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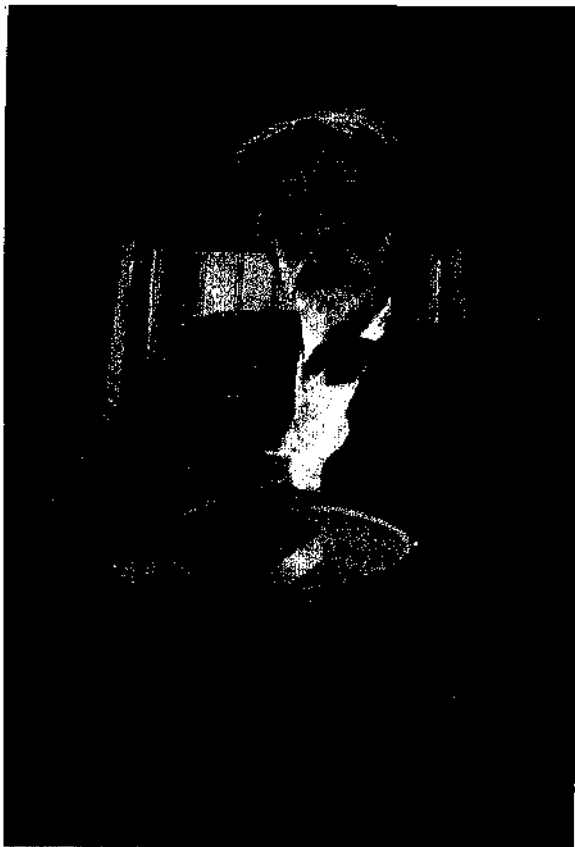


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*Henry Blake 11. 2*

# NEW VERSE

WRITTEN IN

**1921**

BY

ROBERT BRIDGES

POET LAUREATE

WITH THE OTHER POEMS OF THAT YEAR

AND

A FEW EARLIER PIECES



OXFORD

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## P R E F A C E

IF a poet were wholly responsible for his production, the distracting variety of this booklet, both in its moods and measures, would need apology ; nor is the author likely to win credit for such restraint as he has actually exercised, without which the collection would have been even less presentable; he has, moreover, grouped his incongruities into four sections, so as to avoid mixing the different versifications. This arrangement is in a backward order of time : Part I is in the writer's latest manner and still peculiar to himself: it may be styled *Neo-Miltonic Syllables* and has been described elsewhere. It pretends to offer their true desideratum to the advocates of Free Verse. The poems in Part II are in Accentual measures the reproaches against this manner having been launched fifty years ago may be considered obsolete ; Part III is all in recognizable old styles ; and Part IV is of the most ancient facture, in William Stone's (somewhat amended) quantitative prosody . this is still in full taboo, but the hitherto unpublished specimens here included are of the date of the writer's earlier delinquencies. All the poems not specially dated at the foot were written in 1921.



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# PART I



# I

## CHEDDAR PINKS

MID the squander'd colour

idling as I lay

Reading the Odyssey

in my rock-garden

I espied the cluster'd

tufts of Cheddar pinks

Burgeoning with promise

of their scented bloom

All the modish motley

of their bloom to-be

10

Thrust up in narrow buds

on the slender stalks

B



I had forgotten Homer  
dallying with my thoughts  
Till I fell to making  
these little verses  
Communing with the flowers 40  
in my rock-garden  
on a May morning.



## II

### POOR POLL

I SAW it all, Polly, how when you had call'd for sop  
and your good friend the cook came & fill'd up your pan  
you yerk'd it out deftly by beakfuls scattering it  
away far as you might upon the sunny lawn .  
then summon'd with loud cry the little garden birds  
to take their feast. Quickly came they flustering around  
Ruddock & Merle & Finch squabbling among themselves  
nor gave you thanks nor heed while you sat silently  
watching, and I beside you in perplexity  
lost in the maze of all mystery and all knowledge 10  
felt how deep lieth the fount of man's benevolence  
if a bird can share it & take pleasure in it.

If you, my bird, I thought, had a philosophy  
it might be a sounder scheme than what our moralists  
propound : because thou, Poll, livest in the darkness

which human Reason searching from outside would pierce,  
but, being of so feeble a candle-power, can only  
show up to view the cloud that it illuminates.

Thus reason' d I: then marvell'd how you can adapt  
your wild bird-mood to endure your tame environment 20  
the domesticities of English household life  
and your small brass-wire cabin, who sh<sup>dst</sup> live on wing  
harrying the tropical branch-flowering wilderness :

Yet Nature gave you a gift of easy mimicry  
whereby you have come to win uncanny sympathies  
and morsell'd utterance of our Germanic talk  
as schoolmasters in Greek will flaunt their hackney'd tags

*φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν and κτήμα ἐς ἀεὶ*

*ἢ γλῶσσ' ὀμώμοχ', ἢ δὲ φρῆν ἀνώμοτος*

tho' you with a better ear copy us more perfectly 30  
nor without connotation as when you call'd for sop  
all with that stumpy wooden tongue & vicious beak  
that dry whistling shrieking tearing cutting pincer  
now eagerly subservient to your cautious claws  
exploring all varieties of attitude

in irrepressible blind groping for escape

—a very figure & image of man's soul on earth

the almighty cosmic Will fidgeting in a trap—

in your quenchless unknown desire for the unknown life

of which some homely British sailor robb'd you, alas ! 40  
 'Tis all that doth your silly thoughts so busy keep  
 the while you sit moping like Patience on a perch  
 —*Wie viele Tag' und Nachte bist du geblielen!*  
*La possa delle gambe posta in tregue—*  
 the impeccable spruceness of your grey-feather'd pöll  
 a model in hairdressmg for the dandiest old Duke  
 enough to qualify you for the House of Lords  
 or the Athenaeum Club, to poke among the nobs  
 great intellectual nobs and literary nobs  
 scientific nobs and Bishops *ex officio* : 50  
 nor lack you simulation of profoundest wisdom  
 such as men's features oft acquire in very old age  
 by mere cooling of passion & decay of muscle  
 by faint renunciation even of untold regrets ;  
 who seeing themselves a picture of that wh: man should-be  
 learn almost what it were to be what they are-not.  
 But you can never have cherish'd a determined hope  
 consciously to renounce or lose it, you will live  
 your threescore years & ten idle and puzzle-headed  
 as any mumping monk in his unfurmsh'd cell 60  
 in peace that, poor Polly, passeth Understanding—  
 merely because you lack what we men understand  
 by Understanding. Well! well! that's the difference

*C'est la seule difference, mais c'est important.*

Ah ! your pale sedentary life ! but would you change ?  
exchange it for one crowded hour of glorious life,  
one blind furious tussle with a madden'd monkey  
who would throttle you and throw your crude fragments away  
shreds unintelligible of an unmeaning act

*dans la profonde horreur de l'eiernelle nuit ?* 70

Why ask? You cannot know. 'Twas by no choice of yours  
that you mischanged for monkeys' man's society,  
'twas that British sailor drove you from Paradise—

**Εἶθ' ὄφελ' Ἀργούς μὴ διαπτύσθαι σκάφος!**

I'd hold embargoes on such a ghastly traffic.

I am writing verses to you & grieve that you sh<sup>d</sup> be  
*absolument incapable de les comprendre,*

*Tu, Polle, nescis ista nee poles scire :—*

Alas ! Iambic, scazon and alexandrine,  
spondee or choriamb, all is alike to you—

80

my well-continued fanciful experiment  
wherein so many strange verses amalgamate  
on the secure bedrock of Milton's prosody :  
not but that when I speak you will incline an ear  
in critical attention lest by chance I might  
p6ssibly say s6mething that was worth repeating:  
I am adding (do you think ?) pages to literature

that gouty excrement of human intellect  
accumulating slowly & everlastingly  
depositing, like guano on the Peruvian shore, 90  
to be perhaps exhumed in some remotest age  
(*piis secunda, vate me, deturfuga*)  
to fertilize the scanty dwarf'd intelligence  
of a new race of beings the unhallow'd offspring  
of them who shall have quite dismember'd & destroy'd  
our temple of Christian faith & fair Hellenic art  
just as that monkey would, poor Polly, have done for you.



