

WIDENER



HN NS39 H

REUBEN
AND OTHER POEMS

B. F. BAUGHAN

The Author desires to thank the Editors of *The Spectator* and *The Speaker* for permission to republish from their columns some half-dozen of the pieces included in the following pages.

REUBEN AND OTHER POEMS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

VERSES.

Price 5/-

(A. CONSTABLE & Co.)

Some opinions of the Press:—

“VERSES is a clean and healthy book . . . sweet lyrical freshness.”—*Academy*.

“Some of them are exquisite . . . Mr. Baughan’s name is new to us, but it is sure to become better known.”—*Glasgow Herald*.

“A promising volume . . . charming little idylls, full of grace and melody.”—*Publishers’ Circular*.

“A book to give pleasure . . . A vein of poetry fresh as a runnel in a waste. . . . A book of achievement and promise.”—*Speaker*.

“If Mr. Baughan can fulfil the promise shown, he may make for himself a name in literature . . . undoubted genius. . . . May do great things.”—*Morning Post*.

REUBEN AND OTHER POEMS

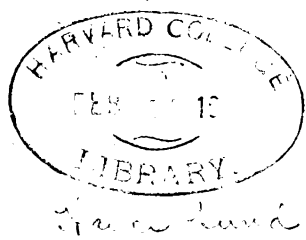
By B. E. BAUGHAN
Author of "Verses"

WESTMINSTER
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO LTD
2 WHITEHALL GARDENS

1903

~~23425379~~

Oct 11 4 27, 1, 20



**BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
FROME, AND LONDON.**

CONTENTS

	PAGE
REUBEN	9
PREPARATION FOR DIVINE SERVICE	46
PHOCAS	48
BRIGHTON FRONT	56
LANDLOCK'D	60
THE <i>Mary Ross</i>	63
THE TWO SHIPS	67
WITH THE TIDE	71
THE SHIP AND THE SEA	75
OUTSIDE O' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN	78
YOUNG HOTSPUR	85
THE OLD PLACE	87
IN EXILE	90

REUBEN

BEHIND a bleak unshelter'd promontory—
Seventy fathom of white chalk plunged down
Sheer to deep sea, an edge to open space :
Where, at her extreme bourne and outlook, Earth
Stands up, and with a bared and dauntless brow
Superbly fronts far ocean, shoreless air :—
There lies a little hollow.

North, and east,
And westward (save where one blue-opening vale
Leads inland to the village and is lined
With hanging firwoods dark), treeless and wan,
Untenanted, unplough'd, as mid-sea blank,
Spreads far away the everlasting down :
A lonely tableland, whose pastures huge,
Gradually undulating, never crown'd
By soaring peak, nor falling to deep dales,
With sober, tawny, equable long lines,
Uninterrupted sweep the enormous sky :
A voiceless lifted world of roomy peace,
Whose simple amplitude and pure expanse

REUBEN

Fill the held void and virgin austere air,
And overwhelm the silenced mind of man,
With an almighty sense of sovereign space,
Giant, indifferent, dumb—a keen cold breath
Of pungent liberty and loneliness
Untouch'd.

But in the hollow there are trees ;
Sycamores, from whose dim and misty boughs
On February dawns the wild-voiced thrush
Exults, and 'mid whose rosy buds, in May,
Some o'er-sea nightingale betwixt the brine
Alighting, and the waiting woodland green,
In this first gage of Home grateful may linger
One night, and with long shafts of passion thrill
The wistful reaches of the far blue dusk.
And 'neath the trees, 'mid all that barren waste
Vividly green and various, grew trim grass
Once, and bright hardy flowers—marigolds,
Wallflower, larkspur, snapdragon and, ranged
In rows on either side the red-brick path
That parted the broad beds of kitchen herbs,
Gooseberries and currants, all a homely wealth
Of verdure : with one wide old apple-tree,
That, for two people, pink and white in spring,
Gold in September, tinted the whole world.

At one side of the dip, behind the trees,
A tarr'd shed, built of wreck-wood, met the down.

REUBEN

Opposite, looking landward, with the lap
Of garden spread between, a small house stood,
Square, solid, of grey stone, its painted door
And shutters of a weather-stain'd sea-blue,
Its slanted roof of pigeon-purple slate
Splash'd into brightness by the broidering rings
And rounds of orange lichen. Dappled too,
And crusted, was each twig of every tree
With massèd lichen, hoary, silver-gold,
Greenish or russet. For the sea, though hid,
Was not far off; on stone and bark she wrote
Her salty runes, refresh'd the brooding air
With her frank breath, and with her mighty voice
The stately stillness more majestic made;
Never remitting from that shelter'd spot
Plain signs of her eternal neighbourhood.

Yet, solitary tho' the place might be,
And to strong influences subjected, drear
Or lonely it was not. Small sights and sounds
Pleasantly occupied it all day long—
Hens clucking 'neath the bushes; the black goat
Calling, from shed or pasture-tether; bees
From clover, sainfoin, or the low gold crowns
Of honey-vetch, with music coming home
Up thro' the garden to the door-seat, where
Their pale straw houses glisten'd to the sun.
And from within came sounds—Pilot's loud bark,
Or Reuben's whistle, or the low sweet voice
Of Mercy, singing at her housewifry.

REUBEN

For here, amid the garden and the downs,
Their still and simple life of well-loved toil,
Toil that was life, and daily sweetness small,
Reuben and Mercy led : a childless pair,
Through forty years of mutual tenderness
Each to the other child and parent grown.
She was a little woman, shrivell'd, spare
And apt, with beaming eyes and rosy cheeks
And busy birdlike movements. I have thought,
At times, the life they led, and he required,
Solitary, same, pressed hard on Mercy. Hers
Was a keen taste in little things ; she loved
That trivial, intimate, long-drawn-out talk
Of daily happenings, in-and-out details,
And chance of new-old changes, by whose help
Women in villages make shift to weave
Some kind of colour'd arabesque as fringe
To Life's web, hodden-gray. But seldom hers
Such brightening ; only of a Sunday morn,
The greetings after church—he standing back
Uneasy : or a spice of gossip to
Some rare event of shopping—when the thought
Of him there all alone wing'd her way back.
Yet she was happy. Love was Life, to her,
And all her life was love. Like some small brook
Was Mercy, that, from meadows turn'd aside,
Runs brightly in a bare place, buoyantly
Babbling and dancing 'mid a fringe of flowers
Itself has brought to birth : with no cascade
Resplendent, and by no deep following pool

REUBEN

Begloom'd ; but, childlike, telling to the sun
Its every little pebble, yet with means
Abundant in its strait and shallow scope
To charm the glad, the weary to revive,
And cleanse the travel-stain'd. Not very wise,
And no way great was Mercy—save in prompt
And plain goodwill : the gracious wish to please,
The gracious inclination to be pleas'd ;
No queen o'ertopp'd her there.

And like some rock

Was Reuben, which the singing stream endues
With fern and fresh green mosses, which no less
Of the sweet song the mute occasion is.
Older than Mercy by ten years, more aged
By thirty, bow'd in body, slow, infirm,
But of a sure mind, he was much her charge
Yet order'd both their lives. A gaunt old man
With settled lips and deep dumb eyes of blue
(A diver he had been, and some shy sense,
Of that inhuman isolation bred
In the remote dim regions of the sea,
Possess'd him still, and like an unseen wall
Secreted him from neighbourhood, in show
If not in fact) : a man of his own way,
Of even judgment and a quiet heart :
Just before generous, generous after just :
Who, when boys robb'd his garden, prosecuted—
“ In rightness to the neighbours and the boys,”

REUBEN

He said, and Mercy then must plead in vain:
But when, the birching done, with honest ruth
Gruff father, plaintive mother, brought their pack
Of down-faced culprits to beg pardon, lads
And parents gaped alike to see him rise
Awkward and grave, the unready pilfering hands
Pile up with apples, then, without a word,
Go out, 'mid silence puzzled more than pleased:
Few were his friends, but three he found enough:
His wife, his dog, and (Who Himself adjoins
Great things to small, and neighbours the high hills
With the low valleys), God. And people spoke
With distance and respect of him, as one
Whose right to privacy and his own path
Was amply earn'd and proven. Not before
It wore him out, he left his calling, then,
Following a long dream, came to end his days
In the remember'd cottage, where of old
His mother rear'd him, and the white road ran
To school and Mercy. Many a fairer scene,
A richer scope, a fuller way of life,
His wandering years had shown him, but no way
So sweet as the old simple way, no home
Like the old home. The cottage he had found
A ruin, and the garden, russet sward,
And with his own hands so rebuilt the one,
The other re-created, that the place
Was truly all his own except in law;
Was so in that, perhaps, or soon would be,
Argued the knowing—witness how he work'd!

REUBEN

No labour like the landlord's ; and who picks
His own tune plays the fiddle twice as long.
" What if he do live poor ? " they said. " Some folk
Like keeping next to getting. Past all doubt
He'd some sure reasons for those foreign parts.
There's three good hands to go a-gathering—
Toil, time, and thrift ; and he's a pretty purse
Put by !—Why, you can see it in his face,
Close though he shuts his mouth up—people do,
That know the road to riches."

Meanwhile he
Reck'd little of their reckoning. Strenuous
And far a-field no more, he was not yet
Memory's poor stay-at-home, upon the Past
Feeding a faint life ; but the Present still
Stood richly friend to him, and his smooth days
Not bound, yet busy, unfatigued yet full,
Forward nor backward looking overmuch,
But each contain'd within its own ripe round,
Like windless autumn weather, steep'd in sun,
And haze-enfolded, slipp'd serenely by.

