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A LITTLE FLAME BLOWN





✓  
A LITTLE  
FLAME  
BLOWN

—By <sup>William</sup>  
W. E. BARD ✓  
11.



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RW



*Go Mother,  
whose memory  
I cherish*



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—W. E. B.



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## *Vagabond*

*This is all I ask of life:  
The earth and open sky  
As comrades and a roving star  
To guide me by*

*—A roving star to lead me on,  
And when I tire,  
A wayside spot among the trees  
And a rousing fire*

*—A fire of beechen logs  
To thaw my inmost soul,  
A flash of color and romance  
To make me whole*

*—A splendid flame that blossoms  
To a crimson flower  
And dies to burning embers  
For the soul's deep hour.*



## THE BUILDERS OF FIRES

*“The young men build their fires  
Under the wide silence of stars.”*





## *Trophy*

*I felt exultant joy to make the kill.  
There in the narrow space he stood  
As sensing danger, tensely-carved and still,  
Gray as a shadow in the wood.*

*I held my fire to see the antlered head,  
My rifle slowly came to rest . . .  
It had been Life I stalked, now fallen dead,  
With kingly blood upon his breast.*

*In Tristram Wood  
Winter Night*

The keen gray wind strips from  
Each lean old wrinkled tree  
Its tattered, last gay leaf  
And sends it wide and free.

Many a linden, shorn  
And sad, becomes a harp  
Of winds in Tristram Wood,  
When dusks grow biting-sharp.

The roving harpist plucks  
A dirge from tuneless strings,  
That rises shrill as bird-cries,  
Fierce as falcon-wings.

In Tristram Wood the wind  
Has undertones as thin  
As elfin music from  
A wizard's violin.

Yet Fear stalks through the night,  
And there are stifled cries  
Within the wind, and laughter  
Of ghoul-infested skies.

If ye have staled of life  
And missed its highest good,  
Go ye a winter's night  
To walk in Tristram Wood.

## *Autumn Song*

Far-seen, in a wavering line they fly  
With wings outspread against the sky—  
    And where shall they be going?  
Their wild cry cuts me sharp as the cry  
Of a woman watching her first-born die—  
    Wild geese and the north wind blowing.

A weary team and a gleaming plow,  
Beads of sweat on the plowman's brow,  
    And the brown earth turning, turning.  
The sun's dusk-low and over a bough  
The thin moon lifts its shining prow—  
    When shall they be returning?

Whether the winter come late, come soon,  
Watching the stars and the wistful moon,  
    We have no way of knowing,  
Yet the north wind spells an old night-rune  
Like a broken harp and out of tune—  
    And what shall it be blowing?

The wheel of seasons turning slow—  
In the tangy air a hint of snow,  
    In the wood a partridge drumming.  
The time to reap and the time to sow,  
The time when leaves of the burr-oak blow—  
    Wild geese are coming, coming.

Whenever I hear their clarion cry,  
And pause to watch them passing by,  
    I have no time for sowing,  
Nor may I gather the tangled rye.  
Wild geese, wild geese against the sky,  
    Must you be going, going?

## *Voyagers*

There sounds an alarm of sudden cries,  
Wildly resonant through the clear  
And frosty air: *Arise! Arise!*  
Fleeting shadows passing near  
Blot out the stars from straining eyes,  
Leaving men baffled as they peer  
Into dim neolithic skies  
Again tonight. A hemisphere  
Rings with an old, old Viking chant,  
Prophetic as the tides: I hear  
The ancient minstrelsy of brant,  
Sweet vibrant music to my ear.  
Tonight their craning flight aslant  
The wind is like a whetted spear  
Jove-hurled against the adamant  
Of stubborn years. The thin veneer  
Of ordered life is a brittle crust  
That falls as acorns from their burrs,  
Or leaves in autumn when a gust  
Has shaken. These are harbingers  
Of restless waiting, wanderlust.  
(Something wild within me stirs,  
And I shall go because—I must.)

*O comrades, hail! O voyagers!*

## *Night Cry*

It rings above deserted streets, a cry  
Too wild and lonely for the cry of bird  
Or beast. No tumult man has ever heard,  
Of wind or sea or charging host, no high  
Alarm of trumpets pealing to the sky,  
Has left him with a soul so deeply stirred,  
Trembling as one who listens to a word  
From dying lips that he may not deny.

Then never may a drowsy villager be  
A little man with little thoughts again,  
Untroubled by the sudden cry of geese:  
For, hearing, Vikings braved the unknown sea  
And rushed headlong to battle; sober men  
Forsook their firesides, not content with peace.



*Assurance for Dreamers*

Should your dear wife leave you,  
Child renounce his kin,  
Life itself deceive you,  
One will take you in.

Should Love be unworthy,  
Friendship prove untrue,  
Nature, black and earthy,  
Then will mother you.

In an unkept orchard,  
When you walk with grief,  
Trees will touch your tortured  
Soul and bring relief.

## *Robins*

No flame had tipped the redbud or the haw  
With magic of the spring, yet when I saw  
The year's first robin dropping from the sky  
Their beauty stung me like a sudden cry.

March brought a flash of color to my tree  
That winging, soon departed, leaving me  
A moment such as lives in treasured song,  
Whose golden words, remembered, linger long.

And when I looked outside at early dawn  
There was a robin hopping on the lawn;  
Without a pageant or a single drum  
I knew that overnight—Spring had come.

## *Discovery*

My son, walk much in solitude,  
Commune long with your soul and know  
The discipline of the silent wood.  
Come, let us leave our books and go.

We'll creep through dusks where whippoorwills  
Are calling, down the little streams  
That write across the patient hills  
Their cryptic, undeciphered themes.

Walk with me down a dry creek-bed  
That runs between primeval trees;  
Pause in a spot untenanted  
By any small divinities.

There deep in virgin silences  
You'll hear the oracle or elf  
Whose still, small voice forever says,  
*Stay here until you find yourself.*

## *The Tornado*

Chant your miserere, Earth!  
The horn of chaos,  
Winged and terrible in the sky,  
Approaches swiftly.  
They who read upon it  
Fury!

Fury!

Fury!

Turn and fly.

Within its shadow  
Black and menacing,  
You cover in alarm—  
And suddenly  
the hill  
lies bare  
Beneath the talons of the storm.

## *The Builders of Fires*

### I

Long has man sought to unravel the secret of fire.  
Once cheerless and cold, deprived of the heavenly gift,  
He saw the bright sword of the lightning unsheathed  
And the swift red flame running before the wind.  
He heard its wild laughter abroad in the forest,  
Shrinking in fear at the mouth of his cave.

One there was searching, the first of his kind,  
Who found the bright symbol of fire  
Carved in the bark of a mango-tree,  
And looking intently caught the spark  
Lingering in the dead wood after the visible life had  
gone.

And one day, rubbing two sticks together,  
He saw its thin face peering at him  
And felt the heat quicken and watched the slow flame  
come to birth.

He it was captured the wild thing deep in an  
unguessed cranny of earth,  
When chipping a stone to make an arrowhead,  
He saw its sharp glance as it leaped and pursuing,  
Grasped its wry neck and felt the sting of its flame.

He it was reasoned about the spirit of fire,  
Worshipping it as a god—Agni, he called it, and  
Tohil and Inti.

He saw it deep-lurking in the eyes of his child,  
And the glint of it shining in the hair of his loved  
one;

And deep in the pit of the night he saw it and heard  
The white pæan of the stars.

### THE SONG OF THE STARS

We are the Lenders of Fire,  
We are the Makers of Destiny;



The earth and its kingdoms are under our sway.  
We preside at the birth of its rulers,  
We foreshadow the coming of mighty men.  
We are the ones who quicken the souls  
Of seers and poets with heavenly fire.

We are the Keepers of Fire.  
We have seen the little fires that men have built  
To cook their meat and warm their bodies  
Leap and lift their insolent flames to heaven;  
We have marked the bones of the Builders of Fires  
Burned in a funeral pyre.  
We have seen the monster loosed of his fetters,  
Consuming the forests—devouring his own.

