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LIFE'S MINSTREL

A Book of Verse

DANIEL HENDERSON





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LIFE'S MINSTREL

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A Book of Verse

BY

DANIEL HENDERSON



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
681 FIFTH AVENUE

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PS3515
E43345
1919

SEP 15 1919

Printed in the United States of America

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TO MY WIFE

*Beloved, if what I sing
Has in it chords of worth,
Has notes to which there cling
The sweetness of the earth;*

*And if within it lies
The shadow of a gleam,
That shows I sought to rise
To some diviner theme;—*

*Then let me weave this thong
To link you to my art,
For was not every song
First sheltered in your heart?*

For permission to reprint certain of these poems, the author is grateful to *McClure's Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Outlook*, *The Bookman*, *Everybody's Magazine*, *The Forum*, *The Magazine of Contemporary Verse*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Munsey's*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, *The Woman's Home Companion*, *The Lyric*, *Books and the Book World* (New York Sun), *New York Evening Sun*, *New York Evening Post*, and *The Baltimore Sun*.

The author is also indebted to the National Arts' Club of New York City for permission to reproduce the prize war poem, "The Road to France."

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LIFE'S MINSTREL

WILL-O'-THE-WISP

“WILL-O'-THE-WISP”—’tis this the town is naming
you;

“An idle lad”; “a dreamy lad”—I hear my people
blaming you.

There’s seldom roof above you,
And yet you’d have me love you
And share your luck; and follow on the wild, wild
quest that’s claiming you!

“WILL-O'-THE-WISP,” another lad is wooing me;
A busy lad; a steady lad—forever he’s pursuing me!
My mother bids me choose him;
And why should I refuse him
For a roving heart that every man predicts will be
undoing me?

“WILL-O'-THE-WISP,” if ill luck is to harry you,
And if your end-of-rainbow quest into the mire will
carry you;
If ruin you are facing
With your wild-goose chasing,
You’ll need a heart to bear you up. Let come what
will—I’ll marry you!

THE STARWARD TRAIL

“TENNYSON’S dream of an aerial fleet—
Pooh! An idle bard’s conceit!”

Thus we mocked the Pioneers
Plotting highways to the spheres!

Thus we clung to humdrum things
And scorned their lore of winds and wings!

Foolish it seemed to us to mark
The sudden rise of the meadow-lark!

How could mankind hope to follow
The falcon’s swoop; the flight of a swallow?

While we grumbled, while we scoffed,
Still, thank God, they looked aloft!

Seaward, where a gray gull clove
Mists that curtained cape and cove,

THE STARWARD TRAIL

They saw a new Columbus dare
Illimitable seas of air!

The eagle breasting the coastwise gale
Marked for them the way of the mail,

And where snow-fleeing bird tribes went
To find a tropic continent,

They saw ethereal roads astir
With many a human voyager!

“Cling to the old and flout the new!”
Age through age, the law holds true,

Yet—the Dreamer again has won!
Up, and follow his path to the sun!

THE TEA TRADER

JACKSON at his counter packing tea—
Storing little bags away
For the rush hours Saturday.
On the tea-bins' painted faces
Are quaint names and quainter places,
And a geisha waves her fan
And allures him to Japan!
'Mid the syrups, soaps and sodas
Jackson muses on pagodas,
And the tea's pervasive smell
Works an opiate spell
On the old clerk's stuffy brain. . .
He goes sailing to Formosa
And to Java and Hong-kong;
He goes trafficking in pekoe
And bohea and oolong!

Then a voice: "Six lemons, please,
And a pound of English cheese!"

Jackson's ship has come to shore
In McConnell's grocery store!

THE HOMING HEART

EACH day, dear love, my road leads far
From where you, home-contented, are.
My mood is kin to that unrest
Which sends the wild bird from its nest.

But tho' I have a roaming heart,
God gave me too a homing heart,—
How swift at dusk my path runs to
The lights of home, the arms of you!

THE BRUSHWOOD FIRE

NICHOLAS, Hamilton and I—
Friends, whose houses lie close by—
Join in raking the leaves and stalks
October drops on our lawns and walks;
Join in building a brushwood fire
As high as an urchin could desire.

Ours is the primitive joy of seeing
Flame leap into animate being.
Like as a dancer sheds her cloak,
Fire springs out of the pungent smoke,
Wafting a subtle, rare perfume
That carries a hint of lilac bloom,
A scent of clover and eglantine
Blended with mint and box and pine.

Yet, as the quivering flame dies down
And the cinders powder to a brown,
And the smoke melts into the fading day,
Laughter dies, and our mood turns gray.

THE BRUSHWOOD FIRE

Is it because the brushwood fire
Seems to us now the summer's pyre?
Is it because we think its red
Is made of blood the roses shed?
Is it that we have set alight
The heart of spring in our pagan rite?
Or that we know that the orchard's blush,
The nests of the oriole and thrush,
Violet, dogwood, all things vernal,
All that our souls would make eternal,
Burgeoning May and golden September
Have their death in the dying ember?