### III

#### THE TAPESTRY

*'Sequel to the foregoing' W. W.*

'THESE tapestries have hung fading around my hall  
centuries long ; their old fashion'd mythology  
infects the fresh and young with blighting influence  
like Abram there with knife and faggot standing stark  
to slay his son. I'm vow'd I'll have no more of them.  
Turn me them outside-m, their faces to the wall,  
so shall we have more colour and less solemnity.'—

Thus the young heir and lord enjoin'd his wondering steward  
who obey'd, and many a guest was bidden, and at the feast  
the wine flow'd free with fine hubbub and merriment. 10

My tale is but a fable of God's fair tapestry  
the decorated room wherein my spirit hath dwelt  
from infancy a nursling of great Nature's beauty  
which keepeth fresh my wonder as when I was a child.

Such is the joy of the eye, that dark conduit whereby  
the swift creative ray, offspring of heavenly fire,  
steals to the mind, wakening in her secret chamber  
vast potencies of thought which there lie slumbering  
in the image of God. Ah ! had I not heard and seen  
today, when at my window a meryl sat fluting 20  
his happy canticle to hail the sun's uprise ?

Then looked I forth and lo ! The Elysian fields of Dawn !  
and there in naked peace my dumb expectancy  
mirror'd above the hills, a pageant like music  
heard in imagination or the silence of dreams.

What if I had not seen the cloths of Night take hue  
soft-tinged as of brown bear-skin on green opal spread  
which still persisting through shift imperceptible  
grew to an incandescent copper on a pale light-blue !  
Then one flame-yellow streak pierced thru' the molten bronze  
with lilac freak'd above, where fiery in red mist 31  
the orb with slow surprise surged, till his whole blank blaze  
dispell'd from out his path all colour—and Day began.

Thus ever at every season in every hour and place  
visions await the soul on wide ocean or shore  
mountain forest or garden in wind and floating cloud  
in busy murmur of bees or blithe carol of birds :  
nor is it memoried thought only nor pleased sense

that holds us, nor whate'er Reason sits puzzling out  
of light or atom, as if—say, the Rainbow's beauty 40  
lay in our skill to fray the Sun's white-tissued ray  
to unravel and measure-off the gaudy threads thereof:

It is a deeper thrill, the joy that lovers learn  
taking divine instruction from each other's eyes,  
the Truth that all men feel gazing upon the skies  
m constellated Night—*O God* the father of heaven!  
' When I arose and saw the dawn, I sighed for Thee.'

Reckon the backward stretch of Mankind's pedigree,  
should it be fifteen thousand generations told  
were that so long to climb from dim selfconsciousness 50  
up to the eagle aery of high philosophy ?

to escape from his wild-beast cave in the wilderness  
to till'd plains and safe homes, farms and mansion'd gardens,  
populous wall'd cities, temples and pillar'd schools,  
to dwell m grace, gravity, amity and good manners ?

Was then the first dawning of his savage wonder  
a vain terror to scare him from his aim astray ?

all his prophetic seers, poets, enthusiasts,  
dreamers, artists, adorners, whose meditation  
won to purity of soul in the visions of God, 60

have guided him on securely and taught him wisely ;  
their soul's desire came with man's Reason from Nature,

transfiguring his sorrows in heroic grace ;  
their temples even in ruin reproach his follies  
his science is consecrated by their beauty.

I prop so far my slight fable with argument  
to lay malison and ban on the upstart leprous clan  
who wrong Nature's beauty turning her face about:  
for, certes, hath the goddess also her hinder parts  
which men of all ages have kindly thought to hide : 70  
But as a man, owning a fine cloth of Arras,  
in reverence for his heirloom will examine it all  
inside and out, and learn whether of white wool or silk  
the high-warp, what of silver and gold, how fine the thread,  
what number of graded tints in hatching of the woof;  
so we study Nature, wrong side as well as right  
and in the eternal mystery of God's working find  
full many unsightly a token of beauty's trouble ;  
and gam knowledge of Nature and much wisdom thereby :  
but these making no part of beauty's welcome face, 80  
these we turn to the wall, hiding away the mean  
ugly brutish obscene clumsy irrelevances  
which Honesty will own to with baffling humour  
and in heightening the paradox can find pleasure ;  
since without such full knowledge can no man have faith  
nor will his thought or picture of life be worth a bean.

Now, bean, button, or boterfly, pray accept of me  
for my parrot verses this after apology:  
making experiments in versification

I wrote them as they came in the mood of the day                   90  
whether for good or ill—it was them or nothing.



## IV

### KATE'S MOTHER

PERCH'D on the upland wheatfields beyond the village end  
a red-brick Windmill stood with black bonnet of wood  
that trimn'd the whirling cross of its great arms around  
upon the wind, pumping up water night and day  
from the deep Kentish chalk to feed a little town  
where miniatured afar it huddled on the coast  
its glistening roofs and thrust its short pier in the sea.

Erewhile beside the Mill I had often come and gazed  
across the golden cornland to the purple mam  
and distant town, so distant that I could not hear           10  
the barrack bugles but might spy the castle-flag  
a speck of bunting held against the foam-fleck'd waves:  
and luggers in black rank on the high shingle-bank  
drawn up beside the tarr'd huts of the fishermen  
(those channel boatmen famous for courage and skill)

and ships that in the offing their scatter'd courses fetch'd  
with sunlit sails, or bare-masted outrode the tide:

'Twas such a scene of bright perspective and brave hues  
as no painter can forge, brushing his greys and blues  
his madder, vermilion, chrome and ultramarine, 20

'Twas very England herself as I grew to love her  
—as any manchild loveth looking on beauty—  
England in the peace and delight of her glory,  
beneath the summer sun in the wild-roving wind  
the mighty fans hurtling steadily above me as there  
Nature flooded my heart in unseizable dream :

Long ago—when as yet the house where I was born  
was the only home I knew and I no bigger then  
than a mastiff-dog may be, and little of clothing wore  
but shirt and trews and shoes and holland pinafore : 30  
then was my father's garden a fairy realm of tree-  
worship, mimic warfare and ritual savagery  
and past its gates a land of peril and venture lay  
my field of romance the steep beach of the wild sea  
whither might I go wander on high-days for long hours  
tended at every step by a saint, a nurse and mate  
of such loving devotion patience and full trust  
that of all Catharines she hath been my only Kate.

But inland past the Windmill lay a country unknown,

so that upon the day when I was grown so strong 40  
(to my great pride 'twas told) that I might walk with Kate  
on her half-holiday's accustomed pilgrimage  
to see her old mother who lived across the downs  
in the next combe, it happ'd that I so stirred must be  
that after seventy years I can revive the day.

