

Selected Poems

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1944

Selected Poems

Ave, Australia

FLING out her flag to the world and the wrong in it!
Thunder her name to the dawn that shall be!
Ave, Australia! Name with a song in it —
Name of the free!

Stars that De Quiros, Dirk Hartog, and Flinders saw
Blazing their track o'er the perilous seas,
Cross of their dreaming — ensign of a higher law,
Break to the breeze!

Sons of the vanguard that harnessed the wilderness,
Quarried her quick soul from matrix and clod,
Pinioned as eagles to-day in her battle-stress,
Go ye with God!

Bearing the freedom that cradled your nationhood,
Bearing the honour ye dare not betray,
Pledge of the faith that shall thrive a glad earth again,
Purged of decay.

Fling out her flag to the world and the wrong in it!
Thunder her name to the dawn that shall be!
Ave, Australia! Name with a song in it —
Name of the free!

The Promised Land

I. DE QUIROS' DREAM

(*Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo*)

IN Callao the church bells ring,
The pious people kneel and pray,
The Mass is said, the sweet choirs sing
For "such as tempt the sea to-day."
But never merchant sailed so far
For spice and gold and ivory,
As these who track Adventure's star
Across a grey and ghostly sea.
Westward they watched them sinking slow
Three hundred lazy years ago,
Hull down, hull down from Callao
For "*Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo!*"

O was it wrack of wind and wave,
Or lost Atlantis of the south
Snatched from a wisp of dream that drave
'Twixt black horned capes of doom and drouth,
Or was it some prophetic tone
From white peaks of that Morning caught
When brooding Godhead walked alone
And Cosmos quickened at His thought,
That all De Quiros' spirit stirred,
And wide-winged like a wild sea-bird
Followed the Vision and the Word
O "*Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo!*"

They brought him home across the sea,
The craven ones, the mutineers,
To sit with Grief and make his plea
Through nine and twenty barren years —
Just one more ship with swallow wings
To beat again enchanted bounds
Where the white Cross in heaven swings,
And league-long rollers race like hounds
Slipt from the leash of pack and floe
From kennels of Antarctic snow,
To bear him where he fain would go
Ah "*Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo!*"

They built the ship, they brought the men,

They gave the seal unto his hand,
De Quiros blessed his God again,
And saw in faith his Promised Land.

* * * * *

They dipped the flags that very day,
They tolled the bells and women wept,
His swallow ship at anchor lay,
De Quiros, spent with labour, slept
Afar from those enchanted seas
That lave the branching coral trees
Through all the dreaming centuries
By "*Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo!*"

The dreamers dream their dreams and die;
Perhaps with hope their heaven is starred;
Their way was rude, their goal was high,
The stuff of dreams was their reward.
In Lima town of old Peru,
Lulled by the long Pacific wave,
And the soft Trade wind sighing through
Green feather palm and belled agave,
De Quiros sleeps and men forget;
His Cross of stars is blazing yet
In thy celestial coronet,
O "*Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo!*"

II. THE FULFILMENT.

Australia

O late last comer at the feast of nations,
Australia, what meats shall be thy share?
And what thy measure of the vine's oblations?
Or god-like inspiration . . . or despair?
A splendid savage, thou, with loins unwrung,
And the proud speech of freemen on thy tongue.

Dreaming they found thee, when the noontide splendour
Of Europe's pride had dwindled down to grey,
When Greece and Rome had sunken in surrender
To baser triumphs of a lesser day.
Dreaming they found thee, Oldest of the Old,
With youth eternal on thy forehead bold.

Winds of the world had waked thy singing sedges
Ere Grecian vultures wheeled at Marathon;

Old rivers gnawed upon thy granite ledges
When Samson trod the streets of Ascalon
Drunken with conquest, and Delilah's grace
Betrayed him captive to her conquered race.

Grandeur of grief that man has never measured
Presses thy temples like a crown of thorn,
Hope that the bounds of dream have never treasured
Sleeps in thy heart for peoples yet unborn,
Spirit Inscrutable-from whose dim fane
A sobbing plover stabs the night with pain.

By hill and cutting, still, with lank hair streaming,
Like weed to every wind, thy she-oaks stand;
O'er what wild company of fevered dreaming
Did their thin music wave its wizard wand?
Old fiddlers grey that Time has held in thrall
Within a great deserted banquet-hall,

Where long since, all the rippled song and laughter
That wakened echo's ecstasy are gone,
And fitful minor wails through ridge and rafter
For those brave ghosts that jested here anon
Fisher and hunter, warrior spear and crest,
Thy dusky host whose sullen star dips west.

Dreaming they found thee and with hands audacious
Had bound on thee old burdens of despair,
Dark legacies of darker climes ungracious,
And growths too grim for Christian land to bear;
Deeming thee less for thy long dreaming's sake,
Nor reeking of the day when thou must wake;

Deeming thee barren that, unburdened, idled
By estrange Saharas of unslaked desire;
Deeming thee worthless that no hand had bridled
With tinselled trappings of an older Tyre
O Dauntless One, that proved with scourge and rod,
And winnowed men with very winds of God,

What Tyrian stint thy reckless wealth shall measure?
What slave-oared galleys thy great cargoes bear?
Solomon's hoard grows mean beside the treasure
Thy rock and range and river-bed declare;
Nor queen of old was clad in garb so fine
As clothes the flocks on those far hills of thine.

A chooser thou, not chosen for the spilling
Or for the saving as thy choosers will,
No empty vessel purchased for the filling,

Thou beatest out thy haughty purpose still;
The witnesses thy solitudes retain
Grey bones that crumble where they first had lain.

Who fared with Fate — who followed a far gleaming,
As vain as thy mirage — and bit thy dust —
Of English lanes and cool green meadows dreaming
Alone have seen unveiled thy face august
And turned from it with their last shuddering breath
To pray for pity at the hands of Death.

Priests of thy fierce immensities, intoning
Like muffled magi in thy spectral trees,
Petulant winds across thy great plains moaning,
Whisper thine immemorial elegies;
And phantom fingers pluck to Winter's stars
The eerie lute-strings of thy black belars.

And we thy native-born who waked to wonder
Of morning magpies' fluted madrigals,
Or trembled when with roll of muffled thunder
The mad red horses broke their cloudy stalls,
And, where wide wheatland to the river wheels,
Swung down with desolation at their heels —

Yea, we who feel thy hidden pulses throbbing
In great autumnal anthems of the gums,
In Banshee winds down sunset gullies sobbing
Or red December's braggart battle drums,
Thrill to the incense thy great censers spill,
Diablerie that melts and mocks us still.

For thou art tender, pitiless great Mother,
To those who shrink not from thy bitter cup,
To those who flinch not in the savage smother
Without the courts wherein thy victors sup;
Hyssop and honey, yea, for bread a stone
But heart of thy heart, courage as thine own —

Who set their tents beside thy grey Gulf Waters,
Who tracked the leads that star thy western lodes,
Who follow still, brave sons and braver daughters,
Where the lean pack-train threads the flinty roads,
To wrest from Bush Primeval wine of dreams,
Or darker vintage drawn from Lethean streams.

Haply it may be that some spark titanic
Sprang like a super-soul from those grim years
When wrestled with thy janitors tyrannic
The splendid spirit of the Pioneers;

A super-soul to write with Time and thee
The mightiest page of human history.

Such history as later years' evangels
Seeing may trace on some celestial page
For calm o'erseeing eyes of the Archangels;
And God may smile to see a golden age
Ripen beneath thy vault of burning blue
To that fulfilment men nor angels knew.

Strange stories of the gods remain to mortals
From some dim era when the world was young:
Did human error slam the sacred portals
Or god-like anger seal the human tongue,
That so the link is lost, nor gods nor men
Reforge it on this troubled earth again?

It may be so, yet some diviner story
Breathes from thy hills — the Vision and the Word
That drew De Quiros with their burning glory
Through dark sea-wastes no friendly keel had stirred
Move like a pillared flame unto their goal
The Alcheringa of thy dreaming soul!

So from thy dreaming time thou comest, bringing
A sun-god race that knows not how to fear,
A sun-god race to set new slogans ringing,
And bid a sad world be of better cheer;
Sons of thy mettle yet all laughter-wise,
With the young light of morning in their eyes.

They are not yet — with unsealed sense discerning
The pathless way that points the hidden goal,
The lode-star in a clouded heaven burning,
The under-song in Wisdom's over-soul:
They are not yet, in truth, yet who shall say?
East from the murk of Europe breaks the day.

Yon night that heavy on the west is lying
Shudders, with Cosmic vengeance tempested,
O'er shattered shrine and famished children dying,
O'er women desecrate and manhood sped
To fence old failures, buttress craven creeds,
Draconian laws to bind what Folly breeds.

But thou art of the morning — Youth eternal
On thee has laid her mantle for a sign;
Shalt thou who tasted of a cup supernal
Tipple with tapsters of a brew malign?
Lift up thy gates and fling thy portals wide

For the New Order, purged and purified.

When old lights flicker and old faiths are reeling,
From upland fanes floats incense far more sweet,
Where magpie matins through thy gums are peeling,
And the young winds are singing in the wheat,
Than ever shrouded sacrificial rite
Of Earth's wan millions climbing toward the light.

The gods shall come again, nor shrined ascetic,
Nor swagman, poring still thy wayside page,
Nor seer nor sibyl know the hour prophetic
That brings the coming of thy golden age.
When southern Sigurds forth thy Fafnirs drive,
Australia Felix, shall the gods arrive.

Australia Felix! Yea, by glad seas bounded,
Lion of lands no hunters' wiles have won;
Till bugler Time the last, "Retreat" has sounded,
And o'er the tumult booms the sunset gun,
Thy Titan hands shall wrest the secret keys
Of progress from the groaning centuries.

O Watcher on a sea-washed tower uplifted
To the white wonder of the morning star,
That sees, beyond the dawn, the Orient rifted
With war accurséd and the things of war
A blur of carrion wings to cloud the smiles
Of the green gladness of Pacific Isles!

Lift up thy gates! Still, still there cometh, riding
Upon an ass's colt as once of old
Unto Jerusalem, a prophet hiding
His glory in a humble mantle's fold.
Lift up thy gates — a mad world has decreed
Its own damnation — Shall thy children bleed?

Let the old order go! — new faiths shall quicken,
New revelations flood the ways untrod,
Levin the vales where old disorders thicken,
And Justice shuffles at a monster's nod.
Bid usurers and money-changers go
That made our fathers' house a house of woe!

Aye, sound the clear call high above the fretting
Turmoil of Trade and blood-feud of the West
Let the old order go! — new tides are setting
To Eldorados man hath never guessed;
And they shall deal no more in fears and hates
Who dwell with thee beside the Eastern Gates.

Autumn in Tasmania

WHITE everlastings star the peaks again
Where mountain moss her living carpet spreads
And through the eaves of hollow runnel-beds
The soft sad winds of mourning March complain.
But yesterday through aisles of tasselled grain
Came Ceres singing — now grey gully-heads
Give back her grief. Like one in sleep she treads
And calls for lost Persephone in vain.

No glad voice answers. Olive-shadowed musk
Sheds funeral incense over ridge and fell
Where ebb'd reluctant day; now like a ghost
A haggard moon rides up the eastern coast,
And through the silence, like a passing bell,
A bittern booms across the caverned dusk.

Doherty's Corner

THERE'S no bush to-day at Doherty's Corner,
Only strange green hills and the glint of a far bay;
Time has come like a thief and stolen the wonder
And magic of Yesterday.

There are no fairies now at Doherty's Corner,
Where dusky spider-orchids and wild white daisies grew;
Time that stilled the heart of the singing forest
Has stolen her fairies too.

Henderson's hill is green at Doherty's Corner,
But no fairy trips in the dawn or the dusk thereon,
Perhaps they died when the old black log and the bracken
And the box bushes were gone.

They only lived, maybe, in a child's dreaming,
For children walk in a twilit world of their own,
And the grown folk were ever too wise to listen
To pipes by the fairies blown.

They used to say it was wind and the bees thrumming
Through billows of bean blossom as white as driven foam;
But I knew it was not the wind or the brown bees humming
Heavily hiving home;

For I had heard such music there by the river
When never a reed-head rustled and every sense was a-leap —
Under the darkened hillside . . . the little people
Singing the world to sleep!

For I had heard such piping there in the low light,
The queer half-light before the light of the moon,
All the pipes of Faëry playing together
Down by the old lagoon.

O Green Hills, O hills with your alien faces,
Fresh as August flowers on the grass of an old grave,
Your witch gold has gone with the fairy pipers'
Wood-song and elfin stave!

You are sad, O ye hills, with your faces lifted,
Lit with a young delight to the ache of the far skies!
Yea, you are sad as the faith of little children
And the sorrow of old eyes.

There's no bush to-day at Doherty's Corner,
No pipers will come with pipes skirling again

To dance for me on Henderson's hill in the moonlight,
Or cry in the fairy rain.

It's a kind green land at Doherty's Corner,
And new, fair children frolic its hills upon;
But once once in the years that are half forgotten
Once it was Avalon.

A West Coast Silhouette

(Tasmania)

FAGUS and myrtle!
Spoil of an axe that will ring no more,
Heaped on a hearth that has long been cold:
Flame-wreaths leaping yellow and bright
From the hot red heart of a West Coast fire:
And a black Sou'wester screaming without,
Hard through the "horizontal" scrub,
Like the sibilant hissing of angry snakes,
Beating the bole and blighting the leaf,
While the pine hut rocked like a ship at sea,
And the wall-plates plucked at the ten-inch spikes,
Bedded deep in the myrtle logs —
O it comes back like a song to my brain:
I hear the thresh of the spiteful hail,
And I feel the lift of the wind beneath,
The forward heave and the lightning lurch
And the shuddering gasp like a living thing,
As we crouched in the heel of the tempest's grip
High on the shoulder of Hamilton!

O, children of softer climes,
You that welcome the violets
And watch the gold of the daffodil break
Its velvet bondage to greet the Spring;
That mark the peeping of snowdrop stars
(Pale, petulant tapers that bend and blow
At the soft caprices of every wind
That tosses the tassels of scented snow
On the nodding thorn by the garden gate);
You, fenced afar with the glad green years
From the stress and struggle of iron coasts
Torn by the teeth of the hurricane —
What should you know of the spears of sleet
Stabbing the skin and pricking the veins,
And biting the bone as the axe-blade bites
To a mountain myrtle's shuddering heart?
Or the Fear that sleeps in his frozen lair
By the blasted crags of the nether pole,
The mad Sou'wester,
Biding the hour that the blind bergs keep,
Till a witch of hate at the turn of the moon
Wakens her nurseling to ride the gale?

