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POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH

INTRODUCTION

THE aim of this Anthology is to give a survey of twenty years of post-War poetry in England. No poem is included that was published before the end of the War. Apart from two or three who are self-excluded, the only omissions are such poets as Hilaire Belloc and Sir Henry Newbolt, the bulk of whose work is pre-War.

Prophecy is always dangerous, but when the main contribution to poetry of the last two decades is assessed, it may be found that the period under review is primarily lyrical ; many fine narrative and satirical poems have been written, but they, excepting Masfield's narrative poems, are not read in this age of "sick hurry and divided aims," of tabloid news and the slick ready-made entertainment of the cinema and the wireless.

The Elizabethan age made wide discoveries in the physical and geographical world, and the Renaissance enlarged the fields of man's speculations ; but the twentieth century has made more momentous discoveries, and physical science has opened immenser realms to man's imagination, not all of them with potentialities for the greater happiness of mankind. These discoveries have stimulated man's mind, but some of them have been so shattering that man has not yet been able to re-orientate himself. Hence, while some minds feel that

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more feel that man's conquest of his environment is insignificant compared with man's failure to conquer himself. Science and war have disillusioned mankind ; not that way lie self-conquest, self-realization, and a better world, a world free from injustice, inequality and intolerance, a world where man can "ensue peace." So, though this age may be mainly lyrical, many of the lyrics are songs of disillusionment or of fearful hope, the song of the bird in the storm or under the shadow of the storm past or the storm impending. But the lyric is not less lyrical for being wrung from despair.

Other poets turn, as poets have always done, to the immutable things of Nature—to flowers, birds, and animals. It is when one considers these poets in the light of contemporary events that one sees them as escapists—like the poets of Eldorado,

“ Out to seek an Age of Gold
Beyond the Spanish Main.”

Thomas Hardy may be uttering an essential truth when he declares,

“ Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass :
Yet these will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass,”

but it is little help and consolation to a fearful generation, and it is no solution or palliative of the difficulty. But whether a poet should offer a solution to contemporary problems is another and a debatable matter.

After the first exhilaration of the War, expressed in such poems as Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier* and Julian Grenfell's *Into Battle*, where the spirit of the poet is identified with the spirit of his country, and Thomas Hardy's *Men Who March Away* with its—

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“ Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.
Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away,”

came the realization of the bestiality and horror and waste and futility of war. Then followed cynicism, expressed in terms of derision of the earlier facile idealism, and with it the knowledge that the only good that ever arises from war is comradeship.

“ Was there love once ? I have forgotten her.
Was there grief once ? Grief yet is mine.
Other loves I have, men rough, but men who stir
More grief, more joy, than love of thee and thine.

Faces cheerful, full of whimsical mirth,
Lined by the wind, burned by the sun ;
Bodies enraptured by the abounding earth,
As whose children we are brethren : one.”

(*Fulfilment* : Robert Nichols)

Foremost among the War poets was Siegfried Sassoon, one of the first to turn his disillusionment into poetry and one whose poetry marked with perfect candour the changes in the combatant's outlook on war. Later came Isaac Rosenberg, who, a promising poet before the War, had his tortured imagination further roughened and fevered by the War ; and Wilfred Owen, who would have developed into a fine poet even without the emotional impulse of the War. For Wilfred Owen, “ the poetry is in the pity ” :

“ The truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.”

And from this sorrow at the incalculable slaughter of youth and the turmoil around him, from “ the

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miseries of the world that would not let him rest,"
the poet turned to examine his own mind :

" Here is no cause to mourn
. . . save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also ; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world."

To express this searing of the emotions, this clear-sighted waking from illusion, the poets felt the smooth words and rhythms of traditional verse to be incongruous and inadequate. They needed a freer verse. As did Walt Whitman, they moulded a form that made use of the vocabulary of everyday speech and the cadences and rhythms of prose.

" Grant peace ;
For a space let there be no roar
Of wheels and voices, no din
Of steel and stone and fire.
Let us cleanse ourselves from the sweat and dirt,
Let us be hushed, let us breathe
The cold sterile wind from colourless space."
(*Retreat* : Richard Aldington)

Of the traditionalists some were strongly touched by the War and its generated emotions and reactions : for example, Edmund Blunden (especially in his prose *Undertones of War*, where are fused his two subjects, the War and the English countryside, and which reveals the sensitive poet's matured reflections on the War, as does Siegfried Sassoon's trilogy, *Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*) ; others were touched less ; still others not at all, especially W. H. Davies, who is a law unto himself.

The post-War generation has fallen into two camps : it has either pursued tradition as if the War had not

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occurred, or it has had its whole outlook modified by what happened from 1914 to 1918.

In 1922 T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* epitomized and gave a new impetus to the mood generated by the War—if anything so permeated by death and aridity can give impetus. The cynical bitterness and disillusioned disorientation caused by the War received their full expression in this sterile, but dynamically sterile, poem, so freed from any passage suggestive of consolation. In broken-down cadences was echoed the breaking-down of all life's decencies, standards, conventions, and beliefs. No philosophy of courage was availing; the only philosophy that was not meaningless was "defeatism." Echoing traditional passages of romantic and classical poetry in order to strengthen its pages and to emphasize the contrast between the spacious days of old and these barren times, *The Waste Land* probed through shams and exposed the dry bones of reality as seen by a Jeremiah. The poem also seemed to exploit the new interest in psychology and Freudian theories of the subconscious.

From this cadaver, risen, as it were, from the tomb, has issued a new class of poets. The earliest imitators of T. S. Eliot copied many of his falsities and negations, chief among them being Stephen Spender, C. Day Lewis, W. H. Auden, and Louis MacNeice. But these four show signs of winning to a new positive philosophy, a faith in the mind of man and the greatness of the human spirit. In rhythms based on the experiments of T. S. Eliot and Gerard Manley Hopkins, and even, in the first two of them, of Robert Bridges, and by means of an intrusive symbolism and vocabulary that are often private and personal, technical and elliptical, and using few of the conventions of traditional verse, at least three of these four are formulating a philosophy akin to Communism.

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Their verse is abundant in innuendoes, half-hints, bizarre symbolism, recondite images. But the basis of it is "man's inhumanity to man" and, offshoot of the War, the essential and eternal brotherhood of man. But the content of a poem, whether idealistic or Communistic, does not make poetry by itself, and it is often debated whether these four, judged in bulk, are poets in the true sense of the word.

Apart from them all, yet susceptible to current changes, stands he who is generally acclaimed as the greatest poet of the day—W. B. Yeats. In his early days he was a pure melodist, a poet of half tones and half lights, of the Celtic Twilight, of *The Fiddler of Dooney* and *Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*. He was then the poet of Irish myth and folk-lore, though influenced by his fellow poets of the Rhymers' Club, especially Ernest Dowson and Arthur Symons, who were under the latest French influences. The post-War Yeats has something of John Donne in him, and is a philosopher influenced by the mysticism of the Hindus (as is the latest James Stephens, and "A.E." from the beginning). His poetry is weighted with thought, as well as with symbolism. The melody is still there, but now it is not quite such a prominent part of the design.

A few poets remain, individualists, keeping a little apart from contemporary life in its aspects of flux and change, untouched by movements and schools of thought. Their main study is themselves or things absolute, and the political world around them is meaningless save in so far as it impinges on them. They include Roy Campbell, of the flamboyant line; W. H. Davies, the spontaneous and sensitive child of nature, singing as unselfconsciously as an Elizabethan; Walter de la Mare, who, with his wavering rhythms and magical cadences, wanders like a visitor from another country among the beautiful sights of this

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world ; A. E. Housman, the ironic stoic ; D. H. Lawrence, in revolt against machines and standardization, and upholding the holiness of man's appetites and instincts ; Hugh MacDiarmid, the leader of the Gaelic revival in Scotland ; Herbert Palmer, the twentieth-century Isaiah ; Ruth Pitter, in the classic tradition, intellectual, restrained, but spiritual and full of colour ; Lady Margaret Sackville, Landorian epigrammist, creating images of gem-like clarity ; Anna Wickham, the vehement feminist.

Here they are—a hundred poets, diversified as man's moods, but all alike bearing witness to the variety and interest of the life of the senses and the spirit.

MAURICE WOLLMAN

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WORDS

OH words, Oh words, and shall you rule
The world? What is it but the tongue
That doth proclaim a man a fool,
So that his best songs go unsung,
So that his dreams are sent to school
And all die young.

There pass the trav'ling dreams, and these
My soul adores—my words condemn—
Oh, I would fall upon my knees
To kiss their golden garments' hem, 10
Yet words do lie in wait to seize
And murder them.

To-night the swinging stars shall plumb
The silence of the sky. And herds
Of plumèd winds like huntsmen come
To haunt with dreams the restless birds.
To-night the moon shall strike you dumb,
Oh words, Oh words. . . .

STELLA BENSON

SECOND INTERLUDE

SPOKEN BEFORE "ARDVORLICH'S WIFE"

THESE are not visions of romance,
Nor dreams (begotten by longing and chance) 20

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Of a richer life, a fairer place
Than this fair earth : they seek to trace
In true and violent things that were done
In years long over, by men long gone
The impulses of spirits like ours,
The sources of forgotten powers
Engendered by the wild earth's touch
And lost to us by overmuch
Contact and crowding and modishness
That blunt our apprehensiveness. 10

We tell of things that once were news,
Such as the press now soils for its use ;
But we look beyond the accident
Of a thing that happened for the thing it meant.
To mimic the murder or the kiss
Tells us nothing of what it is
In the significance of the heart.
We need to meditate apart
From the imitation of something seen—
To ask of deeds that once have been 20
What they were destined to come to mean
In the spirits of those who suffered and did,
And in our spirits in which are hid
The same dim forces, which all inherit.

Which of us has seen a spirit ?
We have no belief to bring us near it :
Yet in the world of poetry
We can admit such things may be,
And in the possibility
Receive enlarged experience 30
Of beauty and the interior sense
Of man's most intimate dealing with man.

Here, moving in the little span
Of this loved stage, you shall not see

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The day's externe reality.
Poetry wills that you shall hear
The implications of all fear,
All terror and joy, that shall express
In earnest grievous life no less
Than an inmost essence of loveliness.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

UNCONQUERABLE

HOMER and Milton blind, Beethoven deaf,
And Collins mad and Savage famishing,
And Marlowe huddled into a forgotten grave,
And Chatterton—and sorrows everywhere 10
Loading the witless air :

Calamity and Death hunt the same wood,
One strikes if other misses ; neither rests,
Making of Eden daily desolation,
A bloody amphitheatre of Earth,
Cinders of April turf.

The enemies of Poetry, the fierce thieves
Of beauty's and creation's miracle,
Twin Cæsars ravaging their captived Kingdoms,
For envy slaying what else lives undecaying, 20
Or maiming without slaying. . . .

If there were worser ills than Death to dream of,
Worse pangs than hunger's and the numbèd sense,
If even the long foul solitude of the grave
Ended not other griefs of other men,
And other fears ; even then

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Poetry needs must breathe through lips of man
Desperate defiance and immortal courage,
Needs must hope bicker in his burning eye,
And Death and hunger, madness and despite,
Sink sullenly from sight.

JOHN FREEMAN

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BEFORE "THE SINGING SANDS"

IN the beginning was the Word : then began man's
thought.

And the word is with God, by it He is still creating.
The power that is in man's utterance man has lately
forgot.

Thought has denied the part that sound has in thought's
shaping.

In the young years of the earth man desired to con-
template

His defeats and victories, joys and agonies, beginning
and ending :

To act these on a stage was a holy ceremony, an aid
To the worship of the Forces that maintain us,
stricken or contented.

By this ennobling art man's bodily lovelinesses
(That are uncontrolled accidents, either to inspire or
hurt)

Were seen, like those of the soul, to be every man's
possession

In the influence of the Word, and of movement born
of the Word.

PROLOGUE

First in the Word, and last in the Word was their
belief :
Colour and form and tone were theirs, but in its
service ;
Sound was theirs, but sound enriched by the texture
of speech
And, governed by ordered rhythm of speech, to music
turning.

To such a lovely labour we would have dedicated
Our days and selves, our passion and all we can
achieve—
To present honourable beings or shattered beings
and degraded
Seeming worthy alike in the enlargement brought by
the deed.

But the ancient theatre of adoration and beauty
revered,
In which the fate of man was faced and borne and
softened
By watching its devout imitation, its law made clear,
Is taken away from us who would serve it, and from
our longing.

We and our kind have been homeless, we have not
known what to do
To bring to expression the impulses hidden in us by
our fathers,
Till a poet and master of power in his power, in the
hour and mood
Of creating, has seen a purpose for us : to the Word
he has hearkened.

The Word is in him for guide. It is the living source
Of the old august celebration which is despised and
over :

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

We assemble here in its name, he has unlocked and
restored

This house of the Word for us, new and yet not other.

Now to the old great art of the drama of moving
speech,

And of movement looking to speech for grace and
divine intention,

We address ourselves in your presence : in satisfying
our need

We would speak to a need in you for our ancient way
with no ending.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

I HAVE HEARD VOICES UNDER THE EARLY STARS

I HAVE heard voices under the early stars
Where, among hills, the cold roads glimmer white,—
Voices of shadows passing, each to the other,
Clear in the airy stillness 10
Call their familiar greeting and Good-night.

Were they not come as guests to a remembered room,
Those words, surrounded by the befriending silence ?
But words, ah, words—who can tell what they are
made of,
Or how inscrutably shaped to colour and bloom ?
Sharp odours they breathe, and bitter and sweet and
strong,
Born from exultation, endurance, and desire ;
Flying from mind to mind, to bud a thought again,
Spring, and in endless birth their wizard power prolong.

There was a voice on a sun-shafted stair 20
That sang ; I heard it singing :

I HAVE HEARD VOICES

The very trees seemed listening to their roots
Out in the sunshine, and like drops in light
The words rained on the grasses greenly springing.

Ah, lovely living words, what have we done to you ?
Each infant thought a soul exulting to be born
Into a body, a breath breathed from the lips, a
word
Dancing, tingling, pulsing, a body fresh as dew !
Once in the bonds of use manacled and confined
How have we made you labour, thinned from beauty
and strength,
Dulled with our dullness, starved to the apathy of a
serf, 10
Outcast in streets, abandoned foundlings of the mind !

Yet once, in stillness of night's stillest hour,
Words from the page I read
Rose like a spirit to embrace my spirit.
Their radiant secret shook me : earth was new ;
And I throbbed, like one wakened from the dead.

O swift words, words like flames, proud as a victor's
eye,
Words armed and terrible, storming the heart, sending
Waves of love, and fear, and accusation over
Peoples,—kindling, changing ! Alas, but can you
die, 20
Hardened to wither round the thought wherein you
grew ?
Become as the blind leading with slow shuffle the
blind,
Heavy like senseless stones the savage kneels before ?
O shamed, O victim words, what have we done to
you ?

LAURENCE BINYON

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

THE BIRTHRIGHT

*THE miracle of our land's speech—so known
And long received, none marvel when 'tis shown !*

We have such wealth as Rome at her most pride
Had not or (having) scattered not so wide ;
Nor with such arrant prodigality
Beneath her any pagan's foot let lie. . . .
Lo ! Diamond that cost some half their days
To find and t'other half to bring to blaze :
Rubies of every heat, wherethrough we scan
The fiercer and more fiery heart of man : 10
Emerald that with the uplifted billow vies,
And Sapphires evening remembered skies :
Pearl perfect, as immortal tears must show,
Bred, in deep waters, of a piercing woe ;
And tender Turkis, so with charms y-writ,
Of woven gold, Time dares not bite on it.
Thereafter, in all manners worked and set,
Jade, coral, amber, crystal, ivories, jet,—
Showing no more than various fancies, yet,
Each a Life's token or Love's amulet. . . . 20
Which things, through timeless arrogance of use,
We neither guard nor garner, but abuse ;
So that our scholars—nay, our children—fling
In sport or jest treasure to arm a King ;
And the gross crowd, at feast or market, hold
Traffic perforce with dust of gems and gold !

RUDYARD KIPLING

ON MEMORY

No tribe has built a shrine to Memory
Nor carved an image dreaming in her name

ON MEMORY

Above the rocks, where twice a day the sea
May pour a music at her altar flame ;
An image curled to listen like a shell
Rounded with sound upon the ocean brim,
A subtle coil of coral that can tell
The echoes floating in the seafall dim.

Yet she is eldest of the goddesses.
She makes our flesh ring softly, like a bell
Shaken by passing feet. No words can tell
Why man should find her murmuring so sweet. 10

In the coiled ashy nerveways of the brain
This goddess has her shrine.
Sound dies in breaking waves of pain
Before she takes her echoes thin and fine ;
And the eye's gateway sifts all coloured light,
The nostril's gateway separates all fume,
Before those echoes, born on the mind-spume,
Come to the altar where she dwells, smiling in ordered
night.

She doth undo her delicate sweet door
With subtle keys. No human sound can tell 20
Of that fresh light and ancient sorrow-bell
Tolling remotely as we tread her floor
(Mazed yet as simple as a ball of dew)
Among the wandering echoes blowing through.

She harvests for the autumn of the mind,
Bringing all home beneath an evening light,
Storing it gently at the open doors
That cannot shut against the coming night ;
There, in the lingering day
The mind may pause, and play 30
A little while with toys of garnered touch and sight.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

The dragon and the daisy of Atlantis
She hath drawn in : and still the harvest goes
Between the eager doorways of the senses,
And she weaves it into echoes as it flows.
Her curved powers rise and go like light
Into the future, dark devouring bright,
Like half a rainbow lost
In cloud and half by woods and cities crossed.
She knows the future, with its death of warmth and light.

But when this comes, and all the stars are dead, 10
Hidden behind the drifting star-mote sheet,
When final snowstorms cover palaces
And men creep down within steel cliffs for heat
But cannot cheat the old,
Returned and creeping cold—
Then Memory shall undo her doorway dim and sweet,
And wait alone within man's freezing brain
While all his story closes like a flower ;
Faithfully garnering his final pain
With courage, godhead, beauty, in their hour ; 20
And for the final time
His soul shall hear her bell of sorrow chime
And know her light of freshness and her calming power.

No more, oh nevermore
(So tolls the bell across the slowly darkening floor)
No more, O harvest fine
Your wave shall wash the doorway of the shrine
In the last man's cold skull, the goddess Past,
Shut in by dark, by furry frost, shall sleep at last.

STELLA GIBBONS

✓ MERU

CIVILIZATION is hooped together, brought 30
Under a rule, under the semblance of peace

CIVILIZATION

By manifold illusion ; but man's life is thought,
And he, despite his terror, cannot cease
Ravening through century after century,
Ravening, raging, and uprooting that he may come
Into the desolation of reality :
Egypt and Greece good-bye, and good-bye, Rome !
Hermits upon Mount Meru or Everest,
Caverned in night under the drifted snow,
Or where that snow and winter's dreadful blast
Beat down upon their naked bodies, know 10
That day brings round the night, that before dawn
His glory and his monuments are gone.

W. B. YEATS

CIVILIZATION

I WEIGH the piles of Babylon
Against a morning bird's shrill cry,
When the dawn-wind flutes alone
Under the pearl-blue misty sky.

I weigh the mounds of confined coin,
Buried in vaults, bases of towers,
Against the gossamer threads that join
The petals of pale Autumn flowers. 20

The brazen and the iron house
Are rooted amid skulls and bones,
But the Sun's joy sings luminous,
And dances through his crystal zones.

Beyond the hills of Corylande
The violet evening weaves a star
That burns immaculate and bland—
What ant-hills Time's dark cities are !
WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

CONTINUITY

BANKERS at war
That gold may rule
Dim lives that should be free,
Space circular,
And Faith gone cool,
And Time a mystery. . . .
But from some old and plain delights
No puzzles shall me sever :
Love's act could speak
When Greek met Greek ; 10
Some joys are good for ever.

Rose in her bower
Of thorn and leaf
Growing through history
Smells for an hour
As sweet as brief
And for eternity.
Fishing in history's murmuring tarn
Whence echo ceases never,
With Thought for cast 20
I'll catch the past
And stay by it for ever.

Roses were old
And wit was salt
With Ulysses at sea
Long before gold
Made thought a fault
Heavy in mine and me.
Serene by rose and murmuring tarn
No banking laws can sever, 30
My senses share
The warm Greek air
Sweet once, and so for ever.

STELLA GIBBONS

IN THE CAVES OF AUVERGNE

HERALDRY

Who curbed the lion long ago
And penned him in this towering field
And reared him wingless in the sky ?
And quenched the dragon's burning eye,
Chaining him here to make a show,
The faithful guardian of the shield ?

A fabulous wave far back in Time
Flung these calm trophies to this shore
That looks out on a different sea.
These relics of a buried war, 10
Empty as shape and cold as rhyme,
Gaze now on fabulous wars to be.

So well the storm must have fulfilled
Its task of perfect overthrow
That this new world to them must seem
Irrecognizably the same,
And looking from the flag and shield
They see the self-same road they know.

Here now heraldic watch them ride
This path far up the mountain-side 20
And backward never cast a look ;
Ignorant that the dragon died
Long since and that the mountain shook
When the great lion was crucified.

EDWIN MUIR

IN THE CAVES OF AUVERGNE

He carved the red deer and the bull
Upon the smooth cave rock,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Returned from war with belly full,
And scarred with many a knock,
He carved the red deer and the bull
Upon the smooth cave rock.

The stars flew by the cave's wide door,
The clouds wild trumpets blew,
Trees rose in wild dreams from the floor,
Flowers with dream faces grew
Up to the sky, and softly hung
Golden and white and blue. 10

The woman ground her heap of corn,
Her heart a guarded fire ;
The wind played in his trembling soul
Like a hand upon a lyre,
The wind drew faintly on the stone
Symbols of his desire :

The red deer of the forests dark,
Whose antlers cut the sky,
That vanishes into the mirk
And like a dream flits by, 20
And by an arrow slain at last
Is but the wind's dark body.

The bull that stands in marshy lakes
As motionless and still
As a dark rock jutting from a plain
Without a tree or hill,
The bull that is the sign of life,
Its sombre, phallic will.

And from the dead, white eyes of them
The wind springs up anew, 30
It blows upon the trembling heart,
And bull and deer renew

ROMAN HEADSTONE

Their flitting life in the dim past
When that dead Hunter drew.

I sit beside him in the night,
And, fingering his red stone,
I chase through endless forests dark
Seeking that thing unknown,
That which is not red deer or bull,
But which by them was shown :

By those stiff shapes in which he drew
His soul's exalted cry, 10
When flying down the forest dark
He slew and knew not why,
When he was filled with song, and strength
Flowed to him from the sky.

The wind blows from red deer and bull,
The clouds wild trumpets blare,
Trees rise in wild dreams from the earth,
Flowers with dream faces stare—
O, Hunter, your own shadow stands
Within your forest lair ! 20

W. J. TURNER

ROMAN HEADSTONE

JULIA, carissima Julia,
Strange how you hold a beauty for me now,
As though no sixteen centuries had dimmed your
charm,
When only crusted stones remain to trace
Your exile life, here where I seek not balm
To heal such wounds of body as once scarred your lord,
But silence for my mind and peace for hands
That they may cease their restless artifice
And stretch at ease in tendrils and grass strands !

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Julia, carissima Julia,
Strange that no woman bears the likeness now
That you have set upon my tablet mind,
Not in obliterated text as here
In perpetuum ave carved I find,
A valediction lichenised and broken !
Beyond what ultimate are you ? I ponder.
In perpetuum ave atque vale.

Julia, where do you wander ?

JOHN GAWSWORTH

A SAXON SONG

Tools with the comely names, 10
Mattock and scythe and spade,
Couth and bitter as flames,
Clean, and bowed in the blade,—
A man and his tools make a man and his trade.

Breadth of the English shires,
Hummock and kame and mead,
Tang of the reeking byres,
Land of the English breed,—
A man and his land make a man and his creed.

Leisurely flocks and herds, 20
Cool-eyed cattle that come
Mildly to wonted words,
Swine that in orchards roam,—
A man and his beasts make a man and his home.

Children sturdy and flaxen
Shouting in brotherly strife,
Like the land they are Saxon,
Sons of a man and his wife,—
For a man and his loves make a man and his life.

VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST

THE GOTHIC ROSE

THE LAST ABBOT OF GLOUCESTER

THE Middle Ages sleep in alabaster
A delicate fine sleep. They never knew
The irreparable hell of that disaster,
That broke with hammers Heaven's fragile blue.

Yea, crowned and robed and silent he abides,
Last of the Romans, and that ivory calm,
Beneath whose wings august the minster-sides
Trembled like virgins to the perfect Psalm.

Yea, it is gone with him, yea, it returns not ;
The gilt proud sanctuaries are dust, the high 10
Steam of the violet fragrant frankincense burns not :
All gone ; it was too beautiful to die.

It was too beautiful to live ; the world
Ne'er rotted it with her slow-creeping hells :
Men shall not see the Vision crowned and pearly,
When Jerusalem blossomed in the noon-tide bells !

WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE

THE GOTHIC ROSE

AMID the blue smoke of gem-glassed chapels
You shall find Me, the white five-wounded Flower,
The Rose of Sarras. Yea, the moths have eaten,
And fretted the gold cloths of the Duke of York, 20
And lost is the scarlet cloak of the Cardinal Beaufort ;
Tapers are quenched and rods of silver broken,
Where once King Richard dined beneath the leopards:
But think you that any beautifulness is wasted,
With which Mine angels have blessed the blue-eyed
English,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Twining into stone an obscure dream of Heaven,
A crown of flinty spines about the Rose,
A slim flame blessing the Coronal of Thorns ?
And York is for ever the White Rose of Mary,
And Lancaster is dipt in the Precious Blood,
Though the high shrine that was built by the king of
the Romans

Be down at Hayles, and the abbey of Saint Mary
Be shattered now in three-towered Eboracum.

WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE

ALAS ! POOR QUEEN

SHE was skilled in music and the dance
And the old arts of love 10
At the court of the poisoned rose
And the perfumed glove,
And gave her beautiful hand
To the pale Dauphin
A triple crown to win—
And she loved little dogs
And parrots
And red-legged partridges
And the golden fishes of the Duc de Guise
And a pigeon with a blue ruff 20
She had from Monsieur d'Elbœuf.

Master John Knox was no friend to her ;
She spoke to him soft and kind,
Her honeyed words were Satan's lure
The unwary soul to bind.
“ Good sir, doth a lissome shape
And a comely face
Offend your God His Grace
Whose Wisdom maketh these
Golden fishes of the Duc de Guise ? ” 30

OPENING CHORUS

She rode through Liddesdale with a song ;
“ Ye streams sae wondrous strang,
Oh, mak’ me a wrack as I come back
But spare me as I gang.”
While a hill-bird cried and cried
Like a spirit lost
By the grey storm-wind tost.

Consider the way she had to go,
Think of the hungry snare,
The net she herself had woven, 10
Aware or unaware,
Of the dancing feet grown still,
The blinded eyes—
Queens should be cold and wise,
And she loved little things,
 Parrots,
 And red-legged partridges,
And the golden fishes of the Duc de Guise,
And the pigeon with the blue ruff
She had from Monsieur d’Elbœuf. 20

MARION ANGUS

OPENING CHORUS

FOR A NOAH PLAY

STAND with us here
On the south-western cliff of the great Jurassic escarp-
 ment,
A common for rare wood-larks, a place where wind-
 pumps veer
Constant as your necessity, drinking that reservoir
Free to all : invisible the veins it is life to open,
The lake only your death may look on.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Stand with us now and hear
Only the wood-lark's irrelevant song, the shepherd's
whistle,
And seven-league footfall of wind striding through dry
grasses.
For as yet the torrents to come are but a roaring in the
ear
Of prophets, or the raving fancy of one delirious with
thirst.
Pacific the sky, a delight for shepherds and hikers ;
though a seer
Might behold over the cities to north and north-east
spreading
A stain, clouds not white, the coaling-up of wrath.

Stand with us here.
Feel underfoot the linked vertebrae of your land 10
Stretching north to the far fells, the head of rivers.
Prehistory sleeps below in many beds. Before
Man set a value on his thoughts or made a prison for fear,
These hills were grown up, to the sky happily married,
That now are wrinkled with the rains of more than
mortal years,
Old enough to remember the first birds and the great
reptiles.

Stand with us. Far and near
See history unfolded in the scrolled hills, her secret
Indelible as hieroglyphs stamped on their stone, clear
To the eye but hard for you to interpret. The green
barrows 20
Of Britons. The high camps where Roman eagles
kept watch
On Wales unblinking. The manors, cosy in combes.
Dear
The dewponds, and still black the circles of Jubilee
bonfires.

OPENING CHORUS

Stand with us here,
The past at your feet, your fingers nervous like the
lark's wing
To be up and doing. And now, for to-day's sun goes
higher,
Let your hearts grow warm as wax to take note of the
future :
Let him step forward, if one there be wise to weather,
From behaviour of martens or altered tones of the
smooth-voiced weir
Able to learn and to beware.

Now look away
Into the valley and deep into the unregarded
Sweat that has made it fertile. That curve of plough-
land see 10
As a graph of history, and hear what the young corn
tries to say.
Read between those furrows a desperate appeal
Of men who had no other voice.

Now look beyond, this way.
Behold a different growth : set in ancient wood,
Grafted on to the valley stock, a new life—the Town.
Consider the uniform foliage of roofs, hiding decay
And rain-fearing pests and all the diversities of loving :
Wind-screens dazzled by the sun : strip-built roads
that stray
Out like suckers to drain the country ; and routes
familiar 20
To night-expresses, the fire-crest flyers, migrating
south.

Now come away
From these self-flattering heights, and like a diver
plunging
Into his own image, enter the Town. You pass

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Nurseries that splash crude colour over war's pale
griefs,
Nurturing seed for a soil shallow as soldiers' graves :
Huts, the butt-ends of a war, Honour's sloven retreat ;
And ashamed asphalt where the naked put on in-
difference—to-day
Willowherb grows in the cracks, the idiot flower of
exhaustion.

Now closer look this way.
Do not be deceived by the two-faced traffic signs, the
expensive
Flood-lit smile of civic beauties, the fountains that
play
In limelight like spoilt children. See rather how the
old
Their wintering ghosts creep out on gusts of warm
nostalgia :
The young, their run-ahead hope barred by Death's
one-way
Approach : and the good like madmen preaching to
locked faces.

Look not away—
Though ugly this, it is your foundation and your
predicament.
Behind the image of glass, the mirage of brick, you
await
A judgment and a choice. But listen for that which
is still
Less than the whisper of clouds assembling, of arrows
falling.
But look to him we will call Noah, figure of your
fate,
Him understand, him obey.

C. DAY LEWIS

FROM "DEVIL'S DYKE"

THE LANE

YEARS and years and man's thoughtful foot,
Drip and guttering rains and mute
Shrinkage of snows, and shaggy-hoofed
Horse have sunk this lane tree-roofed
Now patched with blossoming elder,
Wayfaring-tree and guelder ;
Lane that eases the sharp-scarped hill
Winding the slope with leisurely will.

Foot of Briton, formal Roman,
Saxon and Dane and Sussex yeoman
Have delved it deep as river-bed,
Till I walk wading to my head
 In air so close and hot
 And by the wind forgot,
It seems to me that in this place
The earth is breathing on my face.

Here I loiter a lost hour,
Listen to bird, look on a flower.
What will be left when I am gone ?
A trodden root, a loosened stone
And by the blackthorn caught
Some gossamery thought
Of thankfulness to those dead bones
That knit hills closer than loose stones.

ANDREW YOUNG

FROM "DEVIL'S DYKE"

(Satan leaning against the lintel of the open door, looks out toward the pell-mell disruption of his army.)

