



A VAGABOND'S
PHILOSOPHY

A. SAFRONI
MIDDLETON



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A VAGABOND'S PHILOSOPHY

A Vagabond's Philosophy

IN VARIOUS MOODS

INCLUDING PART II

Songs of the South Seas

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'BUSH AND SEA RHYMES,' ETC.
COMPOSER OF MUSIC FOR THE GOVERNMENT
REGIMENTAL BANDS, MARCHES, INTERMEZZOS,
ENTR'ACTES, ETC. ETC.

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DEDICATION

OLD comrades, by my fire in dreams
Your hands I clasp to-night ;
Heaven starlit o'er the forest gleams
As 'neath the blood-wood's height
You lie with folded hands asleep
By shores of tumbling waves,
As I creep up each silent steep
To kiss forgotten graves.

The soul of all the songs I sing,
Whatever sounds most true,
I dedicate each wild true ring,
Inspired, old chums, by you.
The world grieves not that you are dead—
Brave, reckless men who died,
Crept from their camp-fires back to bed
Along the wild hillside.

But, comrades, 'neath the hills or waves,
Could one sad song of mine
Reveal dead souls of far-off graves,
'Twould be a song divine.
As pure and sweet as flowers that grow
Where once with wild delight
You sang, where bush-flowers, bursting, blow
Thro' dead fire-ash to-night.

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DEDICATION

And so in dreams I take your hands,
In long-dead eyes I gaze,
And half in tears from other lands
Bring back the dear old days.
In other lands 'neath greyer skies
Wild rides again recall,
Your songs, your laughing, manly eyes—
The boy who loved you all.

Lies in my sea-chest 'neath my bed
The fiddle, stringless, still ;
Old chums, since all of you are dead,
'Neath forest steep and hill,
I cannot play the songs you loved ;
But with tired eyes and pen
I strive to tell the truth, who roved,
And found you—God's best men.

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PART I

A VAGABOND'S PHILOSOPHY

IN VARIOUS MOODS

How beautiful the world around here sleeps,
As creep those clouds where midnight stars peep through,
As waving trees, along each range of steeps,
Hide Ocean-dark where waves oft foam to view
Through those shore gaps ; as rise and fall grey-wings,
Sea-birds, where through dark pines the night wind
sings :

And Fate-like, footed vast o'er far slope-bars,
Mountains uprise their solemn moveless heads,
From inland stare out t'wards the sea's fixed stars
As forests, miles below—while moonrise spreads—
Steal into view, as when from Time's dark sea
Creation heaved these hills up silently.

I could here half believe those tall gaunt trees
Here o'er our campfire, singing in moonlight,
Are wrecks, masts by old shores of unknown seas,
And sailors—dead, climb, sing up in the night
When wails that wind ! as like two old scarecrows
In rags we sit here, why—Heaven only knows.

Hairless your head, those once warm kindly eyes
Sinless as death, cold as a workhouse bed ;
Our toothless mumbling mouths, grown old and wise,
Half-hunger for the stars there overhead.
Seems Time scythes down the Ages full of spite,
To harvest up such sights as we to-night.

Our sorrow,—'tis that voice, hark ! that night wind
Wails what forgotten griefs of lovers dead ?
As stars—like angels hovering trees to find
The dreams of little birds asleep in bed—
Through branches flash—maybe they see blue day—
Our heaven beyond, behind them far away.

Maybe the past, sad dreams of all things fled,
Like birds that speck the sunset's dim skyline
Fast flying down the dusk to ages dead,
'TwiXt Heaven and Earth in dark Fate waters shine—
As stars seen on the sea when night winds drift
Do fade and shine again 'tween each dark rift.

Dark-branched the moonlit forest of the Brain !
By dark thoughts haunted, noiselessly they leap
From bough to bough—the Ages !—winds complain,
From what vast seas of passion do they sweep ?
What skyline of this boundless ocean—Night,
Doth catch the stragglng beams—infinite light ?

Creation is a mighty mystery,
But wondrous, too, man's mind—it is the sky
Bright with created worlds ! For, as the sea
Reflects the stars by night, man's inward eye
Doth image small, draws down the shining skies
That do gaze back to God, glad—through His eyes !

Comrade—we 'll live again, my whole soul swears
The inward dreaming sight fades, never dies ;
Just as those unborn children, trembling fears,
Small shadows, walk in front of lovers' eyes
Down moonlit lanes ; Creation, all man loves,
Behind the Mighty Dreamer—through space moves !

How have we grieved o'er grief, have thought sweet
truth,
Of this sad universe of murmurs deep
Heard was when lovely lips breath'd faith through death,
To listening ears—We heard the Angels weep—
Comrade, we both believed that Woman's Voice !
Yet—better far to grieve—than ne'er rejoice !

That falling star doth emblem our lost faith,
How else? since shut from splendid wealth, such space ?
We creep mean alleys, shadow'd by Old Death,
Peep o'er Heav'n's boundless fence, such meanness trace,
Such power o'er helplessness, till when all 's said,
Man's faith is true—we 're better off when dead !

Why for, and whence these aspirations, dreams
Of life made beautiful through monstrous test—
The creeds, the blasphemies, the wretched schemes
To get to Heaven ! Is life some monstrous jest ?
Where is sweet virtue ? whose most secret wish
To eat the rind—not bolt the tempting dish !

Who knows the other ? oft stern white-wigged might
Condemns some helpless soul, all virtue dead,
Yet through some dream of passion he by night
Oft creeps, takes off his boots too by her bed !
So jogs the world along, through storm and wind
And sunlight, beautiful through being blind !

How true 'tis, Virtue is its own reward—
A castaway on isle of seas unknown !
Makes some old Negro King fall by the sword
Imperial—dead by his bamboo throne,
His big kind eyes, astonish'd, watching—puff !
The weaker to the wall—his head blown off !

Where 's our reward ? in rags we sit to-night,
God's map of sorrow wrinkled to our eyes ;
As winds uplift your shirt reveal to sight
Those skinny ribs, the very forest sighs
At glimpse of that grey straggling beard, as lingers
Moonlight o'er your sad old face and thin fingers.

Where are our best dear friends? some strayed and sunk,
Frail wayward souls, drown'd, stumbled in the pool
Of what big wish? Maybe some died dead drunk.
Poor devils! trampled flowers once beautiful;
As soft-winged birds place confidence in men,
Crept in some trap, and ne'er came out again!

And we have sinned,—but ne'er all virtue lost,
Since side by side our campfires we have wept
With keen remorse, as o'er the forest tossed,
Half holy felt—'tis true our passions slept—
Alas! men sin, yet what else can men do—
Starve? with such lovely eyes, Heaven in full view!

And, too, we've hung our heads, hot blushed with
shame
As heavenward gazed that good man's goggling eyes,
Till up we looked. Ah! curse his wretch'd name!
And our surprise,—duped by the vilest lies,
We chased his flying feet, our eyes flamed wrath—
Our cash-box gone! our week's supplies—and faith!

'Tis only sad men are man's faithful friends,
Those hearts that blow like flowers by moonlight,
Or, as yon wand'ring moon's pale sorrow lends
Your dreaming eyes of yesterday's dead light.
Ah, all men know 'tis only sorrow kneels
By dying men, since only sorrow feels.

Your eyes sad legends are, in one skull rolled,
Time's mouth wails, 'tis your lips. Just as those
gleams—

Our campfire's blaze—once blossom'd green and gold
Of trees, we are surviving ghosts, strange dreams
Of what blue days? what dead wild girls and men
Have crept through skylines to these scenes again!

Alas! 'tis grief that makes man's soul aspire
For harvest of Fate's grinding, silent mills.
I know this—my dead self near this campfire
To-night doth watch me—somewhere in these hills;
'Twill haunt me through the night, asleep in dreams.
Sad as moonlight o'er stealing forest streams.

A wild bird's song steams in that old stew-pot!
Sad food for heirs of Heaven, while stars blaze heat,
Infinities of waste! seems, God knows not
This sad philosophy of shivering feet;
Would He astonish'd lift the veil, aghast
See His pale moons and sad men trooping past,

O'er rubbish flung, dead worlds cast into space,
One awestruck-hunt for Him! sad droves of eyes,
Vast regiments tramping Ages with sad pace,
With telescopes that probe for Him through skies.
Then, like winds sigh clouds 'neath the sea-moon high,
Blow out the suns and moons of all the sky!

To see you wrinkled, old, with soul so brave,
I 'd half believe the Mind Immense has died :
Creation's boundless mystery, the grave,
Of truth and beauty, all worlds through space wide
In song, till God uplifts dark shroud of night,
Stands, bathing His vast universe with light.

Since men like shadows move about the skies,
Pale mortal faces dreaming what we seem,
Life seems that image of me in your eyes,
As by your campfire you sit there and dream !
The ages stealing from God's slumbering mind,
Like moonlit waters ruffled by a wind !

Where 's Beautiful ? is life, man's lovely aims,
All arts, but mouldy fungus growth that sprouts
On dreaming brains ? Are our ambitious claims
Like to wild blasphemies, those frenzied shouts—
Our sad Comrade, who through this whole night yells,
Swears that he 's God—in madhouse shut up dwells !

Ah ! Atheist men may be reverse of wise,
Grand fools, big eyebrows and stupendous head
May hide Heaven, seen by those closed sacred eyes,
The kneeling child beside its tiny bed,
While they through darkness move like blind cold-
moles,
As blue skies shine one inch above their holes.

Yet, comrade, do I love man's doubting heart,
 Those men whose grief is life's self-sacrifice.
 That ' True Believer ' hate who stands apart
 In virtue's robe that covers all his vice ;
 By Faith, I 'd shun all Heav'n, with him to dwell,
 I 'd pack my doubts and take my hopes to Hell !

Think you I 'm mad ?—well, madness is the breath
 Of life's big wish, turn your eyes to the past,
 You will find stern reality was death ;
 Loveliness held in our arms secure at last
 Dissolves to dust, our soul shapes all that seems,
 Life's golden age shines through our wildest dreams !

So fades Earth's splendour, dreams of fleeting
 bliss,
 The chemistry of life, in lovelit eyes,
 Creation's passion centr'd in one kiss,
 The ecstasy of dreams, the star-thrilled skies,
 Eternities of one Impassioned Night
 To this—two sad old men with blurred eyesight.

But, we 've been happy ! think of all we 've done !
 In seaports of the world, our wild careers,
 Nudged old Fate in the ribs, danced in the sun,
 Are known now as two brave old Pioneers !
 Heavens ! Poets sang our Fame ! each song enshrines
 The beauty—Jove, not ours—of their own minds.

We have seen men laid in their lone bush-graves,
A swag beneath some head—then left behind
With forest silence and the birds, the waves
On shores hard by roll up, and still the wind
Sings on, and still somewhere in distant lands
Love waits to kiss those lips and buried hands.

And children, yet unborn, the flowers will pull,
Blooms fed by dust of that poor silent Earth.
If flowers are dead men's eyes, then beautiful
Will be sweet blossoms o'er past campfire mirth,
And some Australian girl's warm lovelit eyes,
Her lips that kiss love's gift, pluck'd—where he lies !

So, comrade, sleep, our dust will live again,
Here, by my side in friendship lay your head,
And, ere the campfire dies, let 's welcome pain
And thank our lucky stars we are not dead !
Had man been born in Heav'n he would, I 'll
swear,
Point to those stars and cry, ' 'Tis Heaven out there ! '

What boots it to bewail ? Doom's vast dark glass
A mirror is for magic dream Immense,
Where o'er the dancing stars do glittering pass,
And, if we smudge with our distorted sense
The radiance of Creation's lovely skies,
'Tis God's grief maketh beautiful man's eyes.

That campfire warms our bloodless feet, so cold,
Where 'd be the slumbrous warmth that creeps them now,
The splendour of youth's song—if never old
Grew man, with Scripture grand writ o'er his brow ?
These wrinkles, God's dreams are, sad thoughts—no
worse,
The Hidden Poet of the Universe.

So, lay our heads down in deep leafy gloom ;
Like children lost ; together sleeping lie.
This universe around our sacred room—
The pain-thrilled stars that climb that lovely sky
Are special lamps hung o'er dark changeless doom,
To watch our cherished dreams that must not die.

PIONEERS

You men who live in city crowds, what know you of
The silences of Earth, the starlit gloom,
Where dreaming men 'neath lovely skies oft lonely rove
Wild shores where seas for ever beat their doom,
Where ships like mighty moths pass by the yellow moon,
Their ghostly sails 'neath cloud-wracks gliding by
As on the hills you stand and dreaming hear the tune
Of humming stars across the silent sky?
Where tree-branched harps wail overhead, Night's
solemn words
As silvered waters toss, where Ocean roams
Till white sails race the moon, winged messengers—Big-
Birds,
With cargoes of sweet dreams for English homes!
What know you of sweet virtue of the homeless plain?—
Those men, sad lovers of Earth's loveliest eyes—
Ay—sleeping in their shanty dreaming—clasp again
Some dead girl in her grave 'neath English skies,
Where singing some old song your voice, of boyish glee,
Stops as your comrade turns his face away,
Then, silence by the campfire's red shine when you see
His bright eyes wet with tears for some dead day.