And he groans and mutters and swells and comes,
(A buccaneer with a voice of dread
That rolls like the thunder of muffled drums)
Heaping the breast of the great South main
With moving mountains of moaning death,
And grips the land,
As a strong man grapples his mortal foe,
In the moonless madness of windy night
High on the shoulder of Hamilton.

Grey huts of pine!
Starting out from a mist of years,
Like sentinel ghosts on a spectral track,
In a long procession the years come back,
Pale dawn and dawn,
Solemn and grey o'er the bleak White Spur;
And a wistful wind
Whispers its immemorial tale
Of griefs that were old when the world was young.
Once more I stand —
Stand and look west from an open door,
With the world beneath me stretching away
Far and far as the eye can see
To Heemskirk out on the dim sea marge:
And hear, now muffled, now rising clear,
The jangling note of a single bell
And the beat of hoofs, on the corded track,
Of the pack-team toiling up from “the Lead”;
Yea, hear again
Through the hollow hush of the afternoon
The brown thrush fluting her madrigal,
The axe-strokes ringing o'er ridge and spur,
And the clang of “steel”
At the change of shifts on the “number four”.

O pulsing and thrilling and vivid and near,
From the things that are leap the things that were,
And Time and Space are shadows that pass
Like cloud-furrows over a field of rye,
As I drowse and dream of an open door
Of a pine hut set by a bridle-track
High on the shoulder of Hamilton.

Ballade of Autumn

DOWN harvest headlands the fairy host
Of the poppy banners have flashed and fled,
The lilies have faded like ghost and ghost,
The ripe rose rots in the garden bed.
The grain is garnered, the blooms are shed,
Convolvulus springs on the snow-drop's bier,
In her stranded gold is the silver thread
Of the first grey hair in the head o' the year.

Like an arrant knave from a bootless boast,
The fire-wind back to his North has sped
To harry the manes of a haunted coast
On a far sea rim where the stars are dead.
Wistful the welkin with wordless dread,
Mournful the uplands, all ashen sere—
Sad for the snow on a beauteous head—
For the first grey hair in the head o' the year.

Time trysts with Death at the finger-post,
Where the broken issues of life are wed—
Intone no dirges, fill up the toast
To the troops that trip it with silent tread,
Merry we'll make it though skies be lead,
And March-wind's moan be a minstrel drear—
A truce to trouble!—we'll drink instead
To the first grey hair in the head o' the year.

South Esk sings on where the furze-fires spread
But we'll mourn no more as of old, my dear,
When gorse flames golden and briars flush red
With the first grey hair in the head o' the year.

Tale of the Old Coast Road

THE big road-cars come flashing through like shuttles, south and north,
By Bishopsbourne to Launceston, by Sassafras to Forth,
And watching, in a waking dream, I hear the murmur grow,
The music of the Coast Road stream of fifty years ago;
The hillsides answer wheel and whip, wild echoes swell and fail,
As heavy o'er the blacksoil dip she comes, the Royal Mail—
I hear a loafing wheeler snort, the toiling leaders strain,
“From Table Cape by Devonport for the town of Deloraine”.

* * * * *

And this the tale they told to me when the children were abed,
And on the broad hearth merrily the little flames ran red,
How in the old south room he lay and drove his coach and four
As once he drove it every day, as he would drive no more.
They tied the reins to his bed-foot, and in a land of dream
He raced his horses neck and neck against a phantom team;
Four blacks behind a leader pale as the white moon at the wane,
A coach without a passenger for the town of Deloraine.
Upon the big white leader's back a muffled horseman rode,
His head was down, his rein was slack, all loosely he bestrode;

No word of answering cheer he spake unto the sick man's hail,
Nor dallied he with whip or brake beside the Royal Mail;
What hot-head dared so rash a test? But woe the day or weal,
The old man's fighting soul confessed a foeman worth his steel,
And fiercely girt him for the fight while in life's silver chain
Death wove his dusky strand that night on the road to Deloraine.

And now he flogs them up the pinch black reared against the stars,
And feels her lifting inch by inch to creaking swingle bars;
And now across the stiff red loam he nurses them by fits,
Or feels them as the whip cuts home hang heavy on the bits.
But still the four black steeds come on behind their leader grey,
They fell behind him at the Don, they chased him thro' Torquay;
And starting from a broken sleep he takes the lead again
And swings them 'cross Rubicon for the town of Deloraine.

The wan moon hid a wistful face behind a granite crest,
Orion, Taurus, Pleiades, sank seaward down the west;
The sick man drowsed and drifted far from earth and human cares,
And paled the startled watchers at a footfall on the stairs;
A young wind whimpered at the pane of griefs that never slept,
And wild and white across the plain the keening plovers swept,
But in his sleep the dreamer smiled, belike he drove again

From Table Cape by Devonport for the town of Deloraine.

Upon the hearth the leaping red had dwindled ashen grey,
The nurse was nodding by the bed, and eastward broke the day.
All sudden stirred he, and his eyes strained backward thro' the gloom,
“They're here; they'll block us on the bridge; make room, I say, make room!
What dam foaled yon white-livered brute that gallops in the lead!
Who rides there! Answer, or I shoot!” His voice shrilled like a reed.
“The bridge! The bridge!” His sobbing breath rose to a shout of pain—
“The bridge is down!—'tis us or Death to-night for Deloraine!”

“Get over! Up! Get up, my lads! So . . . h-steady . . . pull away;
We've left them at the Rubicon, the rest is only play.”
But still beside him in his dream the big black horses came,
And still he flayed his sweating team, blind, desperate, but game.
“Pull off!” his voice was harsh and high. “Back, madman, back! . . . too late!
The wheel's gone; God! the mail!” . . . then strong, exultant and elate
His voice rang in defiant cheer high over Death's domain—
“She lifts! . . . She's free! . . . What ho! the lights!—the lights of Deloraine.”

Spider-Orchids

STILL they stand upon the hillside and the low sun glances
On the little elfin faces all begloomed to ashen grey;
O never hand is lifted nor a light foot dances
For the fiddle-bow is broken and the fiddler far away
Lost and gone and half forgotten down a long dead yesterday.

Once they tarried on the hillside when the world lay sleeping,
(O, the tide was at the turning and a low moon at the wane!)
And a sudden mist came o'er them and a low soft weeping
And the Grey Woman touched them, and they never laughed again
Or danced beneath the moonlight on the hills of Vandiemaine.

So they crouch like little children till the blind fear passes
That stole their merry music and stilled their dancing feet,
And left them there for ever with the thin wild grasses
That whisper them at midnights and moan in noons of heat
Of the old things, the kind things, that were so dear and sweet.

Far, far the hills of Faäry, and the slow tides turning
And the great white moons of men are as hollow winds that blew
O the little wistful faces and the wee hearts burning
To pluck the magic moon-grapes and gather honey-dew
That only white immortals and the fairies ever knew!

Will they waken once, I wonder, to a wild horn blowing
When a little lost wind whimpers and the Cross is leaning low?
Will they see the lamps of Faäry down her green glades glowing?
Will they hear the taut strings throbbing to a newly resined bow,
And go dancing, dancing, dancing, spilling laughter as they go?

Vagrant

BITTER bites the bleak wind,
But I must go my lone,
Trampin' down the black road,
Restin' on a stone.

Kisses in the bird's song
An' gold upon the whin—
Och, shame upon the old law
That called poor Love a sin!

Once I had the gay heart
That never care could drown,
An' the dancin' feet o' me
Light as thistle-down,

In an' out the turf rigs
Free as swallows flew;
Singin' went the world then,
An' I went singin' too.

Once I dreamed o' kind fire
On a clean hearth-stone;
But, wurrasthrue, the cold winds
They cut me to the bone.

Times I dreamed o' one man
Of all the world o' men;
But well the day or woe the day,
'Tis I'll not dream again.

Times I dreamed o' wee folk
Singin' round the fire,
But och, the world's a cold place
For them without a sire.

Berries on the brown briar
Speed the fallin' year;
Sowin'-time was song-time—
Now the winter's here!

Robin at the day's heart,
Sloes upon the thorn,
Curlin' blue o' turf smoke—
Och, that I was born!

Sorrow rides the bleak wind,
An' I must go my lone,

Trampin' down the black road,
Restin' on a stone.

Ode To A Pallid Cuckoo

AT what black tarn of unavailing tears,
 Rock-bound, remote,
Hast thou deep drunken through the iron years
 Till, note by note,
Its mortal anguish falls like molten spears
Of trembling music from thy golden throat?

There is no grief in this young land to break
 Her singing gold
With mournful minor wrung from hidden ache,
 Old, ages old;
Yet singest thou for some old sorrow's sake
The saddest story song hath ever told.

Bringest thou still from some mysterious place
 Of asphodels,
And tideless beaches of an older race,
 And long-breathed spells
Whose ecstasy and anguish interlace
Like drifting desolate tones of wind-blown bells,

Some broken legend homeless winds have keened,
 Some odyssey
Of baffled ships in bitter seas careened
 Eternally—
Salt-bitten sails and battered bulwarks greened
With the cold creeping gardens of the sea?

Or where dark-limbed magnolias, hushed and filled
 With peace divine,
Lift ivory bowls from which great winds have spilled
 The magian wine,
From harp aeolian some dire tempest stilled
Plucked thou the enchanted song and made its sorrow thine?

When drowned Atlantis foundered steep by steep,
 Nor kindly Noon
Nor Dawn nor Dusk could break her weed-wound sleep,
 Nor the white moon,
Swelled first o'er that forlorn and empty deep
The haunting notes of thine immortal rune?

Or did some lovely Trojan woman's soul,
 From Ilium
Travailing toward her dark predestined goal,
 Splendid but dumb,

Conjure thee from the gods' inscrutable scroll,
Her templar and her troubadour to come?

Or when the dying Prince of David's stem
 Bade the triced thief
To sup with Him in Heaven, nor condemn
 Man's vengeance brief
On that wan hill by walled Jerusalem
Caught'st thou some cosmic chord of sempiternal grief,

The ache of all the ages that have run
 Whence none dare ask,
The moan of dreadful wheels of Being spun
 In endless task,
For amnesty of blind oblivion
The wail behind Creation's smiling mask?

What ages wrought with cunning sorceries
 The thing thou art?
As isle and isle set wide in sundering seas
 We are apart,
Yet thou, clear calling in these Summer trees,
Hast told the sorrow lying next my heart.

Ah Summer trees! Ah Bird-song bitter-sweet
 With human loss,
Here where but now was fern and cool retreat
 Of flower and moss,
I see a vision of pale piercéed feet,
And Mary crying underneath the Cross.

Ballade of Bitter Memories

WE build and gather, in vain, in vain,
 Tempests of Chance with our castles play,
The weevil winnows the gold o' the grain,
 Gold o' the morning glooms to the grey.
Shall we weep for our idols of painted clay,
 Salt dews of sorrow the sere blooms wetting?
Nay, gods of the desert of Dreadful Day,
 Give us the gift of a great forgetting!

The hemlock cup to the dregs we drain,
 But the lotus islands beyond the bay
On the purple twilight are scarce a stain,
 And the fairy boatmen are far away;
Baffled and blind and athirst we pray!
 From the fitful fever and slow blood-sweating,
Gods of the desert of Dreadful Day,
 Give us the gift of a great forgetting!

A twisted shard and a rusted chain,
 A dying camp-fire beside the way,
A smoke-wreath blown to the blue of the plain,
 A swan-song flung to the vast for aye—
Was it spectral hands on the strings astray,
 Or a wistful wind at the casement fretting?
Gods of the desert of Dreadful Day,
 Give us the gift of a great forgetting!

Youth is a trust that the years bewray,
 Life is a canvas of Fate's vignetting—
Gods of the desert of Dreadful Day,
 Give us the gift of a great forgetting!

Confiteor

“mea culpa! mea culpa! mea maxima culpa!”

December, 1918.

HERE in this hour,
This hour of silence from fierce sound
That girdles the gray world round,
Here in the hush that was Death,
That is Life ebbing backward to breath,
In a twilight of awe;
Life that has drunk with the damned,
That has visioned Despair,
Naked and bare;
Life that has trailed like the snake,
Belly-deep in the dust,
That has felt the sharp lunge and the thrust
Of the conquering heel
To implacable infinite skies,
Cries for a sign.

Keeper of all the keys,
Lord of the balances
That weigh the shivering worlds,
Hear and forgive!

Give us not peace, not peace to shame us more,
Who are so wholly shamed
And soiled and horror-tamed,
But clear, clear sight to see
Our own iniquity.
Give us to feel,
Sharper than beaten blades of leaping steel,
The sword of living law,
And in our wounds
The strong clean salt of Truth, like holy flame,
Cleansing the blame
That sealed us unto Death.

What shall we say, who sinned so bitterly
Against our higher selves and Thee—and Thee,
O, omnipresent Now,
Dead Yesterday and pulsing Evermore?
Of our lost glory nothing shall restore
The mystical strange sum;
But this we vow, this: That never again

Shall we beat the brand of Cain
Into the greater brows that are to come.
For this poor spark of once resplendent grace,
Giver of justice, veil thy frowning face;
Hear, and forgive!

Lo, we have sinned, we have sinned,
In the fevered urge
That broke like a red surge
On pain-pale coasts of life;
But less was our sin withal,
As vassals and slaves mazed in the blind thrall
Of the red harlot War,
Yea, less than our crime
That bound with ruthless hand
The twisted thorns on the grand
Calm brows of Peace,
Our crime accurst,
Our piteous crime of greed
That ground the face of Need,
That robbed the man,
And ripped, with ribald jest,
The babe from its mother's breast
That the lean jade might toil
Our crime, our crime
Pent in the World's hot heart,
Housed apart,
In crèches and in gaols,
And that dread place,
Where shadow on shadow flits,
And Reason, throneless, sits
And plays like a child in the dirt.

Lo, we have walked in pride,
And builded temples to strange deities,
And made a song, and bent the sycophant knee,
And spurned the living God,
Aye, spurned the Presence,
Tongued or mute,
In man and patient brute,
And the star-eyes of daisies in the grass,
And turned unmoved to take
From the World's ache
Our thrice accurséd toll,
To buy and sell our sisters in the street,
And beat and beat
On living hearts a Dead March down to Hell.

