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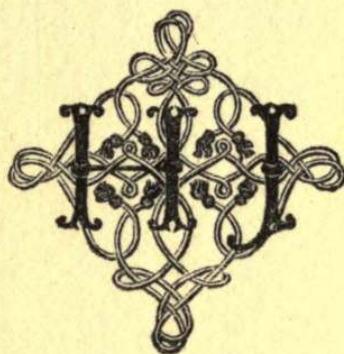
SONGS  
OF  
THE  
FIELDS





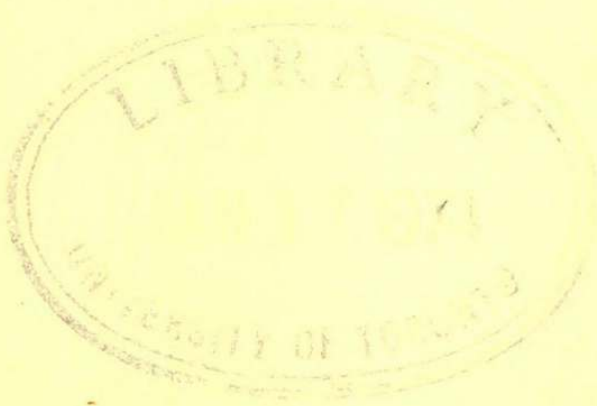
# SONGS OF THE FIELDS

BY  
FRANCIS LEDWIDGE  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY LORD DUNSANY



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TO  
MY MOTHER  
THE FIRST SINGER I KNEW



SEVERAL of the poems in the following pages appeared originally in *The Saturday Review* and *The English Review*, and the author's thanks are due to the editors for permission to include them in this volume.

## INTRODUCTION

By LORD DUNSANY

**I**F one who looked from a tower for a new star, watching for years the same part of the sky, suddenly saw it (quite by chance while thinking of other things), and knew it for the star for which he had hoped, how many millions of men would never care ?

And the star might blaze over deserts and forests and seas, cheering lost wanderers in desolate lands, or guiding dangerous quests ; millions would never know it.

And a poet is no more than a star.

If one has arisen where I have so long looked for one, amongst the Irish peasants, it can be little more than a secret that I shall share with those who read this book because they care for poetry.

I have looked for a poet amongst the Irish peasants because it seemed to me that almost only amongst them there was in daily use a



diction worthy of poetry, as well as an imagination capable of dealing with the great and simple things that are a poet's wares. Their thoughts are in the spring-time, and all their metaphors fresh: in London no one makes metaphors any more, but daily speech is strewn thickly with dead ones that their users should write upon paper and give to their gardeners to burn.

In this same London, two years ago, where I was wasting June, I received a letter one day from Mr. Ledwidge and a very old copy-book. The letter asked whether there was any good in the verses that filled the copy-book, the produce apparently of four or five years. It began with a play in verse that no manager would dream of, there were mistakes in grammar, in spelling of course, and worse—there were such phrases as “'thwart the rolling foam,” “waiting for my true love on the lea,” etc., which are vulgarly considered to be the appurtenances of poetry; but out of these and many similar errors there arose continually, like a mountain sheer out of marshes, that easy fluency of shapely lines which is now so noticeable in all that he writes; that and sudden glimpses of the fields that he seems at times to bring so near to one that one exclaims,



“ Why, that is how Meath looks,” or “ It is just like that along the Boyne in April,” quite taken by surprise by familiar things : for none of us knows, till the poets point them out, how many beautiful things are close about us.

Of pure poetry there are two kinds, that which mirrors the beauty of the world in which our bodies are, and that which builds the more mysterious kingdoms where geography ends and fairyland begins, with gods and heroes at war, and the sirens singing still, and Alph going down to the darkness from Xanadu. Mr. Ledwidge gives us the first kind. When they have read through the profounder poets, and seen the problem plays, and studied all the perplexities that puzzle man in the cities, the small circle of readers that I predict for him will turn to Ledwidge as to a mirror reflecting beautiful fields, as to a very still lake rather on a very cloudless evening.

There is scarcely a smile of Spring or a sigh of Autumn that is not reflected here, scarcely a phase of the large benedictions of Summer ; even of Winter he gives us clear glimpses sometimes, albeit mournfully, remembering Spring.

“ In the red west the twisted moon is low,  
And on the bubbles there are half-lit stars :



Music and twilight : and the deep blue flow  
 Of water : and the watching fire of Mars.  
 The deep fish slipping through the moonlit bars  
 Make death a thing of sweet dreams,—”

What a Summer's evening is here.

And this is a Summer's night in a much longer poem that I have not included in this selection, a summer's night seen by two lovers :

“The large moon rose up queenly as a flower  
 Charmed by some Indian pipes. A hare went by,  
 A snipe above them circled in the sky.”

And elsewhere he writes, giving us the mood and picture of Autumn in a single line :

“And somewhere all the wandering birds have flown.”

With such simple scenes as this the book is full, giving nothing at all to those that look for a “message,” but bringing a feeling of quiet from gleaming Irish evenings, a book to read between the Strand and Piccadilly Circus amidst the thunder and hootings.

To every poet is given the revelation of some living thing so intimate that he speaks, when he speaks of it, as an ambassador speaking for his sovereign ; with Homer it was the heroes, with Ledwidge it is the small birds that sing, but in particular especially the blackbird, whose cause he champions against all other



birds almost with a vehemence such as that with which men discuss whether Mr. ——, M.P., or his friend the Right Honourable —— is really the greater ruffian. This is how he speaks of the blackbird in one of his earliest poems ; he was sixteen when he wrote it, in a grocer's shop in Dublin, dreaming of Slane, where he was born ; and his dreams turned out to be too strong for the grocery business, for he walked home one night, a distance of thirty miles :

“ Above me smokes the little town  
With its whitewashed walls and roofs of brown  
And its octagon spire toned smoothly down  
As the holy minds within.  
And wondrous, impudently sweet,  
Half of him passion, half conceit,  
The blackbird calls adown the street,  
Like the piper of Hamelin.”

Let us not call him the Burns of Ireland, you who may like this book, nor even the Irish John Clare, though he is more like him, for poets are all incomparable (it is only the versifiers that resemble the great ones), but let us know him by his own individual song : he is the poet of the blackbird.

I hope that not too many will be attracted to this book on account of the author being a peasant, lest he come to be praised by the how-



interesting ! school ; for know that neither in any class, nor in any country, nor in any age, shall you predict the footfall of Pegasus, who touches the earth where he pleaseth and is bridled by whom he will.

DUNSANY.

*June, 1914.*

I WROTE this preface in such a different June, that if I sent it out with no addition it would make the book appear to have dropped a long while since out of another world, a world that none of us remembers now, in which there used to be leisure.

Ledwidge came last October into the 5th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, which is in one of the divisions of Kitchener's first army, and soon earned a lance-corporal's stripe.