We have seen the cities of men consumed.  
We looked down on the burning of Troy  
And saw the mad flames of Paris.  
We have beheld the cities rising above their ruins  
And seen the seedling growing beside the shell of its  
father, the oak.  
For the self-same fire knits together  
The sinews of life that it destroys.

Ours is the same deep fire that burns in men's bodies,  
Jealously guarded and handed down to their sons  
And the sons of their sons forever  
To light the fires of all generations.  
You who have seen your hoardings crumble in flames,  
Look up at the stars, little men.  
We, too, are consumed, for ours is the same  
Inappeasable fire that runs in your veins.

## II

The young men build their fires  
Under the wide silence of stars,  
Dreaming a silver and immemorial dream.  
The young men plant the seeds of fire  
Deep in the cryptic heart of the earth;

They take the white and inappeasable ember,  
And, blowing till it has been quickened to birth,  
They watch the flame kindle, consuming their youth.

The ears of the young men are canny of hearing,  
Their feet are wayward and slow to counsel;  
The thoughts of the young men are winged thoughts,  
Their eyes gleam sharp as a lifted sword,  
Their words go swift as a lance that is thrown.

### THE SONG OF THE YOUNG MEN

We are the Harnessers of the wind,  
The Riders of the lean and plunging Thunderbolt.  
We shall set a deadline for the rampant Holocaust  
And find the Whirlwind's tangled thread.  
We are rebel upstarts, renegades, and poets,  
Flouters of convention, all.  
We are stripling Samsons joining battle with the  
Philistines,  
Brandishing the jawbone-of-an-ass;  
We are slinger-boys who do not quail  
Before a mountain-browed Goliath;  
We the waiters on Parnassus,  
The pluckers of a secret truth—  
We shall look upon the face of God,  
For we are children of Prometheus,  
We are Bringers of the Fire.

The feet of the young men grow heavy  
And their hearts grow weary with sowing,  
And the young men are old men whose dreaming is  
done,  
Grown sober with thinking about the riddle of life.

### III

The old men build their fires  
Under the immemorial stars;  
They spread their hands to the warmth

And lean back watching the flames.  
The brains of the old men are twisted and wise,  
They know many things the young cannot know.  
To them it is given the power to see  
A pageant that lengthens out of a dream—  
Shadowy figures, malformed and misshapen,  
The sons of their sons to the fifth generation  
Walking untouched in the midst of the fire.  
The eyes of the old men are puckered and deep,  
Their thoughts run backward to youth.  
The ears of the young men are filled with their  
boasting.

#### THE SONG OF THE OLD MEN

We have wrought the share that rips the darkling soil.  
(Our sons are the husbandmen of earth.)  
We have made the bellows and kept the sacred forge.  
(Our sons are the smiths and makers of tools.)  
We have fashioned the wheels that turn with the  
smooth precision of stars.  
(Our sons are the engineers and drivers of swift  
machines.)  
We have hewn the wood and shaped the iron;  
We have girded up the battlements of the world.  
(Our sons are the wrights and builders of cities:  
The pyramids rose beneath their hands, the mighty  
Colossus, the Parthenon;  
Ancient cities and modern—Babylon, Rome, and  
New York.)  
We are the Builders of Fires.  
We have made the sullen tube that speaks as with the  
voice of God;  
We have beaten out the sabre thirsty for the blood of  
our fellow-man;  
We have shaped the ram that batters down the cities  
that men have built.

(Our sons go down to war with Alexander and Napoleon—  
They will laugh as they destroy the works that we  
have wrought,  
And they will shout with joy to kill each other.)  
We are the Builders of Fires.

The old men lie down by dwindling fires,  
And the life ebbs slowly that runs in their veins.  
The chill of the night wind is about them,  
And the earth beneath them is lonely  
As an old man whose dreaming is done;  
Their breathing grows slack and they waken no more.  
The fires of the old men are dying and may not be  
lighted;  
The flesh of the old men is ashes and may not be  
quickenened.  
The young men are coming to build their fires,  
The bones of the old men are under their feet.

## *To a Skyscraper*

Here long ago a humble cabin stood  
To shelter Man, and here a city grew  
About it where the axe had cleared a wood,  
And men built houses—greater ones—and You.

The crowds pass by and yet you stand aloof,  
Majestic in your loneliness, sublime  
As a sheer Alpine peak beneath whose roof  
Are chronicled the casualties of Time.

Here Life flows past, yet who in all this throng  
Of men has raised a beauty-thirsting eye  
To seek the gothic soul of you, O song  
Of iron stanzas flung against the sky?

Some day this narrow plot will bear a higher  
And you, O giant that you are,  
Contemptuous of Time's corroding fire—  
You shall go down like Troy—or a falling star.



## Quest

The shouting dies in ancient Ur,  
The streets of Accad do not stir,  
And quiet falls on Babylon.  
Their kings sleep, for their work is done.

Then comes the worm and crawling ant:  
The ants have made a covenant  
To sink their drill of mordant fire  
To wake the kings who sleep in Tyre.

The worms of Rehoboth are wise:  
They feed on prophets, pierce their eyes;  
They hollow out a catacomb  
Within their skulls to make a home.

At last comes man with pick and spade,  
Disturbs the thing that man has made  
And delves until he finds the ghost  
Of all the grandeur he has lost.

The ant and worm alike unearth  
Life's eating sorrow, hour of mirth;  
And man explores in all his quest  
The searching mind, the soul's unrest.

## SONS OF GOD

*“Yet some have left a deathless name  
That burns to heaven like a flame.”*





## *Atavistic*

*The hoary sea of long ago  
Beat out dumb syllables of time  
Till, clambering upward through the slime,  
A creature paused to hear the flow  
Of breaking waters—man's first rhyme.*

*Leaves of remembrance slowly part  
And all the deep-sensed years restore.  
O wild surf crying on the shore,  
Your cadenced music shakes my heart.  
I've heard the same wild song before!*

# *Sons of God*

## AN EPIC OF THE RACE

### I

Of all the dim migrations of man  
That passed, a lengthened caravan,  
There is scant record left for us,—  
Of many a sweeping exodus,  
Of peoples like a pinched-out flame  
Who left us naught but an empty name,  
Of whom men searching find no trace:  
Peoples whose rhythmic ebb and flow  
Beat out in weary rhyme and slow  
The long hiatus of the race,  
And many a bannered Aryan host  
Whose legions wandered and were lost.  
Full many a great empire and vast  
Rose in its grandeur, dimmed and passed  
With Cush and Ophir to the dust,  
As nations with no Homer must.  
Tubal and Caphtor, where are they?  
Where are they gone of whom we say,  
Caucasia trembles to the tread  
Of myriads marching in the dead  
Of centuries? We only know  
That mighty movements shook the earth,  
Rhythmic as the cadenced birth  
Of mountains in the long ago.  
One by one, one by one,  
Empires rose beneath the sun,  
And surely waned and were no more,  
Yet stars undimmed flowed as before.

### II

And of men what is there to say?  
As nations perish, so do they.  
Yet some have left a deathless name

That burns to heaven like a flame.  
Some were kings and ruled empires,  
Some peasants by their humble fires;  
Some drawers of water and hewers of wood,  
Destined to toil for the common good.

Some with the mind's all-seeing eye  
Probed deep the vast and starry sky;  
Some were interpreters of mankind,  
Ears to the deaf and Eyes for the blind,  
And a Voice to waken in the heart  
Its choice and gifted dreamer, Art—  
Creators attempting to portray  
The fleeting glammers of their day,  
As gods whose breath on shapes of clay  
Made beasts to walk and winging birds;  
And cunning artificers with words,  
Who held in a stylus-point or pen  
The golden destinies of men.

—O deathless of Song, blind Homer a boy,  
Drinking in tales of vanquished Troy,  
Heard as he walked by the Ægean Sea  
The charging of hosts interminably.  
Listening there and pondering long,  
He caught up its theme and timeless song;  
Heard in the beat of its Iliad  
All the triumphs mankind has had,  
Heard in the beat of its Odyssey  
Of greater conquests yet to be.

