

-120 SONGS-  
SAD AND SWEET

BY  
KAIKHUSHRU M. COOPER

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—120 SONGS—  
SAD AND SWEET

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WITH A FOREWORD

BY

H. MARTIN, M. A. (OXON.), O. B. E.,  
FORMERLY OFFICIATING PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR,  
THE MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH



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SAD AND SWEET

BY  
KAIKHUSHRU M. COOPER

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## FOREWORD

What is poetry? That is a big question, to which no short answer can be given. All we can say is that the three essentials of poetry are *imagination, emotion, and music*. Where these are found in any marked degree in words, there is poetry. Poetry is the product and expression of inspired imagination; it arouses emotion in the poet and rouses emotion in the reader or hearer; and it is essentially musical.

Poetic imagination is vision. A true poet is a seer; that is, a "see-er", one who sees. He is a man of vision. He can see hidden truth which we ordinary folk cannot see, and he can express it so vividly that we can see it too.

Emotion is part of poetry. Prose is logical; poetry is emotional. Prose speaks to the head; poetry appeals to the heart. Prose presents truth in the cold light of reason; "poetry is truth carried alive into the heart by passion." As Byron said,

"And feeling in the poet is the source  
Of others' feeling."

Music, the element of song, is the third essential element of poetry. Prose talks; poetry sings. The music of poetry lies partly in its flowing rhythm, and partly in the harmonious sounds of its words. The poet chooses his words, not only for their sense and their suggestiveness, but also for their sound. He

## FOREWORD

arranges them like musical notes to produce harmonies of word-music. He "articulates sweet sounds together"; and he will vary his music to suit his subject, so that the very sound of his lines will echo and reinforce their meaning.

We may say, then, that when speech becomes highly imaginative, emotional and musical, it becomes poetry.

How can we tell a real poem from mere verse? Well, the essentials of poetry should be the touchstone. When presented with a supposed poem, we may apply the test: Has it these three essentials? Has it imagination? Has it emotion? Has it music? If it has, we may presume that it is poetry. If it has not, then it is mere uninspired verse.

An example will make this clear. Read this verse:—

I put my hat upon my head  
And walked along the Strand;  
And there I met another man,  
Whose hat was in his hand.

Now that is quite decent verse. The metre is regular, and the rhyme correct. But is it poetry? Let us test it. Except for the rhyme, there is no music in the lines; there is certainly neither vision nor imagination; and there is no emotion of any kind. The subject is so trivial as to be almost silly. The man who wrote felt nothing, for there was nothing to feel; and so we feel nothing as we read the lines, except, perhaps, a slight amusement at their silliness. There is not a scrap of poetry in the verse. It is mere verse and nothing else.

## FOREWORD

Now read this stanza aloud:—

“Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright!  
The bridal of the earth and sky—  
The dew shall weep thy fall tonight;  
For thou must die.”

Here is music. Listen, for example, to the succession of mellow vowel-sounds in the first line—*ee, ay, o, oo, o, a, o, i*. Here is emotion—the gentle feeling of sadness at the passing away of something beautiful. And here, too, is imagination—the vision of the transitoriness of all earthly things, however lovely, and the fancy of the dew as a being that feels sorrow at the death of the day. So this stanza is poetry.

We must learn to appreciate real poetry, and to distinguish it from mere uninspired verse. This at first is not easy. Someone has well said: “To a true taste in poetry there is requisite just *clean feeding in poetry*.” He meant that the reading and study of poems that are recognised as true and noble poetry will give us a taste for the real thing, and will enable us to distinguish between the true and the false.

In the light of all this, who can doubt that Mr. Cooper\* was a true poet, and his little poems are real poetry? Take, for example, this one on the regret of old age for the loss of youth:—

“Time was when everything I saw was new:  
Even the lustrous drops of morning dew,  
Enamoured of the roses and their hue;  
And all the golden stars that set aflame  
The heavens at night, to spread abroad their fame.

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\* Passed away on 18th March, 1938.

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But now, alas! each thing is old and grey  
And lacks the lustre of my youthful day.  
They are not changed, I know; 'tis I, grown old,  
Have lost the fire of youth. So feeling cold,  
With eyes grown dim, not even the purest gold  
Delights me now as in the days of yore;  
On me old age has closed its iron door."

Here the *emotion* is the sad regret for the loss of youth—the sadness of old age. The little poem is inspired by *imagination*—the imagination that can sadly contrast the feelings of age with those of youth. And the verse is full of *music*—the rhymes, *new, dew, hue; aflame, fame; grey, day; old, cold, gold; yore, door;* and the sad melody of the last line—"On me old age has closed its iron door."

HENRY MARTIN

— 1 —

Give me a simple song—  
The trill of a tiny bird,  
Throbbing with new-born life,  
So rarely, rarely, heard.

Only a lyric cry  
From depths of a bursting soul,  
The music that transports  
And through the ages roll.

From where the roses joyous blow,  
All thoughts of her do come and go.  
Beyond her lies the silver tide,  
Behind her all the glories hide.  
So potent is her quivering frame,  
The stars in heaven are put to shame.  
She is that Soul who dreams in glee,  
And wakeful views Eternity.

— 3 —

I am an ancient friend:  
Yet what a fuss they make,  
And keep themselves awake,  
When I my greetings send!  
— Thus Death of visage dark  
Did once remark.

A little while they hum ;  
And then they trooping come,  
And murmur in my heart.  
Strangely they start,  
And strangely part.  
No message do they bring —  
They only sing,  
And with my wish agree  
To clear the sky for early spring.  
Yet these my tiny songs  
Are dear to me ;  
They sweep away my wrongs,  
And keep me from all worries free.

Go where I go,  
I see the sky above  
And feel its golden glow.

Seek what I seek,  
Love meets me everywhere  
And plays some cunning trick

Dream as I may,  
Death rears its ugly head  
And fills me with dismay.

O Youth that once was mine!  
O Age that plagues me now!  
O Death with knitted brow,  
What's left of me is thine.

Yet while I thus repine,  
Quite crushed beneath my weight,  
Triumphant and elate  
The warriors cross the line.

My heart is sore ;  
The dear old home is now no more.