COME back out of the day, my people !
It is the hour of moths, and conquer'd men.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Come back, limp wings !
The first bird sings
With round chest puff'd against the sky,
And smally blinks at the beginning breeze.
Would we were closer to such things,—
The innocent concerns of bird and feather ;
Forbidden heaven, must we forfeit these ?
But come, my failures, let us go together
Out of the light, let us away ;
Justly we are expell'd ; this day-shone earth 10
Mocks at our cunning, and we stay
But to provide unseemly mirth
For traitors, wild with holiday.
Look at the dew,
The slowly-focussing land,
The opening fields in rustic smock of grey ;
Oh, they will never understand
How near to death they lay,
But in dull simpleness their journal tasks renew.
There is no fear in Nature ; though I spin 20
Each night a different net of sin,
Foreknowing my defeat
She sleeps, then wakes
And shakes
The dun gauze of her loveliness
Over the morning, sieving out the stars,
Then hastens to repeat
The tedious conventions of rebuilding day.
Come, my poor lions, gather up your hate ;
Out of the world with you, 30
Into the pit with you, out of the sun :—
Self-foil'd, there's the disgrace, we are self-foil'd.
One of our number, working our own plan !
Henceforth content yourselves with single combat,
For know, mankind can only be assailed
Through the weak individual, soul by soul,
Stolen, devour'd ; his mind, collectively,

GO THE LONG WAY, THE LONG WAY HOME

Cannot be scratch'd—
Witness the strange futility of war.
Death was our ally long ago,
I say long, long ago, for now we are betrayed.
Our murders have not still'd the thrush,
Nor to the white hills brought decay ;
Our hope had swollen to a cloud,
But now it weeps, and rains away.
Come back into the dark, my soldiers.

CHRISTOPHER HASSALL

GO THE LONG WAY, THE LONG WAY HOME

Go the long way, the long way home. 10
Over this gate and that lean, at the three lanes'
meeting delay,
Look well at that field of hay, eye closely the drilled
loam,
Finger the springing corn, count every petal
Of the hedge rose and the guelder rose.
Under the bosom of the blossomed elder stay,
Delay, linger, browse deep on all this green and all
this growing,
Slant cheek to the sweet air, with deep greeting survey
The full-leaved boughs like water flowing,
The corn-waves hurrying uphill as the wind blows.
Look overhead into the blue, look round, 20
Watch this bird fly and that bird settle,
With slow treading and sure greet the assuring ground:
Go slowly, for slowly goes this midsummer day,
And this is the last time you will come this way.

Go the long way, the long way home.
Aye, and when you've arrived and the sighing gate
falls to,
Go slowly, go heedfully your garden through.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Breathe in the spice pinks, turn face up to the soft
Ripe rose that wags aloft,
Nod to the old rake, rub thumb along the spade's edge,
Measure the potato hills and the tall bean rows,
Pledge cherry and currant bush, pledge lily and lily
leaf spear
And rebel the nettles waving along the hedge ;
Look closely, look well,
See how your garden grows,
Ponder yourself even into the secret cell
Of this year's honeycomb : 10
Look long, for long has this been yours and long been
dear,
And this is the last time you will stand here.

Go the long way, the long way home.
Though you are weary, hasten not ghost to ground,
Tarry this last hour out, take your last look round,
Greet finally the earth, greet leaf and root and stock.
Stand in your last hour poised, like the dandelion clock—
Frail ghost of the gaudy little-thing that you were—
Stand up, O homing phantom, stand up intact and
declare
The goodness of earth the greatest good you found, 20
Ere the wind jolts you, and you vanish like the foam.
SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

THE CORNER STONE

STERILE these stones
By time in ruin laid.
Yet many a creeping thing
Its haven has made
In these least crannies, where falls
Dark's dew, and noonday shade.

THE SNARE

The claw of the tender bird
Finds lodgment here ;
Dye-winged butterflies poise ;
Emmet and beetle steer
Their busy course ; the bee
Drones, laden, near.

Their myriad-mirrored eyes
Great day reflect.
By their exquisite farings
Is this granite specked ;
Is trodden to infinite dust ;
By gnawing lichens decked.

10

Toward what eventual dream
Sleeps its cold on,
When into ultimate dark
These lives shall be gone,
And even of man not a shadow remain
Of all he has done ?

WALTER DE LA MARE



THE SNARE

FAR away and long ago
This trouble at my heart began :
Ere Eden perished like a flower,
Or Eve had shed her tears an hour,
Or Adam knew himself a man,
In every leaf of every tree
Beauty had set a snare for me.

20

Far away and long ago
Her loveliest song began to chime.
Bright Hector fell, and at the stroke
Ten thousand hearts like mine awoke

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

In every age and every clime.
She stood bestriding Time and Space
Amid the stars, and lit the rose
With scent and colour, and she chose
My country for a dwelling place,
And set a snare in every tree
Awaiting me, awaiting me !

EDWARD DAVISON

THE VAGRANT SCHOLAR

THE golden sunshine crept upon my book
And changed the pages to diminishing fields,
The words to bushes where the thrushes sang. 10
I wandered back where I had been before,
Page after page, enchanted with the grass,
The flowering hedgerow and the scented branch,
The rills with voice of linnets, and the birds
With music as of hidden waters tumbling
Through stones and mosses into secret pools.
I looked upon the wisest words again
And saw the sowers at their ancient work
Along the furrows gleaming through the clay.
The seed of thought, and seed for human bread,
Eternal beauty and immediate need, 21
Were scattered there before my hungry eyes
In that inspired confusion of the sun.

RICHARD CHURCH

BROOK NOSTALGIA

OH, I would go away and fire my eyes,
Get a new brain, and woo the gravel flies,
And make a glow-worm pillow of my sighs !

FAMILIARITY

Forget, forget—where alder roots cling wet.
Where water runs I can a year forget.
The empty brain grows pleasuring ears and eyes.

See, watch, suspend. Just that, and gild my nose,
Mindless as hern or otter, in the sun's throes,
Where rock-moss drips, where water gleams and flows.

Grey is my heart, and grey the face of thee.
These chopine heels set not the pace for me.
Where winds walk warily I cannot see.

But by the ivied bridge the dun-flies gleam ; 10
The brown trout turns his speckles to the stream,
And small stones stun my dark street-troubled dream.

Only where water runs I can forget.
Fins, little wings and pebbles pearl Time's net.
What sometimes was, came oft, and shall be yet.

HERBERT PALMER

FAMILIARITY

DANCE not your spectral dance at me ;
I know you well !

Along this lane there lives no tree
But I can tell.

I know each fall and rise and twist ; 20
You—why, a wildflower in the mist,
The moon, the mist.

Sound not that long alarm, gray tower,
I know you well ;

This is your habit at this hour,
You and your bell !

If once, I heard a hundred times
Through evening's ambuscade your chimes—
Dark tower, your chimes.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Enforce not that no-meaning so,
Familiar stream ;
Whether you tune it high or low,
I know your theme ;
A proud-fed but a puny rill,
A meadow brook, poured quick and shrill—
Alone and shrill.

Sprawl not so monster-like, blind mist ;
I know not “ seems ” ;
I am too old a realist 10
To take sea-dreams
From you, or think a great white Whale
Floats through our hawthorn-scented vale—
This foam-cold vale.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

EVENING

THE burden of these beauties is too much.
They strain my passion for mortality.
They ring my world with falsity of touch
As fingers can the far dim rims of sea.
They overcrowd with their reality
The small and casual places of the brain, 20
Till what is edged most passionately with me
Is lost too easily for errant pain.

Empty the sack of this too varied sky
Of sails and lights and children. Let there lie
A vacant vastness of expectancy
As in the mind before the last dreams free.
Let doom be everywhere the sign of grace,
And each thing stand for death in its true place.

L. AARONSON

Rapallo

CLOSE AKIN MY WARRIORS ARE

THE GOLDEN SPIDER IN THE MIND

HERE's a bent tree :
Hated and loved it, have I, years in turn ;
Cool fan-flake roof and dappled root in fern,
What do they say for me ?
This only : here
I stood alone, once, in a vanished year,
Imagining
A most vain thing.

Mark Folly well :
But her divine disguising 10
Who may tell ?
What golden spider in the mind, devising
How he should fling his unseen filmy rope,
Chanced here to shed
On trembling beech-twigg tender overhead
His skein of airy hope ?
On that day I
Lay leafy-lost, sun-spel,
Till greenlight fled
And the sky whispered, and a web was spun 20
Never to be undone.

Bent tree,
O hatred part of me,
By what an iron cord you bind me now
Fast to your bitter bough !

GEOFFREY SCOTT

CLOSE AKIN MY WARRIORS ARE

CLOSE akin my warriors are ;
From the humming bird that swings

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

All a-quiver, like a star
In a radiance of quick wings—
—To the tiger mountains, stricken
 Into stillness by a breaking
 Curse ; behold, they stir and quicken,
 Gods shall tremble at their waking. . . .

Lo, my warriors, close akin,
An impregnable alliance.

*Drop thy sword and thy defiance,
Bow thy head and let them in.*

10

STELLA BENSON

THEY WILL COME BACK

THEY will come back, the quiet days,
Rosemary, myrtle, lavender,
And spring returning, leaf by leaf,
To the quiet heart, the single mind.

Not with the slow septennial change,
The steady pulse, or the iron tide ;
With the curfew dove, the quiet bell,
It will not come, the harvest-home.

They will not come, the gentian days,
With the cornfield white in summer, or the long 20
Provençal noon, but with the autumnal storm,
Strikes in the north, and random shots.

They will come back, the strenuous days,
On Peteret Ridge, the Eagle Nest,
And cross the gap of trivial time
Sure as the wind, the night express.

Through bombs and teargas, through the acute
Machine-gun rattling answer, strict
Self-knowledge, dark rebellion, death

PLOUGHING

In the shuttered streets, through barricades,
And doors flung open in the wind,
They will come back.

MICHAEL ROBERTS

PLOUGHING

GRUDGING of delight were those winter hours,
And spring a gleam of flower in the mind.
The earth had staled with bearing, but again
The loth soil must be mellowed with dung
And opened for new sowing.

When the east
Had drained the last twilight from the low places
And birds shook the stillness loose, the ploughman 10
Had scored his second groove on the field.
The horses muscled forward without the whip,
But quick to answer to his mastery
Who weighed the give of soil and rip of share,
Trusting the nervous needle of his instinct
To point the furrows straight.

At the turn
He eased the team about, doled the angle
To keep the just span of the parallels ;
And as he swung the blade spilt fire. The clods
Were glossy as they stumbled off and settled 20
To wait until the tight weather should break them.

Each time he neared I hailed him, but the wind
Or whirlpool of black wings weaving round him
Broke up my words. Waiting his return
I did not guess how he would one day rise
Heroic into my imagination,
Treading the land his fathers knew, plying

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Forward, back, a living shuttle, drawing
Closer the invisible stuff of tradition.

But so I see him now, against wide morning,
He and his plough, a moving statuary
Of toil, an image of the will of our race,
Familiar since man had no other annals
Than those written on a scroll of land.

STANLEY SNAITH

ORCHARDS

SOMETIMES in apple country you may see
A ghostly orchard standing all in white,
Aisles of white trees, white branches, in the green, 10
On some still day when the year hangs between
Winter and spring, and heaven is full of light.
And rising from the ground pale clouds of smoke
Float through the trees and hang upon the air,
Trailing their wisps of blue like a swelled cloak
From the round cheeks of breezes. But though fair
To him who leans upon the gate to stare
And muse "How delicate in spring they be,
That mobled blossom and that wimpled tree,"
There is a purpose in the cloudy aisles 20
That took no thought of beauty for its care.
For here's the beauty of all country miles,
Their rolling pattern and their space :
That there's a reason for each changing square,
Here sleeping fallow, there a meadow mown,
All to their use ranged different each year,
The shaven grass, the gold, the brindled roan,
Not in some search for empty grace,
But fine through service and intent sincere.

VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST

NIGHT RHAPSODY

NIGHT RHAPSODY

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
When over all there reigns the ultimate spell
Of complete silence, darkness absolute,
To feel the world, tilted on axle-tree,
In slow gyration, with no sensible sound,
Unless to ears of unimagined beings,
Resident incorporeal or stretched
In vigilance of ecstasy among
Ethereal paths and the celestial maze,
The rumour of our onward course now brings 10
A steady rustle, as of some strange ship
Darkling with soundless sail all set and amply filled
By volume of an ever-constant air,
At fullest night, through seas for ever calm,
Swept lovely and unknown for ever on.

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Embalmed in darkness watchful, sweet, and still,
As is the brain's mood flattered by the swim
Of currents circumvolvent in the void,
To lie quite still and to become aware 20
Of the dim light cast by nocturnal skies
On a dim earth beyond the window-ledge,
To brood apart in calm and joy awhile
Until the spirit sinks and scarcely knows
Whether self is, or if self only is,
For ever. . . .

How beautiful to wake at night,
Within the room grown strange, and still, and sweet,
And live a century while in the dark
The dripping wheel of silence slowly turns, 30
To watch the window open on the night,
A dewy silent deep where nothing stirs,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

And, lying thus, to feel dilate within
The press, the conflict, and the heavy pulse
Of incommunicable sad ecstasy,
Growing until the body seems outstretched
In perfect crucifixion on the arms
Of a cross pointing from last void to void,
While the heart dies to a mere midway spark.

All happiness thou holdest, happy night,
For such as lie awake and feel dissolved
The peaceful spice of darkness and the cool 10
Breath hither blown from the ethereal flowers
That mist thy fields ! O happy, happy wounds,
Conditioned by existence in humanity,
That have such powers to heal them !—slow sweet sighs
Torn from the bosom, silent wails, the birth
Of such long-treasured tears as pain his eyes,
Who, waking, hears the divine solitudes
Of midnight with ineffable purport charged.

How beautiful it is to wake at night,
Another night, in darkness yet more still, 20
Save when the myriad leaves on full-fledged boughs,
Filled rather by the perfumes' wandering flood
Than by dispensation of the still sweet air,
Shall from the furthest utter silences
In glimmering secrecy have gathered up
An host of whisperings and scattered sighs,
To loose at last a sound as of the plunge
And lapsing seethe of some Pacific wave,
Which, risen from the star-thronged outer troughs,
Rolls in to wreath with circling foam away 30
The flutter of the golden moths that haunt
The star's one glimmer daggered on wet sands.

So beautiful it is to wake at night !
Imagination, loudening with the surf

DUST

Of the midsummer wind among the boughs,
Gathers my spirit from the haunts remote
Of faintest silence and the shades of sleep,
To bear me on the summit of her wave
Beyond known shores, beyond the mortal edge
Of thought terrestrial, to hold me poised
Above the frontiers of infinity,
To which in the full reflux of the wave
Come soon I must, bubble of solving foam,
Borne to those other shores—now never mine 10
Save for a hovering instant, short as this
Which now sustains me ere I be drawn back—
To learn again, and wholly learn, I trust,
How beautiful it is to wake at night.

ROBERT NICHOLS

DUST

THE sower trudged and swung, leaning
On the sinewy wind, and as he tossed,
The grain over the chapped furrows
Puffed from his hand like dust.

Dragged and driven, the upland trees
Went in a confusion of leaf ; 20
Even the pedantic oaks
Bowed to that shadowy mischief.

Last autumn's skeletons ran, or lifted
Like a flirt of sparrows off the ground.
I dizzied at that tangled flight
And the woodland's surf-sound.

O Conqueror, stand awhile in the hills
Before scattering my life, I said,
With the dead leaves and the quick dust
And the thoughts out of my head. 30

STANLEY SNAITH

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

WOOD AND HILL

NOWHERE is one alone
And in the closed covert least,
But to small eye of bird or beast
He will be known ;
To-day it was for me
A squirrel that embraced a tree
Turning a small head round ;
A hare too that ran up the hill,
To his short forelegs level ground,
And with tall ears stood still. 10
But it was birds I could not see
And larks that tried to stand on air
That made of wood and hill a market-square.
ANDREW YOUNG

THE SNOWDROP

Now—now, as low I stooped, thought I,
I will see what this snowdrop *is* ;
So shall I put much argument by,
And solve a lifetime's mysteries.

A northern wind had frozen the grass ;
Its blades were hoar with crystal rime,
Aglint like light-dissecting glass 20
At beam of morning prime.

From hidden bulb the flower reared up
Its angled, slender, cold, dark stem,
Whence dangled an inverted cup
For tri-leaved diadem.

THE GUEST

Beneath these ice-pure sepals lay
A triplet of green-pencilled snow,
Which in the chill-aired gloom of day
 Stirred softly to and fro.

Mind fixed, but else made vacant, I,
Lost to my body, called my soul
To don that frail solemnity,
 Its inmost self my goal.

And though in vain—no mortal mind
Across that threshold yet hath fared !— 10
In this collusion I divined
 Some consciousness we shared.

Strange roads—while suns, a myriad, set—
Had led us through infinity ;
And where they crossed, there then had met
 Not two of us, but three.

WALTER DE LA MARE

THE GUEST

It seemed our guest was late or lost—
Although the oakshoot thrust
Through the stale snow its leafy crucifix
The winter's spell to break. 20
The pulse of water was hushed, the stems and sticks
Were rasped with frost
And bracken hunchbacked with snow's weight.
No flower-knot burst on the stiff sedge.
It seemed our ghost was lost or late,
Till watching how
That goldfinch battled to a bough,
A muscular twig trailed from its beak,
I knew that Spring was faithful to her pledge.

STANLEY SNAITH

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

A HOLLOW ELM

WHAT hast thou not withstood ;
 Tempest-despising tree,
 Whose bloat and riven wood
 Gapes now so hollowly,
 What rains have beaten thee through many years,
 What snows from off thy boughs have dripped like tears?

Calmly thou standest now
 Upon thy sunny mound ;
 The first spring breezes flow
 Past with sweet dizzy sound ;
 Yet on thy pollard top the branches few
 Stand stiffly out, disdain to murmur too.

The children at thy foot
Open new-lighted eyes
Where on gnarled bark and root
The soft, warm sunshine lies—
Dost thou upon thine ancient sides resent
The touch of youth, quick and impermanent ?

These at the beck of spring
Live in the moment still ; 20
Thy boughs unquivering,
Remembering winter's chill
And many other winters past and gone,
Are mocked, not cheated, by the transient sun.

Hast thou so much withstood,
Dumb and unmoving tree,
That now thy hollow wood
Stiffens disdainfully
Against the soft spring airs and soft spring rain,
Knowing too well that winter comes again? 30

EDWARD SHANKS

INVITATION TO CAST OUT CARE

A SWITCH CUT IN APRIL

THIS thin elastic stick was plucked
From gradual growing in a hedge,
Where early mist awakened leaf,
And late damp hands with spiral stroke
Smoothed slumber from the weighted day,
While flowers drooped with colours furled.

I cut quick circles with the stick :
It whistles in the April air
An eager song, a bugle call,
A signal for the running feet, 10
For rising flyer flashing sun,
And windy tree with surging crest.

This pliant wood like expert whip
Snaps action in its voice, commands
A quiver from the sloth, achieves
A jerk in buds ; with stinging lash
A spring of movement in the stiff
And sleeping limbs of winter land.

Stick plucked and peeled, companions lost,
Torn from its rooted stock : I hold 20
Elate and lithe within my hand
Winged answer to the wings' impulse,
The calyx breaking into flame,
The crystal cast into the light.

CLIFFORD DYMENT

INVITATION TO CAST OUT CARE

COME, stoop between the hazel leaves,
And thrust the chestnut branch aside ;
The tangle that the woodland weaves
Forgets the waiting world outside ;

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

So in this cave of watered green
Cool all thy thoughts by care opprest,
And let the sunlight fall between
The leaves, and dapple on thy breast.

The green of spring, the youngest green,
That chequers all the leafy ride,
Shall mesh the lattice of the screen
Where fact and myth for thee divide ;
The bluebells drifting through the trees,
A silent brook along the brook, 10
Shall flow for thee as fantasies
Escaped from reason's record-book.

The hyacinths between the trees'
Young green shall spread as blue as smoke,
Wider than dreams or prophecies
Around the static, rooted oak ;
The little owl that cries by night
Shall voice thine intimate despair,
And barking foxes shall invite
Thy sorrow to the listening air ; 20

Wild influences that invoke
Communion with a mind perplexed,
And all the secrecies uncloak
That crouch within a spirit vext,
And seek no ease in spoken words,
But in the chapel of the wood
Take wing among the boughs with birds
To find a perfect brotherhood.

VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST

HIGH NOON

FROM high endeavour
On his bright wings, 30
The wasp is fallen
To evil things.

PRAYER FOR RAIN

From deep searching
In honey'd cup
The bee is flown
Elsewhere to sup.

An apple dropped
By a grey trunk—
A wasp wastrel,
And a bee drunk !

HAMISH MACLAREN

TORMENTED BY THE WORLD

TORMENTED by the world, the wise man said :
A rock stands in the sea, 10
And white the anger of water ceaselessly
Thunders upon that stubborn head.
And I heard the noise of the water say
“ Not now, not now, but soon enough, ay, soon
Thou shalt be worn away.”
And I perceived the soul within the stone,
And that it answered the corroding tide :
“ Do all thou canst : have me in thy power :
Destroy this body while it is thy hour.
Shall I be injured, I undignified, 20
Who am my soul, and in my soul
Am God.”—Whereat the whole
Insult of the storming sea
In one confounding cataract replied,
“ What else, thou fool, thinkest thou I may be ? ”

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

PRAYER FOR RAIN

O God, make it rain !
Loose the soft silver passion of the rain !

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Send swiftly from above
This clear token of Thy love.
Make it rain !

Deck the bushes and the trees
With the tassels of the rain.
Make the brooks pound to the seas
And the earth shine young again.
God of passion, send the rain !

Oh, restore our ancient worth
With Thy rain ! 10
Ease the heartache of the earth ;
Sap the grain.
Fill the valleys and the dales
With Thy silver slanting gales ;
And through England and wild Wales
Send the rain !

Lord, restore us to Thy will
With the rain !
Soak the valley, drench the hill,
Drown the stain ; 20
Smite the mountain's withered hips,
Wash the rouge from sunset's lips,
Fill the sky with singing ships.
Send the rain !

HERBERT PALMER

THE LANE

SOME day, I think, there will be people enough
In Froxfield to pick all the blackberries
Out of the hedges of Green Lane, the straight
Broad lane where now September hides herself
In bracken and blackberry, harebell and dwarf gorse

MORTALITY

To-day, where yesterday a hundred sheep
Were nibbling, halcyon bells shake to the sway
Of waters that no vessel ever sailed. . . .

It is a kind of spring : the chaffinch tries
His song. For heat it is like summer too.
This might be winter's quiet. While the glint
Of hollics dark in the swollen hedges lasts—
One mile—and those bells ring, little I know
Or heed if time be still the same, until
The land ends and once more all is the same. 10

EDWARD THOMAS

MORTALITY

As I went down the field that day
Where late was stooked my silver hay,
It seemed a day of death ;
My spaniel nosing on the ground
Set up a rabbit whose lithe bound
Was checked with choking breath.

In loam was then withheld my foot ;
I looked to see some saucy root,
But lo ! it was a mole,
His naked feet upraised in air, 20
No sign of murderer anywhere,
Nor yet of burrow-hole.

Death was not done with me that day
Where late had stood my silver hay,
For, last, I found a bird ;
And, oh, though its quick voice was still,
Loud, loud upon that stricken hill,
“ Mortality,” I heard.

JOHN GAWSWORTH

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

A WINDY DAY

THIS wind brings all dead things to life,
Branches that lash the air like whips
And dead leaves rolling in a hurry
Or peering in a rabbits' bury
Or trying to push down a tree ;
Gates that fly open to the wind
And close again behind,
And fields that are a flowing sea
And make the cattle look like ships ;
Straws glistening and stiff 10
Lying on air as on a shelf
And pond that leaps to leave itself ;
And feathers too that rise and float,
Each feather changed into a bird,
And line-hung sheets that crack and strain ;
Even the sun-greened coat,
That through so many winds has served,
The scarecrow struggles to put on again.
ANDREW YOUNG

THE SOWER

“ O WHO is this at sunrise sowing,
Young as the springtime and as fair ? 20
On rosy mantle blithely blowing
Swerves so exultantly down the air
Scarce seems it dull earth is imprinted ?
Who upon gilded sandal going
Scatters with grace his gay unstinted
Golden bounty everywhere ? ”

“ The seed I sow is living treasure,
Dowered with profound and obscure might
Of earth to bear unearthly pleasure,

DARK-SKIED NOVEMBER

Of deepest dark to gather light ;
But first by frost must it be chidden,
By strong rain ravaged beyond measure,
Until its fiery flower, long hidden,
Flame forth to fill a happy night."

" Lovely sower so lightly strowing
Your golden bounty everywhere,
The breeze has borne you beyond knowing
Nor mind I what spring frosts there were.
The summer rains long since have risen, 10
The autumn rains now cease their blowing,
The seed lies in its secret prison
And deathly still the winter air."

ROBERT NICHOLS

DARK-SKIED NOVEMBER, HOW HAST THOU NOW TURNED

DARK-SKIED November, how hast thou now turned
To drear reflection all our glad employ !
Chill visitor, who com'st but to destroy
Our fruiting of contentment tardy earned,
With thy sad look ; silent remembrancer,
Who, hand on lip, with ruthless eye dost tell
To hill and field and wood what know they well— 20
How changèd shall they be from what they were.

Now, her vain joys repented of, each tree
Drops first those leaves whereon the sun first shined ;
Dulling thy steps, as by dank hedgerows twined
With perished grace thou walk'st : now echoes thee
Down the dim alleys of each mortal mind
The muffled footfall of eternity.

ELIZABETH DARYUSH

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

WINTER FIELD

SORROW on the acres,
Wind in the thorn,
And an old man ploughing
Through the frosty morn.

A flock of the dark birds,
Rooks and their wives,
Follow the plough team
The old man drives ;

And troops of starlings,
A-tittle-tat and prim, 10
Follow the rooks
That follow him.

A. E. COPPARD

SNOW

THE room was suddenly rich and the great bay-
window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible :
World is suddener than we fancy it.

World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various. 20

And the fire flames with a bubbling sound for world
Is more spiteful and gay than one supposes—
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of
one's hands—
There is more than glass between the snow and the
huge roses.

LOUIS MACNEICE

THE WAYFARER

ODE

O to us speak
Bleak snow
With your mellifluous smooth tongue :

What have we done wrong
What wrong have we done,
Our strongest perish without an answering blow
Our strongest young
Hour by hour grow weaker,
While we like prisoners look on
Awaiting our warmth and storage, our ally, the Sun.

Return from the west 11
Our hour is come,
Release the squirrel from its frozen nest
The worm from solid mould,
Cremate to comfortable dust
Our old, and immediately reduce
The icy fortifications of our adversary ;
Dissolve with lightning the imprisoning cold :

Arm with miraculous beams our youth
Clothed in the habiliments of your warmth, 20
And resuscitate all fiery spirits from their death.

GEORGE BARKER

THE WAYFARER

A LAMP shines in a single window,
And the wayfarer pauses, looks ahead.

The fields not mute now, though the sensitive fabric
Of a man's ear must be taut and tuned
To register the rub of a vole's red body
Against a bush ; the crack of the mouse's skull

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

In an owl's beak ; the badger's and the rabbit's way ;
The wind winding among the stems of flowers,
And a leaf falling on the grass.

The fields not mute, though the sounds are small,
And in nocturnal quiet lost.
The huge wood whispering,
The invisible hills somewhere to the south,
And the city far away
Are covered by the wide hand of the sky,
The hand that is freckled with stars. 10

The wayfarer, standing in the enormous meadow,
Sees the yellow square of the lamp,
And knows the fox is not his brother,
Nor the drifting owl his guide ;
Knows the stone no pillow, nor soil his bread,
Nor the milk of petals his wine.
Looking ahead, the wayfarer knows this,
And is aware that he must kneel
To know the creatures whom he loves,
For the wayfarer is solitary in his country. 20

CLIFFORD DYMENT

THE SECRET WOOD

WHERE there is nothing more to see
Than this old earth-bound tree
That years ago dry sawdust bled
But sprouts each spring a leaf or two
As though it tried not to be dead,
Or that down-hanging broken bough
That keeps its withered leaves till now
Like a dead man that cannot move
Or take his own clothes off,

MOUNTAINS

What is it that I seek or who,
Fearing from passer-by
Intrusion of a foot or eye ?
I only know
Though all men of earth's beauty speak
Beauty here I do not seek
More than I sought it on my mother's cheek.
ANDREW YOUNG

IN THE HILLS

THE athletic road swings round
And takes the abrupt fellside at a bound ;
But I am well content to turn my back 10
And spin my spider track
In the mountain dews, that stonechat will not dread,
Nor fox and hare, to tread.
STANLEY SNAITH

MOUNTAINS

WITH dignity ye surge into the sky,
O mountain fortresses : pure is the gleam
Of the far worlds caught in your naked slabs :
Well tempered are ye in the season's forge,
Cold progeny of the fire-breathing sun.
Ye heed not the soft mists and wooing clouds
That your locked hollows gently seek to explore. 20
Proudly above the clinging claim of life
Ye rise to break the elemental storms :
Proudly ye sluice the drooping vines below,
Gaunt monuments of fire that lost its soul.
MICHAEL MCKENNA

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

GARNETT'S GARDEN

I LOOK down from my window,
And I see
A ramble of forget-me-not
Beneath a flowery tree ;
As if the sky had fallen
To let pass
A lovely girl
To dance upon the grass.
I could lie happy dead beneath your garden
If my soul could walk the skies 10
With such white lovely women,
In a cool paradise.

ANNA WICKHAM

TO A GIRL AT THE SEELEY LIBRARY

WHEN with crouched shoulders and attentive head
You droop, lovely, above a sullen page,
So ill your eyes expend their wealth of power
Beauty might mourn her wasted heritage :
Yet all the careful wisdom you have read
Lies like the dust upon a thirsty flower.

For I have heard you in clear reveries
Laughing across the Downs, and we have swung 20
Down Pen-y-Pas together and lain still
On Cleadon when the lark below us sung,
And sunlight rippled to your eager eyes,
And winds went tumbling down the sleepy hill.

EDWARD DAVISON

PUDDLES

OXFORD REVISITED

ALAS ! what make you here poor ghost that goes
Where your swift feet of youth so lightly went ?
Time has borne down that gracious argument
Which was your advocate where Isis flows
Through Christ Church meadows. Sublimate your
woes

Among these happy children whose consent
Holds out kind hands ; accept the treasure lent,
Unconquered sweetness, death-defying rose.

Would yet this sweetness find an echoed home
Where the dream-built city's semblance lies 10
Beyond the stars, could but its silver bell
Out-chime the iron knell of miscalled doom,
How would not Death come kindly with mild eyes
Shining like invocated Uriel ?

ALFRED DOUGLAS

PUDDLES

THE casual children of the storm, they play
like ragged urchins in the public road.
Even the Earth, their mother, holds them cheap :
she feeds them not—for them no welling fount
of waters from her bosom flows ; they wait
on the chance mercies of the passing showers. 20
Nor are they clothed as are their foster-brothers
of field and meadow, in fine cloth of grass
green-woven with gay broideries of flowers,
but in coarse tatters from the gutters picked
and muddy fents. They have no playfellows
save the drab tousled sparrows ; and no toys,
no wind-blown petal, fallen leaf, but make

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

what sport they can with twigs and random straws
and matches by the careless passer dropped.
None gives them heed, and they must live their days
neglected and despised, to come at last
to shrunken grey decrepitude and die,
sunk in a nameless grave as paupers are.
None gives them heed, poor urchins ! Yet have I
many a time been cheered upon my way
seeing how bravely they have made the best
of their lean chance : no merrier laugh than that 10
which on their dirty faces greets the wind
was ever in ripples flashed ; no friendlier smile
by any pool is given than when the sun
shines from their eyes. Then is their poor attire
forgotten and their lowly circumstance,
and I remember only
youth's irrepressible joy, the loveliness
inseparable from waters great and small,
whose power and gift from God is to reflect
the lights of heaven ; and as I go my way, 20
often in sudden deep humility,
often in gratitude, I pause to bless
the cheerful puddles of the public road.

