

A SET
OF
COUNTRY SONGS

BY
THOMAS HARDY

A SET OF COUNTRY SONGS

LET ME ENJOY (MINOR KEY)

I

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the allenacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

II

About my path there flits a Fair,
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I'll charm me with her ignoring air,
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

III

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

IV

And some day hence, towards Paradise,
And all its blestif such should be
I will lift glad, afaroff eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

AT CASTERBRIDGE FAIR

I

THE BALLADSINGER

Sing, Balladsinger, raise a hearty tune;
Make me forget that there was ever a one
I walked with in the meek light of the moon

When the day's work was done.
Rhyme, Balladrhymer, start a country song;
Make me forget that she whom I loved well
Swore she would love me dearly, love me long,
Then what I cannot tell!
Sing, Balladsinger, from your little book;
Make me forget those heartbreaks, achings, fears;
Make me forget her name, her sweet sweet look
Make me forget her tears.

II

FORMER BEAUTIES

These marketdames, midaged, with lips thindrawn,
And tissues sere,
Are they the ones we loved in years agone,
And courted here?
Are these the muslined pink young things to whom
We vowed and swore
In nooks on summer Sundays by the Froom,
Or Budmouth shore?
Do they remember those gay tunes we trod
Clasped on the green;
Aye; trod till moonlight set on the beaten sod
A satin sheen?
They must forget, forget! They cannot know
What once they were,
Or memory would transfigure them, and show
Them always fair.

III

AFTER THE CLUBDANCE

Black'on frowns east on Maidon,
And westward to the sea,
But on neither is his frown laden
With scorn, as his frown on me!
At dawn my heart grew heavy,
I could not sip the wine,

I left the jocund bevy
And that young man o' mine.
The roadside elms pass by me,
Why do I sink with shame
When the birds aperch there eye me?
They, too, have done the same!

IV

THE MARKETGIRL

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on the causey kerb,
All eager to sell her honey and apples and bunches of garden herb;
And if she had offered to give her wares and herself with them too that day,
I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a bargain so choice away.
But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that morning as I passed nigh,
I went and I said "Poor maidy dear!and will none of the people buy?"
And so it began; and soon we knew what the end of it all must be,
And I found that though no others had bid, a prize had been won by me.

V

THE INQUIRY

And are ye one of Hermitage
Of Hermitage, by Ivel Road,
And do ye know, in Hermitage
A thatchroofed house where sengreens grow?
And does John Waywood live there still
He of the name that there abode
When father hurdled on the hill
Some fifteen years ago?
Does he now speak o' Patty Beech,
The Patty Beech he used tosee,
Or ask at all if Patty Beech
Is known or heard of out this way?
Ask ever if she's living yet,
And where her present home may be,
And how she bears life's fag and fret
After so long a day?
In years agone at Hermitage

This faded face was counted fair,
None fairer; and at Hermitage
We swore to wed when he should thrive.
But never a chance had he or I,
And waiting made his wish outwear,
And Time, that dooms man's love to die,
Preserves a maid's alive.

VI

A WIFE WAITS

Will's at the dance in the Clubroom below,
Where the tall liquorcups foam;
I on the pavement up here by the Bow,
Wait, wait, to steady him home.
Will and his partner are treading a tune,
Loving companions they be;
Willy, before we were married in June,
Said he loved no one but me;
Said he would let his old pleasures all go
Ever to live with his Dear.
Will's at the dance in the Clubroom below,
Shivering I wait for him here.

NOTE. "The Bow" (line 3). The old name for the curved corner by the cross streets in the middle of Casterbridge.

VII

AFTER THE FAIR

The singers are gone from the Cornmarketplace
With their broadsheets of rhymes,
The street rings no longer in treble and bass
With their skits on the times,
And the Cross, lately thronged, is a dim naked space
That but echoes the stammering chimes.
From Clockcorner steps, as each quarter dingdongs,
Away the folk roam
By the "Hart" and Grey's Bridge into byways and "drongs,"
Or across the ridged loam;

The younger ones shrilling the lately heard songs,
The old saying, "Would we were home."
The shyseeming maiden so mute in the fair
Now rattles and talks,
And that one who looked the most swaggering there
Grows sad as she walks,
And she who seemed eaten by cankering care
In statuesque sturdiness stalks.
And midnight clears High Street of all but the ghosts
Of its buried burghees,
From the latest far back to those old Roman hosts
Whose remains one yet sees,
Who loved, laughed, and fought, hailed their friends, drank their toasts
At their meetingtimes here, just as these!
1902.

NOTE."The Chimes" (line 6) will be listened for in vain here at midnight now, having
been abolished some years ago.

THE DARKEYED GENTLEMAN

I

I pitched my day's leazings in Crimmercrock Lane,
To tie up my garter and jog on again,
When a dear darkeyed gentleman passed there and said,
In a way that made all o' me colour rosered,
"What do I see
O pretty knee!"
And he came and he tied up my garter for me.

II

'Twixt sunset and moonrise it was, I can mind:
Ah, 'tis easy to lose what we nevermore find!
Of the dear stranger's home, of his name, I knew nought,
But I soon knew his nature and all that it brought.
Then bitterly
Sobbed I that he
Should ever have tied up my garter for me!

III

Yet now I've beside me a fine lissom lad,
And my slip's nigh forgot, and my days are not sad;
My own dearest joy is he, comrade, and friend,
He it is who safeguards me, on him I depend;
No sorrow brings he,
And thankful I be
That his daddy once tied up my garter for me!
NOTE. "Leazings" (line 1). Bundle of gleaned corn.

TO CARREY CLAVEL

You turn your back, you turn your back,
And never your face to me,
Alone you take your homeward track,
And scorn my company.
What will you do when Charley's seen
Dewbeating down this way?
You'll turn your back as now, you mean?
Nay, Carrey Clavel, nay!
You'll see none's looking; put your lip
Up like a tulip, so;
And he will coll you, bend, and sip:
Yes, Carrey, yes; I know!

THE ORPHANED OLD MAID

I wanted to marry, but father said, "No
'Tis weakness in women to give themselves so;
If you care for your freedom you'll listen to me,
Make a spouse in your pocket, and let the men be."
I spake on't again and again: father cried,
"Why if you go husbanding, where shall I bide?
For never a home's for me elsewhere than here!"
And I yielded; for father had ever been dear.
But now father's gone, and I feel growing old,
And I'm lonely and poor in this house on the wold,
And my sweetheart that was found a partner elsewhere,
And nobody flings me a thought or a care.

THE SPRING CALL

Down Wessex way, when spring's ashine,
The blackbird's "pretty deurr!"
In Wessex accents marked as mine
Is heard afar and near.
He flutes it strong, as if in song
No R's of feebler tone
Than his appear in "pretty dear,"
Have blackbirds ever known.
Yet they pipe "prattie deerh!" I glean,
Beneath a Scottish sky,
And "pehty deaw!" amid the treen

Of Middlesex or nigh.
While some folk sayperhaps in play
Who know the Irish isle,
'Tis "purrity dare!" in treeland there
When songsters would beguile.
Well: I'll say what the listening birds
Say, hearing "pretty deurr!"
However strangers sound such words,
That's how we sound them here.
Yes, in this clime at pairing time,
As soon as eyes can see her
At dawn of day, the proper way
To call is "pretty deurr!"

