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ON THE HILL

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THE WANDERER OF LIVERPOOL	
POETRY: A LECTURE	

# ON THE HILL

*by*

JOHN MASEFIELD



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## CONTENTS

ON THE HILL. PROLOGUE	I
THE HILL	2
ON THE HILL. STORY	5
JOUNCER'S TUMP	23
CRY BABY COTTAGE	30
THE WIND	36
FIRE	37
BLOWN HILCOTE MANOR	39
A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS	41
CONSTANT LOVER	72
TRISTAN AND ISOLT	77
COUNT ARNOLDOS	89
TBE LADY ALDA	91
OF THE MOOR KING WHO LOST ALHAMA	94
OF THE MOORISH KING WHO LOST GRANADA	97
THE BANNER OF THE CROSS	99
ROSE OF BEAUTY	106
BRIGHT DARLING	107
LOVELY MARQUISE	109
SAILORMAN BOLD	111
THE WIND OF THE SEA	113
DEAD MAN'S BRIDGE	114
A MESSENGER SPEECH	115
THE END OF THE ILIAD	118

## ON THE HILL

No I know not;  
Yet the framework has a beauty and an order  
Over which illusion passes in the never-counted leaves,  
That are whirled away in Autumn, if they go not  
From Nature any further than the border  
That re-gives as it receives.

Bare the hill stood.  
Rabbit-scuffled chalk was on its trenching;  
And the leafless beeches listened to the silence of the sky.  
Purple as a cloud of thunder brooded Kills Wood;  
In the Vale, a running white of smoke was blenching  
As the West Express went by.

No; I knew not;  
But the setting had a vastness and a power,  
And the long illusion passing never passed, though  
    seemed to pass.  
It was green a little season, and then grew not:  
Fruited sometimes; often never came to flower,  
Then was wind above dead grass.

No; I see not  
More than this, a living greatness of procession,  
Part of infinite procession hurled in fire through the sky,  
Bearing things that seem to be, then seem to be not,  
Human things, in living faulty with obsession,  
Leaving anguish when they die.

## THE HILL

This remains here.  
This was here, I well remember, over fifty years ago.  
Subject to untiring Nature as to many dying creatures,  
Altered always, crop and colour, but preserving living  
features  
That we love and seem to know.

Here the Norther  
Brings its death upon the bastion till the laurustinus dies.  
Here the Easter comes with coughings and the tower  
death-bell tolling,  
Here the Souther drives the rain-streaks out of darkness  
over-rolling,  
And the Wester clears the skies.

Thought is nothing  
To this scene on which the plant of man puts out its  
million leaves  
It has neither brain nor feeling; neither planning nor  
progression;  
Only infinite diversion of an on and on procession  
Hedless of what man believes.

I am of it.  
Know that I am wholly kin, if partly set astray.  
Know that in it is the healing of the sorrow of a nation,  
And the glory of deliverance from crime and usurpation  
With Eternity today

## THE HILL

Man is nothing  
To this quiet, full of power, to this effort, full of peace,  
Nothing, even as a rebel, blind with anger and forgettal;  
Nothing, even as a turmoil that his madness cannot settle  
That his death makes swiftly cease.

But the power  
And its quiet and its effort reassert a silent sway.  
Man by man a spirit listens, soul by soul, a mortal answers,  
Then a cry for better order moves the fren2y of the  
dancers  
And the madresses obey.

I am gazing  
Into what is man's foundation, the enduring scene that  
stands,  
Comforted by sun and water, glad of either in their  
season,  
Something that outlasts our minute, and has majesty for  
reason,  
While its granites wear to sands.

Much I wonder.  
Much I long for this to speak, for an Incarnate Scene  
to come  
With a word for me to utter: so I ponder; so I hearken,  
Watching closely that I see it ere my fading eye-balls  
darken,  
And repeat, ere I be dumb.

All my knowledge,  
All my being is summed up in this, the scene, that is a  
friend  
That is comfort through the evil and the agony of living,

## THE HILL

That, if heeding, and if judging, seems forgetting and  
forgiving  
And will seem so to the end.

Here I leave it.  
Here it leaves me in the twilight, the imperfect wax it  
prest;  
Knowing this, that it has shaped me, or mis-shaped me,  
for the telling  
Of the purpose of the spirit that possesses this, in-  
dwelling,  
Knowing change, but never rest.

Is it heedless?  
Is it heartless, or unjudging, or forgetful, or immune?  
Do we apprehend its nature, can we comprehend its  
power,  
We, as mortal as the sparrow, and as fading as the  
flower,  
And as changing as the Moon?

Let them answer  
Who reply to every question, as befits an iron time.  
I can only see a valley with a million grass-blades blowing  
And a hill with clouds above it whither many larks are  
going  
Singing paeans as they climb.

## ON THE HILL

I walked the wayless downs again  
Last moonless midnight in the rain.  
There were no signs: there was no track;  
The heavens dark on the downs black.  
The hopeless rain upon my face  
The only guide out of the place;  
(That is, while the wind held, that blew  
Against, and froze, and wet me through).

Then, there, atop the lonely heave,  
(Where Murder walks, as men believe),  
That swelling in the down that curves  
And nests the skylark in its turves;  
That desolate deserted rise  
Of blackness up above my eyes,  
A light glimmered, a tiny light;  
And someone called there in the night:

"O friend ... is anyone within?"  
That hill-top is the Dead Man's Whin,  
With nothing on it but the bare  
Short worthless grass and going air  
Where never kestrel finds a mouse—  
But now, there seemed to be a house  
Black on the hill-top, with uncertain  
Light moving on a window-curtain;  
And some-one, nearer to it, cried  
"The light there. . . . May I come inside?"

## ON THE HILL

I stopped there, in the rain a space.  
Whose house was this in Dead Man's Place?  
Who, if not Murder, walked the dark,  
With even the dogs too wet to bark?  
What hand would open to the crier?  
What hand grow redder at the fire?  
But was not all a dream? for none  
Lived on that hill, not any-one , . .  
There was no house, and yet, I heard  
Bolts drawn at door where someone stirred.

I heard let fall a wooden bar,  
A figure held a door ajar,  
A man's voice called  
    "Who's there? Come in."

Tired and wetted to the skin,  
I hurried after him who had hailed,  
(A spare man with a hooding veiled)  
And as he entered, followed, too,  
"Go in," the host said. Then he drew  
The wooden bar against the night  
And marshalled us into the light.

It was an earth-floored cowman's hut  
With tiles on rafters roughly cut;  
Unceiled and red the tiles, and pent  
In steep slope somewhat like a tent,  
And at its lowest point, the walling  
Plainly shut-out a cattle-stalling,  
For, when beyond the wall, I heard  
Uneasy cows that munched and stirred.  
A candle on a table spread  
Dim light upon the little shed,

## ON THE HILL

There seemed an inner-room shut-to  
By curtainings that had been blue.  
All was as rude as in a ship  
A red clay saucer held the dip;  
The table was two planks, and three  
Low stools were all its luxury.  
Horn cups, an earthen jug of wine,  
With bread, were set for folk to dine.

As for the host and hostess there,  
Neither was in the least aware  
Of me, behind the wandering man;  
They poured him wine, and then began  
A talk that rather seemed to be  
Part of the hill-top's memory  
Than something spoken heart to heart.  
I listened in a time apart  
Knowing, that they were deaf and blind  
To any-one of living kind  
That they were shut away from me  
In poetry's eternity.

He who had let us in, was one  
Born in the South, under the sun,  
A swarthy man, with dark clipped hair  
His bronze face shaven, and his air  
One of command, with thoughtful eyes  
That probed for truth with scrutinies.

His wife was Southern Greek: her face  
Was all a miracle of grace,  
Wherein sweet wisdom had set sign,  
Of all things lovely and benign.

## ON THE HILL

Both were of middle age, I guessed  
And both, though rudely housed, were dressed  
In woollens bearing marks of pride  
Bright purple hems two fingers wide.

This couple took the wanderer's hood,  
And bade him sit to drink and food,  
And now I saw the wanderer plain.  
His face of triumph over pain  
Of gladness of resolve, of light  
After sad searchings infinite,  
Itself was pleasure to behold.  
He seemed some twenty summers old.  
And winning to us, not as one  
Winning, from youth, but having won.

### *The Youth*

I thank you that you bid me stay.  
I have gone utterly astray  
Here on these downlands in the dark  
With never any track nor mark.

### *The Host*

Daylight will show a track. What quest  
Brings one from Athens so far West?

### *The Youth*

I come from Athens: it is true.

### *The Host*

As Chief here, I have heard of you.  
"A youth indifferent to danger,  
Who comes from strange lands seeking stranger,"  
Talk to us: tell us what you seek . . .  
I follow Truth: My wife is Greek.

## ON THE HILL

### *The Youth*

If both permit, I will attempt  
To tell the law seen, the dream dreamt.

Twenty years since, an Eastern man  
Entered your Province, and began  
To teach what none before had heard.  
And every hearing soul was stirred,  
The old to wrath, the young to praise.  
Who was he? Common rumour says  
An Indian teacher; or, at least,  
One knowing wisdom from the East.  
Some say, a Roman soldier's son,  
Borne by some girl in garrison.  
The rumours vary: no-one knows.

I never met the lucky those  
Who went about with him, and knew him.  
He taught . . . and then the Romans slew him  
For rousing people's spirits so.  
The Romans did not end him, though.  
His friends maintain that he survives,  
With all mankind's undying lives,  
Forever, near us, everywhere:  
That those who search, become aware  
That this is so; they enter in  
To Wisdom innocent of sin,  
And are in joy with him again.

On hearing this, I thought it vain;  
But yet, the men who told me this  
Had half-perceived some mysteries  
That this man's spirit had revealed.  
And words that he had uttered healed  
A sorrow that was killing me.

## ON THE HILL

And soon the teaching came to be  
The only way of life I know.

An inner prompting bids me go  
Wherever beaten sorrowers dwell,  
Wherever lostness is in hell  
To bring the heaven of my news;  
A heaven men may never lose.

So I have followed conquest here,  
To this, now Roman, desert drear,  
Where people hardly lived, but now,  
Live harder, sorrow more, and bow  
Under a foreign yoke, that bears  
Hard on slave-necks, but worse on theirs  
Who once were free as the winds blowing.  
Sorrow like theirs is worth the knowing,  
It is a present spur to irk  
My sloth to do my teacher's work;  
It makes me wholly feel and see  
A spirit-world surrounding me  
Using my heart and hand in ways  
That comfort man and give God praise.

### *The Host*

Report had led me to suppose  
That you were surely one of those  
Who follow this new Eastern way.  
I sympathise with all you say.

I am the man who tried, and cast,  
Your teacher, the enthusiast;  
I sentenced him that he should die.  
"I murdered him judicially,"  
Some critics say with bitter voice.

## ON THE HILL

My Roman Office left no choice.  
The man was being hailed as King,  
Setting the city rioting;  
And I, with few men under me,  
Was final, as I had to be.

I tried to gather what he meant,  
Why riots followed where he went.  
I judged, he made no royal claim  
Himself, nor taught with any aim  
Save, to change values and find truth.  
He was not even stirring youth,  
His followers were men mature:  
That he brought rioting was sure,  
Something about him made him seem  
A saviour long foretold, I deem.  
Such sparks make wicked fire roar.

Pd seen the sort of man before.  
They go into the desert-hills,  
Where the sun blinds and the heat kills,  
And there, alone with stars and death,  
Night-frosts, and daytime's burning breath  
The thorns and asps and splitting stone  
They find what they call "God alone,"  
And then return to tell of Him.

It is not any madman's whim;

Something they find, as this one did.  
Loneliness shows what living hid.  
But what a just man apprehends  
Is often turned to evil ends  
By scoundrels such as ever plan  
To wreck the governance of man

## ON THE HILL

That their own devilry may rule;  
To such, your teacher seemed a tool  
Most useful, as I judge; and those  
Who help, or profit, Caesar's foes,  
I, who am Caesar's soldier, slay;  
Now, here, as yonder, yesterday.

A reaper often cuts a flower.

### *The Hostess*

The cock has clattered out the hour,  
Let me confess a woman's share  
In what befell the teacher there.

You may remember, I besought  
That you should spare that man of thought.  
Such mercy could not be, it seemed,  
However terribly I dreamed.  
I could not stoop to any deed  
To thwart what Caesar had decreed,  
And when I heard he had to die,  
My Lord, a shattered soul was I.

My Greek maid, Helen, felt with me.  
She said, "Death falls by destiny."

And whaf she did I hardly know,  
But this, she told me long ago,  
After her marriage, when I last  
Had speech with her, the day we passed  
In port at Myra, where she dwells.  
Some of it, common rumour tells.

Helen was beautiful to see,  
And many worshippers had she

## ON THE HILL

Among your men: and deep regard  
From that old sergeant of your guard.

She said, the sergeant pledged his word  
To help, if any chance occurred,  
But warned her, it was death to *try*  
To rescue men condemned to die,  
And said "Yet at a feast like this  
Some little slender hope there is:  
Because the townsmen, every-one,  
Will be indoors by set of sun;  
None but my picket will be there  
To spy or make the folk aware,  
Thus giving chance we may contrive  
To bring the teacher down alive.  
So much will be the picket's task,  
To do as told and never ask  
(And never tell, be very sure,  
Lest they be crucified past cure).

He said "My girl, strange things are done  
By soldiers underneath the sun,  
It *may* be, that a squad of old  
Has saved a man for love or gold;  
And those who did such shameful sin  
Prepared a tomb to hide him in.  
Could you do that?"

And Helen could. . . .

A certain Greek, I understood,  
A follower of the teacher, had  
A vault new-hollowed and was glad  
To give this place, and gold beside  
And risk the being crucified,



## ON THE HILL

### *The Host*

The sergeant certified him dead.

### *The Hostess*

Strange things long-service sergeants swear.  
A whisper soon was everywhere  
Throughout the city, that his wraith  
Had come to people, bringing faith  
In life, after the body's end.

