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Edited by Sir Edward Marsh

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GEORGIAN POETRY

1911-1912

DEDICATED

TO

ROBERT BRIDGES

BY THE WRITERS

AND THE EDITOR

PREFATORY NOTE

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

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

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

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

E.M.

Oct. 1912.

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

DUNSANY

## CONTENTS

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

The Sale of Saint Thomas

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

The End of the World (from 'Chambers of Imagery,' 2nd series)

Babel: The Gate of God (from 'Chambers of Imagery,' 2nd series)

RUPERT BROOKE

The Old Vicarage, Grantchester

Dust

The Fish

Town and Country

Dining-room Tea

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON

The Song of Elf (a fragment from the Ballad of the White Horse)

WILLIAM H. DAVIES

The Child and the Mariner (from 'Songs of Joy')

Days too Short (from 'Songs of Joy')

In May (from 'Songs of Joy')

The Heap of Rags (from 'Songs of Joy')

The Kingfisher (from 'Farewell to Poesy')

WALTER DE LA MARE

Arabia (from 'The Listeners')

The Sleeper (from 'The Listeners')

Winter Dusk (from 'The Listeners')

Miss Loo (from 'The Listeners')  
The Listeners

JOHN DRINKWATER  
The Fires of God (from 'Poems of Love and Earth')

JAMES ELROY FLECKER  
Joseph and Mary (from 'Forty-Two Poems')  
The Queen's Song (from 'Forty-Two Poems')

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON  
The Hare (from 'Fires,' Book III)  
Geraniums  
Devil's Edge (from 'Fires,' Book III)

D. H. LAWRENCE  
The Snapdragon

JOHN MASEFIELD  
Biography

HAROLD MONRO  
Child of Dawn (from 'Before Dawn')  
Lake Leman (from 'Before Dawn')

T. STURGE MOORE  
A Sicilian Idyll (first part)

RONALD ROSS  
Hesperus (from 'Lyra Modulata')

EDMUND BEALE SARGANT  
The Cuckoo Wood (from 'The Casket Songs')

JAMES STEPHENS  
In the Poppy Field (from 'The Hill of Vision')  
In the Cool of the Evening (from 'The Hill of Vision')  
The Lonely God (from 'The Hill of Vision')

ROBERT CALVERLEY TREVELYAN  
Dirge

BIBLIOGRAPHY

\* \* \* \* \*

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

THE SALE OF SAINT THOMAS

[A quay with vessels moored]

Thomas:

To India! Yea, here I may take ship;  
From here the courses go over the seas,  
Along which the intent prowls wonderfully  
Nose like lean hounds, and track their journeys out,  
Making for harbours as some sleuth was laid  
For them to follow on their shifting road.  
Again I front my appointed ministry.--  
But why the Indian lot to me? Why mine  
Such fearful gosselling? For the Lord knew  
What a frail soul He gave me, and a heart  
Lame and unlikely for the large events.--  
And this is worse than Baghdad! though that was  
A fearful brink of travel. But if the lots,  
That gave to me the Indian duty, were  
Shuffled by the unseen skill of Heaven, surely  
That fear of mine in Baghdad was the same  
Marvellous Hand working again, to guard  
The landward gate of India from me. There  
I stood, waiting in the weak early dawn  
To start my journey; the great caravan's  
Strange cattle with their snoring breaths made steam  
Upon the air, and (as I thought) sadly  
The beasts at market-booths and awnings gay  
Of shops, the city's comfortable trade,  
Lookt, and then into months of plodding lookt.  
And swiftly on my brain there came a wind  
Of vision; and I saw the road mapt out  
Along the desert with a chalk of bones;  
I saw a famine and the Afghan greed  
Waiting for us, spears at our throats, all we  
Made women by our hunger; and I saw  
Gigantic thirst grieving our mouths with dust,  
Scattering up against our breathing salt  
Of blown dried dung, till the taste eat like fires  
Of a wild vinegar into our sheathed marrows;  
And a sudden decay thicken'd all our bloods  
As rotten leaves in fall will baulk a stream;  
Then my kill'd life the munched food of jackals.--  
The wind of vision died in my brain; and lo,  
The jangling of the caravan's long gait  
Was small as the luting of a breeze in grass

Upon my ears. Into the waiting thirst  
Camels and merchants all were gone, while I  
Had been in my amazement. Was this not  
A sign? God with a vision tript me, lest  
Those tall fiends that ken for my approach  
In middle Asia, Thirst and his grisly band  
Of plagues, should with their brigand fingers stop  
His message in my mouth. Therefore I said,  
If India is the place where I must preach,  
I am to go by ship, not overland.  
And here my ship is berthed. But worse, far worse  
Than Baghdad, is this roadstead, the brown sails,  
All the enginery of going on sea,  
The tackle and the rigging, tholes and sweeps,  
The prows built to put by the waves, the masts  
Stayed for a hurricane; and lo, that line  
Of gilded water there! the sun has drawn  
In a long narrow band of shining oil  
His light over the sea; how evilly move  
Ripples along that golden skin!--the gleam  
Works like a muscular thing! like the half-gorged  
Sleepy swallowing of a serpent's neck.  
The sea lives, surely! My eyes swear to it;  
And, like a murderous smile that glimpses through  
A villain's courtesy, that twitching dazzle  
Parts the kind mood of weather to bewray  
The feasted waters of the sea, stretched out  
In lazy gluttony, expecting prey.  
How fearful is this trade of sailing! Worse  
Than all land-evils is the water-way  
Before me now.--What, cowardice? Nay, why  
Trouble myself with ugly words? 'Tis prudence,  
And prudence is an admirable thing.  
Yet here's much cost--these packages piled up,  
Ivory doubtless, emeralds, gums, and silks,  
All these they trust on shipboard? Ah, but I,  
I who have seen God, I to put myself  
Amid the heathen outrage of the sea  
In a deal-wood box! It were plain folly.  
There is naught more precious in the world than I:  
I carry God in me, to give to men.  
And when has the sea been friendly unto man?  
Let it but guess my errand, it will call  
The dangers of the air to wreak upon me,  
Winds to juggle the puny boat and pinch  
The water into unbelievable creases.  
And shall my soul, and God in my soul, drown?  
Or venture drowning?--But no, no; I am safe.  
Smooth as believing souls over their deaths  
And over agonies shall slide henceforth  
To God, so shall my way be blest amid  
The quiet crouching terrors of the sea,  
Like panthers when a fire weakens their hearts;

Ay, this huge sin of nature, the salt sea,  
Shall be afraid of me, and of the mind  
Within me, that with gesture, speech and eyes  
Of the Messiah flames. What element  
Dare snarl against my going, what incubus dare  
Remember to be fiendish, when I light  
My whole being with memory of Him?  
The malice of the sea will slink from me,  
And the air be harmless as a muzzled wolf;  
For I am a torch, and the flame of me is God.

A Ship's Captain:

You are my man, my passenger?

Thomas:

I am.

I go to India with you.

Captain:

Well, I hope so.

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

Thomas:

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

Captain:

You have a talisman? I have one too;  
I know not if the storms think much of it.  
I may be shark's meat yet. And would your spell  
Be daunting to a cuttle, think you now?  
We had a bout with one on our way here;  
It had green lidless eyes like lanterns, arms  
As many as the branches of a tree,  
But limber, and each one of them wise as a snake.

It laid hold of our bulwarks, and with three  
Long knowing arms, slimy, and of a flesh  
So tough they'd fool a hatchet, searcht the ship,  
And stole out of the midst of us all a man;  
Yes, and he the proudest man upon the seas  
For the rare powerful talisman he'd got.  
And would yours have done better?

Thomas:

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

Captain:

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

Thomas:

Not start? I pray you, do.

Captain:

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

Thomas:

What do you wait for, then?

Captain: A carpenter.

Thomas:

You are talking strangely.

Captain:

But not idly.  
I might as well broach all my blood at once  
Here as I stand, as sail to India back  
Without a carpenter on board;--O strangely  
Wise are our kings in the killing of men!

Thomas:

But does your king then need a carpenter?

Captain:

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

Thomas:

What dream was that?

Captain:

A palace made of souls;--  
Ay, there's a folly for a man to dream!  
He saw a palace covering all the land,  
Big as the day itself, made of a stone  
That answered with a better gleam than glass  
To the sun's greeting, fashioned like the sound  
Of laughter copied into shining shape:  
So the king said. And with him in the dream  
There was a voice that fleered upon the king:  
'This is the man who makes much of himself  
For filling the common eyes with palaces  
Gorgeously bragging out his royalty:  
Whereas he hath not one that seemeth not  
In work, in height, in posture on the ground,  
A hut, a peasant's dingy shed, to mine.  
And all his excellent woods, metals, and stones,  
The things he's filched out of the earth's old pockets  
And hoised up into walls and domes; the gold,  
Ebony, agate stairs, wainscots of jade,  
The windows of jargoon, and heavenly lofts  
Of marble, all the stuff he takes to be wealth,  
Reckons like savage mud and wattle against  
The matter of my building.'--And the king,  
Gloating upon the white sheen of that palace,  
And weeping like a girl ashamed, inquired  
'What is that stone?' And the voice answered him,  
'Soul.' 'But in my palaces too,' said he,  
'There should be soul built: I have driven nations,  
What with quarrying, what with craning, down  
To death, and sure their souls stay in my work.'  
And 'Mud and wattle' sneered the voice again;  
But added, 'In the west there is a man,

A slave, a carpenter, whose heart has been  
Apprenticed to the skill that built my reign,  
This beauty; and were he master of your gangs,  
He'd build you a palace that would look like mine.'--  
So now no ship may sail from India,  
Since the king's scornful dream, unless it bring  
A carpenter among its homeward lading:  
And carpenters are getting hard to find.

Thomas:

And have none made for the king his desire?

Captain:

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

Thomas:

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

Captain:

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

Thomas:

Let it be storm or calm, so we be sailing.  
I long have wished to voyage into mid sea,  
To give my senses rest from wondering  
On this perplexed grammar of the land  
Written in men and women, the strange trees,  
Herbs, and those things so like to souls, the beasts.  
My wilful senses will keep perilously  
Employed with these my brain, and weary it  
Still to be asking. But on the high seas  
Such throng'd reality is left behind,--

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

Captain:

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

Thomas:

Have you good skill  
In seamanship?

Captain:

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

Thomas:

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

Captain:

Queerly, sometimes.

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

Thomas:

Why, what do you mean?

Captain:

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

Thomas:

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

Captain:

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

Thomas:

Not I.

Was the man killed?