J. REDWOOD ANDERSON

IN THE SPRING, AND IN SEPTEMBER

In the dreary morning, when
Every wave is capped with foam,
Seafarers remember then
Pansies in the garden loam.

When beneath the silver Plough
Blow the clouds, half-hiding it,
Seafarers remember how 30
Lamps in village inns are lit.

THE BOYNE WALK

In the spring, and in September,
When the white-throat swallows pass,
Mariners, looking up, remember
The sweet waves of upland grass.

HAMISH MACLAREN

THE BOYNE WALK

“FROM these dew-lapped fields,” said the Meath
man,
“Tramps doze at their drink and the shiny air
Is too drunk to stir,” or so his words ran
As we walked, half-hidden, through where the reeds
stand
Between the Boyne and its green canal ;
And sweltering I kept to the pace he planned, 10
Yet he wouldn't even wait in the reeds
To watch a red perch, like a Japanese hand,
Grove in the sun-shot water and weeds—
He merely called back : “ O, go be damned ! ”

With break-neck looks at the strealy end
Of a stupefied town, I paced his heel
By moat, dead wall and under an arch
That was all of a crouch with the weight of years ;
But where the road led I'd have known were I
wise
From one running look in the dark of his eyes— 20
For each seemed the bright astrological plan
Of a new Don Quixote and his man
Again on campaign with ladder-ribbed steeds
Knock-kneed—what odds ! One cock of the ears
Or an opening smoke-blue eye in the reeds
Would fork me upon a bare back, and, cheers !
We'd have ridden our road as the kings of Meath.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

We walked, as became two kings outcast
From plains walled in by a grass-raising lord,
Whose saint is the Joker, whose hope is the Past—
What victuals for bards could that lad afford ?
O, none ! So off went his dust from our boots,
But his dust that day was of buttercup gold
From a slope, with a sight that was, man alive,
grand :

Just two servant girls spreading blue clothes
On grass too deep for a crow to land ; 9
And though they waved to us we kept on our track,
And though to the bank their own clothes soon toppled
We sweltered along—while my thought floated back
Through shy beauty's bathing -pool, like an old bottle!

Heat trembled in halos on grass and on cattle
And each rock blazed like a drunken face ;
So I cried to the man of the speedy wattle
“ In the name of Lot's wife will you wait a space
For Adam's red apple hops dry in my throttle,”
And yet instead of easing the pace,
I saw on the broad blackboard of his back 20
His muscles made signs of a far greater chase,
Until as I tried to keep up on his track
Each pore of my skin became a hot spring
And every bone swam in a blister of pains
While all my bent body seemed as an old crane's
Lost in a great overcoat of wings.
Soon out from my sight off went the big Meath
man

Dodging the reeds of his nine-mile road,
So I lolled, as a bard bereft of his daemon
Or a Moses awaiting a light-burdened cloud ; 30
But heaven lay low all naked and brazen
Within the mad calm on that desert of green,
Where nothing, not even the water, is lean,
Where the orderly touches of Thought aren't seen—

THE BOYNE WALK

And yet not a wild thought sang in my noddle ;
Ah, how could it sing, while speed bit each heel,
While heat tugged a tight noose into my throttle
And while, on my spine, the hung head went nodding
As on it fierce light picked with a black bill.

Then where in soft Meath can one find ease ?
When the sun, like a scarecrow, stands in those
 meadows
Guarding their glory, not even the breeze
That ghostly rogue, can crop a shadow ;
When even I asked for “ a drink, if you please ” to
A woman, as proud as a motherly sow,
Hoked out of my way and hid where a larch
Leant like a derrick across an old barge
Stocked in the reeds ; and so I went parched !
Ah, but soon down the Boyne, there O the surprise
From a leaping fish—that silver flicker—
Was nothing compared to what hit my eyes :
An innocent house, marked “ Licensed for Liquor ! ”

Could anyone treat me to brighter green meadows
 Than the Meath man who finished his thirsty plan
 when 20
 Between every swig he mooned through those windows?
 And yet, on my oath, it was easier then
 To coop a mountainy cloud in a henhouse
 Than to group the Meath light into lines for my
 pen ;
 And still I must bless him since beauty was caught
 In ears that were drumming, in eyes all sweat,
 In nostrils slimmed by indrawn breath ;
 For I made, as we lay in the grass by that road
 This poem—a gem from the head of a toad ;
 So here, will you take it—hall-marked by a day 30
 Over the hills and far away ?

F. R. HIGGINS

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

THE FLOWERING REED

WHEN the red brands of day consume
And in the darkening Rhone illumine
The still reflections of the reed,
I saw its passing leagues of gloom,
Torrential in their strength and speed,
Resisted by a rosy plume
That burned far down among the weed ;
As in the dark of Tullia's tomb
The final wick-tethered phantom set
To watch, remember and regret, 10
Thawing faint tears to feed its fume
Of incense, spent in one long sigh
The centuries that thundered by
To battle, scooping huge moraines
Across the wreck of fifty reigns ;
It held a candle to the eye
To show how much must pass and die
To set such scatheless phantoms free,
Or feather with one reed of rhyme
The boulder-rolling Rhone of time, 20
That rafts our ruin to the sea.

ROY CAMPBELL

MIDDLE OF THE WORLD

THIS sea will never die, neither will it ever grow old
nor cease to be blue, nor in the dawn
cease to lift up its hills
and let the slim black ship of Dionysos come sailing in
with grape-vines up the mast, and dolphins leaping.

What do I care if the smoking ships
of the P. and O. and the Orient Line and all the other
stinkers

THE OLIVE TREE

cross like clock-work the Minoan distance !
They only cross, the distance never changes.

And now that the moon who gives men glistening
bodies
is in her exaltation, and can look down on the sun
I see descending from the ships at dawn
slim naked men from Cnossos, smiling the archaic smile
of those that will without fail come back again,
and kindling little fires upon the shores
and crouching, and speaking the music of lost
languages.

And the Minoan Gods, and the Gods of Tiryns 10
are heard softly laughing and chatting, as ever ;
and Dionysos, young, and a stranger
leans listening on the gate, in all respect.

D. H. LAWRENCE

THE OLIVE TREE

IN a bare country shorn of leaf,
By no remote sierra screened,
Where pauses in the wind are brief
As the remorse of a fiend,
The stark Laocoon this tree
Forms of its knotted arm and thigh
In snaky tussle with a sky 20
Whose hatred is eternity,
Through his white fronds that whirl and seethe
And in the groaning root he screws,
Makes heard the cry of all who breathe,
Repulsing and accusing still
The Enemy who shaped his thews
And is inherent to his will.

ROY CAMPBELL

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

VESPERS ON THE NILE

WHEN to their roost the sacred ibis file,
Mosquito-thin against the fading West,
And palm-trees fishing in the crimson Nile
Dangle their windless effigies of rest,

Scarce to the moon's hushed conquest of the blue
Have waked the wingless warblers of the bogs,
Or to the lunar sabbath staunchly true
The jackals sung their first selenologues,

When through the waste, far-flung as from a steeple
First in low rumours, then in sounding choir, 10
The lamentation of an ancient people
Sounds from the waters and the sands of fire ;

And centuries have heard that plaint persist,
Since Pharaoh's foreman stood with lifted quirt,
Or swung the bloody sjambok in his fist
To cut the sluggard through his hairy shirt.

This was the strain, the Amphionic lyre,
By which were carted Thebes' colossal stones,
Which though it lifted pyramid and spire
Yet rang their ruin in prophetic tones. 20

Still theirs the agony, still theirs the bondage,
Still theirs the toil, their recompense forlorn
To crop the thistles, bite the withered frondage
And rasp the bitter stubble of the corn.

Still as if Pharaoh's sjambok cut their rumps,
Sick for some Zion of the vast inane,

AT RHEY [RHAGES]

The effort of a thousand rusty pumps
Wheezes untiring through their shrill refrain.

Where royal suns descending left no stains,
Where forms of power and beauty change and pass,
One epic to eternity remains—
The heehawhallelujahs of the Ass.

ROY CAMPBELL

AT RHEY [RHAGES]

WHAT says the Persian poet? "In travel meet
together

The native of Merv and of Rhey, the Roman and the
Kurd."

Now at Rhey, in the Persian summer weather,
I saw on the rocks a swallow, an English bird. 10

I wondered, had it nested under a rafter

There in Kent, built a nest of Kentish clay?

Brought up its young to the sound of English laughter,

And heard the English laughter again at Rhey?

The rocks were red in the sun, the rocks were
bare ;

Ruin was on the hillside, shards were found

On the rocky hillside there

Beneath a little scraping of the ground.

Shards of Darius' and Alexander's day

Where the swallow skimmed the mound 20

As if Alexander had not passed that way,

But only the months gone by in journeying

From the meadows to the red rocks in the plain,

From the red rocks to the meadows back again,

On the impulse of a blind instinctive wing,

As if Raphael and Tobias had never come to Rhey.

VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

TRISTAN DA CUNHA

SNORE in the foam ; the night is vast and blind ;
The blanket of the mist about your shoulders,
Sleep your old sleep of rock, snore in the wind,
Snore in the spray ! the storm your slumber lulls,
His wings are folded on your nest of boulders
As on their eggs the grey wings of your gulls.

No more as when, so dark an age ago,
You hissed a giant cinder from the ocean,
Around your rocks you furl the shawling snow
Half sunk in your own darkness, vast and grim, 10
And round you on the deep with surly motion
Pivot your league-long shadow as you swim.

Why should you haunt me thus but that I know
My surly heart is in your own displayed,
Round whom such leagues in endless circuit flow,
Whose hours in such a gloomy compass run—
A dial with its league-long arm of shade
Slowly revolving to the moon and sun.

My pride has sunk, like your grey fissured crags,
By its own strength o'ertopped and betrayed : 20
I, too, have burned the wind with fiery flags
Who now am but a roost for empty words,
An island of the sea whose only trade
Is in the voyages of its wandering birds.

Did you not, when your strength became your pyre,
Deposed and tumbled from your flaming tower,
Awake in gloom from whence you sank in fire,
To find, Antaeus-like, more vastly grown,
A throne in your own darkness, and a power
Sheathed in the very coldness of your stone ? 30

TRISTAN DA CUNHA

Your strength is that you have no hope or fear,
You march before the world without a crown,
The nations call you back, you do not hear,
The cities of the earth grow grey behind you,
You will be there when their great flames go down
And still the morning in the van will find you.

You march before the continents, you scout
In front of all the earth ; alone you scale
The mast-head of the world, a lorn look-out,
Waving the snowy flutter of your spray 10
And gazing back in infinite farewell
To suns that sink and shores that fade away.

From your grey tower what long regrets you fling
To where, along the low horizon burning,
The great swan-breasted seraphs soar and sing,
And suns go down, and trailing splendours dwindle,
And sails on lonely errands unreturning
Glow with a gold no sunrise can rekindle.

Turn to the night ; these flames are not for you
Whose steeple for the thunder swings its bells ; 20
Grey Memnon, to the tempest only true,
Turn to the night, turn to the shadowing foam,
And let your voice, the saddest of farewells,
With sullen curfew toll the grey wings home.

The wind, your mournful syren, haunts the gloom :
The rocks, spray-clouded, are your signal guns
Whose stony nitre, puffed with flying spume,
Rolls forth in grim salute your broadside hollow
Over the gorgeous burials of suns
To sound the tocsin of the storms that follow. 30

Plunge forward like a ship to battle hurled,
Slip the long cables of the failing light,
The level rays that moor you to the world :

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Sheathed in your armour of eternal frost,
Plunge forward, in the thunder of the fight
To lose yourself as I would fain be lost.

Exiled like you and severed from my race
By the cold ocean of my own disdain,
Do I not freeze in such a wintry space,
Do I not travel through a storm as vast
And rise at times, victorious from the main,
To fly the sunrise at my shattered mast ?

Your path is but a desert where you reap 10
Only the bitter knowledge of your soul :
You fish with nets of seaweed in the deep
As fruitlessly as I with nets of rhyme—
Yet forth you stride, yourself the way, the goal,
The surges are your strides, your path is time.

Hurled by what aim to what tremendous range !
A missile from the great sling of the past,
Your passage leaves its track of death and change
And ruin on the world : you fly beyond,
Leaping the current of the ages vast 20
As lightly as a pebble skims a pond.

*

The years are undulations in your flight
Whose awful motion we can only guess—
Too swift for sense, too terrible for sight,
We only know how fast behind you darken
Our days like lonely beacons of distress :
We know that you stride on and will not hearken.

Now in the eastern sky the fairest planet
Pierces the dying wave with dangled spear,
And in the whirring hollows of your granite 30
That vaster sea to which you are a shell
Sighs with a ghostly rumour, like the drear
Moan of the nightwind in a hollow cell.

THE WANDERER

We shall not meet again ; over the wave
Our ways divide, and yours is straight and endless,
But mine is short and crooked to the grave :
Yet what of these dark crowds amid whose flow
I battle like a rock, aloof and friendless,
Are not their generations vague and endless
The waves, the strides, the feet on which I go ?

ROY CAMPBELL

THE WANDERER

You swept across the waters like a Queen,
Finding a path where never trackway showed,
Daylong you coultured the ungarnered clean 10
Casting your travelling shadow as you strode.

And in the night, when lamps were lit, you sped
With gleams running beside you, like to hounds,
Swift, swift, a dappled glitter of light shed
On snatching sprays above collapsing mounds.

And after many a calm and many a storm,
Nearing your land, your sailors saw arise
The pinnacles of snow where streamers form,
And the ever-dying surf that never dies.

Then, laden with Earth's spoils, you used to come 20
Back, from the ocean's beauty to the roar
Of all the hammers of the mills of home,
Your wandering sailors dragged you to the shore,

Singing, to leave you muted and inert,
A moping place for sea-gulls in the rain
While city strangers trod you with their dirt,
And landsmen loaded you for sea again.

JOHN MASEFIELD

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

SAILOR AND INLAND FLOWER

THE stars never had any mystery for me :
In the soft midnight, in the Indian Sea,
I had simply to level my sextant at Arcturus's eye
And he had to tell me where I was ; he dared not lie.

I had simply to level my sextant and wonder, " To-
night
Where am I, Arcturus, Arcturus bright ? " "
And he would twirl his silver whiskers and then say :
" You are exactly seventeen hours' steaming from
Bombay." "
Orion, the Lion, the Crab, and Betelgeuse,
They were all as friendly as farm-hands in the *Fox*
and Geese. 10

But these unwinking wood anemones
That make a Milky Way beneath the trees
Are nothing but secrecies.

They simply shine there, and keep
Themselves in eternal haughtiness and half-sleep,
And I might be in Atlantis, or any haunted place
Out of time and space.

HAMISH MACLAREN

SAILING SHIPS

LYING on Downs above the wrinkling bay
I with the kestrels shared the cleanly day,
The candid day ; wind-shaven, brindled turf ; 20
Tall cliffs ; and long sea-line of marbled surf
From Cornish Lizard to the Kentish Nore
Lipping the bulwarks of the English shore,

SAILING SHIPS

While many a lovely ship below sailed by
On unknown errand, kempt and leisurely ;
And after each, oh, after each, my heart
Fled forth, as, watching from the Downs apart,
I shared with ships good joys and fortunes wide
That might befall their beauty and their pride ;

Shared first with them the blessed void repose
Of oily days at sea, when only rose
The porpoise's slow wheel to break the sheen
Of satin water indolently green ; 10
When for'ard the crew, caps tilted over eyes,
Lay heaped on deck ; slept ; murmured ; smoked ;
threw dice ;
The sleepy summer days ; the summer nights
(The coast pricked out with rings of harbour-lights),
The motionless nights, the vaulted nights of June
When high in the cordage drifts the entangled
moon,
And blocks go knocking, and the sheets go slapping,
And lazy swells against the sides come lapping ;
And summer mornings off red Devon rocks,
Faint inland bells at dawn and crowing cocks. 20

Shared swifter days, when headlands into ken
Trode grandly ; threatened ; and were lost again,
Old fangs along the battlemented coast ;
And followed still my ship, when winds were most
Night-purified, and, lying steeply over,
She fled the wind as flees a girl her lover,
Quickened by that pursuit for which she fretted,
Her temper by the contest proved and whetted ;
Wild stars swept overhead ; her lofty spars
Reared to a ragged heaven sown with stars, 30
As leaping out from narrow English ease
She faced the roll of long Atlantic seas.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Her captain then was I, I was her crew,
The mind that laid her course, the wake she drew,
The waves that rose against her bows, the gales,—
Nay, I was more ; I was her very sails
Rounded before the wind, her eager keel,
Her straining mast-heads, her responsive wheel,
Her pennon stiffened like a swallow's wing ;
Yes, I was all her slope and speed and swing,
Whether by yellow lemons and blue sea
She dawdled through the isles off Thessaly, 10
Or saw the palms like sheaves of scimitars
On desert's verge below the sunset bars,
Or passed the girdle of the planet where
The Southern Cross looks over to the Bear,
And strayed, cool Northerner beneath strange skies,
Flouting the lure of tropic estuaries,
Down that long coast, and saw Magellan's Clouds
arise.

And some that beat up Channel homeward-bound
I watched, and wondered what they might have
found,
What alien ports enriched their teeming hold 20
With crates of fruit or bars of unwrought gold ?
And thought how London clerks with paper-clips
Had filed the bills of lading of those ships,
Clerks that had never seen the embattled sea,
But wrote down jettison and barratry,
Perils, Adventures, and the Act of God,
Having no vision of such wrath flung broad ;
Wrote down with weary and accustomed pen
The classic dangers of sea-faring men ;
And wrote " Restraint of Princes," and " the Acts 30
Of the King's Enemies," as vacant facts,
Blind to the ambushed seas, the encircling roar
Of angry nations foaming into war.

VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST

THE BLUE-PETER

THE BLUE-PETER

THE day has come for sailing ; and at last
The brisk blue-peter flutters at the mast.
Too long beneath the mountains we have lain
While winds and waters called to us in vain :
Too long the inn has held us, and too long
Our ears have hearkened to the tavern-song.
The time has come to quit the company
Of those who dread the isolating sea,
Who, slumbering through night-watches, spend their
days

Carousing in the ingle's drowsy blaze : 10
For what are they to us who are the sons
Of tempest, in whose veins the salt tide runs,
Whose pulses answer to the ebb and flow
Of all the seas that travel to and fro,
Whose feet have trod the tilting deck from birth
And stumble only on the stable earth,
Whose eyes can pierce the spindrift of the night
And blunder blindfold in the tavern light,
Whose hearts must ever in the throng and press
Ache with intolerable loneliness 20
Shut in by walls as in an airless grave,
Whose home is the unwalled unrafted wave,
Who each within himself can only find
In solitude the comrade to his mind,
And only in the lone sea-watch can be
At ease at length in his own company.

The brisk blue-peter beckons ; and at last
Our souls shall ride full-sailed before the blast
Into the perilous security
Of strife with the uncompromising sea. 30

WILFRID W. GIBSON

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

DOCKS

WHEN paint or steel or wood are wearing thin,
Then they come in :
The liners, schooners, merchantmen, and tramps,
Upon a head of water pressing hard
On gates of greenheart wood, that close and guard
The docks, till lintels, clamps,
Swing suddenly on quoins steel-pivoted,
With harsh complaint and clang,
And then above the walls arise and spread
Top-gallant yards or funnel, spanker-vang 10
Or dolphin-striker ; ~~figure-heads~~ arise
That settling sway
Beside an inn ; a mermaid's breasts and eyes
Beneath a bowsprit glare beside a dray.

All docks are wonderful, whether beside
The estuaries or foreshores robbed of sea,
Where jetties and much dredging keep them free,
And the strong constant scouring of the tide
Sweeps down the silt ; or where by sandy dune
The neap-tides leave them dry, or flood-tides dash 20
With a vindictive lash
At the conjunction of the sun and moon.
And wonderful are dry docks, where the ships
Are run on keel-props held by timber-shores,
And sterns and prores
Stand up for scrapers' work, and the paint drips
Among algae and mussels ; wonderful when
Docks still are in the building, and the pumps
Move water from the sumps,
And derricks, little trains, and shouting men 30
Dump clustered cylinders upon the gravel,
And through the sky square blocks of granite travel,
Dangling to place to make the sills. Or when

THE MOON HATH NOT

As now by Thames the running currents flush
The sluices of the locks, and seek to rush
Reverse-gates strengthening the entrances,
Harry the boats, and shift
The refuse of the town and littoral drift ;
And in the dusk the slums are palaces.

They wait upon the sea.
And wharf and jetty, stately in the grime,
Make commerce classical, and turn sublime
The warehouse crammed with jute or flax or tea.

DOROTHY WELLESLEY

THE MOON HATH NOT

THE moon hath not got any light ; 11
All that beauty, all that power,
Is a cheat upon the sight,
Is come and gone within the hour !
What is pure,
Or what is lovely ?
Nothing is that will endure !

An apple-blossom in the spring,
When spring awakens everything,
Is pure or lovely as it please, 20
Or not as it knows not of these !
What is pure,
Or what is lovely ?
Nothing is that will endure !

Pure is cherished in a dream,
Loveliness in little thought ;
Out of nowhere do they gleam,
Out of nothing are they wrought !
What is pure
Or what is lovely ?
Nothing is that will endure !

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Courage, goodness, tenderness :
Beauty, wisdom, ecstasy :
Wonder, love, and loveliness :
Hope, and immortality :
What is pure,
Or what is lovely ?
Nothing is that will endure !

Pure and lovely sleep and wait,
Where not good nor ill is done,
In the keep, within the gate, 10
At the heart of everyone :
What is pure,
Or what is lovely ?
All is, and doth all endure.

JAMES STEPHENS

ROTATION

EVEN the owls are lyrical
When the moon's right,
And we have no patience with the stars
On a dusty night.

Love is dull with the mood wrong,
And age may outsing youth, 20
For there is no measuring a song,
Nor counting upon truth.

All's well, and then a flood of loss
Surges upon delight,
While the rose buds upon the cross,
And the blind have sight.

THE IMMORTAL HOUR

Morning wisdom vanishes,
And dusk brings dread
That stalwart sleep banishes
Ere primes are said.

He who is sure, has all to learn ;
Who fears, but fears in vain ?
For never a day does the year turn,
But it shall turn again.

JOHN DRINKWATER

THE IMMORTAL HOUR

I. SEMI-CHORUS

WE have no tears, who are the source of weeping,
and what is laughter to us, whose laughter first 10
of laughter woke in man the sweet unsleeping
hunger and thirst ?

We are the words the poets hear and fail of,
we are the note beyond the fiddle's cry,
we for all lovers of beauty are a tale of
beauty that passes by.

II. SEMI-CHORUS

Cried a ghost-king by night, " Divine Augustus !
you tread the ends of the world only to find
that the long roads of dreams go sweeping past us 20
into a world behind.

A fleeting throne, a shadow godhead these are,
whose symbol is the axes and the rod,"
saying, " There is another kingdom, Cæsar,
a further heaven, God."

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

I. SEMI-CHORUS

We walk with the wind's feet, and do not rest,
we walk between the leaves in the high meadows,
our hair with their green wings of light, our breast
stained with the soft green shadows.
Fleeter than the heart's desire, one by one
we leave delights that are well spoken of,
and far behind us echo, as we run,
the tired feet of love.

II. SEMI-CHORUS

We are impatient of truth, that is no more
than finite stain upon the infinite, 10
a fading seamark on a distant shore,
and we have gone from it,
whose lips, though grave, are not too grave to smile at
the heart of man crying in his vext youth :
“ What is the truth ? ” and to make answer, “ Pilate,
we are the truth.”

HUMBERT WOLFE

BYZANTIUM

THE unpurged images of day recede ;
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed ;
Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song
After great cathedral gong ; 20
A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire of human veins.

Before me floats an image, man or shade,
Shade more than man, more image than a shade ;

BYZANTIUM

For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
May unwind the winding path ;
A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
Breathless mouths may summon ;
I hail the superhuman ;
I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Planted on the star-lit golden bough,
Can like the cocks of Hades crow, 10
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
In glory of changeless metal
Common bird or petal
And all complexities of mire or blood.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave, 20
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after spirit ! The smithies break the flood,
The golden smithies of the Emperor !
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-born, that gong-tormented sea. 30
W. B. YEATS

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

SHALL WE STILL WRANGLE ?

SHALL we still wrangle,
Struggle and cry ?
Oh, why not entangle,
Live life and let die,
Together, espoused,
Body and I ?

Come, THOU, without reason,
Profit, or ill :
Without need or season,
Come, without will : 10
Look up and frown not !
Ah, Love, stand still !

What a wild power
Hast thou over all !
This earth—thy flower !—
Thy nothing-at-all !
This heaven—thy dominion :
This brain thy thrall !

Art thou the Weaver
Whose fingers shall tie 20
Quiet into fever
Comfortably—
That knot for whose secret
Many men die ?

FRANK KENDON

O LOVE, THE INTEREST ITSELF IN THOUGHTLESS HEAVEN

O LOVE, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven,
Make simpler daily the beating of man's heart ; within,
There in the ring where name and image meet,

O LOVE

Inspire them with such a longing as will make his
thought

Alive like patterns a murmur of starlings
Rising in joy over wolds unwittingly weave ;

Here too on our little reef display your power,
This fortress perched on the edge of the Atlantic
scarp,
The mole between all Europe and the exile-crowded
sea ;

And make us as Newton was, who in his garden
watching
The apple falling towards England, became aware
Between himself and her of an eternal tie.

For now that dream which so long has contented our
will, 10
I mean, of uniting the dead into a splendid empire,
Under whose fertilizing flood the Lancashire moss

Sprouted up chimneys, and Glamorgan hid a life
Grim as a tidal rock-pool's in its glove-shaped valleys,
Is already retreating into her maternal shadow ;

Leaving the furnaces gasping in the impossible air,
The flotsam at which Dumbarton gapes and hungers ;
While upon wind-loved Rowley no hammer shakes

The cluster of mounds like a midget golf course,
graves
Of some who created these intelligible dangerous
marvels ; 20
Affectionate people, but crude their sense of glory.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Far-sighted as falcons, they looked down another
future ;
For the seed in their loins were hostile, though afraid
of their pride,
And, tall with a shadow now, inertly wait.

In bar, in netted chicken-farm, in lighthouse,
Standing on these impoverished constricting acres,
The ladies and gentlemen apart, too much alone,

Consider the years of the measured world begun,
The barren spiritual marriage of stone and water.
Yet, O, at this very moment of our hopeless sigh

When inland they are thinking their thoughts but are
watching these islands, 10
As children in Chester look to Moel Fammau to decide
On picnics by the clearness or withdrawal of her
treeless crown,

Some possible dream, long coiled in the ammonite's
slumber,
Is uncurling, prepared to lay on our talk and kindness
Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain ;

And out of the Future into actual History,
As when Merlin, tamer of horses, and his lords to
whom
Stonehenge will still a thought, the Pillars passed

And into the undared ocean swung north their prow,
Drives through the night and star-concealing dawn
For the virgin roadsteads of our hearts an unwavering
keel. 21

W. H. AUDEN

THE ENEMIES

DEVICE

O THAT I might believe that time
Is but a measure thrown on things
That hold existence in a sphere
Intense alone, and always felt
In full reality ! For then
I could evade despondency
By magnifying to my frame
The ecstatic beat that night and day
Pulses within the milk-white walls
Of mental sloth, eager to break 10
Into the radiant release
Of vision divine and precise.

—Time that is a shrouded thought
Involving earth and life in doubt.

HERBERT READ

THE ENEMIES

TIME, change and death, these
Three are Man's enemies.

What ? Time that takes the pain from grief,
That brings again bud and leaf,
That sets the child in its mother's arms ?

What ? Change that gives eyes to the blind, 20
That in decay can freshness find,
Making old, new ; familiar, strange ?

What ? Death that shuts the gate
On longing and regret,
Grief, fear, pain, shame, satiety, and all harms—
Time and change ?

SYLVIA LYND

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

IN TIME LIKE GLASS

IN time like glass the stars are set,
And seeming-fluttering butterflies
Are fixed fast in Time's glass net
With mountains and with maids' bright eyes.

Above the cold Cordilleras hung
The wingèd eagle and the Moon :
The gold, snow-throated orchid sprung
From gloom where peers the dark baboon :

The Himalayas' white, rapt brows ;
The jewel-eyed bear that threads their caves ; 10
The lush plains' lowing herds of cows ;
That Shadow entering human graves :

All these like stars in Time are set,
They vanish but can never pass ;
The Sun that with them fades is yet
Fast-fixed as they in Time like glass.

W. J. TURNER

THE ENIGMA

MAN, what is man ? A hasty tool
Forged in four seconds of distracted fire,
Unkindly cast into the world to cool
In the cold wind of loneliness, until 20
Bracing his metal to the wind reveal
The beauty of his spirit and desire,
As every quality of edge and steel
Soul, the delighted craftsman, can require !

LOOKING AT THE STARS

Man, what is man ? The Prince of Time,
The roof of the world, and cornice of renown,
Whose thoughts go up into the stars of rhyme
Or flit between the Scorpion and the Crown—
And whose most daring act is to uncover,
To the indifferent ear of darkness, all
His little failures to be loved or lover,
Crying between the pillow and the wall.

Man, what is man but woman's toy,
Needing her hands at first in pitiful harms, 10
Humbled all his life to need the joy
That's in one woman or another's arms ;
And even in the grave I dare say lonely
Till the dark fingers of the trees break through—
Woman, you make us at your pleasure, only
That our strong bones may be embraced by yew.

LAURENCE WHISTLER

THIS BLIND ROSE

As this blind rose, no more than a whim of the dust,
achieved her excellence without intent,
so man, the casual sport of time and lust,
plans wealth and war, and loves by accident. 20

HUMBERT WOLFE

LOOKING AT THE STARS

Now, by night, while all is still,
Orion sets his starry heel,
Marching, on the western hill :—
Constellations with him wheel

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Westward, ever westward moving,
Many a hero, many a god,
Fierce in war and fierce in loving :—
Men in ancient times who trod

This strange planet knew and named
Their great deeds, proclaimed their glories,
While the white stars flinched and flamed :—
Shades of shades those men ; but stories

Live when speaking lips are dumb :—
Is it their night-haunting breath, 10
Across unnumbered ages come,
Breathes in my hair the chill of death ?

SYLVIA LYND

POEM FOR AN ANNIVERSARY

ADMIT then and be glad
Our volcanic age is over.
A molten rage shook earth from head to toe,
Seas leapt from their beds,
World's bedrock boiling up, the terrible lava.
Now it is not so.

Remember, not regret
Those cloudy dreams that trod on air 20
How distantly reflecting fire below :
The mating in air, the mute
Shuddering electric storms, the foul and fair
Love was used to know.

Admire, no more afraid,
Country made for peace. Earth rent,
Rocks like prayers racked from the heart, are now
Landmarks for us and shade :
Hotfoot to havoc where the lava went,
Cooler rivers flow. 30

SHINING DARK

Survey what most survives—
Love's best, climate and contour fine :
We have trained the giant lightning to lie low
And drive our linked lives :
Those clouds stand not in daydream but for rain,
And earth has grain to grow.

