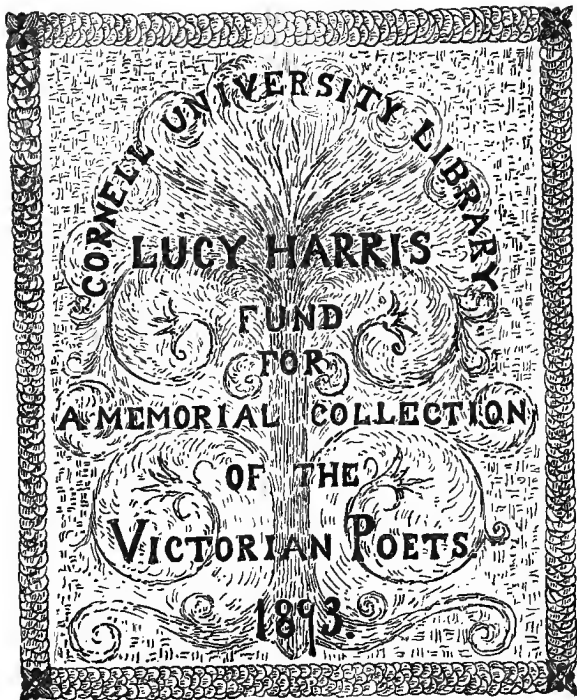


POEMS

EMILY

HICKEY





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P O E M S













# POEMS

BY

EMILY HICKEY

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

MDCCCXCVI



TO  
MY VERY DEAR FRIEND  
ANNIE ELEANOR RIDLEY  
IN MEMORY OF  
1871—1895



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## The Ballad of Lady Ellen

### THE ARGUMENT

**T**HERE was a very mighty famine in the land, and the people's cry went up day by day, and many of them died. And the Lady Ellen, their Duke's daughter, sold her jewels and her rich robes, that the people might have wherewith to stay their hunger: for her father, the Ruler of the land, cared not a whit whether the folk lived or died, and would not hearken to the praying of his daughter on their behalf.

Then, when she had spent all that she had, the lady went forth into the city, in the disguise of one of mean estate: that with her own eyes she might see the plight of the people, and hear it with her own ears.

And lo! she learned how the emissaries of the Evil One were buying the souls of the folk, and how the folk were selling their souls that they might have bread for themselves and for their children.

Then the lady, knowing this dreadful thing, prayed once more to the Duke, her father, on the folk's behalf, and found his heart as hard as the nether millstone.

And so she sold her own soul to the Evil One for a mighty sum, and bought therewith food and seed-corn for the people.

So plenty drove out famine, and the emissaries of the Evil One were hounded forth, not as at that time to return.

And the soul of the Lady Ellen fared forth to hell, and lo! at the very heart of hell she found the Lord's heaven, and was laid to rest on the bosom of Mary.

“SAY, what ails you, daughter mine?  
The flowers are springing fair and fine;

“Never a cloud in the sky so blue;  
And the whole big world is glad but you.

“ Call your page, and bid him bring  
Your fair white horse, the gift of the king ;

“ Light as a bird that flies the air,  
He'll bear you away from your brooding care.”

“ Nay, I prithee, father, nay ;  
I will not ride my horse to-day.”

“ Summon hither your bower-lady  
With the voice as sweet as voice can be ;

“ And when she sings her goodly song,  
Your trouble will not tarry long.”

“ Nay, my sire, no song for me :  
I will not hear the sounds of glee.

“ Aye and ever I hear them cry,  
My kith-folk in their misery.”

“ Daughter, you cannot see the poor,  
They are banned and barred from your father's door.

“ How should you know their wants and woes ? ”  
“ My soul hath eyes and I see with those.”

“ Daughter, to-night shall a feast be spread,  
Where the king's son shall be banqueted ;

“ High on the dais shall be your seat,  
As for mine only heir is meet.

“ Your maids must busk you royal fair,  
With a golden circlet round your hair ;

“ And a stately robe of cramoisie,  
Set with the fine lace daintily.

“ Bid your ladies bring for you  
The scented glove and the broidered shoe ;

“ Let fiery-hearted rubies deck  
Your rosed-white ears and liliated neck.

“ And lest too bright your beauty shine,  
Fling over all, fair daughter mine,

“ A wimple of golden tissue free,  
A faery mist from head to knee.”

“ O father, what have I to do  
With scented glove and broidered shoe ?

“ Lovely robe and precious gem,  
What have I to do with them ?

“ All I had I have sold to give  
Wherewith to bid the people live.

“ How can I flaunt in rich array,  
When the people sit in rags to-day ?

“ How can I taste of dainty meat,  
When the people have not what to eat ?

“ Father, father, fair to own  
Are the lands your father's fathers won ;

And the castle girt with the broad deep moat,  
Where a war-famed banner high doth float ;

“ And goodly fair, indeed, to see  
Are piles of the red and the white money.

“ But castle and lands and fee are naught  
To the worth of the souls the Saviour bought.

“ The black-winged famine, day by day,  
Swoops on their lives like a bird of prey,

“ And the people know they are but dead  
For lack of needful flesh and bread.

“ Father, take of your golden store,  
And give it to the starving poor.

“ I pray you in the dear Lord’s name  
To help the souls for whom He came.”

He laughed a scornful laugh and long—  
“ I care not for the folk a song !

“ And if you will not grace my board,  
I care not, daughter, by the Lord !

“ The king’s son shall be my heir,  
Instead of you, my daughter fair.”

Lady Ellen kneeled and steept  
The hard floor with the tears she wept :

But harder than the marble stone  
Is the human heart to hardness grown.

“ Myself will go,” the lady said,  
“ And see how they die for lack of bread.

I who have lived at joyous ease,  
Would to God I might die for these.”

Low she spake to her bower-lady,  
Whose heart was gentle as heart can be ;

And the two went out from the castle gate,  
Dight like women of low estate.

They went through the city side by side,  
And saw themselves how the people died.

And they saw a thing more dread to see  
Than curse of famine and drought could be :

And they heard a thing more dread to hear  
Than toll of a death-bell on the ear.