To him employment and enjoyment were
But one : with his own hands to rear and reap
Crops he had sown on soil that he had till'd :
—To tend the creatures, seek the eggs, and on
The shed-door chalk the daily tally up :

REUBEN

At ebb-tide, from the foreshore spring, to dip
Out of the strength of seaweed-cover'd rocks,
Sweet water for the household, and bear home,
Crystal to see and crystal cool to hear,
The radiant sheen, lip-lipping two grey pails :

After high storms to rove the beach, and rout
The wind-rows, Pilot following, not for wood
And useful wreckage only, but the joy,
The curious joy, in-knit with human roots,
Of search itself : nay, if nought else he cull'd,
Tidings this travell'd débris of the waves
Never refused to give him, news far-come
Of strange sea-lives, of man's vicissitudes,
The wide world yonder, and the deep world here :

To mark the moon and chronicle the tides :
On blue and dulcet afternoons, to couch
In some warm elbow of the cliff, that holds
A bight of spreaded sea ; and there for hours,
In Pilot's panting company, to watch
The untir'd Deep travelling toward him, huge, alive,
Wonderful ! one great drop of sapphire glow
Shimmering and shoaling like a peacock's neck
To richest purple, azure and pure green,
Barr'd here and there with shafts of lustre, shot
Down by some high white cloud :

To mark the gulls,
Sweeping so sure and easy thro' the deep
Ravine of air, or toward the Blue above
The flash of bright white light beneath their wings
Upbearing, while their restless and hoarse cry

REUBEN

Voiced as it were of that smooth basking Blue
Beneath, the heart inveterately wild:—

Or else compute, of every passing ship,
Curtseying schooner, seated red-wing'd barge,
Or hurried steamer busily riving up
The unresisting gloss, their several speed,
Tonnage and cargo, whence and whither bound,
But never grudge the roving of their keels:

At night-fall, by the drift-oak's various flame,
To pore upon old work-plans, books and charts,
With notes in labour'd writing; to survey
Old calculations, once work'd out, or go
Securely back in thought to old chill hours
Ere dawn . . . once more the breast-plate heavy
hangs,

The caging helmet drops . . . the difficult breath
Buzzes . . . now, slowly over the boat-side
Heav'd is the weighty body, and grows light;
While, flash'd to fire on either hand, the Dark
Pulses with radiance! till the far-off dawn,
Flushing yon upper world to life, pales this,
And weirdly thro' the cold green glimmer move
Shadowy forms deep-dwelling. Ay, but cleave
With steady axe this ocean-thicket, 'mid
Whose moving tangle, *What*, unmoving looms,
What gleams? Kind Heaven, the pity! Where be-
tween

The drown'd ship's ribs, 'mid fecund ooze and growth
That have no sense and yet how thick may thrive!
Mothers' sons, bare boned, lie in cabins cold

REUBEN

While far-off homes wait empty : : : With a start
Suddenly might he shake that ill sight off,
Deliver'd thankfully to present peace,
As Mercy's gentle hesitating voice
Spelt out the evening Psalms : and so to bed :—
Sometimes 'mid lashing rain to lie awake,
And thro' the wind's incessant lumbering, hear,
Safely, the great Voice boom : or, 'mid the stars
And silence, and the pausing of a mind
Profoundly by the far sea-rhythm lull'd—
'Mid Night's wide simple quiet, perfected
By movements low without, of leaves and wind,
Live things unconscious nestling in their sleep,
And the beloved breathing at his side—
To drink long draughts of peace, to realize
Rest . . . till the sweetness of that shared repose
Would deepen down to love, and he would lie
Thinking : " Sure, we *are* happy ! God *is* good ! "

Such was his daily life, his year-long joy.

Till one spring came. The bees woke up, brown buds
Were on the wallflowers, and fresh radiant days
Jollily brought the welcome season in.
'Twas time to plant young cabbage, peas and beans,
And work the winter stiffness from the joints.
Reuben was fain and hearty. But, indoors,
Day after day a little heavier hung
Their wonted tasks on two persisting hands,

REUBEN

That falter'd. Brightly still the dwelling shone,
And sweetly smell'd, with country cleanliness.
But at a cost now; and the frugal meals,
For one partaker all too plentiful,
Gradually later grew, the evening Psalms
Earlier—till, once, the low and quavering voice
Broke to a sob of pain. In one long look,
Silent, set one on either side the hearth,
That night they faced each other and the truth.
Mercy was ailing, and all things were changed.

Now to take long'd-for action, yet not rouse
Fear in the other, was the care of each:
And by degrees, by cautious heedful steps,
Carefully hidden, perfectly perceiv'd,
They dared at last their common goal to touch,
And speak of doctor's help—still furtively;
“To make ye eat a bit more,” Reuben said,
Concealing how the each-day-slower step,
Thinn'd face, and hid, unhideable pain had long
Wrung him with vague foreboding. “Nay, to make
My temper sweeter,” Mercy said, and smiled;
No word on her white lips of what hot wrath
Now gall'd implacably her days and nights,
Made toil a penance, rest a torture, stole
The savour out of prayer, and with dark dread
Wielding the awful power of the flesh
O'ershrouded all her circumstance of life.

Next day they took the village road. It was

REUBEN

A morn of early March. The keen sweet air,
All of a-startle with the eager, wild,
Sudden exhilaration of the spring,
Ran riot in the blood. The glad young sun
Clear-ey'd, adown his steep blue paths of Heaven
Sprang laughing; in the dimples of the down
He nestled, ran along the twinkling grass,
Woo'd to faint smiles the wistful earth, and kiss'd
The ready waves into a world of glee.
The larch boughs in the spinney show'd a blush
Of coming verdure and smelt fresh of spring.
Warmth lay along the village; young green grass
Was springing 'neath the old grey churchyard wall,
And light sat reigning in the bare elm-tops.
Greetings on all sides met them, and the life
Came back to Mercy's eye, to her wan cheek
The colour came, responding to a world
So glad and kind; and ready as of old
Her smiles return'd the laughter in the eyes
Of children, skipping schoolward, unabash'd
Even by Reuben, this delightful day.
Beyond the street young barley waved, the air
Came softer, over leagues of gentle land—
No more the wide starv'd russet, bur rich brown,
Pure yellow of the charlock, purple, fawn,
Emerald, and tender tints innumerable,
In rounding violet vapour at the last
Melting towards Heaven's azure. Larks in the blue,
Lambs in the green fields lent a voice to joy;
Everything in this opening world with life,

REUBEN

New life, abounded. Pain, grief, age, all care,
Seem'd but some mad mistaking of the mind,
And, like a passion, Hope on Reuben seiz'd.
One basking crocus, at the doctor's door,
With golden light o'erswimming, held his eye,
And seem'd to shine into his very heart.
How could that be so bright, and God so good,
And anything in all the world go ill?
Then the door open'd.

With a joke at first
The old doctor greeted neighbours so well known,
So rarely seen—then listen'd, ask'd, grew grave:
Examin'd and grew graver; paus'd awhile . . .
On death-like stillness suddenly his voice
Clapp'd, loud and harsh with sensibility:
"Reuben, my man! Mercy, my poor good soul—
Bear up! I can do nothing."

"Nothing, sir?"
'Twas Mercy's voice, quiet and steady; 'twas
Mercy he answer'd, talking on of rest,
Nursing, good nourishment; all palliatives—
But for a cure, not one. Some hospital
He named, which might receive her: but at that
She started, gasp'd, and "Let me die at home,"
She said. The last word scarcely pass'd her lips,
And no one spoke again.

REUBEN

They rose to go,
But on the doorstep Reuben stopp'd, and rais'd
Slow eyes at last upon the doctor's face—
“How long?” “Nine months or so—a year—” he
stammer'd,
Shut-to the door, and hurried with hard work,
To bar away from quivering kindred depths
That gaze, of mute accepted agony—
Pain without end and with no anodyne
Into the quick of a live human heart
Dealt and receiv'd : thenceforth for evermore
To inhabit there and, like the heart's own red,
Only with life itself pass out of life.

Meanwhile, their two-mile walk the old pair
went—
The other way now, homeward. And still, still,
The sweet light broad and delicately lay,
The young corn rippled and the air came kind,
The birds and lambs, ay, even the very clouds
Of heaven seem'd happy. Back, the way they came,
Slowly they went ; the strength of both was ebb'd ;
Slowly they went, and not one word the while.
Back, through the work-still'd village, past the elms,
The church, the humming school, the spinney, down
The white road and the tawny pasture lands,
Into the hollow, home. There stood the trees ;
Blackie was browsing ; and the currants, they
Would leaf next week ; the thin blue smoke curl'd up

REUBEN

Just as it did on Sundays, coming home.
And home itself, and sky, and down, and sea
Were all as usual, everything the same—
All, all, how different !

As they rose at length
That night together from their knees : “ My lad,”
She whisper’d, “ God is good ; we’ve got a year,
Maybe.” But Reuben had no words to say.
In the deep middle of the night fierce pangs
Awoke her, but the groan upon her lips
Died, as she felt the breath come hot and quick
Between those other lips, and heard the voice
Dearer than life break into one low cry,
Quick-stifled, on the almighty name of God.

That spring-time wore and went. When summer came,
Mercy, grown pitifully weak, at last
Perforce to Reuben’s anxious daily plea
Gave way, and from the near town where she dwelt
Alone, in much-respected widowhood,
Heavily summon’d the oft-tender’d aid
Of Sarah, her one sister. She was good,
Godly, ungracious, with a caustic tongue,
Capable hands, and critical shrewd eyes,
That saw too well to see aright, too much
To see sufficient ; thoroughly ransack’d

REUBEN

Foibles, and left large virtues out of view.
Clear sight is often near sight ; specks of dust
Are duly through a microscope discern'd—
Not stars : nor measurable at one sharp glance
Are the immense horizon lines of Truth.
But she was vigorous, skilful, loyal, sure,
None ever master'd Sarah, saving one
That wanted wit—her brother ; him she serv'd
And humour'd with sweet patience until Death
Emptied her clasping and reluctant hands.
And, partly for her well-to-do sleek state,
Her town-bred and authoritative air,
Part for a certain piquant zest she had
In telling vivid tales of love and blood,
Nay, somewhat for her very sharpness' sake
(Like children, a severity deserv'd,
A touch assur'd, respecting) : readily
Her old-time village neighbours welcom'd her,
And felt her presence lent a spice to things,
Whenever ('twas not often) she might choose
Touch and talk with them.