C. DAY LEWIS

SHINING DARK

SCATTER grey ash to the darkness, break
The jar, the brittle urn, to the bleak
Inhuman north, and the dark wind—

Crumble the trivial husk, the shell, 10
And claim, O firm substantial Earth,
The living pulse and the quick sap
From the green shoot and the cunning skull,

Take it ; and take the unsullied lake,
The song, the unconquered hill, the alert
Touch, and the glance, and a man's strength—

Take it ; you can but take it once—
The gentian hour and the sun's light ;
Pride of young earth and living limb,

Take : Calcine the amorphous dust, 20
Destroy the inert substratum, break
Too late, the pattern : dust attains,
Quicker than tardy death, the shining dark—

Beethoven dead and Milton blind,
Melville, forsaken of the valiant mind,
Beyond the inhuman pattern, men,
Broken, ephemeral, undismayed.

MICHAEL ROBERTS

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

IN YEARS OF CRISIS

OH, for the anodyne
Of action—for a fight to fight,
Knowing both end and means were right !
Alas ! No liberating call is mine.

The world travails. Her groans
Give me no rest. Can I not make
Some swift bright effort for her sake ? . . .
But where ? But how ? A deeper voice disowns

The ego that would lose
Self-pain in some impetuous
Tilting at shadows. Credulous
Are they who Reason's mimic warfare choose !

Reason ? She claims her due.
But if she be not born again
Of spirit, she must toil in vain,
And with more anguish the sad earth bestrew.

Not where her engines sweep,
And all the dust and echoes start,
Lies the true combat. Nay ! O heart,
Tunnel into thyself ! Bore deep ! Bore deep !

There lurk the enemies :
A noxious host ! Seek them elsewhere,
And—though adventure lull thy care,
And gay illusion gild the enterprise—

Even as thou aim'st the blow
At the mere visible feint of wrong,
For all thy vaunting martial song,
Thou wilt but run yet further from the foe !

A TIME TO DANCE

Back to thyself, O soul !

There the world's battles must be fought :

There her salvation must be sought :

There only can'st thou make her sorrows whole.

The fight is long, you say ?

The victory will be too late ?

Perchance. Yet—back ! Look to the gate :

To thine own gate ! There is no other way.

GILBERT THOMAS

A TIME TO DANCE

FOR those who had the power

of the forest fires that burn

10

Leaving their source in ashes

to flush the sky with fire :

Those whom a famous urn

could not contain, whose passion

Brimmed over the deep grave

and dazzled epitaphs :

For all that have won us wings

to clear the tops of grief,

My friend who within me laughs

bids you dance and sing.

20

Some set out to explore

earth's limit, and little they recked if

Never their feet came near it

outgrowing the need for glory :

Some aimed at a small objective

but the fierce updraught of their spirit

Forced them to the stars.

Are honoured in public who built

The dam that tamed a river ;

or holding the salient for hours

30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Against odds, cut off and killed,
are remembered by one survivor.

All these. But most for those
whom accident made great,
As a radiant chance encounter
of cloud and sunlight grows
Immortal on the heart :
whose gift was the sudden bounty
Of a passing moment, enriches
the fulfilled eye for ever. 10
Their spirits float serene
above time's roughest reaches,
But their seed is in us and over
our lives they are evergreen.

C. DAY LEWIS

THE FOOLS

THEY are the fools of the earth,
Envy and scorn of the wise,
Rapt to the wonders of birth,
Blind with the light in their eyes—
Blind to the things that deface,
Seeing the marvel that lies 20
In the lure of unlimited space
And the fathomless deep of the skies.

They are the poor of the world,
Rich with intangible gold ;
Racing for rainbows unfurled
Wide over pasture and wold :
Children of dream and desire,
Seeking the glory revealed

REPLY

In daybreaks of passionate fire
Or grasses and weeds of the field.

They see the Unseen and endure,
Though the seen is insistent and loud ;
They cleave to the things that are sure,
To vision and phantom and cloud.
Day is an impulse of light,
Night is a massing of stars ;
Waves are alive when they smite
At cavern and crag of their bars. 10

They are the fools of the earth,
Drunken as men with new wine—
Born in mysterious birth
To an heirship of purpose divine :
Singing where others are dumb,
Hearing the wonders that speak
From the heaven and the grasses, they come
In the pathways that lead to the peak.
ARTHUR L. SALMON

REPLY

YES, you, who dared not face your intuition,
Who stilled as soon as born the puny cry 20
That rose remembering immortality—
Yes, you, who fled as cowards from your vision
Down the broad ways of easy, cheap decision,
Hoping that gold and meat and drink could buy
A tower to hide your secret self-suspicion
And shut from sight your unattempted sky—
Yes, you would find it easy to deride
Our feet that fail where yours have never tried. . . .
GEOFFREY JOHNSON

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

HEARING OF HARVESTS ROTTING IN THE VALLEYS

HEARING of harvests rotting in the valleys,
Seeing at end of street the barren mountains,
Round corners coming suddenly on water,
Knowing them shipwrecked who were launched for
islands,
We honour founders of these starving cities,
Whose honour is the image of our sorrow.

Which cannot see its likeness in their sorrow
That brought them desperate to the brink of valleys ;
Dreaming of evening walks through learned cities,
They reined their violent horses on the mountains,
Those fields like ships to castaways on islands, 11
Visions of green to them that craved for water.

They built by rivers and at night the water
Running past windows comforted their sorrow ;
Each in his little bed conceived of islands
Where every day was dancing in the valleys,
And all the year trees blossomed on the mountains,
Where love was innocent, being far from cities.

But dawn came back and they were still in cities ;
No marvellous creature rose up from the water, 20
There was still gold and silver in the mountains,
And hunger was a more immediate sorrow ;
Although to moping villagers in valleys
Some waving pilgrims were describing islands.

“ The gods,” they promised, “ visit us from islands,
Are stalking head-up, lovely through the cities ;
Now is the time to leave your wretched valleys

MARINA

And sail with them across the lime-green water ;
Sitting at their white sides, forget their sorrow,
The shadow cast across your lives by mountains."

So many, doubtful, perished in the mountains
Climbing up crags to get a view of islands ;
So many, fearful, took with them their sorrow
Which stayed them when they reached unhappy cities ;
So many, careless, dived and drowned in water ;
So many, wretched, would not leave their valleys.

It is the sorrow ; shall it melt ? Ah, water 10
Would gush, flush, green these mountains and these
valleys,
And we rebuild our cities, not dream of islands.

W. H. AUDEN

MARINA

Quis hic locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga ?

WHAT seas what shores what grey rocks and what
islands
What water lapping the bow
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through
the fog
What images return
O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning
Death
Those who glitter with the glory of the humming bird,
meaning 20
Death

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning
Death
Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning
Death

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,
A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog
By this grace dissolved in place

What is this face, less clear and clearer
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—
Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer
than the eye 10

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and
hurrying feet
Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.
I made this, I have forgotten
And remember.
The rigging weak and the canvas rotten
Between one June and another September.
Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my
own.

The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.
This form, this face, this life 20
Living to live in a world of time beyond me ; let me
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that un-
spoken,
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.

What seas what shores what granite islands towards
my timbers,
And woodthrush calling through the fog
My daughter.

T. S. ELIOT

IMPERMANENT CREATIVENESS

IMPERMANENT CREATIVENESS

THE spider pendulously waits
Stranded in the unroaded air,
The spider's belly-mind creates
Thoroughfare on thoroughfare.

The fatally inquisitive moth
Wakes to ambition with a quiver,
Leaves its bed and board of cloth :
Wings of moth go flit and shiver.

And all the time on the window-pane
Shadow fingers of the trees 10
Wistfully grope and grope again
After the indoor mysteries.

Over asphalt, tar, and gravel
My racing model happily purrs,
Each charted road I yet unravel
Out of my mind's six cylinders.

Shutters of light, green and red,
Slide up and down. Like mingled cries,
Wind and sunlight clip and wed
Behind the canopy of my eyes. 20

Moth-wings burn. Spiders shrivel ;
Their bright webs break and cobwebs turn.
Minds burn. Homers drivél.

Yet all the time on the window-pane
Shadow fingers of the trees
Grove, grope, grope again
After unseen fatalities.

LOUIS MACNEICE

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

STARFALL

OUR hopes are fading. Let them fade !
There is no lack where they were made.
What, though a great wind shake the might
Of the tree of Heaven, and, through the night,
Scatter the blissful blooms of light ?
There's not a tremor in the root,
No loss, and, after blossom, fruit.

*The starry petals fall and fade :
There is no lack where they were made.*

E. H. VISIAK

SARASVATI

As bird to nest, when, moodily, 10
The storm cloud murmurs nigh the tree,
Thus let him flee,
Who can to sing,
Here hath he calm, and sheltering.

As bee to hive, when, with the sun,
Long honey-gathering is done,
Who can to sing,
There let him flee,
This is his cell, his companie.

As child to mother running, where 20
The thunder shudders through the air,
Thus let him flee,
Who can to sing,
Here hath he ward, and cherishing.

I THINK CONTINUALLY

Fly to thy talent ! To thy charm !
Thy nest, thine hive, thy sheltering arm !
Who can to sing,
There let him flee.
This is, naught else is, certainty.

JAMES STEPHENS

A LITTLE DISTANCE OFF

THIS world behind the faces that you see,
The moving lips and eyelids, eyes alight
Like matches blown by wind, because you stand
A little distance off and cannot change
Your isolation for their many, bears 10
The complete shape of art, the harmony
And pattern of a film. . . . The film unrolls,
The world evolves in words and flame of eyes,
And you withdrawn, a watcher, yet create,
Yet mould the shape, alter a poise or smile,
The incidence of light, as one who sees
Across the windows of a climbing train
The mountain farms curl backwards, where the paths
Lead up to glimpses of sun-dazzled walls,
Conceive strange lives and features, faintly hearing
The fall of music from behind the trees. 21

JOHN LEHMANN

I THINK CONTINUALLY OF THOSE WHO WERE TRULY GREAT

I THINK continually of those who were truly great.
Who, from the womb, remembered the soul's history
Through corridors of light where the hours are suns
Endless and singing. Whose lovely ambition
Was that their lips, still touched with fire,
Should tell of the Spirit clothed from head to foot in song.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

And who hoarded from the Spring branches
The desires falling across their bodies like blossoms.

What is precious is never to forget
The essential delight of the blood drawn from ageless
springs

Breaking through rocks in worlds before our earth.
Never to deny its pleasure in the morning simple light
Nor its grave evening demand for love.
Never to allow gradually the traffic to smother
With noise and fog the flowering of the spirit.

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields 10
See how these names are fêted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
Born of the sun they travelled a short while towards
the sun,
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.

STEPHEN SPENDER

THE GAY

THOSE moon-gilded dancers
Prankt like butterflies,
Theirs was such lovely folly 20
It stayed my rapt eyes :
But my heart that was pondering
Was sadly wise.

To be so lighthearted
What pain was left behind ;
What fetters fallen gave them
Unto this airy mind :
What dark sins were pardoned ;
What God was kind !

AN IMPATIENCE

I with long anguish bought
Joy that was soon in flight ;
And wondered what these paid
For years of young delight ;
Ere they were born what tears
Through what long night.

All these gay cheeks, light feet,
Were telling over again,
But in a heavenly accent,
A tale of ancient pain 10
That, the joy spent, must pass
To sorrow again.

I went into the wilderness
Of night to be alone,
Holding sorrow and joy
Hugged to my heart as one,
Lest they fly on those wild ways
And life be undone.

“ A.E.”

AN IMPATIENCE

GREAT men and learned I can hate,
And would confound them if I could : 20
I saw a simple thing of late,
A soul that lived in solitude.

In anger have I closed the book
That lusts to make all men believe :
But the lone wildling creature's look
Homage demands and shall receive.

Your thoughts are vast, yet shapeless things,
And never done, like Babel tower :
But to its life this spirit brings
Completeness, like the five-leaved flower. 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

You end in chaos, as you began ;
You are made filth and food of flies :
This loves, and when it ends its span,
As flowers fall, even so it dies.

Your way, your ends are dread to me,
When in your hell I share your dream :
But when this dies, I seem to see
Five petals on the sliding stream.

RUTH PITTER

THE BOTTLE

OF green and hexagonal glass,
With sharp, fluted sides— 10
Vaguely transparent these walls,
Wherein motionless hides
A simple so potent it can
To oblivion lull
The weary, the racked, the bereaved,
The miserable.

Flowers in silent desire
Their life-breath exhale—
Self-heal, hellebore, aconite,
Chamomile, dwale : 20
Sharing the same gentle heavens,
The sun's heat and light,
And, in the dust at their roots,
The same shallow night.

Each its own livelihood hath,
Shape, pattern, hue ;
Age on to age unto these
Keeping steadfastly true ;

THE BOTTLE

And, musing amid them, there moves
A stranger, named Man,
Who of their ichor distils
What virtue he can ;

Plucks them ere seed-time to blazon
His house with their radiant dyes ;
Prisons their attar in wax ;
Candies their petals ; denies
Them freedom to breed in their wont ;
Buds, fecundates, grafts them at will ; 10
And with cunningest leechcraft compels
Their good to his ill.

Intrigue fantastic as this
Where shall we find ?
Mute in their beauty they serve him,
Body and mind.
And one—but a weed in his wheat—
Is the poppy—frail, pallid, whose juice
With its saplike and opiate fume
Strange dreams will induce 20

Of wonder and horror. And none
Can silence the soul,
Wearied of self and of life,
Earth's darkness and dole,
More secretly, deeply. But finally ?—
Waste not thy breath ;
The words that are scrawled on this phial
Have for synonym, *death*—

Wicket out into the dark
That swings but one way ; 30
Infinite hush in an ocean of silence
Aeons away—

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Thou forsaken !—even thou !—
The dread good-bye ;
The abandoned, the thronged, the watched, the
unshared—
Awaiting me—I !

WALTER DE LA MARE

GREY SAND IS CHURNIN' IN MY LUGS

GREY sand is churnin' in my lugs.
The munelicht flets, and gantin' there
The grave o' a' mankind's laid bare
—On Hell itsel' the drawback rugs !

Nae man can ken his hert until
The tide o' life uncovers it, 10
And horror-struck he sees a pit
Returnin' life can never fill.

HUGH MACDIARMID

SIMPLICITY

THEY are so many, man's grim miseries.
His brain is sullen with a thousand scars ;
Curtains of ambition blind his eyes
To the quiet patience of the stars.

He is so interwoven into nations,
Tangled with intrigue and false counter-schemes,
That he forgets these watchers at their stations
Where Space, for aeon on aeon, outstreams. 20

He has forgotten the single heart, the one
And unimpeded purpose of the soul ;
The love that rises like the morning sun,
And sets upon a life made whole.

RICHARD CHURCH

BEYOND THE SODDEN OVERHANGING MIST

THE SEA

I HAVE come back from the wide sea,
To breathe the narrow dust again,
In cities, where men cumber men.
Why is it that I dare not be
Alone with Nature? Coming near
The light and peace of her austere
Regard, I am filled with shameful fear.

What is this thing the towns have made,
Into their likeness made anew,
Until we know not star or dew? 10
We are afraid of light, afraid
Of windy space, and naked skies,
And all in heaven and earth that lies
Beyond this prison of our eyes.

ARTHUR SYMONS

BEYOND THE SODDEN OVERHANGING MIST

BEYOND the sodden overhanging mist
The flutes and cornets of eternity
Play out their harmonies of light. The earth
For ever cradled and swathed but faintly feels
That heavenly music. While the great beams flow
With endless beat, like a symphonic stream, 20
Only the tiny pulse of living hearts
Betrays earth's conscience; and man her god
Drugged with the rhythm of his own machines
Sleeps to that also; for man's soul is shut,
His fount of music and great summer glory:

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

He has no bloom of cheek, no fire in his eye,
No light of love, no kindly power, no joy :—
Behold him in the street a fearful slave,
Sallow and sleek and dead ; while God apart
By river-banks weeps in the willow trees.

MICHAEL MCKENNA

MORNING

Do not awake the academic scholars,
'Tradition's hairy god last night departed.
This morn the huge iconoclastic rollers
Blot out the roads where long the Spirit carted
The prayerful dream, the scientific load, 10
The cobwebbed preacher-stuff of Portobello.
To-day will find a new straw-bodied god
Much brighter than the other morbid fellow.

And when they wake—the scholars—they will be
Toothless, unvoiced and maybe half-way gone,
With nothing but a clouded memory
To lead them to the hieroglyphic stone
On which old Scholarship had proudly scratched
A list of doors that Truth has left unlatched.

PATRICK KAVANAGH

TO PENETRATE THAT ROOM

To penetrate that room is my desire, 20
The extreme attic of the mind, that lies
Just beyond the last bend in the corridor.
Writing I do it. Phrases, poems are keys.
Loving's another way (but not so sure).

UNDER THE EYELID

A fire's in there, I think, there's truth at last
Deep in a lumber chest. Sometimes I'm near,
But draughts puff out the matches, and I'm lost.
Sometimes I'm lucky, find a key to turn,
Open an inch or two—but always then
A bell rings, someone calls, or cries of " fire "
Arrest my hand when nothing's known or seen,
And running down the stairs again I mourn.

JOHN LEHMANN

UNDER THE EYELID

UNDER the lid the pictures come and go
And splash their changing colours to and fro : 10
First they are carried on a beam of light
That from vibration turns to quick delight :
But when you drop the gentle blue vein'd blind
They flicker from the cupboards of your mind,
Where all the bright collections you have made
On dim forgotten shelves are thickly laid
Till they can cross the forefront of your brain
And conquer your sweet consciousness again ;
Then one by one they flicker into sight
Driving your thoughts before them in a fright, 20
And turn your cogitations quite astray
In the bewildered mirror of their way.

Now if their flashing sequence I could guide
By slipping careful words in where they hide,
My eyelid's treasures, roughened by my tongue,
Catching with yours to move your thoughts along,
I should be happy in my bold invasion
And lead you to forgive this fond intrusion.

BRYAN GUINNESS

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

TO THE SURVIVORS

THE rust that paints their cities red
And makes their cast-iron idols reel :
The russet locust-swarm that's spread
Upon their wilting crops of steel :—

This gift of our protecting Sire,
'The Solar Christ, to purge the lands—
Is like the good Promethean fire
At which to warm our scatheless hands.

By it the human heart relumed,
Shall blaze once more with ruby light— 10
The strong shall seize it unconsumed,
The rest will crumble at its sight.

The brave from out its grudging crust
Will pull the treasure that it keeps—
Within the red sheath of the rust,
The white Excalibur that sleeps :—

One from its ash breathe new desire ;
One from its embers snatch the Star
That glances with a triple fire
And tips the Trident of Cailar :— 20

One will blow flames, when nations drowse,
With which to burn prophetic lips :
And some find shares, with cruiser-prows,
To heave the curling turf like ships.

Then, like Niagara set free,
Ride on, you fine Commando : vain
Were looking back, for all you'd see
Were " Charlies " running for their train !

WHO STANDS ERECT UPON THE EDGE

For none save those are worthy birth
Who neither life nor death will shun :
And we plough deepest in the Earth
Who ride the nearest to the Sun.

ROY CAMPBELL

RETURN

RESURRECT, resurrect,
The senses and the intellect,
Swing and stride and march again
In thundering charges down the plain.
Carry the dry logs to the fire,
Relight pride, resurge desire, 10
And spin the dead leaves down the wind,
And let in winter on the mind.

Out with old banners, let them fly,
Nor care a hang for symbolry :
I am I, and close to hand
My world to shape or understand.
Life goes on, once more I live,
Once more the open skies can give
Some native force, some natural power,
And flaming triumph through an hour. 20

JULIAN BELL

WHO STANDS ERECT UPON THE EDGE

Who stands erect upon the edge
Precipitate for new adventure
—Forgoes the sitting on the hedge
The timid facebothways composure

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Is hero too with wizard sword
His perilous dignity is sure
—The master of a green accord
Between flesh and the pulse of nature.

CLERE PARSONS

TO HIS OWN MIND

O WEAVER, will you not forget
To spin your airy web and slight ?
Too nimble Dancer, dancing yet
On the thin meshes of the night !
Beneath my feet your ropes are set,
You hang the stars within my brain ;— 10
I too could weave a wiry net
And dance upon a thoughtful chain,

But that, in pauses, I have heard
Dim sounds that mock the polished mind,
Have seen the lovely and absurd
Things of the country of the blind ;
A country where a flaming word
Found by an idiot in his sleep
Is yet the peering poised white bird
That scans the pavement of the deep. 20

GEOFFREY SCOTT

NATIVITY

A FLOWER has opened in my heart . . .
What flower is this, what flower of spring,
What simple, secret thing ?
It is the peace that shines apart,
The peace of daybreak skies that bring
Clear song and wild swift wing.

THE PRISONER

Heart's miracle of inward light,
What powers unknown have sown your seed
And your perfection freed ? . . .
O flower within me wondrous white,
I know you only as my need
And my unsealed sight.

SIEGFRIED SASOON

CALM AS THE MOON

WHAT shall be the signal for departure ?
We, who have departure curled up in us
Like the red wings of a moth in a cocoon,
Are walking through the town's confused alarms, 10
Calm, to those who meet us, as the moon.

Those who meet us cannot see under the shell :
What shall be our signal for departure
From the habit and the self we have outgrown ?

Wait, we shall come to it any time soon,—
The crying of cocks in riverside farms,
A flush of sunlight on a March afternoon,
The thunder of engines in a glass-roofed terminus,
The advance out of shadow and the crowd of lifted
arms.

JOHN LEHMANN

THE PRISONER

EVERY morning the prisoner hears 20
Calls to action and words of warning :
They fall not on deaf but indifferent ears.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Free speech, fresh air are denied him now,
Are not for one who is growing thin
Between four walls of Roman thickness.

From his cell he sees the meetings begin,
The vehement look on the orator's brow
And the listeners warped by want and sickness.

His old wound throbs as old wounds will,
The summer morning makes his head feel light,
Painful the sunlight on the whitewashed sill,
Trembling he awaits the ever-fruitful night, 10

For then dreams many-formed appear
Teeming with truths that public lips ignore,
And naked figures struggle from the sea
Shipwrecked, to be clothed on shore,

And words no orator utters are said
Such as the wind through mouths of ivy forms
Or snails with silver write upon the dead
Bark of an ilex after April storms.

While flights of bombers streak his patch of sky,
While speakers rant and save the world with books, 20
While at the front the first battalions die,
Over the edge of thought itself he looks,

Tiptoe along a knife-edge he slowly travels,
Hears the storm roaring, the serpent hiss,
And the frail rope he hangs by, twisting, unravels,
As he steps so lightly over the abyss.

WILLIAM PLOMER

EVENSTAR

MIDNIGHT

I HAVE thrown wide my window
And looked upon the night,
And seen Arcturus burning
In chaos, proudly bright.

The powdered stars above me
Have littered heaven's floor—
A thousand I remember ;
I saw a myriad more.

I have forgotten thousands,
For deep and deep between, 10
My mind built up the darkness
Of space, unheard, unseen.

I held my hands to heaven
To hold perfection there,
But through my fingers streaming
Went time, as thin as air ;

And I must close my window
And draw a decent blind
To screen from outer darkness
The chaos of the mind. 20

MICHAEL ROBERTS

EVENSTAR

EVENSTAR, still evenstar
If this twilight thou dost shine
On a more unhappy head,
On tears lonelier than mine,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Vainer prayers and deeper sighs,
Take, sweet spirit, thou that art
Comforter of our despairs
All the prayers perforce unsaid,
All the sighs I cannot sigh,
All the tears I cannot shed ;
Fill his eyes and flood his heart,
Who, my everlasting kin,
Broods afar, unknown, apart.
Bring, ah bring him that surcease
From unsolaceable pain,
Which nor prayers, nor tears, nor sighs,
No, nor even the divine
Presence of thy eternal peace
Can, O evenstar, make mine.

ROBERT NICHOLSON

BECAUSE OF THE MUTE DISTANCE OF SPACE

BECAUSE of the mute distances of space,
The orbèd reign of stars, the lonely lamps
Of planets like a bracelet round their sun,
I shut my soul at night and ceased to sing
For my too deep longing :
And so I listened to the lark at morn
Ascending from the corn
And mingled all my music with his song,
Till singing he and I
Seemed to have filled the whole eternal sky.
But when at length the fairy face of day
Had vanished away,
The naked jewels in the sword of truth
Stole all my notes, so I could only stare,
Like a dumb babe, at air.

MICHAEL MCKENNA

THE CHESTNUT CASTS HIS FLAMBEAUX

THE CHESTNUT CASTS HIS FLAMBEAUX

THE chestnut casts his flambeaux, and the flowers
Stream from the hawthorn on the wind away,
The doors clap to, the pane is blind with showers.
Pass me the can, lad ; there's an end of May.

There's one spoilt spring to scant our mortal lot,
One season ruined of our little store.
May will be fine next year as like as not :
Oh ay, but then we shall be twenty-four.

We for a certainty are not the first
Have sat in taverns while the tempest hurled 10
Their hopeful plans to emptiness, and cursed
Whatever brute and blackguard made the world.

It is in truth iniquity on high
To cheat our sentenced souls of aught they crave,
And mar the merriment as you and I
Fare on our long fool's-errand to the grave.

Iniquity it is ; but pass the can.
My lad, no pair of kings our mothers bore ;
Our only portion is the estate of man :
We want the moon, but we shall get no more. 20

If here to-day the cloud of thunder lours
To-morrow it will hie on far behests ;
The flesh will grieve on other bones than ours
Soon, and the soul will mourn in other breasts.

The troubles of our proud and angry dust
Are from eternity, and shall not fail.
Bear them we can, and if we can we must.
Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink your ale.

A. E. HOUSMAN

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

LAST POEM

SHE does not choose to tread that way of faith
Which once she trod in plain simplicity
And duty. Now shower down your pity

Or make her the victim of your wrath and warn her
"Arrogant fool you will return in time
Sorry for your vulgar self-sufficiency "

Pray for her then as one who dared incur
The anger of every god and each creator
But who revered the mind's integrity
Whose hand was against strife
Whose love for the lowly.

1

CLERE PARSONS

WE ARE THE SAILORS OF A STRANGER SEA

WE are the sailors of a stranger sea
The standfast pioneers of unknown waterlands
Therefore let us not awhile turn back
Because no land horizons our grey life.

Rather because we sail our course close-hauled
Let us stand erect and face the biting wind
Like sailors, sinews halliard-taut
To stand the strain. With firm and even steps
Let us glide towards rain and blinding mist
With the fine effrontery of clean white bows
To quell the swelling mutiny of waves.
And let us not forget our heritage
The glory of seasoned timbers caulked by time
The vessel and reward we call our home.

2

JAMES BRAMWELL

THE CONFLICT

THE CONFLICT

I SANG as one
Who on a tilting deck sings
To keep their courage up, though the wave hangs
That shall cut off their sun.

As storm-cocks sing,
Flinging their natural answer in the wind's teeth,
And care not if it is waste of breath
Or birth-carol of spring.

As ocean-flyer clings
To height, to the last drop of spirit driving on 10
While yet ahead is land to be won
And work for wings.

Singing I was at peace,
Above the clouds, outside the ring :
For sorrow finds a swift release in song
And pride its poise.

Yet living here,
As one between two massing powers I live
Whom neutrality cannot save
Nor occupation cheer. 20

None such shall be left alive :
The innocent wing is soon shot down,
And private stars fade in the blood-red dawn
Where two worlds strive.

The red advance of life
Contracts pride, calls out the common blood,
Beats song into a single blade,
Makes a depth-charge of grief.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

LAST POEM

SHE does not choose to tread that way of faith
Which once she trod in plain simplicity
And duty. Now shower down your pity

Or make her the victim of your wrath and warn her
"Arrogant fool you will return in time
Sorry for your vulgar self-sufficiency "

Pray for her then as one who dared incur
The anger of every god and each creator
But who revered the mind's integrity
Whose hand was against strife
Whose love for the lowly.

10

CLERE PARSONS

WE ARE THE SAILORS OF A STRANGER SEA

WE are the sailors of a stranger sea
The standfast pioneers of unknown waterlands
Therefore let us not awhile turn back
Because no land horizons our grey life.

Rather because we sail our course close-hauled
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Like sailors, sinews halliard-taut
To stand the strain. With firm and even steps
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Contracts pride, calls out the common blood,
Beats song into a single blade,
Makes a depth-charge of grief.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Move then with new desires,
For where we used to build and love
Is no man's land, and only ghosts can live
Between two fires.

C. DAY LEWIS

ROCK PILGRIM

LET the damned ride their earwigs to Hell, but let me
not join them.
For why should I covet the tide, or in meanness
purloin them ?
They are sick, they have chosen the path of their
apple-green folly.
I will turn to my mountains of light, and my mauve
melancholy.

Let their hands get the primrose—God wreathe me !—
of lowland and lagland ;
For me the small yellow tormentil of heath-hill and
crag-land. 10
Man's days are as grass, his thought but as thistle-
seed wind-sown ;
I will plod up the pass, and nourish the turf with my
shin-bone.

I should stay for a day, I should seek in high faith
to reclaim them ?
But the threadbare beat straw, and the hole in my
shirt will enflame them.
They are blinder than moles, for they see but the flies
in God's honey ;
And they eat off their soles ; and they kneel to the
Moloch of money.

THE WEST

They have squeezed my mouth dumb ; their clutch
for a year yet may rankle.
will tie Robin Death to my side, with his claw on
my ankle.
Let them come, stick and drum, and assail me across
the grey boulders,
- ill flutter my toes, and rattle the screes on their
shoulders.
Let the damned get to Hell and be quick, while
decision is early.
will tie a red rose to my stick, and plant my feet
squarely.
My back shall be blind on their spite, and my rump
on their folly ;
will plod up the ridge to the right, past the crimson-
green holly.

HERBERT PALMER

THE WEST

BEYOND the moor and mountain crest
—Comrade, look not on the west— 10
The sun is down and drinks away
From air and land the lees of day.

The long cloud and the single pine
Sentinel the ending line,
And out beyond it, clear and wan,
Reach the gulfs of evening on.

The son of woman turns his brow
West from forty counties now,
And, as the edge of heaven he eyes,
Thinks eternal thoughts, and sighs. 20

Oh wide's the world, to rest or roam,
With change abroad and cheer at home,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Fights and furloughs, talk and tale,
Company and beef and ale.

But if I front the evening sky
Silent on the west look I,
And my comrade, stride for stride,
Paces silent at my side.

Comrade, look not on the west :
'Twill have the heart out of your breast ;
'Twill take your thoughts and sink them far,
Leagues beyond the sunset bar. 10

Oh lad, I fear that yon's the sea
Where they fished for you and me,
And there, from whence we both were ta'en,
You and I shall drown again.

Send not on your soul before
To dive from that beguiling shore,
And let not yet the swimmer leave
His clothes upon the sands of eve.

Too fast to yonder strand forlorn
We journey, to the sunken bourn, 20
To flush the fading tinges eyed
By other lads at eventide.

Wide is the world, to rest or roam,
And early 'tis for turning home :
Plant your heel on earth and stand,
And let's forget our native land.

When you and I are spilt on air
Long we shall be strangers there ; es
Friends of flesh and bone are best :
Comrade, look not on the west. 30 he

A. E. HOUSMAN

BELIEF

CREED

THE things that touch me nearest are not those
That bring or money or repute to men :
A schoolboy angered by a spluttering pen,
A burnet moth around a young wild-rose,
Eight notes of Bach, a line of Landor's prose,
The vagabond asleep on straw, the " When ? "
On Love's frank lips, the glow-worm in the glen,
Gray peace before the cock of morning crows.

I am an eavesdropper of loveliness,
And in the humble hope I find my food ; 10
My daily labour is a walking sleep :
And, though I know the slothful heart's distress,
I see how Indolence hath her own good,
And bind her sheaves, and store them fast and deep.
E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

BELIEF

A THIEF has got his creed of thieving,
Birds their religion of the sky,
Scholars and saints their keen believing—
And all are justified but I.