Captain:

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

Thomas:

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

Captain:

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

Thomas: (alone)

Ay, loose tongue, I know how thou art prompted.  
Satan's cunning device thou art, to sap  
My heart with chatter'd fears. How easy it is  
For a stiff mind to hold itself upright  
Against the cords of devilish suggestion  
Tackled about it, though kept downward strained  
With sly, masterful winches made of fear.  
Yea, when the mind is warned what engines mean  
To ply it into grovelling, and thought set firm,  
The tugging strings fail like a cobweb-stuff.  
Not as in Baghdad is it with me now;  
Nor canst thou, Satan, by a prating mouth  
Fell my tall purpose to a flatlong scorn.  
I can divide the check of God's own hand  
From tempting such as this: India is mine!--  
Ay, fiend, and if thou utter thy storming heart  
Into the ocean sea, as into mob  
A rebel utters turbulence and rage,  
And raise before my path swelling barriers  
Of hatred soul'd in water, yet will I strike  
My purpose, and God's purpose, clean through all

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

Imagining his eternal hell of lust.--

They say the land is full of apes, which have  
Their own gods and worship; how ghastly, this!--  
That demons (for it must be so) should build,  
In mockery of man's upward faith, the souls  
Of monkeys, those lewd mammals of mankind,  
Into a dreadful farce of adoration!  
And flies! a land of flies! where the hot soil  
Foul with ceaseless decay steams into flies!  
So thick they pile themselves in the air above  
Their meal of filth, they seem like breathing heaps  
Of formless life mounded upon the earth;  
And buzzing always like the pipes and strings  
Of solemn music made for sorcerers.--  
I abhor flies,--to see them stare upon me  
Out of their little faces of gibbous eyes;  
To feel the dry cool skin of their bodies alight  
Perching upon my lips!--O yea, a dream,  
A dream of impious obscene Satan, this  
Monstrous frenzy of life, the Indian being!  
And there are men in the dream! What men are they?  
I've heard, naught relishes their brains so much  
As to tie down a man and tease his flesh  
Infamously, until a hundred pains  
Hound the desiring life out of his body,  
Filling his nerves with such a fearful zest  
That the soul overstrained shatters beneath it.  
Must I preach God to these murderous hearts?  
I would my lot had fallen to go and dare  
Death from the silent dealing of Northern cold!--

O, but I would face all these Indian fears,  
The horror of the huge power of life,  
The beasts all fierce and venomous, the men  
With cruel souls, learned to invent pain,  
All these and more, if I had any hope  
That, braving them, Lord Christ prosper'd through me.  
If Christ desired India, He had sent  
The band of us, soldier'd in one great purpose,  
To strike His message through those dark vast tribes  
But one man!--O surely it is folly,  
And we misread the lot! One man, to thrust,  
Even though in his soul the lamp was kindled  
At God's own hands, one man's lit soul to thrust  
The immense Indian darkness out of the world!  
For human flesh there breeds as furiously  
As the green things and the cattle; and it is all,  
All this enormity of measureless folk,  
Penn'd in a land so close to the devil's reign  
The very apes have faith in him.--No, no;  
Impetuous brains mistake the signs of God  
Too easily. God would not have me waste

My zeal for Him in this wild enterprise,  
Of going alone to swarming India;--one man,  
One mortal voice, to charm those myriad ears  
Away from the fiendish clamour of Indian gods,  
One man preaching the truth against the huge  
Bray of the gongs and horns of the Indian priests!  
A cup of wine poured in the sea were not  
More surely lost in the green and brackish depths,  
Than the fire and fragrance of my doctrine poured  
Into that multitudinous pond of men,  
India.--Shipman! Master of the ship!--  
I have thought better of this journey; now  
I find I am not meant to go.

Captain:     Not meant?

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

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

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

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

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

The Stranger: (to the Captain)

You are the master of this ship?

Captain: I am.

Stranger:

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

Captain:

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

Stranger:

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

Captain:

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

Stranger:

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

Captain:

I, my Lord?  
I have no need of slaves: I am too poor.

Stranger:

For twenty silver pieces he is yours.

Captain:

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

Stranger:

He is a carpenter.

Captain:

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

Stranger:

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

Captain

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

Stranger:     Yea? He is your man.

Captain:

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

Stranger:

Now, Thomas, know thy sin. It was not fear;  
Easily may a man crouch down for fear,  
And yet rise up on firmer knees, and face  
The hailing storm of the world with graver courage.  
But prudence, prudence is the deadly sin,  
And one that groweth deep into a life,  
With hardening roots that clutch about the breast.  
For this refuses faith in the unknown powers  
Within man's nature; shrewdly bringeth all  
Their inspiration of strange eagerness  
To a judgment bought by safe experience;  
Narrows desire into the scope of thought.  
But it is written in the heart of man,  
Thou shalt no larger be than thy desire.  
Thou must not therefore stoop thy spirit's sight  
To pore only within the candle-gleam  
Of conscious wit and reasonable brain;  
But search into the sacred darkness lying  
Outside thy knowledge of thyself, the vast  
Measureless fate, full of the power of stars,

The outer noiseless heavens of thy soul.  
Keep thy desire closed in the room of light  
The labouring fires of thy mind have made,  
And thou shalt find the vision of thy spirit  
Pitifully dazzled to so shrunk a ken,  
There are no spacious puissances about it,  
But send desire often forth to scan  
The immense night which is thy greater soul;  
Knowing the possible, see thou try beyond it  
Into impossible things, unlikely ends;  
And thou shalt find thy knowledgeable desire  
Grow large as all the regions of thy soul,  
Whose firmament doth cover the whole of Being,  
And of created purpose reach the ends.

\* \* \* \* \*

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

THE END OF THE WORLD

The snow had fallen many nights and days;  
The sky was come upon the earth at last,  
Sifting thinly down as endlessly  
As though within the system of blind planets  
Something had been forgot or overdriven.  
The dawn now seemed neglected in the grey  
Where mountains were unbuilt and shadowless trees  
Rootlessly paused or hung upon the air.  
There was no wind, but now and then a sigh  
Crossed that dry falling dust and rifted it  
Through crevices of slate and door and casement.  
Perhaps the new moon's time was even past.  
Outside, the first white twilights were too void  
Until a sheep called once, as to a lamb,  
And tenderness crept everywhere from it;  
But now the flock must have strayed far away.  
The lights across the valley must be veiled,  
The smoke lost in the greyness or the dusk.  
For more than three days now the snow had thatched  
That cow-house roof where it had ever melted  
With yellow stains from the beasts' breath inside;  
But yet a dog howled there, though not quite lately.  
Someone passed down the valley swift and singing.

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

#### BABEL: THE GATE OF THE GOD

Lost towers impend, copeless primeval props  
Of the new threatening sky, and first rude digits  
Of awe remonstrance and uneasy power  
Thrust out by man when speech sank back in his throat:  
Then had the last rocks ended bubbling up  
And rhythms of change within the heart begun  
By a blind need that would make Springs and Winters;  
Pylons and monoliths went on by ages,  
Mycenae and Great Zimbabwe came about;

Cowed hearts in This conceived a pyramid  
That leaned to hold itself upright, a thing  
Foredoomed to limits, death and an easy apex;  
Then postulants for the stars' previous wisdom  
Standing on Carthage must get nearer still;  
While in Chaldea an altitude of god  
Being mooted, and a saurian unearthed  
Upon a mountain stirring a surmise  
Of floods and alterations of the sea,  
A round-walled tower must rise upon Senaar  
Temple and escape to god the ascertained.  
These are decayed like Time's teeth in his mouth,  
Black cavities and gaps, yet earth is darkened  
By their deep-sunken and unfounded shadows  
And memories of man's earliest theme of towers.

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

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

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

RUPERT BROOKE

THE OLD VICARAGE, GRANTCHESTER

[Cafe des Westens, Berlin]

Just now the lilac is in bloom,  
All before my little room;  
And in my flower-beds, I think,  
Smile the carnation and the pink;  
And down the borders, well I know,  
The poppy and the pansy blow ...  
Oh! there the chestnuts, summer through,  
Beside the river make for you  
A tunnel of green gloom, and sleep  
Deeply above; and green and deep  
The stream mysterious glides beneath,  
Green as a dream and deep as death.--  
Oh, damn! I know it! and I know  
How the May fields all golden show,  
And when the day is young and sweet,  
Gild gloriously the bare feet  
That run to bathe ...  
'Du lieber Gott!'

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

[Greek: eithe genoímaen] ... would I were  
In Grantchester, in Grantchester!--  
Some, it may be, can get in touch  
With Nature there, or Earth, or such.  
And clever modern men have seen  
A Faun a-peeping through the green,  
And felt the Classics were not dead,  
To glimpse a Naiad's reedy head,  
Or hear the Goat-foot piping low ...  
But these are things I do not know.  
I only know that you may lie  
Day long and watch the Cambridge sky,  
And, flower-lulled in sleepy grass,  
Hear the cool lapse of hours pass,  
Until the centuries blend and blur  
In Grantchester, in Grantchester ...

Still in the dawnlit waters cool  
His ghostly Lordship swims his pool,  
And tries the strokes, essays the tricks,  
Long learnt on Hellespont, or Styx;  
Dan Chaucer hears his river still  
Chatter beneath a phantom mill;  
Tennyson notes, with studious eye,  
How Cambridge waters hurry by ...  
And in that garden, black and white  
Creep whispers through the grass all night;  
And spectral dance, before the dawn,  
A hundred Vicars down the lawn;  
Curates, long dust, will come and go  
On lissom, clerical, printless toe;  
And oft between the boughs is seen  
The sly shade of a Rural Dean ...  
Till, at a shiver in the skies,  
Vanishing with Satanic cries,  
The prim ecclesiastic rout  
Leaves but a startled sleeper-out,  
Grey heavens, the first bird's drowsy calls,  
The falling house that never falls.

\* \* \* \* \*

God! I will pack, and take a train,  
And get me to England once again!  
For England's the one land, I know,  
Where men with Splendid Hearts may go;  
And Cambridgeshire, of all England,  
The shire for Men who Understand;  
And of 'that' district I prefer  
The lovely hamlet Grantchester.  
For Cambridge people rarely smile,  
Being urban, squat, and packed with guile;  
And Royston men in the far South  
Are black and fierce and strange of mouth;  
At Over they fling oaths at one,  
And worse than oaths at Trumpington,  
And Ditton girls are mean and dirty,  
And there's none in Harston under thirty,  
And folks in Shelford and those parts  
Have twisted lips and twisted hearts,  
And Barton men make cockney rhymes,  
And Coton's full of nameless crimes,  
And things are done you'd not believe  
At Madingley on Christmas Eve.  
Strong men have run for miles and miles  
When one from Cherry Hinton smiles;  
Strong men have blanched and shot their wives  
Rather than send them to St. Ives;  
Strong men have cried like babes, bydam,  
To hear what happened at Babraham.