Oh, the dearth was raging stark and sore  
From the eastern to the western shore ;

And the Duke that owned the wide country  
Never a moment's care gave he :

But the Prince of Hell was 'ware, and sent  
His powers to bring him great content.

They sit in a room of a hostel there,  
Two swart men with raven hair.

Day by day, with keen hawk-eye,  
They watch the people's misery.

Strange dark men who understand  
Right well the language of the land.

Trippingly that language goes  
Upon the lissom tongues of those.

Gold in heaps they are counting o'er,  
And the hostess marvels at the store.

" O fair sirs, the people cry  
Day by day in their misery.

" O fair sirs, but hear their prayer ;  
Gold enow ye have, and to spare."

" Nay, good hostess, bid them come  
Each alone, to this our room.

" All that will may have, be sure,  
Gold enow their ills to cure."

The poor come to the hostelry,  
And enter where the strangers be ;

Enter a high room carven fair ;  
A room that was once a king's chamber.

One by one they leave the place,  
With a dreadful change on every face.

For those were the devil's emissaries,  
Who dealt in souls for merchandise.

Little they gave for the worn and old,  
But for the young they gave much gold.

And to all the folk that there did come  
They said they would give a king's ransom

For a virgin soul of purity,  
In a virgin body fair to see.

Oh, this was the thing the lady learned,  
Before her footsteps home were turned.

This was the thing more dread to see  
Than curse of famine or drought could be.

This was the thing more dread to hear  
Than toll of a death-bell on the ear.

Back from the city the lady came,  
Pierced to the heart with sorrow and shame ;

Back she came in her wordless woe,  
That would not suffer a tear to flow.

She went, in sackcloth garmented ;  
With Lenten ashes upon her head,

And came to her father's princely seat,  
And knelt in her anguish at his feet.

“ What mean you, maid, to put to shame  
Your father's house and your father's name,

“ That you come in sackcloth garmented,  
With the dust of Lent upon your head ? ”

Tears of blood were the words she spoke,  
 " Father, father, save the folk ! "

He looked on her in his anger grim,  
 As low she bowed herself to him :

And spake at last in his bitter jest,  
 " To sell your own white soul were best !

" Your lily-soul, bedewed with prayers,  
 Is worth a world of such as theirs ! "

All night long the lady prayed ;  
 " Slay me, O God, for these," she said.

For the flame at the ruby's heart that burns  
 Is nought to the fire in the soul that yearns

To save a soul in its jeopardy,  
 Or perish instead, if so may be.

And when the sun was risen again,  
 She went alone to the evil men.

" What will ye give me for a dole,  
 If I render you up my soul ? "

" Oh, we will give thee what thou wilt  
 For the goodliest soul that ever was spilt."

They dealt her out the price she would,  
 And she signed her name to the bond in blood.

She gave to the poor, and loud they swore  
 To deal with evil men no more.

And then the lady sent a quest  
 To the cornlands of the far-off west ;

For freighted ships of golden corn  
 Across the wide sea to be borne.

The corn was worth its weight in gold,  
Which the western folk to the lady sold.

They said, when fourteen days were o'er,  
The corn would come to the waiting shore.

Corn for bread, and corn for seed ;  
Corn enow for the people's need.

None should trade with the Evil One,  
Till the fourteen days were past and gone,

Because of the gold that free did come  
By the Lady Ellen's martyrdom.

The Lady Ellen looked afar  
Out toward the land of the western star ;

As she sat in her chamber day by day,  
Her eyes on the wide sea far away.

Until at last she saw them come,  
The fair white ships of her love's ransom.

Down she fell on her bended knee,  
When the sails at last her eyes could see ;

“ Now when they will, they e'en may take  
My soul that's lost for my people's sake.”

She bad that none should come to her ;  
And she drew the bolts of her high chamber ;

And no one knew, save God alone,  
What anguish and woe to her were known,

Till her body no more could bear the stress  
Of her soul's exceeding bitterness.



But never she swerved from the path of love  
To the heart of Hell and the fires thereof.

Into the harbour the vessels rode,  
Laden each with a costly load.

And the black-winged famine flew away  
For the food and the seed that came that day.

They hounded forth the evil men,  
Never to come to the land again.

And strength came back once more to the weak,  
And the parched mouths for joy could speak.

They went in throngs to praise and pray  
At the place where Lady Ellen lay.

But Lady Ellen, who loved them so,  
Was gone from the sound of their weal or woe.

They burst the bolts of her chamber-door,  
And found her stark-dead on the floor.

The body that erst was fair to see  
Was the writhen spoil of her agony :

And dark on the face the woe was sealed  
Of the death unhousselled, unannealed.

The soul so pure and charitable  
Fared alone to the gates of hell,

Naked made of its body's dress ;  
Clad in its great love's loveliness.

Open the gates, and let her win  
To the flame and the awe and the pain therein !

Right to the heart of hell she fared,  
All unharmed and all unscared.

She to whose unpolluted sight  
The flame was glory, the darkness light.

Sounds of wailing to other ears—  
To hers the music of all the spheres,

That drew to the Empyrean bliss  
Where the mystic Rose of the Blessed is,

Abloom by the lake reflected bright  
From the very Uncreated Light.

Oh, far apart are east and west,  
And far apart are toil and rest,

And far apart are morn and even,  
And far apart are hell and heaven ;

And of heaven above or hell below  
Where is the man who thinks to know ?

Yet the soul that Love makes strong to dare  
The heart of hell, finds heaven is there.

Oh, a new light dawned in Mary's eyes,  
When the soul came into Paradise ;

For on her the Lord had laid behest  
To bring that soul to the sweetest rest.

Up she rose from her high queen-seat,  
With the sheen of the blessed on her feet ;

Drew to the soul that entered there,  
And laid it upon her bosom fair :

Even the soul where God did see  
The very self of Charity.

“ Christ the Lord hath brought to His bliss  
“ Thee, whose love was a love like His :

“ Darling of JESUS, lie to-day  
“ Here in the bosom where JESUS lay.”