—Moses who fled from his fellow-man,  
Tending his flocks in Midian,  
Saw more than a bush and a living flame,  
Beheld the thunders of a Name—  
Saw in the heavens the Pentateuch  
And Yahweh's finger write in the book  
A fearful and a fiery word

That spelled the judgment of the Lord;  
And saw one Star above the rest  
That had no setting in the west.

—Rapt Galileo, pupil of Law,  
One night from his native Pisa saw  
The wondrous pageant of heaven unfurled,  
Suns and satellites world on world  
Wheeling through their infinite arc.  
Then, as a light that routs the dark,  
The Truth rose full and shining-clear  
Against a dogma held too dear:  
No god with a geocentric sling  
Can hold the tethered worlds on a string.

—Great Leonardo, speechless with awe,  
Looked up from an earthly city and saw  
A face that shone in the heavens afar  
As solitary as a star,  
The Mona Lisa, peer of her kind,  
Whose radiant beauty struck him blind;  
Then, trembling, grasped a brush and wrought  
The masterpiece his soul had caught,  
That, beggar of life's deepest lure,  
Made dying rich and living poor.

—Columbus, who saw ships come in,  
When seas were flown with merchantmen,  
And watched their pennons dip from sight,  
Saw more than mystic sails and white.  
He saw within the setting sun  
Great galleons vanish one by one,  
And saw beyond the hollow sea  
That lapped his native Italy  
The coast-line of the New World gleam:  
Cherishing youth's unshaken dream,  
He sailed on, past the dim Azores,  
And dared to touch its misty shores.

## *Pageant*

And still the slowly-moving caravan  
Beats out its epos, flushed with victory,  
Long marching to the weary odyssey  
And dim, unstarred promethead of man—  
For who each sunset since the world began  
Has not seen Ilium burn ingloriously,  
Or civilization fold its pageantry  
Above the roofs of old Tenochtitlan.

Great figures pass like shadows on a screen  
And are forgotten. On the littered field  
An instant gleams the victor's blade, half-thrust,  
Then on the canvas glows a fairer scene—  
Oh, with Achilles' spear and battered shield  
Does Homer's pen lie trampled in the dust?

## *North Star*

Eons before the first man stood alone,  
Or turned his curious eye to view a star  
And thought it but a little ember blown  
To guide some traveler who journeyed far—  
Eons before a peak rose in the Andes,  
Before the Himalayas came to birth,  
Or dull Napoleons stirred or shaken Gandhis,  
Your light shone through the shrouding mists  
of earth.

The fiery heart of Chimborazo cools  
And Stromboli consumes, still you live on;  
Dead Caesars mingle in the dust with fools—  
For mountains sink and men, bewildered, die;  
Yet untold ages after they are gone  
You shall remain as steadfast in the sky.



## *Harvest After Battle*

In fields where life was beaten to the dust  
The yeoman walks, and tirelessly his plow  
Turns under broken sabres sheathed in rust.  
Call him a plodder, yes—but on his brow  
The light of kings and conquerors is set.  
He reads the promise of the nascent vine:  
*The earth shall bear a Son in tith and sweat,  
And his shall be the laughter of the wine.*

And after days of waiting, days of toil,  
The softly-beaten drums announce his birth,  
As he bursts green and singing through the soil,  
Messiah-child and suckling of the earth.  
Then lo, the golden miracle of wheat,  
A loaf for every toiling man to eat.

## *The Singing Mountain*

### I

We three—the Poet and the Seer and I—  
Beheld the mountain as it came to birth,  
Full-bodied from the elder cleft of earth,  
An infant Cyclops mounting to the sky.  
It rose in grandeur, quickened from the dead,  
And Time crept from its shell, eternity,  
And silent stood apart to watch with me,  
And Space drew near, fluttering overhead.

I dared to look and in that moment saw  
The fourth dimension and the face of God . . .  
The Poet beckoned down the path he trod,  
The Seer gazed rapt and long and spoke of law—  
But I—I heard a Song that has no name,  
I felt the wind and knew the shaken flame.

### II

The evening shadows gathered. On the peak  
I saw an eagle nesting with a star;  
Then Something voiced dark words, oracular,  
Remote. (It is not lawful I should speak  
Of what I heard.) A raw funereal wind  
Blew on its slopes: I shared its bitter breath,  
I knew it for the first foretaste of death,  
As Israel felt God's finger, having sinned.

The years have come and gone, a rounded score;  
With them the seasons of my youth have passed  
To bear their witness I shall sleep at last  
Beside the mountain and awake no more.  
The Seer departs, the Poet, and only I  
Remain to lift a dumb face to the sky.



## BURNING EMBERS

*“With what an abandon they ride . . .”*



*Thus the Course of Empire*

*Youth ploughs a furrow  
Silver-thin into the west;  
Age by his burro  
Trudges on his weary quest.*

## *Burning Embers*

i

The flames dance brightly under the stars  
And sink to embers in the midst of the fire,  
Until the heavy-lidded hour of dreaming has come  
And the curious shapes of old mesquite-roots  
Lie coiled in the semblance of fiery serpents.

Old man, as you watch them brooding, what do you  
see,

As you smoke your last pipeful of tobacco,  
And ride once more the trail of Wyoming,  
With youth in your blood like a quick flame kindled,  
And the wind's keen thunder in his ears?

—*One kind of cattle in a fiery sea*

Running in a mad stampede—

Cattle with a horn-sweep wide as Texas  
Horn-tip to horn-tip under the lightning,  
Glittering with mother-of-fire.

—*Horses with shining hooves of gold,*

Rearing with the glory of manes upflung—

Horses with their nostrils starving for air,  
Falling by the roadside, ridden half to death—  
Horses that can jump like the double chain-  
lightning,

That can only be ridden by the step-son of the  
devil,

And a wildly-jerking rider topping off an outlaw.

—*Men with Stetson hats, lean of face and grim,*

Ceaseless-bobbing figures on the road to town—

Men who ride like blue and singing devils,  
Crouching in the saddle, spurring to a run,  
With six-guns swinging at their hips.

—Faces yet of men that frame a ringing yell—  
Lifted guns erupting geyser-spurts of flame—  
The backward-forward play of gunfire,  
Like a crimson needle stitching up the night—  
Lifeless bodies crumpling in the saddle,  
And stirrups flapping soundlessly.

Wildly careening fiery figures  
Silently folded into the night,  
There is something splendidly immortal about  
them,  
Outliving their brief, meteoric hour—  
*They are Hector and Ajax before the walls of  
Troy.*

ii

They rode up a long trail singing  
For the bright coin of adventure  
And drank the hasty cup of life  
About a death-encircled fire.  
A moment and they are gone,  
Yet standing out in letters of fire  
Their challenge is written across the night.  
*Look, blindfolded old man,  
Groping for the light of yesterday's old and blind,  
Where shall you find their like?*

A moment and they are gone—  
The indistinct thunder of hoofs dies out.  
Yet there is heard the wild,  
Hilarious laughter of men  
Who sit about their evening fires  
And live again the epic saga  
That they have written in their own life-blood.  
*Listen, dumbfounded old man,  
And you will hear the thundering hoofs of death  
On the last dim trail of life.*

## *Rendezvous*

Ten thousand horsemen riding down the wind  
    Within the dim arena of the moon;  
Men who sang in barrooms, lived and sinned,  
    And died at high noon to a pistol's tune—

    They crowd the seamy edge of paradise,  
    A hard and glinting purpose in their eyes;  
    The slinking wolf who crouches in the grass  
    Feels the cold earth shiver as they pass.

Ten thousand voices on familiar ground,  
    The ringing challenge and the wild halloo;  
The sudden drum of hoofbeats and the sound  
    Of men dismounting at the rendezvous—

    Tonight they build their fires upon the plains,  
    Then, turning, mount and touch the bridle-reins.  
    Only the grey wolf watches, as they pass  
    Like wildfire sinking in the prairie grass.