But Grantchester! ah, Grantchester!  
There's peace and holy quiet there,  
Great clouds along pacific skies,  
And men and women with straight eyes,  
Lithe children lovelier than a dream,  
A bosky wood, a slumbrous stream,  
And little kindly winds that creep  
Round twilight corners, half asleep.  
In Grantchester their skins are white,  
They bathe by day, they bathe by night;  
The women there do all they ought;  
The men observe the Rules of Thought.  
They love the Good; they worship Truth;  
They laugh uproariously in youth;  
(And when they get to feeling old,  
They up and shoot themselves, I'm told)...

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

## DUST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## THE FISH

In a cool curving world he lies  
And ripples with dark ecstasies.  
The kind luxurious lapse and steal  
Shapes all his universe to feel  
And know and be; the clinging stream  
Closes his memory, glooms his dream,  
Who lips the roots o' the shore, and glides  
Superb on unreturning tides.  
Those silent waters weave for him  
A fluctuant mutable world and dim,  
Where wavering masses bulge and gape  
Mysterious, and shape to shape  
Dies momentarily through whorl and hollow,  
And form and line and solid follow  
Solid and line and form to dream  
Fantastic down the eternal stream;  
An obscure world, a shifting world,  
Bulbous, or pulled to thin, or curled,  
Or serpentine, or driving arrows,  
Or serene slidings, or March narrows.  
There slipping wave and shore are one,  
And weed and mud. No ray of sun,  
But glow to glow fades down the deep  
(As dream to unknown dream in sleep);  
Shaken translucency illumines  
The hyaline of drifting glooms;  
The strange soft-handed depth subdues  
Drowned colour there, but black to hues,  
As death to living, decomposes--  
Red darkness of the heart of roses,  
Blue brilliant from dead starless skies,  
And gold that lies behind the eyes,  
The unknown unnameable sightless white  
That is the essential flame of night,  
Lustreless purple, hooded green,  
The myriad hues that lie between  
Darkness and darkness! ...

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

Unconscious and directly driven,  
Fades to some dank sufficient heaven.

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

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

#### TOWN AND COUNTRY

Here, where love's stuff is body, arm and side  
Are stabbing-sweet 'gainst chair and lamp and wall.  
In every touch more intimate meanings hide;  
And flaming brains are the white heart of all.

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

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

Intensest heavens between close-lying faces  
By the lamp's airless fierce ecstatic fire;

And we've found love in little hidden places,  
Under great shades, between the mist and mire.

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

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

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

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

#### DINING-ROOM TEA

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

Till suddenly, and otherwhence,  
I looked upon your innocence;  
For lifted clear and still and strange  
From the dark woven flow of change  
Under a vast and starless sky  
I saw the immortal moment lie.  
One instant I, an instant, knew  
As God knows all. And it and you  
I, above Time, oh, blind! could see  
In witless immortality.

I saw the marble cup; the tea,  
Hung on the air, an amber stream;  
I saw the fire's unglittering gleam,  
The painted flame, the frozen smoke.  
No more the flooding lamplight broke  
On flying eyes and lips and hair;  
But lay, but slept unbroken there,  
On stiller flesh, and body breathless,  
And lips and laughter stayed and deathless,  
And words on which no silence grew.  
Light was more alive than you.

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON

THE SONG OF ELF

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'The thing on the blind side of the heart,  
On the wrong side of the door;  
The green plant groweth, menacing

Almighty lovers in the spring;  
There is always a forgotten thing,  
And love is not secure.'

\* \* \* \* \*

WILLIAM H. DAVIES

### THE CHILD AND THE MARINER

A dear old couple my grandparents were,  
And kind to all dumb things; they saw in Heaven  
The lamb that Jesus petted when a child;  
Their faith was never draped by Doubt: to them  
Death was a rainbow in Eternity,  
That promised everlasting brightness soon.  
An old seafaring man was he; a rough  
Old man, but kind; and hairy, like the nut  
Full of sweet milk. All day on shore he watched  
The winds for sailors' wives, and told what ships  
Enjoyed fair weather, and what ships had storms;  
He watched the sky, and he could tell for sure  
What afternoons would follow stormy morns,  
If quiet nights would end wild afternoons.  
He leapt away from scandal with a roar,  
And if a whisper still possessed his mind,  
He walked about and cursed it for a plague.  
He took offence at Heaven when beggars passed,  
And sternly called them back to give them help.  
In this old captain's house I lived, and things  
That house contained were in ships' cabins once;  
Sea-shells and charts and pebbles, model ships;  
Green weeds, dried fishes stuffed, and coral stalks;  
Old wooden trunks with handles of spliced rope,  
With copper saucers full of monies strange,  
That seemed the savings of dead men, not touched  
To keep them warm since their real owners died;  
Strings of red beads, methought were dipped in blood,  
And swinging lamps, as though the house might move;  
An ivory lighthouse built on ivory rocks,  
The bones of fishes and three bottled ships.  
And many a thing was there which sailors make

In idle hours, when on long voyages,  
Of marvellous patience, to no lovely end.  
And on those charts I saw the small black dots  
That were called islands, and I knew they had  
Turtles and palms, and pirates' buried gold.  
There came a stranger to my granddad's house,  
The old man's nephew, a seafarer too;  
A big, strong able man who could have walked  
Twm Barlum's hill all clad in iron mail;  
So strong he could have made one man his club  
To knock down others--Henry was his name,  
No other name was uttered by his kin.  
And here he was, insooth illclad, but oh,  
Thought I, what secrets of the sea are his!  
This man knows coral islands in the sea,  
And dusky girls heartbroken for white men;  
This sailor knows of wondrous lands afar,  
More rich than Spain, when the Phoenicians shipped  
Silver for common ballast, and they saw  
Horses at silver mangers eating grain;  
This man has seen the wind blow up a mermaid's hair  
Which, like a golden serpent, reared and stretched  
To feel the air away beyond her head.  
He begged my pennies, which I gave with joy--  
He will most certainly return some time  
A self-made king of some new land, and rich.  
Alas that he, the hero of my dreams,  
Should be his people's scorn; for they had rose  
To proud command of ships, whilst he had toiled  
Before the mast for years, and well content;  
Him they despised, and only Death could bring  
A likeness in his face to show like them.  
For he drank all his pay, nor went to sea  
As long as ale was easy got on shore.  
Now, in his last long voyage he had sailed  
From Plymouth Sound to where sweet odours fan  
The Cingalese at work, and then back home--  
But came not near his kin till pay was spent.  
He was not old, yet seemed so; for his face  
Looked like the drowned man's in the morgue, when it  
Has struck the wooden wharves and keels of ships.  
And all his flesh was pricked with Indian ink,  
His body marked as rare and delicate  
As dead men struck by lightning under trees,  
And pictured with fine twigs and curled ferns;  
Chains on his neck and anchors on his arms;  
Rings on his fingers, bracelets on his wrist;  
And on his breast the Jane of Appledore  
Was schooner rigged, and in full sail at sea.  
He could not whisper with his strong hoarse voice,  
No more than could a horse creep quietly;  
He laughed to scorn the men that muffled close  
For fear of wind, till all their neck was hid,

Like Indian corn wrapped up in long green leaves;  
He knew no flowers but seaweeds brown and green,  
He knew no birds but those that followed ships.  
Full well he knew the water-world; he heard  
A grander music there than we on land,  
When organ shakes a church; swore he would make  
The sea his home, though it was always roused  
By such wild storms as never leave Cape Horn;  
Happy to hear the tempest grunt and squeal  
Like pigs heard dying in a slaughterhouse.  
A true-born mariner, and this his hope--  
His coffin would be what his cradle was,  
A boat to drown in and be sunk at sea;  
To drown at sea and lie a dainty corpse  
Salted and iced in Neptune's larder deep.  
This man despised small coasters, fishing-smacks;  
He scorned those sailors who at night and morn  
Can see the coast, when in their little boats  
They go a six days' voyage and are back  
Home with their wives for every Sabbath day.  
Much did he talk of tankards of old beer,  
And bottled stuff he drank in other lands,  
Which was a liquid fire like Hell to gulp,  
But Paradise to sip.

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

That birds could pass from starboard unto port  
Under her dripping keel.

Oh, it was sweet

To hear that seaman tell such wondrous tales:  
How deep the sea in parts, that drowned men  
Must go a long way to their graves and sink  
Day after day, and wander with the tides.  
He spake of his own deeds; of how he sailed  
One summer's night along the Bosphorus,  
And he--who knew no music like the wash  
Of waves against a ship, or wind in shrouds--  
Heard then the music on that woody shore  
Of nightingales, and feared to leave the deck,  
He thought 'twas sailing into Paradise.  
To hear these stories all we urchins placed  
Our pennies in that seaman's ready hand;  
Until one morn he signed for a long cruise,  
And sailed away--we never saw him more.  
Could such a man sink in the sea unknown?  
Nay, he had found a land with something rich,  
That kept his eyes turned inland for his life.  
'A damn bad sailor and a landshark too,  
No good in port or out'--my granddad said.

#### DAYS TOO SHORT

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

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

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

#### IN MAY

Yes, I will spend the livelong day  
With Nature in this month of May;  
And sit beneath the trees, and share

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

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

#### THE HEAP OF RAGS

One night when I went down  
Thames' side, in London Town,  
A heap of rags saw I,  
And sat me down close by.  
That thing could shout and bawl,  
But showed no face at all;  
When any steamer passed  
And blew a loud shrill blast,  
That heap of rags would sit  
And make a sound like it;  
When struck the clock's deep bell,  
It made those peals as well.  
When winds did moan around,  
It mocked them with that sound;  
When all was quiet, it  
Fell into a strange fit;  
Would sigh, and moan and roar,  
It laughed, and blessed, and swore.  
Yet that poor thing, I know,  
Had neither friend nor foe;  
Its blessing or its curse  
Made no one better or worse.  
I left it in that place--  
The thing that showed no face,  
Was it a man that had

Suffered till he went mad?  
So many showers and not  
One rainbow in the lot;  
Too many bitter fears  
To make a pearl from tears.

#### THE KINGFISHER

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

#### WALTER DE LA MARE

#### ARABIA

Far are the shades of Arabia,  
Where the Princes ride at noon,  
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,  
Under the ghost of the moon;

And so dark is that vaulted purple  
Flowers in the forest rise  
And toss into blossom 'gainst the phantom stars  
Pale in the noonday skies.