All his future books lie on the knees of the gods. May They not be the only readers.

Any well-informed spy can probably tell you our movements, so of such things I say nothing.

*June, 1915.*

DUNSANY, *Captain,*  
*5th R. Inniskilling Fusiliers.*



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## TO MY BEST FRIEND

I LOVE the wet-lipped wind that stirs the hedge  
And kisses the bent flowers that drooped for  
rain,

That stirs the poppy on the sun-burned ledge  
And like a swan dies singing, without pain.

The golden bees go buzzing down to stain  
The lilies' frills, and the blue harebell rings,  
And the sweet blackbird in the rainbow  
sings.

Deep in the meadows I would sing a song,  
The shallow brook my tuning-fork, the birds  
My masters ; and the boughs they hop along

Shall mark my time : but there shall be no  
words

For lurking Echo's mock ; an angel herds

Words that I may not know, within, for you,  
Words for the faithful meet, the good and true.



## BEHIND THE CLOSED EYE

I WALK the old frequented ways  
That wind around the tangled braes,  
I live again the sunny days  
Ere I the city knew.

And scenes of old again are born,  
The woodbine lassoing the thorn,  
And drooping Ruth-like in the corn  
The poppies weep the dew.

Above me in their hundred schools  
The magpies bend their young to rules,  
And like an apron full of jewels  
The dewy cobweb swings.



And frisking in the stream below

The troutlets make the circles flow,

And the hungry crane doth watch them grow

As a smoker does his rings.

Above me smokes the little town,

With its whitewashed walls and roofs of brown

And its octagon spire toned smoothly down

As the holy minds within.

And wondrous impudently sweet,

Half of him passion, half conceit,

The blackbird calls adown the street

Like the piper of Hamelin.

I hear him, and I feel the lure

Drawing me back to the homely moor,

I'll go and close the mountains' door

On the city's strife and din.



## BOUND TO THE MAST

WHEN mildly falls the deluge of the grass,  
And meads begin to rise like Noah's flood,  
And o'er the hedgerows flow, and onward pass,  
Dribbling thro' many a wood ;

When hawthorn trees their flags of truce un-  
furl,

And dykes are spitting violets to the breeze ;  
When meadow larks their jocund flight will  
curl

From Earth's to Heaven's leas ;

Ah ! then the poet's dreams are most sublime,  
A-sail on seas that know a heavenly calm,  
And in his song you hear the river's rhyme,



And the first bleat of the lamb.

Then when the summer evenings fall serene,  
Unto the country dance his songs repair,  
And you may meet some maids with angel mien,  
Bright eyes and twilight hair.

When Autumn's crayon tones the green leaves  
sere,

And breezes honed on icebergs hurry past ;  
When meadow-tides have ebbed and woods  
grow drear,  
And bow before the blast ;

When briars make semicircles on the way ;  
When blackbirds hide their flutes and cower  
and die ;

When swollen rivers lose themselves and stray  
Beneath a murky sky ;



Then doth the poet's voice like cuckoo's  
break,

And round his verse the hungry lapwing  
grieves,

And melancholy in his dreary wake

The funeral of the leaves.

Then when the Autumn dies upon the plain,

Wound in the snow alike his right and wrong,

The poet sings,—albeit a sad strain,—

Bound to the Mast of Song.

TO A LINNET IN A CAGE

WHEN Spring is in the fields that stained your  
wing,

And the blue distance is alive with song,

And finny quiets of the gabbling spring

Rock lilies red and long,

At dewy daybreak, I will set you free

In ferny turnings of the woodbine lane,

Where faint-voiced echoes leave and cross in  
glee

The hilly swollen plain.

In draughty houses you forget your tune,

The modulator of the changing hours,



You want the wide air of the moody noon,  
And the slanting evening showers.

So I will loose you, and your song shall fall  
When morn is white upon the dewy pane,  
Across my eyelids, and my soul recall  
From worlds of sleeping pain.

## A TWILIGHT IN MIDDLE MARCH

WITHIN the oak a throb of pigeon wings  
Fell silent, and grey twilight hushed the fold,  
And spiders' hammocks swung on half-oped  
things

That shook like foreigners upon our cold.

A gipsy lit a fire and made a sound

Of moving tins, and from an oblong moon

The river seemed to gush across the ground

To the cracked metre of a marching tune.

And then three syllables of melody

Dropped from a blackbird's flute, and died

apart

Far in the dewy dark. No more but three,



Yet sweeter music never touched a heart  
Neath the blue domes of London. Flute and  
reed,  
Suggesting feelings of the solitude  
When will was all the Delphi I would heed,  
Lost like a wind within a summer wood  
From little knowledge where great sorrows  
brood.

## SPRING

THE dews drip roses on the meadows  
Where the meek daisies dot the sward.  
And Æolus whispers through the shadows,  
“ Behold the handmaid of the Lord ! ”  
The golden news the skylark waketh  
And 'thwart the heavens his flight is curled ;  
Attend ye as the first note breaketh  
And chrism droppeth on the world.

The velvet dusk still haunts the stream  
Where Pan makes music light and gay.  
The mountain mist hath caught a beam  
And slowly weeps itself away.



The young leaf bursts its chrysalis  
And gem-like hangs upon the bough,  
Where the mad throstle sings in bliss  
O'er earth's rejuvenated brow.

## ENVOI

Slowly fall, O golden sands,  
Slowly fall and let me sing,  
Wrapt in the ecstasy of youth,  
The wild delights of Spring.

## DESIRE IN SPRING

I LOVE the cradle songs the mothers sing  
In lonely places when the twilight drops,  
The slow endearing melodies that bring  
Sleep to the weeping lids ; and, when she stops,  
I love the roadside birds upon the tops  
Of dusty hedges in a world of Spring.

And when the sunny rain drips from the edge  
Of midday wind, and meadows lean one way,  
And a long whisper passes thro' the sedge,  
Beside the broken water let me stay,  
While these old airs upon my memory play,  
And silent changes colour up the hedge.



## A RAINY DAY IN APRIL

WHEN the clouds shake their hyssops, and the  
rain

Like holy water falls upon the plain,  
'Tis sweet to gaze upon the springing grain  
And see your harvest born.

And sweet the little breeze of melody,  
The blackbird puffs upon the budding tree,  
While the wild poppy lights upon the lea  
And blazes 'mid the corn.

The skylark soars the freshening shower to  
hail,

And the meek daisy holds aloft her pail,

And Spring all radiant by the wayside pale,  
Sets up her rock and reel.

See how she weaves her mantle fold on fold,  
Hemming the woods and carpeting the wold.  
Her warp is of the green, her woof the gold,  
The spinning world her wheel.

By'n by above the hills a pilgrim moon  
Will rise to light upon the midnight noon,  
But still she plieth to the lonesome tune  
Of the brown meadow rail.