Let all your vaunted pride of wealth and fashion'd
walls,
Lamp-lit thronged streets, be your eternal Home.
And mine—tall singing trees wherethrough the moonlight
falls
Across the forest floor my footsteps roam.
And when I 'm dead, let my eyes feel the grey moss-
flowers
In dripping moon-light creep through dust that felt
Warmth, musical with trees, sweet-throated bird-
praised hours
Where by my lone bush-bed with faith I 've knelt.

YEARS PARTED

I 've loved and lost in this sad spirit-sense—

My dreams have blossom'd as a field wildflower
That breathes its fragrance to the Soul Immense,
Drops sodden in the mud in one brief hour.

God knows, my love once was as pure as this,
And steadfast as a star's flame through the night :
God knows, our lips met in one sacred kiss
Ere my star falling curved swept out of sight.

Love's mystery I 've known, fair secret charms :
And as death steals the loveliest of Earth's eyes—
Dissolving them to dust—from out my arms
Winds scatter'd her as dust beneath the skies.

I shall love her when o'er the twilight falls ;
My soul will cling with trailing, beating wings
Among the stars till that lost voice soft calls
My spirit through the dark from mortal things.

From men I 've sat apart : stared at her book—
One verse marked off that praised love's length of years—
Whoe'er you are, may you, friend, never look
Till words seemed blurred as gaze your eyes through
tears.

Man shouts of Heav'n and what his soul is worth,
As though God bargains o'er some merchandise—
I pray eternal life is some sweet birth
Where my awakening gaze sees Heav'n—her eyes.

I've felt love's wildest passion stir my soul,
As singing winds do bending moonlit trees.
Wailed—as dead sailors 'neath dark Ocean's roll
Tossed white hands to the moons of southern seas !

And where are you ? fair image of lost Heaven,
Your loveliness—'twas my soul and these eyes
That fashion'd Earth's wild-angel soft thing driven
To my glad arms—out of dreamed Paradise.

Can dreams forget, can you forget, 'twas I
Gazed in those eyes, with rapture, saw strange light
Steal like sunrise across a midnight sky ?
Ah, God, the very stars abashed took flight.

Then, climbed the moon, peeped through that window-
pane,
Saw your face fast asleep on love's strong arm,
Thick hair unloosed o'er warm white bosom reign,
As smiled your sleeping lips through moonlight's charm.

Is sorrow one sad song of earthly things ?
And trust in woman's love the dying day ?
Are dreams sunsets soft-specked with curling wings—
Birds o'er the skyline fading far away ?

Now—like to swallows lost far out at sea,
I seek love's south, warm spirit eyes, true lips ;
And, as lost trembling birds cling—woe is me !
With tiny feet to masts of passing ships,

My thoughts roam o'er the universe in vain
To find the splendour of some dream I knew,
Out to the stars cling fluttering, till again
My arms hold fast my loveliest dream—of you.

I 've loved the stars—and all those things that shine
With happiness of pure enduring light,
Ere from your eyes across brief day of mine
Clouds crept, hid starlit Heaven out of sight.

And, now—my very faith in God seems dead ;
The music of my heart moans like the sea ;
My Heaven—where slumbering lies my tired head
As in a dream you come back, dear, to me.

BY THE SEA

HARK ! 'tis the night-bird's singing sweet,
Cloth'd warm in feathers, rich in song,
From bough to bough it flits along,
As man, dejected, warms his feet
And mumbles with dry tuneless tongue.

His dreams are fleeting as the wind,
All that he loves doth fade, alas !
Brief as the imaged birds that pass
O'er hill-quiet lakes ;—still, in his mind
Stars sleep—'tis God's sad mirror-glass.

Oh, what this sorrow of the world,
I've heard it through the rigging blown
As sailors, their legs round yards thrown,
Out seaward gazed as grey wings curled
In silence round the storm-moon lone.

I've heard tremendous ocean pain
The universe wrapt in a shroud,
Not dead—but struggling, cry aloud
As each flash split the night in twain,
Saw ghosts aloft, where men did crowd.

As one who on a dark shore stands,
Doth gaze upon a midnight sea—
Dark-moving moon-bathed mystery—
Yet sees blue waves of distant lands
Glad-singing up far shores—to me

Comes back the light of other days,
As gazing on the ocean deep,
Wherein a dead man lies asleep,
I watch the fate-like moving ways,
I who alone his memory keep.

IMPERIALISM

SAVED, say you? Well, yes, in this sense, a citizen of
the Immense
Am I, the stars, my freighted ships, inspire song to my
trembling lips.
A child of blacken'd city walls, I claim for my Ancestral
Halls
Some splendour o'er those plains of space, where-t'wards
my beggar'd footsteps trace.
Though penniless camped 'neath these trees, as gaze my
exiled eyes o'er seas
That I must cross, I'll knock the door, not timidly,
mind you, for more
Hold out my hands, I'll bravely lift—these eyes! He
knows the first fine gift,
Though spent, alas! was prized by me—not spent in
wails and misery
Of selfish song that in the end He'd fail me, my rich
grand one Friend.
So go! depart, wail me no tears—to-night I'm listening
to the spheres
To catch the Harmonies of Space, ere my eyes look Him
in the Face.

DRIFTING

MY soul, dear, as a star in Heaven burning,
Sings doom as deep as that unquiet sea,
And, as a star in darkest night is turning
Out glad blue days, your eyes return to me.
Blue shining depths of gladness to mine lifted—
As hung impassion'd souls 'twixt Earth and Heaven—
Oh, could the tide return that our lives drifted—
And bring me to your arms again—forgiven !

Leave faults asleep—remember wild vows only,
The blue-gums, oh, the bush-bird, now years dead,
As mirror'd in your eyes we kiss'd, it lonely
Sang in the sunlit branches overhead.
The river in the hills still wanders, singing,
And, in those boughs by night the parrots sleep—
Likemy old thoughts, when moonbeams, to leaves clinging,
Reveal their frightened eyes as 'possums leap.

No day breaks o'er the hills of that sad dream-land,
But from those boughs the birds awake and fly,
No sunset falls, but on those hills I lone stand
And watch them down the skyline fade and die.

Thick-overgrown, the shanty by the hillside
 Still stands ; when through its doorless, moonlit room
 The dead leaves fall, the creeping dingo's feet glide
 Till sunrise streaks each day of changeless gloom.

And, on the walls old picture frames are clinging ;
 The fireside where we sang and dreamed for hours—
 Sat o'er by nights, watch'd ember-bright flames flinging—
 Moss-grown, now blossoms red and blue bush flowers.
 Where are those dreams, your eyes and all the laughter ?
 The comrades of dead gum-tree camp, hard by ?
 All faded into sunsets—silence after
 Of night and loneliness across the sky.

In dreams I watch the unborn Ages breaking—
 As waves in moonlight toss white hands and climb
 For ever up dark shores—new eyes awaking
 Are romping round the skirts of aged Time ;
 Blue days, the stars behind for ever flying
 Bring music and strange voices with the years,
 And on the hills I stand with Autumn dying,
 Her lakes asleep are deep with huddled tears.

Come to me, dear, in dreams of sleepless longing,
 As moonlight falls where few sad flowers remain,
 As southbound swallows 'neath the stars rush thronging
 All homeward fly, come back to me again.
 Old winds asleep, keep secrets of the hollows,
 The birds that sang—for years their songs have fled,
 Come back, ere, all too soon, the darkness follows,
 Come back, ere these few flowers, my dreams, are dead.

MORTAL ASPIRATIONS

SCENE : *A MORTAL having escaped the penalty of death, appears outside the gates of Heaven, and there, on the sacred threshold of Immortality, stands trembling, thinking to deceive GOD—though unwittingly—by pleading that the purity of his mortal aspirations, though still clothed in the garment of mortality, deserve to enter Paradise, so that he might gaze upon the woman whom he loves with earthly eyes. He strives through finite lips to convince GOD of the absolute spiritual nature of his love, that there is no need for him to die, so beautiful are the aspirations that have survived the shadows of the world. The Supreme Mind cannot help him in his material state, but sadly listens.*

MORTAL

God, I am cold, let Thou me in.
I love not Earth ; I hate, too, Sin.
The flesh Thou gavest 'tis so weak,
Yet I would find that which I seek,
And still not die.

GOD

Who art thou there that knockest here ?
What thy great sorrow, what thy fear ?

MORTAL ASPIRATIONS

Hast thou uncoiled the toil Doom gave?
 Who dared thee step across thy grave?

MORTAL

Unhappy, God, on Earth was I;
 Ambition probed thy lovely sky;
 The birds sang something in mine ears
 That made me dream of Thee in tears,
 And she, too, whom I love, is here,
 So lovely—must be, Father, is she near?

GOD

What seekest thou, child of that world,
 Those whitest limbs thou didst see curled
 In Death's strong arms, in dark vault place.
 I saw death let thee kiss her face!
 And canst thou ask, plead there defiled
 For her in spirit, mortal child?
 How knowest which didst love the best?
 Her soul in mortal garment drest,
 Or light unseen of thought's sad skies,
 That beauteous spirit of her eyes.

MORTAL

I did love sweet thoughts of her mind,
 As dreaming mortals love the wind
 Of music—those sad beating wings
 Of crying angels on harp strings;
 I loved her with all strength I have,
 My love 'tis stronger than the grave.

GOD

Then why didst come across the sky
With thy strong love—afraid to die ?

MORTAL (*strives to tell GOD that he loves both his mortality
and His spirit, as GOD loves Himself and his Creation*)

Thou lovest Thy Celestial Night,
Dear God, and lovely is Thy sky
Where fast across your swallows fly—
When from Thy bosom on each flight
The wandering stars go by.
Ne'er have I dreamed Thou didst forget
Those souls that cling to each sunset—
As sailors cling to masts at sea
And sink, O God, with faith in Thee.

GOD (*answers sadly*)

Thou standest clad in flesh defiled,
How can the spirit help thee, child ?

MORTAL (*wonders what GOD may mean*)
O God, doth that black angel, Death,
E'er claim man's soul at his last breath ?
That blind dumb thing that tramps the spheres
This night hunts through Thy universe ;
Men cringe to it with thousand fears,
Forgive me, God, if it I curse !
Oh blessed is Thy unshadowed sky
Wilt Thou, dear God, let me go by ?
Why must I die ?

MORTAL ASPIRATIONS

GOD

Thy soul must be as bright and fair
 As star that flames in heavens of air,
 Ere thou go by, child, thou must die !
 But she thou lovest lingereth near,
 Trembling listens—now with fear !

MORTAL

O Father, is she standing there
 Those eyes I kissed ? I combed her hair,
 I threw my world's ambition by,
 By her to dream and sweetly lie
 Through sleepless nights !
 O God, my soul's ambitious birth
 Has hung 'twixt Heaven and my Earth,
 My soul a searchlight Thee to find !
 And, as Thy kind sun in the sky
 'Twixt Earth and Thee revolves, doth wind
 The stars to view, then soft blue days,
 My sad thoughts and my soul's warm praise,
 I have with trust complete Thee given,
 With feet on Earth, my head in Heaven,
 Have I moved o'er sad mortal ways.

Thy voice I 've heard—when sailors died,
 As mothers old by firesides cried
 By night, when to the window-pane
 The wind came tired, wet with rain,

Did follow sunsets 'cross seas wide,
Crept up the moonlit lonely shore,
Brought dying thoughts—tapped on the door.
I've felt Thy presence in that room
Where breathed a baby's face asleep,
Thy moonbeams sad did quivering creep
Those eyelids lovely, as through gloom
Bright angels moved, did bending weep.

What greater sorrow ere I prove
Through these pale lips depths of my love ?
May I, God, claim in Heaven still
These mortal eyes ? If I must die,
Sweet aspirations of our sky
To bright halls of your Heaven bring ?
In Thy Just Presence stand and sing,
To tearless Angel-eyes and ears,
Songs trembling o'er with human tears
And bitterness ? Canst see the will
That pleadeth for my soul within ?
Is Mortal's grief his own wrought sin ?
May I go by ?

GOD

Thou knowest not thyself, my child.

MORTAL

Immeasurable Thy own created space,
Thou knowest where its endless bounds do end !

Why didst create me, with pale mortal face
 And mind finite ? from wealth infinite lend
 Such shadow, such sad grief to soul enshrined
 In clay—that seekest Thee ! Thy boundless mind
 As moonlight falls on sea-dark waters.

GOD

Do poets dream, expect their much-loved book
 Of saddest verse will ope, inquire and look
 Them in the face ? demand with grief what brought
 Into their soul sincere its own sad thought ?

MORTAL (*bewildered*)

Father ! Beautiful is moonlight on the sea,
 It is as light in Mortal's dreaming eyes—
 Reflected from Thy bright Infinity ;
 But, O God, in the end each poet dies !
 May I step in ? ere dead, have one sweet look
 With mortal eyes, drink radiance of her face ?
 Thou hast verse writ in me !—Thy pleading book !
 It bids my life pass by Thy boundless grace !
 Our poets of the world have writ such things.
 Not dead, have entered Heaven on wings !
 And poets are Thy thoughts, O God.

GOD

My thoughts unchained afar may roam
 As winds the moonlit waves drift into foam,
 Man's brief thoughts sparkle.