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

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

#### THE SLEEPER

As Ann came in one summer's day,  
She felt that she must creep,  
So silent was the clear cool house,  
It seemed a house of sleep.  
And sure, when she pushed open the door,  
Rapt in the stillness there,  
Her mother sat, with stooping head,  
Asleep upon a chair;  
Fast--fast asleep; her two hands laid  
Loose-folded on her knee,  
So that her small unconscious face  
Looked half unreal to be:  
So calmly lit with sleep's pale light  
Each feature was; so fair  
Her forehead--every trouble was  
Smooth'd out beneath her hair.

But though her mind in dream now moved,  
Still seemed her gaze to rest  
From out beneath her fast-sealed lids,  
Above her moving breast,  
On Ann, as quite, quite still she stood;  
Yet slumber lay so deep  
Even her hands upon her lap  
Seemed saturate with sleep.

And as Ann peeped, a cloudlike dread  
Stole over her, and then,  
On stealthy, mouselike feet she trod,  
And tiptoed out again.

#### WINTER DUSK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### MISS LOO

When thin-strewn memory I look through,  
I see most clearly poor Miss Loo,  
Her tabby cat, her cage of birds,

Her nose, her hair--her muffled words,  
And how she'd open her green eyes,  
As if in some immense surprise,  
Whenever as we sat at tea,  
She made some small remark to me.

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

#### THE LISTENERS

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

JOHN DRINKWATER

THE FIRES OF GOD

I

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

Poor barren years that brooded over-much  
On your own burden, pale and stricken years--  
Go down to your oblivion, we part  
With no reproach or ceremonial tears.  
Henceforth my hands are lifted to the touch  
Of hands that labour with me, and my heart  
Hereafter to the world's heart shall be set  
And its own pain forget.  
Time gathers to my name--

Days dead are dark; the days to be, a flame  
Of wonder and of promise, and great cries  
Of travelling people reach me--I must rise.

## II

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

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

## III

Then a great change befell:  
Long time I stood  
In witless hardihood  
With eyes on one sole changeless vision set--  
The deep disturbed fret  
Of men who made brief tarrying in hell  
On their earth-travelling.  
It was as though the lives of men should be  
Set circle-wise, whereof one little span  
Through which all passed was blackened with the wing  
Of perilous evil, bateless misery.  
But all beyond, making the whole complete  
O'er which the travelling feet

Of every man  
Made way or ever he might come to death,  
Was odorous with the breath  
Of honey-laden flowers, and alive  
With sacrificial ministrations sweet  
Of man to man, and swift and holy loves,  
And large heroic hopes, whereby should thrive  
Man's spirit as he moves  
From dawn of life to the great dawn of death.  
It was as though mine eyes were set alone  
Upon that woeful passage of despair,  
Until I held that life had never known  
Dominion but in this most troubled place  
Where many a ruined grace  
And many a friendless care  
Ran to and fro in sorrowful unrest.  
Still in my hand I pressed  
Hope's fragile chalice, whence I drew deep draughts  
Shaping belief that even yet should grow  
Out of this dread confusion, as of broken crafts  
Driven along ungovernable seas,  
Some threads of order, and that I should know  
After long vigil all the mysteries  
Of human wonder and of human fate.

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

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

#### IV

Soon was I then to gather bitter shame  
Of spirit, I had been most wildly proud--  
Yet in my pride had been  
Some little courage, formless as a cloud,  
Unpiloted save by the vagrant wind,  
But still an earnest of the bonds that tame  
The legionary hates, of sacred loves that lean  
From the high soul of man towards his kind.

And all my grief  
Had been for those I watched go to and fro  
In uncompassioned woe  
Along that little span my unbelief  
Had fashioned in my vision as all life.  
Now even this so little virtue waned,  
For I became caught up into the strife  
That I had pitied, and my soul was stained  
At last by that most venomous despair,  
Self-pity.

I no longer was aware  
Of any will to heal the world's unrest,  
I suffered as it suffered, and I grew  
Troubled in all my daily trafficking,  
Not with the large heroic trouble known  
By proud adventurous men who would atone  
With their own passionate pity for the sting  
And anguish of a world of peril and snares;  
It was the trouble of a soul in thrall  
To mean despairs,  
Driven about a waste where neither fall  
Of words from lips of love, nor consolation  
Of grave eyes comforting, nor ministration  
Of hand or heart could pierce the deadly wall  
Of self--of self,--I was a living shame--  
A broken purpose. I had stood apart  
With pride rebellious and defiant heart,  
And now my pride had perished in the flame.  
I cried for succour as a little child  
Might supplicate whose days are undefiled--  
For tutored pride and innocence are one.

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

V

I turned me from that place in humble wise,  
And fingers soft were laid upon mine eyes,  
And I beheld the fruitful earth, with store  
Of odorous treasure, full and golden grain,  
Ripe orchard bounty, slender stalks that bore  
Their flowered beauty with a meek content,  
The prosperous leaves that loved the sun and rain,  
Shy creatures unproved that came and went  
In garrulous joy among the fostering green.  
And, over all, the changes of the day  
And ordered year their mutable glory laid--

Expectant winter soberly arrayed,  
The prudent diligent spring whose eyes have seen  
The beauty of the roses uncreate,  
Imperial June, magnificent, elate  
Beholding all the ripening loves that stray  
Among her blossoms, and the golden time  
Of the full ear and bounty of the boughs,--  
And the great hills and solemn chanting seas  
And prodigal meadows, answering to the chime  
Of God's good year, and bearing on their brows  
The glory of processional mysteries  
From dawn to dawn, the woven shadow and shine  
Of the high moon, the twilight secrecies,  
And the inscrutable wonder of the stars  
Flung out along the reaches of the night.

'And, the ancient might  
Of the binding bars  
Waned, as I woke to a new desire  
For the choric song  
Of exultant, strong  
Earth-passionate men with souls of fire'.

## VI

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

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

Long ere from immanent silence leapt  
Obedient hands and fashioning will,  
The giant god within us slept,  
And dreamt of seasons to fulfil

The shaping of our souls that still  
Expectant earthward vigil kept;  
Our wisdom grew from secrets drawn  
From that far-off dim-remembered dawn.

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

Wise of the brief beloved span  
Of this our glad earth-travelling,  
Of beauty's bloom and ordered plan,  
Of love and love's compassioning,  
Of all the dear delights that spring  
From man's communion with man;  
We cherish every hour that strays  
Adown the cataract of the days.'  
'We see the dear untroubled skies,  
We see the glory of the rose,  
And, laugh, nor grieve that clouds will rise  
And wax with every wind that blows,  
Nor that the blossoming time will close,  
For beauty seen of humble eyes  
Immortal habitation has  
Though beauty's form may pale and pass.

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

JOSEPH AND MARY

Joseph:

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

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

Mary: (inattentive to his words)

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

Joseph:

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

Mary:

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

Joseph:

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

Mary:

Behold the lad.

Joseph:

I dare not gaze:  
Light streams from every limb.

Mary:

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

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

Joseph:

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

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

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

Mary:

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

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

Joseph:

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

Mary:

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

#### THE QUEEN'S SONG

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

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

Then I myself,  
Rising austere and dumb,  
On the high shelf  
Of my half-lighted room,  
Would place the shining bust  
And wait alone,

Until I was but dust,  
Buried unknown.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

THE HARE

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

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

And wet mist soaks his mother-wit.

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

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

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

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

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

The sky was cloudless overhead,  
And just alive with larks asinging;  
And in a twinkling I was swinging  
Across the windy hills, lighthearted.  
A kestrel at my footstep started,  
Just pouncing on a frightened mouse,  
And hung o'er head with wings a-hover;  
Through rustling heath an adder darted:  
A hundred rabbits bobbed to cover:  
A weasel, sleek and rusty-red,  
Popped out of sight as quick as winking:  
I saw a grizzled vixen slinking  
Behind a clucking brood of grouse  
That rose and cackled at my coming:  
And all about my way were flying  
The peewit, with their slow wings creaking;  
And little jack-snipe darted, drumming:  
And now and then a golden plover  
Or redshank piped with reedy whistle.  
But never shaken bent or thistle

Betrayed the quarry I was seeking;  
And not an instant, anywhere  
Did I clap eyes upon a hare.

So, travelling still, the twilight caught me;  
And as I stumbled on, I muttered:  
'A deal of luck the hare has brought me!  
The wind and I must spend together  
A hungry night among the heather.  
If I'd her here ...' And as I uttered,  
I tripped, and heard a frightened squeal;  
And dropped my hands in time to feel  
The hare just bolting 'twixt my feet.  
She slipped my clutch: and I stood there  
And cursed that devil-littered hare,  
That left me stranded in the dark  
In that wide waste of quaggy peat  
Beneath black night without a spark:  
When, looking up, I saw a flare  
Upon a far-off hill, and said:  
'By God, the heather is afire!  
It's mischief at this time of year ...'  
And then, as one bright flame shot higher,  
And booths and vans stood out quite clear,  
My wits came back into my head;  
And I remembered Brough Hill Fair.  
And as I stumbled towards the glare  
I knew the sudden kindling meant  
The Fair was over for the day;  
And all the cattle-folk away;  
And gipsy folk and tinkers now  
Were lighting supper-fires without  
Each caravan and booth and tent.  
And as I climbed the stiff hill-brow  
I quite forgot my lucky hare.  
I'd something else to think about:  
For well I knew there's broken meat  
For empty bellies after fair-time;  
And looked to have a royal rare time  
With something rich and prime to eat;  
And then to lie and toast my feet  
All night beside the biggest fire.  
But, even as I neared the first,  
A pleasant whiff of stewing burst  
From out a smoking pot a-bubble:  
And as I stopped behind the folk  
Who sprawled around, and watched it seething,  
A woman heard my eager breathing,  
And, turning, caught my hungry eye:  
And called out to me: 'Draw in nigher,  
Unless you find it too much trouble;  
Or you've a nose for better fare,  
And go to supper with the Squire ...

You've got the hungry parson's air!  
And all looked up, and took the joke,  
As I dropped gladly to the ground  
Among them, where they all lay gazing  
Upon the bubbling and the blazing.  
My eyes were dazzled by the fire  
At first; and then I glanced around;  
And in those swarthy, fire-lit faces--  
Though drowsing in the glare and heat  
And snuffing the warm savour in,  
Dead-certain of their fill of meat--  
I felt the bit between the teeth,  
The flying heels, the broken traces,  
And heard the highroad ring beneath  
The trampling hoofs; and knew them kin.  
Then for the first time, standing there  
Behind the woman who had hailed me,  
I saw a girl with eyes astare  
That looked in terror o'er my head;  
And, all at once, my courage failed me ...  
For now again, and sore-afraid,  
My hands were hot upon a hare,  
That struggled, strangling in the snare ...  
Then once more as the girl stood clear,  
Before me--quaking cold with fear--  
I saw the hare look from her eyes ...

