

THE LAND WE LOVE

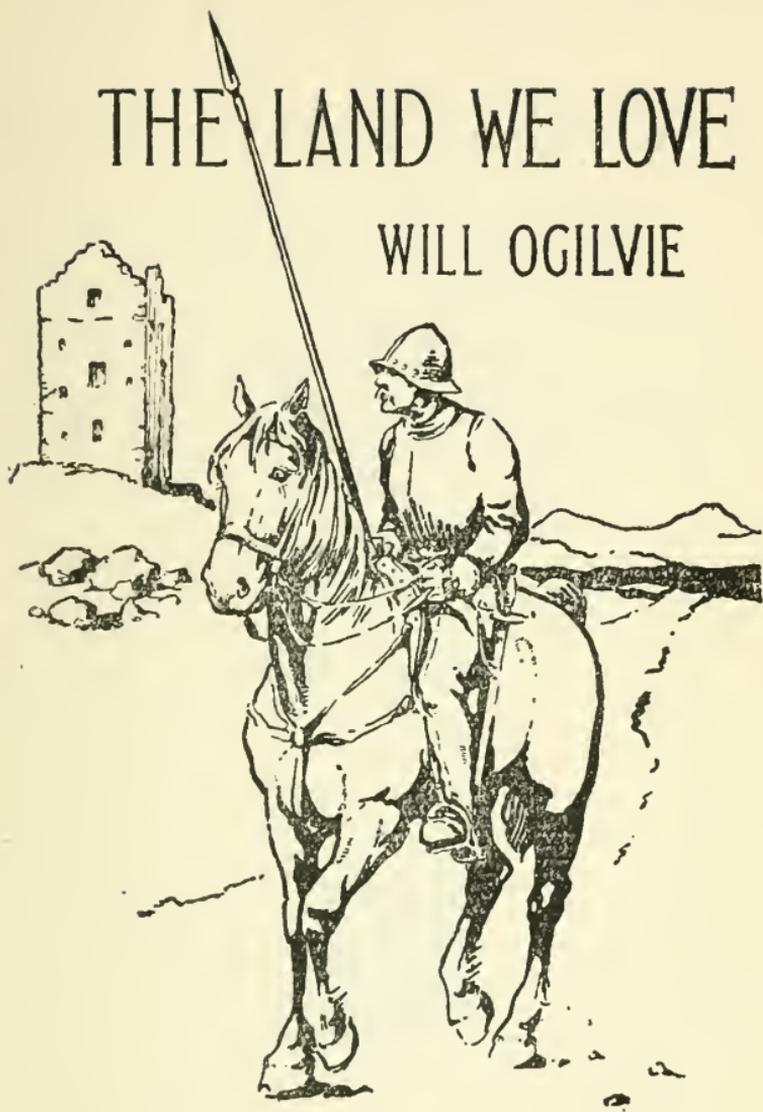
WILL OGILVIE



• Finckharts

THE LAND WE LOVE

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THE LAND WE LOVE

BY

WILL OGILVIE

AUTHOR OF

"WHAUP O' THE REDE"

"RAINBOWS AND WITCHES," "FAIR GIRLS AND GREY HORSES"

"MY LIFE IN THE OPEN"

ETC

SECOND EDITION



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TO
MY MOTHER

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BORDER SONGS

God gave all men all earth to love,
But since our hearts are small,
Ordained for each one spot should prove
Belovèd over all.

Rudyard Kipling.

THE LAND WE LOVE

JUST a line of blue hills to remember:
Just a valley one fails to forget,
Whether bound with the gold of September
Or with jewels of midsummer set!
Just a fringe of dark woodland and coppice,
Just a ribbon of river and stream
For a hem to the cornfields whose poppies
Burn soft as a rose in a dream!

Just a sweep of marsh-moorland and heather,
Just a brae where the blackfaces climb,
Just a loch where the grey gulls forgather
And the burns out of Cheviot chime!
Just a glen where the wild-duck and pheasant
Find a sheltering nook from the blast,
Just a peel-tower that stoops to the Present
With the legend and lore of the Past!

THE LAND WE LOVE

Just an abbey that, ruined and hoary
And racked with the reign of the years,
Tells a mystic and marvellous story
That breaks on the silence like tears!
Just a fortress, perhaps, or a fastness,
Just a bridge or a grave or a stone,
That has saved from Time's infinite vastness
Some tale half as old as Time's own!

There's a spell in this Land of the Marches,
In this Border that gave us our birth,
In this spot where the Heaven's wide arch is
Spread blue o'er the best of the earth!
'Tis the shrine where our hearts keep returning
Wherever our feet may be led;
All our love on that altar lies burning,
All our song-wreaths around it are spread!

A BORDER TOAST

ARMSTRONGS and Elliots! You know where
they were bred—

Above the dancing mountain burns, among the
misty scaurs;

And through their veins, these Border lads, the
raiding blood runs red

—The blood that's out before the dawn and
home behind the stars!

Armstrongs and Elliots!!

And touch your glass with mine!

Armstrongs and Elliots! And how should they forget

The pride their fathers gathered round the roving,
reckless names?

Can't you hear the horses neighing, and the riders
jesting yet

Above a thousand driven steers and fifty farms in
flames?

Armstrongs and Elliots!!

Stand up and drink to it!

A BORDER TOAST

Armstrongs and Elliots! The hills are riding deep,
The steeds are very weary and the sun is sinking
low,

But yonder steals our grey hill-fox along the stony
steep!

Hark for'ard! Now, my Border boys, sit down
and let them go!

Armstrongs and Elliots!!
With all the honours! Drink!

HOME

I HEAR the plough's creak, and the trampling Clydes,
The bicker of the darting gulls above the new-
turned loam,
And the March wind from Cheviot roaring as he
rides
Down the ribboned leas of Home.

I see the clover and the swung bluebells,
The curling waves of hawthorn, with their crests
of blossom-foam,
The moon upon the meadow and a star above the
fells,
And the night-mist wrapping Home.

I see the rivers, low before the rains,
Laden with the laughter of the moorlands where
they roam,
The little Border rivers flashing white like silver
chains
Made to bind warm hearts to Home.

HOME

I hear the wide world calling faint and far
Down dim forgotten beaches where the fenceless
oceans comb,
But a stronger voice is calling where the green fields
are
In the quiet valley that is Home.

THE BROWN BURNS

THE brown burns of the Border,
They hasten down the vale,
In shallows through the sunlight,
In spates before the gale.
Grey dawn and rosy sunset
Lie mirrored in their breast,
Who call us forth to labour,
And lead us home to rest.

They cool our knee-deep cattle,
They turn our drowsy mills
They bring to us the music
Of our blue eternal hills.
They count our crumbling arches,
They tell our lichened towers,
And wake with soft insistence
Some ancient pride of ours.

THE BROWN BURNS

Sweet with the scent of heather,
Clear from the clasp of peat,
They dance, to please our children,
Against their rosy feet.
They guide our youths and maidens
When love has bid them roam ;
They lead our tired fathers
Along the last road home.

For thought of whence they gather,
For love of where they wend,
For pride of flowers they cherish
And fields that they befriend,
When all sounds else are silent,
When all songs else depart,
The brown burns of the Border
Shall sing within my heart.

KIRKHOPE TOWER

GREY to the grey of the hill, fronting the quiet
places,
Where under their plaid of the purple the red
grouse cower,
Alone with the wind of the wold and the feeding
blackfaces
Stands, like a king on the Marches, old Kirkhope
Tower.

Its stones are riven apart 'neath the weight of the
weather,
In its cold and crumbling chimneys the corbies
nest,
A heron flaps from the burn, and out of the
heather
A blackcock sails as my step breaks in on his
rest.

Under the walls four-square, weird and lichened
and hoary,
I stand at the open port in a dream and gaze
At the worn old stones that have borne swift feet
to the foray,
And light feet down to the burn in forgotten days.

KIRKHOPE TOWER

I climb by the broken stairway; the great grey wall
Runs fair and free to the roof, uncrossed of
beam;

And that that was lady's bower, and this that was
hall

Where the strong men feasted, are one; and
again I dream,

And I see the board with its English sirloin laden,
I hear the spurred heels clink as the benches fill,
I see the goblet snatched aloft from the hand of a
maiden,

And I hear the raiders' toast as it rings to the hill.

A fair dame sits at her bower-window and spins,
Looking forth to the Ettrick, whose blossoms of
foam

Leap not so light and white down the shadowy
linns

As the white hand here in the shadow above
the comb.

High on the rampart crest, where the wind blows
free

On his sunburnt cheek and his rough hilt-
hardened hand,

One looks southward and east over tide and tree
Searching the moor for foes as a sailor searches
for land.

KIRKHOPE TOWER

Below me, huddled and dumb, in the darkened
floor of the keep,

I can hear a reined horse stamp, clicking his snaffle-bar;
I can hear the sudden rustle of startled sheep
As a spurred foot treads the silence and hinges jar.

West wind, wailing so sadly over the buttress stone,
You that have lifted the beard of the watcher on
the tower,

You that have stirred the arras where the dame sits
spinning alone,
Stay, and whisper to me the secrets of board and bower!

You that have stooped and sung to this old grey
silent warden,

You that have carried the tidings of hoofs on
the plain,

When home with their plunder came riding the
vassals of Harden

With mud of the moss of the Carter on rowel and rein!

The west wind rides past me unheeding. The
shadows that lower

On the hillside have darkened the purple;
departing, I turn,

For a white hand is waving farewell to me out of
the tower

And a brown hand is pointing my path as I
climb by the burn.

KIRKHOPE TOWER

Grey to the grey of the hill, lichen-covered and
hoary,

I leave you alone in the silent dusk of the hour;
What I have guessed I have guessed, but you keep
your own story

Held safe in your heart and for ever, O Kirkhope
Tower!

DECEMBER MISTS

THE mists are riding on Ruberslaw,
Their nets are spread on the Border!
Winds, have ye never a sword to draw,
Or a troop to set in order?
Waken, and rally your spears in line;
Carve us a space where the sun may shine;
Fill us a cup of your wild-honey wine
To drink to their death on the Border!

The mists are trooping on Bowmont Vale
In dull grey resolute order,
Trampling the silver of Ettrick and Ale,
Blinding the beautiful Border!
Waken, O waken, ye winds of the west;
Sweep from the Solway at Beauty's behest;
Fling them, the foemen, from corrie and crest,
From furrow and fence of the Border!

TEVIOT

NOWHERE branch the trees so bonny,
Nowhere grows the grass so green,
Rise the banks so rich and sunny,
Run the roads so white and clean,
As where, glad with mountain water,
Truant from her heath-clad hills,
This the Border's hoyden daughter
Laughter through the Lowland spills.

Silver shines her sunlit shoulder,
Silver sounds her cymbal call,
Here a challenge growing bolder,
There a love-word low let fall!
None her wanton mood may master,
None her wayward feet may stay;
Call her—she but glides the faster!
Chide—the less will she obey!

TEVIOT

Love-lorn swallows stoop above her,
Kissing, clinging, breast to wave;
All the wild flowers lean to love her,
Every bud a bending slave;
But she stays for flower nor swallow,
Longing bush nor lonely tree,
Mocking, "Come, then, come and follow;
I am his who masters me!"

So, with only laughter laden,
Never caught, yet often called,
Teviot speeds, a blue-eyed maiden,
Chainless, curbless, unenthralled;
Mad and glad with mountain water,
Gathered where the pink heath grows
She, the Border's hoyden daughter,
Wayward through the Lowland goes.

ON A ROMAN HELMET

(Found at Newstead)

A HELMET of the legion, this,
That long and deep hath lain,
Come back to taste the living kiss
Of sun and wind again.
Ah! touch it with a reverent hand,
For in its burnished dome
Lies here within this distant land
The glory that was Rome!

The tides of sixteen hundred years
Have flowed, and ebbcd, and flowed,
And yet—I see the tossing spears
Come up the Roman Road;
While, high above the trumpets pealed,
The eagles lift and fall,
And, all unseen, the War God's shield
Floats, guardian, over all!

