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A BOOK OF ENGLISH POEMS

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GRADED FOR USE IN SCHOOLS

By J. H. JAGGER, M.A., D.Litt.

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J. H. JAGGER, M.A., D.Litt.

PART THREE



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INTRODUCTION

THE uses of Poetry are many. As a poem expresses the fine emotions of the poet, it helps to refine our feelings, and so makes us better boys and girls, better men and women. As it presents us with what the keen eye of the poet has seen, it causes the scales to fall from our eyes, and enables us to see what we might never have beheld. As it conveys to us the poet's experience, it enlarges our experience of life, and it does this with the least trouble to ourselves. It also makes us more like the poet, for since, while we are reading a poem, we share the poet's experience, we become for a time and to some extent one with him. Our eyes see what he sees, and we feel what he feels. Moreover, many poems inspire us to right action. And therefore, besides helping us to understand, poetry makes us better able to do the ordinary acts of life, and to follow the ordinary pursuits of life.

There is something of the poet in all of us. If it were otherwise, we should pay no attention to poetry. We may not be able to compose poems, but we can appreciate them.

The word *poet* originally meant "one who makes verses." That, however, is rather a mean idea of a poet, for he does much more than

string words together in rhyme and metre. In composing a song, or in telling a story in verse, a poet creates something. He gives us his ideas and feelings, which, if he is a true poet, are wonderful and inspired, so that he is able to cast over that about which he sings a heavenly radiance. Yet in delineating a flower, relating an incident, or describing a person, he cannot wholly cut loose from this world of ours. He is bound to imitate it in his words. There is, therefore, much truth in the ancient description of a poet, as one who imitates nature and copies life. Because the poet is endowed with a finer perception than ours, and because he has finer feelings, it may seem that his imagination runs away with him. If he writes well and truly, this is not so; and his poems will stand the test of time, since they will be a revelation. They will not be slavish transcripts; they will be magic copies, which can only be made by one gifted with special power of vision.



A BOOK OF ENGLISH POEMS

I

THE COUNTRY LASS

A NORTH COUNTRY lass up to London did pass,
Although with her nature it did not agree,
Which made her repent, and often lament,
Still wishing again in the North for to be :—
“ O, the oak, and the ash, and the bonny ivy-tree,
Do flourish at home in my own countree !

“ I like not the Court, nor to City resort,
Since there is no fancy for such maids as me ;
Their pomp and their pride I can never abide,
Because with my humour it doth not agree.
O, the oak, and the ash, and the bonny ivy-tree,
Do flourish at home in my own countree !

“ How oft have I been on the Westmoreland green,
Where the young men and maidens resort for
to play,
Where we with delight, from morning till night,
Could feast it and frolic on each holiday.
O, the oak, and the ash, and the bonny ivy-tree,
Do flourish at home in my own countree !

“ The ewes and the lambs, with the kids and their
dams,
To see in the country how finely they play ;
The bells they do ring, and the birds they do
sing,
And the fields and the gardens are pleasant and
gay.
O, the oak, and the ash, and the bonny ivy-tree,
Do flourish at home in my own countree !

“ When I had the heart from my friends to depart,
 I thought I should be a lady at last ;
 But now do I find that it troubles my mind,
 Because that my joys and my pleasures are past.
 O, the oak, and the ash, and the bonny ivy-tree,
 Do flourish at home in my own countree ! ”

Anonymous.

“ BLOW, BLOW, THOU WINTER WIND ”

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,

Thou art not so unkind

As man's ingratitude ;

Thy tooth is not so keen,

Because thou art not seen,

Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh-ho ! sing, heigh-ho ! unto the green holly :
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere
 folly :

Then, heigh-ho, the holly !

This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,

Thou dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot :

Though thou the waters warp,

Thy sting is not so sharp

As friend remembered not.

Heigh-ho ! sing, heigh-ho ! unto the green holly :
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere
 folly :

Then, heigh-ho, the holly !

This life is most jolly.

William Shakespeare

SPIRIT SONG

To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky :
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three,
That sing about the golden tree :
Along the crispèd¹ shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring ;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosomed Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring.
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard, and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odororous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purpled² scarf can show. . . .
Mortals that would follow me,
Love virtue ; she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime ;
Or, if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

“ From “ *Comus*,” by John Milton.

¹ Cool.

² Fringed.

THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE

Pastoral poetry—the poetry of shepherds and shepherdesses piping to their flocks—was at one time very fashionable. *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, *The Shepherd's Morning Song*, and *The Shepherd's Evening Song* are all pastorals. This poem describes perfectly the fanciful pastoral life where

Every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

It is quite unreal, quite artificial, but very musical and very sweet. The poetry of a life free from care and real toil, and of fields

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly

has a charm for everyone, if for a moment he can forget that it is not to be found on earth.

COME live with me, and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool,
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

The Passionate Shepherd to his Love 5

A belt of straw and ivy buds
With coral clasps and amber studs ;
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love.

Thy silver dishes for thy meat,
As precious as the gods do eat,
Shall on an ivory table be
Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning ;
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me, and be my Love.

Christopher Marlowe.

THE SHEPHERD'S MORNING SONG

SEE, the day begins to break,
And the light shoots like a streak
Of subtle fire ; the wind blows cold,
Whilst the morning doth unfold ;
Now the birds begin to rouse,
And the squirrel from the boughs
Leaps, to get him nuts and fruit ;
The early lark, that erst was mute,
Carols to the rising day
Many a note and many a lay.
Shepherds, rise, and shake off sleep !
See, the blushing morn doth peep
Through the windows, whilst the sun
To the mountain-tops is run,
Gilding all the vales below

With his rising flames, which grow
 Greater by his climbing still.
 Up, ye lazy grooms, and fill
 Bag and bottle for the field !
 Clasp your cloaks fast, lest they yield
 To the bitter north-east wind.
 Call the maidens up, and find
 Who lay longest, that she may
 Go without a friend all day.
 Then reward your dogs, and pray
 Pan¹ to keep you from decay :
 So unfold, and then away !

John Fletcher.

THE SHEPHERD'S EVENING SONG

SHEPHERDS all, and maidens fair,
 Fold your flocks up : for the air
 'Gins to thicken, and the sun
 Already his great course hath run.
 See the dew-drops, how they kiss
 Every little flower that is ;
 Hanging on their velvet heads
 Like a rope of crystal beads.
 See the heavy clouds low falling,
 And bright Hesperus down calling
 The dead Night from underground ;
 At whose rising, mists unsound,
 Damps and vapours, fly apace,
 Hovering o'er the wanton face
 Of these pastures, where they come

¹ The ancient god of shepherds.

Striking dead both bud and bloom :
Therefore from such danger lock
Everyone his lovèd flock ;
And let your dogs lie loose without,
Lest the wolf come as a scout
From the mountain, and ere day
Bear a lamb or kid away ;
Or the crafty thievish fox
Break upon your simple flocks.
To secure yourselves from these
Be not too secure in ease ;
Let one eye his watches keep,
Whilst the other eye doth sleep ;
So shall you good shepherds prove,
And for ever hold the love
Of our master ! Sweetest slumbers
And soft silence fall in numbers
On your eyelids ! So farewell !
Thus I end my evening's knell.

John Fletcher.

FOR A' THAT, AND A' THAT

This poem, like *The Two Sisters o' Binnorie*, *The Farewell*, *The Gay Goshawk*, and *To a Mountain Daisy*, is written in Lowland Scots dialect. It combines fine fervour with proud humility. Robert Burns, the great singer of Scotland, was himself, in many ways, such a man as he here exalts.

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that ?
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that !

For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toils obscure, and a' that ;
 The rank is but the guinea stamp ;
 The man's the gowd for a' that.

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
 Wear hodden-gray, and a' that :
 Gie fools their silks and knaves their wine,
 A man's a man for a' that.
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their tinsel show, and a' that ;
 The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
 Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie,¹ ca'd a lord,
 Wha struts and stares, and a' that ;
 Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof ² for a' that :
 For a' that, and a' that,
 His riband, s⁺ar, and a' that,
 The man of independent mind,
 He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
 A marquis, duke, and a' that ;
 But an honest man's aboon his might
 Guid faith, he mauna fa' ³ that !
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their dignities and a' that,
 The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
 Are higher rank than a' that.

¹ Fellow.² Noodle.³ Must not get.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that ;
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth
May bear the gree,¹ and a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that.

Robert Burns.

TO DAFFODILS.

FAIR daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon ;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong ;
And, having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay as you ;
We have as short a spring,
As quick a growth to meet decay
As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain ;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

Robert Herrick.

¹ Prize.

MY LUVE'S IN GERMANY

The sadness of this lament pierces through every line ; it is the cry of one who is in despair, the constant repetition of the phrase " Send him hame ! " emphasizing its poignant longing. The poem is divided by a verse—the fourth—in which a messenger delivers the news of the soldier's death.

My Luve's in Germany,
 Send him hame, send him hame ;
 My Luve's in Germany,
 Send him hame :
 My Lúve's in Germany,
 Fighting for royalty :
 He may ne'er his Jeanie see ;
 Send him hame, send him hame ;
 He may ne'er his Jeanie see,
 Send him hame.

He's brave as brave can be,
 Send him hame, send him hame ;
 He's brave as brave can be,
 Send him hame.
 He's brave as brave can be,
 He wad rather fa' than flee ;
 But his life is dear to me,
 Send him hame, send him hame ;
 Oh, his life is dear to me ;
 Send him hame.

Our faes are ten to three,
 Send him hame, send him hame ;
 Our faes are ten to three,
 Send him hame ;
 He maun either fa' or flee,

In the cause o' loyalty ;
Send him hame, send him hame ;
In the cause of loyalty,
Send him hame.

Your Luve ne'er learnt to flee,
Bonnie dame, bonnie dame ;
Your Luve, ne'er learnt to flee,
Winsome dame ;
Your Luve ne'er learnt to flee,
But he fell in Germany,
Fighting brave for loyalty,
Mournfu' dame, bonnie dame, ,
Fighting brave for loyalty,
Mournfu' dame.

He'll ne'er come ower the sea,
Willie's slain, Willie's slain ;
He'll ne'er come ower the sea,
Willie's gane.
He'll ne'er come ower the sea,
To his Love and ain' countrie—
This warld's nae mair for me,
Willie's gane, Willie's gane.
This warld's nae mair for me,
Willie's slain.

Anonymous.

A GIRL'S SONG

"A Girl's Song" is on the same subject as "My Luve's in Germany," but the setting and situation are quite different. It is a poem of the war of 1914-1918, and describes with simple beauty the scenery of Flanders, where so many British soldiers fell.

THE Meuse and Marne have little waves ;
The slender poplars o'er them lean.
One day they will forget the graves
That give the grass its living green.

Some brown French girl the rose will wear
That springs above his comely head ;
Will twine it in her russet hair
Nor wonder why it is so red.

His blood is in the rose's veins,
His hair is in the yellow corn ;
My grief is in the weeping rains,
And in the keening¹ wind forlorn.

Flow softly, softly, Marne and Meuse ;
Tread lightly, all ye browsing sheep ;
Fall tenderly, O silver dew,
For here my dear Love lies asleep.

The earth is on his sealed eyes,
The beauty marred that was my pride ;
Would I were lying where he lies,
And sleeping sweetly by his side !

The Spring will come by Meuse and Marne,
The birds be blithesome in the tree.
I heap the stones to make his cairn
Where many sleep as sound as he.

Katharine Tynan.

¹ Wailing.

THE BELLS OF SHANDON

About "The Bells of Shandon" much might be said, for it is different from any other poem. The most remarkable feature of it is the manner in which, by its metre, its double rhymes, its rhymes in the lines, and the short lines at the end of each stanza, it suggests the sound of distant church bells.

WITH deep affection and recollection
I often think of those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would, in days of childhood,
Fling around my cradle their magic spells.
On this I ponder where'er I wander,
And thus grow fonder, sweet Cork, of thee ;
 With the bells of Shandon,
 That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters of the river Lee.

I've heard bells chiming full many a clime in,
Tolling sublime in cathedral shrine,
While at a glib rate brass tongues would vibrate ;
But all their music spoke naught to thine.
For memory, dwelling on each proud swelling
Of the belfry, knelling its bold notes free,
 Made the bells of Shandon
 Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters of the river Lee.

I've heard bells tolling old Adrian's Mole in,
Their thunder rolling from the Vatican,
And cymbals glorious, swinging uproarious
In the gorgeous turrets of Notre Dame ;
But thy sounds were sweeter than the dome of
 Peter
Flings o'er the Tiber, pealing solemnly.
 O ! the bells of Shandon
 Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters of the river Lee.

There's a bell in Moscow ; while on tower and
kiosk, O ! .

In St. Sophia the Turkman gets,
And loud in air calls men to prayer
From the tapering summits of tall minarets.
Such empty phantom I freely grant them ;
But there is an anthem more dear to me,—

'Tis the bells of Shàndon

That sound so grand on

The pleasant waters of the river Lee.

Francis Mahony.

YE MARINERS OF ENGLAND

Ye mariners of England
That guard our native seas, .
Whose flag has braved, a thousand years,
The battle and the breeze,
Your glorious standard launch again
To match another foe !
And sweep through the deep
While the stormy winds do blow ;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

The spirits of your fathers
Shall start from every wave—
For the deck it was their field of fame,
And Ocean was their grave :
Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell
Your manly hearts shall glow,
As ye sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow ;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep ;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep.
With thunders from her native oak
She quells the floods below—
As they roar on the shore,
When the stormy winds do blow ;
When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn,
Till danger's troubled night depart,
And the star of peace return.
Then, then, ye ocean warriors,
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceased to blow ;
When the fiery fight is heard no more,
And the storm has ceased to blow.