MARY O' THE MOOR

MARY LANG—the laughing one? Soldier, you'll not
find her

If you linger at her gate or tap upon her door;
She is roving, roving, roving, though our hearts
would bind her—

Ask the shepherds for the way to “Mary o' the
Moor.”

So—you're Duncan, her betrothed! You're ghostly
in the gloaming!

Angus thought he left you dead upon a trench's
floor!

'Twas his news that broke her heart and set her feet
to roaming—

Cleave the mists and climb the rocks to “Mary
o' the Moor!”

Aye, no doubt you can explain—such things befall
in battle!

Go and tell her why the post no letters from you
bore!

MARY O' THE MOOR

Go and bring her back again from wandering with
the cattle—

Bring us gleeful Mary Lang, not “Mary o’ the
Moor!”

THE SCARLET THREAD

“Behold, when we come to the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou hast let us down by.”—Joshua 2:18.

RED as the lips of Rahab,
Harlot of Jericho,
Hung the thread from her casement
Ages on ages ago!

Over the fire and slaughter
Shone the cord's rich flame!
Out of her ruined city
Rahab, the shielded, came!

Swiftly the spinners of evil
Gathered the thread and spun:
Nightly robed in its color
Daughters of Babylon!

How its riotous tangles
Twisted dancer and priest!
Twined the groves of Astarte;
Girdled the emperor's feast!

THE SCARLET THREAD

Solomon, from his window,
Watching Jerusalem,
Mused on the subtle woman
Flaunting her scarlet hem!

Men go marching to battle;
Suddenly flares from a door—
Deadlier than their foemen—
Crimson that Rahab wore!

Yea, and the spindles that fashioned
Nineveh's red attire
Spun for our present cities
The halter of desire!

Then is the thread so woven
Into the web of the race
That, age through age, we must bear it
Down to the Judgment-place?

When will our spirits sicken
Of weaving the cloth of doom?
When will the God within us
Shatter its shuttle and loom?

THE LAD WHO WENT TO SEA

My grandsire a skipper was,
My brother follows the sea,
My father farms, and I plow for him,
But the deep is calling me.

I look at the rippling wheat
And I see but wind-whipped surge;
From the rim of the sky the clouds
As white-winged ships emerge;

When the stars come out, I think
But of men who by them steer
In storms, not the swish of tree
But the crack of mast I hear;

And yon white bit of road,
Half hid by the hedging leas,
Seems a strip of sun-bleached coral reef
In the lap of emerald seas.

THE LAD WHO WENT TO SEA

Oh my father will miss my help,
My mother for me will weep,
But my grandsire Joel will understand
Why I must sail the deep!

There's a brig for Africa's coast
That's shipping a crew in the bay,
And the voice of the sea says "Go!" to me—
And to-night I'll be on my way!

A NATURE-LOVER PASSES

(In certain places, it is still the custom to tell the bees that a member of the family has died.)

BEES, go tell the things he treasured—

Oak and grass and violet—

That altho his life was measured

He is with them yet!

Tell the wild rose and the clover

That the earth has made him over!

Tell the lilting, loitering stream

He is sharer of its dream!

Whisper to the April wood

Of his blending in its mood!

Tell the wind his spirit flows

In whatever way it blows!

Tell the thrush it draws its art

From the rapture of his heart!

Bees, to his green shelter bring

All of earth's bright gossiping:—

Tales of feather, flower or fur;

Sap upmounting; wings astir!

Now we may no more attend him,

Bid his loved wild things befriend him!

BOB WHITE

I HEARD them greet the peep of dawn

From every bush and tree:

Blackbird, bluebird, robin, wren,

Jay, thrasher, chickadee;

Then I heard, from his retreat

Somewhere in the corn or wheat,

Bob White welcoming the morning

And I thought his song more sweet:

“Bob White! Bob White!”

Was that note of bird or sprite—

Bob White?

I have listened in the shadows

To the haunting whippoorwill,

I have heard the rapturous mocker,

Oh, a wealth of sweetness spill!

Yet not these to-day I hear,

But one sound stayed in my ear—

Just the quail's full-throated whistle,

Just his double note of cheer:

“Bob White! Bob White!”

May no gun your fluting blight—

Bob White!

THE CAROLERS OF WYNNE

THE little town of Wynne
Was festooned and ablaze,
As silvery bells rang in
The holiest of days,
And joyous town-folk met
To sing the Christ-Child's praise.

The mayor and aldermen
A truce to business swore,
And with the choristers
Went singing, door to door,
Of the holy baby born
Upon a stable floor.

They woke the boulevard—
Wynne's lordliest avenue;
The mayor himself dwelt here,
The city fathers, too;
Here they had millions spent
For the pleasure of the few.

THE CAROLERS OF WYNNE

“For if,” they said, “our street
With loveliness we gown,
Then visitors who come
To estimate our town
Will speak abroad our praise,
And give us great renown!”

An impulse led them thence,
And down a narrow street
Where huddled figures marked
The coming of their feet;
Where misery and filth
Had stifled all things sweet!

To flimsy tenements
With carolings they came;
To huts where happiness
Was nothing but a name;
To the hungry rose their songs,
To the sick, and blind, and lame!