But 'twas otherwise
With Reuben. When the late October days
Droop dull low heavens o'er the unsunn'd down,
And rhyme grey melancholy leagues above
With grey and melancholy leagues below—
Still the flowers tarry ; and the blank outspread
Of lonely landscape, separate step by step,

REUBEN

Is thro' their tender trivial influence
Redeem'd, and still has charm. But when, betwixt
Day and day sunless, foggy night on night
Brings the slight frost unfailing, and the pinch'd
Earhnut and harebells, and wan scabious
Fade, and are not succeeded : then indeed
Hard skies beneath, and o'er a naked land,
A starveling and a settled gloom presides.
And so on Reuben Sarah's influence fell.
Sheath'd by no shame and edged with judgment cold,
That steely scrutiny could wound, and though,
Untemper'd in the fires of sympathy,
Oft it must glance aside and leave him still
Unsearch'd, unviolated : none the less
Its neighbourhood was a perpetual daunt.
It chill'd his spirit, his small innocences
Rebuk'd, penn'd in and paralysed his powers,
And from a life of happiness bereft
Filch'd comfort also. Little heeded he.
What is the loss of Less when All is gone ?
Yet drearier is the bleak November down
For the dead stalks of its once-colour'd flowers.

Smooth days no more, and tender peaceful
nights ;
Vague gentle dalliance with the days long past,
And calm unreckoning with futurity,
No more. Old hardship seem'd a happy dream,

REUBEN

Old joys incredible ; and days to come
Held but one fact, frightful, inevitable,
Real. Within doors often now forbid,
Excluded by himself at first, until
Time to a front of perfect apathy
Should school him, his free wanderings over down
And cliff-side and the curious varied shore
He yet abandon'd quite, and all day long
Toil'd only with a double industry
At the old duties, rarely from earshot
Of what the humble home of Joy had been
Once, but was now of Anguish. And when light
Fail'd him, or labour, he would creep away
Into the old wood-shed, and there for hours
Sit, with a listless hand on Pilot's neck,
Blankly before him gazing, motionless ;
Till a shrill summons, or the step that woke
The dog's low growling, call'd him. No Psalms now,
And a far different, harder prayer, alone.

But level steps 'twixt rock and rock are found,
Moments of lull in storms, and 'mid long pain
A respite. Mercy's pangs would slack at times,
And Sarah's conscience warrant to all three
A holiday from over-help. Such care
As Reuben's, strait-laced up at every point
With endless detail'd charges, then might serve,
And she among the village gossips take

REUBEN

A well-won recreation, chat and cheer,
And the delight of hinted self-applause
Loudly re-echoing round. Till, soon, as well
Of Sarah's as of Mercy's many trials
Word ran abroad : of Reuben's vexing ways,
His years and all their burdens (he was nigh
His dotage, any one could see) : his sloth,
Clumsiness, closeness and stupidity :
How he spent hours outside—and just as well—
Indoors he sat as mum as any corpse : . . . ”
Poor soul, she meant no malice. Watch like hers
Body and mind o'er-racks, and if Care's breath
Can curdle in the heart at times even Love,
How much more like is work-day Charity
So to forswear itself ! By this grey day,
Inexorable, of Destiny oppress'd,
Tir'd with this tireless tempest of sore woe
(Unearn'd, and seen in secret as a wrong),
She, being for strength and weakness, what she was,
Must rail ; and rail'd on Reuben, since upon
The felt cause of her burden, unconfess'd
But without recognition recognized—
On God, she dared not rail.

At home, the while,
Such halcyon noons or blessed gloamings through,
Mercy and Reuben might together be
Alone once more. Upon those precious hours,

REUBEN

Peace, the long-exiled housemate, stealing back,
Might smile, with careworn lips. There, hand in hand,
They patiently abode, like two that wait.
Silent they sat together, Reuben's gaze
Fix'd idly on the once dear apple boughs,
And Mercy watching the long thro'-shine turn
To pillars and to pennons of green light
Her window lily-leaves. They seldom look'd
At one another, very seldom spoke ;
Sometimes a fitful word or two might slip.
"She tries you, Reuben." "Nay, she tends thee,
lass !"

"Three now to feed—however shall we do ?
An' all this weary doctoring !" "Never fret !
Two can feed three, dear heart, an' 'tis kind soil
This year." "Next year—O, lad !—" On such a
word

Would silence close again, until—quick steps,
The door flung open, and the stinging tones :
Thro' conscience-pricks, it may be, doubly sharp.
Mercy had talk'd too much—or else been moped ;
The fire was low—a furnace—and despite
The wistful voice, "O sister, let him stay !"
Water or wood must instantly be brought,
And Reuben, rising, with one full fond look
Into those understanding pleading eyes,
Would reach his cap, and, Pilot slinking close,
Go out, obey the heard commandment first,
Then the unheard, buy quiet for his wife
At his own cost and so come back no more.

REUBEN

That summer went, that autumn, winter, spring.
Next summer came, and still she linger'd on
And could not die : a piteous creature now,
Whose weary world to the rack'd body's sense,
At furthest to her chamber wall was shrunk.
Whose set monotony of pain no care
Could vary now ; the gentle garrulousness
Gone, the brave cheer of that sunshiny spirit
Quench'd ; even for Reuben scarce a greeting now.
A whole once-happy kindly human being
Turn'd to a fine machine for feeling pain,
Whose intervals of rest were nothingness.
Alive, yet lifeless : dying, far from death :
Obscure, to signal martyrdom adjudged :
Innocent, with inhuman tortures wrung.
—O strange, inscrutable world !

For Reuben now
No sweet shared vigil, no reviving change
For Sarah. But the neighbours to and fro
Came with kind aid ; and went with strange reports.
Reuben was rarely altered. Age was age
And trouble trouble—but what trouble need
Glue up the lips and screw the eyelids down,
And make a man as shy of company
As if he was himself a bit of gold
And all his neighbours thieves ? And as to age—
He *did* look wan and wisht, not Mercy's face
Show'd more the bone—yet see what strength he had !

REUBEN

Always at work ! Ah, *he* knew how to gain,
And how to grasp—and how to turn the key !
Thrift was that call'd ? which bid a man of means
With no more youth in his veins, to live himself,
And half expect his helpers would (but they
Were wiser), on his garden-stuff—home-grown,
You see, not piping any pennies out !
Some days again he wholly idled ; walked
Twice, to the harbour-town and back, ten miles ;
Why—nobody dare ask, for, push'd too far,
He *would* speak, short and savage.

Till, as mould
O'er objects from the public air's free touch
Too long reserv'd, there subtly stole and clung
O'er Reuben's untold motives, leprous films
Of rootless rumour, breaths of thin surmise
That soon, a solid and a monstrous mask,
Disgraced the form they covered. Talk began
Of miser's craft in Reuben, of bygone
Fatal privation forced on Mercy—sow'd
With gold that much-lov'd garden, and the hands
That dress'd it, dyed with innocent spilt blood.

So ran the village verdict. For the rest,
His dumb indifference gave the parson scope

REUBEN

(A young oft-puzzled man) for ponderings dark
On heaven-sent grief that hardens ; and grim cause
Had the dry pity which, invading, sapp'd
The doctor's old regard. Reuben, who long
Had shunn'd his visits, as he left the house
One July noon, upon the dusty road
Stood and confronted him with last year's cry :
" Doctor ! how long ? " Remembering last year's look
The doctor glanced away and shook his head.
" I say, How long ? " cried Reuben in a voice
So rude and desperate that the other turn'd
Quickly, a moment stared at the strange light
(Not anger, dread, despair—hope could it be ?)
Fierce and peremptory in those faded eyes,
Then slowly, with attention, answer'd : " Well—
In such a case 'tis hard to tell. Perhaps—
Say—at a hazard, Christmas time——"

" So long ? "

The light died out, the pinch'd and sombre face
Grew ashen. " God ha' mercy on us ! " he said
Like one who knows not what his tongue is doing—
" Christmas ? Live on to Christmas ! " " But the pain
May lessen," said the doctor, watching. " Ay ! "
He answer'd dull, " That's good . . . That's not it.
Pain ?

All's pain now—No ! " he suddenly cried out,
" There'll *not* be less ! More, doctor, worse ! "——

REUBEN

He stopped,
Ey'd him suspiciously and shambled off.
The doctor sigh'd. "It seems her body will
Outlive his mind. He was a fine man once."

Some weeks ere Christmas, a prolong'd west wind
Brought constant rain ; till, three days ere the feast,
Round to the north it shifted, and keen frost
Turn'd into slides of ice the watery roads,
While o'er the downs an ominous mass'd wall
Bulged up, of loose grey cloud. Then the wind ceased,
The frost held, and the snow began. Five days,
Five muffled days, five still and soundless nights,
The soft snow fell, and stay'd. It hush'd the sea,
The virginal white land inviolate set,
And rear'd 'twixt man and man frail barriers
That firm and staunchly held. All round the house
No sight, no sense, but of unending snow.
Doctor nor friend along those treacherous tracks
And thro' that blinding daze could come. Instead
Came Peace ; instead, the blessed face of Death
With tender sunset glow at last illum'd
The long grey gloom of Dying. Mercy's hour
Drew near, but for five days before she died
Suffering released her, and once more she lived.

