ORA. / ORG.

Verse *and* Vision

POEMS

BY

HUGH ORD

[redacted]

1936

To
Mrs E. Roosevelt
with the respectful compliments
of the author.
T. Hughes Ford
1946

HUGH ORD.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Dedicated to my most patient of critics

—My Wife

PREFACE.

I am indebted to the proprietors of the Sydney Bulletin for their kind permission to re-print the two following poems, viz.:—"The Whirligig of Time" and "Camp and Town"; and likewise to the proprietors of the Weekly Times for their permission to re-print the two poems—"Recollections" and "My Wasted Years."

Time after time
I've chased in rhyme,
Enobled thoughts of rapture,
But feeble things
With broken wings
Have been my only capture.

Though they ne'er be
For men to see
On brass or marble graven,
They yet, apart,
In someone's heart,
Perchance may find a haven.

THE AUTHOR.

INGLEWOOD, VIC.,
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RECOLLECTION.

'Tis five and twenty years to-day—
How swift have sped the years away—
Since I was camped by Portland Bay.

Those lads who laboured with me then
Are sober grown and married men;
Changed each, I daresay, out of ken.

The Darlot Creek ran clear and strong,
And blackwood trees, the course, along,
Bent branches down to hear its song.

I hear its waters murmuring still
In fancy, as I always will
Whilst pulse and brain their tasks fulfil.

There, by the camp fire, blazing bright,
Whose flames flung radiance to the night,
A singer's voice awoke delight.

Right down the years that voice has lent
A charm to banish discontent,
As when I listened from my tent.

A simple song of fond desire,
Sung by the survey camp log fire,
Of age-old themes that deeds inspire.

The gloomy forest, grim, depressed—
Standing like some unfriendly guest—
Locked up the music in its breast.

But, though they've passed, their ghosts remain
Like wandering children of the brain,
And memory leads them back again.

WHO IS AN ENGLISHMAN?

Who is an Englishman? Tell me, pray,
You who have wandered the world's highway
To the north and the south and the east and west,
Whether in idle or gainful quest—
Who have trodden paths where millions toil
'Mong city walls, or the lonely soil
Of foreign countries far away—
Who is an Englishman? Tell me, pray.

I put these words some time ago
To one whose locks were white as snow,
Whose eyes were blue like ocean brine
The colour of his Saxon line;
But Age which marks mankind the same
Had nowise spared his shrunken frame;
Yet, spite of Age's careworn load,
He straighten'd him on the dusty road
And, gathering voice as fervour ran,
He told who was an Englishman.

"Is there a man," said he, "so base
To call our kin an alien race?
Each man that's born on English soil
Would such a dastard swift embroil;
O'er all the world, since Adam died,
The human race has scattered wide,
And parts have gained distinctive worth,
From out the land that gave them birth.

"Though other people pride display,
'Tis England still that leads the way,
Name every country that you can,
You'll find 'tis England's in the van.
'Mong bards whose race has proudly run,
Her Shakespeare shines a mighty sun;
His wondrous words like leaping flame
Light his imperishable fame;
And, when the centuries have rolled,
His mighty name will still be told.

"Her Milton's fame has likewise rung
For noblest prose in human tongue;
And nations all have knelt to twine
Their laurel garlands round his shrine.
Within the ranks of warriors bright
The name of Cromwell stands for Might,
The Empire of our present day
Was founded by his soldier sway.

" 'Twas Drake and Blake and Nelson gave
The English right to rule the wave;
No other names may yet displace
These gallant ones of English race.
Their spectral squadron still doth sweep
The waves our Empire's soldiers keep;
From Arctic zones to tropic sky
The flag they planted still doth fly.

"The world awoke when Newton saw
The truth of gravitation's law;
He lit a torch whereby mankind
Could guide its mathematic mind.

"Philosophers have lived and died
Within the world's division wide,
But none have won a higher fame
Than that which rests on Bacon's name.

"When shackled slaves had no recourse
In quest of justice—Wilberforce,
The Englishman, with humane hand
Struck off the gyves and healed the brand.

"Who held the power of speech that lit
Men's minds, like that of younger Pitt?
His burning words the kingdom filled
With power, not even death has stilled."

* * * *

The old man paused, his trembling frame
With proud excitement seemed to flame,
A brighter light flashed in his eye
As swift the lustrous throng passed by.
"That man," said he, "whose place of birth
Is somewhere on that English earth,
Or he whose parentage may claim
By right of birth an English name—
Who holds the old traditions dear,
And turns with scorn from craven fear,
That man, to whom no cry of pain
Wrung by injustice calls in vain—
Share England's mighty fame, he can,
And claim the name of ENGLISHMAN."

THE OPENING OF THE SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE.