We are a few,  
And fast we all are getting old.  
I feel the wind is blowing cold,  
And naught is left for me to view,  
Though still I wait for something new.

What comes hereafter — who can say?  
I live my day,  
And go the old and rugged way.  
And if I write,  
I strive to be a little bright,  
Though now and then I storm and rage,  
Too weak to bear the weight of age.

A little peep into my life  
These tiny songs supply,  
Though here and there the picture drawn  
May seem to you awry.

Of many moods I've always been,  
Have known the ebb and flow ;  
Yet I have trained my wand'ring steps  
Where they should always go.

I've wandered far to reach each star,  
Have sailed from sea to sea ;  
But all I've known, I've known in dreams  
Where shackles fall, and free  
The Poet roams and sucks the sweet  
Which makes his life complete.

Who keeps the count?  
The murdered martyrs unremembered lie!  
They raise no cry;  
They clamour not for blood.  
Swept by the rush of old tyrannic flood,  
Elsewhere they find eternal rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Who keeps the count  
Of those who died unblest?

What does Death do?—It hides the stars that  
twinkle in our eyes,  
And crushes Hope that's centred in some fancied  
paradise.

Yet not content with this it dries our blood and  
keeps us in  
Dark narrow pits where worms and vermins eat  
and feast and grin.

What does Death do?—It ends the anguish of our  
aching bones,  
And safe deposits us beneath revered tombs and  
stones,  
Where we are left to dream of joys which have  
no counterpart  
On this our Earth where nothing satisfies the  
hungry heart.

Each morn I go and listen to the sea —  
Its far-off voice that rumbling comes to me.  
And then I think of friendless souls of old  
To whom a source of solace manifold  
It proved when thrown adrift they knew no home.  
Even so, weary grown, seaward I roam.  
It soothes and draws me to that mystery  
Wherein each broken reed may yet grow free.

— 12 —

Not whence we come,  
But where we go —  
O this alone,  
We'd like to know.

The streams that dry  
Again do flow:  
Shall we too have  
Such come and go?

The light of Spring is on the sea  
And happy looks each verdant tree.  
How comes it then that Death is free  
To mar this scene of harmony?  
Is there no law to bar it here  
This festive season of the year,  
That it should even now appear  
Armed with a scythe and with a bier?

The radiant sun shall peer through my grave,  
And I shall hear the *koel* singing brave,  
And the rumbling sound of wave following wave.  
But O! the stars that beckon me will meet  
No more my gaze, when once down in a pit  
I make my bed and crumble bit by bit;  
And that shall be a state of agony,  
Unless annihilation sets me free.

Now to her eyes the dawn proclaims  
The aimlessness of all her aims;  
And she retires to pray and fast:  
But O! how long this mood will last?  
Yet anyway while lasts this life,  
A little of this inward strife  
Should welcome be to those who stray,  
Who wander with the young and gay.

It seems so strange to me  
That there can be a town,  
A town without its sea :

That we can sleep and wake,  
And see the sun arise,  
Yet hear no ringing waves,  
And still be good and wise.

It seems so strange to me  
That men can live and die  
Beyond the sounding sea,  
And never heave a sigh.

Dreadful is their fate  
Who hear no roaring waves,  
Who live beyond the sea  
And sleep in land-lock'd graves.

After death are wonders rare,  
And not a shred of ugly care,  
There's naught to do, and naught to rue,  
The sky is ever clear and blue.  
And we can wander at our will,  
Or sit and watch some tiny rill  
Murmuring secrets of her heart  
With strange, alluring, maiden art;  
And mark how love there satisfies  
With quieter hints and closer ties.  
Then why this dread to cross the bound  
Where pleasures such are ever found,  
Where creeping doubts assail us not,  
Where each one has a common lot?

Tho' I have reached at last full sixty years,  
Little of life I've known worth knowing.  
But it avails not now to shed hot tears:  
Enough that He my boat is towing.

These shadows flitting here and there,  
Do they like drooping souls despair?  
Or are they dumb in ecstasy,  
These flitting shadows that we see?

And what are they who light of limb  
Are so fantastic and so grim?  
We meet them here, we meet them there;  
They wander much, and much they dare,  
And sometimes in the graveyard scare.

I know not what these shadows be,  
These flitting shadows that we see;  
Though from my early childhood days  
They danced with me in subtle ways.  
They never said a single word,  
Though all I said they quietly heard —  
These shadows flitting here and there,  
These phantoms of some vast despair.

What's that we call the Infinite?  
The changes that our vision greet:—  
The rise and fall that still recall  
Persepolis, its pillars tall;  
Such desolation and retreat  
As still return with rhythmic beat;  
The surge of life in endless ways,  
That rushes on and nowhere stays;  
What heaves and rolls and hurries by,  
As dreams that wander and defy.  
O these portend the Infinite—  
The changes that our vision greet.

O dreamer! dream each mystery,  
But pause where flows Eternity.  
The tide might come and carry thee,  
Such is its force and tyranny.

O dreamer! dream as one would dream  
Of angels and of goblins grim,  
But pause before thy sense grows dim;  
For life obeys no idle whim.

“O mark my steps, guide me aright,  
Through this dark night.  
In frenzied haste I've lost the way  
And gone astray.  
I seek the clue which yet might heal  
The pain I feel —  
The agony which tortures me,  
Who once was free.”

“Go, live thy life and wait the day,  
And keep thy eyes on verdant May.  
The secrets which thou fain wouldst know,  
In haste and hurry greater grow.  
Abide thy time: the east will ring  
One day, and e'en to thee will bring  
Its message, clear and full of joy.  
March onward and thy fears destroy!  
For they who brave, their souls can save:  
The coward finds an early grave.”

Bewitched by her this wakeful silent night,  
I see her scale the sky in glorious light.  
Is she an exile — this young fairy Moon,  
Withholding from the suppliant gods some boon?

Why is she so aloof?

Weaves she what warp and woof?  
Will she not share with me her wizardry  
Wherewith she silvers all the land and sea?  
How mute and queen-like still she wanders on,  
Regardless of the fast approaching dawn!

