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A BOOK OF VERSE

A BOOK OF VERSE

BY

THORNTON SWAIN THOMAS ✓

1889—1921



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A BOOK OF VERSE

THE FAIRIES' CHARM

Where the sun in magic splendour kisses earth's most fruit-
ful lands,
And the moonlight after darkness seems made by fairy
hands, —

It's so tender and so fragile that the Milky Way would
break
The moonlight after darkness that the fairies seem to
make —

There, the fairies live and frolic, while they make the magic
beams
That a child in fancy visions when, at night, he's wrapped
in dreams.

There is not a fleck of trouble or a single drop of harm
That the fairies mix at darkness when they brew their
magic charm.

They carry it on leaflets of the tiny clover-leaves
And pour it on the eye-lids of the child who most believes

In the presence of the fairies who prepare the magic charm
That has not a fleck of trouble or a single drop of harm.

1916

PHANTOM CREWS IN PHANTOM SHIPS

The sea was roaring up the rocky shore
Where pebbles rolled and flashed,
The cliffs were washed with spray from top to base
Where foamy billows dashed.

The sea was booming up the rocky shore,
The gulls were soaring high ;
Upon the tossing, crested ocean waves
A ship went sailing by.

The ship was seen to vanish in the sun,
Another came in view
Around the barren neck of coral reef
Where shone the sea's green hue.

The ship went sailing, sailing past the sun ;
The sea was void of craft,
And as the twilight deepened into dusk,
The merry pebbles laughed.

The endless line of splashing spray, the surf,
The seashells, sand and sea,
Beneath the crescent moon which ruled the tide,
Were playing careless, free.

The shadows mingled in the twilight's glow ;
The wind was low and mild ;
The wrecks along the coast of barren rocks
Seemed high with dead men piled.

But quick, the wrecks were floating once again
Upon a tossing sea,
And figures drowned in ages long ago
Woke to mortality.

Their spectre forms moved o'er the phantom decks
And hoisted sail to wind,
To cruise once more upon the deep blue sea
Which rushed and foamed behind.

The ancient wrecks, afloat from off the rocks, —
Each fitted with a crew, —
Went sailing, sailing, off across the sea,
Till lost to mortal view.

The ships are gone, with crews of phantom men
And phantom canvas sails ;
But all return to beach themselves once more
With creak of ropes and nails.

The crews and sails have vanished from the ships ;
The wrecks, restored again,
Repaint the visions of their woeful times,
Dismasted on the main.

Thus, every eve, when dusk has palled the deep,
The wrecks float on the tide ;
And all the sailors drowned within the sea,
Their phantom barks will guide.

PRAYER AND RIGHT

Up from the depths the foe has ris'n —

O, Lord, may we, a nation loving peace,
Soon see the cruel swords resheathed —

Soon hear the war's great clanging bellow cease !

Such conflict raging under heaven !

Lord, Thou wilt guide the arm bequeathed with right.
Oh, may the victory be given

To him who knows the only law to fight !

Not cowardice, not love, not glory,

Nor armies formed of myriad million-fold,
Not hate, not lawlessness, not navies,

Not cannons, ships or bravest men untold,

But fighting for the right in battle

Will crush the foe and fell the maddened king.

Oh, then, brave warriors, be not stupid cattle —

Make men throughout the world your praises sing.

1916

WHERE DO THE OLD YEARS GO ?

The old year is dying. Long has he served
His time, and fast is stealing onward to
Some far distant, undiscovered clime
To meet there all the myriad years gone by.

Long hast thou wondered, mayhap, where the years
Have stowed themselves when they escaped the world ;
But no one knows. We must pursue the year,
Waning, — but no ! he cannot, must not die,
Else, on his wayward journey we can ne'er
Proceed and learn where dying years have fled.

The passing year is waning, waning, still,
And soon may we be flying through the ways
Whence all the hundreds, thousands, brother years have
fled,
And see where ancient time has gone, before !

The year is dead ; shall human souls e'er know
Where he has gone ? In vain we watched his flight ;
He seemed to rise on wings and disappear.
And we still linger, knowing not where years
Have gone — to what far, undiscovered clime.

1916

HOW VERY STRANGE!

Now, I was not a man of might,
Nor could I write so well
That anything I ever wrote
Was surely bound to sell.

But quite the opposite, I say,
And do not speak in doubt,
For I can always testify
Why things will come about.

I started out to find a name
To put a poem to,
And walked from here to everywhere
With nothing that would do.

At last I found my needed name,
'Twas funny, I admit,
But when I tried to write it down,
My trousers wouldn't fit.

That is true, I swear it is —
My trousers grew so small
And tightened up and tightened up,
Till they weren't there, at all.

I ran about in frightful woe
And sat me down to think ;
But ere I touched a mossy stone,
My shirt began to shrink.

Now, here I was without my pants,
My shirt was going, too,
And where could I obtain some more,
Or what, instead, could do ?

I heard a roaring at my rear,
And turned to see a stream
Come gushing down the mountainside —
Its banks were white with cream.

The stream was made of purest gold,
The fish I couldn't see,
But thought that they must somewhere be —
Most likely in a tree.

The moon was low, I could not see,
But thought without a doubt,
That trees were very scarce near here —
That's why the moon was out.

Then I recalled that I had had
For supper something vile,
And knew just why my pants had shrunk
An inch for every mile.

NATURE IS NEVER WEARY

The birds may sing and the rains may fall,
But Nature is never weary ;
The wars may come and bring death to all,
But Nature is never weary.

The snows may come and may blanch the land,
But Nature is never weary ;
The tides may rise and may cover the land,
But Nature is never weary.

The men may die for the land they saved,
But Nature is never weary ;
A flag may wave where another waved,
But Nature is never weary.

So lives may bud and may blossom and bloom,
But Nature is never weary ;
And War's grim shadow may cast its gloom —
But Nature is never weary.

1917

OH, FOREST HILLS AND LEAFY TREES !

Oh, forest hills and leafy trees,
Which bend to every passing breeze !

Oh, forest hills, how oft I've tried
To climb thy old familiar side !

As often have I failed to see
What lies beyond the circled sea.

I've lived amidst the city's noise
Till I am weary. Bring me joys,

Oh, forest hills and leafy trees,
Of thy green slopes and whispering breeze !

Upon thy pathways let me climb ;
Oh, let me swing from branch to vine ;

Within thy sylvan cool retreats,
Let me have rest from city streets ;

And let me know the busy hum
Of city noises overcome

Within the forest's verdant street
Where crying cat-birds wild repeat

10 OH, FOREST HILLS AND LEAFY TREES!

In their queer, crying, dismal way
What all the summer breezes say !

Oh, forest hills ! Oh, leafy trees,
Which bend to every passing breeze,—

Oh, forest hills, how oft I've tried
To climb thy old familiar side !

* * * * *

And now, thank God, I rest at last —
The journey up thy side is past !

Once more I live a life care-free
On hill, by brook, in plain and tree.

And in thy sylvan, cool retreats,
I now find rest from city streets.

1916

THE NATIONAL ROAD AT IRVINGTON

Through sun and din to cool retreats
You run, oh, longest of the streets !

Beyond the city's noisy beat
You run along, the same old street,

Past meadows fair with waving grain,
Through dust and mud ; through snow and rain.

Beyond the town in summer fair
You run, a dusty thoroughfare ;

Beneath the glaring summer sun
You glide along through Irvington.

We leave you now to visit realms
Unknown to pilots' hands or helms ;

We wander through the winding ways
And call to mind the faraways.

The faraways, — the faraways
Have gone in manifold decays.

The people of the faraways
Have lived their time in yesterdays.

Though, here and there, and to and fro,
Far from the well-known street we go,

We find the street in memory, still,
With gladsome heart and liberate will,

And all the faces, — everyone —
We know have gone from Irvington,

We meet along the highway there —
Along our memory's thoroughfare.

1917

THE DORY

The cold wind whistled out over the sea,
And the gulls sailed by as they called to me ;
A fisherman sang at his nets by the door
Of his cot, hard beat, on the windy shore ;
His dory tugged at the anchor line,
His dory weathered to wind and shine,
His trusty dory with battered sides, —
See with what peace she gently rides
The climbing billows and harbor swells !
But list to the tale the fisherman tells :
“ ’Twas a stormy night, and the wind was high,
And we were driftin’, and rocks were nigh ;
Our sails were gone, and our masts, beside,
And we at the mercy of wind and tide —
The wind inshore and the tide was out —
We’d strike on the rocks without a doubt,
And go to pieces before daylight.
And with never a sail or smoke in sight,
We drifted on till we heard the roar
Of the surf and billows upon the shore,
And saw the whitecaps churned to foam
On the shore ahead ; and I thought of home
And my cozy bed, and the cheery hearth —
The cheeriest spot on all the earth.
I took a look at the lighthouse gleams
And thought of the past, — of my youthful dreams

Of being a sailor upon the main,
And I wished in my soul that once again
I roamed the beach of the seaport town
And slept again in my bed of down.
But we were hardened, — we sailor men, —
Not sentimental and soft, — and then
The schooner struck and a weirder cry
Was never raised from earth to sky ;
Twenty men lifted their voice in prayer
When she struck that night in the sea's dark lair.
Her bows stove in and she swung around
To take the beat of the sea's rebound ;
Her deck-house next, and her boats — but one —
Went drenching down, and her cruise was done.
Her sides stove in and her deck ripped wide,
With wreckage and gear strewn over the side.
Her deck was open from beam to beam,
And the angry waters they surged and screamed
Through her dismal hold where the catch was kept,
Where in time of yore the tired crew slept.