Nothing I know : I only feel
The old unknowledgeable tide : 20
Friendships, revealings, loves—the wheel
By which men live and yet have died.
ROBERT GITTINGS

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

NOTHING IS ENOUGH

NOTHING is enough !
No, though our all be spent—
Heart's extremest love,
Spirit's whole intent,
All that nerve can feel,
All that brain invent,—
Still beyond appeal
Will Divine Desire
Yet more excellent
Precious cost require
Of this mortal stuff,—
Never be content
Till ourselves be fire.
Nothing is enough !

10

LAURENCE BINYON

I SPEND MY DAYS VAINLY

I SPEND my days vainly,
Not in delight ;
Though the world is elate,
And tastes her joys finely.

Here wrapped in slow musing
Lies my dark mind,
To no music attuned
Save its own, and despising

20

The lark for remoteness,
The thrush for bold lying,
The soft wind for blowing,
And the round sun for brightness.

THE SECRET DAY

O tarry for me, sweet ;
I shall stir, I shall wake !
And the melody you seek
Shall be lovely, though late.

FRANK KENDON

THE SECRET DAY

My yesterday has gone, has gone and left me tired,
And now to-morrow comes and beats upon the door ;
So I have built To-day, the day that I desired,
Lest joy come not again, lest peace return no more,
Lest comfort come no more.

So I have built To-day, a proud and perfect day, 10
And I have built the towers of cliffs upon the sands ;
The foxgloves and the gorse I planted on my way ;
The thyme, the velvet thyme, grew up beneath my
hands,
Grew pink beneath my hands.

So I have built To-day, more precious than a dream ;
And I have painted peace upon the sky above ;
And I have made immense and misty seas, that seem
More kind to me than life, more fair to me than
love—
More beautiful than love.

And I have built a house—a house upon the brink 20
Of high and twisted cliffs ; the sea's low singing fills it ;
And there my Secret Friend abides, and there I think
I'll hide my heart away before to-morrow kills it—
A cold to-morrow kills it.

Yes, I have built To-day, a wall against To-morrow,
So let To-morrow knock—I shall not be afraid,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

For none shall give me death, and none shall give
me sorrow,
And none shall spoil this darling day that I have made.
No storm shall stir my sea. No night but mine shall
shade
This day that I have made.

STELLA BENSON

MEN IMPROVE WITH THE YEARS

I AM worn out with dreams ;
A weather-worn, marble triton
Among the streams ;
And all day long I look
Upon this lady's beauty
As though I had found in book 10
A pictured beauty,
Pleased to have filled the eyes
Or the discerning ears,
Delighted to be but wise,
For men improve with the years ;
And yet, and yet,
Is this my dream, or the truth ?
O would that we had met
When I had my burning youth ;
But I grow old among dreams, 20
A weather-worn, marble triton
Among the streams.

W. B. YEATS

TO GROW OLDER

To grow older is this :
To feel on the first rose
The breath malign and fell

THE TIME OF DREAMS

Of the first icicle,
And in the earliest kiss
The handshake of farewell.

To turn at length heart-craven :
Deliberately to close
Your senses to the spring
Because her wiles must bring
December round again ;
To shun love's foothills even,
Fearing to reach the crest 10
Of joy, and see beyond
No choice but to descend
Those slopes of less-than-best
Which are most kin to pain.

And in the end to find
Sole refuge in the mind—
That princely solitude
Where the meek seasons spin
Swift, slow, to suit your will,
Or whirl a-widdershin 20
From rose to daffodil ;
Where love no sequence keeps,
But at your bidding leaps
—Bold, gentle, sweet, or hot—
From mood to mood,
Yet wanes not, withers not.

JAN STRUTHER

THE TIME OF DREAMS

WHAT sweet, what happy days had I,
When dreams made Time Eternity !
Before I knew this body's breath
Could not take life in without death. 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

As fresh as any field of grass
This breath of life was, then ; it was
An orchard with more fruit than leaf,
And every owl enjoyed his grief.
No Winter's morn, when I went forth,
Could force on me a sunless North ;
When I would watch the bees for hours
Clinging to their love-bitten flowers ;
And, dreaming to the songs of birds,
Would still delay my deeds and words ; 10
And every common day could place
A shining Sunday in my face.
O for my greater days to come,
When I shall travel far from home !
On seas that have no shade in sight,
Into the woods that have no light ;
Over the mountains' heads so tall,
Cut by the clouds to pieces small ;
Across wide plains that give my eye
No house or tree to measure them by. 20
And all the wonders I shall see
In some old city new to me ;
Haunting the ships and docks, and then
To hear the strange, sea-faring men
That with their broken English prove
More lands than one to roam and love.
What sweet, what happy days had I—
When dreams made Time Eternity !

W. H. DAVIES

COMPENSATION

BRIGHT-EYED youngster, say,
If you can read the future, 30
Will you regret to-day,
The wild surprise of nature ;

BUCH DER LIEDER

Bird-song, bloom, and rapture,
And lips you dare not capture
Yet soon will touch with your own
And find the secret flown ?

I once was your age, truly
Bold and shy by turn.
I took my maiden duly,
And found still more to learn.
Soon gone was that sweet fooling ;
Life brought a greyer schooling. 10
Yet since that harsh betrayal
Joy has not seemed so frail.

RICHARD CHURCH

BUCH DER LIEDER

BE these the selfsame verses
That once when I was young
Charm'd me with dancing magic
To love their foreign tongue,

Delicate buds of passion,
Gems of a master's art,
That broke forth rivalling Nature
In love-songs of the heart ; 20

Like fresh leaves of the woodland
Whose trembling screens would house
The wanton birdies courting
Upon the springing boughs ?

Alas, how now they are wither'd !
And fallen from the skies
In yellowy tawny crumple
Their tender wreckage lies,

And all their ravisht beauty
Strewn 'neath my feet to-day
Rustles as I go striding
Upon my wintry way.

THE FIDDLER AND THE GIRL

I lived on hope once ; felt my spirit uplifted
By some dream-prospect of established greatness,
Hoped for a Crown and wore it, Power and was rich ;
Possessed through every misfortune and restraint ;
In Desolation was a kind of king.
The regal Marlowe built not firmer than I,
For Getting was just Hoping. Now Life's different.
All's going away, fading, and slipping from me,
And Death seems friendly.

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THE FIDDLER AND THE GIRL

So I can say, "To the winds with Hope ! What's Hope !"

Say it unscathed, set free from wrath and pain.
What's Hope to me when the instrument is speaking !
Only by this I pay my lease of life.
My fiddle sings ! Let hopes die where they soared.

Oh, I'll not chide you for your swift intrusion !
Nor make you shy that you have given me kindness
As senseless as the sun's tap on the hill
Or the soft-footed south wind's wanderings.
Heaven's sense it was, as sudden as wind or sun ; 10
Yet timely, just a touch from the blue sky.

And the root of the matter is I am growing old
And you've half saved me.—No ! it is not Passion.
If it should ever shake you, make no sign,
Nor let your thought run on my slain discretion
That I should sing of you 'neath sun or star,
You the Sun's flag ; for I kneel down to the Sun
And the whole curving radiance of blue sky,
That breadth that holds all Wonder and pure Reason.
Though there's a stretch of severing years between us, 20
Deep chasms of night and tired experience,
You a fair child, and I pushed back by Time.

No ! there's no union of our outward selves,
The mortal trappings of the central sense,
You so aglow, I withering ; you the wild rose,
Song's eglantine, the hyacinth cupula,
Or the juniper, Elijah's cloaking tower,
Any fair flower that's fragrant in the Spring,
The Spring itself, and then the Sun of Spring.

You were all that to me, like a maid to a lover, 30
Touching my darkness with soft kindling fingers,
The rays of your spirit shining through my spirit

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Till I was pinned to Heaven and the light again,
I Earth's sad clod, and you a shaft from the Sun.

How shall I thank you ? Praise what lies beyond you
And all about you, and in the heart of Day ;
Do it in this, the bow along the wire,
Scattering a trail of music on the silence
As I press forward, acolyte, and knowing
I can do nothing save respond and follow
As the Earth follows the Sun, yet does not follow—
Its worn face tilting to the fiery radiance— 10
Swinging around in the wide severing void.

But I'd speak plainer, change the speech's figure.
The body's between us, that's the actual severance,
Yet almost nothing if I break with Time
And let the clean-stripped spirit touch the spirit.
In any thousand years what's death and change !
What's blight and age, or any sudden thing
That starts new life out of life's perishing !

There are no walls between us, only chasms,
The abysses of the flesh, the sinews' cleavage, 20
(Both voice and sight go out upon the uplands)
And these will close as they have closed before.
The Spirit-summit towers firm through Death and
Change ;
And I'll see plainer ere the century's gone,
And know what stole upon me in strange guise.
For every Spring it comes—shakes me, then goes.

HERBERT PALMER

A PRIVATE MAN ON PUBLIC MEN

WHEN my contemporaries were driving
Their coach through Life with strain and striving,

COOLE AND BALLYLEE, 1931

And raking riches into heaps,
And ably pleading in the Courts
With smart rejoinders and retorts,
Or where the Senate nightly keeps
Its vigils, till their fames were fanned
By rumour's tongue throughout the land,
I lived in quiet, screened, unknown,
Pondering upon some stick or stone,
Or news of some rare book or bird
Latterly bought, or seen, or heard, 10
Not wishing ever to set eyes on
The surging crowd beyond the horizon,
Tasting years of moderate gladness
Mellowed by sundry days of sadness,
Shut from the noise of the world without,
Hearing but dimly its rush and rout,
Unenvying those amid its roar,
Little endowed, not wanting more.

THOMAS HARDY

COOLE AND BALLYLEE, 1931

UNDER my window-ledge the waters race,
Otters below and moor-hens on the top, 20
Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven's face
Then darkening through "dark" Raftery's "cellar"
drop,
Run underground, rise in a rocky place
In Coole demesne, and there to finish up
Spread to a lake and drop into a hole.
What's water but the generated soul?

Upon the borders of that lake's a wood
Now all dry sticks under a wintry sun,
And in a copse of beeches there I stood,
For Nature's pulled her tragic buskin on 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

And all the rant's a mirror of my mood :
At sudden thunder of the mounting swan
I turned about and looked where branches break
The glittering reaches of the flooded lake.

Another emblem there ! That stormy white
But seems a concentration of the sky ;
And, like the soul, it sails into the sight
And in the morning's gone, no man knows why ;
And is so lovely that it sets to right
What knowledge or its lack had set awry, 10
So arrogantly pure, a child might think
It can be murdered with a spot of ink.

Sound of a stick upon the floor, a sound
From somebody that toils from chair to chair ;
Beloved books that famous hands have bound,
Old marble heads, old pictures everywhere ;
Great rooms where travelled men and children found
Content or joy ; a last inheritor
Where none has reigned that lacked a name and fame
Or out of folly into folly came. 20

A spot whereon the founders lived and died
Seemed once more dear than life ; ancestral trees
Or gardens rich in memory glorified
Marriages, alliances and families,
And every bride's ambition satisfied.
Where fashion or mere fantasy decrees
Man shifts about—all that great glory spent—
Like some poor Arab tribesman and his tent.

We were the last romantics—chose for theme
Traditional sanctity and loveliness ; 30
Whatever's written in what poets name
The book of the people ; whatever most can bless
The mind of man or elevate a rhyme ;

AN ANCIENT TO ANCIENTS

But all is changed, that high horse riderless,
Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode
Where the swan drifts upon a darkening flood.

W. B. YEATS

AN ANCIENT TO ANCIENTS

WHERE once we danced, where once we sang,
Gentlemen,

The floors are sunken, cobwebs hang,
And cracks creep ; worms have fed upon
The doors. Yea, sprightlier times were then
Than now, with harps and tabrets gone,
Gentlemen !

10

Where once we rowed, where once we sailed,
Gentlemen,

And damsels took the tiller, veiled
Against too strong a stare (God wot
Their fancy, then or anywhen !)
Upon that shore we are clean forgot,
Gentlemen !

We have lost somewhat, afar and near,
Gentlemen,

The thinning of our ranks each year
Affords a hint we are nigh undone,
That we shall not be ever again
The marked of many, loved of one,
Gentlemen.

20

In dance the polka hit our wish,
Gentlemen,

The paced quadrille, the spry schottische,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

“ Sir Roger.”—And in opera spheres
The “ Girl ” (the famed “ Bohemian ”),
And “ Trovatore,” held the ears,
Gentlemen.

This season’s paintings do not please,
Gentlemen,
Like Etty, Mulready, Maclise ;
Throbbing romance has waned and wanned ;
No wizard wields the witching pen
Of Bulwer, Scott, Dumas, and Sand, 10
Gentlemen.

The bower we shrined to Tennyson,
Gentlemen,
Is roof-wrecked ; damp that drip upon
Sagged seats, the creeper-nails are rust,
The spider is sole denizen ;
Even she who voiced those rhymes is dust,
Gentlemen !

We who met sunrise sanguine-souled,
Gentlemen, 20
Are wearing weary. We are old ;
These younger press ; we feel our rout
Is imminent to Aides’ den,—
That evening shades are stretching out,
Gentlemen !

And yet, though ours be failing frames,
Gentlemen,
So were some others’ history names,
Who trod their track light-limbed and fast
As these youth, and not alien 30
From enterprise, to their long last,
Gentlemen.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,
Gentlemen,
Pythagoras, Thucydides,
Herodotus, and Homer,—yea,
Clement, Augustin, Origen,
Burnt brightlier towards their setting-day,
Gentlemen.

And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed ; list,
Gentlemen ;
Much is there waits you we have missed ; 10
Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,
Much, much has lain outside our ken :
Nay, rush not : time serves : we are going,
Gentlemen.

THOMAS HARDY

THE DESERTED HOUSE

KNOWING the house deserted, amid the darkness of
trees
That seemed to me memories
Flat as vernal scenery upon a stage,
Greatly daring I came to the house again ;
Came straight, for I knew its intimacies ;
Broke through bracken and wood to the tower with
the weather vane ; 20
Came to visit the place
I thought not to visit again.

And knowing the secret ways between tree and tree,
I came through undergrowth
To the falling folly once more,
Where we played together, my brother and I, and he
Who died by his own hand, another brother to me.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

But the folly had gone ; and down I kneeled on the
floor
That remained, a great slab of stone, the tombstone of
three.

And the ghosts rose up : children who trotted beside
Me, a child again. But alone I had not died.
And that day I feared the deserted house, and the
brake,
The trees and the glades of the wood,
I feared the forsaken garden,
For none of the living were there, and another ghost,
He who gave me life (and his spirit I feared the
most),
Walked, silent, forever alone alongside the lake 10
Whom no living woman had understood.

I came yet a second time to that house and garden,
With the one whom I love, saying : " Come, let us
enter the house,
That I feared so before to do."
And we climbed by a window and stood
On the old blank landing I knew,
Where, a child, on the stairway to bed,
In a corner I huddled alone to look at the stars,
Where first the awe and fear of infinity took me.
We went up the hollow stairs and after us followed the
dead. 20
In the empty nursery I cried : " There, there was the
bed,
Where she beat me and shook me,
When I cried with terror at night."

Then the one whom I love
Held me long on that spot, held me deep,
Murmuring : " Here is the healing,
Here is the answer, the pardon."

SONNET

Since when I play with the ghosts in the house and the
garden,
In dreams,
When asleep.

But my love took another love
New Year when the snow was deep.

So I came a third time,
Like a leveret over the snow,
To stand at the roots of the nursery lime,
When the squares of the windows were leaden,
Not golden as long ago. 10

And I knew that the children played
With drum and painted toys,
Whilst our favourite, the suicide, walked the landing ;
Now the ghosts were I and the boys.

The boys that cook brown trout with me
On the fire in the folly, in dreams,
So the tramp says : " The hares
Have been here again, it seems."

DOROTHY WELLESLEY

SONNET

You must say No to this that seems so living,
Loosen your hold, and let it pass you by. 20
There can be no atonement, no forgiving,
Until this thought of clemency shall die.
You have known pity and supremely won it,
Have leant upon its form and known it true,
Then call on Death to set his numbness on it,
It must be only memory to you.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Not till the deeper loving has undone it
Can there be any greater thing to do.—
You must say Yes to this annihilation
For only so can spirit travel free
And anguish rend itself in consummation
As buds that break on April's weeping tree.

NORA K. McCAUSLAND

EPITAPH

SIR, you should notice me : I am the Man ;
I am Good Fortune : I am satisfied.
All I desired, more than I could desire,
I have : everything has gone right with me. 10
Life was a hiding-place that played me false ;
I croucht ashamed, and still was seen and scorned :
But now I am not seen. I was a fool,
And now I know what wisdom dare not know :
For I know Nothing. I was a slave, and now
I have ungoverned freedom and the wealth
That cannot be conceived : for I have Nothing.
I lookt for beauty and I longed for rest,
And now I have perfection : nay, I am
Perfection : I am Nothing, I am dead. 20

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

GERONTION

*Thou hast nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.*

HERE I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates

GERONTION

Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,
And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead ;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea, 10
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.
I an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. " We would see a
sign ! "
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvenescence of the
year
Came Christ the tiger

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering
judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers ; by Mr. Silvero 20
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room ;

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians ;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles ; Fraulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door.
Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

After such knowledge, what forgiveness ? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors

And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too
soon

Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed
with 10

Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours.
Think at last

We have not reached conclusion, when I
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation 20
Of the backward devils.

I would meet you upon this honestly.
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
I have lost my passion : why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated ?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch :
How should I use them for your closer contact ?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium, 30
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,

VIENNA

With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the
windy straits
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,
And an old man driven by the Trades
To a sleepy corner.

Tenants of the house, 10
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

T. S. ELIOT

VIENNA

THESE are the consequences,
The way the world goes :
And sleep's and hope's pretences
Inadequate defences :
Too late or ill-planned
Desperate lines manned :
Courage and folly now
To force and craft bow.

Clear air of a mountain town 20
That I have not known :
The useless firing and the weary ends
Of comrades, might-have-been friends,
Who fought well, but too late.
Can we, from that fate
Wring to some foresight,
Or will the same lost fight
Mark too our ends ?

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

War is a game for the whole mind,
An art of will and eye,
No brothering of mankind
Or hating inconstantly :
A hard art of foreseeing,
Of not too much caring ;
A game for their playing
Who fall in love with death,
Doubt, and seeping fear,
Contemptuous of the breath 10
Of crowds, and love of common
Yet loved man or woman.
A giving that retains
The privacy of our pains.

JULIAN BELL

LOVELY IMMORTAL

DARLING perfection, whom I scorn,
Lie sleeping, sleeping, softly now !
In dreamless quiet, there she lies
Beneath the frosty, starlit bough.

O sleep full softly, never fear ;
You'll wake and shiver in the grey 20
When sun-stars vanish one by one
And dawn, relentless, strides to day.

O then your thought will rise and wrench
The world anew, renew the past,
Give alien life to bird and leaf
Till day with grief is overcast.

In one sharp moment you'll repeat
The words too true. You'll not rescind,

O TIME BE SWIFT

But whistle, whistle, once again
For dreams gone sailing down the wind.

And still at daybreak, sunset, noon,
You'll turn and leave a wreath to lie
Where I have found my bivouac
Under a black and broken sky.

MICHAEL ROBERTS

WHEN I'M ALONE

"*WHEN I'm alone*"—The words tripped off his tongue
As though to be alone were nothing strange.

"*When I was young*," he said, "*when I was young. . . .*"

I thought of age, and loneliness, and change. 10
I thought how strange we grow when we're alone,
And how unlike the selves that meet, and talk,
And blow the candles out, and say good-night.
Alone. . . . The word is life endured and known.
It is the stillness where our spirits walk
And all but inmost faith is overthrown.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

O TIME BE SWIFT

O TIME be swift to heal this sullen pain,
Make me forgetful as the rivers are
Of the moon's image when the dawn again
Drives from the sky all save the morning star ; 20
Let me keep nothing of my lost delight,
Not so much as a scent to chill my room

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

With bitter-sweet remembrance ; fill the night
With kind oblivious sleep and soundless gloom.

So in a little while may I awaken
To the bright world and live, being wise to bless
The sun because it lights the road I have taken,
My life because it has conquered bitterness,
My soul because I have held my faith unshaken,
My hope because it was strengthened by distress.

EDWARD DAVISON

LIVE YOU BY LOVE CONFINED

LIVE you by love confined,
There is no nearer nearness ; 10
Break not his light bounds,
The stars' and seas' harness :
There is nothing beyond,
We have found the land's end.
We'll take no mortal wound
Who felt him in the furnace,
Drowned in his fierceness,
By his midsummer browned :
Nor ever lose awareness 20
Of nearness and farness
Who've stood at earth's heart careless
Of suns and storms around,
Who have leant on the hedge of the wind,
On the last ledge of darkness.

We are where love has come
To live : he is that river
Which flows and is the same ;
He is not the famous deceiver
Nor early-flowering dream.
Content you. Be at home 30
In me. There's but one room

IF LOVE BE A FLOWER

Of all the house you may never
Share, deny or enter.
There, as a candle's beam
Stands firm and will not waver
Spire-straight in a close chamber,
As though in shadowy cave a
Stalagmite of flame,
The integral spirit climbs
The dark in light for ever.

C. DAY LEWIS

IF LOVE BE A FLOWER

If love be a flower, 10
Pluck not thy flower,
Though flowers be cool
And dear to thy brow.
Thou happy fool,
Thou shalt travel not far,
Thou shalt lie down with this
Cold flower for thy lover.
He shall blind, he shall star
Thine eyes. His cold kiss
Thy mouth shall cover. 20

If love be music,
Hear not that music,
Sing not that song,
Though songs be few.
Oh, very strong,
Very close is the weaving
Of notes among notes.
Thou art bound and entangled.
Sing, then, unbelieving,
And sing till thy throat's 30
Soft song is strangled.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

If love be a lion,
Flee not that lion,
Let thy triumphing bones
On the desert lie.
On a desert of stones
Thy bones shall smile,
Comforted only
By stark silence.
Silence and dew
Be thy crown, for thou
Wert blind to a flower
And deaf to music.

10

STELLA BENSON

LOVE

BESIDE love, what jewel has mystery
And depth of heart ?
What bird of the wood has sanctuary
In leaves apart ?
What ewe calling her lamb at evening
Has tenderness ?
What day has grace that night can deepen
And sleep can bless ?

20

Jewel filled with water-light
Strong to endure,
Bird in the dark green night
Of leaves pure,
Ewe and lamb side by side,
Evening above,
No strength, no peace, no comfort have
Beside love.

STELLA GIBBONS

THE CUL-DE-SAC

SONG

LOVE, Love to-day, my dear,
Love is not always here ;
Wise maids know how soon grows sere
The greenest leaf of Spring ;
But no man knoweth
Whither it goeth
When the wind bloweth
So frail a thing.

Love, Love, my dear, to-day,
If the ship's in the bay, 10
If the bird has come your way
That sings on summer trees ;
When his song faileth
And the ship saileth
No voice availeth
To call back these.

CHARLOTTE MEW

THE CUL-DE-SAC

WHOSE love's a broad highway
That stretches boldly on
Before them all the day,
White and smooth in the sun— 20
These, if they will, may run.
For them there is no need
To curb the hot-foot speed
Of their delight, which draws them
On over dale and hill
And from each summit shows them
A landscape lovelier still.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

But those whose love's no more
Than a blind alley—
A cul-de-sac
Which can have no other end
Than turning back
Or beating with bare hands
At a wall without a door—
These must go slowly.
These at a measured pace
Must walk, 10
And linger in one place
Often, to gaze and talk ;
Even retrace
A yard or two, perhaps,
Their careful steps,
And take them over again.
Their eyes they must restrain
From seeking the far sky
And bend them to enjoy
The small delights which grow beneath their feet :
Veined, shining, curious pebbles 21
They must admire, and stoop
To finger the small cresses,
Stonecrops and cushioned mosses
That creep
Between the untrodden cobbles
Of that deserted street.

Gently if they are wise,
From stage to stage progresses
The grave, time-honoured dance of their caresses.
Impetuous hands must bide 31
Their hour, till hungry eyes
Be satisfied ;
And from a finger's touch
They must distil as much
Sweetness and ravishment

SILVER WEDDING

As freer lovers find
In bodies intertwined.
They must eke out each kiss
With its own memory
And long foretasting of the next one's bliss :
For kisses treated so
Shall be less swift to grow
(Strange alchemy !) from butterfly to bee.

By such fond strategy,
Such passionate artifice, 10
They may a long while cheat
Themselves into content,
And not too deeply care
That fate across the threshold of their street
Has scrawled " No Thoroughfare."

JAN STRUTHER

HUSBAND AND WIFE

Not theirs the vain tumultuous bliss,
Whose only currency's a kiss,
Nor linked hands, nor meeting eyes,
But long-drawn mutual silences, 20
Community in trivial things,
The rare fantastic mood that brings
Wisdom and mirth unspeakable
Out of an insect or a shell.

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

SILVER WEDDING

In the middle of the night he started up
At a cry from his sleeping Bride,
A bat from some ruin in a heart he'd never searched,
Nay, hardly seen inside :

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

“ Want me and take me for the woman that I am,
And not for her that died,
The lovely chit Nineteen I one time was,
And am no more,” she cried.

RALPH HODGSON

WOMAN'S SONG

No more upon my bosom rest thee,
Too often have my hands caressed thee,
 My lips thou knowest well, too well.
Lean to my heart no more thine ear
My spirit's hidden truth to hear
 —It has no more to tell.

10

In what dark night, in what strange night,
Burnt to the butt the candle's light
 That lit our room so long ?
I do not know. I thought I knew
How love could be both sweet and true,
 I also thought it strong.

Where has the flame departed, where
Amid the waste of empty air
 Is that which dwelt with us ?
Was it a fancy ? Did we make
Only a show for dead love's sake,
 It being so piteous ?

20

No more against my bosom press thee,
Ask no more that my hands caress thee,
 Leave the sad lips thou hast known so well.
If to my heart thou lean thine ear,
There, grieving, thou wilt only hear
 Vain murmuring of an empty shell.

EDWARD SHANKS

LOVE LIGHTS HIS FIRE

SONG OF OPHELIA THE SURVIVOR

THERE is no smirch of sin in you, only its fires.
You are a man burned white with merciless desires ;
A restless heat consumes you, and your brain,
Tortured to torturing, craves for ugly pain.

Beauty still lives in you, and from her seat
Controls your glances, and directs your feet ;
One look from you taught me so much of love,
I have all pleasure, just to watch you move.

That look was like a wet blue mist of flowers,
Which held compelling loveliness and sleepy powers.
I dreamed of calling pipes down a warm glade ; 11
By the transposed music of your soul I was betrayed.

Pipe for me, my dear lover ! I will come,
And your sick soul shall find in me a home ;
I will be your house, clean, high, and strong,
And you shall live in me, all winter long.

As you are fevered, I will be a pool,
Full of green shadows, level, silent, cool.
You shall bathe in me, in my being move ;
I will put out your fires with my strong love. 20

ANNA WICKHAM

LOVE LIGHTS HIS FIRE

LOVE lights his fire to burn my Past—
There goes the house where I was born !
And even Friendship—Love declares—
Must feed his precious flames and burn.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

I stuffed my life with odds and ends,
But how much joy can Knowledge give ?
The World my guide, I lived to learn—
From Love, alone, I learn to live.

W. H. DAVIES

THE WHITE SWAN

COULD you but see her
—She would seem
Like some bright star
That is seen in dream :
Like a sun-burst
Seen on a wintry day 10
When all, but one bright spot,
Is grey.

Could you but see her
—That would be
As when one sees
On a flooding sea
The white foam ride ;
Or sees a proud swan,
Buoyantly,
Breasting a tide. 20

JAMES STEPHENS

SECOND PORTRAIT OF J. M.

SHE has stood upon the rims of many worlds
And looked at many voids with open eyes
And turned back smiling and returned unscathed,
Remaining young and wise.

INTIMACY

She has drunk the sun, embraced the air, spun Earth
Upon her fingertips, and laughed and cried
A lifetime in a day, but never yet
Been wholly satisfied.

She is armoured, confident, complete, exultant,
Born to command, star-destined to success—
And yet, a little, longs to rest, disarmed,
Tired of tirelessness.

A. S. J. TESSIMOND

TO — WITH AN IVORY HAND GLASS

Look in this crystal pool, and you will see
(Haloed in gold, enshrined in ivory) 10
What Heaven's unopened windows hid from me.

Whence this enchantment, weaving spells that bind
With sightless cords my visionary mind?
What angel, dark or shining, lurks behind?

Eyes of the flesh still blind, unfolded scroll
Hiding its mystery! God knows the whole.
I guess your face the shadow of your soul.
ALFRED DOUGLAS

INTIMACY

SINCE I have seen you do those intimate things
That other men but dream off; lull asleep
The sinister dark forest of your hair 20
And tie the bows that stir on your calm breast
Faintly as leaves that shudder in their sleep.
Since I have seen your stocking swallow up,
A swift black wind, the flame of your pale foot,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

And deemed your slender limbs so meshed in silk
Sweet mermaid sisters drowned in their dark hair ;
I have not troubled overmuch with food,
And wine has seemed like water from a well ;
Pavements are built of fire, grass of thin flames ;
All other girls grow dull as painted flowers,
Or flutter harmlessly like coloured flies
Whose wings are tangled in the net of leaves
Spread by frail trees that grow behind the eyes.

EDGELL RICKWORD

THE WINDS

THE quality of your rage is my delight : 10
I saw a wind in a volcanic night
Incline a fir-wood almost to the ground,
And with such strength, that I could hear no sound—
So is your anger written for my mind,
In driven trees, and in that mastering wind.

A quality of courage is my gift.
First would you wreck, O Builder ? Lift
Your hammer against me, and strike your fill ;
Cleave me to dust—and from that dust my will
Will rise in spirals, masterful as flame, 20
Till whirlwinds march, in triumphs of your name !

ANNA WICKHAM

RENASCENCE

WE have bit no forbidden apple,
Eve and I,
Yet the splashes of day and night
Falling round us, no longer dapple
The same valley with purple and white.

RENASCENCE

This is our own still valley,
Our Eden, our home ;
But day shows it vivid with feeling,
And the pallor of night does not tally
With dark sleep that once covered the ceiling.

The little red heifer : to-night I looked in her eyes ;
She will calve to-morrow.
Last night, when I went with the lantern, the sow
was grabbing her litter
With snarling red jaws ; and I heard the cries
Of the new-born, and then, the old owl, then the bats
that flutter. 10

And I woke to the sound of the wood-pigeon, and lay
and listened
Till I could borrow
A few quick beats from a wood-pigeon's heart ; and
when I did rise
Saw where morning sun on the shaken iris glistened.
And I knew that home, this valley, was wider than
Paradise.

I learned it all from my Eve,
The warm dumb wisdom ;
She's a quicker instructress than years ;
She has quickened my pulse to receive
Strange throbs, beyond laughter and tears. 20

So now I know the valley
Fleshed all like me
With feelings that change and quiver
And clash, and yet seem to tally,
Like all the clash of a river
Moves on to the sea.

D. H. LAWRENCE

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

OMNIPRESENCE

THERE is no loneliness for me ;
I see you in the dotted stars,
in all the plenty of the leafless sea :
even the rush-hid nenuphars
suggest your personality ;
you forage with the pirate bee.

How wonderful that you should share
with Earth her time-old loveliness !
Does she not lend her softness for your hair,
and can no other way express 10
what thrushes down the years have sung
but through the sweetness of your tongue ?

You descant with the droning bees,
and when the sky-lark's hymns are done
I hear strange echoes drop among the trees :
I pluck the crimson snap-dragon
and feel you shiver through and through,
for spirit has gone out of you.