MORTAL

As lightning silently exalts the night
 Of cloud, and ocean's pain reveals to sight,
 When o'er the ragged edge of midnight blue
 The lovely wet-stars do flash through,
 I've watched Thy thoughts flash, far outwind
 O'er dark Immensity—Thy mind ;
 Just as I feel Thou standest now,
 Hid in bright heavens of light,
 As ages wrinkle o'er Thy brow
 Creation's grief in your deep eyes,
 I've seen Thee hid vast in the skies !
 Thy shadow moved—it made the night
 And breathed the stars !
 'Twas when I prayed, a little child ;
 Father, was I then defiled ?

GOD

My son, I love thee as myself,
 I knew not, shut in hills of time,
 Thou would'st so near t'wards Heaven climb.

MORTAL

God, when the sailor climbs at sea
 Tall masts, his shadow in moonlight
 Upon the deck toils silently,
 Doth mimic him up in the night.
 So climbed I, toiled toward Thy mind—
 Would leave my shadow blind behind.

MORTAL ASPIRATIONS

O let me pass, have sweet new birth,
 My ghostly shadow o'er the Earth
 Will run through moonlit streets, wail grief:
 Seen by men 'twould inspire belief!
 Or in this mortal garment drest,
 With Thy own sweet permission, God,
 I'll steal to Earth, make sad men blest,
 Walk old ways that these feet have trod—
 Just as that pale-faced Christ that died—
 By each dark unbeliever's side
 I'll walk—nor plead on Earth again,
 For Thy sake, as Thy Son—in vain!
 Through crowded lamplit ways I'll creep,
 Find sad men that on doorsteps sleep;
 I'll kiss them, bless them, ere quite dead,
 For Christ's sake will kiss each poor head.
 Relight their sleepless vacant eyes—
 Men that still breathe, but have met Death.
 And being dead, still grieve—lack faith!
 God, may I now creep through Thy skies,
 Thy earnest child?
 God, wert Thou me, and I, God, Thou,
 I'd let Thee through.
 May I pass now?

[GOD *remains silent as the MORTAL continues.*

Men have dreamed that Creation's lovely womb
 Was fathered by dark soulless cruel Death.

Thy universe some monstrous endless tomb,
That Thy vast power of bright creating breath
Breathes everlasting silence o'er the spheres,
O'er heavens of thought, and lovely listening ears
To murmurs of Thy universe of gloom ;
That eyes may be the moons o'er tides of tears
That drift across pain-thrilled infinities
Of dark and changeless Doom !

GOD

All thou dost say eternally I 've known.
I cannot let thee by, child, thou must die.
As she, that purest love of earth,
That suffered for thy mortal birth—that other !

MAN (*remembering Earth's purest love answers eagerly*)

I love her as I do those eyes
That lovelit search for tiny sighs,
Watch for small shadows of our skies
That sweetly t'wards stars did uplift,
And caught my soul adrift—my mother !

GOD

'Twas she with sorrow to Me came,
Her eyes with grief of thee aflame.
Thou knowest, Mortal, all the rest—
Her soul clung weeping to My breast,
Nor hast thou asked for her till now.

*The MORTAL hangs his head with shame,
and answers*

As swift instinct unerring flies
'Neath stars, those small bright gliding eyes
Of south-bound swallows through the night,
All twittering on far seaward flight,
My thoughts through starlit space have flown—
Dropped dead long ere they reached Thy throne—
Their tiny souls, sad ghostly things,
Came crying back with fluttering wings
To drop again to deep space night,
Once more flit round Earth's pale sunlight,
And still from mortals ere they die
Their trembling songs—thoughts to Thee fly, dear God.

*[GOD does not answer. In despair the MORTAL
gazes up from the threshold of the sacred
Halls of Exiled Humanity, and cries—*

Oh, must I die, God? I who stand
Here in despair, have brought
This little bag, 'tis in my hand
And holds my cherished thought—
Thoughts of sweet Mother Earth.
Oh, splendour of those boundless eyes
Wherein the dark tides fall and rise
That drift the stars!
Where art thou, God?

[Only the echo of his own voice answers, and the

shadows fall over him as once more he continues, having faith that GOD, though silent, is still listening.

Ne'er have I evil thought, dear God, of Thee,
And, if e'er 'gainst Thy bright immortal face
Flew dark night birds, and beat it, flapped their wings,
They were dark cruel haunting thoughts of men,
Blind nightmare things that whirl from dark to light ;
And, thoughts that on Thy shoulder trembling stood
And sang songs full of tears—such thoughts were mine.

[So spoke the MORTAL sad, and as once again through tremendous silence the echoes answered him.

In lost despair his eyes gazed o'er space wide,
Then noiselessly he dropped to Earth and died,
And mortals gathering, on his pale face gazed
To see those lips and dead eyes smile—amazed !

THE REFLECTIVE PASSENGER

OUT o'er the sea the waves like sorrow beat ;
 Beneath the white-moon mystery oft toss,
As thump the decks here throbbing 'neath my feet
 The engines urge the liner leagues across.

Hark!—passengers ! their voices echoing float
 Where grey sea-birds glide by the deck-saloon,
As in my heart rebounds the magic note
 Of night—the Ocean's everlasting tune.

There are the stars, the dark seas wallowing shake
 The mirror'd moon ; as toils the wriggling screw,
For miles behind winds one bright tumbling wake,
 A silver path 'neath dome of midnight blue.

She plunges on, through boundless gloom doth
 glide,
Her funnels snort red smoke, 'tis rolling by,
Some stars are glittering where, dissolving wide,
 Like monstrous wraiths, it fades across the sky.

My eyes intense watch, envying misty things!

There, on the bridge, move awful forms of Fate,
As moonlight to each unshaved face soft clings;

They are on watch—the skipper and chief mate!

And who am I? outbound for distant lands;

A passenger who dreads the light of day,
Here hiding, hush'd! dirt grimed my face and hands?

I am, O God, the starving Stowaway!

YESTERDAY

YESTERDAY

To you, my saddest song I sing,
A song weaved from the breath
Of all sweet birds that thrill the spring,
And all the grey of death.

The calm, clear beauty of your eyes
Gleams far across the years,
A tiny sparkling bridge of sighs
From now—to boyhood tears.

Deep in my heart pale flowers grow,
Spring up in dreaming light,
And, shivering softly, burst, and blow
In tears of mist to-night.

For years have flown away, dear girl,
Since on your lovely head
Winds kissed each sunlit golden curl,
And all our vows are dead.

MAN

MAN's brain it is Creation, that vast sky,
The stars, his thoughts, across forever flash ;
Celestial are his eyes, they never die,
They gleam in space—a thrown stone's sparkling splash
In tropic waters—so do they rehearse
Brief splendour of the Outer Boundless Mind ;
And conscious doth become the universe
Of night immense. His dreams, by dark outlined,
Are lovely as his stars in splendour move
Across skies framed by grand imagination—
Which is Infinity in pangs, doth prove
Man's eyes create this dream of vast Creation !
A power tremendous, thrilling worlds with light—
God's eyelight mirror'd on brief mind finite.

REINCARNATION

LIFE'S splendid poem, love, is this—
To blush your curved white bending throat
With one smart of a clinging kiss ;
My soul in dreams like stars that float
On midnight seas 'neath summer skies
Whene'er I gaze—in your clear eyes.

Those far fixed mountains and those seas—
Deep moonlit waters grandly moving—
Hush'd songs of starlit waving trees
Where 'neath we sit in silence loving,
Is landscape of the Artist real
Who paints the air the thoughts we feel !

The flowers of heaven—that vast space field
Far scattered o'er those hollow ways—
They are the blossoming buds to yield
Opening eyes, love's boundless gaze
From boundless worlds, till all rehearse
The mind that moves the Universe !

We are strange spirit air of dreams,
That are the currents of the sea
Whereon stars shine—heaven's own moonbeams !
Its tide sweeps t'wards eternity,
One ocean power, the whole doth move
With setting suns to boundless love.

All that we feel, all that we are,
The wistful gleam, dear, of your eyes
Is like to twilights and one star.
Ere myriads blaze the dark'ning skies—
That shadow vast through hidden light—
God, moving in the Infinite !

And, love, each breathing fond caress,
My whispering lips, your listening ears,
Your pale face—music's sweet distress—
Winds out at sea, our exile fears—
All is a shell's faint hollow cry
Of mind—behind that great dumb sky !

Your flower-like eyes set 'neath your brow
Where lifted hair, kissed by the wind,
Half hides each glimmering gaze as now
They do express your hidden mind,
Resemble those immortal eyes
That do express forth all the skies !

So, grasp this gift of blood-thrilled love,
With lip to lip, drink while we may
Of life's sweet wine that eyes may prove
Creation's grand pain toiled away,
Nor toiled in vain, that we may see—
Half feel—bliss that we are to Be !

Your pleading eyes, ah, love, may soon
Express some doubt the lone heart feels,
But, life it is that changeful moon
That fades, yet ever full blown steals
O'er these same scenes—so, dear, this know—
I loved you ages long ago !

And love, at death, your dreams, sweet birds,
From your mind to your eyes will swim,
Will glide away winged spirit herds
To fade in sunset far and dim ;
But eyes, like sunsets, only die
To open in some morning sky.

A thousand years ago that sea
Beneath that same old moon did cry,
And on these hills, our dead selves—we !
With lip to lip, moaned ' We must die.'
The wind along the waste still sweeps,
And to my arms the same love leaps !

Death will not hold us down in sleep,
Dead, dumb lips pray, nor pray in vain,
From out each dark age, love, you 'll leap
To sunlight and my arms again—
Your sweet voice trembling in my ears
I 'll half remember these same years !

We 're very old, in my heart's gloom
I 've, frighten'd, watch'd my dead self creep ;
O'er magic landscape, changeless doom,
I 've run, a ghost that cannot sleep !
My arms held you, by moonlit seas
I laid you dead 'neath forest trees.

I heard your voice call on the wind,
As silvered seas did onward roll
The midnight mystery of mind—
Some Boundless Ocean of my Soul,
As through the phantom glooms I crept
From lonely shores where dead you slept.

Dead, too, we 're, lying in these hills !
Curled in dark ages by my side
Your dead form sleeps, this love that thrills
My soul—'tis kisses as you died !
Those ancient trees, where moonlight swims,
Flower now, warmth of long dead white limbs.

REINCARNATION

Place your small hand of dreams in mine,
Just as a pledge to ne'er forget
My passion is that blood-gold shine
That clings around your soul's sunset—
That howe'er far your grave may be
From mine—you will remember me !

And, love, when moonlight falls across
Flowers blowing o'er your buried head,
As those far sea waves silvered toss,
These hills will be our bridal bed,
Each sweet birth from each buried mind,
Dead, clinging dreams that seek the wind !

And all sweet birds, at sunset singing,
Our dead vows pour'd from moving throats,
Adrift in boughs around us clinging
Old echoes of each heart's dead notes,
Wild music that the woods still keep
As in the hills we lie asleep.

TO THE MEMORY OF A. H. C. M.

HERE in the heart of death, life and sweet songs
Of woods drenched with fair joy of live green
leaves,
Brief flowers, bright plumaged birds, soft twittering
throings
As tired sea-winds with branchy music grieves
And seems to grieve for all my sad heart longs,
The sun, out in the big kind sky, warmth breathes.

Where are old guests? Through silent halls I plead,
'Tis my own echo roams this sacred place,
And answers mortal ears. My sad eyes read
Life's riddle—'tis my own pale mortal face,
And far worlds whereon men, the voiceless dead,
Once cried 'Infinity!'—through forlorn space.

Tremendous power man dreams, from night he rose,
With trembling hands t'wards stars he did arise,
The sad Priest of the Universe! The throes
Of what dead worlds—sad shining in his eyes?
His voice the scream of anguish silence knows
Has echoed 'neath the vault of stricken skies.

If Earth our mother is, I pray for sleep
Below green trees, my eyes just covered o'er
With scented mould, that living flowers may leap
To laughter where the sun bright-winged doth soar.
My fingers dead will feel each twining creep
As flowers spring softly through the wood's dark floor.

My dead blood's passion, grass, births of wild
flower,
My thoughts on winds that roam the Universe !
My soul some infinite lost travelling power
That once dreamed God ! and no surviving curse
Alive of mine for men must bless the hour
On life's strange hill, since we the All, rehearse.

Moonlight my sorrow is, Sunset my soul,
Stars, my bright thoughts, my brief flesh, pain—
O Earth.

The Ocean's boundless round, doth blindly roll,
And exiles me—Creation's saddest birth.
The wandering winds my death through ages toll,
May sleep be sorrow in God's eyes of truth !

For then, dead souls dwell in that first grand sight
Of all that is, just as suns sunk in space
Shine in dark depths, the Infinite, and light
Of Heav'n one boundless song, one thrilling race
For life through death ! And God doth all the night
Enfold—and all the stars reflect His face.

Oh, what we were, again we soon shall be,
The wayside flower knows grief—its wistful eyes
Peep through deep grass, and strains small face to see
Its hills 'neath heaven—contented, drops and dies—
And such our weakness is. God grant that we
Alive, know death, and dead, know life's surprise.