Thomas Campbell.

A SONG OF ENGLAND

“ A Song of England ” is notable for the affection that appears in its lines, for the description it gives us of England, but still more, perhaps, for its smooth music.

My England, island England, such leagues and
leagues away,
It's years since I was with thee, when April
waned to May :
Years since I saw the primrose, and watched the
brown hillside

Put on white crowns of blossom and blush like
April's bride ;
Years since I heard thy skylark, and caught the
throbbing note
Which all the soul of springtide sends through
the blackbird's throat.
O England, island England ! if it has been my
lot
To live long years in alien lands, with men who
love thee not,
I do but love thee better who know each wind
that blows,
The wind that slays the blossom, the wind that
buds the rose,
The wind that shakes the taper mast and keeps the
topsail furled,
The wind that braces nerve and arm to battle
with the world :
I love thy moss-deep grasses, thy great untortured
trees,
The cliffs that wall thy havens, the weed-scents
of thy seas,
The dreamy river-reaches, the quiet English
homes,
The milky path of sorrel down which the spring-
tide comes.
O land so loved through length of years, so
tended and caressed,
The land that never stranger wronged nor foe-
man dared to waste,
Remember those thou speedest forth round all
the world to be
Thy witness to the nations, thy warders on the
sea !

And keep for those who leave thee and find no
better place
The olden smile of welcome, the unchanged
mother-face !

Sir Rennell Rodd.

BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

One of the most splendid of English war-songs, fit to be set beside Burns' "Scots Wha Hae." The marvellous sound of its strong music has set on fire the blood of thousands. It was occasioned by the American Civil War, when the slavery of the negro was abolished in the United States of America.

MINE eyes have seen the glory of the coming of
the Lord :

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes
of wrath are stored :

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible
swift sword :

His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred
circling camps :

They have builded Him an altar in the evening
dews and damps :

I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and
flaring lamps :

His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows
of steel :

"As ye deal with My contemners, so with you
My grace shall deal :

Let the hero born of woman crush the serpent
with his heel,

Since God is marching on."

He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall
never call retreat ;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His
judgment seat :
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him ! Be
jubilant, my feet !
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born, across
the sea,
With a glory 'in His bosom that transfigures you
and me :
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make
them free !
While God is marching on.

Julia Ward Howe.



II

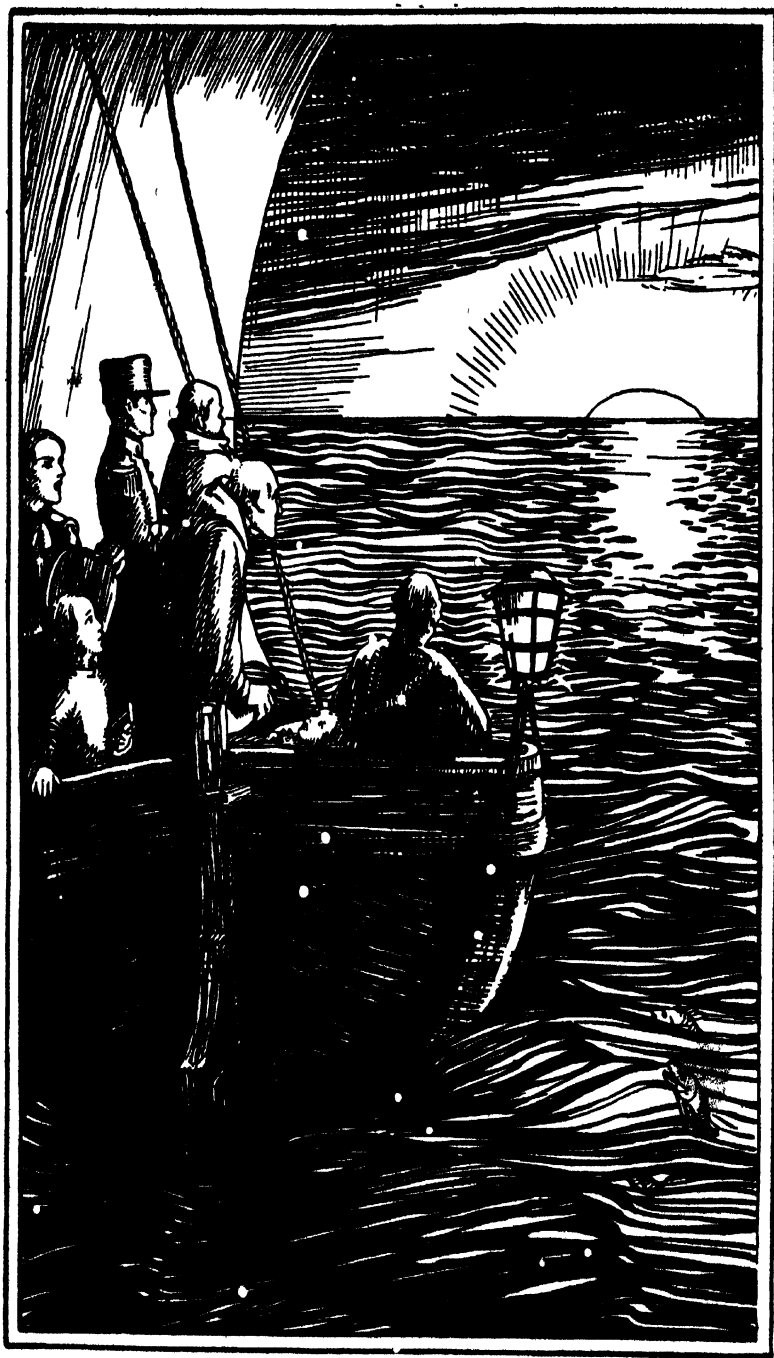
LEISURE

WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare ?
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows ?
No time to see, when woods we pass
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass ?
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like stars at night ?
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance ?
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began ?—
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

William H. Davies.

THE SOLITARY REAPER

It is not the song of the Reaper, but the reflection which it suggested, that forms the subject of this poem. The sound started a train of thought that carried the listener to "the silence of the seas" and to "old, unhappy, far-off things." The music of the song linked his soul to all that now is, and all that is past, and the music and magnificent phrases of the poem act in the same manner upon the reader. The last verse expresses a feeling similar to that prompted by "The Little Waves of Breffny," which is printed next. In the latter, however, there is a difference; for there the fact is emphasized that greater and grander experiences have remained cold, while



affection has twined itself round scenes and sounds small and unimportant in themselves, but possessing a special value for the poet's heart.

BEHOLD her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass !
Reaping and singing by herself :
Stop here, or gently pass !
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain ;
Oh, listen ! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands :
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago ;
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been, and may be again ?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending :
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending ;—

I listened, motionless and still ;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

William Wordsworth.

THE LITTLE WAVES OF BREFFNY

THE grand road from the mountain goes shining
to the sea,
And there is traffic in it, and many a horse and
cart ;
But the little roads of Cloonagh are dearer far
to me,
And the little roads of Cloonagh go rambling
through my heart.

A great storm from the ocean goes shouting o'er
the hill,
And there is glory in it and terror on the wind ;
But the haunted air of twilight is very strange and
still,
And the little winds of twilight are dearer to
my mind.

The great waves of the Atlantic sweep storming
on their way,
Shining green and silver with the hidden
herring shoal ;
But the little waves of Breffny have drenched my
heart in spray,
And the little waves of Breffny go stumbling
through my soul.

Eva Gore-Booth.

The Belfry
THE BELFRY

23

"The Belfry" is an even-toned description of the timid adventure of a small girl and a small boy, who climb a tower to where the bell hangs. Every detail is clearly marked. In the last stanzas, where the wide surrounding landscape is suggested, and the reverberating clang of the great bell can be heard, there is a very powerful contrast. Before, the reader's thought was confined to the narrow space enclosed by the four walls of the tower. Now, it travels to the horizon, where earth and sky meet.

DARK is the stair, and humid the old walls
Wherein it winds, on worn stones, up the tower.
Only by loophole chinks at intervals
Pierces the late glow of this August hour.

Two truant children climb the stairway dark,
With joined hands, half in glee and half in fear ;
The boy mounts brisk, the girl hangs back to
hark
If the gruff sexton their light footstep hear.

Dazzled at last they gain the belfry-room.
Barred rays through shutters hover across the
floor,
Dancing in dust ; so fresh they come from gloom
That breathless they pause wondering at the
door.

How hushed it is ! what smell of timbers old
From cobwebbed beams ! The warm light here
and there
Edging a darkness, sleeps in pools of gold,
Or weaves fantastic shadows through the air.

How motionless the huge bell ! Straight and stiff,
Ropes through the floor rise to the rafters dim.
The shadowy round of metal hangs, as if
No force could ever lift its gleamy rim.

A child's awe, a child's wonder—who shall trace
What dumb thoughts on its waxen softness write
In such a spell-brimmed, time-forgotten place,
Bright in that strangeness of approaching night ?

As these two gaze, their fingers tighter press ;
For suddenly the slow bell upward heaves
Its vast mouth, the cords quiver at the stress,
And, ere the heart prepare, the ear receives

Full on its delicate sense the plangent stroke
Of violent, iron, reverberating sound.
As if the tower in all its stones awoke,
Deep echoes tremble, again in clangour drowned,

That starts without a whirl of frightened wings
And holds the young hearts shaken, hushed, and
thrilled,
Like frail reeds in a rushing stream, like strings
Of music, or like trees with tempest filled,

And rolls in wide waves out o'er the lone land,
Tone following tone toward the far-setting sun,
Till where in fields long-shadowed reapers stand
Bowed heads look up, and lo, the day is done.

From " The Belfry," by Laurence Binyon.

THE VILLAGE PREACHER

In this piece and the next, which are extracts from a poem entitled "The Deserted Village," may be noticed clever character-drawing and sly humour. The verses are called heroic couplets; they are rhymed in pairs, and flow with wonderful ease and grace. At the end of the first piece there is a striking simile, which illuminates the character of the village Preacher, and forms a splendid climax.

NEAR yonder copse, where once the garden
 smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild—
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing¹ rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his
 place;
Unpractised he to fawn or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their
 pain:
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims,
 allowed;
The broken² soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away,

¹ Exceedingly.² Disabled.

Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields
were won.

Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to
glow,

And quite forgot their vices in their woe ;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side ;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for
all ;

And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting¹ life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul ;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to
raise,

And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place ;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools who came to scoff remained to pray.

The service past, around the pious man,

“With steady zeal each honest rustic ran ;

E'en children followed, with endearing wile,

And plucked his gown, to share the good man's
smile.

¹ Departing.

His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed ;
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares
distressed :

To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven—
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the
storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are
spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Oliver Goldsmith.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER

BESIDE yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school.
A man severe he was, and stern to view ;
I knew him well, and every truant knew :
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face ;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he :
Full well the busy whisper circling round
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.
Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault ;
The village all declared how much he knew ;
'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too ;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And e'en the story ran—that he could gauge :

In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill ;
For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still ;
While words of learned length and thundering
 sound

Amazed the gaping rustics ranged around ;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew.

Oliver Goldsmith.

THE PATRIOT

The author called this a Dramatic Romance, by which he meant that it is like a speech made by a person in a play, because it reveals something of the speaker's character, and tells something of his history. It contains the thoughts of a condemned man on the way to execution, and might be the last lines of a Tragedy. From it the reader is able to surmise the events of the preceding year, and it opens a window through which he can see the soul of the patriot and his feelings. It is a very subtle work of art.

It was roses, roses all the way,

With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :

The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,

The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

The air broke into a mist with bells,

The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.

Had I said, " Good folk, mere noise repels—

But give me your sun from yonder skies ! "

They had answered, " And afterward, what else ? "

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun

To give it my loving friends to keep !

Naught man could do have I left undone :

And you see my harvest, what I reap

This very day, now a year is run.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—
Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the shambles' gate—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind ;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds ;
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
“ Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me ? ”—God might question ; but instead
'Tis God shall repay : I am safer so.

Robert Browning.

THE LONDONER'S CHARIOT

(The Conductor speaks)

COME board my speeding chariot that bears you
for a brown or two
From shire to shire, by bridge and spire, from
Lee to Muswell Hill ;
I pass by ancient palaces, I sweep across a Down
or two,
You'll swear it's worth a crown or two
Before the wheels are still.

From dawn to dark by city streets, with scarlet
sides I hurry down ;

Quit sordid care, climb up my stair, and glide
with me along,
And you may dream in Warren Wood or ponder
on a Surrey Down ;
My wheels shall beat your worry down
And fill your soul with song.

Choose well your day, and if in doubt just ask
some wise old weather-head ;
'Take bread and cheese, and, if you please, an
apple and a bun ;
And you may revel half a day at Epping or at
Leatherhead,
As blithe as any feather-head
That dances in the sun.

There's pageant on the sky for you. The stately
clouds go sweeping on,
A fleet of sail that braves the gale across the windy
vast ;
Anon they seem a host of horse in sudden dust
stampeding on
To find fresh fields for feeding on,
Before the day is past.

And steeples far away you'll spy through veils
of mist that muffle them,
Where old and scarred they rise and guard God's
acre of dead souls ;
And round them barley stems that bow as sudden
breezes ruffle them,
And fairy fingers shuffle them
With every wave that rolls.

You'll pass by many an ancient Inn, and see the
 swinging sign of it ;
You'll pass by marts of coster-carts, and gardens
 sweet with musk ;
And ever as you face the sky you'll see the chang-
 ing line of it,
Until the sun makes wine of it.
And drowns the world in dusk.