### *The Host*

I recollect the rumours, friend,  
And had my doubts, but left it so,  
As something better not to know  
Unless offence occurred again.  
The man had beauty in his brain.

The sergeant and your maid, per die,  
Might very well have ruined me;  
And still not saved the man;

and yet ...

Something I cannot well forget . . .  
He said, about my destiny,  
Of power being given me,  
As by eternal justices . . .  
Can men serve Rome and do amiss?

### *The Youth*

Never condemn yourselves, but know  
He understood you long ago.  
You are the civilised, who stand  
With light and dark one on each hand  
And are well-bred, well-mannered, true  
And upright in the tasks you do . . .

## ON THE HILL

He was the light, and lived in light  
All-knowing, lovely, infinite,  
And universal, everywhere,  
For those who hope, for those who dare,  
To cease not seeking till they find  
All spirit flooding full the mind  
With utter selfless gladness given,  
The very God vouchsafing Heaven.

Men in my presence have wept tears  
Remembering their ecstatic years  
When they could hear him every day.  
They weep, because they brought away  
So little of the marvellous view  
Each phrase, or story, opened-to.  
They say "When we were with him there,  
The very Heaven was laid bare.  
His presence made us understand  
The universe from grains of sand.  
Though now we wonder what he meant.  
He was a light that Heaven sent."

### *The Host*

A young man follows flags that stream;  
In middle age he finds them dream.  
In older ages every zest  
Is but a habit sick for rest.  
When all the eagles have come down  
And old delight is out of town,  
Does what your teacher knew endure?  
Would he have found his Heaven sure,  
Had he grown old as I have grown?  
Would he, in middle age, have known  
This light, this gladness, that you praise?  
Could they have stood the working days

## ON THE HILL

And anxious nights of thirty years?  
Nay, by all record it appears  
That none of you take any heed  
Of ordinary human need,  
As food or marriage, and the care  
Of children, and the wear and tear  
Of getting the State's service done.  
Or for the thrift that every one  
Should practice against helpless age.

I, too, went through your present stage  
Long since, and felt, (even I) its thrill.  
Felt it as enemy to kill  
Lest it should tempt me to betray  
My spirit from the Roman way.

The Roman way is not apart,  
Enjoyed in the ecstatic heart.  
It is within the world a scheme  
Brought into being out of dream  
Brought, by great virtue, to endure  
Through human change as something sure.  
Something of speech and law and order,  
Making men one within a border,  
Kept reasonably safe from those  
Whose savageries are human foes.  
Life is a bitter thing to most.  
This dying body is the host  
To strong affections and to thought  
That death and savagery make nought.  
The Roman way has this for fruits:—  
It postpones death and bridles brutes.  
It gives an equal law applied  
So surely that our subjects bide

## ON THE HILL

In safety, and can safely go  
To all lands that our eagles know.  
In all those lands the cities rise  
With all that human mind can prize  
Books, thoughts, religions, music, arts,  
All intercourse of minds and hearts  
All health and food of body, too.  
That system has created you  
And brought you west. If you turn east  
For fifteen hundred miles at least  
Our road and rule make smooth the way.  
A hundred million souls a day  
Live by that Rome, without whose hand  
Those millions would be scattered sand.  
I feel, that to maintain such power  
Not through a chance ecstatic hour  
But year by year through life and death  
Is man's best thanks-giving for breath.  
Service in such a cause atones  
For life's long hell in thorns and stones.

### *The Hostess*

You ever gave your service thus  
To Rome, the Eagle over us.  
You bring a safety to mankind.  
But man has madness in his mind.  
A paven road or gathered tax  
But partly yield him what he lacks.  
He longs to tread untrodden snow  
Where none but the immortals go.  
A music does but make him long  
For ruin from the Siren's song.  
He seeks the subtle link that runs  
From dead dust to ecstatic suns,

## ON THE HILL

Change is his essence; not content.  
But where so'er that teacher went  
Change followed in the heart, like spring,  
Rome is my State, and you, my King,  
But He was leader into peace,  
He made the bitternesses cease,  
The littlenesses fade, the gloom  
Seem but a necessary room  
Soon passed through on a starry way.

### *The Youth*

I listen mute to all you say.  
You saw and heard him: I, alas,  
Was but an infant when he was.  
Sir, all the virtue Rome has spread,  
Keeps mankind housed and clad and fed,  
O, it is much; beyond count more  
Then empire ever wrought before.  
But yet, may I attempt to tell  
Where kernel fails a splendid shell?  
Do not some conquered subjects feel  
As grain ground underneath a heel?  
Do not earth's scoundrels seek a chance  
To snatch the great inheritance?  
To sei2e the purple for the ends  
Of pirate-kings with robber-friends?

This lady, like myself, is Greek.  
Our gods were on the snowy peak;  
In Spring's divinest light; in flowers;  
In mountain glens where the tarn cowers;  
In the mad valley of bright flood  
Where beauty shudders in the blood;  
None but the blindest failed to see  
The omnipresent deity.

## ON THE HILL

And some revealed that loveliness  
As far as mortal can express.  
My teacher, whom that spirit fed,  
Knew it as life and daily bread,  
As dwelling-place, as inly known  
That being there is Life alone,  
Wisdom, Direction, Beauty, Power,  
Transfiguring man's little hour.

Sir, in a moment that there came,  
My teacher called me by my name,  
And bade me give myself away.  
"Keep nothing but the night and day  
But break your selfish heart by giving."  
Such is the order of my living.  
And O, *my* living teacher knew.  
I wind upon a shining clue  
That brings me brightness as I wind,  
And certainty that I shall find  
The light itself, the very Word  
The deathless told-of Tree, the Bird  
Singing amid the burning spice  
**O**f Paradise, of Paradise.  
The fiery wisdom that is Heaven.

\* \* \*

A cock was startled from his sweven,  
There in some unseen perch; he crowed;  
His hens fluttered: a heifer lowed;  
Than all was still on the dark wold.  
But now the light had been foretold,  
And that rude room and that tense three  
Remained no longer clear to me . . .  
And though from each I craved a word  
I knew they neither saw nor heard . . .

ON THE HILL

Nay . . . were not there ... I was again  
On the lone hill under the rain  
In the dark night where beetles sped  
When the wet grass bent at my tread.

There were no stars, there was no light  
Save where a gash of chalk was white,  
Nothing but waves of downland dark  
With no owl hunting for the lark,  
No tip-toed vixen with her cubs  
No badger grumbling after grubs  
Nothing but downland going by  
In darkness, till it touched the sky,  
The rain that fell, the wind that went  
In the old thorns, with its lament.  
The vastness of the emptiness  
Was exquisite in its excess.  
Between the zenith and my head  
Was nought but spiritual bread,  
Nothing that man could wrong or seize  
Or fill with folly or disease.

Then, as I stumbled on, the east  
Seemed, in the dark, where night was least;  
And now I neared the dip, and stood  
East of the ruined larchen wood,  
And watched the scene emerge.

The rain

In its last showers left the plain;  
The clouds both broke and lifted: light  
Brought the remembered hills to sight,  
And gleamed upon the flooded plough.  
The blackbirds were awaking now.

## ON THE HILL

A pale sun, after standing still,  
Shook off the wood upon the hill,  
And lifted into clouds that swirled  
Like smoke from a dissolving world.  
Blue quiet visibly prepared.

Then, from the flooded plough there fared  
A myriad host of dark wings swift  
Urged by the instant soul to lift  
In blackness against sky: the crowd  
One surge of hurry crying loud,  
Dark as March rooks: and then, O wonder,  
They wheeled, and all the whiteness under  
Was sky-burst, flinging fire of light  
Unbelievable, infinite.

O, turn, dark, frightened wings, again,  
O, gleam, thou gold-cock on the vane,  
Shine, burn, give promise, utter hope,  
That fetters break, that prisons ope,  
That spirits exquisite from thought  
Will bring to man, as once they brought,  
Faces, like theirs, so full of calm  
That only seeing them is balm.

O bright wings, fly to us; O birds  
Speak to us those few living words  
That are the Bird, the Fire, the Spice,  
Of Paradise, of Paradise.

## JOUNCER'S TUMP

My grand-dad said, to Sis and me,  
"In'yonder tump, or mound,  
An ancient hero buried be,  
With gold all wrapped around:—  
A thousand pound."

My grand-dad died, as reason bade,  
Since man but mortal is.  
The only thing of him that stayed,  
Was just that word of his,  
To me and Sis.

And I went east and then went west,  
A soldier of the Queen;  
Sis married twice, and then had rest  
As though she hadn't been  
Upon the scene.

And I, returning from the war,  
One-legged, (that went with two),  
Found none to love or sorrow for,  
And nought for me to do,  
But barley-brew.

So, sitting in the HOB & JILL  
At my eleventh cup,  
"In Jouncer's Tump" (I said to Bill)  
There lies a golden tup.  
Let's dig him up."

## JOUNCER'S TUMP

"Come on", said Bill: the rest said "No . . .  
Its ill to rouse the dead.  
What's put below should lay below  
Until the world is sped . . ."  
Much more they said.

But out went Bill and out went I  
Into the moonlit way  
The full moon revelled in the sky  
The tawny owl said "Hey , . .  
Hoo Hoo. Hurray."

So, pick and shovel being had,  
We went by the Red Lane  
To where the Jouncer's Tump stood sad  
Between a field of grain  
And Charles's Wain.

And when we saw it close at hand  
That great mound with its trees,  
So grim, it put us to a stand,  
For human marrows freeze  
At things like these.

For many hundred men had wrought  
To heap that barrow grim;  
And he, inside, though out of thought,  
Had once been passing trim,  
With life in him.

For otherwise, not thus would men  
Have piled such sods and stones  
High up, to half the county's ken,  
Above his breathless bones.  
This, the world owns.

## JOUNCER'S TUMP

This man had been a King indeed,  
And now, to break his tomb,  
Was something to make mortals heed . . .  
A cloud came by like doom  
And brought a gloom.

Then Bill: "It seems to me" (he said)  
"That yonder lies the door.  
There, where the rabbit burrows be.  
And what men venture for  
Leads to their score."

With that, he leapt into the ditch  
And picked, like a man mad,  
The Jouncer Barrow's sloping pitch . . .  
For Bill was a live lad.  
Great might he had.

And after scrabbling tons of earth  
Lo, there a doorway shewed,  
Ample for any mortal girth,  
In, to the King's abode,  
An open road.

Bill lit the candle in his hat  
And in he crawled and scraped  
We shovelled like the mole or rat  
And there the passage shaped  
The doorway gaped.

And when the fallen earth was cleared  
That long dead men had strown,  
A kind of corridor appeared,  
Empty and dry as bone  
In well laid stone.

## JOUNCER'S TUMP

Roofed with it, paved and walled; and we  
Pushed-in, but half in dread  
Of what our eyes might shortly see,  
And what might soon be said  
There, by the dead.

Then, lighting all the light we had,  
We reached the room four-square,  
In the grave's heart, and stood adrad  
At what we had laid bare,  
The dead King there.

For there . . . the first, this myriad year,  
Did our four eyes behold  
Big bones, a sword-hilt and a spear,  
Beneath a mail of gold  
As grand-dad told.

Then Bill, who feared not dead nor quick,  
After his first surprise,  
Said, "Take his hat for candle-stick,  
And now, to strip the prize,  
From where it lies."

So while the candles waved and dripped  
We did our robbers' deed,  
That golden coat of his we stripped,  
Urged to a double speed  
By fear and greed.

Then out we dragged it to the night,  
Before the east was gray,  
An owl glid to us into sight,  
And called and glid away,  
Hoo Hoo Hurray.

## JOUNCER'S TUMP

We shovelled out our marks and went  
Away, all mucked and hot.  
And Bill said, "Now, my first intent  
Is, put the spoil to pot,  
And melt the lot."

And this, ere daylight came, we did.  
We melted and we shared,  
And each his portion took and hid,  
Nor told what we had dared,  
Nor what had bared.

Yet, later, as I shook my sack,  
What seemed a coin of gold  
Fell on the flooring with a clack  
And on its edging rolled,  
Till I caught hold.

It was a coin, or link, or flake,  
Stamped with an ear of corn,  
A marvel of an ancient make  
By men of heretofore . . .  
None recent-born.

None, for a thousand years or two,  
Had had the skill to leave  
That golden corn-ear done so due,  
From some long-mouldering sheave.  
It made me grieve,

That neither of us once had seen  
That mail with any care;  
That neither knew what it had been  
Nor what its beauties were  
That we laid bare.

## JOUNCER'S TUMP

All of the coat, for all I knew  
Had once been subtly wrought  
Of links each beautiful and new  
Like this one, (as I thought)  
And now was nought.

I put the little link aside . . .  
And lo, an earnest drove  
Of angry men of law who tried  
To trace the treasure-trove,  
And did, by Jove.

For people of The HOB & JILL  
Had talked, and news had spread . . .  
The constables had taken Bill,  
"O wicked," (people said)  
To rob the dead,"

And both our shares of gold they took.  
They called us "Thief" and "Knave"  
For having dared to break and look  
Within a dead man's grave.  
Much jaw they gave.

They made us shut the barrow door  
And smooth the barrow side  
Much neater than it was before:—  
And talk went far and wide.  
At last it died.

But two strange things there be; the one  
That that lone golden link  
That I had saved, was somehow gone  
Through chance or theft or chink,  
Where, I can't think.

## JOUNCER'S TUMP

The other, that my grand-dad told  
Full forty years ago,  
About the hero wrapped in gold  
That we discovered so.  
How did he know?

For he had never searched the mound;  
None had, the scholars showed,  
Since first the King went underground,  
And Jouncer's Tump was strowed,  
For his abode.

And scholars said the golden King  
By what might still appear,  
Had slumbered there a little thing  
Of twice a thousand year,  
Or very near.

And how my grand-dad knew that fact,  
As fact we proved it be,  
Two thousand jears after the act,  
Not any man can see.  
It staggers me.