PART II
SONGS OF THE SOUTH SEAS

PRELUDE

WHY DO I SING

WHY do I sing of sunsets far, where the dying skyline
ends,
And why, oh, why, are the world's worst men my very
dear, best friends ?
Deep in my heart I somehow know 'tis the sad lips say
those things,
That fluttering cry and steal away to God on angel-
wings.

Why do I sing of homeless men and happy, singing birds,
Of sunsets on the boundless seas with tender, poet words ?
Because I know men, birds, and flowers on lands 'neath
all the skies
Are beautiful, are sorrow-tears of God's creating eyes.

SHE-OAKS

(AUSTRALIA)

THE breeze-wail of myalls and she-oaks
I can hear ; on the steep
Faint echoes the wood-cutter's axe-strokes
From forest glooms deep ;
And sweet sounds,—oh, a girl's bright laughter
Comes back like a song
That brings tears to our eyes years after
As memories throng.

I know that time's hand has rung changes,
That only in dreams
Moonlight falls asleep on the ranges.
The voices of streams
To my ears in moonlight are singing
Beneath the gum-trees.
Yet only one voice is still ringing—
The voice of the seas.

Old comrades, with ships down the skylines,
Have faded away
With sunsets, and only one star shines—
My soul's mystic ray.

In the mist and rain of the long nights
My dreaming remains ;
But I 'm happy in dreams of those old fights
O'er seas and the plains.

And I greet you all of the old times—
Brave sea-chums afar.
Here 's a toast ! The soul of my rough rhymes
Wherever you are !
I gaze in your eyes, dead or living,
In alien lands.
If in Heaven you 'll cherish this giving,
This clasp of the hands.

DESIRE OF THE HILLS

(QUEENSLAND)

I LOVE the hills, the wilds, the hollows ; I somehow
know a sweet dead swallow's
Fluttering soul imprisoned in mine cries ;
I never see the dying flowers and mists of sunset autumn
hours,
Out o'er the hills, but southward turn my eyes.
I hear the reckless drover singing, the scatter'd stock all
homeward bringing,
Across the plains where bushmen racing go !
I see the tall red woods stand sleeping, their moon-bright
branches 'possums leaping,
As men move by their small tents just below.

Where life is one unpolished song of rhythms as you jog
along,
Old trees your friends, night and the starry skies ;
A sweet bird singing in the trees to serenade your
memories,
As in the campfire stare your dreaming eyes.
Oh for the sea-slopes curved and slanting, the tree-frogs
round me weirdly chanting,
And in the moonlit, marsh-flowered scented swamp ;

And far off, on the dim skyline, the swagman's tiny
bush-fire shine,

Where, homeless on the plains, he 's pitched his camp.

Oh for the cattle o'er plains crawling, the chuckling
cockatoos soft-calling,

Big, bright-winged blossoms breathing on a branch,
As creeping ragged from the gums, the swagman safe
at sunset comes,

To sleep inside the friendly squatter's ranch.

And o'er the slopes the flame-tree blooms, all fiery in
soft twilight glooms ;

As westward o'er the skyline's scant gum-trees
The parrots all fade far away, ring-specks dim down the
dying day.

In tiny fleets, o'er sunset's golden seas,
As o'er the hills tired sea-winds drifting creep down deep
hollows, leaves uplifting,

And whiffs from bush flowers and sweet-scented musk,
The day's death-blood far westward flushing.

The woods asleep, the birds all hushing,

As God sighs all the stars across the dusk.

There in my hut on some lone steep I long to lay my
head and sleep,

Half dream the night-bird's clandestine refrain
Is some dead girl's voice outside singing, as moonlit
flowers the walls soft clinging,

Scent dreams that drift me o'er the seas again !

THE HOMESTEAD

I CAN still see the forest trees
All waving in the dusk,
Smell from damp glooms, sweet whiffs of breeze,
Dead wattle blooms and musk.
Where sunset floods the dying day—
Ring-specked, where parrots flock—
Roams o'er the plateau far away
The drover with his stock.

The small bush homestead by the sea
Still stands, the front door swings
As on the tall, gaunt, dead gum-tree
The magpie sits and sings.
There, by the door, the stockman sits
And smokes. On her red rug
His pale wife sits just by and knits—
His beard three children tug!

And as I stand and, dreaming, gaze,
The trees have taken wing,
And from my heart out of old days
Comes this sad song I sing.

That garden where those children ran,
Raced me, laughed, screamed with joy,
Is overgrown—and I, a man,
Have overgrown the boy.

I know the redwood forest height—
Big branches thrilled with words,
Rich-laden with God's golden light,
Songs of soft, bright-winged birds—
Has blazed to ash in homestead fires
Of cities o'er the plains ;
Of all those woods and sweet desires
This poem now remains.

Sweet Ellen, curled hair and brown eyes,
I loved her pretty ways ;
And as I dream sad heart-mists rise
From those wild boyhood days.
My love was half a passion then,
That pure love God earth gave,
That comes in after-years to men
For some one in a grave.

Their shanty where I sweetly slept
And heard the night-bird screams—
As thro' the scrub the dingo crept—
Has rotted into dreams :

THE HOMESTEAD

Now thro' those hills the echoes fly
Of hearts o'er shining rails,
The night express fast thundering by
That brings the English mails.

Yet often I go back again
To where the homestead stands,
Gaze in old eyes thro' mists of pain
And clasp old shadow hands ;
Kiss Ellen, Bertha, and Lurline :
Those pretty children three
May some day read these lines of mine
And all remember me.

IN THE FOREST

THRO' dark-branched glooms oft do I creep, smell old
campfires, and know
Some strange delight deep in my heart, dead ages long
ago ;
Lost in the forest far, I creep 'neath thick-mossed ancient
trees,
My listening ears seem echoing shells of immemorial
seas ;
Old winds drift damp scents o'er a lake, whiffs by my
nostrils stray,
The wild men in canoes afar in sunset steal away !
Blue flowers, blood-fringed, peep wistfully 'tween crags
where damp-drip curls,
Gaze up—are half-remembered eyes of lovely wild dead
girls.
Then in the stillness sadly cries a lone-bird's song above
And thrills my heart to tears for some forgotten voice of
love.

THE FRIENDLY ISLANDS

THE seas I 've roamed, hypocrisy I hate ;
 God grafted in my soul sweet fire of song ;
 On life's dark hills I 've wrestled, fought with fate.
 Stuck in South Seas, still young I jog along.
 'Neath strange stars sit, o'er me the banyan bends
 These heathens round about their huts my friends.

We call them heathens—well, 'tis habit most ;
 King Mafeleto is my royal friend ;
 His ancestors, 'tis true, did eat on toast
 Their mortal enemies, but Heaven defend
 That I should judge men by their long past crimes—
 We Christians too have had some fine old times.

They 're shouting heathen songs by their hut fires !
 At each brown breast clings one sweet little mouth,
 Like diamonds peep, small satisfied desires—
 Eyes bright with starlight of the sea-nursed south !
 'Neath moon-bright branches roam tall wild men
 bare,
 As maidens sing and comb dishevelled hair.

Writhes that grand pain—where dark Pacific Seas
Lash tiny isles 'neath midnight's crystal skies,
Like tumbling silver glimmering thro' dark trees ;
O'er wild shore reefs sea-dark waves, curling, rise ;
Through bamboo branches shine wild eyes, those sins,
Savages clothed in loin strip and their own skins.

Some nights I creep down, visit my brown brothers
In hive-shaped den, each on a small mat squats,
Wild jabbering men and rough-haired squatting mothers,
All eating fish stuff steaming in earth pots.
They turn, smile, show white teeth as I creep in,
Such pleased dark eyes, as knees support each chin.

Deep-bosomed men, brown statues, thrilled with life,
They roam these forests old. Lithe curved-limbed
girls,
In modest loin strip dressed, laugh, race with strife,
My prize to win as fade their sun-flashed curls,
Gleam o'er the slopes as long legs, racing, run,
Their bright eyes flying back—my brass ring won !

Sweet eyes of innocence, so clear, wherein
Surprised you see Creation's virgin light ;
Real colour shades of life, and still the sin
Bright bubbling with sweet laughter in God's sight—
Our sins unborn, those diamond-sparkling eggs
That hatched are spiders creeping on black legs.

I 've seen wild orgies 'neath these moonlit palms,
Like skeletons wild men dance moonbeams white ;
The midnight tribal drum beats loud alarms !
A glimpse of whirling legs glide thro' moonlight.
All come and vanish with the tom-tom's tune
As clouds passed one by one across the moon.

And silently swayed shadows to and fro
In sheets of glass that mirror'd curved dark
limbs—
All imaged in lagoons !—where now below
Night's one small imaged cloud across soft-swims—
When Bingo took to wife Melango fair,
Hot-blushing in soft bridal robe—her hair !

I 've seen their King in solemn state enthroned,
And fire-majestic gleam in his big eyes,
As maidens swayed their bodies, chanting, moaned
Fierce tribal songs of deathless histories
In dead of night as tom-toms loud did beat
And grim Court jester tickled his big feet.

Like cherubims by each small hive-hut door
Peeped small wild faces with sweet wondering eyes
As that old King, to hear such ancient lore,
Did lift long arms and chin towards the skies,
To call down spirits of the mighty dead,
To bless his isle and fat anointed head !

Then have I, dreaming, safe here up a tree,
Thought of my England's splendour and royal Courts,
Gazed sadly at stars out across the sea,
And wondered why creation changed first thoughts,
Made cities with crimes shuffling round in boots,
When men so happy seemed in their skin suits !

Men say mosquitoes' fever, South Sea damp
On velvet skins, and such like living lies !
By Heaven ! here 's half the truth, it is the tramp
Of white men that the brown ones die like flies.
Nor could I sleep last night for traders' rows,
And Germans with wild women for their frows !

You could run out a regiment of wild men,
Parade them up and down for fifty years,
Peer in their eyes, and bury them, and then
Swear from your soul those fearless pioneers,
That build a nation's glory, pomp and pride,
Had less of virtue than the helpless side !

I 've sailed the seas, the lost brigade, those wrecks,
I 've chummed with them on their wild flight of haste,
They 'd killed some one, may be passed those bad
cheques.
Rough diamonds ? well, yes, some just bits of paste !
There 's two here now, clean-shaved, dyed ! bless your
hearts,
I 've seen some funny beggars round these parts !

They 'll build a church ! a prison's gloomy walls
Where wild men by their huts now squat and sing.
Erect a gallows ! when the trap-door falls,
Civilisation will be in full swing !
Nor is this satire, but my modest pun
On justice and grim truth beneath the sun !

Where are the unknown seas where they 'll ne'er come ?
Wild, hurrying souls, the poet's pioneers !
Sing me a song of silent tribal drum,
Dead camp-fires and bush griefs of other years.
God, where 's the wave that runs up singing, soars
And breaks to spray on undiscovered shores ?

Old world, good-bye ! my dreams have ceased to borrow,
Strange gleam of stars across this mystic isle.
Heaven's calm face brightens like an eye from sorrow,
As dawn swamps skyline dark where drift clouds
smile,
And tumbling down the slopes, rush, plump and brown,
The wild man's children from the small hut town !

MAFELETO'S PHILOSOPHY

(SOUTH SEA ISLANDS)

An old South Sea Islander's real opinion of the white man's trek with his creed into his primæval provinces, and interesting, inasmuch as it gives one an insight into his view of thinking and seeing things as they are.

COME round me, kinsmen, let the white man go,
What knows he of our soul, to heathen us,
Who drink the virgin forest sap? We know
This much—enough, he is a knowing cuss.
Are there no shadows 'neath his native sky,
No children starving by his forest tent
As from the Royal King's come the roystering cry
Of festive song, no souls, no heart's grief rent?

Let him shout on, pass me the full nut-bowl,
I'm old, would I trust to his wretched creed?
I, with my fifty gods, that soothe my soul,
Must fail them all—trust to one god—indeed!
Look you—I'm wise, a dead white man is dead
Should he offend his Heav'n while 'neath the sun—
And we?—well, at the worst, when our soul's fled,
If fifty fail, we've still his Mighty One!

He 'd steal our souls, curse him, his lying race
Claimed my blue seas and this my ancient isle !
Remember well do I that first white face
That blessed my head, with hand t'wards heaven did
smile.

Pah ! I believed that grin !—had I known then
Those eyes gazed from the spirit heart of hell
I 'd slain him !—faith, 'tis true these strange white men
One virtue have when cooked—yes, do eat well !

Pass me the bowl, time 'tis to grieve, at most,
When in sick dying eyes the last stars sleep.
We 've won our battles too, enjoyed the roast
Of what sweet foes ! 'tis even so we reap
Sweet vengeance ! They, those prating white men
skunks,
Our wives defiled, our land made one vile hell ;
Cursed missionaries, and traders on night-drunks—
Ah ! I 've a tale, when dead, their God to tell !