So board my speeding chariot and leave your
 native soil behind ;
I fly like fire from shire to shire, from Sheen to
 Seven Kings ;
I've got a Spartan at the wheel, another drum
 of oil behind ;
Though slower wheels may toil behind,
It's you that shall have wings.

Wilfrid Thorley.

THE SOUTH COUNTRY

WHEN I am living in the Midlands,
 That are sodden and unkind,
I light my lamp in the evening ;
 My work is left behind ;
And the great hills of the South Country
 Come back into my mind.

The great hills of the South Country
 They stand along the sea,
And it's there, walking in the high woods,
 That I could wish to be,
And the boys that were boys when I was a boy
 Walking along with me.

The men that live in North England
I saw them for a day :
Their hearts are set upon the waste fells,
Their skies are fast and grey ;
From their castle-walls a man may see
The mountains far away.

The men that live in West England
They see the Severn strong,
A-rolling on rough water brown
Light aspen leaves along.
They have the secret of the Rocks,
And the oldest kind of song.

But the men that live in the South Country
Are the kindest and most wise ,
They get their laughter from the loud surf,
And the faith in their happy eyes
Comes surely from our Sister the Spring
When over the sea she flies ;
The violets suddenly bloom at her feet ;
She blesses us with surprise.

I never get between the pines
But I smell the Sussex air ;
Nor I never come on a belt of sand
But my home is there.
And along the sky the line of the Downs
So noble and so bare.

A lost thing could I never find,
Nor a broken thing mend,
And I fear I shall be all alone
When I get towards the end.

Who will be there to comfort me,
Or who will be my friend ?

I will gather and carefully make my friends
Of the men of the Sussex Weald ;
They watch the stars from silent folds,
They stiffly plough the field.
By them and the God of the South Country
My poor soul shall be healed.

If I ever become a rich man,
Or if ever I grow to be old,
I will build a house with deep thatch
To shelter me from the cold,
And there shall the Sussex songs be sung
And the story of Sussex told.

I will hold my house in the high wood,
Within a walk of the sea,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Shall sit and drink with me.

Hilaire Belloc.

ST. ANDREWS

No greater difference can be imagined than that between St. Andrews, a stern and dreary town on a barren coast, and Oxford, surrounded by lush meadows through which flow lazy streams. The poem expresses a tender affection, and its words are very musical.

*St. Andrews by the Northern sea,
A haunted town it is to me !
A little city, worn and grey,
The grey North Ocean girds it round ;
And o'er the rocks and up the bay,
The long sea-rollers surge and sound.*

And still the thin and biting spray
Drives down the melancholy street,
And still endure, and still decay
Towers that the salt winds vainly beat.
Ghost-like and shadowy they stand
Clear mirrored in the wet sea-sand.

O, ruined chapel, long ago
We loitered idly where the tall
Fresh-budded mountain-ashes blow
Within thy desecrated wall:
The tough roots rent the tomb below,
The April birds sang clamorous,
We did not dream, we could not know,
How soon the Fates would sunder us!

O, broken minster, looking forth
Beyond the bay, above the town,
O, winter of the kindly North,
O, college of the scarlet gown,
And shining sands beside the sea,
And stretch of links beyond the sand,
Once more I watch you, and to me
It is as if I touched his hand!

And therefore art thou yet more dear,
O little city, grey and sere,
Though shrunken from thine ancient pride,
And lonely by thy lonely sea,
Than these fair halls on Isis' side,
Where youth an hour came back to me.

A land of waters green and clear,
Of willows and of poplars tall,

And in the spring-time of the year
 The white may breaking over all ;
 And pleasure quick to come at call,
 And summer rides by marsh and wold,
 And autumn with her crimson pall
 About the towers of Magdalen rolled :
 And strange enchantments from the past,
 And memories of the friends of old,
 And strong Tradition, binding fast
 The flying terms, with bands of gold,—

All these hath Oxford ; all are dear :
 But dearer far the little town,
 The drifting surf, the wintry year,
 The college of the scarlet gown,
St. Andrews by the Northern sea :
That is a haunted town to me.

Andrew Lang.

L'ALLEGRO

“L’Allegro” is a description of pleasant objects, of the objects which naturally attract the eye of the cheerful man, and of the appearance they present under the influence of a happy mood.

The manner in which the poem is arranged is noteworthy. After the preliminary passages, in which melancholy is banished and mirth is invoked, the delights of rural solitude, and of rustic toil and leisure, are described, of ploughing, seed-time, and harvest ; then the poet passes to town life, with its busy crowds, its ceremonies, theatres, and concerts.

“L’Allegro” is equally remarkable for the musical rhythm of its lines, and for its happy phrases, many of which have passed into everyday usage.

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,
 Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born

In Stygian cave forlorn

'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights
unholy !

Find out some uncouth cell,

Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous
wings,

And the night-raven sings ;

There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,

In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

But come, thou Goddess fair and free,

In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,

And by men heart-easing mirth ;

Whom lovely Venus at a birth,

With two sister Graces more,

To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore :

Or whether (as some sager sing)

The frolic wind that breathes the spring,

Zephyr, with Aurora playing,

As he met her once a-maying,

There, on beds of violets blue,

And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,

Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,

So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee

Jest, and youthful Jollity,

Quips and Cranks and wanton Wiles,

Nods and Becks and wreathèd Smiles,

Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,

And love to live in dimple sleek ;

Sport that wrinkled Care derides,

And Laughter holding both his sides ;

Come, and trip it, as you go,

On the light fantastic toe,

And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty ;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unprovèd pleasures frèe ;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine ;
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin ;
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before :
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill :
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures :
Russet lawns and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest ;
Meadows trim, with daisies pied ;
Shallow brooks and rivers wide ;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses ;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves ;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
Sometimes, with severe delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks¹ sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the chequered shade,
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail :
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat ;

Fiddles.

How Faery Mab the junkets ate ;
She was pinched and pulled, she said ;
And *he*, by Friars' lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end ;
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength ;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin sings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.

Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With masque and antique pageantry ;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

And ever, against eating cares,

Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
 Married to immortal verse,
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
 In notes with many a winding bout
 Of linkèd sweetness, long drawn out,
 With wanton hœd, and giddy cunning,
 The melting voice through mazes running,
 Untwisting all the chains that tie
 The hidden soul of harmony ;
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head
 From golden slumber on a bed
 Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
 Such strains as would have won the ear
 Of Pluto to have quite set free
 His half-regained Eurydice.

These delights, if thou canst give,
 Mirth, with thee I me2n to live.

John Milton.

THE GAY GOSHAWK

The next three poems of this section are old ballads ; those that follow are modern poems on subjects such as those which inspired the ballads, so that there is a good opportunity of comparing the old and the new. The ballads are rough in style and metre, but they have a simple charm ; the modern poems are more polished, and more artificial.

“The Gay Goshawk” is a ballad of romantic adventure, and also of magic—for the goshawk speaks. The tale is not told in the ordinary manner ; in several places the hearer is left to discover who is supposed to be speaking. “The Gay Goshawk,” like other ballads, was sung or recited by wandering minstrels to the crowds who gathered round them. It is in the usual ballad metre, the two others being in quite different and much rarer measures.

“O WELL is me, my gay goshawk,
 That you can speak and flee ;

For you can carry a love letter
To my true love from me."

"O, how can I carry a letter to her ?
Or how should I her know ?
I bear a tongue ne'er with her spake,
Nor wi' my eyes her saw."

"O well shall you my true love ken
So soon as you her see :
For of all the flowers of fair England
The fairest flower is she.

"And when she goes into the house,
Sit you upon the whin¹ ;
And sit you there and sing our loves
As she goes out and in."

Lord William has written a love letter,
Put it under his pinion gray :
And he's awa to Southern land
As fast as wings can gae.

And well he knew that lady fair
Among her maidens free :
For the flower that springs in May morning
Was not sae sweet as she.

And first he sang a low, low note,
And then he sang a clear ;
And aye the o'erword of the sang
Was "Your love can no win here."

¹ Furze bushes.

“ Feast on, feast on, my maidens all,
The wine flows you amang ;
While I gang to my shot-window
And hear yon bonnie bird’s sang.”

O first he sang a merry song,
And then he sang a grave :
And then he pecked his feathers gray,
To her the letter gave.

“ Have there a letter from your love :
He says he sent you three ;
He cannot wait your love longer,
But for your sake he’ll die !”

“ I send him the rings from my white fingers,
The garlands off my hair ;
I send him the heart that’s in my breast :
What would my love have mair ?
And at Mary’s kirk in fair Scotland
Ye’ll bid him meet me therè.”

She hied her to her father dear
As fast as go could she :
“ A boon, a boon, my father dear,
I pray you grant it me !
That if I die in fair England,
In Scotland bury me.

“ At the first kirk of fair Scotland
You causè the bells be rung ;
At the second kirk of fair Scotland
You cause the mass be sung ;

“ And when you come to St. Mary’s kirk,
You’ll tarry there till night.”
And so her father pledged his word,
And so his promise plight.

The lady’s gone unto her bower
As fast as she could fare ;
And she has drunk a sleepy draught
That she had mixed with care.

And pale, pale grew her rosy cheek,
That was sae bright of blee¹ ;
She seemed to be as surely dead
As anyone could be.

Then up arose her seven brethren,
And hewed to her a bier ;
They hewed it from the solid oak,
Laid it o’er with silver clear.

The first Scots kirk that they came to
They gart² the bells be rung ;
The next Scots kirk that they came to
They gart the mass be sung.

But when they came to St. Mary’s kirk,
There stood spearmen all in a row ;
And up and started Lord William,
The chieftain among them a’.

¹ Hue.

Caused.

He rent the sheet upon her face
A little above the chin :
With rosy cheek, and ruby lip,
She looked and laughed to him.

“ A morsel of your bread, my lord !
And one glass of your wine !
For I have fasted these three long days
All for your sake and mine.”

Anonymous.

THE TWA SISTERS OF BINNORIE

THERE were twa sisters sat in a bower ;
Binnórie, O Binnórie !
There cam a knight to be their wooer,
By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.
He courted the eldest wi' glove and ring,
Binnórie, O Binnórie !
But he lo'ed the youngest abune a' thing,
By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.
The eldest she was vexèd sair,
Binnórie, O Binnórie !
And sair enviéd her sister fair,
By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.
Upon a morning fair and clear,
Binnórie, O Binnórie !
She cried upon her sister dear,
By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.
“ O sister, sister, tak my hand,
Binnórie, O Binnórie !
And we'll go down by the river strand,”
By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

She's ta'en her by the lily hand,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And led her down to the river-strand,

By the bonny milldams o' Binnórie.

The youngest stood upon a stane,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

The eldest cam and pushed her in,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

" O sister, sister, reach your hand,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And ye sall be heir o' half my' land,"

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

" O sister, I'll not reach my hand,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And I'll be he'r of all your land,"

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

" O sister, reach me but your glove,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And sweet William sha'll be your love,"

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

" Sink on, nor hope for hand nor glove,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And sweet William shall be my love,"

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

Sometimes she sauk, sometimes she swam,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

Until she cam to the miller's dam,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

Out then cam the miller's son,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And saw the fair maid swimmin' in,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

“ O father, father, draw your dam !

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

There's either a mermaid or milk-white swan,”

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

The miller hasted and drew his dam,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And there he found a drowned womán,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

You couldna see her yellow hair,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

For gowd and pearls that were sae rare,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

You couldna see her fingers sma',

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

Wi' diamond rings they were covered a',

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

And by there cam a harper fine,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

That harpit to the king at dine,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

And when he looked that lady on,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

He sighed and made a heavy moan,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

He's ta'en three locks o' her yellow hair,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And wi' them strung his harp so rare,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

He brought it to her father's hall,

Binnórie, O Binnórie !

And there was the court assembled all,

By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

He laid his harp upon a stane,
 Binnórie, O Binnórie !
And straight it began to play by lane,¹
 By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.
“ O yonder sits my father, the King,
 Binnórie, O Binnórie !
And yonder sits my mother, the Queen,
 By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.
“ And yonder stands my brother Hugh,
 Binnórie ! O Binnórie !
And by him my William, sweet and true,”
 By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.
But the last tune that the harp played then,
 Binnórie, O Binnórie !
Was, “ Woe to my sister, false Helén ! ”
 By the bonnie milldams o' Binnórie.

Anonymous.

HELEN OF KIRCONNELL

If legend is trustworthy, this popular ballad is founded upon fact. It is said that Helen was the daughter of the Laird of Kirconnell, in Dumfriesshire. After her death in the manner described, David Fleming, whose lament forms the poem, attacked his enemy and slew him. According to another tradition, he was not able to reach his foe at the time, but followed him from land to land, and finally killed him in Spain.

I wish I were where Helen lies ;
Night and day she on me cries ;
O that I were where Helen lies,
On fair Kirconnell lea !

¹ Alone, i.e. of its own accord.

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
And curst the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd¹ Helen dropt,
And died to succour me.

O think na ye my heart was sair,
When my Love dropped and spak nae mair ?
There did she swoon wi' mickle care
On fair Kirconnell lea.

As I went down the water side,
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide,
On fair Kirconnell lea ;

I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hackéd him in pieces sma',
I hackéd him in pieces sma',
For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare,
I'll mak a garland o' thy hair,
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
Until the day I die !

O that I were where Helen lies !
Night and day on me she cries ;
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
Says, " Haste, and come to me ! "

O Helen fair ! O Helen chaste !
If I were with thee, I were blest,
Where thou lies low and taks thy rest,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish my grave were growing green,
A winding-sheet drawn owre my e'en,
And I in Helen's arms lying,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish I were where Helen lies !
Night and day she on me cries ;
And I am weary of the skies,
For her sake that died for me.