NOTE.—This ballad was suggested by a story included through a mistake in Mr. W. B. Yeats's collection of Fairy and Folk-tales of the Irish peasantry. This story of “Countess Kathleen O'Shea,” which Mr. Yeats has dramatised, and Mrs. Hinkson (Katherine Tynan), has made the foundation of a poem, neither of which works I have seen, is, I am informed, certainly no Irish legend. It was translated, or adopted, from the French by Mr. John Augustus O'Shea, and published in an Anglo-Irish newspaper, whence, in all good faith, Mr. Yeats reprinted it in his Irish Folk-tale book. I have made very considerable alterations and additions, as anyone who knows the version in Mr. Yeats's book will easily see at once.

## The Passion of King Conor

### AN OLD IRISH LEGEND

IN the Red-Branch House, in Emania, they kept the  
 Ball of Dread,  
 The lime-bound brain of Mesgedra, whom Conall had  
 sent to the dead ;  
 Till the fools of Conor stole it, the creature of wrek  
 and death,  
 And played therewith in their folly, till it came to the  
 sight of Keth :  
 And Keth, the son of Magach, he stole the fate-ball  
 then,  
 And carried the death in his girdle, for the king of the  
 Ulstermen.

There was none upon earth like Conor who sat on the  
 Ulster throne ;  
 So great and comely and mighty, the peer of him ne'er  
 was known :  
 So fair of the face and the body, and prudent, well-  
 speched and wise ;  
 In race, in arms, and in raiment, full glorious in all  
 men's eyes.

'Twas Keth of the sons of Connaught was fain to slay  
 the king ;  
 And he watched till his time was come, and he cast the  
 ball from a sling ;

And it sank in the forehead of Conor, and low and quiet  
 he lay ;  
 And Fingen the leech was with him, and tended him  
 night and day.

He rose from his bed of healing with life gone grey  
 and dim ;  
 No more of the combat's glory or the lustre of love  
 for him ;  
 Nor anger nor joy must he cherish, but sit, a broken  
 thing,  
 With the light gone out of his life, great Conor MacNessa,  
 the king ;  
 And seven were the years that went from the time of  
 his quieting.

Then, lo ! on a fair spring day, there came a darkness  
 and fear,  
 And the strong earth moaned and shook, and Barach  
 the Druid came near,  
 When the king was fain to know why the earth was  
 wrapt in shade,  
 With never a gleam of light but the levin that maketh  
 afraid.

Said Barach, *Jesus the Christ, the Son of God most High,*  
*Is hanging nailed on a cross, between the earth and the*  
*sky.*

And Conor the king said, *Why ? What evil thing hath He*  
*done ?*

*What ill is laid to His charge ? And Barach made answer,*  
*None.*

*Then Him, the Guiltless and Pure, said Conor the king,*  
*they slay ?*

And Barach, he bowed the head, and answered him  
 only *Yea.*

Then Conor MacNessa, mad with sorrow and anger,  
 leapt  
 From the seat where, seven slow years, his body its  
 calm had kept ;  
 He rushed to the woods amain, and wild in his passion  
 drew  
 His sword, and hacked at the trees, as if each were the  
 form of a Jew :  
 And the wrath of his soul foamed out at his lips all  
 white and dry ;  
 And the great veins swelled on his brow, and the fierce  
 blood streaked his eye.

*Oh, why did He leave me untold? For I would have  
 championed Him ;  
 Yea, I would have sprung to His side ; and a combat fierce  
 and grim  
 Have waged for His sake, for His, Who is dying unhelped,  
 alone ;  
 And a high king's valour and might those evil hearts should  
 have known.*

*'Tis I would have helpt Thee, O Christ, 'tis I would have  
 sided with Thee !  
 'Tis I would have conquered Thy foes, and set the innocent free ;  
 O Christ ! O Christ ! they defile Thee ! They slay that Body  
 of Thine !  
 And I in my strength would have saved Thee, with even this  
 body of mine.*

*It's oh ! for the fight I would wage there ! Would stand by  
 Thy side ; nor rest  
 Nor stay, though they pierced me and hewed me ; and Thee,  
 O Thou Fairest and Best,  
 Yea, Thee, for Whom earth is a-wailing, Thee, Lord, would  
 I shield with my breast.*

*Jesus! O Jesus! I hear it! the wailing for Thee Who  
must die!*

*Oh, but it slays me to listen; full grievous and bitter the cry!  
And I hear, and mine arms cannot reach Thee, the sorrow of  
dying to stay;*

*And mine heart is crushed with the anguish; and yet they  
slay Thee and slay.*

And lo! with the might of his passion, the fate-ball leapt  
from his head!

And even as the Saviour was speaking the great *It is  
finished,*

The anguish and torment were ended, and Conor  
MacNessa lay dead.

NOTE.—It was the custom amongst the Ancient Irish to mix the  
brains of their slain foemen with lime, and knead them into a ball.  
Several of these balls have lately been found at Old Connaught, the  
estate of Lord Plunket, Archbishop of Dublin.

This story is to be found in O'Curry's Manuscript Materials of  
Irish History.

I may add that, had I known of Mr. T. D. Sullivan's fine treat-  
ment of this legend before I versified it, I should probably have left  
it untouched.

## A Wolf Story

INSTINCT or reason, which, good sirs? Oh, instinct in  
 brutes, you say!  
 And reason only in lordly man! Well, think of it as  
 you may,  
 I'll tell you of something not unlike to reason I saw one  
 day.  
 Is it only men that are makers of law? Perhaps! Yet  
 hearken a bit;  
 I'll tell you a tale; say you if e'er you have heard a  
 stranger than it.

It was many and many a league away from the place  
 where now we are;  
 And many a year ago it happened, in the land of the Great  
 White Czar.  
 It was morn; I remember how cold it felt, out under a  
 low pale sky,  
 When we moored our boat on the river-bank, my  
 comrade Leigh and I;  
 And the plunge in the water unwarmed of the sun was  
 less for desire than pluck,  
 And we hurried on our clothes again, and longed for our  
 breakfast luck;  
 When, all of a sudden, he clutched my arm, and pointed  
 across. And there  
 We stood up side by side and watched, and as mute as  
 the dead we were.