## *An Old Tale Retold*

I saw a man a-riding, riding all alone,  
His horse's hoofs struck fire, ringing on the stone.  
I saw a cowboy riding down to Santa Fe,  
Spurred and booted, singing on his wedding day.

I saw a man a-riding, riding to his hurt,  
Spurring like a madman, shooting as he spurred.  
I saw a horse a-running, nostrils flaring wide,  
Fear rode in the saddle once a man did ride.

I saw a lifeless form a-hanging from a limb,  
With face upturned to heaven, ghastly-white and  
grim.  
His boots and spurs are buried in the grave with him,  
His saddle hangs unused, its silver long grown dim.

I saw a woman waiting, waiting for her lover,  
Singing in the twilight, the silver moon above her.  
I saw a woman waiting, sick of heart and sighing;  
At last the bitter wind blew and she lay a-dying.

## *Silent Rider Loping*

Yes, Jim, the old days are gone forever.  
The fires we built by the road are dead;  
The rider's song, the bedded herd,  
The heyday of the range, are fled.  
And yet the glittering stars we looked on  
These forty-some odd years ago  
Still search the hidden souls of men,  
And the same sanguine rivers flow.

Those days have left us lonely, Jim.  
Yet see that soft-eyed lad over there  
With a rope among my saddle-stock?  
He's just come sixteen and bids fair  
To keep the old tradition alive.  
He has a ranging spirit in him,  
Something his daddy could not tame,  
Nor long immersion in books could dim.

I watched him saddle that piebald bay  
And hie for those blue hills whose fingers  
Point to the silent rider loping  
Into each sunset. *The shadow lingers*  
*Among the greasewood and the cactus*  
*And lengthens across the dying scene,*  
*And men are taciturn returning*  
*With faces of rawhide beaten lean.*



## *Mesa Trail*

The mesa is an old man brooding  
On the prairie by a lonely fire.  
The trail across its wrinkled brow  
Gleams whitely in the moonlight.

### i

Up this trail the Spanish padres passed,  
With robe and cowl of priesthood, pomp of soldiery,  
Searching for the golden honeycomb of Cibola,  
Scanning dim horizons for a land of better promise.  
They melted up a burro-load of gold,  
And it came out the golden body of a woman.  
There was feasting then, and dancing, round the  
image that they called  
One-let-down-from-heaven-on-a-linen-sheet.  
Drunken laughter rose to punctuate their purpose  
And mocked the wind that stirred among the pinon-  
tops,  
And the night of heaven, tenting near,  
Was a dusky maid with jewels in her hair.

The march of centuries has crushed the desert-born.  
Stolidly the sloe-eyed natives plod  
Among the ruins of their city-states,  
That blossomed once, open-petaled to the sun.

### ii

It was here the fierce Apaches paused  
To build their tribal fires and reënact  
The drama of revenge for ancient wrongs  
With savage chants and incantations, sob of beaten  
drums,  
Garbed in the habiliments of war—  
While in the canyon-bed the dog-wolf crunched his  
flouncing quarry,

Shaking savagely, and paused from lapping the warm  
blood  
To eye this orgy of his cousin, man—  
Of warriors treading out a fearful march against the  
stars,  
With brandished knives and faces gleaming hideous in  
the firelight.

He who comes to watch the ritual of sunset,  
And marks the eagle circle screaming to his roost;  
He may hear the war-whoop borne upon the night-  
wind,  
And the sound of ponies' hoofs among the sagebrush,  
And see a line of ghostly figures riding down the trail.

iii

Up this trail a band of grizzled trappers came  
To keep a rendezvous upon this rocky eminence  
And view the pageant of the buffalo moving south-  
ward  
Like the turgid tide of some amazing sea—  
Frontiersmen clad in buckskin, who had scoured the  
plains and tramped  
The length of many a river for their wealth of beaver  
peltry.  
Through the plains and mountains they have hewed  
a trail  
That now becomes a turnpike where twelve may ride  
abreast.

They have fallen, winners of the wilderness;  
They are sleeping under pines and hemlocks,  
They are dreaming by the singing waterfalls.  
About them mighty oaks are toppling, sinking slowly  
To the loamy sweetness of the earth.

Up this pathway poured a long and weaving queue  
 Of Texas cattle in the heyday of the Chisholm trail,  
 That spreading fanwise, came to halt against the  
     mesa-edge,  
 Where half a dozen men could hold as many thousand  
 cattle,  
 A dust-grimed Saxon caravan pausing in its epic  
     journey.  
 Herd followed herd along the trail, like caterpillars  
     crawling . . .  
 There were cities at the distant railroad-end—  
 Ellsworth, Dodge, and Abilene, Ogallala and Chey-  
     enne,  
 Wanton cities with their glaring charms,  
 Spreading lures before the hungry souls of men. . . .

And there were men who drove the trail-herd singing  
 Who wove their fortunes in a song  
 They measured by their ponies' hoofs  
 And sang at midnight by a dying fire,  
 Who rode to death with laughter on their lips.

The mesa is an old man brooding  
 On the prairie by a lonely fire.  
 The scar across its wrinkled brow  
 Gleams as whitely as a knife-wound  
 In the moonlight.

## *Pioneers*

Their bones lie rotting under golden waves  
Of wheat . . . *Just here they made their stand. The  
guide*

*Rode in and, gasping out his message, died.  
They saw the dust-cloud and the screeching braves  
Like hornets swarming, cursed them, Painted knaves  
Or fiends of hell, and watched them circle wide.  
Each warrior clinging to his pony's side . . .  
The reaper whirrs above their unmarked graves.*

Once they moved westward in their wagon-trains,  
The Empire Builders and the Pioneers,  
A song of conquest beating in their veins.  
Still they are marching, seeking new frontiers:  
The sowing is not wasted that remains  
To fill the harvest-measure of the years.

## *Cavalcade*

Indian, trapper, cowboy, pioneer—  
With what an abandon they ride, arrayed  
In crude and savage splendor! The cavalcade  
Has topped the distant rise as cavalier  
As in the day they rode this grim frontier;  
For in its conquest-drama they have played  
Their tragic roles, and turning undismayed,  
Wave nonchalant farewell and disappear.

The desert gives no quarter, asking none.  
The players go, the mighty stage remains,  
Insensate, dull beneath the desert sun.  
Yet by their camp-fires when the day is done  
Men hear the beat of hoofs across the plains,  
The rumble of approaching wagon-trains.



## *John Paul Jones*

Now who should come a-ridin' but John Paul Jones,  
Happy as a lark with everything he owns,  
Fifty-dollar saddle and a two-bit hoss.  
Never was a man he called his boss,  
Tied a little rope to his saddle-horn,  
The nerviest fool cowboy ever was born.

John Paul Jones, he's a lucky guy,  
He's goin' to heaven by and by.

He built a little loop for a yearlin' calf,  
Calf gave a little bawl and that ain't half,  
It gave a little bawl, which made him laugh.  
But its mammy came a-runnin' to claim that calf;  
A posse came a ridin' after John Paul,  
Found him a-hidin' where the grass was tall.

John Paul Jones, he's a lucky guy,  
He's goin' to heaven by and by.

Now who should come a-ridin' but John Paul Jones,  
Nary a buzzard pickin' of his bones.  
The sheriff put a price on John Paul's head,  
He ups with his gun, pumps the sheriff full of lead.  
They hung John Paul to a bo' d'arc tree,  
The nerviest fool cowboy I ever did see.

John Paul Jones, he's a lucky guy,  
He's goin' to heaven by and by.

He met Saint Pete at the Golden Gate  
With a *Howdy, old timer, I'm a little late—*  
Just then he looked out on the dogie stars  
Grazing unbranded by the heavenly bars.  
*Good-bye, Saint Pete, Oh what do I see,*  
*A thousand little dogies waitin' for me!*

On any clear night if you look in the sky,  
You may see John Paul go ridin' by.