Anonymous.

THE BATTLE OF NASEBY

BY OBADIAH BIND-THEIR-KINGS-IN-CHAINS-AND-
THEIR-NOBLES-WITH-LINKS-OF-IRON, SERGEANT IN
IRETON'S REGIMENT

The Puritans were a compound of religious zeal, capacity in ordinary business, and military skill. Their visages were uncouth, their manners caused ridicule, their language was mixed with quotations from the Bible, but their enemies soon found that these oddities concealed a very formidable character.

The battle of Naseby was the turning-point in the war between Charles I and the Parliament. Realizing that his soldiers were not superior to the Cavaliers, Oliver Cromwell trained a force composed of devout Puritans, which came to be called his Ironsides, and which was found to be, man for man, more than the equal of any army that could be brought against it. At Naseby they drove the Royalists from the field.

OH ! wherefore come ye forth, in triumph from
the North,
With your hands and your feet, and your
raiment all red ?
And wherefore doth your rout, send forth a
joyous shout ?
And whence be the grapes of the winepress
which ye tread ?

Oh, evil was the root, and bitter was the fruit,
And crimson was the juice of the vintage that
we trod ;
For we trampled on the throng of the haughty
and the strong,
Who sate in the high places, and slew the saints
of God.

It was about the noon of a glorious day 'of June,
That we saw their banners dance, and their
cuirasses shine,
And the Man of Blood was there, with his long
essencéd hair ;
And Astley, and Sir Marmaduke, and Rupert
of the Rhine.

Like the servant of the Lord, with his Bible and
his sword,
The General rode along us to form us to the
fight,
When a murmuring sound broke out, and swelled
into a shout,
Among the godless horsemen upon the tyrant's
right.

And hark ! like the roar ' of the billows on the
shore,
The cry of battle rises along their charging
line !
For God ! for the Cause ! for the Church ! for
the Laws !
For Charles King of England and Rupert of
the Rhine !

The furlous German comes, with his clarions
and his drums,
His bravoës of Alsatia, and pages of Whitehall ;
They are bursting on our flanks. Grasp your
pikes, close your ranks ;
For Rupert never comes but to conquer or to
fall.

They are here ! They rush on ! We are broken !
We are gone !
Our left is borne before them like stubble on
the blast.
Oh Lord, put forth thy might ! Oh Lord, defend
the right !
Stand back to back, in God's name, and fight
it to the last.

Stout Skippon hath a wound ; the centre hath
given ground ;
Hark, hark !—what means the trampling of
horsemen on our rear ?
Whose banner do I see, boys ? 'Tis he, thank
God, 'tis he, boys,
Bear up another minute : brave Oliver is here.

Their heads all stooping low, their points all in a
row,
Like a whirlwind on the trees, like a deluge on,
the dykes,
Our cuirassiers have burst on the ranks of the
accurst,
And at a shock have scattered the forest of his
pikes.

Fast, fast, the gallants ride, in some safe nook to
hide

Their coward heads, predestined to rot on
Temple Bar ;

And he—he turns, he flies :—shame on those cruel
eyes

That bore to look on torture, and dare not
look on war.

Ho ! comrades, scour the plain ; and, ere ye
strip the slain,

First give another stab to make your search
secure ;

Then shake from sleeves and pockets their broad-
pieces and locketts,

The tokens of the wanton, the plunder of the
poor.

Fools ! your doublets shone with gold, and your
hearts were gay and bold,

When you kissed your lily hands to your
lemans to-day ;

And to-morrow shall the fox, from her chambers
in the rocks,

Lead forth her tawny cubs to howl above the
prey.

Where be your tongues that late mocked at heaven
and hell and fate,

And the fingers that once were so busy with
your blades,

Your perfumed satin clothes, your catches and
your oaths,

Your stage-plays and your sonnets, your
diamonds and your spades ?

Down, down, for ever down, with the mitre and
the crown,
With the Belial of the Court and the Mammon
of the Pope ;
There is woe in Oxford Halls : there is wail in
Durham's stalls ;
The Jesuit smites his bosom : the Bishop rends
his cope.

And She of the Seven Hills shall mourn her
children's ills,
And tremble when she thinks on the edge of
England's sword ;
And the kings of earth in fear shall shudder when
they hear
What the hand of God hath wrought for the
Houses and the Word.

Lord Macaulay.

THE ASSAULT

THE beating of the guns grows louder.
“ *Not long, boys, now.* ”
My heart burns whiter, fearfuller, prouder.
Hurricanes grow
As guns redouble their fire.
Through the shaken periscope peeping,
I glimpse their wire :
Black earth, fountains of earth rise, leaping,
Spouting like shocks of meeting waves ;
Death's fountains are playing ;
Shells like shrieking birds rush over ;
Crash and din rise higher.

A stream of lead raves
Over us from the left . . . (we safe under
cover!).

Crash! Reverberation! Crash!
Acrid smoke billowing. Flash upon flash.
Black smoke drifting. The German line
Vanishes in confusion, smoke. Cries, and cry
Of our men, "*Gah, yer swine!*
Ye're for it," die
In a hurricane of shell.

One cry :
"*We're comin' soon! look out!*"
There is opened hell
Over there : fragments fly,
Rifles and bits of men whirled at the sky :
Dust, smoke, thunder! A sudden bout
Of machine guns chattering . . .
And redoubled battering,
As if in fury at their daring! . . .

No good staring.

Time soon now . . . home . . . house on a
sunny hill . . .
Gone like a flickered page :
Time soon now . . . zero . . . will engage. . .

A sudden thrill—
"Fix bayonets!"
Gods! we have our fill
Of fear, hysteria, exultation, rage,
Rage to kill.

My heart burns hot, whiter and whiter,
Contracts tighter and tighter,
Until I stifle with the will
Long forged, now used
(Though utterly strained)—
O pounding heart,
Baffled, confused.
Heart panged, head singing, dizzily pained—
To do my part.

Blindness a moment. Sick.
There the men are !
Bayonets ready : click !
Time goes quick ;
A stumbled prayer . . . somehow a blazing star
In a blue night . . . where ?
Again prayer.
The tongue trips. Start :
How's time ? Soon now. Two minutes or less.
The guns' fury mounting higher . . .
Their utmost. I lift a silent hand. Unseen I
 bless
Those hearts will follow me.
And beautifully,
Now beautifully my will grips,
Soul calm and sound and filmed and white !
A shout : " Men, no such order as retire ! "
I nod.
The whistle's 'twixt my lips . . .
I catch
A wan, worn smile at me.
Dear men !
The pale wrist-watch . . .
The quiet hand ticks on amid the din.

The guns again
Rise to a last fury, to a rage, a lust :
Kill ! Pound ! Kill ! Pound ! Pound !
Now comes the thrust !
My past . . . dizziness . . . will . . . but trust
These men. The great guns rise ;
Their fury seems to burst the earth and skies !

They lift.

Gather, heart, all thoughts that drift ;
Be still, soul,
Compress thyself
Into a sound bright whole.
I cannot speak.

Time. Time !

I hear my whistle shriek,
Between teeth set ;
I fling an arm up,
Scramble up the grime
Over the parapet !
I'm up. Go on.
Something meets us.
Head down into the storm that greets us.
A wail.
Lights. Blurr.
Gone.
On, on. Lead. Leād. Hail.
Spatter. Whirr ! Whirr !
“*Toward that patch of brown ;
Direction left.*” Bullets a stream.
Devouring thought crying in a dream.
Men, crumpled, going down . . .

Go on. Go.
Deafness. Numbness. The loudening tornado.
Bullets. Mud. Stumbling and skating.
My voice's strangled shout :
" *Steady pace, boys !* "
The still light : gladness.
" *Look, sir ! Look out !* "
Ha ! ha ! Bunched figures waiting.
Revolver levelled quick !
Flick ! Flick !
Red as blood.
Germans. Germans.
Good ! O good !
Cool madness.

Robert Nichols.

FLODDEN FIELD

In the battle of Flodden, which was fought in 1513, the English under the Earl of Surrey defeated the Scotch, who had invaded England. The Scottish King, James IV, had taken up a strong position on a hill ; but, abandoning his advantage, he attacked the English with results disastrous to his army. The slaughter was terrible ; scarcely a Scottish family of note but suffered loss, the King himself being among the slain ; and even to this day the fatal field of Flodden is sadly remembered.

BLOUNT and Fitz-Eustace rested still
With Lady Clare upon the hill,
On which (for far the day was spent)
The western sunbeams now were bent.
The cry they heard, its meaning knew,
Could plain their distant comrades view :

Sadly to Blount did Eustace say,
“Unworthy office here to stay !
No hope of gilded spurs to-day.
But see ! look up—on Flodden bent
The Scottish foe has fired his tent.”

.

And sudden, as he spoke,
From the sharp ridges of the hill,
All downward to the banks of Till,
Was wreathed in sable smoke.
Volumed, and vast, and rolling far,
The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,
As down the hill they broke ;
Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone,
Announced their march ; their tread alone,
At times one warning trumpet blown,
At times a stifled hum,
Told England from his mountain throne
King James did rushing come.
Scarce could they hear or see their foes,
Until at weapon-point they close.
They close in clouds of smoke and dust,
With sword-sway and with lance's thrust ;
And such a yell was there,
Of sudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air.
O life and death were in the shout,
Recoil and rally, charge and rout,
And triumph and despair.

.

Long looked the anxious squires ; their eye
Could in the darkness nought descry.

At length the freshening western blast
Aside the shroud of battle cast ;
And, first, the ridge of mingled spears
Above the brightening cloud appears ;
And in the smoke the pennons flew
As in the storm the white seamew.
Then marked they, dashing broad and far,
The broken billows of the war,
And plumèd crests of chieftains brave,
Floating like foam upon the wave,
 But nought distinct they see.
Wide raged the battle on the plain ;
Spears shook, and falchions flashed amain ;
Fell England's arrow-flight like rain ;
Crests rose and stooped, and rose again,
 Wild and disorderly.

Amid the scene of tumult, high
They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly :
And stainless Tunstall's banner white,
And Edmund Howard's lion bright,
Still bear them bravely in the fight :
 Although against them come
Of gallant Gordons many a one,
And many a stubborn Badenoch man,
And many a rugged Border clan,
 With Huntly and with Home.

Far on the left, unseen the while,
Stanley broke Lennox and Argyle ;
Though there the western mountaineer
Rushed with bare bosom on the spear,

And flung the feeble targe aside,
And with both hands the broadsword plied.
'Twas vain :—But Fortune, on the right,
With fickle smile cheered Scotland's fight.
Then fell that spotless banner white,
The Howard's lion fell.

.

By this, though deep the evening fell,
Still rose the battle's deadly swell,
For still the Scots, around their King,
Unbroken, fought in desperate ring.
Where's now their victor vaward wing ?
Where Huntly and where Home ?—
O, for a blast of that dread horn,
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
That to King Charles did come,
When Roland brave, and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer,
On Roncesvalles died !

The English shafts in volleys hailed,
In headlong charge their horse assailed ;
Front, flank and rear, the squadrons sweep
To break the Scottish circle deep
That fought around their king.
But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though billmen ply the ghastly blow,
Unbroken was the ring ;
The stubborn spearmen still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood,
The instant that he fell.

No thought was there of dastard flight ;
Linked in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
As fearlessly and well ;
Till utter darkness closed her wing
O'er their thin host and wounded king.

Then skilful Surrey's sage commands,
Led back from strife his scattered bands ;
And from the charge they drew,
As mountain waves, from wasted lands,
Sweep back to ocean blue.
Then did their loss his foemen know ;
Their King, their Lords, their mightiest low,
They melted from the field as snow,
When streams are swoln and south winds blow.
Dissolves in silent dew.
Tweed's echoes heard the ceaseless splash,
While many a broken band,
Disordered, through her currents dash
To gain the Scottish land,
To town and tower, to down and dale,
To tell red Flodden's dismal tale,
And raise the universal wail.
Tradition, legend, tune, and song,
Shall many an age that wail prolong ;
Still from the sire the son shall hear
Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,
Of Flodden's fatal field,
Where shivered was fair Scotland's spear,
And broken was her shield.

Sir Walter Scott.

HE FELL AMONG THIEVES

This is a poem of Empire. It records the death, and the thoughts before death, of one of the uncounted sons of Britain who have done and are doing Britain's work in different parts of the world. An English soldier has been caught by a hill-tribe on the Indian frontier, and is murdered by them. Before his death, he thinks of his far-away home, and passes his life in review, scene by scene.

“YE have robbed,” said he, “ye have slaughtered
and made an end,
Take your illgot plunder, and bury the dead :
What will ye more of your guest and sometime
friend ? ”
“Blood for our blood,” they said.

He laughed : “If one may settle the score for five,
I am ready : but let the reckoning stand till day :
I have loved the sunlight as dearly as any alive.”
“You shall die at dawn,” said they.

He flung his empty revolver down the slope,
He climbed alone to the eastward edge of the
trees ;
All night long in a dream untroubled of hope
He brooded, clasping his knees.

He did not hear the monotonous roar that fills
The ravine where the Yassin river sullenly flows ;
He did not see the starlight on the Laspur hills,
Or the far Afghan snows.

He saw the April noon on his books aglow,
The wistaria trailing in at the window wide ;
He heard his father's voice from the terrace
 below
Calling him down to ride.

He saw the gray little church across the park,
The mounds that hid the loved and honoured
 dead ;
The Norman arch, the chancel softly dark,
The brasses black and red.