How shall we pray for pity who have shown
No pity in our day?
Haply do we presume to dare confess,
When such black witnesses
Cry for atonement to the ultimate Judge.

Keeper of all the keys,
Lord of the balances
That weigh the worlds,
Forgive!

Suggan Boggin

*“When the poet sighed for a lodge in some vast
wilderness he did not know Suggan Boggin.”*

The Argus, Melbourne.

SPECTRE-FOOTED of the past,
Shapeless, voiceless from the Vast
On the white page, Suggan Boggin!
And the swift years roll away,
Whispering from the distance gray
“Suggan Boggin! Suggan Boggin,
By the Black Mountain!”

House of Terror whence there came
Strange wild things without a name
Creeping down from Suggan Boggin
When the candle-light went out,
Moving, moving all about,
With the feel of Suggan Boggin
By the Black Mountain!

When the tempest swept the hill
Fierce things plucked the window-sill,
Fierce things known of Suggan Boggin
Nuzzled underneath the door,
Fumbled all about the floor,
Breathing cold, like Suggan Boggin
By the Black Mountain.

Years o' nights the lonely wind,
Picking at the window blind,
Told me tales of Suggan Boggin,
Hidden far from human ken
And the kindly feet of men—
Wild, wild tales of Suggan Boggin
By the Black Mountain.

Years o' nights the ghostly rain
Beating at the muffled pane
Sang to me of Suggan Boggin,
Strong and terrible and strange;
Changing as the great clouds change,
And the creek moaned “Suggan Boggin
By the Black Mountain!”

Rolling down from crag and lair
With the fog roots in their hair,
 Crawling down from Suggan Boggin
Like the wrack across the sky,
Things that one must see and die,
 Came the hosts of Suggan Boggin
 By the Black Mountain!

Spectre-footed of the past,
Shapeless, voiceless from the Vast
 On the white page, Suggan Boggin!
And the swift years roll away
Whispering from the distance gray
 “Suggan Boggin Suggan Boggin,
 By the Black Mountain!”

Kismet

THE days are hawks, Belovéd,
That feed on hearts of men:
The camel-train goes westward,
And breast-high blows the sand;
And what am I that shudder
To quench the smoking brand?
The days are hawks, Belovéd,
That feed on hearts of men.

Last night the bamboo shivered;
I heard the wind go by,
The homeless wind, Belovéd,
That hears the hidden things;
I saw the bright steel redden;
I heard the beat of wings
Last night Last night, Belovéd,
I heard the wind go by.

What flesh shall stand against you,
O ye who cast the die?
I heard the stalking lion
Choke back his sobbing breath,
And crouch before the Presence
That only men call Death!
What flesh shall stand against you,
O ye who cast the die?

To-night is ours, Belovéd!
To-morrow's foes are far;
Your eyes are soft as lightnings
That play across the south,
And more than Paynim plunder
The red wine of your mouth;
To-night is ours, Belovéd;
To-morrow's foes are far!

To-night the gods are laughing,
We listen and forget—
Forget the slow tides ebbing,
Forget the creeping sand;
O Maya! Maya! moon-gift
Upon a beggar's hand,
To-night the gods are laughing,
We listen and forget!

The days are hawks, Belovéd,
That feed on hearts of men;
To-morrow is a young wind,
We follow where it blows;
But who shall reap the young wheat
Or pluck To-morrow's rose?
The days are hawks, Belovéd,
That feed on hearts of men!

At A Jeweller's Window

YEA, they are very fair, these fretted things
That man has fashioned for his art's delight,
And some small meed of profit—great or slight,
As Wealth dictates, or Fashion's balance swings.
I, being simple, feel no spell that clings
To such brave panoply of prisoned light;
Yon bleak-souled brilliants' frosty lure despite,
I count it coldly—bracelets, brooches, rings.

But bring to me from gray old Samarkand
A rough rock-fragment starred with those blue eyes
That keep the hidden gates of life and death,
And, with a sudden catching of the breath,
I feel (as one who touches The All-Wise)
The heart of Asia beating in my hand.

Oasis

WHO diggeth a well by the way,
Who planteth a palm,
Sendeth up from the desert of Day
A perpetual psalm.

For a king shall bend low by the well
To give praise ere he drink,
And a slave 'neath the palm-shade shall tell
His full heart on the brink.

There the pitiless sword of the day,
Of the blinding bright noon,
Shall be stayed ere it leapeth to slay,
Shall be changed for a boon.

Nor the terror that flieth by night
Nor the arrow by day
Shall stoop down with dark pinions of blight
On the well by the way.

For Love with a rose in his hand
And a song in his mouth
Has delivered the soul of the land
From the duress of Drouth.

And never a sunset but brings
Slumber's silken surcease,
Like a tremulous folding of wings
On the altars of Peace.

And never a night goeth east
To the gates of the day
But Mercy is pilgrim and priest
At the well by the way.

Yea, grander than Aves that climb
By the white peaks of Prayer
To a temple untarnished by time,
And the Deity there,

Goeth up from the desert of Day
The perpetual psalm
Of a song at the well by the way,
And a wind in the palm.

Pinch-Gut

AMBER and opal, jade and amethyst,
Mazed in a dancing mesh of living gold.
How well she wears her gems, this velvet-stoled
Barbaric harbour queen! Bold brow and wrist,
And bosom bound by many a blazing twist;
The royal scarabs on her vestments scrolled
Flashing through veil and wimple's shimmering fold,
Like magian shuttles threading moonstone mist!

And, set in many a coruscating querl,
In some strange spirit of sardonic jest,
A thing of hate and sweat and blood and tears,
Grim deep-sea growth of dumb despairing years,
The costliest jewel on Port Jackson's breast,
Old Pinch-gut darkles like a great black pearl!

Song

OH, someone plucked wattle high up on the hill,
And sarsaparilla by Koonemah's knee,
From lilting green uplands where brown thrushes trill,
Someone brought wattle to me!

Someone brought wattle that sprang by the way,
Like a mystical flame from a magical tree,
From a temple of winds where the blown brackens sway,
Someone brought wattle to me!

Ere Night her shy legions of dream had withdrawn,
And moon-jewels trembled their soft gramarye,
From peaks of the peris all dappled with dawn,
Someone brought wattle to me!

Oh, someone wove wattle with pink and white thorn,
(Up, up from the heather a song floated free),
From paths of the pixies all mantled with morn,
Someone brought wattle to me!

Campbell Town

BY Campbell Town the river creeps,
And there when there is none to see
One old in sorrow comes and weeps,
And tells a broken rosary.
No silken anguish set in chords
That beat at Pity's shining gate,
But grief that finds no meed of words
To make itself articulate;
O Campbell Town, far Campbell Town!
O Lady of the soft grey gown!

I went one day by Campbell Town,
By Campbell Town that was so fair,
In green and gold and summer-brown
When She was there, when She was there—
Her town that keeps one empty place
Through all the fulness of the years,
Her town with its so quiet face,
Whose dumb regard was more than tears;
O Campbell Town, far Campbell Town,
O Lady of the soft grey gown!

By Campbell Town the waters flow;
Perhaps she hears them singing by;
Her roses, haply, when they blow,
Are glad for her sweet presence nigh;
But grief too sharp for words to bear,
And tears too bitter-salt to flow,
Are ours for ills we could not share,
Who loved her so, who loved her so;
O Campbell Town, far Campbell Town,
O Lady of the soft grey gown!

Adam Lindsay Gordon

LULLED by the sob of a southern sea
He sleeps, who waked by the northern foam,
To dream of a brown land, wide and free,
And make it his home;
Who sang great songs to its bluer dome,
And netted the strong, strange speech it stirred
With the mourning note of an older lay,
And swept from us like a wild, bright bird,
Singing his heart away!

A fighter ever, a conqueror still,
With his last ride ridden, his last song sung,
And the hemlock measure to drink or spill,
While the vain shouts rung,
Swift from the tourney his strong soul swung
Out through the dark to the Giver of Dreams;
Boldly as ever he rode fared he,
West with the sunset's red triremes,
Into his own country!

Small need had he of a graven stone
Who rests so well in his quiet place
'Neath the drifted gold of his wattle, blown
Through her leaves' green lace.
Nor ever in Hellas' years of grace,
When Echo played with Olympian chords,
More proudly lifted a laurel tree
To point the grave of a lord of words
Sleeping in Thessaly!

Small need had he of a graven stone
Whose songs have rung through a continent,
Like the notes of a morning bugle blown
In the winds' high tent,
Reveill e to lands magnificent,
Where beggars are monarchs of Come-by-Chance,
With titles too clear for a king to break,
And more than a king is the bold free-lance,
Singing for singing's sake!

Faery

PIXIES in the ferny hollow,
Brownies on the hill;
Every track we used to follow
Keeps its fairies still.

Only we have left our places
Desolate and cold,
Only we have turned our faces
From the glades of gold;

Seeking for the things that perished,
Lights that failed afar;
Losing those clear eyes that cherished.
God in stone and star;

Seeking still in man's endeavour
And Divine decree
For the gracious "light that never
Was on land or sea";

Waiting some supreme to-morrow,
Where the dream-flowers wake;
Singing songs to some far sorrow
Lest our own hearts break.

So we journey, half forgetting
There are fairies still,
Where the little winds are fretting
Round the hollow hill.

The Going of the Grey Geese

“At the end of March all the grey geese in the Hebrides collect together in one place and then depart for their nesting haunts within the Arctic Circle.”

ERE Spring has come with song o'er the sobbing outer seas,
And the sough of April rain to the green Hebrides,
Crowd the wild geese all a-gabble in a strange excited rabble,
For it's northward go the greylags,
The greylags,
Honking north go the greylags grey.

There's a whisper down the wind, there's a call across the sea
Of a nest among the crags of a white countree,
And it's gather from the hushes of the furze-land and the rushes;
“Gather in!” cry all the greylags,
The greylags,
“Gather!” cry the greylags grey.

Never year but comes the sign from the barren and the peak,
Where the merry dancers trip and the polar skies are bleak,
And it's wing and wing together from a world of whins and heather,
Honking homeward go the greylags,
The greylags,
Honking home go the greylags grey.

Like a shooting star at eve, like an arrow from a bow,
Cleaving straight in trackless blue the clean way they all must go,
To a hot huzza of greeting and the roll of pinions beating
Sails the King of all the greylags,
The greylags,
The King of all the greylags grey.

Oh, was it magic flute or enchanted viol's sigh
Floating down from Heaven's gates? Hark the rapturous reply!
Hark, the clamour and the bustle of a million wings a-rustle!
“We are coming!” cry the greylags,
The greylags,
“Coming!” cry the greylags grey.

Nor'-nor'-east across the sky, wing and wing and neck and neck,
Till the blurred ranks gloom to cloud and the last cloud is a speck.
Nor'-nor'-east for far fields flying, and echo answers, dying,
“Honk, a-honk, a-honk!” the greylags,
The greylags,
“Honk onk,” the greylags grey.

So Spring comes in with song o'er the sobbing outer seas,

And the sough of April rain on the green Hebrides,
And the wild geese gabble-gabble in a strange excited rabble,
For it's northward go the greylags,
The greylags,
Honking north go the greylags grey.

The Well

“There shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water.”

I MUST go back to the well,
 Though the well drown me,
If all that the world could tell
 Waited to crown me!

Dreams and the heart's desire
 Are a fool's finding;
Who are we that should tire
 Of the mill's grinding?

Seeing all dreams burn pale
 When the dreamers waken,
That all must utterly fail
 In the tale taken.

Who are we that should turn
 From the sharp leaven,
Feeling our hearts burn
 For some lost heaven?

The soul of the wise is sad
 For very seeing,
But the heart of a fool is glad
 In his own being.

Shall miracles come to pass
 For the soul's reading
That has lain like the trampled grass,
 Broken and bleeding?

Visioned in tears that start
 Where the ways sever,
In tears that hide in the heart
 And hurt forever?

There was a gleam that came
 To me, benighted,
A flickering candle-flame
 By pale hands lighted,

And out of the flame a song
 Cleft the dark o'er me,
Fleet as a flame, and strong,
 And fled before me,

A pillar of song and fire
By strange paths leading,
The star of the soul's desire,
Always receding.

Wonders and signs shall come—
Who shall reveal them?
Seeing all lips are dumb—
Shall Death unseal them?

One shall hear tongues in the wind,
Mighty with meaning,
Elegies muffled and thinned
To a reed's keening.

When all that speaks to the throng
Is the wind's blowing,
Or the lift of a wild swan's song,
Or the wave's flowing.

One shall see thoughts by the way,
Blown from far places,
With the light of eternal Day
In their veiled faces,

When all that the throng shall see
For its faith's saving
Is the bough of a broken tree
In the wind waving.

Hope and the morning star,
And a lark's winging,
And the sea on the outer bar
Sobbing and singing,

The murmur of tall pines
Crooning together
At dusk, when the wind whines
In the wet heather,

The patter of warm rains,
And the hot drumming
Of blood in the world's veins
When Spring is coming,

A sparrow dead in the street,
A dove hawk-smitten,
A hind at the hunter's feet—
So was it written?

The lure of Ultimate things

Formless and nameless,
The beating of great wings,
Invisible, tameless,

The spell on the hills at eve
Was it cloud dying,
Or the shimmer of God's sleeve,
That left us—crying?

A strange step at the door,
And the out-going
Of quick feet on the floor,
That passes knowing—

These shall be things too fleet
For us to bind them;
Flagging on heavy feet,
Falling behind them.

But the faith of a friend shall stand
In the fierce questing,
As a rock in a weary land,
For the soul's resting,

And love shall be fairy gold
For a little heaping,
Till night, and the hands fold
For the long sleeping.

Villanelle

Oh, hills we loved in sweeter days of old,
What faith shall bind, and what strong love prevail?
The scythe of Time is singing through the gold.

Malefic priests your mysteries have told
On some black rosary of hidden Baal,
Oh, hills we loved in sweeter days of old!

Once walked we there in such diviner mould,
Nor life nor death nor sorrow might assail;
The scythe of Time is singing through the gold.

The flocks of Dawn must couch in Dusk's grey fold
For that veiled shepherd piping down the trail,
Oh, hills we loved in sweeter days of old!