“Joy to the world!” they sang,
But groans belied their tale!
“No more let sorrow grow!”
(They heard gaunt beggars rail!

THE CAROLERS OF WYNNE

Their gladdest note was hushed
Before a starved child's wail!

The mayor and aldermen
Fled from this bitter school,
But on their hearts was seared
The Christly law of Yule:
"Who serves the poor and weak,
Makes cities beautiful!"

LOVE ENDURES

I GATHER wisdom from the earth;
I note its tides and changes;
I ponder how from feast to dearth,
From bud to blight, it ranges!
I learn how surely fortune goes;
How swiftly friendships perish!
I see futurity's thick snows
Loom over all we cherish!
Yet well I know my love for you,
Through life's brief season vernal,
Will drink the Everlasting's dew—
Your rose in the Eternal!

ABSENCE

I AM tempted to tell how I want her:
But circumstance holds us apart,
And why should my yearning haunt her—
Who has the same ache in her heart?

So I put my feelings in fetters!
I hamper and shackle my pen!
The proof seems plain in my letters
That I am the coolest of men!

Yet she knows that my hours are ages!
She sees that my coldness is fire!
She reads in my empty pages
The gulfs of my soul's desire!

BUILDING

Tho' my tools are few and blunted,
 Tho' unskilled my plodding hand,
All the long days through I labor
 At the building I had plann'd.

And altho' my heart sinks in me
 When I weigh what I have wrought
With the structure, tall and splendid,
 I had builded in my thought,

While the workmen round about me
 Skill with finer tools combine
Till their buildings, rising grandly,
 Cast their shadows over mine,

Yet I hope that when the master
 From a far land comes to learn
If the workmen of his kingdom
 Faithful proved through his sojourn,

BUILDING

And my comrades from their labors
Go, commended by their lord,
And he turns to where I dumbly
Wait his censure or reward,

He will read in my poor building
All the noble things I plann'd;
Judge by what my soul aspired to,
Not by labors of my hand.

SECRETS OF THE SEA

My hut by the sea was built
Of the wrecks of long-lost ships.
In the night its driftwood walls
And the wind and waves have lips;
As I lie in my bed they whisper to me
Of many an ocean mystery.

I know where the great ships went
That were never seen again;
I know how the floor of the deep
Was strewn with bones of men;
I know who were cowards, I know who were brave,
When men saw their sepulchers in the wave!

I know of a sealer's crew
That is freezing to death on a floe;
How fishermen pay with their lives
For the catch of the day, I know.
As I rise each morn to fish in the sea,
I ask: "Will the night hear a tale about me?"

YOUTH AND DEATH

RIPE and waiting hung the fruit upon life's
crowded limb:

Death came walking where the branches swayed and
bent to him!

Death came seeking—but he left the mellow fruit
to rust,

And he plucked the tenderest buds and flung them
to the dust!

THE SEARCHLIGHT

I SAW a great white shaft of light
 Skyward leaping, earthward sloping;
Across the regions of the night
 Forever groping!

I thought how Man's undaunted mind—
 Spurred by a hope that is supernal—
Explores the firmament to find
 A gate to the eternal!

LOVER AND LYRE

BELOVED, when men wonder
What poems I bring
To you, my sweet lady
Of wedlock and ring;

I think how the sunset
Has baffled art's brush;
How the singer's voice fails
That would follow the thrush.

Then how may my heart,
With its lyrics of fire
Find tongue in the cool,
Measured twang of my lyre?

A POET

His verse that soars on smooth, swift wing
Flies out of his remembering!
But ever in his heart awaking
Are songs he crippled in the making!

THE POET'S PATH

WHEN Chaucer sang—did he pursue
A mystic or exotic strain?
Not so! From folk he met he drew
His Canterbury train!

And Shakespeare of the deathless page—
What won him immortality?
Because he made our world his stage
He lives for you and me!

And Burns, his brief life madly spent,
Why does he sway us to this hour?
He voiced a ruined maid's lament!
He mourned a broken flower!

Ye who aspire to follow Song,
Spurn not the plain, broad path of art!
Walk with great poets through the throng
And feed the common heart!

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

MEN in the country yearn
For the streets of the town as they till;
But men of the city turn
Their thoughts to meadow and hill.

Sailors, pent on the deep,
Dream of houses and trees;
But the landsmen they envy keep
Their thoughts on the seven seas.

Travelers long for home,
And hold its memory green;
But stay-at-homes would roam,
With all of the world between.

Cheery our own hearth fires!
Pleasant our places of birth!
Why do our hearts' desires
Lie at the ends of earth?

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

Abram went up out of Ur,
 Yet blame not the sons of Shem;
The wandering foot was astir
 Thousands of years before them!

Cain turned east in pursuit
 Of a star-eyed damsel of Nod!
Adam, for lovelier fruit,
 Left his groves—and his God!

HER EYES ARE SENTINELS

HER eyes are sentinels
That faithfully patrol
The pathway to her heart—
And past them lies my goal!