He saw the School Close, sunny and green,
The runner beside him, the stand by the parapet
 wall,
The distant tape, and the crowd roaring between
His own name over all.

He saw the dark wainscot and timbered roof,
The long tables, and the faces merry and keen,
The College Eight and their trainer dining aloof,
The Dons on the dais serene.

He watched the liner's stern ploughing the foam,
He felt her trembling speed and the thrash of her
 screw ;
He heard the passengers' voices talking of home,
He saw the flag she flew.

And now it was dawn. He rose strong on his feet,
And strode to his ruined camp below the wood ;
He drank the breath of the morning cool and
 sweet ;
His murderers round him stood.

Light on the Laspur hills was broadening fast,
The blood-red snow-peaks chilled to a dazzling
white ;

He turned, and saw the golden circle at last,
Cut by the Eastern height.

“ O glorious Life, who dwellest in earth and sun,
I have lived : I praise and adore thee.”

A sword swept.

Over the pass the voices one by one
Faded, and the hill slept.

Sir Henry Newbolt.

THE FAREWELL

After the defeat of James II at the Battle of the Boyne, many Scottish Jacobites, who had come to help him, realizing that his cause was hopeless, and being unable to return to their own country, went to the Continent and there enlisted in foreign armies. In this poem such a soldier is heard taking a last farewell.

“ It was a’ for our rightfu’ king
We left fair Scotland’s strand ;
It was a’ for our rightfu’ king
We e’er saw Irish land,
My dear—
We e’er saw Irish land.”

“ Now a’ is done that men can do,
And a’ is done in vain ;
My love and native land, farewell,
For I maun cross the main,
My dear—
For I maun cross the main.”

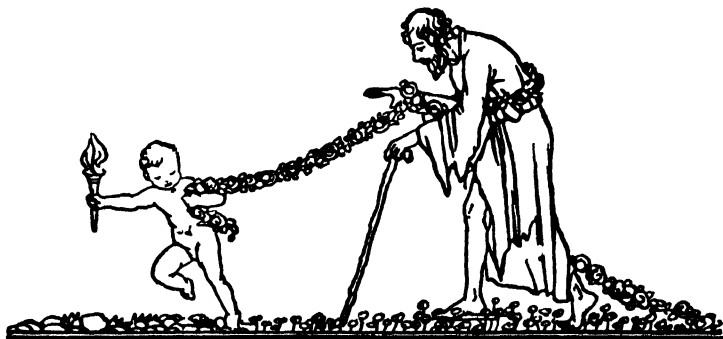
.

He turned him right and round about
Upon the Irish shore ;
And gae his bridle-reins a shake
With, Adieu for evermore,
My dear—
Adieu for evermore. ˆ

The sodger frae the wars returns,
The sailor frae the main ;
But I hae parted frae my love,
Never to meet again,
My dear—
Never to meet again.

When day is gane, and night is come,
And a' folk bound to sleep,
I think on him that's far awa',
The lee-lang night, and weep,
My dear—
The lee-lang night, and weep.

Robert Burns.





III

THE HUNTER

BEYOND the blue, the purple seas,
Beyond the thin horizon's line,
Beyond Antilla, Hebrides,
Jamaica, Cuba, Caribbees,
There lies the land of Yucatan.

The land, the land of Yucatan,
The low coast breaking into foam,
The dim hill where my thoughts shall roam
The forests of my boyhood's home,
The splendid dream of Yucatan !

I met thee first long, long ago
Turning a printed page, and I
Stared at a world I did not know
And felt my blood like fire flow
At that strange name of Yucatan.

O those sweet, far-off austral¹ days
When life had a diviner glow,
When hot suns whipped my blood to know
Things all unseen ; then I could go
Into thy heat, O Yucatan.

I have forgotten what I saw,
I have forgotten what I knew,

¹ When a boy, the author of this poem lived in Australia.

And many lands I've set sail for
To find that marvellous spell of yore,
Never to set foot on thy shore,
O haunting land of Yucatan.

But sailing I have passed thee by,
And leaning on the white ship's rail
Watched thy dim hills till mystery
Wrapped thy far stillness close to me,
And I have breathed, "'Tis Yucatan !

"'Tis Yucatan ! 'Tis Yucatan !"—
The ship is sailing far away,
'The coast recedes, the dim hills fade,
A bubble-winding track we've made,
And thou'rt a dream, O Yucatan.

Walter J. Turner.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

Lord Tennyson was a poet of the grand style. He had the eye of an artist, and when he chose he could decorate his subject with flashing jewels. This poem is a kind of dream created by "The Arabian Nights." It has rare and precious words, a calm, dignified movement, delicately-glowing colours, and a very elaborate form of verse.

WHEN the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flowed back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time ;
And many a sheeny summer-morn
Adown the Tigris I was born,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,

High-walled gardens green and old ;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Anight my shallop, rustling thro'
The low and bloomèd foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue :
By garden-porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering thro' lamplight dim,
And broidered sofas on each side :
 In sooth it was a goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Often, where clear-stemmed platans guard
The outlet, did I turn away
The boat-head down a broad canal
From the main river sluiced, where all
The sloping of the moonlit sward
Was damask-work, and deep inlay
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept
Adown to where the water slept.
 A goodly place, a goodly time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

A motion from the river won
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on
My shallop thro' the star-strown calm.
Until another night on night
I entered, from the clearer light,

Imbowered vaults of pillared palm,
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
Heavenward, were stayed beneath the dome
Of hollow boughs—a goodly time,
For 'it was in the golden prime
Of good Hayoun Alraschid.

Still onward ; and the clear canal
Is rounded to as clear a lake.
From the green rivage many a fall
Of diamond rillets musical,
Thro' little crystal arches low,
Down from the central fountain's flow
Fallen silver-chiming, seemed to shake
The sparkling flints beneath the prow.
A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Above, thro' many a bowery turn
A walk with vary-coloured shells
Wandered engraïned. On either side
All round about the fragrant marge
From fluted vase and brazen urn
In order, eastern flowers large,
Some dropping low their crimson bells,
Half-closed, and others studded wide
With disks and tiars, fed the time
With odour in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Far off, and where the lemon grove
In closest coverture upsprung,
The living airs of middle night

Died round the bulbul as he sung :
Not he : but something which possessed
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepressed,
 Apart from place, withholding time,
 But flattering the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumbered : the solemn palms were ranged
Above, unwooed of summer wind :
A sudden splendour from behind
Flushed all the leaves with rich gold-green,
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, countercharged
The level lake with diamond-plots
 Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
 For it was in the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,
Grew darker from that under-flame :
So, leaping lightly from the boat,
With silver anchor left afloat,
In marvel whence that glory came
Upon me, as ¹ in sleep I sank
In cool soft turf upon the bank,
 Entrancéd with that place and time,
 So worthy of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

¹ As if.

Thence thro' the garden I was drawn—
A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
And many a shadow-chequered lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And dæp myrrh-thickets blowing round
The stately cedar, tamarisks,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

With dazèd vision unawares
From the long alley's latticed shade
Emerged, I came upon the great
Pavilion of the Caliphate.
Right to the carven cedarn doors,
Flung inward over spangled floors,
Broad-based flights of marble stairs
Ran up the golden balustrade,
After the fashion of the time,
And humour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight,
As with the quintessence of flame,
A million tapers flaring bright
From twisted silvers looked to shame
The hollow-vaulted dark, and streamed
Upon the moonéd domes aloof
In inmost Bagdat, till there seemed
Hundreds of crescents on the roof
Of night new-risen, that marvellous time,
To celebrate the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Then stole I up, and trancèdly
Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
Serene with argent-lidded eyes
Amorous, and lashes like to rays
Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
Tressèd with redolent ebony,
In many a dark, delicious curl
Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone ;
 The sweetest lady of the time,
 Well worthy of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Six columns, three on either side.
Pure silver, underpropt a rich
Throne of the massive ore, from which
Down-drooped, in many a floating fold,
Engarlanded and diapered
With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirred
With merriment of kingly pride,
 Sole star of all that place and time
 I saw him—in his golden prime,
 THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID.

Lord Tennyson.

PRE-EXISTENCE

I LAID me down upon the shore
And dreamed a little space ;
I heard the great waves break and roar ;
 The sun was on my face.

My idle hands and fingers brown
 Played with the pebbles grey ;
The waves came up, the waves went down,
 Most thundering and gay.

The pebbles, they were smooth and round
 And warm upon my hands,
Like little people I had found
 Sitting among the sands.

The grains of sand so shining-small
 Soft through my fingers ran ;
The sun shone down upon it all,
 And so my dream began :

How all of this had been before ;
 How, ages far away,
I lay on some forgotten shore
 As here I lie to-day.

The waves came shining up the sands,
 As here to-day they shine ;
And in my pre-pelasgian hands
 The sand was warm and fine.

I have forgotten whence I came,
 Or what my home might be,
Or by what strange and savage name
 I called that thundering sea.

I only know the sun shone down
 As still it shines to-day,
And in my fingers long and brown
 The little pebbles lay.

Frances Cornford.

THE ICE CART

PERCHED on my city office-stool
I watched with envy, while a cool
And lucky carter handled ice . . .
And I was wandering in a trice,
Far from the grey and grimy heat
Of that intolerable street,
O'er sapphire berg and emerald floe,
Beneath the still, cold ruby glow
Of everlasting Polar night,
Bewildered by the queer half-light,
Until I stumbled, unawares,
Upon a creek where big white bears
Plunged headlong down with flourished heels.
And floundered after shining seals
Through shivering seas of blinding blue.
And as I watched them, ere I knew,
I'd stripped, and I was swimming, too,
Among the seal-pack, young and hale,
And thrusting on with thrashing tail,
With twist and twirl and sudden leap
Through crackling ice and salty deep—
Diving and doubling with my kind,
Until, at last, we left behind
Those big, white blundering bulks of death,
And lay, at length, with panting breath
Upon a far untravelled floe,
Beneath a gentle drift of snow—
Snow drifting gently, fine and white,
Out of the endless Polar night,
Falling and falling evermore
Upon that far untravelled shore,
Till I was buried fathoms deep

Beneath that cold white drifting sleep—
Sleep drifting deep,
Deep drifting sleep . . .

The carter cracked a sudden whip :
I clutched my stool with startled grip,
Awakening to the grimy heat
Of that intolerable street.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson.

THE HOST OF THE AIR

A poem of Irish superstition : the Host of the Air are the fairies, or Sidhe, the gods of ancient Ireland, who live in the hearts of the mountains and under the lakes, and can at certain times lure people into their power. The nightfall by the dreary lake, and the thin clear strains of elfin music, are most powerfully suggested.

O'DRISCOLL drove with a song
The wild duck and the drake
From the tall and the tufted reeds
Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the reeds grew dark
At the coming of night tide,
And dreamed of the long dim hair
Of Bridget his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed
A piper piping away ;
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls
Who danced on a level place,
And Bridget his bride among them,
With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him,
And many a sweet thing said ;
And a young man brought him red wine,
And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,
Away from the merry bands,
To old men playing at cards
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,
For these were the Host of the Air :
He sat and played in a dream
Of her long dim hair :

He played with the merry old men,
And thought not of evil chance,
Until one bore Bridget his bride
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,
The handsomest young man there,
And his neck and his breast and his arms
Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll scattered the cards,
And out of the dream awoke :
Old men and young men and girls
Were gone like a drifting smoke ;

But he heard high up in the air
A piper piping away ;
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay.

William Butler Yeats.

ARETHUSA

Ancient myth endowed each mountain, tree, and stream with an earth-spirit: at a later time the spirit was no longer identified with the natural object, and the nymphs and fawns and river-gods became guardian deities. This poem takes us back to the earliest stage, when river and river-god are one.

According to the legend, Alpheus and Arethusa joined their waters in Greece, flowed under the sea, and rose again above the earth in Sicily. It was a beautiful fancy, and is worthily treated by Shelley. In the rhythmic flow and light-hearted music of his lines we can feel the rush of the torrents down the mountain side, the sunlight dancing upon them as they leap from crag to crag.

ARETHUSA arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams ;
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams ;
And gliding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep ;
The earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

Then Alpheus bold
On his glacier cold
With his trident the mountains strook ;

And opened a chasm
In the rocks—with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It unsealed behind
The urns of the silent snow ;
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below.
The beard and the hair
Of the River-god were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

“ Oh, save me ! oh, guide me !
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair ! ”
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer ;
And under the water
The earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam ;
Behind her descended
Her billows, unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream :—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind,
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.

Under the bowers
Where the Ocean powers
Sit on their pearlèd thrones ;
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones ;
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a network of coloured light ;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night ;
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the Ocean's foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain cliffs
They passed to their Dorian home.

And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sunrise they leap
From their cradles steep
In the cave of the shelving hill ;
At noontide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of asphodel ;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep.

Beneath the Ortygian shore,
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky,
When they love but live no more.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

MORFE D'ARTHUR

When King Arthur was a young man, he received a magic sword, Excalibur, from a damsel sitting in a boat at the margin of a lake. He carried this sword throughout his life, and used it in all his conflicts against oppressors and wrongdoers. In the last battle that he fought, all his knights, except Sir Bedivere, were slain, and he himself was sorely wounded. Then said Arthur to Sir Bedivere (according to Sir Thomas Malory, from whom Lord Tennyson obtained this story), "Take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again, and tell me what thou there seest." The rest of the story is told in the poem.

The metre, each line of which has five accents, is called blank verse, because it is not rhymed.

So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonness about their lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :

“The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people that I made,—
Tho’ Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be ;
I am so deeply smitten thro’ the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across,
And took it, and have worn it, like a king ;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me
word.”