JULIEJANE

Sing; how 'a would sing!
How 'a would raise the tune
When we rode in the waggon from harvesting
By the light o' the moon!
Dance; how 'a would dance!
If a fiddlestring did but sound
She would hold out her coats, give a slanting glance,
And go round and round.
Laugh; how 'a would laugh!
Her peony lips would part
As if none such a place for a lover to quaff

At the deeps of a heart.
Julie, O girl of joy,
Soon, soon that lover he came.
Ah, yes; and gave thee a babyboy,

But never his name . . .
Tolling for her, as you guess;
And the baby too . . . 'Tis well.
You knew her in maidhood likewise? Yes,
That's her burial bell.
"I suppose," with a laugh, she said,
"I should blush that I'm not a wife;
But how can it matter, so soon to be dead,
What one does in life!"

When we sat making the mourning
By her deathbed side, said she,
"Dears, how can you keep from your lovers, adorning
In honour of me!"
Bubbling and brightsome eyed!
But now O never again.
She chose her bearers before she died
From her fancymen.

NOTE. It is, or was, a common custom in Wessex, and probably other country places, to prepare the mourning beside the deathbed, the dying person sometimes assisting, who also selects his or her bearers on such occasions.

"Coats" (line 7). Old name for petticoats.

NEWS FOR HER MOTHER

I

One mile more is
Where your door is
Mother mine!
Harvest's coming,
Mills are strumming,
Apples fine,
And the cider made to year will be as wine.

II

Yet, not viewing
What's adoin'
Here around
Is it thrills me,
And so fills me
That I bound
Like a ball or leaf or lamb along the ground.

III

Tremble not now
At your lot now,
Silly soul!
Hosts have sped them
Quick to wed them,
Great and small,
Since the first two sighing halfhearts made a whole.

IV

Yet I wonder,
Will it sunder
Her from me?
Will she guess that
I said "Yes," that
His I'd be,
Ere I thought she might not see him as I see!

V

Old brown gable,
Granary, stable,
Here you are!
O my mother,
Can another
Ever bar
Mine from thy heart, make thy nearness seem afar?

THE FIDDLER

The fiddler knows what's brewing
To the lilt of his lyric wiles:
The fiddler knows what rueing
Will come of this night's smiles!
He sees couples join them for dancing,
And afterwards joining for life,
He sees them pay high for their prancing
By a welter of wedded strife.
He twangs: "Music hails from the devil,
Though vaunted to come from heaven,
For it makes people do at a revel
What multiplies sins by seven.
"There's many a heart now mangled,
And waiting its time to go,
Whose tendrils were first entangled
By my sweet viol and bow!"

THE HUSBAND'S VIEW

"Can anything avail
Beldame, for my hid grief?
Listen: I'll tell the tale,
It may bring faint relief!
"I came where I was not known,
In hope to flee my sin;
And walking forth alone
A young man said, 'Good e'en.'
"In gentle voice and true
He asked to marry me;
'You onlyonly you
Fulfil my dream!' said he.

"We married o' Monday morn,
In the month of hay and flowers;
My cares were nigh forsworn,
And perfect love was ours.
"But ere the days are long
Untimely fruit will show;
My Love keeps up his song,

Undreaming it is so.
"And I awake in the night,
And think of months gone by,
And of that cause of flight
Hidden from my Love's eye.

"Discovery borders near,
And then! . . . But something stirred?
My husband he is here!
Heaven has he overheard?"
"Yes; I have heard, sweet Nan;
I have known it all the time.
I am not a particular man;
Misfortunes are no crime:
"And what with our serious need
Of sons for soldiering,
That accident, indeed,
To maids, is a useful thing!"

ROSEANN

Why didn't you say you was promised, RoseAnn?
Why didn't you name it to me,
Ere ever you tempted me hither, RoseAnn,
So often, so wearifully?
O why did you let me be near 'ee, RoseAnn,
Talking things about wedlock so free,
And never by nod or by whisper, RoseAnn,

Give a hint that it wasn't to be?
Down home I was raising a flock of stock ewes,
Cocks and hens, and wee chickens by scores,
And lavendered linen all ready to use,
Adreaming that they would be yours.
Mother said: "She's a sportmaking maiden, my son";
And a pretty sharp quarrel had we;
O why do you prove by this wrong you have done
That I saw not what mother could see?

Never once did you say you was promised, RoseAnn,
Never once did I dream it to be;

And it cuts to the heart to be treated, RoseAnn,
As you in your scorning treat me!

THE HOMECOMING

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,
And lonesome was the house, and dark; and few came there.
"Now don't ye rub your eyes so red; we're home and have no cares;
Here's a skimmercake for supper, peckled onions, and some pears;
I've got a little keg o' summat strong, too, under stairs:
What, slight your husband's victuals? Other brides can tackle theirs!"
The wind of winter mooed and mouthed their chimney like a horn,
And round the house and past the house 'twas leafless and lorn.

"But my dear and tender poppet, then, how came ye to agree
In Ivel church this morning? Sure, thereright you married me!"
"Hoo-hoo! I don't know I forgot how strange and far 'twould be,
An' I wish I was at home again with dear daddee!"
Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,
And lonesome was the house and dark; and few came there.

"I didn't think such furniture as this was all you'd own,
And great black beams for ceiling, and a floor o' wretched stone,
And nasty pewter platters, horrid forks of steel and bone,
And a monstrous crock in chimney. 'Twas to me quite unbeknown!"
Rattle rattle went the door; down flapped a cloud of smoke,
As shifting north the wicked wind assayed a smarter stroke.
"Now sit ye by the fire, poppet; put yourself at ease:
And keep your little thumb out of your mouth, dear, please!
And I'll sing to 'ee a pretty song of lovely flowers and bees,
And happy lovers taking walks within a grove o' trees."
Gruffly growled the wind on Toller Down, so bleak and bare,
And lonesome was the house, and dark; and few came there.

"Now, don't ye gnaw your handkercher; 'twill hurt your little tongue,
And if you do feel spitish, 'tis because ye are over young;
But you'll be getting older, like us all, ere very long,
And you'll see me as I ama man who never did 'ee wrong."
Straight from Whit'sheet Hill to Benvill Lane the blusters pass,
Hitting hedges, milestones, handposts, trees, and tufts of grass.
"Well, had I only known, my dear, that this was how you'd be,

I'd have married her of riper years that was so fond of me.
But since I can't, I've half a mind to run away to sea,
And leave 'ee to go barefoot to your dd daddee!"
Up one wall and down the otherpast each windowpane
Prance the gusts, and then away down Crimmercrook's long lane.