## *Indian Blanket*

*Indian blanket*; Quaint, idyllic name,  
Or blood-wrought symbol of a dying race,  
It clothes a thousand threadbare hills with flame  
And routs with beauty all the commonplace  
Old straggling roadsides and neglected fields.  
It lifts a gleaming trail at dawn, wine-red  
And edged with mullein, and at dusk it yields  
The legend of a people at whose tread  
The earth was shaken: *Long the war-whoop rang,*  
*And huddled bodies lay with scalps as white*  
*As peeled willows, yet no minstrel sang*  
*Their Odyssey, no poet rose to write*  
*Their Iliad . . . only a flower springs*  
From flinty earth to mark their wanderings.

## *The Old Chief's Lament*

Not many moons ago the fires  
About our lodges burned too bright;  
The flames were many fingers grasping  
For the scalp-lock of the night.

Not many moons ago war-drums  
Cried out for vengeance, blood for blood;  
Tonight the feet of braves are trudging  
Thud on slow and dreaded thud.

My tribe is as the buffalo  
A race of greedy butchers killed;  
Tonight their war-drums are unstrung,  
Their counsels are forever stilled.

Where has Wahkonda gone? Where are  
The stirring villages that rose  
But yesterday? *Ei*, where are ashes  
That the wind has scattered? *Who knows?*



## *Microcosm*

I take this drop distilled from rotten soil;  
Within its depths of tarnished gold I see  
The weary concourse of humanity:  
A thousand faces seamed by sin and toil,  
The unclean city waiting for its spoil.  
Its portals bear the legend, INFAMY,  
And on its streets a rakehell company  
Parade earth's most unholy saga—OIL.

Yet wait, within the cloudy drop I hold  
I see a crystal stream that flows alway.  
Once more I search its depths of tarnished gold:  
A city's spires are gleaming in the sun;  
Beneath them on its streets the children play  
And lines of workmen pass, their labor done.

## *Desert Dusk*

The sun, half-loath to quit day's parted husk,  
Goes down, lingering on the yucca-tips  
As if to stay the slow-advancing dusk  
With one last fiery apocalypse.  
The early stars are lighted in the sky  
Where crimson and magenta smoulder. Far  
A coyote lifts a lonely, quavering cry  
Unto whatever wolfish gods there are,  
Voicing his deep, insatiable lust to kill;  
And far the answer of a hunting-pack  
Breaks savagely. Suddenly all is still—  
The quarry turns, gray shadows at his back.

In some deep canyon-bed tomorrow's sun  
Will glance upon a fresh-picked skeleton.

## *Seaman On the Desert*

All hopes are lost upon this endless trail,  
A thousand dawns flare brilliantly and die;  
The last deep dwindling of desire shall fail  
Before the last dusk close this open sky.

These yellow waves, far as the eye can reach,  
Stretch on beyond the length of any sea;  
No nearer draws the iridescent beach  
That marks the welcome voyage-end for me.

About the prows of ships just on ahead,  
The seas are shattering, waves piling high.  
The scene fades to the purple sky-rim, dead  
And cold, and the old aloofness of the sky.

And in the gathering darkness spars are seen  
That are a yucca's gothic silhouette,  
Ships on the skyline turning dull sea-green,  
The port of dreams above a gold sunset.



## HURRICANE

*“The wind draws close and dances  
In its terrible ring.”*



## *Deep Sea*

*Some went out in stormy weather  
And some went out in fair;  
Beneath the sea they lie together  
With seaweed in their hair.*

*Some took ship from Ingleside  
And some from Dundee way,  
King and peasant side by side  
To wait the judgment day.*

*Foe holds sweet converse with foe  
And lovers plight their love,  
Swaying with the ebb and flow  
Of seas they know not of.*

*For Death has bound in a common sheaf  
The souls of great and small,  
And some will land on Brockton Reef,  
And some no reef at all.*



## *Sea Harvest*

Then go ye down to the sea  
When the moon is a sickle in the sky.  
Go ye down with a shout,  
And never stop to say good-bye.  
For the way of the gull and goose is plain,  
And the way of a ship at sea,  
But the way of a lad with a roving brain  
Is past all finding out.

Then go ye down to the sea  
If ye would know the way of grief;  
But watch lest you be lost.  
The soul of man is a barley sheaf,  
Cut down by the scythe of the harvest wind  
And ground by the hooves of the sea;  
For windily-well the gain is thinned,  
And well the sheaves are tossed.

## *Tropic Night*

Hideous bodies writhe and twist  
In throes of hot, convulsed desire;  
Outlined in gleaming amethyst  
They beat a path about the fire.  
(A black flame burns in every heart.)  
*Old jungle trails are coming soon,  
Soon Night's ten thousand eyes will start  
At white skulls dangling in the moon.*

The sea sobs out its wild, barbaric  
Litany against the shore.  
(Memory is an old mesmeric  
Sea-chant from the ocean-floor.)  
The stars, like comets poised in flight,  
Are orbit-weary . . . *and the roll  
Of breakers, all the sounds of night,  
Are tom-toms beating in my soul.*

## *San Luis Pass*

### A LEGEND OF THE TEXAS COAST

i

The wind was east, the wind was wild,  
And wilder yet the sea,  
As a fisherman put out from land  
And gulls screamed mournfully.  
His neighbors came to plead with him:  
The boor is on the bar,  
He who goes forth comes back no more  
To trust his luckless star.  
Last night the sea was calm as death  
When the sun sank down to rest;  
The east was gray as a fresh-dug grave,  
And pale as a corpse the west.  
The clouds were skulking ghosts last night  
And the huddling stars were dim.  
Do not put forth to the grounds today!  
But their words were spurs to him.

His wife came down to the marshland shore  
As the sun was rising red  
With a bright-faced lassie at her side;  
Still not a word he said.  
He looked across the stormy pass  
Where waves were tossing wild,  
He threw his duffle in the hold  
And kissed his only child.  
He kissed his wife three times—three times  
And last upon the mouth:  
May God preserve the souls of three  
And winds blow from the south!

ii

His ship shot through the angry seas  
And through the waves did plough;

The wind blew sharp as icy sleet  
    Across his starboard prow.  
The boor swept in across the bar  
    And up San Luis Pass,  
And fear was in their every heart  
    For the mother and her lass.  
Then she went out through the driving rain,  
    And *Come back! Come back!* she cried.  
*O lassie, lassie, your father is dead!*  
    But only the wind replied,  
And never a word her daughter heard  
    Upon her dun sea-bed,  
And no one knew the place she lay  
    As the tide crept round her head.

The night closed down as dread and wild  
    As the wind and sea and gulls,  
And drifting on the boiling waves  
    Were bits of broken hulls.  
But some there were who swore they saw,  
    As a light far out to sea,  
A phantom ship against the storm,  
    Or the cross of Calvary.  
And still she calls *Come back! Come back!*  
    So the village women say,  
For she may not give up her search  
    Until the Judgment Day.

## *Hurricane*

SCENE: A fisherman's cabin.

### I

CHLOE

This year no summer ducks built their nests  
In the reed-fringed ponds at Anahuac;  
Carancahua, where the bright-billed divers  
Were wont to disport themselves,  
Is now but a flat and lifeless coast.

MARM

High and querulous sound the curlew,  
Disputing about the course to take;  
The plover that come to the greening prairies  
Flutter on hasty wings.

CHLOE

The last few days of summer were quiet.  
Six suns burned dim in the pallid sky,  
Six winds moaned deep like a troubled soul,  
Six seas lay calm against the reef—  
Too calm, as a man whose heart plots mischief.

MARM

Last night the Visitor came  
And sat at the table uninvited.  
A gust of wind blew out the lamp  
When the door was opened,  
But when I struck a match  
He was not in the room.

CHLOE

Gray as a flounder fell the dusk;  
The new sun rose like a fiery brand,  
Red above the sea,  
And the cross on the little one's breast  
Grew puffed and angry along with it.

## II

### FIRST VISITOR

So this is the child.  
Marm was telling me it's a girl.  
'S too bad.

### CHLOE

Yes. She it was who held it  
When first it came to the cabin of Jules,  
And her face was lit by a crooked smile  
As she pronounced it a woman-child.

### SECOND VISITOR

She's a husky youngster;  
Look at her go for it.