“I lashed myself to a broken spar
And leaped out into the harbor bar.
The water was cold, — it was icy chill,
And I floated and swam and drifted till
My feet touched land, and not till then
I wondered about the other men.
I heard a keel on the sandy shore
Gently grating above the roar
Of wind and storm and restless sea ;
I saw a dory with ‘ James A. Lee ’
Painted clear on her battered bow
And moving sluggish and lying low
And filled with water. A human corpse
Lay head aslant across the thwarts.

I turned it over, and saw the mate
Who had paid his forfeit to death and fate.

“At daybreak on the windswept shore,
When the waters calmed and the storm was o’er,
They found me lying and brought me to —
The sole survivor of all the crew
Of the fishing-schooner, the ‘James A. Lee,’
Which was lost at night in a heavy sea.

And that,” the fisherman said to me,
“Is the last of the boats of the ‘James A. Lee’ !”

I looked where he pointed and saw his dory
As he had described her in his story ;
Her battered sides and her anchor-line, —
His dory weathered to wind and shine.

THAT SUNDAY NIGHT IN CAMP *

It was down beside the water, 'neath the stately willow
trees

That waved their drooping branches when they felt a stray-
ing breeze,

That we sang and talked one evening — and my memory
still sees —

That Sunday night in camp.

We sang the old familiar songs — the songs of days gone
by :

“Annie Laurie,” “Suwannee River,” and “Comin’ through
the Rye” —

With such a living fervor that my memory seems to cry :

“That Sunday night in camp !”

The moon below the river seemed a large and silvery ball
As she streamed her mellow glimmer on the singers one
and all

While we sang beneath the willows by the whispering
waterfall,

That Sunday night in camp.

Oh, that moonlight summer evening when we sang the
good old songs

Thrilled us with a joy that our memory ever throngs !

Ah, to live again that evening my soul still ever longs !—

That Sunday night in camp !

* The Boy-Scout Camp at Bethany Park, Brooklyn, Indiana,
July, 1915.

TO A MAID

O, fairest maid — O, rarest maid,
How oft in sunlight golden,
With thee I've been — with thee I've strayed,
In times far gone and olden !

O, fairest maid — O, rarest maid,
So often we together
Have walked afar, and joyful strayed,
Our friendship must we sever ?

1917

IN AMORE

The twinkle and flash of a far-off star
And the gleam of a full red moon,
And a little canoe on a sea of light
And a paddle or two
And nothing to do
But drift away in the night !

Drifting away on the sea of light,
In the current of early love,
And a sweet guitar and a lover's love
And the breathing fair
Of the loved one there,
With the gleam of the moon above.

And so we rocked and drifted along
In the moonlight's silvery smile
In our little canoe on a sea of light
With a paddle or two
And nothing to do
But drift away in the night !

1917

THE OLD SCHOOL-DAY ROMANCES

Of the wealth of facts and fancies
That our memories recall,
The old school-day romances
Are the dearest after all.

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Oh ! the days of love and childhood
“ That our memories recall ”—
Shadows flitting through the forest
Where the water used to fall
And go racing off in woodlands
As a careless child at play —
As these thoughts of love still linger,
My heart can truly say :
“ Of the wealth of facts and fancies
That our memories recall,
The old school-day romances
Are the dearest after all.”

I can hear the forest's voices,
I can hear the shaded “ crick,”
Hear the dead leaves, startled, rustle,
The snapping of a stick,
And a shadowy form goes gliding
Slowly back from tree to tree,
As a timid voice says softly,
Won't you come and play wiv me ? ”

Then, the broad, well-lighted schoolroom
And the teacher's wary eyes —

And the question asked, " Who threw it ? "
With the " wherefores " and the " whys,"
As he picked up the eraser,
Went on writing at the board,
While my own heart beat on faster
With a hasty heart-beat toward
" The old school-day romances "
Which are dearest after all.

Oh ! the slow and painful ticking
Of the timepiece on the wall,
As it ticked away the minutes
And the hours one and all ;
Then the snicker of some pupil
And the scratching of a pen —
All come back to me so clearly
That I thrill to say again :
" Of the wealth of facts and fancies
That our memories recall,
The old school-day romances
Are the dearest, after all."

When at last the bell had sounded
And the pupils were turned loose,
She and I walked home together,
With our fingers knitted close.
We were laughed at by the " big ones," —
By the " big boys " and the girls, —
The boys who wore real neckties
And the girls who'd shed their curls.
Yes, they laughed their blatant laughter,
As we walked on down the street ;
But those thoughts of youth come to me
That I love as I repeat :

“ Of the wealth of facts and fancies
That our memories recall,
The old school-day romances
Are the dearest after all.”

For the innocence that nestles
In the heart of youngest youth
Is the only true conception
Of a friendly love and truth ;
For me there's a special meaning
Woven in every line
Of the fabric of romances
With that old sweetheart of mine.

1917

IGNIS FATUUS

Ignis Fatuus, flitting yon,
Hither, to, and yon again,
Always out of reach are you,
Luring toward you foolish men.

Crying in the marshes lone,
Through the darkest hours of night :
“ Come, O wayworn traveler, come ;
I will guide you with my light ! ”

Thus you beckon and you call,
Off in some far distant bog, —
Home of murderers and thieves,
Bayou of the snake and frog.

Then you wander far away
Till the worn-out traveler falls,
Prey to thieves and other rogues,
Through your silent, glowing calls.

Ah ! your light is like some men
Beckoning with artful wiles
To the weaker men who fall
Prey to all their leader's smiles.

Lead us not, O, Ignis Fatuus !
Far into the deep unknown,
Beckoning and leaving us
Till we fall to die alone.

THE WRECK

The night is cold, the wind howls mournfully,
The flying snow is sparkling 'neath the moon,
And as a train flies past with shriek and moan,
Its noise is deadened by the silent snow.
The train speeds on past sleeping hamlets white,
Past dim, unlighted farms and vacant roads,
O'er plains and rivers, past great woods, and on
Around a swinging curve. A red light shines
But is not seen. And on the engine roars !

The engineer is fast asleep ; for hours
He's run the train without his needed rest,
And now at length he's fallen fast asleep.
He's deep in dreams, and just around the curve
A broken rail, which leads up to a bridge,
Lies small, yet mighty, when the horse of steel
Is plunging swiftly down with passengers
Asleep behind, the engineer in front !

The roaring giant struck the broken rail
And swerved headlong into the frozen stream ;
The heavy ice gave way at once, the fireman
Jumped, the engineer went down —asleep.

The trailing cars came rolling down the bank,
And some were stopped by mighty trees ;
The other plunged into the hole made by
The locomotive. Oh, those screams of death
That even strong men gave ! The struggling
Souls beneath the ice ! The wounded women
And the wounded men all paint a picture
Upon my mind that time cannot efface.

Down in the water I could see a form
Whose white face comes before me even now,
And then I saw it sink beneath the tide
With one last piercing, woeful cry for aid.

1917

THE FOREST OF DEATH

O ! wondrous lakes and forest dells
Wherein the chief of Fancy dwells,
Invite me to your cool retreats
Away from noisy, raucous streets
Wherein the city's clangor beats
Throughout the day, throughout the night.
Within the forest gleams a light
Of Fancy dancing in the gleam
Of things that are not what they seem ;
The noise and clangor and the din
Of this dull town we're dwelling in,
Must needs be stilled and overcome ;
And in the woods where lips are dumb,
We must return from whence we come —
Freed from the noise of city ways,
To live and live through days and days,

Until, at length, we reach a land
Where each sad heart, or wandering band,
May come and rest beneath the trees
And feel the wafting of the breeze
In sylvan shrines of freedom wrought.
There comes a time in life's hard way,
As on we toil from day to day,
Beneath the wavering, whispering trees,
Reclining 'neath their peaceful ease,
That one of us must steal afar
And voyage o'er the crossing-bar ;
Thus one by one and day by day,
One of our number steals away.

And thus we die ; though never taught
The reason why we go. For naught,
We think, our numbers steal away ;
Just one by one and day by day,
Until, at length, alone we are
From all that number gone afar ;
And last — not least — the chieftain goes
And passes through the rows on rows
Of memories left by fleeting souls.
O ! wondrous lakes and forest dells
Wherein the chief of Fancy dwells,
O ! let me fly to your retreats —
Far, far away from clanging streets.

1917

THE SHIP OF STATE

Through turmoil and through love and hate
I sail, and piloted by fate,
The helmsman dread, on seas unknown,
On oceans limitless and lone.

On through the starlit waves I glide —
Still wishing I were by your side —
O'er seas so dread, so desolate
And awful, piloted by fate.

The hand of shades the rudder grips
And sends the swiftest, strongest ships
To death beneath the crushing blows
Dealt by the ruthless Prussian foes.

* * * * *

One ship there is, — the Ship of State, —
Which is not piloted by fate ;
The hand of God is on the wheel
And holds it with a grip of steel.

Oh, place me on the Ship of State
That glides through turmoil, love and hate,
And in the safety of its mast,
Bear me upon the ocean vast !

Then I can weather storm and gale,
And on and on forever sail —
The hand of God is on the wheel
And holds it with a grip of steel.