"I don't know what to say to't, since your wife I've vowed to be;
And as 'tis done, I s'pose here I must bide poor me!
Ayeas you are kikikind, I'll try to live along with 'ee,
Although I'd fain have stayed at home with dear daddee!"
Gruffly growled the wind on Toller Down, so bleak and bare,
And lonesome was the house and dark; and few came there.
"That's right, my Heart! And though on haunted Toller Down we be,
And the wind swears things in chimley, we'll to supper merrily!
So don't ye tap your shoe so pettishlike; but smile at me,
And ye'll soon forget to sock and sigh for dear daddee!"

December 1901.

PIECES OCCASIONAL AND VARIOUS

A CHURCH ROMANCE

She turned in the high pew, until her sight
Swept the west gallery, and caught its row
Of musicmen with viol, book, and bow
Against the sinking sad towerwindow light.
She turned again; and in her pride's despite
One strenuous viol's inspirer seemed to throw
A message from his string to her below,
Which said: "I claim thee as my own forthright!"
Thus their hearts' bond began, in due time signed.
And long years thence, when Age had scared Romance,
At some old attitude of his or glance
That galleryscene would break upon her mind,
With him as minstrel, ardent, young, and trim,
Bowing "New Sabbath" or "Mount Ephraim."

THE RASH BRIDE AN EXPERIENCE OF THE MELLSTOCK QUIRE

I

We Christmascarolled down the Vale, and up the Vale, and round the Vale,
We played and sang that night as we were yearly wont to do
A carol in a minor key, a carol in the major D,
Then at each house: "Good wishes: many Christmas joys to you!"

II

Next, to the widow's John and I and all the rest drew on. And I
Discerned that John could hardly hold the tongue of him for joy.
The widow was a sweet young thing whom John was bent on marrying,
And quiring at her casement seemed romantic to the boy.

III

"She'll make reply, I trust," said he, "to our salute? She must!" said he,
"And then I will accost her gently much to her surprise!
For knowing not I am with you here, when I speak up and call her dear
A tenderness will fill her voice, a bashfulness her eyes.

IV

So, by her windowsquare we stood; ay, with our lanterns there we stood,
And he along with us, not singing, waiting for a sign;
And when we'd quired her carols three a light was lit and out looked she,
A shawl about her bedgown, and her colour red as wine.

V

And sweetly then she bowed her thanks, and smiled, and spoke aloud her
thanks;
When lo, behind her back there, in the room, a man appeared.
I knew him one from Woolcomb way Giles Swetman honest as the day,
But eager, hasty; and I felt that some strange trouble neared.

VI

"How comes he there? . . . Suppose," said we, "she's wed of late! Who

knows?" said we.

"She married yestermorning only mother yet has known
The secret o't!" shrilled one small boy. "But now I've told, let's wish 'em
joy!"

A heavy fall aroused us: John had gone down like a stone.

VII

We rushed to him and caught him round, and lifted him, and brought him
round,

When, hearing something wrong had happened, oped the window she:
"Has one of you fallen ill?" she asked, "by these night labours overtaken?"
None answered. That she'd done poor John a cruel turn felt we.

VIII

Till up spoke Michael: "Fie, young dame! You've broke your promise, sly
young dame,

By forming this new tie, young dame, and jilting John so true,
Who trudged tonight to sing to 'ee because he thought he'd bring to 'ee
Good wishes as your coming spouse. May ye such trifling rue!"

IX

Her man had said no word at all; but being behind had heard it all,
And now cried: "Neighbours, on my soul I knew not 'twas like this!"
And then to her: "If I had known you'd had in tow not me alone,
No wife should you have been of mine. It is a dear bought bliss!"

X

She changed deathwhite, and heaved a cry: we'd never heard so grieved a
cry

As came from her at this from him: heartbroken quite seemed she;
And suddenly, as we looked on, she turned, and rushed; and she was gone,
Whither, her husband, following after, knew not; nor knew we.

XI

We searched till dawn about the house; within the house, without the house,
We searched among the laurel boughs that grew beneath the wall,

And then among the crocks and things, and stores for winter junketings,
In linhay, loft, and dairy; but we found her not at all.

XII

Then John rushed in: "O friends," he said, "hear this, this, this!" and
bends his head:
"I'vesearched round by theWELL, and find the cover open wide!
I am fearful thatI can't say what . . . Bring lanterns, and some cords to
knot."
We did so, and we went and stood the deep dark hole beside.

XIII

And then they, ropes in hand, and Iay, John, and all the band, and I
Let down a lantern to the depthssome hundred feet and more;
It glimmered like a fogdimmed star; and there, beside its light, afar,
White drapery floated, and we knew the meaning that it bore.

XIV

The rest is naught . . . We buried her o' Sunday. Neighbours carried her;
And Swetmanhe who'd married hernow miserablest of men,
Walked mourning first; and then walked John; just quivering, but composed
anon;
And we the quire formed round the grave, as was the custom then.

XV

Our old bass player, as I recallhis white hair blownbut why recall!
His viol upstrapped, bent figuredoomed to follow her full soon
Stood bowing, pale and tremulous; and next to him the rest of us . . .
We sang the Ninetieth Psalm to herset to Saint Stephen's tune.

THE DEAD QUIRE

I

Beside the Mead of Memories,
Where Churchway mounts to Moaning Hill,
The sad man sighed his phantasies:

He seems to sigh them still.

II

"'Twas the Birthtide Eve, and the hamleteers
Made merry with ancient Mellstock zest,
But the Mellstock quire of former years
Had entered into rest.

III

"Old Dewy lay by the gaunt yew tree,
And Reuben and Michael a pace behind,
And Bowman with his family
By the wall that the ivies bind.

IV

"The singers had followed one by one,
Treble, and tenor, and thoroughbass;
And the worm that wasteth had begun
To mine their mouldering place.

V

"For twoscore years, ere Christday light,
Mellstock had throbbd to strains from these;
But now there echoed on the night
No Christmas harmonies.

VI

"Three meadows off, at a dormered inn,
The youth had gathered in high carouse,
And, ranged on settles, some therein
Had drunk them to a drowse.

VII

"Loud, lively, reckless, some had grown,
Each dandling on his jigging knee

Eliza, Dolly, Nance, or Joan
Livers in levity.

VIII

"The taper flames and hearthfire shine
Grew smokehazed to a lurid light,
And songs on subjects not divine
Were warbled forth that night.

IX

"Yet many were sons and grandsons here
Of those who, on such eves gone by,
At that still hour had throated clear
Their anthems to the sky.

X

"The clock belled midnight; and ere long
One shouted, 'Now 'tis Christmas morn;
Here's to our women old and young,
And to John Barleycorn!'

XI

"They drink the toast and shout again:
The pewterware rings back the boom,
And for a breathwhile follows then
A silence in the room.