ON A ROMAN HELMET

Who marched beneath this gilded helm?
Who wore this casque a-shine?
A leader mighty in the realm?
A soldier of the line?
The proud patrician takes his rest
The spearman's bones beside,
And earth who knows their secret best
Gives this of all their pride!

With sunlight on this golden crest
Maybe some Roman guard,
Set free from duty, wandered west
Through Memory's gates unbarred;
Or climbing Eildon cleft in three,
Grown sick at heart for home,
Looked eastward to the grey North Sea
That paved the road to Rome.

Or by the queen of Border streams
That flowed his camp beneath
Long dallied with the dearer dreams
Of love as old as death,
And doffed this helm to dry lips' need,
And dipped it in the tide,
And pledged in brimming wine of Tweed
Some maid on Tiber-side.

ON A ROMAN HELMET

Years pass; and Time keeps tally,
And pride takes earth for tomb,
And down the Melrose valley
Corn grows and roses bloom;
The red suns set, the red suns rise,
The ploughs lift through the loam,
And in one earth-worn helmet lies
The majesty of Rome.

TWEEDMOUTH BAR

O WIDE and winding river,
You bring, it seems to me,
The glamour of the Lowlands
As gift unto the sea:
The clink of spur and stirrup,
The gleam of bit and lance,
The spoil of all the Border
In riches of Romance!

Beneath your silver burden
The stars have heard you pass,
With laughter o'er the pebbles,
With love-words through the grass;
Now, welcomed by the sea winds
And woven with the spray,
'Neath Berwick's time-worn ramparts
You mix with Tweedmouth Bay!

TWEEDMOUTH BAR

While we lie deeply dreaming,
What wraiths of vessels ride!
Ghost ships of song and story
That drop with every tide!
Their sails are broidered moonlight,
Each masthead lamp's a star,
When the white boats of Fancy
Glide over Tweedmouth Bar!

The sea mists stoop and wrap them,
And none on earth may know
Where they shall furl their tops'ls
And let their anchors go;
For round the world and round again
They'll find in fields afar
No knight to ride like Deloraine,
Or love like Lochinvar!

THE HARP OF ETTRICK

I N a green kirkyard where the silent hills
Are a guard to the glamour that Ettrick keeps,
Rocked by the music of rain-fed rills
The shepherd friend of the fairies sleeps.
Nought nameth his grave the rest among,
Save the simple slab as a headstone set,
With the deep-cut date when he lived and sung,
And a carven harp—lest the world forget!
Round him the sheep and the moorfowl feed,
Close to his shoulder the heathbells blow,
And the sun may shine and he does not heed,
And the flowers may bloom and he does not know.

But at night, when the arras of cloud is torn
And tossed by the Solway winds aside,
When the moon comes sailing above Delorne
And sets in her silver the Ettrick tide,
When the magic wing of the midnight hour
Stoops low to the worn old Gamescleuch walls,
And a lonely owl on the Thirlestane Tower
With a querulous note to the silence calls,
Then a murmur wakes in the heath and fern,
And the fairies gather, unseen of men,
Riding up from the Rankleburn
And trooping down from the Tima Glen.

THE HARP OF ETTRICK

So soft is the fall of their feet in the grass,
So light is the lift of each gossamer wing,
You might think it the murmur of breezes that pass
Leaving whispers of love on the lips of the ling.
They cross the low Ettrick by light of the moon
That has robed in her lilies the foam on its wave,
They climb the dark dyke where the shadows are
strewn,
And stand with bowed heads on the marge of his
grave.
However so soft be their step, he has heard,
And he moves to their midst like a king to his
throne,
Not a leaf, not a blade in the grasses is stirred
As he lifts the grey harp from its place on the stone.

The dead strings waken beneath his hand,
And the echoes ring through the cleuch and ford,
As he sings of a new Kilmeny's land
And a new Earl Walter's matchless sword;
'Tis a song that is never for mortal ear,
And the grave to the world is unstirred and still,
And he who might pass by the kirk would hear
No sound but the wind as it crossed on the hill;
Yet those golden words to the vale belong,
And the tale is a tale that the fairies know,
And the wail of that harp is the deathless song
That the dreamer hears in the Ettrick's flow.

ON CHEVIOT'S SHOULDER

UP here where the winding sheep-tracks go
By the knoll and the naked boulder
The old hill's plaid of the winter snow
Has slipped from his wind-swept shoulder.

The clouds are scattered; the sun rides through,
All earth with splendour gilding;
The loch is lit with a lighter blue
And a swan in the reeds is building.

A lark is singing in love's old way,
With his heart and his wings a-quivver;
He knows the worth of a morn in May,
And the song to sing to the Giver.

Down in the valley, a silver thread,
Tweed to the sea runs slowly,
And round him an old romance is spread
Like a presence hushed and holy.

And here where the kingdoms march and meet,
And Cheviot stands as warder,
Witching and sweet lies under our feet
All the matchless pride of the Border.

ON CHEVIOT'S SHOULDER

Not a foot of ground in this grey morass,
Not a space in yon stretch of heather,
But has heard the hoofs of the horses pass
As the reivers rode together.

Not a silent glen in this range's shade
But has rung to the boast of battle,
But has heard the sob of a Southron maid
And the lowing of English cattle.

But peace lies over this still May-morn
Like the mist on the Bowmont lying,
And strife has fled, to the silence borne
Like a gull to the Solway flying.

DRYBURGH

O SILVER waves that go crooning by,
For whom is the slumber song ye sing!
And whose is this tomb ye guard, and why;
O, tall grey towers where the ivies cling?
Not for a soldier, and not for a king
That is laid in the lap of his last long sleep,
O, waves, are the whispering words ye bring!
O, walls, is the generous watch ye keep!

Here in the stillness sleeps the Bard,
Where the shadows are flung from the Eildons Three.
Hush! Step light, lest the peace be marred
Of the sweet spot's silent witchery!
With footfall soft as the wind in the tree,
And light as the dew on the bluebell's breast,
Come, come to the rail of his tomb and see
Where the Wizard of Old Romance takes rest!

He hath woven the wonderful threads of Life
From cradle to bier in a cloth of gold;
He hath crossed us the spears of Border strife
And the hands of the Highland loves of old,
And every word is a jewel to hold
While a nerve shall thrill or a sword shall thrust,
Till the last of the fairy tales be told
And the mouldering Dryburgh stones be dust.

FROM BEMERSYDE

HIS favourite view! Southward the Carter Bar
Beating a purple breast against the blue,
Northward the braes of Gala stretching far,
And, all between, the golden fields he knew;
And this is Bemersyde! And this Scott's view!

Here from the hillside lift your eyes and see
The cornfields of the Border waving wide,
Eildon upreared in triple majesty,
And silver Tweed bound seaward in his pride!
All, all he loved, looking from Bemersyde!

The blue mists stoop on Melrose; from the moors
The Gala gathers home her hundred rills;
Still in the vale the old-time charm endures,
Still some weird glamour of enchantment fills
The far grey riot of the Ettrick hills.

This was his favourite scene! With our dull eyes
We note its lights and shadows, and our pride
Throbs as we murmur "Here our homeland lies!"
We see the Border; but Scott's view more wide
Took in Life's light and shade from Bemersyde!

THE WITCH OF BOWDEN

CORN was blighted, cattle died,
In the fields of Bowden!
Red o' hair and evil-eyed
Laughed a wife of Bowden.
"Burn the witch!" the people cried;
"For the sake o' crop and corn,
For the sake o' hoof and horn,
Burn the witch o' Bowden!"

Bringing wood from far and near
Came the folk of Bowden,
Piled the faggots for a bier
For the witch of Bowden.
Down the street with taunt and jeer
Flew the maids and flocked the men,
Trooped the children ten by ten
To burn the witch of Bowden.

THE WITCH OF BOWDEN

Spinning at her ingleside

Sat the witch of Bowden,

Heard the roar of the rabble ride

Down by the doors of Bowden.

Looking from her casement, cried:—

“A’ the folk’ll no’ be met,

Twa-three turns A’ve time for yet,

A’ve spun sae lang in Bowden!”

Smoke and flame to Eildon sped

On the moor by Bowden!

Her cloak was grey and her shoes were red

When they burned the witch of Bowden!

Still ye may search and see the spot,

Brown on the moor where the grass grows not,

Where they burned the witch of Bowden.

COLLEDGE WATER

MY sire is the stooping Cheviot mist,
My mother the heath in her purple train,
And every flower on her gown I've kissed
Over and over and over again.

The secret ways of the hills are mine;
I know where the wandering moorfowl nest,
And up where the wet grey glidders shine
I know where the roving foxes rest.

I know what the wind is wailing for
As it searches hollow and hag and peak;
And, riding restless on Newton Tor,
I know what the questing shadows seek.

I know the tale that the brown bees tell,
And they tell it to me with a raider's pride,
As drunk with the cups of Yeavinger Bell
They stagger home from the English side.

I know the secrets of haugh and hill,
But sacred and safe they rest with me
Till I hide them deep in the heart of Till
To be taken to Tweed and the open sea.

TO A BORDER COLLIE IN TOWN

WHERE are you travelling, head on paw,
With big brown eyes a-dreaming?
Leaving your bed in the barley straw
For the morning hill mists cold and raw
To gather the sheep on Hounam Law,
With the grey Kale under you streaming?

Has your heart gone back to your mountain home
On the wings of a wild wish flying?
Do you sniff the scent of the peaty loam
On the open moor where the red grouse roam?
Is the white drift flung in your face like foam?
Do the whaups wheel over you, crying?

Why do you whimper and start in your sleep?
Are you losing the rebel blackfaces?
Down the braeside do you gallop, and leap
At the burn in the hollow, and race at the steep
With a heart that has only a thought for your sheep
In this wildest of runaway chases?

TO A BORDER COLLIE IN TOWN

This is no home for a dog of your breed,
You, a knight of the Hill-Shepherds' Order!
You that have stood where the ridges recede,
And looked to the South on the haughs of the Rede,
And looked to the North on the vale of the Tweed,
With your paw on the Gates of the Border!

The roar of the traffic goes past you unheard
In monotonous maddening motion,
But you have gone back where the heather is stirred
By the swift little feet of the Cheviot herd—
Gone back to the realm of the fox and the bird,
And the wind blowing clean from the ocean!

THE RAIDERS

LAST night a wind from Lammermoor came
 roaring up the glen
With the tramp of trooping horses and the laugh
 of reckless men
And struck a mailed hand on the gate and cried in
 rebel glee:
“Come forth. Come forth, my Borderer, and ride
 the March with me!”

I said, “Oh! Wind of Lammermoor, the night’s
 too dark to ride,
And all the men that fill the glen are ghosts of
 men that died!
The floods are down in Bowmont Burn, the moss
 is fetlock-deep;
Go back, wild Wind of Lammermoor, to Lauderdale
 —and sleep!”

Out spoke the Wind of Lammermoor, “We know
 the road right well,
The road that runs by Kale and Jed across the
 Carter Fell.”
There is no man of all the men in this grey troop
 of mine
But blind might ride the Borderside from Teviot-
 head to Tyne!”

THE RAIDERS

The horses fretted on their bits and pawed the
flints to fire,
The riders swung them to the South full-faced to
their desire;
“Come!” said the Wind from Lammermoor, and
spoke full scornfully,
“Have ye no pride to mount and ride your fathers’
road with me?”

A roan horse to the gate they led, foam-flecked
and travelled far,
A snorting roan that tossed his head and flashed
his forehead star;
There came a sound of clashing steel and hoof-
tramp up the glen.
. . . And two by two we cantered through, a
troop of ghostly men!

.

I know not if the farms we fired are burned to
ashes yet!
I know not if the stirks grew tired before the stars
were set!
I only know that late last night when Northern
winds blew free,
A troop of men rode up the glen and brought a
horse for me!

THE MARCH BURN

FOLK will tell you in their order
Bowmont, Teviot, Tweed—in turn;
But I know the real Border,
And I know the true March Burn.

'Tis the playground of the swallow,
'Tis the heron's banquet-hall,
Just a gleam the wild ducks follow
When the evening shadows fall.