Nature's secrets all his life he probed,  
Excepting not the ugly venomous toad.  
Now here he lies; and vermins on him prey:  
Perhaps they too are searching for a ray  
Which might reveal a vision yet afar,  
And plant their hopes upon some distant star.

I was a warrior trained. Now dead I lie  
And dream of daily battles in the sky.  
There is no rest for me, no peace of mind;  
Fire and fury still my spirit blind.  
No soothing word is heard, no light is seen:  
I wonder what these heavenly tumults mean.

What are thy thoughts? O thoughtful Sea!  
The carcass and the coral tree,  
Say, dost thou know what these may be?  
Whate'er thy thoughts, O speak to me!

What are thy thoughts? O raging Sea!  
Say, dost thou and the gods agree,  
So what thou willest, they decree?  
Whate'er thy power, O speak to me!

What are thy thoughts? O joyous Sea!  
The lovely mermaids living free —  
Say, dost thou dream of them or me?  
What are thy dreams, O joyous Sea?

What are thy thoughts? O speak to me!  
The wistful moon is watching thee.  
Say, dost thou dream of love and me?  
Speak thy thoughts, O wakeful Sea!

What are thy thoughts? O mighty Sea!  
Say, dost thou dream of death like me,  
And life that may hereafter be —  
Or dost thou live for ever free,  
Not knowing what these tangles be?

O then 'twas all direct and plain,  
    When I was young and strong;  
But now that I am old and wise  
    Black doubts assail and throng,  
And everything seems blurr'd or dark,  
And every guess goes wide of mark.

O now that I am old and wise,  
    I go from door to door;  
I stop to listen, argue, think,  
    But baffled still and sore,  
Think of the days of hope and trust  
When gold was in each grain of dust.

Night, with your starry eyes,  
How oft you come and go!  
What wonder in your texture lies,  
What dreams that overflow  
And keep the dizzy world aglow!

Night, with your starry eyes,  
Spell-bound you hold me while  
The revelry of gods defies  
The phantoms that beguile  
My soul with their sinister smile.

Night, with your starry eyes,  
Both gods and men have ancient ties,  
Ties that endure the rush of Time  
As, on his wing impalpable, he flies.

He is the Master-Alchemist.  
If you remember this,  
You then can understand  
Why He incessant builds,  
And why He breaks again,  
With all the strength He wields.  
He has a deeper aim;  
And this He doth attain  
Thro' varying means and ways.  
Thus thro' a casual kiss,  
He builds a rigid band;  
And thro' a blinding mist  
Evolves another game;  
Or thro' a whiff betrays  
His mighty mind  
Wherein each scheme displays  
Things that are intertwined.

This life which breathes in us all sorts of hope,  
This life which freely gives us all so much,  
This very life fails us at last, and leaves  
Us cold, once it withdraws its kindling touch.

And then we are no more! A lifeless lump,  
We helpless lie and slowly putrefy.  
No more we think; no more we calculate;  
No more behold the glory in the sky;  
No more think of the past, in future peep;  
Immersed in depths of deep eternal sleep.

O tender limbs and chubby cheeks!  
O smiling eyes that see beyond!  
O laughter born of inward joy!  
    O foolish and so fond!

Does He still haunt thy tiny steps,  
Does He still lead thee, all along,  
Does He still play and sport with thee,  
    And harbour thee from wrong?

Why strikest thus thy dearest friend,  
And laughest so in simple joy?  
I too was once, O dearest mite!  
    Like thee a tiny boy.

I too was wild and full of pranks,  
I too had once my happy day;  
But years came creeping on and on,  
    And now I'm old and grey.

So long as we are hale,  
The earth is fresh and green,  
And all the flowers blow,  
Happy and serene.

So long as we are hale,  
All the birds sing best,  
And joy is found abundant  
In every mating nest.

So long as we are hale,  
The rivers joyous flow,  
And happy are the fields  
Where corn in plenty grow.

So long as we are hale,  
The cattle roam at ease,  
And eat and drink and work,  
And everyday increase.

So long as we are hale,  
The seasons too are mild,  
And winter comes to go,  
And buxom grows each child.

So long as we are hale,  
The stars glow bright in sky,  
And lovers all rejoice,  
And all the world defy.

So long as we are hale,  
The world's a happy place  
Where each one hugs his life,  
And wears a smiling face.

We change from age to age, but not so you:  
You are the same, the same old buoyant soul  
Who rapturous sang creation's hymn that day  
When first the glorious sun sent forth his light.  
The freshness of that joy lives still in you,  
And shall pass on to other throats. But we,  
We men are strangers to our own forbears:  
Adam to us is a far-off cry, and Eve  
Is like to send a shock thro' gentle nerves;  
But you are still the same and no whit changed.  
Time has not touched your silken feathery dress  
Nor any wise the accents of your note,  
Or e'en your joyous outlook of this life;  
So that a million rolling years from hence  
The same sweet golden note shall herald dawn  
And still regale the honest woodlander,  
Tripping along some old laburnum path  
To meet his love.

When I am gone, O think of me  
As one whose soul is fetters-free;  
Who now can climb the highest peak;  
Who now can greater powers seek,  
And stand on terraces to view  
Glories presenting aspects new.

Listen! there is no going back,  
No faltering, no devious track.  
Beckon to me with hope and joy!  
There is no death, meant to destroy;  
No darkness heaving deep despair;  
But beauty greeting everywhere.

He lives his life, as in a maze,  
In Shiva's all-encircling haze;  
Nor questions he His cryptic ways.

At break of dawn he lights his fire,  
And, as he chants the hymns entire,  
His frame now shakes, now rigid grows,  
His eyes turn crystal, then slowly close  
At last, released from earth's embrace,  
He sees outspread, all in a blaze,  
The Universe in Shiva's eye.

Anon the vision slips him by!  
And he returns, and sees again  
God Shiva dancing on his brain.

Fight not! for Love is nobler than all creeds  
Conceived by narrow minds. Hate merely breeds  
Dissensions which the Lord of Love abhors.  
Think ye that barred and bolted are His doors  
'Gainst all His creatures, but the chosen few—  
Those who believe the dispensation new?  
Not so; His gates are always open wide,  
Both for the reprobate whose sense has died,  
As he who in his cell of sanctity  
Breathes perfect faith and selfless charity.  
Endure him then whose heart His love still owns,  
Although his hands are raised to stocks and stones.  
He breathes a prayer more living than your creed,  
Transcending forms which God could never need.

