Light Love.
The love that is not quite love,—
Ah, let us be kind to it!
For it bears a touch of the dream above,
Of lads-love exquisite!

The love that is not quite love
But only the heart's wild fling—
A passing joy like the touch of a boy,
Or a smile from a lad in spring!

H. Townes

The Tenants.

There are a host of tenants in my heart
Queer boyish loves that will not go away:
Light, merry glints of lads'-love, yesterday;
Stray bits of smiles that have nor guile nor art
But are of some past happiness a part;—
Hot, furtive kisses, so fleet and fugitive,
One wonders why their soft imprints should live.
Yet,—through my memory how oft they dart!

Mark Beecher.

Regret.

"Godspeed" I cried and watched him go—
The lovely boy I craved
But dared not shelter in my heart,—
He turned his head and waved.

Now I would yield my every hope
To follow where he went
And, at the trail's end, kiss again
My Love—a penitent!

Terriss Owens.
The Love of Boyhood.

The love of Boyhood lives; it never dies.
    Deathless as Love's own self, it gleams and shines
    As an old votive lamp among the pines,
Aglow so long as stars smile in the skies!
A boon of dew, it falls where slumbering lies
    The seed-bud of a thousand-flowered rose;
    A breeze benign on arid earth it blows;
A cooling hand, it soothes the Scholar's eyes.
Sweet'ner of Centuries, Egypt knew it, Rome
    And Persia were thrilled by its day-dreams;
It broods e'en now by those two twin-like streams
Where Abu-Nowas sung;—where storied Dome
And ivied silence crown the Cyclades,
The eager heart still wakes to this Love's cries!
    Vincent Scarford.

The Boy and the Dolphin.

A band of boys went bathing to the sea
    All fair, but one the first in youthful bloom,
Him marked a Dolphin, tenderest of his kind,
    Far off and joined his gambols in the wave.
And a great love grew up between the twain,
    For day by day, the boy came to the shore
And day by day his faithful friend was there,
    And on his back would bear him merrily
Amid the dashing waves, a burden dear.
    But on an unblest morn, what time their mirth
Was happiest and the boy in trustful glee
    Upon his playmate stretched his limbs at length,
And backward leaned, and shouted to his steed,
    Ah, me! the sharp spear of the Dolphin's fin
Pierced his fair side and split his tender life,
    So there was no more play between the twain.
But that poor friend, perceiving how the foam
    Was crimsoned all with blood about his track,
And that sweet voice, which was his music, hushed,
    Knew that all joy was slain and agony
Seized him and he desired to die.
    So to the beach he bore him mournfully
Amid the dashing waves a burden dear;
    And on the sands he softly laid him down
And by his side gave up his grieving soul.
    But the boy's comrades, sorrowing for their mate,
Took up the corpse and washed it of the blood,
    And laid it in a grave beside the sea,
Beside the sea, above the wave-washed sand.
    And by his side they laid the Dolphin dead
For the sake of that true love he bore the boy.
    Ernest Meyers.
The First Swimmers.

The chill clung to the water;
A bevy of boys
In naked beauty,
Venturesome,
Shivering,
Shy with wonderment,
Huddled into themselves;—
Like street sparrows
On snowy mornings!

David O'Neill.

The Truant.

Slim woodland faun who stands upon the brink
Of that cool, unforgotten swimming hole,
While spying, leaf-checked sunbeams seem to wink
A sly condonement of this hour you stole
From cramping seat and unrelenting book
In yon slave-laden galley known as "school";—
I note one backward, gay, defiant look,
And then your shout ends gurgling in the pool!

Burges Johnson.

Parsons' Pleasure.

A greengloom sideloop of the creek,
A sodden place of twilight smell:
Clear dayshine did not often touch
That water; and a mouldy hutch
For the convenience of undressing.
An ancient, far from prepossessing,
Offered uncandid towels (eschewed
By most).

There men's white bodies, nude,
Unconscious, comely, gallant, Greek,
Stretched, tingled cool, shone sleek, lived well
In the one patch where sunwarm fell.

Christopher Morley.
Love's Incarnation.

Floating dreamily
O'er the waters cool of a lazy river,
I espied beneath a tree a lovely boy,
Basking in the warm sunshine,
His golden hair burying his hands as he lay
Stretched at full length, his head supported by his arms,
In full enjoyment of life.
And, as I passed, our eyes met as if by destiny;
And, as I gazed, the colour flooded his fair cheeks,
And his long lashes drooped over his eyes with virgin modesty.
But that one glance told me plainer than any book
That it was Love that I lacked and that I had found it
There, in that pure youthful soul.

Fidian.

I Was Happy.