1917

THE LOTUS LAND

The Lotus Land of long ago,
Where Youth and Beauty proudly blow !

O, take me, Wonder, by the hand,
And lead me out to Lotus Land !

And let me eat the luscious flowers
That bring back youth and happy hours.

In Lotus Land, there is no gloom ;
But restful ease where bloom

The Lotus buds. O, take me now !
My grey locks pend upon my brow,

My back is stooped, my eyes are dim,
I cannot talk above the din

Of city noises and their lure,
For I am feeble, I am poor.

Through all the weary days of strife
I passed not one day of my life

Wherein I felt that I was free:
O, take me, Wonder, back with thee !

O, take this withered hand of mine
And hold it safely, thus, in thine,

And lead me to the Lotus Land,
Where Youth and Love go hand in hand.

1917

THE DRIFTWOOD FIRE

The wind in mournful challenge screamed
And fanned our flickering driftwood fire
Till pictures on the sea
Would flash and live and then expire,
With dull monotony,
And show us lights that once had gleamed.

O driftwood fire! Those flames of light
Which burn the frames of stricken ships
Cast high from out the main,
Enshrouded thick with seaweed whips
Recall those scenes again.
O driftwood fire that burns so bright !

We sat upon the sands that night
And talked of things that were and seemed,
And saw the lighthouse beams
As on the wrecks the flashes gleamed
In friendly, fitful gleams.
O driftwood fire that burns so bright !

We spoke of sailors and their plight,—
The sailors and their captains brave
Who plunged beneath the sea.
And vessels tossed upon the waves
Were pictured clear to me.
O driftwood fire that burns so bright !

Full many wrecks were plain in sight,
Some partly buried in the sands,
Or drifted o'er the main

Where men had died in foreign lands,
Or suffered mortal pain.
O driftwood fire that burns so bright !

The moon above gave mellow light ;
We watched the waves upon the shore,
Which rushed with swirl and foam,
Creep in, rush out, and wail and roar
With sullen swish and moan.
O driftwood fire that burns so bright !

We talked upon the sands that night
Until the sounding tide had crept
From out its briny bed,
And from the beach the ashes swept
And flung them cold and dead,
Leagues down the beach, far out of sight.

1917

MANUSCRIPT FOUND ON A DESERT ISLAND

The way is hard, the night is dark and lone ;
The seas are rough, the ship is tempest-tossed ;
A distant light gleams on my memory,
But flickers, dies, before the seas are crossed.

And ere the morning sunshine gilds the skies,
The storm is blown away, and in the quiet dawn,
Upon a barren reef, 'neath tropic sun,
A vessel clings, storm-lashed, with life-boats gone.

Long played-out spindrift wanders o'er
The decks, deserted, lifeless, dead, and bare,
And sea-green foam has curdled on the sides
And dried up underneath the tropic glare.

The air is still ; the mists of morning gray
Have rolled away to other distant shores ;
No natives flock to see the stranded ship ;
Naught but the writhing sea the hull explores.

I saw the vessel from the tropic shore,
And sorrow swept me for the other men ;
I felt as some poor Crusoe on an isle,
Alone, a wayworn wanderer wrecked again.

My home, my friends, the glowing family hearth,
My friends who waited on a distant shore, —
To welcome me, a wanderer, home again, —
Whose days and nights were long, whose hearts were sore.

I longed again for old familiar faces,
 I longed for childhood days to come once more,
 If I might have another chance ! — Oh, why
 Had I been wayward in the days of yore ?

I'd reckoned naught of toil or fortune then ;
 My life was careless as the very sea ;
 All labor seemed to me a hopeless bore,
 And now, what chance, what fortune, came to me ?

Shipwrecked ! Doomed to die in lands unknown,
 Unheard of ! Blots of islands in the deep,
 Where naught but tropic plants and fruit abound,
 And here my wretched bones will ages sleep,

Perchance disturbed by wandering herds of men
 Who seek for treasures o'er the unknown earth,
 In tropic islands of the tropic seas,
 Who'll wonder who I was and what my birth.

How many men have wandered out of sight
 In seeking fortunes, here and there, unknown,
 How many men have perished on this isle,
 And left no record save a bleaching bone ?

I've found my rest, my final resting-place —
 This island in the sea, uncharted now,
 Will hold my bones ; my manuscript will be
 Unearthed, perchance — I know not when nor how.

And so, I charge thee, tell them all at home
 The tale as thou hast read it written here.
 I claim no monument to mark my grave,
 My resting-place, this isle which I revere.

MY LITTLE COLLEEN WITH THE AUBURN
HAIR

Oh, my little colleen with the auburn hair !
I met you first on the plains so bare,
And when you saw me, you smiled on me —
A smile that was good for a boy to see.

Oh, my little colleen with the auburn hair !
It thrilled me with love as I waited there —
Waiting for you to come to me
And talk with me of our joy to be.

Oh, my little colleen with the auburn hair,
Throwing off to the winds your care-free care,
And strolling with me by the waving trees,
Your voice as soft as the summer breeze —

The summer breeze through the maple trees,
The song of birds and the hum of bees ;
Strolling and ling'ring beside the sea,
You laughed and you smiled as you strolled with me.

O'er the plains and the hills we have strolled away,
Forgetful of time, and from day to day
We've gathered blossoms beside the stream
And wandered along in a dreamy dream.

But, ah ! my colleen with auburn hair,
Where I met you first I have lost you there ;
You have gone from my life, and a sight so fair
As my little colleen with the auburn hair

Is rare to see, for a boy like me
Sees only your love and the love that he
Knows, and the love that he feels is true —
A gentle love, and a love for you.

Oh, my little colleen with the auburn hair !
Where I met you first, may I meet you there
Again, on the plain, or beside the sea ?
Oh, say, my colleen, you'll come to me !

1917

THE CREEK

(Summer)

Where the elderberries grow
And the tinted lilacs blow
In the wood ;

Where the creek is flowing deep
And the turtles lie asleep
In the stream,

That's the place I want to go
When the buds of summer blow,
Sweet and fair.

When the creek will swiftly pass
Through the silent river-grass
In the stream,

Stretch itself into a pond
And go racing on beyond
Through the wood,

Dancing ever toward the main,
Past the meadow's waving grain,
Sweet and fair.

(Winter)

The creek is coated thick with ice
Which binds it close as any vice
Stern and cold.

Beneath the silent, frozen glare,
One wonders if the creek is there
Still and cold ;

And in amongst the snow-white hills
The creek is joined by icy rills
Small and cold.

Below the ice-coat, silent passes
The creek, unhindered by the grasses —
Frozen, gone ;

And when it stretches in a pond
All smothered by the winter's bond,
Skaters come

And up and down the pond they glide
On fairy wings from side to side,
Swift and cold.

1918

TO A TOBACCO PIPE

Smouldering thing of man's desire,
Heaped with ruddy coals of fire,
Old and burnt and caked and sweet,
What a joy to prop my feet
Up on some old dingy chair,
Fill you with tobacco rare.
Touch a match and in the gloom
Of a lonely attic room,
See the coals flare up, expire
And the smoke go rising higher
Every time its dusky curls
Leave the bowl in jaunty whirls !
In fancy, smoking, one forgets,
All his claims are laid aside ;
In the dizzy swirl of smoke,
They take form and often yoke
Folly to the truer scene.

Once, my foolish fancy spoke,
Coming clear from out the smoke,
“ Come and go with me to play
Up and yonder far away.”
Then on phantom wings I go,
Gliding thither, to and fro,
Till at length my dreams are o'er —
Ashes scattered on the floor
Show me that my pipe has crept
From my mouth, and as I slept
Dashed itself against the floor,
Broke in twenty bits or more.

Dear old pipe that glows no more,
Broken on the attic floor,
Let me thank you for the time
That I bought you for a dime ;
Though long in fragments you have lain
And never can be whole again,
I love you just the same, old pipe,
Cheapest of the smoker's type !

1918

HOME

It may be a lonely farmhouse
With vines tumbling over the wall —
It may be a lordly mansion,
But it's home to a man after all.

For there the wee mother is waiting,
And there the soft echoes fall,
There the old friends will greet you,
And it's your own home, after all.

It may be a tenement dreary,
The plaster chipped off of the wall,
And no verdant grass round your doorway ;
But it's home just the same, after all.

Where'er you may be, someone's waiting,
Someone is waiting somewhere
In a home palatial or lowly —
Someone's awaiting you there.

1918

DISAPPOINTED

It was off some tropical island where the coral reefs abound
And the deep entangled woodland, — the drowsy, noisy
sound

Of the twang of ukeleles, — where our ship at anchor lay
In the misty light of morning when the sea was still and
gray.

Ten fathoms deep on the ocean — the sun was beginning
to rise

And the birds of the gay-colored plumage were beginning
to open their eyes.

We lay with our anchor still clutching the mud on the
ocean floor,

Longing and waiting for daylight for our journey down
to the shore —

Down to the shore, where the maidens — fair maidens
with flowing hair —

Would be waiting to greet us on landing — would greet us
on landing there.

The dawn was beginning to waken and, at length, through
the calm gray sea

We rowed with an eager longing to be on the land so free.

* * * * *

But the land that we longed for had vanished, so back to
the ship we rowed,

And found that our vision of maidens, whose hair had so
wantonly flowed,

Was only a sailor's vision ; the vessel at anchor, too,

Was merely a landsman's vision which the waking had
swept from our view.