No heavy dreams upon her eyelids weigh,  
Nor do her busy fingers ever stay ;  
She knows a fairy prince is on the way  
To wake a sleeping beauty.



To deck the pathway that his feet must tread,  
To fringe the 'broidery of the roses' bed,  
To show the Summer she but sleeps,—not  
    dead,  
This is her fixed duty.

## ENVOI

To-day while leaving my dear home behind,  
My eyes with salty homesick teardrops blind,  
The rain fell on me sorrowful and kind  
Like angels' tears of pity.

'Twas then I heard the small birds' melodies,  
And saw the poppies' bonfire on the leas,  
As Spring came whispering thro' the leafing  
    trees  
Giving to me my ditty.



## A SONG OF APRIL

THE censer of the eglantine was moved  
By little lane winds, and the watching faces  
Of garden flowerets, which of old she loved,  
Peep shyly outward from their silent places.  
But when the sun arose the flowers grew  
bolder,  
And she will be in white, I thought, and she  
Will have a cuckoo on her either shoulder,  
And woodbine twines and fragrant wings of  
pea.

And I will meet her on the hills of South,  
And I will lead her to a northern water,



My wild one, the sweet beautiful uncouth,  
The eldest maiden of the Winter's daughter.  
And down the rainbows of her noon shall slide  
Lark music, and the little sunbeam people,  
And nomad wings shall fill the river side,  
And ground winds rocking in the lily's steeple.

## THE BROKEN TRYST

THE dropping words of larks, the sweetest  
tongue

That sings between the dusks, tell all of you ;  
The bursting white of Peace is all along  
Wing-ways, and pearly droppings of the dew  
Emberyl the cobwebs' greyness, and the blue  
Of hiding violets, watching for your face,  
Listen for you in every dusky place.

You will not answer when I call your name,  
But in the fog of blossom do you hide  
To change my doubts into a red-faced shame  
By'n by when you are laughing by my side ?



Or will you never come, or have you died,  
And I in anguish have forgotten all ?  
And shall the world now end and the heavens  
fall ?

THOUGHTS AT THE TRYSTING STILE

COME, May, and hang a white flag on each  
thorn,

Make truce with earth and heaven ; the April  
child

Now hides her sulky face deep in the morn  
Of your new flowers by the water wild  
And in the ripples of the rising grass,  
And rushes bent to let the south wind pass  
On with her tumult of swift nomad wings,  
And broken domes of downy dandelion.  
Only in spasms now the blackbird sings.  
The hour is all a-dream.

Nets of woodbine

Throw woven shadows over dreaming flowers,



And dreaming, a bee-luring lily bends  
Its tender bell where blue dyke-water cowers  
Thro' briars, and folded ferns, and gripping  
ends  
Of wild convolvulus.

The lark's sky-way  
Is desolate.

I watch an apple-spray  
Beckon across a wall as if it knew  
I wait the calling of the orchard maid.

Inly I feel that she will come in blue,  
With yellow on her hair, and two curls strayed  
Out of her comb's loose stocks, and I shall  
steal  
Behind and lay my hands upon her eyes,  
"Look not, but be my Psyche!"

And her peal

Of laughter will ring far, and as she tries  
For freedom I will call her names of flowers  
That climb up walls ; then thro' the twilight  
hours

We'll talk about the loves of ancient queens,  
And kisses like wasp-honey, false and sweet,  
And how we are entangled in love's snares  
Like wind-looped flowers.



## EVENING IN MAY

THERE is nought tragic here, tho' night uplifts

A narrow curtain where the footlights burned,

But one long act where Love each bold heart

sifts

And blushes in the dark, but has not spurned

The strong resolve of noon. The maiden's

head

Is brown upon the shoulder of her youth,

Hearts are exchanged, long pent up words are

said,

Blushes burn out at the long tale of truth.

The blackbird blows his yellow flute so strong,

And rolls away the notes in careless glee,

It breaks the rhythm of the thrushes' song,

And puts red shame upon his rivalry.

The yellowhammers on the roof tiles beat

Sweet little dulcimers to broken time,

And here the robin with a heart replete

Has all in one short plagiariséd rhyme.



## AN ATTEMPT AT A CITY SUNSET

(TO J. K. Q.)

THERE was a quiet glory in the sky  
When thro' the gables sank the large red sun,  
And toppling mounts of rugged cloud went by  
Heavy with whiteness, and the moon had won  
Her way above the woods, with her small star  
Behind her like the cuckoo's little mother. . . .  
It was the hour when visions from some far  
Strange Eastern dreams like twilight bats take  
wing  
Out of the ruin of memories.

O brother

Of high song, wand'ring where the Muses fling

Rich gifts as prodigal as winter rain,  
Like stepping-stones within a swollen river  
The hidden words are sounding in my brain,  
Too wild for taming ; and I must for ever  
Think of the hills upon the wilderness,  
And leave the city sunset to your song.  
For there I am a stranger like the trees  
That sigh upon the traffic all day long.



## WAITING

A STRANGE old woman on the wayside sate,  
Looked far away and shook her head and  
sighed.

And when anon, close by, a rusty gate  
Loud on the warm winds cried,  
She lifted up her eyes and said, " You're late."  
Then shook her head and sighed.

And evening found her thus, and night in state  
Walked thro' the starlight, and a heavy tide  
Followed the yellow moon around her wait,  
And morning walked in wide.

She lifted up her eyes and said, " You're late."  
Then shook her head and sighed.



## THE SINGER'S MUSE

I BROUGHT in these to make her kitchen sweet,  
Haw blossoms and the roses of the lane.  
Her heart seemed in her eyes so wild they beat  
With welcome for the boughs of Spring again.  
She never heard of Babylon or Troy,  
She read no book, but once saw Dublin town ;  
Yet she made a poet of her servant boy  
And from Parnassus earned the laurel crown.

If Fame, the Gorgon, turns me into stone  
Upon some city square, let someone place  
Thorn blossoms and lane roses newly blown  
Beside my feet, and underneath them trace :



“ His heart was like a bookful of girls’ song,  
With little loves and mighty Care’s alloy.  
These did he bring his muse, and suffered long,  
Her bashful singer and her servant boy.”

## INAMORATA

THE bees were holding levees in the flowers,  
Do you remember how each puff of wind  
Made every wing a hum? My hand in yours  
Was listening to your heart, but now  
The glory is all faded, and I find  
No more the olden mystery of the hours  
When you were lovely and our hearts would  
bow

Each to the will of each, but one bright day  
Is stretching like an isthmus in a bay  
From the glad years that I have left behind.

I look across the edge of things that were  
And you are lovely in the April ways,



Holy and mute, the sigh of my despair. . . .