There, in a sacred quietude enwrap,
Tranquil she lay within Death's gentle arms ;
Already from the ills of Life remote,

REUBEN

And to Life's heart, close, close. Hers now at last
Of all the well-known shows to know the sense,
The real heart of friends, the vital calm.
Stay'd thus awhile upon Time's outmost shore,
A willing and a trustful charge she lay
Facing Eternity. From that small room,
From that high court and sovereign Presence pure
Rancour retreated, trouble fled away.
Reuben and Sarah by that bedside lost
All sense of interacting strain and jar.
She but perceiv'd her dying sister's face,
Reuben, his wife's—and both, the breath of God.

But, the fifth day at evening, came a change ;
Thaw, with a south wind and persistent rain
Pattering all night long. Blue came the day ;
Sea-scented and sun-scented the mild air
Set quick green footsteps in the floor of white.
Nature revived. And Sarah, as she stood
Watching the world return, and spied at last
A figure 'mid the landscape, smiled, and said :
“ Here comes the doctor—but you're better, lass.
Eh, we'll do yet.” There came upon her words
A moan—a gasp—a pause ; and turning round,
“ Mercy ! ” she wailed. Bending above the bed
With exultation Reuben answer'd her.
“ She's gone ! ” he said. “ She's gone at last, thank
God ! ”

“ Gone ! ” Sarah cried : “ dead, Reuben ? Your
wife *dead*,

REUBEN

And you with a 'Thank God ! ?'

He rose and went,
Not speaking, to the window, like a man
That wakes, and after darkness would have light.
Next moment, he was gripping at her arm,
Face bloodless, eyes on fire—"Give me your word,
Woman, ere yon man come! Promise me! Say
You'll bury her. You *must* bury her. I've nought."
"Reuben!" she cried in fierce resentment: then
The memory of their late watch side by side,
The sense of that new ending, coming back,
Rebuked and gentlier moved her. "He is crazed,"
She said: "Poor soul, the trouble's ta'en his wits.
Come, Reuben! pluck up heart." "Nay, not my wits,
It's taken all the money," he replied.

Then, strong suspicion seiz'd her. Not one word
She spoke, but stood there facing him, and probed
His face with piercing eyes. His eyes, but now
So urgent, were dropp'd down; his head hung down;
His body seem'd to dwindle as it stood,
And not one limb or line or hair of him
But mean it look'd and shamed. With strong disgust
Her decent heart was shaken. "Coin's made flat:
That's cause enough, for you, to pile it up!
Miser! at your old tricks again, and she
Not cold!" He straighten'd up and raised his head;
As if the taunt put strength in him. His eyes,

REUBEN

Deep, hollow, sad, look'd truly into hers.
" Sarah ! I have no money. Before God
I have not ! Sure you'll promise, Sarah ? For
She was your sister."

" And she was your wife,
And now you'll grudge the burying of her. Shame !
Shame on you, Reuben ! Everybody knows
What kind of roots lie in your garden there."

" Folks say what say they will, I wot—'tis God
Knows." His voice broke a little. Then he said :
" He's yet a good step off. I'll tell ye all.
When I'd to quit my calling, and we'd paid
To put the place right (for the agent's hard
And I was fain to live here), we had left
No more but just enough. It would have been
Enough ; what with the garden and the bees
And doing of such work as old folk can,
We look'd to live on quiet a good while,
And then die quiet. Had it pleas'd God so,
There'd ha' been plenty. But it's been His will
This way ; and there's been doctor, and the drugs
And food and such. I tried to stretch it out :—
You know if I've lived close : but her club stopp'd ;
An' mine, I've had to slip 'em one by one,
An' she lived longer nor I'd reckon'd for.
All's gone—Praise God ! she'll never need to know,
Now."

REUBEN

“Ye can sell some o’ the house-stuff, then,”
Said Sarah stoutly, tho’ her secret heart
Reel’d with a consternation yet ungauged :
“Or get a mortgage on the house and land—
Not that I grudge, but he that’s gear to hold
Has gear to handle.” “House nor land is mine.
It never was,” he answer’d wondering, “and
I doubt there’s little o’ the house-stuff mine.
It’s four months that I’m owing for the rent.
They said they’d put a man in after three,
Then after four—and the fourth’s up—it fell
O’ Christmas, and no going to beg more time
By reason of the snow. God’s blessing on it,
It’s seen her safe away! Now, when he comes,
He *may* come, him you took for doctor, him
That’s coming yonder—for all’s theirs by right—
The very bed is theirs.”

“He’s coming *now*?”

Cried Sarah. She believed at last. His tone,
Simple, direct, left no more room for doubt.
Sorrier far than wonted weakness is
The helplessness of strength; with hanging hands
Beside the silent bed she stood stock-still
And fumbled in her mind. “Have pity on us!
Oh, my poor Mercy! Oh, what *will* folk say?
Reuben! you’d never, never let him in?
Not right in the dead face of her?” She came
And crouch’d beside him, like a wild thing tamed,

REUBEN

All heart gone out of it. " You've something, sure ?
Oh, pay him off—don't grudge it her that's gone,
Pay him off, man ! You *must* ! To think o' this !
Oh, dear, what *will* they say ? "

He took a crock
Off the high shelf, and turn'd it upside down ;
But not one coin fell out. " Last time he came
You saw me pay the doctor : an' I sold
All I could carry into town with me,
An' made a written promise o' some more
(Leaving what's justly right to quit the rent),
An' paid the rest of 'em. There's no more debts.
There's no more money, but there's no more debts.
He's ta'en her in the nick o' time—but, eh ! . . .
He drove it near ! "

She said no more ; and both
Sat still while, she sobbing, patient he
As one whose only office is, to wait.
At last there came the knocking, and he rose.
" Say you *will* bury her, Sarah ? "

Like a flash
She was between him and the door, both hands
Upon the undrawn bolt. " Yes, yes ! But, oh,

REUBEN

Keep him out, Reuben ! Reuben lad, I'll pay !
I doubt all hasn't been your fault. Oh, say
I'll stand, say anything ! Only keep him out."

" I cannot keep him out. The man must do
His duty," he replied ; " and, Sarah lass,
What can it matter, *now* ? " His quiet voice
Was weighted with a dignity from which
She shrank abash'd. The bailiff knock'd again,
And Reuben drew the bolt and let him in.

After the long wild tossing months of rain
And roaring, ice and gloom, on some still dawn,
Windless and mild, the weakling earth awakes.
And, lo ! once more on mother-knees it lies,
And on a dear face opens heavy lids—
For there, pale, pensive, veil'd in quietude,
Finger on lip, yet not without a smile,
Spring broods above her nurseling ; all is well !
Then, in the spinney, arums of the wood
Push up their young white necks, unfurl their broad
And genial green about some prone fir-tree,
By winter tempests fell'd. The sweet air breathes,
The pale beams play about it, quivering light
Flits on to it and off, while through the twigs
The busy finches flit. But never more
Beneath that blister'd bark the suppling sap
Will rise ; the August sunlight ne'er shall bask

REUBEN

Amid those broad boughs more. The storms are done,
The winter past, each other last year's growth
Replenish'd is, and hidden seed finds birth.
Life warm and closely laps it—but the tree
Is dead, and dead will lie:

So was it now
With Reuben. Comfort from far off and near
Pour'd on him. Sarah's tale, by alter'd lips
In altering ears now told, to eager aid
Arous'd the oft unready, ever real
Kindliness of an English countryside.
The poorer neighbours, this with food, and that
With fuel, each one with the shy excuse,
"Wishing to spare you toil and trouble," came ;
And what more rescue lay within their reach
The rest procured. Money indeed none dared
To offer, but the agent, a hard man,
Whose master was abroad, was given cause
To stay the seizure of the goods until
Forth from that dwelling to her last should fare
Their sometime mistress. And a place for him,
A home and tendance, long as he should need,
Soon as he wish'd them, waited the old man—
Sarah's ; the unwonted stirring of whose heart
Her wonted reason troubled, and perhaps
Deceiv'd. But Reuben's mind was steady. " No :
I thank ye kindly, but the House is best.
We'd only fret each other. I've paid rates

REUBEN

Regular all these years, an' going there
I'm none so much beholden ; I've a right
There."

Tho' she knew him wise—tho' sturdy sense,
Ashamed but truthful, told her what had been
Would be again, and warn'd her that Impulse,
So strong in promise and in proof so weak,
Never will alter Nature : yet his dull
Indifference struck upon her soften'd heart
As a stone strikes on flesh. Nor only so—
But all that warm and new-sensed sympathy,
So general now about him, found it strange
And somewhat chilling that its care on one
So careless, so entirely untouch'd,
Must needs 'be lavish'd. Ay, the spring was back,
The air had soften'd ; but the tree was dead.
Reuben, long toss'd upon vicissitudes,
A calm had reach'd where no man touch'd him more.

The day they buried Mercy he came back,
A frail old man, alone ; but there was still
One left to bid him welcome. Pilot tore
At his unwonted chain and snapp'd the links,
Leaping and barking with a frantic joy
Untestified for months, to find the long
Lone waiting over, and his master back.

REUBEN

He stoop'd; and 'twixt his hands the nestling head
Held for a moment, for a moment gazed
In the warm eager eyes; then took his gun,
New-primed, and once more to the shed they went,
Trusting and trusted, two old comrades. There
He shot him through the heart; nor did his hand
Tremble, nor was there in his eye one tear
Then, or thereafter, digging the small grave
Under the sycamore trees.

With slow long toil
Thro' the remainder daylight, and thro' much
Of the long dark, within the silent house
He work'd till all was orderly and clean,
Ready for stranger-hands. Midnight had struck
Ere all was done; and, all being duly done,
He lock'd each well-known door behind him, left
The hollow and went forth into the night.

There was no moon. The great black sky was
strown
With stars innumerable; the quiet air
Brought up the ceaseless sighing of the sea:
Out on the darkling promontory he came,
Came to the blank cliff-edge, and there stood still,
Homeless, alone, amid a night twofold.