Suddenly into my life there came a boy
Of sixteen summers, whose fresh lovely face
Was radiant as the Dawning,—like a joy
That smiles in dreams, swift flies, leaving no trace
Save a vague sense of awe and wonderment:
O never did words live wherewith to tell
His body's beauty!—rather be content
To dream upon his star-white limbs, so well
And surely formed as if in marble cast,
Which after aeons of slumber woke to life!
His eyes were like clear waters, when the last
Gold o' the sun lies locked in shadowy strife
With imaged cloud and grass at close of Day—
Deep mirrored waters, unperturbed alway.

F. S. Woodley.

I Saw Him Once.

I saw you once, one golden space,
Yet love leaped flamelike in my breast and burned,
You only looked at me and then you turned
To leave me dreaming of your boyish face.
No memory is mine wherein to trace
That loveliness for which my heart so yearned,—
No dreaming hope of mine has ever learned
What joys unlooked-for bloomed beneath your grace!

Sanford Middleton.
The Love-Boy.

A little boy, but oh, so lovable,
With lips and eyes
That smile and shine with mirth and tenderness
In sweet surprise.

Two little hands, but oh! so powerful
To hold a heart,
And make it live and love and beat for him
Wholly apart.

Two bare brown knees and oh, how wonderful
They seem to be,
Kissed by the sun and by the gentle breeze
And kissed by me.

Two eyes with light so sparkling that they seem
Like stars above,
And fill the soul with mirth and ecstasy
And tender love.

M. Snow.

Two Tiny Hands

Two tiny hands laid hold upon my heart.
Two lips sought mine in fond caress
And swore no mortal gods could ever part
Our lives, or spoil our happiness.

Two tiny hands withdrew their sweet embrace
Two boyish lips curved in disdain.
Now in my heart remains an empty space
That I shall never, never fill again.

D. B.
(a school-boy to another.)

A Memory.

Soft shining with a light divine
His soft brown eyes, like a caress,
Showed clearly,—looking into mine,—
A world of tenderness.

His rose-red lips near mine he held;
Mine trembled in ecstatic bliss,
As he my deepest love compelled
In a long, lingering kiss!

But now I've lost my fairest prize,—
(Oh, brief—too brief—Love's heavenly stay!)
O rose-red lips, O soft, brown eyes,
Why have you turned away?

S. B.
Lad's Love.

I had his first—they say across the sea
His "lad's love"! Truth and faith he gave to me
Unquestioning—a boyish faith that knew
No doubt—a truth that shamed me although true,—
A lover's and a brother's clasping hand,—
A child's kiss either could understand!
The time was sweet; the end full well I knew;
I had his "lad's love", faithful, pure and true;
I am content nor ask for more; when she
Shall come, from far or near, his love to be,
A man's brave heart will be her willing shrine,
And she shall fill her place,—but never mine!

Wayne Gordon.

The Parting of the Ways.

They called for him tonight—two little girls,
One near his age, the other younger still;
"Going?" they asked; and he looked straight at me,—
(We'd planned to read together, he and I),
But now—the girls had come; they had a dance—
He'd partly promised—
"Yes," I said; "Yes, go".
(What lover ever could say "no"?)
And now I sit alone; the book lies there
Open, where we were reading when they came.

I had not thought t'would come so soon—This change;
Only fifteen and my beloved boy,—
For he and I have been such chums—till this!
But now—
I cannot give him what he wants!
Is it not cruel? Why is life so hard
To us Boy-lovers?

Were it things like toys
I'd find a way, somehow, to compass it;
It's been my pride that he's had everything:—
I've been his Providence till this (and ah,
What joy it was to be his Providence!)
But here,—soon I must stand aside and see
A hated girl now take up my loved task
And be to him what I have always been—
Companion, chum, house-mate and comforter.
    Well, I must hope
    The best—be cheerful; he so hates to see
Me sad or solemn,—. . . and there!—
The evening's over—that's his step, thank God!

E. Van Cleve.
Together.

Sleeping together... how tired you were......
How warm our room... how the firelight spread
On wall and ceiling and great white bed!
We spoke in whispers, as boys will do,
And now it was I—and then it was you
Slept a moment, to wake—time fled;—
"I'm not a bit sleepy," one of us said.

I woke in your arms,— you were sound asleep,
So close together we had tried to creep,—
Clinging fast in the darkness, we lay
Sleeping together,— that yesterday!

C. Mansfeld.

A little Boy in the Morning.
He will not come and still I wait;
He whistles at another gate,
Where angels listen, Ah, I know
He will not come, yet if I go
How shall I know he did not pass
Barefooted in the flowery grass?

The moon leans on one silver horn
Above the silhouettes of morn,
And from their nest-sills finches whistle
Or, stooping, pull the downy thistle—
How is the morn so gay and fair
Without his whistling in the air?