## CRY BABY COTTAGE

"Now, at last, we're really settled in the new house,"  
said her lover.  
You have had the day alone in it; now tell me how you  
sped.  
You have got the things in order, upon shelves or under  
cover;  
Such a trim house you have made me; sure, the best since  
we were wed."

"I am glad you like the place" she said, "Indeed, the  
house is charming.  
We will make the garden lovely and be happy night and  
day.  
But a strange thing seems to be here ... an unhappy,  
not alarming.  
For a lid le child seems weeping here and will not go away.

"I heard it first this morning, when you left me for the  
city.  
This afternoon I heard it twice, a doleful sound to hear.  
A little child who cries and cries and never meets with  
pity,  
**From there, beside the winding stair, or in the corner  
near.**

**I am sure, for Sarah heard it, and she said "I see, you  
hear it. . . ."**

## CRY BABY COTTAGE

Its what the tenants mostly hear at fire-lighting-time.  
And, mostly, people never mind; but some folk seem to  
fear it. ...  
There were strangers here, a long time since, there may  
have been a crime.

For a little boy they had, (they say); the step-son to the  
woman;  
The man's child, by a former wife; (or so the tale is  
strown)  
And nothing but the love of God can make a step-child  
human  
To the woman in the mother's place, with no child of  
her own.

They went away, the three of them, oh, while I was at  
Larken,  
Not seven yet, that summer-time, the Queen's First  
Jubilee.  
And ever since the child has cried when it begins to  
darken.  
They had the Rector to him once, to make him let it be"

So Sarah said, this afternoon; and now that night is  
closing,  
I feel a thing unhappy here; my darling, do not you?"  
"You mean, within the stairway?"  
"Yes. You feel it?"  
"I'm supposing  
That the fairy-tales of Sarah give an old-world house a  
grue——

## CRY BABY COTTAGE

"I'M not a sentimental man inclined to old wives' terrors  
A death, I look on as an end, whatever that may prove.  
When mortals cannot cry as flesh, how can they cry as  
spirits?

And how can throats give utterance, when breathings  
cease to move?

Forget old Sarah's gossippings, and see, the lights are  
lighted now,

The curtains drawn, the red ones, that we use when  
swallows go.

Your dearness makes me sorrowful for bachelors be-  
nighted now . . .

But what was that upon the stair? Did someone speak  
or no?"

"That is the noise I speak of"

"That? A boy must be there, fooling us. ...

Come out of that. . . . There's nothing there. ... It  
must be from out-side.

Or else, a spray of ivy blown. . . . No folly shall start  
ruling us. ...

Wait here, in case you hear his steps, if he attempts to  
hide. . . .

But, no; there's no-one in the yard, nor any ivy growing  
there. . . .

We cleared it, you remember . . . and the moonlight  
makes it plain . . .

The courtyard doors are bolted, so that no-one can be  
going there. . . .

Yet I heard a small boy sobbing there, and there he is  
again. . . .

## CRY BABY COTTAGE

It IS upon the stairway; very probably the panelling  
Is moved by peoples' footsteps into creaking like a cry...  
The feather-edging of a board may squeak within its  
    channelling  
And all the panels must be loose, the time being so dry—

But, no; it isn't channelling, nor panelling, nor any-  
thing . . .  
The wood is firm, or firm enough; besides, the night is  
still . . .  
We two are sure as Sarah of a sad and an uncanny thing....  
It seems to ask me for my help and give the help I will.

It seems to me ... does it, to you? to cry to us to liberate  
From cruelty and loneliness, from somewhere on the  
stair?"

"Yes. . . . That is how it strikes me."

"Well, then; let us not deliberate  
The tools are in the cupboard here; we'll look for what  
is there.

And see ... this lower panel is not fitted like the other  
one. . . .

It's set in ancient mortar covered thick with coats of paint.  
Will you hold the candle nearer? Now, a long heave;  
now, another one . . .

And the old dry mortar tumbles from its sixty years\*  
restraint.

Yes ... the panel has been tampered with, since first the  
joiner fitted it,

Long, long ago, about the time of glorious Queen Anne...  
A clumsy fellow did it, for you see, he scratched and  
pitted it,

And filled the hollows in with paint so freely that they ran.

### CRY BABY COTTAGE

But now, I've loosed the mortar; I can lift the panel out  
of it;  
It comes. Now give the candle here; a hollow lies  
within. . . .  
A cloth with little bones is here; there isn't any doubt  
of it.  
A deadly thing has happened here of cruelty and sin".

A little boy was buried there; for sixty years was shuttered  
there  
Since those who murdered him had thrust, before they  
fled the scene.  
Yet something had impressed the spot; a spirit's wrongs  
were uttered there,  
Till mind of man was stirred to seek and find where  
wrong had been.

They laid the bones in holy ground to have the rest they  
coveted,  
And never more did creature cry about the twisting stair  
The spirit has forgotten grief; the bones, how they were  
buffeted  
When victims to the cruelties of devils dwelling there.

They never traced the murderers; the passing time had  
taken them;  
But people living near the place still sometimes tell the  
tale  
Of Life that held about the bones though it had long  
forsaken them;  
The Life, that though a little boy's, could make its plea  
avail.

### CRY BABY COTTAGE

The water-springs arise thereby, and jewel-bright their  
bubbings are,  
On black and marigolded mud the moorhens' footsteps  
print,  
The moorhens hold themselves aloof from spots where  
mortal troublings are,  
They nest among the alder-roots below the water-mint.  
The green gleam of the king-fisher goes by with a blue  
glint.

## THE WIND

The wind comes in from the sea to the chicory-flower.  
The stalkage bows, the pale blue blossoms are shaken.  
The wind is part of a hundred leagues of power  
That over the sea a turbulent way has taken.  
Flying-fish silvered it through, it stirred the Kraken,  
Its breath was battle to men from a roaring sky,  
We stand to it here, the chicory-flower and I.

It sprang, like a rebel thought, from a beating fire  
Of Sun, on a sharky sea, in an inlet steaming;  
Its fever rose, as its life fell, into a gyre  
Of Hell, invading the sky (to a seer's seeming).  
As Hell, upon earth and ocean, it rushed, screaming  
In a planless, pathless shatter of land and sea,  
To a Berkshire hill, the chicory-flower and me.

It hurls and is gone, like an unseen bird flying,  
It is on to the Chilterns now, this fight unfought;  
Tomorrow, the Maelstrom's eddy will feel it dying  
As breath that can break no bubble and injure naught.  
It will be nothing at all, save this, in thought,  
A gust on a Berkshire hill from a driving cloud,  
And the blue-spanged stalk of a chicory-flower that bowed.

## FIRE

Often, before, he had been away for a week,  
Going with sheep or cattle, or hunting deer,  
And come home bright in the eye, with tan on his cheek,  
With money in pouch, or a stag's haunch on his spear:  
But, now, though bright in the eye, his face made fear.  
It was white as the ground-mist, and his mouth wrought:  
"What is it?" his Mother asked, "What is it, my Dear?"  
"I HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE WILDS AND  
LIVING IS NOUGHT.

I went, as I went of old, to the gashed glen,  
Where the deer drink, where often a stag lies.  
Bright in the coat were the dogs, and merry the men;  
The curlews laughed, the larks went up in the skies.  
And O, joy in the trees, the clack of the pyes;  
And printed fair at the spring the slot we sought;  
But Fire ran through my spirit and burned me wise,  
I HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE WILDS AND  
LIVING IS NOUGHT.

I know no more of the truth than that truth is good.  
I know not what is the Fire that burns me through,  
But O, it is life and loving and home and food,  
The sun, the moon, the water and holy dew.  
It was there at the glen's bend where the hare-bells grew;  
It is always there, and now it is in my thought;  
I shall not marry, nor live as I used to do,  
I HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE WILDS AND  
LIVING IS NOUGHT.

## FIRE

I shall ask no more of the world, for the world is here,  
A power so great, it is past man's power to speak;  
Beauty and truth more bright and keen than a spear,  
Joy for the sorrowing man and strength for the weak,  
I fear no horror that death and the world may wreak,  
I am a thing the Fire that burned me bought,  
I am the Fire's now and Fire I seek,  
I HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE WILDS AND  
LIVING IS NOUGHT."

## BLOWN HILCOTE MANOR

In perfect June we reached the house to let,  
In remote woodland, up a private lane,  
Beyond a pond that seemed as black as jet  
Whereon a moorhen oared with chickens twain;  
And from the first a sense of want or debt  
Seemed to possess the place from ancient pain.

Then, turning Right, we had the House in view,  
A red Victorian brick—with earlier stone,  
Fair, but unhappy, being overgrown  
With all the greenness Summer ever grew.  
Above, about, the Summer sky was blue,  
And drowsy doves intoned their purrillone.

But though abundant Summer shed her grace,  
A look sufficed, to tell a wanderer there  
That Death and Sorrow of Soul had hurt the place,  
Stricken its life and plucked its glory bare.  
No tick of time, no bell-chime, charmed the air;  
The clock had stopped; we saw an empty case.

The House was dead, with doors and windows shut.  
No chimney smoked; no broom, no bucket, plied;  
Under the pampas at the border-side  
A humping rabbit shewed a flash of scut.  
How many Summers since the lawn was cut?  
I plucked the door-belles pull; no bell replied.

## BLOWN HILCOTE MANOR

Then, as I sought another door, a sense  
Startled my mind, a sense my comrade shared,  
That all the House was glad, because suspense  
(Long there) was finished, and a peace declared.  
Blank on the uncut grass the windows stared,  
But, oh, delighted souls were gazing thence.

A tall French-window in a garden room  
Was latchless and ajar; we entered in.  
The place seemed full of folk, expecting whom?  
A Household mustered there, expecting kin . . .  
Someone most dear, perhaps estranged by sin,  
Or lacking absolution from the tomb.

Through open doors we looked into rooms bare  
All, sensibly inhabited with glee,  
And happy folk seemed coming down the stair  
From sunny bedrooms in eternity,  
Although we might not talk with them nor see  
We felt the joy they wanted us to share.

The Manor brimmed with happiness unknown  
From sorrows ending and beloved return.  
Death having perished, hell was overthrown,  
And spirits there made festal fires burn,  
And ours, too, for, did we not discern  
Love, living on, not dying all alone?

Men in their misery forever pray  
For any gleam, for any certain ray,  
From light beyond the mirk they struggle through.  
This certainty of living love we knew  
At Hilcote Manor, *off* the Icknield Way,  
On Monday, June the sixth, in 'thirty two.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

That little brook's the boundary line  
Between the counties two  
And there, in eighteen twenty nine  
Bill Cop of Dym and Jock of Dyne  
Occasioned a to-do.

Now Bill was Cop's (the Blacksmith's) son  
And scaled eleven stone:  
And he could wrestle, box and run  
With pretty nearly any-one,  
As any-one would own.

But though he was a likely lad,  
Robust and quick and game,  
And dearly loving Meg of Stad,  
One weaker spot his nature had  
The bottle was the same.

And Meg of Stad, that sterling heart,  
Who chose him for her friend,  
Felt many a cruel pang and smart  
On seeing him borne home in cart  
From pubs at Lower End.

And much she hoped that, when they wed  
Her will might change his joys,  
From painting half the county red  
In riot fit to raise the dead  
Among the fighting boys.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

Now Jock of Dyne, a farmer's son,,  
Was greatly unlike Bill,  
He never took to games for fun,  
But as a means for number One  
To thrive, by act of will.

And resolution made him strive  
For mastery in all  
And right direction made him thrive:  
And very much he hoped to wive  
With Anne of Prior's Dall.

His nature had no weaker spot  
To tempt him from The Way.  
He never tossed the friendly pot  
Nor took, nor stood, the kindly tot  
That scattered Bill astray.

And much dislike he felt for Bill  
That generous rowdy boy  
Whose singings roused the midnight hill  
And scared the night-owl from her kill  
And the night jar from her joy.

Now those were days, my grandsire said,  
When parsons lived by tithes  
And corn was thrashed by flails for bread  
And gibbets stood with bones of dread  
And hay was cut with scythe.

And corn was cut with fagging hooks  
That left the stubble long  
And bakers were mens' Sunday cooks  
And girls (he said) had better looks,  
And poets better song.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

And harvest homes and Christmas times  
Brought many a glad delight  
Of barrelled ale and ringing chimes  
And when the bees were in the limes  
The boxers came to fight.

The boxers, then, fought out of door  
Where grass was flat and firm.  
The London sportsmen gave a store  
Of purses worth the fighting for  
At end of Summer Term.

And fights, in those days, were with fists  
Bare-knuckled, skin to skin,  
No gloves, nor tapes, on hands or wrists  
But take the torture of the lists  
And let the best man win.

The ropes were hitched to make a square,  
Where level grass might be  
An umpire stood to see all fair,  
Between rounds no one had a chair,  
He took his second's knee.

And many a valiant bruiser bold  
Would fight while he could stand  
Jack Scroggins, Gasman, Puggy Old,  
The names are rightly done in gold  
The glories of our land.

And many a sport, with watchful eye  
Would search for some-one new  
To urge, to back, (and sometimes buy)  
And profit from (upon the sly)  
Which now they never do.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

And there were such who knew of Jock  
And more who knew of Bill  
And in the parlour at The Cock  
They said "The pair should have a knock . . .  
We'll see they shall and will."

"And this," they said, "Will make a stir,  
If ever battle did,  
So shall the winner, as a spur  
To make him tear his foeman's fur,  
Receive a hundred quid?"

This they agreed: the plot was laid,  
And knaves with serpent tongue  
Told Jock of things Bill never said,  
While others went to Bill and played  
On strings Jock never strung.

So what with guile and what with hate  
And greed to win the purse  
The champions took the proffered bait  
And threatened as they made the date  
To be the other's curse.

For Bill said "I have heard it told  
You call me fool and sot.  
Be careful, then, my joker bold  
If, when we prance the magic mould,  
You find that I am not."