I hear once more the linnets' April tune

Beyond the rainbow's warp, as in the days

You brought me facefuls of your smiles to  
share

Some of your new-found wonders. . . . Oh

when soon

I'm wandering the wide seas for other lands,

Sometimes remember me with folded hands,

And keep me happy in your pious prayer.

## THE WIFE OF LLEW

AND Gwydion said to M'ath, when it was  
Spring :

“ Come now and let us make a wife for Llew.”  
And so they broke broad boughs yet moist  
with dew,

And in a shadow made a magic ring :

They took the violet and the meadow-sweet  
To form her pretty face, and for her feet  
They built a mound of daisies on a wing,  
And for her voice they made a linnet sing  
In the wide poppy blowing for her mouth.  
And over all they chanted twenty hours.

And Llew came singing from the azure south  
And bore away his wife of birds and flowers.



## THE HILLS

THE hills are crying from the fields to me,  
And calling me with music from a choir  
Of waters in their woods where I can see  
The bloom unfolded on the whins like fire.  
And, as the evening moon climbs ever higher  
And blots away the shadows from the slope,  
They cry to me like things devoid of hope.

Pigeons are home. Day droops. The fields  
are cold.

Now a slow wind comes labouring up the sky  
With a small cloud long steeped in sunset gold,  
Like Jason with the precious fleece anigh  
The harbour of Iolcos. Day's bright eye

Is filmed with the twilight, and the rill  
Shines like a scimitar upon the hill.

And moonbeams drooping thro' the coloured  
wood

Are full of little people wingéd white.  
I'll wander thro' the moon-pale solitude  
That calls across the intervening night  
With river voices at their utmost height,  
Sweet as rain-water in the blackbird's flute  
That strikes the world in admiration mute.



## JUNE

BROOM out the floor now, lay the fender by,  
And plant this bee-sucked bough of woodbine  
there,

And let the window down. The butterfly  
Floats in upon the sunbeam, and the fair  
Tanned face of June, the nomad gipsy, laughs  
Above her widespread wares, the while she  
tells

The farmers' fortunes in the fields, and quaffs  
The water from the spider-peopled wells.

The hedges are all drowned in green grass seas,  
And bobbing poppies flare like Elmor's light,



While siren-like the pollen-stainéd bees  
Drone in the clover depths. And up the height  
The cuckoo's voice is hoarse and broke with  
joy.

And on the lowland crops the crows make raid,  
Nor fear the clappers of the farmer's boy,  
Who sleeps, like drunken Noah, in the shade.

And loop this red rose in that hazel ring  
That snares your little ear, for June is short  
And we must joy in it and dance and sing,  
And from her bounty draw her rosy worth.  
Ay! soon the swallows will be flying south,  
The wind wheel north to gather in the snow,  
Even the roses spilt on youth's red mouth  
Will soon blow down the road all roses go.



## IN MANCHESTER

THERE is a noise of feet that move in sin  
Under the side-faced moon here where I stray,  
Want by me like a Nemesis. The din  
Of noon is in my ears, but far away  
My thoughts are, where Peace shuts the black-  
birds' wings  
And it is cherry time by all the springs.

And this same moon floats like a trail of fire  
Down the long Boyne, and darts white arrows  
thro'

The mill wood ; her white skirt is on the weir,  
She walks thro' crystal mazes of the dew,

And rests awhile upon the dewy slope  
Where I will hope again the old, old hope.

With wandering we are worn my muse and I,  
And, if I sing, my song knows nought of mirth.  
I often think my soul is an old lie  
In sackcloth, it repents so much of birth.  
But I will build it yet a cloister home  
Near the peace of lakes when I have ceased to  
roam.



## MUSIC ON WATER

WHERE does Remembrance weep when we  
forget ?

From whither brings she back an old delight ?

Why do we weep that once we laughed ? and  
yet

Why are we sad that once our hearts were  
light ?

I sometimes think the days that we made  
bright

Are damned within us, and we hear them yell,

Deep in the solitude of that wide hell,

Because we welcome in some new regret.



I will remember with sad heart next year  
This music and this water, but to-day  
Let me be part of all this joy. My ear  
Caught far-off music which I bid away,  
The light of one fair face that fain would stay  
Upon the heart's broad canvas, as the Face  
On Mary's towel, lighting up the place.  
Too sad for joy, too happy for a tear.

Methinks I see the music like a light  
Low on the bobbing water, and the fields  
Yellow and brown alternate on the height,  
Hanging in silence there like battered shields,  
Lean forward heavy with their coloured yields  
As if they paid it homage ; and the strains,  
Prisoners of Echo, up the sunburnt plains  
Fade on the cross-cut to a future night.



In the red West the twisted moon is low,  
And on the bubbles there are half-lit stars :  
Music and twilight : and the deep blue flow  
Of water : and the watching fire of Mars :  
The deep fish slipping thro' the moonlit bars  
Make Death a thing of sweet dreams, life a  
mock.

And the soul patient by the heart's loud clock  
Watches the time, and thinks it wondrous  
slow.

TO M. McG.

(WHO CAME ONE DAY WHEN WE WERE ALL  
GLOOMY AND CHEERED US WITH SAD  
MUSIC)

WE were all sad and could not weep,  
Because our sorrow had not tears :  
You came a silent thing like Sleep,  
And stole away our fears.

Old memories knocking at each heart  
Troubled us with the world's great lie :  
You sat a little way apart  
And made a fiddle cry.



And April with her sunny showers  
Came laughing up the fields again :  
White wings went flashing thro' the hours  
So lately full of pain.

And rivers full of little lights  
Came down the fields of waving green :  
Our immemorial delights  
Stole in on us unseen.

---

For this may Good Luck let you loose  
Upon her treasures many years,  
And Peace unfurl her flag of truce  
To any threat'ning fears.

## IN THE DUSK

DAY hangs its light between two dusks, my  
heart,

Always beyond the dark there is the blue.

Sometime we'll leave the dark, myself and  
you,

And revel in the light for evermore.

But the deep pain of you is aching smart,

And a long calling weighs upon you sore.

Day hangs its light between two dusks, and  
song

Is there at the beginning and the end.



You, in the singing dusk, how could you wend  
The songless way Contentment fleetly wings ?  
But in the dark your beauty shall be strong,  
Tho' only one should listen how it sings.

## THE DEATH OF AILILL

WHEN there was heard no more the war's loud  
sound,

And only the rough corn-crake filled the hours,  
And hill winds in the furze and drowsy flowers,  
Maeve in her chamber with her white head  
bowed

On Ailill's heart was sobbing : " I have found  
The way to love you now," she said, and he  
Winked an old tear away and said : " The  
proud

Unyielding heart loves never." And then she :  
" I love you now, tho' once when we were  
young



We walked apart like two who were estranged  
Because I loved you not, now all is changed.”

And he who loved her always called her name

And said : “ You do not love me, ’tis your  
tongue

Talks in the dusk ; you love the blazing gold

Won in the battles, and the soldier’s fame.