The world is calling; I must go.
How shall I know he did not pass
Barefooted in the shining grass?

Francis Ledwidge.

Possession.
My love I own in his white, white youth,
For he gave to me his heart of fire
And fiercely my two strong hands shall keep
His uttermost desire.
The swift, unsullied lips he bends to me are mine,
And mine the hands that never tire.

But oh, his singing self goes free!
I do not own my lover's soul,
And all his tinctured dreams I can but dimly see
Inviolate within a crystal bowl.

C. Worth.
The Immortal Boy.

You may be right, I do not doubt you are;
He may have been the Shakespeare of your thought,—
The brilliant shadow singing in the dark,—
But still he sang! And more than that, he laughed . . .
I'd sooner think,—
Not of the broken, disillusioned man,—
But rather of the big-eyed, laughing lad,
The bad boy of old Stratford, spending half his time
In planning mischief and the other half
In planning rhymes. I like to picture him,
His slender body slipping 'mongst the trees,
Nimbler than moonlight,—an adventurer
Then as he never ceased to be! A lover
With all the ardor of Eighteen and June,
Yet wed to cold December 'gainst his will;—
A father in his teens,—a child with children!
I like to see him scornful of the law,
Smiling at oaths or charges, with his mind
On doggerel that was to plague them all.
Then, boylike, finding life too great a coil,
He ran away, careless, wondering, blithe,
To London and to immortality!

Well,—
You keep your Bard, the immortal Boy for me!

Louis Untermeyer.

To Hugh.

O lovely boy, the seasons blend in you
Their varied charms, their glory and their grace!
The youth and love of Spring is in your face
And in those tender eyes of matchless blue,
The happy sunshine of the summer, too,
Has caught you in its passionate embrace;
For sunshine has not fitter dwelling place
Than on your lips, so sweet and smiling, Hugh!
And on your head has Autumn laid her hand
As though completing beauty's wealth untold,
For there I see in every silky strand
The glory and the light of burnished gold.
But tell me, lovely boy, ah, tell me this:
Should I find Winter's coldness in your kiss?

M. Snow.
The Mess Boy.

He had contempt that was divine
For every sailor that he fed,
For while they talked of "Fun" and "Wine"
He read.

He washed their dishes, made their bed,
And gave their bodies joy with grace;
Nor could their insults on his head
Erase

That fine immobile pride of his,—
In the embraces of each man
He was as different as a Kiss
From Pan!  

Sydney Wilmer.

Genius.

Lady,
You, who are pattering to your carriage door
In high-heeled shoes,
Your hat spraying delicate, white feathers,
Soft furs about your throat
And pointed designs, crusted with diamonds,
Pinned to your frail blouse—
Your coat was made by the best of tailors
Who patted and pinned and smoothed it with infinite care
So that it would give you "long lines."
And your figure has been stiffened rigidly
Into the proper shape.
You are hung with costly things,
You carry them about with you—
Even the intricate embroidery on your stockings is a cause for
wonder—
And when you think of them
Your little, muffled mind glows with satisfaction.
But you are not half so beautiful
For all your trouble,
As the young workman who just went swinging down the street,
His body lithe and strong and free as a whip in the wind!

Louis Saunders Perkins.
Lines on the Portrait of a Midshipman Killed in Battle.

A boy's face wherein beauty lies
As in all things untouched by age,
A waking wonder in those eyes
That scarce had looked on Life's first page,
And all that beauty and that grace
Forever gone through Time and Space.
When last I saw those lips they laughed,
Those eyes were lit with sunshine then;—
Who guessed a sudden, bitter draught
Would find in you a man 'mid men,—
That strength could in such frailty lie,
And youth with such high courage die!

Cecil Roberts.

To Robert Westman, dead in battle.

I was his teacher on a time
Some happy seasons back,
Guiding his hand and mind to trace
That knowledge which youths lack.

Now dead in France, his tenderness
Enfolds me as the sea,
Now I am like a little child
In wonder at his knee.

"Bobbie, I love you" is all my heart can say
No matter where I wake at night or wander in bright day.

No word of mine could ever say
One half of what is true
No reticence is graver than
The poem that is you.

Willard Wattles.

Plaint of Friendship by Death Broken.

God, if thou livest, Thine eye on me bend
And stay my grief and bring my pain to end,
Pain for my lost, the deepest, rarest friend
Man ever had, whence groweth this despair.

Robert Nichols.
Night for Adventure.

Sometimes when fragrant summer dusk
Comes in with smell of rose and musk
And scatters from their sable husk
The stars like yellow grain,—
Oh, then the ancient longing comes
That lurks in me like roll of drums
To follow where the cricket strums
His banjo in the lane.