We saw the grey wolf's fateful spring, and we saw the  
 death of the deer ;  
 And the grey wolf left the body alone, and swift as the  
 feet of fear  
 His feet sped over the brow of the hill, and we lost the  
 sight of him,  
 Who had left the dead deer there on the ground, uneaten  
 body or limb.  
 So, when he vanished out of our sight, we rowed our  
 boat across,  
 And lifted the carcass, and rowed again to the other  
 side. " The loss  
 For you, good Master Wolf, much more than the gain  
 for us will be !  
 'Twere half a pity to spoil your sport except that we fain  
 would see  
 The reason why, with hunger unstaunched, you have  
 left your quarry behind ;  
 Red-toothed, red-mawed, forgone your meal ! Sir Wolf,  
 we'll know your mind ! "

Hungry and cold we watched and watched to see him  
 return on his track.  
 At last we spied him a-top of the hill, the same grey  
 wolf come back,  
 No more alone, but a leader of wolves, the head of a  
 gruesome pack.  
 He came right up to the very place where the dead  
 deer's body had lain,  
 And he sniffed and looked for the prey of his claws, the  
 beast that himself had slain ;  
 The beast at our feet, and the river between, and the  
 searching all in vain !

He threw up his muzzle and slunk his tail, and whined  
 so pitifully,

And the whole pack howled and fell on him,—we hardly  
could bear to see.

Breaker of civic law or pact, or however they deemed  
of him,

He knew his fate, and he met his fate, for they tore him  
limb from limb.

I tell you, we felt as we ne'er had felt since ever our  
days began ;

Less like men that had cozened a brute than men that  
had murdered a man.

## Two Women and a Poet

### I. ELSA

My one beloved is mine, and I am his !  
 My poet beautiful and great of soul !  
 The coming days may bring me joy or dole,  
 But naught remains for me to gain or miss.  
 My soul hath met his soul in that still kiss,  
 My life stands fearless out, a perfect whole,  
 My brow is lucent with the aureole  
 Set round it by his great love's emphasis.

I know not how such glory as this can be ;  
 I am as one who, after heavy noise  
 Of tempest and the shouting of the sea,  
 Comes to a Paradise of perfect joys,  
 Where every gift and grace, in equipoise,  
 Goes round a sun of light, eternally.

### II. MILDRED

Because he loveth her she goeth blithe ;  
 The veriest bliss of blisses doth she taste ;  
 And I, too, love him ! Shall I bid him haste,  
 That fell Anatomy who bears the scythe,

To spoil her grand white bosom, leave her lithe  
 White limbs with all their grace for aye disgraced,  
 And lay her perfect body's beauty waste,  
 Who holds my lover bound with cord and withe?

Leave her the beauty, O God, for Time to set  
 His ill slow fingers on with touches dim!  
 Leave her the radiancy of face and limb!  
 Let her be deadly fair a season yet!  
 But, if thou be just God, make her forget  
 That once she loved and was beloved by him.

### III. A POET

How long ago? Have years or only days  
 Gone by? We live in sense and not in years.  
 They said—what was it?—*an ugly piece of work.*  
 Well, one may think that out of ugliness  
 The perfect beauty shall be born some day:  
 Or shall we say, things are not as they seem?  
 Nothing is fair or ugly in itself?  
 Who would have thought that small-faced, soft-eyed child,  
 Mildred, who lay upon my breast and cooed,  
 Would slay another, and then kill herself?  
 The world is very evil; O dear God,  
 When shall Thy light arise and all be peace?  
 We poets are forerunners of the time  
 When all shall run in rhythmic harmony;  
 We, the great poets, like the Weimar sage,  
 Who keep us calm amid the tempest's roar.  
 The lesser poets are beaten, driven about,  
 Are passion's slaves. Well, well, they have their place;  
 They take the big world's anguish on their heart,  
 And so their songs, half-stifled, only rise  
 To sink; a poet should be no mere man,

And these are men. God give us gracious calm  
 To float immortal song on : I am calm,  
 Yet touched by gentle sorrow's tenderness,  
 Which lies on me like dew upon a flower.

These little women ! It is very strange !  
 Mildred's small face, white star in glooms of hair,  
 Slight body like a child's, and little soft  
 Child-hands ; who would have thought she could have  
 slain

That Elsa, glorious-limbed and Juno-tall ?  
 O my poor Elsa, I would not see you dead,  
 I keep the memory of your beauty safe !  
 She poisoned you. She said—what was it she said ?—  
*I did not mean to make the woman die,*  
*But take a memory away from her.*

They thought her mad, and shut her up away  
 From fair world-life : and then she slew herself ;  
 And all for love—why should she not have known  
 That love is but a little part of life,  
 As poets know, and all harmonious souls ?  
 Mildred was not harmonious ; Elsa was ;  
 One living harmony of spirit and sense,  
 One flame-like motion quick and passionate.

Well, these things rightly apprehended blend them-  
 selves

In life, to make the harmony of song.  
 Shall Mildred's tear-drenched kisses leave a taste  
 Of brine upon my lips ? Not so, not so.  
 Nothing shall break this splendid calm of mine.  
 One cannot sing in tempest, therefore, peace.  
 The small among us cannot do the work,  
 The great wait for the greater ones to come.  
 Shall I keep earth a-waiting ? Surely not.



## The Lady of Comfort

“Fair damsel, thou hast been called the *Lady of Comfort*, because everyone who enters thy presence sorrowful returns contented and happy.”—*Gesta Romanorum*, lxiii.

SHE was my friend of many years,  
Glad for my joy, sad for my tears ;

And unto many as unto me  
She gave the grace of her sympathy.

All our griefs and our joys she knew,  
Suffering and rejoicing too.

Hers to give and ours to take ;  
Tacit covenant naught should break.

None of us ever guessed or thought  
Our Lady of Comfort needed aught ;

For as for her, her soul was fed  
From the very source of life, we said.