You love the stories that are often told

By poets in the hall.” Then Maeve arose

And sought her daughter Findebar : “ O,  
child,

Go tell your father that my love went wild

With all my wars in youth, and say that now

I love him stronger than I hate my foes. . . .”

And Findebar unto her father sped

And touched him gently on the rugged brow,

And knew by the cold touch that he was dead.



## AUGUST

SHE'LL come at dusky first of day,  
White over yellow harvest's song.  
Upon her dewy rainbow way  
She shall be beautiful and strong.  
The lidless eye of noon shall spray  
Tan on her ankles in the hay,  
Shall kiss her brown the whole day long.

I'll know her in the windrows, tall  
Above the crickets of the hay.  
I'll know her when her odd eyes fall,  
One May-blue, one November-grey.  
I'll watch her from the red barn wall  
Take down her rusty scythe, and call,  
And I will follow her away.



## THE VISITATION OF PEACE

I CLOSED the book of verse where Sorrow wept  
Above Love's broken fane where Hope once  
prayed,

And thought of old trysts broken and trysts  
kept

Only to chide my fondness. Then I strayed  
Down a green coil of lanes where murmuring  
wings

Moved up and down like lights upon the sea,  
Searching for calm amid untroubled things  
Of wood and water. The industrious bee  
Sang in his barn within the hollow beech,  
And in a distant haggard a loud mill



Hummed like a war of hives. A whispered  
speech

Of corn and wind was on the yellow hill,  
And tattered scarecrows nodded their assent  
And waved their arms like orators. The brown  
Nude beauty of the Autumn sweetly bent  
Over the woods, across the little town.

I sat in a retreating shade beside  
The river, where it fell across a weir  
Like a white mane, and in a flourish wide  
Roars by an island field and thro' a tier  
Of leaning sallies, like an avenue  
When the moon's flambeau hunts the shadows  
out

And strikes the borders white across the dew.  
Where little ringlets ended, the fleet trout



Fed on the water moths. A marsh hen crossed  
On flying wings and swimming feet to where  
Her mate was in the rushes forest, tossed  
On the heaving dusk like swallows in the air.

Beyond the river a walled rood of graves  
Hung dead with all its hemlock wan and sere,  
Save where the wall was broken and long waves  
Of yellow grass flowed outward like a weir,  
As if the dead were striving for more room  
And their old places in the scheme of things ;  
For sometimes the thought comes that the  
brown tomb

Is not the end of all our labourings,  
But we are born once more of wind and rain,  
To sow the world with harvest young and strong,



That men may live by men 'til the stars wane,  
And still sweet music fill the blackbird's song.

But O for truths about the soul denied.

Shall I meet Keats in some wild isle of balm,  
Dreaming beside a tarn where green and wide  
Boughs of sweet cinnamon protect the calm  
Of the dark water? And together walk  
Thro' hills with dimples full of water where  
White angels rest, and all the dead years talk  
About the changes of the earth? Despair  
Sometimes takes hold of me but yet I hope  
To hope the old hope in the better times  
When I am free to cast aside the rope  
That binds me to all sadness 'till my rhymes  
Cry like lost birds. But O, if I should die  
Ere this millennium, and my hands be crossed



Under the flowers I loved, the passers-by  
Shall scowl at me as one whose soul is lost.

But a soft peace came to me when the West  
Shut its red door and a thin streak of moon  
Was twisted on the twilight's dusky breast.  
It wrapped me up as sometimes a sweet tune  
Heard for the first time wraps the scenes  
around,

That we may have their memories when some  
hand

Strikes it in other times and hopes unbound  
Rising see clear the everlasting land.

## BEFORE THE TEARS

You looked as sad as an eclipséd moon  
Above the sheaves of harvest, and there lay  
A light lisp on your tongue, and very soon  
The petals of your deep blush fell away ;  
White smiles that come with an uneasy grace  
From inner sorrow crossed your forehead fair,  
When the wind passing took your scattered  
hair  
And flung it like a brown shower in my face.

Tear-fringéd winds that fill the heart's low  
sighs

And never break upon the bosom's pain,



But blow unto the windows of the eyes  
Their misty promises of silver rain,  
Around your loud heart ever rose and fell.  
I thought 'twere better that the tears should  
    come  
And strike your every feeling wholly numb,  
So thrust my hand in yours and shook fare-  
    well.

## GOD'S REMEMBRANCE

THERE came a whisper from the night to me  
Like music of the sea, a mighty breath  
From out the valley's dewy mouth, and Death  
Shook his lean bones, and every coloured tree  
Wept in the fog of morning. From the town  
Of nests among the branches one old crow  
With gaps upon his wings flew far away.  
And, thinking of the golden summer glow,  
I heard a blackbird whistle half his lay  
Among the spinning leaves that slanted down.

And I who am a thought of God's now long  
Forgotten in His Mind, and desolate



With other dreams long over, as a gate  
Singing upon the wind the anvil song,  
Sang of the Spring when first He dreamt of me  
In that old town all hills and signs that creak :—  
And He remembered me as something far  
In old imaginations, something weak  
With distance, like a little sparking star  
Drowned in the lavender of evening sea.

## AN OLD PAIN

WHAT old, old pain is this that bleeds anew ?  
What old and wandering dream forgotten long  
Hobbles back to my mind ? With faces two,  
Like Janus of old Rome, I look about,  
And yet discover not what ancient wrong  
Lies unrequited still. No speck of doubt  
Upon to-morrow's promise. Yet a pain  
Of some dumb thing is on me, and I feel  
How men go mad, how faculties do reel  
When these old querns turn round within the  
brain.



'Tis something to have known one day of joy,  
Now to remember when the heart is low,  
An antidote of thought that will destroy  
The asp bite of Regret. Deep will I drink  
By'n by the purple cups that overflow,  
And fill the shattered heart's urn to the brink.  
But some are dead who laughed! Some  
scattered are  
Around the sultry breadth of foreign zones.  
You, with the warm clay wrapt about your  
bones,  
Are nearer to me than the live afar.

My heart has grown as dry as an old crust,  
Deep in book lumber and moth-eaten wood,  
So long it has forgot the old love lust,  
So long forgot the thing that made youth dear,



Two blue love lamps, a heart exceeding good,  
And how, when first I heard that voice ring  
clear

Among the sering hedges of the plain,  
I knew not which from which beyond the corn,  
The laughter by the callow twisted thorn,  
The jay-thrush whistling in the haws for rain.

I hold the mind is the imprisoned soul,  
And all our aspirations are its own  
Struggles and strivings for a golden goal,  
That wear us out like snow men at the thaw.  
And we shall make our Heaven where we have  
sown

Our purple longings. Oh ! can the loved dead  
draw

A near us when we moan, or watching wait



Our coming in the woods where first we met,  
The dead leaves falling on their wild hair wet,  
Their hands upon the fastenings of the gate ?