A call that bids me rise and strip,
And naked all from toe to tip
To wander where the dew-drops drip
From off the silent trees,
And where the hairy spiders spin
Their nets of silver, fragile-thin,
And out to where the fields begin,—
Like down upon the breeze!

Or in a silver pool to plunge
And like a great trout wheel and lunge,—
Beneath the water lilies plunge,—
'Mid stars reflected there:
My face upturned, to lie afloat,
With moonbeams rippling round my throat
And from the rushes' dull green coat
Weave chaplets for my hair.

Then, leaping from my rustic bath,
To take some winding meadow-path,
Across the fields of aftermath
To run with flying feet,
And feel the dewdrop-weighted grass
That bends beneath me as I pass,
Where solemn trees in shadowy mass
Beyond the highway meet!

Victor Starbuck.

The Boy in the Nightmare.

He clung to me, his young face dark with woe,
And as the mournful music of the tide
Monotonously crooned, he moaned and cried,—
A silhouette against the afterglow!....
I said:—"The boat has spread her pinions wide,—
The stars and wind come forth together,—go
Straight to our love-tryst, . . . that you well know,
And place my seat, as always, at your side!"

Rupert Hillyer.
They meet their lovers, when day cools,
    Under the upland trees,
Or by the river swimming pools,
    Inviting at their ease
    The body-piercing breeze.
Then it is sweet as heaven to kiss,
    Enchanted and unseen;
But they think no more of love than this
    That it is something not amiss
When leaves are long and green!

H. Lange.

De Puerorum Osculia.

Red mouths of lads for love God made:
    God mindeth ever poor wights' ease;—
Yet men His kindly Will gainsayed!

In seemly innocence arrayed
    To be in sooth, a grace to please,—
Red lips of lads for love God made.

He weened that Love might there be stayed
    That steals into the blood to tease;—
Yet men His kindly Will gainsayed.

Ah, pretty kisses they had prayed
    Did not cold Pride their duty seize:—
Red mouths of lads for Love God made;
    Yet men His kindly Will gainsayed!

Giles de Gillies.

A Page's Song.

    Jesu,
If thou wilt make
Thy peach-trees bloom for me,
    And fringe my boyhood's path, both sides,
    With lads-love fine and free,—
If thou wilt make thy skies as blue
    As in old Sicily,
And wake the little leaves that sleep
    On every bending tree,—
I promise not to vexen thee
That thou should make eternally
    Heaven my home;
But right contentedly
A singing page I'd be
    Here in thy springtime
    Jesu!

A. W. Percy.
Youth.
How perfectly mine eyes delight
In your dear awkwardness!
Because I love you, it is grown
Poignant as a caress.

The sudden way you move your hands,
Your quick ungainly feet—
These homely things my heart holds close
Finding them very sweet.

If you were gracious as your soul
I could but love you less:
Perfection cannot catch the throat
Like your dear awkwardness.

E. Tietiens.

After Vacation.
Let me think it over, now that you are gone.
I cherished those hours, every one,
When your boyish laughter filled the air
And broke my thought of pain and care.

Ah, red young lips and rosy cheeks!
My heart for its long-lost boyhood seeks,
Some echo of it rang in your voice,
And hearing it I could not help rejoice;
And part of my love was love for you
And part for the dreams that have not come true.

Cecil Roberts.

To a Friend.
Thy voice, as tender as the light
That shivers low at eve—
Thy hair, where myriad flashes bright
Do in and outward weave—
Thy charms in their diversity
Half frighten and astonish me.

Thine eyes, that hold a mirth subdued
Like deep pools scattering fire—
Mine dare not meet them in their mood,
For fear of my desire,
Lest thou that secret do descry
Which evermore I must deny.

Hard is the world that does not give
To every love a place;
Hard is the power that bids us live
A life bereft of grace—
Hard, hard to lose thy figure, dear,
My star and my religion here!

James Fenimore Cooper, Jr.
Give me one friend, just one, who meets
The needs of all my varying moods;
Be we in noisy city streets,
Or in Dame Nature's solitudes.

One who can share my grief or mirth,
And know my days to praise or curse;
And rate me for just what I'm worth,
And find me still—Oh, not so worse!

One who can let the world go by
And suffer not a minute's pang;
Who'd dare to shock propriety
With me, and never care a hang!

E. M. Clark.

Manly Love.

Deep in your heart understand
the love of a man for a man;
He'll go with you over the trail,
the trail that is lonesome and long;
His faith will not falter nor fail,
nor falter the lilt of his song.
He knows both your soul and your sins,
and does not too carefully scan,—
The Highway to Heaven begins
with the love of a man for a man!

Donald Malloch.