REUBEN

Void, void was all about him—Heaven's huge height,
Earth's last abyss, the cold and spacious Deep,
The immeasurable spread of unfill'd air,
Not more unmitigated, not more sheer,
Opened about his single shape of man
Than round his soul, unfenced, denuded, lone,
Lay the bare outlook—GOD! And if then he,
From all his fellows at a distance set
Dumb, at the last with passionate outcry
Dared to his Maker turn : if then awhile
Vainly he stretch'd his soul to measure God,
Arraign'd the judgment of the one just Judge,
Rose in revolt 'gainst Life : who, being man,
That knows the impact of the limits, knows
The wildness of the God-given instincts foil'd—
Reason embattled, smarting struggling sense
Of Justice, thwarted Love-of-law at bay—
Who dare condemn him ? And, Who made the wings,
Will He their needs-must beating at the bars
Blame ? or disown that power-in-powerlessness,
That vital spirit, which, come enfranchisement,
Straight to His bosom would the bird bear home ?

Yet, if he thus strove long (and those few dread
And poignant moments in his tale of life
Outdid the partial measurement of time,
Outvolumed shallower years) : far otherwise
Influence more potent, more inveterate,
More fundamental wrought, and, last, prevail'd.

REUBEN

Reverence inborn, habitual humbleness,
Just-dealing memory, and, Life's great gift—
The heart's gain'd knowledge ineradicable
Of Love—of proven, real, all-vital Love—
These on his thought laid compensating stress
And sway'd the fair scale back. Nay, more, his soul
Even from out the matrix of despair
Pluck'd forth strong reassurance ; her bared brow,
And emptied world, discovering to her
The infinitesimal smallness of herself.
Whence power ensued ; and as night sped, such words
Now and again unconscious broke from him :

“ It is impossible that all should be
Waste—our love nothing, all her pain no use,
Worthless this land and sea, and all those stars !
There must be some real reason lies beyond,
Sure—some complete plan running fore and aft,
(Could we but see it) *why* we should be born,
And die, and, this and then betwixt, have pain.
What ? How can *I* tell ? Little of dry land
Live corals know, that make it, when they die.

The years are very many, and the world
Enormous. For a moment, in the midst,
I, *I*—one atom—ask about *my* lot !
I ! What am 'I' ? That's not it—what am I
For ? If there's reason in it—and there is—
And if God knows His business—which He does—
Each atom must ha' got its atom's use,

REUBEN

Each mite o' dust its work. Take any plan :
There's ne'er a single separate thing in it
But's there to help the others : *must* be there,
To help the rest bring out the whole thing right.
Not for a sitting softly, but for *use* :
That's sense—the standing-ways they must stay fixt,
The sliding-ways must travel and not stop,
The cradle must keep faithful to the keel—
Ay, and the ropes to check her, an' the blocks
Needed to steady as she makes her plunge
The vessel that's to tread mid-ocean, must
Break—but they all help ! . . .

“ Ah, that helps me out !
Old, broken, mazed, or young and strong and sure,
We're just like that. What are we in the end,
What are we meant for, what's the good of us,
But each to eke out everybody else,
An' all to do His work ? So, then, for me,
I must be wanted, else I'd be put out . . .
A kind o' block, perhaps, that's being broke. . . .
Well, an' if that's my business, turn it round !
If good to others must mean ill to me.
That ill to me is others' good, and God's.
My breaking is their making—I'm of use !

“ An' whether it's all just, how can I judge,
Lord God ? Or care to, neither. For it's *Thou* !
Ay, it all lies in that. It is Thysel

REUBEN

Stands back and forth it, everyway. I see,
Now that I must look closely, nought but Thee.
For the plan's Thine, the stuff, the tools are Thine,
The making—and the breaking, Lord—all's Thine!

Break me, then, if I'm usefulest that way;
Break me, and let me help Thee. It's Thy hand;
It's been Thy hand all thro' and—*she* was broke.

. . . Man's mind's a little thing, but this is sure—
Where'er I'm wrong, I'm right here—Work o' His
Must go straight thro', no shirking and no sham.
She never shirk'd. An' if it's hard, 'tis hard:
But all the time it's what He needs. O God,
Master o' men! You need *me*. I'll not fail!
I'll e'en bide out my breaking to the end."

The solemn hours paced on, darkness and stars
And silence. There he stood but spoke no more.

Then came a comfortless and foggy dawn.
He left the cliff, and to the hollow came
Once more—paus'd, look'd—pass'd on, and went his way,
First to deliver up his house keys, then
To seek the parish workhouse, far inland.

PREPARATION FOR DIVINE SERVICE

My mind's a temple.
Come, sweep it clean.
Out with you, low thoughts,
Little thoughts and mean !

What's the oblation
Offer'd up to-day ?
" Joy—in the glory of
A rosy leaf-spray !

" Crisp air, with rain-drops
Wash'd clear and bright :
Hosts of happy sunbeams,
Deluges of light :

" Ripe leaves translucent
Hung against the blue :
Painted air and sunlight
Palpitating thro'."

PREPARATION FOR DIVINE SERVICE

O ready make the temple, then !
Dust the dulness out,
Strew the ground with gladness
And scatter health about.

And, as to all the service,
Thanksgiving will be fit.
For when the senses bring a gift,
God smiles on it.

PHOCAS

“ TOWARDS the end of the third century A.D., a holy man named Phocas dwelt outside the gate of Sinope . . . and lived by cultivating a little garden. . . . One night, some strangers knocked at his door, and he invited them to enter. . . . They told him that they were sent in search of a certain Phocas, who had been denounced as a Christian, and that they were commissioned to kill him wheresoever they should find him. The servant of God, without betraying any surprise, conducted them to a chamber of repose, . . . went into his garden and dug a grave amid the flowers. The next morning he went to his guests and told them : ‘ I myself am Phocas.’ They started back, unwilling to imbrue their hands in the blood of their host, but he encouraged them, saying : ‘ Since it is the will of God, I am ready to die in His cause.’ Then they led him to the brink of the grave, struck off his head and buried him therein.”

Mrs. JAMESON, *Sacred and Legendary Art.*

THE dim blue twilight of the stars
 Against the window lay,
The night wind whisper'd thro' the trees,
The strangers slept : when from his knees
 Phocas arose, and silently
 Went down the garden-way.

PHOCAS

Unto the flowers he came, and there
 Paced out with equal tread,
And careful glance this way and that
(As meting yet another plat),
 Six feet of earth among his flowers.
 Then, looking up, he said :

“ Sons, parents, friends, yea, how much more
 Had I in thee, my God !
Yet, knowing that we are but dust,
And earth a little love we must,
 All-pitying ! lo, what fellowship
 Thou brought'st me from the sod !

“ Children, more every day, to tend,
 Mothers, to furnish food,
Brethren, to help me praise Thee—nay
But Cherubim in coats of clay,
 To guide my soul, and lead it thro'
 Low gateways unto good.

“ Oh, I have seen fair come of foul,
 And cleanness crown the mould—
I have watch'd patience mastering ill
And Death requickening Life—until
 I learn'd that in a garden yet
 God walketh as of old.

PHOCAS

“ My kindly good Green Things ! ” he said,
 “ Seventy years and seven
Together, and but one night more !
For I go through a sudden door
 Home . . . God forgive me ! Would I have
 Aught that is earth’s in heaven ?

“ My little comrades, fast asleep,
 God be with you this night !
Yea, night and morning, storm and sun,
God walk with you ! God’s will be done !
 Bless ye the Lord, my well-beloved,
 For all His ways are right.

“ And now, the one last grace. Ye know
 When your cramp’d roots did pine,
I, loving you, transplanted you :
So now will God the Gardener do
 With Phocas, His poor plant—Give room,
 Amid your roots, for mine.”

He girt his robe, and tenderly
 Uplifted, root by root,
And planted in a neighbouring lot,
The flowers that fill’d the destin’d spot.
 An olive-tree hung over it,
 Bow’d down with ripening fruit.

PHOCAS

Then, while no voice or hand of man
 Comfort or courage gave
(But the serene stars in the sky
Watch'd, and the dew fell tenderly,
 And sweetly rose the breath of flowers),
 Did Phocas dig his grave.

Which done, he threaded here and there
 The darkling garden-ground,
As through his home a blind man goes,
And where to seek and find he knows ;
 And store of certain other plants
 He brought, and set them round.

In all the uprooting having said
 To each, "Forgive it me !"
And round about the yawning space
Each one in its peculiar place
 Planting, he bless'd, and said to it,
 "God root and nourish thee !"

The first were naked Crocus bulbs.
 Them laid he at the head.
"Ye first-fruits of the wintry mould,
Ye happy Gospels writ in gold,
 Prophesy here the bright robe of
 My buried flesh," he said.

PHOCAS

A Red Rose on the left he set,
 White Lilies on the right:
“ Bestain’d with blood, beset with thorn,
Good in this world is hardly born.
 Yet, thorns once made a Crown, and Blood
 Once wash’d a whole world white :

“ So now,” he said, “ tho’ scarce one bud
 On my rough branches be,
One day, I dare be sure, will God
Touch all to bloom my pruned rod—
 Father ! and being pure at last,
 Even I shall pleasure Thee !

“ . . . Here, at my heart, white Columbine,
 Show forth the holy Dove.
Yet, do not grudge a little space
To this one, with the human face,
 Heart’s-ease—O excellently named
 Thou little look of love !

“ And do thou, here, at my left hand,
 Grow thickly, bitter Rue,
And thickly from this right hand spring,
Sweet Spikenard ! that its offering
 My dust may still afford to God,
 Of grief and worship due.