Just a strip of sunny water
That a man may step across,
Just a little laughing daughter
Of the mist-cloud and the moss.

Meadow-sweet and hemlock love her,
And when soft the South wind blows
There are kisses blown above her
From the thistle to the rose.

And, though Tweed may claim the honour,
She who dances through the fern
With the white lace-foam upon her
Is the true March Burn.

A BORDER POET

THE green of God's earth
Is the floor of the fane
Where he worships the worth
Of the sun and the rain.

The blue of God's sky
Is the roof and the dome
Of the storehouse where lie
The rich gems of his home.

Each dale as it dips,
Each stream and its strand,
Is a song to his lips
And a harp to his hand.

Each hill, near and far,
Holds the gleam of the lance
Of an Armstrong or Kerr
In the days of Romance.

And the bard of this land
That was spoil to the strong
Still shall raïd with rash hand
The wide Marches of Song.

A SONG FOR THE FLAG

(Presented to a Border School)

BLOW down, ye winds, from Eildon
And set these folds a-swing!
Shake forth this Flag of Empire
To children of the king!
The boldest knees have bowed to it,
The bravest hearts have bled
To guard that royal banner
And hold its wings outspread!

See! Red that burns for courage,
And Blue that shines for truth,
And White that gleams for purity—
Look up, clear eyes of youth!
What homage will ye bring them,
These colours twined and crossed
With old-time grief and glory
And battles won and lost?

A SONG FOR THE FLAG

No manse so wrapped in moorland,
No farm so far afield,
But owes a son to Empire,
A hand to sword and shield;
No child of all our homesteads
But honour holds him bound
To fight that yonder banner
Rules aye on Border ground.

But till that day shall waken,
And till that need shall call,
Take for your sword the daily task
That fills the hand of all;
For best we build our Empire
And best we serve our king
Who do the simple duty
The passing hour shall bring.

A SONG OF BORDER RIVERS

TWEED

ACROSS my once dividing barrier race and race
Hold friendly hands, and bury helm and lance;
I mirror wold and woodland in my face,
And in my heart Romance!

TEVIOT

I bring a song to you from out the laughing hills—
A song the binding mill wheels leave unthralled,
That I may whisper it in foam that fills
Each cavern of the cauld!

JED

Of all the Cheviot's dearest streams I am the first;
The music of the Marches I have kept;
I wake again in grey-walled Ferniehirst
Old glories that have slept!

YARROW

I win the hearts of more than my own sons, for I
Am chosen idol of a thousand lyres;
Yet have I wealth of witchery more high
Than any song aspires!

A SONG OF BORDER RIVERS

TILL

Sorrow is mine. My tawny waves are muffled drums
That beat beside the warrior in his grave;
My step is slow and measured, as becomes
A mourner of the brave!

ETTRICK

I am the happy nurse of him, the fairies' friend,
Whose harp shall ring while any song shall be;
I bring the message that his hill flowers send
Of love to the great sea!

IF I WERE OLD

IF I were old, a broken man and blind,
And one should lead me to Mid-Eildon's crest,
And leave me there a little time to rest
Sharing the hilltop with the Border wind,
The whispering heather, and the curlew's cry,
I know the blind dark could not be so deep,
So cruel and so clinging, but that I
Should see the sunlit curve of Cheviot's steep
Rise blue and friendly on the distant sky!

There is no darkness—God! there cannot be—
So heavy as to curtain from my sight
The beauty of those Border slopes that lie
Far South before me, and a love-found light
Would shine upon the slow Tweed loitering by
With gift of song and silver to the sea!—
No dark can ever hide this dear loved land
from me.

SUNSET

ALONG the Ettrick hills a splendour wakes
Of red and purple; dark the shadows run
On Ruberslaw, but see! the Dunion takes
The golden sword-thrust of the setting sun!

The evening sky one rolling cloudbank fills,
Wrought in strange phantasy of tower and tree,
Mocking the ramparts of our Border hills,
Dwarfing their battlements of majesty.

A snowstorm drifting down the Bowmont vale
A little hour ago made Cheviot white,
And left him glistening in his silver mail,
The day's last champion in the lists with night.

THE FOLDING OF THE PURPLE

HIS plaid on his shoulder Cheviot twines
In many a snow-white fold,
And a low red star on the peak that shines
Has clasped it with clasp of gold;
For this is the time when the hill-kings sleep
Folding their purple away
Till the moorfowl nest and the sunbeams sweep
Full-armed through the gates of May!

Good night! Good night! Though the winds
blow loud
Could thy slumber be less than sound
With a pillowed head upon fairy cloud
And a foot on enchanted ground?
Uncrossed of care be thy sleep, O King!
With thy purple folded away
Till the moorfowl nest and the sunbeams swing
Full-armed through the gates of May.

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

(A Fragment)

FROM Cheviot's crest the wind blew cold
And whirled the drift round byre and fold.
The lonely pines that flanked the farm
Tossed here and there a tasselled arm
Above the brown burn's roaring spate,
And moaned beneath the hill wind's hate.
Within the house, whose window light
Flung shafts of gold on shields of white,
The fire-glow from the chimney wide
Had forced the shadow elves to hide
Where cobwebs to the rafters clung
And spiders on their bridges swung.
Half resting on his black-thorn crook
The gudeman in the ingle-neuk
With furrowed brow and lips apart
Sat gazing in the fire's red heart.
His lyart locks were thin and spare,
His cheeks had lost their ruddy bloom,
Time's burden and a weight of care
Within his eyes had cast their gloom;
Full four-score years in labour spent
Had stolen his rugged strength and bent
Those shoulders broad, that stalwart form
Whose pride had trampled stress and storm.

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

The gudewife sitting by his side
Her busy needles deftly plied,
While oft her loving glance would stray
To where the old man, bent and grey,
Recalled dim youth and lost desire
From pictures glowing in the fire.
The years had lightly dealt with her ;
Still in her warmer veins astir
The red blood ran ; her locks of white
Framed eyes still full of happy light,
Nor had the rose of beauty fled
From comely cheeks and lips still red.

II

The needles clicked with rise and fall,
The clock tick-tacked upon the wall,
The grey cat in the ingle purred,
And still the old folk spoke no word.
Then suddenly the door latch jarred,
And chill and wintry from the yard
Blew in the gale, and from the gloom
Dave Elliot stepped into the room.
Setting his shoulder to the blast
He closed the door and barred it fast,
Dusted the snow flakes from his cloak
And, laying down the lantern, spoke—
“There’s a right wind blowing along the burn,
The dead leaves dance at an elfin kirk ;

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

The firs are singing the wildest song
I have heard them sing in this glen for long.
If Boney rides on the sea to-night
He'll be taking a toss from the horses white!"

III

The gudewife laid her knitting by
To greet her son with kindly eye,
And coax the lamp to burn less dim
And set his simple meal for him.
Then, sitting at the ingle side,
She watched him with a mother's pride.
She noted well the shoulders broad
That carried like a king's the maud;
She marked the sinewy limbs and strong,
The clear eyes innocent of wrong,
The fearless glance, the quiet grace
So common in the Border race.
Meanwhile he told her of the farm,
Of folded steers made safe from harm,
Of sheep down-driven from the height
And gathered in the bieldy glen
Out of the turmoil of the night
Beyond the searching storm wind's ken.
Then, conscious of his work well done,
He turned his thoughts to wider things.
And talked of battles still un-won
And strife of emperors and kings.

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

IV

The tale that Europe's heart had stirred
Here in the hills was not unheard.
Scarcely a cot could Cheviot claim
That knew not dread Napoleon's name,
Scarce farm or stell or shearing-stance
But echoed with some jibe at France.
Then came the whisper of a planned
Invasion, how the French would land
Before these winter months had passed
And bind the sea-kings slaves at last!
Thus yeoman troops were raised to stand
As bulwark to the Borderland,
And beacons piled upon the braes
That so might all the Marches blaze
And warn the watchful country round
Should foe set foot on freeman's ground.

V

Now seated by his sire a-dream
And at his gentle mother's side
Young Elliot raised the threadbare theme
And bade the wraiths of conquest ride,
Pictured the home he held so dear,
Laid waste beneath the invader's spear,
Saw sheep and cattle put to sword
To feed the Frenchman's ravening horde,

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

Saw golden hill and glorious glen

Made over to Napoleon's men.

In simple words the scene he drew ;

The old man shook his locks of snow,

And in his tired eyes of blue

A soft smile woke, serene and slow :—

“Nay, lad, these frog-fed foes of thine

Will meddle not with you or me ;

If they be seeking butchers' kine

They'll find them nearer to the sea.

Though half of France our isle should fill

Our ewes will feed on Cleuchburn still !”

VI

With spirit bold the youth replied,

“I trust one day with my troop to ride,

When the beacons blaze and the bugles call

And the Border banners above us fall ;

When the farmers mount in the bends of Kale

And the hillmen arm in the Bowmont vale,

Then the French shall learn as their feet touch shore

That we count our Border worth fighting for !”

The old man shaking his grey head

Returned to his dreams of a day long dead,

But the dame spoke with flashing eyes—

“Safe in such hands our dear land lies !

Had I youth I would harbour but one desire :

To ride in your troop when the hills take fire !”

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

VII

“And is it so strange,” Dave asked her then,
“That the need of our homes should find us men?
Do you think it a hero’s task to dare
To fight for a land God made so fair;
To cross a sword for these hills of blue,
These glens that the nut-brown burns run
through,
These scattered strips of the windy fir
So dear to the heart of the Borderer;
To carry a gun that shall guard from harm
Each river-hamlet and upland farm,
That shall keep the bounds our fathers drew,
And prove ourselves to our Border true?”

VIII

So speaking, he rose from the ingleside
And wound his plaid round his shoulders wide:
“Old Robin is stamping the stones in his stall,
It’s time he was watered and bedded and all.
I’ll pledge me he’s standing with eyes on the
door
Just to catch the first gleam should the beacons
cry ‘war’!”
And, laughing, he lifted his lantern and went.
In the courtyard the storm wind was slackened
and spent,

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

The stars over Cheviot burned steady and white,
And the Bowmont sang low in her love to the
 night;
There was no other sound but her ripple and fall
And the click of the hill pony's hoofs in the stall.
Young Elliot absorbed this new mood of the
 night's,
And wondered and listened, and looked to the
 heights;
Then suddenly, bound as it were by a spell,
Saw a gleam on the shoulder of Yeavinger Bell,
And far in the northward, alive in the gloom,
An answering flare on the hill-top of Hume.
Then brighter and bolder and nearer and higher
From Caverton Edge broke a steeple of fire,
And ere one could whisper the hill by its name
The Dunion stood forth in a mantle of flame.
One moment the watcher stood, robbed of his wit,
Then he roared to the farmhouse: "The beacons
 are lit!
The lightnings are loosened, the war-dogs untied,
And it's time for the Borders to saddle and ride!"

IX

His mother came at his lusty cry
And looked with awe on the reddening sky,
And his father hobbled across the door
Shaking his head at the name of war.

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

The gudewife gazed at each flaming crest,
Then she folded her hands on her patriot breast—
“If our land is in danger our sons must ride;
May the hand of God be a sword at their side!”
Dave Elliot spoke no word at all
But he turned his nag in the narrow stall,
And buckled the girth and tightened the bit
And crooned in a grey ear “The beacons are lit!”
E’re half the sleeping farm had stirred
He was cloaked and armed and booted and
spurred,
He had taken his father’s trembling hand,
Had kissed his mother a fond good-bye,
And answered the call of the Borderland
And the red sign written across the sky.

X

Down the path by the snow-fed burn
That wound with many a twist and turn
Young Elliot rode right cautiously
Till he struck the road at the rowan tree,
Then he stood in his stirrups and loosed the rein
And Robin went galloping into the night
With his shoulders grey and his streaming mane
A-flash in the beacons’ golden light.
A lantern gleamed at a cottage door,
A light in the neighbouring farmyard shone;

WHEN THE BEACONS BLAZED

“Swirehope’s awake to the word of war,
And I’ll wager,” said Elliot, “Walter’s on!”
Over the stones that strewed the way
At the top of his speed went the cat-foot grey.
Once his rider looked back to the west
And far away on a Liddesdale crest
Saw a new flame break, and “By Gad!” said he,
“There are some that have further to ride than
me!”