A blazing afternoon in splendor of mid-July  
Kate and my elder sister and I trudged down the street  
past village pond and church, and up the winding lane  
came out beside the windmill on the high cornland  
where my new world began. A wheel-worn sunken track 50  
parted the tilth, deep rugged ruts patch'd here and there  
with broken flints raked-m from strewage of the ground,  
baked clay fissured by drought, as sphnter'd rock unkind  
to a child's tread, and on either hand the full-grown corn  
rose up a wall above me, where no breeze might come  
nor any more sight thence of the undulating sweep  
of the yellow acres nor of the blue mam below

For difficulty and roughness and scorch of the way  
then a great Bible-thought came on me: I was going  
like the Israelites of old in the desert of Sin, 60  
where forty years long they journey'd in punishment:  
'twas such a treeless plain as this whereon they went,  
this torrid afternoon under the fiery sun

might be the forty years ; but I forgot them soon  
picking my way to run on the low skirting banks  
that shelved the fields, anon foraging mid the ranks  
fending the spikey awns off from my cheeks and eyes  
wherever I might espy the larger flowers, and pull'd  
blue Cockle and scarlet Poppy and yellow Mangold  
whose idle blazonry persists to decorate 70  
the mantle of green and gold which man toileth to weave  
for his old grandmother Earth :—with such posies in hand  
we ran bragging to Kate who plodded on the track  
and now with skilful words beguiled us in her train  
warning how far off yet the promised land, and how  
journey so great required our full strength husbanded  
for the return : 'twere wise today to prove our strength  
and walk like men. Whereat we wished most to be wise  
and keeping near beside her heeded closely our steps  
so that our thoughts now wander'd no more from the way  
(O how interminable to me seem'd that way ') 81  
till it fell sloping downwards and we saw the green  
of great elms that uplifted their heads m the combe :  
when for joy of the shade racing ahead we sat  
till Kate again came up with us and led us on  
by shelter'd nooks where among apple and cherry trees  
many a straw-thatcht cottage nestled back from the road

A warp'd wicket hidden in a flowery Privet-hedge  
admitted to her mother's along a pebbled path  
between two little squares of crowded garden framed 90  
in high clipt Box, that blent its faint pervading scent  
with fragrant Black-currant, gay Sweet-william and Mint,  
and white Jasmin that hung drooping over the door.  
A bobbin sprang the latch and following Kate we stood  
in shade of a low room with one small window, and there  
facing the meagre light of its lace-curtain'd panes  
a bland silver-hair'd dame clad in a cotton frock  
sat in a rocking-chair by an open hearth, whereon  
a few wood embers smouldering kept a kettle at steam.  
She did not rise, but speaking with soft courtesy 100  
and full respectful pride of her daughter's charges  
gave us kind welcome, bade us sit and be rested  
while Kate prepared the tea. Many strange things the while  
allured me : a lofty clock with loud insistent tick  
beguiled the solemn moments as it doled them out  
picturing upon its face a full-ngg'd ship that rocked  
tossing behind an unmoved billow to and fro:  
beside it a huge batter'd copper warming-pan  
with burmsh'd bowl fit for Goliath's giant spoon,  
and crockery whimsies ranged on the high mantel-shelf: 110  
'twas a storeroom of wonders, but my eyes returned

still to the old dame, she was the greatest wonder of all,  
the wrinkles innumerable of her sallow skin  
her thin voice and the trembling of her patient face  
as there she swayed incessantly on her rocking-chair  
like the ship in the clock : she had sprung into my ken  
wholly to enthrall me, a fresh nucleus of life-surprise  
such as I knew must hold mystery and could reveal :  
for I had observed strange movement of her cotton skirt  
and as she sat with one knee across the other, I saw 120  
how her right foot in the air was all a-tremble and jerked  
in little restless kicks : so when we sat to feast  
about the table spredd with tea and cottage cakes  
whenever her eye was off me I watched her furtively  
to make myself assured of all the manner and truth  
of this new thing, and ere we were sent out to play  
(that so Kate might awhile chat with her mother alone)  
I knew the SHAKING PALSY. What follow'd is lost,  
how I chew'd mint-leaves waiting there in the garden  
is my latest remembrance of that July day, 130  
all after is blank, the time like a yesterday's loaf  
is sliced as with a knife, or like as where the sea  
in some diluvian rage swallowing a part of the earth  
left a sheer cliff where erst the unbroken height ran on,  
and by the rupture has built a landmark seen afar

—as 'tis at the South Foreland or St. Margaret's bay—  
so memory being broken may stand out more clearly  
as that day's happenings live so freshly by me, and most  
the old widow with her great courtesy and affliction :  
and I love to remember it was to her I made 140  
the first visit of compliment that ever I paid.



## V

### THE COLLEGE GARDEN

IN 1917

THE infinitude of Life is in the heart of man,  
a fount surging to fill a lake that mirrors heav'n,  
and now to himself he seemeth stream to be and now pool  
as he acteth his impulse or stayeth brooding thereon.

There is no beauty of love or peace, no joy nor mirth  
but by kindred artistry of contemplation enhanc'd  
decketh his sovranity with immortalities.

Jewels of imagination hath he, purities  
and sanctities whereby he dareth approach God  
plenishing his temples with incense of music                    10  
in praise and lyric litanies that call on Christ:  
his Destiny is one with the eternal skies : he heth  
a dream in the elemental far vistas of Truth  
inhaling life to his soul as the ambient azurous air  
that he draweth into his mortal body unconscious  
to fire the dutiful-desperate pulse of his blood.

And yet again there is neither any evil nor mischief  
 sprung from teeming chaos to assault his mind, but he  
 will harbour it—he will be goodfellow in turn with Sin.  
 Hark to him how cheerily he windeth his hunting-horn 20  
 whipping-in his wolf-pack to their pasture of blood !  
 See his comforting mastery of Nature's forces  
 how he skilleth it to his own rum, ev'n to mimic  
 cosmic catastrophe in her hideous destructions !  
 He will have surfeit of passion and revel in wrong  
 till like a shameless prodigal at death's door he find  
 his one nobility is but to suffer bravely  
 in the lazar-house of souls his self-betrayal.

Surely I know there is none that hath not taint at heart:  
 Yet drink I of heav'nly hope and faith in God's dealing 30  
 basking this summer day under the stately limes  
 by the immemorial beauty of this gothic college,  
 a place more peaceful now than even sweet peace should be,  
 hush'd in spiritual vacancy of desolation  
 by sad desertion of throng'd study and gay merriment—  
 since all the gamesome boys are fled with their glory  
 light-hearted in far lands making fierce sport with Hell  
 and to save home from the spoiler have despoil'd their homes  
 leaving nought in their trace but empty expectancy  
 of their return, Alas ! for how few shall return ! 40

what love-names write we daily in the long roll of death !  
And yet some shall return, and others with them come :  
life will renew ; tho' now none cometh here all day  
but a pensive philosopher from his dark room  
pacing the terrace, slow as his earth-burden'd thought,  
and the aged gardener with scythe wheelbarrow and broom  
loitering in expert parcimony of skill and time  
while on the grassy slope of the old city-rampart  
I watch his idleness and hearken to the clocks  
in punctual dispute clanging the quarter-hours— 50  
dull preaching calendars ticking upon their wheels  
punctilious subdivisions of infinity  
and reckoning now as usual all the monstrous hours  
these monstrous heartless hours that pass and yet must pass  
till this mischief shall pass and England's foe be o'erthrown—  
and shall be o'erthrown—'tis for this thing her dear boys die  
and this at each full hour the chimes from Magdalen tow'r  
proclaim with dominant gay cloze hurl'd to the sky.

Thus hour draggeth on hour, and I feel every thrill  
of time's eternal stream that passeth over me 60  
the dream-stream of God's Will that made things as they be  
and me as I am, as unreluctant in the stream  
I lie, like one who hath wander'd all his summer mom  
among the heathery hills and hath come down at noon

in a breathless valley upon a mountain-brook  
and for animal recreation of hot fatigue  
hath stripp'd his body naked to lie down and taste  
the play of the cool water on all his limbs and flesh  
and lying in a pebbly shallow beneath the sky  
supine and motionless feeleth each ripple pass  
until his thought is merged in the flow of the stream  
as it cometh upon him and lappeth him there  
stark as a white corpse that stranded upon the stones  
blocketh and for a moment delayeth the current  
ere it can pass to pay its thin tribute of salt  
into the choking storage of the quenchless sea.