Before that lovely presence of hers  
Our souls undid their barriers ;

And the stonework of reserve fell low,  
Even as the walls of Jericho,

When seven times seven the ark had gone  
Around, and the trumpets' blast was blown.

But we never thought that she could swerve  
From her gracious calm and sweet reserve ;

She who walked with a stately mien,  
Over herself and her world a queen.

But once this woman let me see  
The quivering heart of her agony.

She laid her head upon my knees,  
And spake in words like unto these :

“ Let me weep for a little while ;  
Me who so long have worn a smile !

“ Let me sob for my broken joy,  
As a little child for its broken toy.

“ I have laughed with friends and cheered their  
way :—  
Oh, let me weep for myself to-day !

“ I have not suffered mine heart's distress  
Upon the heart of the world to press.

“ I have taught my lips to be bravely dumb  
About the gone that no more may come.

“ But to-day the big tears blind mine eyes ;  
I have but played at being wise.

“ To-day my sobs are deep and long ;  
I have but played at being strong.



“God, give me mine own, own drink and food !  
I have but played at being good.”

Strong and calm through good and ill,  
I had thought her before, and I think her still ;

None the less great because I saw  
The tears that awed as a man's might awe ;

And heard her low full voice sustain  
A weight that was heavier than pain.

And I was just as I used to be ;  
Except that now I had learned to see.

So there was never fear nor pride  
Betwixt us twain till the day she died.

## Baa, Baa, Black Sheep

THEY say I'm very foolish ;  
They hint it isn't right,  
To love one little black sheep  
Far more than all the white !

The white sheep are gentle,  
And never apt to stray ;  
My black sheep is often cross,  
And sometimes runs away.

My black sheep is sometimes  
The very naughtiest  
Of all naughty things that be !  
Yet I love him best !

He flings me defiance ;  
Pretends to butt me too ;  
He scampers when I want him, off  
To the hillside blue ;

So fast I cannot catch him,  
But e'en must sit and wait  
Until he comes back again,  
When he has gaed his gait.

Sometimes, all unwearied,  
 Comes my bonny thing;  
 (Bonny heather-smell doth love  
 Round his fleece to cling.)

Comes with a strange light,  
 A strange depth in his eyes,  
 Caught from where I do not know,  
 In some unknown wise:

Looks into my face, then,  
 Till indeed I seem  
 Like to one that knoweth not  
 If he see or dream.

But in a moment,  
 Broken is the spell;  
 Off goes my black sheep,  
 Where, I cannot tell!

Bad little black sheep!  
 How you plague me,—oh,  
 They tell me I must tether you,  
 Never let you go!

Such a tiny radius  
 You'd have!—but where's the good?  
 I wonder who could tether you,  
 If indeed he would!

O bonny black sheep,  
 If you make me fret,  
 Just a minute's look at you,  
 And I quite forget!

Dear, I would not change you,  
 Even if I could;  
 Naughtiest of naughty things!  
 Best of all the good!

“Baa, baa, black sheep!  
Have you any wool?”

“Yes, sir, that I have,  
Three bags full!”

Three bags, black sheep,  
Very soft and fine!  
Richest fleece on all the downs,  
Bonny black sheep mine.

One lock of your wool  
Is worth the Golden Fleece.  
Brought in the olden time  
From the land of Greece.

Black sheep, black sheep,  
I would not have you tame:  
Oh, but life has gone on wings,  
Since the day you came!

If you bring trouble,  
Weariness, annoy,  
Better than the fairest calm,  
Is your gift, joy.

Black sheep, comely sheep,  
Wander at your will;  
Come belated, early come,  
And welcome still.

For black sheep, black sheep,  
Right well I know  
Little were the whole world's worth,  
If you must go.

## The Children's Knight

WITH eyes that look up sunward,  
 The knights of Love ride onward,  
     To fight the fight ;  
 They ride, the wrong redressing,  
 The weak ones lifting, blessing,  
 With heart and life confessing  
     The true, the right.

Munificent and loyal,  
 And courteous as the royal,  
     Noble and true ;  
 Our eyes have looked upon them,  
 With hearts that fain had won them  
 All blessing fair to crown them  
     That life e'er knew.

And we, whose lips have sung them,  
 Discern and know among them  
     His armour bright ;  
 The vow his heart hath made is  
 To none of all sweet ladies ;  
 He rideth where the shade is ;  
     The children's knight.

He heard the children crying ;  
 The little children, lying  
     Where devil's hoof

On rosy life had trodden ;  
 And green grass lay blood-sodden ;  
 For them he fought, Childe Roden,  
 In armour proof.

Unceasing and unresting  
 (The swift stag for his cresting),  
 Well hath he fought.  
 The legend which he beareth  
 Below that crest he weareth,  
 (Oh, well for him who dareth !)  
*All good or nought !\**

O little children, love him !  
 None loveth you above him,  
 Your minstrel knight ;  
 On heart, voice, life, so fully,  
 He bears your passion duly ;  
 Would give his life up truly  
 For your sweet right.

O little arms, clasp round him !  
 True knight, good knight, ye found him ;  
 O childhood's eyes,  
 Smile into his who gave you  
 Love that so burned to save you ;  
 Heart to heart must he have you,  
 His great love's prize.

\* *Tout bien ou rien.*

“Your Joy no Man taketh from You”

*“ Il n’y a pas de milieu, la Croix barre plus ou moins la vue libre de la nature ; le grand Pan n’a rien à faire avec le divin Crucifié.” —*  
STE. BEUVE.

O CHRIST, who layest, a babe, at the bosom of Mary  
sweet ;  
O child, whose Father’s will was the first of thy drink  
and meat ;

O man, whose love could dare to win the terrible crown  
That circleth his brow alone who layeth his life adown ;

Thee painter and sculptor show with a face o’ershadowed  
deep  
For the anguish of all the world and the woe its lovers  
reap.

Thy hands and feet are pierced, side wounded, brow  
enthorned,  
And patience lives on the lips of the smitten of God and  
scorned.