XII

"When nigh without, as in old days,
The ancient quire of voice and string
Seemed singing words of prayer and praise
As they had used to sing:

XIII

"While shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,'"

Thus swells the long familiar sound
In many a quaint symphonic flight
To, 'Glory shone around.'

XIV

"The sons defined their fathers' tones,
The widow his whom she had wed,
And others in the minor moans
The viols of the dead.

XV

"Something supernal has the sound
As verse by verse the strain proceeds,
And stilly staring on the ground
Each roysterer holds and heeds.

XVI

"Towards its chorded closing bar
Plaintively, thinly, waned the hymn,
Yet lingered, like the notes afar
Of banded seraphim.

XVII

"With brows abashed, and reverent tread,
The hearkeners sought the tavern door:
But nothing, save wan moonlight, spread
The empty highway o'er.

XVIII

"While on their hearing fixed and tense
The aerial music seemed to sink,
As it were gently moving thence
Along the river brink.

XIX

"Then did the Quick pursue the Dead
By crystal Froom that crinkles there;
And still the viewless quire ahead
Voiced the old holy air.

XX

"By Bankwalk wicket, brightly bleached,
It passed, and 'twixt the hedges twain,
Dogged by the living; till it reached
The bottom of Church Lane.

XXI

"There, at the turning, it was heard
Drawing to where the churchyard lay:
But when they followed thitherward
It smalled, and died away.

XXII

"Each headstone of the quire, each mound,
Confronted them beneath the moon;
But no more floated therearound
That ancient Birthnight tune.

XXIII

"There Dewy lay by the gaunt yew tree,
There Reuben and Michael, a pace behind,
And Bowman with his family
By the wall that the ivies bind . . .

XXIV

"As from a dream each sobered son
Awoke, and musing reached his door:
"Twas said that of them all, not one
Sat in a tavern more."

XXV

The sad man ceased; and ceased to heed
His listener, and crossed the leaze
From Moaning Hill towards the mead
The Mead of Memories.
1897.

THE CHRISTENING

Whose child is this they bring
Into the aisle?
At so superb a thing
The congregation smile
And turn their heads awhile.
Its eyes are blue and bright,
Its cheeks like rose;
Its simple robes unite
Whitest of calicoes
With lawn, and satin bows.
A pride in the human race
At this paragon
Of mortals, lights each face
While the old rite goes on;
But ah, they are shocked anon.

What girl is she who peeps
From the gallery stair,
Smiles palely, redly weeps,
With feverish furtive air
As though not fitly there?
"I am the baby's mother;
This gem of the race
The decent fain would smother,
And for my deep disgrace
I am bidden to leave the place."
"Where is the baby's father?"
"In the woods afar.
He says there is none he'd rather

Meet under moon or star
Than me, of all that are.
"To clasp me in lovelike weather,
Wish fixing when,
He says: To be together
At will, just now and then,
Makes him the blest of men;
"But chained and doomed for life
To slovening
As vulgar man and wife,
He says, is another thing:
Yea: sweet Love's sepulchring!"
1904.

A DREAM QUESTION

"It shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine."
I asked the Lord: "Sire, is this true
Which hosts of theologians hold,
That when we creatures censure you
For shaping griefs and ails untold
(Deeming them punishments undue)
You rage, as Moses wrote of old?
When we exclaim: 'Beneficent
He is not, for he orders pain,
Or, if so, not omnipotent:
To a mere child the thing is plain!'
Those who profess to represent
You, cry out: 'Impious and profane!'"

He: "Save me from my friends, who deem
That I care what my creatures say!
Mouth as you list: sneer, rail, blaspheme,
O manikin, the livelong day,
Not one griefgroan or pleasuregleam
Will you increase or take away.

"Why things are thus, whoso derides,
May well remain my secret still . . .
A fourth dimension, say the guides,

To matter is conceivable.
Think some such mystery resides
Within the ethic of my will."

BY THE BARROWS

Not far from Mellstockso tradition saith
Where barrows, bulging as they bosoms were
Of Multimammia stretched supinely there,
Catch night and noon the tempest's wanton breath,
A battle, desperate doubtless unto death,
Was one time fought. The outlook, lone and bare,
The towering hawk and passing raven share,
And all the upland round is called "The He'th."
Here once a woman, in our modern age,
Fought singlehandedly to shield a child
One not her own from a man's senseless rage.
And to my mind no patriots' bones there piled
So consecrate the silence as her deed
Of stoic and devoted selfunheed.

A WIFE AND ANOTHER

"War ends, and he's returning
Early; yea,
The evening next tomorrow's!"
This I say
To her, whom I suspiciously survey,
Holding my husband's letter
To her view.

She glanced at it but lightly,
And I knew
That one from him that day had reached her too.
There was no time for scruple;
Secretly
I filched her missive, conned it,
Learnt that he
Would lodge with her ere he came home to me.
To reach the port before her,
And, unscanned,

There wait to intercept them
Soon I planned:
That, in her stead, I might before him stand.
So purposed, so effected;
At the inn
Assigned, I found her hidden:
O that sin
Should bear what she bore when I entered in!
Her heavy lids grew laden
With despairs,
Her lips made soundless movements
Unawares,
While I peered at the chamber hired as theirs.
And as beside its doorway,

Deadly hues,
One inside, one withoutside
We two stood,
He came my husband as she knew he would.
No pleasurable triumph
Was that sight!
The ghastly disappointment
Broke them quite.
What love was theirs, to move them with such might!
"Madam, forgive me!" said she,

Sorrow bent,
"A child I soon shall bear him . . .
Yes I meant
To tell you that he won me ere he went."
Then, as it were, within me
Something snapped,

As if my soul had largened:
Conscience capped,
I saw myself the snarer, them the trapped.
"My hate dies, and I promise,
Grace beguiled,"
I said, "to care for you, be
Reconciled;
And cherish, and take interest in the child."

Without more words I pressed him
Through the door
Within which she stood, powerless
To say more,
And closed it on them, and downstairward bore.
"He joins his wifemy sister,"
I, below,

Remarked in goinglightly
Even as though
All had come right, and we had arranged it so . . .
As I, my road retracing,
Left them free,
The night alone embracing
Childless me,
I held I had not stirred God wrothfully.

THE ROMAN ROAD

The Roman Road runs straight and bare
As the pale partingline in hair
Across the heath. And thoughtful men
Contrast its days of Now and Then,
And delve, and measure, and compare;
Visioning on the vacant air
Helmed legionaries, who proudly rear
The Eagle, as they pace again

The Roman Road.
But no tall brasshelmed legionnaire
Haunts it for me. Uprises there
A mother's form upon my ken,
Guiding my infant steps, as when
We walked that ancient thoroughfare,
The Roman Road.