70



## VI

### THE PSALM

WHILE Northward the hot sun was sinking o'er the trees  
as we sat pleasantly talking in the meadow,  
the swell of a rich music suddenly on our ears  
gush'd thru' the wide-flung doors, where village-folk in church  
stood to their evening psalm praising God together—  
and when it came to cloze, paused, and broke forth anew.

A great Huguenot psalm it trod forth on the air  
with full slow notes moving as a goddess stepping  
through the responsive figures of a stately dance  
conscious of beauty and of her fair-flowing array                    10  
in the severe perfection of an habitual grace,  
then stooping to its cloze, paused to dance forth anew;

To unfold its bud of melody everlastingly  
 fresh as in springtime when, four centuries ago,  
 it wing'd the souls of martyrs on their way to heav'n  
 chain'd at the barbarous stake, mid the burning faggots  
 standing with tongues cut out, all singing in the flames—  
 O evermore, sweet Psalm, shalt thou break forth anew.

Thou, when in France that self-idolatrous idol reign'd  
 that starv'd his folk to fatten his priests and concubines, 20  
 thou wast the unconquerable paean of resolute men  
 who fell in coward massacre or with Freedom fled  
 from the palatial horror into far lands away,  
 and England learnt to voice thy deathless strain anew.

Ah ! they endured beyond worst pangs of fire and steel  
 tortunngs invisible of tenderness and untold ;  
 No Muse may name them, nay, no man will whisper them ;  
 sitting alone he dare not think of them—and wail  
 of babes and mothers' wail flouted in bald song. 29  
 Draw to thy cloze, sweet Psalm, pause and break forth anew !

Thy minstrels were no more, yet thy triumphing plaint  
 haunted their homes, as once in a deserted house  
 in Orthes, as 'twas told, the madden'd soldiery

burst in and search'd but found nor living man nor maid  
only the sound flow'd round them and desisted not  
but when it wound to cloze, paused, and broke forth anew.

And oft again in some lone valley of the Cevennes  
where unabsolved crime yet calleth plagues on France  
thy heavenly voice would lure the bloodhounds on, astray,  
hunting their fancied prey afar in the dark night 40  
and with its ghostly music mock'd their oaths and knives.  
O evermore great Psalm spring forth ! spring forth anew !



## VII

### COME SI QUANDO

How thickly the far fields of heaven are strewn with stars!  
Tho' the open eye of day shendeth them with its glare  
yet, if no cloudy wind curtain them nor low mist  
of earth blindfold us, soon as Night in grey mantle  
wrappeth all else, they appear in their optimacy  
from under the ocean or behind the high mountains  
climbing in spacious ranks upon the stark-black void:  
Ev'n so in our mind's night burn far beacons of thought  
and the infinite architecture of our darkness,  
the dim essence and being of our mortalities,                   10:0  
is sparkled with fair fire-flecks of eternity  
whose measure we know not nor the wealth of their rays.

It happ'd to me sleeping in the Autumn night, what time  
Sinus was uplifting his great lamp o'er the hills,  
I saw him not—my sight was astray, my wonder  
held by the epiphany of a seraphic figure  
that was walking on earth—in my visions it was—  
I saw one in the full form and delight of man,  
the signature of godhead in his motion'd grace,  
and the aureole of his head was not dimm'd to my view ; 20  
the shekmah of azure floating o'er him in the air  
seem'd the glow of a fire that burn'd steadfast within  
prison'd to feed the radiance of his countenance ;  
as a lighthouse flasheth over broken waters  
a far resistless beam from its strong tower: it was  
as if Nature had deign'd to take back from man's hand  
some work of her own as art had refashion'd it  
—when Giorgione (it might be) portraying the face  
of one who hath left no memory but that picture  
and watching well the features at their play to find 30  
some truth worthy of his skill, caught them for a moment  
transfigured by a phantom visitation of spirit  
which seizing he drew forth and fix'd on the canvas  
as thence it hath gazed out for ever, and once on me:  
Even such immanent beauty had that heroic face  
and all that look'd on it loved and many worshipp'd.

For me, comfort possess'd me, the intimate comfort  
 of Beauty that is the soul's familiar angel  
 who bringeth me alway such joy as a man feeleth  
 returning to the accustom'd homeliness of home 40  
 after long absence or exile among strange things,  
 and my heart in me was laughing for happiness—  
 when I saw a great fear fell on the worshippers,  
 The fear of God : I saw its smoky shadow of dread ;  
 and as a vast Plutonian mountain that burieth  
 its feet in molten lava and its high peak in heaven,  
 whenever it hath decoy'd some dark voyaging storm  
 to lave its granite shoulders, dischargeth the flood  
 in a thousand torrents o'er its flanks to the plain  
 and all the land is vocal with the swirl and gush 50  
 of the hurrying waters, so suddenly in this folk  
 a flood of troublous passion arose and mock'd control.

Then saw I the light vanities and follies of man  
 put on dragonish faces and glour with Gorgon eyes  
 disowning Shame and Reason, and one poet I saw  
 who from the interdependence and rivalry of men  
 loathing his kind had fled into the wilderness  
 to wander among the beasts and make home of their caves :  
 like to those Asian hermits color'd by their clime  
 who drank the infatuation of the wide torrid sand 60

the whelming tyranny of the lonely sun by day  
the boundless nomadry of the stars by night, who sought  
primeval brotherhood with things unbegotten ;  
who for ultimate comfort clothing them i' the skin  
of nakedness wrapt nothingness closely about them  
choosing want for wealth and shapeless terrors for friends,  
in the embrace of desolation and wearied silence  
to lie babe-like on the bosom of unpitying power.

But he found not rest nor peace for his soul: I read  
his turbulent passion, the blasphemy of his heart 70  
as I stood among the rocks that chuckled the cry  
wherewith he upcast reproach into the face of heaven.

' UNVEIL thine eyes, O THEMIS ! Stand, unveil thine eyes !  
from the high zenith hang thy balance in the skies!  
In one scale set thy Codes of Justice Duty and Awe  
thy penal interdicts the tables of thy Law  
and in the other the postulant plea of Mercy and Love:  
then thine unbandaged sight shall know thy cause how light  
and see thy thankless pan fly back to thee above.

' Or wilt thou deeper wager, an if thou hast the key 80  
to unlock the cryptic storehouse of futurity,

fetch the mint-treasure forth, unpack the Final Cause  
whose prime alweighty metal must give Reason pause ;  
or if 'tis of such stuff as man's wit cannot gauge  
scale thou the seal'd deposit in its iron-bound cage  
Nay, lengthen out the beam of the balance on thy side  
unequal as thou wilt, so that on mine the pan  
to hold the thoughts of man be deep enough and wide.

' What Providence is this that maketh sport with Chance  
blindly staking against things of no ordinance ? 90  
Must the innocent dear birds that singing in the shaw  
with motherly instinct wove their nest of twisted straw  
see in some icy hail-gust their loved mansion drown'd  
and all their callow nurselings batter'd on the ground ?  
Even so a many-generation'd city of men  
the storied temple of their endeavour and amorous ken  
is toss'd back into rubbish by a shudder of the earth's crust:  
Nor even the eternal stars have any sanction'd trust  
that, like ships in dark night ill-fatedly on their course, 99  
they shall not meet and crash together, and all their force  
be churn'd back to the vapory magma whence they grew  
age-long to plod henceforth their frustrate path anew.

' From this blind wreckage then hath Wisdom no escape  
but limitless production of every living shape ?