1917

BACK TO FREEDOM

Home to the cottage — home to the mansion,
Home to the city or home to the town,
Back to the mountain — the home in the valley,
Back where the flocks are ranging the down.
Back to old friends, to parents and loved ones,
Back to the ploughshare or pen,
Back to the books and the old family fireside
To live as of yore once again.

We are the victors, the fighters, the freers ;
We offered our lives for a cause that was just.
There are some who won honor and glory
In the love of America's trust ;
Some lie in the soil where they battled,
Or sleep in a grave in the sea ;
But the boys who came back to the fireside
Enjoy the land of the free.

I am glad that I offered my service
To fight for the right o'er the wrong ;
I stood by our flag in the Navy —
No glory to me can belong,
But what care I for the glory
If only the future may see
The flag that was never defeated
Still wave o'er the land of the free ?

1919

BURNS'S COTTAGE

Quaint old cot of vines and rushes, with its welcoming
doorway bare,
Open to the wind and weather and the hot sun's flaming
glare ;

Here the poet wrote his verses, here he tilled his native
soil ;
Here he lived and toiled and suffered, wearied with his
daily toil,

Glad to rest within the cottage when the daily chores were
done —
In the quaint old humble homestead, open to the wind and
sun.

1918

SUMMER-TIME MEMORIES

The birds and the bees are calling
Far across the open fields,
Where all nature, listless, lolling,
All the fruits of summer yields.

And the scented air is beck'ning
To the swelt'ring city-bound,
And the city man is reck'ning
On the flowing river's sound,

As it flows about the meadows
And beneath the fragrant air,
While it gurgles in the shadows
Of the trees and bushes there.

O, it gurgles in a language
All the lazy schoolboys know,
For it calls them to go swimming
Where the stream runs deep and slow !

In the shade and deeper shadows,
Where the woods are still and cool,
Down below the sunlit meadows,
They'll be trooping after school.

Can't you see them swimming, splashing,
Can't you hear their happy calls ?
Here come others wildly dashing
Just above the roaring falls.

1919

WE PARTED BY THE WAYS

Oh, when we parted by the ways
Where dashed the angry sea,
I longed to tarry with you, love —
You were so dear to me.

Now many miles between us lie,
My days are dark and long ;
Yet oft I think in gloomy hours
Upon the sea's dread song.

I see the league-long line of surf,
The mile on mile of sand,
And hear the sea-gulls' crying mock
The wind upon the land.

I see the twilight settling down
Upon the sullen shore ;
I long to watch the seething tide
Rush in and out and roar.

You know the quaint, old-fashioned cots
That tumbled in decay —
The broad expanse of wind-swept moor
We roamed from day to day !

You know the stories often told
About these mansions rare !
We saw the cluttered hearthstone, and
We climbed the littered stair.

We wandered through the silent woods,
And gazed on joys unknown,
And we forgot the ways of life
As seeds of time unsown.

But comes a time in all our lives
When partings must be borne,
Though hard the way and long the stay
And feelings sad, forlorn.

1919

SCENES OF BOYHOOD

Strange faces peer around the darkened ways,
And unknown scenes are stretched before my eyes.
I cannot recognize the ancient sights
I knew in days of youth. Again I dream
Of days gone by, the famous swimming-hole,
The country roads beneath the summer sun,
The dusty streets, the groves, the cooler woods
My boyhood fancy knew in years gone by.

I find old friends I hardly seem to recognize
When I return, so great the change. I hear
The news of people whom I once have known,
Those who are dead, or like myself, have gone
To dwell in distant climes away from friends.
But some day they will all return to see
The changes wrought since they have left the town.

Where stretched in golden fields the waving grain
I found a highway peopled thick with men ;
And all were strange ; the woods we used to roam
Were cut away. Beyond the creek where once
Were rolling hills and cultivated farms
And long, uneven, dusty roads that trailed
Seemingly, into the great beyond
And tumbled over hills till out of sight,
I found the city stretching out to meet
Its thriving, smaller neighbor of the north.

I knew the country miles and miles around
From happy boyhood's vagrant hikes and tramps ;
I've wandered o'er the dusty roads that led
Past nestled farms and valley-hidden towns ;

From some old grass-grown corner of a fence
I've heard all nature singing to the world
Beneath the scorching, blazing summer sun ;
I've heard the meadow lark across the fields
Repeat his song of whistled melody
That floated o'er the boundless stretch of lands
Upon a summer zephyr, fanning it
Until it drifted to the straggly hills
Which flung it back in echoes, broken, still.

But all are gone, and when they disappeared,
My spirit went from there, yet tarried by
The way, as if 'twere loath to leave the spot
Where hallowed days of youth and careless ways
Were passed without a thought of years to come.
I long to lay my soul bare to the heart
Of youth, and dream the dream of yesterdays.

THE DYING FIRE

The dying fire burned low upon the hearth ;
It flickered, glowed and then burned bright and clear,
And died again, as though its life on earth
Were o'er, its worth was gone, and death was near.

The silence, darkness, in that dreary room,
Oppressed my thoughts ; I stared into the fire
And watched the dying flames dispel the gloom,
Until I saw the one, last flame expire.

And when the daylight filled the tiny room,
I saw the ashes scattered o'er the hearth ;
I swept away the ashes and their gloom,
And kindled once again the flames of mirth.

O, living flames ! O, crackling, flying spark !
My life is like the tiny, struggling flame ;
For I am old, my seasoned life is dark,
And days and nights to me are all the same.

All day I sit beside thy welcome light
And think of days gone by and loved ones dead ;
And then when steal the shadows of the night,
I leave thy side and totter to my bed.

I've no regrets ; my time is short
And I await the pleasure of the Lord,
And count myself as drifting, aged ort,
While I await the speaking of the word.

1919

ANOTHER "RAVIN"

Once, upon a midnight bleary, while I pondered weak and
teary,

Over many a quaint and curious friend of long ago,
All at once I grew quite tearless, and at last I grew quite
cheerless

As I heard a ripping, tearing, as a team of horses rearing,
Just a mile or so above me in the sky.

And it set my head a-tangle, for to hear of such a wrangle
Up above me in the heavens, made my head a dizzy swirl —
Made my brain a dizzy whirl.

And I sat there thinking, thinking, all the time my heart
a-shrinking,

For I knew I lacked the courage to explore ;
And three times I upward got me, and three more I down-
ward sot me,
Losing heart, and courage lacking more and more.

But at length I braved the spirits, as I brushed away the
tearlets,

And in despair I started — started up to close the door ;
But the roaring sound abated, and myself I reinstated
In the same old easy chair I'd had before.

" 'Twas an aeroplane," I muttered, and I think I slightly
stuttered —

" Only this, and nothing more."

1919

THE CALL OF ALASKAN TRAILS

I've wandered over the mountains,
I've dug for Alaskan gold,
I've worked in the tropic sunshine,
And mused through the Arctic cold ;
And I've seen strange men and people
And seen strange lands and seas ;
But give me the North — Alaska —
Where the dead wind seems to freeze !

Out where the great land stretches
As far as the eye can see,
And the wind blows fresh from the Circle,
And men, one and all, are free ;
Where the great hills rear to Heaven,
As they did ere the birth of man,
And the great god, Gold, has christened
Alaska since time began.

And the Yukon, the silent river
Which has claimed so great a toll,
Flows on in the summer, ice-freed,
With a murmur within its soul.
Oh, why did I leave it ! I loved it —
This land where the gold god rules,
Where men are proved by their mettle,
Not made by the fettered schools !

There is scurvy and cold and hunger,
There's death at near every turn,

And what you get by your labors
Is every cent that you earn ;
It's the land of the greatest chances,
Dead hopes refired to flame,
In the heart of the luckless "failure"
Who has gone there to make his name.

You must work and fight and battle,
And your hopes may be small or none,
But in the end you will love it —
This land of the Midnight Sun.
You will love it ; it calls you and beckons
To the lonesome ice and snows —
And the wild, cold plains of the Barrens,
And the nights with their lurking foes.

1919

THE OLD SAILOR RETIRED

How oft through the years 'mongst the hills have I
rambled,

And sometimes sat down by swift-flowing streams,
Or wide-spreading elms, with the birds singing gaily,
And let my thoughts drift through the valley of dreams.

I dream of old ships and of faces long absent,
And turn in my memory to scenes I once knew,
While the wind whistles by, in soft echoes recalling
The voices and whispers of skipper and crew.

The streams often sing to me, with gush and with gurgle,
The sweet-sounding notes of some ancient refrain,
That falls on my ear soft as dew in the meadow,
And tinkles as light as a soft-falling rain.

Oh, take me away from this land of e'er-longing !
Oh, let me go back to the life that I know,
On the wild ocean's bosom that bears the ship onward
Where the warm tropic winds through the rigging shall
blow !

Let me taste the salt spray that breaks over the bow-
spirit,
And hear once again the loud thund'ring of sails,
When the ship has hove to and we're dropping the anchor,
And the lee-rails go under in grip of the gales.

When the crew is asleep in the bunks below hatches,
And the wild seas are pounding the decks overhead,
And the beams and the frames are all creaking in con-
cord, —

I long to return to those days that are dead !