And Jock replied "I never boast  
Nor heed an empty threat,  
But many a King with many a host  
Has found his glory gone to ghost  
Twixt sunrise and sunset.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

And I, who neither boast nor threat,  
Nor heed the men who do,  
Have got a mind that can't forget  
The men to whom I owe a debt  
And one such man are you."

Thus both the men defiance fling  
With bitter looks askance  
Each cries aloud how he will wring  
His foeman's neck within the ring  
And glad to have the chance.

Jock took for trainer Sergeant Hood  
Who'd fought at Waterloo  
And now kept game in squire's wood,  
And very strictly understood  
What training men should do.

He loved to make his boxers hot  
With gunners' ancient plays  
Of lifting nine-pound cannon-shot  
Up, down, at ease, or at the trot'  
As in his soldier days.

And at the coming-on of night  
He dearly loved to tell  
How England countered with the right  
At sunset in the famous fight  
When Boney's fortune fell.

Bill took for trainer Cocker Joe  
(Called "Leatherface" and "Pog")  
A light-weight champion long ago,  
One knowing all that man can know  
Preparing battles here below  
For Man, or Cock, or Dog.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

A sterling man (in such-like sports)  
With knowledges profound.  
Reject calumnious reports—  
Remember, it takes many sorts  
To make the world go round.

Beneath these guides the champions two  
Began, with Spartan fare,  
With abstinence from barley-brew,  
And running miles in morning dew  
For battle to prepare.

And in the summer eves in rings  
In barns, or in the yard  
They tested-out the punch-bag's springs;  
Or tried new upper-cuts and swings  
On partners as they sparred.

And each, (as prudence bade) had spies  
To watch the foeman's way . . .  
To hear the trainers criticise  
And judge what little dodge were wise  
Upon the battle day.

The Sporting Press wrote: "Both are fit  
As fine young men can be.  
Jock has the pull in weight a bit,  
And in the reach, but Bill can hit,  
And both are quick and full of grit,  
And sure of victory."

Throughout the countryside there ran  
The thrill at fever pitch  
For everyone was partisan  
And cried for one or other man

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

And Time dragged through a dreary span  
Ere Fate could settle which.

Now two there were whose hearts were sad  
Amidst the general joy.

The darling heart of Meg of Stad  
Was bitter sore for Bill her lad  
Whom Jock might soon destroy.

And Anne of Prior's Dall was sore  
Lest chance (that battle brings)  
Should deal the blow that folk deplore  
The touch of Fate so much the more  
Than all the mights of Kings.

Lest Bill, in battle's whirl, should knock  
By chance, beyond his skill,  
Her man, the flower of the flock,  
The resolute and righteous Jock,  
And scoop the proffered till.

And though too wise to tell her fear  
To Jock, who scorned his foe,  
Her anger brought the devil near  
Who whispered something in her ear  
That she was glad to know.

Both dreaded and deplored the fight  
Now drawn so close at hand  
Both panted for an inner light  
Of how to stop it: how they might  
They could not understand.

Meg, after mourning for her fate,  
(For Bill was very dear)

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

At last decided not to wait  
But write and tell a magistrate  
And make him interfere.

In bold block-letters, such as now  
Each ministry decrees,  
She told a Blueshire Justice how  
A fight, that Law did not allow,  
Was drawing daily nearer now,  
And would he stop it, please?

The knowledge was already his ...  
He called his marshals twain . . .  
He said "The Hop Pole set, it is ...  
Or else the Cock's, that's doing this . . .  
Just warn them to refrain."

Alas, for loving Meg, who sought  
To make her Bill secure.  
Her righteousness of heart and thought,  
By froward Fate disaster brought  
Aiid made his ruin sure.

For mark, the marshals, going first  
To Noneley's Hop Pole inn,  
O fatal hap, O minute curst,  
Quite unexpectedly they burst  
Upon a scene of sin.

Alas, that very tick of time  
Bill's trainer Joe had picked  
To hold a cocking-match sublime,  
(A cruelty then reckoned crime)  
And now the clock had ticked.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

Joe, having left his charge, was there  
Encouraging his bird  
The marshals took him unaware  
He struck them both in his despair'  
O cruel luck O Fate unfair  
O shining Fortune blurred.

He struck the marshals each a blow  
By instinct, in surprise,  
Not malice I would have you know  
For malice never was in Joe,  
But still when nervous strain is so  
As such are nerves' replies.

Such nervous acts are called, at law,  
"Resisting the po-lice"  
Whom citizens should eye with awe:  
For batting such on rib or jaw  
Is rupture of the peace.

Having "resisted," Joe was bound,  
And in the lock-up laid:  
A dreary cell within the Pound  
Which sinners shared with horse and hound  
Or heifer that had strayed.

When Joe was jailed, the marshals went  
On, to the Cock, to warn  
The sportsmen pledged to the event  
That magistrates were on the scent  
And fights would not be borne.

That any holding of the fight  
Would constitute offence  
A wicked blot on moral white.

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

The *Cock* made play with inner light  
And injured innocence.

*They* promote fighting: never they . . .  
How calumnies distort . . .  
Urge lads to fight each other? Nay  
But it is hot, this summer day  
Step in, and take a quart.

Its true, some talk there was awhile  
Of two who disagreed.  
But that was out at Cadger's Stile  
The other side of Seven Mile . . .  
Sit down, sirs; drink and feed.

When they had fed, and drunk, and gone  
The *Cock* Inn's sportsmen bold . . .  
(*Matilda Jane and Honest John*)  
Said "We will fix the beaks anon."  
(As may be later told).

The Law had dealt the *Wrong* a chill  
But had not stablished Right.  
And doing thus had wrought an ill  
By taking Joe from charge of Bill  
Four days before the fight.

And on that very day of days  
Dark Anne of Dall began  
To ruin Bill by crafty ways  
That Jock might win the battle's bays  
And prove the better man.

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

In bold block-letter, (only script  
That governments can read),  
The blackness of her spirit skipped,  
She wrote to Bill that she had shipped  
A present for his need.

"You know," she wrote, "how good it is  
In training, to be spare . . .  
But Scroggins, in that book of his,  
Says "Nothing is as good as *fizz*  
To make one do and dare.

I send . . . to make your conquest sure . . .  
Six magnums of champagne  
Whether you venture or endure  
You'll find it more than helpful . . . your  
Well-Wisher, I remain."

This letter and the wine were sent  
By ways that none could trace  
Bill eyed them both with much content  
Nor dreamed of what the giver meant  
His own complete disgrace.

And Joe was gone, and Joe had been  
A trainer strict and hard  
Red beef in gobbets, very lean,  
Were all the dinners he had seen,  
With toast of brown bread charred.

Such abstinence's daily irk  
Had galled him with its chain.  
He thought the wine a pleasant perk  
He said "This training's thirsty work  
And worse: it is insane.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

Jack Scroggins and the Blueshire Eight  
Restrict no bite nor sup,  
On eggs and sherry wine they bait  
Neat whiskey puts them above Fate  
And brandy wins the Cup.

And what is good for heroes, must  
Be good for humbles, too,  
And I am all as dry as dust  
And all my hinges are in rust  
And what I want is dew . . .

A tiny swig, one little tot  
Can work no mighty ill.  
The force that makes the summer hot  
Declares that abstinence is rot.  
I want to drink, and will , . ."

He cut the cord: the cork flew loose.  
Out gushed the foaming head  
Of ginger, gas and gooseberry juice  
And all that vintners used to use  
With acetate of lead.

And drink he did, that day and next;  
And on that morrow's mom  
Bedrowsed, dishevelled and perplex  
"The dog that bit me" was his text  
And abstinence his scorn.

And when his trainer Joe returned  
(Fines paid and penance o'er)  
A melancholy truth he learned,  
Bill Cop, his champion, he discerned  
A heap upon the floor.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

He saw this melancholy scene  
The day before the fight.  
This body, prostrate and unclean,  
Could never prance the magic green  
And dodge Jock's wicked right.

But still, when Destiny outpours  
Mere man must drink the cup;  
And Joe in many lands and wars  
Had gathered rough and ready lores  
For sobering men up.

These all he zealously applied  
And all with some effect.  
But when the main result was eyed  
Bill Cop, the champion, once his pride,  
He knew what to expect.

"O Bill, my lad; O Bill, my lad,  
In many rings you've fought—  
And many backers you've made glad,  
But now your backers will be had.  
O Bill, you didn't ought."

The dawn made glad the eastern skies,  
Since dawn cannot delay;  
However dreadful to men's eyes  
Too surely in the east will rise  
"The day, th' important day."

And soon as blackbirds were in song,  
And feet the dew-drops stirred,  
The young, the idle and the strong  
Were thinking "Now it won't be long.  
Before we get the word . . .

## A TABLE OF COUNTRY THINGS

Before the inmost two or three,  
Discreetly make aware,  
The closely-guarded mystery,  
Exactly where the fight will be,  
That we can hurry there."

In every yard, in every inn  
The gig, the chaise, the trap,  
The turn-turn and the palankin,  
Stood ready, polished, pole and pin,  
Trace, spring and step and strap.

And conversation spread the news  
Like fire, or like flood,  
That Bill had been upon the booze  
That Jock of Dyne would cook his goose  
And lay him in the mud.

Now Meg of Stad had promised Bill,  
Not trouble him nor see,  
But on the day of battle, still  
She just would tap his window sill  
And wish him victory.

So, hasting thence, she swiftly found  
The training-cottage trim,  
With Bill's adherents standing round  
A Bill like someone lately drowned  
She went to speak to him.

"O Bill," she said, or tried to say . . .  
But here Joe interfered:—  
"Bill isn't quite himself today . . .  
Don't worry him but keep away,  
A mouse was in his evening hay  
And now his liver's queered."

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

"O, what?" she cried. Joe took her arm  
To comfort, not explain.  
"The Ring," he said, "Have no alarm . . .  
Will act upon him like a charm  
He'll scatter Jock to Spain."

How she returned, she knew not quite  
But coming home she read  
The Sports News in the Blueshire Light  
"All say that Jock will win the fight  
And put Bill Cop to bed."

And gossip stirred and rumour whirred  
And people looked askance  
And everywhere she went she heard  
By nod and beck and bitter word  
That Bill had killed his chance.

"Alas," she cried, or, rather, thought,  
For it would never do  
To seem to rank Bill's chance as nought  
"Alas, what wonder can be wrought?  
What miracle ensue,"

"What flowers, what returning birds  
Shall glad my world with Spring?  
Alas how Fortune grinds and girds . . ."  
(If these were not her very words  
They were the kind of thing).

Then, suddenly, the impulse came.  
It smote her like a sword . . .  
"I'll save my darling William's name.  
I'll perish, or I'll stop the game . . .  
I'll call upon my Lord."

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

My Lord, (J.P. and D.C.L.)  
Heard all she had to say:—  
"This boxing-match (considered well)  
Would be (but which I cannot tell)  
A RIOT, or AFFRAY.

Some word of it has reached my ear  
And if they dare proceed,  
They shall be prisoned all . . ." and here,  
Without, came cheer and ringing cheer,  
And tramp of trotting steed.

And seeking cause for such a noise  
He swiftly had the sight  
Of all the sporting men and boys  
All trotting to their joy of joys  
Away, to see the fight,

"They're off," he said, "The fight is on.  
I'm late, and that's the fact.  
Swift, fellows, saddle Prester John.  
I'll follow, Madam, and anon  
I'll read the Riot Act."

Out went my Lord: out came the horse  
On, saddle went: in, bit.  
"Which way, now?"  
"Lord, past Ffynnon Source,  
They've fixed the fight for Nether Gorse."  
"I'll stop them, if there's any force  
In Riot Act or Writ."

But when in sparks and dust, my lord  
No longer could be seen,  
The grinning stablemen guffawed

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

"He'll have his ride for his reward  
The fight's at Tineton Green."

Alas for loving Meg, who heard  
The place at last revealed  
Her saviour's ardour made absurd  
By devil's craft and lying word  
That made Bill's sentence sealed.

"Alas" (her burning sorrow ran)  
"An evil weird I thole.  
Ill fortune dogs my every plan  
I cannot help my darling man  
But O I will console.

I will console him in defeat,  
When, beaten blrxk and blue,  
He lies beneath his foeman's feet,  
My Bill shall find his ruin sweet  
Because his Meg is true."

Now Meg, a lass of long ago,  
Like other women then,  
Had learned, that women fit to know,  
Nay, even hussies, didn't go  
To watch the sports of men.

No stout back-sworder, slashing high,  
No hurdler in his run,  
No jockey stirrupped on his gry,  
Was then beheld by women's eye,  
It simply wasn't done.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

But Meg, who could not save, was bent  
On helping human need,  
Away, for Tineton Green, she went,  
The foot-path-way, and stile she hent  
By Water Tineton Mead.

Meanwhile, Bill's seconds, sad and glum  
Took Bill upon his way,  
And as they trotted, they were dumb,  
But Jock was led with pipe and drum  
And "Good old Jock: Hurray."

Adown Bill's cheeks the seconds see  
The hot tears running salt,  
And Bill exclaimed "I'll let them see  
I'll sting in dying, like the bee,  
I'll last a round, or two, or three,  
O boys, don't think too ill of me . . .  
It's all my silly fault."

"Now, stow it Bill," the trainer said  
"When time is called and leads are led,  
You keep a little large . . .  
And never mind his figure-head,  
You might as well try hitting lead,  
But watch for where he puts the bread  
And plunk him in the barge.

The solar plexus is the place  
To choke the fellow's luff;  
He'll take the lead and set the pace,  
But plunk him in the middle-case  
Where Captains stow the duff.  
If necessary, plunk a brace  
But one should be enough."

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

By this, they neared the pitch, and found  
How swift the news had been  
Wherever lane or highway wound,  
Were horsemen, gigs and footmen bound  
To Tineton Minster Green.

And cheers and singing rose and fell  
And flags were flying where  
On flat green turf by Tineton Yell  
With white manilla tautened well  
Was pitched the magic square.