I venture boldly where
Their searching torches shine—
Why should I be afraid
Where love is countersign?

Her eyes are sentinels,
And yet, when I implore,
Their beacons light for me
Her spirit's open door!

VOYAGE

SINGLY my shallop cleaves the surge!
Singly it journeys across life's verge!

It answers the hail of passing ships!
It pauses a space at crowded slips!

And for a while a snow-white sail
Companions it through sun and gale,

But, a lonely ship on a lonely sea,
It draws to its port of destiny!

THE LIVING

I TREAD once more the market-place;
In trafficking my heart seeks balm;
But often, over trade's turmoil
There falls a holy calm.

A thing she loved has met my sight:
Arbutus, or a clump of ferns;
Or in a stall of books I find
Her well-loved poet, Burns.

The thrushes sing—and call her back;
I see her friends smile from the throng;
Or from some window comes a snatch
Of her most-treasured song.

Because she loved the things of earth
They hold her gentle spirit yet.
They cry to me, "Remember her!" . . .
As if I could forget!

THE ARBUTUS SELLER

INTO the city on this April day—

From greening woods to wintry highways bending,
He passes with arbutus-laden tray,

A wealth of fragrance every step attending.
An angel unawares is in this clod;

His ceaseless, clamorous cry is his soul's duty—
This vender comes, ambassador from God,
To bring unto the famished town His beauty!

A RAIN MOOD

I LISTEN in the night
 To the singing rain.
By its knocking on the roof,
 By its tap upon the pane,
I am tempted out
 To the dripping lane!

Did some primeval pair,
 In some April flood,
Quit their cave to revel
 In the storm and mud—
And pass the thrill along
 To stir my blood?

THE LAW OF THE DUST

TIME, with your pen in the past,
Time, with your scrolls that run
Back of the birth of man,
Back to the Primal One,
What is the word you mold
Out of the ash of a star,
Out of a crumbled creed,
Out of the clay of a czar?
Miters and scepters rust!
Crushed are conquerors' spears,
Armies and nations lie
Dead in the moldering years!
Layer on layer of life
Died in the cinders and shale—
What will our wise men know
When they decipher your tale?

Came the whisper of Time:
"This is the future's key—
These worlds bloomed—and are dust!
So your world will be!"

THE LAST MINSTREL

I saw a lonely harper on a Coney Island boat—
An old pathetic minstrel with an old pathetic note!
His eyes were fiery caverns; his beard was long and
hoar;
He seemed, within this new-world throng, the earth's
last troubadour!
And, blowing from an ancient shore, a wind possessed
his strings
And sang a song whose burden was of scarce-
remembered things:—
The tune that David made for Saul—a soft, hill-
country strain
That led the king from feverish courts to quiet
streams again!
The mourning note that Israel played in her
captivity,
Before her lyre was hushed and hung upon the
willow tree!
A saga that some Iceland bard wrought to his
chieftain's glory!

THE LAST MINSTREL

From viking feast, from feudal throne, the minstrel
drew his story!

The harp that once through Tara's halls the soul
of music shed

Vied with a modern waltz to win this last lone bard
his bread!

SIX SONNETS

CLOSED DOORS

My heart shall wear no chains of memory!

No sombre tide from yesteryear shall flow!

I shall not think of death's repeated blow

Whereby the true and valiant went from me!

I shut out friendships that have ceased to be!

I turn from dreams that flared and lost their
glow!

A hard and misty way have I to go—

I bar old griefs, to journey strong and free!

And yet—how many nights there comes a gust

That sweeps at will across my consciousness

And flings wide doors I closed against distress!

So that those things that from my mind I thrust,

Loosed by this wind from Thought's deserted
coasts,

Rush in and overwhelm me with their ghosts!

CAN DEAD MEN RISE?

I HOLD no doubt of immortality!

To be reborn is no more strange than birth.

Lo, life has had its source in lifeless earth—

Man rose from death when Adam came to be!

Why question that the grave shall set us free

When, out of fire and dew and dust and dearth,

Moses and Shakespeare brought their dreams and
worth,

And Jesus mounted to His destiny?

Then, having lived creation's miracle,

Say not, when men to dreamless sleep are borne,

That life for them is broken and outworn—

The soul shall build its future in its cell!

The God who breathed into our frame His breath

Will keep His children from the mold of death!

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

FROM out the library's silent halls I strode
 Into the traffic of Fifth Avenue;
 Into a scene of turmoil, from a view
Of book-lined aisles where Milton's lamp still glowed;
Where valiant spirits of the past abode;
 Where, in a cloister-hush, men paid their due
 Of reverence to the great souls whence they drew
Ideals and dreams to lighten their long road.

The two contrasted strangely in my thought—
 This tide of noisy, hurrying, heedless men,
 And yonder brooding temple of earth's lore;
Yet from this current wisdom's fane was wrought!
 Within this life-stream Chaucer dipped his pen,
 And Shakespeare searched its depths and found
 his ore!

FULFILLMENT

BEAUTY, Belovèd, I found in various dress:—

In white waves breaking over yellow bars;
In moonlit harbors rimmed by ghostly spars;
In meadows blazing with the sun's impress;
In roses trembling at the wind's caress.