Can this our soul that dreams beyond the bounds  
of time and space

Prove in the end a fragile thing emitting transient  
rays?

Can this be all the truth revolving round His  
blazing light?

Ah, no! that cannot be; nearer to Him we come  
each night

In dreams revealed to yearning soul, e'en as in  
sleep we swoon,

And, 'tuned to higher pitch, with life's great  
marvels we commune.

The songs of love are all sung out,  
And now my thoughts are elsewhere;  
They're fixed upon yon fading light  
Which lands me in despair.

Is life so transient as it seems,  
And Death alone victorious lord?  
Are all our cherished dreams belied,  
And naught can hope afford?

These doubts recurring leave me cold,  
Yet still I argue for the best —  
Can so much good be lost for ever,  
Can life be such a jest?

I sing of sun-bright skies and valleys wild,  
Of foliage and of flowers richly piled,  
Of vernal wood resonant with the birds  
That to the early riser still rehearse  
Their golden pomp, and of the swelling sea  
Exuberant of joy and mystery.  
Of these and many more, yea, many more,  
I sing; so that the weary and the sore  
May solace find in songs thus simply wrought,  
And find there music for their minds distraught;  
And Hope and Faith the seeker there may meet,  
And joys celestial too their vision greet,  
As I too hope my songs to carry me  
To realms of quiet rest, tho' far they be.

Here is beauty everywhere ;  
Here are hills untouched by man,  
And flowers and birds and hoary trees,  
And songs that breathe of mating joy ;  
  
And yet my soul doth something miss —  
The sea and all its harmony,  
Its thousand colours and the trance  
It throws on weary human life.

O circling sea! thou art to me  
A dream of peace — a mystery,  
Immortal as the hope I nurse,  
And soothing as her maiden eyes.

The first transcendent thought was hatched in dark,  
Not in the blaze of naked light;  
For when the mighty Mind set up the mark,  
'Twas universal night.

There was not then the glory of the sun,  
Spreading effulgence in the sky,  
When vastly brooding, He dominion won  
And saw old Chaos fly.

So even now, O Darkness, from thy realm  
Strange voices to the poet come,  
Voices which by their sweetness overwhelm,  
And make the minstrel dumb.

For this, no less for the penetrating vision,  
Out-leaping bounds of time and space  
And looking deeper than the depth of reason,  
Indebted to thy grace

Are we — O Darkness steeped in mystery,  
Whose hem shall reach our groping soul  
When this vast world, dissolved in symphony,  
Becomes a perfect whole.

These are the things I'll never do ;  
These are the things I won't pursue:—  
Bite back the biter, scotch his head,  
On fallen foe exultant tread ;  
Wish ill to him who evil means,  
And share with him his dismal dreams ;  
Pay back a man in his own coin ;  
The campaign 'gainst the helpless join ;  
Espouse oppression's shameful cause,  
And seek for strength in unjust laws :  
These are the things I cannot do ;  
Praise be to Him and unto you  
Whose life is still a beacon light  
To guide my faltering steps aright,  
And lead me farther yet away  
From darkness, to the dawn of day.

Old-time tales of fairyland,  
    These I read with greater zest,  
Now that I am fifty-five,  
    And my eyes are turned to west.

O! how restful 'tis to turn  
    From the weary working-day,  
To the pages of that life  
    Where the sky is never grey;

Where the crown is for the good,  
    Where the end is always bright,  
Where Jack kills the giant grim,  
    With his puny arm and might.

Ah! these are the tales I read,  
    These the people I would know,  
Now that I am fifty-five,  
    And my thoughts are halting, slow.

Children, you have seen the twinkling stars,  
Now looking big, now looking small,  
Will you tell me what these stars reveal,  
And why you love them one and all?

Children, singing songs and driving hoops,  
And shouting loud and louder still,  
Say, romping and playing here and there,  
Will you ever have your fill?

Children, when you deftly turn your hands  
And wisely build your sandy pile,  
May you then, O never, never dream  
That this your world's a little while!

Children, while you lift your tiny hands,  
And pray as mother makes you pray,  
Ask, O ask for me of life like yours  
A year, a month, a single day.

In the island-home where I was born,  
Bright, golden rays adorn each morn,  
And the restful sky still wears its blue,  
And gorgeous is the sunset hue.

And there the Palm, the evergreen,  
Is oft disturbed with joys unseen;  
For there, if anywhere on earth,  
Beauty in glory takes its birth.

Soon shall these flowers fade. Yet question not  
Why they were made so beautiful and rare,  
At last to die  
In conflict with the spirits of the air.

'Tis all a passing show!  
Men and flowers come and go,  
While silent dreams the Soul a while  
To greet the stragglers with a smile.

You, they say, moving in your appointed course,  
A course to which there is no ending here, no break,  
No stop, tho' death perhaps might seem a sudden  
pause —

You, they say, must go on moving, moving still,  
While I, blood of your blood and flesh of your  
own flesh,  
Must tumble up or down, ere comes for me the  
change.

O Mother, if this be the mighty mind's design,  
What mean our sorrows here, our fatuous desires,  
Our bitter complaints, our senseless, childlike  
yearnings here,  
Our blind and steady faith, our hopes, and this  
our love?

The sea is near; the sea is far away!  
O! that on a bright summer day,  
Before me I can see her glory spread,  
And by that vision surely led  
Follow the wonders of her heaving soul;  
And then, without a studied goal,  
Roll on and on to meet my destiny  
Where there is neither land nor sea,  
But just a spark of His own ecstasy  
To kindle peace within my breast;  
And quietly lay me down in peace to rest,  
Dreaming such dreams as have no past,  
All framed and formed in one eternal cast.