PHOCAS

“ . . . Here, since the needs of life for me
Are over, o'er my feet
Resting (and yet not tired), below,
Ye dwarfish pair of pot-herbs, grow—
Fail not ! I might not lustier take,
To rob my poor of meat.”

Then with sharp Briars he lined the pit :
“ Who wore you for a Crown
A King He was—a craven, I !
How oft, all lush with victory,
Cares of this world, ye choked my life—
Dead, I shall keep you down.”

He stood : and in his gentle mind
Seem'd all the plants to tell.
“ The Vine is full of mysteries.
The Gourd, the Passion-flower—but these
Let me not have,” he said, “ for when
Was all indulgence well ? ”

When, next he lift his eyes, behold
The night was pass'd away,
And pass'd the pearly, glimmering hours ;
Bright dew-drops quiver'd in the flowers,
And the first sunbeam of the morn
Upon his last work lay.

PHOCAS

“Blessed be God!” he cried: “O Earth,
Thy shadows flit and fail!
My day is dawn’d, my dark is past.
O light that brings the Light at last!
O risen sun, O Rising Sun,
O death, O Life! All hail!”

But the barb’d Rose his raiment caught
As glad he turn’d to go.
And pausing, looking down, he said,
“Ah, my poor flowers! When I am dead,
Seeds, and the uncouth wildlings will,
How quickly! lay you low.

“Who, being perish’d—O there comes
A strange hope to my mind!
Will that good God whose mercy can
A heaven bestow on erring man
To His green world that never fell
Be less completely kind?”

“I shall see *Him*! Ah, then I shall
Nought else desire to see!
But if your diligence ye do,
He, loving beauty, must love you:
And round the many mansions, sure
Must many gardens be?”

• PHOCAS

“ Nevertheless ” (to the blue sky
His wither'd hands he rais'd),
“ What thing soever Thee shall please,
That granting, Lord, to me and these,
Blessed be Thou ! and evermore
By every creature prais'd ! ”

. . . Noon, coming, saw 'mid that fair close,
All fragrant, still and bright,
One barren mound, set guardian-wise
With flowers, on whose rejoicing eyes
The absolute high sun pour'd down
His strong unshadow'd light.

BRIGHTON FRONT

SPEW'D forth in fell array
'Gainst yon accusing presence of pure Even,
Look where the town's thick volley of foul breath
 Hits and besmirches Heaven,
 And spurs the dying day
 Unto its death.

The lamps fling out their long straight miles of glare,
 But, upon stealthy feet,
 Fog walks the street :
Coil'd round by whose chill hands, each troubled flare,
 Paled, penn'd, bereft of rays,
 Confusedly betrays,
But cannot lift, the burden of the air ;
Nor the gilt shops, blindfold for all their blaze,
Illumine can the dulness and the daze,
Or light the listless eyes that in them gaze.
 Yet still the mire-thick road
 Re-echoes, the hoarse cries
 Fight one another ;
 Carriages thud along toward revelries,
 And, fain of nothings, jewell'd and in rags,

BRIGHTON FRONT

Deaf by dumb brother,
Prick'd by Vacuity's unsparing goad,
Man thrusts and presses o'er the clanking flags.
O, is the city clean forgot of Peace ?
Can nothing put the spangled squalor by,
And bid the futile buzzing tension cease ?
Ah, then, to escape the unvaluable strife !
To front large issues, and achieve release
From this mad flow of triviality
This ebb of life !

Look ! look ! another light !
Listen ! another voice !
Forget the street—
Turn, and with lampless and oft-stumbling feet
O'er layer'd nets outspread,
Past patient keels that keep
Dumb witness to the Deep,
And over the untrack'd sharp shingle tread
Whither the quiet calling summoneth.
The thick loud town to left of us and right,
Forth ! Face the lonely sea, the wide bare night,
And once again draw breath.

Deep, vast and free,
Absolute, naught between,
Reigns overhead Heaven's right immensity !
Life on this landward salty air doth sit
Quickening it :
Veil-less the moon : far spread the shining sea !

BRIGHTON FRONT

Here is clean outlook, here doth no lie come,
No littleness abide,
Here freedom yet retains her ancient home,
Beauty here issues freshly from the foam,
And the Soul's wings are wide.
O ever-breathing Breast,
Re-inspire me !
O Energy unresting, give me rest !
Succour me, O strong Sea !
Hark . . . hark . . . ! The billow rises,
The billow breaks,
The sea calls,
And my heart awakes !

O my heart !
We, beach'd so high on this world's huckster strand,
Might we at last in truth the mooring slip,
And out upon wide water like a ship
Launch forth and leave the land,—
Flee the staled air, the loud and empty life,
The little lights, with the great Light of Heaven
Pretentiously at strife !
Scarce would we then be fain of any goal,
For any haven sigh !
Content, awhile, 'twixt heaven and earth to lie
Unscreen'd, and fenceless fly
Unholden winds before.
While the great voice of sheer Infinity,
Voice of a Soul and speaking to the Soul,

BRIGHTON FRONT

For aye should speak around us, and (the shore
Wiped wholly out, the offing far and free),
Strong and with full-spread sails we might explore,
With keel enfranchis'd, way uncheck'd, range o'er
Some huge uncharted Sea !

LANDLOCK'D.

HERE, where beyond yon straight-ruled rim
Of inland pasture high,
Rich with some latent meaning swim
Long lines of purple sky :

What ails my soul ? Where all is well
Her quietude what jars ?
Why raves she round her prison-cell
And battles at the bars ?

*“ O, swift my longing oversprings
Yon shore's last dip and rise !
O, well I know, beneath the wings
Of yon descending skies*

*Who waits ! whose widely opening arms
Summon, to set me free ! ”*
“ O fool ! that a delusion charms,
Yonder is not the sea.

LANDLOCK'D

“Field upon field yon sky o'erstoops
Ere to the sea it come.”

—Like a struck child, she quails, she droops,
She cowers, and is dumb.

“Nay, could these eyes, thy windows, yield
The view thy clamour craves :
Yon same sky, deepening o'er a field,
A widening field, of waves :

“Till, thro' the mystic lip-to-lip
Of furthest sky and sea
The elusive limit soft should slip
Into Infinity :

“Say, O my soul ! would'st lie content
Before that vision vast ?
Thy restless longing wholly spent,
Thy passion still'd, at last ?

“No ! Thine inevitable wail
Too duly I divine.
*Would that I were a ship, to sail
Past yon horizon-line !*

LANDLOCK'D

*"Would, from this body, as a bird
From the obdurate cliff
Winging at length her way deferr'd,
Launch'd were mine aery skiff !*

*"Then would I range, with unstopp'd speed,
Space, and the whole world wide.
Would then this wild rebellious need
Cease, being satisfied ?"*

Her quick wings beat, her cage of clay
Quivers—till "Nay!" she mourns—
*"I should but win, for all my way,
New limits, other bournes !*

*"How do ye straiten, stepdame Earth
An alien world," she saith,
Me, that beyond all seas and birth,
Thou, wilt Thou loose me—Death?"*

THE MARY ROSS

“WHAT was the hardest hour,” you ask,
“Ever I had at sea?”
There was that in the wreck of the *Mary Ross*
Is bitten into me.

Five merry weeks of sun and speed,
A ship well-mann'd and stout—
One hour from home she falter'd, stopp'd
Short . . . and the lights went out.

What follow'd—O just-dealing God,
How firm must be Thy mind,
Such a beginning to have given
And such an end design'd!

. . . Sudden, from human eyes and hands
And kindred human breath,
Into the wild black Void, into
The unthought-on fangs of Death. . . .

THE MARY ROSS

. . . The bitter cold was all—then breath
Again, and something cross'd
My clutching fingers ; with a spar
Now was I driven and toss'd.

Where were the rest ? My strain'd ear caught
No answer. . . . Dazed and stark,
Moments it may have been, or hours,
Dash'd thro' the roaring dark.

I thought that I must have traversed Time
And touch'd Eternity,
When, high in the air, a cry, a wail :
“ I am afraid ! Save me ! ”

And yonder !—O what's that blacker black
Bulged out upon the gloom ?
By the glint of the whirling spray I saw
Her lifted stern-post loom.

“ Save me ! ” O what's yon whiter speck
O'er the yeasty glimmer wild ?
Terribly flash'd the hasty moon
On—*the face of a little child !*

THE MARY ROSS

Back chased the blessed dark—but, O!
I'd seen! Aye, all too clear
I see her still—the piteous mouth,
The great eyes fixt with fear.

Not an hour since upon my knee
Her good-night pranks were play'd,
And now—to face Death . . . and alone . . .
God! and *afraid?* “Afraid!”

Oh, I cried from the trough—I promised her
The help that I could not give.
The wind drove back my words—the waves
Drove on their fugitive.

“Somebody save me!” And again
For one mad second's space,
'Mid the rushing rack the quiet moon,
'Mid the wide void, that face!

And she saw me! Great Heaven, she smiled!
Stretch'd out her arms and cried,
“Save me!” and half my name—and then . . .
Then she was pacified.

THE *MARY ROSS*

For . . . a swirl . . . a suck . . . when next I rose,
Nought, save the stormy roar !
Down in the darkness I thank'd God.
She was afraid no more.

THE TWO SHIPS

(To G. H. C. S.)

I DREAM'D I stood on some advanced cliff
Heading the harbourage of Heaven, and watch'd,
From out the open deep, their voyage done,
Ships making port ; and these I knew for souls,
Coming from earthly travel home to God,
But in the very guise of ships they came ;
Diverse in build, of varying speed, and size
Unequal ; and among them, as I look'd,
Chiefly conspicuous, two.