Dick Turpin was a gallant blade, as history can tell,
And, mounted on his steed Black Bess, rode fearlessly and well,
But who shall say more gallant mien, and fearlessness to boot,
Was ever shown, astride a steed, than shown by bold De Groot;
So toss your hats on high, my boys, and shout till echoes ring,
"Long live De Groot!" who ope'd the bridge, in honour to the King.

The task fulfilled, respect upheld, whate'er the price may be,
Has left one bright emblazoned page for future history;
No Communistic tricks of State that would our wills forestall,
Can, 'midst the hoots of partisans, the gallant deed recall;
So toss your hats on high, my boys, and shout till echoes ring,
"Long live De Groot!" who ope'd the bridge, in honour to the King.

31/3/31.

ENGLAND'S LITERATI.

Down through the ages out of days untaught,
Beacon by beacon marks, in glittering line
Of prose and verse, the path of English thought;
Wide o'er the world its brilliant signals shine.

Names that adorn the scroll of England's fame
With lustre that no centuries efface;
What glory theirs!—what pride of ours! to claim
A kinship with those men of English race.

Toiled not for gold reward, they gave us gold
Upon imperishable pages, so that we
May keep our nation great by sermons told
In English prose and English poetry.

SWAGMAN'S REST.

O'er the rugged ranges far and blue,
Where runs the line of the old survey,
Is a lonely mound that waste leaves strew,
And a dead man sleeping the years away.

A boundary rider had found him there—
A swag and billycan close beside—
Famished and ragged with long grey hair,
On the dusty track he had dropped and died.

What hopeless words had his lips expressed?
His name or kin there was nought to trace;
Part of his story was grimly pressed
In the keen despair of his bloodless face.

They made his grave 'neath the roadside tree—
A stone-piled mound that the wild dog spurns—
And there his slumber is soothed, maybe,
By winds that steal o'er the whispering ferns.

Or p'rhaps from his couch he can upward gaze
From sightless eyes that a soul unbars,
To trace the round of the endless days,
Or follow the flight of the trackless stars.

Whilst the world goes round in the same old way,
And Time takes toll of the worst and best—
We marked the place on the old survey,
By the name 'tis known by "Swagman's Rest."

CAMP AND TOWN.

Over the flat the river flows,
Singing its song in the same old way.
Ripple and eddy its surface shows,
Touched with the gold of a sunset ray;
The green grass dotted with daisy-heads,
Like a snow-flecked sheet of emerald spreads
Over the banks 'neath the gum-trees grey.

Old Time has marked with heedless hand
The winding way where the waters glide;
Hard-by the homes of a township stand,
And all of the old bush glories hide.
But to me, as I sit in the closing day,
My thoughts go wandering, far away
Back 'gainst the flowing of time and tide.

Ghosts of the sixties pass again
Over the dusty, trailing track;
The bullock team in the lumbering wain,
And I hear the swish as the long whips crack;
For here, where the tea-tree thickest grew,
Was the crossing-place we teamsters knew
Ere the axe had driven the bush-line back.

Yet vain are the visions my fancies share
Of bearded mates of the olden days;
Who drank at the inn of its rough-brewed beer,
Of their swearing devil-may-care wild ways,

Those free and easy old times are sped,
When we slept with a blanket of stars o'erhead,
Warmed by the camp-fire's roaring blaze.

On the Christmas days we were loyal souls
To the old-world custom, kind and rough,
And the blackened bucket over the coals
Sent savoury steam from the boiling "duff";
It helped our journey to kingdom come
When we washed it down with shanty rum—
Some of the real old deadly stuff.

I miss that crossing of days gone by—
A bridge stands now where the waters play—
Instead of the wild-dog's startled cry
One hears the house-dog's watchful bay,
Swelling the sounds of a township's strife
Like the quickened pulse of a fretful life,
That onward spreads in its listless way.

And a new inn stands where the old inn stood—
And I see the sun slope down to the west—
To an old man's vision of bad and good,
Some of the old days seem the best;
And I often think, when I've got to go,
I should like to sleep where the waters flow,
Lulled by their lazy voice to rest.

UNCLE ANDY.

In Memory of an Old Alluvial Miner.

In a gully 'mongst the ranges where the golden wattles grow,
And the everlasting daisies in the early Summer blow;
Where the mint-bush, from its purple bells, pours perfume on the wind,
Uncle Andy's hut was standing with the pipeclay heaps behind.

Sitting by his open door-way, at the closing of the day,
Smoking, with his dog beside him, in his free old-fashioned way,
I can see him, grey hair falling o'er a brow where care had thrown
Many a furrow of its hardship, living out his life alone.

See again those Summer evenings, which I fain remember best,
Whilst their sunset glories faded with the fading crimson west—
Hear again the stirring stories of the early diggings, when
Miners on the ranges round him numbered twenty thousand men.