THE VAMPIRINE FAIR

Gilbert had sailed to India's shore,
And I was all alone:
My lord came in at my open door

And said, "O fairest one!"
He leant upon the slant bureau,
And sighed, "I am sick for thee!"
"My lord," said I, "pray speak not so,
Since wedded wife I be."
Leaning upon the slant bureau,
Bitter his next words came:
"So much I know; and likewise know
My love burns on the same!"
"But since you thrust my love away,
And since it knows no cure,

I must live out as best I may
The ache that I endure."
When Michaelmas browened the nether Coomb,
And Wingreen Hill above,
And made the hollyhocks rags of bloom,
My lord grew ill of love.
My lord grew ill with love for me;
Gilbert was far from port;
And so it was that time did see
Me housed at Manor Court.
About the bowers of Manor Court

The primrose pushed its head
When, on a day at last, report
Arrived of him I had wed.
"Gilbert, my lord, is homeward bound,
His sloop is drawing near,
What shall I do when I am found

Not in his house but here?"
"O I will heal the injuries
I've done to him and thee.
I'll give him means to live at ease
Afar from Shastonb'ry."
When Gilbert came we both took thought:
"Since comfort and good cheer,"
Said he, "So readily are bought,
He's welcome to thee, Dear."
So when my lord flung liberally

His gold in Gilbert's hands,
I coaxed and got my brothers three

Made stewards of his lands.
And then I coaxed him to install
My other kith and kin,
With aim to benefit them all
Before his love ran thin.
And next I craved to be possessed
Of plate and jewels rare.
He groaned: "You give me, Love, no rest,
Take all the law will spare!"
And so in course of years my wealth
Became a goodly hoard,
My steward brethren, too, by stealth
Had each a fortune stored.

Thereafter in the gloom he'd walk,
And by and by began
To say aloud in absent talk,
"I am a ruined man!"
"I hardly could have thought," he said,
"When first I looked on thee,
That one so soft, so rosy red,
Could thus have beggared me!"
Seeing his fair estates in pawn,
And him in such decline,
I knew that his domain had gone
To lift up me and mine.
Next month upon a Sunday morn
A gunshot sounded nigh:
By his own hand my lordly born

Had doomed himself to die.
"Live, my dear lord, and much of thine
Shall be restored to thee!"
He smiled, and said 'twixt word and sign,
"Alas that cannot be!"
And while I searched his cabinet
For letters, keys, or will,
'Twas touching that his gaze was set

Yet though I now enjoy my fling,
And dine and dance and drive,
I'd give my prettiest emerald ring
To see my lord alive.
And when the meet on huntingdays
Is near his churchyard home,
I leave my bantering beaux to place
A flower upon his tomb;
And sometimes say: "Perhaps too late
The saints in Heaven deplore
That tender time when, moved by Fate,
He darked my cottage door."

THE REMINDER

I

While I watch the Christmas blaze
Paint the room with ruddy rays,
Something makes my vision glide
To the frosty scene outside.
There, to reach a rotting berry,
Toils a thrush, constrained to very
Dregs of food by sharp distress,
Taking such with thankfulness.
Why, O starving bird, when I
One day's joy would justify,
And put misery out of view,
Do you make me notice you!

THE RAMBLER

I do not see the hills around,
Nor mark the tints the copses wear;
I do not note the grassy ground
And constellated daisies there.
I hear not the contralto note
Of cuckoos hid on either hand,
The whirr that shakes the nighthawk's throat
When eve's brown awning hoods the land.
Some say each songster, tree, and mead

All eloquent of love divine
Receives their constant careful heed:
Such keen appraisement is not mine.
The tones around me that I hear,
The aspects, meanings, shapes I see,
Are those far back ones missed when near,
And now perceived too late by me!

NIGHT IN THE OLD HOME

When the wasting embers redden the chimneybreast,
And Life's bare pathway looms like a desert track to me,
And from hall and parlour the living have gone to their rest,
My perished people who housed them here come back to me.
They come and seat them around in their mouldy places,
Now and then bending towards me a glance of wistfulness,
A strange upbraiding smile upon all their faces,
And in the bearing of each a passive tristfulness.

"Do you uphold me, lingering and languishing here,
A pale late plant of your once strong stock?" I say to them;
"A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them?"
"O let be the Wherefore! We fevered our years not thus:
Take of Life what it grants, without question!" they answer me seemingly.
"Enjoy, suffer, wait: spread the table here freely like us,
And, satisfied, placid, unfretting, watch Time away beamingly!"

AFTER THE LAST BREATH

There's no more to be done, or feared, or hoped;
None now need watch, speak low, and list, and tire;
No irksome crease outsmoothed, no pillow sloped
Does she require.
Blankly we gaze. We are free to go or stay;
Our morrow's anxious plans have missed their aim;
Whether we leave tonight or wait till day
Counts as the same.
The lettered vessels of medicaments
Seem asking wherefore we have set them here;
Each palliative its silly face presents

As useless gear.
And yet we feel that something savours well;
We note a numb relief withheld before;
Our wellbeloved is prisoner in the cell
Of Time no more.
We see by littles now the deft achievement
Whereby she has escaped the Wrongers all,
In view of which our momentary bereavement
Outshapes but small.
1904.

IN CHILDBED

In the middle of the night
Mother's spirit came and spoke to me,
Looking weariful and white
As 'twere untimely news she broke to me.
"O my daughter, joyed are you
To own the weetless child you mother there;
'Men may search the wide world through,'
You think, 'nor find so fair another there!'

"Dear, this midnight time unwombs
Thousands just as rare and beautiful;
Thousands whom High Heaven foredooms
To be as bright, as good, as dutiful.
"Source of ecstatic hopes and fears
And innocent maternal vanity,
Your fond exploit but shapes for tears
New thoroughfares in sad humanity.
"Yet as you dream, so dreamt I
When Life stretched forth its morning ray to me;
Other views for by and by!" . . .
Such strange things did mother say to me.

THE PINE PLANTERS (MARTY SOUTH'S REVERIE)

I

We work here together
In blast and breeze;

He fills the earth in,
I hold the trees.
He does not notice
That what I do
Keeps me from moving
And chills me through.
He has seen one fairer
I feel by his eye,
Which skims me as though
I were not by.

And since she passed here
He scarce has known
But that the woodland
Holds him alone.
I have worked here with him
Since morning shine,
He busy with his thoughts
And I with mine.
I have helped him so many,
So many days,
But never win any

Small word of praise!
Shall I not sigh to him
That I work on
Glad to be nigh to him
Though hope is gone?
Nay, though he never
Knew love like mine,
I'll bear it ever
And make no sign!

II

From the bundle at hand here
I take each tree,
And set it to stand, here
Always to be;
When, in a second,
As if from fear

Of Life unreckoned
Beginning here,
It starts a sighing
Through day and night,
Though while there lying
'Twas voiceless quite.

It will sigh in the morning,
Will sigh at noon,
At the winter's warning,
In wafts of June;
Grieving that never
Kind Fate decreed
It should for ever
Remain a seed,
And shun the welter

Of things without,
Unneeding shelter
From storm and drought.
Thus, all unknowing
For whom or what
We set it growing
In this bleak spot,
It still will grieve here
Throughout its time,
Unable to leave here,
Or change its clime;
Or tell the story
Of us today
When, halt and hoary,
We pass away.