How shall man honour this Demiurge and yet keep  
 in due honour the gift that he rateth so cheap ?  
 Myriad seeds perfected that one seed may survive—  
 Millions of men, that Reason in a scant few may thrive,  
 Multiplication alike of good bad strong and weak  
 and the overflow of life more wasteful than the leak.       no

' And what this treasure, of which, so prodigal of the whole,  
 he granteth unto each pensioner in such niggard dole ?  
 its short lease on such terms as only can be enjoy'd  
 against some equal title invaded or destroy'd ?  
 What is this banquet where the guests are served for meat ?  
 What hospitality ? What kind of host is he  
 the bill of whose purveyance is *Kill ye each other and eat ?*

' Or why, if the excellence of conscient Reason is such,  
 the accomplishment so high, that it renounce all touch  
 of kindness with its kin and humbler parentage       120  
 —building the slaughter-house beside the pasturage—  
 Why must this last best most miraculous flower of all  
 be canker'd at the core, prey to the spawn and spawl  
 of meanest motes ? must stoop from its divine degree  
 to learn the spire and spilth of every insensate filth  
 that swarmeth in the chaos of obscenity ?

' And if the formless ferment of life's primal slime  
bred without stint, and came through plant and beast in time  
to elaborate the higher appurtenance of sex

Why should this low-born urgency persist to vex 130

man's growth in grace ? for sure the procreant multitude  
would not to outcrowd the earth wer't not for lack of food,  
and thus the common welfare serveth but to swell  
the common woe, whereat the starvelings more rebel.

See, never hungry horde of savage raiders shpp'd  
from Tartary's parching steppes so for destruction equipp'd  
as midst our crowded luxury now the sneaking swarm  
that pilfereth intelligence from Science to storm  
Civilization in her well-order'd citadel.

Thus Culture doeth herself to death reinforcing hell 140

and seeth no hope but this, that what she hath wrought in vain  
since it was wrought before, may yet be wrought again  
and fall to a like destruction again and evermore.

' And what Man's Mind ? since even without this foul offence  
it breedeth its own poison of its own excellence :

it riseth but to fall deeper, it cannot endure.

Attainment stayeth pursuit and being itself impure  
dispiriteth the soul. All power engendereth pride  
and poor vainglory seeing its image magnified

upon the ignoble mirror of common thought, will trust 150  
 the enticements of self-love and the flattery thereof  
 and call on fame to enthrone ambition and mortal lust.

' Wherefore, since Reason assureth neither final term  
 nor substantive foundations impeccable and firm  
 as brutish instincts are—and Virtue in default  
 goeth down before the passions crowding to the assault;  
 Nothing being justified all things are ill or well  
 are justifiable alike or unjustifiable  
 till, whether in mocking laughter or mere melancholy,  
 Philosophy will turn to vindicate folly : 160  
 and if thru' thought it came that man first learnt his woe,  
 his Memory accumulating the recorded sum  
 his Prescience anticipating fresh ills to come,  
 How could it be otherwise ? Why should it not be so ?

'And last, O worst! for surely all wrongs had else been nought  
 had never Imagination exalted human thought  
 with spiritual affection of tenderness intense  
 beyond all finest delicacy of bodily sense ;  
 so that the gift of tears, that is the fount of song  
 maketh intolerable agony of Nature's wrong. 170

Ask her that taught man filial love, what she hath done  
 the mother of all mothers, she unto her own dear son ?

him, innocently desirous to love her well,  
 by unmotherly cruelty she hath driven to rebel,  
 hath cast out in the night homeless and to his last cry  
 for guidance on his way hath deign'd him no reply.

' And thou that in symbolic mockery feign'st to seal  
 thine eyes from horrors that thou hast no heart to feel,  
 Thou, THEMIS, wilt suspect not the celestial weight  
 of the small parcels that I now pile on the plate. 180

These are love's bereavements and the blightings of bloom  
 the tears of mourners inconsolable at the tomb  
 of promise wither'd and fond hope blasted in prime:  
 These, the torrential commiserations of all time  
 These, the crime-shrieks of war, plague-groans and famine-cries  
 These, the slow-standing tears in children's questioning eyes  
 These, profuse tears of fools, These, coy tears of the wise  
 in solitude bewailing and in sad silence  
 the penshing record of hard-won experience  
 Rum of accomplishment that no toil can restore 190  
 Heroic Will cham'd down on Fate's cold dungeon-floor.  
 See here the tears of prophets, confessors of faith  
 the tears of beauty-lovers, merchants of the unpriced  
 in calumny and reproach, in want, wanhope and death  
 persecuted betray'd imprison'd sacrificed ;  
 All tears from Adam's tears unto the tears of Christ.

' Look to thy balance, THEMIS ; Should thy scale descend  
bind up thine eyes again, I shall no more contend ;  
for if the Final Cause vindicate Nature's laws  
her universal plan giveth no heed to man 200  
No place ; for him Confusion is his Final Cause.'

THUS threw he to the wilderness and silent sky  
his outrageous despair the self-pity of mankind  
and the disburdenment of his great heaviness  
left his heart suddenly so shaken and unsteadied  
he seem'd like one who fording a rapid river  
and poising on his head a huge stone that its weight  
may plant his footing firmly and stiffen his body upright  
against the rushing water, hath midway let it fall 209  
and with his burden hath lost his balance, and staggenng  
into the bubbling eddy is borne helpless away.  
Even so a stream of natural feeling o'erwhelm'd him  
whether of home maybe and childhood or of lovers' eyes  
of fond friendship and service, or perchance he felt  
himself a rebel untaught who had pilfer'd Wisdom's arms  
to work disorder and havoc in the city of God •  
For suddenly he was dumbstruck and with humbled step  
of unwitting repentance he stole back to his cave

and wrapping his poor rags about him took his way  
 again to his own people and the city whence he had fled.  
 There in the market-place a wild haggard figure 221  
 I saw him anon where high above a surging crowd  
 he stood waving his hands like some prophet of old  
 dream-sent to warn God's people ; but them the strong words  
 of his chasten'd humanity inflame but the more ;  
 forwhy they cannot suffer mention of holiness  
 nor the sound of the names that convince them of sin  
 If there be any virtue, if there be any praise,  
 'tis not for them to hear of or think on those things.  
 I saw what he spake to them tho' I heard it not 230  
 only at the sting thereof the loud wrath that arose.

As a wild herd of cattle on the prairie pasturing  
 if they are aware of one amongst them sick or maim'd  
 or in some part freak-hued differently from themselves  
 will be moved by instinct of danger and set on him  
 and bowing all their heads drive him out with their horns  
 as enemy to their selfwill'd community ;  
 even such brutish instinct impell'd that human herd  
 and some had stoop'd to gather loose stones from the ground  
 and were hurling at him : he crouch'd with both his arms 240  
 covering his head and would have hid himself from them  
 in fear more of their crime than of his own peril

Then with a plunge of terror he turn'd and fled for life  
and they in wild joy of the chase with hue and cry  
broke after him and away and bent on sport to kill  
hunted their startled game before them down the streets.

Awhile he escaped and ran apart, but soon I saw  
the leaders closing on him—I was hiding my eyes  
lest I should see him taken and torn in blood, when, lo !  
the street whereon they ran was block'd across his way 250  
by a white-robed throng that came moving with solemn pace  
waving banners and incense and high chant on the air,  
and bearing 'neath a rich canopy of reverence  
their object of devotion—as oft in papal Rome  
was seen vying with pomps of earthly majesty  
or now on Corpus Christi day thro' Westminster  
in babylonish exile paradeth our roads—  
and as I looked in wonder on the apparition, I saw  
the hunted man into their midst dash'd wildly and fell.