I can still see the faces of skipper and seamen
I knew on the cruise in my last sailing-ship, —
There was Hansen, the Swede, with the extra long fore-
head,
And MacDonnell, the Scot, with the scar on his lip ;

And the skipper, old man, was a wonderful master,
Tattooed and grey-bearded, had sailed every sea ;
His muscles were iron, and his voice, like a cannon,
Transmitted his orders from wind'ard to lee ;

And his face looked as hard as the deck where he battled
With storms, and with hurricanes, tempests, and gales ;
But his eyes were, at times, quite as soft as a mother's,
Though he fought with the seas and the half-frozen sails.

Ah, still in the meadows I dream of old shipmates,
And wander adrift in some faraway dream,
Where my thoughts, like the spindrift of wild seas, are
scattered
By wind through the trees, or the gush of a stream !

WOULD YOU CALL THIS AN ESSAY ON TIME ?

My love, dread not the passing of the days ;
The glass of time, the slowly falling sand,
Will count the hours until we meet again
With fond embrace as in the days gone by.
The time will quickly pass. The golden sand
Of Father Time will see the brighter hours.

At this sweet time, there's peace on earth, and men
Have ceased their ruthless turmoil o'er the sea,
And life is sweeter now for those who love.
The spirit of the times decrees that we
Should cast aside our worries and our tears
And join together in a song of mirth.

Our hearts this day are opened to the world
And all mankind are brothers, each to each.

Far may I roam, but, dear, e'er long we'll be
Again enfolded in each other's arms
Until Fate beckons and I heed her call
Once more to journey into distant lands.

And what is time ? The endless lapse of years
That seem to fold away themselves and die
Like ocean wavelets breaking on the sands !
For time is always, never-ending, vast.

So when I leave you, dear, do not forget
That long though separating miles may be,
My thoughts of you are nearer than all else ;
Your spirit still will hold a hallowed place
Deep in my heart that naught can take away.

One thing I ask you, ere I wend my way, —
Think of me, love, as often you and I
Have passed sweet hours alone in solitude,
We twain in ocean places, and in haunts
Where lovers linger, lispings words of love
For no one else to hear, — the secret words
That Cupid taught mankind at birth of time.

1920

BY THE LIGHT OF THE HARVEST MOON

The harvest moon shone clear upon the shore
Of Talahassee Lake, and mountains near
Cast death-like shadows on the waves and through
The changing autumn leaves of gold and brown.
A hush fell o'er the waters. The silver gleam
Strewn by the harvest moon revealed a skiff ;
It gliding slowly toward the further shore
And piloted by unfamiliar hands.

The placid waters parted 'neath the bow
And widened farther o'er the darkened lake
Until they rippled on the whitened banks
In lispig whispers, hushed and low and clear.

At length the unknown boatman came to shore
And pulled the gleaming skiff upon the sand
And knelt in prayer upon the silent beach
To thank his Maker for his wild escape.

No sound disturbed the deadened autumn hush,
No ripple marred the surface of the lake,
Until the unknown traveller's low " Amen "
Disturbed the calm 'round Talahassee Lake.
And then a shot was fired ; the boatman groaned
And sank upon the silver, moonlit sand
In agony of death.

Then through the underbrush and wood there came
Two stalwart men in uniform of guards
Who looked upon the body where it fell,

On those smooth, silent sands, and cursed beneath
Their breath.

“ Wrong man ! ” the first one said, “ My brother ! ”

The moon still shone on Talahassee Lake —
The harvest moon, so clear, so round, so bright ;
And at that hour, some say, she dropped a tear,
Although, perchance, it might have been a cloud
Which dimmed her flushing face in that dread hour.

1920

FAME'S BECKONING

Far-called, Fame beckoned over distant lands
And called me from my home and friends and love
To treasures limitless and fortunes wide
That savored not of atmosphere of love.
I heeded then the call of Fame, prepared
To forego all I held in deepest love,
And started o'er the earth, a wanderer.
I'd seen myself, in dreams, a millionaire,
Possessing yachts, art treasures, and large estates,
Golf-links and tennis-courts and limousines,
A home for every season of the year, —
Large mountain-camps, seaside resorts and farms, —
Oh ! anything my fancy called to mind.
I dreamed not but my life would be
An endless round of mild retirement
When Fame had countersigned my checks at last.
My head had turned, and I lost many friends,
And others said, " You are not yet so rich ;
Don't build your castles in the air so high
Until you have the wherewithal, my friend."
I heeded not their sage advice ; I left
Them all for foreign lands, for riches vast,
The proud fulfillment of my foolish dreams.

I laughed and went my way through foreign lands
And saw strange sights and men and ways and seas ;
But Fame, illusive, seemed as far away
As when she beckoned to me years before.
I suffered much, and labored, labored hard

From rise to set of sun, beneath the broil
Of tropic rays that seemed to scorch my flesh.

One night I stood within the Plaza Cor
And watched the merry crowds throng to and fro.
A dance-hall, not so very far away
Flung out its melodies upon the air,
Like glamored scenes of far-off dreams that still
The home-lured wanderer's palpitating breast.
I stopped as one entranced to hear the strains
Playing some long-forgotten waltz we knew
At home, — some war-song, or a song of love, perhaps !
And there, ah, yes ! — the name ? I'd quite forgot !
But, no, I must remember — “ Tipperary ” ?
No, it was something else that met its fame
Since peace was signed — Oh, “ Dear Old Pal of Mine ” !
And how I thrilled to hear those notes again !
The words ran through my mind once more, and I
Recalled how we had sung that song so long ago
Out underneath the trees that summer eve,
And how we talked of love, as lovers do, —
And here am I a wage-slave, far away
In tropic lands where Fame had beckoned me
And then deserted like a trailing thread
Of smoke that vanishes for aye away.
My heart had never yearned for home before
That night, and then I longed and prayed for home ;
But Fate had caught me in its seething tide —
A maelstrom vast of turbulence and woe,
Until I lacked the manhood to return,
Since I had boasted so of future wealth.
Oh, why had I not heeded friends' advice
And waited till I'd filled my purse with gold
And seen Fame writing checks for me galore !
I'd cast aside my friends, position, love,

For gold, that cursed lure that makes us all
Repent of deeds and words. No love was mine,
Nor hope. I had to labor 'neath the lash
Of Fame and satisfy Ambition's wants —
An outcast hulk to pass my days in toil.

The streets were now deserted save for men
Who sought a shelter from the air of night,
Or who had been belated in the day ;
And all went skulking in the gloomy shade
Like rats ; and when I passed, they turned their face
Away, as if ashamed of being recognized.
I hurried to my gloomy shelter — “ Home ”
I called it, in my tongue — 'twas “ casa ” there —
A lonely casa — home, indeed ! — For me
It meant a bed, a place to sleep and eat,
And nothing more — no love, no friends — no HOME !

1920

A SAILOR'S THOUGHT

I've a long, hard trick at the wheel to-night ;
But the sea is calm and the wind is light,
And the moon shines over the rolling tide
With silvery gleams on either side
Of the crested bow as she cuts the sea
And tosses the spindrift, careless, free.
No sound I hear but the swishing swish
Of the crested sea with its spume and foam —
But deep in my very soul I wish
That once again I could be at home.

1920

A DREAM OF SUMMER

The snow was heaped in drifts around
The barn and house and frozen ground ;
The trackless drifts and trackless lane
And thickly coated window pane
And silence, stillness of the place
Where showed no life, nor well-known face,
Seemed all unlike to days of yore,
When welcomed us at every door
Familiar odors of the farm
That lent to Fancy, Fancy's charm
Of homeliness, and stately mien
Of ancient homesteads, and the scene
Of winter sheeting with its snow —
The place we loved so long ago,
Which stands deserted in the snows
Of winter. Then our memory shows
The gleaming fields a frozen glare,
The buildings all wind-swept and bare ;
No well-known sounds to greet my ears,
As there had been in other years —
The moaning of the cedar trees,
The music of the summer breeze,
The meadow-lark's low, whimpering call,
The cricket's chirp from spring to fall,
The music made by summer elves
Have each the music of themselves ;
The lowing of belated herds,
The warbling of the homing birds

At evening, when the close of day
Is rich with odors of the hay, —
These wheeling birds in homeward flight
All heralding approach of night.
I linger in the scented air
And breathe nocturnal perfume there —
But cold winds blow the fleeting snow
Before it, crushing foe on foe.
The Northern armies once again
Have settled on the world of men ;
The old homestead we knew of old
Is quite deserted, barren, cold,
And wintry winds and drifting snow
Have mustered up from long ago, —
Like some old memories of the past —
My dreams of yore which now, at last,
Are realized ; and Memory's beckoning
Gives me chance for solemn reckoning ;
I wander through the hidden maze
Till I come to the hazy Faraways.
There let me sleep the sleep of rest, —
The sleep the Faraways have blest.

THE MUSE

A Muse came into my room one night
And swept the dust from my idle plume,
And winked at me with his eye so bright
And then skipped merrily out of the room.
I heard him tripping adown the stair
Treading so lightly on fairy feet,
And my thoughts went out in the darkness there,
Out of the house to the lighted street.

My fancy led me away, away
On golden wings to a land afar,
Where Time is always an endless day
And things are not as they seem they are.
And I saw the quaint little fairies there,
Queer little fairies, inquisitive folk,
With drooping lashes and golden hair,
Who never smiled and who rarely spoke.