And as BilPs carriage reached the crowd  
That oped and closed behind,  
Their comments followed frank and loud.  
"Bill Cop is underneath a cloud  
That isn't silver-lined."

And now from Dyne direction drove  
Jock's troop with banners brave  
With Jock as eminent as Jove  
Smelling an orange stuck with clove  
That Anne his sweetheart gave.

And now arose the wilding cheer  
"Three cheers for Jock of Dyne."  
"They'll soon be at it: Jock is here . . .  
Ten thousand to a pot of beer  
Jock setdes him in nine."

But no-one took that offer bold  
Nor seemed inclined to do.  
For no-one needed to be told  
That Jock would knock his foeman cold  
In something under two.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

But, ere the fight could have its way  
Some long delays they had,  
To clear the ringside for the fray,  
And toss for corners: let us, pray,  
Return to Meg of Stad.

She ran the Tineton field-path-way  
Where few could see or stare,  
Beside the copse called Tinker's Hey,  
(A pitch where gipsies used to stay)  
And there some gipsies were.

Two women-gipsies, young and old,  
Plaiting a garden-kipe;  
Both wearing heavy rings of gold,  
Both sunburnt, black-eyed, quick and bold,  
(The elder smoked a pipe).

And these, when Meg, a comely lass,  
Came by, in bitter tears,  
Disliked to let such sorrow pass,  
And hearing what the trouble was,  
They strove to offer cheers.

"For see," they said, "The facts of it...  
Life's neither right nor wrong . . .  
Fate is beyond a mortal's wit . . .  
A fight may fall to the unfit,  
And ruin to the strong.

But you will shortly know, my dear  
The ringside roar has ceased ' . . .  
That means, the fight is very near . . .  
But, hark, what horseman gallops here  
Like tempest from the east?"

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

There, roaring down the Tineton Path,  
Spurred, cheered and lifted on,  
Besweated like a soapy bath,  
Came Law's own very self in wrath  
My Lord, on Prester John.

Past them he sped, they heard the gong  
That bade the battle flame,  
They heard the startling of the throng  
And then my Lord shout clear and strong  
"In good King George's Name . . ."

They heard, from just one field away,  
The voice bid fighting cease.  
They heard the ringing accents say  
"Refrain from RIOT and AFFRAY  
And breaking of the peace."

Then growls arose, and snarls were heard,  
And then three hollow groans . . .  
But they obeyed the uttered word,  
And Meg was singing like a bird  
And happy to the bones.

And now up-spoke the marshals twain  
Of whom I wrote before  
"You heard his lorship say Refrain'  
Don't let me have to speak again—  
Move on, now, say no more."

They had been waiting there, in fine,  
For battle to begin.  
But had not checked the sports' design  
For both had bet on Jock of Dyne  
And wanted him to win.

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

Meg saw the sullen mob proceed  
Beyond the hedge, to stile.  
They yelled, and cat-called and te-heed  
So toughly that Meg felt the need  
Of keeping hid awhile.

"You see," the gipsy women cried,  
"Your lover's risks are stopped.  
A sheriff cannot be defied;  
The yeomanry are out, beside,  
And breakers will be copped.

There'll be no fight, nor chance of fight."  
But here, a ringside crook  
In passing, said, "My blossom bright,  
The rossers cop the rinkydite,  
We're shifting to another site.  
The sheriffs have no kind of right  
The other side the brook.

We're moving now across the brook  
To Buffshire's guardless shore  
Where, if you like to go and look  
You'll see how much you've been mistook  
Salaams, miss, and bob swore."

No need to go and look, alas,  
Too plainly it was true  
Swift, swift the thousand sportsmen pass  
The county brook to level grass  
As they had schemed to do.

"Alas," Meg sobbed, "For darling Bill."  
The younger gipsy cried,  
"But, sweetheart, you can save him still.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

Its easy, if you have the will. . .  
Mount Monkey here, and ride."

"Where to?" Meg asked. "Across the lode  
A two-mile level clip. . . .  
The Buffshire magistrate's abode, . . .  
Rear-Admiral Sir Falmouth Road,  
The Navy's oakest chip . . .

Come on, now: up you get: yo ho" . . .  
Meg perched on Monkey's back.  
Now, darling, off: away you go . . .  
The gate and house as white as snow  
The right-hand of the track.

Just shout "Sir Falmouth Road, they plan  
To fight on Buffshire soil . . ."  
Meg cried, "I'll die or save my man  
Run, Monkey, as you never ran,  
Till engines burst or boil."

Off Monkey set from Tinker's Hey;  
In flashes, Meg beheld  
The heads of sportsmen on their way  
She heard the shout of "Jock—Hurray"  
That foeman backers yelled.

She dared not look for Bill, but urged  
That racing pony true,  
On, where the road was grassy-verged,  
The Monkey galloped as though scourged,  
The hoof-cut turfage flew.

"Out of my way," Meg cried; and all  
Seeing that flying pair  
Paid quick attention to the call

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

For men will dodge a cannon-ball  
Seen coming through the air.

Past Tineton Church, past Tineton Ash  
Past Tineton-Staggers-Weir,  
Across the sunny lode they splash,  
The bees spin by, the daisies flash,  
O gallop, Monkey dear.

Past Cox of Tollers, wringing cheese,  
Past Tillie at the churn,  
They beat the birds, they beat the bees,  
Meg urges on, the Monkey flees.  
The blood throbs, the hearts burn.

And lo, the vanes on Yarcle Church  
Flash bright as things alive . . .  
And there's the gate she rode to search.  
She swerved to westward with a lurch  
And scored the gravelled drive.

Up, to the house, the Monkey raced.  
Out popped the Coxwain's head:—  
"Madam, you come in such a haste . . .  
Your pony's flanks are white as paste . . .  
Is anybody dead?"

"The Admiral," she cried, "O where . . .,  
Sir Falmouth . . . where is he?"  
Then, from a shady garden-chair  
There came a roar as from a bear  
Asleep and suddenly aware  
Of being stung by bee.

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

"What is it, Madam?" came the roar.  
"O Sir, they plan a fight . . .  
At Tineton, on the Buffshire shore.  
O come and stop them, I implore."  
Sir Falmouth answered:—"Right . . .

Breaking King George's Peace, you said?  
At Tineton? Call all hands.  
The man who breaks, by A and Z,  
The Peace, will get a broken head  
And three months' prison bands."

Swift, swift, his seaman servants tear  
The horses from their stalls:  
Swift, swift, they mount: away they bear,  
Up flies the turf into the air  
Meg follows fast with flying hair  
Returning thanks that such there were  
In England's floating walls.

But, can they be in time to save  
Before the gong goes clang.  
Ere Bill, the loved, however brave,  
Is downed by skill and booed by knave?  
On, on, the cheering sailors drave  
On, on, the horses sprang.

The mob has crossed the brook with cheers,  
As they had planned to do.  
And now the longed-for minute nears,  
The stakes are driven deep like spears  
The ropes are strained thereto.

And now a stir, but not a roar,  
As Bill comes to the ring.

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

And sad he was to see how sore  
His backers were, that cheered of yore  
For many spat and many swore.  
He seized a post and vaulted o'er  
With all his native spring.

And now tumultous rousing yells  
Announce the backers' hopes.  
The hand-bell ringers chime the bells  
"Hurray for Jock," the cheering swells  
And then a sudden silence tells  
That Jock is at the ropes.

Jock stood awhile to let them see  
How fit he was, how fine:  
The picture of a man was he:  
A cheer crashed like a breaking sea:—  
"Hurray for Jock of Dyne."

He smiled and snuffed the incense in.  
He waggled hands at friends.  
Impatient sports exclaimed "Begin"  
Now was the woodcock near the gin,  
And Destiny her ends.

For lo, with hand upon the post,  
He pressed, and vaulted light,  
His every act was like a boast;  
He reckoned here without his host  
He slipped, and strained his right.

He hid the hurt, that none might know,  
And turned his hand; in vain . . .  
The trouble was not bettered so.  
To Bert, his second, whispering low,

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

He said "Just give my arm a go ...  
I've got a crick or sprain."

He leans against the ropes; his mates  
Massage his hands and wrists  
But neither crick nor pang abates  
Not easy to be changed are Fates  
When Destiny insists.

And now the lucky coin is spun:  
Jock wins the toss and takes  
The corner backing on the sun.  
Now, save the seconds, everyone  
Stands clear of ropes and stakes.

There, quiet on Joe's knee is Bill,  
Malign, on Bert's is Jock.  
The bottle-holders bend and fill  
A cooler bucket at the rill.  
The referee cries:—"Quiet. Still."  
The cynic cannot scape a thrill,  
The wit forbears to mock.

The Fight-Promoter cries, "Gents, all . . .  
To Right and Left, behold . . .  
Two champions, hefty, quick and tall,  
Each able to punch down a wall  
And knock the other cold.

Upon my Right: on Joey's knee,  
Is William Cop of Dym:  
Upon my Left, on Bert's, you see  
Lord Jock of Dyneland: this is he . . .  
You all know about him.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

Now that I turn, upon my Right  
Is Jock, to Left is Bill.  
And both are ready for the fight.  
A bit of needle gives it bite,  
Or so I hope it will.

They come to settle which is which  
As champions ever did.  
All things agree: time, weather, pitch.  
The winner will be made more rich  
A hundred golden quid.

Get ready, both. All ready? Clang."  
The time-keep struck the gong.  
Up, from the knees, the heroes sprang  
Shook hands, and oh a bitter pang  
Went all Jock's arm along.

But pang or none, his heart was bold  
And made his arm obey.  
Both meant to have a story told  
Of that day's battle for the gold  
Both led, and got away.  
Then horses scattered flying mould  
A sea-voice shouted at them "Hold . . .  
Hold on . . . Avast. Belay."

Sir Falmouth galloped to the ring  
And slashed the roping clear  
He cried "Hear all . . . For George the King  
Pipe down this lawless gathering.  
I'll see him quodded till the spring  
Who dares to quarrel here.

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

You two, you boxers, stripped to fight,  
I charge you, come with me."  
Some sportsmen growled "Put out his light"  
But no-one dared dispute the Knight  
Whose ways were of the sea.

So Bill and Jock their jackets donned  
And followed, as he bade.  
The crowd dispersed in dull despond,  
But Meg rode out of sight beyond  
To bless the gipsy maid.

Sir Falmouth marched with Jock and Bill,  
(His henchmen friending both)  
He put the two upon the stand  
He made each shake the other's hand  
And would not let them go until  
They vowed to keep good peace and will  
Upon their Bible oath.

Jock said "Since you'd have licked me, Bill,  
Perhaps I'm just as glad.  
I gave my wrist a nasty thrill . . .  
I strained it, and its hurting still."  
Bill said: "I saw you had . . .

But, if you hadn't, Jock, I know  
You would have minced me small,  
I played the fool on losing Joe . . .  
So let our quarrel finish so,  
And make me grooms-man when you go  
To marry Anne of Dall."

A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

All prospect of the fight was gone:  
The Law had said it Nay  
And those who urged the venture on  
(Matilda Jane and Honest John)  
A sorry pair were they.

Sir Falmouth guessed their bitter plight  
He said: "Laws have to be ...  
But let us set our troubles right:—  
A double-wedding, not a fight,  
And drop the curtain with delight,  
And send the bill to me ...

For Meg and Anne must have their boys  
Ere hop-picking has ceased:  
We'll fill the happy day with joys  
I'll see the wedding makes a noise  
And you shall give the feast."

(The feast, if readers will allow,  
Shall not be told in text  
Twould wring with grief the modern brow  
That lives on snoek a year from now  
And nuts a year from next).

Since love brings ever happy growth  
Bill vowed to Meg (and kept his oath)  
To drink and fight no more.  
A brightness shone from Meg on both.  
And Jock to Anna plighted troth  
And happy were the four.

Ere harvest made the farmers smile,  
In that most glad of years,

## A TALE OF COUNTRY THINGS

The marriages were done in style;  
(With Yeomanry in double file)  
When Meg and Bill came down the aisle,  
Few kept from happy tears.

Sir Falmouth and his Lordship sent  
A four-in-hand of grays.  
The belfry-bells made merriment,  
With music to The Cock they went  
And, after feast, in heart's content,  
Went home, in bonfire blaze.

They lived for many a happy day,  
As Providence decreed.  
And ever struggled to repay  
The gipsies out at Tineton Hey  
With things delighting mortal clay  
And corn for Monkey's feed.

This ends the tale of country things  
Four generations since.  
God save King George, our best of Kings,  
And guard his House with angels' wings  
And bless the little Prince.

O Spirit beyond power strong  
Beyond all beauty bright  
Annul our infamies of wrong,  
And change our jargon into song  
Our darkness into light.

## CONSTANT LOVER

The Lady Constance prayed within her bower  
By candle-light, near midnight, in the tower.

She heard a single horse draw slowly near.  
She heard the watch-dogs whimper as from fear.

No challenge came, no iron bolts withdrew,  
But up the stairs came footsteps that she knew.

No mortal breathing urged that dreaded tread.  
Her husband was returning from the dead.

Then ... he was in the room, and face to face,  
After a twelvemonth in the burial place.

HE: So, you are watching all alone  
Constant Lover?  
So, you are watching all alone,  
Widow, my own?

SHE: No; not alone; not wholly lonely,  
Count Arnold.  
No; not alone; not wholly lonely,  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: Whom have you here for company,  
Constant Lover?  
Whom have you here for company,  
Widow, my own?

## CONSTANT LOVER

SHE: God, and the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
Count Arnold.  
God and the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: Where are the men-folk of the House,  
Constant Lover?  
Where are the men-folk of the House,  
Widow, my own?

SHE: Down in the guard-room, scouring iron,  
Count Arnold.  
Down in the guard-room, scouring iron,  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: Where are the women of the House,  
Constant Lover?  
Where are the women of the House,  
Widow, my own?

SHE: Weaving, embroidering and spinning.  
Count Arnold.  
Weaving, embroidering and spinning,  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: Where are the pretty girls, the sweet,  
Constant Lover?  
Where are the pretty girls, the sweet,  
Widow, my own?