When glorious banners flamed by to the wars,
Or evening donned her diamond robè of stars,
My spirit felt the kiss of loveliness.

And yet I had a sense of longing still,
Unsatisfied by landscape or by art;
Unquenched before the glow of sunset skies!
It was a hunger you alone could fill,
You with a flame of love within your heart
Kindling eternal beauty in your eyes!

FACES

LIFE writes man's history upon his face.

She takes his plastic features for her scroll
And traces there the story of his soul;
Its gladness, grief, nobility, disgrace.
Come, read the parchment in the market place;
Mark each man, hurrying to possess his goal;
Here watch the living manuscript unroll
Its record of the progress of the race.

How runs the story to its destiny?

See, there is much of woe and sin in sight!
Can it be life a happier ending scorns?
Not so! turn back and read her prophecy
That she should trace the triumph of the Right—
It lies upon that face men crowned with thorns!

ESCAPE

My strength, my skill, I barter week by week:
There is a covenant I hold with Trade
Whereby for faithful service I am paid
The sustenance and comforts that I seek.
I scarce dare look to Beauty's shining peak
Or hear the voice of Loveliness persuade—
The market's hand forever on me is laid;
Forever in its feverish tongue I speak.

And yet, thank God! Night brings its interlude
When, with my mate, my books, my stars, my
dreams,
I may forget the morrow and its schemes;
When I may climb to taste Olympian food;
When my starved spirit struggles to its flower,
Fed by the holy dew of this rich hour!

GUNS AND PLOWSHARES

THE WEDDING OF THE FLEETS

(AMERICA TO BRITAIN)

BRITAIN, yours is the birthright
Of fog and gale and sea!
Never the restless tide outruns
The reach of your destiny!

Yet of your ocean mother
I, too, drew my stock!
Drake and Raleigh within me
Led me to Plymouth Rock!

What if my planet rises
Here in the west, apart?
Mine is your Keltic vision!
Mine is your Saxon heart!

Came the hour of your peril!
God, how you rose and defied
Hate that poisoned the roadways!
Death that lurked in the tide!

THE WEDDING OF THE FLEETS

Strained my ships at their moorings!
Rang my admirals' cry:—
“Send us to fight by our brothers!
Send—or our souls will die!”

Then were our squadrons wedded—
There in the spume and mist
Crushing the common danger!
Pledging the deathless tryst!

This is our law, O Britain:—
What we have joined shall be
Blent on the face of the waters
Till God shall dry the sea!

Whither our mandates lead us,
Whither our keels may run,
British and Yankee sailors
A world apart—are one!

A SEA WIND

THE wind to-night is from the sea.

I hear within its rush and roar

Sounds that are alien to our shore:—

The ceaseless boom of cannonry,

The thundering shock of war!

On nights like these, can those who died

Rise from their graves in Flanders' loam

And span the ocean's rack and foam?

Yea, can lost warriors rouse and ride

To us who yearn at home?

The wind to-night is from the sea—

From shores that Death has held in chain—

And O, a voice is in the rain!

Hush! Hush! My heart! It cannot be

That dead men speak again!

THE PEOPLE'S HOUR

It is the people's hour, and kings
Are strangling in the web they spun!
No more the thirsting bayonet springs;
The last red drop has run.

War flees us with his hideous train
Of woe and pestilence and dearth!
The priest rebuilds the ruined fane—
Christ's peace returns to earth!

We rear the roof and drive the plow
Among the wreckage War has left;
All blighted things will quicken now—
Except the hearts bereft.

And those staunch hearts that were our shields—
Our dead, yet deathless, warrior throng—
May sleep in peace in Flanders' fields:
We made no truce with Wrong!

THE PEOPLE'S HOUR

It is the people's hour! We leap
To seize the scepter and the crown!
That freedom won with blood we keep,
And naught shall tread us down!

And yet—the Liberty we gain
May set more than we reckon free!
Lo! strains forever at his chain
Our arch-foe, Anarchy!

It is the people's hour so long
As Justice rules the heart of man!
So long as Brotherhood is strong,
And Law controls the plan!

Not ours the strength to shape, Lord God,
The goal and glory of our race!
We sunder the oppressor's rod—
Keep Thou the Pilot's place!

JOYCE KILMER

STRENGTH without stint we gave to Liberty

When she leapt forth to shatter earth's last
chains!

Greatly with soul and brawn and wealth wrought we,

Girding her spirit, shielding her rich veins!

Now comes her triumph! Broken in their wars,

Tyrants are groveling at her shining hem!

Now comes her crowning hour! Heaven's farthest
stars

Cluster to form her deathless diadem!

Shall we exult, who toiled in her great host?

Nay, for this thought is bludgeoning our pride:—

We lived for Freedom to our uttermost,

But for her cause—he died!

ALAN SEEGER

*"I have a rendezvous with death
In some disputed barricade—"*
—Alan Seeger.

HE did not prize too much the sounding phrase;
Nor guard too zealously his poet's bays;
Nor dream that he could slay the hosts of Wrong
With just the marching measures of his song!