And there was the Muse that had lured me on
Into this land of weirdest things —
Into this land of endless dawn
On mysterious fancy's golden wings.
I followed the Muse through a thousand halls,
Down through many a winding way,
Till I heard the low, far distant calls
Of my footsteps echoing far away.

I sought my Muse in the day's broad gleam,
Flitting through many a wide domain

And he lured me on as in a mystic dream
Hither and thither and yon again.
I stabbed my pen in the ink, and wrought
Such verses as never again I may ;
I had found my Muse, though for long I sought
Until the night had turned to day.

And I gloated over the poem then
Like some poor wanderer sheltered by home
Who has wandered far from the haunts of men
And then turned back, no more to roam.
And then I thought — oh, a cursed thought ! —
And tore the sheet in a thousand bits,
For I had reasoned, the verse I wrought
Was merely one of the Muse's fits.

1920

MEMORIES

A passing whiff of dying autumn leaves,
A little word, or thought, or sigh,
Or some remark, made sometime, unawares,
Calls memories of days gone by.

And living coals on hearthstones oft portray
The living pageant of the years ;
Fond memories of days gone by arise,
With all their doubts and hopes and fears.

And some old letter, worn with age and tears,
Brings all to light that once had been ;
Youthful romance, obscured by passing years,
And all — one changing, shifting scene.

1920

THE HOME CALL

I stand on the distant, sun-beat shore,
Where the winds blow chill and the waves are cold,
And gaze away through the mists so grey
That are old as the world is old,

And I long for the shore that is far away,
For my home with its sunlit air,
Where the warm winds blow ; and I long to go
Back to my home and the dear ones there.

But the trail still calls in its own hard way —
Oh! I know its persistent cry !
Yet there's naught so kind as a home sublime,
To beckon, to soothe, to sanctify.

1920

MALCONTENTMENT

I lie in the shade of the hemlocks, and dream of the days
gone by,
And the wind whispers low in the tree-tops, a murmuring,
lispig sigh,
That carries my wearied fancies from the realm of reality,
Far from the haunts of mortals, over a wide, wide sea.

The sun sinks low in the heavens, and the purple glories
glow,
And the far-cast twilight shadows are drifting to and fro,
As the south wind rocks the tree-tops, like a hand unseen,
unknown,
While I lie in the shade of the hemlocks and dream of the
past alone.

I dream of my fancied ambitions, my home and all that it
means,
My friends and my loved ones and sweetheart, and boy-
hood's familiar scenes ;
And the stoop in my back and my footsteps and my cal-
loused hands will tell
How I waited and moiled and suffered and lived in the jaws
of hell.

Far, far away in the mountains, where the weary, weird
shadows call,
And voices are low and pathetic, I hear, surging over it all,

My cherished desires and ambitions of making my dreams
come true,
How they lured me on with their splendor, my hopes
springing ever anew.

Ah ! they lured me on and they held me, so I'll dig for my-
self a grave
High up on the peak of some mountain. "Here lie the
bones of a slave,"
I'll chip on the face of my tombstone, and the world will
not know or care
Whether I joyed or suffered, whither I came or fare.

1920

THIRTY HUSKY DARKIES

Thirty husky darkies went meandering down the street,
Fifteen smiling features and fifteen frowning faces —
Thirty husky darkies that I wouldn't care to meet,
For they had designs of murder in some melancholy places.

Where the street lights cast a glimmer I could see a glint
of steel,
And could hear the rasping thunder of their thirty tam-
bourines,
Thirty glints of metal that I wouldn't care to feel,
All they needed to complete things was a bunch of drunk
marines.

Of a sudden they grew quiet and with careful step and
slow,
They gathered on a corner in the shadow of a wall ;
Their gaiety subsided, as they whispered soft and low,
“ We will get him for his money, we will get him one and
all.”

The sky was cast with shadows, and a wind, high-pitched
and cold,
Was beating rain before it through the streets and in the
town ;
The streets were quite deserted but for this black band so
bold
Who were waiting there in silence grim to strike their vic-
tim down.

They heard his footsteps coming from behind a ruined
house ;

But the steps were not so lively as a sober man's might
be.

“ Good night ! ” one darky muttered, “ do we dare to
kill a souse ? ”

“ What you scared of ? ” asked another, “ when he comes,
just wait and see ! ”

But he passed by unmolested and his soul was none the
wiser

That the thirty wicked darkies who were waiting there to
kill,

Were sizing up his liver with the meanness of the Kaiser,
There behind the looming shadows of the town so dark
and still.

Some looked to the heavens and whispered in their sav-
age tongue

(Not a prayer, I guess), and wondered if the storm would
ever break.

The wind had sunk into a moan and everything seemed
wrong,

And some began to wonder if the murder was a fake.

At length the lights grew dimmer, with a final flicker
died,

And the shadows grew the deeper, and no passer-by they
saw ;

And the wind was howling, roaring like a maddened bull
untied.

“ We were wrong, ” the darkies muttered, “ some place
there is a flaw. ”

The rain beat down in torrents and the sea began to roar,
And all was black and blacker than the bottom of the sea ;
But the sun came out at daybreak, and upon the sandy
shore,
Lay the corpses of the darkies looking brazenly at me.

1920

IN THE FALL

We parted when the withered leaves
Were scattered over ridge and glen,
With tender words and sweet farewells,
Not knowing when we'd meet again.

Once more the summer-time has come
And I am still away, my friend, —
Forget me not, I beg of you,
As o'er strange lands my way I wend.

I know a welcome's waiting me,
I almost see your face again,
Smiling, laughing, greeting me
Like sunshine after misty rain.

Oh, when shall we two meet again !
The years are long, the way is steep,
The day is long, the night is dark,
But still my vigil I must keep.

Perchance the hand of Fate may yield
And bring us face to face again
Ere Autumn leaves begin to fly
Or snow gives place to gentle rain.

What say you ? Do you think we've changed
Since parting on that autumn day ?
Oh think, my friend, how glad we'll be
When I come down the Homeward Way !

1920

SATISFACTION

The autumn woods were changing shade,
All silent, still, and lonely ;
We heard the autumn zephyrs steal
Across Lake Tannahonely.
We heard the gushing of a rill
Come splashing through the valley
From some far mountain-top wherefrom
It made its sudden sally.

When twilight fell upon the woods,
And stars came out and danced there,
We sat around our glowing fire,
Enraptured and entranced there.
This night, to us, was one sweet bliss, —
The end of toil and sorrow ;
We never thought about the past
Or what might bring the morrow.

We stood on Tannahonely's shore
And watched the red sun setting,
Each wrapped in Nature's love and charm
And city cares forgetting.
The great sun sank behind the hills
And flashed its autumn splendors
Upon the changing, amber leaves
Like camp-fires' dying embers.

Thus passed our day of solitude, —
The far-stretched world so lonely

Cried up to us, as on the beach,
We sat that night, and only
Mused and dreamed until the gloom
Of night-time fell around us ;
We had no thoughts to call us back,
No problems to confound us.

1920

THE PATH

The twilight shadows fell around
The country plain, upon whose breast
I strolled that summer's eve at dusk,
When Nature all the world caressed.

I wandered listless through the glen,
Beneath the trees' far-jetted shade,
Whose branches formed a towering arch
And whispered when the stray winds played ;

While at my feet, in tangled growth,
A tiny path crept, stealthy, bare,
And disappeared within the gloom
To lead the wanderer elsewhere.

To wondrous realms, to kingdoms vast
And unknown countries to explore,
It beckoned, pleaded, lured me on
To see the lands I knew of yore.

I entered Nature's hallowed realm
And breathed the scented evening air
Enriched with fragrance of the flowers,
Which bloomed in sweet abundance there.

The dusk ! the silence over all,
The woods with twilit sky above,
Endeared my very life to this —
This hallowed nest of Nature's love.

The path trailed on and rambled far
Beside a lake, upon whose face
There played the shadows of the pines
That guarded e'er the charming place.

The waters rippled on the shore,
Where scarce a human foot had strayed,
And murmured, lispings, dying there,
Content, their secrets unbetrayed.

With many a turn and writhe and twist,
I came at length upon a home
Where no one lived, — an empty house, —
Deserted, empty, and alone.

I saw where old decay had crept —
The work of Time whose slow, strong hand
Had razed the home of better days,
And left it stranded on the sand.

“ Ah, well,” I thought, “ how much akin
Our fortunes are — how all for naught
We journey to a future end —
How different life than we had thought ! ”

For I'd pursued this calling path
And come upon a ruined heap.
Perchance, like this, my bones may rest
In peaceful solitude asleep.

DESERTED FARMHOUSE

Beside the dashing, writhing, roaring ocean
On lonely islands of the sea,
I saw deserted, old and bare, a farmhouse
That harbored wond'rous tales for me.

The wandering sea breeze o'er the island straggled
Limply through the open door,
And scattered long-forgotten dust of ages
Far out across the distant moor.

No lazy smoke curled from the tumbling chimney,
No housewife sang about her chores,
No children's laughter echoed through the cottage,
No locks restrained the time-worn doors.

In summer, silent zephyrs hover near it
And cool the stagnant breath inside ;
In winter, snow-falls fly and drift around it
Like scattered spindrift from the tide.

Two windows, looking o'er the blasty ocean,
Admit the cold and damp sea-gales,
Like some dead ghost of long departed ages
Whose silence mocks our noisy hails.