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
“It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro’ the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man,
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.”

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,

Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights ; and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping
down

By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
“ Hast thou performed the message that I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
“ I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.”

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
“ Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing, for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,

As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud :

" And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey, then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt ! but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Someone might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, ' King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely Maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :

“What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

“I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds !”

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :

“Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !

Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.

Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.”

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword.
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great
brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in
an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.

And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker
breath :

“ Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.

Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ? ”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :

“ Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, for I never saw,

Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,

Not tho’ I live three lives of mortal men,

So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him.

But when I locked again, behold an arm,

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him

Three times, and drew him under in the mere.”

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:

“ My end draws nigh ; ’tis time that I were gone,

Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight.

And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear

My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.”

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,

Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,

And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes

As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere

Remorsefully regarded thro’ his tears,

And would have spoken, but he found not words ;

Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,

O’er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,

And rising bore him thro’ the place of tombs.

But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,

Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed,

When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,

Muttering and murmuring at his ear, “ Quick,
quick !

I fear it is too late, and I shall die."

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.

He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him, like a goad.
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he
based

His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them: and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by
these

Three Queens with stoles of gold—and from them
rose

A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the
barge,"

And to the barge they came. There those three
Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all,
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,

And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his
hands,

And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood ; for all his face was
white

And colourless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east :
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with
drops

Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls,
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne, were parched with
dust ;

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his
lips.

So like a shattered column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere :
“ Ah, my lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought forth a noble knight.
Such times have not been since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved,
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, at last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,

And new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answered Arthur, from the barge :
" The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by
prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy
voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them
friend ?

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with par and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted
swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,

Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

Lord Tennyson.



IV THE SEASONS

In Edmund Spenser's time the 1st of March was reckoned to be the beginning of the year. Each of the four seasons is here described as a person.

This piece is written in a famous stanza, called after its inventor the Spenserian stanza. The language is old and sounds quaint to us, but this perhaps is an advantage. The long stanza gave ample room for the poet, and his descriptive details are telling and apt.

So forth issued the Seasons of the Year ;
First, lusty Spring, all dight¹ in leaves of
 flowers
That freshly budded and new blooms did bear,
In which a thousand birds had built their
 bowers
That sweetly sung to call forth paramours ;
And in his hand a javelin he did bear
And on his head, as fit for warlike stours,²
A gilt engraven morion he did wear
That as some did him love, so others did him fear.

Then came the jolly Summer, being dight
In a thin silken cassock coloured green,
That was unlinèd all, to be more light ;

¹ Decked.

² Perils.



And on his head a garland well beseen
 He wore, from which, as he had chafèd been,
 The sweat did drop ; and on his hand he bore
 A bow and shafts, as he in forest green
 Had hunted late the leopard or the boar,
 And now would bathe his limbs with labour
 heated sore.

Then came the Autumn all in yellow clad,
 As though he joyèd in his plenteous store,
 Laden with fruits that made him laugh, full
 glad
 That he had banished hunger, which to-fore
 Had by the belly oft him pinchèd sore :
 Upon his head a wreath, that was enrolled
 With ears of corn of every sort, he bore ;
 And in his hand a sickle he did hold,
 To reap the ripened fruits the which the earth
 had yold.¹

Lastly, came Winter clothèd all in frieze,
 Chattering his teeth for cold that did him chill :
 Whilst on his hoary beard his breath did freeze,
 And the dull drops, that from his purpled bill
 As from a limbeck² did adown distil.
 In his right hand a tippèd staff he held,
 With which his feeble steps he stayèd still ;
 For he was faint with cold, and weak with eld,³
 That scarce his loosèd limbs he able was to wield.

Edmund Spenser.

¹ Yielded.

² Retort.

³ Age.

A FROSTY DAY

In every stanza, except the last but one, is to be found a picture painted in delicate colours: colour is the keynote of the whole. In the last stanza but one, sound takes the place of colour.

GRASS afield wears silver thatch ;
Palings all are edged with rime ;
Frost-flowers pattern round the latch ;
Cloud nor breeze dissolve the clime ;

When the waves are solid floor,
And the clods are iron-bound,
And the boughs are crystallised hoar,
And the red leaf nailed aground ;

When the fieldfare's flight is slow,
And a rosy vapour rim,
Now the sun is small and low,
Belts along the region dim ;

When the ice-crack flies and flaws,
Shore to shore, with thunder shock,
Deeper than the evening daws,
Clearer than the village clock ;

When the rusty blackbird strips,
Bunch by bunch, the coral thorn,
And the pale day-crescent dips,
New to heaven, a slender horn.

Lord de Tabley.

THE WATER NYMPH

The spirit of a woodland brook speaks in "The Water Nymph." It is written in the same metre as "L'Allegro," but in a very different style; and no one who reads after it "The Waterfall of Terni" can fail to notice the contrast between the calm and quiet of the one and the force of the other.

I LIVE in the heart of a limpid pool,
In the living limpid heart of a pool :
I live in a flow of crystalline,
Where silvery fish with jewelled eyne
Float silent, and the ripple-gleam,
With many a delicate water-dream,
Moves the face of flowers to quaver,
Hanging where the wavelets waver—
Daffodil, hyacinth, spring flowers,
Who slumber veiled from sunny showers
That only trickle feebly through
Forest foliage from the blue.

My streamlet sparkles in the pines,
And here in lambent flame declines,
For the sun has burst his leafy thrall,
Kissing it passionate in the fall.
I love to feel the water plash
Merrily into my pool,
With a swift reverberating flash
Of soft foam beautiful.
One brilliant surface shrines the sky ;
Another, young lit leaves on high ;
While yet another, shadowed o'er
Below deep emerald, my floor'
Reveals, all wavering below
My water's everlasting flow.

O the enamelled butterflies
 That flutter where the runnel flies,
 Silverly glistening over stones
 Where the nightingale intones,
 Where he flutes the livelong day,
 Learning the water's liquid lay!
 A lovelier rendering is heard
 Fresh from the genius of a bird,
 While emulous water vainly tries
 To glisten like the glistening eyes
 Of nightingales in vernal leaves,
 Where the rose bower softly heaves.

From "The Water Nymph and the Boy,"
by Roden Noel.

THE WATERFALL OF TERNI

In this impressive piece can be felt the sweeping of waters over a high cliff, and the thunder of their fall upon the rocks below. It is written in the same metre as "The Seasons," but with an effect quite different. "The Seasons" is languid; this vibrates with tumultuous energy.

THE roar of waters!—from the headlong height
 Velino cleaves the wave-worn precipice:
 The fall of waters! rapid as the light
 The flashing mass foams, shaking the abyss:
 The hell of waters!—where they howl and hiss,
 And boil, in endless torture; while the sweat
 Of their great agony, wrung out from this
 Their Phlegethon, curls round the rocks of jet
 That guard the gulf around, in pitiless horror set,

And mounts in spray the skies, and thence again
 Returns in an unceasing shower, which round,

With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
Is an eternal April to the ground,
Making it all one emerald. How profound
The gulf ! and how the giant element
From rock to rock leaps with delirious bound,
Crushing the cliffs, which, downward worn and
rent

With his fierce footsteps, yield in chasms a fearful
vent

To the broad column which rolls on, and shows
More like the fountain of an infant sea
Torn from the womb of mountains by the
throes

Of a new world than only thus to be
Parent of rivers, which flow gushingly,
With many windings, through the vale ! Look
back !

Lo, where it comes like an eternity,
As if to sweep down all things in its track,
Charming the eye with dread, a matchless
cataract !

Horribly beautiful ! But on the verge,
From side to side, beneath the glittering morn,
An Iris sits amidst the infernal surge,
Like Hope upon a death-bed, and, unworn
Its steady dyes, while all around is torn
By the distracted waters, bears serene
Its brilliant hues with all their beams unshorn :
Resembling, 'mid the torture of the scene,
Love watching Madness with unalterable mien.

From "Childe Harold," by Lord Byron.

THE CLOUD

Generally, something of the poet appears in his works ; that is not so in "The Cloud," where, as in "The Water-Nymph," Nature speaks and tells her life. In the series of pictures found in the stanzas there is a triumphant happiness, as if she was rejoicing in her own beauty, variety, and activity. This jubilant effect is heightened by the dancing metre, the secret of which is easily discovered by finding how the accents fall.

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From 'the seas and the streams ;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast ;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits ;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits ;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea :

Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The spirit he loves remains ;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in ra'ns.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead ;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings'
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea
beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden, with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn ;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer.
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,

When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl ;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and
swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,—
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march,
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the powers of the air are chained to my
chair ;
Is the million-coloured bow ;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky ;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain, when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex
gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,¹

¹ Tomb.

And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from
the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

SUNSET IN THE HIGHLANDS

THE western waves of ebbing day
Rolled o'er the glen their level way ;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravine below,
Where twined the path, in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splintered pinnacle ;
Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,
Huge as the tower which builders vain
Presumptuous piled on Slinar's plain.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Formed turret, dome or battlement,
Or seemed fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever decked,
Or mosque of Eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lacked they many a banner fair ;
For, from their shivered brows displayed,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dewdrops sheen,
The briar rose fell in streamers green,

And creeping shrubs, of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west wind's summer sighs.

Boon nature scattered, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child ;
Here eglantine embalmed the air ;
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there ;
The primrose pale and violet flower
Found in each cliff a narrow bower ;
Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Grouped their dark hues with every stain
The weather-beaten crags retain.
With boughs that quaked at every breath
Grey birch and aspen wept beneath ;
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock ;
And, higher yet, the pine-tree hung
His shattered trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seemed the cliffs to meet on high,
His boughs athwart the narrowed sky.
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glistening streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue ;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream.

From "The Lady of the Lake," by Sir Walter Scott.

. NIGHTFALL

Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad.

Silence accompanied ; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale ;
She all night long her amorous descant sung.
Silence was pleased : now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires ; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

John Milton.

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

*A naked house, a naked moor,
A shivering pool before the door,
A garden bare of flowers and fruit
And poplars at the garden foot :—
Such is the place that I live in,
Bleak without and bare within.*

YET shall your ragged moor receive
The incomparable pomp of eve,
And the cold glories of the dawn
Behind your shivering trees be drawn ;
And when the wind from place to place
Doth the unmoored cloud-galleons chase,
Your garden gloom and gleam again,
With leaping sun and glancing rain.
Here shall the wizard moon ascend
The heavens, in the crimson end
Of day's declining splendour ; here
The army of the stars appear.

The neighbour hollows dry or wet
Spring shall with tender flowers beset ;
And oft the morning muser see
Larks rising from the broomy lea,
And every fairy wheel and thread
Of cobweb dew-bediamonded.
When daisies go, shall win^ter-time
Silver the simple grass with rime ;
Autumnal frosts enchant the pool
And make the cart-ruts beautiful ;
And when snow-bright the moor expands,
How shall your children clap their hands !
To make this earth, our hermitage
A cheerful and a changeful page,
God's bright and intricate device
Of days and seasons doth suffice.

Robert Louis Stevenson.





ROBIN-A-THRUSH

Poets, like other men, have their lighter moments, in which they make jokes. Comic poems are the jokes of poets, and it will be seen from the poems in this little collection that their jokes are of several kinds. The poem which follows can easily be recognized as an old one ; the next pretends to be a ballad. Other poems are mock-heroic, or tell a tale which is comic because it presents human nature in a humorous light, or use words in a comic manner, or poke fun at serious writing by imitating it in a ridiculous way.

ROBIN he married a wife in the West,
And she turned out to be none of the best ;
When she rises she gets up in haste,
And flies to the cupboard before she is laced ;
She milks her cows but once a week,
And that's what makes her butter so sweet ;
When she churns she churns in a boot,
And instead of a cruddle she puts in her foot.
She put her cheese upon the shelf,
And left it to turn till—it turned of itself ;
It turned of itself and fell on the floor,
Got up on its feet and ran out of the door.
It ran till it came to Wakefield Cross,
And she followed after upon a white horse.

This song was made for gentlemen ;
If you want any more you must sing it again.



FAITHLESS NELLY GRAY

A PATHETIC BALLAD

As its sub-title shows, "Faithless Nelly Gray" is a mock ballad, and it is in ballad metre. In every verse there is a play upon words, an expression being used in a double sense. These puns generally occur near the ends of the stanzas, thus forming comic anticlimaxes.

The pun in the tenth stanza is now obscure, for the second meaning has gone out of use. It is in the word "knot"; a porter's load was called "a knot," and "to take a knot" meant "to carry a burden."

BEN BATTLE was a soldier bold,
And used to war's alarms ;
But a cannon ball took off his legs,
So he laid down his arms !

Now, as they bore him off the field,
Said he : " Let others shoot ;
For here I leave my second leg,
And the Forty-second Foot ! "

Now Ben he loved a pretty maid :—
Her name was Nelly Gray ;
So he went to pay her his devours
When he'd devoured his pay .

But when he called on Nelly Gray
She made him quite a scoff ;
And when she saw he'd wooden legs
Began to take them off !

" Oh, Nelly Gray ! Oh, Nelly Gray !
Is this your love so warm ?
The love that loves a scarlet coat
Should be more uniform ! "

Said she, " I loved a soldier once,
For he was blithe and brave ;
But I will never have a man
With both legs in the grave."

" Before you had those timber toes
Your love I did allow ;
But then, you know, you stand upon
Another footing now."

" O false and fickle Nelly Gray ;
I know why you refuse :—
Though I've no feet, some other man
Is standing in my shoes."