He kept his rendezvous—in that dark place
His life became a ransom for his race.
Hark now! His song is on his nation's breath—
His memory shall have no tryst with death!

WALT WHITMAN

I SAW all breeds blend into one nation,
 Furling their flags of the battle mood!
I saw a Charta of Federation
 Binding all men to brotherhood!

Whose dream flash'd forth when the bars were
 cloven?
 And whose heart flamed to fuse the mass?
Whitman, this new world's ties were woven
 Out of your Leaves of Grass!

WAR, DO NOT GLOAT!

WAR, do not gloat
Because you see our millions in your road!
Do not delude yourself that lures by which
You led kings forth to rape and slay
Have snared our feet!
Glory?
We want no laurels wrung from your foul field!
Empire?
It is a bait we spurn!
We loathe your spirit!
We abominate
Your aim to throne the brute and crush the soul!

We follow you,
And yet your goal and ours
Are set as far apart as heaven and hell!
It is not you who leads us this red road!
We take your path to build upon your wrecks;
To lift humanity beyond your clutch!
Nay, never gloat

WAR, DO NOT GLOAT!

Because we choose your way!
We track you but to slay you!
With these swords
We sweep your armies from the path of Peace!

FIGHTING STOCK

DEDICATED TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

QUENTIN, the eagle, nobly dead!
Theodore wounded, but plunging ahead;
Archie, torn in the shrapnel's rain,
Pleading to lead his lads again!
Kermit, leaping from honors won
To wrench new victories from the Hun!
Here is no shielded princeling clan,
But front-line champions of man!
Come, have we called the roll entire?
Nay, add to it that sturdy sire
Who guides in spirit his Bayard breed
To starry goal and shining deed!

Fighting stock! Fighting stock!
And millions more of the same brave strain,
Plowing through Picardy and Lorraine!
What tyrant can withstand their shock?
Fighting stock! Fighting stock!

THE ARMY CHAPLAIN

THESE sodden, slimy trenches are my pews;
This is my flock—rude, blood-bespattered men.
Some boys are here whom I once taught at home;
Far closer are we now than in those days.
Then I have other lads who say the church
Breeds superstition and hypocrisy.
Some swear and gamble—till I won their hearts
I heard them curse me for a “Holy Joe!”

Yet with what awe I minister to them—
As fine a breed as God put on earth!
Irreverent—true! But by their scoffs they mask
The altar fires aflame within their breasts!
I do not preach to them that bloodless Christ
Whom artists picture haunting No Man’s Land—
Aloof and shuddering at the things He sees.
Instead, I tell them of that Man who met
With fearless heart a despot’s cross and sword,
And died, that through His death the soul might live.

They nod their heads; they understand this
Christ. . . .

They take Him with them to their Calvary!

MEN OF THE BLOOD AND MIRE

WE whom the draft rejected;
We who stay by the stuff;
We who measure our manhood
And find that it isn't enough;
We who are gray and burdened;
We whom the trades require—
Will you permit us to hail you,
Men of the Blood and Mire?

We of the thundering forum;
We of the pen and press;
We who are pouring our utmost
Into our land's success;
We of the Cross and Triangle,
Lofty in deed and desire—
God, how we shrivel before you,
Men of the Blood and Mire!

Aye, we are square with conscience—
We are reservists all;

MEN OF THE BLOOD AND MIRE

Aye, when your ranks are gaping,
 We will fight where you fall!
Yet, while we wait, your altar
 Flames in the gas and fire—
We are the shade of your glory,
 Men of the Blood and Mire!

A SOLDIER IN MANHATTAN

SOLDIER, home from the wars,
 Threading our throngs again,
Lost, with your golden bars,
 In a world of hurrying men;

What if the crowd be mute?
 Read in our eyes your due!
See how our hearts salute
 The soul of the race in you!

THE GRAY BATTALION

O PALLID, pallid hosts, are you flesh or are you
ghosts,

With your drums that give no beat, with your
sober, silent tramp?

What flags are these that rise like phantoms on our
skies?

What frontier was your bivouac and whither is
your camp?

“We are men who took the sword for the nations and
the Lord!

We charged the shattering guns! We met the
storming fire!

If France has ruddy stains they were crimsoned from
our veins!

And we died, not knowing we would win our ut-
termost desire!

“Not for us the laureled arch! Not for us the ban-
nered march!

Not for us the throngs exulting as the victor’s
pæan rolls!

THE GRAY BATTALION

Still we tread the darkened roads which we trudged
with pressing loads,

And the ruts that racked our bodies are a guid-
ance for our souls!

“We are those who could not sleep where we lay be-
yond the deep!

We are those who lay unresting in the friendly
foreign loam!

And our Captain and our Lord gave us this for our
reward:

To march amid the night mists to the places we
called home!”

TO CERTAIN BOLSHIEVIKI

BEFORE we knew your name, you dwelt with us!
You watched us from the East Side or the Bronx,
You moved among the masses in our squares.
Perhaps we rubbed your elbows some noon hour
As you strolled gabbling through Fifth Avenue—
Ishmaelites, with curses for our breed!