Ye days of bubbling blood and passions strong,  
Where are ye gone? Why do we feel so weak?  
Why do we shut the windows and the doors?  
Why do we fear so much the chilling blast?  
Why do we venture not to go outside  
And meet the children romping in the fields?  
What's wrong with us? The world is all astir,  
And naught is changed. Still ring the merry bells,  
And still the roses blow, perfuming life;  
And still the birds do carol as of yore.  
Behold, the lovers there! as arm in arm  
They walk and build their castles in the air.  
Life is a round of pleasure to them all;  
But we, grown old, we mar the harmony,  
And see the clouds gathering in the sky.  
Alas, for us! that we should fear and fall;  
That we should thus anticipate the night,  
And not enjoy His light, while yet we may.

In the light of day I find my way, and restful there  
abide.

Night holds me in her arms, yet keeps me still  
unsatisfied;

For Night has charms that quiver through her  
slender witching frame,

And feed my famished soul like a woodland fairy  
lost to shame.

From doubt, despair and dread,  
And dreams of fever bred,  
With perfect calm to wed—  
How great a change is Death!

From certainty of pain,  
And worldly hopes all vain,  
And madness born in brain—  
How great a change is Death!

And tho' Death leaves a scar,  
And keeps us far, afar,  
May be that from some distant star  
The dear ones watch from where they are.

Not wiser grown, with this and that, and all  
The mystic lore that piléd lies, or here  
Or there, neath old Nineveh's ancient wall,  
Or else entomb'd in Babylon, where clear  
Th' Euphrates flowed. Nor Egypt, first-born guide,  
Could aught reveal; nor India, once the home  
Of high-soul'd thought, where *rishis* lived and died  
Still gazing, reading still the star-lit dome.  
Not wiser grown! The earth and heaven the  
same.

The mighty winds still blow; the waters roll.  
With all his strivings, weak and blind and tame,  
Man fails to grasp the e'er-eluding whole.

The Spirit of a boundless mystery  
Still broods upon his soul in agony.

Baby ! with your flower-full hands  
Clasp the heaven and reach it here ;  
Reach it here, O reach it here —  
When May is merry, the sky is clear.

And pluck the secrets one by one,  
And reach them here, O reach them here.  
Then with your open, morning voice,  
When May is merry, make them clear,  
That we so taught may view the dawn  
Ere wakeful May is doomed and gone,  
Ere flowers fade and June is on.

Baby, in your sleep,  
Say, what golden dreams  
Do creep?

Baby dear, it seems  
You with stars oft play  
In dreams.

Have a care! awake,  
All these stars may slip,  
And break.

Baby, dream your dreams  
Till the golden sun  
Here beams.

It was a budding bright garden walk,  
With jasmines here and geraniums there;  
And little Miss Mary came running to me,  
And 'twas all a dream, and a dream was she!

I played on the reed, she danced on the green,  
For we were old friends, Miss Mary and I;  
And I played on my reed a garden air,  
And little Miss Mary tripped here and there.

The garden was smiling for April's love,  
And the birds they were singing the coming May;  
And dear Miss Mary was crowning her head  
With the wreath that I wreathed, the crown that  
I made.

And we were such friends, such garden friends,  
That the flowers they smiled, the birds loud sang;  
And I laughed and she danced, my Mary and I,  
Both happy and light neath the April sky,

And the gurgling laugh of the garden brook  
Mixed with the mirth of Miss Mary's peal;  
And I felt as a babe in the light of her eye—  
And 'twas all a dream, my Mary and I!

I who had no fear to freely speak my mind,  
I who foremost stood, and never lagged behind,  
I who thought it mean to pause and calculate,  
I who joined each losing cause with heart elate,  
I who backed the poor and weak with ready zeal,  
I who answered to each fallen man's appeal,

Now brood upon each passing mystery,  
And deeper look than I was wont to see;  
For everywhere I find a latent hint  
That gives to all I view a sombre tint.  
How Nature works and moulds from youth to age,  
And how she cools our blood at every stage!

Give me the blue, give me the sky;  
No matter, I die,  
Give me the blue, the blue broad sky.

Give me the sky, give me the blue;  
Let me embrace yon vaster view.  
How can I stay, how can I fail,  
Alive with the passion of an ancient tale?

The blue is my home, the blue of the sky;  
And God lives in blue and never says, Die.  
To the blue I fly. There me He will fold  
In the light of His love, the lustre of His gold.

Ah to the blue, the blue broad sky!  
Farewell! we shall meet by and by.  
The earth is a clog, and I find it so —  
Farewell to all! to the blue I go.

Some of us are here,  
And some of us are there —  
With all my hope, belief,  
Maybe they are no where.

And therein lies thy sting,  
Thou old unfeeling Death.  
What difference ought else would make,  
Where now they draw their breath?

For when I cry, I cry  
Not moved by selfish thought;  
Despite my hope, I feel  
The dead dear ones are naught.

They're lost both here and there;  
They're lost in every way;  
They're lost, save in our thoughts  
Which struggle night and day.

Dreams, the Stars, and the Sea,  
My soul these apprehends:  
These are no shadows to me.

The Sea with its daily roar,  
Rocking the world to life,  
In silence as of yore ;

The million Stars serene,  
Flooding the midnight sky,  
Fairer than any queen ;

And dreams of a rarer hue,  
Hinting love to me,  
As maidens do —  
All these I apprehend  
Better than solid land.

These trees were yogis yearning to be free,  
Who were transformed and fixed in ecstasy.  
I look on them with awe and reverence,  
As silent souls of mighty excellence.  
I wonder what they dream these million years  
On this high hill, untouched by mortal fears.  
May be they've cut the tangled web of Time,  
And dazed still see the trembling Spark sublime  
Which, as it giddy turns, throws out its light,  
Through which the teeming stars receive their  
sight.

But we who see the shadows flitting by,  
What can we know? And yet, before I die,  
I would they'd soften for a while their stare,  
And the secrets of the Universe declare.

Time was when everything I saw was new:  
Even the lustrous drops of morning dew,  
Enamoured of the roses and their hue;  
And all the golden stars that set aflame  
The heavens at night, to spread abroad their  
fame.

But now, alas! each thing is old and grey  
And lacks the lustre of my youthful day.  
They are not changed, I know; 'tis I, grown old,  
Have lost the fire of youth. So feeling cold,  
With eyes grown dim, not even the purest gold  
Delights me now as in the days of yore:  
On me old age has closed its iron door.