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OTHER VERSES

CLOTH OF GOLD

SOME spin in the light and the splendour,
Some weave in the dark and the cold;
But the least with a touch that is tender
Makes cloth of his fancies of gold,
As he twines the wide Earth and her glories,
Warm love, and the passions of men
Into poems and pictures and stories
By toil of the brush and the pen.

They have taken the mountain and meadow,
The wind and the river and rain,
The star and the sunlight and shadow,
The deep and the drift of the main;
With their hearts they have broidered and bound
them,
With their hopes they have folded and sped,
With the love of their lives they have crowned them,
And twisted their faith in the thread.

My hand to you, weavers a-weaving!
My heart to you, spinners that spin
With your threads of love-laughter and grieving,
Your threads of soul-beauty and sin!
Though the world greet your labour with scorning
In your toil your reward shall ye meet,
For no song of the stars of the morning
As the hum of your wheel is so sweet!

A WOODLAND BOUQUET

NOT for you the rank and fashion
Of the hollyhock and rose,
But the twining reckless passion
Of the wildest flower that grows,
For the love you twined about me, clasping tendrils
where you chose!

Not the spoil of any border,
Not the wealth of garden-beds,
Where the asters stand in order
Primly nodding queenly heads,
But the riot of wild flowers where the breezy
upland spreads

Creamy elder from the coppice,
Briar-roses wet with dew,
And a bunch of scarlet poppies,¹
And a sheaf of cornflowers blue,
Bound about with golden grasses; these, my
woodland love, for you!

IN HER SLEEP

THE days may be long ere she taketh
The hand of the Summer to keep;
The hours may be long ere she waketh;
But to-day the Earth stirred in her sleep!

Was it glance of the Sun as he passed her
To scourge the dry South with his whips
That has bidden those pulses beat faster
And brought the faint smile to those lips?

Hath she seen, as she dreamful reposes,
This Prince in some vision too fleet
Come again with his basket of roses
To lay, as of old, at her feet?

Was the sigh that just rippled her bosom
But a sensuous movement of rest,
Or her thrill to some golden dream-blossom
His loving hand laid in her breast?

Till the dawn of birds' song and buds breaking
She hath dreams that are priceless to keep.
Swift and soon come the hour of her waking—
She has stirred, she has stirred in her sleep!

THE FEBRUARY THRUSH

A GALLANT more daring
Than all of his peers,
The love he is sharing
Is first of the year's!
Let late laggard lovers
Go wait for the rose,
The joy he discovers
Sweeps in with the snows.

The first growth of grasses,
The first swell of bud,
The first wind that passes
With warmth for the blood,
The first gleam of gold where
The crocuses start,
He gathers to fold where
Love foldeth his heart.

A month—and each pleader
Shall deafen the grove,
But this one is leader
Of Spring and its love!
A month—and March brings in
Her blossoms to cheer,
But brave he who sings in
The dark o' the year.

A BUNCH OF SNOWDROPS

O LITTLE bunch of snowdrops, the messages ye
bring
Are music from the mating thrush and greeting from
the Spring,
Unfolding life and beauty as your snow-white cups
unfold
Their pale green inner petals and their hearts of
yellow gold.

Warm, kindly hands have gathered you, and I shall
not forget
They gathered you this morning while still the woods
were wet,
And though the city's dust and grime have dried
away the dew
The freshness of the waking world is clinging still
to you.

So, little bunch of snowdrops, I hold you doubly dear
As pledge of lawns I may not tread and songs I shall
not hear.
A heart may borrow hope from you whose blind
faith bids ye blow
So long before the summer and so soon behind the
snow!

THE HERALD

THE ashleaves hide in their buds of jet,
There is never a leaf on the beech-tree yet,
But a new life stirs in the waking land
As though the summer were near at hand,
And down in the dell that the burn runs through
A thrush is singing as if he knew.

It was only last night, or the night before,
That the blackthorn branches were silvered o'er;
It was only this morning, or yesterday,
That the woods grew into a primrose way,
That the South wind woke and the sky turned blue,
Yet a thrush is singing as if he knew.

Perhaps he has heard from a lark in the sky
Or an early bee as it wandered by,
Or he may have learned when the winds are still
That summer is waiting behind the hill.—
I only know that the news is true,
And a thrush is singing—because he knew.

MARCH WINDS

THE winds of June are clowns in the clover
Riding the tops of the early rye,
Turning the swift-winged plovers over,—
Silvery gleams on a purple sky.

Winds of September come roughly sweeping
Like tyrant Kings through the ripening corn,
And behind them the Summer lies weeping, weeping
For poppies trampled and roses torn.

Winds of October are friends returning
When orchard aisles are withered and brown,
Breaking the twigs for our winter burning
And flinging the ripe red apples down.

Winds of November that gather and follow
With brooms that the Autumn mists obey
Are housemaids busy on hill and hollow
Sweeping the leaves from the Winter's way.

But the winds of March that are yonder gliding:
Ah! these are the dearest winds that blow!
Mothers they seem to me, stooping, guiding
Little child-snowdrops out of the snow!

DAFFODILS

HO! you there, selling daffodils along the windy
street,
Poor drooping, dusty daffodils—but oh! so summer
sweet!
Green stems to stab with loveliness, rich petal-cups to
hold
The wine of Spring to lips that cling like bees about
their gold!

What price to you for daffodils? I'll give what price
you please,
For light and love and memory lie leaf by leaf with
these!
And if I bought all London Town I could not hope
to buy
What I have found in sunshine bound, and wrapped
in open sky!

My money for your daffodils. Why do you thank
me so?
If I have paid a reckless price, take up my gift
and go,
And from the golden garden-beds, where April
sunbeams shine,
Bring in more flowers to light the hours for lover-
hearts like mine!

AN APRIL SONG

AS pink and white as apple-flower,
As graceful as the daffodils,
For me she brightens every hour
In this grey city of the hills.
She is the Spring that fills my heart,
She is the South winds as they blow,
And like the winds she walks apart;
She does not know—she does not know!

The days are long, away from her;
But O those days on which we meet
Set all my trembling heart a-stir
With dreams too daring, hopes too sweet!
And yet, withal she does not guess;
I bid a staid “goodbye” and go
Back to dark cells of loneliness;
She does not know—she does not know!

I might have told her of my love,
But April is a month of doubt,
And rain clouds wrap the peaks above
While down the vale the sun shines out;
Her hand might cling no more to mine,
Her eyes meet mine no more, and so
The April sun would cease to shine—
Perhaps 'tis best she does not know!

FORGET-ME-NOT

DOWN in the glen that the burn runs through
Is a tiny splash of the sky's own blue,
A shy bloom hid in the summer grasses
Asking this boon of the stream as it passes—
“Forget-me-not!”

The careless ripple goes dancing by;
There are blossoms to kiss that are not so shy;
There are prouder maids more worth the wooing,
And why should he wait for your plaintive sueing,
“Forget-me-not?”

Better he stay for those eyes of blue,
He will find no flower that is half so true;
When the laugh of the vale is a memory only,
He will dream again of your plaintive, lonely,
“Forget-me-not!”

THE MAGIC WAND

IT is only a mill-pond mean and small,
And round it the nettles grow rank and tall,
And the tangled duckweed is green with slime,
But I knew that pool in a golden time
When ribbons of bark from the fir tree's stem
Were ships of the world and we played with them ;
When the Tyrean barges hour by hour
Coasted with cargoes of hemlock flower,
And, loaded down to the bulwark rail,
The Spanish galleons hoisted sail,
And from every bay in yon broken wall
Came a battleship at the Island call !

Once, I remember, when winds were low,
A tall gift-yacht with her sails of snow
Majestic moved through the sunset fire
Like a wild white swan, and the ships of Tyre
Dipped all their flags on her splendid way—
And the sun went down too soon that day !

THE MAGIC WAND

In a little cluster of oak trees set
Is a spot where old memories linger yet;
Since we played in its shadow long years have sped,
But whenever that moss-grown bank I tread
I remember it once as a forest aisled
With vasty glades; to the eyes of a child
Each acorn bonny, and smooth, and brown
Was a fairy's gift from the sky flung down,
And the acorn cups that the wind had spilled
Were bowls for the pipes that fancy filled!

The path still leads us to copse and pond,
But where, O Youth, is thy magic wand?

NEW FOREST PONIES

YOU are free of the woodland meadows,
Of swamp and thicket and ride;
All day in the slanting shadows
You lurk and loiter and hide,
Till the moonlight silvers the bracken
And the stars on the copses dance,
And the fires of the sunlight slacken
As the night comes up from France!

The night that by tower and steeple
Comes up like a witch in the sky,
Calling loud to the little people
To mount while the moon is high;
Setting legions of light feet twinkling
Through the dewy marshland grass,
And the bells on the heath-flower tinkling
As the fairy horsemen pass!

NEW FOREST PONIES

In the light of the stars they gather
Between the mirk and the morn,
With kirtle and cap and feather
And hunting knife and horn ;
Then come from the deep glades swinging
Their ropes of the twisted dew,
Like gay little cowboys flinging
Their lariat loops on you !

You are free of the woodland meadows,
You are free of thicket and ride ;
All day in the slanting shadows
You lurk and loiter and hide ;
All day unbitted and idle
You wheel and whinny and prance,
But you bend to an elfin bridle
When the night comes up from France !

THE HILL ROAD

O VERY fair the white roads are that run from town
to town,
The hedge-bound roads, the busy roads, where
fashion passes down,
But fairer is the fenceless track and many times more
sweet
That winds among the heather round the dark hills'
feet.

By farm and lonely shieling, and past them far, it goes;
A road that runs to nowhere, with a goal that no
one knows;
A road that runs to nowhere, growing less and less a
trail
Till it fades into the moorland where a tall scaur
ends the vale.

O, seldom drones a hoof on it and seldom drums a
wheel,
But brown along its mossy marge you see the hill-
burns steal;
And now and then the shadow of a cloud above the
ben,
A cloaked and lonely traveller, rides down it through
the glen.

THE HILL ROAD

Green grows the grass upon it, and the scattered
pebbles lie
Where mountain storms have darkened them and hill
winds blown them dry,
But the blackface woos the sunlight in the warmth
its bosom brings,
And the ruffled grey-hen crouches ^{to} with its cool dust
on her wings.

The last light hoof-mark falters, the last dim wheel-
track dies,
And there you'll find the pansies with their happy
purple eyes.
By rock-rose fair and silver-weed and butterwort so
blue
The traveller to nowhere shall find the path anew.

The broad white roads run splendid by wood and
dale and down
To seek the courts of Europe and the wealth of
London Town,
Yet though it lead to nowhere, as all the world can
see,
The hill road winding through the heath leads far
enough for me.

THE SHEPHERD

KEEN blows the wind over Braidhope, but close
is my warm plaid wound;
It's a gey bit step on the hirsel from the haugh to
the hill-top ground,
But there's lift in the heart of the heather, there's
wine in the wind from the sea,
And up o'er the shoulder of Braidhope's light
tramping for Laddie and me.

Bord'ring the burn with their silver the swords of the
fairies are bright;
Hiding the grips and the hollows the snowwreaths lie
crested and white;
Near all of the flock is beneath us laid close in the
lap of the lee,
But there's aye a few wandering wastrels make labour
for Laddie and me.

THE SHEPHERD

The bent is all withered and yellow, the bracken all
twisted and bow'd;

There's never a bee on the heather or a bird between
me and the cloud.

The West wind rides over the moorland with ice-
whetted lance at his knee,

He has never a foeman on Braidhope unless it be
Laddie or me!

The shadows sweep up from the valley, the dark
hirples down from the hill;

At the bend of the glen is a cottage and a candle
burns bright on the sill;

Now the snowflakes may break from the purple, the
snow-clouds roll up from the sea,

For the ewes are all bonnily bielled and home beckons
Laddie and me.