And yet while they tell of a love that boundless woe  
sustained,  
At the bar of the human heart are one and all arraigned :

For they say thy cross bars out the glory of earthly things;

The flush of the sunset sky, the light that is early spring's;

The beat of the sea's high heart against her lover's breast;

The spirit making its form in the body manifest;

The wild sweet thrill i' the blood young mating creatures know;

The solemn calm that broods on the everlasting snow;

The bliss of a poet's heart when his perfect song is made;

The joy of the warrior-soul whom nothing maketh afraid.

They say that, afar in the dark, dear Pan, our lover, lies,  
In a dreadful silence lapt, struck dead by thy lightning eyes.

Dear Pan, great Pan, who came to the place of men's abode,

A beam of the warm sun-smile alive on the lips of God.

Nay, Christ, thou lover of life, thou never slewest him thus

Who came in the morn of the world with beauty and cheer for us.

They say it who show thy face like his that never hath smiled,

Thou wonder of all the world, God-strong, more pure than a child.

We look in thine eyes that smile as the eyes of God, and see

The less in the more; not thee in Pan, but Pan in thee.



Thou greater and higher than he, by the stoop to the  
dread abyss,  
And the rise to the shining heights of love-begotten bliss.

For the gate in the shape of a cross, whose wardens are  
death and night,  
Is the gate to the life of life; the gate to the light of  
light.

## To a Wee Laddie

I CALL you many a name, my king!  
 No font-name is enough for me,  
 All prettiness of call I bring  
 From fairy tale and history;  
 But mostly after two whereon  
 A light from Shakespere's spirit fell,  
 I love to call you, little one;  
 Even after Puck and Ariel.

And hereby, stranger, may you guess  
 A little of this laddie's kind,  
 His pretty ways and mischievousness,  
 In Ariel and Puck combined;  
 His nimble, supple movements—oh,  
 Full oftentimes I cannot tell  
 If here be Robin Goodfellow,  
 Or here be delicate Ariel!

I think I should not wonder much,  
 My little tricksy Puck, some day  
 To see the dairy at your touch  
 Play some queer prank and melt away.  
 I know when bowls of cream are set  
 Their calm is very oft assailed;  
 And sometimes, Puck, you quite forget  
 That butter fails if cream has failed.

Full often, Ariel mine, you work  
 Most bravely for an hour or so,  
 And 'neath your gravity scarce will lurk  
 A touch of Robin Goodfellow ;  
 But then you claim, as Ariel claimed,  
 That shortly I should set you free,  
 And boldly ask, and unashamed,  
 For time of gladsome liberty.

And, gently be your spriting done,  
 You seldom let one quite forget  
 You want the time of spriting gone,—  
 Away from task and lesson set !  
 Away, away, to joyous play,  
 Such play as Ariel could not know ;  
 You sport with human younglings gay,  
 More blest than Robin Goodfellow.

I know you often plague your maid,  
 My bonnie Robin Goodfellow !  
 And yet I know the girl, unpaid,  
 Would gladly follow you to and fro :  
 For you have that within you, dear,  
 Which somehow seems to cheer and bless ;  
 The ether is always blue and clear  
 Beyond fleece-clouds of naughtiness.

O laddie, how your voice goes up  
 In melody at church, as though  
 Your soul were just an incense-cup  
 Wherefrom sweet clouds of worship go !  
 One scarce would think that, in the pause  
 Antiphonal, it could be true  
 You fain would eat that apple, was  
 Under the rose bestowed on you.

But there be times, oh, rarely sweet !  
Times when my whole soul knoweth well  
Beside me walk an angel's feet,  
Not feet of Puck nor Ariel :  
A human angel, with the eyes  
That sure have met the eyes of God,  
In walking through some Paradise  
Where feet of mine have never trod.

I have no name to call you by,  
My darling, at such times as this ;  
I only watch you reverently,  
And in the silence bend to kiss  
That sweetest face and loveliest  
Has e'er been looked upon by me,  
Who entertain this angel guest,  
Not unawares, but wittingly.

## I Think of You as of a Good Life-boat

I THINK of you as of a good life-boat  
 That, once a-launch, thrilled aye and throbb'd to meet  
 The mastered waves against her bow to beat,  
 And leap to the great ocean full afloat,  
 Where, wild about the sharp rocks of the world,  
 There was a storm of angry spray upswirled,  
 As passionate hands, in wanhope's struggles fierce,  
 Beat the strong waves till foam arose on foam,  
 Yet drew them none the nearer life and home.  
 And oh, to save them from the loss and curse,  
 And snatch them from the moaning deep, and bring  
 Safe to the quiet place of sheltering !

You have ceased to ride the storm, who breasted well  
 The dreadful surges and the tempest's swell ;  
 Who brought the wrecked from terror of the sea  
 Into the haven where they fain would be.

Oh, well for you, and yet alas for me !

## A Mill Ballad

(FROM THE FRENCH OF GUSTAVE NADAUD)

IN the heart of a country wild,  
 Where the unbelievers be,  
 Was a king so good and wise,—  
 Long, long ago lived he :  
 He was kind as a father is,  
 And rich as the earth, ywis.

*Turn the mill, turn the mill, Jack ;  
 Not yet have I filled my sack.*

But his subjects they rebelled  
 Against his majesty,  
 And drove him from the throne,  
 Nobody knoweth why :  
 From town to town he past ;  
 A mill his shelter at last.

*Turn the mill, turn the mill, Jack ;  
 Not yet have I filled my sack.*

Nor glory nor fear had he,  
 This king, as he worked alway ;  
 No murmur lived on his lips ;  
 This miller he sang all day ;  
 All night he slumbered deep :  
 Of yore could he never sleep.

*Turn the mill, turn the mill, Jack ;  
 Not yet have I filled my sack.*

But once on a day there came  
 Of those who had driven him away,  
 A host of folk to his cote,  
 For changeable souls are they :  
 "Take back the crown for thine head!"  
 "Nay! I give it to you instead!"