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

While all the others slept asnore  
In caravan and tent that night,  
I lay alone beside the fire;  
And stared into its blazing core,  
With eyes that would not shut or tire,

Because the best of all was true,  
And they looked still into the light  
Of her eyes, burning ever bright.  
Within the brightest coal for me ...  
Once more, I saw her, as she started,  
And glanced at me with red lips parted:  
And as she looked, the frightened hare  
Had fled her eyes; and merrily,  
She smiled, with fine teeth flashing white,  
As though she, too, were happy-hearted ...  
Then she had trembled suddenly,  
And dropped her eyes, as that fat man  
Stepped from the shadow of the van,  
And joined the circle, as the pot  
Was lifted off, and, piping-hot,  
The supper steamed in wooden bowls.  
Yet, she had hardly touched a bite;  
And never raised her eyes all night  
To mine again; but on the coals,  
As I sat staring, she had stared--  
The black curls, shining round her head  
From under the red kerchief, tied  
So nattily beneath her chin--  
And she had stolen off to bed  
Quite early, looking dazed and scared.  
Then, all agape and sleepy-eyed,  
Ere long the others had turned in:  
And I was rid of that fat man,  
Who slouched away to his own van.

And now, before her van, I lay,  
With sleepless eyes, awaiting day;  
And as I gazed upon the glare  
I heard, behind, a gentle stir:  
And, turning round, I looked on her  
Where she stood on the little stair  
Outside the van, with listening air--  
And, in her eyes, the hunted hare ...  
And then, I saw her slip away,  
A bundle underneath her arm,  
Without a single glance at me.  
I lay a moment wondering,  
My heart a-thump like anything,  
Then, fearing she should come to harm,  
I rose, and followed speedily  
Where she had vanished in the night.  
And as she heard my step behind  
She started, and stopt dead with fright;  
Then blundered on as if struck blind:  
And now as I caught up with her,  
Just as she took the moorland track,  
I saw the hare's eyes, big and black ...  
She made as though she'd double back ...

But when she looked into my eyes,  
She stood quite still and did not stir ...  
And picking up her fallen pack  
I tucked it 'neath my arm; and she  
Just took her luck quite quietly,  
As she must take what chance might come,  
And would not have it otherwise,  
And walked into the night with me,  
Without a word across the fells.

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

But when the air with dawn was chill.  
As we were travelling down a hill,  
She broke her silence with low-sobbing;  
And told her tale, her bosom throbbing  
As though her very heart were shaken  
With fear she'd yet be overtaken ...  
She'd always lived in caravans--  
Her father's, gay as any man's,  
Grass-green, picked out with red and yellow  
And glittering brave with burnished brass  
That sparkled in the sun like flame,  
And window curtains, white as snow ...  
But, they had died, ten years ago,  
Her parents both, when fever came ...  
And they were buried, side by side.  
Somewhere beneath the wayside grass ...  
In times of sickness, they kept wide  
Of towns and busybodies, so  
No parson's or policeman's tricks  
Should bother them when in a fix ...  
Her father never could abide  
A black coat or a blue, poor man ...  
And so, Long Dick, a kindly fellow,  
When you could keep him from the can,  
And Meg, his easy-going wife,  
Had taken her into their van;  
And kept her since her parents died ...  
And she had lived a happy life,  
Until Fat Pete's young wife was taken ...  
But, ever since, he'd pestered her ...  
And she dared scarcely breathe or stir,

Lest she should see his eyes aleeer ...  
And many a night she'd lain and shaken,  
And very nearly died of fear--  
Though safe enough within the van  
With Mother Meg and her good-man--  
For, since Fat Pete was Long Dick's friend,  
And they were thick and sweet as honey,  
And Dick owed Pete a pot of money,  
She knew too well how it must end ...  
And she would rather lie stone dead  
Beneath the wayside grass than wed  
With leering Pete, and live the life,  
And die the death, of his first wife ...  
And so, last night, clean-daft with dread,  
She'd bundled up a pack and fled ...

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

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

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

Six months and more have cantered by:  
And, Winter past, we're out again--  
We've left the fat and weatherwise  
To keep their coops and reeking sties.  
And eat their fill of oven-pies,  
While we win free and out again  
To take potluck beneath the sky  
With sun and moon and wind and rain.  
Six happy months ... and yet, at night,

I've often wakened in affright,  
And looked upon her lying there,  
Beside me sleeping quietly,  
Adread that when she waked, I'd see  
The hunted hare within her eyes.

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

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

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

#### GERANIUMS

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

Broken with lust and drink, blear-eyed and ill,  
Her battered bonnet nodding on her head,

From a dark arch she clutched my sleeve and said:  
'I've sold no bunch to-day, nor touched a bite ...  
Son, buy six-pennorth; and 't will mean a bed.'

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

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

#### DEVIL'S EDGE

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

And I remembered, drowsily,  
How 'mid the hills last night I'd lain  
Beside a singing moorland burn;  
And waked at dawn, to feel the rain  
Fall on my face, as on the fern  
That drooped about my heather-bed;  
And how by noon the wind had blown  
The last grey shred from out the sky,  
And blew my homespun jacket dry,  
As I stood on the topmost stone  
That crowns the cairn on Hawkshaw Head,  
And caught a gleam of far-off sea;  
And heard the wind sing in the bent  
Like those far waters calling me:  
When, my heart answering to the call,  
I followed down the seaward stream,  
By silent pool and singing fall;  
Till with a quiet, keen content,  
I watched the sun, a crimson ball,  
Shoot through grey seas a fiery gleam,  
Then sink in opal deeps from sight.

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

D.H. LAWRENCE

SNAP-DRAGON

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

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

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

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

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

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

So she came down from above

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She hid her face, she murmured between her lips  
The low word 'Don't!' I let the flower fall,  
But held my hand afloat still towards the slips  
Of blossom she fingered, and my crisp fingers all  
Put forth to her: she did not move, nor I,  
For my hand like a snake watched hers that could not fly.  
Then I laughed in the dark of my heart, I did exult  
Like a sudden chuckling of music: I bade her eyes  
Meet mine, I opened her helpless eyes to consult  
Their fear, their shame, their joy that underlies  
Defeat in such a battle: in the dark of her eyes  
My heart was fierce to make her laughter rise ...  
Till her dark deeps shook with convulsive thrills, and the dark  
Of her spirit wavered like water thrilled with light,  
And my heart leaped up in longing to plunge its stark  
Fervour within the pool of her twilight:  
Within her spacious gloom, in the mystery  
Of her barbarous soul, to grope with ecstasy ...

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

\* \* \* \* \*

JOHN MASEFIELD

BIOGRAPHY

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts  
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,  
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten

The dates which made me will be all forgotten;  
And none will know the gleam there used to be  
About the feast days freshly kept by me,  
But men will call the golden hour of bliss  
'About this time,' or 'shortly after this.'

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

By many waters and on many ways  
I have known golden instants and bright days;  
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,  
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;  
The summer day on which in heart's delight  
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white,  
The glittering day when all the waves wore flags  
And the ship Wanderer came with sails in rags;  
That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk  
When life became more splendid than its husk,  
When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains  
Shone with a doorway opening beyond brains;  
The dawn when, with a brace-block's creaking cry,  
Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,  
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of red,  
Then gone, with one raised hand and one turned head;  
The howling evening when the spindrift's mists  
Broke to display the four Evangelists,  
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by breakers,  
Wind-beaten bones of long-since-buried acres;  
The night alone near water when I heard  
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird;  
The English dusk when I beheld once more  
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citted shore,  
The lines of masts, the streets so cheerily trod  
In happier seasons, and gave thanks to God.  
All had their beauty, their bright moments' gift,  
Their something caught from Time, the ever-swift.

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

And all the world's flags flying and seagulls dipping.

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

not alone the ships

But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to whips,  
The two close friends of nearly twenty years  
Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-peers,  
Whose feet with mine wore many a bolthead bright  
Treading the decks beneath the riding light.  
Yet death will make that warmth of friendship cold,  
And who'll know what one said and what one told,  
Our hearts' communion, and the broken spells  
When the loud call blew at the strike of bells?  
No one, I know, yet let me be believed--  
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a word  
Live in the soul to make the being stirred;  
Towns can be prisons where the spirit dulls  
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,  
Away from all bright water and great hills  
And sheep-walks where the curlews cry their fills;  
Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see  
But dead museums and miles of misery  
And floating life un-rooted from man's need  
And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed  
And life made wretched out of human ken  
And miles of shopping women served by men.  
So, if the penman sums my London days,  
Let him but say that there were holy ways,  
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old  
With stinking doors where women stood to scold  
And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn  
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born;  
And windy gas lamps and the wet roads shining  
And that old carol of the midnight whining,  
And that old room above the noisy slum  
Where there was wine and fire and talk with some  
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul  
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and those friends,  
Those glittering moments that a spirit lends,  
That all may be imagined from the flash,  
The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning gash;  
Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took  
Light to send out to men in song or book;  
Those friends who heard St. Pancras' bells strike two,  
Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew,

Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's best,  
The thought beyond great poets not expressed,  
The glory of mood where human frailty failed,  
The forts of human light not yet assailed,  
Till the dim room had mind and seemed to brood,  
Binding our wills to mental brotherhood;  
Till we became a college, and each night  
Was discipline and manhood and delight;  
Till our farewells and winding down the stairs  
At each gray dawn had meaning that Time spares  
That we, so linked, should roam the whole world round  
Teaching the ways our brooding minds had found,  
Making that room our Chapter, our one mind  
Where all that this world soiled should be refined.