Inside the windswept house, so long deserted,
We saw the scenes of chaos scattered o'er,
And hoarded treasures there had been forgotten —
Famed books and art of classic lore.

And long throughout the day I sat and wondered
Upon the treasures gathered there —
Forgotten, yes, the owners dead and buried —
To whom belonged these treasures rare.

They slipped away as silently as evening
Fell on that long deserted isle,
And vanished — ne'er again to turn and cherish
With parting look and lingering smile.

1920

WHEN EVENING SHADOWS FALL

At daylight's end, when earth has gone to rest,
 Into our hearts for just a little while,
There steals the solemn sweetness of things blest —
 Forgotten thoughts that beckon and that smile.

Through Memory's lanes we wander down the ways
 Where cool sea-breezes fanned the stagnant air,
And once again we joy to stand and gaze
 Upon the golden sweetness we knew there.

Again we see the ancient, tumbled cot
 That harbors treasures of the storied past
Of wearied souls who fled the humble spot
 For spirit realms away, unending, vast.

Sweet solitude in these deserted climes
 Was ours, and after dusk had filled the room
Of this old house — the theme of many rhymes —
 We sat and talked within the sultry gloom.

We spoke of many people gone from here
 Whom we had never known, but by their books
Which they had left for many a lonely year
 To gather dust in these old, haunted nooks.

Some treasured volumes in the dust we found
And kept them all as memories of old
For days to come. We held as sacred ground
This spot of lovers' secrets all untold.

And e'er again we left the shaded place,
A cool sea-breeze had sprung across the land ;
For dusk, I could not see my sweetheart's face,
But whispered gently as I took her hand.

I whispered thoughts that only she could know
And understand, and in my heart there burned
A deepest love. Then we arose to go
And to the mainland then our steps we turned.

Can you recall those days as well as I,
While thinking not of time or fortune then,
We banished thoughts of care or worried sigh
And played as thoughtless children once again ?

Can you recall the sunsets o'er the Isle
Which harbored all those tales for you and me —
My parting look and one, long ling'ring smile,
The last, low moaning of the autumn sea ?

All, all are gone ; but, dear, from out the past
One dream is realized — by far the best —
And one which through the hoary years shall last
Until God calls us to our final rest.

So, Sweetheart, let us dream of days to come,
Of fortunes to be made in other climes,
Of long dead friends whose silent deeds are done —
Who breathe their presence in these passing rhymes.

YOUTH IS SWEET

In the golden years of our lovers' dream
Where Love holds unbounded sway,
Our life is sweet and youth is rare —
For it lingers only a day !
And in old age, it is sweet to con
The days that are dead and gone,
As we twain sit by the glowing fire —
We twain in the world alone.

1921

AN OLD-FASHIONED GARDEN IN WILDWOOD

There's an old-fashioned garden in Wildwood,
Where the roses in sweet clusters cling, —
And this garden I knew in my childhood, —
Where the wild robins flutter and sing.

And down in a musty old corner,
Where in autumn the dead leaves fall,
A treasure was buried — a treasure,
In the musty old nook in the wall.

Over beds full of poppies, of daisies,
And rambling vines of decay,
The wandering and overgrown foliage
Trails on through night and through day.

And the breezes blow over the garden,
Sweet laden with odors of musk,
And I breathe in the rich-scented breezes
As I stand in the garden at dusk.

And the stars in the heavens a-twinkle,
Look down on the earth below,
And I know that they look at this garden —
This garden I loved long ago.

Ten years ago in this garden,
At midnight one summer's eve,
My sweetheart and I went trysting
And when we arose to leave,

She dropped a wee sprig of cherry
And it fell by the garden wall
In the musty old fungus-grown corner,
Where the night fairies heeded its fall.

Oh, the years have been heavy and lonesome,
The garden neglected and bare ;
But I found the wee sprig of the cherry
In the musty old corner there.

And my thoughts ever turn to the garden,
Though miles from this shore do I roam, —
To that tangled old garden in Wildwood,
In the land that I knew as my home.

1920

YESTERNIGHT

Oh ! Yesternight what wondrous bliss was mine !
The soft sea-waves lapp'd o'er the silent sands
And moonlight flickered silver, dancing there
Upon the waters, kissed by summer winds.
The zephyr flung against my face your hair —
Your hair — and thrilled me — Oh ! I cannot say !
My thoughts were lingering far in other lands
In lovers' Dreamland, listless, far away.
I talked, you listened to my witching tales
As, when a mariner, I sailed the seas
And told you of the storms and wrecks I'd seen.
Love, can that night serene, that peaceful eve,
Slip from our minds as on the beach we sat
And heard the nightwinds hum their songs of love ?

1921

SOMEDAY

In the future, far withdrawn,
Comes a Someday, far away,
And with eager steps, the dawn
Comes to us of that Someday.

Then we planned — how many things ?
Planned to read our unread books,
Planned to loose the tangled brushwood
Barring deep, sequestered nooks.

* * * * *

Time has fled ; its trailing past
Leaves us with our deeds undone,
Hoping, waiting to the last
For the days that never come.

1921

THE TRAIL OF YESTERDAY

Back down the trail of Yesterday —
That long, long trail we used to know —
I wandered, lost in thought, one day,
And paused, for things had altered so.

Old things had gone, and new ones there
The known and treasured had replaced,
And Time's firm hand, with whip and snare
All links of Memory had effaced.

Ah, there were some at eventide
Had trod this very path with me —
In yesteryears went side by side
As children laughing, fancy-free.

I looked and there across the way,
I saw the children, boisterous, loud,
Skip down the trail of Yesterday —
And dreamed that I was of the crowd.

How down each winding country lane
I'd skipped with truant comrades, then —
How friendships totter, waver, wane,
And never flicker bright again !

I strolled the trail of Yesterday
And thought how naught my fortunes were,
How boyhood dreams had died away
Like scattered smoke upon the air ;

For in my boyhood days I'd planned
To be a poet famed afar,
To have my works in every land —
But see how frail our fancies are !

1921

POWERLESS WORDS

If words were gold, and I could fling them far
And feel the golden light of every star —
 That shines serene upon you through mine eyes —
 A holy shrine at which I worship you,
Then I should cherish you above the mortal world,
 A being 'rayed in all-celestial robes.
But words are powerless and gold is filth —
 Vain words cannot release my prisoned thoughts
And give them access to the limpid air
Which hangs above me listless everywhere.
They struggle to be free, but all in vain —
They struggle, but words choke them back again,
And I am powerless, for I cannot breathe
The thoughts that fill my tortured mind to-day.

1921

THE SAILOR'S FAREWELL

Sleep, sweet, under the golden stars —
The night-wind fans thy breast,
And the soft, low moan of the lonesome sea
Sings thee the song that thou lovest best.

Sleep, sweet, under the golden stars —
The moonlight plays, we know,
Over the ocean and far away
In the distant land where the true loves go.

Sleep, sweet, under the golden stars —
My ship must sail at dawn,
In the mellow light of the summer morn,
To lands afar — and on and on.

Sleep, sweet, under the golden stars —
Thou must not weep for me ;
No peril shall come on my voyage, love,
And I shall ever be thinking of thee.

Sleep, sweet, under the fading stars,
And list to the night-wind's song ;
'Tis wailing a fond adieu to me,
For well it knows that my journey's long.

1921

ROMANCE OF A SHIPWRECK

Old hulk that through the years has lain
Half buried in these shifting, coast-wise sands,
What tales have you for me of buccaneers,
Of untold deeds upon the stormy main,
Of blood upon your broad, embattled decks,
Of Crusoes cast upon deserted isles to die,
Of storms, of gales, and this, your final resting place —
What brought you here to these deserted climes ?
All semblance of your noble past is gone,
Your masts are long-decayed in other realms,
Your timbers, rotting, show your empty hold
Where now green tides emerge and writhe in scorn.
Perchance, within your hold in former years,
You carried slaves, or pirates' pilfered gold !
Who knows what wealth was yours — what tales you
bear !

Oh ! speak, and tell me tales of buccaneers,
Your fights with storm and hurricane and gales.
Speak, speak, you gaunt old relic of the main,
And tell your tales of valor and of woe !

You young romantic pigmy of the land —
Your dreams of valor and of buccaneers
You read in story-books for childish minds to grasp.
The days of buccaneers are passed, no blood is shed
In unpraised deeds upon the reeling decks ;
Few men are cast upon deserted isles to die.

But storms and hurricanes will never cease ;
They send the strongest ships with all their hands
Into " The Port of Missing Ships," of which,
No doubt in some old story-book you've read.
The hulks of vessels tossed upon the beach,
Exposed to view, lie whitening in the wind
And sun, and battered by the storms and tides,
Decay ; and young romantic people think,
As you have done, that every ship must bear
A tale that startles youth and binds with awe.
Now, you may dream your dreams about the sea
And battered hulk along some barren shore ;
But listen, those who have a tale to tell
Lie buried deep beneath the ocean's tides.
But I — my life was unromantic, short,
And dull. My owners called me " That old tub,"
And talked about " insurance," and, forsooth,
All things were commonplace — no blood —
No buccaneers, no deeds of valor, slaves,
Nor naught of which you dream. Instead, I was
A plain old lumber schooner ; yet sometimes
I carried coal, or other coastwise goods.
A hulk am I, what worth I had is gone,
Unless, perchance, I fill some glowing hearth
With colors rich for wondering eyes to see,
Who, wrapped in romance like yourself, will talk
Of thrilling deeds and buccaneers and gold.