*Turn the mill, turn the mill, Jack;  
 Not yet have I filled my sack.*

"My wife is a miller's wife,  
 And millers my sons shall be :  
 The water runs in the stream :  
 The corn in the field grows free :  
 All else doth change," he said ;  
 "But aye is there need of bread!"

*Stop the mill, stop the mill, Jack;  
 For now have I filled my sack.*

## In a Swiss Wood

I SAT and watched the water fall  
Adown the gray rocks rough and tall,  
Which Nature there did robe and crown  
With marvellous wealth of green and brown.  
A small white butterfly did flit  
Across the rainbowed breast of it.  
One up on high, one down below,  
I saw two monkshood clusters grow.  
The long fair grasstufts which the sun  
In southering glory looked upon  
Lay soft and delicate, like the hair  
Of little maidens kneeling there ;  
And the high mountains caught the glow  
On crests of everlasting snow.  
The whortleberries on the bank  
Beside me of the sunshine drank,  
That flushed their green to living red ;  
And on the happy air was shed  
The sunkissed pinetrees' quickening scent ;  
Its fragrance through and through me went.  
The little ants moved busily  
O'er shed pine-needles close to me ;  
And now and then the human folk  
Passed by ; I knew not if they spoke



Or no, because the water sang  
So loud, and bonny bell-flowers rang ;  
And budding grasses at my feet  
Thrilled as they felt the live air beat  
In rhythmic rapture all around,  
A glory of sense and light and sound.  
Through voiceful peace and restful stir  
There Nature drew me so to her,  
That, were it but for once, I vaunt  
I knew not either wish or want.

## To the Czar Nicholas II.

CZAR NICHOLAS, whose life is sudden hurled  
On the high dreadful splendours of the world ;

We give thee tears, because thy father lies  
With Death's eternal calm upon his eyes ;

And pity, for thine heart had turned away  
From all the glory and terror of that sway.

To him, Death's solemn gift of quietness :  
To thee, life's very sorest strain and stress ;

Vigils of awe, and festivals of dread ;  
Care by thy throne, and trouble by thy bed.

Yet to thy face the face of Hope is set,  
With eyes that oft have wept, and still are wet.

For his the past, who lieth cold and dumb ;  
But thine the present, and the near-to-come.

He gave the gift of Peace ; oh, be it thine  
To give the larger gift, and more divine !

Let not thine eyes, O Czar, refuse to see  
No gift avails the land that is not free.

Let not thine ears, O Czar, refuse to hear  
The cry sent up to God from year to year :

Nor, if thou see and hear, shut sight and sound,  
Guarded by Fear and Sloth, in night's profound.

Thou lonely great one, set thy strenuous might  
Against the clash of elemental fight.

Dare, as the saviours of the world must dare ;  
Bear, as the saviours of the world must bear.

And if thou win, of Love thy guerdon take ;  
And if thou perish, perish for Love's sake.

## Death and Life

NONE may know the reason why  
All our earth-time, you and I,  
Must be strangers utterly.

Slow or fast the earth-time wends,  
And the due probation ends ;  
Then comes Life to make amends.

Once we thought that Life was come  
Quickening what was fallen numb.  
Death stood there, and smote us dumb.

O'er the mountain-peaks, that even,  
Leapt the sudden rose-red levin,  
From the mighty-clouded heaven.

Shelter for a moment known :  
Then a roof, with sudden groan,  
Fell, and smote us twain to one.

All we saw was one quick flame :  
Then the crash and darkness came ;  
Light and darkness all the same.

All we knew was one great light,  
In the rapture of the night ;  
Earth and earth's vanished quite.

Now at last we two might swerve  
 From our passion-wrought reserve ;  
 Dominated, heart and nerve,

By remorseless ecstasy ;  
 For we thought we were to die  
 There together, you and I.

Brave and true, and brave and true,  
 Struggle o'er for me and you,  
 Now our happy spirits knew.

Death was there, sweet death who had  
 All Love's glory unveiled, unclad ;  
 We beheld it and were glad.

It was death, dear death and blest,  
 Lovely death whose hand had prest  
 Mouth to mouth and breast to breast.

*Saved !* one cried ! We spoke not, we :  
 All our knowledge, verily,  
 Death was gone from you and me.

Emptied cup that full did brim :  
 Sunlit peaks all gray and dim :  
 Death was gone, and Life with him,

## The Ship from Tirnanoge\*

WE two were alone by the sea ;  
I, and the man I loved with me.

Our eyes were glad, and our hearts beat high,  
As we sat by the sea, my love and I ;

Till we looked afar, and saw a ship :  
Then white, white grew his ruddy lip ;

And strange, strange grew his eyes that saw  
Into the heart of some deep awe.

His hand that held this hand of mine  
Never a token gave nor sign ;

But lay as a babe's that is just dead :  
And I sat still and wondered.

Nearer and nearer the white ship drew :  
Who was her captain, whence her crew ?

Her crew were men and women bright,  
With fair eyes full of unknown light.

\* The Land of Youth.

From far-off Tirnanoge they came,  
Where they had heard my true-love's name :

The name the birds and waves had sung,  
Of one who must bide for ever young.

Strong white arms let down the boat ;  
Song rose up from many a throat.

Glad they were who soon had won  
A lovely new companion.

They lowered the boat and they entered her ;  
And rowed to meet their passenger :

Rowed to the tune of a music strange,  
That told of joy at the heart of change.

I heard her keel on the pebbles gride,  
And she waited there till the turn o' the tide.

While they kept singing, singing clear,  
A song that was passing sweet to hear :

A song that bound me in a chain  
Away from any thought of pain.

They paused at last in their sweet singing,  
And I saw their hands were beckoning,

In a rhythm as sweet as the stillèd songs,  
That passed to the air from their silent tongues.

He rose and kissed me on the face,  
And left me sitting in my place,

Quiet, quiet, life and limb,  
I, who was not called like him.

Into the boat he entered grave,  
And the tide turned, and she rode the wave ;

And I saw him sitting at the prow,  
With a rose-light about his brow.

The boat drew nigh the ship again,  
With all its lovely women and men.

I saw him enter the ship and stand,  
His hand held in the captain's hand.