THE CHIEF MATE

My ship 's at sea, the sails outspread, the moon flies
backward overhead,
The bow heaves up, the swell is strong, she broadside
lies and skims along !
The figure-head with lifted hands prays on, the skipper
staring stands
In full view on the poop, beard white—I know the old
man 's sad to-night.
The ' off ' watch, restless, cannot sleep, as roam their
bunks across the deep.
Some, whispering by the foremast, smoke, where wind-
ward booms each wild sea-stroke !
Here, on the endless waters hurled, we are half-way
across the world !
My mate, young Wells, he 's on watch too, my nose and
ears sting, with cold blue.
This is no Spanish Main, the breeze comes straight from
icy Arctic seas !
We are both nervous, Wells and I ; there on the main-
hatch it doth lie,
In canvas wrapt, the chief mate's length, devoid of light
his eyes, his strength

Of limb and soul, and hand-grip warm, all vanished from
that silent form !

He jumped at sunset in wild seas to save a sailor !
grasped his knees !

I saw it all : two struggling men together fighting wild
seas, when

They went beneath the hissing waves. By God ! the
seas to-day did rave,

The skipper waved his arms and roared, the thundering
seas leapt up on board

Like hissing fiends to stop the chase of comradeship with
flinchless face !

We sat, a lump in every throat, out there, tossed in the
small lifeboat.

We brought that dead form back alone, the other one he
had clean gone !

The crew his orders had obeyed, but like a sleeping child
they laid

His wet head down ; his brave blue eyes looked through
their arms straight at the skies.

At sunset stood round pale with sorrow, they 'll drop him
over there to-morrow !

And now the lone ship flies along, as swaying 'neath the
stars in song

The sails are singing overhead, above the hatch where
he lies dead.

No wonder winds and sails fast flying sound something
like dead sailors crying.

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

SOME day I shall command respect,
With earnest eyes men will acclaim
Some virtue mine, which to my shame
Is hidden by their sad neglect.

I shall be dead then, fast asleep !
They will shout my old published songs,
Make wild romance of all my wrongs.
My creditors will hear—and weep.

The friend who gave the loyal trust,
That in some weakness I forgot,
Will hear, and say, ' I hate him not ! '
Why hate a little bit of dust ?

They 'll say, when stone-deaf I 'm in bed,
Though of their name I am the worst—
' He 's dead, alas ! the best go first ! '
True 'tis, the best men are men dead.

My shabbiest friend will knock the door,
Be ushered in, in tears stand mute ;
Gaze round my room, spot my best suit—
Départ, and will return no more !

That night, around the festive board,
With glee they 'll stuff, then one will cough,
And say, ' Poor chap, he 's better off
Than we.' But shall I be, O Lord ?

Kind words they 'll publish o'er my bones—
Alas ! that I, who so much need
Such praise, shall not stand there and read !
I wish for births there were tombstones !

To think, they who looked in my face
With calm contempt, will gaze with awe,
All hushed, on me, who ne'er once saw
Such looks in life for a scapegrace !

Oh to sit there with pride and share
The pomp and state imperial
That will attend my funeral.
They 'd blush with shame to see me there !

'Tis not on Earth, but underneath,
We 're beautiful to eyes o'erhead,
Have all the virtues when we 're dead,
In life walk arm-in-arm with death.

So do I dream, philosophise,
Here in my attic-room to-night,
That mirror-cracked my pinched face white
Reveals, and hungry restless eyes.

This crust of bread my wealth, a lent
Felt-hat unpawned my hope in gloom,
As ticks the clock t'wards changeless doom,
When that door 's thumped and thumped for rent !

ROMANCE

I SAILED away across the seas,
I heard the sails soft-singing,
And climbing sailors, to the breeze
Their wild sea chanties—flinging.
I climbed aloft, gazed o'er the sea,
I saw dark shore-lines rise
Where up, all ramping wild with glee,
Waves tossed before my eyes!

I travelled strange lands far and wide,
I dived 'mong mirror'd moons
In waters where the catamarans glide
By palms and reef lagoons.
I gazed in a dusky maiden's eyes
By a wild man's tiny tent,
Then packed my swag as the black crow flies,
To another land I went.

I lay all night on the homeless plain,
To the stars I prayed in bed
For life's wild Romance, but prayed in vain,
As the stars crept overhead.

But often in the lone bush-night
Bright eyes came, leaned o'er me,
Then glimmering in the pale moonlight,
Ran back into the sea.

And in those waters o'er and o'er
I've dived in vain, then cried
For misery on some lone shore
With no one by my side.
And so for years I wandered, friend,
Sought love and wealth, alack !
Roamed distant lands, and in the end
Brought this one sad song back.

REALITY

(SEQUEL TO ROMANCE)

THE seas I 've travell'd, made my pile
 Of wealth—'tis comradeship—of one,
 Voltaire-like on this windy isle—
 This Universe, snug in the sun
 Secure I sit, and all men trace
 With sidelooks on sad cynic me
 On this grave saturnine old face
 Experience grim, they stare and see.

Not one e'er dare approach my throne!
 They know I 've found the whole race out.
 Severely with myself alone
 I reign, nor have one earthly doubt
 But my best friend, staunch, true will be,
 As there he sits, his old back bent,
 Doth jealous watch, with love, o'er me
 And my welfare, though not one cent
 Have I, as in this mirror glass
 At him I gaze, and searching trace
 Truth in man's eyes, for there, alas!
 I recognise my own sad face.

ERE I AM OLD

DEAR God, while flowers and fields are lovely,
 And all my dreams have wings,
While in my soul to you far-soaring
 A skylark sings,
My eyelids close in slumber gently,
 About my limbs enfold
The silence of the buried ages—
 Ere I am old.

Bring sleep—ere stars sing hopeless sorrow,
 While on the hedgerow spray
The blackbird is an angel singing
 To me all day.
Death—hold me tight, leave no escaping,
 Fast to my dead limbs cling,
When swallows o'er my grave, returning,
 Fly back to spring.

THE MISSING EARL

(FIJI)

HERE, 'neath strange skies, the South Sea moon
Doth ghostly fire the helmet fringe—
The regiment line of seas in tune
That charge the shore, where monsters cringe—
Those huge dark rocks—while round me whirls,
In moonlight, wild men and wild girls !

Hark ! how they jump and joyous shriek
'Neath palms, as falls the moonbeam rain !
As with brown legs my white legs weak
Strive, likewise toss and jerk in vain,
As spitefully I throw them higher,
Think of old England and perspire.

I 'm happy being dead ; I stand
An exile in dark ages grim,
This other world, this magic land,
This unknown isle of Oceans dim,
As like grey souls that 'scape the grave,
Outrigged canoes come o'er the wave.

There sits the royal queen, and black king
With chin on knees, dressed in no clothes,
As round the dusky-maiden ring
Whirls in moonlight, his fat broad nose
A bone ring shakes ; what sadder sight
For me whose king once made a knight !

I, who have watch'd white bodies shine
Thro' gauzy veils in splendid halls,
And eyes that sparkled rich with wine,
And now, ye gods, hear that applause,
As white-teethed maidens clap and praise
Each effort, as my knees I raise !

I have discarded evil dress,
What care I now for life's sweet chance,
As naked in my fig-leaf dress
Beneath the South Sea moon I dance !
Gaze in these dusky lovelit eyes—
This thing I 'll love thro' changeless doom,
For she, my wife, 'neath English skies,
Alas ! did vanish—with my groom !

IN THE BUSH

I 'M back in the bush with a trustful chum,
With our drawing-room spread 'neath a gum !
I was sick of myself and evil ways
And the splendid scheme that never pays !
And life that is made up, O my brother,
Of one curs'd thing and then another !
'Tis night and the forests sleep so still :
If I climb up there on that little hill,
And stand beneath those tall red trees,
I can spot the far-off moonlit seas !
And the waves all tossing splash the sky,
Where the full-rigged home-bound pitches by !
There sits my chum, old sober-side,
We 've travelled, we two, the whole world wide.
He 's thick-necked, low, but he has no fears,
And his mouth as he gapes ends near his ears !
As we sit by this camp-fire blazing bright—
Here where we need not be polite,
And sit in a little chair upright
To a guest that will call every night !
Where no one bangs at your shanty door,
And growls, ' I 've been here twice before,

And I don't care a damn 'bout your good intent ;
All I want is my overdue rent !'
If he did—these hills are silent, deep,
The gullies dark by the moonlit steep,
And here you could kill a man outright,
And no one know that he died that night !
Though he stood by your door a month upright—
Till he shrank and his clothes flapped in moonlight.
Oh ! 'tis sweet to sit on this dead gum-log
As he waggeth his tail, my chum—my dog !

THE GOLD COAST

(HOMESICK)

HERE, sweltering 'neath blue tropic skies,
For miles and miles deep jungle lies.
Like big brown peg-tops upside down,
Just out there stands the black man's town.
And men call this the Golden South—
No wonder I 'm down in the mouth !
About five thousand hissing flies
Swarm round my sun-blazed, blinded eyes !
And though the gold-mines are round here,
I 'd sell my soul for English beer !
I 've sweated all night in these pants.
You dare not take them off ; the ants,
The fleas, and awful crawling things,
Creep 'tween the sheets and flap their wings—
My body smarts now with their stings !

Hot fevers own this cursed place,
Grip tight your throat, stare in your face.
And through your frenzied brain all night
Black devils leap with wild delight !

Until you sleep, then from far lands,
Stretched o'er the seas come shadow hands,
And lips that kiss your fevered brow—
Ah, God! to feel such kisses now!
On that small steep, the red trees by,
The dead white men all homesick lie!
They cannot hear the tom-tom's tune
By night, when 'neath the Afric moon
The black's blood-curdling shriek, as run
From jungles dark things one by one,
In moonlight jump that silent steep:
Thank God, dead men lie deep in sleep!
There's something shouting in my head—
'Clear out, old man, before you're dead!'
And if when you all read these lines,
No letter comes, and no old signs,
To tell I'm back in London Town,
You'll know they too have got me down!

THAT HUT!

(NORTH QUEENSLAND)

IN the saddle I swayed as helplessly I clutched the
loosened reins
Out under the bending blue gum-trees of the misty
moonlit plains,
Not a sound but the drought wind's sweeping as I sat
there still astride
By a little moonlit shanty hut on the edge of the slope's
steep side.
As I knocked again and listened—tap, tap on the moon-
lit door,
O'er the silent gullies faintly died the echoes as before,
As with mocking, echoing laughter across the moonlit
dream,
Down in the dead swamp oaks pealed out the laughing
jackass scream,
And over the red woods 'neath the moon off noiselessly
it flapped
As once again on that shanty door with my stockwhip
loud I tapped.
My heart thumped, leapt in the stillness, as my horse her
ears up-pricked,
For a woman's voice within replied 'Hallo!' as the
bolt-bar clicked,

As down o'er the moonlit marsh swamp oaks my shadow
 slipped and leapt,
 With mimic stride as I swung aside, from the stirrup
 softly stept.

There in the gloom of that small room we sat, we two
 alone,
 As all around came soft the sound of the night wind's
 wailing moan ;
 She by the bench, a comely wench, sat with pale outlined
 face
 As little slips of bright flame tips crept from the small
 fireplace.
 And o'er the floor thro' open door from far moon-silvered
 trees
 The bright moonbeams in silver streams crept o'er her
 face and knees !
 As to my ears came sad as tears her wailing tale of
 gloom,
 Her husband dead, laid out in bed in that next silent
 room !
 Alas ! my brain's old fire again raged my sad soul to bliss ;
 I gazed in skies of soft dark eyes, felt heaven in one
 warm kiss ! . . .
 I held my breath, that thing of death my blood made
 chilly creep,
 When I that night held up a light, in that room crept to
 sleep.

Outstretched there on my small couch grim I sideways
fixed my eyes on him !

He must have been quite six feet tall, his shape took up
the length of wall,

My candle spluttered in the gloom, left moonshine only
in that room.

Outside passed on a little cloud, sent dark slips creeping
o'er his shroud !

I moved my eyes sideways about ; it seemed those dead
feet there stuck out

To fix my eyes and make me creep ; unshut they stared,
I could not sleep !

The shadows of gum boughs wind-swept, with moon-
beams o'er those fingers crept,

Across the thick clay walls did go and o'er his shroud
crept to and fro.

I heard the night-bird as the trees all bending moaned
like far-off seas

As ghastly pale like sculptured stone I lay in that dim
room alone ;

Bulged out my eyes, like glass both stared, his fingers
moved, did scratch his beard !

I cursed that hut, I cursed grim fate, my hair did stiffen,
bristle straight !

I could not move, I thought ' I dream,' fate gripped my
tongue, I could not scream !

Dear God, I blessed each bubbling note as outside ope'd
a rich red throat.

The night-bird's music sweet did steal into my ears so
calm and real !
It stopped ! I heard a whiz, a scratch, a slip of flame—
fizz !—'twas a match !
A shadow by the window slipped, across the room it
ghost-like whipped !
I heard my hostess outside whisper, a clip of lips—Jove,
some one kissed her !
Then in moonlight from left to right it moved, that
shroud, O ghastly sight ;
Great God, were my two eyes bewitched ? those dead
protruding feet both twitched !
My eyes did jump, my heart did thump, I fancied I
could hear it bump !
As through that awful hush did pour cold sweat-drops,
drip, drip, on the floor.
I made to spring, leap off that couch, my tense nerves
centred in one crouch
To bolt, to spring across that floor clean out of that hut's
small front door.
I gave one look with sheer fright steady, I slipped both
feet down floorwards—ready !
Oh, terror ! God ! I shut my eyes ; those dead feet moved
in mimic wise !
To stay my flight out in the night distinctly both moved
in moonlight.
My tongue went dry as cobble-stone, my heart gave
forth one soundless moan.