THE DEAR

I plodded to Fairmile Hilltop, where
A maiden one fain would guard
From every hazard and every care
Advanced on the roadside sward.
I wondered how succeeding suns
Would shape her wayfarings,

And wished some Power might take such ones
Under Its warding wings.
The busy breeze came up the hill
And smartened her cheek to red,
And frizzled her hair to a haze. With a will

"Goodmorning, my Dear!" I said.
She glanced from me to the faroff gray,
And, with proud severity,
"Goodmorning to youthough I may say
I am not YOUR Dear," quoth she:
"For I am the Dear of one not here
One far from his native land!"
And she passed me by; and I did not try
To make her understand.

1901

ONE WE KNEW

She told how they used to form for the country dances
"The Triumph," "The Newrigged Ship"
To the light of the guttering wax in the panelled manses,
And in cots to the blink of a dip.
She spoke of the wild "poussetting" and "allemanding"
On carpet, on oak, and on sod;
And the two long rows of ladies and gentlemen standing,
And the figures the couples trod.
She showed us the spot where the maypole was yearly planted,
And where the bandsmen stood
While breeched and kerchiefed partners whirled, and panted
To choose each other for good.

She told of that farback day when they learnt astounded
Of the death of the King of France:
Of the Terror; and then of Bonaparte's unbounded
Ambition and arrogance.
Of how his threats woke warlike preparations
Along the southern strand,
And how each night brought tremors and trepidations
Lest morning should see him land.
She said she had often heard the gibbet creaking

As it swayed in the lightning flash,
Had caught from the neighbouring town a small child's shrieking
At the carttail under the lash . . .
With capframed face and long gaze into the embers
We seated around her knees
She would dwell on such dead themes, not as one who remembers,
But rather as one who sees.
She seemed one left behind of a band gone distant
So far that no tongue could hail:
Past things retold were to her as things existent,
Things present but as a tale.
May 20, 1902.

SHE HEARS THE STORM

There was a time in former years
While my rooftree was his
When I should have been distressed by fears
At such a night as this!
I should have murmured anxiously,
"The pricking rain strikes cold;
His road is bare of hedge or tree,
And he is getting old."
But now the fitful chimneyroar,
The drone of Thorncombe trees,
The Froom in flood upon the moor,

The mud of Mellstock Leaze,
The candle slanting sooty wick'd,
The thuds upon the thatch,
The eavesdrops on the window flicked,
The clacking gardenhatch,
And what they mean to wayfarers,
I scarcely heed or mind;
He has won that stormtight roof of hers
Which Earth grants all her kind.

A WET NIGHT

I pace along, the rainshafts riddling me,
Mile after mile out by the moorland way,
And up the hill, and through the eweleaze gray
Into the lane, and round the corner tree;
Where, as my clothing clams me, mirebestarred,
And the enfeebled light dies out of day,
Leaving the liquid shades to reign, I say,

"This is a hardship to be calendared!"
Yet sires of mine now perished and forgot,
When worse beset, ere roads were shapen here,
And night and storm were foes indeed to fear,
Times numberless have trudged across this spot
In sturdy muteness on their strenuous lot,
And taking all such toils as trifles mere.

BEFORE LIFE AND AFTER

A time there was as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well.
None suffered sickness, love, or loss,
None knew regret, starved hope, or heartburnings;
None cared whatever crash or cross
Brought wrack to things.
If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,
If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,
No sense was stung.
But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?

NEW YEAR'S EVE

"I have finished another year," said God,
"In grey, green, white, and brown;

I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
And let the last sun down."
"And what's the good of it?" I said.
"What reasons made you call
From formless void this earth we tread,
When nineandninetly can be read
Why nought should be at all?

"Yea, Sire; why shaped you us, 'who in
This tabernacle groan'
If ever a joy be found herein,
Such joy no man had wished to win
If he had never known!"
Then he: "My labourslogicless
You may explain; not I:
Sensesealed I have wrought, without a guess
That I evolved a Consciousness
To ask for reasons why.

"Strange that ephemeral creatures who
By my own ordering are,
Should see the shortness of my view,
Use ethic tests I never knew,
Or made provision for!"
He sank to raptness as of yore,
And opening New Year's Day
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore
In his unweeting way.

1906.

GOD'S EDUCATION

I saw him steal the light away
That haunted in her eye:
It went so gently none could say
More than that it was there one day
And missing byandby.
I watched her longer, and he stole
Her lily tincts and rose;

All her young sprightliness of soul
Next fell beneath his cold control,
And disappeared like those.
I asked: "Why do you serve her so?
Do you, for some glad day,
Hoard these her sweets?" He said, "O no,
They charm not me; I bid Time throw

Them carelessly away."
Said I: "We call that cruelty
We, your poor mortal kind."
He mused. "The thought is new to me.
Forsooth, though I men's master be,
Theirs is the teaching mind!"

TO SINCERITY

O sweet sincerity!
Where modern methods be
What scope for thine and thee?
Life may be sad past saying,
Its greens for ever graying,
Its faiths to dust decaying;
And youth may have foreknown it,
And ripper seasons shown it,
But custom cries: "Disown it:
"Say ye rejoice, though grieving,
Believe, while unbelieving,
Behold, without perceiving!"

Yet, would men look at true things,
And unilluded view things,
And count to bear undue things,
The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And Life its disesteeming.

February 1899.

PANTHERA

Yea, as I sit here, crutched, and cricked, and bent,
I think of Panthera, who underwent
Much from insidious aches in his decline;
But his aches were not radical like mine;
They were the twinges of old woundsthe feel
Of the hand he had lost, shorn by barbarian steel,

Which came back, so he said, at a change in the air,
Fingers and all, as if it still were there.
My pains are otherwise: upclosing cramps
And stiffened tendons from this country's damp,
Where Panthera was never commandant.
The Fates sent him by way of the Levant.
He had been blithe in his young manhood's time,
And as centurion carried well his prime.
In Ethiop, Araby, climes fair and fell,
He had seen service and had borne him well.

Nought shook him then: he was serene as brave;
Yet later knew some shocks, and would grow grave
When pondering them; shocks less of corporal kind
Than phantomlike, that disarranged his mind;
And it was in the way of warning me
(By much his junior) against levity
That he recounted them; and one in chief
Panthera loved to set in bold relief.
This was a tragedy of his Eastern days,
Personal in touchthough I have sometimes thought
That touch a possible delusionwrought

Of halfconviction carried to a craze
His mind at last being stressed by ails and age:
Yet his good faith thereon I well could wage.
I had said it long had been a wish with me
That I might leave a scionsome small tree
As channel for my sap, if not my name
Ay, offspring even of no legitimate claim,
In whose advance I secretly could joy.