There are roads that are smoother to travel, I grant
you, but go where I will

There is never a pathway that calls me like this that
leads over the hill,

When the West wind comes up from the Solway
in the sleety chain mail of the sea

To trample the bracken on Braidhope and wrestle
with Laddie and me.

THE HARPER OF THE CAULD

HE sits above the flowing stream
Just where its pebbly bed is walled
By the low barrier of the cauld,
And twines in song his river-dream.
His song is sweet and void of care,
This Harper old with snow-white hair.

He hears the May-day tide go by
With promise of the early flowers,
And looks, and lo! the hawthorn bowers
Are whiter than the locks that lie
About his shoulders; and he sings
Of all the joy that May-time brings.

He hears the July ripples pass
With tinkle on the stones laid bare,
And lifts his harp; O fond and fair
Their tale of gowans in the grass!
He steals their whisper ere they go,
And weaves it into music low.

THE HARPER OF THE CAULD

And when September comes to crown

The year with gold, when the wind dips

Like little painted fairy ships

The withered oak leaves drifting down,

He finds a song to sing for them,

Then binds them in a diadem.

In summer suns, in winter snows,

The hill burn cradled in the peat,

The low stream winding through the wheat,

Have each a song; and each he knows,

And twines into a music rare,

This Harper with the foam-white hair.

THE GIPSIES

LOITERING in the sunlight, O ye lotus-loving
people,
Dawdling through the daisies with your slow, slow
feet,
Every lane's an aisle for you and every tree's a
steeple,
And the wind your organ-music as it murmurs in
the wheat!

You that know the splendour of the rosy risen
morning,
You that hold the secrets of the calm un-numbered
stars,
You that steal the brownness of the berries for
adorning,
You to whom the wide earth is a roadway for your
cars!

THE GIPSIES

You that wrap the white dust round your naked feet
for ever

As you travel through wild roses to your goal of
dim desires,

You that chase the South wind and the raindrops
down the river,

You that seek contentment with a heart that never
tires!

When my thoughts are carried over from your camp
fires to the city,

When I follow in my fancy where the feet of
fashion play,

Then my scorn is for the scornful and my heart goes
forth in pity

To the people that would wean you from your
royal, reckless way!

Live and loiter in the sunlight, O ye lotus-loving
people,

In your azure-domed cathedral ye shall worship as it
meet,

Where every lane's an aisle for you and every stem's
a steeple,

And the wind is organ-music as it murmurs through
the wheat!

THE HUM OF THE BEE

THE lark may be too soon a comer,
The bud be too soon on the tree,
But, my Heart, you may say it is summer
When you hear the first hum of the bee!

The South wind that ripples the clover,
And rocks the green world at his feet,
Blows soft for this little brown rover
A-swing on his perilous seat.

The West wind that baffles the swallows,
And lashes the poplars to foam,
Stills the storm of his anger, and follows
To waft this wing-wanderer home.

The sunbeams of morning come strewing
Gold love on his russet and gold;
The blossom-cups yield at his wooing
Their hearts and the honey they hold.

There is many an earlier comer,
But no one loved better than he;
And, my Heart, it is never a summer
Till you hear the first hum of the bee!

THE CROSSING SWORDS

AS I lay dreaming in the grass
I saw a Knight of Tourney pass—
All-conquering Summer. Twilit hours
Made soft light round him, rainbow flowers
Hung on his harness.

Down the dells
The fairy heralds rang blue-bells,
And, even as they rocked and rang,
Into the lists full-armed there sprang
Autumn, his helm the harvest moon,
His sword a sickle, the gleaner's tune
His hymn of battle.

Each bowed full low,
Knight to knight as to worthy foe;
Then Autumn tossed as his gauntlet down
A leaf of the lime tree, golden brown,
And Summer bound it above the green
Of his shining breastplate's verdant sheen.

They closed. Above them the driving mists
Stooped and feathered—and hid the lists.
Later the cloud mist rolled away
But dead in his harness the Green Knight lay.

THE LAST ROSE

IT is only a day and a day
Till the storm-wind shall steal to your heart,
Rending all your red petals apart,
Taking perfume and beauty away;
And the hours are now numbered and few
Till the night in her pity shall pass
And lay her soft tears of the dew
On your leaf-covered grave in the grass.

And I think as I bid you good-bye,
It is only a day and a day
Till Death comes with his sickle to slay,
And we lie where your torn petals lie:
And I would, little rose, that we knew
In the hour when our summer departs
We had given such gladness as you
From the sunlight God stored in our hearts.

THE GLEANERS

THROUGH Autumn's wide-flung doors
The laden wains have rolled,
Spilling on golden floors
The dust of their bundled gold;
And now from wood and wold,
Where the dews of dawn are spun,
God's gleaners, one by one,
Come forth to the feast and, bold,
Take the gift of the rain and sun.

Doves from the deep dark firs,
Rooks from the elm-tops bare;
And the oatfield trembles and stirs,
And the barley stems are fair
With the shimmering cloak they wear
Of the sable and silver of wings;
And the red sun, rising, brings
Over the hill-top the hare
And the wild, shy, woodland things.

By the patter of little feet
In the dry dead leaves of the wood,
By the rustle of wings in the wheat,
As the wild birds stoop to their food,
Shall ye know that our God is good,
That the harvest shall never fail,
That enough shall be spilled by the gale
For the wandering moorfowl's brood
And the gipsy-hearts of the vale.

A FALLING LEAF

THE wings of the South wind scarcely stir
The blue-grey tassels that fringe the fir,
The tangled bracken grown bravely old
Renews its pride with a touch of gold,
There is life and colour on wood and wold,
—Then, like a sudden sob of grief,
“Tip-tap, tip-tap!”—a falling leaf!

There's a droning wheel on the far-off road,
A waggon lifting the year's last load;
The stacks stand yellow against the sky,
The down of the thistle goes floating by,
And hearts are happy and hopes are high,
—Then, stealthily, like some slow thief,
“Tip-tap, tip-tap!”—a falling leaf!

THE WIND OF AUTUMN

I AM the Wind of Autumn,
From fields afar I roam,
I dry the sheaves of harvest,
I blow the swallows home;
I fling to earth the apples,
I set the gleaners free;
I twine a wreath of scarlet
Around the rowan tree.

I break the withered branches
And strew them in the glen
To fill the hands of children
And warm the hearths of men;
I bear the wildfowl seaward,
I pass the mother-call
When the far-scattered coveys
Close in at evenfall.

I kiss the rain-wet roses,
I lift the tired leaves down;
I toss the silver seagulls
Behind the furrows brown.
I am the Wind of Autumn,
I bid the bluebells ring
To speed the ships of Summer
Across the world to Spring.

THE FAIRIES OF THE FROST

TELL me, where have you lain hidden
All the long glad summer days,
Fairies, little Fairies of the Frost,
To the sunlight's feast unbidden,
To the gloaming's love-lit ways
And the laughter and the glamour of it lost?

Were you hid among the clover
Or low down among the wheat
With your sparkling diamond shoon,
When the West wind rippled over
With the shadows on his feet
Going eastward to his meeting with the moon?

In the roses did ye settle?
Lay ye watching in the lane,
With a heart alert to learn
Every leaf and stem and petal,
So that every window-pane,
When you etched it, might be true to flower
and fern?

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All the long glad summer days,
Fairies, little Fairies of the Frost,
To the sunlight's feast unbidden,
To the gloaming's love-lit ways
And the glamour and the laughter of it lost?

THE WOLVES

WINDS, ye are wolves of the night
Far spurred by your fierce desires,
Hunting the sleighs of the fading light,
Siegeing the sunset fires!

Ye steal through a forest of stars,
Ye sniff at the clouds' white stores;
Hungry, ye howl at our window bars
And ramp at our bolted doors!

Whining, ye gather and go;
Restless, ye raven and roam.
Ye follow our tracks in the trodden snow,
Ye hound and hustle us home!

Sometimes a leader falls,
And your ravening ranks are thinned,
Till your wavering vanguard calls,
Then—wolves, O wolves of the wind!—

THE WOLVES

Your cubs creep out of the night,
And your she-wolves heavy with young,
To lend a tooth to the fight,
To lend to the siege a tongue!

As dim nights follow the days
Ye follow your fierce desires,
Hunting the twilight's sleighs,
Circling the sun's camp-fires!

DECEMBER'S DIAMONDS

DECEMBER in her diamonds! Down Winter's deep
she gleams
Till the jewel-bordered highway is a path to silver
dreams,
And every tuft of grass a ship that trails white nets
astern,
And every leaf of lowly weed a frond of fairy fern.

December in her diamonds! Who caught the falling
dew
And wove it into elfin chains to charm the world
anew?
Who broke the barrier of the cloud and stole those
gems of night
To sew them on the snowy shoes that speed
December's flight?

DECEMBER'S DIAMONDS

No human hand may gather them however hard it
try;
No maid of earth may borrow them, no mortal man
may buy;
But all may see the sunlight glance along their royal
sheen,
And all may watch December dance more jewelled
than a queen.

Though princely are the pendants that the dames of
London wear,
No gem in all their necklets with December's can
compare;
No countess claims a coronet so regal as the tree's,
No queen may clasp a girdle set with richer stones
than these.

The snow's own sunlit diamonds! Go search, if
search ye will,
The cavern deeps of Kimberley—and find them
matchless still!
What glory bought of mint or mine may with her
pride compare:
December in her diamonds, the fairest of the fair?

THE SNOW

SOME would speak of the snow as a wonderful
winding sheet

In the silence of forgetfulness wrapping December's
dead;

I would rather dream of it as a white flower flung at
the feet

Of the world and Winter wed.

Adrift from the balconies of some tall-towered golden
city

Fall the soft snow-flakes in the magic of soundless
flight,

And I see the hands of the angels, girl angels, flinging
confetti

On the Earth in her bridal white.

WILDFOWL

WHEN the day and the dark are meeting,
And the first stars climb the sky,
We can see you with brave wings beating
Like shadows over us fly.

As ye speed through the daylight dying,
As swift to the dark ye go,
Will ye leave us no light word lying
On the breast of the sunset glow?

Up there on your strong wings streaming,
Down the bridle-track of the wind,
Caught ye never the gold bits gleaming
Of Summer riding behind?

Do ye bear from the buds no message,
No tale from the roses bring?
Do ye come with no hope, no presage,
No sound or sign of the Spring?

In the calm of those clouds high over
Have ye never a whisper heard
Of a bee in the early clover
Or the song of a nesting bird?

THE INGLESIDE

WHEN the shadows downward glide
Fancy rules the ingleside,
And within the glowing fire
Lie the dream fields of Desire.

Brighter than the lighted lamps
Gleam the stars on far-off camps,
Warmer than the pine-log glow
Wait the lips of long ago.

There is not a lover fair
But her face is pictured there,
There is not a comrade true
But goes redly riding through.

There is ne'er a dream of fame
But takes shape in yonder flame,
There is ne'er a song of love
But is sung in yon red grove.

THE INGLESIDE

Soft and grey a cinder falls:
Camp and grove and castle walls
Fade away in dust and flame
With our dreams of love and fame.

Yet, when shadows downward glide
Fancy rules the ingleside,
And we find amid the fire
Dream flowers of the old Desire.

THE BRUMBIES *

THERE are steeds upon many a Western plain
That have never bowed to a bit or rein,
That have never tightened a girth or chain.

They feed in the blue-grass, fearless, free
As the curbless wind on the bit-less sea,
And the life they lead is a song to me.

For I know there are those in the world to-day
Who are just such rebels at heart as they,
Running uncurbed in the brumby way.

Men that have never been bridle-bound,
Bitted or girthed to the servile round,
Men of the wide world's stamping ground.

Who have wheeled to the Dawn; have kept lone guard
When the soft Bush nights crept golden-starred;
Rebels that never the world shall yard.

* "Brumby"; the Australian name for a wild horse.

THE BRUMBIES

There is room on this earth for the toilers too,
And some must draw where their grandsires drew,
And some must lope on the trails anew.

But as long as the girth and the harness scar,
As long as there's land unfenced and far,
The wild mob feeds under moon and star.