When all the trees are green,  
Do we not waste our time  
In reading ancient verse,  
No matter how sublime ?

When all the girls are young  
And wear their sweetest smile,  
Is it not folly then,  
For you to show your bile ?

When roars the sea in joy,  
And you are on the shore,  
Can you resist to dance  
And raise a wild uproar ?

When all the stars look bright  
And she, your girl, is by,  
Is it a madness, say,  
Old babblers to defy ?

How can it be? How can it be?  
How can a tear draw Him to me?  
How can a cry perturb His peace?  
How can He stop, how can He cease  
From mighty works, to help, caress,  
And all my little wrongs redress?

And yet in spite of this belief,  
I've asked and got from Him relief.  
It seems there's nothing great or small:  
He answers each sincere call;  
His healing love is everywhere—  
In us alone there lives despair.

Do I know all your names,  
And all you think and do?  
O Trees! amid a busy life  
I have forgotten you.

Yet now again I'm here  
And see you standing high,  
And wonder why I live in town,  
And there at last should die

When I can spend my days  
Beneath your glorious shade,  
And dream with you, in soft repose,  
How He this woodland made.

When I was young I used to sit alone,  
    And dream of stars;  
But now I'm old, I ruminate how age  
    Each venture mars,  
And how it cripples all my well-planned schemes,  
    Without a tear,  
And rudely pushes me from off the stage,  
    I still hold dear.

E'en He, the Lord of all,  
He felt the urgent call  
    Of hot desire ;  
And so created He  
All things, both you and me,  
    From His own fire.

What wonder then if we,  
His wandering progeny,  
    Likewise here feel  
The same desperate urge,  
Until we too emerge  
    From dark . . . and kneel  
To know the mystery  
Wherein Creation flowers free.

When all around seem hard to please,  
Before my eyes are stately trees;  
Washed by the rain they look so green,  
I think their souls are no less clean.  
So I, a lonely man, rejoice  
That in a world quite dreary otherwise,  
There still remain these joyous trees  
With which my soul can form new ties.

In the heart of a rose snugly I lie;  
Born and reborn, each time I die.  
A drop of sweet dew, my hours are few,  
Yet the splendour of life I calmly view.  
I care not to know why it should be so;  
But so it happens—I come and go.  
The song of the lark as it soars up high  
Stirs in my soul a kindred cry;  
And the breath of the morn breathes joy untold  
As I sleep in the rose's fragrant fold.  
This is my life, though frailsome it be,  
A day or two of ecstasy.

O where were you, my Soul,  
Before you came to me,  
Tripping down the stairs  
Of Heavens' mystery?

Were you a floating song,  
A spark of ecstasy,  
A kiss from star to star,  
Flung far in sympathy?

Or say, were you a wish  
Of some old yogi's dream,  
Who sought beatitude  
In truly knowing Him?

— 70 —

What wonders at thy feet await,  
What beauty crowns thy golden head,  
What light embalms thy tiny soul,  
O child, for the weeping world remade  
From out His love, entire, whole —  
What beauty crowns thy golden head,  
What light embalms thy tiny soul!

Our work is done :  
The youths are coming to the fore.  
God grant the rising sun  
May greet them as he greeted us of yore !  
And may the light of ancient days  
Make bright their ways,  
And ope before their eager eye  
The vision of a brighter sky,  
And may they work and strive and thrive,  
And keep their banners high,  
Contented still in peace of mind,  
Yet in the race falling no whit behind.

How can I live, and I so young,  
Without my love by me ?  
How can I live, and I so young,  
Unless we both agree  
That she and I should lovers be,  
Both bounden and both free ?

How can we live, and we so young,  
Unless we both agree  
That we should dream in wonder locked,  
And wake in ecstasy ?  
So that we know what is to know —  
Both bounden and both free.

Now and then an ancient house  
Looks on me with human eyes,  
And speaks to me in accents such  
As I can fully realise.

And then I feel it has a soul;  
It too is worried with some thought,  
And feels the ache of growing age,  
Now discontented with its lot.

So there I stop and muse a while,  
And wonder at our silent tie;  
Then pass it by, but not without  
A deep-drawn sigh.

What are thy dreams, O tiny child?  
Are they of flowers waving bright,  
Of fairy children tripping light,  
Of April morn and May delight,  
Of something that is wondrous wild?

Remember O! each lovely dream  
Of flowers, fairies, running stream;  
Remember these and tell them each  
When we begin to ask and teach.  
So we too, old and wise, may know  
What glories we forget as we do grow.

On thee He has bestowed  
Rare loveliness and joy,  
And guarded thee with spines,  
Lest anyone destroy,  
O Rose, thy royal hue,  
Sweet with the touch of dew.

Art thou then more dear to Him  
Than we who constant dream,  
And seek the love-light in His eyes  
In the lightening skies?

Ah me! full well I know  
Life is a random throw.  
Some taste life's sweets each where,  
And some a staggering blow.  
Some sail the placid sea,  
Complacent and serene;  
Some toss about in blank despair,  
And end in misery.

For some the sky is blue,  
The fields are ever green;  
Some get more than their due,  
With hopes still more to win.

Some drudge half-starved and dumb,  
And stagger all the way;  
Some daily stroll and hum,  
Careless of what might come.

O Thou! who knowest all,  
And knowest what to do,  
Why dost thou bless a few,  
And why the rest appal?

Elusive child!  
Your wayward ways and antics wild  
Bring daily to our heart such joy  
As naught can equal or destroy.  
Say then, what visions are your own  
That are to grown-ups quite unknown?  
What glory do you dream and see,  
What light from heaven, what ecstasy,  
That peals of laughter constant ring—  
O cherub, without a cherub's wing?

Toddl'ing on thy tiny feet,  
What joy thou flingest everywhere!  
Happy is the home, my child,  
Where He bestows a gift so rare.

All the day they see thee smile,  
All the day thy laughter hear;  
It seems thy birth has brought to them  
A different light and atmosphere.