His shroud did uplift with his knees, in moonshine big
with shadow'd trees
Upon the mud clay wall it rose, his image—monstrous
head, then nose!
And beard as slowly he did steal from off his bier white-
faced and real!
Uncurled my tongue my lips to lick—Jove, 'twas so dry
I heard it click!
When he sat up with eyes aflush, with finger to his lip
said 'Hush!'
He was not dead, yet there in bed, with jaw-rag wrapped
about his head!
With hatred in my eyes I gazed, my whole soul terror-
blazed, amazed
To think he was not dead, but shammed; I moved my
mouth, sighed 'Well, I'm damned!'
As idiot-like from that first fright at him I chuckled with
delight;
His pale old mouth hissed, 'Do not stir; I died, I
shammed death to catch her!'
I gazed around, gave one wild bound, all noiselessly for
night winds drowned
The horror noise of what befell, and left for me no dread
of hell!
As he from off his trestle slipped, cold fingers fierce my
throat tight gripped!
I stared (O God! were this all lies), gazed my bulged
eyes in those dead eyes!

I swayed, and fell with deadened thud, rushed to my
 mouth hot foam and blood!
 I felt his fingers cold relax, as rolled my eyes, he seized
 an axe!
 I staggered to my feet as he sprang through the door,
 imprisoned me!
 The door shut tight, I heard a scream: 'O Heaven,' I
 cried, 'pray that I dream!'
 I seized a bar, and blow on blow, o'er that iron-bark
 door swift did go!
 By faith, the splinters sparkling flew, as every stroke
 fate-like struck true.
 Till through the chinks I saw moonlight, and that old
 fiend dance in shroud white.
 The door down crashed as through I dashed, stood
 breathless, blood my face warm splashed!
 I stumbled as I rushed the door, o'er something huddled
 on the floor;
 I made for him! Outside I stood, gazed o'er the moonlit
 solitude.
 I rubbed my eyes, thought 'Do I dream? are things
 really what they seem?'
 Winds stirred tall trees that moaned the breeze, a night-
 bird sweetly burst to song;
 Across the sky, 'neath the moon high, a small cloud
 hurried fast along.
 It was no dream; real stars did gleam. Outside the
 plains stretched wide and real,

As standing there in shirt near bare, the cool winds
sweetly by did steal,
As with eyes wide with grim surprise I stood there
petrified, and saw
His shroud outflying at his heels, his jaw-rag flapping
round his jaw,
His bare legs racing as he ran, and flew in front a little
man !
Just like a rabbit scurrying raced the secret lover that
he chased !
I saw a face uplifted gleam, heard silence—followed by
a scream !
Across the silent gullies wide the echoes flying—flying
died !

.
With one wild bound to horse I sprang ! swung round !
I was astride !
For in the saddle up the slopes that swiper off did ride !
As after him I galloped fast, far off he disappeared,
Till round the curved pale moonlit slopes, sideways
swung out his beard !
Away down thro' deep gullies' gloom with eyes pushed
out with fright,
With outstretched neck she followed fast his shadow in
moonlight !
As o'er the sombre, sheer steeps' walls, with swift,
stupendous stride,
Silently it bobbed ahead ! across each steep, one side !
Till 'neath the moon, far off, away I saw him racing go !

Up winding slopes, dodged 'tween the trees, I chased a
 mile below
 That ghostly rider fleeing fast; I saw off, fluttering
 white,
 His torn shroud 'neath the distant trees, a glimpse out
 o'er the night,
 As 'neath the curved pale midnight moon, right over-
 head, passed by
 Migrating cranes, like skeletons on wings, across the
 sky.
 Jove! my old horse with fearful fright across the slopes
 did fly.

Did seem trees, hills, all breathless, watched that race
 o'er those night slopes—
 That Fate somehow on me had staked brief man's eternal
 hopes!
 Dead men climbed up the moonlit trees, all waved their
 shadow-hands,
 Wailed hollow murmurs of applause across those silent
 lands!
 I chased Perversity in human shape, all shades of crime
 in him:
 All shades of love, that tragic hut's true love and old
 love grim.
 I chased my hideous passions—God! hot fires raged in
 my head!
 That fleeing man seemed my own self, *that old hut corpse
 not dead!*

To haunt my dreams, and as one sees his image by him
pass
In moonlit water, silently down some vast mirror-
glass
I chased my dead self. I'd grown old ; distinctly I could
trace—
As turned that flying rider off and grinned—my own
white face !
I yearned to clutch him by the throat and see his still
corpse lay
Out on the plains, and from myself exulting ride away !
I chased life's nightmare, onward flew ; I knew his flight
would send
Him t'wards the stars, that silent peak, the world's
extreme dim end.
As o'er a chasm wide and deep the old man flying
went !
I loosed the reins, thumped, heaved her sides, my brave
horse nearly spent.
I held my breath : up, up she reared, with aeroplane-like
glide,
Arose in space, her nostrils steamed in moonlight—oh,
my pride,
As sailed her heels, then noiselessly dropped, safe, the
other side !
I thought of comrades half in spite, to think they were
not there
To see the way I rode that night on that horse, with
back bare !

As up the winding mountain slope he raced, I after him!
 In deep, dark glooms, bright on the winds, all ghostly
 outlined dim,

Dead women with dishevelled hair uplifting in moonlight,
 Wailed sad applause to see me ride for love's sake 'cross
 the night.

As at his heels I rode and gasped, I breathless held my
 breath;

I knew one false step meant for me and all men certain
 death!

My horse pawed up the last sheer cliff, there on the
 mountain top,

Face to face we stood, so still, I heard my own sweat drop,
 As in each other's eyes we stared, I heard the far sea
 sounds.

I clutched his throat, blew off his head, his beard blazed
 brightly—zounds!

He vanished on the moonlit wind! The mountain
 swayed as I

Fell over, over, tumbling through space so silently
 I heard the waves a mile below all faintly splish and
 splash,

As my old horse and I, both dead, down on the rocks
 came crash!

.
 The room was dark, there was no sound, the night winds
 softly swept

Leaves on the window pane, as oped my eyes and nearly
 wept,

To find death was so hushed and still, and that men still,
when dead,
Could think, and have such dry, parched mouth and
heavy, swollen head.
I heard outside the night bird's song up in the blue gum-
tree,
Its melody crept to my ears in fellowship with me.
The blankets moved! my chum's white face—oh, joy!
I'd kicked his shins
In that wild night ride, chasing hard a dead man for his
sins!
And that's why never on wild sprees, no, not my one
best chum,
Nor any living man now can entice me to drink rum!
Such was my dream, that most men dream, when con-
science smites the brain,
When old dead passions will arise and haunt our lives
again!

SAMOA

IN the west the sunsets seaward sink,
Few sails fade over that ocean's brink
As catamarans glide with ghostly wings
In moonlight, as each cargo sings !
Swarms of wild faces sailing along
O'er the South Sea Bay chanting wild song ;
We anchored down by the still lagoons,
By the dark-branched palms and mirrored moons
By the shore-bamboos, where moved wild eyes,
Peeping through leaves, bright with surprise.
Wild women ran from each secret den,
Admired, gazed at white sailor-men.
As we crept up shores of mystic-lands,
Our sea-boots tossing silver sands,
As in the vault of lovely night,
The South Sea moon was hanging bright ;
Our shadows in still water glassed
Like crowds of ghosts, crept as we passed
There in a space sat the old king,
And women bare their legs did fling,
Danced silently in pale moonlight
As Mile-End cheered with wild delight !

That old king's nose with grin immense
Did spread, revealed real innocence !
His white teeth gleamed as all the crew
Laughed louder, still—Heavens, 'tis most true,
Up went her legs, the South Sea Queen !
Hysterical, the crew did lean
One on the other as supports,
They nudged each other, the old salts.
The cook forgot his place, did smack
Our stern Scotch skipper on the back !
I 'm glad they laughed and did not weep,
They 're now all in their graves asleep.

OUTWARD BOUND

I 'M off! outbound o'er wide blue seas. Farewell, ye
unpaid bills!

Great heaven, I 've swallowed seas of stuff, ship-loads of
oil and pills!

For mist and rain crept in my bones 'neath English skies,
but I

Wish you good luck, old country, and brave Englishmen,
good-bye!

Farewell, old fenced-in woods, dead dreams, primroses,
and bluebells;

Farewell, ye city alley-ways with your suspicious smells;

Farewell, old shivering Fleet Street moths, by London's
splendid bars!

I 'm bound for boundless plains lit by the everlasting
stars.

Respectability, farewell! Oh, God be thanked, tweed
suits

Hide skeletons in top hats, starved, that shuffle round in
boots,

Ring out my soul one real wild cry to touch a nation's ears,
Sing me to wealth—my dear old rhymes awake a nation's
cheers!

I would refresh old skeletons, I'd stand them all
upright,
Stick new eyes in, in rows they'd stand; God, laughing
at the sight,
Would be my critic, and I'll swear review my songs—all
right.
Old Fleet Street relics, think of me when your sad eyes
you raise
As down you swallow beer and wail o'er those old better
days.
Maybe I too shall dream of you, and miss your tales of
woe;
Will find my golden age, as now, in dreams of long ago,
For while I rhyme these lines—who knows?—some
rhymers o'er the seas
Looks Englandwards, is cursing scenes the same as I
curse these!
A nation's curse, that built the world, my England's
noble pride—
Where'd be the brave old pioneers if home smells
satisfied?
They've broken up the wooden ships and blazed them in
hearth fires
To warm the dreams of English boys who cherish sea
desires,
Ye figure-heads that roamed 'neath stars to-night a city
roars,
Where curled the singing waves to spray on undiscovered
shores.

And now your sad old faces stare o'er streets where
traffic streams ;
When o'er the Thames the ancient moon pours down its
wistful beams,
I've watch'd your upraised hands pray on across the
moonlit ridge,
Voyaging seas in dreams across Westminster—by the
Bridge !¹
Your sailor-men, who sang aloft they 're dead, or may,
alas !
Now old, be cursing on some tramp, all cleaning paint
and brass.
Brave Bill, the boatswain, bossed us all across the seven
seas wide,
He's selling matches, shivering, Heavens ! on kerb-
stones near Cheapside.
Farewell, we've still the ships that roam, the decks
cleared clean for sea ;
A swarm of hands wave on the wharf, but not one hand
for me.
I'm bound away for southern seas, where the flying
clippers go,
To fight the breath of the ramping winds where the
eastern slashers blow,
Till the moonless summer nights stare down as the
lightning swells the skies,

¹ The figure-heads of the old ships can be seen at the ship-breakers, Westminster Bridge.

As silently as love-light flashed from a woman's warm
dark eyes,
As I climb aloft o'er seas of dreams and clasp creation
bright
In my arms and kiss the stars, my soul one with the
Infinite,
Oh, I 'll see the Leeuin light afar, in the long dog-watch
I 'll creep
Below to my bunk with praying lips, thank God as I fall
asleep.
I 'll not care a d——n for anything ! with a shirt wrapt
up my wealth !
And photos of my few dead friends I 'll steal ashore by
stealth
When I smell the scented sweet shore winds come
blowing out to me
As the big grey loafing tramp sea birds wheel round and
put to sea.
I 'll creep up the slopes a happy man who has found life's
one true worth,
My best friend all the world, I will imparadise the earth.
I 'll build a tiny wooden house, it must be 'neath some
trees,
Where I can watch the silvered waves of tumbling moon-
lit seas !
And if ever I dream of cities far, and I cannot close my
eyes,
As out in the silent forest depth the wild dog, wailing,
cries,

Till the laughing voices of dead men sad haunt my sleep-
less brain,
With stern deliberation I will rise and heal my pain.
I 'll lean o'er my bed and take strong pulls at the bottle
that there I 'll keep,
And find the golden age again in draughts of vintage deep!
Oh, I know that only one wind blows the dead man's
soul to sea.
And wherever it blows, oh, what care I, since God's
hand fashioned me ?
On the last foothold that earth man gives, where the day
to night doth change,
As stars come creeping silently over the last dark range.
I 'll stand on that last grand silent peak, brave, into the
sunset dive,
For I 've loved God's gift of life as much as any man
alive !

THE BRIDAL NIGHT

(HER CONFESSION)

FOR ever warm and lovely are my limbs
For him each secret white, caressing curve.
Within my chamber glass my image swims,
As love bewitched my eyes soft sway and swerve
To sweeter show my body's bare outline,
As thro' my tumbling hair my pleased eyes shine.

For ever young I 'll be, with warm desires,
To be imprisoned in love's sweet, strong arms.
I shall for him create from my soul's fires
His image, or mine own, that his soul charms !
I will curve these fond arms o'er him by night,
As thro' sweet dreams repose my warm limbs
white

For him my rich red blood, my eyes, this hair,
Unloosed, dark tumbling o'er my maiden breast,
Made lovelier for this thought—he 'll clasp me there,
Whene'er at dawn our farewell lips are pressed.
His bearded face I 'll kiss when moonlight creeps
His eyelids quivering as still on he sleeps !