This is the old, old pain come home once more,  
Bent down with answers wild and very lame  
For all my delving in old dog-eared lore  
That drove the Sages mad. And boots the  
world

Aught for their wisdom ? I have asked them,  
tame,

And watched the Earth by its own self be  
hurled

Atom by atom into nothingness,

Loll out of the deep canyons, drops of fire,

And kindle on the hills its funeral pyre,

And all we learn but shows we know the less.



## THE LOST ONES

SOMEWHERE is music from the linnets' bills,  
And thro' the sunny flowers the bee-wings  
    drone,  
And white bells of convolvulus on hills  
Of quiet May make silent ringing, blown  
Hither and thither by the wind of showers,  
And somewhere all the wandering birds have  
    flown ;  
And the brown breath of Autumn chills the  
    flowers.

But where are all the loves of long ago ?  
Oh, little twilight ship blown up the tide,



Where are the faces laughing in the glow  
Of morning years, the lost ones scattered wide ?  
Give me your hand, Oh brother, let us go  
Crying about the dark for those who died.

## ALL-HALLOWS EVE

THE dreadful hour is sighing for a moon  
To light old lovers to the place of tryst,  
And old footsteps from blessed acres soon  
On old known pathways will be lightly  
prest ;  
And winds that went to eavesdrop since the  
noon,  
Kinking<sup>1</sup> at some old tale told sweetly brief,  
Will give a cowslick<sup>2</sup> to the yarrow leaf,<sup>3</sup>  
And sling the round nut from the hazel down.

<sup>1</sup> Provincially a kind of laughter.

<sup>2</sup> A curl of hair thrown back from the forehead : used metaphorically here, and itself a metaphor taken from the curl of a cow's tongue.

<sup>3</sup> Maidens on Hallows Eve pull leaves of yarrow, and, saying over them certain words, put them under their pillows and so dream of their true-loves.



And there will be old yarn balls,<sup>1</sup> and old spells

In broken lime-kilns, and old eyes will peer

For constant lovers in old spidery wells,<sup>2</sup>

And old embraces will grow newly dear.

And some may meet old lovers in old dells,

And some in doors ajar in towns light-lorn ;—

But two will meet beneath a gnarly thorn

Deep in the bosom of the windy fells.

Then when the night slopes home and white-

faced day

Yawns in the east there will be sad fare-

wells ;

And many feet will tap a lonely way

Back to the comfort of their chilly cells,

<sup>1</sup> They also throw balls of yarn (which must be black) over their left shoulders into old lime-kilns, holding one end and then winding it in till they feel it somehow caught, and expect to see in the darkness the face of their lover.

<sup>2</sup> Also they look for his face in old wells.

And eyes will backward turn and long to stay  
Where love first found them in the clover  
bloom—

But one will never seek the lonely tomb,  
And two will linger at the tryst alway.



## A MEMORY

Low sounds of night that drip upon the ear,  
The pluméd lapwing's cry, the curlew's call,  
Clear in the far dark heard, a sound as drear  
As raindrops pelted from a nodding rush  
To give a white wink once and broken fall  
Into a deep dark pool : they pain the hush,  
As if the fiery meteor's slanting lance  
Had found their empty craws : they fill with  
    sound  
The silence, with the merry round,  
The sounding mazes of a last year's dance.



I thought to watch the stars come spark by  
spark

Out on the muffled night, and watch the moon  
Go round the full, and turn upon the dark,  
And sharpen towards the new, and waiting  
watch

The grand Kaleidoscope of midnight noon  
Change colours on the dew, where high hills  
notch

The low and moony sky. But who dare cast  
One brief hour's horoscope, whose tuned ear  
Makes every sound the music of last year?  
Whose hopes are built up in the door of Past?

No, not more silent does the spider stitch  
A cobweb on the fern, nor fogdrops fall  
On sheaves of harvest when the night is rich



With moonbeams, than the spirits of delight  
Walk the dark passages of Memory's hall.  
We feel them not, but in the wastes of night  
We hear their low-voiced mediums, and we rise  
To wrestle old Regrets, to see old faces,  
To meet and part in old tryst-trodden places  
With breaking heart, and emptying of eyes.

I feel the warm hand on my shoulder light,  
I hear the music of a voice that words  
The slow time of the feet, I see the white  
Arms slanting, and the dimples fold and fill. . . .  
I hear wing-flutters of the early birds,  
I see the tide of morning landward spill,  
The cloaking maidens, hear the voice that tells  
"You'd never know" and "Soon perhaps  
again,"



With white teeth biting down the inly pain,  
Then sounds of going away and sad farewells.

A year ago ! It seems but yesterday.  
Yesterday ! And a hundred years ! All one.  
'Tis laid a something finished, dark, away,  
To gather mould upon the shelves of Time.  
What matters hours or æons when 'tis gone ?  
And yet the heart will dust it of its grime,  
And hover round it in a silver spell,  
Be lost in it and cry aloud in fear ;  
And like a lost soul in a pious ear,  
Hammer in mine a never easy bell.



## A SONG

My heart has flown on wings to you, away  
In the lonely places where your footsteps lie  
Full up of stars when the short showers of day  
Have passed like ancient sorrows. I would fly  
To your green solitude of woods to hear  
You singing in the sounds of leaves and birds ;  
But I am sad below the depth of words  
That nevermore we two shall draw anear.

Had I but wealth of land and bleating flocks  
And barnfuls of the yellow harvest yield,  
And a large house with climbing hollyhocks  
And servant maidens singing in the field,

You'd love me ; but I own no roaming herds,  
My only wealth is songs of love for you,  
And now that you are lost I may pursue  
A sad life deep below the depth of words.



## A FEAR

I ROAMED the woods to-day and seemed to hear,  
As Dante heard, the voice of suffering trees.  
The twisted roots seemed bare contorted  
knees,  
The bark was full of faces strange with fear.

I hurried home still wrapt in that dark spell,  
And all the night upon the world's great lie  
I pondered, and a voice seemed whisp'ring  
nigh,  
" You died long since, and all this thing is  
hell ! "

## THE COMING POET

“ Is it far to the town ? ” said the poet,  
As he stood 'neath the groaning vane,  
And the warm lights shimmered silver  
On the skirts of the windy rain.

“ There are those who call me,” he pleaded,  
“ And I'm wet and travel sore.”

But nobody spoke from the shelter,  
And he turned from the bolted door.

And they wait in the town for the poet  
With stones at the gates, and jeers,  
But away on the wolds of distance  
In the blue of a thousand years



He sleeps with the age that knows him,  
In the clay of the unborn, dead,  
Rest at his weary insteps,  
Fame at his crumbled head.