THE HOOFS OF THE HORSES

THE hoofs of the horses!—Oh! witching and sweet
Is the music earth steals from the iron-shod feet!
No whisper of lover, no trilling of bird
Can stir me as hoofs of the horses have stirred.

They spurn disappointment and trample despair,
And drown with their drum-beats the challenge of Care;
With scarlet and silk for their banners above,
They are swifter than Fortune and sweeter than Love.

On the wings of the morning they gather and fly,
In the hush of the night-time I hear them go by—
The horses of Memory thundering through
With flashing white fetlocks all wet with the dew.

When you lay me to slumber no spot you can choose
But will ring to the rhythm of galloping shoes,
And under the daisies no grave be so deep
But the hoofs of the horses shall sound in my sleep.

THE OLD COACH DRIVER

AMONG his garden roses lone he sits
And hears the traffic of the road roll past,
But hears no more the jingle of his bits,
His long whip's thunder or his guard's full blast.

He hears for rattle of his leading bars
The throb of engines, and the motor's horn
For the strong music blown against the stars
On many a frosty night and windy morn.

With eyes grown dim, with old feet faltering,
Scarce now he dares to cross that road, the same
Where once in robe of scarlet he was king
And all pulled out before him when he came.

Time will be served; new years new codes adjust;
Old rules are banished and old days depart;
The dust is on his roses, and the dust
Of eighty years hangs, choking, round his heart.

A MOTHER'S THOUGHT

A SNOW-WHITE spirit flying free
Across God's vast eternity,
Boasting her little wings the best,
Went circling far beyond the rest.
She left Heaven's starry gates behind,
And down the pathway of the wind
Flew on and on, and found no fear
Though Earth itself grew dark and near.

Sudden those peerless wings and proud
Were netted in a mountain cloud,
And lay there bound in silver tether,
White plume entangled in white feather.
Long time forsaken and forlorn
She struggled, from her shoulders torn
The white wings quivered in the cloud;
Then all the sky with song grew loud,
And the child spirit pure as pearl
Came down to earth—our baby girl.

A MOTHER'S THOUGHT

And now we know when still she lies
With that sweet smile across her eyes,
She sees her white wings in the cloud
And hears the gold harps harping loud,
And when she stretches her pink hand
We know—we know and understand!

Would we could guard her day and night
And keep her pure soul pure and white,
That nought might still that music's stir
And no cloud keep her wings from her!

ON THE DEATH OF
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

TO-DAY falls the lyre from the hand
That waked her wild music of passion, majestic
and grand,
Took circling white sea bird and cliff-hanging tree,
Took motion and colour of wave-crest, of sea-flower
and sand,
And twined in a garland of love to lay on the lips
of our land.
—Is his death not *thy* sorrow, O Sea?

Mute, magical, passionate lyre!
No more shall the sunbeams of laughter, the moons
of desire,
Make light for thy music when buds on the lilac
bush cling,
When daffodils dance and our red-budded tulips take
fire,
When green leaves of April leap suddenly forth on
the briar.
—Is his death not *thy* sorrow, O Spring?

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Is this not *your* sorrow, O Stars,
You that he chanted so sweetly in bold measured bars,
In song that shall live while your mystical glory
endures?
O birds, trilling now on the verge of the Summer by
half-built nests!
O roses, his friends, with the half-hidden buds in
your breasts,
Is this grief not a sorrow of *yours*?

BARE FEET

TRAMP of gay feet on the pavement,
Roar of the carts and the cars,
And a sound that is only a silence
That calls ye, compassionate stars!
Heart of me! How can you hear them,
Stumbling and painful and slow,
For the little bare feet of the children
Are making no sound in the snow!

Sweep of the swords of December,
Gleam of the leaves and the light,
Music and dancing and laughter
And dazzle and dream in the night!
Heart of me! See them beside you,
Faltering;—where shall they go?
Little bare feet of the children
Making no sound in the snow!

The lamps shall burn low at our banquets,
The holly leaves wither and die,
But the Christ's crown is fadeless in Heaven,
God's lamps burn undimmed in the sky!
Heart of me! God hath his angels
That stooping in pity shall bring
The little bare feet of His children
Safe home to the Courts of the King.

A PRAYER

WITCH! take me back on your broom,
Through the glimmer of tales I was told,
To the rainbow whose arch in the gloom
Is a guide to its treasures of gold!
I am tired of Life's blame and its praises,
And of Hope's inarticulate phrases,
Let me lie once again in the daisies,
While I link them in chains as of old!

Time has only a handful of days
That are brimful of innocent joy;
Life has only one garland of bays,
And she binds them to give to a boy;
And we know, who have suffered and striven,
That the keys of the gateway of Heaven
Shall but once to a mortal be given—
To a child in the sun, for his toy!

Witch! take me back on your broom!
Shall I bend to my trivial toil,
While a rainbow's astride in the gloom
With a cave at its foot to despoil?
I am tired of Life's fortune and phases,
Its mingling of moods, and its mazes,
And I want to lie down in the daisies,
And sleep with my cheek to the soil!

THE COTTAGE

STANDS a clearing in the woodland and the
cottage it encloses
Is the hall of Scotland's courage and the home that
holds her pride,
And the wallflowers in the border and the trailing
yellow roses
Twine a simple wreath for valour with its rightful
wreath denied.

The sunlight floods the gables and the thin blue
smoke goes sweeping
To melt in mists of fancy, till it seems to sorrow's
eyes
Like smoke above old battles where our soldier sons
lie sleeping—
The smoke above the altar of old Scotland's sacrifice.

THE COTTAGE

With chatter and with laughter come the children in
the morning,
Bare feet and sun-browned faces and limbs naked to
the knee,
With satchels on their shoulders, rugged road and
rough wind scorning
With the courage of the brave old land whose
bulwarks they shall be.

As they pass the garden gateway you can hear far
pipers playing,
See the set and lifted faces while the drums before
them beat,
As those children grown to manhood take the battle-
road, obeying
The bugles of the regiments that never knew defeat.

Pass on, O merry children, up the hill-path, through
the heather,
Bare-footed, bravely hearted, on the road your fathers
trod,
With gay young voices lifted and with glad hands
linked together,
The strength of Scotland's future in the charge of
Scotland's God!

COTTAR AND KING

OVER a cottage the winds blew wild,
Mocking the wail of a new-born child,
But the fairies knew—and they only smiled,
Rocking his wooden cradle!

His songs fly wide on their silver wings,
Fame to his hand her sceptre brings,
Over his shoulder as over a king's
Time has folded the purple.

A ROYAL HEART

RAGGED, uncomely, and old and grey,
A woman walked in a Northern town,
And through the crowd as she wound her way
One saw her loiter and then stoop down,
Putting something away in her old torn gown.

“You are hiding a jewel!” the watcher said.
(Ah! that was her *heart*—had the truth been read!)
“What have you stolen?” he asked again.
Then the dim eyes filled with a sudden pain,
And under the flickering light of the gas
She showed him her gleaning. “It’s broken gless,”
She said; “I ha’e gethered it up frae the street
To be oot o’ the road o’ the bairnies’ feet!”

Under the fluttering rags astir
That was a royal heart that beat!
Would that the world had more like her
Smoothing the road for its bairnies’ feet!

SUNSET ON LOCHAILORT

WEARY of ocean, of ridge, and hollow,
The seagull rests on his island tower,
And butterfly-winged the grey sea-swallow
Flits on the white foam-flower.

The burns are leaping through fern and heather,
Spurning the rocks in a splendid glee,
Singing a sunset song together,
Glad to be safe to sea.

Out of the West comes the gold light gleaming,
Paving a road to the headlands high,
Where Rum and Eigg in the blue lie dreaming
Under the hills of Skye.

From Arisaig comes a distant wailing,
Ardneish sobs for a hope forlorn,
In Loch Nanuagh a lone ship sailing
Waits for a king forsworn.

SUNSET ON LOCHAILORT

There is a grief upon moor and meadow,
There is a hunted foot on the strand,
By lore and legend, by wraith and shadow,
This is Prince Charlie's land!

Dip to the slow swell soft, my wherry!
Lie on the water light, mine oar!
So shall we drift over Sunset Ferry
Under Lochailort shore!

.

The dark has hidden Day's golden sheen,
The sun's red rose has been plucked by night;
The moon over Moidart climbs, a queen,
Splendid and round and white.

SIX HANDS

SIX hands linked for happiness!
We ask no more, we need no less
Than six hands for happiness!

Two that are brown and rough and scarred
That have found the world and its labour hard,
Two that are proud to toil and guard.

Two that are soft and dear and white,
Loving and trustful day and night,
Two that lead to the pure and right.

Two that are tiny and pink and sweet,
Stealing our fond hearts' every beat,
Making the magic ring complete.

Six hands linked for happiness!
We ask no more, we need no less
Than six hands for happiness!

KINGS IN EXILE

WE were serfs; there were roads to us forbidden,
There were barriers they would not let us pass,
Till the fairies brought the purple they had hidden
And the palfreys they had tethered in the grass.

Then we rode out past the wonder of the world,
Past desire and disenchantment that it brings,
Till on battlements we saw the flags unfurled
Of faëry, and knew that we were kings!

We were kings and our playmates were princesses,
We were rulers and our empire lay afar
Beyond things proved, beyond the gate of guesses,
And a thousand miles beyond the furthest star.

We were kings!—Now around us fall the shadows
Of our serfdom like a raven's dropping wings.
Not a footstep of a fairy in the meadows—
Not a comrade who remembers we were kings!

TO RIGHT THE WRONG

WERE I this city's over-lord
As but its humble serf am I—
Were I this city's over-lord
I would ride forth with naked sword
And slay its heartless wrongs, or die!

Were I this city's armèd chief,
And chief in something more than name,
My arm should rob it of its grief
And choke from it its crying shame.

No toiler then should cross its street
With aching arms and tired eyes dim,
While fashion's full-fed horses' feet
Should fling the highway's filth on him.

No weak one, weary from his toil,
Should spend his miserable dole
In loathsome dens where spoilers spoil
To gain the price that sells a soul.

TO RIGHT THE WRONG

No women, loyal in their love,
Should wait outside those poisoned bars
Chilled and heart-weary, while above
Gaze mockingly the wanton stars.

No hungry little child should stand
With pale lips pressed against the pane,
Looking on a forbidden land
Of food and warmth—were I to reign!

No girl should walk these pitiless streets
In the cursed mart of open shame,
God witness! if this poor heart beats
With manhood worthy of the name.

Were I this city's over-lord,
As but its lowly serf am I,
Were I this city's over-lord
I would ride forth with naked sword
And slay its heartless wrongs, or die!

SCOTLAND'S SHRINE

I LEAVE the busy, crowded street
To step within your silent aisles,
Where the dead hearts of centuries beat
Beneath your storied roof, St Giles' !
Where choir and chapel void and vast
Are filled with spirits of the Past !

In golden shafts and rainbow spears
The light falls soft on oak and stone,
So filters through nine hundred years
The glory that is Scotland's own ;
For these your sombre walls include
Our country's pride of nation-hood !

The feet of heroes tread your pave
While echo to their fame replies ;
The voice of Knox still fills your nave ;
Dead Stewart in your South Aisle lies !
Your roof and steeple once again
Are rampart for Queen Mary's men !

SCOTLAND'S SHRINE

The sound of trampling feet intrude,
A slow procession winds in state
Out of the grey-towered Holyrood
And up the mourning Canongate.
'Tis great Montrose they carry home
To his long rest beneath your dome!

Around me stand, Time's trusted fanes,
The tributes to our later dead;
The triumph faded, there remains
But grief—the tears that Scotland shed;
And dark upon your splendid walls
The stained old colours droop like palls!

Deep falls the early winter eve,
And deeper grows the winding spell
That old Romance will always weave
Around the shrine we love so well!
Oh! House of heroes, proud, apart,
How much you hold of Scotland's heart!

THE WHITE PAVILIONS

WITH snow-white blossoms starred,
With a snow-white cloud above,
The White Pavilions guard
Souls pure as the woodland dove.
All day in the face of Death
On the still wind's whispering breath
The silver bugles of Faith
Sound, and the trumpets of Love.