CHRISTOPHER HASSALL

FISH IN THE UNRUFFLED LAKES

FISH in the unruffled lakes
The swarming colours wear, 20
Swans in the winter air
A white perfection have,
And the great lion walks
Through his innocent grove ;
Lion, fish, and swan
Act, and are gone
Upon Time's toppling wave.

SONG

We till shadowed days are done,
We must weep and sing
Duty's conscious wrong,
The Devil in the clock,
The Goodness carefully worn
For atonement or for luck ;
We must lose our loves,
On each beast and bird that moves
Turn an envious look.

Sighs for folly said and done 10
Twist our narrow days ;
But I must bless, I must praise
That you, my swan, who have
All gifts that to the swan
Impulsive Nature gave,
The majesty and pride,
Last night should add
Your voluntary love.

W. H. AUDEN

SONG

SINCE I have given thee all my very heart,
Since I have staked so deep and dangerously 20
All that I have of hope till breath depart,
And flung my little kingdom on a die ;

Since now there streams over my land and sea
This dread Love—strange as light—beyond recall,
I am thy prisoner ; yes, and thou art free
With but a touch to lay in ruin all.

HERBERT TRENCH

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

A HERD OF DOES

THERE is no doe in all the herd
Whose heart is not her heart.
O Earth, with all their glimmering eyes
She sees thee as thou art.

Like them in shapes of fleeting fire
She mingles with the light
Till whoso saw her sees her not
And doubts his former sight.

They come and go and none can say
Who sees them subtly run 10
If they indeed are forms of life
Or figments of the sun.

So is she one with Heaven here,
Confounding mortal eyes,
As do the holy dead who move
Innumerable in the skies.

But now and then a wandering man
May glimpse as on he goes
A golden movement of her dreams
As 'twere a herd of does. 20

HUGH MACDIARMID

ON HARTING DOWN

ONCE, when their hearts were wild with joy,
They bedded on the downs :
Hours drifted past, the dawn grew ghast,
Their polls wore dewy crowns.

LODGE AND MANSION

While the stars paled, she, first, awoke
And saw, no more alone,
They kernel were to a herd of deer,
Come round them all unknown.

A dun buck couched upon the left,
A white doe to their right,
An hundred others, like watching mothers,
Loomed peacefully out of night.

Ere she could wake him, they rose and were
shaking
Small droplets from cold thighs ; 10
Proudly the leader then streamed them afar
To where the sun would rise.

Till, dot by dot, they threaded the arch
His lifting forehead raised,
And, sublimed to light, were lost to sight,
Though still enthralled she gazed.

Her lover rose and, leaning close,
Through to her mind he peered ;
Parked therein, numerous, timid, dumb
Musings retired or neared.

T. STURGE MOORE

LODGE AND MANSION

WHEN you have left me, beautiful, alone,
This tireless soul and tired thing of breath,
Again toward two houses I must run
And always be encroaching fast upon
Your beauty and the hour of my death.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

How little, in your loving if I died
Kissed into silence, should I want of faith !
But like an artless bridegroom and a bride
Never my resolutions coincide—
Your beauty and the hour of my death.

O then some darkness when delight is due
Conceal in your rare lips a painless wraith
Of poison to consume my body too,
That I may drink, while all the world is you,
Your beauty and the hour of my death. 10

Then under holy arms what could we fear ?
We would not fear, to do no more with breath.
It was the curious dawn we could not bear
That looked into the night—O take, my dear,
Your hour and the beauty of my death.

LAURENCE WHISTLER

AFTER ATTEMPTED ESCAPE FROM LOVE

(To J. M.)

HE who has once been caught in a silver chain
may burn and toss and fret.
He will never be bound with bronze again ;
he will not be forgiven ; will never forget.
He who has looked at the golden grapes of the sun
will call no sour fruit sweet. 21
He will turn from the moon's green apples and run,
though they fall in his hand, though they lie at his
feet.

A. S. J. TESSIMOND

THE BAD GIRL

FREEDOM

Now heaven be thanked, I am out of love again !

I have been long a slave, and now am free ;

have been tortured, and am eased of pain ;

I have been blind, and now my eyes can see ;

have been lost, and now the way lies plain ;

I have been caged, and now I hold the key ;

have been mad, and now at last am sane ;

I am wholly I, that was but a half of me.

So, a free man, my dull proud path I plod,

Who, tortured, blind, mad, caged, was once a God.

JAN STRUTHER

THE BAD GIRL

I SAW her in her woodland place

11

When she was young, when we were young :

And there was fairness in her face

And a sweet verse upon her tongue.

The last red light made glancing ore

The mosses on the knotty tree :

The level rays in the covert's core

Made all the leafage fantasy ;

Made the brown gold, and made her seem

(Who was, God knows, but common clay)

20

A noble thing, a lovely theme,

One that could not be cast away.

I cast away, I cast away

Things childish, and am not forlorn :

But she had better have died, the day

She stood so fair beneath the thorn.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Younger than I, yet is she old ;
None finds her honest, none finds her sweet :
Long past her beauty, she will scold,
Will beg and cozen, lie and cheat.

I as the woody medlar grow
And shall be ripe when I am rotten :
But like June's strawberry, even so
She, much enjoyed, is soon forgotten.

Yet like Ben Jonson's lily, she
Lent to her day a darling grace, 10
Remembered till unwept shall be
Laid in the loam her liliated face.

So, Saturn, upon Venus think,
And light esteem your armour tough :
Say, though the festering lily stink,
Strength without beauty's not enough.

RUTH PITTER

WELL, AND WHAT OF IT ?

WELL, and what of it ? What if you are beautiful ?
What if your ready mirror shows you hour by hour
far eyes profound as a heaven-reflecting pool,
mouth like the rainbow's smile upon the summer
shower ? 20

What if your faithful thirsty lovers think of you
as of some draught celestial, some pure passion's wine,
when still the man-made Grail of their adoring view
flows but with vanity, ferment of worldly vine ?

Is this achievement ? Is this what shall make you
glad ?

Is this a gift for others bought with your life-blood,

NOW I HAVE NOTHING

a sweet truth that shall warm men's starving hearts,
shall add
to weal, this cold, corroding misuse of rich good ?

Out on you, woman ; quit your beauty, ere the day
when that's within it shall have eat'n it all away.

ELIZABETH DARYUSH

FALSE ANCHORAGE

UNDER this hayrick lies
All my heart's treasure,
The impermanent skies
Pass at their leisure,
And the flowers of the noon
Prepare to fade soon.
The bird-music dies.
Oh bitter heart's treasure
To anchor me so
To this woman, my lover,
While the skies fade above her
And the earth dies below.

10

RICHARD CHURCH

NOW I HAVE NOTHING

Now I have nothing. Even the joy of loss—
Even the dreams I had I now am losing.
Only this thing I know ; that you are using
My heart as a stone to bear your foot across. . . . 20
I am glad — I am glad — the stone is of your
choosing. . . .

STELLA BENSON

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

MARY'S SONG

I WAD ha'e gi'en him my lips tae kiss,
Had I been his, had I been his ;
Barley breid and elder wine,
Had I been his as he is mine.

The wanderin' bee it seeks the rose ;
Tae the lochan's bosom the burnie goes ;
The grey bird cries at evenin's fa',
" My luve, my fair one, come awa'."

My beloved sall ha'e this he'rt tae break,
Reid, reid wine and the barley cake, 10
A he'rt tae break, and a mou' tae kiss,
Tho' he be nae mine, as I am his.

MARION ANGUS

GOSSIP

A BREEZE in the barley
And gossip is there ;
A thousand heads whispering
A secret laid bare.

A thousand wise heads
A-nod in the sun ;
The joy on their faces !
The shame on one ! 20

JOHN GAWSWORTH

WHEESHT, WHEESHT

WHEESHT, wheesht, my foolish hert,
For weel ye ken
I widna ha'e ye stert
Auld ploys again.

SEA LOVE

It's guid to see her lie
Sae snod an' cool,
A' lust o' lovin' by—
Wheesht, wheesht, ye fule.

HUGH MACDIARMID

MORNING

A WIDE land and a bright light flowing
Where winds nor rise nor fall ;
Empty ; and not a footstep going
To break the charm at all.

A wide sky and a deep calm, knowing
Of neither right nor wrong—
Only through all material flowing
Soft immaterial song. 10

The loud hoof of a strong horse going ;
Grinding of wheel on road ;
And the heart awakened, and bitterly knowing
Its harness and its load.

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

SEA LOVE

TIDE be runnin' the great world over :
'Twas only last June month I mind that we
Was thinkin' the toss and the call in the breast of
the lover
So everlastin' as the sea. 20

Heer's the same little fishes that sputter and swim,
Wi' the moon's old glim on the grey, wet sand ;
An' him's no more to me nor me to him
Than the wind goin' over my hand.

CHARLOTTE MEW

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

SO NOW SEPTEMBER ENDS

So now September ends ; above the sea
One drifting gull emits his plaintive cry,
Haunting, and keeping lonely watch with me,
Wheeling above the shadows from the sky. ·
Ours is a harmony of solitude,
Ours the soul-union, gotten without speech,
That shares and understands the heart's wild mood
When love has turned to jetsam of the beach :
For I am gone from you, am desolate.
He is bereft : his flock has winged away. 10
We are sad monarchs of a tide-bound state,
Without one subject in this dying day ;
And ever on my ears (O serpent hiss !)
Surf brushes shingle with a lover's kiss.

JOHN GAWSWORTH

BITTER SANCTUARY

I

SHE lives in the porter's room ; the plush is nicotined.
Clients have left their photos there to perish.
She watches through green shutters those who press
To reach unconsciousness.
She licks her varnished thin magenta lips,
She picks her foretooth with a finger nail, 20
She pokes her head out to greet new clients, or
To leave them (to what torture) waiting at the door.

II

Heat has locked the heavy earth,
Given strength to every sound.
He, where his life still holds him to the ground,

BITTER SANCTUARY

In anaesthesia, groaning for re-birth,
Leans at the door.
From out the house there comes the dullest flutter ;
A lackey ; and thin giggling from behind that shutter.

III

His lost eyes lean to find the number.
Follows his knuckled rap, and hesitating curse.
He cannot wake himself ; he may not slumber ;
While on the long white wall across the road
Drives the thin outline of a dwindling hearse.

IV

Now the door opens wide. 10

He : “ Is there room inside ? ”

She : “ Are you past the bounds of pain ? ”

He : “ May my body lie in vain

Among the dreams I cannot keep ! ”

She : “ Let him drink the cup of sleep.”

V

Thin arms and ghostly hands ; faint sky-blue eyes ;
Long drooping lashes, lids like full-blown moons,
Clinging to any brink of floating skies :
What hope is there ? What fear ?—Unless to wake
and see
Lingering flesh, or cold eternity. 20

O yet some face, half living, brings

Far gaze to him and croons :

She : “ You’re white. You are alone.

Can you not approach my sphere ? ”

He : “ I’m changing into stone.”

She : “ Would I were ! Would *I* were ! ”

Then the white attendants fill the cup.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

VI

In the morning through the world,
Watch the flunkeys bring the coffee ;
Watch the shepherds on the downs,
Lords and ladies at their toilet,
Farmers, merchants, frothing towns.

But look how he, unfortunate, now fumbles
Through unknown chambers, unheedful stumbles.
Can he evade the over-shadowing night ?
Are there not somewhere chinks of braided light ?

VII

How do they leave who once are in those rooms ? 10
Some may be found, they say, deeply asleep
In ruined tombs.
Some in white beds, with faces round them. Some
Wander the world, and never find a home.

HAROLD MONRO

THE PLAYERS

To-day I acted Christ,
While Joy played Lazarus ;
I buried her in ferns
And heaps of gathered grass.
And when I cried " Come forth ! " 20
Up from the grave she rose
And, with a peal of bells,
Threw off her burial clothes.

When Sleep this night has come,
With feathers for our grass,
Shall we reverse our parts
Of Christ and Lazarus ?

THE REAPER

When I—a buried man—
Hear “ Lazarus, come forth ! ”
I’ll rise and with both hands
Ring every bell on earth !

W. H. DAVIES

HOW LONG, SAID SPIRIT, MUST I WALK THIS EARTH ?

How long, said spirit, must I walk this earth ?
I, wingèd, to whom Paradise gave birth,
How long must I pace fields of drought and dearth ?

How long, said mind, must I tread the small maze
Of paths bewild’ring, of thought that betrays
My straight endeavour with blind-alleyed ways ? 10

How long must I, said life, said bodied soul,
Be baulked by faulty flesh from beauty’s goal ?
How long have but pittance, who sees joy’s whole ?

How long, said heart, may I love’s raiment wear ?
How long may I work for those I hold dear ?
When must I leave them in sorrow and fear ?

ELIZABETH DARYUSH

THE REAPER

I saw in a corn-field
A man very beautiful ;
And he held in his hand
A sickle of flame.
I approached him and said, “ Sir,
Why standest thou sorrowful
Here by thyself, and
What is thy name ? ”

20

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Then sadly he answered :
“ My name, it is Wonderful,
Lord of the Harvest, and
Healer of ill.
My spirit is sore grieved,
For the time is at hand
To put forth the sickle :
And lo !
The corn is a bundle,
The chaff is a hill.”

10

MICHAEL MCKENNA

SONNET

DARK dreadful death I dread your approach :
Knowing as I know you roll nearer every hour
Fear of your fearful embrace spreads great folds
Of coldness like an ocean over me ; I cry, How
How can I withstand, stand up, repel
The ever invading eternal wave whose swell
Beginning at birth, declines into what afterwards,
Reaching its crested height at the second the heart
Sick of resistance, sinks to succumb like a stone
Marking the moment buoyant life departed. 20
Not beaten, not beaten, but utterly fatigued
These four limbs fall deaf to the word defeat :
Aware by divine kindness that this descent
Through cubic nothingness resembles supine rest.

GEORGE BARKER

FATE WRITES TWO EPITAPHS

I. ON ANY MAN

I LET him find, but never what he sought ;
I let him act, but never as he meant ;

EPITAPHS

And, after much mislearning, he was taught,
Tired, to be content with discontent.

2. ON MAN

He had great virtues, but a seed of terror
Corrupted him ; fear made him cruel, mean ;
So I repealed an all-but-glorious error,
Wiped off a little dust, and left earth clean.

A. S. J. TESSIMOND

EPITAPHS

I

THE SLAYERS

“ WHY did you die ? ”—I died of everything :
Life, like deep water, robbed me of my breath ;
Sorrow, delight, love, music, Winter, Spring,
Slew me in turn, and, last of all, came—Death. 10

II

FOR A BLIND MAN

On many a road, forlorn,
I wandered day and night.
For *this* then was I born—
To find in death my light ?

III

THIRST

Life did not stint my cup to fill,
I drank each drop yet thirsted still ;
Death's little, poor and meagre wine
Has wholly quenched this thirst of mine.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

IV

EVERYMAN

What shall be said of me? "He lived a span—
Then died." No more! What more of any man?

V

THE AMBUSH

Year in, year out, I took my daily pleasure
In ways serene beyond the common measure,
So was the more surprised when, suddenly,
Death (whom I scarce believed in) sprang on me.

VI

GREEN FRUIT

O! rose-red blossom, shake your wings and fall
From the safe shelter of the sunny wall!
Your fruit? Lament it not. It might have been
Like mine (which came to ripeness), sour and green.

VII

THE RETURN

Disown me not, O patient Mother Earth! II
Restless was I, a rebel from my birth;
But now thy prodigal and weary son
Seeks pardon at thy breast, his folly done.

VIII

PROPHECY

My light is out, yet will I prophesy
Men still unborn will show more light than I;
And am content that other men in turn
Against *my* darkness shall the brighter burn.

MARGARET SACKVILLE

EPITAPH

THIS, OUR SISTER

SHIP with brass handles, crowned with flowers,
That rides the chancel high,
~~The~~ candle-light, the incense cloud,
The storm of music pass thee by :

Above the arches and the voice,
The chanting and the mourners pale,
O mute and folded voyager,
What ocean dost thou sail ?

L. A. G. STRONG

EPITAPH

SHE was too lovely for remembrance—
Let us forget her like a dream, 10
Lest all our days and all our nights hereafter
Empty should seem.

Let not the blind remember beauty,
Nor deaf men think upon a tune :
There are things that are too lovely for remem-
brance—
Let us forget her soon.

Let us forget her—we who loved her—
For pity's sake, for comfort's sake :
Lest, plucked too oft by the long hands of sorrow,
Our heart-strings break. 20

JAN STRUTHER

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

ISLAND ROSE

SHE has given all her beauty to the water ;
She has told her secrets to the tidal bell ;
And her hair is a moon-drawn net, and it has
caught her,
And her voice is in the hollow shell.

She will not come back now any more, nor waken
Out of her island dream where no wind blows ;
And only in the small house of the shell, forsaken,
Sings the dark one whose face is a rose.

HAMISH MACLAREN

SKALD'S DEATH

I HAVE known all the storms that roll.
I have been a singer after the fashion 10
Of my people—a poet of passion.
All that is past.
Quiet has come into my soul.
Life's tempest is done.
I lie at last
A bird cliff under the midnight sun.

HUGH MACDIARMID

FROST

UNNATURAL foliage pales the trees ;
Frost, in compassion of their death,
Has kissed them, and his icy breath
Proclaims and silvers their election. 20
Death, wert thou beautiful as these,
We scarce would pray for resurrection.

L. A. G. STRONG

IN THIS DARK HOUSE

IN THIS DARK HOUSE

I SHALL come back to die
From a far place at last,
After my life's carouse
In the old bed to lie
Remembering the past
In this dark house.

Because of a clock's chime
In the long waste of night,
I shall awake and wait
At that calm, lonely time 10
Each sound and smell and sight
Mysterious and innate—

Some shadow on the wall
When curtains by the door
Move in a draught of wind ;
Or else a light footfall
In a near corridor ;
Even to feel the kind
Caress of a cool hand 20
Smoothing the draggled hair
Back from my shrunken brow,
And strive to understand
The woman's presence there,
And whence she came, and how.

What gust of wind that night
Will mutter her lost name
Through windows open wide,
And twist the flickering light
Of a sole candle's flame
Smoking from side to side, 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Till the last spark it blows
Sets a moth's wings aflame
As the faint flame goes out ?

Some distant door may close ;
Perhaps a heavy chair
On bare floors dragged about
O'er the low ceiling sound,
And the thin twig of a tree
Knock on my window-pane
Till all the night around
Is listening with me,
While like a noise of rain
Leaves rustle in the wind.

10

Then from the inner gloom
The scratching of a mouse
May echo down my mind
And sound around the room
In this dark house.

The vague scent of a flower
Smelt then in that warm air
From gardens drifting in,
May slowly overpower
The vapid lavender,
Till feebly I begin
To count the scents I knew
And name them one by one,
And search the names for this.

20

Dreams will be swift and few
Ere that last night be done,
And gradual silences
In each long interim
Of halting time awake
All conscious sense confuse :

30

LET ME NOT LIVE

Shadows will grow more dim,
And sound and scent forsake
The dark, ere dawn ensues.

In the new morning then,
So fixed the stare and fast,
The calm unseeing eye
Will never close again.

I shall come back at last,
In this dark house to die.

EDWARD DAVISON

THE SLEEPER

HE has rejected the dumb word 10
Of stone, or of stilled woods,
The melancholy of moorland bird
And the clashing bells of floods.

He has forgotten the calling sky
And the tolling of the sea.
Too memorable Earth, may I
Sleep just as sound as he.

LILIAN BOWES LYON

LET ME NOT LIVE

LET me not live in a sad monument,
But let me be
Far from the searching of remembrance sent, 20
Sunk in the sea ;
The Gods have written death ; set not to time
The trifling bound

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Of marble, nor a tablet marred with rhyme,
No plot of ground ;
I was less fair than clouds, and no man makes
Statues to these ;
Forget me ; think upon the silent lakes,
The slender trees.

RUTH PITTER

FROST

AH, nobody knows
The thing I would learn
But the star of the frost
That is still in the night for a while 10
And is burned in the morning and lost.

So would I be frozen,
So would I be burned
Into silence
And lost ;
So would I return—
Not I—not I—
But a wind from the wild,
Besieging the blossoming
Towers of the roses. 20

STELLA BENSON

HE WILL WATCH THE HAWK

HE will watch the hawk with an indifferent eye
Or pitifully ;
Nor on those eagles that so feared him, now
Will strain his brow ;
Weapons men use, stone, sling and strong-thewed bow
He will not know.

PADRAIC O'CONAIRE—GAELIC STORY-TELLER

This aristocrat, superb of all instinct,
With death close linked
Had paced the enormous cloud, almost had won
War on the sun ;
Till now, like Icarus mid-ocean-drowned,
Hands, wings, are found.

STEPHEN SPENDER

THE DEAD POET

WHEN rime was on the road and ditches glistened
Under the leafless trees before the hedge,
The birds upon the boughs perked heads and listened
To the tight ice cracking amid the sedge, 10
And over the old bridge you came a-whistling,
Puffing your breath out, steaming the air around,
And I thought, " Never scytheman went a-thistling
That cut his purple clean as you cut sound."

Your notes re-echo on a frosty morning :
I never see the sun's bar top a hill,
The ice-plumed pine with dripping fire adorning,
But once again I hear their lusty, shrill,
Clear music, and expect to see you come :
I cannot think, " He has turned, and made for home."
JOHN GAWSWORTH

PADRAIC O'CONAIRE—GAELIC STORY-TELLER

(DIED IN THE FALL OF 1928)

THEY'VE paid the last respects in sad tobacco 21
And silent is this wakehouse in its haze ;
They've paid their last respects ; and now their
whiskey
Flings laughing words on mouths of prayer and praise ;

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

And so young couples huddle by the gables,
O let them grope home through the hedgy night—
Alone I'll mourn my old friend, while the cold dawn
Thins out the holy candlelight.

Respects are paid to one loved by the people ;
Ah, was he not—among our mighty poor—
The sudden wealth cast on those pools of darkness,
Those bearing, just, a star's faint signature ;
And so he was to me, close friend, near brother,
Dear Padraic of the wild and sea-cold eyes— 10
So loveable, so courteous and noble,
The very West was in his soft replies.

They'll miss his heavy stick and stride in Wicklow—
His story-talking down Winetavern Street,
Where old men sitting in the wizen daylight
Have kept an edge upon his gentle wit ;
While women on the grassy streets of Galway,
Who hearken for his passing—but in vain,
Shall hardly tell his step as shadows vanish
Through archways of forgotten Spain. 20

Ah, they'll say : Padraic's gone again exploring ;
But now down glens of brightness, O he'll find
An alehouse overflowing with wise Gaelic
That's braced in vigour by the bardic mind,
And there his thoughts shall find their own fore-
fathers—

In minds to whom our heights of race belong,
In crafty men, who ribbed a ship or turned
The secret joinery of song.

Alas, death mars the parchment of his forehead ;
And yet for him, I know, the earth is mild— 30
The windy fidgets of September grasses
Can never tease a mind that loved the wild ;

AS THOUGH WITH THE EYES OF A POET

So drink his peace—this grey juice of the barley
Runs with a light that ever pleased his eye—
While old flames nod and gossip on the hearthstone
And only the young winds cry.

F. R. HIGGINS

AS THOUGH WITH THE EYES OF A POET DEAD AND GONE

As though with the eyes of a poet dead and gone
I loitered looking on
Where scattered over the turnip field a score
Of workers, each in the hoar
Dusk of winter secluded as working alone,
Lifted the roots full-grown. 10
Vagrant seemed they and mum as a flock of crows,
And when with heavy blows
They swung the roots together to free them of soil
This gesture of their toil
Was as though they would flap their wings with the
first smite
And struggle of taking flight.

Small was their winter world, where looming a tree
Signalled its boundary,
And the lost sun groping its way through the west
Might have sunk unguessed, 20
Save that from the rickyard the breathing blur
Of the thrasher awhirr
Betokened that longer yet the dim day must run
Before their day's work were done.

Not as myself I watched them—with alien sense
And curious deference
Of one but lot and luck as a bird alit
And free to fly thence—but knit

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

With them and through them into the sullen ground.
With acceptance profound
And casual as theirs I stood, watching them there,
And knew you beside me, John Clare.

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

AT THE GRAVE OF HENRY VAUGHAN

ABOVE the voiceful windings of a river
An old green slab of simply graven stone
Shuns notice, overshadowed by a yew.
Here Vaughan lies dead, whose name flows on for ever
Through pastures of the spirit washed with dew
And starlit with eternities unknown. 10

Here sleeps the Silurist ; the loved physician ;
The face that left no portraiture behind ;
The skull that housed white angels and had vision
Of daybreak through the gateways of the mind.
Here faith and mercy, wisdom and humility
(Whose influence shall prevail for evermore)
Shine. And this lowly grave tells Heaven's tranquillity.
And here stand I, a suppliant at the door.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

ON READING SOME NEGLECTED POETS

THIS is a long road in a dubious mist ;
Not with a groan nor any heard complaint 20
We march, uncomprehending, not expecting Time
To show us beacons.

ISHMAEL

When we have struggled on a little farther
This madness will yield of itself,
There will not be any singing or sudden joy,
But a load will be set down.

And maybe no one will ever come,
No other traveller passing that way,
Therefore the load we lifted will be left,
A milestone, insignificant.

MICHAEL ROBERTS

ISHMAEL

THE night you died the air was full of sighing,
From jungle passes blew the sickening breeze, 10
Across the moon a dingy smoke was flying,
The black palms tossed and tossed the bounding seas,
The warm gusts filled the tent where you were lying
And swayed the lantern-light across your knees,
The crepitant crickets everywhere were crying
Between the sighs and sudden silences.

Right well you knew, and we, that you were dying
Self-exiled, self-disgraced, self-overthrown,
You who had spent youth, blood and bone denying
Blood of your blood, bone of your very bone. 20
We spoke : you grinned, in iron derision eyeing
The proffered cup. Then between groan and groan
Forced out your last : " God damn you and your
prying !
Why can't you let a bastard die alone ? "

The night you died the air was full of sighing.

ROBERT NICHOLS

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

WANDERING MEN

WHEN sudden night had trapped the wood,
We stumbled by dark earthing
To find a path we never knew
Though we went down on bare knee.
But as we prayed there came a sound
Of canticles upon the air,
A momentary flame that rounded
The bell-house of Kildare.

Among her women on the threshold
Great Brigid gave us welcome. 10
She had concealed in colder veil
Too soon the flaming of her forehead
That drew our eyelids in the wood.
By shadowy arch she led the way,
She brought us to a lighted room
And served each one at table.

I think it was the food of Eden
We shared, for that new ale,
Though brighter than the serpent-reed,
Was not indeed of summer's brew, 20
And drowsily we heard the calling
Of voices from an instrument—
Soft as the music that King Saul
Had feared beyond his tent.

And all that night I was aware
Of shapes no priest can see,
The centaur at a house of prayer,
The sceptred strangers from the East.
Confined in dream we saw again
How Brigid, while her women slept 30
Around her, temple'd by the flame,
Sat in a carven chair.

THE PAST GENERATION

We wakened with the early blackbird
Before the oaks had drawn
An old sun-circle in the grass :
The sightly house was gone.
Yet we gave praise to that sky-woman
For wayfare and a vision shown
At night to harmless men who have
No parish of their own.

AUSTIN CLARKE

THE PAST GENERATION

CORNERED within a mind that from its dark berth
Sags like an old cobweb of wings and bones, 10
Yet clad in a fireside shadow—he sits inert,
A pensioned man of seventy years or so,
Nodding and leaning to feel the white dough
Ripening to bread upon a scorching hearth ;
But once into the crust his thumb is spread—
With smells of yeast enlivening the air—
His eyes seem rich with black ale ; he lifts the bread
As though his hands are full of prayer.

And while the cake cools within the window space
That pane of scowls glows like a holy place. 20

Browbeaten he stands there now scanning the moun-
tain
That throws a long siege against the shadowy glass,
Blinding that spyhole, where light squeezed from the
pincers
Of dusk and dark, like death, has creased his face—
Creased as his crushed eyes squint with strain of sinew,
Poor seedless skin, the jail of all his race,
The last thing human next the wind's dominion,
The one thing hostile to the mountain's peace ;

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

—A peace unbroken save by a sudden fright
From creaking wild duck winged in headlong flight.
Against that huddled strength his hate is pitched ;
And now he glowers at his roots of heath,
That squat their evil claws in this dark hour
Upon the thrown clay cabins of a street :
Homes like worn graves, tombstoned with the gables
That, shading our race once in the blazing years,
Sheltered those mothers, who breeding a stock of nobles
Raised them to grace with a grey baptism of tears. 10

And yet that stock gave stark air a green delight :
Its young men, hardy, nimble of limb and wit
To shorten the road, inveigle a bird or bind
Proud necks to bridles and rough lands to wheat ;
With girls of wild sweetness, athletically designed
From nape and hip to instep and over whose breast
Snuggled the lazy brightness of the West.

Now those delights are all gone ; and, look, old pry,
Where lightning struck, burnt bare that blossoming
tree,
A black hand points indictment at the sky. 20

So he—last trembler from those heartscalding years—
Making this hour unearthly with the dead,
Ceases to spy on what the night has hid
And while each timid thing creeps into bed,
Clamping his door—more like a coffin lid—
He turns, he yawns and having locked the sashes
Calmly he rakes the fire, till deep in ashes
The hushed flame sleeps within its own red dream.

He's now in bed ; but there's not a sign he'll ease
The weight of the great sleep that's on his bones, 30
The weight that he has gathered with the years—
Too weary now he seems even to doze

COLONEL FANTOCK

And fearing death may oust him from those bones
" O holy God " he sighs, he turns, he eyes
The bare breast Virgin suckling Her Child
Printed in smoky gold above the bed.

And as he mouths Time's lullabies, his beads
Barely keep count of prayers in yawned retreats ;
And so from floor and stool old shadows creep
With crickets ticking out the time of sleep.

F. R. HIGGINS

COLONEL FANTOCK

THUS spoke the lady underneath the trees :
I was a member of a family 10
Whose legend was of hunting—(all the rare
And unattainable brightness of the air)—
A race whose fabled skill in falconry
Was used on the small song-birds and a winged
And blinded Destiny. . . . I think that only
Winged ones know the highest eyrie is so lonely.

There in a land, austere and elegant,
The castle seemed an arabesque in music ;
We moved in an hallucination born
Of silence, which like music gave us lotus 20
To eat, perfuming lips and our long eyelids
As we trailed over the sad summer grass,
Or sat beneath a smooth and mournful tree.

And Time passed suavely, imperceptibly.

But Dagobert and Peregrine and I
Were children then ; we walked like shy gazelles
Among the music of the thin flower-bells.
And life still held some promise,—never ask
Of what,—but life seemed less a stranger, then,
Than ever after in this cold existence. 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

I always was a little outside life,—
And so the things we touch could comfort me ;
I loved the shy dreams we could hear and see—
For I was like one dead, like a small ghost,
A little cold air wandering and lost.

All day within the straw-roofed arabesque
Of the towered castle and the sleepy gardens wandered
We ; those delicate paladins the waves
Told us fantastic legends that we pondered.

And the soft leaves were breasted like a dove, 10
Crooning old mournful tales of untrue love.

When night came, sounding like the growth of trees,
My great-grandmother bent to say good-night,
And the enchanted moonlight seemed transformed
Into the silvery tinkling of an old
And gentle music-box that played a tune
Of Circean enchantments and far seas ;
Her voice was lulling like the splash of these.
When she had given me her good-night kiss,
There, in her lengthened shadow, I saw this 20
Old military ghost with mayfly whiskers,—
Poor harmless creature, blown by the cold wind,
Boasting of unseen unreal victories
To a harsh unbelieving world unkind,—
For all the battles that this warrior fought
Were with cold poverty and helpless age—
His spoils were shelters from the winter's rage.
And so for ever through his braggart voice,
Through all that martial trumpet's sound, his soul
Wept with a little sound so pitiful, 30
Knowing that he is outside life for ever
With no one that will warm or comfort him. . . .
He is not even dead, but Death's buffoon
On a bare stage, a shrunken pantaloon.