For now the sunshine of the Spring  
Is ever present in the place  
Where thou hast chosen to preside,  
With all that childhood there portrays.

Thou art no more; and yet a good deal more.  
Each day is full of some old memories;  
And now a month has passed they still increase,  
Although things seem to move just as before.

And yet there is a gap, a vacancy,  
Which we all daily feel as morning breaks,  
As also when a casual thought betakes  
Itself to thee in what we meet and see.

E'en thus the dreary Present brings the Past;  
And tho' we know it well this could not last,  
It works and acts with such insidious skill  
That it revives what should be buried deep;  
So that when we expect it least, we feel  
Like one lost on a far-off lonely steep.

I like to hear the thunder sound  
    And crack the sky;  
I love to see the lightning flash  
    Illume — then die.

The glory of the night in blaze  
    Transports me high,  
And stirs in me the deeps  
    That silent lie.

And then I feel I am in touch  
    With mysteries  
That otherwise elude and fly;  
    For they are His.

O Earth! howso I cling to thee,  
What can I do when comes to me  
The ukase to depart?

O Earth! hast thou a friendly heart  
To stand by me and wage a war  
Against Death's ancient tyranny,  
So that I could be free,  
And others too who fear his treachery?

O Earth! what do I hear?  
Is it thy groan of helplessness and fear?

Night speaking to herself, alone on sea,  
Met there the raging Gale.  
“What’s that you mutter low?” the Gale inquired;  
“What is the harrowing tale?”

And answered Night, “I felt so hungry, O!  
But now the feast is spread;  
A lot of youthful souls shall meet my arms,  
And me in darkness wed.”

The Gale raged louder still, incensed that Night  
Should calculate her gain;  
And lo! Night swallowed up with relish keen  
Those by the Gale were slain.

The old-time rhymer in his simple way  
Doth still convey  
A rapture to my heart,  
Naught else can otherwise impart.  
Hence still I love  
His artless tune,  
Far, far, above  
What frigid words commune.

When first the dead shall ope their eyes,  
What will they see?

The hope that here lies unfulfilled,  
Will not this be  
Like Spring that hounds the Winter bare  
In sudden glee?

Or will the past be as a dream  
Dreamed and forgot,  
While other visions will supervene,  
Uncalled, unsought,  
And work their wonders in a way  
Transcending thought?

Whatever be in store for them,  
No gloom or care  
Shall mar their clear vision, or  
Their faith impair;  
For they shall move from star to star,  
In fragrant air.

The sense of tears in mortal things  
Engenders joy in lyric cry;  
And as the Poet wildly sings  
That joy his soul doth glorify.  
Then wonders he what stirs him so  
To sing in raptures songs of woe.

Little he knew what Love can do.  
Hence trembling much about his fate,  
He stood before Love's gate.  
But Love was there to lend a hand,  
To cheer and make him understand,  
Even a sinner can retrieve  
His dreadful past, and once more live  
An honest soul, a trusty friend . . . .  
And lo! he oped his heavy eyes  
In consternation and surprise.

Love's flame in its august old shrine,  
Enthroned in beauty that's divine,  
Is tended still with pure delight  
And, despite Time's treacherous flight,  
Throbs in unison with human heart and blood,  
And fills, as with a rising flood,  
The souls of all true devotees,  
Beyond the surge of raging seas.

All things here change ;  
And beauty loses fight  
If once she fails  
To use her might.

For naught avails  
To win the proffered prize,  
If once your eyes  
Their lustre lose,  
And love there dies.

Who is behind this plot, this treachery?  
And why can't we, creation's lords, be free  
From its old lust and shameful tyranny?  
And why should we each time suffer defeat?  
Is it a dream that ever thus can cheat,  
Tho' we are men who claim a high degree  
Of skill to check and thwart our enemy?  
Reveal, reveal, O God! say what is it  
That makes this villain, Death, such a misfit?

The hypocrites from him recede,  
And even his former friends revile;  
Yet in a corner buds a rose,  
And greets him daily with a smile.  
And he, thus touched, sees deeper far,  
Confined within the prison bar.

When shall we come into our heritage,  
Lost long ago?  
When shall we get at least our rightful wage,  
So that we too might know  
A fraction of the blessings that you win  
Thro' conjoint efforts, made by us and you.  
Speak, O speak! is it a heinous sin  
To ask for even this?  
Let us partake, before it is too late,  
Before you miss  
The proffered chance, and still refuse to view  
Our miseries. Believe, we cannot wait;  
Our souls are restless; we are hungry too.  
Bestir yourselves, Masters! and something do.

O sweet is life while it endures.  
The aged too it still allures !  
And that is why with aching knee,  
Onward we all would like to go  
Rather than be ever free.  
O sweet is life, as I too know,  
Whose weary thoughts now linger low,  
Without the impulse of a song ;  
For tho' they talk of right or wrong,  
'Tis better far to live and will  
Than sink beneath, and lie there still.

Not so proud a pace ;  
Not such haughty ways.

Once your youth is fled,  
Beauty will not wait ;  
It will leave you lone,  
Fallen from high state.

O my dear and own !  
Not so proud a pace ;  
Not such haughty ways

All else be seeming so ;  
Death is what it doth seem.  
Beyond we do not know,  
Though each one has some whim :  
Some higher still will go ;  
Some here return again.  
But still the truth is plain,  
Let fancies flit in vain :  
The bird sure leaves its nest —  
Death is no idle jest.

When first I came to know  
Elsewhere I now must go,  
Leaving my home in heaven  
And the angels seven,  
Did I not feel alone  
Thus on my own resources thrown?

Did I not cry and shout,  
Not knowing what was about,  
Not knowing that on this Earth  
They were awaiting a new birth?

And now when I shall back return,  
Will they be strangers all?  
Or will they once again shall yearn  
For me, and me recall  
As one who having sojourned here  
Was back to his old sphere?

Whatever be my fate,  
Great wonders still for me await.

Though I am daily growing weak and old,  
And constant feel the trembling touch of Time,  
Yet is my ardent heart both young and bold—  
More so, when soothed I breathe in rural clime.  
O then the light of youthful star-lit eyes  
Conveys its cunning touch and sorcery,  
Just as the coloured patterns in the skies  
Evoke in me a deeper harmony;  
And so in joy I live and earn my wage,  
Free from the helplessness of broken age.

