make us stand upright
Burning in terror--O that it were night!
He may not come ... what? listen, listen, now--
He is here! lie closer ... 'Adam, where art thou?'

THE LONELY GOD

So Eden was deserted, and at eve
Into the quiet place God came to grieve.
His face was sad, His hands hung slackly down
Along his robe; too sorrowful to frown
He paced along the grassy paths and through
The silent trees, and where the flowers grew
Tended by Adam. All the birds had gone
Out to the world, and singing was not one
To cheer the lonely God out of His grief--
The silence broken only when a leaf

Tapt lightly on a leaf, or when the wind,
Slow-handed, swayed the bushes to its mind.

And so along the base of a round hill,
Rolling in fern, He bent His way until
He neared the little hut which Adam made,
And saw its dusky roof-tree overlaid
With greenest leaves. Here Adam and his spouse
Were wont to nestle in their little house
Snug at the dew-time: here He, standing sad,
Sighed with the wind, nor any pleasure had
In heavenly knowledge, for His darlings twain
Had gone from Him to learn the feel of pain,
And what was meant by sorrow and despair,--
Drear knowledge for a Father to prepare.

There he looked sadly on the little place;
A beehive round it was, without a trace
Of occupant or owner; standing dim
Among the gloomy trees it seemed to Him
A final desolation, the last word
Wherewith the lips of silence had been stirred.
Chaste and remote, so tiny and so shy,
So new withal, so lost to any eye,
So pac't of memories all innocent
Of days and nights that in it had been spent
In blithe communion, Adam, Eve, and He,
Afar from Heaven and its gaudery;
And now no more! He still must be the God
But not the friend; a Father with a rod
Whose voice was fear, whose countenance a threat,
Whose coming terror, and whose going wet
With penitential tears; not evermore
Would they run forth to meet Him as before
With careless laughter, striving each to be
First to His hand and dancing in their glee
To see Him coming--they would hide instead
At His approach, or stand and hang the head,
Speaking in whispers, and would learn to pray
Instead of asking, 'Father, if we may.'

Never again to Eden would He haste
At cool of evening, when the sun had paced
Back from the tree-tops, slanting from the rim
Of a low cloud, what time the twilight dim
Knit tree to tree in shadow, gathering slow
Till all had met and vanished in the flow
Of dusky silence, and a brooding star
Stared at the growing darkness from afar,
While haply now and then some nested bird
Would lift upon the air a sleepy word
Most musical, or swing its airy bed
To the high moon that drifted overhead.

'Twas good to quit at evening His great throne,
To lay His crown aside, and all alone
Down through the quiet air to stoop and glide
Unkenned by angels: silently to hide
In the green fields, by dappled shades, where brooks

Through leafy solitudes and quiet nooks
Flowed far from heavenly majesty and pride,
From light astounding and the wheeling tide
Of roaring stars. Thus does it ever seem
Good to the best to stay aside and dream
In narrow places, where the hand can feel
Something beside, and know that it is real.
His angels! silly creatures who could sing
And sing again, and delicately fling
The smoky censer, bow and stand aside
All mute in adoration: thronging wide,
Till nowhere could He look but soon He saw
An angel bending humbly to the law
Mechanic; knowing nothing more of pain,
Than when they were forbid to sing again,
Or swing anew the censer, or bow down
In humble adoration of His frown.
This was the thought in Eden as He trod--
... It is a lonely thing to be a God.

So long! afar through Time He bent His mind,
For the beginning, which He could not find,
Through endless centuries and backwards still
Endless for ever, till His 'stonied will
Halted in circles, dizzied in the swing
Of mazy nothingness.--His mind could bring
Not to subjection, grip or hold the theme
Whose wide horizon melted like a dream
To thinnest edges. Infinite behind
The piling centuries were trodden blind
In gulfs chaotic--so He could not see
When He was not who always had To Be.

Not even godly fortitude can stare
Into Eternity, nor easy bear
The insolent vacuity of Time:
It is too much, the mind can never climb
Up to its meaning, for, without an end,
Without beginning, plan, or scope, or trend
To point a path, there nothing is to hold
And steady surmise: so the mind is rolled
And swayed and drowned in dull Immensity.
Eternity outfaces even Me
With its indifference, and the fruitless year
Would swing as fruitless were I never here.

And so for ever, day and night the same,
Years flying swiftly nowhere, like a game
Played random by a madman, without end
Or any reasoned object but to spend
What is unspendable--Eternal Woe!
O Weariness of Time that fast or slow
Goes never further, never has in view
An ending to the thing it seeks to do,
And so does nothing: merely ebb and flow,
From nowhere into nowhere, touching so
The shores of many stars and passing on,
Careless of what may come or what has gone.