But you are tomb of all the heart might hold;
The dumb days tread like mourners ashen pale;
The scythe of Time is singing through the gold.

A ghostly camp-fire on a windy wold,
We followed, like the knights of ancient tale;
Vain was the questing, far the Holy Grail
The scythe of Time is singing through the gold.

A House

DRAW down the blinds, like lids o'er weary eyes
That look no more upon the things of earth,
And so, goodbye!
House that was "home" but yesterday, where now
The blank walls meet me with a mute reproach,
The naked floors ring hollow to my tread
Like cries of inarticulate regret.

Last night betwixt the midmurk and the grey
Thy last fire dwindled to a sullen spark,
And slow, reluctant as expiring hope,
Thy last lamp died and left us in the gloom.
To-morrow stranger feet shall come and go,
And alien shadows fall across thy door
And flit from room to room, and here appraise,
And there decry thy value—empty house,
O empty house that yesterday was Home!

* * * * *

Draw down the blinds, like lids o'er weary eyes
That will not wake or smile on us again!
Yea, so goodbye!
Last grave of many left beside the way!

Rainbow Gold

THE mists are rising on Broгнаhee,
There's a cuckoo calling down Gwelna Hold,
And, oh, but it's there that I long to be,
Dreaming the dreams of old.

Oh, I dreamed a dream 'twixt the moon-set white
And the wild red dawn of a haunted day;
Kiss me, nor chide me, O Heart's Delight,
For I must away, away.

Soft is the sunlight on Broгнаhee,
Softer the shadows in Gwelna Hold;
But I hear the fairy folk calling me,
Gathering rainbow gold.

“Oh, it's far and far to the rainbow's rim;
It is far and far,” said my love to me,
“And your heart will ache and your eyes grow dim,
Yearning for Broгнаhee.

“Tarry awhile, for the bluebell blows,
And the bonnets o' buttercups bend and nod;
Tarry awhile, my Heart o' the Rose,
For the spell of the golden-rod!”

Oh, the rainbow gold is far to find,
And sharp are the spears of the hillside sleet,
But I follow and follow all faint and blind
The prints of the fairy feet.

Is it wings or winds by the salt sea foam,
Or came the call of my love to me?
“Heart o' the Rose, come home, come home,
With the swallows to Broгнаhee!”

But faint I follow and fast they flee
(Years o' days are a tale that's told),
And weary, weary the heart of me,
Seeking for rainbow gold.

Swallow and swallow on bounding wings,
Where the far fell gleams in the furze-fire light,
Pilot me back to the dear home things,
Pilot me home to-night!

It is far, so far to the rainbow's rim,
It is far, so far that my feet must fail,

Though the crocks of gold be full to the brim
Down in the fairy vale.

And never a swallow will stay his flight;
The fairies are fled and the world is chill;
Oh, have you forgotten me, Heart's Delight,
Are you watching and calling still?

Late, ah, late in a lonely day
Shall it profit me now that I held in fee
More of delight than a mortal may?
Ah, bitter-sweet Broгнаhee!

Shall it profit me now that the hills we trod
Were templed halls of the gods of old,
And the misty cups of the golden-rod
Were brimming with rainbow gold?

The bonnets o' buttercups bend and blow,
And over the dark of the distance swells,
Now sad and solemn, now soft and low,
The tolling of fairy bells.

The mists are rising on Broгнаhee,
There's a cuckoo calling down Gwelna Hold,
And, oh, but it's there that I long to be,
Dreaming the dreams of old.

Hill Ghosts

THERE'S a wind that cries in the hills to-day,
 (Fingal, Fingal, and the low mists creeping!)
And it's O for South Esk under skies of gray
 South Esk and the brown trout leaping!

Fires of whin on a brown hill side,
 Robin jerkined in scarlet feather;
Trysting there with his dear wee bride,
 In the spell of the mountain weather

But old Fingal is a world away,
 By Malahide and the low mists creeping;
And it's O for South Esk under skies of gray,
 South Esk and the brown trout leaping!

At Evensong

GRANDMOTHER sits, when the light is fading
 Behind the western horizon bars,
When come the spirits of sleep invading
 The dreamy dusk of the world of stars.

Grandmother looks, when the lights are failing,
 Failing, failing o'er field and lawn,
Out through the dark where the ships are sailing
 To a haven of rest in a rose-red dawn.

Trembles a song in the silence, linking
 The world-old past with the yet to be,
Like harbour lights thro' the sea-mists blinking,
 The old, old music, "Abide with me."

Grandmother sits where the veil is lifting,
 And life and death are the self-same bond—
Twin pilots now, when her barque is drifting
 Toward the silent bar of the Great Beyond.

Soft shine the stars in the dreamland meadows
 Where the gleaners whisper of ways that part,
And sheaves that withered behind the shadows
 Where the hot life seethes in the old world's heart.

Grandmother sits with her world behind her,
 Where the shadows tremble on life's worn way,
Straining dim eyes through the mists that blind her,
 Where a lone star gleams in a world of gray.

In the vale of the shadows the children, sobbing,
 Tell of lost treasures the years sweep o'er,
And the hearts of men through the years are throbbing
 With the old life-hunger for evermore.

But Grandmother looks, when the lights are failing,
 Failing, failing o'er field and lawn,
Out through the dark where the ships are sailing
 To a haven of rest in a rose-red dawn.

Woman

MOTHER of Christ and of Iscariot!
O, angel-demon holding in your hands
The fateful glass wherein the trembling sands
Of human being compass sage or sot:
Christs that adorn, Caligulas that blot
The Book of Time with blood and burning brands;
Nor sage nor sophist with their wizard wands
Has wrung your sway by tittle or by jot.

O, Vesta-Circe fountain-head of tears,
Thrice-heated furnace of enduring hate,
Portal of Life and gate of tenfold Death,
Upon your nod they hang with bated breath
Who serve with love, or at your bidding wait
To carry black vendetta down the years!

John Riley's Last Ride

John Riley, said to be the original of "The Man from Snowy River," whilst being carried over the mountains from Groggin to Corryong Hospital, died on the way. The party carried his body the remainder of the fifty-mile journey into Corryong and buried him there.

THE flanks of Kosciusko
Loomed vast and veiled and grey,
And the dark vale of Groggin
Was darker than the day
When "The Man from Snowy River"
Went away.

Half scared, the mountain eagle
Rose up with heavy flight,
To watch the strange procession
From height to ragged height
Wind out by crag and cliff-head
Out of sight.

Low moaned the mountain torrent
By gorge and granite crest,
Loud shrilled the wailing plover
From his deep-shadowed nest,
To "The Man from Snowy River"
Drifting west.

By paths he paced at pleasure,
By roads he spurned with speed
Through the wild vale of Groggin
With grave and patient heed
They strode with one grim shadow
In the lead.

Up, up The Hermit's shoulder,
With twain upon his back,
The sweating mountain pony
Strained, snorting at the wrack
Or was it that strange leader,
Striding slack?

But "The Man from Snowy River"
Heard no wild plover's strain,
Or beat of muffled footsteps
That bore him, drowsed with pain,
From the wild vale of Groggin

In the rain.

Belike he felt slow fingers
Close colder on his wrist,
And heard a low voice calling
Across the solemn mist,
When the twilight turned to ghostly
Amethyst.

But haply with the brumbies,
Full tilt adown the steep,
Or heading mountain scrubbers,
Flung out a thousand deep,
Rode "The Man from Snowy River"
In his sleep.

In Carter's hut the shadows
Danced dim on roof and door,
When Peace, on earth descending,
Brimmed Life's dark ranges o'er
And "The Man from Snowy River"
Dreamed no more.

With rain-song on the roof-tree,
His pent soul quit the husk,
With sway of censer branches
And drip of funeral musk,
And a bittern's far bell tolling
In the dusk.

As he would have it ordered,
Who loved his Bush the best,
With Her grave garments folded
To Her stern bosom pressed,
He turned from Life's vain questing
To his rest.

Far, far from Kosciusko
He slumbers deep and long,
While the wild vale of Groggin
Is bursting into song,
And strange winds croon above him
"Corryong" "Corryong."

From the Iron Road

COULD I but sing the grief of my heart's core
 Into one strain,
Then I might face the Iron Road once more,
 Regenerate, fain
 To joust with Fate in the long lists again!

Quick laughter and the young respite of tears,
 Such could not stay
To front with me the slow, despoiling years,
 And the toll gray;
 I am a scroll that slow fires burn away.

There was a wild rune beating in my ears,
 Of Song to be—
Such song as some high, haunted headland hears
 When the tired sea
 Sobs De Profundis to Infinity.

There was a strong thought leaping in my heart
 Like a white flame,
For the world's hope, and the world's tears astart,
 And the world's shame,
 And all the dumb, blind griefs without a name.

But these have left me on the Iron Road
 Too sad for song,
Quick to the measures beaten by the goad
 Of dominant Wrong,
 Sensing the groaning centuries' "How long?"

Better the desert where the lean kite wings
 And the simooms blow
Than all the mirth of all the courts of kings
 Pressed from the woe
 Of that pale company that joyless graveward go.

Better than pomp of nations banned and bound
 By braggart blade,
Than haughty cities walled and turret-crowned,
 One palm tree's shade
 Templing the silence mighty winds have made.

Better than steeples that from land to land
 Stab the blue air,
Than hushed high altars whose tall tapers stand
 So ghostly fair,

Like holy hands that make eternal prayer,
One brave hibiscus burning like a gem
One scented bowl
Of lotus incense swaying on its stem
Like a pale soul
Poised tremulous for flight and its far goal.

Oh, take me, take me, little wind that blows
Ere the young moon
Blossoms in heaven like a mystic rose,
And the stars swoon
Down languorous aisles of Night's enchanted noon!

For I have heard from these poor prison bars
A sigh soft-drawn
From whispering islands under great white stars
That greet the dawn,
Radiant in royal rose and flame and fawn.

Oh, take me, take me, cloud-ship sailing east
With bows a-gleam,
For morning lands purged from Oppression's priest,
Where kind stars beam,
And the lost Moon Islands guard the gates of Dream!

For I am weary of the Iron Road
The martyrs trod;
Yea, very weary of the Templar's code,
The pilgrim's rod;
Haply in ways of all the winds walks—God!

Old Hop-Kilns

(Vignette)

COWLED kilns crouching by the lonely lands, the hop lands,
Cowled kilns waiting for the freights that came of old
Spilling song and laughter where a broken line of roof stands
Wan to-day and wistful in the wane of willow-gold.

Stacked poles standing on the windy height, the green height,
Stacked poles standing bleached and bitten to the core;
Ghostly white convolvulus by morning light and moon-light
Creeps across the threshold where the dancers come no more.

May wind crooning in the rafters and the grey crows,
May wind sobbing like a muted violin
None o' nights to hear it now but water-hens and brown owls
Calling in the shadows when the sickle moon is thin.

May comes sadly to the haunted lands, the hop lands;
May comes sadly now the years have lost their gold
Sadly to the patient poles like wizened wraiths of pale hands
Waiting by the cowled kilns the freights that came of old.

Hamilton

WILD and wet, and windy wet falls the night on Hamilton,
Hamilton that seaward looks unto the setting sun,
Lady of the patient face, lifted everlastingly,
Veiled and hushed and mystical as a cloistered nun.

O the days, the cruel days creeping over Hamilton
Like a train of haggard ghosts, homeless and accursed,
Moaning for a fleet o' dream silver-sailed and wonderful,
Moaning for a sorrow's sake, the fairest and the first.

O the moon, the lonely moon, leaning low on Hamilton,
Thro' the years that sunder us the dead come back, come back,
Scent of white eucryphia stars blown on winds of Memory,
Glint and gleam of fagus gold adown the torrent's track.

Half my heart is buried there, buried high on Hamilton,
Lonely is the sepulchre with never stone for sign,
Where the nodding myrtle plumes stand like sable sentinels
And the ruddy rimony wreathes the hooded pine.

Half my heart is yearning yet, yearning yet for Hamilton,
Hamilton beyond the surge of sobbing Southern main,
O the croon of wistful winds calling, calling, calling me,
Where the mottled mountain thrush is singing in the rain.

We shall ne'er go back again, back again to Hamilton,
Heart o' me, our track is toward the heart of burning day,
Hills beyond the call of hills beaconing and beckoning—
Westward, westward winds the track, a thread of dusky grey.

Wy Yung

BEYOND the ridge of Never Forget
Is a grey ghost land where no glad gleam flashes,
Where run the rivers of Old Regret,
And the red fruit withers to dust and ashes.
Over the edge of the World it lies
Where curlews call and the reed-beds shiver,
And Time is a sorrow that never dies
In old Wy Yung by the Mitchell river.

There youth came tripping with lightsome feet,
Brave youth with the clog of a curse upon it,
Where poppies flamed in the whispering wheat,
And young winds tilted the blue bells' bonnet:
Sad youth came sighing with heart athirst,
And a passionate prayer to the Cosmic Giver:
Ah, God! for the faith that was fairest, first,
In old Wy Yung by the Mitchell river.

Change on the grey land has worked his will
Nor softened a line on its face abhorred,
Gapped are the gum-trees on Calvert's hill
Like time-thinned hairs on an old man's forehead;
And a spectre stalks through the dappled maize
Where dead flags rustle and tassels quiver,
A spectre dark as the bygone days
In old Wy Yung by the Mitchell river.

Night Stock

FROM Winterbrook to Ashton
The road is white and clear;
In the low light, in the moonlight,
In the heyday of the year,
To Winterbrook from Ashton
Riding came my dear!

A columbine, a red rose,
A tiger-lily grand,
And pansies blue as elves grew
In fields of Faäryland,
To Winterbrook from Ashton
He brought me in his hand!

But more than royal red rose
Or tiger-lily fine,
A blue bowl, a pearl bowl
A-brim with wizard wine;
He brought me scented night stock,
And all the world was mine!

A purple leaf, a green leaf,
A hint of pink and brown,
And deep, deep, in charmed sleep
I laid my senses down,
And heard the beat of wee feet,
The fairies come to town!

Oh, Faäry Town is Dream Town,
And none may break the spell,
But the earth-scent and the wind-song
And the murmur of a shell
At moonset when the ebb-tide
Is tolling like a bell!

And Faäry time is all time,
Nor aye is near or far;
For heart's need or love's meed,
A mercy or a star,
The blessed gates of ivory
For ever stand ajar!