Often at night I tread those streets again  
And see the alleys glimmering in the rain,  
Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps,  
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under lamps,  
The secret house where once a beggar stood,  
Trembling and blind, to show his woe for food.  
And now I miss that friend who used to walk  
Home to my lodgings with me, deep in talk,  
Wearing the last of night out in still streets  
Trodden by us and policemen on their beats  
And cats, but else deserted; now I miss  
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his  
And that strange way he had of making gleam,  
Like something real, the art we used to dream.  
London has been my prison; but my books  
Hills and great waters, labouring men and brooks,  
Ships and deep friendships and remembered days  
Which even now set all my mind ablaze--  
As that June day when, in the red bricks' chinks  
I saw the old Roman ruins white with pinks  
And felt the hillside haunted even then  
By not dead memory of the Roman men;  
And felt the hillside thronged by souls unseen  
Who knew the interest in me, and were keen  
That man alive should understand man dead  
So many centuries since the blood was shed,  
And quickened with strange hush because this comer  
Sensed a strange soul alive behind the summer.  
That other day on Ercall when the stones  
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied bones,  
While the bees droned and all the air was sweet  
From honey buried underneath my feet,  
Honey of purple heather and white clover  
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's over.  
Then other days by water, by bright sea,  
Clear as clean glass, and my bright friend with me;  
The cove clean bottomed where we saw the brown  
Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet down,

And saw the long fronds waving, white with shells,  
Waving, unfolding, drooping, to the swells;  
That sadder day when we beheld the great  
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate  
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great cliff's gaps,  
Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,  
While drenching clouds drove by and every sense  
Was water roaring or rushing or in offence,  
And mountain sheep stood huddled and blown gaps gleamed  
Where torn white hair of torrents shook and streamed.  
That sadder day when we beheld again  
A spate going down in sunshine after rain  
When the blue reach of water leaping bright  
Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked with white.  
And that far day, that never blotted page  
When youth was bright like flowers about old age,  
Fair generations bringing thanks for life  
To that old kindly man and trembling wife  
After their sixty years: Time never made  
A better beauty since the Earth was laid,  
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair  
For the great gift of life which brought them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the days  
Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise.  
The day they led my cutter at the turn,  
Yet could not keep the lead, and dropped astern;  
The moment in the spurt when both boats' oars  
Dipped in each other's wash, and throats grew hoarse,  
And teeth ground into teeth, and both strokes quickened  
Lashing the sea, and gasps came, and hearts sickened,  
And coxswains damned us, dancing, banking stroke,  
To put our weights on, though our hearts were broke,  
And both boats seemed to stick and sea seemed glue,  
The tide a mill race we were struggling through;  
And every quick recover gave us squints  
Of them still there, and oar-tossed water-glints,  
And cheering came, our friends, our foemen cheering,  
A long, wild, rallying murmur on the hearing,  
'Port Fore!' and 'Starboard Fore!' 'Port Fore' 'Port Fore,'  
'Up with her,' 'Starboard'; and at that each oar  
Lightened, though arms were bursting, and eyes shut,  
And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut,  
And the curse quickened from the cox, our bows  
Crashed, and drove talking water, we made vows,  
Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain  
We numbered things we'd never eat again  
If we could only win; then came the yell  
'Starboard,' 'Port Fore,' and then a beaten bell  
Rung as for fire to cheer us. 'Now.' Oars bent,  
Soul took the looms now body's bolt was spent,  
'Damn it, come on now.' 'On now,' 'On now,' 'Starboard.'  
'Port Fore,' 'Up with her, Port'; each cutter harboured

Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, 'Heave, oh heave,'  
Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking sheave.  
'Heave,' and I saw a back, then two. 'Port Fore,'  
'Starboard,' 'Come on'; I saw the midship oar,  
And knew we had done them. 'Port Fore,' 'Starboard,' 'Now.'  
I saw bright water spurting at their bow,  
Their cox' full face an instant. They were done.  
The watchers' cheering almost drowned the gun.  
We had hardly strength to toss our oars; our cry  
Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.

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

But that ends, too.

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

This many-pictured world of many passions  
Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,  
And what life is is much to very few;  
Men being so strange, so mad, and what men do

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

HAROLD MONRO

CHILD OF DAWN

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### LAKE LEMAN

It is the sacred hour: above the far  
Low emerald hills that northward fold,  
Calmly, upon the blue the evening star  
Floats, wreathed in dusky gold.  
The winds have sung all day; but now they lie  
Faint, sleeping; and the evening sounds awake.  
The slow bell tolls across the water: I  
Am haunted by the spirit of the lake.  
It seems as though the sounding of the bell  
Intoned the low song of the water-soul,  
And at some moments I can hardly tell  
The long-resounding echo from the toll.  
O thou mysterious lake, thy spell  
Holds all who round thy fruitful margin dwell.  
Oft have I seen home-going peasants' eyes  
Lit with the peace that emanates from thee.  
Those who among thy waters plunge, arise  
Filled with new wisdom and serenity.  
Thy veins are in the mountains. I have heard,

Down-stretched beside thee at the silent noon,  
With leaning head attentive to thy word,  
A secret and delicious mountain-tune,  
Proceeding as from many shadowed hours  
In ancient forests carpeted with flowers,  
Or far, where hidden waters, wandering  
Through banks of snow, trickle, and meet, and sing.  
Ah, what repose at noon to go,  
Lean on thy bosom, hold thee with wide hands,  
And listen for the music of the snow!  
But most, as now,  
When harvest covers thy surrounding lands,  
I love thee, with a coronal of sheaves  
Crowned regent of the day;  
And on the air thy placid breathing leaves  
A scent of corn and hay.  
For thou hast gathered (as a mother will  
The sayings of her children in her heart)  
The harvest-thoughts of reapers on the hill,  
When the cool rose and honeysuckle fill  
The air, and fruit is laden on the cart.  
Thou breathest the delight  
Of summer evening at the deep-roofed farm,  
And meditation of the summer night,  
When the enravished earth is lying warm  
From recent kisses of the conquering sun.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

T. STURGE MOORE

A SICILIAN IDYLL

(FIRST SCENE)

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

First, thou must know that oftentimes I rise,--  
Not heeding or not finding sleep, of watching  
Afraid no longer to be prodigal,--  
And gaze upon the beauty of the night.  
Quiet hours, while dawn absorbs the waning stars,  
Are like cold water sipped between our cups  
Washing the jaded palate till it taste  
The wine again. Ere the sun rose, I sat  
Within my garden porch; my lamp was left  
Burning beside my bed, though it would be  
Broad day before I should return upstairs.  
I let it burn, willing to waste some oil  
Rather than to disturb my tranquil mood;  
But, as the Fates determined, it was seen.--  
Suddenly, running round the dovecote, came  
A young man naked, breathless, through the dawn,  
Florid with haste and wine; it was Hipparchus.  
Yes, there he stood before me panting, rubbing  
His heated flesh which felt the cold at once.  
When he had breath enough he begged me straight  
To put the lamp out; and himself had done it  
Ere I was on the stair.  
Flung all along my bed, his gasping shook it  
When I at length could sit down by his side:  
'What cause, young sir, brings you here in this plight  
At such an hour?' He shuddered, sighed and rolled

My blanket round him; then came a gush of words:  
'The first of causes, Damon, namely Love,  
Eldest and least resigned and most unblushing  
Of all the turbulent impulsive gods.  
A quarter of an hour scarce has flown  
Since lovely arms clung round me, and my head  
Asleep lay nested in a woman's hair;  
My cheek still bears print of its ample coils.'  
Athwart its burning flush he drew my fingers  
And their tips felt it might be as he said.  
'Oh I have had a night, a night, a night!  
Had Paris so much bliss?  
And oh! was Helen's kiss  
To be compared with those I tasted?  
Which but for me had all been wasted  
On a bald man, a fat man, a gross man, a beast  
To scare the best guest from the very best feast!'  
Cydilla need not hear half that he said,  
For he was mad awhile.  
But having given rein to hot caprice,  
And satyr jest, and the distempered male,  
At length, I heard his story.  
At sun-down certain miles without the town.  
He'd chanced upon a light-wheeled litter-car,  
And in it there stood one  
Yet more a woman than her garb was rich,  
With more of youth and health than elegance.  
'The mules,' he said, 'were beauties: she was one,  
And cried directions to the neighbour field:  
"O catch that big bough! Fool, not that, the next!  
Clumsy, you've let it go! O stop it swaying,  
The eggs will jolt out!" From the road,' said he,  
'I could not see who thus was rated; so  
Sprang up beside her and beheld her husband,  
Lover or keeper, what you like to call him;--  
A middle-aged stout man upon whose shoulders  
Kneeled up a scraggy mule-boy slave, who was  
The fool that could not reach a thrush's nest  
Which they, while plucking almond, had revealed.  
Before she knew who it could be, I said  
"Why yes, he is a fool, but we, fair friend,  
Were we not foolish waiting for such fools?  
Let us be off!" I stooped, took, shook the reins  
With one hand, while the other clasped her waist.  
"Ah, who?" she turned; I smiled like amorous Zeus;  
A certain vagueness clouded her wild eyes  
As though she saw a swan, a bull, a shower  
Of hurried flames, and felt divinely pleased.  
I cracked the whip and we were jolted down;  
A kiss was snatched getting the ribbons straight;  
We hardly heard them first begin to bawl,  
So great our expedition towards the town:  
We flew. I pulled up at an inn, then bid them

Stable my mules and chariot and prepare  
A meal for Dives; meanwhile we would stroll  
Down to the market. Took her arm in mine,  
And, out of sight, hurried her through cross-lanes,  
Bade her choose, now at a fruit, now pastry booth.  
Until we gained my lodging she spoke little  
But often laughed, tittering from time to time,  
"O Bacchus, what a prank!--Just think of Cymon,  
So stout as he is, at least five miles to walk  
Without a carriage!--well you take things coolly"--  
Or such appreciation nice of gifts  
I need not boast of, since I had them gratis.  
When my stiff door creaked open grudgingly  
Her face first fell; the room looked bare enough.  
Still we brought with us food and cakes; I owned  
A little cellar of delicious wine;  
An unasked neighbour's garden furnished flowers;  
Jests helped me nimbly, I surpassed myself;  
So we were friends and, having laughed, we drank,  
Ate, sang, danced, grew wild. Soon both had one  
Desire, effort, goal,  
One bed, one sleep, one dream ...  
O Damon, Damon, both had one alarm,  
When woken by the door forced rudely open,  
Lit from the stair, bedazzled, glowered at, hated!  
She clung to me; her master, husband, uncle  
(I know not which or what he was) stood there;  
It crossed my mind he might have been her father.  
Naked, unarmed, I rose, and did assume  
What dignity is not derived from clothes,  
Bid them to quit my room, my private dwelling.  
It was no use, for that gross beast was rich;  
Had his been neither legal right nor moral,  
My natural right was nought, for his she was  
In eyes of those bribed catchpolls. Brute revenge  
Seethed in his pimpled face: "To gaol with him!"  
He shouted huskily. I wrapped some clothes  
About my shuddering bed-fellow, a sheet  
Flung round myself; ere she was led away,  
Had whispered to her "Shriek, faint on the stairs!"  
Then I was seized by two dog officers.  
That girl was worth her keep, for, going down,  
She suddenly writhed, gasped, and had a fit.  
My chance occurred, and I whipped through the casement;  
All they could do was catch away the sheet;  
I dropped a dozen feet into a bush,  
Soon found my heels and plied them; here I am.'