COLONEL FANTOCK

His military banner never fell,
Nor his account of victories, the stories
Of old apocryphal misfortunes, glories
Which comforted his heart in later life
When he was the Napoleon of the schoolroom
And all the victories he gained were over
Little boys who would not learn to spell.

All day within the sweet and ancient gardens
He had my childish self for audience—
Whose body flat and strange, whose pale straight hair
Made me appear as though I had been drowned— 11
(We all have the remote air of a legend)—
And Dagobert my brother whose large strength,
Great body and grave beauty still reflect
The Angevin dead kings from whom we spring ;
And sweet as the young tender winds that stir
In thickets when the earliest flower-bells sing
Upon the boughs, was his just character ;
And Peregrine the youngest with a naive
Shy grace like a faun's, whose slant eyes seemed 20
The warm green light beneath eternal boughs.
His hair was like the fronds of feathers, life
In him was changing ever, springing fresh
As the dark songs of birds . . . the furry warmth
And purring sound of fires was in his voice
Which never failed to warm and comfort me.

And there were haunted summers in Troy Park
When all the stillness budded into leaves ;
We listened, like Ophelia drowned in blond
And fluid hair, beneath stag-antlered trees ; 30
Then, in the ancient park the country-pleasant
Shadows fell as brown as any pheasant,
And Colonel Fantock seemed like one of these.
Sometimes for comfort in the castle kitchen
He drowsed, where with a sweet and velvet lip

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

The snapdragons within the fire
Of their red summer never tire.
And Colonel Fantock liked our company ;
For us he wandered over each old lie,
Changing the flowering hawthorn, full of bees,
Into the silver helm of Hercules,
For us defended Troy from the top stair
Outside the nursery, when the calm full moon
Was like the sound within the growth of trees.

But then came one cruel day in deepest June, 10
When pink flowers seemed a sweet Mozartian tune,
And Colonel Fantock pondered o'er a book.
A gay voice like a honeysuckle nook,—
So sweet,—said, “ It is Colonel Fantock’s age
Which makes him babble.” . . . Blown by winter’s
rage

The poor old man then knew his creeping fate,
The darkening shadow that would take his sight
And hearing ; and he thought of his saved pence
Which scarce would rent a grave . . . that youthful
voice

Was a dark bell which ever clanged “ Too late ”—
A creeping shadow that would steal from him 21
Even the little boys who would not spell,—
His only prisoners. . . . On that June day
Cold Death had taken his first citadel.

EDITH SITWELL

THE SPRIG OF LIME

He lay, and those who watched him were amazed
To see unheralded beneath the lids
Twin tears, new-gathered at the price of pain,
Start and at once run crookedly athwart
Cheeks channelled long by pain, never by tears.

THE SPRIG OF LIME

So desolate, too, the sigh next uttered
They had wept also, but his great lips moved,
And bending down one heard, "A sprig of lime ;
Bring me a sprig of lime." Whereat she stole
With dumb signs forth to pluck the thing he craved.

So day he till a lime-twigg had been snapped
From some still branch that swept the outer grass
Far from the silver pillar of the bole,
Which mounting past the house's crusted roof
Split into massy limbs, crossed boughs, a maze 10
Of close-compacted intercontorted staffs
Bowered in foliage, where through the sun
Shot sudden showers of light or crystal spars,
Or wavered in a green and vitreous flood.

And all the while in faint and fainter tones,
Scarce audible on deepened evening's hush,
He framed his curious and last request
For "lime, a sprig of lime." Her trembling hand
Closed his loose fingers on the awkward stem,
Covered about with gentle heart-shaped leaves 20
And under dangling, pale as honey-wax,
Square clusters of sweet-scented starry flowers.

She laid his bent arm back upon his breast,
Then watched above white knuckles clenched in
prayer.

He never moved. Only at last his eyes
Opened, then brightened in such avid gaze
She feared the coma mastered him again. . . .
But no ; strange sob rose chuckling in his throat,
A strange ecstasy suffused the flesh
Of that just mask so sun-dried, gouged, and old, 30
Which few—too few !—had loved, too many feared.
"Father !" she cried ; "Father !"

He did not hear.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

She knelt, and kneeling drank the scent of limes,
Blown round the slow blind by a vesperal gust,
Till the room swam. So the lime-incense blew
Into her life as once it had in his,
Though how and when and with what ageless charge
Of sorrow and deep joy how could she know ?

Sweet lime that often at the height of noon
Diffusing dizzy fragrance from your boughs,
Tasselled with blossoms more innumerable
Than the black bees, the uproar of whose toil 10
Filled your green vaults, winning such metheglin
As clouds their sappy cells, distil, as once
Ye used, your sunniest emanations
Toward the window where a woman kneels—
She who within that room in childish hours
Lay through the lasting murmur of blanch'd noon
Behind the sultry blind, now full, now flat,
Drinking anew of every odorous breath,
Supremely happy in her ignorance
Of Time that hastens hourly and of Death 20
Who need not haste. Scatter your fumes, O lime,
Loose from each hispid star of citron bloom,
Tangled beneath the labyrinthine boughs,
Cloud on such stinging cloud of exhalation
As reeks of youth, fierce life, and summer's prime,
Though hardly now shall he in that dusk room
Savour your sweetness, since the very sprig,
Profuse of blossom and of essences,
He smells not, who in a paltering hand
Clasps it laid close his peaked and gleaming face 30
Propped in the pillow. Breathe silent, lofty lime,
Your curfew secrets out in fervid scent
To the attendant shadows ! Tinge the air
Of the midsummer night that now begins,
At an owl's oaring flight from dusk to dusk,
And downward caper of the giddy bat

FOREFATHERS

HAWKING against the lustre of bare skies,
With something of th' unfathomable bliss
He, who lies dying there, knew once of old
In the serene trance of a summer night,
When with th' abundance of his young bride's hair
Loosed on his breast he lay and dared not sleep,
Listening for the scarce motion of your boughs,
Which sighed with bliss as she with blissful sleep,
And drinking desperately each honied wave
Of perfume wafted past the ghostly blind, 10
First knew th' implacable and bitter sense
Of Time that hastes and Death who need not haste.
Shed your last sweetness, limes !

But now no more.

She, fruit of that night's love, she heeds you not,
Who bent, compassionate, to the dim floor,
Takes up the sprig of lime and presses it
In pain against the stumbling of her heart,
Knowing, untold, he cannot need it now.

ROBERT NICHOLS

FOREFATHERS

HERE they went with smock and crook,
Toiled in the sun, lolled in the shade, 20
Here they mudded out the brook
And here their hatchet cleared the glade :
Harvest-supper woke their wit,
Huntsman's moon their wooings lit.

From this church they led their brides,
From this church themselves were led
Shoulder-high ; on these waysides
Sat to take their beer and bread.
Names are gone—what men they were
These their cottages declare. 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Names are vanished, save the few
In the old brown Bible scrawled ;
These were men of pith and thew,
Whom the city never called ;
Scarce could read or hold a quill,
Built the barn, the forge, the mill.

On the green they watched their sons
Playing till too dark to see,
As their fathers watched them once,
As my father once watched me ; 10
While the bat and beetle flew
On the warm air webbed with dew.

Unrecorded, unrenowned,
Men from whom my ways begin,
Here I know you by your ground
But I know you not within—
There is silence, there survives
Not a moment of your lives.

Like the bee that now is blown
Honey-heavy on my hand, 20
From his toppling tansy-throne
In the green tempestuous land—
I'm in clover now, nor know
Who made honey long ago.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

THE PASSING OF A STOIC

Now stiff who once was willow,
Now bent who once was tall,
He walks along the garden
At noon and afternoon,

MR. NUTCH

And while the buds are yellow
His life is at the fall,
Yet he will ask no pardon
Who never asked a boon.

With death he will not quarrel,
Nor bid the gods be kind,
The shadow of disaster
Has been his place of school,
And now he makes no moral
Of echoes in his mind 10
That tell of life the master
With whips for man the fool.

With eyes upon the gravel
He does not heed the year,
Among the lives that waken
He moves but does not live,
A bitter way to travel
He travels without fear,
But with no blessing taken
Goes on with none to give. 20
JOHN DRINKWATER

MR. NUTCH

MR. NUTCH,
Brown-bearded bear,
Chased the scamps of boys through fruit-trees.
“Scamps,” he called them,
But it was a serious affair,
Breaking down the Palings
And stealing Property.
Clumsily he would grab and ramble,
Angrily he would dart and grumble,
Heavily he would sway and shamble 30
After the nimble boys.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

He would stumble among the trees,
Full-branchèd apples
That sagged beneath their rosy swags,
Or crabs that trailed their bitter-sweet rockets
Across the crisp autumn air.

Bombardments of apples
And impudent laughter
Met Mr. Nutch
Where'er he might wander,
His crinkled boots crusted with crystals 10
Under the glittering cobweb-tangled autumn.
(Oh,
If only Mrs. Nutch
Could have tidied up the season,
What a different autumn it would have been,
With its neatly piled pyramids of apples,
Sorted according to size and colour,
Even the branches graded,
Placed symmetrically
One above another, 20
The grass dry, well-aired
And of an even height !)

But, as it was,
There, heavily trudging,
Angry and out of breath
Mr. Nutch must grab and ramble
From one walled garden to another.
At his approach
The birds would flutter in the fruit nets,
Bump and struggle in the fruit nets ; 30
Each small bird that pecked the honeyed heart
Of golden or grape-blushing plum,
Was in reality a vulture
Feeding on Mr. Nutch's entrails—

THE HONEY-SEEKER

Mr. Nutch,
That Prometheus bound to an orchard.
But the birds would flutter and struggle,
For Mr. Nutch
Was the natural enemy of every bird,
However soft or gaudy-feathered,
Just as Mrs. Nutch
Was the sworn foe
Of every cobweb,

Mouse and
Roman Catholic.

OSBERT SITWELL

THE HONEY-SEEKER

(WHITE'S *Natural History of Selborne*, LETTER XXVII)

I CANNOT live here, for there are no bees,
Only bare sand-dunes and the cold brown shoals,
And on the foreshore common some few foals.
I run into the marshes over knees,
Hunting for honey as Old Nick for souls,
And am afraid in winter I shall freeze ;

Because my home is far down in the South,
Where are no stolen fields, fenced off with wire,
But hanging copse, and lazy absent squire,
And flocks of buzzers in the months of drouth,
Whose sting I feared no more than glow-worm's fire,
Taking them boldly in my open mouth. 21

Yet ever first the tiny venom'd hair
With thumb and shrewd forefinger out I drew,
So that they were obedient and true,
Although the strolling parson sighed : " Beware !
That kind pricks when it is dead." I nothing knew
But sweetness and their bodies' golden glare.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Sometimes between my shirt and sunburnt skin
I have fostered fifty of these pilferers,
Whom I caught yarely on the yawning furze
Or father's cottage, starred with jessamin,
Teaching my lips to imitate their din,
As nightjars imitate the white moth's whirs.

Or into a bee-garden slide I could
And, squatting close against the stools, rap out
My summons coaxingly, and snatch the rout
As forth it fared, or in a hungry mood 10
Upset the hives, and vanish with a shout
Before the drowsy owner understood.

An innkeeper there was who brewed his mead ;
I drudged beside him for a draught of it.
The bee-wine in my throat, I seemed to flit,
All honey ! But the dullard could not read
Nature, and girded at me, in his fit,
For swilling out of drunkenness and greed.

My summer's taking served me through the year ;
A dormouse from October, I would doze, 20
Curled in the firelit corner while it froze,
And start up slowly, as new leaves appear.
Gray folk turn peevish when the youngest grows ;
To gain a pittance have they sent me here.

I miss the orchard and my wasp-filled flask.
There are no bumble-bees on the sea's back ;
And if I hurry on a straggler's track,
Men jerk me round to my forsaken task
By the potatoes or the turnip sack,
And heaven is denied me when I ask. 30

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

APRIL FOOL

FARMER'S BOY

It is a naked country without trees ;
Scourged by winds from the seas ;
Bald and bare ;
Harsh with sounds that drive like stones through the
air. . . .
They do say
There were forests here once on a day ;
But the great wars stole them away.

And when I walk at noon upon the bare,
The beaten ridge, where
The grass grows, 10
Where once, they say, the pines climbed in rows,
I do hear
A singing like to harps in my ear,
And like a ship at sea the wind goes.
ROSE MACAULAY

APRIL FOOL

WHEN April flowers adorn the copse
And showery drops
Their petals chide,
I walk the woods to hear anew
Sweet time undo
His ancient stops ; 20
For now the thronged dark boughs have shoaled
Their glimmering tide,
The mice are bold,
Young coney hops,
And full of ruth the snakes do glide.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

And ever-living ever-dead
Time lies abed,
For thus it seems
His tongue best tells the lovely birds
Their lovely words.
O lightly sped,
Soft smiling time ! hold back the showers,
Divert the streams,
The so brief hours
From age so dread, 10
And gild with youth my dying dreams.
A. E. COPPARD

THREE OLD BROTHERS

WHILE some goes dancing reels and some
Goes stuttering love in ditches,
The three old brothers rise from bed,
And moan, and pin their breeches.
And one says, " I can sleep no more,
I'd liefer far go weeping,
For how can honest men lie still
When brats can spoil their sleeping ? "
And Blind Tom says, that's eighty years, 20
" If I was ten years younger
I'd take a stick and welt their rumps,
And gall their gamest runner."
Then James the youngest cries, " Praise God,
We have outlived our passion ! "
And by their fire of roots all three
Praise God after a fashion.

Says James, " I loved, when I was young,
A lass of one and twenty,
That had the grace of all the queens 30
And broke men's hearts in plenty ;

THREE OLD BROTHERS

But now the girl's a gammy crone,
With no soft sides or bosom,
And all the ones she kist abed
Where the fat maggot chews 'em.
And though she had not kiss for me,
And though myself is older,
And though my thighs are cold to-night,
Their thighs, I think, are colder."

And Blind Tom says, " I knew a man
A girl refused for lover 10
Worked in America forty years,
And heaped copper on copper ;
And came back all across the foam,
Dressed up in silks and satins,
And watched for her from dawn to dark,
And from Compline to Matins ;
And when she passed him in her shawl,
He burst his sides with laughing,
And went back happy to the west,
And heeded no man's scoffing. 20
And Christ," moans Tom, " if I'd his luck
I'd not mind cold nor coughing ! "

Then Patcheen says, " My lot's a lot
All men on earth might envy,
That saw the girl I could not get
Nurse an untimely baby."

And all three say, " Dear heart ! Dear heart ! "
And James the youngest mutters,
" Praise God we have outlived our griefs
And not fell foul like others, 30
Like Paris and the Grecian chiefs
And the three Ulster brothers ! "

FRANK O'CONNOR

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

FANCY'S KNELL

WHEN lads were home from labour
At Abdon under Clee,
A man would call his neighbour
And both would send for me.
And where the light in lances
Across the mead was laid,
There to the dances
I fetched my flute and played.

Ours were idle pleasures,
Yet oh, content we were, 10
The young to wind the measures,
The old to heed the air ;
And I to lift with playing
From tree and tower and steep
The light delaying,
And flute the sun to sleep.

The youth toward his fancy
Would turn his brow of tan,
And Tom would pair with Nancy
And Dick step off with Fan ; 20
The girl would lift her glances
To his, and both be mute :
Well went the dances
At evening to the flute.

Wenlock Edge was umbered,
And bright was Abdon Burf,
And warm between them slumbered
The smooth green miles of turf ;
Until from grass and clover
The upshot beam would fade, 30
And England over
Advanced the lofty shade.

THE FOOL

The lofty shade advances,
I fetch my flute and play :
Come, lads, and learn the dances
And praise the tune to-day.
To-morrow, more's the pity,
Away we both must hie,
To air the ditty,
And to earth I.

A. E. HOUSMAN

THE FOOL

Poor fool who stood alone,
A-staring at a tree, 10
Wherein a wild bird sang ;
The world with tidings rang,
Of a new world to be ;
He stood as any stone
A-staring at a tree.

Honour was everywhere
In action on that day ;
Old wrongs were put away,
And envy overthrown
By nations met in prayer, 20
As sometimes warriors pray ;
And he, the poor fool, he
Still stood as any stone
To stare upon a tree.

It was a silly bird,
Piping an idle note,
Unworthy to be heard
By men come to engage
Another golden age ;

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

A foolish bird, who wrote
But green songs in a tree
With but a fool to see,
With but a fool to tell
In his own silly word
That such a song was well
When the heroic mind
Was loud among mankind.

Loud upon land and sea
Victorious goodwill 10
Made music that the scribes
Of honour must record
Upon the utmost hill,
Among the hidden tribes
In forests of the night ;
The coming of the lord,
No less, was that decree,
That benison, that light ;
And still because a tree
Made lyrics all the day 20
He stared the time away.

Poor fool, to spend the time
Of honour in a rhyme,
Because a wild bird set
His wisdom in a net.

JOHN DRINKWATER

TO AN OLD LADY

RIPENESS is all ; her in her cooling planet
Revere ; do not presume to think her wasted.
Project her no projectile, plan nor man it ;
Gods cool in turn, by the sun long outlasted.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

Our earth alone given no name of god
Gives, too, no hold for such a leap to aid her ;
Landing, you break some palace and seem odd ;
Bees sting their need, the keeper's queen invader.

No, to your telescope ; spy out the land ;
Watch while her ritual is still to see,
Still stand her temples emptying in the sand
Whose waves o'erthrew their crumbled tracery ;

Still stand uncalled-on her soul's appanage ;
Much social detail whose successor fades, 10
Wit used to run a house and to play Bridge,
And tragic fervour, to dismiss her maids.

Years her precession do not throw from gear.
She reads a compass certain of her pole ;
Confident, finds no confines on her sphere,
Whose failing crops are in her sole control.

Stars how much further from me fill my night,
Strange that she too should be inaccessible,
Who shares my sun. He curtains her from sight,
And but in darkness is she visible. 20

WILLIAM EMPSON

THE LAMPLIGHTER

HERE to the leisured side of life,
Remote from traffic, free from strife,
A cul-de-sac, a sanctuary
Where old quaint customs creep to die
And only ancient memories stir,
At evening comes the lamplighter ;
With measured steps, without a sound,
He treads the unalterable round,

Soundlessly touching one by one
The waiting posts that stand to take
The faint blue bubbles in his wake ;
And when the night begins to wane
He comes to take them back again,
Before the chilly dawn can blight
The delicate frail buds of light.

OLD SOLDIER

But only a rag
On a lifting thorn—
An ironic flag
Crow-pecked, forlorn.

Love's frosted buds,
That could not shake
The nursing gods
Of green, awake.

Petty squabbling
My eyes did see,
And Achilles wobbling
In jeopardy,

And the men of thought
Being hustled on
Till there was not
Under the sun

THE NEXT WAR

An unflustered bird
Of evening mood
Or a poet's word
In the interlude.

Over the war-loud
Fields I went,
Strumming the crowd-
False instrument,

One with the savage
And insane. . . .

10

O War, to ravage
My virgin Spain !

PATRICK KAVANAGH

THE NEXT WAR

Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death ;
Sat down and eaten with him, cool and bland,—
Pardoned his spilling mess-tins in our hand.
We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath,—
Our eyes wept, but our courage didn't writhe.
He's spat at us with bullets and he's coughed
Shrapnel. We chorussed when he sang aloft ;
We whistled while he shaved us with his scythe. 20

Oh, Death was never enemy of ours !

We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.
No soldier's paid to kick against his powers.

We laughed, knowing that better men would come,
And greater wars ; when each proud fighter brags
He wars on Death—for Life ; not men—for flags.

WILFRED OWEN

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

DEAD MAN'S DUMP

THE plunging limbers over the shattered track
Racketed with their rusty freight,
Stuck out like many crowns of thorns,
And the rusty stakes like sceptres old
To stay the flood of brutish men
Upon our brothers dear.

The wheels lurched over sprawled dead
But pained them not, though their bones crunched ;
Their shut mouths made no moan.
They lie there huddled, friend and foeman, 10
Man born of man, and born of woman ;
And shells go crying over them
From night till night and now.

Earth has waited for them,
All the time of their growth
Fretting for their decay :
Now she has them at last !
In the strength of their strength
Suspended—stopped and held.

What fierce imaginings their dark souls lit ? 20
Earth ! Have they gone into you ?
Somewhere they must have gone,
And flung on your hard back
Is their souls' sack,
Emptied of God-ancestral essences.
Who hurled them out ? Who hurled ?

None saw their spirits' shadow shake the grass,
Or stood aside for the half-used life to pass
Out of those doomed nostrils and the doomed mouth,
When the swift iron burning bee 30
Drained the wild honey of their youth.

DEAD MAN'S DUMP

What of us who, flung on the shrieking pyre,
Walk, our usual thoughts untouched,
Our lucky limbs as on ichor fed,
Immortal seeming ever ?
Perhaps when the flames beat loud on us,
A fear may choke in our veins
And the startled blood may stop.

The air is loud with death,
The dark air spurts with fire,
The explosions ceaseless are. 10
Timelessly now, some minutes past,
These dead strode time with vigorous life,
Till the shrapnel called " An end ! "
But not to all. In bleeding pangs
Some borne on stretchers dreamed of home,
Dear things, war-blotted from their hearts.

A man's brains splattered on
A stretcher-bearer's face ;
His shook shoulders slipped their load,
But when they bent to look again 20
The drowning soul was sunk too deep
For human tenderness.

They left this dead with the older dead,
Stretched at the cross roads.

Burnt black by strange decay
Their sinister faces lie,
The lid over each eye ;
The grass and coloured clay
More motion have than they,
Joined to the great sunk silences. 30

Here is one not long dead.
His dark hearing caught our far wheels,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

And the choked soul stretched weak hands
To reach the living word the far wheels said ;
The blood-dazed intelligence beating for light,
Crying through the suspense of the far torturing
wheels

Swift for the end to break
Or the wheels to break,
Cried as the tide of the world broke over his sight,
“ Will they come ? Will they ever come ? ”
Even as the mixed hoofs of the mules,
The quivering-bellied mules, 10
And the rushing wheels all mixed
With his tortured upturned sight.

So we crashed round the bend,
We heard his weak scream,
We heard his very last sound,
And our wheels grazed his dead face.

ISAAC ROSENBERG

ASLEEP

UNDER his helmet, up against his pack,
After the many days of work and waking,
Sleep took him by the brow and laid him back.
And in the happy no-time of his sleeping, 20
Death took him by the heart. There was a quaking
Of the aborted life within him leaping . . .
Then chest and sleepy arms once more fell slack.
And soon the slow, stray blood came creeping
From the intrusive lead, like ants on track.

Whether his deeper sleep lie shaded by the shaking
Of great wings, and the thoughts that hung the stars,
High-pillowed on calm pillows of God's making
Above these clouds, these rains, these sleets of lead,
And these winds' scimitars ; 30

BREAK OF DAY IN THE TRENCHES

—Or whether yet his thin and sodden head
Confuses more and more with the low mould,
His hair being one with the grey grass
And finished fields of autumn that are old. . . .
Who knows? Who hopes? Who troubles? Let it
pass!
He sleeps. He sleeps less tremulous, less cold,
Than we who must awake, and waking, say Alas!
WILFRED OWEN

BREAK OF DAY IN THE TRENCHES

THE darkness crumbles away—
It is the same old druid Time as ever.
Only a live thing leaps my hand— 10
A queer sardonic rat—
As I pull the parapet's poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies
(And God knows what antipathies).
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German—
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between. 20
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life,
Bound to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.
What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver—what heart aghast? 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
Drop, and are ever dropping ;
But mine in my ear is safe,
Just a little white with the dust.

ISAAC ROSENBERG

RETURNING, WE HEAR THE LARKS

SOMBRE the night is :
And, though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.

Dragging these anguished limbs, we only know
This poison-blasted track opens on our camp—
On a little safe sleep.

10

But hark ! Joy—joy—strange joy.
Lo ! Heights of night ringing with unseen larks :
Music showering on our upturned listening faces.

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song—
But song only dropped,
Like a blind man's dreams on the sand
By dangerous tides ;
Like a girl's dark hair, for she dreams no ruin lies
there,
Or her kisses where a serpent hides.

20

ISAAC ROSENBERG

GIRL TO SOLDIER ON LEAVE

I LOVE you, Titan lover,
My own storm-days' Titan.
Greater than the son of Zeus,
I know whom I would choose.

THE GOLDEN ROOM

Titan—my splendid rebel—
The old Prometheus
Wanes like a ghost before your power :
His pangs were joys to yours.

Pallid days, arid and wan,
Tied your soul fast :
Babel-cities' smoky tops
Pressed upon your growth

Weary gyves. What were you
But a word in the brain's ways, 10
Or the sleep of Circe's swine ?
One gyve holds you yet.

It held you hiddenly on the Somme
Tied from my heart at home :
O must it loosen now ? I wish
You were bound with the old, old gyves.

Love ! You love me—your eyes
Have looked through death at mine.
You have tempted a grave too much.
I let you—I repine. 20

ISAAC ROSENBERG

THE GOLDEN ROOM

Do you remember that still summer evening
When, in the cosy cream-washed living-room
Of The Old Nailshop, we all talked and laughed—
Our neighbours from The Gallows, Catherine
And Lascelles Abercrombie ; Rupert Brooke ;
Eleanor and Robert Frost, living a while
At Little Iddens, who'd brought over with them
Helen and Edward Thomas ? In the lamplight

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

We talked and laughed ; but, for the most part,
listened

While Robert Frost kept on and on and on,
In his slow New England fashion, for our delight,
Holding us with shrewd turns and racy quips,
And the rare twinkle of his grave blue eyes ?

We sat there in the lamplight, while the day
Died from rose-latticed casements, and the plovers
Called over the low meadows, till the owls
Answered them from the elms, we sat and talked :
Now, a quick flash from Abercrombie ; now, 10
A murmured dry half-heard aside from Thomas ;
Now, a clear laughing word from Brooke ; and then
Again Frost's rich and ripe philosophy,
That had the body and tang of good draught-cider,
And poured as clear a stream.

'Twas in July
Of nineteen-fourteen that we sat and talked ;
Then August brought the war, and scattered us.

Now, on the crest of an Aegean isle,
Brooke sleeps, and dreams of England : Thomas lies
'Neath Vimy Ridge, where he, among his fellows, 20
Died, just as life had touched his lips to song.

And nigh as ruthlessly has life divided
Us who survive ; for Abercrombie toils
In a black Northern town, beneath the glower
Of hanging smoke ; and in America
Frost farms once more ; and, far from The Old
Nailshop,
We sojourn by the Western sea.

And yet,
Was it for nothing that the little room,
All golden in the lamplight, thrilled with golden
Laughter from hearts of friends that summer night ? 30

MUD

Darkness has fallen on it ; and the shadow
May never more be lifted from the hearts
That went through those black years of war, and live.

And still, whenever men and women gather
For talk and laughter on a summer night,
Shall not that lamp rekindle ; and the room
Glow once again alive with light and laughter ;
And, like a singing star in time's abyss,
Burn golden-hearted through oblivion ?

WILFRID W. GIBSON

MUD

TWENTY years ago 10
My generation learned
To be afraid of mud.
We watched its vileness grow,
Deeper and deeper churned
From earth, spirit, and blood.

From earth, sweet-smelling enough
As moorland, field, and coast ;
Firm beneath the corn,
Noble to the plough,
Purified by frost 20
Every winter morn.

From blood, the invisible river
Pulsing from the hearts
Of patient man and beast ;
The healer and life-giver,
The union of parts,
The meaning of the feast.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

From spirit, which is man
In triumphant mood ;
Conqueror of fears,
Alchemist of pain
Changing bad to good ;
Master of the spheres.

Earth, the king of space ;
Blood, the king of time ;
Spirit, their lord and god ;
All tumbled from their place, 10
All trodden into slime,
All mingled into mud.

RICHARD CHURCH

REPORT ON EXPERIENCE

I HAVE been young, and now am not too old ;
And I have seen the righteous forsaken,
His health, his honour, and his quality taken.
 This is not what we were formerly told.

I have seen a green country, useful to the race,
Knocked silly with guns and mines, its villages vanished,
Even the last rat and last kestrel banished—
 God bless us all, this was peculiar grace. 20

I knew Seraphina ; Nature gave her hue,
Glance, sympathy, note, like one from Eden.
I saw her smile warp, her lyric deaden ;
 She turned to harlotry—this I took to be new.

Say what you will, our God sees how they run.
These disillusion are His curious proving
That He loves humanity and will go on loving ;
 Over there are faith, life, virtue in the sun.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

HORSES

HORSES

THOSE lumbering horses in the steady plough,
On the bare field—I wonder why, just now,
They seemed so terrible, so wild and strange,
Like magic power on the stony grange.

Perhaps some childish hour has come again,
When I watched fearful, through the blackening rain,
Their hooves like pistons in an ancient mill
Move up and down, yet seem as standing still.

Their conquering hooves treading the stubble down
Were ritual that turned the field to brown, 10
And their great hulks were seraphim of gold,
Or mute ecstatic monsters on the mould.

And oh the rapture, when, one furrow done,
They marched broad-breasted to the sinking sun !
The light flowed off their bossy sides in flakes ;
The furrows rolled behind like struggling snakes.

But when at dusk with steaming nostrils home
They came, they seemed gigantic in the gloam,
And warm and glowing with mysterious fire
That lit their smouldering bodies in the mire. 20

Their eyes as brilliant and as wide as night
Gleamed with a cruel apocalyptic sight.
Their manes the leaping ire of the wind
Lifted with rage invisible and blind.

Ah now it fades ! it fades ! and I must pine
Again for that dread country crystalline,
Where the blank field and the still-standing tree
Were bright and fearful presences to me.

EDWIN MUIR

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

TORIL

Crowd : Another Bull ! another Bull !

Ox : You heard ?
Your number's up, the people gave the word !

Bull : Feasted on flowers, the darling of the days,
To-day I've ghastly asphodels to graze,
Harsh sand to bite, and my own blood to swill—
Whose dewlap loved the golden-rolling rill,
When through the rushes, burnished like its tide,
The lovely cirrus of my thews would slide,
My heart flame-glazing through the silken skin
Joy of its mighty furnace lit within.
These crescent horns that scimitared the moon.
These eyes, the flaming emeralds of noon,
Whose orbs were fuel to the deathless rays
And burned the long horizon with their gaze—
All now to be cut down, and soon to trail
A sledge of carrion at a horse's tail !

Ox : Flame in the flaming noon, I've seen you run.
The Anvil of Toledo's now your Sun
Whose furious aurora they unfold
(A hurricane of scarlet and of gold) 20
Whose iron clangs for you, whose dawn you feel,
The target of its burnished ray of steel !

Bull : Ox as you are, what should you know of this
Who never neared the verge of that abyss ?

Ox : Ox as I am, none better knows than I
Who led your father's fathers here to die.
Declaiming clown, I am the mute, the wise ;
Poets would read enigmas in my eyes.
My being is confederate with pain,
Mine to endure as yours is to complain ;

THE WHITE HARE

I am the thinker, satisfied to know,
And bought this wisdom for a life of woe.
Be brave, be patient, and reserve your breath.

Bull : But tell me what is blacker than this death

Ox : My impotence.

Bull : It was your soul that spoke !—
More hideous than this martyrdom ?