Was it not true, my friends, that in your thought
Fifth Avenue became America?
You saw its windows filled with costly stuffs,
And watched rich motor-cars go up and down
In never-ending streams;
And when you went back to your seething land
You told your simple countrymen we were
A nation as luxurious as was Rome—
A people ruled by soulless capitalists.

You did not learn our languages,
Nor come into our homes.
You did not step from Wall Street to discern
If our New England folk were slaves to gold.

TO CERTAIN BOLSHEVIKI

You did not try our South, nor test our West;
Nor bathe your spirit in the human tides
That sweep our strong young land from coast to
coast!

For if you had, you would have told your folk
That this was their warm-hearted brotherland,—
Brother in freedom,
Brother in generous purpose,
Brother in all things
That make for justice and democracy!

THE ROAD TO FRANCE

(NATIONAL ARTS CLUB'S PRIZE WAR POEM)

THANK God our liberating lance
Goes flaming on the way to France!
To France—the trail the Gurkhas found!
To France—old England's rallying ground!
To France—the path the Russians strode!
To France—the Anzac's glory road!
To France—where our Lost Legion ran
To fight and die for God and man!
To France—with every race and breed
That hates Oppression's brutal creed!

Ah France—how could our hearts forget
The path by which came Lafayette?
How could the haze of doubt hang low
Upon the road of Rochambeau?
At last, thank God! At last we see
There is no tribal Liberty!

THE ROAD TO FRANCE

No beacon lighting just our shores!
No Freedom guarding but our doors!
The flame she kindled for our sires
Burns now in Europe's battle fires!
The soul that led our fathers west
Turns back to free the world's oppressed!

Allies, you have not called in vain!
We share your conflict and your pain!
"Old Glory," through new stains and rents,
Partakes of Freedom's sacraments!
Into that hell his will creates
We drive the foe; his lusts, his hates!
Last come, we will be last to stay—
Till Right has had her crowning day!
Replenish, comrades, from our veins,
The blood the sword of despot drains,
And make our eager sacrifice
Part of the freely-rendered price
You pay to lift humanity—
You pay to make our brothers free!
See, with what proud hearts we advance—
To France!

THE EMBATTLED FOREST

“STEADFAST, my trees!” (thus the wood whispered).

“Man is making war!

Man is blasting hills and shattering cities to gain
his armies a road!

I alone thwart him!

I am the last fortress!

Beauty has fled to my heart for sanctuary!

Shelter her, my poplars!

Be brave, my ash!

Chestnuts, twine your limbs thickly!

Underwoods, grow densely!

Thorns and vines, weave yourself into an impene-
trable barrier!

Rise before man dark and impassable!

“He strikes! His blades tear me!

His bullets startle my mating birds!

My frightened fawns fly to my innermost coverts!

Steadfast, my trees!

Resist him still, my thickets!

THE EMBATTLED FOREST

Engulf and bewilder him!
See! He stumbles and halts!
He turns back!
I have conquered him!

“He comes again!
What rushes upon me with the fury of ten thousand
 North Winds?
What thunderbolts rend me?
My oak! My venerable oak!
Time delayed too long his scything—
This wild wind slays you!
My tender birch, you are bleeding!
My wild rose! My delicate ferns!
The storm crushes even you!
Naked lies Beauty!
Naked, aye, and slain!
Man has triumphed!
Man—and his shells!”

THE FLAG OF MAN

(A Hymn of World Fraternity)

WEAVE for the world the flag of man!
Finish the fabric our sires began!
Out of our lives shall the thread be spun!
Out of our veins shall the color run!
Out of our deeds shall rise its luster!
Out of our dreams its stars shall cluster!
Wide as the heavens spin the span
Of freedom's fabric—the flag of man!

Ply the shuttle and crowd the loom!
Spin the threads of the tyrant's doom!
Spin humanity's hopes fulfilled—
Shackles sundered and cannon stilled!
Blend the glorious flags of the free
In the far-spun cloth of fraternity!
Twine with the victor's shining sheaf
The somber threads of the people's grief!
Those who inherit must know the price—
Dye the folds in our sacrifice!

THE FLAG OF MAN

Weave for the world the flag of man!
Gather the nations into its span!
Yea, there shall still be struggle to spin,
And divers goals for the tribes to win,
But show them joined in generous strife
To lead the race to larger life;
Lifting the torch of a common aim
Out of warfare's trampled flame!
Making the roads our armies beat
Paths to a common judgment-seat!

VERSES OF CHILDHOOD

FINGER-PRINTS

HER little fingers stain the doors
And blur the window-pane;
O'er treasured books of mine she pores—
Her finger-marks remain.
There's flour on our piano's keys—
She's fond of all the arts—
And how her little fingers squeeze
Their prints into our hearts!

She grows:—we soon no longer may
By smears about the place,
Detect how she has spent the day,
Her climbs and wanderings trace.
Time will erase those tiny hints
Of pastry, sweets, mud-tarts—
But not those precious finger-prints
Pressed deep into our hearts!