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Which faced the sea abruptly in huge crags.  
Each slope grew steeper till I left my seat  
And led the mule; for now Hipparchus' snore  
Tuned with the crooning waves heard from below.  
We passed two narrow belts of wood and then  
The sea, that first showed blue above their tops,  
Was spread before us chequered with white waves  
Breaking beneath on boulders which choked up  
The narrowed issue seawards of the glen.  
The steep path would no more admit of wheels:  
I took the beast and tethered her to graze  
Within the shade of a stunt ilex clump,--  
Returned to find a vacant car; Hipparchus,  
Uneasy on my tilting down the shafts,  
And heated with strange clothes, had roused himself  
And lay asleep upon his late disguise,  
Naked 'neath the cool eaves of one huge rock  
That stood alone, much higher up than those  
Over, and through, and under which, the waves  
Made music or forced milk-white floods of foam.  
There I reclined, while vision, sound and scent  
Won on my willing soul like sleep on joy,  
Till all accustomed thoughts were far away  
As from a happy child the cares of men.  
The hour was sacred to those earlier gods  
Who are not active, but divinely wait  
The consummation of their first great deeds,  
Unfolding still and blessing hours serene.  
Presently I was gazing on a boy,  
(Though whence he came my mind had not perceived).  
Twelve or thirteen he seemed, with clinging feet  
Poised on a boulder, and against the sea  
Set off. His wide-brimmed hat of straw was arched  
Over his massed black and abundant curls  
By orange ribbon tied beneath his chin;  
Around his arms and shoulders his sole dress,  
A cloak, was all bunched up. He leapt, and lighted  
Upon the boulder just beneath; there swayed,  
Re-poised,  
And perked his head like an inquisitive bird,  
As gravely happy; of all unconscious save  
His body's aptness for its then employment;  
His eyes intent on shells in some clear pool  
Or choosing where he next will plant his feet.  
Again he leaps, his curls against his hat  
Bounce up behind. The daintiest thing alive,  
He rocks awhile, turned from me towards the sea;  
Unseen I might devour him with my eyes.  
At last he stood upon a ledge each wave  
Spread with a sheet of foam four inches deep;  
He gazing at them saw them disappear  
And reappear all shining and refreshed:  
Then raised his head, beheld the ocean stretched

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

But tell me, is he tutor to that boy?

Damon:

He is an elder brother to the lad.

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

And loved before men of more kindness!

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

My brain lights up to see thee happy! wait,  
It may be I can give some notion how

Our poet spoke:

'Damon, the best of life is in thine eyes--  
Worship of promise-laden beauty. Seems he not  
The god of this fair scene?

Those waves claim such a master as that boy;  
And these green slopes have waited till his feet  
Should wander them, to prove they were not spread  
In wantonness. What were this flower's prayer  
Had it a voice? The place behind his ear  
Would brim its cup with bliss and overbrim;  
Oh, to be worn and fade beside his cheek!--  
'In love and happy, Delphis; and the boy?'--  
'Loves and is happy'--

You hale from?'--

'tina;

We have been out two days and crossed this ridge,  
West of Mount Mycon's head. I serve his father,  
A farmer well-to-do and full of sense,  
Who owns a grass-farm cleared among the pines  
North-west the cone, where even at noon in summer,  
The slope it falls on lengthens a tree's shade.  
To play the lyre, read and write and dance  
I teach this lad; in all their country toil  
Join, nor ask better fare than cheese, black bread,  
Butter or curds, and milk, nor better bed  
Than litter of dried fern or lentisk yields,  
Such as they all sleep soundly on and dream,  
(If e'er they dream) of places where it grew,--  
Where they have gathered mushrooms, eaten berries,  
Or found the sheep they lost, or killed a fox,  
Or snared the kestrel, or so played their pipes  
Some maid showed pleasure, sighed, nay even wept.  
There to be poet need involve no strain,  
For though enough of coarseness, dung--nay, nay,  
And suffering too, be mingled with the life,  
'Tis wedded to such air,  
Such water and sound health!

What else might jar or fret chimes in attuned  
Like satyr's cloven hoof or lorn nymph's grief  
In a choice ode. Though lust, disease and death,  
As everywhere, are cruel tyrants, yet  
They all wear flowers, and each sings a song  
Such as the hilly echo loves to learn.'

'At last then even Delphis knows content?'

'Damon, not so:

This life has brought me health but not content.  
That boy, whose shouts ring round us while he flings  
Intent each stone toward yon shining object  
Afloat inshore ... I eat my heart to think  
How all which makes him worthy of more love  
Must train his ear to catch the siren croon  
That never else had reached his upland home!  
And he who failed in proof, how should he arm

Another against perils? Ah, false hope  
And credulous enjoyment! How should I,  
Life's fool, while wakening ready wit in him,  
Teach how to shun applause and those bright eyes  
Of women who pour in the lap of spring  
Their whole year's substance? They can offer  
To fill the day much fuller than I could,  
And yet teach night surpass it. Can my means  
Prevent the ruin of the thing I cherish?  
What cares Zeus for him? Fate despises love.  
Why, lads more exquisite, brimming with promise,  
A thousand times have been lost for the lack  
Of just the help a watchful god might give;  
But which the best of fathers, best of mothers,  
Of friends, of lovers cannot quite supply.  
Powers, who swathe man's virtue up in weakness,  
Then plunge his delicate mind in hot desire,  
Preparing pleasure first and after shame  
To bandage round his eyes,--these gods are not  
The friends of men.'

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

I ne'er would harm thee; art thou not ashamed  
To treat thy conquest thus?'  
He shouted partly to drown the sea's noise, chiefly  
The nearing Delphis to disarm.  
His voice lost its assurance while he spoke,  
And, as he finished, quick to escape he turned;  
Thy son's eyes and that steady coming on,  
As he might see them over ruffled crests,  
Far better helped him swim  
Than ever in his life he swam before.  
Delphis passed by Amyntas;  
Hipparchus was o'ertaken,  
Cuffed, ducked and shaken;  
In vain he clung about his angry foe;  
Held under he perforce let go:  
I, fearing for his life, set up a whoop  
To bring cause and effect to thy son's mind,  
And in dire rage's room his sense returned.  
He towed Hipparchus back like one he'd saved  
From drowning, laid him out upon that ledge  
Where late Amyntas stood, where now he kneeled  
Shivering, alarmed and mute.  
Delphis next set the drowned man's mouth to drain;  
We worked his arms, for I had joined them; soon  
His breathing recommenced; we laid him higher  
On sun-warmed turf to come back to himself;  
Then we climbed to the cart without a word.  
The sun had dried their limbs; they, putting on  
Their clothes, sat down; at length, I asked the lad  
What made him keen to pelt a stinking fish.  
Blushing he said, 'I wondered what it was.  
But that man, when he came to help, declared  
'Twould prove a dead sea-nymph, and we might see,  
By swimming out, how finely she was made.  
I did not half believe, yet when we found  
That foul stale fish, it made us laugh.' He smiled  
And watched Hipparchus spit and cough and groan.  
I moved to the car and unpacked bread and meat,  
A cheese, some fruit, a skin of wine, two bowls.  
Amyntas was all joy to see such things;  
Ran off and pulled acanthus for our plates;  
Chattering, he helped me set all forth,--was keen  
To choose rock basin where the wine might cool;  
Approved, was full as happy as I to praise:  
And most he pleased me, when he set a place  
For poor Hipparchus. Thus our eager work,  
While Delphis, in his thoughts retired, sat frowning,  
Grew like a home-conspiracy to trap  
The one who bears the brunt of outside cares  
Into the glow of cheerfulness that bathes  
The children and the mother,--happy not  
To foresee winter, short-commons or long debts,  
Since they are busied for the present meal,--

Too young, too weak, too kind, to peer ahead,  
Or probe the dark horizon bleak with storms.  
Oh! I have sometimes thought there is a god  
Who helps with lucky accidents when folk  
Join with the little ones to chase such gloom.  
That chance which left Hipparchus with no clothes,  
Surely divinity was ambushed in it?  
When he must put on Chloe's, Amyntas rocked  
With laughter, and Hipparchus, quick to use  
A favourable gust, pretends confusion  
Such as a farmer's daughter red-faced shows  
If in the dance her dress has come unpinned.  
She suddenly grows grave; yet, seeing there  
Friends only, stoops behind a sister-skirt.  
Then, having set to rights the small mishap,  
Holding her screener's elbows, round her shoulder  
Peeps, to bob back meeting a young man's eye.  
All, grateful for such laughs, give Hermes thanks.  
And even Delphis at Hipparchus smiled  
When, from behind me, he peeped bashful forth;  
Amyntas called him Baucis every time,  
Laughing because he was or was not like  
Some wench ...

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

Cydilla:

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

Delphis:

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

Cydilla:

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

Delphis:

How he watched me near the zenith?

Three years back

That dream pounced on me and began to soar;

Having been sick, my heart had found new lies;

The only thoughts I then had ears for were

Healthy, virtuous, sweet;

Jaded town-wastrel,

A country setting was the sole could take me

Three years back.

Damon might have guessed

From such a dizzy height

What fall was coming.

Cydilla:

Ah my boy, my boy!

Damon:

Sit down, be patient, let us hear and aid;--

Has aught befallen Amyntas?

Delphis:

Would he were dead!

Would that I had been brute enough to slay him!--

Great Zeus, Hipparchus had so turned his head,

His every smile and word

As we sat by our fire, stung my fool's heart.--

How we laughed to see him curtsy,

Fidget strings about his waist,--

Giggle, his beard caught in the chlamys' hem

Drawing it tight about his neck, 'just like

Our Baucis.' Could not sleep

For thinking of the life they lead in towns;

He said so: when, at last,

He sighed from dreamland, thoughts

I had been day-long brooding

Broke into vision.

A child, a girl,

Beautiful, nay more than others beautiful,

Not meant for marriage, not for one man meant,

You know what she will be;

At six years old or seven her life is round her;

A company, all ages, old men, young men,

Whose vices she must prey on.  
And the bent crone she will be is there too,  
Patting her head and chuckling prophecies.--  
O cherry lips, O wild bird eyes,  
O gay invulnerable setter-at-nought  
Of will, of virtue--  
Thou art as constant a cause as is the sea,  
As is the sun, as are the winds, as night,  
Of opportunities not only but events;--  
The unalterable past  
Is full of thy contrivance,  
Aphrodite,  
Goddess of ruin!