The captain wonderful to see,  
With eyes a-change in depth and blee ;

A-change, a-change for ever and aye,  
Blue, and purple, and black, and gray ;

And hair like the weed that finds a home  
In the heart of a trail of white sea-foam.

I wist he was no mortal man,  
But he whose name is Manannan.\*

They sailed away, they sailed away,  
Out of the day into the day.

\* The sea-god of Irish legend.



## “And After This—”

I READ the angel's hest in his dread eyes,  
 And when he turned I followed, shivering  
 For lack of that lost body used to cling  
 About me till God smote off its disguise.  
 So followed I who could none otherwise,  
 Until he brought where God had bidden him bring,  
 Even to a place wherein was everything  
 That erst exceedingly I used to prize.

There saw I gold and jewels uncounted spread ;  
 There heard I voices pealing forth acclaim ;  
 There saw I lust in fullness banqueted.  
 Lust's dearth and fullness were to me the same ;  
 And nought to me was wealth and nought was fame ;  
 And nothing had I won to love instead.

## TO R. N

OH, say thou not, *Now I shall go to sleep!*  
For he\* who said it did not sleep, but die.  
Close not thine eydlids on our agony;  
Stay with us, hold our hands in fellowship,  
While darkness broods above us dread and deep.  
Lift thou thy silver-trumpet voice on high,  
And let it bear up to God's ear the cry  
Of souls too numb to plain themselves and weep.

Brother, O brother, do not ask to go  
Into the calm awhile! Dear brother, stay!  
The world hath need of mighty ones to-day  
To raise the right, the wrong to overthrow.  
No loon can draw the great Odysseus' bow:  
No weakling wield the hammer of Thor's grim play.

\* Byron.

## To Miranda, who Sleeps

*Awake, dear heart, awake ! thou hast slept well !*

The dawning light hath set the world astir  
 With chirp and warble of birds, and faery whirr  
 Of winglets, quivering in the broken spell  
 That sleep had laid on nature : strange to tell,  
 Miranda sleepeth yet ; strange, for it were  
 A wonder if the delicate ear of her  
 Knew not this multitudinous matin-bell.

But still Miranda sleeps ! What was to meet  
 In dreamland, what, or whom, for thee to lie  
 Unmindful of the glory of earth and sky,  
 With little quiet hands and quiet feet ?  
 And still thou sleepest, and thy sleep is sweet.—  
 Dear heart, I would not waken thee, not I.

## Love and Grief

### I

DEAD Love, dead Love, now shall thy burial be !  
 I give thee rainbowed hope to be thy shroud :  
 I lay the beauty maketh women proud  
 On thy dead heart : I set my girlhood's glee  
 In that strait bed which now doth compass thee,  
 Immortal as I thought, to mortal bowed,  
 With all thy supreme godhead disallowed.  
 Dead Love, dead Love, and what shall comfort me ?

What new fresh loveliness will yet arise  
 From his dear dust and ashes, his that erst  
 Made the whole realm of beauty pale and dim ?  
 What blossom of glory from his grave shall burst ?  
 I will not look and see it with the eyes  
 That opened at his kiss, and looked on him.

## Love and Grief

### II

ALAS for the mortality of grief !

Next year, perhaps, and next year I may shun  
 The full sweet life of things beneath the sun,  
 But only now am I of mourners chief.  
 Too soon I shall have drunken Time's relief !  
 A little while, and healing will have run  
 Through every vein, forgetfulness begun !  
 O Love, dead Love, that woe should be so brief !

And shall this be indeed the end of all ?

The sleepy drench of Time to soothe and lull  
 Into the calm that now I shudder from ?  
 This hand, which felt thy bosom throb, to cull  
 Flowers from thy grave for memory-coronal ?  
*O Love, that to this fashion Grief should come !*

## A Choice

IF I might choose one gift God's hand could yield,  
 What would I crown my life withal to-day ?  
 With love, or gold, or fame, or absolute sway,  
 Or beauty such as women's who have thrilled  
 Men's souls and senses till no more they willed  
 With their own wills, but only must obey ?  
 Or would I choose to have my mother-clay  
 Lapping me round, whose pain at last were stilled ?

What would I choose, and what would I forgo ?  
 Would all desire go up in that swift cry,  
 Were it one little minute's space, *to know*  
*God's love which passeth knowledge, verily ;*  
 And, ere the glory fadeth off, to die ?  
 Would God, that I were sure of choosing so !

## Ad Poetam

O POET of the golden mouth, on you  
 God's benison for music sweet and true.

Your web of song is full divinely wove ;  
 A warp that's joy across a woof that's love.

If rudest thorns have sharply pierced your hand,  
 Blest, with the Rose upon your heart, you stand.

If you have known the awe and gloom of night,  
 Your element was still the eternal Light.

If you have tasted bitter woe and teen,  
 More wholesome-sweet for that your song hath been.

And to the music dropping from your tongue  
 No taste of morbid gall hath ever clung.

No pestilential sloughs of decadence  
 Have ever clogged your spirit, fouled your sense.

In vital grace and virile sanity,  
 Of earth and heaven, O poet, you are free.

Sing on, sing on the strain he knoweth best  
 Who hath the heavens' blue road, the earth's brown nest.





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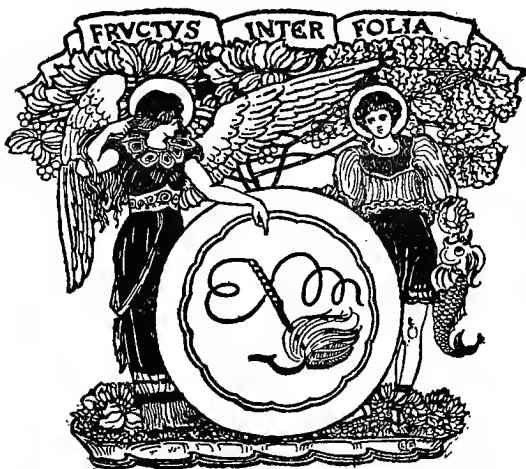


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