Angel and angel wait,
With trembling white wings stirred,
To speed from the silver gate
At their lightest sign or word.
They are neither checked nor chidden,
No joy from their eyes is hidden,
No gift to their hands forbidden,
No wish of their hearts unheard.

These are the women who stayed
Pure in a world of mire,
Wife and mother and maid
Filling their God's desire;
Whose faith to the weaker and sadder
Made all life brighter and gladder,
Till hope was a rose-hung ladder
And love was a golden lyre.

THE WHITE PAVILIONS

These are the women who held
White hands to us through the mist
When we railed at Fate and rebelled,
Or, tempted, failed to resist;
And these when life's sad ships started
Gave faith to the lovers parted
And hope to the broken-hearted,
With their own brave lips un-kissed.

And, taking their youth and beauty,
They laid them, untouched of shame,
On the lighted altar of Duty
That burns with a changeless flame;
And leaned from their own white places
With cheer for the pale young faces
Where Sin has furrowed her traces
And Sorrow has carved her name.

To these has the great God given
In the White Pavilions a throne
And the love of the hosts of Heaven,
For sake of an earth-love shown
To the fainting hearts they nourished
And the broken faiths they cherished,
When all hopes human had perished
And all faiths mortal had flown.

A PURPLE THRONE

WE have bowed down to the roses, we have loved,
we have laughed in the sun,
We have paid court to the Summer; but now that
the Summer is done,
And the skies in the West are purple and mists on the
moor are chill,
The wild Norse blood of our fathers beats time to the
wind on the hill.

The warmth of the sun grows fainter, the poppies
have drooped and died,
And September, the woodland painter, is at work on
his canvas wide,
And our roving hearts grow restless as he splashes his
gold once more
On the limes and the languorous beeches that sigh to
us "Summer is o'er!"

What if the thrushes are silent! What if the swallows
are fled!
The heather is home to the blackcock, the sky to the
gull and the gled;
A breath of the boisterous Nor' wind blown in from
the ultimate snows
Is worth all the warmth of a Summer that sleeps in
the scent of a rose!

A PURPLE THRONE

For not of the Southron races, that bask in the golden
shine
With swarthy and sunkissed faces and hot hands
stretched to their wine,
Are we, who have drunk of the hill streams on the
snow-clad mountain-steep;
And why should we weep for the Summer who has
friends—and enough—to weep?

When the last wain, laden, passes; when the last leaf,
whispering, falls;
When the first frost sears the grasses; then Winter,
the White Queen, calls;
And under the skies grown leaden we kneel at her
purple throne,
Where the ripening apples redden and the withering
leaves are blown.

Not for us are the soft lawn trances and the lazy hum
of the bees,
But the heart in us throbs and dances to the gale in
the leafless trees;
And over the wasted garden a voice from the high
hill pleads,
So—goodbye to the scattered roses!—we go where the
lone wind leads!

GRACE DARLING

IT was striking five on the Longstone clocks,
And the dawn was grey on a stormy sea,
When the keeper climbed by the light-house stair
To darken his lamps, and was swift aware
Of a broken ship on the Harcar Rocks,
Lying helpless less than a mile a-lee.

He called to his daughter, "Look thee, Grace,
There's a steamer aground on the Harcar, girl!
There are sailors clinging to mast and deck!
'Twere a chance in ten we might reach the wreck
Had I three strong men on this manless place
And a boat that could live in yon cauldron swirl!

But with no one but women to bear me part
I am helpless, indeed, as a man may be.
It were madness to launch in those waves alone,
For, swift as a shell in the breakers thrown,
However so stout were the rower's heart
My cobble would sink in so wild a sea!"

Lissome and brave, but in form so slight
That a strong man's hand might have held her high,
Grace Darling, daughter of sea-kings, said:
"Shall we measure our chance till their chance is fled?"
Then, her hair in the wind and her eyes alight,
"They are men—shall we wait and watch them die?"

GRACE DARLING

"I have rowed to the shore when the seas ran steep,
And the old boat weathered it brisk and brave,
And," she laughed, "I was bred to the stretcher's toil;
If I've dared as much for a load of oil
Shall I flinch if the waves on Harcar leap,
With the life of a man in my hand to save?"

The seas broke white on the Longstone Bar,
The gale still gathered from East by North,
As they carried the oars from room to rock;
And the sun on the ocean rose to mock,
And the wild wind laughed, and the last pale star
Alone in the heavens looked coldly forth.

O, the little wrists, they were white and thin,
But tough as the strands of twisted wire,
And the rounded arms seemed soft and white,
But the clumsy blades were as lances light
As they dipped to the deep seas, out and in,
In the sweeping strength of a heart's desire!

The spindrift lashed her on brow and cheek,
The sea-salt shone in her wind-blown hair;
Behind her the lighthouse rose and fell
As they climbed or sank in the ocean swell,
And she heard the oars in the rowlocks creak
And the storm birds call as they cleft the air.

GRACE DARLING

The tiny cobble was racked and tossed
Backward and forward, and flogged and flung
From gulf to crest like an autumn leaf,
But they held her head to the Harcar Reef,
And the sailors, seizing a hope half lost,
To their broken masts with a new life clung.

With hands on the bucking oar-heads numb,
With eyelids sore with the whip of the sea,
With arms grown weary and shoulders strained,
Rod after rod is the far goal gained,
Till at last to the foam of the reef they come,
And roll to the swell on the steamer's lee.

One after one, where the breakers comb,
The sailors have dropped to the skiff o'erside
That is held by a maiden's art in place,
And, however the seas may roll or race,
There are stout arms now that shall drive her home
To the lighthouse tower in the teeth of the tide.

.
Grace Darling! So long as by Longstone Bar
The tides shall come and the tides depart,
While Bamburgh walls on the steep shall stand,
Thy fame shall live in Northumberland,
And over its borders out and far
To wherever men honour a hero-heart!

ROBERT BURNS

A TEAM went forth in the wintry dawn to its
labour upon the lea,
A team came home in the early dark when the moon
was above the tree,
And a poet sang to the trampling feet as a sailor
sings to the sea!

Battle-songs of Freedom, that were forged in a full
heart's fire!
Songs of Home for a humble hearth, and songs on
the low sweet lyre,
Of a true man's love, and a woman's worth, and a
lonely soul's desire!

We wait in the drifting silence of the barren years
since then.
Ah! the closed eyes, and the splendid heart that will
never throb again
To the lover's sigh, and the nature-call, and the
patriot pride of men!

Silence, and yet no silence—for the singer's voice returns
From the mountain cliff and the carven tower, and
the wide world listening learns
Of the golden words that the fairies keep in the caves
of Time—for Burns!

A BALLAD OF GRETNA GREEN

I HELD her hand, and, "To-night at ten!"
I whispered with lips in her golden hair,
And I whispered it over and over again
For love of her answering: "I will be there!"
Then I mounted and rode from her father's hall,
And I thought, as I galloped his oaks between,
"Heart of my heart, ere the full moon's fall
You shall sleep on my bosom at Gretna Green!"

With the moon and the stars for our only light
We hooked up the dapples at Dingley Inn,
And under the oaks it was coal-black night
When the clock chimed ten with a cheery din.
A white form moved in the cypress shade;
I thrilled to the touch of a trembling hand:
"Up, little love!" and she swift obeyed,
Then I laughed, "You may follow us, Cumberland!"

A BALLAD OF GRETNA GREEN

I called to the postboy, "Ride, now, ride!
First to the March and I fee thee well!"
Then I sprang to my seat at the maiden's side
And the whip on the good grey roadsters fell.
We had left the gate at one splendid bound
With a swinging pole and a lurching load,
And never to me was a dearer sound
Than the clang of our hoofs on the dark North Road.

'Twas a narrow start, there was little to spare!
I could see the lights in the windows blaze,
I could hear the challenging, "Who goes there?"
As they caught the roll of our parting chaise.
I knew that the squire had guessed our flight,
I knew that he knew what that flight might mean,
And I said to myself, "'Tis a race to-night
From the Dingley gateway to Gretna Green!"

I drew sweet lips to my own and kissed,
And thrilled at the touch with a reckless joy,
Then glanced at the shadows behind and hissed,
"There are hoofs at the back of you. Ride,
there, boy!"
The greys stretched out at their topmost pace,
And I laughed as my lady leaned to me,
But I slipped my pistol out of its case
And I laid it ready across my knee.

A BALLAD OF GRETNA GREEN

The moon shone white upon Carter Fell,
And it lit the eyes of my lady fair.
I kissed her throat: ah! I loved her well!
And I filled my hand with her golden hair.
But loud hoofs broke on my dearest dream;
I could feel her tremble. I kissed and kissed!
Then the forehead stars of a sorrel team
Leapt suddenly out of the moon-fed mist.

The whip cut deep on the dapple greys,
And the sorrels dropped to the dark behind,
Then we saw the lights of Carlisle blaze,
And beyond them the road to the Borders wind.
Our galloping hoofs from the stones struck stars,
The men-folk guessed what our haste must mean,
And the maidens waved from their window bars
And shouted, "Safe journey to Gretna Green!"

We were clear of the town; before us, wide,
Like a long white ribbon, the North Road ran,
And I leaned from the window, "Ride, boy, ride,
Let them catch us now if they've steeds that can!"
Ere my lips on the latest word could close
Came the din of hoof and the drone of wheel,
And out of the dust at my shoulder rose
A riding-boot and a rowelled heel.

A BALLAD OF GRETNA GREEN

I pointed the muzzle, my pistol spoke.

I fired at the horse, I could spare the man.

The good beast reeled and dropped in his yoke,

And I roared, "You may catch us now if you can!"

Then I thought, as I turned to her witching charms,

Could a man have done less for such splendid spur?

And I knew as I gathered her into my arms

That a steed were but little to kill for her.

'Tis a merciless game when a true love plays

And the Border Line to that love spells home,

And weary and spent were our rare good greys

From their crests to their croups all splashed with
foam;

But we stood at the blacksmith's door at last,

And he joined in the glimmering moonlight sheen

A fetter of silver to bind us fast,

Lover to lover, at Gretna Green.

AN INVOCATION

THERE is never a full-throated minstrel that sings
Where the shades of the laurel lie deep—
There is never a bird in God's garden that brings
Such a balm for man's spirit to keep,
As the music that falls from your whispering wings,
O, my beautiful Grey Dove of Sleep!

It is long since with passion a-tremble the star
Bade his golden goodnight to the rose;
Every moonbeam that slants to the earth is a bar
On the amethyst gates of Repose,
On the gates that the fingers of Dawn set ajar
For the hand of the Darkness to close!

It is long since the shadows of Silence and Rest
Drooped their wings on the sky and the sea;
It is long since the breezes drew rein in the West
With their tired steeds turned loose on the lea;
There is never a bird that is out of its nest
And abroad in the darkness—but thee!

Happy lovers lie sleeping. Full stars light the way
For a splendour of home-coming ships
That have gathered the opaline dreams of the day
To bring down on their rudderless trips.—
I, too, would be dreaming.—Ah! little bird, lay
But a moment your beak on my lips!

SONG

(From "Whaup o' the Rede")

WAKE, little bees; the sun is shining,
The daisies are come and the oak buds break;
The thorn's in bloom and the vetch is twining—
Wake, little brown bees,
Wake!

Go, little bees; the speedwell glistens,
The gorse is out in a golden row;
The lark is in song and the whole world listens,
Go, little brown bees,
Go!

Fly, little bees; in your brave disorder;
Serried and single, low and high;
Bear me a message beyond the Border,
Fly, little brown bees,
Fly!

Speed, little bees; my love-word taking;
He that I love shall hear and heed;
Tell him my heart is breaking, breaking—
Speed, little brown bees,
Speed!

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

A COCK crows in the darkness; loud and plain
A rival answers; then the first again;
And on and on, until the eastern sky
Shows a grey wing and silences their cry.
Then suddenly and swift the crimson dawn,
Like roses from a silver bowl withdrawn,
Moves forth resplendent from the mantling grey,
And brings the daylight and the toil of day.