— 97 —

When I was vigorous and young,  
The stars burnt brilliant in the sky.  
Who heeds them now?  
Both young and old now pass them by.

Not mine shall be the sorrow  
For what I lose to-morrow.  
So if I pass away,  
Think not I've lost a day;  
For I shall nothing know,  
Nothing if once I go.  
And yet I too may flower,  
There in His secret bower,  
As a dream in the wreath He weaves  
Of what He ultimately gives.

There's much I would forget but thy great love :  
God's own dear touch won't claim a place above.  
Let no one frown and say that I blaspheme —  
Smiles there on God's own face a radiant beam.

— 100 —

Pluck not, my child, these pretty flowers  
That greet you on your way;  
They have their merry morning hours  
As you have yours for play.

Who can compare  
With the child that grows?  
Not the jasmine and the rose,  
Not the lily with its pose.  
Sure nothing can compare,  
Seek we here or seek we there,  
And so we worship it,  
And thank the Maker for His gift.

— 102 —

It is His way to bless true love ;  
So He contrives, right through our eyes,  
To pour the passion of His soul  
In us, until it fructifies,  
And thus we get what we yearn for—  
A baby at our door.

Do thou in dreams of mine abide,  
And softly in my ear confide  
The secrets of the grave.  
I promise thee not to betray  
A single word of what you say,  
E'en though my soul it save.

His love for us shall intercede  
When dire is our need.  
It will not fail us in the least;  
It will dispel the mist  
And show us clear His beaming light,  
So that the howling night  
Shall flee afar and leave us where  
No fears shall be, no care.  
Thus soothed we shall forget the past,  
And, faithful till the last,  
Survey the glories of the sky  
And live — no more to die,  
But still to live and still to know  
His love, as we do grow.

“Bestow,” I begged; He answered, “Take,  
But not for this or that one’s sake.  
I offer free, and take thou free;  
For herein lies the mystery  
Which love alone can clearly teach,  
And thro’ its touch the stragglers reach.”

To some Thy bounties flow ;  
Some get a staggering blow ;  
Ah, that it should be so !  
Yet they who better know,  
They raise their hands and pray,  
Knowing Thou won't betray  
The stragglers on their way,  
But give Thy loving hand  
Their miseries to end ;  
Then land them safely where  
There is no want or care,  
No famine or despair.

O why anticipate, my friend,  
The ills of age,  
The wars you mayn't be called upon to wage?  
Why write the songs of sorrow,  
When brings to you each morrow  
Recurring hope and bliss,  
The bliss which age perhaps might miss?

Throw far away your doubts,  
And sing the jubilant songs of joy:  
Yours is the time to suck the sweets,  
Though age might bring annoy.

If it were only possible  
We'd wrest all secrets from his heart,  
And know what use he makes  
Of loved ones sleeping neath the grass.  
But, alas!  
Without our leave he comes and takes,  
And bids us part  
With what we treasure in our heart.  
All this he does, the tyrant Death,  
And we quite helpless, hold our breath.

After the worry of the day,  
If children fail to charm thy eye,  
Not e'en the golden evening sky  
Can thy depression least allay;  
For they are friends of old and young,  
And where they are there's always May.

If naught can bring thee rest or joy,  
Go seek those children's company.  
There's in their laughing eyes such grace  
That it will surely make thee free  
To see them dance away in glee.  
For they are better far than angels are—  
Each one on earth a tiny twinkling star!

When young the stars oft winked at me,  
And beckoned me from far;  
They have their eyes now elsewhere!  
O fickle thus all lovers are—  
Or woman frail or twinkling star.

Love is the life of gods  
To whom we sing our lauds.

What else in heaven they do?  
— We work and pray and sue;  
Their heaven is always blue.

For they regale each night  
In love's soft purple light,  
And with their god-like might,  
No ennui e'er they know,  
Or any sort of woe;  
While we still pray and sue,  
Yet hardly get our due!

Love is the life of gods,  
Who punish us with rods!

Yes, you are dead and out of sight;  
But daily for your soul he prays.  
There to the living sea he goes,  
And pours out there a parent's woes,  
And in the fading evening light  
Remembers what were once his days  
When you were by,  
And glorious was the sea and sky.

In youth is pleasure, as we know,  
But age brings curses, O!  
And yet we long to live and see  
With new birth crowned each tree,  
And peeping buds in joy declare:  
“Now throw away your care!  
All aches and pains will pass away;  
For now is coming May.”  
And then we hope once more again  
Bright May will banish pain,  
And bring us health and bring us joy;  
And we too shall enjoy,  
Tho’ we are old, and we are weak —  
Since lusty May is coming quick.

When, at last, I go,  
What will you do,  
My chosen few?

In dusty nooks,  
Where no one looks,  
There shall you rest —  
And that's, perhaps, the best —  
Unless someone,  
Under the sun,  
With love as rare  
As mine, takes you under his care,  
My chosen few.

He patted the child in his nurse's arm:  
" May you, my boy, grow old and wise,  
In a world where there is much to charm,  
And much more still to tantalize.  
And tho' I now remember it not,  
Darling, I too was once like you;  
And surely, someone then patted me,  
As now I do."

Earth changes every day and every night,  
Yet who has heard it grumble or complain?  
While we who fear such change thro' growing age,  
How we complain and daily fret in vain!

Elusive Time now takes me back and points

To me the wreckages of past;

Now gently beckons me to look ahead

And witness there a stately mast.

The Past and Future show strange views to me,

And leave me dreaming of Life's mystery.

Some say that in the grave below  
Undisturbed we can dream,  
While earth and heaven pass away  
And perish like a whim.

Some say that in the grave below  
We gather strength to sing;  
But few assert that being dead  
We heavenward do wing.

O Death! hast thou no cosy nest  
Where thou canst ever sleep and rest,  
That thou intrudest here and there  
And snatches oft the very best?

Ah! roamest thou eternally  
To make each life a mockery;  
For day and night still pryest thou,  
A menace to the young and free.