'Twas like as when a fox that long with speed and guile 260  
hath resolutely outstay'd the yelling murderous pack  
if when at last his limbs fail him and he knoweth  
the hounds hot on his trail and himself quite outworn  
will in desperation forgo his native fear  
and run for refuge into some hamlet of men  
and there will enter a cotter's confined cabin and plead

panting with half-closed eyes to the heart of his foe,  
altho' he knoweth nought of the Divinity  
of that Nature to whom he pleadeth, nor knoweth  
ev'n that he pleadeth, yet he pleadeth not in vain 270  
—so great is Nature—for the good wife hath pity,  
will suffer him to hide there under settle or bed  
until the hunt be pass'd, will cheer him and give him  
milk of her children's share until he be restor'd  
when she will let him forth to his roguish freedom again—

So now this choral convoy of heavenly pasture  
gave ready succour and harbour to the hunted man  
and silencing their music broke their bright-robed ranks  
to admit him, and again closed round him where fordone  
he fell down in their midst: and hands I saw outstretch'd 280  
to upraise him, but when he responded not nor stirr'd  
they knelt aghast, and one, who in solemn haste came up  
and for the splendour of his apparel an elder seem'd,  
bent over him there and whisper'd sacred words, whereat  
he motion'd and gave sign, and offering his dumb mouth  
took from the priestly fingers such food as is dealt  
unto the dying, and when the priest arose I knew  
by the gesture of his silence that the man was dead.

Then feet and head his body in fair linen winding 289  
they raised and bore along with dirge and shriving prayer

such as they use when one of their own brotherhood  
after mortal probation has enter'd into rest  
and they will bury his bones where Christ at his coming  
shall bid them all arise from their tombs in the church;  
Whereto their long procession now went filing back  
threading the streets, and dwarf'd beneath the bright façade  
crept with its head to climb the wide steps to the porch  
whereunder, as ever there they arrived, the dark doorway  
swallow'd them out of sight: and still the train came on  
with lurching bannerets and tottering canopy 300  
threading the streets and mounting to the shadowy porch  
arriving entering disappearing without end  
when I awoke, the dirge still sounding in my ears  
the night wind blowing thro' the open window upon me  
as I lay marvelling at the riddle of my strange dream.





## PART II



**VIII**  
**TO FRANCIS JAMMES**

'Tis April again in my garden, again the grey stone-wall  
Is pranked with yellow alyssum and lilac aubrey-cresses ;  
Half-hidden the mavis caroleth in the tassely birchen tresses  
And awhile on the sunny air a cuckoo tuneth his call:  
Now cometh to mind a singer whom country joys enthral,  
Francis Jammes, so gnppeth him Nature in her caresses  
She hath steep'd his throat in the honey'd air of her wilder-  
nesses  
With beauty that countervails the Lutetian therewithal.

You are here in spirit, dear poet, and bring a motley group,  
Your friends, afore you sat stitching your heavenly trousseau—  
The courteous old road-mender, the queer Jean Jacques  
Rousseau,  
Columbus, Confucius, ail to my English garden they troop,  
Under his goatskin umbrella the provident Robinson Crusoe,  
And the ancestor dead long ago in Domingo or Guadaloupe.



## IX

### MELANCHOLY

'T WAS mid of the moon but the night was dark with ram,  
Drops lashed the pane, the wind howl'd under the door;  
For me, my heart heard nought but the cannon-roar  
On fields of war, where Hell was raging amain :  
My heart was sore for the slam :—  
As when on an Autumn plain the storm lays low the wheat,  
So fell the flower of England, her golden grain,  
Her harvesting hope trodden under the feet  
Of Moloch, Woden and Thor,  
And the lovingkindness of Christ held in disdain.                    10

My heart gave way to the strain, renouncing more and more ;  
Its bloodstream fainted down to the slothful weary beat  
Of the age-long moment, that swelleth where ages meet,  
Marking time 'twixt dark Hereafter and Long-before ;  
Which greet awhile and awhile, again to retreat;

The Never-the-same repeating again and again,  
Completing itself in monotony incomplete,  
A wash of beauty and horror in shadows that fleet,  
Always the Never-the-same still to repeat,  
The devouring glide of a dream that keepeth no store. 20

Meseem'd I stood on the flats of a waveless shore,  
Where MELANCHOLY unrobed of her earthly weeds,  
Haunteth in naked beauty without stain ;  
In reconcilment of Death, and Vanity of all needs ;  
A melting of life in oblivion of all deeds ;  
No other beauty nor passion nor love nor lore ;  
No other goddess abideth for man to adore ;  
All things remaining nowhere with nought to remain ;  
The consummation of thought in nought to attain.

I had come myself to that ultimate Ocean-shore, 30  
Like Labourer Love when his life-day is o'er,  
Who home returning fatigued is fain to regain  
The house wherein he was born and cradled of yore ;  
Stumbling on the threshold he sinketh down on the floor ;  
Half-hearteth a prayer as he heth, and nothing heeds,  
If only he sleep and sleep and have rest for evermore.





# PART III



X

BUCK 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;

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.



## XI

### EMILY BRONTE

*'Du hast Diamanten'*

THOU hadst all Passion's splendor,  
    Thou hadst abounding store  
Of heaven's eternal jewels,  
    Beloved ; what wouldst thou more ?

Thine was the frolic freedom  
    Of creatures coy and wild,  
The melancholy of wisdom,  
    The innocence of a child,

The mail'd will of the warrior,  
    That buckled in thy breast  
Humility as of Francis,  
    The self-surrender of Christ;

And of God's cup thou drankest  
The unmmgled wine of Love,  
Which makes poor mortals giddy  
When they but sip thereof.

What was't to thee thy pathway  
So rugged mean and hard,  
Whereon when Death surprnsed thee  
Thou gav'st him no regard ?

What was't to thee, enamour'd  
As a red rose of the sun,  
If of thy myriad lovers  
Thou never sawest one ?

Nor if of all thy lovers  
That are and were to be  
None ever had their vision,  
O beloved, of thee,

Until thy silent glory  
Went forth from earth alone,  
Where like a star thou gleamest  
From thine immortal throne.

## XII

### THE TRAMPS

A SCHOOLBOY lay one night a-bed  
Under his window wide,  
When dusk is lovelier than day  
In the high summertide ;

The jasmin neath the casement throng'd  
Its ivory stars abloom ;  
With freaking peas and mignonette  
Their perfume full'd the room :

Across the garden and beyond  
He look'd out on the skies,  
And through black elmen boughs afar  
Watch'd where the moon should rise :

A warm rain fed the thirsty earth,  
Drops patter'd from the eaves  
And from the tall trees as the shower  
Fell lisp'ing on their leaves :

His heart was full, and pleasant thoughts  
Made music in his mind,  
Like separate songs of birds, that are  
By general joy combined.

It seem'd the hour had gather'd up  
For every sense a bliss  
To crown the faith of all desire  
With one assuaging kiss ;

So that he fought with sleep to hold  
The rapture while he might,  
Lest it should sink and drowning die  
Into the blank of night;

Nor kenn'd it was no passing thing  
Nor ever should be pass'd  
But with him bide a joy to be  
As long as Life should last.

For though young thoughts be quite forgone,  
The pleasure of their dream  
Can mesh them in its living mood  
And draw them in the stream :

So I can fancy when I will  
That there I lie intent  
To hear the gentle whispering rain  
And drink the jasmin scent:

- And then there sounds a distant tread  
Of men, that night who strode  
Along the highway step by step  
Approaching down the road,

A company of three or four  
That hastening home again  
After a Sabbath holiday  
Came talking in the ram :

Aloof from all my world and me  
They pass aneath the wall,  
Till voice and footstep die away  
And into silence fall:

Into the maze of my delight  
Those blind intruders walk;  
And ever I wonder who they be  
And of what things they talk.



### **XIII**

#### **THE GREAT ELM**

FROM a friend's house had I gone forth,  
And wandering at will  
O'er a wide country West and North  
Without or vale or hill,  
I came beneath the broken edge  
Of higher sloping ground,  
Where an old Giant from the ledge  
O'erlook'd the landscape round:

A towering Elm that stood alone,  
Last of an ancient rank,  
And had great barky roots out-thrown  
To buttress up the bank ;

His rough trunk of two hundred years  
    In girth a pillar gave  
As massive as the Norman piers  
    That rise in Durham's nave;

But this for stony roof and wall  
    Uphving timber held,  
Where never in its forest tall  
    Had woodman lopp'd or feil'd :  
Above its crown no wind so fierce  
    Had warp'd the shapely green,  
And scarce with bated breath might pierce  
    Its caves of leafy screen.