I wish I ne'er had seen your face ;
But now a long farewell !
For you will be my death ; — alas,
You will not be my Nell."

Now when he got from Nelly Gray,
His heart so heavy got,
And life was such a burden grown
It made him take a knot.

So round his melancholy neck
A rope he did entwine,
And for the second time in life
Enlisted in the Line.

One end he tied around a beam,
And then removed his pegs ;
And, as his legs were off,—of course,
He soon was off his legs.

And there he hung, till he was dead
As any nail in town ;
For, though distress had cut him up,
It could not cut him down.

A dozen men sat on his corpse,
T'o find out why he died :
And they buried Ben in four cross-roads
With a stake in his inside.

Thomas Hood.

THAT HEATHEN CHINEE

The author of this poem was the poet of the mining camps of California and the Western States. The language is a peculiarly life-like imitation of the speech of many of the rough men of the wild West, who were and are more remarkable for energy than for learning.

WHICH I wish to remark—
And my language is plain—
That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
Which the same I would rise to explain.

Ah Sin was his name ;
And I shall not deny
In regard to the same
What that name might imply ;
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,
As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye.

It was August the third ;
And quite soft was the skies ;
Which it might be inferred
That Ah Sin was likewise ;
Yet he played it that day upon William
And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game,
And Ah Sin took a hand.
It was Euchre : the same
He did not understand.
But he smiled as he sat by the table
With a smile that was childlike and bland.

Yet the cards they were stocked
In a way that I grieve,
And my feelings were shocked
At the state of Nye's sleeve :
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,
And the same with intent to deceive.

But the hands that were played
By that heathen Chineese,
And the points that he made
Were quite frightful to see—
Till at last he put down a right bower,
Which the same Nye had dealt unto me.

Then I looked up at Nye,
And he gazed upon me ;
And he rose with a sigh,
And said, " Can this be ?
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labour."
And he went for that heathen Chineese.

In the scene that ensued
I did not take a hand,
But the floor it was strewed
Like the leaves on the strand
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,
In the game he did not understand.

In his sleeves, which were long,
He had twenty-four packs—
Which was coming it strong,
Yet I state but the facts :
And we found on his nails, which were taper,
What is frequent in tapers— that's wax.

Which is why I remark
And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar—
Which the same I am free to maintain.

Francis Bret Harte.

THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN

The sly humour of "The Laird o' Cockpen" has made it famous. It is a piece of gossip made into a poem. Every line contains a satirical stroke of character-drawing, or is spiced with good-natured malice; and everything seems to go in favour of the lady till near the end, when the tables are suddenly turned.

THE LAIRD o' Cockpen, he's proud and he's great,
His mind is ta'en up with things o' the State ;
He wanted a wife his braw hoose to keep,
But favour wi' wooin' was fashious to seek.

Doun by the dyke-side a ledgy did dwell,
At his table-head he thought she'd look well—
McClish's ae daughter o' Claverse-ha' Lee,
A penniless lass wi' a lang pedigree.

His wig was weel pouthered, and as guid as new ;
His waistcoat was white, his coat it was blue ;
He put on a ring, a sword and cocked hat,
And wha could refuse the laird wi' a' that ?

He took the grey mare, and rade cannily,
An' rapped at the yett o' Claverse-ha' Lee :
" Gae tell Mistress Jean to come speedily ben,¹
She's wanted to speak to the Laird o' Cockpen."

Mistress Jean she was makin' the elder-flower wine.
" An' what brings the laird at sic-a-like time ? "
She put aff her apron, and on her silk gown,
Her mutch wi' red ribbons, and gaed awa' doun.

An' when she cam' ben he bowèd fu' low,
An' what was his errand he soon let her know ;
Amazed was the laird when the leddy said " Na,"
And wi' a laigh curtsie she turnèd awa'.

Dumfounded he was, nae sign did he gie,
He mounted his mare, he rade cannily ;
And aften he thought, as he gaed thro' the glen,
" She's daft to refuse the Laird o' Cockpen."

And now that the laird his exit had made,
Mistress Jean she reflected on what she had said :
" Oh, for ane I'll get better, it's waur I'll get ten ;
I was daft to refuse the Laird o' Cockpen."

Next time that the laird and the leddy were seen,
They were gaun arm-in-arm to the kirk on the
green ;
Now she sits in the ha' like a weel-tappit hen,
But as yet there's nae chickens appeared at
Cockpen.

Lady Nairne.

¹ Into the parlour.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF A FAVOURITE
CAT

This is an artificial trifle. It is a burlesque, and is exactly in the manner of poems upon serious and important subjects. The metre is smooth, the language is polished, the ornaments are such as would suit the true sublime. Its elevated refined style is in sharp contrast with the rough speech of "That Heathen Chinee," and with the Scottish dialect of "The Laird o' Cockpen."

'Twas on a lofty vase's side,
Where China's gayest art had dyed'
The azure flowers that blow,
Demurest of the tabby kind,
The pensive Selima, reclined,
Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared :
The fair round face, the snowy beard,
The velvet of her paws,
Her coat that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes
She saw—and purred applause.

Still had she gazed, but 'midst the tide
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
The Genii of the stream :
Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue,
Through richest purple, to the view
Betrayed a golden gleam.

The hapless nymph with wonder saw :
A whisker first, and then a claw
With many an ardent wish .
She stretched, in vain, to reach the prize—
What female heart can gold despise ?
What cat's averse to fish ?

Presumptuous maid ! with looks intent
Again she stretched, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between ;
Malignant Fate sat by and smiled ;
The slippery verge her feet beguiled—
She tumbled headlong in.

Eight times emerging from the flood
She mewed to every watery god
Some speedy aid to send :—
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirred,
Nor cruel Tom nor Susan heard—
A favourite has no friend !

From hence, ye Beauties, undeceived,
Know one false step is ne'er retrieved,
And be with caution bold :
Not all that tempts your wandering eyes
And heedless hearts is lawful prize,
Nor all that glisters gold !

Thomas Gray.



VI

THE RESOLUTE SOUL

COURAGE, my soul ; now learn to wield
The weight of thine immortal shield ;
Close on thy head thy helmet bright ;
Balance thy sword against the fight.
See where an army, strong as fair,
With silken banners spreads the air.
Now, if thou be'st that thing divine,
In this day's combat let it shine ;
And show that nature wants an art
To conquer one resolvèd heart.

Andrew Marvell.

“ NEW DOTH THE SUN APPEAR ”

NEW doth the sun appear ;
The mountain's snows decay ;
Crowned with frail flowers comes forth the baby
year,
My soul ! Time posts away,
And thou yet in that frost
Which flower and fruit hath lost,
As if all here immortal were, dost stay.
For shame ! Thy powers awake,
Look to that Heaven which never night makes
black,
And there, at that immortal sun's bright rays,
Deck thee with flowers which fear not rage of
days !

William Drummond.



SWEET CONTENT

ART thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers ?

O sweet content !

Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed ?

O punishment !

Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed

To add to golden numbers golden numbers ?

O sweet content ! O sweet, O sweet content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace ;

Honest labour bears a lovely face ;

Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny !

Canst drink the waters of the crispèd spring ?

O sweet content !

Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine
own tears ?

O punishment !

Then he that patiently want's burden bears

No burden bears, but is a king, a king !

O sweet content ! O sweet, O sweet content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace ;

Honest labour bears a lovely face ;

Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny !

Thomas Dekker.

VIRTUE

Day, Rose, and Spring are addressed, the conclusion in all cases being the same—each must die ; then they are contrasted with the virtuous soul, which nothing can touch or harm : even if the world should be destroyed and fall in ruins around it, it can stand steadfast and serene, confident in its immortality.

SWEET day, so cool, so calm, so bright,

The bridal of the earth and sky ;

Sweet dews shall weep thy fall to-night,

For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue, angry and brave,¹
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives ;
But when the whole world turns to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

George Herbert.

THE MAN OF LIFE UPRIGHT

THE man of life upright, whose guiltless heart is
free
From all dishonest deeds, or thought of vanity ;
The man whose silent days in harmless joys are
spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude, nor sorrow discon-
tent,—
That man needs neither towers nor armour for
defence,
Nor secret vaults to fly from thunder's violence ;
He only can behold with unaffrighted eyes
The horrors of the deep and terrors of the skies.
Thus, scorning all the cares that fate or fortune
brings,
He makes the heaven his book, his wisdom
heavenly things,

¹ Bright and beautiful.

Good thoughts his only friends, his wealth a well-
spent age,

The earth his sober inn and quiet pilgrimage.

Thomas Campion.

THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will ;
Whose armour is his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill ;

Whose passions not his masters are ;
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Untied unto the world by care
Of public fame or private breath ;

Who envies none that chance doth raise,
Nor vice ; who never understood
How deepest wounds are given by praise ;
Nor rules of state, but rules of good ;

Who hath his life from rumours freed ;
Whose conscience is his strong retreat ;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
Nor ruin make oppressors great ;

Who God doth late and early pray
More of His grace than gifts to lend ;
And entertains the harmless day
With a religious book or friend ;

This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise or fear to fall ;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all.

Henry Wotton.

ALL THAT'S PAST

VERY old are the woods ;
And the buds that break
Out of the brier's boughs,
When March winds wake,
So old with their beauty are—
Oh, no man knows
Through what wild centuries
Roves back the rose.

Very old are the brooks ;
And the rills that rise
Where snow sleeps cold beneath
The azure skies
Sing such a history
Of come and gone,
Their every drop is as wise
As Solomon.

Very old are we men ;
Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
By Eve's nightingales ;
We wake and whisper awhile,
But, the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
Of amaranth lie.

Walter de la Mare.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN
APRIL 1786

It has been said, with a touch of exaggeration, that more is to be learnt about man from this poem than from wars and the rise and fall of nations, if it is truly considered.

How many ploughmen have performed this act ! How few have thought anything of it ! And of those few there has been but one to put his thoughts and feelings into words.

The daisy is a symbol of lowly innocence, and just as it is helpless before the ploughshare, so man is helpless before the strokes of fate—that, whatever of truth it contains, is the central idea of the piece.

WEE modest crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour ;
For I maun crush amang the stour
Thy slender stem :
To spare thee now is past my pow'r
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas ! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward springing, blithe to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early humble birth ;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted¹ forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce reared above the parent-earth
Thy humble form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun² shield,
But thou, beneath the random bield³
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble field
Unseen, alane.

¹ Shone.

² Must.

³ Protection.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
 Thy snawy bosom sunward spread,
 Thou lifts thy unassuming head
 In humble guise ;
 But now the share uptears thy bed,
 And low thou lies.

Robert Burns.

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

Not a word of the "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" can be altered without damage being done, without the balance of a line being destroyed, or without the meaning being blurred. It was polished and repolished by its author till it reached perfection, in that his art has quite concealed itself, though to many ears it may not sound spontaneous and passionate.

It teaches that all men are equal: not merely are they made equal by death, they are equal at birth. Earthly inequalities, the poet argues, are due to differences of opportunity, more than to differences of natural ability. This theme is laid out with infinite care, and is adorned with all the resources of poetic art, as that was understood and practised in the time when Thomas Gray lived. The solemn majesty of the words suits exactly with the tone that is appropriate to the scene, and to such a contemplation

It has always been acknowledged to be one of the masterpieces of English literature.

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
 The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
 Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds :

Elegy written in a Country Churchyard 123

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering
heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built
shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care :
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke :
How jocund did they drive their team afield !
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy
stroke !

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,

Awaits alike the inevitable hour :

. The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,

If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted
vault

The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust

Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?

Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,

Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death ?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid

Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page

Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll ;
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene

The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear :
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast

The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes—

Their lot forbade : nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined ;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind ;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
To heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray ;
Along the cool, sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet ever these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture
decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th'unlettered
Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply :
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,

Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind :

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires ;
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonoured dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate,
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall enquire thy fate—

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
“Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn,
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

“There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreaths its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

“Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

“One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree ;
Another came ; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.

“The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw
him borne.

Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn” :

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere ;
Heaven did a recompense as largely send :
He gave to misery all he had, a tear ;
He gained from Heaven (’twas all he wished) a
friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

Thomas Gray.

LOVE OF COUNTRY

BREATHES there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
“ This is my own, my native land ! ”
Whose heart hath ne’er within him burned
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand ?
From “ *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*,”
by Sir Walter Scott

THE ISLES OF GREECE

Like the other poem of Byron's in this book, "The Isles of Greece" burns with passionate feeling. Byron had a noble love of freedom, and in these verses he speaks as a modern Greek, lamenting the fate of his country, which had, at the time when he wrote, been for centuries under the domination of the Turks; and lamenting, too, that the Greek character had degenerated.

The allusions in the poem need some explanation. Sappho was a poetess. Delos is an island in the Ægean Sea, which was sacred to Phœbus, the patron deity of music and art. Scios and Teios were the birthplaces of poets. Sunium is a cape in the south of Greece. At Marathon the Greeks defeated the Persian invader in a great battle, and at Salamis Xerxes' fleet was destroyed. At Thermopylæ 300 Spartans and 10,000 other Greeks withstood the whole weight of a mighty Persian army. All the Spartans perished, but they gained a deathless monument of fame.

THE isles of Greece ! the isles of Greece !
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose and Phœbus sprung !
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse :
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' Islands of the Blest.

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea ;

And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free ;
For, standing on the Persian's grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow
That looks on sea-born Salamis ;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations—all were his !
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set, where were they ?

And where were they ? and where art thou,
My country ? on thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now,
The heroic bosom beats no more !
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine ?