Ox : The Yoke !
ROY CAMPBELL

THE WHITE HARE

At the field's edge,
In the snow-furred sedge,
Couches the white hare ;
Her stronghold is there. 10

Brown as the seeding grass
In summer she was,
With a creamed belly soft as ermine ;
Beautiful she was among vermin.
Silky young she had,
For her spring was glad ;
On the fell above
She ran races with love.
Softly she went 20
In and out of the tent
Of the tasselled corn ;
Till the huntsman's horn
Raised the bogey death
And she was gone, like breath.

Thanks to her senses five
This charmer is alive :

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

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POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Who cheated the loud pack,
Biting steel, poacher's sack ;
Among the steep rocks
Outwitted the fanged fox.

And now winter has come ;
Winds have made dumb
Water's crystal chime ;
In a cloak of rime
Stands the stiff bracken ;
Until the cold slacken 10
Beauty and terror kiss ;
There is no armistice.
Low must the hare lie,
With great heart and round eye.

Wind-scoured and sky-burned
The fell was her feet spurned
In the flowery season
Of her swift unreason ;
Gone is her March rover ;
Now noon is soon over ; 20
Now the dark falls
Heavily from sheer walls
Of snow-cumbering cloud,
And Earth shines in her shroud.
All things now fade
That were in love's image made.
She too must decrease
Unto a thorny peace,
Who put her faith
In this flesh, in this wraith. 30
A hoar habit borrows
Our light lady of sorrows,
Nor is her lot strange ;
Time rings a snow-change.

LILIAN BOWES LYON

THE SEALS

DUCKS

THE ducks are clacking by the brook ;
The sun is hot, but cool their feathers look.
Ducks do not plan ambitious schemes :
Their commerce is in weeds and streams.
They ask, what's life but sparkle and spray
In a lazy brook on a lazy day ?
I think, if I were five feet something shorter,
I might have been a duck upon the water,
A portly duck, with a shining bill
Yellow and spruce as a daffodil. 10
To me, possessed of an idle mind,
That seems a life of the perfect kind.

Two bicycles plunge into the water—
Two boys intending war and slaughter.
The brook is shallow here. There is a noise
Of water, and terror, and reckless boys.
The stream turns brown with mud. It rocks and heaves,
And the ducks' brains flutter like wind-tossed leaves.
They waddle and cackle in consternation,
While the boys are leaping with jubilation, 20
And I can see that man and duck
Are both cursed by a dancing luck.

CLIFFORD DYMENT

THE SEALS

LEAVE her alone,
She is the Island's daughter.
Sleek heads, dark heads
Are risen from the water :
Leave her the company
Her songs have brought her.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

The old gray music doctors
Of the ocean,
Their holy, happy eyes
Shining devotion,
Applaud and blow
In foam and soft commotion.

It is her hour,
The Island's only daughter.
The dark, sleek heads
Are risen from the water : 10
Leave her the company
Her songs have brought her.

L. A. G. STRONG

THE VIPER

BAREFOOT I went and made no sound ;
The earth was hot beneath :
The air was quivering around,
The circling kestrel eyed the ground
And hung above the heath.

There in the pathway stretched along
The lovely serpent lay :
She reared not up the heath among, 20
She bowed her head, she sheathed her tongue,
And shining stole away.

Fair was the brave embroidered dress,
Fairer the gold eyes shone :
Loving her not, yet did I bless
The fallen angel's comeliness ;
And gazed when she had gone.

RUTH PITTER

SNAKE

SNAKE

A SNAKE came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

•

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark
carob-tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he
was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in
the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied
down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a
small clearness, 10
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack
long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and
mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning
bowels of the earth 20
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the
gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and
finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet,
to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth ?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him ? 10
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him ?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured ?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices :
If you were not afraid, you would kill him !

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough 20
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the
air, so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

SNAKE

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,
and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his with-
drawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly
• drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind
convulsed in undignified haste, 10
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the
wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with
fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act !
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human
education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again. 21

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate ;
A pettiness.

D. H. LAWRENCE

Taormina

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

THE SCORPION

LIMPOPO and Tugela churned
In flood for brown and angry miles
Melons, maize, domestic thatch,
The trunks of trees and crocodiles ;

The swollen estuaries were thick
With flotsam, in the sun one saw
The corpse of a young negress bruised
By rocks, and rolling on the shore,

Pushed by the waves of morning, rolled
Impersonally among shells, 10
With lolling breasts and bleeding eyes,
And round her neck were beads and bells.

That was the Africa we knew,
Where, wandering alone,
We saw, heraldic in the heat,
A scorpion on a stone.

WILLIAM PLOMER

HARDWICK ARRAS

I DREAM of a White Hart that through the meadows
Of an unending tapestry runs and runs,
And through great forests lit by languid suns
It leaps, and into gulfs of velvet shadows 20
Plunges with pearl-pale sides, and on and on
Tireless and fearless races, still pursued
By hounds in gaping-mouthèd multitude,
And huntsmen clad in rich caparison,
On steeds with fiery manes and nostrils red ;
Yet ever safe it bears its amber horns
And hoofs of dimmest green and silver tail

THE UNICORN

Through infinite shades and daisy-mottled fields,
Betwixt slim trunks of many a magic vale,
And under lonely towers, which virgin morns
Illumine, and its swift pace never yields,
Calm, wingèd, beautiful, unhurrièd. . . .

WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE

THE UNICORN

HATE me or love, I care not, as I pass
To those hid citadels
Where in the depth of my enchanted glass
The changeless image dwells ;
To where for ever blooms the nameless tree ; 10
For ever, alone and fair,
The lovely Unicorn beside the sea
Is laid, and slumbers there.

Give or withhold, all's nothing, as I go
On to those glimmering grounds
Where falling secretly and quiet as snow
The silent music sounds ;
Where earth is withered away before the eyes,
And heaven hangs in the air,
For in the oak the bird of paradise 20
Alights, and triumphs there.

Slay me or spare, it matters not : I fly
Ever, for ever rest
Alone and with a host : in the void sky
There do I build my nest :
I lay my beams from star to star, and make
My house where all is bare ;
Hate, slay, withhold, I rear it for thy sake
And thou art with me there.

RUTH PITTER

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

THE trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky ;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth Autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count ;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount 10
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold, 20
Companionable streams or climb the air ;
Their hearts have not grown old ;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water
Mysterious, beautiful ;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away ? 30

W. B. YEATS

THE HERON

THE HERON

THE fresh wet wind and the wide glittering light
Are over now, and everything is night ;
The barges, the great bustle, the clink of tools
Have left no impress on the river-pools ;
And reedy desolation edged with rose
Resumes untroubled its antique repose,
And curved against it, in unstirring sedge,
A lonely heron bills the water's edge,
Like Thought himself on his worn elbow leaning
And probing fathom on fathom for a meaning—
So still in Time's unwearying flow, he seems 11
The first that haunted ruined Academes,
The very bird that dared to dip his bill
In Memphian pylons crumbling to the swill,
The first of fishers, who is fishing still. . . .

Then the wave quivers with a rod of gold
Intruding fiercely on the heron's hold
From the near city's Babylonian strife.
The commentator on the fringe of life
Lifts his loose body in the misty rain ; 20
Long-legged, fastidious in high disdain,
He swoops to duskier reaches, dims to ghost
In that Nirvana where all time is lost. . . .

How easy was that sweep, how eloquent
Its cool patrician scorn of man's intent ;
Sure as the angel's poise in Exodus,
Whispering, " The first-born of your cities thus
Amid their clamour knew the night, and ceased
Swift as the passage of my wing released "—
And in that mocking cry what visions breed 30
Of all our cities flowering back to reed.

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

STORMCOCK IN ELDER

IN my dark hermitage, aloof
From the world's sight and the world's sound,
By the small door where the old roof
Hangs but five feet above the ground,
I groped along the shelf for bread
But found celestial food instead :

For suddenly close at my ear,
Loud, loud and wild, with wintry glee,
The old unfailing chorister
Burst out in pride of poetry ; 10
And through the broken roof I spied
Him by his singing glorified.

Scarcely an arm's-length from the eye,
Myself unseen, I saw him there ;
The throbbing throat that made the cry,
The breast dewed from the misty air,
The polished bill that opened wide
And showed the pointed tongue inside :

The large eye, ringed with many a ray
Of minion feathers, finely laid ; 20
The feet that grasped the elder-spray ;
How strongly used, how subtly made,
The scale, the sinew, and the claw,
Plain through the broken roof I saw ;

The flight-feathers in tail and wing,
The shorter coverts, and the white
Merged into russet, marrying
The bright breast to the pinions bright,
Gold sequins, spots of chestnut, shower
Of silver, like a brindled flower. 30

CONUNDRUM

Soldier of fortune, north-west Jack,
Old hard-times' braggart, there you blow !
But tell me ere your bagpipes crack
How you can make so brave a show,
Full-fed in February, and dressed
Like a rich merchant at a feast.

One-half the world, or so they say,
Knows not how half the world may live ;
So sing your song and go your way,
And still in February contrive 10
As bright as Gabriel to smile
On elder-spray by broken tile.

RUTH PITTER

CONUNDRUM

THE rooks, once grave as lawyers
Disputing winter's case,
Suddenly clown and antic
And drive bare elm-tops frantic,
A riot in blue space—
The rooks, once grave as lawyers,
New-gowned or grave top-sawyers,
Run wild in steeplechase. 20

Each March this wild-fire folly
Sweeps Rookland, rocks the glade ;
Yet augur, bard, and prophet
Knew not the reason of it
When Rome was yet unmade—
Why birds of melancholy
Should dance in wild-fire folly
Because one stick was laid.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Pythagoras, holy Moses,
Merlin, and Numa too,
While swiftly leapt the seasons
Have racked their brains for reasons
Till lip and nose went blue ;
Pythagoras, holy Moses
Have stroked their learned noses
For nothing. Why should you ?

Let others ransack bookland
To square the circle, find
In regions four-dimensional
Why rooks turn unconventional
Just at a whim of wind ;
Let others ransack bookland,
I take my joy with Rookland
And leave it undefined.

10

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

THE REDSHANKS

DRIVE on, sharp wings, and cry above
Not contemplating life or love,
Or war or death : a winter flight
Impartial to our human plight.

20

I below shall still remain
On solid earth, with fear and pain ;
Doubt, and act, and nervous strive,
As best I may, to keep alive.

What useless dream, a hope to sail
Down the wide, transparent gale,
Until, insentient, I shall be
As gaseous a transparency.

TWILIGHT THRUSH

What useless dream, a hope to wring
Comfort from a migrant wing :
Human or beast, between us set
The incommunicable net.

Parallel, yet separate,
The languages we mistranslate,
And knowledge seems no less absurd
If of a mistress, or a bird.

JULIAN BELL

TWILIGHT THRUSH

THE python clouds coiled overhead,
Grim sunset eyed the sallow marsh, 10
The stream sighed in its stealthy bed,
All else hung silent, hopeless, harsh.

When startingly on a sturdy trill
A thrush's resolute song rang out
As if to rally the world's will
By fluting in the face of doubt.

If That which did mankind create
To solace Its dry heart with mirth
Had suddenly grown satiate
And glanced with pity on the earth, 20

I scarce had known amaze more rude
Than in that spot and in that hour
To hear the praise of fortitude
Hymned in despite of doomfall's lour.

High on the thorn, against the gloom
I spied him perched : a strange, pale star—
Voice of true valour under doom !
Spirit of friend slaughtered in war !

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Brother ! Staunch voice !—you bid me guess
How much of comfort courage knows
In its own sense of blessedness
And the song blessedness bestows.

ROBERT NICHOLS

MOTHS

Now with a humming from the greening skies,
Sphinx moths with course set true
Shoot forth, torpedoes with a spinning screw,
And bulbous lantern eyes.

Now hanging round the trumpet of the flowers
The Death's Head, hairy, squeaking as he comes, 10
A squeal of bagpipes and a blur of drums,
Seeks his black food, the Deadly Nightshade ; scours
The garden like a vampire after prey,
And failing fades, an air machine, away.

Now those small moths that in their infancy
Feed on the wild sea spurge,
Growing above the surge
That creams the slate slabs of the Cornish sea,
Come for the honeysuckles swinging loose
On the brick summer house ; 20
And Leopard Moths that feed upon the spindles
And lilac-bark in spring,
With dark-blue spots upon a wedge-like wing,
Loving the lights, flying to cottage candles ;
The Ghost Swift moth that feigns
Death in the capturers' net, with such deep arts ;
And Gipsies horned and lean, straight showers of
darts ;
Dark Dagger from the plains ;
And sweet Peach Blossom feeding on the brambles ;

MOTHS

The small coquettish Puss ;
And that great blunderbuss
That bumps on homing farmers and down drumbles
On footpaths through the midnight fields of May.
Blue moths that seek chalk hills above the leas,
And Scarlet Tigers in the apple-trees,
These are the moths that linger on the day.

But others will seek out the darkest hours,
To make their drunkard onslaught on the flowers ;
Drab, stout, like little mice 10
Scampering after rice.
Fen moths that feed
On parsley, wild angelica, lucerne,
Companions of newt and leech and hern.
And Mottled Rustics that love teazel weed ;
Waved Umber moth that in the forks of pears
Spins its soft silk cocoon,
Breaking to wing in the short nights of June
To feast upon dog roses and sweet briars ;
The moth named Phoenix, symbol of the rest, 20
For all their brood
Were grubs that bred their beauty in a wood,
Freedom made manifest :
A faith assured hailed glorious in a husk,
Seen as a whirl of wings and windy lights,
On hills, in hollows of soft earthly nights ;
Ardent adventurers across the dusk,
That fly, fanatics freed, and reach a bed
Where above tapers tall
A dead man's shadow dances on a wall, 30
And shower their burning faiths about his head.

For they must travel far ;
Out of the spreading south Spring Usher blew ;
Tattered beside him flew
The Chinese Character, the Cinnabar ;

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

The Brindled Pug, and the small Seraphim
Blew in with butterflies
Out of the tropic skies ;
Sea-going beauties, that will lightly skim
Around the crow's-nest, or the baking brasse, ,
Telling the sailor of the coastal walk,
Harebells on slopes of chalk,
Stillness of quaking grasses ;
That will not rest, but wearily take flight
Into the ocean night ; 10
Or taking passage on an old tea clipper,
Seek hiding in the sails, and finding this,
Work round to England as a chrysalis :
The Painted Lady with the Dingy Skipper.

And many with wide wing and lustrous name
Blew once, in early times, across the sea :
Paphia, Silver Washed Fritillary,
And that imperial dame
Vanessa Atalanta, who was borne
In sunny splendour on an off-shore gale 20
From coasts of Africa, to meet the hail
Battering the Kentish pebbles in the dawn.
DOROTHY WELLESLEY

THE MARCH BEE

A WARNING wind finds out my resting-place
And in a mountain cloud the lost sun chills ;
Night comes ; and yet before she shows her face
The sun flings off the shadows, warm light fills
The valley and the clearings on the hills.
Bleak crow the moorcocks on the fen's blue splashes,
But here I warm myself with these bright looks and
flashes.

FABLE

And warmed like me the merry humble-bee
Puts fears aside, runs forth to catch the sun,
And by the ploughland's shoulder comes to see
The flowers that like him best, and seems to shun
Cold countless quaking wind-flowers everyone,
Primroses too ; but makes poor grass his choice
Where small wood-strawberry blossoms nestle and
rejoice.

The magpies steering round from wood to wood,
Tree-creeper flickering up the elm's green rind,
Bold gnats that revel round my solitude 10
And most this pleasant bee intent to find
The new-born joy, inveigle the rich mind
Long after darkness comes cold-lipped to one
Still listening to the bee, still basking in the sun.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

FABLE

WHERE the white lane meets with the green
The year's first butterflies are seen ;
Here settling upon leaf or stone,
They spread their colours in the sun.

This is the chosen trysting place
Of butterflies' whole painted race ; 20
Hither the gentle, favouring wind
Of spring shall bring to each his kind.

See, ever full of hope and love,
The basker leap to her above
At the first brushing of her shadow—
Over the hedge, across the meadow !

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

But ah, how fortune mocks delight !
The tortoiseshell pursues the white, '
The yellow brimstone tracks the shade,
Zig-zag, the splendid peacock made.

Swiftly the fair day droops and dies
Above unmated butterflies ;
Again, again, and yet again,
Comes the wrong lover down the lane.

Though still deceived they still return
To wait, to hope, perchance to mourn :— 10
Alas ! poor fools, how must they rue
Who but a flickering shade pursue !

Happier we and wiser far
Than these misguided insects are,
For whom both love and life are lost
At the first touch of evening frost.

SYLVIA LYND

WHAT WAS SOLOMON'S MIND ?

WHAT was Solomon's mind ?
If he was wise in truth,
'Twas something hard to find
And delicate : a mouse 20
Tingling, and small, and smooth,
Hid in vast haunted house.

By smallness quite beset—
Stillest when most alive—
Shrinking to smaller yet
And livelier, until,
Gladly diminutive,
Still smoother, and more still,

DIMENSIONAL

He centres to an Eye,
A clean expectancy,
That, from the narrow black
Safe velvet of his crack,
Quivering, quiet, dumb,
Drinks up the lighted room.

GEOFFREY SCOTT

DIMENSIONAL

WE have tried this in three ways.
(What are the three dimensions called? Birth,
marriage and death?) Well what of the fourth?
What is the charade that the sunflower plays 10
with her splay green foot in the earth
and her heart for ever denying the comfortable North?
What is the use, tall stranger, of your South,
you cannot reach it however your gilded circle
twists with that distant unconvincing star.
Better accept the bee that grumbles at your mouth,
better be groundling, and obediently sparkle
humbly in greeting to your uncelestial Lar—
the little god of the gardens, who never plunges
into the formless sky, who does not ravish 20
cloud with his pirate stem, who does not claim
that his gold claws are in the perilous flanges
of the brazen doors of worship. Be slavish,
sunflower; take a new and earthly name.
Still we have tried three ways. The fourth defies us.
Though the brain burst, though the heart split
asunder
shall we be patient? Shall we stand idle?
The little soul—our timid shadow—denies us.
We will deny our soul and slipping under
flow out into the darkness that is tidal. 30

HUMBERT WOLFE

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

RIBH CONSIDERS CHRISTIAN LOVE INSUFFICIENT

Why should I seek for love or study it ?
It is of God and passes human wit ;
I study hatred with great diligence,
For that's a passion in my own control,
A sort of besom that can clear the soul
Of everything that is not mind or sense.

Why do I hate man, woman or event ?
That is a light my jealous soul has sent.
From terror and deception freed it can
Discover impurities, can show at last 10
How soul may walk when all such things are past,
How soul could walk before such things began.

Then my delivered soul herself shall learn
A darker knowledge and in hatred turn
From every thought of God mankind has had.
Thought is a garment and the soul's a bride
That cannot in that trash and tinsel hide :
Hatred of God may bring the soul to God.

At stroke of midnight soul cannot endure
A bodily or mental furniture. 20
What can she take until her Master give !
Where can she look until He make the show !
What can she know until He bid her know !
How can she live till in her blood He live !

W. B. YEATS

RED SKY AT MORNING

I DREW the blind on Christmas Morn.
The sky was one wild riot of red.
Its glory told me Christ was born,
Yet filled my soul with dread.

LEARNING TO TALK

Against the dawn's too radiant light,
'There stood a solitary Tree.
Its naked arms were black as night,
And grim with prophecy.

GILBERT THOMAS

LEARNING TO TALK

SEE this small one, tiptoe on
The green foothills of the years,
Views a younger world than yours ;
When you go down, he'll be the tall one.

Dawn's dew is on his tongue—
No word for what's behind the sky, 10
Naming all that meets the eye,
Pleased with sunlight over a lawn.

Hear his laughter. He can't contain
The exquisite moment overflowing.
Limbs leaping, woodpecker flying
Are for him and not hereafter.

Tongue trips, recovers, triumphs,
Turning all ways to express
What the forward eye can guess—
That time is his and earth young. 20

We are growing too like trees
To give the rising wind a voice :
Eagles shall build upon our verse,
Our winged seeds are to-morrow's sowing.

Yes, we learn to speak for all
Whose hearts here are not at home,
All who march to a better time
And breed the world for which they burn.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Though we fall once, though we often,
Though we fall to rise not again,
From our horizon sons begin ;
When we go down, they will be tall ones. f

C. DAY LEWIS

INTIMATIONS

I

THE steady candle in my hand,
often, a child, I used to stand
before the looking-glass and stare
on my own face reflected there.

Bright
the flame
lit the pale image in its gilded frame ;
behind me all the mirrored room,
ceiling and walls, drew back in gloom
and left me, as it were,
alone with my own self and all the vast of night.

And as I looked, the features of my face
grew strange to me : as when a word,
too often spoken, often heard,
decays
from living speech to a dead sound ;
and as I watched, spellbound,
a crowding terror shook me : What, thought I,
if suddenly
those staring eyes of mine should show
a meaning that I do not know ?
if I should trace
another countenance that, line by line,
grew slowly in the place of mine ?
and what, O God ! if I should hear
those lips, so white, so fixed in fear,
speak ?

INTIMATIONS

Then, with a shriek
that rang through all the silent house, I fled,
hands over eyes, with crouching head,
sobbing and wild and blind,
down the long corridor, down the stair,
into the garden-darkness . . . anywhere,
so I could leave behind
that room—my room—and its strange Occupant
for ever !

II

I am a man, and do not want 10
the pride of man—but never
dare I walk alone at night
bare-headed when the stars are close and bright :
though I love beauty, and by far
the loveliest thing in nature is a star.
What of all things imagined, seen,
so pure, so passionless-serene,
from malice so remote ?
yet each 20
of all the points of myriad light
becomes for me an Algor as I look—
the skies, no skies : a seven-sealèd book—
and the space-figures, bright Orion,
Eagle and Dragon, Bear and Lion,
fiery signs of hieroglyph.

“ Day unto day uttereth speech . . . ”
What if
the whole night spoke ?
what if the cyclic stars forsook
their serene orbits ? broke 30
that order which is heaven’s first law ? what if
they moved, regrouped themselves, and wrote,
gigantic on the dark above my head,
some dread
intelligible word ?

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

As Dante, in the Sphere of Jove,
beheld the singing spirits move,
regroup themselves, and blaze : a Speaking Bird ?

I am a man and given to love
of all things lovely ; nevertheless
—and unashamed
I make confession—I dare not face
the golden alphabets of space,
lest on my mind
God's total meaning in an instant flamed . . . 10
for O the terror that treads close behind
the trailing mantle of all loveliness !

III

It was a river and a boat thereon ;
I
lay at my ease and stared at the bright sky,
where, far away, one white cloud shone.

There was no sound save the soft dip of oar
and the soft ripple by the reeded shore ;
no sound—save of the wind that blew
through the calm poplar-trees that grew 20
on either side the river ; left and right
their summits brushed the edges of my sight,
leaving the sky between a shining avenue.

The wind—only the wind : I knew
by long persuasion every tone of it :
I knew its flutes, I knew its strings,
its drums, its trumpets—knew its glee,
its love and homeless misery ;
and, more than all, the infinite
far fury of its million wings 30
abroad upon the moorland and the sea.

INTIMATIONS

Only the wind—the wind in summer mood :
and Fancy, were she minded, might
invent man-words for wind-delight
and claim she understood.

Only the wind. Then, as I listened there,
the music changed its character—
not Nature's now, nor did I need invent :
I heard
as if ten thousand voices quired in air
with tunes distinct, articulate word ; 10
while many a keen aerial instrument
—not timbrel, pipe nor harp—
sent
in flashing swift accompaniment
weft of wild glory through the singing's warp.
Not Fancy's work, nor Sleep's—for I
sat broad awake and listened : low and high
ranged the choric harmony
beyond conceiving lovely. Yet no string
was ever set by finger quivering 20
to sounds so strange : no tube was ever blown,
this side the gate of Heaven, to so sweet tone :
out of no human lips or throats
did ever come such words, such notes !

They plunged precipitously down and trod
triumphant the profoundest ground of things ;
they climbed the very height of heights,
and with their wings
made winds about the face of God ;
and keep just time, yet not such time 30
as human numbers scan ;
and ran in scales and met sublime
in chords unknown to man.
I understood them not, yet knew that they
caught in their nets such passions, such delights,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

as pass all love's, all faith's imaginings ;
I understood them not, yet heard
their strophic parallels,
and, word to chanted word,
the planetary verses clash in rime . . .
far away
echoed their beauty, like the fainting chime
of visionary bells.

Such notes, such words as never human tongue
has shaped in air ! such words, maybe, 10
as once announced a King's nativity ;
such notes, maybe, as once were sung
when the last Fiat of Creation swept along
in mute reverberations startling space,
and all the young
stars of the morning cried His praise
shouting aloud in simultaneous song.

And then, once more,
'twas but the wind that blew
gently in the poplar-trees ; I knew, 20
once more,
the ripple by the receded shore
and the soft dip of oar.

IV

But O how near
that Other Life to this !
I go in daily hope, in daily fear :
when shall I see ? when shall I hear ?
For all this world is but a mist
that hides the lip of the supreme Abyss,
and all things that exist 30
the Metaphor of Being. When shall I
see the thing meant in the thing seen,
and know what ocean, earth and sky,
what living and what dying mean ?

ETAIN

In daily hope, in daily fear I go.
When, with a hushed premonitory shock,
shall I hear Echo from her wooded rock
cry back a name I did not cry ?
or run to meet my friend—
to meet, upon my running's end,
one whom I never knew—whom yet I know
more nearly than the beating of my heart ?
When will the rounded hill, the hollow dale,
the solid mountain sweeping to its snow, 10
grow flat and tremble like a veil . . .
and like the temple-curtain suddenly
be rent apart
to show . . .

Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard !
And thinking hath no thought and speech no word !
And I . . . ?
In daily fear, in daily hope I go.

J. REDWOOD ANDERSON

ETAIN

SHE has come from far,
From the Kingdom that must lie 20
Buried deep beneath the hill,
Shadowed by the evening star ;
Bending last year's bracken by
A bitter hour she shall fulfil ;
Cannot the hazel help her
And the willow,
Or the bank that is her pillow
With its green leaf of goodwill ?

She has not far to go
To the Kingdom that must lie 30

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

Buried underneath the hill,
Shadowed in the evening glow ;
(Who can pass those portals by ?)
She shall dream and dream her fill ;
The hazel bough shall help her
 And the willow,
And the bank that is her pillow
With its green leaf of goodwill.

NORA K. McCAUSLAND

THE CREDITOR

THE quietude of a soft wind
Will not rescind 10
My debts to God, but gentle-skinned
His finger probes. I lull myself
In quiet in diet in riot in dreams,
In dopes in drams in drums in dreams
Till God retire and the door shut.
But
Now I am left in the fire-blaze
The peacefulness of the fire-blaze
Will not erase
My debts to God for His mind strays 20
Over and under and all ways
All days and always.

LOUIS MACNEICE

AGE GOTHIQUE DORÉ

KING RICHARD in his garden walks royal,
His mantle green being wrought with scarlet flowers,
His hand holding a coloured book of hours,
His coat all gold, gilden his feet withal.

THE TRINKETS

King Richard walks in his garden by Thames-side,
Hearing the bells of High Westminster ring,
And the sound of the chant of the monks echoing,
Singing each in his stall to God Crucified.
Golden the sun descends beyond Thames-water,
Golden flash out London steeples and spires,
Their vanes burn and turn in the day's last fires.
About the King the flowers of the garden fade,
And in star-light he walks on, yet lonelier,
His heart being filled with the peace of the Mother
Maid. . . .

10

WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE

VALE

THIS was the heavenly hiding-place
Wherein the spirit laughed a day.
All its proud ivories and fires
Shrunk to a shovelful of clay.

It must have love, this silent earth,
To leap up at the King's desire,
Moving in such a noble dance
Of wreathèd ivory and fire.

It will not stir for me at all,
Nor answer me with voice or gleam. 20
Adieu, sweet-memored dust, I go
After the Master for His dream.

“A.E.”

THE TRINKETS

A WANDERING world of rivers,
A wavering world of trees,
If the world grow dim and dizzy
With all changes and degrees,

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

It is but Our Lady's mirror
Hung dreaming in its place,
Shining with only shadows
Till she wakes it with her face.

The standing whirlpool of the stars,
The wheel of all the world,
Is a ring on Our Lady's finger
With the suns and moons empearled
With stars for stones to please her
Who sits playing with her rings 10
With the great heart that a woman has
And the love of little things.

Wings of the whirlwind of the world
From here to Ispahan,
Spurning the flying forests,
Are light as Our Lady's fan :
For all things violent here and vain
Lie open and all at ease
Where God has girded heaven to guard
Her holy vanities. 20

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON

WAR-SONG OF THE ANGELS

BLOW the slow horns through the courts of Heaven
So the sound wanders among the clouds
Whose giant breasts slowly turn to the moon
Or flock in wild silence past the seven
Fixed stars that their own light shrouds !

Blow the clear horns while our ranks stream slowly
Falling with furled wings through the hush,
With faces colder than moonlight shining
Through the dim clouds ; and now the holy
Banners strain in the comets' rush ! 30

THROUGH CURTAINS OF DARKNESS

Blow the slow horns so the moon's mountains
That never echoed shall echo loud,
And her still lakes reflect our banners,
And the wind of our passing send up fountains
Of silver dust to the silver cloud.

Blow, trumpeters ; our wings have drawn a girdle
Round the uneasy world ; not to the skies
And the familiar planets Earth looks up,
But to myriad wings and our calm moonlit eyes.
Blow, trumpets ! Banners, wave, and slow horns
 soundIO
Now Heaven's shadow lights the common ground.

STELLA GIBBONS

THROUGH CURTAINS OF DARKNESS

THE voice of God came upon me through the darkness
That clothed the light of the lower air,
Stole upon me through corrupting darkness
As I walked prideful in despair,
Crying, "Take no heed of those who have stripped
you,
Turn your back—and see Me.
Though you be naked as the wind is naked
You shall be rainbow'd with the sea.

“ Though men despise you, neglect you, frustrate you,
And remember you not in their books, 21
I have written your name on the granite hills
And the primrose banks of the brooks.
Therefore fear not, wail not, embitter not your just
wrath,
Look in front and on high ;
For your songs are tangled in the lightning
And the cedar branches of the sky.

POEMS OF TWENTY YEARS

“ To some has been given honour and riches,
Wealth of earth, strong sinew and power ;
But I have remembered my servant in the lean
 ditches

Even unto this blind hour.

Therefore rage not, chafe not, doubt not ;
You do wrong to feed your ire,
For I have given you an old song made new,
I have given you my heart's fire.

“ Come unto Me all ye that labour,
Come unto Me and have rest, 10
Lay your head upon My starry tabor
And the celestial darkness of My breast.
Lean, rest, and be rocked upon Me
That the wind blow unto you of My ruth ;
For I set My desire upon you
When you bit the bane of Truth.

“ Truth is a poison unto the slack veins,
And a searing wildness to the soft eyes ;
He that finds it shall be cut off,
And his breast torn with sighs. 20
For I see it not as the world sees it ;
Men fear it and flee.
Come unto Me all ye that have seen it,
Come unto Me.

“ Now are the days of darkness upon men,
There is no certainty in things done,
And the moon, a buckler of desolation,
Is a seduction unto the sun.
The stars fight in the lunar spaces ;
The gnarled waves devour their sea. 30
Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden,
Come unto Me.

THROUGH CURTAINS OF DARKNESS

“ For he that finds Truth shall be shaken ;
Demons shall stand at his ears ;
Pride shall assail and cleave him ;
He shall be thrust through with spears.
Therefore twist not, contort not, darken not
When you lift up your lyre.
For Truth was given unto the angels ;
And they are melody and fire.”

HERBERT PALMER

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