Thereat he warned.
"Cancel such wishes, boy!
A son may be a comfort or a curse,
A seer, a doer, a coward, a fool; yea, worse
A criminal . . . That I could testify!"
"Panthera has no guilty son!" cried I
All unbelieving. "Friend, you do not know,"
He darkly dropt: "True, I've none now to show,
For THE LAW TOOK HIM. Ay, in sooth, Jove shaped it so!"

"This noon is not unlike," he again began,
"The noon these pricking memories print on me
Yea, that day, when the sun grew copperred,
And I served in Judaea . . . 'Twas a date
Of rest for arms. The Pax Romana ruled,
To the chagrin of frontier legionaries!
Palestine was annexed though sullen yet,
I, being in age some twoscore years and ten
And having the garrison in Jerusalem
Part in my hands as acting officer
Under the Governor. A tedious time
I found it, of routine, amid a folk
Restless, contentless, and irascible.
Quelling some riot, sentrying court and hall,
Sending men forth on public meeting days
To maintain order, were my duties there.

"Then came a morn in spring, and the cheerful sun
Whitened the city and the hills around,
And every mountain road that clambered them,
Tincturing the greyness of the olives warm,
And the rank cacti round the valley's sides.
The day was one whereon death penalties
Were put in force, and here and there were set
The soldiery for order, as I said,
Since one of the condemned had raised some heat,
And crowds surged passionately to see him slain.
I, mounted on a Cappadocian horse,
With some half company of auxiliaries,
Had captained the procession through the streets
When it came streaming from the judgment hall

After the verdicts of the Governor.
It drew to the great gate of the northern way
That bears towards Damascus; and to a knoll
Upon the common, just beyond the walls
Whence could be swept a wide horizon round
Over the housetops to the remotest heights.
Here was the public executionground
For city crimes, called then and doubtless now
Golgotha, Kranion, or Calvaria.

"The usual dooms were duly meted out;
Some three or four were stript, transfixed, and nailed,
And no great stir occurred. A day of wont
It was to me, so far, and would have slid
Clean from my memory at its squalid close
But for an incident that followed these.

"Among the tagrag rabble of either sex
That hung around the wretches as they writhed,
Till thrust back by our spears, one held my eye
A weeping woman, whose strained countenance,
Sharpened against a looming livid cloud,
Was mocked by the crude rays of afternoon
The mother of one of those who suffered there
I had heard her called when spoken roughly to
By my ranged men for pressing forward so.
It stole upon me hers was a face I knew;
Yet when, or how, I had known it, for a while
Eluded me. And then at once it came.

"Some thirty years or more before that noon
I was subcaptain of a company
Drawn from the legion of Calabria,
That marched up from Judaea north to Tyre.
We had pierced the old flat country of Jezreel,
The great Esdraelon Plain and fightingfloor
Of Jew with Canaanite, and with the host
Of PharaohNecho, king of Egypt, met
While crossing there to strike the Assyrian pride.
We left behind Gilboa; passed by Nain;
Till bulging Tabor rose, embossed to the top

With arbut, terabinth, and locust growths.
"Encumbering me were sundry sick, so fallen
Through drinking from a swamp beside the way;
But we pressed on, till, bearing over a ridge,
We dipt into a world of pleasantness
A vale, the fairest I had gazed upon
Which lapped a village on its furthest slopes
Called Nazareth, brimmed round by uplands nigh.
In the midst thereof a fountain bubbled, where,
Limedry from marching, our glad halt we made
To rest our sick ones, and refresh us all.

"Here a day onward, towards the eventide,
Our men were piping to a Pyrrhic dance
Trod by their comrades, when the young women came
To fill their pitchers, as their custom was.
I proffered help to one a slim girl, coy
Even as a fawn, meek, and as innocent.
Her long blue gown, the string of silver coins
That hung down by her banded beautiful hair,
Symbolled in full immaculate modesty.

"Well, I was young, and hot, and readily stirred
To quick desire. 'Twas tedious timing out
The convalescence of the soldiery;
And I beguiled the long and empty days
By blissful yieldance to her sweet allure,
Who had no arts, but what outarted all,
The tremulous tender charm of trustfulness.
We met, and met, and under the winking stars
That passed which peoples earthtrue union, yea,
To the pure eye of her simplicity.

"Meanwhile the sick found health; and we pricked on.
I made her no rash promise of return,
As some do use; I was sincere in that;
I said we sundered never to meet again
And yet I spoke untruth unknowingly!
For meet again we did. Now, guess you aught?
The weeping mother on Calvaria
Was she I had knownalbeit that time and tears

Had wasted rudely her once flowerlike form,
And her soft eyes, now swollen with sorrowing.

"Though I betrayed some qualms, she marked me not;
And I was scarce of mood to comrade her
And close the silence of so wide a time
To claim a malefactor as my son
(For so I guessed him). And inquiry made
Brought rumour how at Nazareth long before
An old man wedded her for pity's sake
On finding she had grown pregnant, none knew how,
Cared for her child, and loved her till he died.

"Well; there it ended; save that then I learnt
That the man whose ardent blood was mine
Had waked sedition long among the Jews,
And hurled insulting parlance at their god,
Whose temple bulked upon the adjoining hill,
Vowing that he would raze it, that himself
Was god as great as he whom they adored,
And by descent, moreover, was their king;
With sundry other incitements to misrule.

"The impalements done, and done the soldiers' game
Of raffling for the clothes, a legionary,
Longinus, pierced the young man with his lance
At signs from me, moved by his agonies
Through naysaying the drug they had offered him.
It brought the end. And when he had breathed his last
The woman went. I saw her never again . . .
Now glares my moody meaning on you, friend?
That when you talk of offspring as sheer joy
So trustingly, you blink contingencies.
Fors Fortuna! He who goes fathering
Gives frightful hostages to hazardry!"
Thus Panthera's tale. 'Twas one he seldom told,
But yet it got abroad. He would unfold,
At other times, a story of less gloom,
Though his was not a heart where jests had room.
He would regret discovery of the truth
Was made too late to influence to ruth

The Procurator who had condemned his son
Or rather him so deemed. For there was none
To prove that Panthera erred not: and indeed,
When vagueness of identity I would plead,

Panther himself would sometimes own as much
Yet lothly. But, assuming fact was such,
That the said woman did not recognize
Her lover's face, is matter for surprise.
However, there's his tale, fantasy or otherwise.
Thereafter shone not men of Panthera's kind:
The indolent heads at home were illinclined
To press campaigning that would hoist the star
Of their lieutenants valorous afar.
Jealousies kept him irked abroad, controlled
And stinted by an Empire no more bold.