THE OLD-FASHIONED DRESSES MY GRAND- MOTHER WORE

I saw in a picture the old-fashioned dresses,
The old-fashioned dresses my grandmother wore,
With hoops and with ruffles of gossamer essence
And long trains behind that trailed on the floor.

Ah ! these were romantic, these dresses bewitching,
With laces and spangles like queens used to wear ;
The richest of laces and finest embroidery
Which clung to the gowns like clouds in the air.

Grandmother's romances, in days long departed,
Were empty of " movies " and " musical shows " ;
But her life was romantic and wholesome and worthy,
With love in the soul where the truest love blows.

How many romances these dresses have witnessed !
How many proposals — how many in vain ! —
How many sad thoughts have they hidden forever
Down deep in their souls from the wince of the pain !

Oh, the old-fashioned dresses ! the secrets they carry
In wonderful mem'ry of days that are dead,
Lie folded away in the trunks in the attic,
Or bloom on the faded old tintypes, instead.

1921

OLD SHOES

At first they pinched, these threadbare shoes of mine,
Yet shone with new shoes' dazzling sheen ;
And when I bought them they were number nine,
But now they might well be thirteen.

Full many miles my weary feet have trod
In these old shoes through winter's sleet,
And autumn's mud, o'er springtime's rain-drenched sod,
Through summer's dust in lane and street.

I often shined them, for good pals they've been ;
They well deserved my humble care —
They seemed to me more than the dearest kin,
For they went with me everywhere.

And now, old shoes, I bid you fond adieu !
You've served your purpose well, indeed —
I dream about the time when you were new ;
How well you served me when in need.

Your tongues will tell no idle tales, I know ;
Your soles have gone to other climes
To be devoured by demons down below
And vanish — like these swiftly passing rhymes.

1921

COTTAGE BY THE MOORS

When the heat of the day has settled
In the calm of the night's repose,
And the air is sullen and silent
And the wayward night-wind blows ;
When the stars are hid, and the moonlight
Is palled by the storm-blackened shroud,
I joy to inhale the perfume
That is borne by the far storm-cloud.

And I sit in the door of my cottage
That looks out over the moor —
The long, lonely patch of heather,
That waste at my cottage door —
And the far-off peals of thunder
Are wafted down to my ear,
And the distant flashes of lightning
Are playing far and near.

The wind lisps low 'round the cottage —
As low as a zephyr's ghost —
But it calls its legions together
In attack on the evil host,
For the winds are the storm-god's trumpets,
And the lightning his evil fire,
And the thunder his wild artillery,
Who respond to the summons dire.

The rains, in their sweeping columns,
Are the soldiers who fight and die.

You've seen their legions attacking
As they march from the rain-filled sky ?
How they come in orderly fashion —
Come sweeping across the moors,
Driving away the sun-gods
And flooding all out-of-doors !

Afar away in the heavens
The lingering flashes flare —
A soft, sweet light in the darkness
O'er the lonely moor out there !
Ah ! I love it — it fills me with wonder —
These moors and their drenching rains ;
And I love to sit of an evening
And hear them plashing the panes.

My cottage is warm and cozy
And cheerful and bright within,
And I worry naught of the tempest
With its rain and its angry wind.
It awes me, enthralls me, and holds me —
'Tis truly a God-send, I know,
And I love to watch when the storm-clouds
Gather, and wild winds blow.

THE WORKERS

When the long, long shift is over,
And the weary men come down,
Rough, uncouth, and unshaven,
Into the nestling town,
I watch the grim procession
As they drag themselves to rest.
They've earned it, God knows they've earned it,
For these men deserve it best.

For they are the toilers, the workers,
Who are making the dreams come true ;
They are the ones who suffer,
They are the ones who *do*.
Brains lay plans for the workers
Who toil in the sweat and the grime
Till the long, long shift is over
And they know not the pulse of time.

1921

THE FACTORY HAND

Back to the factory's bustle, back to the gloom and
smoke,
Kneeling beneath the burden of the wage-slave's heavy
yoke ;
Toiling and moiling and grinding through the long day's
heavy tread,
Stumbling home in the evening dog-tired, and as good as
dead.

The rustle and clank of machinery, the fire and the furnace
glare
Burn in my ears in the daytime and at night I dream of
the glare —
Toiling onward and ever, physical strength without
brains,
Striving for naught in the conflict — a hulk is all that re-
mains.

I had feasted and laughed and frolicked, and the wild seas
claimed my soul,
My thoughts were just for the present and I followed no
settled goal.
But ah ! I have seen the turmoil, the hate, and the love and
strife
And now I have learned the riches that one may wring
out of life.

It is I who will toil and labor ; it is I who will find the
way ;

It is I who will find ambition — the will to conquer, to
slay.

On, in the wide world onward — new prizes to fight for,
to win,

New worlds to conquer and cherish, new hopes 'mid the
toil and din.

1921

AU REVOIR

Outside I wore a smile, but in my soul
Were tears, sad tears, that rose and surged and fell
Into the deep oblivion of worlds
Unknown, unseen, and dark, and far away.
I hardly dared to speak of love to you
Because I feared for unknown things ; but, dear,
At last I spoke, and now I leave, to go
To other climes to make my fortunes there.
Each day that I'm away, within my thoughts
A sacred corner shall be set apart
For you, and you alone, and every day
I'll think of you. Your soul will fill my dreams.
Believe these lines I pray you, oh beloved —
Ere many days have flown into the past
We'll meet again as better, older friends.

1921

THROUGH RUINED HALLS

From far away the long-lost echo falls
In shaded memory upon my ear ;
Through long days' toil in sweat and grime
Forgotten words arise and then expire.
The ghosts of those I once had known long years
Ago, run, wild, unbridled through the halls
Of memory, as echoes through a ruined castle.
They pause, then dart upon my mind again
As dreams, long dead within the mouldering past.
Oh come, my idol of these dreams ! For long
I've waited for thee in these ruined halls.
Oh come, and fill these ruins with thy voice
As thou were wont to do those years before.

1921



FADED SMILES

The green has faded from the trees,
The smiles that played upon her lips
Have faded as the autumn leaves ;
And this my sodden memory grips.

I see her smile, like summer skies,
Her golden hair in summer's breeze,
Sweet memory makes old thoughts arise —
The golden memory of these.

The autumn sun has set once more
'Mong silent ghosts of smiling lips.
These stalk the unseen, distant shore
Which once the summer sun had kissed.

1921

THE LURING MUSE

My muse deserted me — to distant lands
The little unknown Something fled away.
In vain I plied my plume — in vain I scratched
And tore up leaf on leaf and ream on ream
Of costly parchment pad ; but nothing came —
Of inspiration I was sore bereft,
Until, on happy thought, I lit my pipe
And saw the grey smoke-clouds arise —
And there, within the dizzy swirl, I saw
The wavering beckon of an ancient muse ;
And then, on phantom wings, I followed him
For many leagues into the hopeless maze
Of poems to be born from out my hand.
My plume ran free, unguided o'er the page,
And traced vague lines unto an end,
As, in a dream, the dreamer neither knows nor cares
Whereto his wandering thoughts shall lead.
But in the end, I woke, and found my pipe,
In broken fragments, lying on the floor,
The ashes dead and cold, my daydream flown,
And just the ghost of some forgotten muse
Still hov'ring near my fancy-stricken form.

1921

LOVE IN SUMMER

The wind sighed low in the treetops, and the night birds
chirruped by,
Calling their mates in the darkness — a plaintive and
haunting cry
Which lingered for long in the twilight, then dwindled and
died away,
And the echo was lost in the darkness as the moon before
the day.

The summer night's air was silent as the hush o'er a
sleeping child,
And the soft, sweet voice of my loved one spoke to me,
gentle and mild —
Like a tender caress to a dying man, for my soul was
wracked with pain,
For the long, long summer was dying and the fall was
coming again.

Alas, how one's dreams are vanquished, for the dead leaves
whisper, call,
Mocking at Love forsaken in the eerie, low lisp of fall,
For all through the summer's rare sweetness, Love leads
us myriad miles —
Nature and Life are teeming with Love, sweet Love and its
snaring wiles.

1921

CHERCHEZ LE VIN

In vain I searched old cellars' nooks for wine
Which, thought I, must be there concealed ;
But only dusty cobwebs greeted me
In my strange quest — aye, strange, indeed,
For I am not a drinking man, you know,
But just a harmless forcer of dry laws.

1921

TO DYING SUMMER

Tired old Summer folds his arms
And lisps the old refrain once more ;
And there falls o'er towns and farms
Sweet silence as in days of yore.

Silence, save the bleating calf
Who loses in the evening glow
Its kind mother, and the laugh
Of children romping to and fro.

From his death-bed Summer sees
The noble deeds that he has done,
And with memory of these
He lets the days slip one by one—

Each and all, Fall chills creep in
And crowd the dying summer out.
His weakened form, his drooping chin
Foretell his age beyond a doubt.

As he strolls along the way
And walks so feebly through his age,
Autumn sprites greet him and say,
“ Art growing old, thou summer sage ! ”

On the palsied, broken brow
All life is dead ; the leaves, aged, gone,
Flutter, wither on the bough,
Where once in sun-kissed green they shone.

1921

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