The first swam in,
Beauty incarnate ! From the distant blue
Stately emerging, gliding gradual on,
Her visionary towers of swelling snow,
Aerial, azure-spaced, offended not
That crystal atmosphere, shamed not one beam

THE TWO SHIPS

Of that celestial light. And closer come,
No flaw belittled, no neglect belied
That majesty of mien, but burnish'd shone
Her tapering spars, and glittering-bright her trucks.
Her hull, from cleaving stem to sheering stern ;
In gracious lines all freshly-glancing ran,
And in her well-trimmed sails, her ropes all taut,
Her rigging well set-up and rattled-down,
Her order'd decks and steady steering, lay
Proof of a full and unscathed company.

How otherwise the other ! Stoutly built,
With engines to give certainty and speed,
She sagg'd and labour'd in that halcyon calm,
Her steam deficient, all her pumps at work,
And hardly made her haven, staggering in
It seem'd at hazard, with that wavering wake.
Nearer, sea-crusted weary sides she show'd,
Dented and scored, and o'er the bow a sail
Suck'd in to stop some gash—and, even so,
Down by the head she was. Her davits yawn'd
Boatless ; and of enfeebled strength and stores
Exhausted spoke the details of her gear,
Where all not rust was rotten. Beggarly,
Disabled, unseaworthy, in she crept
Like refuse in the other's regal wake,
And, 'mid that home of pure perennial joy,
Stank of old sorrows.

THE TWO SHIPS

Watching both, "What mirth,
What exultation new!" I said, "awaits
The happy Overseers angelical,
When at her berth arrived yon faultless ship
They scan, and, making true report to Him
That builded her and owns, perceive His smile,
But this poor wreck—for other destinies
Launch'd, by her make,—at such her home-return
What but a shamefaced pity can they feel,
And disappointment He?"

Then answer'd one :
"Thou seest the arrival. Hast thou watch'd the
voyage ?
Happy the ship with cargo well bestow'd
At starting, and in sailing a fair wind :
'Twixt port and port her course set clear, by coasts
Unperilous, o'er roomy waters calm.
But—storms outridden, scarce-escapèd reefs,
Freight slowly won at many a sunder'd port,
Painfully shipp'd and borne thro' many foes :
Collision suffer'd : and to long endure
The usage of the brine : and yet win home—
This asks for staunchness, strength and enterprise,
This courage claims, and seamanship exact.
And should it not bring honour?"

THE TWO SHIPS

Hereupon,
The vessel I at first admired, I now
Despised, and "How much happier," I cried,
"More to be envied, much more glorious,
Nay, in the Builder's sight, how far more fair,
This crawling-in triumphant, than yon calm
Easy re-entry, unproved, unproved!"

But he: "Why wilt thou mete the more and less?
Each her due course obedient having sail'd,
Each her desired cargo faithful borne,
Delightful to the Heavenly Eye come both."

WITH THE TIDE

YESTREEN, the hour before he died,
He groan'd, and said : " Dear lass,
Go see if the tide be like to turn
And my poor soul to pass."
And I went. But I swore to God as I went,
That I would not let him pass.

I went down to the twilight shore,
I watch'd the full tide swell,
And I set my heart, as it rose and rose,
To hold him, 'gainst it fell.
My heart was as deep as Heaven with love,
And as hot with pain as Hell.

And, being at last in a lone place,
With nought save Him beside,
" O God ! God ! What's come to Your heart

WITH THE TIDE

To let such ill betide ?
Oh, how do You *dare* to make us so,
And hurt us so ? ” I cried.

“ If it was only my three dear lads,
Drown'd in a day, again :
Or the one wee lassie You made be born
For just that month o' pain :
Or wring *my* life out, drop by drop,”
I said, “ and I'll not complain—

“ But him, that I've seen to all these years,
An' him that's loved me so—
God ! there is that atwixt us twain
Even You can scarcely know !
Oh, he's *mine* ! ” I cried, “ and I'll keep him mine
And I will not *let* him go ! ”

. . . The still sea and sky stood there
Against me, like a wall.
The uncolour'd sea and sky they hung
Like a straight, seamless pall.
The faint wan waves, like breaths they rose,
Like dying breaths did fall.

WITH THE TIDE

But, quick and strong above them, I
 Heard my own heart-throbs sound,
My thoughts, 'mid that dead hush, I felt
 Beating round and round.
O I felt I was the one live thing
 Left, in a world aswound.

Ay, 'twixt the sleeping air and sky,
 And the tide that seem'd asleep,
I mind how I stood, all stir and strain,
 My man's life for to keep—
Till, sudden, *It* fell! Sudden, on me
 Fell the grey Quiet deep.

It was not peace, it was not pain,
 Not hope and not despair.
It was myself drawn out of me,
 And I set empty there.
And I heard the slow words from my mouth
 Dropping, like a prayer.

The sea and sky stood firm, the waves
 Kept up their plashing sound,
I seemed to wake to the life of things,

WITH THE TIDE

Now mine was fall'n aswound.
O, a speck, on a speck of the earth I stood—
And the whole World lay all round.

And I said : " What must be, will be,
Whether I will or no. . . ."
" There's *That* in the world must take its way
Across our weal and woe.
There's more to the World than you an' me."
" David ! David ! Go ! "

A sea-snail crawl'd upon the sand,
The hard sand shining-brown,—
Years back, each ebb has drain'd it, years
To come, each flood will drown :
" There's a need," I said, " and a *want*—that's
why. . . ."
And I watch'd the tide go down. . . .

. . . Calm I went in, calm I took
His dead face to my breast.
The vacant night, the vacant day,
Have pass'd me undistress'd.
I've had to agree with the Will of God,
My heart's broke, but at rest.

THE SHIP AND THE SEA

DAY after day, thro' following night on night,
Whether 'twixt Blue and Blue, amid grey calm,
Tempest, or chill disconsolating fog—
Still thro' void air, 'neath one continuing dome
Of mute enormous sky—o'er plain on plain
Of lonely, stark, uninterrupted sea—
From circle to repeated circle of
Mere space for ever changing, aye unchanged :
Voyages on her solitary way
The strong sea-worthy ship:

And she informs that void. The solitude
She peoples, and to all that blank gives point.
Her single presence wakes as to an aim,
Touches, as tho' to sense, the occupants
Of that insensate world. The leashless waves
Race at her side and follow at her heel :
The virgin and clean air dwells in her sails,
And seabirds, none know whence, sudden appearing,
Hover, as round their mother, at her helm.

THE SHIP AND THE SEA

The sea is gemm'd with her, the sun's wide eye
Brightens all day on her, and when night comes,
The stars mount up her rigging, the moon slips
White feet upon her sharply-shadow'd decks,
And, in her towers of steady sail high-sitting,
Quietly sings the wind.

More : she herself, this world amid, conveys
Another world, and other. Sound of lips
And light of eyes, a burden of warm breath
And hearts toward other hearts that beat, is come
Upon the emptiness—a world of quick,
Doing, devising Consciousness usurps
This kingdom of untroubled one-ness—plays
Its sole pulsating part in this huge ○
Of unspectator'd theatre : : : and then
As in its entry, in its exit, brief—
Vanishes. The ship passes and is gone.

A rushing star, thro' Heaven's capacious calm
Down-hurling momentary fire : a swift
Passion, that strong on some commanding spirit
Leaps . . . fastens . . . fails : or, an importunate fly
That, loud about its little business,
One drowsy second of the summer noon
Awakes, the next falls dead : invading so
So takes possession, so predominates,
And even so is pass'd the ship, and gone.

THE SHIP AND THE SEA

She passes. And the indifferent world resumes
Its ancient semblance, and its own device.
Voiceless once more, unpeopled and alone,
One vast monotony magnificent,
The air, the sea, and the infinite sky
Are all—The heart-throbs and the busy minds
Are gone, and wordless comes the wind, the light
No longer sees itself in human eyes,
Nor watch of man is set upon this world.

Nevertheless, it lives, and has its being.
The wind blows on, the sky presides, the sea
Her ageless journeying round the earth pursues,
And onward all the untrodden currents flow.
Man come or gone, 'tis equal. Nature still
Remains, and still the stable elements
Fill their inherent office. Sweet with salt
The free air wanders o'er the wandering waves,
Bright shines the sun upon the shipless sea.

OUTSIDE O' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN

I

WE were late, sure enough, an' the wind coming
rough,

An' the sky of a dirtyish grey.

So we mended our pace, for 'tis always a race
To find our old bodies a sortable place

On the mail, of a marketing day.

But, well—there it stood at the *Red Lion* door,
With the baggage atop an' the horses afore,
An' so many babies an' mothers inside
That, "Peter!" says I, "we shall have a poor ride."
But Peter says, "Well, if it do come a pelt,
'Twon't be the first touch o' weather we've felt.
An' not being sugar nor salt, we won't melt,
Outside o' the mail into Mennen."

OUTSIDE O' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN

II

Howsumever, come round to the front, why we found

That even the box it was full.

But they all holler'd loud: "'Tis a bit of a crowd,
But we've room for you, Missus — and only too
proud"—

"Heave her up, Pete, and we'll pull."

There was some o' me up, there was some o' me
down—

A bash to my bonnet, a tear in my gown.

But what of the climb when you're up to the top?

The rougher you've travelled, the sweeter you stop.

Then they hoisted an' shoved my old man to a seat,

An' "Gee-up!" cries Ben. An' 'twas truly a treat

To get such a view o' the shops an' the street,

Outside o' the mail into Mennen.

III

'Twas a-growing so dark, I'd a puzzle to mark

How many was taking the air.

There was Benny, an' Willy the shopman, an' Zack
(That's three) on the front seat; an' four on the back—

Schoolmaster, wi' newly-cut hair,

Grace Annie, the post-girl, an' next to her me,

An' Pete, all a-tuck'd in as tight as could be.

We'd an apron o' sacking, an' straw underfoot,

Our marketing safely bestow'd in the boot,

OUTSIDE O' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN

And only ten mile and a trifle to go.

Says Benny: "We're in for a bit of a blow."