Yet in some actions southward he had share
In Mauretania and Numidia; there
With eagle eye, and sword and steed and spur,
Quelling uprisings promptly. Some small stir
In Parthia next engaged him, until maimed,
As I have said; and cynic Time proclaimed
His noble spirit broken. What a waste
Of such a Roman!one in youthtime graced
With indescribable charm, so I have heard,

Yea, magnetism impossible to word
When faltering as I saw him. What a fame,
O Son of Saturn, had adorned his name,
Might the Three so have urged Thee!Hour by hour
His own disorders hampered Panthera's power
To brood upon the fate of those he had known,
Even of that one he always called his own
Either in morbid dream or memory . . .
He died at no great age, untroubly,
An exit rare for ardent soldiers such as he.

THE UNBORN

I rose at night, and visited
The Cave of the Unborn:
And crowding shapes surrounded me
For tidings of the life to be,
Who long had prayed the silent Head
To haste its advent morn.
Their eyes were lit with artless trust,
Hope thrilled their every tone;

"A scene the loveliest, is it not?
A pure delight, a beautyspot
Where all is gentle, true and just,
And darkness is unknown?"
My heart was anguished for their sake,
I could not frame a word;

And they descried my sunken face,
And seemed to read therein, and trace
The news that pity would not break,
Nor truth leave unaverred.
And as I silently retired
I turned and watched them still,
And they came helter-skelter out,
Driven forward like a rabble rout
Into the world they had so desired
By the allimmanent Will.

1905.

THE MAN HE KILLED

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!
"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.
"I shot him dead because

Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although
"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Offhand likejust as I
Was out of workhad sold his traps
No other reason why.
"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to halfacrown."
1902.

GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE (A MEMORY OF CHRISTIANA C)

Where Blackmoor was, the road that led
To Bath, she could not show,
Nor point the sky that overspread
Towns ten miles off or so.
But that Calcutta stood this way,
Cape Horn there figured fell,
That here was Boston, here Bombay,
She could declare full well.
Less known to her the track athwart
Froom Mead or Yell'ham Wood
Than how to make some Austral port
In seas of surly mood.

She saw the glint of Guinea's shore
Behind the plumbtree nigh,
Heard old unruly Biscay's roar
In the weir's purl hard by . . .
"My son's a sailor, and he knows
All seas and many lands,
And when he's home he points and shows
Each country where it stands.
"He's now just thereby Gib's high rock
And when he gets, you see,
To Portsmouth here, behind the clock,
Then he'll come back to me!"

ONE RALPH BLOSSOM SOLILOQUIZES

When I am in hell or some such place,
 Agroaning over my sorry case,
What will those seven women say to me
Who, when I coaxed them, answered "Aye" to me?

"I did not understand your sign!"
 Will be the words of Caroline;
While Jane will cry, "If I'd had proof of you,
 I should have learnt to hold aloof of you!"

"I won't reproach: it was to be!"
 Will dryly murmur Cicely;
And Rosa: "I feel no hostility,
 For I must own I lent facility."
Lizzy says: "Sharp was my regret,
And sometimes it is now! But yet
I joy that, though it brought notoriousness,
I knew Love once and all its gloriousness!"
Says Patience: "Why are we apart?
Small harm did you, my poor Sweet Heart!

A manchild born, now tall and beautiful,
Was worth the ache of days undutiful."
And Anne cries: "O the time was fair,
So wherefore should you burn down there?
There is a deed under the sun, my Love,
And that was ours. What's done is done, my Love.
These trumpets here in Heaven are dumb to me
With you away. Dear, come, O come to me!"

THE NOBLE LADY'S TALE

I

"We moved with pensive paces,
 I and he,
And bent our faded faces
 Wistfully,
For something troubled him, and troubled me.

"The lanthorn feebly lightened
Our grey hall,
Where ancient brands had brightened
Hearth and wall,
And shapes long vanished whither vanish all.
"O why, Love, nightly, daily,'
I had said,
'Dost sigh, and smile so palely,
As if shed
Were all Life's blossoms, all its dear things dead?'
"Since silence sets thee grieving,'
He replied,
'And I abhor deceiving
One so tried,

Why, Love, I'll speak, ere time us twain divide.'

"He held me, I remember,
Just as when
Our life was June(September
It was then);
And we walked on, until he spoke again.

"Susie, an Irish mummer,
Loudacclaimed
Through the gay London summer,
Was I; named
A master in my art, who would be famed.

"But lo, there beamed before me
Lady Su;
God's altarvow she swore me
When none knew,
And for her sake I bade the sock adieu.

"My Lord your father's pardon
Thus I won:
He let his heart unharden

Towards his son,
And honourably condoned what we had done;

"But saidrecall you, dearest?
As for Su,
I'd see heray, though nearest
Me unto

Sooner entombed than in a stage purlieu!

"Just so. And here he housed us,
In this nook,
Where Love like balm has drowsed us:
Robin, rook,

Our chief familiars, next to string and book.

"Our days here, peaceenshrouded,
Followed strange
The old stagejoyance, crowded,
Rich in range;
But never did my soul desire a change,
"Till now, when far uncertain
Lips of yore
Call, call me to the curtain,
There once more,

But ONCE, to tread the boards I trod before.

"A night the last and single
Ere I die
To face the lights, to mingle
As did I
Once in the game, and rivet every eye!"
"To something drear, distressing
As the knell
Of all hopes worth possessing!' . . .
What befell
Seemed linked with me, but how I could not tell.
"Hours passed; till I implored him,
As he knew
How faith and frankness toward him
Ruled me through,
To say what ill I had done, and could undo.

"FAITHFRANKNESS. Ah! Heaven save such!"

Murmured he,
"They are wedded wealth! I gave such
Liberally,
But you, Dear, not. For you suspected me.'
"I was about beseeching
In hurt haste

More meaning, when he, reaching
To my waist,
Led me to pace the hall as once we paced.
"I never meant to draw you
To own all,'
Declared he. 'But I SAW you
By the wall,
Halfhid. And that was why I failed withal!"

"Where? when?' said I 'Why, nigh me,
At the play
That night. That you should spy me,
Doubt my fay,
And follow, furtive, took my heart away!'
"That I had never been there,
But had gone
To my locked room unseen there,
Curtains drawn,
Long days abiding told I, wonderwan.

"Nay, 'twas your form and vesture,
Cloak and gown,
Your hooded features gesture
Half in frown,
That faced me, pale,' he urged, 'that night in town.
"And when, outside, I handed
To her chair
(As courtesy demanded
Of me there)
The leading lady, you peeped from the stair.

"Straight pleaded I: 'Forsooth, Love,
Had I gone,
I must have been in truth, Love,
Mad to don
Such wellknown raiment.' But he still went on
"That he was not mistaken
Nor misled.
I felt like one forsaken,
Wished me dead,
That he could think thus of the wife he had wed!

"His going seemed to waste him
Like a curse,
To wreck what once had graced him;
And, averse
To my approach, he mused, and moped, and worse.
"Till, what no words effected
Thought achieved:
IT WAS MY WRAITH projected,
He conceived,
Thither, by my tense brain at home aggrieved.
"Thereon his credence centred
Till he died;
And, no more tempted, entered
Sanctified,
The little vault with room for one beside."