## THE VISION ON THE BRINK

To-NIGHT when you sit in the deep hours alone,  
And from the sleeps you snatch wake quick  
and feel

You hear my step upon the threshold-stone,  
My hand upon the doorway latchward steal,  
Be sure 'tis but the white winds of the snow,  
For I shall come no more.

And when the candle in the pane is wore,  
And moonbeams down the hill long shadows  
throw,  
When night's white eyes are in the chinky  
door,



Think of a long road in a valley low,  
Think of a wanderer in the distance far,  
Lost like a voice among the scattered hills.

And when the moon has gone and ocean spills  
Its waters backward from the trysting bar,  
And in dark furrows of the night there tills  
A jewelled plough, and many a falling star  
Moves you to prayer, then will you think of me  
On the long road that will not ever end.

Jonah is hoarse in Nineveh—I'd lend

My voice to save the town—and hurriedly  
Goes Abraham with murdering knife, and  
Ruth

Is weary in the corn. . . . Yet will I stay,  
For one flower blooms upon the rocks of truth,  
God is in all our hurry and delay.



## TO LORD DUNSANY

(ON HIS RETURN FROM EAST AFRICA)

FOR you I knit these lines, and on their ends  
Hang little tossing bells to ring you home.  
The music is all cracked, and Poesy tends  
To richer blooms than mine ; but you who  
roam

Thro' coloured gardens of the highest muse,  
And leave the door ajar sometimes that we  
May steal small breathing things of reds and  
blues

And things of white sucked empty by the bee,  
Will listen to this bunch of bells from me.



My cowslips ring you welcome to the land  
Your muse brings honour to in many a tongue,  
Not only that I long to clasp your hand,  
But that you're missed by poets who have sung  
And viewed with doubt the music of their verse  
All the long winter, for you love to bring  
The true note in and say the wise thing terse,  
And show what birds go lame upon a wing,  
And where the weeds among the flowers do  
spring.



## ON AN OATEN STRAW

My harp is out of tune, and so I take  
An oaten straw some shepherd dropped of old.  
It is the hour when Beauty doth awake  
With trembling limbs upon the dewy cold.  
And shapes of green show where the woolly  
fold

Slept in the winding shelter of the brake.

This I will pipe for you, how all the year  
The one I love like Beauty takes her way.  
Wrapped in the wind of winter she doth cheer  
The loud woods like a sunbeam of the May.  
This I will pipe for you the whole blue day  
Seated with Pan upon the mossy weir.



## EVENING IN FEBRUARY

THE windy evening drops a grey  
Old eyelid down across the sun,  
The last crow leaves the ploughman's way,  
And happy lambs make no more fun.

Wild parsley buds beside my feet,  
A doubtful thrush makes hurried tune,  
The steeple in the village street  
Doth seem to pierce the twilight moon.

I hear and see those changing charms,  
For all—my thoughts are fixed upon  
The hurry and the loud alarms  
Before the fall of Babylon.

## THE SISTER

I SAW the little quiet town,  
And the whitewashed gables on the hill,  
And laughing children coming down  
The laneway to the mill.

Wind-blushes up their faces glowed,  
And they were happy as could be,  
The wobbling water never flowed  
So merry and so free.

One little maid withdrew aside  
To pick a pebble from the sands.  
Her golden hair was long and wide,  
And there were dimples on her hands.



And when I saw her large blue eyes,  
What was the pain that went thro' me ?  
Why did I think on Southern skies  
And ships upon the sea ?

## BEFORE THE WAR OF COOLEY

AT daybreak Maeve rose up from where she  
prayed

And took her prophetess across her door  
To gaze upon her hosts. Tall spear and blade  
Burnished for early battle dimly shook  
The morning's colours, and then Maeve said :

“ Look

And tell me how you see them now.”

And then

The woman that was lean with knowledge said :  
“ There's crimson on them, and there's drip-  
ping red.”

And a tall soldier galloped up the glen



With foam upon his boot, and halted there  
Beside old Maeve. She said, "Not yet," and  
turned

Into her blazing dun, and knelt in prayer  
One solemn hour, and once again she came  
And sought her prophetess. With voice that  
mourned,

"How do you see them now?" she asked.

"All lame  
And broken in the noon." And once again  
The soldier stood before her.

"No, not yet."

Maeve answered his inquiring look and turned  
Once more unto her prayer, and yet once more  
"How do you see them now?" she asked.

"All wet

With storm rains, and all broken, and all tore

With midnight wolves." And when the  
soldier came

Maeve said, "It is the hour." There was a  
flash

Of trumpets in the dim, a silver flame

Of rising shields, loud words passed down the  
ranks,

And twenty feet they saw the lances leap.

They passed the dun with one short noisy dash.

And turning proud Maeve gave the wise one  
thanks,

And sought her chamber in the dun to weep.



## LOW-MOON LAND

I OFTEN look when the moon is low  
Thro' that other window on the wall,  
At a land all beautiful under snow,  
Blotted with shadows that come and go  
When the winds rise up and fall.  
And the form of a beautiful maid  
In the white silence stands,  
And beckons me with her hands.

And when the cares of the day are laid,  
Like sacred things, in the mart away,  
I dream of the low-moon land and the maid  
Who will not weary of waiting, or jade

Of calling to me for aye.

And I would go if I knew the sea

That lips the shore where the moon is low,

For a longing is on me that will not go.



## THE SORROW OF FINDEBAR

“ WHY do you sorrow, child ? There is loud  
cheer

In the wide halls, and poets red with wine  
Tell of your eyebrows and your tresses long,  
And pause to let your royal mother hear  
The brown bull low amid her silken kine.  
And you who are the harpstring and the song  
Weep like a memory born of some old pain.”

And Findebar made answer, “ I have slain  
More than Cuculain’s sword, for I have been  
The promised meed of every warrior brave  
In Tain Bo Cualigne wars, and I am sad  
As is the red banshee that goes to keen



Above the wet dark of the deep brown grave,  
For the warm loves that made my memory  
glad."

And her old nurse bent down and took a wild  
Curl from her eye and hung it on her ear,  
And said, "The woman at the heavy quern,  
Who weeps that she will never bring a child,  
And sees her sadness in the coming year,  
Will roll up all her beauty like a fern ;  
Not you, whose years stretch purple to the  
end."

And Findebar, "Beside the broad blue bend  
Of the slow river where the dark banks slope  
Wide to the woods sleeps Ferdia apart.



I loved him, and then drove him for pride's  
sake

To early death, and now I have no hope,

For mine is Maeve's proud heart, Ailill's kind  
heart,

And that is why it pines and will not break."

## ON DREAM WATER

AND so, o'er many a league of sea  
We sang of those we left behind.  
Our ship split thro' the phosphor free,  
Her white sails pregnant with the wind,  
And I was wondering in my mind  
How many would remember me.

Then red-edged dawn expanded wide,  
A stony foreland stretched away,  
And bowed capes gathering round the tide  
Kept many a little homely bay.  
O joy of living there for aye,  
O Soul so often tried !