It seem'd in that dark foliage laid  
    Suspended thought must dwell;  
As in those boughs that overshadow  
    The nver-sides of Hell,  
That fabled Elm of Acheron,  
    Within the gates of death,  
Which once Æneas look'd upon—  
    As Virgil witnesseth—  
Whose leafage the last refuge was  
    And haven of mortal dreams,

That clustering clung thereto because  
They might not pass the streams.

Now suddenly was I aware  
That on the grassy shelf  
A spirit was waiting for me there,  
A coy seraphic elf—  
My other half-self, whom I miss  
In life's familiar moods,  
And ken of only by his kiss  
In sacred solitudes ;  
And for that rare embrace have borne  
With Fate and things distraught,  
The wanhope of my days forlorn,  
My sins, have counted nought.

He is of such immortal kind,  
His inwit is so clean,  
So conscient with the eternal Mind—  
The self of things unseen,  
That when within his world I win  
Nor suffer mortal change,  
I am of such immortal km  
No dream is half so strange.

Alas, I have done myself great wrong  
    Truckling to human care,  
Am shamed to ken myself so strong  
    And nobler than I dare :  
And yet so seldom doth he grant  
    The comfort of his grace,  
So fickle is he and inconstant  
    To any time or place,  
That since he chose that place and time  
    To come again to me,  
I'd hold him fast by magic rhyme  
    Forever to that tree :  
As there in lavish self-delight,  
    Godlike and single-souled,  
I lay until the dusk of night  
    Came creeping o'er the wold.

## XIV

### THE SLEEPING MANSION

As our car rustled swiftly  
along the village lane,  
we caught sight for a moment  
of the old house again,

Which once I made my home in—  
ev'n as a soul may dwell  
enamouring the body  
that she loveth so well:

But I long since had left it;  
what fortune now befalls  
finds me on other meadows  
by other trees and walls.

The place look'd blank and empty,  
a sleeper's witless face  
which to his mind's enchantment  
is numb, and gives no trace.

And to that slumbering mansion  
was I come as a dream,  
to cheer her in her stupor  
and loneliness extreme.

I knew what sudden wonder  
I brought her in my flight  
what rapturous joy possess'd her,  
what peace and soft delight.



**XV**  
**VISION**

How should I be to Love unjust  
    Since Love hath been so kind to me ?  
O how forget thy tender trust  
    Or slight the bond that set me free ?  
How should thy spirit's blithe embrace,  
    Thy loyalty, have been given in vain,  
From the first beckoning of thy grace  
    That made a child of me again,  
And since hath still my manhood led  
    Through scathe and trouble hour by hour,  
And in probation perfected  
    The explicit fruit of such a flower ?

Not ev'n the Apostles, in the days  
They walk'd with Christ, lov'd him so well  
As we may now, who ken his praise  
Reading the story that they tell,  
Writ by them when their vision grew  
And he, who fled and thrice denied  
Christ to his face, was proven true  
And gladly for His memory died :  
So strong the Vision, there was none  
O'er whom the Fisher's net was cast,  
Ev'n of the fearfullest not one  
Who would have left Him at the last.

So 'tis with me ; the time hath clear'd  
Not dull'd my loving: I can see  
Love's passing ecstasies endear'd  
In aspects of eternity :  
I am like a miser—I can say  
That having hoarded all my gold  
I must grow richer every day  
And die possess'd of wealth untold.



## XVI

### LOW BAROMETER

THE south-wind strengthens to a gale,  
Across the moon the clouds fly fast,  
The house is smitten as with a flail,  
The chimney shudders to the blast.

On such a night, when Air has loosed  
Its guardian grasp on blood and brain,  
Old terrors then of god or ghost  
Creep from their caves to life again ;

And Reason kens he hents in  
A haunted house. Tenants unknown  
Assert their squalid lease of sin  
With earlier title than his own.

Unbodied presences, the pack'd  
Pollution and remorse of Time,  
Slipp'd from oblivion reenact  
The horrors of unhouseld crime.

Some men would quell the thing with prayer  
Whose sightless footsteps pad the floor,  
Whose fearful trespass mounts the stair  
Or bursts the lock'd forbidden door.

Some have seen corpses long interr'd  
Escape from hallowing control,  
Pale charnel forms—nay ev'n have heard  
The shrilling of a troubled soul,

That wanders till the dawn hath cross'd  
The dolorous dark, or Earth hath wound  
Closer her storm-spredd cloke, and thrust  
The baleful phantoms underground.



## **XVII**

### **A DREAM**

I HAD come in front of a building and knew  
I should enter : the gates were barr'd,  
but a postern was open, and I push'd through  
and stood in a wide courtyard.

Twas built, as colleges are, four-square,  
though arch and colonnade  
all here were of wood and out of repair,  
timeworn but undecay'd.

Great carven portals in Gothic style,  
when building could save man's soul:  
doors worthy to face a cathedral aisle,  
or where men-at-arms patrol.

But whether 'twere some old abbey of monks  
with cloister, chapel and cell,  
or a farmstead with pens and stalls and bunks  
for cattle, I could not tell.

There neither were cattle nor men about,  
no cock nor clock gave Steven ;  
and I in my dream had never a doubt  
'twas the entry-court of heaven.

An old man then appear'd from a door  
and silently moved around ;  
his beard was grisled and thick, and he wore  
a cassock that reach'd the ground

Stately his figure and lofty his mien,  
solemn and slow his tread :  
'twas Peter the Saint; I had often seen  
in pictures his noble head,

Which truly in Guide's painting is shown  
sadden'd and full of force,  
as unconvinced he sits on a stone  
suffering Paul's discourse.

Like any night-watchman he walked along  
    peering about on his rounds,  
attentive to see that nothing is wrong,  
    no smoke nor thief within bounds ;

Or like a merchant who checks his stores,  
    sorting his trusty keys,  
he unlock'd and anon relock'd the doors,  
    visiting now those, now these.

Quiet I stood sans hope or fear,  
    nor moved to catch his eye,  
nor felt annoy'd when he came quite near  
    and pass'd me unnoticed by:

I knew he must know I was there ; the scheme  
    of eternity gave us time ;  
so I took whatever might hap in my dream  
    as easy as now in my rhyme.

When, as to a prodigal son, from afar  
    he approach'd—he had been remiss  
through kindness—he said ' I know who you are :  
    you won't get further than this:

' You needn't be bash'd nor mortified,  
nor fancy you're laid on the shelf:  
things ain't as they used to be inside ;  
I don't go in much myself.'

Then passing away he turn'd again,  
as if to relieve his mind,  
and spoke—if partly he wish'd to explain,  
I'm sure he will'd to be kind :—

He look'd full glum—it may be a sin  
to repeat his words, as I know it's  
bad taste—but he said—(He'll square me the sin) :  
' Why ! what d'you think ? We've just took in  
a batch of those French poets.'



**XVIII**  
**TO HIS EXCELLENCY**

ONE of all our brave commanders,  
Near of km and dear my friend,  
Led his men in France and Flanders  
From the first brush to the end :

Peril lov'd he, and undaunted  
Sought it out, and thanked his stars  
That to him a place was granted  
In the worst of all the wars.

He brought Uhlans in from Soignes,  
Where the first blood was let out—  
With his remnant from Andregnies  
Saved St. Quentin's desperate rout.

Stiffly fought he through the onset  
Undishearten'd by defeat;  
Held the rear from dawn to sunset  
Through the long days of retreat.