The wind that wakes the clove buds
Blows east by Hindustan,
From Celebes the spice breeze
Brings junk and merchantman,

With frankincense and camphor
And myrrh and frangipan!

But fleeter through the palm seas,
Low-loaded to the rail,
With scented snow of peach blow,
Like foam before the gale,
To Faäry Town with witchgold
The fleets of Faäry sail!

And first they gave me lad's love
And mint and dragon's tongue,
But the last gift was black thrift—
Slow, slow the sea-tide swung,
And white as bone the moon set,
The bells of Faäry rung!

Oh, soon they gave me witchgold,
But syne they brought me rue,
And the earth-scent and the wind-song
Like hounds of night ran through
And loudly belled the white stag,
The horns of Faäry blew!

The columbine, the red rose,
The tiger-lily grand,
The pansies blue as elves grew
Were dust within my hand;
But mine for aye the night stock,
My Faäry contraband.

* * * * *

From Winterbrook to Ashton
The road is white and clear;
In the low light, in the moonlight,
In the heyday of the year,
To Winterbrook from Ashton
Riding came my dear!

Sailed

To the memory of the late J. F. Archibald, dear to old "Bulletin" bards.

SHE was not listed on your noisy quays,
O little port of Earth;
No screaming crane, no whining derrick's wheeze
Betrayed her secret berth,
Ere down the tide-way swift and white she slipped,
While every flag on one gay harbour dipped.

Perhaps old Pinch-gut spoke her in his sleep,
And South Head's sleepless eye
Gave her Godspeed ere heaved the trackless deep
To meet uncharted sky,
And brooding Darkness built her cloudy cairn
O'er Earth's poor little coast-lights, dropped astern.

Perhaps a wheeling gannet, outward blown,
Or the swift albatross,
Sighted her dropping down the dark, alone,
Where spectral wind-weeds toss,
And screaming turned him to the empty main
From harbour lights and kind home cliffs again.

For her nor sunken rock nor hidden shoal,
But that mysterious sea
Lip-lapping in the hollow of the bow!
God holds upon his knee,
While through His fingers sand of aeons runs
In constellated whirl of ordered suns.

For it was written in the Book of Years
Ere Earth's first rib was laid,
He that has kept the Faith among his peers,
And perished unafraid,
Shall have his place in that high company
Of gods that are when half-gods cease to be.

And such shall have safe convoy till he stand,
Free from the fettering clod,
With that great brotherhood on either hand,
That walks and talks with God,
In loyal faith and goodly fellowship,
And simple singleness of eye and lip,

And sees revealed what human eyes behold
Dimly as in a glass,

When Eleusinian curtains backward fold
And the pale pageants pass
Life's aimless martyrdom of blood and tears
In slow procession darkling down the years.

Of such was he who saw in broken gleams
The Vision Beautiful, Nor shrank dismayed because his waking dreams
Transgressed the common rule;
Who dared be free to dare the "grand mistake,"
Or play the fool for nobler folly's sake.

Of such was he, our brother who has gone
Beyond our little grief;
Beyond the shadow of that Acheron
Of pestilent belief;
Who kept the Faith and flung Her standard free
To the young winds of all futurity.

She was not listed on your noisy quays,
O little port of Earth;
No screaming crane, no whining derrick's wheeze
Betrayed her secret berth,
Ere down the tide-way swift and white she slipped,
While every flag on one gay harbour dipped.

June Roses

O RED Rose of June,
Like a lingering ember
From fires of December
Rekindled for boon,
When a wild afternoon
Like a grey ghost goes gliding
And creeping and hiding
From a sorrowful moon—
A reproachful white moon!

O Red Rose of pain,
Like the last spark that flashes
From smouldering ashes
Of love on the wane!
Thro' the pitiless rain,
And the wind's wistful sobbing
A dead march is throbbing
Again and again,
And for ever again.

O Red Rose new born,
Like a scimitar flaming
And flashing and shaming
Life's fear and its scorn,
Levin love-lilt new torn
From storm-torrents sweeping
From fountain heads leaping
From lips of the morn—
Of Hope's evergreen morn!

Rekindled for boon,
When the genii of sorrows
Of all the to-morrows
Combine and commune
In a wild rebel rune,
Bright symbol and token!—
Full foreword fain spoken!—
O Red Rose of June!—
Brave Red Rose of June!

Evil

NOT Beelzebub, but white archangel, I
Turn the dim glass and shift the sands again,
And touch the eyelids of the sons of men
Lest they forget—forget and drowsy lie
In Fate's unfurrowed fallow till they die—
As seed that quickens not for dawns that leap
From out the dark of immemorial years,
With kiss of wind and sun and wizard tears
Of fugitive clouds to wake them from their sleep.

With milestones I have set the crumbling sod
Of human judgment that they stray not wide,
Nor languish lost in labyrinths alway;
And smile in pity when I hear them pray
That Wrong's rude whips from them be turned aside,
Who call me Evil—not discerning God.

To-Night

IT is to-night! The tense strings sob no more:
Close fast the doors, and draw the sheltering blinds
Against the vampire broods that hover near,
Shapeless similitudes of nameless fears.
Here, love, upon the outmost beetling crag
Of black oblivion, soft-winged Sleep shall guard
From fierce, familiar terrors that pursue
With scourges sharp as death and 'wildering cries
Of red-fanged packs that hunt in paths of Day.
It is to-night! To-morrow's wolves are far!

Beloved, kind is Sleep—but still more kind
The cradling arms of Death. Here on the verge
Of great forgetfulness, canst thou not hear
Departing clangour of the 'leaguering hosts
Swoon on the void, and—like a wailing wind
From some far shore—the beat of Sorrow's wings
Die down to peace! Beloved, sleep, nor dream!
It is to-night! To-morrow's wolves are far!

Ballade of Dreams

ACROSS the loom the shuttles fly,
Like random, rippled lights at play
Upon the road where you, where I,
Drift down the Valley of To-day;
White snowdrop stars beside the way
Illume the flight of fancies fled,
In some far Spring-time's snowdrop spray
Our dreams shall live when we are dead.

We quibble over how and why,
Or vex our souls with “yea” and “nay”;
Turn all the golden years awry,
And bid the wheel of pleasure stay;
And still our webs of hodden grey
Are shot with many a wizard thread
That passes not with passing clay—
Our dreams shall live when we are dead.

The proud, the strong, the brave shall die,
All flesh shall perish e'en as they;
Nor love, nor life, nor duty's tie
Shall hold the fateful hour at bay:
But past restraining barriers, yea,
On universal pinions spread,
A phoenix phalanx o'er decay,
Our dreams shall live when we are dead.

With cypress gather blooms of may,
Beyond the dark the dawn is red;
Peace! sad one, tho' the gods shall slay,
Our dreams shall live when we are dead.

The Enslavement

RAIL not at Mammon, helots of to-day,
Nor curse Bellona, goddess of the sword,
Nor Tyranny, of Toil meet overlord:
This is your covenant—"You must obey!"
Under its ban your helot-mothers lay;
Your sires, slave-born to slave-born mothers, poured
The gluttons' wine, or cringed for bed and board:
Why murmur then? And whence your blank dismay?

Not with red rite of sword on Strife's wan hill,
'Mid clash of arms and pomp of war's estate,
Was Freedom slain, and her strong sons laid low,
But in some wild red dawning long ago,
When Man, the savage, took his savage mate,
And beat, and bent, and broke her to his will.

Woman

A Reply

“GOD be sorry for women?” Nay, singer and sister woman,
Sing the woman Triumphant!—“the face turned from the clod”—
Wave of the mystical ocean, thro' season and changing season,
Intoning its grand Te Deum on cosmical bars of God!

Sing the Woman Triumphant!—queen-sibyl from morn primeval—
Lo! at her nod swung open the portals of Birth and Breath,
Fear and the anguish of Fear 'neath her naked feet she has trodden
As Over-mistress of Sorrow—derider of dominant Death.

Wherefore shall God be sorry? or hearts that are wise in women
Pity the shimmering splendour, the woman-waves of His sea,
Pity the tremulous tides in the flood of their Godward setting
To the scintillant, white soul-beaches whose sands are Eternity?

God be sorry for woman? that men for their sport defile her?
Lo! to the dark she has flung them, pilotless, rudderless, blind,
For prey to the shark-toothed foes of their vanity's vile creations;
To reap the wrath of the whirlwind where laughing they sowed the wind.

Dare man be sorry for God? As the sky to the hills thereunder,
As the sea in its ebbing and flowing, Creation's image she stands—
Strength with a mask of softness, wisdom with meekness hidden,
Serpent and dove commingled, with the torch of God in her hands.

Yea! Sing the Woman Triumphant! no dirge but a march eternal,
Tabor and clash of cymbals and homage of waving palms!
Diapason of life-tides throbbing! Look, weary one, doubting sister,
'Tis Mary of Nazareth passes—with the infant Christ in her arms.

Mountain Myrtle

MYRTLE by the mountain rills!
Dark-plumed monarch stern and scowling,
You that hear the thunder growling
And the black sou'-wester howling
Through the wild Tasmanian hills.
Myrtle by the western springs!
Harp whose chords have ne'er been smitten,
Land whose songs have ne'er been written,
Where no tooth of scorn has bitten
To the inner heart of things.

Myrtle, myrtle, watching yet,
Where old Montezuma races
Down the waterworn rock-faces,
Singing songs to lonely places
Set in ways of wind and wet!
Myrtle, myrtle, stern and stark,
Where they turned them from the questing,
When their sun of life was westing—
Still your dark boughs soothe their resting,
Moaning, moaning in the dark.

Myrtle, myrtle lying low,
With the moss about you creeping,
With the torrent round you leaping,
And the grand old mountain keeping
Vigil as the seasons go,
Still to me your music comes
Set in chords august, specific,
When a storm-voice, weird, terrific,
Beats across the waste Pacific
Like the roll of muffled drums.

Guardian of far peaks untrod
By fierce cloven-hoofed excesses
And Humanity's distresses,
Where no clamour for redress is,
And the hills look up to God,
Pillars of a larger sky,
Immemorial altars folden
Deep in aisles of green and golden,
Whose white taper-stars are holden
By supernal hands on high!

On the wings of evenfall

Soft as clouds their sky-ways wending,
Or white angel-hosts descending
With the gift of peace unending
When the dark is over all,
Like the sough of Southern seas
Comes to me the drowsy droning
Of the wizard priests, intoning,
When the Western wind is moaning—
Moaning in the myrtle trees.

The Reiver

THE floods are out on the flats to-night,
Moaning and maddened and wild and red,
Like a hooded serpent ready to smite,
Old Mitchell rears in his straitened bed;
Quick! Lords of the cattle and crops, your dole!
The reiver river takes toll, takes toll!

Hope for no harvest of eager hands,
The ripened ears and the swollen cribs!
The sludge-bar, tossed on the hungry sands,
That gapes like a skeleton's sundered ribs,
The break and the blight and the far-flung shoal
Of the reiver river take toll, take toll!

The lean teams lagged at the furrow end,
And the plumed green army stood brave anon,
Now from mourning upland to river bend
The whisper is hushed and the plumes are gone,
Only the waters a death-dirge roll
Where the reiver river takes toll, takes toll!

Plunder, full plunder of horn and hoof,
Of torn green tresses and whitening bone,
And a darker tribute, deep housed aloof
Where the vespering pines on the hillside moan,
Man, beast and bird, and the twisted bole—
So the reiver river takes toll, takes toll!

The floods are out on the flats to-night,
Pray if you dare to and hold your breath;
For a craft rides seaward with never a light,
And the man at her wheel is Pilot Death.
Was it curlew or plover? Or parting soul?
Hush!—the reiver river takes toll, takes toll!

City Hunger

ATENT 'neath the gum trees!—O No! No!
Give me the stream of which I am part—
The red stream filling the old world's heart
With life and laughter, with rapture and glow.
Give me the battle the strivers ken
With comrades beside and the goal before.
O tears and laughter and strife to the core—
I love you! love you, cities of men!

Fair are the halls where the white stars peer
Thro' green arched casements from kindly skies!
But the cities of men have a thousand eyes
That beacon and beckon the distant near.
With Life on the march and Time on the wing
To a wild world measure, what matter the odds?
Or roses strewn by the hands of the gods?
Or hyssop and rue that the seasons bring?

Sing not of far-folden hills agleam,
Of sun-kissed valleys where Strife is not,
The sylvan Nirvanas where ripe to rot
The fruits of Toil and the flowers of Dream.
A leaf among leaves I had rather be tossed
'Mong the soul-ships cleaving a treacherous tide—
Or freighted for ports of the Barmecide,
Or bound for the deep sea docks o' the lost.

A tent 'neath the gum trees? No! not I!
I'll march with the rabble, clean and unclean,
Judas, Barabbas or Nazarene—
And die as I lived when it's time to die.
Till from the banquet that mortals ken
The lights wane low and the guests depart—
O tears and laughter and strife to the heart,
I love you, love you, cities of men!

Crooked River

A LEAGUE of brown with lights of gold,
And, 'gainst blue sky's resistance,
Far hilltops gleaming white and cold
Across the purple distance!

Beyond the hum of city streets,
Their strife and stress and scorning,
Again through worn world-pulses beats
The magic of the morning.

I see the lone hawk wheeling high,
The blown, brown reed-beds shiver,
And faint and far the hills that lie
Beyond the Crooked River.

O haunted hills! O holy hills!
Where wizard lights are streaming
O'er Youth's enchanted window sills
From hinter-skies of dreaming;

O hills behind the hollow dark
Where human wisdom falters,
And Hate keeps vigil, stern and stark,
By Custom's petty altars!

It seems so long since life was love
From God's heart brimming over,
The lark-song in the blue above,
The brown bee in the clover:

So long, by drifting dawns and darks
Since—(Christ! Thy creed grows colder!)
God lived among the ironbarks
On Lookout's ragged shoulder.

What tho' since then (Ah, ruthless change!)
On charts of land Australian,
They've writ my hills a mountain range
With title cold and alien!

“Australian Alps?” No pulses leap
To greet that title olden,
Where hushed in memoried twilight sleep
Life's glamoured things and golden.

“Australian Alps?” Nay, nay, there thrills
Through Memory's skies a-quiver

The glory of *my* hills—“*the hills*
Beyond the Crooked River.”