SHE: They are abed; they are all sleeping,  
Count Arnold.  
They are abed; they are all sleeping,  
May God bring comfort, ever.

## CONSTANT LOVER

HE: May I but look at them and see,  
Constant Lover?  
May I but look at them and see,  
Widow, my own?

SHE: No: you would terrify them, Arnold,  
Count Arnold.  
No: you would terrify them, Arnold.  
May God bring comfort, ever.

How did you enter when you came,  
Count Arnold?  
How did you enter when you came?  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: By the window with the iron bars,  
Constant Lover.  
By the window with the iron bars,  
Widow, my own.

SHE: Then , . . you have burned the bars away,  
Count Arnold?  
Then, you have burned the bars away?  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: No: my bars burn, but not away,  
Constant Lover,  
No; my bars burn, but not away.  
Widow, my own.

SHE: You came by horse ... where is your horse  
Count Arnold?  
You came by horse ... where is your horse?  
May God bring comfort, ever.

### CONSTANT LOVER

HE: Down in the courtyard the horse waits,  
Constant Lover.

Down in the courtyard the horse waits,  
Widow, my own.

SHE: Shall I send water, hay and oats  
Count Arnold?

Shall I send water, hay and oats?  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: He takes no water, hay nor oats,  
Constant Lover.

This horse takes only condemned souls,  
Widow, my own.

What time is that, that the cock crows,  
Constant Lover?

What time is that, that the cock crows,  
Widow, my own?

SHE: It is Twelve, striking on the clock  
Count Arnold.

It is Twelve, striking on the clock  
May God bring comfort, ever.

HE: Yes, it is Twelve; for the Horse stamps,  
Constant Lover.

Yes, it is Twelve, for the Horse stamps,  
Widow, my own.

Now, for farewell, give me your hands  
Constant Lover.

Now, for farewell, give me your hands  
Widow, my own.

**CONSTANT LOVER**

**SHE:** O you have scorched them to the bone,  
Count Arnold.

O you have scorched them to the bone,  
May God bring comfort ever.

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

The King and Queen debate with eagerness  
What King shall marry Isolt the Princess.

On Marc, the Cornish King, the pair agreed.  
Then, the Queen said "But first we must take heed.

She seems to like this Prince, Sir Tristan, here;  
The lad with love-songs ever at her ear.

Can you invent a plot to speed him hence  
A week or two, and yet without offence?"

"Yes," said the King. "Ask Tristan to attend."  
"Ah, noble Tristan, trebly welcome, friend . . .

You are the huntsman whom I long to see.  
Will you attempt a forest-quest for me?

But, ere I ask it, let me first declare . . .  
No quest more perilous is anywhere. . . ."

"Speak on, O King, and make my blood run cold . . ."  
"You have a lion's heart, as I was told . . .

And this, the favour that I have to ask  
Matches your soul: it is a lion's task . . .

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

In the far forest where wild cattle go,  
A mad bull ranges, working bitter woe.

You may have heard of him from knight or ranger. . ."  
"Truly, O King, and understand the danger."

"I trust my woodmen, not the common tongue.  
This bull is not an aged rogue, but young;

Young, but full-grown, and raging against man.  
Mens' terror gives him horns of seven span.

White, with black ears, and as my rangers tell  
Bitten by some mad wolf and mad as hell.

So mad, that any hound, hurt in attack  
Upon him, maddens, and infects the pack.

Men dare not hound him now, nor venture near  
The green wood grim that hides that bull of fear.

They think he is an evil spirit come  
To terrify men back to devildom.

Secret he lurks along the forest marge  
Till beast or careless mortal makes him charge.

His frightful horns have tattered many a limb.  
O Tristan, will you rid the woods of him?"

"Sir, I will gladly try."

"But go on foot,  
With heavy arrow nocked, ready to shoot.

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Horses he hears, and hounds are no more use.  
Creep up to windward, matching guile with ruse.

A man on foot alone has better chance  
To snatch one shot with arrow or with lance,

And you, men say, are deadly with both tools.  
The many whom he kills are not all fools.

The quest brings cruel danger, Tristan mine."  
"O King, if Fortune cherish my design.

Perhaps I may destroy him, ere he me."

Away, into the forest ways, is he

Then off the ways into the wildwood grim  
Where every thicket might hide death for him.

"Whichever wins," the Queen said, "We shall thrive ..  
The bull or Tristan will not be alive."

The King and Queen bade Isolt to attend  
"Isolt, your days of singleness must end.

We (and the Kingdom's need) alike decide  
That you must be the King of Cornwall's bride."

"I cannot, Sir: I love King Tailored Son,  
The poet Tristan, Sir, that lovely one."

"That is but childish fantasy and blind.  
Royalty ever has the realm to mind."

"My love for Tristan must be more to me  
Than royalty or realm can ever be."

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

"Girl, you talk folly, and you disobey."  
"Sir, I love Tristan; threaten as you may!"

The King bade build an earthen tower,  
And in it shut Isolt the Flower.  
He said "Love soon succumbs to power."

They shuttered her, and barred her fast;  
Each day was sadder than the last.

Slowly, the weary hours fell  
From cock-crow to the evening-bell.

Imprisoned Isolt hardly heard  
The May cry of the Cuckoo-bird.

And saw no gleam of the May sun.  
But, ere the seventh day was done,

On the grim prison's barry sill  
A chaffinch tapped her tiny bill.

"O Little Mimi," Isolt cried,  
Fly to my Love, ere I have died,

Tell him, that I, who hold him dear,  
Am shuttered up in prison here,

And here must perish sorrowing  
Unless I wed the Cornish King.

But, tell him this . . . and, oh, attend  
To each word, Mimi, little friend . . .

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Say, that I have, and mean to try,  
A drug that makes men seem to die,

That whitens cheek and lips, and nulls  
The life-long comment of the pulse.

This, when I take, will lay me white  
Dead to all touch, as to men's sight.

The King and Queen will come to see,  
And sigh, (though scowling) "Dead is she . . .

The Princess Isolt: let her have  
Mourners to sing her to her grave

The yard where gannets' plumes are shed,  
The sea-shrine, on St. Dinas Head.

Bury her there . . . and let her lie,  
She flouted our authority.

Then, Mimi darling, tell my lover  
How he can make my corse recover . . .

Bid him attend, three mornings hence  
Beside the chapel's seaward fence

Where the wild apples cluster close  
Pure blossom, all, as April goes.

There let him loiter, till he hear  
My singing mourners drawing near

And let him stop them ere they pass  
From All Saints Way onto the grass.

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

He need but beg to see my face  
For certain they will grant the grace

And more, for knowing his despair  
They'll stand aside and leave us there.

When they are gone, he can revive  
My seeming death to girl alive.

First, he must kneel beside his love  
And sign a cross; then, let him move

The poison-crystal from my lips  
That holds my spirit in eclipse,

Then, let him doubt not, I shall sjnile  
As living, in a minute's while.

And, Mimi, bid him have at hand  
A ship to take me from the land

Or else, good horses, that will bear  
Into some liberty of air

Two lovers, such as he and I  
Who can but love until they die

And need no other gift from Fate  
Than each the other, early or late.

In such green happiness, in Spring  
I will be lover to my King

And you, beneath the hawthorn thatch  
In lichen-silvered nest, shall hatch

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Thy Arab-scripted eggs, and preen  
All May to us, Love's King and Queen.

Such solitude, with Love for friend,  
Will blur this bitter time, and mend

The curse called "living" by the dull.  
O Mimi, find my Beautiful,

There in the forest as he waits  
By waters where the red stag baits.

O Mimi, hasten . . . tell him true . . ."

Away the pretty chaffinch flew.

Westward the happy Mimi drove  
With all the energy of love

And after search, found Tristan tense  
Eyeing new hoof-prints stamped immense

In mud, where Alan Water spread.  
The bull had stamped those marks of dread

Not seven minutes since, and lay  
Hidden, ahead, some yards away.

Perhaps within a javelin-shot . . .

But Mimi told . . . and he forgot  
The mad bull and his hunter's zest  
The plighted promise of his quest

All he could think of was his sweet  
Dead, truly, in a winding-sheet,

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Borne to the grave, and he, too late  
There by the sea, to change her fate.

What if but one of Life's delays  
Should check him on the forest ways?

Check him, one little fatal hour  
Till earth had hidden the white flower?

Five fatal feet of earth stamped close  
Shutting the sunlight from the rose?

Doubt not, the anguish tortured him  
There, as he ran the forest dim.

Within the prison, Isolt heard  
The gossip pass from bird to bird,  
"Mimi has told the Prince, and he  
Runs through the forest to the sea."

"No ... he is there. And runs a ship  
Into green water from the slip."

"No ... he has hoisted sail, and sped  
Into that nook at Dinas Head."

"No; he has left her there, and goes  
To find some knowledge of his rose . . .

O listen, Princess, he has crept  
Close hither, as the sentries slept . . .

And now will sing: O listen . . . Hark  
Tristan will save you from King Marc."

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

(The Song)

"Isolt, my share of all things good,  
What the bird told, I understood.

In the green channel of cool sea  
A swimming sea-swan waits for thee.

Deep in the apple-blossom bower  
Tristan awaits the laggard hour

And prays, that it may make him meet  
Isolt, his share of all things sweet."

Then Isolt sang: "Then, now, I take  
A cold road for my lover's sake,

And lift the drug, whose presence stays  
The red blood's currents in its ways.

And hope that it may swiftly bring  
This eager subject to her King . . .

If not, that it may null to naught  
The every longing of her thought,  
That is but Tristan, everywhere,  
I lift the eastern drug . . . and dare."

At sunset, when the wardress knocked  
And none replied, the guards unlocked

And peering-in upon the bed  
The wardress saw the Princess dead.

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

And cried, "O, she is dead, past cure.  
Her loving heart has broken, sure.

O tell the King, for pity's sake . . .  
Even his iron heart will ache."

They told the King. "Indeed?" he said  
"She brought her death on her own head.

At dawn tomorrow, let her be  
Borne to the chapel near the sea,

And buried . . . Bid the priests prepare  
Censers and singers to be there.

And sing a psalm, and let her lie.  
She flouted our authority."

So the night passed while lady dew  
Danced the long grass with her wet shoe.

Now through the grass on the sea's verges  
The priests bear Isolt, singing dirges.

Tristan, in cover near the chapel  
Snowed on by blossom of wild apple

Waiting, in lover's anguish, heard  
That song too sad to be by bird.

Then the lone bell upon the Head  
Tolled, for the coming of the dead.

And on the wayward winds there come  
The fragrances of burning gum.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

So, moving forth, Prince Tristan cried  
"O stay; sweet bearers of my bride.

Stay but a moment, till I see  
The dear face dead for love of me.  
    And let me be alone, to pray  
    For one so darling rapt away".

The bearers stopped: the singers ceased  
"So be it" said the Warden Priest.

"Look on the empty case, whose soul  
May now be bright with aureole

Where sorrow of love is turned to bliss,  
And no parting of lovers is.

Look, then, and pray, two minutes here.  
To God, all human love is dear.

Leave them together . . . we will go  
Down to the holy well below."

Tristan knelt down, and gently drew  
The white silk from the face he knew.

Then, as the footsteps died, he quaked  
Lest the still form might not be waked.

Then from her lips he plucked the dark  
Death-crystal that had laid her stark,

And saw her eyelids tremble open  
And Isolt stir, like one awoken.

## TRISTAN AND ISOLT

He felt her pulse beat in her wrist  
Her life spread like the sun through mist

Then with a smile, she waked; she stood.  
They crept together through the wood

They clambered down to the green cove  
Wherein the sea-bird galley hove.

There, thrusting forth, they cleared the rocks  
And felt the water's slapping knocks

Yield to a purr along her rail  
When once the wind had filled the sail.

Meanwhile, the mourners, having left the well,  
Found the bier empty, so the stories tell,  
Yet, in the dew, the lovers' footprints showed.  
The priests and mourners hurried the same road.

And after them, the King and Queen came riding  
The King all curses and his consort chiding.

"Show us this Tristan and his trickster girl."

They saw a bright white water-furrow curl  
Under the vessel's bow as Tristan steered;  
Star-glittering gems of spray her going sheared.

The gannets plunged for fish and rose in glee.  
Wind-hurries ruffled ripples on the sea.

Safe from pursuit the flying lovers drove  
Ahead was liberty; beyond was Love.

## COUNT ARNOLDOS

Who can have had such an adventure  
Beside the waters of the sea  
As fell upon the Count Arnoldos  
The Feast of Holy Trinity?

The Count Arnoldos rode a-birding  
A falcon perched upon his hand,  
And there he saw a galley hovering  
Seeking to come ashore to land.

Her sails were all of golden satin  
Her ropes were golden wires strong  
Her Captain, steering at the tiller,  
Nearing the beaches, sang a song

A song that made the seas silent  
The waves still and the winds sink  
That made the fish that swim the deepness  
Arise and swim upon the brink

That made the birds, that wander flying,  
Come down to perch on her mast-head.  
Then up and spoke the Count Arnoldos,  
Lo, I will tell you what he said.

"For God's sake, seaman, I beseech you  
Sing . . . and teach that song to me."

COUNT ARNOLDOS

Answered him the galley captain  
Even thuswise answered he

"No. I do not say my singing  
Save to him who goes with me."

## THE LADY ALDA

In Paris is the Lady Alda,  
The great Sir Roldan's plighted bride,  
Three hundred demoiselles attend her  
To tend her splendour is their pride.

Of cloth of gold is all their costume  
Gold sandals are on their feet  
They all eat at the same table  
Of the same bread they all eat  
All save the lovely Lady Alda  
She was their Queen in the Queen's seat'

A hundred of them spun gold threading  
A hundred dyed the silk bright  
A hundred played upon the viol  
That Lady Alda might delight.