O solitude unspeakable! to be
For ever with oneself! never to see
An equal face, or feel an equal hand,
To sit in state and issue reprimand,
Admonishment or glory, and to smile
Disdaining what has happened the while!
O to be breast to breast against a foe!
Against a friend! to strive and not to know
The laboured outcome: love nor be aware
How much the other loved, and greatly care
With passion for that happy love or hate,
Nor know what joy or dole was hid in fate,
For I have ranged the spacy width and gone
Swift north and south, striving to look upon
An ending somewhere. Many days I sped
Hard to the west, a thousand years I fled
Eastwards in fury, but I could not find
The fringes of the Infinite. Behind
And yet behind, and ever at the end
Came new beginnings, paths that did not wend
To anywhere were there: and ever vast
And vaster spaces opened--till at last
Dizzied with distance, thrilling to a pain
Unnameable, I turned to Heaven again.
And there My angels were prepared to fling
The cloudy incense, there prepared to sing
My praise and glory--O, in fury I
Then roared them senseless, then threw down the sky
And stamped upon it, buffeted a star
With My great fist, and flung the sun afar:
Shouted My anger till the mighty sound
Rung to the width, frightening the furthest bound
And scope of hearing: tumult vaster still,
Thronging the echo, dinning My ears, until
I fled in silence, seeking out a place
To hide Me from the very thought of Space.

And so, He thought, in Mine own Image I
Have made a man, remote from Heaven high
And all its humble angels: I have poured
My essence in his nostrils: I have cored
His heart with My own spirit; part of Me,
His mind with laboured growth unceasingly
Must strive to equal Mine; must ever grow
By virtue of My essence till he know
Both good and evil through the solemn test
Of sin and retribution, till, with zest,
He feels his godhead, soars to challenge Me
In Mine own Heaven for supremacy.

Through savage beasts and still more savage clay,
Invincible, I bid him fight a way
To greater battles, crawling through defeat
Into defeat again: ordained to meet
Disaster in disaster; prone to fall,
I prick him with My memory to call
Defiance at his victor and arise
With anguished fury to his greater size
Through tribulation, terror, and despair.

Astounded, he must fight to higher air,
Climb battle into battle till he be
Confronted with a flaming sword and Me.

So growing age by age to greater strength,
To greater beauty, skill and deep intent:
With wisdom wrung from pain, with energy
Nourished in sin and sorrow, he will be
Strong, pure and proud an enemy to meet,
Tremendous on a battle-field, or sweet
To walk by as a friend with candid mind.
--Dear enemy or friend so hard to find,
I yet shall find you, yet shall put My breast
In enmity or love against your breast:
Shall smite or clasp with equal ecstasy
The enemy or friend who grows to Me.

The topmost blossom of his growing I
Shall take unto Me, cherish and lift high
Beside Myself upon My holy throne:--
It is not good for God to be alone.
The perfect woman of his perfect race
Shall sit beside Me in the highest place
And be My Goddess, Queen, Companion, Wife,
The rounder of My majesty, the life,
Of My ambition. She will smile to see
Me bending down to worship at her knee
Who never bent before, and she will say,
'Dear God, who was it taught 'Thee' how to pray?'

And through eternity, adown the slope
Of never-ending time, compact of hope,
Of zest and young enjoyment, I and She
Will walk together, sowing jollity
Among the raving stars, and laughter through
The vacancies of Heaven, till the blue
Vast amplitudes of space lift up a song,
The echo of our presence, rolled along
And ever rolling where the planets sing
The majesty and glory of the King.
Then conquered, thou, Eternity, shalt lie
Under My hand as little as a fly.

I am the Master: I the mighty God
And you My workshop. Your pavilions trod
By Me and Mine shall never cease to be,
For you are but the magnitude of Me,
The width of My extension, the surround
Of My dense splendour. Rolling, rolling round,
To steeped infinity, and out beyond
My own strong comprehension, you are bond
And servile to My doings. Let you swing
More wide and ever wide, you do but fling
Around this instant Me, and measure still
The breadth and the proportion of My Will.

Then stooping to the hut--a beehive round--
God entered in and saw upon the ground
The dusty garland, Adam, (learned to weave)

Had loving placed upon the head of Eve
Before the terror came, when joyous they
Could look for God at closing of the day
Profound and happy. So the Mighty Guest
Rent, took, and placed the blossoms in His breast.
'This,' said He gently, 'I shall show My queen
When she hath grown to Me in space serene,
And say "'twas worn by Eve.'" So, smiling fair,
He spread abroad His wings upon the air.

* * * *

ROBERT CALVERLEY TREVELYAN

DIRGE

Gone is he now.
One flower the less
Is left to make
For thee less lone
Earth's wilderness,
Where thou
Must still live on.

What hath been, ne'er
May be again.
Yet oft of old,
To cheat despair,
Tales false and fair
In vain
Of death were told.

O vain belief!
O'erweening dreams!
Trust not fond hope,
Nor think that bliss
Which neither seems,
Nor is,
Aught else than grief.

* * * *

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