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

I taught myself to rhyme; the trick will cling.  
Ah, Damon, day-lit vision is more dread  
Than those which suddenly replace the dark!  
When the dawn filtered through our tent of boughs  
I saw him closely wrapped in his grey cloak,  
His head upon a pile of caked thin leaves  
Whose life had dried up full two years ago.  
Their flakes shook in the breath from those moist lips;  
The vow his kiss would seal must prove, I knew  
As friable as that pale ashen fritter;  
It had more body than reason dare expect  
From that so beautiful creature's best intent.  
He waking found me no more there; and wanders  
Through ðna's woods to-day  
Calling at times, or questioning charcoal burners,  
Till he shall strike a road shall lead him home;  
Yet all his life must be spent as he spends  
This day in whistling, wondering, singing, chatting,  
In the great wood, vacant and amiable.

Damon:

Can it be possible that thou desertest  
Thy love, thy ward, the work of three long years,  
Because chance, on an April holiday  
Has filled this boy's talk with another man,  
And wonder at another way of life?

Worse than a woman's is such jealousy;  
The lad must live!

Delphis:

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

Damon:

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

Delphis:

Where is the Athens that Pericles loved?  
Where are the youths that were Socrates' friends?  
There was a town where all learnt  
What the wisest had taught!  
Why had crude Sparta such treasonous force?  
Could Philip of Macedon  
Breed a true Greek of his son?  
What honour to conquer a world  
Where Alcibiades failed,  
Lead half-drilled highland hordes  
Whose lust would inherit the wise?  
There is nothing art's industry shaped  
But their idleness praising it mocked.  
Thus Fate re-assumed her command  
And laughed at experienced law.  
What ails man to love with such pains?  
Why toil to create in the mind  
Of those who shall close in his grave  
The best that he is and has hoped?  
The longer permission he has,  
The nobler the structure so raised,  
The greater its downfall. Fools, fools,  
Where is a town such as Pericles ruled?

Where youths to replace those whom Socrates loved?

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

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

Yet wearied peoples each in turn awake  
From virtue, as a man from his brief love,  
And, roughly shaken, face the useless truth;  
No answer to brute fact has e'er been found.  
Slaves of your slaves, caged in your furnished rooms,  
Ushered to meals when reft of appetite--  
Though hungry, bound to wait a stated hour--

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

Cydilla:

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

Damon:

Mad--yes--mad as cruelty!

\* \* \* \* \*

Poor, poor Cydilla! was it then to this

That all my tale was prologue?  
Think of Amyntas, think of that poor boy,  
Bereaved as we are both bereaved! Come, come,  
Find him, and say that Love himself has sent us  
To offer our poor service in his stead.

Cydilla:

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

\* \* \* \* \*

RONALD ROSS

HESPERUS

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

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

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

Art thou a tear left by the exiled day

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

The disenchanting vapours hide thee fast;  
The watery twilight fades and night comes on;  
One lingering moment more and thou art gone,  
Lost in the rising sea of clouds that cast  
Their inundations o'er the darkening air;  
And wild the night wind wails the lightless world's despair.

\* \* \* \* \*

EDMUND BEALE SARGANT

#### THE CUCKOO WOOD

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

Magic paths there are that cross;  
Some beset with jewelled moss  
And boughs all bare; where others run,  
Bluebells bathe in mist and sun  
Past a clearing filled with clumps  
Of primrose round the nutwood stumps;  
All as gay as gay can be,

And bordered with dog-mercury,  
The wizard flower, the wizard green,  
Like a Persian carpet seen.  
Brown, dead bracken lies between,  
And wrinkled leaves, whence fronds of fern  
Still untwist and upward turn.  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could  
Issue from this wizard wood,  
Half of green, and half of brown,  
Unless he laid his senses down.

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

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

Why for a whispered doubt should I  
Shun that other beech-tree high,

Red and watchful, still and bare,  
With a thousand spears in air,  
Guarding yet its treasured leaf  
From storm and hail and winter's grief?  
Unregarded on the ground  
Leaves of yester-year abound,  
For what is autumn's gold to one  
That hoards a life scarce yet begun?  
Let me so renew my youth,  
I defend it, nail and tooth,  
Rooting deep and lifting high.  
For this my dead leaves hiss and sigh  
And glow as on the downward road  
To the dog-snake's dread abode.  
Noxious things of earth and air,  
Get you hence, for I prepare  
To flaunt my beauty in the sun  
When all beside me are undone.  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Pan shall see  
The surge of my virginity  
Overtop the sobered glade.  
Luminous and unafraid  
Near his sacred oak I'll spread  
Lures to tempt him from his bed:  
His couch, his lair his form shall be  
By none but by the fair beech-tree.

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

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Forth I creep,  
When the flowers fall asleep,  
And upgather odours rare  
Floating on the misty air,

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

Welcome, welcome, cloudless night,  
Is our labour ended quite?  
Are the mortal and the tree  
Now made one in ecstasy,  
One in foretaste of the dawn?  
Crescent moon, sink, sink outworn!  
Stars be buried, stars be born,  
Mount and dip to tell aright  
The doings of the morrow's light!  
Mists, assemble, hide me quite,  
Till the sun with growing strength  
Grips your veils, and length by length  
Tears them down from head to foot;  
Then to the challenge I am put!

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

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

Tell me, busy, busy glade,  
Shifting aye in light and shade,  
Are the dryads peeping forth,  
More in wonder than in wrath,  
Each beneath her own dear tree  
Parting her hair that she may see  
How queens put on their sovereignty?  
All are come of Pan's own race,  
Nymphs and satyrs fill the place,  
Necks outstretched and ears a-twitching,  
That Pan may know of all this witching.  
Heedless stumble the goatfeet  
Till four-footed things retreat.  
Cries of Ah! and Ay! and Eh!  
Scare the forest birds away,  
And their notes that rang so clear  
At dawn, you now shall rarely hear:  
Only a robin here and there  
Pitches high his trembling voice  
In a challenge to rejoice.

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

Tell me, silent, silent glade,  
All in light that once was shade,  
All in shade that once was light,  
How went the creatures from my sight?

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

Tell me, whispering, whispering glade,  
Am I eager or afraid?  
Do I wish the god to come?  
What shall I say if he be dumb?  
Tell me, wherefore hiss and sigh  
Those shrivelled leaves? Has Pan gone by?  
Why do your thousand pools of light  
Gaze like eyes that fade at night?  
Pan has but twain, Pan's eyes are bright!  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! See, yon stakes  
Gape and grin like fangs of snakes;  
Not snakes nor hounds are mouthing thus;  
Pan himself is watching us.  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Now  
The god is breasting the hill-brow.  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Pan is near:  
Joy runs trembling back to fear.  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! All my blood  
Knocks through the heart whose every thud  
Chokes me, blinds me, drains my madness.  
As one half-drowned, I feel life's gladness  
Ooze from each pore. Towards the sun  
Downhill I reel that fain would run.  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Thornless seem  
Briars that part as in a dream.  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Hazel-boughs  
Hurt not though they blood the brows.

Cuckoo! In a meadow prone  
At last I lie, my wits my own;  
And in my hand I clasp the flower  
To counteract that magic power;  
The cuckoo-flower, in a lilac sheet  
Under body, head and feet.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

JAMES STEPHENS

IN THE POPPY FIELD

Mad Patsy said, he said to me,  
That every morning he could see  
An angel walking on the sky;  
Across the sunny skies of morn  
He threw great handfuls far and nigh  
Of poppy seed among the corn;  
And then, he said, the angels run  
To see the poppies in the sun.

A poppy is a devil weed,  
I said to him--he disagreed;  
He said the devil had no hand  
In spreading flowers tall and fair  
Through corn and rye and meadow land,

By garth and barrow everywhere:  
The devil has not any flower,  
But only money in his power.

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

#### IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

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

#### THE LONELY GOD

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

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

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

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

'Twas good to quit at evening His great throne,  
To lay His crown aside, and all alone

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

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

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

And so for ever, day and night the same,  
Years flying swiftly nowhere, like a game  
Played random by a madman, without end  
Or any reasoned object but to spend

What is unspendable--Eternal Woe!  
O Weariness of Time that fast or slow  
Goes never further, never has in view  
An ending to the thing it seeks to do,  
And so does nothing: merely ebb and flow,  
From nowhere into nowhere, touching so  
The shores of many stars and passing on,  
Careless of what may come or what has gone.

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

And so, He thought, in Mine own Image I  
Have made a man, remote from Heaven high  
And all its humble angels: I have poured  
My essence in his nostrils: I have cored  
His heart with My own spirit; part of Me,  
His mind with laboured growth unceasingly  
Must strive to equal Mine; must ever grow

By virtue of My essence till he know  
Both good and evil through the solemn test  
Of sin and retribution, till, with zest,  
He feels his godhead, soars to challenge Me  
In Mine own Heaven for supremacy.

Through savage beasts and still more savage clay,  
Invincible, I bid him fight a way  
To greater battles, crawling through defeat  
Into defeat again: ordained to meet  
Disaster in disaster; prone to fall,  
I prick him with My memory to call  
Defiance at his victor and arise  
With anguished fury to his greater size  
Through tribulation, terror, and despair.  
Astounded, he must fight to higher air,  
Climb battle into battle till he be  
Confronted with a flaming sword and Me.

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

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

And through eternity, adown the slope  
Of never-ending time, compact of hope,  
Of zest and young enjoyment, I and She  
Will walk together, sowing jollity  
Among the raving stars, and laughter through  
The vacancies of Heaven, till the blue  
Vast amplitudes of space lift up a song,  
The echo of our presence, rolled along

And ever rolling where the planets sing  
The majesty and glory of the King.  
Then conquered, thou, Eternity, shalt lie  
Under My hand as little as a fly.

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

Then stooping to the hut--a beehive round--  
God entered in and saw upon the ground  
The dusty garland, Adam, (learned to weave)  
Had loving placed upon the head of Eve  
Before the terror came, when joyous they  
Could look for God at closing of the day  
Profound and happy. So the Mighty Guest  
Rent, took, and placed the blossoms in His breast.  
'This,' said He gently, 'I shall show My queen  
When she hath grown to Me in space serene,  
And say "'twas worn by Eve.'" So, smiling fair,  
He spread abroad His wings upon the air.

\* \* \* \* \*

ROBERT CALVERLEY TREVELYAN

DIRGE

Gone is he now.  
One flower the less  
Is left to make  
For thee less lone  
Earth's wilderness,

Where thou  
Must still live on.

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

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

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