### CHLOE

When she left I drew the blanket aside  
And saw the Mark, like an evil thing  
That had fastened itself on the babe.  
Marm tells me I am to blame.

### FIRST VISITOR

Yes, and Jules—what did he say?

### CHLOE

It bears the shape of a ship's masthead,  
He said, and in a man it would stand  
For the following of the sea.

### SECOND VISITOR

It is not a happy thought;  
Sailors have no constancy.

### CHLOE

But in a woman, he said, it is a sign  
That bows her unto the will of a man  
And brings her unto the bed of childbirth.

### FIRST VISITOR

It is a mark due to a woman's sin  
Sealed in the flesh of the yet-unborn,  
Fixed by the conjunction of stars,  
Or so I've always heard it said.

### CHLOE

The priest in the village spoke of sin.



FIRST VISITOR

It is a stigma borne by a woman  
Whose feet are quick to follow  
The paths of the waterfront.

SECOND VISITOR

We'd better be going.

III

CHLOE

The Terror rides in the storm tonight.  
Jules stirs uneasily in his sleep,  
As one who is troubled by a dream,  
Muttering words half-curse, half-groan.  
In the yellow candlelight the scar  
Shines livid and red across his cheek.  
Do you remember the night he knifed  
A Mexican down at El Campo?

MARM

What is it to you?

CHLOE

I must tell you.

Returning, drunken and crazed,  
He drove me forth with curses.  
I went stumbling through the dark  
Till the lights of the village church shone white.  
Timid and shaken, I paused at the door.  
But the warmth and the light were inviting,  
And the hymns were sweet with assurance,  
And the words of the priest were gentle and kind.  
What it was that possessed me, I cannot tell—  
I must have been mad to enter.  
The people turned in their seats at my coming,  
As though I were an evil presence  
Invading the sanctuary.  
So I listened to the words of the priest,  
Shrinking to a seat in the corner.  
I remember he spoke of a judgment  
That comes like a thief in the night.



Do you know of a judgment?

MARM

That is the talk of a fool. Let me sleep.

CHLOE

Yet with the chill gray of dawn

I crept back to the cabin of Jules.

One afternoon the priest came,

Sombre, persuasive of speech,

To point me the narrow way of faith.

He taught me to make the sign of the cross.

He said it would save me in time of trouble.

MARM

Rubbish, to fill your head.

To bed, child, back to bed.

#### IV

A NEIGHBOR

Why do you not look to the sky, Jules?

For it is an open book to you.

CHLOE

O Jules, do you hear the sea moan?

Do you hear the wind wail its long miserere?

NEIGHBOR

Know you not that the dice have been shaken, Jules?

And the Dark Ones have counseled together?

And thus it has been decreed, and thus;

And as the lots were cast

Always the pawns were souls of men?

CHLOE

Has the fire in your bosom grown cold,

That you will not listen to words of wisdom?

JULES

Make way at the door. Make way.

CHLOE

Let us drink the sweet wine of love

And eat the strong meat today,

For on the morrow the white-faced priest

Will come to add his blessing.

Has the fire in your bosom grown cold, Jules?

MARM (*Singing*)

The love of Jules is out yonder,  
And stronger it is than the love of a woman.  
The wind has a passion for Jules  
And the kiss of the sea is wanton.

JULES

The catch must go to Galveston.

NEIGHBOR

Then why do you waver, Jules?  
Set your shoulder against the wind.  
Your fishing-boat lies at the pier.

JULES

Yet keep a light burning,  
And when the night deepens I will come.

CHLOE

Tomorrow the black-robed priest will come,  
And we shall be wedded. Do not forget.

V

CHLOE (*At a window*)

There is Jules and his fishing-boat!

MARM

Make him a little prayer,  
White as the driven spray.

(*Chants*)

The wind caught up the sea in its fist  
And dashed it against the earth;  
It struck the deep with its open hand,  
And out of it sprang the mist.

CHLOE

The world grows narrow and narrow—  
*Oh, where is Jules and his fishing-boat?*

MARM (*Chanting*)

The wind draws close and talks with men,  
It counsels intimately;  
The wind draws close and dances  
In its terrible ring.

## VI

### MARM

Behold how many men are coming,  
Fleeing like the driven cattle.

#### A REFUGEE FROM GALVESTON

There is fear at Hoskin's Mound,  
And greater fear at Matagorda.  
There is high alarm at Galveston;  
Hotels are emptied of their transient guests,  
The railway coaches bulge with passengers,  
The highway runs with fleeing vehicles.

*(Passes on)*

#### AN OIL DRILLER

At Spindletop and Sour Lake  
The sound of drilling ceases.  
The derricks stand against the sky  
Like great trees stripped of foilage.  
There is no laughter in the pool halls,  
No brawling voices in saloons,  
And no one dallies at the games of chance.

*(Passes on)*

#### A TENANT FARMER

At Anchor and Chenango  
There is no cotton picked.  
At Bonnie negroes stay indoors,  
Fear in their dumb, black faces  
And rolling whites of eyes.  
Some chant the songs of Judgment Day,  
Some grovel on the floor and pray.

*(Passes on)*

#### MARM (*Chanting*)

At Bolivar City and High Island  
Men are pointing out to sea.

#### FISHERMEN (*Chorus*)

He stands at the dim Bahamas' edge  
And far he sounds his challenge;  
His forelock ripples dark with thunder,

And the lightning swift and terrible, glances from his  
eye;  
He shakes his mane and the stars of heaven grow dim;  
He stamps in his wrath and the breath of his nostrils  
Sweeps the wild birds from the sky;  
The ships of the ocean have turned from their courses.  
He comes, he comes,  
The unbridled steed of the Caribees.  
He charges like a whirlwind down from Yucatan;  
His hoofs are plunging in the Gulf of Mexico.

## VII

MARM

The morn has passed and the afternoon  
Draws to a single horror's length.  
What do you see, child,  
With your face pressed to the window?

CHLOE

It is a seagull, flattened and spent.  
I thought at first it was Jules.  
Is it not time that he should be coming?

MARM

Humph! It is the time of lamp-lighting.

CHLOE

The darkness gathers and it is night.  
The night of the night is come,  
The dregs and pit of all night.  
It is time I should place a light in the window.

MARM

It is time to cease babbling.

CHLOE

*Listen!* Out of the tempest comes  
The long and dolorous cry of a soul  
Caught in the meshes of sin.

MARM

The sea in its fury takes wings.  
The walls of the cabin are an eggshell  
Crushed in the fingers of a giant;

The timbers are wrenched from their sockets,  
And the rafters are strewn by the wind  
As a litter of straws in a threshing-field.

CHLOE

*Oo-oo-oh! Jules! Jules!*  
*Mother of God!*

*(Crosses herself)*

MARM

What is it now?

CHLOE

It is gone. I saw it there,  
So close that I might have touched it.  
An instant it grew in the window,  
But when I screamed it was gone—  
That face, cruelly marred by the storm,  
And eyes that held a horror past thinking!

MARM

The cabin's gone, like a fluttering bird  
Crumpled in the wind.  
*The sea—! The sea—!*

CHLOE

*My baby!*

## VIII

FIRST FISHERMAN

The storm passed quickly.

SECOND FISHERMAN

Otherwise who of us would be living?

FIRST FISHERMAN

I hear that Jules was out last night.

SECOND FISHERMAN

Yes. Four of us brought him in.  
Here's Marm. She can tell you about it.

MARM

They had set this day for their wedding.  
I alone am left.

SECOND FISHERMAN

Here comes the priest.



PRIEST

The sea lays spent,  
As a soul whose sins are pardoned.  
I am called to the waterfront today  
In the performance of a solemn duty.

FIRST FISHERMAN

Whot does he say?

OTHER FISHERMAN

Be still, fellow. Now, proceed, father.

PRIEST

Chloe is here, and Jules, by a miracle;  
Here they lived by the sacrament unblessed.

FIRST FISHERMAN

What? Jules here, and Chloe?

PRIEST

Yesterday Jules was out in the storm,  
Nor had he returned at dusk, as you know.  
Yet this is the day for them to be wedded.