Society

OBUBBLE blown on rotting seas of Crime!
Wan iridescence 'gendered of Decay,
Ignis fatuus whose fallacious ray
Dances a dance of death above the slime—
Beneath you lie the promises of Time,
The power, the pride, the hope of yesterday—
Magnificence of nations passed away
Like phantom puppets of forgotten mime.

What legioned valour beating bars of breath
Has stifled in your dungeons of Dismay!
What love shall sit in darkness for your sake
Till Hate no seas of sophistry can slake
Shall sweep your tainted loveliness away,
O bubble blown from bloated lips of Death!

The Song of the Axe

A SONG for the sword! where the red blood poured
An oblation to earthly glory;
They have pledged its name to eternal fame,
In the pages of song and story.

A song for the pen! the cosmic pen,
By honesty's clean hand wielded,
It has set more stars on our 'scutcheon bars
Than ever the lordly steel did.

But stronger than these, and braver than these,
With a music more meet for singing,
Swell out from the trees, thro' the centuries,
The echoes of axe strokes ringing.

Wherever the beat of resolute feet
Down the vale of the years is falling,
From the war-worn flanks of their out-post ranks,
The song of the axe is calling.

O the song of the axe on the westward tracks,
By the camp fire ruddily leaping—
'Twas the Marseillaise of the roving days
That wakened the land from sleeping.

They heard it ring where the snow-streams spring,
And the arrows of tempest hurtle,
As it leaped with a flash and a quivering crash
To the heart of a mountain myrtle.

Where the carriages swerve round the clean-railed curve
That clings to the mountain's shoulder,
You can read its signs in the ranks of the pines
Where the prostrate monarchs moulder.

O music and mirth of the cities of earth,
O levin of light and laughter!
From the forests ye sprang where the axes sang
Their lyrics of ridge and rafter.

It has poured no tears on the restless years,
Its march is no march of terror,
In the skies that are 'tis a steadfast star,
Set high o'er the ways of error—

When the last bright blade that a proud part played
In the pageants of power and plunder,

Doth plough the plain for the fertile grain,
Still the conquering axe shall thunder.

Anathema

THE earth is cursed! Grey sky and sullen sea
And bitter wind—like a half-stifled groan
From some blind gulf of outer darkness blown,
Where legioned wrong moaneth her broken plea
Because of Faith that trusts unceasingly
Thro' unavailing ages. Where is God!
Hath He forgot? Or drowsy doth He nod
On lonely hilltops of Infinity?

Silent, all silent! To your tasks, ye boors
And human clods that grovel in the dust,
And serve Oppression for her bitter bread!
Blind, bloodless worms with senses dull as lead!
Spawn of Starvation and the Spoiler's lust,
The earth is cursed!—and only Greed endures!

Watching

I PRAYED for the wind of the South,
As I swung his cradle slow,
And my heart was aye in my mouth,
Lest the life of my babe should go
On the feverish panting breath
Of the sullen November noon,
Out where the ships of Death
Sail 'neath a wan white moon.

A bittern boomed in the dusk,
And the winds of the night were wild;
And, pent in its earthly husk,
The soul of my restless child
Beat 'gainst the bonds of breath;
O God! must it journey soon
With the crews of the ships of Death,
That steer by a wan white moon?

Night paled to the dawn's eclipse,
And the moon hung low in the sky;
Still I watched with my heart on my lips
Lest the child that I loved should die,
Should pass with the dawn's first breath
O'er the bar where the ebb-tides croon,
And the lights of the ships of Death
Wane dim 'neath a wan white moon.

Credo

LET misers keep their gold, kings keep their power,
And petty princelings hug the chains of pride,
Place-hunters flaunt the triumph of an hour,
Which Time's myrmidons swiftly shall divide!
I claim no part or place within the train
Of pageantry, or aught that pageant gives—
Nor join in vain Te Deums o'er the slain,
Or hope that dies, or recreant faith that lives!
But in the larger life which circles all,
From lowest unto highest, brake nor bound
Shall keep mine own from me, or steal withal,
Or rival claimants baffle or confound!
My right to live, not to myself alone;
My right to toil for that which others share;
My right to bring to Truth's white altar stone
Heart's incense of high thought, and lay it there;
My right to oneness with the souls that dare
For Right's dear sake the Tyrant's beck and nod,
To lead the listless legions of despair
By paths of nobler fellowship to God;
Life's wine, heart's treasure—these mine own shall be,
Gift of the years, all other gifts above!
Live pulsing hearts, warm human sympathy!
Let misers keep their gold—my gold is Love.

Look Up

O PHANTOM bars and futile bands!
O fettered feet of clay!
O blind unfaith and folded hands!
The East is growing grey.

Look up! Hope's rainbow hangs athwart
More joys than life can hold!
O loving heart, O longing heart,
The skies are dropping gold!

O heavy heart, O laggard trust,
O lips too faint to pray!
Tho' dauntless dust go down to dust
Yet each shall have his day.

From alien seas no man may chart,
From stress of wind and foam,
O weary heart, O waiting heart,
Your ships are beating home!

The Judgment

SOUL of the secret places, sense of the hidden things,
My heart is a wounded bird winging wearily home to die,
Blind with the whirl of suns in the brazen bowl of the sky,
Fain for the whispering darkness to fondle and fold her wings.

Crag where the wheeling falcon the sapphire ether breaks,
Horns of the Himalaya where the blue young winds are born
That fan the flitting red feet of the poppy fires in the corn
Ere the temple bells are calling or the first pale lotus wakes.

From the dark of dreams ye called me to the world of wind and sun,
To the twofold path of the spirit and the way the flesh-feet take,
In the cloud-wake of the eagle, in the sun-track of the snake,
I have loved and served and suffered—let the Wise Ones' will be done!

Hope, of the gods beloved; Faith, that was more than prayer,
For a rose in a far green valley, for an upland white with rye,
Three in one have we travailed, but the pledge of the noon goes by,
And who shall be judge of Wisdom or lord of the gift he bare?

There's a wind that wakes at sunset and sobs in the deodars,
A strong kind wind that carries the heaviest-laden home,
Drowsed with the scent of pine and the breath of the honeycomb,
To the halls of eternal twilight beyond the surge of the stars!

So it was writ forever in the Book of gods and men,
One shall follow a far wind and compass his soul's decree,
One shall be slain for a king's whim, and one shall die on the Tree,
But who shall measure the mercies, or quibble with "Why"? or "When"?

The bulbul's song is ended, the desert well is dry,
The last of the lilacs withers unwept in the garden close,
The young wheat droops in the furrow, and far is Kashmiri's rose,
My heart is a wounded bird winging wearily home to die!

The Hill

I WENT one day of days that pass
To seek the house called "Home",
And there was only green grass
And Heaven's high dome.

I went one day to seek the place
That, dreaming, calls me still,
And there was only the calm face
Of a low, long hill.

No roof was there, nor sign where leapt
A hearthstone's friendly flame;
The very sod had long been swept
Of grief and all blame.

The little plot of garden grace
Where balm of beauty blew
Was a forlorn, forgotten place
Where no flower grew.

Lupin and stock, the sheer delight
Of bugloss blue and tall,
And Christmas lilies, hushed and white
And best loved of all—

Some hand had stolen bloom and pod,
And old verbena tree;
No incense lifted up to God
From dark rosemarye.

The tasselled maize that Summer woke
To broken murmurings
Of strange, pathetic tongues that spoke
Of dumb, far things;

The pear tree like a poplar tall,
Whose trembling branches threw
Quaint shadows with the secret call
The child-soul knew;

The rose that nodded by the door,
Or, swept with wind, anon
Flung its loose petals on the floor—
Were all gone—gone!

Nor fence, nor rail, nor any bound
The olden borders kept;

Only afar the river wound
By green willows swept.

Sun-jewels on his breast of blue
Danced, as in years of old
I watched the angels dancing too
On long waves of gold,

When that old tale they told to me
At holy Easter-tide,
That once for little children, He,
God's own Son, died.

O secret spot, from stress apart,
Where once dropped healing balm,
Oasis hidden in the heart,
A well—and one palm.

The palm is dust beside the way,
The patient well has dried,
There's only wind that sobs, to-day,
On the green hill side.

Yet well, perhaps, no shadow flits
O'er sill and lintel now;
Or memory-laden ruin sits
On the low hill's brow;

Yes, well, perhaps, the winding ways
Are hid with kindly grass,
Else I had seen old, tired days
And bowed griefs pass.

As well that o'er a green hill side
God's own good sun spills free—
Old orchard trees more ghosts might hide,
Than I dared see.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust!
New grief old griefs upon,
The olden faith, the olden trust
Are all gone—gone!

Mathinna

AH, woe the day! And woe the day,
Betwixt the golden and the gray,
And woe the star that set for aye—
My star of dream—Mathinna!

I saw the lone moon lift her lamp,
I saw the white star-sentries tramp;
But far, far was the stranger's camp
By glen and gorge, by fell and swamp—
Far, far thy hills, Mathinna.

I saw the dawn leap from his bed,
All wild and red and thunder-fed,
Behind Ben Lomond's purple head
And the mountains—and Mathinna!

I saw the ragged red sun rise
And climb the steel stairs of the skies,
Like blood between mine aching eyes
And the mountains—and Mathinna.

I saw the thin road wind away,
A single thread of dusty gray,
Into the heart of burning day;
And my heart went with it all the way
To the mountains—and Mathinna.

I turned me from the mountains tall;
Behind me distance built her wall;
But still I hear thee call and call—
The sweetest, saddest voice of all—
I hear thee call, Mathinna.

Yea, one sweet song will come to me
Where'er on earth my home shall be,
A song of all wild things and free,
The song that was the soul of thee,
Wild soul of song, Mathinna!

Dust is the white rose by the door,
And dust the scarlet poppy's core,
But thou wilt breathe for evermore
On winds of some enchanted shore—
Red rose of dreams—Mathinna!

Castle Wonderful

I BUILT me Castle Wonderful
All in the morning gold;
Its battlements leaped high and white,
Its turrets sprang through misty light
To break the eagle's wheeling flight,
Above the peak's blue fold;
Oh, it was Castle Wonderful,
My own, my Castle Wonderful,
All in the morning gold!

Above my Castle Wonderful
Was never sun or moon,
But that clear light that dares to beat
Upon God's very judgment seat,
That knows nor cold nor any heat
Of stars that swirl or swoon;
Yea, over Castle Wonderful,
My own, my Castle Wonderful,
Rose never sun or moon.

Into my Castle Wonderful
Grief entered not, or Wrong;
The days ran out in singing sands
That trickled through seraphic hands
To weave the super-human strands
Of sempiternal song;
Nay, into Castle Wonderful,
My own, my Castle Wonderful,
Came never Grief or Wrong.

All out from Castle Wonderful
The flinty roads of gray
Went winding east and winding west,
By singing vale and purple crest,
In opal robes of sunset drest;
Into the far away
Ran out from Castle Wonderful,
My stately Castle Wonderful,
The flinty roads of gray.

All into Castle Wonderful
In royal raiment came,
Through gates of amethyst ajar,
From lands beyond the morning star,
Such men as fared with Balthasar

To praise a holy name,
All into Castle Wonderful,
My own, my Castle Wonderful,
From all the world they came.

Came into Castle Wonderful
Such wealth as gods devise,
Rich tapestries of purpose wrought
On empyreal looms of thought,
Such spoils as are not sold or bought
For ransom or for prize;
Came into Castle Wonderful,
My waiting Castle Wonderful,
Such wealth as gods devise.

* * * * *

Alas, my Castle Wonderful
That was so fair to see,
Upon its towers the gray moss creeps,
Upon its walls the lizard sleeps,
Within its courts the white owl keeps
A lonely watch with me!
Ah, me, my Castle Wonderful,
My ruined Castle Wonderful,
That was so fair to see!

Sling-Pot

BEN LOMOND is a king of peaks, with clouds upon his knee,
And South Esk is a troubadour a-singing to the sea,
But Sling-pot will be Sling-pot through all the years to be.

The wheeling eagle loves to nest among the cloven crags,
The leaping trout his pleasure takes among the river flags.
But Sling-pot like a beggar goes, a beggar clad in rags.
They say, who ride at Duty's call or Honour's high command,
When rain is heavy on the roof and night is on the land,
On Sling-pot lies a withered moon as white as Naaman's hand;

And homeless winds, the winds that know the sorrow mortals keep,
The pang that chokes the muttered word, the tear too salt to weep,
Cry all night long on Sling-pot when the world is fast asleep.

Haply, the gods that keep the keys, from some high throne of grace
Beheld the shame that walks at noon within a holy place,
And laid a curse on Sling-pot, and a shadow on its face;

That when around the feet of Spring the poppies leap in flame,
And every wind is spilling song adown the road she came,
Nor leaf nor moss on Sling-pot may call upon her name.

And when glad Summer comes to robe the earth in blue and gold
Of miracle and mystery that no man dares unfold,
Sling-pot is like a potter's field; so Hinnom was of old.

Yea, old Ben Lomond is a king that lordly winds obey,
And South Esk is a troubadour that sings the years away,
But Sling-pot will be Sling-pot till the last green leaf is gray.

The Grey Woman

THERE'S a little old woman
In a long grey cloak,
And the cross word, the hard word
Is all she ever spoke.

With the old shawl about her
And a creel upon her hand,
She comes sowin' docks an' darnels
Through the kind green land.

'Twas she that turned the wheat black,
'Twas she that broke the plough;
Twas she that. . . Whist, acushla,
'Tis Herself comes now!

For the red cow's ailin',
Sure the wind's from the east,
And God He knows the east wind
Is ill for man an' beast!

And the black rain is beatin'
Like a flail upon the hay,
And the mould is in the barley,
An' the rent's due to-day.

With sorrow and vexation
Our hearts are nearly broke!
Go away, old woman,
In the long grey cloak!

Och, ye thrawn old woman
With the creel upon your hand,
To be sowin' docks an' darnels
Through the good green land!

Sure, fame is only fancy,
An' wealth is far to find,
An' life is like a blown leaf—
A candle in the wind!

A low flame, a long flame,
An' then. . . a puff o' smoke.
Och, shame upon ye, woman,
In the long grey cloak!

Mater Creatorix

IN the field of death I sought him. Oh, the curse on him was sore!
Sweat of blood and tears my portion, but his? . . . to die. . . . to die!
O bruised reed waiting for the wind to reap as it blew by;
O smoking flax awaiting to be quenched for evermore!