Within the stable there is darkness still,
For dawn lies netted on the cobwebbed sill.
An early foot has clanged upon the stones
And stirred the starlings on the dew-wet rhones;
An early hand has raised the corn-bin lid,
And deep the measure in the gold oats hid,
To serve each manger with the welcome swish
That crowns the coming of the brim-ful dish.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

And now each greedy muzzle, nostril deep,
Searches the bottom of the golden heap,
And churns and slavers in a reckless haste,
Afraid one grain of it should go to waste.
Beneath, the clicking rope-blocks rise and fall;
A restless hoof tap-taps in every stall;
Scarce times remains, as each wise Clydesdale knows,
To take this banquet that the dawn bestows.

Scarce have the swifter of their meal made end,
When voices murmur at the courtyard-end;
With clank of foot and loud good-natured din
The gruff-voiced Masters of the Horse come in,
And from the pegs that hang by every stall
They lift their harness, with a cheery call
To Bob or Bonny, Diamond or Maud,
And fling the chain-bands over quarters broad.

Obedient to their masters' orders stern,
Leaving their mangers still uncleaned, they turn
And bend their necks to let the hames be tied,
And let the bridles o'er their forelocks slide;
Then take the bits between their great lips thrust,
Shaking the while from giant manes the dust,
And one by one across the uneven floor
Tramp out to meet the sunlight at the door.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

The cool May morning to the courtyard sings
New songs of summer. On the starlings' wings
A glossier purple makes a prouder sheen;
The sky is bluer and the grass more green.
From the deep comfort of the moss-grown trough
With buried muzzles now the Clydesdales quaff,
While startled pigeons with half-wetted bills
Clap wings and settle on the grain-loft sills.

Now, mounted on the broad brown backs astride,
The horsemen, leading each a horse beside,
Ride forth in double file upon the road
With jerking arm and iron heel for goad.
The tramp and jingle as they pass along
Make mingling music with the morning's song,
And golden sunbeams with a radiance rare
Burnish the brasses that the collars bear.

Within the scented twilight of the byre
The cows, grown restless with a vague desire,
Turn soft brown eyes upon the golden lance
Whose blade is swinging to the dust-elves' dance.
A bolt is drawn, and rusty hinges jar,
Then, like the croon of ocean on the bar,
There swells a murmur as the shed grows bright
—The long line lowing welcome to the light.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

The byreman enters. The cool breath of morn
Stirs every hoof, sets glancing every horn
In weirdest motion. Then he frees the bows,
And one by one each soft wet questioning nose
Turns outward to the doorway, one by one
Each frontlet tosses to salute the sun,
And capering with clumsy gait absurd
Forth to its pasture goes the joyful herd.

Round-limbed and rosy-cheeked and clear of eye,
The women-workers to a field out-by
Step slowly, drinking in the wine of day.
While far above the lav'rock chants his lay,
And in the laurels on the farmhouse lawn
A thrush is silent that has sung since dawn.
The watch-dog leaps to challenge as they pass,
And leaves his footprints on the spangled grass.

Now through the steading sounds the hen-wife's call,
And swift from cattle-close and empty stall,
From sty and stackyard, barn and turnip shed,
Her charges gather with their wings outspread:
The fussing Brahma with her hungry brood;
The red-gilled turkey, masterful and rude;
The waddling ducks, wide-stumbling on their way;
The proud old rooster who discovered day.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

Swish!—on the pavement falls the scattered grain!
Swish!—on the gathered crowd it falls again!
Then every bill upon the stones is plied,
Save where some timid pullet leaps aside
Before the threat of lifted beak or spur,
While one more pushful takes the place of her.
Thus the gold banquet fades before the host,
The boldest taking—as in life—the most.

Amid the turmoil of the tossing breasts
The sparrows feed like rude unbidden guests,
While the proud pigeons, watching from the slates,
Roo-coo-coo-cooing to their murmuring mates,
From time to time drop lightly to the ring,
Or poise above it on superior wing,
Preferring rather that they miss their meed
Than join the feasting where such rabble feed.

The crowd disperses slowly. All in vain
A laggard cockerel scours the ground for grain.
A brace of chickens at the feed-house door
Wait, still expectant; but the feast is o'er.
Back to their foraging in barn and sty
The brown hens wander and the sparrows fly;
The pigeons wheeling on the lazy breeze
Seek out the garden and the early peas.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

The slow ducks waddle upon yellow feet,
With grim divergence to each grub they meet,
Along the dusty roadway to the pond
And sunny welcome of the beach beyond.
Reaching the bank they climb in single file
With notes of guttural delight the while,
Then crowding on by one sweet purpose pressed
Fall, like true lovers, on the water's breast.

The sows with grunting satisfaction hail
The cheerful rattle of the skim-milk pail,
And with deep twinkling eyes and rose-pink ears,
Come heaving forward to the trough that cheers.
Across the silent yard resounds the splash,
As down the wood the milky wavelets dash,
Till gurgling joy, displaced by grunt and squeal,
Betrays the welcome of the morning meal.

Beyond the shadow of the farm's grey walls
Green-girdled Nature to her children calls,
Where hawthorn hedges in their summer dress
The snow-white secrets of their buds confess,
Where buttercups and daisies woo the sun,
And tangled creepers in the ditches run,
Where all things revel in the waking day,
And all are glad because the month is May.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

On trampled mounds the lusty lambkins lead
Their willing comrades in a match of speed;
The calf that follows on the fawn cow's trail,
Dives at the udder with a twinkling tail;
The foal that staggers by the brown mare's side,
Prances unsteadily on hoofs of pride;
While bird and blossom but repeat the truth—
'Tis Summer's triumph and the hour of Youth!

The bark of collies on the breeze is heard,
With noise of shouting and of sheep bestirred;
Down in the hollow shines the silver gleam
Of spreading water from the dammed-up stream;
On the blue sky a cloud of dust is rolled
Above the hurdles of the washing-fold.
. . . At last, the laggards of the flock inside,
The dogs are silent and the gate is tied.

Now, forward to the open platform pressed,
The frightened sheep their destiny have guessed;
In vain with 'wilder'd eyes that seek retreat
Each grips the battens with reluctant feet.
Too late! For Nemesis with horny hand
Has seized the leader of the luckless band
By breech and brisket, in a bundle grey,
And sped her stream-ward in a shower of spray.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

With weighted wool and white, bewildered face,
Awkward she flounders to the landing place,
Stands bleating in the shallows, climbs the bank
With water streaming from her breast and flank,
Then shakes herself and breaks into a run
To join her comrades in the kindly sun,
Nor gives a thought to men or dogs again
Nor sees the pool behind her splashed to rain.

But see! the sun climbs high upon the dome!
Hark to the trampling as the Clydes come home,
Hungry and ready for their midday rest!
By sweat-marked shoulders is their toil confessed;
Their flanks are spattered, and their fetlocks spanned
By the brown bracelets of the turnip land,
But with a steady homeward step they swing,
Making the tug-chains on the hame-hooks ring.

Deep in the trough their dusty lips they sink,
Sliding their collars forward as they drink,
Now biting at a comrade in rough play,
Now, restless, stamping in the churned-up clay
Till, satisfied at last, they back and bore
A stalwart passage to the stable door,
With ribs distended and a flank that dips,
And water dropping from their lazy lips.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

Then, each one seeking his remembered stall,
The straps are loosened and the bits let fall;
Toil is forgotten in the shadows cool;
With mouths unfettered and with mangers full
The giants revel in their hour of grace,
And silence falls upon the dim-lit place,
Save for the crunching of the golden grain
And fitful fretting of the collar chain.

The ploughmen, shaking from their feet the loam,
In twos and threes turn down the path to home,
Tramping unevenly as those whose care
Is daily guidance of the devious share.
The thin smoke signals from the quiet cots
The savoury welcome of the cooking-pots,
And one by one each whitened threshold-stone
Admits a master till the last is gone.

Short is their leisure, for their labour waits,
And soon the cobbles at the court-yard gates
Are ringing newly to the calkined hoofs,
Whose music echoes in the slated roofs.
One ploughman only with his team is left,
For one great Clydesdale, of a shoe bereft,
Is standing idly at the smithy door
With tense ears twitching as the bellows roar.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

Dumbly obedient he lifts his hoof;
Patient, moves over at the smith's reproof;
Leans not upon him nor evades his grasp,
And flinches neither from the knife nor rasp,
But watches with a calm unwinking eye
The sledge descending and the red sparks fly,
Till, shod and plated, at his comrade's side,
He, too, goes field-ward in a new-found pride.

Here on the steepness of the fallow brows
The rich earth reddens to the ribbing-ploughs,
The low chain-harrows on the headlands turn,
Behind them, smouldering, the weed-heaps burn;
And he who looks beyond the Summer sees
The wide leaf waving in September's breeze
And Autumn riding in resplendent robes
To rule the harvest of the golden globes.

No place is here but for the sons of toil,
Who woo for lover the thrice generous soil;
No idlers here the watching eye arrest,
Even the pee-wits by their plundered nest
Are busy mourners, and the lark on high
A busy singer in his patch of sky,
And the grey gulls, a wheeling silver horde,
Most busy diners at earth's banquet board.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

Here from red morning till the set of sun
The harrows rattle and the rib-ploughs run,
Shaping the seed-bed, shattering the clod,
Laying man's labour on the garth of God,
Till white foam gathers over neck and rein
And shoulders deaden to the constant chain,
Till salt sweat stands in beads upon the brow
And strong men stumble as they guide the plough.

While rude strength struggles thus with chain and bond
In toil Titanic, from the road beyond
Youth chimes her laughter resonant and gay,
Setting light feet upon the flowery way :
Youth that has worn her galling fetters, too,
Debtor to duty, bankrupt of the blue,
Till, freed at last from chains of rote and rule,
Time, like a friend, has called her out of school.

Down from the village comes the childish band,
Culls from the wayside with a reckless hand
The pink and golden blossoms of the Spring,
Hunts from the hedgerow every hiding wing,
Shouts for the joy of living, leaps for pride,
Climbs every paling, pulls each branch aside,
Probes every ditch, lays every low bush bare,
O'erlooking nothing, as it seems, but Care.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

But now the trampling of the horses' feet
Where the long furrow and the headland meet,
Recalls the rebels from their eager quest
To taste the pleasure that delights them best;
To them no lav'rock's lilt, however rare,
Can with the creaking of the ploughs compare,
To them no whisper of the scented breeze
Can match the murmur of the swingle-trees.

Happy, they follow in the clasping clay
Where the slow giants snort against the brae,
Content if but a brother crown their dream
With moment's handling of his steady team,
Content if but a father let them stroke
The broad white foreheads of his resting yoke,
And proud as princes, when the long day ends,
If home they ride upon their fat-backed friends.

The sun moves daintily a-down the sky,
A carrier's noisy cart goes creaking by
With harsh discordant wheels that seem to jar
On the proud silence of that golden car.
The shepherd, crossing where the hedgerow thins,
His last long circuit of the flock begins,
Footsore and shambling, with his shoulders bowed,
Yet keenly reading the prophetic cloud.

AN IDYL OF THE FARM

Softly the evening dews begin to fall.
Hark! from the meadow comes the milking-call!
Then the low murmur as the cows reply
One and another to that silvery cry!
With swinging udders they ascend the hill
Each to his mistress and then, staid and still,
Stand with glad eyes and busy switching tails
While the milk foams into the tinkling pails.

At last the daylight to the gloaming yields,
Night's wings are folded on deserted fields,
The ploughs lie idle 'neath discarded chains,
Above the valley strange sweet silence reigns.
Surprised by darkness, in a sudden fear,
The late ducks homeward to the duck-house steer.—
At last, through willows where the shadows lurk
The cows stalk slowly through the May-night mirk.

Thus have we often seen the long day end,
The stars come sparkling, and the night descend.
Scotland! what country in the world but thee
Could weave such beauty for her sons to see?
Could wake such ardour in her dawnings grey,
Could hold such homage through the strenuous day,
And when her toilers from their labour cease
Could wrap their slumbers in such perfect peace?



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