O Heaven ! I thank thee that I live, that I
The thrill have felt thou hadst who sighed the skies !
O midnight stars ! unloved, big dumb-struck sky !
Since he so praised light of my violet eyes,
Where thro' my soul's love pleased, blushed as the rain
Kissed to a rainbow by the sun again.

Heaven made me as I am, with rounded form,
The splendid strength and frailness of the world !
The universe I feel, of bright suns warm,
Flashed out and sang ! bright thoughts thro' darkness
whirled
Thro' love supreme, that found, that came to bless
God, brooding in eternal loneliness.

I do not fear the winds of heaven or sea,
Those breakers tumbling shoreward, far away ;
Or Him whose pale moon sheds beams silently
O'er hills where dark, tall trees oft silvered sway.
But those old ogres in the hills asleep,
'Twere death if from their beds they did upleap !

My silken robe falls as I lean, o'erpeep
My window open wide, thro' lattice bars
Cool airs breathe o'er sweet-scented flowers asleep ;
The cedars far beyond sway 'neath pale stars,
The thick leaves stir. Hush ! in cold moonlight dim
A shadow slips—O joy ! my love, ' tis him !

A SAILOR'S GRAVE

OH, sink me down deep under the sea,
And the wild waves will beat over me ;
The foam of my shroud toss under the sky
When over my head the ships go by,
As the south-bound swallows screaming go
From the mists where the wild lone shore looms low
I will live in the beat of storms, though dead !
As the tides sway o'er my moving bed,
I 'll hear collide the wild green waves
As they clash and meet the dark sea-caves ;
When sunset flames the low skyline far,
Till the waters deep around me are
A mirror wide for every star,
My dead eyes will stare up and be
With shadows pale in eternity.
When the shadow keels of the homebound ships
Glide over me soft as the moonlight slips
Thro' dark-depths to kiss my pale dead lips,
I 'll hear the sailors over me singing,
In the moonlit flying rigging—clinging,
Till their voices fading leave the sound
Of deep moving waters lapping round

Oh, my soul and the sea have been as one,
And the depth of my passion bright as the sun,
So in other years—oh, eyes to be—
Oh, unborn women, stare out to sea—
When the spring flowers blow dream then of me,
For I have loved the soul of your eyes,
And am lying where round the cold wave cries
As my dead limbs lift with each deep tide rise.
Oh, maidens to grieve, unloved, come, creep
To the shore where the waters around me sweep,
And there dip your lovely warm, white limbs,
For dead eyes glide where the moonlight swims,
And your prayers—will they all be dreamed in vain
If a dead man is love-thrilled again ?

A VOICE FROM THE SOUTH SEAS

COOL under the gums a river runs down Murrumbidgee
way,
And every night in the redwood height the star-eyed
'possums play
Till over the slopes the stockwhip rings and the echoing
hoofs faint beat
As up in the hills the lyre-bird fills the bush with music
sweet ;
And far away by the eyes of day the big black swans in
lines
Of curling wings like paddling things glide where the
sunrise shines.
Out over the mountain ridge they pass, while far o'er
the velvet steep
The stockmen ride the scrub slope side chasing the flying
sheep !
And miles away the dim sea waves like white moss rise
and fall
As the deep-sea ships where the skyline dips across the
wide world crawl,

As the sea winds roam from their wild storm home to
kiss the rich bush-flowers,
And threading the slopes the green vine gropes where the
karri-karri towers,
While over the western slopes away on the winds I
dreaming go !
Away with my comrades of the hills where the scented
wattles blow.
As the galloping hoofs beat to the tune of the landscape
fitting by !
And the screaming cockatoos above as we crash 'neath
the blue gums high,
Till scrambling from the dead scrubwood to their roosts
they flapping scream,
As far away the deep sea waves toss in the moon's
white dream,
As racing the mossy open slopes we hear their fading cries.
And bending my head I kiss my mare, gaze down in her
beautiful eyes
Till the wild star-flowers seem dancing through the
lakes of all the skies,
Till down in the hollow gully's gloom, around the bright
bush-fire,
The winds from seaward creeping come to sweep each
leafy lyre,
With spirit fingers wail the trees and the she-oaks o'er
the plains,
And we are the souls of the melodies of the all-night-long
refrains. . . .

Ah, those were the days when life was sweet, when we
galloped side by side,
And where was the stockman who could race me over
the reaches wide
When I was a boy and all the world gazed in my eyes
with pride ?

.
Days follow days, nights follow nights, and the traders
come and go

As I watch the lonely schooner pass where the deep,
wide waters flow,

Fading away o'er ocean dark as the dying simooms blow,
Till the stars pale fall in the mirroring deep of each wild
shore lone lagoon

As the smoke-like sails all silver fired glide by the low
sea-moon.

And who am I that sings this song ? as the sunset wind
soft grieves

With the wild birds' bubbling music blown thro' scented
wild fruit leaves,

As I sit and dream of the old dead days here on these
South Sea isles,

With undressed blacks, shut in alone by the skyline's
wide sea-miles.

As toiling in for ever creep up ocean's breast of sands
The little South Sea wailing waves to toss their snow-
white hands—

Time's homeless waifs, they crying kiss wild red-lipped
coral lands.

Hark! chanting on the steep slope-side the big brown
wild men squat

By beehive dens, while sadly I half envy their wild lot ;
A white man I who sadder am to hear those old-world
tunes,

That seem the sad survival of dead sunsets and dead
moons,

And I, a moral white-bleached thing, who left here long
ago,

And have returned to find, alas ! I am no better so !

As seaward stare my weary eyes, for Fate has willed that I
Should wake the little conscious things that watch the
stars go by.

For oh ! I love their small plump backs and little demon
eyes—

Six of them romping on the slopes as lolling fat she lies,
My half-caste wife, the blacker for the blue of tropic
skies,—

And me also !—disgraced, exiled from all the family ties.
As the swallows swift are flying by the shores of English
seas,

And the swaying rooks hoarse calling from the inland
tall elm-trees,

As the scented hedgerow flowers' warm pulse are musical
with bees,

As I watch the dipping sunsets sink from skyline to
skyline,

O'er the whole wide world that lies between this isle and
dreams of mine.

AN EXILE'S DREAMS

OLD dreams are dead, and blown life's magic rose.
As light of all dead women's eyes
The winter sunset gleams, the starving crows
Are flapping home, where slow it dies.
The deep-sea ships far off in twilight pass
Like shadows down some mighty mirror-glass.

Heaven send me dreams again of other lands,
Where women fair and brave men roam ;
Where love and hate clasped are fast by the
hands ;
And sleeping lies my boyhood home,
As by my bed the old torn novel lies,
Its wild romance behind my sleeping eyes

Oh, let me hear the robin sing again,
Where sunset streaks the winter sky ;
And hear the old piano's strummed refrain.
Oh, ne'er on earth, not till I die,
My soul will music touch and turn to tears,
Like songs remembered sweet of other years !

Heaven send me love such as I 've known in dreams,
When winds and flowers with me did dance,
As sails at sea died down the sunset streams,
Bound for far shores of wild romance !
Till slept my childish eyes, in bed upstairs,
Loved by old heroes, dead a thousand years !

Oh, maidens beautiful, in bed asleep,
Curl 'tween soft sheets, close your bright eyes.
Oh, wayward boys, dream on, in slumber deep,
Your wildest dreams there realise.
Let angels whisper ere unto your ears—
The sweetest singer's song is full of tears.

Let God's south wind kiss every wild-flower dream
That bloweth in sweet fields of youth ;
And swallow-birds far down the valley gleam
Ere wails the winter wind of truth ;
Ere woods lie hushed, and o'er the sunset plain
The birds have flown that ne'er return again.

THE LAST SOLDIER

(ON THE FALL OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE)

HERE in this old inn by the sea,
While slow the English sunset dies,
I sit and watch poor Old Manzi
Lean o'er his fire. Within his eyes—
Bloodshot, alas! relentless stares old age
As Time turns slowly o'er his last grand page.

All weight of care lies on one back ;
All sorrow gleams in Manzi's eyes ;
All tears course down each furrowed track
Of that sad, wrinkled face that lies
Half slumbering as all sighs—the winds—soft toss
His scanty white forelock his brow across.

And we have travelled all the seas
Till that old face is like the map,
Deep-wrinkled, as with head on knees
He broods before his last long nap :
So imbecile and wan now his old face is,
You'd never dream he once judged all the races.

And his worn suit, too, not one thread
But stolen 'twas from distant lands,
Ay, to his shirt! What thousands dead
Weaved that old suit? Jove! those dead hands
For poor old Manzi wait—dead regiments grim—
To get their own back at the death—of him!

He 'll die—where is the man e'er born
Who never in the end did die?
Rome, Carthage—all to-day forlorn,
Point their dark ruins to the sky;
And thousands will brave Manzi's history read
When weeds and flowers blow o'er that slumbering
head.

From China—ay, Peru—they 'll come!
Stand on the dust-heap where he died,
And say, ' Here was grand Manzi's home,
And now he 's dead, with all his side! '
And round bright fires strange races sad will sit,
Will read and weep, some day, to think of it.

Not dead—the passion of those limbs,
Not dead—light of those tragic eyes,
He 'll live again, ay—as still swims
Dead sunset where waves splash those skies,
Brave Manzi's blood thrills life's strange sea with light
Till all the races fade away in night!

I also grieve—I am his child,
 With all his faults I love him still ;
 And yet from all those battles wild,
 By kopje, stronghold stormed, or hill,
 The old man took the cash and waived the rest ;
 I 'm reckless though ; maybe 'twas for the best.

His staunch friend I thro' all his trials,
 I 'll swear he never found a bolder ;
 I 've crawled the blood-splashed tropic miles,
 A fly-blown, festered, near dead soldier.
 I 've routed rebels, saved him in the Pass,
 Slept, starved outside his tent beside his ass !

We 've done the darkest deeds—we 've won !
 And so, like some sweet wild wood bird
 That sings the sweeter for the sun,
 That bursts thro' cloud on leaves soft stirred
 By dead storm-winds—the whole world has burst
 forth
 In praise of our dark sins—and such is truth !

'Tis true that strange old men have seen
 Great virtue in each little song,
 But to see red where some see green
 Is colour-blindness ; all are wrong !
 Howe'er it be, by faith, to lose the day,
 Song birds would croak—disguised old birds of prey.

Where 's my reward for my brave deeds ?

There 's not a flower but thro' dead lips
It blows—lips that sang sweet wild creeds.

To think 'neath tides our famous ships
Lie crumbling at the bottom of the ocean—
By Chinese junks sunk—fills me with emotion.

And Manzi there, with long, thin feet,
In rags, still fights, raves in his sleep,
Dreams of some wild past battle heat,
His old mouth moans, his limbs half leap,
Sway on his chair. To see this forlorn sight
I could cry like a little child to-night.

Yet, faith, we 've had some splendid times
On plain and veldt, of lands o'er seas,
The lust, the drink, the glorious crimes,
And now, oh, evil times like these—
Old age, this dim-lit room, and on that table—
Great heavens, who would have dreamed—old Manzi's
Bible!

Could I that withered flesh renew,
Firm prop him on his feet again,
That old mouth ope to shout as true,
Ay, as of old o'er hill and plain,
Those flinchless warrior eyes blaze up with light ;
That old hand lift to strike one blow for right—

With me behind !—fierce, stern, and grim,
Armed to the teeth with spikes and knives,
His comrade staunch, protecting him,
His island race, his kids and wives.
For this—I 'd take the blame off his old shoulders
That heaven has measured for all murdered soldiers

I, too, must sleep. Our sun has set ;
Like stars in mist we 'll fade away.
Oh, men unborn, ne'er this forget,
I for old Manzi's sins did pay ;
And sleep till that sunrise sweeps death's dark plain,
When all dead regiments, scrambling, wake again !

White faces from the grave they 'll rise !
Old warrior-eyes still—full of sleep,
Nor know 'twas death did close their eyes ;
They 'll stare for stronghold stormed or steep—
To strike again ! Then—flooded in doom's light
All stand hushed, vanquished, when God looms in sight.

Farewell—we 've sinned, yet what sweet field
Of summer, sown with sweetest seed,
In all its glory did but yield
Sweet scented flowers and ne'er one weed ?
And never now a sunset seaward dies
But from the world's wild hills stare English eyes.

AFTER MANY YEARS

(THE SON)

OH, give me green hills and cottages, the mill-wheel
whirling round,
And the bright birds warbling soft on shower-wet
trees,
By the South Coast sunlit scented pines and the rumbling
breakers sound,
As the deep-sea ships creep home from distant
seas,
Where I may dream my dreams of home by the wash of
the Channel waves.
When sunset floats with the Sabbath tolling bell,
Go over the hills to where they sleep in their long-
neglected graves,
And feel what a boy—grown old—now cannot tell.
Far from the sound of the stockwhip's ring and the
lyre-bird's sunset strain
As the tropic sun sinks down the world-wide sea,
That takes me round with its stealing light to my Eng-
lish land again
As the bright Australian stars creep over me.

For my eyes are wet with tears for things I never can
recall,

For the hopes set on my young life's strength of limb,
And the wild will ways of other days that made them—
after all—

Sit by their fire and dream with eyes aswim.
And so, I will steal back again to where the high cliffs
white

Are kissed by the English Channel singing waves.
I'll creep up the hills, then go to God—my soul to the
stars some night,
And lie asleep—where men have made their graves.