FIRST FISHERMAN

How does he mean?

PRIEST

Only the goodness of God can explain it.  
Yet a tithe of words will bind them together,  
And I shall add thereto a blessing  
To quiet the soul of Chloe,  
Chloe of the fair white skin  
And hair like the blown marsh-grass—  
She whom Jules had brought to his cabin,  
Who wore the thought of her sin  
As a crucifix. Here they lie.

FISHERMEN

Ah!

PRIEST

So to my task.

*What God hath joined together  
Let not man put asunder.*

FIRST FISHERMAN

This is a miracle.

## *The Return*

### i

That morning he was first on deck. Before  
Him foamed the surf against its bitten shore,  
And as the waterfront, mist-wrapped, unfurled,  
He felt the tug of a familiar world  
That, from the taffrail gazing witfully,  
Once he'd watched fade unto a memory.  
Then far, as a field of bunting flung  
To welcome him, with yellow poppies hung  
And milkweed's starry bloom against its green,  
He viewed his homeland, colorful and clean . . .

Perhaps it was the coarse and ribald jeers  
They hurled that fixed his sum of misspent years;  
Perhaps the breakers crashing on the shore,  
Like haunting echoes, laid an old, old score  
Against his heart. And thus his purpose held  
As, deeply-probed, his pent-up feelings welled  
And beat against their flood-gates as the sea,  
Roused by a sweeping tempest suddenly,  
Breaks normal bounds. And he at last drew near  
The object of his search with hope and fear,  
A votary to his altar, quick of heart,  
Lest the oracle, angered, should depart.

### ii

Here change had come. Windows gaped oddly here;  
The doors sagged hopelessly. Now it is queer,  
He thought, queer that a spider swings his loom  
Across the threshold of the dusty room.  
Presentiment urged him to look about  
The unkept premises still half in doubt—  
For Time, the thief, had broken in his house



And spoiled his goods. The knawing of a mouse  
Grated on silence through the empty halls,  
So eager once to serve the quick footfalls  
Of life, and seemed somehow to bode him ill,  
As though his fortunes, chiseled down to nil,  
Might shrink some more. Pausing within the room,  
Unable at first to pierce the heavy gloom,  
He soon beheld a ghostly servitor  
In threadbare livery standing by the door,  
Who moved aside and bowed but did not speak—  
Perhaps that erstwhile villain come to wreak  
Upon him summary vengeance, the seedy Ghost  
Of Former Years, rising to be his host  
On this occasion, formed of the vellumed clay  
And rich morocco of another day;  
Bidding him welcome with veiled courtesy,  
And yet not urging the hospitality  
Due travelers. He crossed the room and spoke  
To reassure himself. As his words broke  
The silence, they were echoed by another's,  
And footsteps followed his—or his the others.

The second room was his. There stood his bed;  
Nearby were shelves of books that he had read.  
He took a volume up and flipped a page,  
To note how yellow it had turned with age.  
From this his eye led to the closet door,  
Behind which he had kept the treasure store  
Of youth. He opened it, and when he drew  
Aback another object came to view.  
He started in a panic of alarm,  
Then saw the ghostly thing that brushed his arm  
Was but a coat that moths had eaten—a link  
In Destiny's stout chain, he dared to think.  
And so withal too honest to ignore  
Its dread significance, he pressed the door

That marked the threshold of a larger room,  
Where not a spider swings a dusty loom.

iii

Next day two boys who passed the open door,  
Seeing a grotesque shadow on the floor,  
Drew back in fear. One whispered, *Look! The  
Ghost!—*

*The other, Or the woman up the coast—  
The one who used to stay here nights alone  
And in her window hang a light that shone  
Clear to the Bay. My mother knew her—said  
She hasn't come of late—maybe she's dead.*

Then, going in, they saw a spectral thing  
That dangled from the ceiling by a string,  
And something dogged their footsteps as they ran  
That wore the twisted features of a man.

## *Dream World*

The world of which I am a part  
Has little part in me;  
A wider calls me far and free,  
And though I'm anchored here, my heart  
Follows the white-winged ships that start  
Unhesitant out to sea.

The tight-closed leaves of memory part  
And shadowy forms emerge—  
Not slaves to cringe beneath a scourge,  
Nor they of cloistered walk or mart,  
But men who feel within their heart  
The sea's imperial urge.

Silently the dream-years unfold,  
And falling dusks reveal  
Grey ships with dead men at the wheel  
Who, venturing splendidly for gold,  
Gave blow for blow and met the cold  
Handclasp of death with steel.

The world of which I am a part  
Has little part in me;  
A wider calls me far and free.  
Its high, wild music shakes my heart,  
And I must follow ships that start  
Unhesitant out to sea.

## THE SEVENTH SEAL

*. . . Hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity.*

—WORDSWORTH.



## *Disillusion*

*I caught the sea within a shell  
And held it close against my ear.  
How strange the day I sailed I lost  
The shell and nevermore may hear!*

*I scooped me up a thousand stars  
That shone above the river sand;  
They slipped like minnows through my fingers,  
And only this is in my hand.*

## *Counsel*

In thunder-tones the preacher spoke  
Of One who came with power to save;  
I could not hear him for a voice  
That counseled with me from the grave.



## *Inscription*

All man's hate and all man's lust  
Are written but in annals of dust,  
But all his dreaming and his art  
Build eternal in his heart  
As, living, they forever must.

## *Travelers*

When I was young  
And rode with chin held high  
A Traveler fell in with me.  
(His horse was eager at my side  
And beautiful as running flame.)  
Day in, day out, we journeyed  
Down the long white road together,  
My companion, Life, and I.

When I grew old  
And rode with measured breath,  
A Stranger came, accosting me.  
(My horse was eager at his side  
And beautiful as running flame.)  
In fear I spurred ahead . . .  
How am I to know if it was Life  
That I outrode, or Death?

## *April Comes Again*

*(In Memory of One Departed)*

The stocks peep misty through the rain,  
Her tended poppies bloom again.

Close on her chilly first of April came  
The mistimed warmth of spring and May  
Burst into blossom where she lay,  
So swiftly grew the ardent flame.

A week ago, it seems, I heard  
Her coin a lifetime in a word

And spend her ebbing strength to say,  
*Here in the drawer beside me, feel;*  
*This golden thimble for Lucile,*  
*This string of beads for Verna May.*

Then she lay back and closed her eyes;  
I looked in questioning surprise—

I called, and yet she gave no sign.  
Perhaps beyond this world of pain  
She answered me and smiled again,  
Perhaps her eyes looked deep in mine.

And when the dawn of Easter shone  
To tell the story of the One

Who, loving, paid Love's dearest price,  
Beside the window of her room  
A lily burst in sudden bloom,  
No whiter than her sacrifice.

## *Immortelle*

Be kind to him, O Death, be kind.  
He passed with those who die too young  
To leave a monument behind,  
A poet with his songs unsung.

The strophic seasons make their round  
And Spring, the courtesan of time,  
Comes tapping, tapping at his mound,  
The quick-grass weaves his broken rhyme.

Be kind, O searching years, be kind.  
And write your verdict: *It is well:*  
*He saw the heights in beauty shrined*  
*And plucked death's perfect immortelle.*

## *Beau Geste*

Not that a wan day died,  
As down the upturned goblet of the sky  
Trickled the latest shining drops of splendor,  
But that the rare wine paled, too sparkling in the  
glass,  
And that he drank too deeply of Life's brimming  
bowl  
And laid him down without regret.

Then let us turn aside;  
But let us not disturb him, let him lie  
At rest upon his briary couch, where slender  
Long-stemmed violets bloom above the creeping grass.  
Shall we not count it glory that he fixed a goal  
For which the world is left in debt?