Times were, to retake the trenches  
He dismounted his dragoons,  
Suck'd his share of gas and stench  
With lieutenants of platoons.

Hit by howitzers and snipers  
He in his five years campaign  
Rode the land from Reims to Wipers,  
On the Marne and on the Aisne.

Many deeds would be to blazon,  
Many rights, to tell them all;  
Nieuport, Witchet, Contalmaison,  
La Boiselle and Passendaal.

Nothing in his clean vocation  
Vex'd his soul or came amiss,  
From the hurried embarcation  
To the fateful armistice :

But when terms of truce were bruited,  
Then his cheery countenance fell  
In confession undisputed  
That things were not going well:

' Nay (he said), my hope was larger;  
'Twas not thus I look'd to win :  
I had vow'd to rein my charger  
In the streets of proud Berlin.'



## XIX

*Spoken by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson at the opening  
of the Theatre of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art  
by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, May 27, 1921*

ENGLAND will keep her dearest jewel bright,  
And see her sons like to their sires renown'd ;  
Whose Shakespeare is with deathless Homer crown'd,  
Her freedom the world's hope throned in the height.  
All gifts of spirit are of such airy flight  
That if their fire be spent they fall to ground ;  
Their virtue must with newborn life abound,  
And by young birth renew their old birthright.

We workers therefore in this troublous age  
Would keep our beauty of language from misfeature,  
Presenting manners noble, and mirth unblamed :  
So Truth shall walk majestic on our stage,  
And when we hold the mirror up to Nature,  
She, seeing her face therein, shall not be ashamed

## XX

### HODGE

*After reading Maurice Hewlett's 'Song of the Plow'*

COUNTRYMAN HODGE has gone to fight:

The girls must help to raise the gram,  
Must fag in the workshops day and night,  
Till Hodge come back to his home again.

His life was ever a life of toil

In snow and frost, in drought or rain ;  
But he is heir and son of the soil  
And Hodge shall come to his own again.

The Norman oppress'd him long ago,

But nought reck'd he of pity or pain,  
He stuck to his work and lay full low  
Till he should come to his own again.

Then Commerce swell'd and drove him down ;  
Little he got from all her gam;  
His boys went off and made the town,  
But Hodge shall come to his own again.

He has waited long and foughten well  
That Peace should smile and Plenty reign ;  
And now, as bygone riddlers tell,  
Hodge shall come to his own again.

'The day when folk shall fly in the air  
And skim like birds above the plain,  
Then shall the plowman have his share  
And Hodge will come to his own again.'

1917.



## XXI

### BURNS

*A Toast for Greenock Club Dinner, January 1914*

To Burns I Brave Scotia's laurel'd son,  
Who drove his plough on Helicon ;  
Who with his done rhyme erewhile  
Taught English bards to mend their style ;  
And by the humour of his pen  
Fairly befool'd old Nickie-ben!

Blithe Robbie Burns, we love thee well  
Because thou wert so like thysel':  
And in full cups with festive cheer  
We toast thy fame from year to year.

1914.



## XXII

SORROW and joy, two sisters coy,  
Aye for our hearts are fighting:  
The half our years are teen and tears,  
And half are mere delighting.

So when joy's cup is brimm'd full up,  
Take no thought o' the morrow:  
So fine 's your bliss, ye shall not miss  
To have your turn wi' sorrow.

And she with ruth will teach you truth,  
She is man's very med'cin :  
She'll drive us straight to heav'n's high gate,  
Ay, she can stuff our heads in.

Blush not nor blench with either wench,  
Make neither brag nor pother:  
God send you, son, enough of one  
And not too much o' t'other.

**XXIII**  
**SIMPKIN**

THEY tell me Simpkin is a saint  
I've often wish'd he wasn't,  
If 'tis a note of that complaint  
To look so d—d unpleasant.

The world's no doubt a sorry place  
For Simpkin ; and, by Jabez,  
The merest glimpsing of his face  
Will wring and writhe a baby's.

A lout he is, a kill-joy loon  
Where wit and mirth forgather  
In company I'd just as soon  
Sit by an old bell-wether.

But Simpkin, I have heard men state,  
Is kindly and well-meaning;  
'Tis that his goodness is so great  
It takes so much o' screening.

I would the fiend, that made his skin  
So yellow dry and scurvy,  
Had turn'd the creature outside-in  
Or set him topsy-turvy.

And yet since nothing's made in vain,  
And we must judge our brother  
Unfitted for this world, 'tis plain  
He's fitted for another ;

Where angels glonous to behold  
Shall come, as he supposes,  
To lead him through the streets o' gold  
And crown his head with roses.

And if to Simpkm it befall  
Just as he thinks, so be it!  
I would not grudge the man at all,  
But should not press to see it.



## PART IV



**XXIV**  
**TO CATULLUS**

WOULD that you were alive today, Catullus !  
Truth 'tis, there is a filthy skunk amongst us,  
A rank musk-idiot, the filthiest skunk,  
Of no least sorry use on earth, but only  
Fit in fancy to justify the outlay  
Of your most horrible vocabulary.

My Muse, all innocent as Eve in Eden,  
Would yet wear any skins of old pollution  
Rather than celebrate the name detested.  
Ev'n now might he rejoice at our attention,  
Guess'd he this little ode were aiming at him.

Oh ! were you but alive again, Catullus '

For see, not one among the bards of our time  
With their flimsy tackle was out to strike him ;  
Not those two pretty Laureates of England,  
Not Alfred Tennyson nor Alfred Austin.

1902.

## XXV

TO SIR. THOS. BARLOW, P.R.C.P.

IT'S all up I may tell you, good Thomas Barlow,  
The new medicine is wholly broken and done for:  
You must give up Profession and College, Barlow.

Your fine *Address*, man, *on the basis of treatment*,  
So practical so blindly hopeful of progress,  
'Tis but delusion ; all is ended and done for.

For lately Stephen Coleridge in a current Monthly  
Has wittily in a few words the system exploded.  
Better retire and leave the stage, my dear Barlow.

You've been accustom'd in matters of importance  
To look to me to give you earliest tidings;  
So I devote a penful of little scazons  
To write the dirge of medicine and modern science:

The wonder is how nearly both of us miss'd it:  
Nor would any whisper'd hint of it have ever reach'd me,  
Had not the well deserving excellent author  
Most kindly frank'd me a copy of his dissertation.

Oct. 1902.

XXVI

ΠΟΙΚΙΛΑΘΡΟΝ

*Translated from Sappho*

ALL-ADOR'D, all glorious Aphrodita,  
Heavn's goddess mysterious, I beseech thee  
With thy anguish and terror overwhelm not  
My spirit, O queen :

But hither come thou, as, if e'er, aforetime  
Thou to my crying from afar attentive  
Harkenedst, an' out o' the golden archways  
Unto me earnest,

Harnessing thy fair flatterers, that earthward  
Swiftly drew thee down to the dusky mountains  
Multitudmously winging from unseen  
Heights o' the wide air,

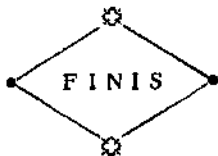
And arrived, thrice-blessed, I beheld thee  
 Smiling on me beautiful and triumphant,  
 Heard thee asking of me what had befall'n me,  
     Why had I call'd thee,

And what I desir'd above all to comfort  
 My madden'd heart:—Who is it hath deny'd thee ?  
 Shall not I subdue the rebel to thy love,  
     Sapph', an' avenge thee ?

•     •     •     •     •     •

Come then, O queen : come to me and release me  
 From bitter woe. Stand my ally. The thing that  
 My spirit most longs for, accomplish, and win  
     Victory with me.

1910.



## NOTE

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Besides these earlier separate publications the first seven poems of this book are issued in a small limited edition under the title *THE TAPES IRY*, Poems by Robert Bridges, Privately printed MCMXXV.