In the field of death I sought him, I all sad and sorrow-shod;
Before my eyes a vision, and within my heart a flame;
And the smoking flax was quickened, and the broken reed became
The Miracle—the mystery of Aaron's budding rod.

In the field of death I found him! Oh, very joy of breath!
On my eternal wheel the potter's clay of his desire
I have graved with cunning purpose, I have moulded as with fire,
I have shapen to Divinity, and conquest over Death!

Waratah

WARATAH, once you were fire o' the flame,
When I plucked you high on the windy hill;
O the sense of that morning is with me still—
And Arthur sang on his way to the sea.

Summer a-dapple with dancing light,
A-lilt with the magic of song gone mad,
Summer in raiment of rapture clad—
And Arthur sang on his way to the sea.

Dust to dust from my listless hand
You fall to rest in an alien earth,
Far from the windy hill of your birth,
Where Arthur sang on his way to the sea.

Winter is out on the windy hill
Where your bonfires leaped in the years ago,
Blandfordia pales to the drifting snow
Where Arthur sang on his way to the sea.

From the dark we came, to the dark we go,
Life is a breath and love is a name,
But Waratah blossom is fire o' the flame
While Arthur sings on his way to the sea.

Nocturne

HYSSOP and vine, red roses dear to Love,
And Pain's imperial purple—hush, Oh hush!
Nor stir with speech their sails of gossamer
Who bear such sweetness forth!
Life sits, hands folden, for a little hour,
Where the mad viols sobbed, and pleasure swoons
For anguish of delight;
In such an hour, when ebbs reluctant day
On shores of afternoon, and from the West
Fades out her rose and gold,
I watch till one lone lamp of evening shines,
And Night,
A caravan of great black camels, creeps
With soundless feet across the Plain of Stars
Low-laden with the merchandise of dreams.
In such an hour, when triumphs of the day
Fall like a ragged garment to the floor,
I dream a dream
Of lighted candles, and a warm hearth-stone,
And curtained casements barred against the night
And all the hosts of Gloom—
And wake
To hollow clangour of a closing door,
Receding footsteps down an empty street!

The West Coasters

(Tasmania)

AUSTRALIA sings her Over-land,
From Murray back to Bourke,
Her three-mile tracks, her sun and sand,
Her men that do the work;
But here's to them, fill high the glass,
Who breasted drifting snow,
Tramping through the button-grass. . . .
Forty years ago!

From Emu Bay to Williamsford,
From Strahan to Dundas,
Through horizontal scrub they bored,
And quaking black morass.
Old Bischoff saw their camp-fires pass,
Mount Lyell saw them grow;
Tramping through the button-grass. . . .
Forty years ago!

The bleak winds flayed them as they strode,
The black frosts bit them sore,
But still The Road, The Open Road
Went singing on before;
And with them went a lightsome lass,
Adventure, face aglow,
Tramping through the button-grass. . . .
Forty years ago!

Where red their leaping camp-fires roared
To forest legions thinned,
The Axe flung, like a levin sword,
Her challenge down the wind.
They slew the pine and sassafras,
The myrtle host laid low,
Tramping through the button-grass. . . .
Forty years ago!

From out their dreams the cities rose
As yet from hill-heads gray
The first red flush of morning grows
Into the lord of day.
So here's to them! fill high the glass!
"The West Coast Esquimaux"
Tramping through the button-grass. . . .

Forty years ago!

Bairnsdale

O BAIRNSDALE by the Mitchell side!
A city still you are to me
When night brings peace that day denied,
And dreaming sets my spirit free.

My city of a thousand dreams
That walk beside me in the street,
My city of a thousand themes
That trod the earth with singing feet!

There is a path among the years,
A path I scarcely dare to take,
Lest anguish of forbidden tears
Should start for some old sorrow's sake.

Yet Father Mitchell still, I know,
Keeps one old play-place dear to me,
Where arrow-headed lilies show
Their fretted fairy filigree;

One headland where the wattles pour
On his brown bosom as of old,
From Spring's green chalice brimming o'er,
Libation of September gold;

One still pool where the willows stand
And trail green tresses from the brink,
And mussels glimmer on the sand,
And cattle straggle down to drink.

And one white road will keep away
Youth's sweetest memory ever green,
A wayside chapel worn and grey,
The little school "Sixteen sixteen".

Ah! who shall say what vows long made,
What prayers like lilies incense-crowned,
Live yet beneath your pine-trees' shade
To keep you always holy ground?

O little school, O place apart,
Bush Alma Mater wise and true,
Who gave us all of saving art
And kindly knowledge that we knew!

O Bairnsdale, Bairnsdale, when my will
Breaks free of day's poor broken schemes,

You are my morning city still. . . .
My city of a thousand dreams.

A Riding Song

I AM dreaming to-night of a dark river eddying
Foam-belled and deep to his rapids below,
And the bay colt is reefing, the brown horse is steadying,
Under the wattles at Lindenow.

Veiled as a mystical bride is the cherry-tree,
Snow-steeds have broken from winter's bleak hold,
And pale wattle-censers have wafted their witchery,
Flooding the welkin with fairy gold.

We are riding again down a radiant yesterday
(Heart o' the rose and a hawk on the wing)
Hoofs a-ring under us, bloom in the wind a-sway,
Into the magical heart of spring.

And Brownlock and Bill and the bay from Monaro side,
And old Snowy River, all dead long, I trow,
Are game as of old; and we ride where we used to ride,
Under the wattles at Lindenow.

Those were the days it was joy to be biding in,
Moonlight and noonlight and shimmer of rain,
O for a noon of lost noons to be riding in,
Hope in the heart and a loose-flung rein!

Green pipers blew for us, fairy bells rang for us,
Year at the springtime, and youth at the flow,
Wine of the wattle-wind, all the world sang to us,
All the world loved us and told us so.

The Law

RED, blood-red feathers lying on the road,
But the sky-ways keep no stain
Of loss or bitter gain,
Of the grim toll of Pain,
Only red feathers lying on the road
Remain!

Nature her olden cruel secret keeps;
Grey earth and brooding sky,
And old winds keening cry,
Like an eternal "Why?"—
While trembling life travailing creeps
To die!

Poor blood-red feathers lying on the road,
Mute witness of the Law
That nerved the tiger's claw,
That fanged the grey wolf's jaw,
And drives blind Europe groaning 'neath a goad
Blood-raw!

Poor soft red feathers lying in the dust,
In your bright span of days
Gave ye due meed of praise
To That Which smiles and slays
And holds Its smiling and Its slaying just—
Always?

Disinherited

(Here and there, a little apart from the laughing crowd that surged in the traffic-ways of Melbourne streets during Fleet Week, little groups of Aborigines in gaudy second-hand apparel, stood and watched the illuminations).

MID her radiant raiment of laughter and light,
Of her splendour the pity,
You are drifting like ghosts of the carnival night
Of the beautiful city.

As a wan wind of March when the forest is stirred
With Autumnal foretoken,
You pass, and the lights and the laughter are blurred
With a sorrow unspoken.

Sere Autumn leaves whirled on the eddy stream
Of the conquering races,
Sad elves from a wistful, wild glamour of Dream,
O faces, brown faces!

High over the mirth and the merriment, hark
O'er the gay saturnalia
The cry of a spirit that moans in the dark—
“Australia, Australia!”

The croon of a mother fast clutched by despair
That shall never know healing,
A Hagar's lament for the child that she bare
Thro' the music is stealing.

But deep in the dark of your slumbering eyes
Burn no Sibylline traces,
Where the lost Alcheringa fire smoulders and dies,
O faces, brown faces!

Deaf, deaf are your ears to the passion and pain
Of a grief unavailing,
Dumb syllables set to the sobbing refrain
Of swans sunward sailing.

Wild children, sad children, deep whelmed by the roar
Of the tide that effaces,
You shall pass and your forest shall know you no more,
Brown faces! Brown faces!

'Mid her radiant raiment of laughter and light,

Of her splendour the pity,
You are drifting like ghosts of the carnival night
Of the beautiful city.

Kurraba

WAS it fairies flung a ladder for our feet upon the hill?
Was it only wooden worn steps that climbed to Heaven's sill?
Or a rosary of old beads? . . . I count and kiss them still;
 Kurraba by the North Shore blue!

Lantana on the red rocks and stars above the town,
Hibiscus was a king's cup, where souls of men might drown;
But the trailing morning glory it was Mary's holy gown,
 At Kurraba by the North Shore blue!

Was it graven lapis lazuli we trod beneath our feet?
Or did we only sleep and dream we felt God's pulses beat,
And heard His golden throated ones go singing down the street
 At Kurraba by the North Shore blue!

O casement where the winds sang of wide enchanted seas,
Till Zamboanga, Nagasak, were hazed Hesperides,
And the fleets of dream came sailing home a cloud of golden bees
 To Kurraba by the North Shore blue!

Oh, never yet was such a light as that on land or sea!
New Earth, new Heaven dreamed again, from old oppression free!
Pray God be good to you, dear hill, through all his days to be,
 Kurraba by the North Shore blue!

The Lost Fairies

THEY come no more with the dancing feet,
Where the daffodil chorus rang sweet, so sweet;
Fairies of mine, have ye fled for ever
Shall we meet no more as we used to meet?

They come no more and the wheels run slow,
And the laughter is hushed that I used to know;
The white owl cries in the twilight meadow
Where our revels rang in the long ago.

O a fairy came knocking one day, one day,
At the meadowsweet gate where we used to play—
I heard him knock, but my heart was weary,
And I sent him weeping away, away.

And ever since then, Tho' my heart be sore
With waiting and watching, they come no more;
And the lilies have stolen their golden sandals,
And the poppies are flaunting the gowns they wore.

Ah! ever since then, in the noon o' the flowers,
When the lights are soft in the fairy bowers,
I sigh and sigh for the banished laughter,
For the singing soul of the wasted hours.

Do they mourn me, I wonder, as one that passed
While the sentinel snapdragons slumbered fast?
Or is it they seek me, all loyal-hearted,
And dream they shall find me at last, at last?

I know not; ever the red suns rise
And roll to their rest in the western skies,
But the loved, lost voices are silent, silent,
And leaps no light to the darkened eyes.

Only when twilight lifteth her wand
And turneth the glory to shadowland,
I hear in the stillness a sound of weeping—
And know the meaning, and understand.

They have passed the boundaries mortals know,
Where the asphodel blooms and the dream-stars glow,
Tho' I seek them, seek them till suns be ashes,
I shall never find them wherever I go.

They will come no more with the dancing feet,
Where the daffodil chorus rang sweet, so sweet;

Where the white owl cries in the haunted meadow,
We shall meet no more as we used to meet.

Rejected

FROST flecked his hair with many a winter's flight,
And, etched with the sharp pencil of the years,
His rugged features set in lines of stress
Match well his knotted hands and toil-thwart form.
But time that set the silver in his hair
Steeled his gaunt frame to an endurance grim
Of which it gives no promise save the tale
Of each day's toil that wavers not, not wanes
In tithes or tithes; but by the unwritten law
He stands convicted of the deadly crime,
The thrice accursed crime of being old.
To-morrow, ten will quarrel for his place,
Thumbs down—he has it!—let the grey-beard go!
No more in the arena of to-day
His place shall know him, nor his strong arms wrest
From youth-accoutred foes the piteous prize
Of daily bread—and wherefore shall he turn
To learn new arts and wield new weapons, now
That tower of manly strength, which stood the shock
Of deadly combat, totters at its base,
And reels before the dastard strategy
That binds his chained limbs to the conqueror's wheel?
For him no mercy stroke of swift, bright steel,
No lightning-pang that brings oblivion
With cradling arms of peace to pillow him;
Such barbarous modes, such rude arbitrament,
Our modern school of ethics doth forbid!
O Pharisees!
O Christian code more black, more damnable
Than heathen rage that spilt the futile blood!
O whited sepulchre of dead men's bones
No holy spark shall quicken into life!
Who wasted Sodom and yet spareth thee
To taint the Universe with blasphemy?

* * * * *

There is no blood upon their hands, good sirs!—
See here the legal bill of his decease—
And “Death from natural causes” thereon writ
By our respected city Coroner,
And lo! for those that read, 'tis countersigned
All in the grim sign manual of the three
Dark sisters, Sorrow, Hunger, and Despair.

Sic transit!—in the game upon the board
'Tis dross kings count,—a man is but a pawn!

Edith

SHE has gone out on the last quest of all
For life's mysterious goal—
Beyond the dark of Death's dividing wall
God speed her soul!

Or hers the gain, or hers the bitter dearth
Merged in the mindless whole—
Beyond the lonely lights of little Earth
God rest her soul!

The Recantation

(With casual compliments to the Woman Movement.)

The searchlight of biology on the sex question has revealed the fact that the female is the primary or root sex, of which the male is a projection or secondary extension as it were, created by the primary sex probably in the interests of division of labour and the better service of the race. Will the female biologist of the far future trace with a graphic pen the gradual but deliberate extinction of the creature of her sex experiment?

GREY with the grief of the world and supremely alone,
Wise with the wisdom of patient and terrible power,
Weary am I of the love and the faith that devour!
Weary of Calvaries climbed, cruel stone by red stone!

I am immutable Motherhood, grim as the grave,
Old as the hills and the sea and the quickening spark;
Life that I bore from the sunless and beingless dark,
I have grown weary of giving and gift that I gave!

Up from the slime and the cave and the murk of despair,
Mouthing its portents and taking its pitiless toll,
Heedless of self, lifting Godward the burden I bare
Up to the sunshine and starshine of Infinite Soul.

Building by night and by day till my fainting soul reeled
Back from the blinding white flame of the vision it saw,
This, my own creature, unspotted by error or flaw,
This my own vision of postulant godhead revealed!

Glory that mocked me, mirage-like, and faded afar,
Temple of purpose that crumbled to coruscant sand,
Systems above you shall rise 'neath my puissant hand,
Edens undreamed of illumine Saharas that are!

Desert of ages that stretches unheeded behind,
Sand through my fingers you trickled in tremulous shower,
Growth of my sweat and my blood was your pride and your power,
Bone of my bone are your skeletons white in the wind!

Rocked in my cradling lap was your palpitant clay,
Nineveh, Babylon, Rome, 'neath the centuries' dust
Under my chariot wheels I have humbled your lust,
Over your dust I am heaping the dust of To-day!

