AUSTRALIA IN LONDON

Between the battle over
   And the battle just begun
They give six days to wander
   And take their bit of fun
To the lads whose land lies under
   The rays of the rising sun.

No English home is theirs,
   They have no English friend —
Australia's uncivilized,
   Squatters, you know, no end!
So up they come to London
   Their bob a day to spend.

And a lad may spend it in the pubs,
   Or girls are cheap as thought —
It's not the warmth of English beer
   Or the harlot's kiss that's sought,
But those about to die have need
   Of tenderness, though bought.

Between the battle over
   And the battle not begun
They walk the streets of London,
   Strangers, frowned upon.
Yet their eyes are grey with the light
   Of the newly risen sun.
A wind from infinite skies
Ruffles always their hair,
And the look of the birds of the sun,
Lonely, disdainful, aware,
Is the look of their mouth and their eyes;
They are the dreamers who dare.

They bear no arms because they must,
They wage no conscript's war,
They fight for neither English king,
Nor tsar nor emperor;
They heard that freedom's cause was struck,
And freedom is their star.

Sons of the rising sun,
With swift un-English eyes,
Not fair with white and red,
But burnt by flaming skies,
And scornful with such youth
As, boasting, fights and dies!

Along the Strand they swing
With haversack and gun,
Their broad, brown hats caught up
One side as if in fun,
And at their tunic’s throat
The sign of the rising sun.

And London furnishes,
Though pious-eyed, askance,
Her harlots and her pubs
To these whose very glance
Is sunlight, and who march
To-morrow into France.

To these so infinitely young,
So passionate to live,
That they can turn a harlot's kiss
To love, and gladly give
What's left of them to death,
And then have all to give.

Sons of the rising sun,
I, from across the sea,
Drink to your gathered youth
And your gallant chivalry.
And I would to God by your side
We fought, as you, to be free.

December, 1916
IN OUR YARD

Moses, Moses, seeing God
In a bush that burned,
Moses, Moses, hearing God
Advising, unconcerned,

I believe you, for myself
Saw Him plain and heard —
Others saw a myrtle bush
That held a mocking-bird.
A WOOD SONG

My love is a bush in bloom,
    My love is a bird in the air,
My love is an April day,
    And a wind with golden hair.

A melody is my love
    That trembles and glistens and goes,
A forest in bud is my love
    Where hidden laughter flows.

Good-bye, O sweet-lipped maiden,
    O trusted friend, adieu!
My old love is my new love
    And dearer far than you.
THE LITTLE SHEPHERD'S SONG
(13TH CENTURY)

The leaves, the little birds, and I,
The fleece clouds and the sweet, sweet sky,
The pages singing as they ride
Down there, down there where the river is wide —
Heigh-ho, what a day! What a lovely day!
Even too lovely to hop and play
With my sheep,
Or sleep
In the sun!

And so I lie in the deep, deep grass
And watch the pages as they pass,
And sing to them as they to me
Till they turn the bend by the poplar tree.
And then — O then, I sing right on
To the leaves and the lambs and myself alone!
For I think there must be
Inside of me
A bird!
ADVENTURE

Who would not love to go
Out where the breakers blow,
Culing and green and slow,
    With a rose sail?
Lands there are far away,
Marvelous in the spray,
Turquoise by night, by day
    Gold as the grail.
Morning's the time to start
Just with a tipsy heart.
Wisdom a tiny part
    Taking, you fail.
TO BUTTERFLY

Do you remember how the twilight stood
And leaned above the river just to see
If still the crocus buds were in her hood
And if her robes were gold or shadowy?
Do you remember how the twilight stood
When we were lovers and the world our wood?

And then, one night, when we could find no word
But silence trembled like a heart — like mine! —
And suddenly that moon-enraptured bird
Awoke and all the darkness turned to wine?
How long ago that was! And how absurd
For us to own a wood that owned a bird!

They tell me there are magic gardens still,
And birds that sleep to wake and dream to sing,
And streams that pause for crocus skies to fill;
But they that told were lovers and 'twas spring.
Yet why the moon to-night's a daffodil
When it is March — Do you remember still?
A C R I C O LÆ

I watch the farmers in their fields
And marvel secretly.
They are so very calm and sure,
They have such dignity.

They know such simple things so well,
Although their learning's small,
They find a steady, brown content
Where some find none at all.

And all their quarrellings with God
Are soon made up again;
They grant forgiveness when He sends
His silver, tardy rain.