At the sweet playing of the viols  
The Lady Alda fell asleep  
And there she dreamed a dream dreadful  
A heavy dream with meaning deep.

She awakened in all terror  
In terror woke that Lady sweet  
She awakened with such screaming  
Men heard her in the city street.

## THE LADY ALDA

Then questioned her doncellas:—  
Lo, I will tell you what they said,  
"What? What is it, Lady Aida?  
What is it, then, that works you dread?"

"O I have dreamed a dream, doncellas,  
The grimmest nightmare ever known.  
I dreamed that I was on a mountain  
There in a desert place alone.

And from the craggy precipices  
There flew a falcon as I saw,  
And after it a savage eaglet  
That struck at him with beak and claw.

The falcon sorely stricken dwindled  
Down, downwards, to my very bed  
The eaglets talons tore his feathers  
The eaglet's beak there struck him dead."

Then answered her the Bedroom Lady  
Who listened to the tale of dreams:  
"Such was the dreaming, Lady Alda.  
Now I can tell you what it means.

The Falcon is your plighted lover  
Now putting forth upon the sea.  
The Mountain is the high cathedral  
In which you both will married be.  
The Eagle is the worldly glory  
That is to make your destiny."

"If it be thus, my Bedroom Lady,  
Jewels and gold shall be thy fee."

## THE LADY ALDA

When morning came upon the tower  
And birds began within the wood  
Letters were brought to Lady Alda  
Letters from far, written in blood.

When she opened the foreign letters  
It was written in blood, alas,  
That her Roldan was dead in battle,  
Killed, in the Roncesvalles Pass.

## OF THE MOOR KING WHO LOST ALHAMA

Upon mule-back the Moor King  
Paced the City of Granada,  
From Elvira Gate as far  
As the Gate of Bab-el-Rama.

MISERY: ALHAMA.

Letters came to him that said  
"The Christians have won Alhama."  
The letters into fire he shred  
And killed the man for the dog's larder.

MISERY: ALHAMA.

Down from mule-back got the King,  
Down, and mounted on a charger,  
Galloped by Zacatin, up  
Up, into the Fort Alhambra.

MISERY: ALHAMA.

Entering the fortress gates  
Straight he shouted as commander  
"Blow up all the trumpets, all  
The silver war-pipes of Granada.

MISERY: ALHAMA.

And let all the drums of war  
Beat the troops to put on armour  
That my Moors may hear the news:—  
Moors of Vega and Granada."

MISERY: ALHAMA.

OF THE MOOR KING WHO LOST ALHAMA

Moors, that heard the sound that Mars  
(Bloody Mars) called in his ardour,  
One by one and two by two  
Ranked to battle for Granada.

MISERY: ALHAMA.

Then spoke up an old Moor  
As though he were the King's Father:  
"Why have we been mustered, King?  
Wherefore raise all this alarum?"

MISERY: ALHAMA.

"Friends, because you have to know  
Truth about a new disaster.  
The Christians by valiancy  
Now have won from us Albania.

MISERY: ALHAMA."

There spoke up an Alfaqui  
Bearded white as a grand-father,  
"Very well you sowed, O King,  
Therefore very well you garner.

MISERY: ALHAMA.

First, you killed the Bencerrajes,  
The very flower of Granada;  
Then, received Cordoban scum  
Renegado and renegada.

MISERY: ALHAMA.

Now, O King, you well deserve  
Ruin doubled twice and farther  
That you should lose yourself, and crown,  
This, and us, and all Granada.

MISERY: ALHAMA."

## OF THE MOOR KING WHO LOST ALHAMA

The recurring assonance is of the heart of the original, and hard to make in English.

The eighth line (not counting the refrain) is "y al mensajero matara." I can only say that the mensajero could not have had Christian burial, and that therefore perhaps the dogs had some of him.

## OF THE MOORISH KING WHO LOST GRANADA

When King Chico of Granada lost his Kingdom and  
departed  
All his horsemen, all the flower of the Moors, rode with  
him, too.  
With his Mother, an Athenian slave, a Christian, lion-  
hearted,  
And they rode the City through.

As the bridge was gone, they forded, through a river-  
stream so spating  
That the King's gold shoes and stirrups were well sodden  
as he rode.  
Then they climbed into the mountains, to the fortune  
that was waiting;  
Bitter stony was the road.

At a sharp turn in the trackway, high aloft, King Chico  
lingered,  
Turned, and gazed down into distance where Granada  
could be seen;  
Palaces in orange groves, and minarets white-fingered  
Where his happiness had been.

Then he spoke: "O proud Granada, all my comfort, all  
my pleasure,  
High and rich, and built with glory, baths and gardens,  
fruits and streams,

## OF THE MOORISH KING WHO LOST GRANADA

There I see you, parted from me, Gty mine, my earthly  
treasure,  
Now a City of my dreams.

From afar I look upon you: I shall never see you nearer,  
For the Wheel of Fortune alters, and unlucky dice are  
thrown.  
Yesterday, I judged as Sovereign at the Gateway of  
Elvira;  
Now, have nothing of my own."

Saying this, he fell, from sorrow, in the rocky trackway,  
weeping,  
Then his Mother with the vanguard turned, and asked,  
"Why they delayed?"  
"Queen, the King beheld Granada, now no longer in his  
keeping,  
And his spirit was dismayed.

Pain afflicted him, O Lady, to behold his land forsaken"  
"So?" the Mother answered, "Truly; it is well that he  
should weep . . .  
Weep in anguish, as a woman, to behold his Kingdom  
taken,  
That as man he could not keep."

## THE BANNER OF THE CROSS

When Hernando took Granada from the Moor,  
All his southern mountain frontier was unsure,  
So he gathered all his Captains and demanded  
"Who will help me make a conquest to endure?"

You have heard that Moors believe a prophecy  
That when once a Cross is seen against the sky  
On the summit of the white Sierras yonder,  
The power of the Moor in Spain will die.

Now who will take the Standard of the Cross  
To the topmost of the peaks the Sierras toss,  
And plant it in the rock that Moors beholding  
May know that truth has brought the Crescent's loss?"

Then they looked at one another and they feared  
Many Captains had a trembling in the beard,  
For, if going there were deadly, the returning  
Seemed fatal, by whatever star they steered.

Then Alonzo, from Aguilar, rose and cried,  
"This attempt was made for me and shall be tried,  
For the sake of Christ, my Captain and his Passion,  
**For** the honour of my Sovereign and his Bride/"

## THE BANNER OF THE CROSS

Then a little band of horse and foot he chose,  
Away they went to where the mountains rose,  
Alonzo bore the banner of his Saviour  
To plant upon the peak above the snows.

The way into the mountains was the way  
Of the wild-cat and the wolf in seeking prey,  
Over scree, between the boulders, up the gullies,  
And across the mountain torrents spouting spray.

And, lo, between two snags of jagged stone,  
Arose, in shepherd's rags a wrinkled crone,  
Who cried "O Christian strayers in the Sierras,  
You travel to your death in the unknown.

The Moors have watched your coming, and prepare  
Grim ambushes, to catch you unaware.  
I've run the mountain-goat-ways to give warning:—  
Avoid the track you tread, for death is there.

Let me, who am a Christian and a slave,  
Repay to them the misery they gave,  
I'll guide you by a shepherd's track unguarded,  
That you bring these Moorish dogs down to the  
grave . . .

See, you, Captain; you can trust me: for, behold . . ."  
Then her sleeve of rivelled sheepskin she unrolled,  
To display her feeble forearm scarred with branding:—  
"This the Moors did, when they captured me of old."

Alonzo said, "O Christian woman, guide,  
For the sake of Christ our Captain Crucified.  
Lead us on to leave His Banner as a token,  
That the Cross shall overcome the Crescent's pride."

## THE BANNER OF THE CROSS

She led among the rocks where no paths showed  
Each step made every sword a heavier load.  
The gusts of wind wailed by, and in the gullies  
The ravens uttered croakings that forebode.

Alonzo questioned: "Surely, we should bear  
Directly southwards, to the summits there?"  
She answered "All directer tracks are ambushed;  
Talk not: for voices travel: but beware."

So, on they went, in line, afoot, and scared  
By all the granite fangs the mountains bared.  
The horsemen had to loose and leave their horses;  
And many halts were made, but on they fared.

A torrent barred their passage with its spate:  
Above, the rock it fell from glowered great:  
Within the flood, the feet clipped on the slimings,  
And lo, the guide had brought them to their fate:—

For as the lancers probed to find a ford  
Lo, there, above, around, the Moorish horde,  
The guide had vanished, and a Khalif shouted  
"Now, slingstones, and then put them to the sword."

At once, the stones hailed on them from the slings  
With cross-bolts from the clanging unseen strings,  
The cymbals clashed: the Moor position echoed  
With war-cries from the prophets and the kings.

Alonzo called his fifty into ranks.  
They had Moors across their rear and on their flanks,  
And the torrent like a barrier to their going  
Alonzo said "O Christians: Give God thanks.

THE BANNER OF THE CROSS

We have a chance; to charge them and breakthrough...  
On rocky ground the luck is with the few . . .  
So, 'Sant' Iago, Brothers: close, Spain, close."  
They charged: the slingstones clanged, the arrows flew.

There fighters slipped and fell, arose and fought  
And bitter death they found and bitter brought.  
They broke the Moorish ring and cut a passage  
Then others barred the way and Fate was wrought.

At last, Alonzo only stood at bay  
The Moors drew back a little in dismay.  
A Moorish prince cried to him "Chief, surrender  
Since that, or dying, is the only way."

Alonso shook his head: he bent and kissed  
The holy banner wrapped about his wrist.  
He saw the Moors around him in a circle  
The mountain cloud blew over in a mist.

He thought of King Hernando and his Queen:  
Of old Aguilar where his life had been,  
Of Christ on the White Horse before Granada,  
That Captain, whom the Spanish Knights had seen.

He said "The night is falling for my going.  
In Paradise, the morning cocks are crowing.  
For Christ (my King's Commander) and His Passion,  
A last charge more, friends: set the trumpets blowing."

Then, though his trumpeters were dead, he ran  
Calling "St. James", upon the nearest man  
Moriscoes closed upon him, and steel clattered  
And hate was merciless a little span.

## THE BANNER OF THE CROSS

They killed Alonzo in a patch of grass  
At Dead Man's Corner in the Eagle Pass  
The Moors in turn plunged lances in his body  
And bloodied a white flower that there was.

They left him: and with clash of beaten gongs,  
With Christian swords as spoil; and heathen songs,  
They marched to their rejoicings with their women,  
In the glory that to victory belongs.

\* \* \*

At midnight, when the feasting in the camp  
Died down, and oil had guttered from the lamp,  
A Christian woman slave crept past the sentries  
Along the rocky ridge, and up the ramp.

It was Ruth of Talavera creeping there  
To the gully of dead men in the still air  
With their Captain Don Alonzo in the flowers.  
She crept to close their eyes and speak a prayer.

She found Alonzo's body where it lay.  
She knelt beside it quietly to pray  
That the spirits of the Christians might be happy  
In the Kingdom that is blither than today.

Then, picking the white flowers from their bed  
She laid them, in a cross, upon the dead  
The moon above the crags gave benediction,  
The wind said something quiet as it sped.

Then, in the moonlight, noticing the fold  
About Alonzo's shield-arm, she unrolled  
The wrap, and saw the precious Christian banner,  
White, with a scarlet cross, and tasselled gold.

THE BANNER OF THE CROSS

Though cut and pierced with many a Moorish spear  
Upon the white the scarlet cross was clear.  
She said "This is Christ's Cross: if I display it,  
The Sign will bless the martyrs lying here.

I'll set it on the peak, that it may wave  
In blessing on good men without a grave;"  
She took it, with a lance left in the flowers;  
And terror froze her blood, but up she drove.

On crust of cracking ice, on rock that broke  
By stones that fell, and echoes that awoke  
She crept to where the pinnacle stood frozen  
That dared all frosts and suns and never spoke.

She climbed, till the world spread and the moon neared,  
The glitter of the distant sea appeared,  
She crawled a ledge that only frost made stable:  
Below, the nought of precipices sheered.

Yet, up; she topped the finger of black glass.  
A fissure in the splitted rock there was.  
In this she drove the lance that spread the banner  
Its tatterings blew clear above the pass.

When sunrise touched the Sierra-tops with gold  
She saw the flag's red symbol blowing bold,  
The Cross of Christ in sunlight gashed and victor;  
The Moors were stricken silent to behold.

The Khalif said "A Cross against the sky:—  
Remember Abderrahman's prophecy:—  
'When the banner of the Christian tops the Sierra,  
The power of the Moor in Spain will die.' "

THE BANNER OF THE CROBS

Then Ruth of Talavera heard them blow  
The war-pipes that commanded them to go  
From the mountains, to the ports and to the gallies,  
To the fates men ever find but cannot know.

With gongings and with drums and with lament  
The army of Moriscoes slowly went.  
The minarets that sunset knew no calling,  
And southern Spain thenceforth no Moorish tent.

But Ruth no longer slave, was free to bring  
The Spaniards with their Captains and their King  
To the gully for Alonzo and his soldiers  
That Christian lips might bless their buying.

## ROSE OF BEAUTY

"Rose of beauty, Rose of beauty  
Rose of love and of delight  
I love you still, when love's forbidden,  
You would not love me when you might,"

"That was your fault, handsome Gallant'  
Never mine, because you sent  
Letters by a man, your servant,  
One who altered their content . . .

Forged them, saying that you loved me,  
But that hope of love was gone  
Since you had a wife already  
In the Kingdom of Leon . . .  
That your wife was Queen of Beauty,  
That your sons were like the Spring. . . ."

"He who wrote you this, Beloved  
Wrote no truth in anything.  
I was never in Castilla,  
Nor Leon, by stars above,  
Since I was a little school-boy  
Knowing nothing about Love."

## BRIGHT DARLING

"Bright thou art, beloved Lady,  
Fair as any beam of light.  
May I put aside my armour?  
May I slumber here tonight?  
Seven years, it is; yes; seven,  
I have borne this armour's weight,  
And my body is burnt blacker  
Than the charcoal in the grate."