Creature of mine for an hour in the aeons that fly,
Flesh of my flesh and desire of my passionate soul;

Flax to the flame of my being's inscrutable goal
You in your fugitive splendour must wither and die!

Lust that took licence of passion and sullied its flood,
Folly that made of my purpose a pestilent jest,
Lo! the stigmata ye veiled with obscenity's vest!—
Footsteps of Deity printed in blasphemous blood!

Patient, aye, patient with patience of terrible power,
Yea, I have smiled on your vauntings and pitied your pride;
Smiled while you strutted your tinselled and tyrannous hour,
Knowing how soon I must sweep you for ever aside!

I am immutable Motherhood, grim as the grave,
Old as the hills and the sea and the quickening spark,
Back, I say! back to the sunless and beingless dark!
I have grown weary of giving and gift that I gave!

Cicada Septemdecim

The Seventeen Year Locust

DOES the locust remember when loud to blue heaven he sings
With his fellows, from palpitant tree-tops, the season of dearth,
Ere he rose like the phoenix, triumphant on scintillant wings. . . .
Does the locust remember his durance in sorrowful Earth?

Did he dream, dungeoned deep in the darkness and silence of clay,
Of a birth-star that beckoned him out of beneficent skies?
Of the beat of a song in the heart of magnificent Day?
Of a shout at the gates of the morning, Hail! Sleeper, Arise!

And, Soul, shalt thou be as a locust that leaps to the sun
Star-bright, empyreal with levin of exquisite breath,
Enraptured with bliss of beatitude barely begun—
Shalt thou in thy glory remember this body of Death?

Ecce Homo!

CHRIST of the Grecian brow and gracious lily hands,
They bear his banner now through all earth's heathen lands.
Christ of the Grecian brow that never knew despair,
Or love or hope or that white wrath no craven soul may dare.
Christ of the hermit's cell and painter's brooding brain,
Who keeps o'er death and hell his eminent domain,
Yea, Christ, Messiah, Prince of David's royal stem,
Not Christ the Anarchist of old Jerusalem!
Not Christ the Anarchist with fearless heart of youth,
Who laid his manhood down to keep the gates of Truth!
Jesus the Carpenter, the Man of Galilee,
Who died for his faith's sake, nail-triced upon a tree!
He gave not dole by dole the life he scorned to keep,
Too fine, too brave a soul to stoop and part the heap.
He knew the ache of toil, of rest the healing balm,
And the kind touch of oil on his plane-blistered palm.
He knew and felt it good—the clean grain running true
In the sharp-scented wood as the keen blade sang through.
He drank from earth and sun and all glad things the food
That made his quick blood run, that made his manhood good.
Laughter and wine and song, a woman's love-lit eye,
All these he knew, he knew ere he went out to die—
To die for a nobler dream than men had dreamed as yet,
To lift a star to lead them far when his own star had set,
To wake a marching song with syllables of fire,
For the multitude that must find its rood on the hills of high desire.
Passion and agony—ah God! he felt them too,
Among his Syrian hills, beneath his Syrian blue.
Passion and agony—what sense of bitter loss
They know who hear with the heart's ear that cry upon the cross.
Jesus the Carpenter, the Man of Galilee
Who died for his faith's sake, nail-triced upon a tree!
Who keep his faith to-day? All fearless souls and true
Who thrill to walk his splendid way some high adventure through,
Some high emprise of God, in courage and in faith,
Knowing his lonely feet have trod the same strange way to death!
Who keep his faith alway nor cry nor count the cost,
Shall win for some diviner day a kingdom that was lost—
The kingdom of the heart, which no man may remove,
Whose law, of their dim dreams a part, is wholly God— and Love!

Frangipanni

KING'S gold and ivory beyond the dreams of avarice!
Nor frankincense and myrrh, I ween, were ever sweet as this,
Nor spell of jasmine wind at dawn when Earth and Heaven kiss.
Frangipanni on a Brisbane lawn!

A voice for ever crying in the wilderness of years,
Through broken arches of a dream's prophetic hopes and fears,
Has grown articulate to-day to straining human ears. . . .
Frangipanni on a Brisbane lawn!

Did Chance or Love ingenerate keep such argosy for prize
From moneychangers in the gates, from toll of merchandise,
That very God might set His seal of wonder in your eyes,
Frangipanni on a Brisbane lawn?

And I, a beggar in the street, of dross or dream denied,
Might feel enchanted gates beneath a wizard hand swing wide
On more than Caesar's empery or Midas' gilded pride. . . .
Frangipanni on a Brisbane lawn!

Rainbows

WHEN we were children they used to tell us
God set His bow in the sky
As a sign to His wildering waste of waters,
Lest the world should be drowned thereby;
And our hearts were glad when we saw His rainbow
Breaking the clouds on high.

And was it a ghost of the wee-folk whispered,
Or a story at twilight told,
That a leprechaun hid at the foot of the rainbow
With a crock full of fairy gold—
In the wistful, wonderful days of childhood
Ere hope and the heart grew cold?

So we chased the rainbows of days departed
Through fields of a fadeless May,
Light as thistledown, fleet as swallows,
Wild as the wind at play;
And the fairy gold at the foot of the rainbow
Was ever a field away.

Ah, ever since then in the changing seasons
We've followed our rainbow, still
Just a field away, and its bow above us,
Its foot on the flinty hill—
Song at the heart and a flame before us,
Leading us, mind and will.

Through tangled tracks of beliefs and doubtings,
Through thicket and thorn and scathe,
We've followed the gleam as it fled before us,
A baffling, beautiful wraith.
We've been chasing rainbows, mystical rainbows,
For the gold of abiding faith.

Through briar and brake, through the lone waste places,
Heart-fain as a homing dove,
With the lights of dream on our lifted faces
A-yeam to the skies above,
We've been chasing rainbows, magical rainbows,
For the gold of enduring love.

Through storm and stress of our blind Spring sowing,
Through dreams of insurgent youth,
Down strange, strong winds from her high hills blowing
Discord unkind, uncouth,

We've been chasing rainbows, glorious rainbows,
For the gold of eternal truth.

And, alas! in the years by the locust eaten,
Where the lambent lotus gleams
In the dusk, and the panthers of life are hidden
By the sinister border streams,
We've been chasing rainbows, pitiful rainbows,
In the jungles of broken dreams!

O Laughter and Love, and O ears that hearken
Their music, come well or ill,
All dreams must die and all days must darken
Till dusk creeps over the hill.
Yet perhaps the rainbows were God's own rainbows?
Perhaps there are fairies still?

The Valley

THEY'VE ploughed it and harrowed it and planted it with maize,
The low green valley by the river,
I could not find my house of dreams where flag and tassel sways,
Though I wandered there forever in an emptiness of days,
 In the low green valley by the river.

There were nine rock ledges in a ragged stair of stone,
 In the low green valley by the river,
And one that walked bare-footed through the wilderness alone,
To see a reed-head shaken by a breath of The Unknown
 In the low green valley by the river.

There were seven stone candles underneath the ragged stair
 In the low green valley by the river,
There were seven stone candles and a multitude at prayer,
Ah, would I could go back again and find them hidden there
 In the low green valley by the river.

For the nine rock ledges were a ladder to the skies
 In the low green valley by the river,
And the seven stone candles were the lamps of Paradise
That angels lighted once, perhaps, for lonely human eyes
 In the low green valley by the river.

They've ploughed you and harrowed you and planted you with maize,
 O Far Green Valley by the river!
But yours the wells of Morning where the hidden magic plays,
That will walk with me in fancy down the twilight of the days,
 O Lost Green Valley by the river.

Hold Fast to Thy Dream

HOLD fast to thy dream, O Dreamer!

Hold fast to thy dream, for thy dream is greater than thee;

Of thy flesh and thy blood and thy spirit it is in truth, but more than the sum thereof.

It is the live coal plucked from the altar to lay upon thy lips, to cleanse thee and to lift thee to the hill called Vision.

Hold fast to thy dream!

In the hour of gladness it shall be as a flower that bloometh beside thee, asking nothing, but giving thee its perfume.

Rejoice therefore, if good things come to thee, but forget not thy dream!

For in the hour of travail it shall be as one that comforteth,

As the beam of a lighthouse cleaving the dazzle of tropic lightning. As strong wine to him that fainteth by the way.

And if it needs be, sacrifice for thy dream—through the dark valley of evil days—through all lies and the strange faces of unfamiliar truth. Though thy heart fail thee let thy dream be lifted to the stars for thy faith's sake—which is for God's sake;

Yea, if brother or friend or lover fail thee, grieve not long, for it is a little thing—not their unfaith, but thine, can cast thee down.

Hold fast to thy dream, O Dreamer!

As In A Glass Darkly

RAIL not at ramparts reared with human hands,
To break the bounds of petty human pride,
Nor curse red War, nor pray for peace, nor chide
Some puny princeling. Lo, in hidden hands
Slow turns the glass from whence the pallid sands
Of cosmic balance, trickling slow, decide
The judgment of the gods. Poor Masks, ye hide
Under your pageants their supreme commands!

Beneath their rods the man-tides ebb and flow
Like seas beneath the moon. As Asia smote. . . .
So (while Autochthon, dreamed within his cave
And sank the West beneath the Orient wave). . . .
Africa's fingers fumble at the throat
Of that old Asia that laid Europe low!

Invocation

GREAT Omnipresence! Pulse of star and clod!
Rhythm of ocean! Beating heart of me,
No lightest touch of mine but touches Thee,
Unknown! Unknowable! whom men call God!
Lion and lamb Thy hidden Law declare,
Python and lily, dewdrop in the grass,
And the great suns that prowl with feet of brass
About the inverted jungles of the air!

So near, and yet so far for faiths that wane,
For love whose starved lamp, failing, flickers low;
Speak! though Thy thunders shake the riven skies!
Speak! though Thy lightnings blind me! so mine eyes
Have seen the Vision! so my heart shall know. . . .
And knowing, rest; nor grieve nor doubt again!

The Drums

*“And if a man does not keep step with his fellows, it may be that he hears
a different drummer.”*

Thoreau

THE millions, to the drums they know,
Their route march follow day by day,
And witness dumbly, as they go,
Unto their little gods of clay.

But drums there are the few men hear
With wakened pulses leaping high
For love that knows not how to fear,
For faith that grudges not to die.

And he who hears, his life must take
As dust within his hollowed hand,
And fare, for his white vision's sake,
An exile in a lonely land.

* * * * *

Ah, still the drums are calling clear,
Nor hidden drummer one may see.
Yet some may hear him, now, and here—
So Jesus heard in Galilee!

Nostalgia

WIND that blew by Flinders once
From the sea wrack grey,
Where the wan sea poppies blow,
Weave your spell to-day!
You that breathed on questing souls
From a secret stair
Some diviner gramarye
Once when we were there.
Brooding pines of Macedon
Watching o'er the plain,
Wake old music in my heart
Soft as summer rain!
Keep ye still one lovely thing
Singing summers through?
Whisper! Pines of Macedon!
Ye that knew—that knew!

Dirge John Shaw Neilson

GENTLY he walked with us, and gave of his spirit
Magic of dusk and dusk and the inner voice of the rain,
Gently he went from us and his place shall know him
 Never again!

Largesse of wind and wing and the dear faces
Of hidden laughter he gave to us—these remain;
But he who was priest of the altar of lovely places. . . .
 Never again!

Westward wheeling of swans' contralto crying,
Deep intoning to deep—and the hushed refrain
Of darkling sheoaks, banshee, and banshee sighing,
 Never again!

Desolate sweet song of sorrowing mountain thrushes
From some dear dead September's castle in Spain—
Lilting low croon of the river song in the rushes. . . .
 Never again!

Reed-sweet and delicate song of his sure finding
Who has trod the way of the spirit and tasted pain
He plucked from life—who shall know the gall of its binding
 Never again!

Last song, last silence, flooding the dark and failing
Like a lost plover out on a windy plain. . . .
We, earth-bound, sad, strain songward unavailing,
 Never again!

Swallows shall come, swallows for Spring's returning,
Thrush answer thrush in the lull of the singing rain,
But he shall sing of Heart's Desire and its yearning
 Never again!

He has gone hence to his own with the High Evangels,
Who shall return to Earth from their white domain,
Though we call, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels,
 Never again!

I Am—Poetry

*“The wind bloweth where it listeth. . . .” but who knoweth whence it came
or whither it goes?*

I AM the wind. I am the sigh of the sheoaks, the whispering of tamarisks, the moan of the surf, the silence, deep-toned and immanent. Older than the hills am I, old as the wind that blew out of heaven to welcome the first dawn.

I am Maya. I am Gramarye. Birth is mine, and death, sorrow and joy and hope. All men see me even though they be blind. All men hear me even though they be deaf. All men speak me even though they be dumb—knowing not any of these things save through the spirit that is of the wind and, nameless.

I am poetry!—whom poets speak of cunningly, not always perceiving the truth whose law I am. And they make images of me according to their comprehension—dressing them with the fabrics of their fancy as it seems good to them—making them goddess or hoyden as their mood chances—but their servant always.

And they make new fashions for their images, even as the tailors and mantle-makers do, and they set them in their book-pages and survey them as window-dressers do, saying, “It is a good show!” But bye and bye they tire of these creations of their imagination, and they devise yet others, saying, “Let us make a new display, let us make something that will clamour of the day we live in!”

Assonance and dissonance, syncopation and *vers libre* are some of the materials that they jumble with such consummate confusion as to baffle even the elite.

And to the Forum come the critics, dressed in much solemnity and great show of wisdom, and they pass certain judgments—so that jealousy and bitterness run riot, and the day is one of failure and futility.

Oh, Poets! Oh, Poet! Behind these shadows still am I—Poetry, who can be slave of no man for my truth's sake.

Ye are wearied in the multitude of your counsels, in the contradiction of the window-shows, in the perversities of the printed page.

Get ye into the wilderness and fast, and listen to the winds and mark the coming and the going of the birds, dawn and sunset and moonrise and the white procession of the stars.

Behold the tongues of the wilderness are very many, and they speak truth, very bitter truth, salted with fire for your soul's chastening. Learn of

them your own littleness, till in perfected humility and a great gratitude ye dip your pens in the blood of your own hearts— and write, because ye must, of that thing ye have found.