'Tis something in the dearth of fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face ;
For what is left the poet here ?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must we but weep o'er days more blest ?
Must we but blush ?—our fathers bled.
Earth, render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead.
Of the three hundred grant but three
To make a new Thermopylæ !

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine !
On Suli's rock and Parga's shore,

Exists the remnant of a line
 Such as the Doric mothers bore ;
 And there, perhaps, some seed is sown
 The Heracleidan blood might own.

Fill high the 'bowl with Samian wine !
 Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
 I see their glorious black eyes shine ;
 But, gazing on each glowing maid,
 My own the burning tear-drop laves,
 To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
 Where nothing, save the waves and I,
 May hear our mutual murmurs sweep ;
 There, swan-like, let me sing and die :
 A land of slaves shall 'ne'er be mine—
 Dash down yon cup of Samian wine !
Lord Byron.

“ENGLAND'S GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND”

AND did those feet in ancient time
 Walk upon England's mountains green ?
 And was the holy Lamb of God
 On England's pleasant pasture seen ?

And did the countenance divine
 Shine forth upon our clouded hills ?
 And was Jerusalem builded here
 Among these dark Satanic mills ?

Bring me my bow of burning gold,
Bring me my arrows of desire,
Bring me my spear ! O clouds, unfold !
Bring me my chariot of fire !

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.
From "Preface to Milton," by William Blake.

ENGLAND AND FREEDOM

These two fine patriotic hymns recite a great reason why Englishmen should love their country. In them Freedom is personified in a grand and majestic way, not with the tender fancy of "How Sleep the Brave ?" Though it is less important, the manner in which the stanza of the first poem is constructed and the order of the rhymes should be noticed.

I

You ask me why, tho' ill at ease,
Within this region I subsist,
Whose spirits falter in the mist,
And languish for the purple seas.

It is the land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose ;
The land where, girt with friends or foes,
A man may speak the thing he will ;

A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.

II

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet ;
Above her shook the starry lights :
She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
Self-gathered in her prophet-mind,
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down thro' town and field
To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men revealed
The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, king-like, wears the crown.

Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears ;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes !

Lord Tennyson.

ODE

How sleep the brave who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest ?

When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung ;
By forms unseen their dirge is sung ;
There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay ;
And Freedom shall awhile repair
To dwell, a weeping hermit, there.

William Collins.

BERMUDAS

Andrew Marvell, the author of this tuneful poem, was a Puritan poet. During his life-time, that is to say, in the seventeenth century, persecution caused many men to leave their homes, and to seek across the Atlantic a place where they would have religious freedom

WHERE the remote Bermudas ride
In the ocean's bosom unespied,
From a small boat that rowed along
The list'ning winds received this song :
" What should we do but sing His praise
That led us through the wat'ry maze
Unto an isle so long unknown,
And yet far kinder than our own ?
Where¹ He the huge sea-monsters wracks,
That lift the deep upon their backs,
He lands us on a grassy stage,
Safe from the storms and prelates' rage :
He gave us this eternal Spring

¹ Whereas.

Which here enamels everything,
And sends the fowls to us in care
On daily visits through the air :
He hangs in shades the orange bright
Like golden lamps in a green night,
And does in the pomegranates close
Jewels more rich than Ormuz shows :
He makes the figs our mouths to meet,
And throws the melons at our feet ;
But apples plants of such a price
No tree could ever bear them twice ;
With cedars chosen by His hand,
From Lebanon, he stores the land ;
And makes the hollow seas that roar
Proclaim the ambergris on shore.
He cast (of which we rather boast)
The Gospel's pearl upon our coast ;
And in these rocks for us did frame
A temple where to sound His name.
Oh, let our voice His praise exalt
Till it arrive at Heaven's vault,
Which thence (perhaps) rebounding may
Echo beyond the Mexique bay ! ”
Thus sung they in the English boat
An holy and a cheerful note :
And all the way, to guide their chime,
With falling oars they kept the time.

Andrew Marvell.

THE LAST POEM

This is the last poem of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, who was British Ambassador to the United States during the Great European War. In January 1918 reasons of state rendered it necessary to send out a direct representative of the Government to take his place. He died a month later, and his death,

occurring at that time, lends a special interest and meaning to the poem.

I vow to thee, my country—all earthly things
above—

Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my
love,

The love that asks no questions : the love that
stands the test,

That lays upon the altar the dearest and the
best :

The love that never falters, the love that pays the
price,

The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country I've heard of long
ago—

Most dear to them that love her, most great to
them that know—

We may not count her armies : we may not see
her King—

Her fortress is, a faithful heart, her pride is
suffering—

And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds
increase.

And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her
paths are Peace.

Sir Cecil Spring-Rice.

PEACE

Henry Vaughan lived when England was torn by the quarrel between Charles I and the Parliament. Hence he knew war in its most terrible form, and had good cause to appreciate the blessings of peace.

My soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars

Where stands a wingèd sentry
All skilful in the wars :
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious Friend,
And—oh, my soul, awake !—
Did in pure love descend
To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst but get thither,
There grows the flower of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.
Leave then thy foolish ranges ;
For none can thee secure
But One who never changes—
Thy God, thy life, thy cure.

Henry Vaughan.



EXERCISES

(Some of these questions and exercises can be answered orally.)

1. Give a brief account of one of the following, naming the subject of the poem, the subject of each stanza, the metre, and the form of the stanza. What kind of poem is it?—Battle Hymn of the Republic, The Patriot, The Solitary Reaper, The Twa Sisters of Binnorie, The Host of the Air, The Seasons, Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat.
2. In these extracts the italicized lines need alteration to make them correct in metre: some of them do not rhyme with any other lines.

(1) *All aflame was the western wave,*
The day was well-nigh done ;
Almost upon the western wave
The broad bright Sun rested.

(2) Sage beneath a spreading oak
The Druid, hoary chief, sat.
Every burning word he spoke
Full of rage and full of grief.

(3) THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.
Year after year unto her feet,
She lying alone on her couch,
Across the purpled coverlet
The maiden's jet-black hair has grown.

3. From Recollections of the Arabian Nights, Sunset in the Highlands, The House Beautiful, The Ice Cart, The Cloud, Nightfall, The Water Nymph, The Belfry, St. Andrews, and A Frosty Day quote one or two lines which are pictures in words.
4. Rearrange the words of the following passages in verse-order. In each passage four lines of verse should be made :
 - (1) Half asleep were the whispering waves ; the clouds had gone to play ; and the smile of Heaven lay on the bosom of the deep.
 - (2) Ere the moon had steered thrice into her port, the living well received a cup of stone : Sir Walter reared three pillars of rude stone, and built a house of pleasure in the dell.
 - (3) The glassy deck where the staid Lieutenant walks is white, without a stain : look on that part which doth remain sacred to the lone chieftain, who stalks majestic.
 - (4) Here I flung open the shutter, when there stepped in, with many of flirt and flutter, a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore. He made not the least obeisance ; he stopped or stayed not a minute ; but, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.
5. In these pieces of verse mark the accented syllables, and the rhymes.

Model : There cáme a mán by míddle dáy ;
 He spéd his spórt, and wént *awáy* ;
 And bróught the Kíng that véry *níght*,
 Who bráke my bówer and sléw my
 kníght.

' may be used to indicate a strong accent, and ` a weak accent.

- (1) Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect
rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies ;
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.
- (2) Down into that darksome cavern
Plunged the headlong Hiawatha,
As a log on some black river
Shoots and plunges down the rapids.
- (3) Still stands the forest primeval : but under
the shade of its branches
Dwells another race, with other customs and
language.
Only along the shore of the mournful and
misty Atlantic
Linger a few Acadian peasants, whose fathers
from exile
Wandered back to their native land to die in
its bosom.
- (4) I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams ;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.

6. Which do you consider to be the most impressive lines or verses in the following poems ? If you can do so, give reasons for your choice : A Song of England, The Solitary Reaper, The Cloud, Morte d'Arthur, An Elegy written in a Country Churchyard, The Man of Life Upright, Flodden Field, The Battle of Naseby, The Isles of Greece, Battle Hymn of the Republic.
7. Divide these two passages printed as prose into lines of blank verse.

- (1) There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier than all the
valleys of Ionian hills. The swimming
vapour slopes athwart the glen, puts forth

an arm, and creeps from pine to pine, and loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand the lawns and meadow-ledges midway down hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars the long brook, fallen thro' the clov'n ravine, in cataract after cataract to the sea.

- (2) For we are all like swimmers in the sea, poised on the top of a huge wave of fate, which hangs uncertain to which side to fall. And whether it will heave us up to land, or whether it will roll us out to sea, back to the sea, to the deep waves of death, we know not, and no search will make us know; only the event will teach us in its hour.

8. (a) State in a short phrase the subject of each stanza of the following poems (b) At what points does each poem differ from the ordinary method of telling a story?—My Love's in Germany, The Belfry, He fell among Thieves, The Farewell, The Gay Goshawk.

9. Convert these pieces of blank verse into rhymed couplets (see p. 25), with as little change as possible :

- (a) So through the whispering trees they came at length

To where a wondrous house a shadow cast
Across the flowers ; and o'er the daisied grass,
Before it, crowds of lovely folk did go
Playing about in carelessness and joy,
Unshadowed by the doubtful deeds of earth.

- (b) As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heaven's pure azure spreads her sacred beams,

When not a breath disturbs the deep serene
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn sky,
Around her throne the vivid planets shine,
And stars unnumbered gild the glowing Pole,

O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver every mountain's top.

- (c) So Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous youth, who from
afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs ; long he perused
His spirited air, and wondered who he was.
For very young he seemed, tenderly reared ;
Like some young cypress, tall and dark and
straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound.

10. Each of the following expressions is different from the natural . change it into its simplest form.

- (a) To feather one's own nest.
(b) I am the daughter of Earth and Water.
[From *The Cloud.*]
(c) Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
[From *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard.*]
(d) The triumphal arch through which I march
Is the million-coloured bow.
[From *The Cloud.*]
(e) Full many a chief of birth and rank,
St. Helen ! at thy fountain drank.
(f) Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
" This is my own, my native land " "

11. Complete :

- (1) THE OWL
Once I was a monarch's daughter
And sat on a lady's knee ;
.....
.....tree.

- (2) The sun now rose upon the right,
Out of the sea came he ;

.....
.....sea.

- (3) Full knee-deep lies the winter snow,
.....sighing,
.....slow,
For the Old Year lies a-dying.

12. For each of the phrases in brackets substitute a single word which sums up the meaning of the phrase and makes a good line of verse :

- (1) Upon a morning (when the sun shone) and clear
She cried upon her sister dear :

“ O sister, sister, take my hand,
And let's go down by the river strand ! ”

- (2) The line of blazing villages
(Reflected in a crimson glow) in the midnight sky.

- (3) A leaping wind from England,
The skies (clear and cloudless) ;
Clean-cut against the morning,
Slim poplars after rain. . . .

13. Change the following piece of prose into unrhymed verse in the metre of the extract given :

Pánsies, lílies, kíngcups, dáisies,
Lét them líve upón their práises
Long as there's a sun that sets
Píimroses will have their glory ;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story ;
There's a flower that shall be mine—
'Tis the little celandine.

On that journey there came upon them a great tempest : and the fierce wind drove the ship before it into strange seas, and broke the rudder and the masts, and a strong current seized the vessel, and washed it against a rock. All who were on board

leaped into the waves, and were soon dashed lifeless upon the beach: only Olger remained upon the deck in the inky darkness, gazing upon the stormy sea. Then he bared his head, thanked God for the courage given to him as a soldier during all his life, and quietly awaited death.

14. What is it in the sound of the words that produces the effect indicated after each of these extracts?

(a) But he heard high up in the air,
A piper piping away;
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay. [The distant
sound of fairy music.]

(b) And to the stack, or the barn door,
Stoutly struts his dames before. [The manner
in which the bird walks.]

(c) The lare black cliff clanged round him.
[The echo of Sir Bedivere's footsteps.]

(d) The sun right up above the mast
Had fixed her to the ocean;
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length,
With a short uneasy motion,

[A becalmed ship beginning to rock under the
influence of a rising wind.]

(e) With deep affection and recollection
I often think of those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would, in days of
childhood,

Fling around my cradle their magic spells.
On this I ponder where'er I wander,
And thus grow fonder, sweet Cork, of thee;
With thy bells of Shandon,
That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters of the river Lea.

[The sound of the church bells.]

- 15 Add a verse to one of: *The Country Lass*, *A Girl's Song*, *The South Country*, *The Gay Goshawk*, *The Twa Sisters of Binnorie*, *A Frosty Day*, *Faithless Nellie Gray*.
- 16 Fill in the blank spaces with the most suitable word among those suggested.
- (a) The — wind comes from the sea [salt, cold, wild, blustering].
 - (b) And thus an airy point he won,
Where, gleaming in the — sun,
Lock Katrine lay beneath him rolled [shining, scorching, setting].
 - (c) Around my wild porch shall spring
Each — herb that drinks the dew [green, fragrant, mountain];
And Lucy at her wheel shall sing
In — gown and apron — [russet, neat]
[new, blue].
17. Write a poem in five stanzas, similar to those on page 123, on *The Village*, using the following notes:
- Stanza I.—The few houses clustering together and surrounded by fields of grain in summer, with a river, and hills in the distance.
- Stanza II.—The village church, among trees on a grassy mound; its tower and graveyard with yew-trees.
- Stanza III.—The village street, deserted as a rule, crowded with farmers on market days.
- Stanza IV.—The one shop of the village.
- Stanza V.—The village people.
18. Write a poem in eight stanzas, like those on page 74, on "St. George and the Dragon."