"Well, if it do rain, a good job it don't snow,"

Says Gracey, "a-riding to Mennen."

IV

"Here's what'll save us the price of a shave,"

Cries Ben, as we got to the moor.

'Twas the picture o' doom, full o' nothing but gloom.

An' just as he spoke, with a shriek and a boom,

Down came the storm, to be sure!

Like hedgehogs we doubled up innards, an' yet

Our cheeks and our chins were a-running wi' wet,

An' we got such a dose o' the vicious east wind

That I'm sure I was certain my nose 'ud be skinn'd.

But the horses, poor things! They were more on my
mind.

They'd to strain onward, stormbeaten an' blind,

While *we'd* to do nothing but sit up behind

Like kings, an' be carried to Mennen.

V

By-an'-by each got a ha'porth o' speech.

Says Peter: "No danger o' dust!"

OUTSIDE Ó' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN

"This rain, one 'ud think, wants to cure us o' drink,"
Says Ben, "but they tell me 'tis wicked to wink,
And wink i' such weather you must."

Grace Annie said nothing, unusual for her,
But Willie'd a-got some cold porridge to stir :
"No prate o' your fine foreign parts any more—
You're a-goin' to be drown'd i' fresh water ashore."
"Got the blues, matey? Don't let 'em attack 'ee.
Why, don't 'ee know how to save me?" says Zacky.
"You plug up my mug wi' a bit o' your baccy—
I'll do the uncorking at Mennen."

VI

We'd to shelter a bit for the lamps to be lit
At the corner o' Callaway Wood—
An' the counsel an' clearing, the comfort an' cheering
O' one bit o' light i' the darkness appearing

I never before understood.

Next minute, I found, though, a different match
Had a-kindled itself wi' a deal o' dispatch.
For, 'twixt Gracey an' me did I see—a man's arm !
Not Peter's. But Gracey she whispers, "No harm."
An' she nestles away—nor I wasn't afraid :
He's a newcomer, but she's a good maid.
Only, the slyboots ! to think we'd convey'd
Love in the mail-cart to Mennen !

OUTSIDE O' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN

VII

'Twas at Dumbledown Hill that Nell Antony's Will,
Oh dear! he did give me a start!
For, to lighten the load, all the men took the road,
An' Zack, he jump'd down ere the horses was slow'd,
An' Willy (bit jealous, poor heart!),
He'd be as clever—but there! he did drop
Right in a puddle, pop-wallopy-plop!
As his neck wasn't broke, we could relish the joke,
An' we just sat an' *laugh'd*, till the schoolmaster spoke:
"Good thing that the ground didn't give, Willy lad!
You'd have frightened New Zealand by now, if it had."
"Give? Give him the want of a wash pretty bad,"
Says Benny—"Won't know him at Mennen."

VIII

"Oh! aren't we unkind! Poor Will, don't you mind!
Have a bull's eye to warm 'ee," cries Grace.
An' Willy, poor chil', he looks up with a smile,
Like saying the *top* made the *bottom* worth while,
An' he had got a fancy work face!
But wet! And as chattery-cold as you'd ask,
An' Peter, he whispers to get out the flask.
Zack is teetotal, an' Schoolmaster too,
So the three of 'em shared it an' made it just do.
All of us saying 'twould only be fair,

OUTSIDE O' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN

Seeing what water he'd had and to spare,
As Willy should have a drop over his share
 To balance him, riding to Mennen.

IX

Like little white ghostes, the lonely mile postes
 Lagg'd by, and the horses went weary.
So we help'd 'em along wi' a bit of a song
That we all of us knew, only some knew it wrong,
 But still it was wonderful cheery.
An' just at the end, where the lady says "Yes,"
(An' Master bent over, bit tender, I guess),
"Ow!" cries Grace Annie, the rain off his hat
Clean down her neck. We did laugh over that!
"But, Gracey, 'tis lucky," says I in her ear,
"That love can't be quenched wi' waters, my dear."
"O, 'tis more weatherproof than my jacket, I fear,"
 Says she, "but we'll soon be in Mennen."

X

As she spoke, in upon her wet dimples there shone
 The light o' the lamp on the Head;
Like a welcome it beam'd, an' the sight of it seem'd
To hearten the horses—the sides of 'em steam'd
 As on thro' the weather we sped.
Here and there stopping at cottage or farm

OUTSIDE O' THE MAIL INTO MENNEN

Unloading—an' didn't the suppers smell warm !
An' the light gushing out o' the doorways like gold,
An' we waiting out there, so hungry an' cold !
“ But I reckon our homes 'll be snugger,” says Peter,
“ Our fires 'll be warmer, our food 'll be sweeter.
Nothing like Want to make Having completer.”
“ Gee-up,” says Benny. “ There's Mennen.”

XI

Signal house passed—Mennen at last !
“ Triumph's ” the ending o' “ Try.”
“ Well, and now the trip's done, I'm half sorry for one ;
“ Poor weather,” says Zacky, “ but pretty fair fun.”
An' Willy says bravely ! “ Ay ! ay ! ”
Master, he murmurs : “ I've been pretty cosy ”—
Gracey laughs out, an' I'll warrant was rosy.
“ Well, grumbles 'll keep—may as well laugh as weep,”
Says I. “ 'Tis more handsome an' equally cheap ! ”
Benny comes round for to help me alight,
An' says he : “ Guess the weather 'ud always be right
If you had the right folks—an' I've had 'em to-night
Outside o' the mail into Mennen.”

YOUNG HOTSPUR

(*New Zealand*)

FAREWELL to you, gully and paddock and peak,
And you, lonely old *wharé*¹ aside of the creek !
Lonely and silent, you'll see me no more,
For I've finished with farming : I'm off to the war.

I have scored my last tally, I've done my last dip,
And, thank God, there's no crutching aboard of a ship.
No more of the yards and the race and the pen,
For I'm going—I'm going to live among *men* !

Who next on my stretcher his blanket will spread,
And curse this old oven for burning his bread ?
Poor beggar ! he'll stare at that map till he's sick of it,
Here—while, hurrah ! *I* shall be in the thick of it.

¹ *Wharé* : a cottage or hut.

YOUNG HOTSPUR

Cushie, old woman, you'll feel a fresh hand,
And the dogs 'll get working they won't understand.
Ay, Roy and Rover, you'll miss me a bit ;
Well, I don't care who misses, so long as I hit !

Last night I was hearing my mother looked sad,
And a face at the station's not overly glad.
But when fighting and fun have got hold of a man,
Why,—the women must manage the best way they can.

What's kisses, and comfort ? The worth of a pin
When there's wrongs to be righted, and honours to win :
When the country is up, and they're calling from Home,
And you've long'd all your life for a bit of a roam !

And suppose, one fine evening, the old Cross up there
Down at me dead on some kopje should stare—
All right ! I'll have met with some reason for breath ;
Life I'll have tasted before I feed Death.

Here's the moon, Russet ! Not much of a lamp,
And a dozen odd miles to pick back into camp.
Up ! Good-bye, *wharé* and paddock and all !
It's " Hurrah for New Zealand, and down with Oom
Paul ! "

THE OLD PLACE

(New Zealand)

So the last day's come at last, the close of my fifteen
year—

The end of the hope, an' the struggles, an' messes I've
put in here:

All of the shearings over, the final mustering done,—
Eleven hundred an' fifty for the incoming man, near
on:

Over five thousand I drove 'em, mob by mob, down
the coast ;

Eleven-fifty in fifteen year . . . it isn't much of a
boast:

Oh, it's a bad old place ! Blown out o' your bed
half the nights,

And in summer the grass burnt shiny an' bare as your
hand, on the heights :

THE OLD PLACE

The creek dried up by November, and in May a thundering roar
That carries down toll o' your stock to salt 'em whole
on the shore:
Clear'd I have, and I've clear'd an' clear'd, yet every-
where, slap in your face,
Briar, *tauhinu*,¹ an' ruin!—God! it's a brute of a
place.
. . . An' the house got burnt which I built, myself,
with all that worry and pride;
Where the Missus was always homesick, and where
she took fever, and died.

Yes, well! I'm leaving the place. Apples look
red on that bough.
I set the slips with my own hand: Well—they're the
other man's now.
The breezy bluff: an' the clover that smells so over
the land,
Drowning the reek o' the rubbish, that plucks the profit
out o' your hand:
That bit o' Bush paddock I fall'd myself, an' watch'd,
each year, come clean
(Don't it look fresh in the tawny? A scrap of Old-
Country green):
This air, all healthy with sun an' salt, an' bright
with purity:

¹ *Tauhinu*, an aromatic shrub, infesting poor soil.

THE OLD PLACE

An' the glossy *karakas*¹ there, twinkling to the big
blue twinkling sea :

Ay, the broad blue sea beyond, an' the gem-clear
cove below,

Where the boat I'll never handle again, sits rocking
to and fro :

There's the last look to it all ! an' now for the last upon
This room, where Hetty was born, an' my Mary died,
an' John : : :

Well ! I'm leaving the poor old place, and it cuts
as keen as a knife ;

The place that's broken my heart—the place where
I've lived my life.

¹ *Karaka*, a Bush tree, with a shining dark green foliage.

IN EXILE

I

THE sea is a lonely thing
Dwelling apart.
Lonely are you and I,
Heart of my heart:

Lonely the mountain-top
Stands in the sky.
Sunder'd as peak and sea
Are you and I:

The mountain cannot move,
The sea must stay.
Ruled is the world. We too,
We must obey.

IN EXILE

II

THE steady stars of Heaven
Look down into the brook ;
Up from the brook to Heaven
The stars as steady look.

Amid the vale, the waters
Undeviating flow.
Past root and rock and forest
They go as they should go.

What keeps the brook so certain,
What rhymes the stars so true,
Hath sure some perfect reason
For parting me and you.

Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.

