

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 fleecy 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,  
Curling 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?



AGRICOLÆ

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!

6

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.