## THE DEATH OF SUALTEM

AFTER the brown bull passed from Cooley's  
fields

And all Muirevne was a wail of pain,

Sualtem came at evening thro' the slain

And heard a noise like water rushing loud,

A thunder like the noise of mighty shields.

And in his dread he shouted : " Earth is bowed,

The heavens are split and stars make war with

stars

And the sea runs in fear ! "

For all his scars

He hastened to Dun Dealgan, and there found

It was his son, Cuculain, making moan.



His hair was red with blood, and he was wound  
In wicker full of grass, and a cold stone  
Was on his head.

“ Cuculain, is it so ? ”

Sualtem said, and then, “ My hair is snow,  
My strength leaks thro’ my wounds, but I will  
die  
Avenging you.”

And then Cuculain said :

“ Not so, old father, but take horse and ride  
To Emain Macha, and tell Connor this.”  
Sualtem from his red lips took a kiss,  
And turned the stone upon Cuculain’s head.  
The Lia-Macha with a heavy sigh  
Ran up and halted by his wounded side.



In Emain Macha to low lights and song  
Connor was dreaming of the beauteous Maeve.  
He saw her as at first, by Shannon's wave,  
Her insteps in the water, mounds of white.  
It was in Spring, and music loud and strong  
Rocked all the coloured woods, and the blue  
height  
Of heaven was round the lark, and in his heart  
There was a pain of love.

Then with a start

He wakened as a loud voice from below  
Shouted, "The land is robbed, the women  
shamed,  
The children stolen, and Cuculain low!"  
Then Connor rose, his war-worn soul inflamed,  
And shouted down for Cathbad; then to greet  
The messenger he hurried to the street.

And there he saw Sualtem shouting still  
The message of Muirevne 'mid the sound  
Of hurried bucklings and uneasy horse.  
At sight of him the Lia-Macha wheeled,  
So that Sualtem fell upon his shield,  
And his grey head came shouting to the ground.  
They buried him by moonlight on the hill,  
And all about him waves the heavy gorse.



## THE MAID IN LOW-MOON LAND

I KNOW not where she be, and yet  
I see her waiting white and tall.  
Her eyes are blue, her lips are wet,  
And move as tho' they'd love to call.  
I see her shadow on the wall  
Before the changing moon has set.

She stands there lovely and alone  
And up her porch blue creepers swing.  
The world she moves in is her own,  
To sun and shade and hasty wing.  
And I would wed her in the Spring,  
But only I sit here and moan.



THE DEATH OF LEAG, CUCHULAIN'S  
CHARIOTEER

CONALL

“ I ONLY heard the loud ebb on the sand,  
The high ducks talking in the chilly sky.  
The voices that you fancied floated by  
Were wind notes, or the whisper on the trees.  
But you are still so full of war's red din,  
You hear impatient hoof-beats up the land  
When the sea's changing, or a lisping breeze  
Is playing on the waters of the linn.”

LEAG

“ I hear Cuchulain's voice, and Emer's voice,  
The Lia Macha's neigh, the chariot's wheels,



Farther away a bell bough's drowsy peals ;  
And sleep lays heavy thumbs upon my eyes.  
I hear Cuchulain sing above the chime  
Of One Who comes to make the world rejoice,  
And comes again to blot away the skies,  
To wipe away the world and roll up Time."

## CONALL

" In the dark ground forever mouth to mouth  
They kiss thro' all the changes of the world,  
The grey sea fogs above them are unfurled  
At evening when the sea walks with the moon,  
And peace is with them in the long cairn shut.  
You loved him as the swallow loves the South,  
And Love speaks with you since the evening  
put  
Mist and white dews upon short shadowed  
noon."

## LEAG

“ Sleep lays his heavy thumbs upon my eyes,  
Shuts out all sounds and shakes me at the  
wrists.

By Nanny water where the salty mists  
Weep o'er Riángabra let me stand deep  
Beside my father. Sleep lays heavy thumbs  
Upon my eyebrows, and I hear the sighs  
Of far loud waters, and a troop that comes  
With boughs of bells——”

## CONALL

“ They come to you with sleep.”



## THE PASSING OF CAOILTE

'Twas just before the truce sang thro' the din  
Caoilte, the thin man, at the war's red end  
Leaned from the crooked ranks and saw his  
friend

Fall in the farther fury ; so when truce  
Halted advancing spears the thin man came  
And bending by pale Oscar called his name ;  
And then he knew of all who followed Finn,  
He only felt the cool of Gavra's dews.

And Caoilte, the thin man, went down the  
field

To where slow water moved among the whins,



And sat above a pool of twinkling firs  
To court old memories of the Fenian men,  
Of how Finn's laugh at Conan's tale of glee  
Brought down the rowan's boughs on Knoc-  
naree,

And how he made swift comets with his shield  
At moonlight in the Fomar's rivered glen.

And Caoilte, the thin man, was weary now,  
And nodding in short sleeps of half a dream :  
There came a golden barge down middle stream,  
And a tall maiden coloured like a bird  
Pulled noiseless oars, but not a word she said.  
And Caoilte, the thin man, raised up his head  
And took her kiss upon his throbbing brow,  
And where they went away what man has  
heard ?



## GROWING OLD

WE'LL fill a Provence bowl and pledge us deep  
The memory of the far ones, and between  
The soothing pipes, in heavy-lidded sleep,  
Perhaps we'll dream the things that once have  
been.

'Tis only noon and still too soon to die,  
Yet we are growing old, my heart and I.

A hundred books are ready in my head  
To open out where Beauty bent a leaf.  
What do we want with Beauty? We are wed  
Like ancient Proserpine to dismal grief.

And we are changing with the hours that fly,  
And growing odd and old, my heart and I.

Across a bed of bells the river flows,  
And roses dawn, but not for us ; we want  
The new thing ever as the old thing grows  
Spectral and weary on the hills we haunt.  
And that is why we feast, and that is why  
We're growing odd and old, my heart and I.



## AFTER MY LAST SONG

WHERE I shall rest when my last song is over  
The air is smelling like a feast of wine ;  
And purple breakers of the windy clover  
Shall roll to cool this burning brow of mine ;  
And there shall come to me, when day is told,  
The peace of sleep when I am grey and old.

I'm wild for wandering to the far-off places  
Since one forsook me whom I held most dear.  
I want to see new wonders and new faces  
Beyond East seas ; but I will win back here  
When my last song is sung, and veins are cold  
As thawing snow, and I am grey and old.

Oh paining eyes, but not with salty weeping,  
My heart is like a sod in winter rain ;  
Ere you will see those baying waters leaping  
Like hungry hounds once more, how many a  
    pain  
Shall heal ; but when my last short song is  
    trolled  
You'll sleep here on wan cheeks grown thin  
    and old.





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