SOUTH SEA ISLANDS

(ASHORE)

WE watched, bewilder'd, 'neath the pale moonshine ;
The Bay's clear water mirror'd mighty trees.
Out o'er the shore's wild rampart curled the line—
The white-ridged line of long Pacific seas !
Bright fireflies danced ; across the still lagoons
Canoes dark floated o'er pale mirrored moons.

A noiseless world, till with weird singing crew
Across the Bay a ghostly craft did steal—
Wild, paddling men in strange outrigged canoe,
The moon their savage faces did reveal.
A fish did somersault with joy ! soft-splashed
Where once the Bay's still water sparkling flashed.

Out on the pale sea rode our full-rigged barque,
Fast anchor'd, rocking to the swinging tide ;
The hanging topsails silvered in the dark
As swung the poop-lamp o'er the wooden side.
We sniffed, like wine, as up the shore we crept,
Cool whiffs of flowers from leafy damp glooms swept.

Far-off, beneath the big round South Sea moon,
The boundless ocean wrinkled. Little waves
Crept up the silent shore—where each lagoon
Shone like a mirror by the dark sea-caves—
Like frighten'd children o'er the rocks did peep,
Their image curling in still water's deep.

As though vast space, in miniature outspread—
Young Universes sparkling all their stars!—
In deep shore glooms soft-twinkled where o'erhead
Waved tropic palms by leagues of coral bars,
Swarms of fireflies danced by calm Southern Seas,
As like an Angel's flute blown in the trees,

A midnight bird burst forth its lovely song,
And on we crept; the boatswain brave, ahead;
His old bald pate in moonlight bobbed along,
The whole crew followed close with noiseless tread,
My shipmate Wells and I with trem'lous mind—
Both young—together bravely crept behind!

Deep in the forest hid, big savage men
By camp-fires rose; fierce gleamed their startled
eyes!
Wild women crept from out each bee-hive den,
Gazed on our faces white with glad surprise!
Proud sat the old King on his bamboo throne;
A sailor's shirt about his bare limbs blown.

Three old barbarians grim sat like wise sages,
Like mummy things ; in wrinkles deep their eyes
Did sadly gleam—as though the dead dark ages
On watch sat by that moonlit Paradise—
Sat by a little fire 'neath three giant trees,
Their old heads touch'd their huddled thin bone knees.

One strange old man on that dim, far-off world—
Where round the waves in moonlight soft were sing-
ing—
Danced wildly, his thin legs oft skyward hurled,
As chanting, wild girls' bodies bare were wringing,
His shadow in moonlight did jump about,
Oft thro' the forest height its head stuck out !

Our old cook, by some strange drink maudlin drunk,
Stamped with delight the leafy forest floor ;
Wild girls their curved bare limbs arose and sunk ;
His big eyes stared, he shouted out ' Encore ! '
In royal nude state the old King fiercely sat,
His big fat feet spread on a little mat.

Like dead men on some unknown world we stood ;
Brown girls danced moonlight, glimmering soft, bright
eyes,
Whirled ghostly round the leafy solitude,
Soft-touched our shirted bodies ; with wild cries
All joyous circling, clapped and danced again
To find us real, warm-blooded sailor-men !

Out flopp'd the sails. In shoals just o'er the side
Glad swimming eyes in sunset upturned gleamed ;
Safe on those wave-washed backs their babes did ride ;
By night did seem as though it had been dreamed,
Wild campfire and weird song of those far isles,
As wailed the swaying sails o'er lone sea-miles.

THE STORM

CRASH ! over the waters wild and dark, the thundering
seas wild leapt,
And the swaying sails cried overhead where the homeless
night-wind swept ;
Like monsters hungry from the deep, heaved up each
giant-back'd sea,
'Neath sailors clinging on the yards who swore most
fearfully ;
And the lightning whipp'd the wind-blown black, each
vivid sapphire flash,
Up-raising night's roof, beautiful, that fell with thunder-
ous crash !
That boomed and roll'd 'way southward faint, as shouting
on the wind,
The boatswain's yelling trumpet-voice died phantom-
like behind.
The old boat dived, crouched, shivering swerved, a
moment broadside laid ;
A flash revealed her figure-head, uplifted hands that
prayed !
The bearded skipper tramp'd the poop as lightning
streaked the clouds,
Breathed night's wild brilliance o'er the sea, and on the
tattered shrouds.

And all the fierce wild hunting seas, like troops by night
turned out,
Wild regiments, charged and charged the ship; the
baffled winds did shout;
Then lovely o'er wild ocean dark, swept moon-white
mystery,
And up the brave boat wounded sprang, o'er hollows of
the sea,
Like some wild-hunted, frighten'd stag, from chasing
winds did flee!

And we shouted a wild sea chanty, 'Blow! blow!
blow! the man down!'
All English sailors flying along home bound for London
Town.
Till breathless stopp'd each shouting mouth, Death
screamed across the sky;
It chilled our blood to creeping ice, a comrade's far lost
cry!
To windward rose sheer breaking walls, the brave ship
swerved and stopped,
Like thundering icebergs, seas arose, crash over deckward
dropped!
Wild, wrecking clouds the storm-moon smashed, left not
one little spark,
To light the travelling mountain seas' fierce charging—
ebon dark!
We hove her to, the lightning swept a bright dream o'er
the wave,

Revealed a crew of faces white, all huddled by a
grave!

Head over all the skipper stood, with hand arched, sea-
ward stared,

Each flash revealed his grand old face as winds swung
out his beard :

All ready stood, real brotherhood, staunch by the
starboard boat ;

Triumphant ran the seas, but we, gripp'd death hard
by the throat,

And the skipper roared away like hell, mad cursed the
whole night wild ;

Alone at sea, our father he, and every man his child.

There by the bulwarks all hands stood, as came the
thrilling cry—

‘ Right ! lower away ! ’ Up like a cork the lifeboat
bobbed, seas high.

As hairy-chested sailormen, strong shouldered, broad
arms bared,

Pulled from their hearts ! thro’ one small chink the moon
from heaven stared !

There, on the ramping wild dark seas, the tiny craft did
rise.

Like phantom voices on the wind swept by their ‘ Halloo ’
cries.

As white-faced on the hove-to ship, like sculptured stone
men stood,

A comrade’s dying cry, faint heard, that froze their very
blood.

With Fate wild wrestling in his grave, his tossed hands
clutching air,
They saved him! caught him by the ear and grabbed
him by the hair!
We warmed him up, the skipper cried to see we'd saved
our chum,
And every man with joy that night drank up one pint
of rum!
And why keep back the sterling truth? We danced,
we fought, we sang!
Forgot the ship, and for the storm—well, did not care
a hang!
The wheelsman hung *tight* to the wheel, the skipper
to his bunk
We lifted up with due respect, and dropped him in—
dead drunk!
And only God knows, I don't, why the old ship wasn't
sunk.
And if my old chums of the sea by some strange chance
should look
And see these lines of mine rhymed out, the old days in
my book,
Although I'm now a country squire, *whoever they may be*,
If they be comrades of those days, come inland down
to me.
We'll drink and shout with wild delight here round this
friendly blaze,
And wake the silent village night with songs of other
days!

A MEMORY

THE grey old skipper on the poop
Sways on from left to right
Out on the moonlit, shining sea—
He 's in his grave to-night !
I see his bearded, sea-worn face,
Sea-boots rise to his knees,
His oilskin cap bashed o'er his eyes,
That gaze o'er unknown seas.

A travelling, windy, wooden world,
The scented sails o'erspread,
As like some pale, beseeching Christ,
The praying figure-head
Roams, voyaging fast o'er Southern Seas.
The swaying masts and spars
With rhythmic chime swing heaven's vast dome
And silently the stars !

As dreaming o'er the decks I move,
Thro' fo'c's'le gloom I creep ;
The oil lamp showers its dingy gleam
O'er sailors fast asleep.

Their slumbering faces glide along
Each in small tossed bunk-bed ;
I hear the muffled tramp, tramp, tramp—
The night watch overhead.

Out o'er the Ocean's brink clouds rise,
Like phantom mountains driven ;
As though a door ope's silently
And shuts, stars steal in Heaven.
Hark ! on the winds the cry—' 'Bout ship !'
The watch creep from below,
Like ghosts in oilskins, in moonlight
Aloft they climbing go !

Their figures clinging to the yards
Move as the grey sails flop,
Their toiling shadows to the decks
Through moonlight softly drop.
But in their bunks for years, I know,
The old ' Hands ' are asleep,
The thund'ring seas above, and God
The long night-watch doth keep !

A WINDY NIGHT

THE wild-night seas are thundering in my little moonlit
room,
All tossing, tossing by my lone bedside.
Across the silent dreaming night, deep moving waters
boom,
As o'er my head the wailing torn-sails glide.
Death's hungering hounds are moaning on dark shores
of starlit doom
For tired sailors on the ocean wide.

The sailor-men are clinging to the broken floating mast,
Along Fate's phantom shore the hounds still cry.
As one by one the overboards, into the ocean cast,
In moonlight toss up white hands once—and die.
The old ship trembling wails her lonely sinking cry at last,
The blind seas onward roll beneath the sky.

Dawn creeps along the sea skyline, the waves are all
asleep ;
The stars steal frighten'd home, all creep indoors.
A magic shore is looming up across the eastern deep.
Where on the emerald waves bright sunrise pours,
The sinful old 'Hands' from the sea together huddled
creep—
Half-frighten'd—up God's silent, unknown shores.

A BUSH GRAVE

I KNOW a grave down Murrumbidgee way,
Alone within the hills where no one goes,
Where years blow sad to sleep their leafy day ;
While overhead the bush-flower wakes and blows,
For spirit fingers visit there with flowers—
Where o'er one faithful friend a blue-gum towers.

And thro' thick, leafy clumps by sea-winds blown
Bright music of the woods with sunset dies,
Till every wild musician home has flown,
And o'er the darken'd wave the sea-gull cries,
Where, like a tunnel way for realms divine,
Upon the wave the big moonrise doth shine.

Oft o'er the slopes the night winds wailing blow,
While parrots in the gum-clumps roost asleep,
And dark things in the redwoods flitting go—
Where 'possums thro' the moonlit branches leap ;
While in the lonely hollow by the sea
Toils on the sweet night-bird in melody.

Where marsh-flowers' breathing scents the swamp's cool
damp,

And o'er the winter white mists creeping lie,
Stands pitched my old chum's silent last sad camp ;
And far away the deep-sea ships go by.
Tired winds from seaward o'er the hollows creep
When on his grave the moonlight lies asleep.

I know a hut, strong-fashioned by our hands,
Upon a hill, half hid in thick bush grass,
Below an old dead gum alone it stands,
Where overhead the moonlit curlews pass,
I hear them piping low on westward flight,
'Way out across the dead years—far to-night.

And oft the moonlight creeps those old log walls ;
Sad steals across each empty small bunk-bed,
Where only now within, the dead leaf falls
Thro' chinks from clinging wild vines overhead.
Lake flowers breathe earth's sweet poetry and die
O'er huddled tears—that fell from out the sky.

PRESS OPINIONS, ETC., OF 'CASTLE BY THE SEA AND
OTHER POEMS,' INCLUDING 'BUSH AND SEA RHYMES'

'A large amount of spirit, impulse, and forcible expression, many striking verses and passages, and generally a tone much superior to the commonplace of ordinary verse-writing.'—*Wm. M. Rossetti*.

'The art of this book is very direct and the feeling unmistakably sincere. . . . "Gabriel" is an extremely forcible expression of the unfailing strength of a true passion . . . much to admire and many fine expressions.'—*Robert Bridges*.

'Good honest poetry is the verdict one passes on "The Castle by the Sea." . . . The author strikes his best note when he deals with Australian scenes and episodes, also in his pictures of life at sea, etc.'—*Irish Times*.

'This is a charming little book, and marks out the author as a delineator of seafaring types and characters of the first eminence.'—*Kelso Chronicle*.

'"The Castle by the Sea." The figures and phrases of this poem are very striking.'—*A. H. Miles*.

'A. Safroni-Middleton's *Bush and Sea Rhymes* stands apart by virtue of the genuine, forceful feeling, striking vividness of the images and description. . . . Virile poems by a vigorous poet.'—*The Athenæum*, Sept. 7th, 1912.

'*Bush and Sea Rhymes*.—Many in their direct appeal to the heart and with their vivid representation of nature and of human passion and yearning, offering us poetic work of really high quality.'—*Contemporary Review*, May 1913.

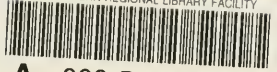
'Mr. A. Safroni-Middleton writes of the bush and sea with a breezy vigour, picturesque descriptive power, simplicity, and directness . . . a voice from the sea and vastness of the world . . . charming love-songs . . . outpourings of a man's natural gift.'—*The Bookman*, Dec. 1912.

'*Bush and Sea Rhymes*.—A really original Australian poet . . . reveals that rarest of combinations—a true poet and humorist—breezy, vigorous, spirited . . . an unaffected poet . . . a mind that can sing and think.'—*New York World*.

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