Their pleasure is so grave and full
When gathered crops are trim,
You know they think their work was done
In partnership with Him.

Then, why, when there are fields to buy,
And little fields to rent,
Do I still love so foolishly
Wisdom and discontent?
RIOLAMA

(AFTER READING HUDSON'S "GREEN MANSIONS")

There is a land beyond the lands you know,
Circled by silver veils of woven rain
And green, clear sunsets with the moon in tow
And woods and dark savannahs of wild grain.

I have not wandered in the forests there,
I have not watched its willowed waters flow,
I have not breathed its leafy, upland air,
And yet, and yet, it is the land I know.

Its people's speech that my heart echoes so
To you were wild birds singing in their vine,
And other dreams and other loves they know,
But all their dreams and all their loves are mine.

They are my people! I am lost with you
And only guess the ways that I should go;
Forever homesick, baffled, yearning to
My native land that I shall never know.
A BALLAD OF ST. SEBASTIEN

1

Sebastien, Sebastien,
The archer of the King I be.
Strip off thine armor, strong and bright,
And naked stand against yon tree
For target to mine arrows' flight;
This is the King's command to thee.

O Archer, draw thy long grey bow,
Thine arrows loosen, wing by wing;
Naked I stand against the tree;
I am obedient to the King.

2

Sebastien, Sebastien,
I fit an arrow in my bow,
With poisoned laughter it is shod.
O naked knight, with head bent low,
Thus slaves bend down to take the rod —
I doubt if blood so meek can flow!

O marksman pale, with eyes of mist,
Close to my side I heard it sing!
And thou must choose a goodlier shaft
Than laughter levelled at my King.
3

Sebastien, Sebastien,
I choose me seven arrows old,
And never the heart of man they miss;
Two red, one green, two black, one gold,
And one soft-falling like a kiss.
Call up thy spirits, Knight, be bold!

Blood, blood, it flows! and oh, the kiss
Upon my heart of that warm thing!
Yet shoot another sheaf, for still
I am but wounded for my King!

4

Sebastien, Sebastien,
Behold a barb that takes away
The love of one thou lovest best.
The love it takes it does not slay,
But leaves it in another's breast. . .
With tears the ancient barb is grey.

Oh, can it be the King ordains
This agony that slays the spring?
But for the years that thou wast loved,
Kneel down, O heart, and bless the King.

5

Sebastien, Sebastien,
Dost thou still turn thy pain to praise?
Wilt thou not die, though crimson-flecked?
Then take the shaft that never strays,
'Tis called "The Death of Self-Respect" —
Its song is laughter, and it slays.

There is no quarry left for death,
And I am dead without death's sting . . .
Take all, take all; Thou gavest all,
O Lord of mine, my Lord the King!

Sebastien, Sebastien,
What is the faith that flows and fills
Thy heart with strength, thine eyes with light
While ruby-red the life-blood spills?
Look up, look up, O dying Knight —
That faith this blunted arrow kills!

And me . . . No archer thou of His!
Back, back! This death, this suffering
Are but thy sport . . . Lift not my head! . . .
O pale-eyed man, art thou the King?
THE QUESTION

Is it enough to feel the opal spring
Burst quivering on branch and bush and wing?
   To kiss the soft-checked air?
   To know the world is fair? —
   Is it enough?

Is it enough to see man's passionate
Divinity break shimmering on fate?
   His soul's devout desire
   Flame and go out like fire? —
   Is it enough?

Will beauty and nobility descried,
Will anything save touching hands and side
   Assuage us to confess
   Through life's unhappiness,
   It is enough?
EVENING LINES

Ah, dreamy world and liquid-sounding leaves,
Ah, skies that on your bosom bear the dawn
And evening, and recurrent, trembling stars,
Why are we strangers to your certain calm,
Your joy, perennial and effortless?
We strive to understand; our desperate faith
Leans listening against the universe
To catch some meaning, some deep harmony
To still the throbbing silence that we hear.
In vain, in vain! There is an inner music,
But 'tis no serenade to please our ears.
When the last human heart is underground,
Great sunsets still will aureole the west,
No whit less gorgeous for that they're unseen.
And this divine frail moon will not delay
Because her lovers' lips are yet more pale
Than when her yearning parted them. Ah, no
Not listeners we, but part, ourselves, of some
Mysterious harmony, perhaps heard elsewhere.