"Tarry here, Lord, pray, and slumber;  
Need of weapons here is gone,  
For my Count has gone a-hunting  
In the mountains of Leon."

"May the madness strike his stag-hounds,  
May the eagles kill his cast;  
Twixt the mountains and this palace  
May your husband breathe his last."

Thus the couple made agreement,  
But the husband's hunt was past.

"What are you about, Bright Darling,  
Child of falsehood, tell me true?"

"Lord, I comb my golden tresses,  
Shedding tears because of you.

## BRIGHT DARLING

Weeping that you leave me lonely,  
And go hunting, while I cry."

"What you answer me, Bright Darling,  
Can be nothing but a lie.  
Whose is the great war-horse neighing  
All my empty stable through?"

"Lord, a stallion from my Father,  
Sent me, as a gift for you."

"Whose are all the plated armours  
In the hallway, as I step?"

They are arms my Brother sent you,  
That he begs you will accept."

"Whose is this sharp javelin shining  
Here at hand, as I observe?"

"Take and kill me with it, Husband,  
As I very well deserve."

LOVELY MARQUISE (Old French)

The King bade feast, by beat of drum,  
The loveliest ladies fair-a.  
The first bright beautiful to come  
Struck him into despair-a.

"O Marquis, hither, tell me true  
What beauty threatens my life-a?  
Is that dear lady known to you?"  
"O King, she is my Wife-a".

"Marquis, your Fate out-fortunes mine,  
To have a Wife so fair-a.  
Let me possess that form divine,  
She shall have all my care-a."

"If you were not my Sovereign King,  
I'd stab you, King, and slay-a . . .  
Alas, you are my Sovereign King,  
And subjects must obey-a"

"Marquis, be not offended thus,  
You shall have recompense-a.  
Over my armies you shall be  
The Field-Marshal and Prince-a".

"O Wife, put on your loveliest things,  
Your laces and your pride-a.  
Your satins white and maiden things,  
As though you were a bride-a.

LOVELY MARQUISE

Adieu, my joy in living things,  
Adieu, my darling heart-a.  
Since you must go to be the King's,  
We lovers have to part-a".

The Queen caused lilies to be drenched  
With drugs from over-seas-a.  
The lily-flowers' poison quenched  
And murdered the Marquise-a.

## SAILORMAN BOLD

Sailorman bold is home from sea  
Away.  
Sailorman bold is home from sea  
Away  
His shoes in patch, his clothes in darns:  
"O Sailor, have you come from far  
Away?"

"Madam, I come from war and far  
Away.  
Madam, I come from war and far  
Away  
O mix a sangaree that so  
A sailorman may drink and go  
Away,"

Sailorman bold sat down to drink  
Away  
Sailorman bold sat down to drink  
Away  
And as he drank he sang so free  
The hostess wept to hear and see  
Away.

"O what is this, O hostess mine  
Away  
O what is this O hostess mine  
Away.

## SAILORMAN BOLD

Is it so sad that you must cry  
If seamen sing in passing by  
Away?"

"I do not weep because you sing  
Away  
I do not weep because you sing  
Away.  
I weep for my dead husband's grace.  
Sir, you are like him in the face . . ."  
Away.

' O gentle hostess, tell me true  
Away.  
O gentle hostess tell me true  
Away.  
Your husband's children were but three . . .  
Now there are six about your knee  
Away."

"Alas, they brought me lying word  
Away  
Alas, they brought me lying word  
Away  
That you had long been lost at sea,  
And so, Sir, I remarried me  
Away."

Sailorman bold emptied his glass  
Away  
Sailorman bold emptied his glass  
Away.  
Without a word, but weeping sore  
He turned and went back to the war  
Away.

## THE WIND OF THE SEA

Three sailor-men from Bantry Bay  
ventured to sea on Christmas Day  
It blows.

The wind of the sea torments us

Out in the sea one found his grave  
Although the others strove to save.  
They strove as hard as men can do  
But only saved their shipmate's shoe;  
His shoe, his hat, his wooden fid,  
And tinder-box with painted lid.  
It blows.

The wind of the sea torments us.

His weeping Mother went to pray  
At St. Anne's Church on Bantry Bay.  
She prayed like many another one,  
"O sweet Saint, give me back my Son".  
Swiftly St. Anne made answer wise:—  
"He waits for you in Paradise".  
The Mother laughed and went her way  
Back to her home and died that day.  
It blows.

The wind of the sea torments us.

## DEAD MAN'S BRIDGE

"At Dead Man's Bridge, where all the Fair will be  
There will be dancing: maj I go to see?"

"No, little Ann; a dance is sin, I fear."

Ann seeks her bed-room, shedding many a tear.  
Ann's Brother asks her, "Why she weeps?" . . .  
"Because  
Mother thinks dancing breaks the holy laws"

"Put on your Sunday blue, with gold belt glancing.  
We'll go to Dead Man's Bridge and see the dancing."  
She donned her Sunday blue with golden zone;  
Away, to watch the dance, the two are gone.

Ann danced upon the bridge and tumbled down.  
"O Brother, help me; quick; or I shall drown".  
"No, little Ann; I'll save you, by my soul".

The Dead Mens' bells in church began to toll.

The Mother said, "The Death Bell tolls: for whom?"  
"Your girl and boy are drowned and in the tomb".

## A MESSENGER SPEECH

Dead is Orestes: dead: I said: I say again.  
They sent me here to tell: hark, as I make it plain.  
There, to the Delphic Games, the pride of Greece, he  
went.  
And wondrously he won event after event.  
No man could match him there: he won prize after prize.  
"O happy man," (men thought) "O marvel in our eyes,  
Orestes, Argos-born, King Agamemnon's son,"  
(The King who led the host by which Troy town was  
won).

But, ah, when God wills doom, a hero must give place.  
He came, with many more, to try the chariot-race.  
One from Achaia came; from Sparta, one; and two  
From Libya: he was fifth: Greek mares his chariot drew...  
Sixth, an Aetolian man, who drove a chestnut team.  
The seventh, two strong bays, Magnesian, as I deem.  
The eighth who drove two whites from sea-lapped Ainos  
came.  
The ninth from Athens was, that God-built town of fame.  
The tenth was from the wilds in the Boeotian land.  
So they drew lot for place, lined up, and took their stand.  
The trumpet blew for OFF: each driver shook his rotes  
And shouted to his team: and on each chariot strains . . .  
All the whole race-course rings with hoofs and rattling  
cars:  
The dust flies up like smoke: the lash flies: the wheel jars.

A MESSENGER SPEECH

Each driver, and each team, longs, lusts and strives to pass  
The rival wheels that smoke, the hoofs that tear the grass.  
Each driver on his back and in his side and face  
Feels the hot breath and foam of rivals as they race.

Orestes, at the turns, drove close-in to the stone  
Almost his left wheel grazed: but so far none was  
thrown . . .

Then the two hard-mouthed whites (from Ainos) seized  
their bits

Just at the seventh turn and smashed their car to bits.  
Then free, out of control, they fouled a Libyan car  
Then crash, horse upon horse, driver and chariot are:  
All the great Crisa turn is heaped with death and wreck...  
Eight of the ten cars crashed, two only kept in check.

Two, for the Athens man, (a wary driver he)  
Drove wide and slowed to pass that wreck-encumbered  
sea.

Orestes, driving last, slowed, too, meaning to wait  
He, too, came safely round: Those two teams reached the  
straight.

Ah, then, then, was the time, there lay the goal ahead:  
But two teams left to run: the man from Athens led:  
Orestes screamed aloud to urge his mares in chase  
Up, up, then neck to neck, they sped there in the race.  
There at the judges' post the roaring crowd begins,  
"Athens," "Orestes; come." "Orestes," "Athens wins".

And now, after so long, so many dangers passed,  
Ofestes on the rails struck on a stone at last  
Struck hard, with the left wheel, which snapped: and he  
was thrown

Caught in the reins and dragged, to death on earth and  
stone.

A MESSENGER SPEECH

Oh, what a pitying cry arose there for the lad  
Who had such glory won and now such ending had  
Dragged by the maddened mares, who did not cease to  
    race . . . ,  
When the grooms stopped the team, no friend could  
    know the face,  
No-one could tell the man . . .

                    They burned his body there . . .  
Now in a bronzen urn the men of Phocis bear  
The ash of that fair youth, here to his fatherland.  
The tale is hard to tell, grievous to understand . . .  
But, to ourselves, who saw the things that we have told  
It was the saddest thing chat men might well behold.

## THE END OF THE ILIAD

When they had reached the ford of the clear-running  
stream,  
The god-born Xanthos brook where many eddies gleam,  
God Hermes sped away into his mountain snows,  
And crocus-mantled dawn above the world arose.

With crying and with groans King Priam drove his boy,  
His dead son, Hector, back, behind the mules to Troy.

And who, of all in Troy, gay-belted girl or lad,  
Looking across the Plain, the knowledge of them had?

Kassandra was the first, that very golden flower,  
She, staring through her tears, beheld them from the tower.  
She saw how in the car her father, Priam, sped,  
And there behind the mules the great one lying dead.

At once through all the ways she sent a wailing drear—  
"O Trojans, Trojans... see ... our Hector drawing near.

O look, if in the past you gladdened when he came . . .  
O, he was gladness, then before the sorrow came.

O . . ." and woe fell on all... and out of city went  
All there to meet the dead and greet him with lament.

His mother, Hecuba, his wife, Andromache,  
Prone in their grief they fell, the Trojans wailed to see ...

## THE END OF THE ILIAD

They pressed to touch the dead, and there, outside the town

They would have stayed all day until the sun went down,  
Had not King Priam called, "Stand back there ... let me come . . . "

You shall have time to mourn when I have brought him home.

Make way, there, for the mules . . . " They moved . . . the waggon passed,

Into the glorious house they drove him home at last.

They laid him in a bed: the singers came to hymn.

The leaders of the song began a dirge for him.

And while the singers sang the women mourned the dead;

Andromache the first her arms about his head.

ANDROMACHE:

"O husband, gone from life . . . and I a widow here,  
Left with a little child for whom no help is near.

We bore him to ill-fate, our darling, you and I.

He will not grow to man, this city's death is nigh.

You, who were watch and guard, go down into the grave,

You, who kept Troia's wives and little children safe.

Now these will soon be slaves in Greek ships bound for Greece.

I, too; and you, my child, will go, and not to peace.

No, but to grind and toil, at some grim chief's command,  
Or some Achaian king will grip you by the hand

And drag you up the steps and from the topmost tower  
Fling you upon the rocks for grim death to devour.

## THE END OF THE ILIAD

In vengeance for some kin whom Hector killed before.  
Un-mild your father was amid the burning war.  
Ah me, the burning war... all Troy laments her chief...  
O Hector, Hector gone, your parents left in grief. . .

And most of all to me your dying brings despair . . .  
No dying-bed was yours, nor comfort from me there.  
No dying word from you came to me at your side  
For me to weep upon and think of till I died."

So said she in her tears. The women's weeping ran  
In moanings by the bier. Then Hecuba began:

HECUBA:

"Hector, of all my sons, my deepest heart's most dear...  
A most dear son to me and to the gods most dear.  
For gods have blest your corpse even in Death and Fate.  
Other lost sons of mine have felt Achilles' hate.  
Some he has caught and sold as slaves in isles afar,  
In Imbros, or beyond, where Lemnos' smoulderings are.

But you, when his sharp bronze had sent into the gloom,  
He dragged, and dragged again about his comrade's tomb,  
His dear Patroclus' tomb, his comrade, whom you killed.  
But did not so restore the spirit that you spilled.

Now here in the dawn's dew you lie unscarred, asleep,  
Like one whom the Bright God has taken to his keep,  
God with a lightning down of painless arrows sent. . ."

Thus, she, crying aloud rousing the long lament.  
Then third among the crowd Queen Helen led the cry:

## THE END OF THE ILIAD

HELEN:

"O Hector, brother dear, none loved you more than I  
Your brother wrought us this, Paris, who brought me  
here,  
To Troy, to cruel war, year after bitter year.  
Would I had rather died those twenty years ago  
Than left the native land that I dishonoured so.  
In all those twenty year I never, never heard,  
From you, Hector, my friend, one harsh or hurtful word,  
No, but when any gibed, or taunted, or was grim  
Your quiet silenced her or gently bridled him.  
You, with your gentle words, you with your gentle ways,  
O I lament you now and shall do, all my days.  
For now, to none in Troy, in all wide Troy, alas,  
Am I beloved or dear, all shudder as I pass."

Thus Helen cried aloud: the crowd moaned in their grief.  
Then Priam spoke to them, Priam, the King and chief.

"Up, Trojan men . . . away, the wood to cut and stack  
And cart into the town: and fear no Greek attack.  
Achilles pledged his word when he dismissed us thence  
That they will not attack until the twelfth dawn hence."

He said; they yoked the teams and instantly, away  
Oxen and mules and men left Troy the forest way.  
Nine days they gathered wood and when the tenth day  
neared  
When the man-lighting dawn first in the east appeared  
They brought the hero's corpse out to the lofty pyre.  
They wept; they laid it down and set the heap afire.  
When rosy-fingered Dawn again to Earth returned  
The folk with glittering wine put out what embers burned  
Mourning, with many a tear running on many a face  
His friends and brothers took the white bones from the  
place.

## THE END OF THE ILIAD

Within a golden box the hero's bones they hid  
With soft bright purple cloths wrapped round about the  
lid.

This, in a pit, in earth, in hurry they put by  
And covered with great stones as close as they would lie.

Then, fearing Greek attack, they set their watchers  
round

And so, in fear, at speed, they heaped the barrow-  
mound.

When they had heaped the mound most swiftly, one  
and all

Returned, to solemn feast, within the palace hall.

Banqueting there, they sat with Priam, reared-of-Zeus,  
Horse-daunting Hector thus received his burial dues.