We read: *Few names abide;*  
*Poets and conquerors go and so shall I.*  
*Then let me sink to earth in glad surrender*  
*And be forgotten. Shall it be that Beauty pass*  
*And Truth no longer stir the embers of my soul*  
*When, chill, my summer's sun has set?*

## *Bon Voyage*

*In Memory of Dr. R. S. Hyer,  
President Emeritus of Southern Methodist University*

The eager ship goes out upon its last  
High voyage, weary of enforced delay,  
And thus I like to think he left. Today  
The dim rotunda's stilled, and filing past  
We move with solemn step, as if the vast  
Of sea and sky were round, and turn away  
With mute farewell. For are there words to stay  
The ready soul or pause the gallant mast?

His calm was not of inconsidered ease,  
But that of conscious reasoned mastery  
That knows its helm. Thus the majestic soul  
Was fashioned by its Builder for far seas  
And, weighing anchor, moves triumphantly  
Out of the harbor toward its ultimate goal.

—May 30, 1929.

## *The Shining Trail*

*In Memory of Clyde Walton Hill*

And is he gone who dreamed such splendid things?  
Not so, he greets us in his wonted place.  
Death hath but touched him with an added grace,  
And to his fancy, heaven hath lent wings.  
Yet who are these this mystic hour brings?  
A pageant moves across the lighted space:  
Dead Wilson speaks and Lincoln lifts his face,  
Taillefer rides again, Caruso sings.

Thus Launfal goes to seek the Holy Grail,  
And Godfrey's sword is leaping to defend  
The Sepulchre that Richard toiled to free.  
*Greatheart sets foot upon the shining trail  
That he has blazed. The petty tyranny  
Of life with greater life has come to end.*

—Feb. 4, 1932.



## *Three Men*

One willed his children lands and oil.

They scattered through the spendthrift years  
What he had gathered with much toil,  
And tasted penury and tears.

Another, wiser, waxing old,

Bequeathed the wealth of heart and mind,  
A finer and untarnished gold;  
Yet fortune was not less unkind.

The third went singing to his grave

And laid him down without a cent;  
Yet greater wealth than they he gave,  
And his estate is still unspent.

## *The Minstrel*

I saw a man as I came down,  
A funny man he was  
To walk the streets of Alvin town  
And sit him on the grass.

As he went singing through the greens  
I dared not tarry long;  
I searched for silver in my jeans  
To buy my girl a song.

I found a coin, nor thought it harm  
To offer it in pay;  
And with my lassie on my arm  
I begged for him to play.

But with a twinkle in his eye  
He turned to look at me.  
Some things, he said, you cannot buy;  
The songs I have are free.

Then from its worn and battered case  
He drew his violin  
And tucked it with familiar grace  
Beneath his merry chin.

Oh, life, he sang, is full of trouble,  
Life is full of care;  
And love, what is it but a bubble  
Bursting in the air?

There was laughter in the song  
And sadness in the tune;  
Some, listening, said he played too long,  
And some he quit too soon.

He doffed his hat and, bowing low,  
He turned and went his way—  
Though that was thirty years ago,  
It seems but yesterday.

## *Heritage*

He took to wife a winsome lass and gay  
Who in the cotton picked as much as he.  
She made a hand, the neighbors say,  
Till she came twenty-three.

Each day she toiled as long as light held out,  
Then as the cotton blurred upon her sight,  
Long rows of fleecy stars came out  
And she picked half the night.

He too beheld, above the lights of town,  
The whited harvest open and his wife,  
A frog-like creature crawling down  
The endless row of life.

At dawn he called her but she did not wake,  
Nor feel the baby nudge her empty breast.  
He said, "I thought to have her take  
A spell of needed rest."

The baby lived, frail likeness with her name,  
To feel the crushing, blind impact of life:  
Foredoomed to bondage, she became  
A cotton picker's wife.

## *The Seventh Seal*

SCENE: A Farm Yard in South Texas.

No, stranger, the cotton was mighty sorry again this year, mighty sorry.

I'll not be wantin' to buy a cyar, no siree.

That old hack over yonder'll be good enough, I reckon.

You an' me won't be hyar much longer, nohow.

(He paused to wipe the buttermilk from his mouth; His eyes were kindled with a burning message.)

Stranger, did you know a great calamity air so nigh  
That hits black wings air now a-flappin' us in the  
face?

The prophet Daniel an' the Revelations both hev  
spoke of hit

As bein' when the seventh seal air opened.

The ones that hev been opened hed horses fer to go  
with them,

But there air no horses with the ones to come.

The first, hit was a white horse, white fer Holiness.

(His prophetic eyes burned into the soul  
Of his visitor as twin balls of fire.)

The second was a red horse,

Jest like as though he tramped in blood, ye see.

That was the War that drug so many of our boys

Away from home to die in Europe.

(His hot breath fanned the visitor's cheek.

The man upon the doorstep moved uneasily.)

Then lo, a black horse!  
That was the Judgment on the nations,  
As though God's finger wrote upon the wall,  
*Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.*

(With outstretched finger he traced the dread words  
in the air,  
Then pointed up as though he were pronouncing  
doom.)

Then last there was a pale horse,  
The color of a corpse that hed begun to mortify.  
That was the Pestilence that caused more men to bite  
the dust  
Than all the shot an' poison gas in Europe.  
We called hit floo—*the in-floo-enzy.*

D'ye see them cyars a-passin' to an' fro  
Like chaparral birds a-runnin' on the road?  
Now look hyar—See those airypplanes  
Like lizards flyin' through the air?  
Can ye wonder that God has lost his patience  
With us with goin'-ons like that?

(He pointed, leveling a lean, prophetic finger.  
His visitor felt a queer sensation creeping down his  
spine.)

Now this here cotton, hit's the staple of the world.  
The world must hev our cotton or hits mills will  
stop.  
So God, he taken the failure of our cotton crop  
To point us to the calamity that our sins hev brung  
upon us.

First off, there was the boll weevil.

Then came the boll-worm burrowin' in to kill the boll.

Then the leaf-worm stripped the foli'ge off.

An' the root rot hit us—Look at that field over yonder.

Stranger, the time air most hyar fer the seventh seal to be opened.

A greater calamity than the world has ever seed air comin',

An' hits black wings air flappin' us in the face.

(He paused to wipe the buttermilk from his mouth.

The automobile salesman did not wait to mutter a farewell,

But passing through the gate, he heard the quavering old voice following him:

*I'll not be wantin' to buy a cyar.*

*That old hack air good enough fer me,*

*An' you an' me won't be hyar much longer, nohow.)*



## *The Python and the Hare*

Like vain and senseless moths that cloud  
A candle's cheap and pitiful flame,  
The gaping rustics formed a crowd  
Beneath the arc-light's brilliant glare.  
A troop of dancing women came,  
The music struck a catchy air.

The barker cried his fulsome spiel.  
Inside a giant python lay  
Gloating over his evening meal.  
He shot black lightnings from his tongue  
And drew his coils about his prey:  
Death lingered, for the night was young.

The mills of death were grinding slow,  
And men looked on in apathy;  
The voices in the room grew low,  
Yet no one raised a hand to spare.  
The silence was broken only by  
The labored breathing of the hare.

And yet one searching in his soul  
Found there a bitter word to say.  
Must Innocence thus pay the toll,  
He asked, and tardy Justice sleep,  
While Lust, all-puissant, has his way?  
And where does common passion keep?

Has Heaven marked, that this should be?  
Has Mercy left no whetted knife  
Or blunted tool with which to free  
The ruby spring at one sweet blow,  
Or crush the golden shell of life,  
To let the burdened spirit go?



When no one answered him a word,  
He turned away . . . Yet late that night  
Within his ordered room he heard  
A rustling noise and, waking, saw  
A strange and most unnatural sight.  
In fear he gazed and half in awe.

A frightened python glided by,  
And in pursuit a snow-white hare,  
The gleam of blood-lust in its eye.  
A weight of pity pressed his heart  
As he beheld a rabbit tear  
Its writhing victim's flesh apart.

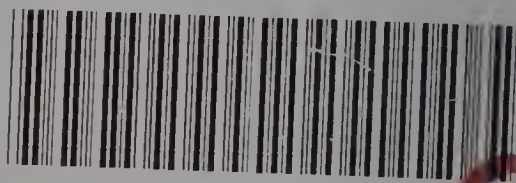








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