THE LITTLE COMMONER

'Tis not through great orations,
Or by reading history,
That I catch the fullest meaning
Of the word Democracy.
For I've a baby daughter,
And I've marked well how she greets
The servants and the tradesmen
And the strangers whom she meets.

While she upon her family
A wealth of smiles bestows,
To Norah in the kitchen
As warm a greeting goes;
And the wee one's gay advances
And her gurgles of pure joy
Are the same to ragamuffins
As to well-dressed girl and boy.

Her spirit is contagious—
It has spread about the place;

THE LITTLE COMMONER

It warms the coldest glances,
And melts the frostiest face;
And I move among my fellows
In a cheerier, kindlier mood,
Since the loving little lassie
Came to teach me Brotherhood.

WHEN LIFE CALLS

LITTLE one, my little one,
 Don't grow up so soon!
Aye, I know that voices new
Call and call and call to you,
Yet how can my bosom spare
Your wee head acuddling there?
 Be contented still, dear heart,
 With mother's hug and croon.

Little one, my little one,
 Don't grow up so soon!
Thus I pray and yet I know
Life will never have it so!
Childhood bids my babe come play,
Girlhood beckons, down the way,
 And my mother-plea is drowned
 By Life's bewitching tune!

LIGHTER CHORDS

MARSHAL BLUEBIRD

BLUEBIRD, skirmisher of Spring,
Scout for squadrons on the wing,
Signalling the slow retreat
Of the regiments of sleet,
Fluting forth your furtive trill
To hearten timid Daffodil,
Bidding Grass be up and sharing
In the Dandelion's daring,
Plotting how the rose shall throw
Flame along the garden row,
Rallying to field and thicket
Sabred bee and drumming cricket—
More than wood and brook and plain
You liberate from Winter's chain!
How our spirits leap and revel
At your coming, wee "Blue Devil!"

THE REPENTANT WIFE

I WANT his muddy feet to come a-messin' up my
floors;

I want to smell his stinkin' pipe; to see him dodgin'
chores;

I want his vermin-covered hound to lie in my best
chair;

I want his garments strewed around; I want to hear
him swear;

I want his poker-playin' chums to come each night
and camp!

I want to have him home again—the shameless shift-
less scamp!

I'm not too proud to let him know it was my fault
he went—

Seems like a woman never knows enough to be con-
tent!

I said I wanted things kept clean—I got it, good-
ness knows!

I called him sinful, slippin' off to see them burlesque
shows!

THE REPENTANT WIFE

I scolded him because at meals he never said a grace ;
Because he never tidied up when folks came to our
place!

I pestered him about his faults—I was too blind to
see

That 'twas his good-for-nothin' ways that made him
dear to me!

A BANJO ROMANCE

I'd be no-account to Clo
If mah fingers didn't know
How to pick de music from dis banjo's strings!
T'aint de player, it's de soun'
Dat she laiks to hab aroun'—
T'aint Remus, it's de instrument he brings!

When I talk instead o' play,
Den her thoughts am far away,
An' dat sich as me is livin' she doan' know!
But I call her back to me
When I take upon mah knee,
An' begin astrummin' on, dis ole banjo!

Lawdy! Lawdy! it is strange
How de lady's 'spression change!
How de sunshine comes and dances in her eyes!
But I'se sad as I kin be,
Fo' I knows I'se gwine to see
Dat 'spression leave her when de music dies!

A BANJO ROMANCE

Reckon I will stay awhile
Out o' reach o' dat gal's smile!

Mebbe den she'll miss mah banjo's music so,
Dat, jes' starvin' fo' a tune,
She will come an' tell me soon:

“Remus play—an' I will be yo' bride fo' sho'!”

THE SONG HIT

HE writes a frothy, vulgar verse—
Then adds a chorus that is worse!

A jazzed and syncopated strain
He links to his uncouth refrain;

And then the paid song-boosters go
To shout his theme at feast and show,

Till those whom it was made to fit
Attune their silly tongues to it!

The Gods of Custom grow satiric
When they let men call this—a lyric!

THE LOST BAZAARS

I ALWAYS said that before I got
Tied down by a wife and kids,
I'd go to see the "great god Budd,"
An' the Sphinx an' Pyramids.

It's the big bazaars I want most to see—
What I read in a Kipling book
Has kept me wishin' day an' night
For a chance to go an' look.

I've been workin' steady in Jubb's garage,
An' I've saved what I could have spent
For tobacco an' movies—an' now I could take
My tour of the Orient.

Yet last night, on the sofa with Nance,
Somehow I let myself slip,
An' I kissed her, an' mentioned what I'd saved,
But not a word of my trip!

THE LOST BAZAARS

Well, Nance isn't bold, yet she dropped a hint
That lots o' folks married on less;
An' you see I couldn't act selfish then—
So the matter's settled, I guess.

I'll give her my savin's to fit up a flat.
But to-day, as I cleaned the cars,
A voice kept sayin': "You paid for that kiss
With your Oriental Bazaars!"

THE END.

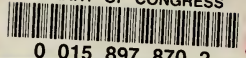
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