"Those were days," said Uncle Andy, "when we diggers used to think
Golden claims would last for ever, and that men should fight and drink;
Yonder is the old track winding, like a band of ribbon brown,
O'er the range where Scott was captured when the troopers shot him down."

He would tell of canvas shanties and the roughest crowds unhung,
How they met to drink and gamble when the wildest songs were sung—
Of the lonely bush at night-time hiding, till the light of day,
Where some stranger had been plundered and his lifeless body lay.

Then from themes of greed and passion, he would speak of Springtime grand,
Ere the bush was robbed of splendour by the rough invader's hand;
When the scrub was strewn with colour and the Spring, with brushes bold,
Painted all the wattle branches with the glory of its gold.

Then the streamlet in the gully babbled down its crystal way,
Singing to its shining pebbles—'tis a tuneless track to-day—
Then the bush-birds warbled sweetly and the plovers used to pipe—
And the bronze-winged pigeons gathered when the wattle seeds were ripe.

Ah! those happy days departed, like some fond remembered song,
Days I spent with Uncle Andy in those Summer seasons long—
Or in winter by his hut-fire when the wind swept round the thatch
And we heard the curlews calling from the wet acacia patch.

And ever when I hear them now their notes bring back to mind
The old hut in the gully and the days I've left behind—
But, alas! the hut has vanished—for the sands of time have run—
And Uncle Andy's journeyed to the Land beyond the sun.

CHRISTMAS LONELINESS.

Oh! for the Christmas of long ago—
The Christmas that used to bind us—
When the world and its ways were a bit more slow,
But fostered a deal more kindness—
And Christmas eve when the bells were rung,
And kinsfolk gathered, the old and young,
And all were gladdened, and carols sung—
But it seems to have dropped behind us.

The old bush home where the old folks stay,
And dream of the days departed,
Where the ghosts of memory block the way
That leads to the days lighthearted;
For Susan's gone and so has Ned,
And some are married and some are dead,
And nothing is left in their place instead,
In the home where they all were started.

So we sit alone, does my wife with me,
On this Christmas Eve in the gloaming,
And we think of the days that used to be,
Ere the children all went roaming;
The Christmas tree, and the laughter gay,
When all foregathered on Christmas day,
Year by year in the same old way—
'Twas always a gladsome homing.

But ways have changed and now it seems
'Tis proper for all to scatter;
Old Christmas time is a land of dreams,
That the new-way customs shatter;
So we sit and wonder, but dare not speak,
To the dream-formed faces of those we'd seek—
And I see a tear on my old wife's cheek,
And I—well—it does not matter.

THE LONE SHEOAK

(By Point Lonsdale Sand Hills.)

You lone sheoak!—'mong stringy pendant leaves,
Like unto harp strings played on by the wind,
You murmur sounds, sad as a heart that grieves
O'er some lost heritage you cannot find.

I oftimes think, when listening to your drone,
I hear it in those voices, quaint and low,
Of untamed men who, now, are dead and gone,
Who sought your shelter, long, long, years ago.

Perhaps you had sympathy—some tender part—
For that dark race that flourished then—Who knows?
Responsive to their sorrows, now, your heart
Shall tell them ever in each wind that blows.

Your sad old song, it conjurs up a scene
Of bygone days that years have long foresworn—
The ill-clad nomad and his dusky queen,
Who, passing, left no kindred life to mourn.

Now nought remains, to mark that tribal life,
Save old stone axe-heads paid as Time's last toll;
The wandering blackman and his faithful wife,
Have tribute paid the herbage at your bole.

Oh! lone sheoak, you drone your sad, sad song—
I'd fain interpret what my ear receives
Of your quaint murmurings which the winds prolong—
Those sorrows hidden in your string-like leaves.

MANUKA TREES.

I stood and listened to the breeze,
That droned through old manuka trees.

Tall straggling pioneers they stood
To face the storms, in sullen mood.

Twisted and tough with branches stark,
Wrapped firmly in their rugged bark.

No foliage eased their wintry frown,
Save where it sparsely clothed each crown.

The sap seemed frozen in their veins,
And left but roughened hard remains.

Those sturdy trees for ages past,
Had fought the ocean's bitter blast.

How oft had temptests, in their course,
Rushed wildly on them in their force?

The storms again, and yet again,
Had, on them, spent their power in vain.

Now tall and twisted, stripped of dress,
They stood there in their loneliness.

Of age unknown—they looked as though
They'd lived perhaps centuries ago.

I bowed my head to those old trees,
As one who, in them, wonder sees.

Age clasped by Vigour—Nature's plan—
In measure not vouchafed to man.

THE BURNING OF OLD PIANOS.

(At a Corporation Tip.)

I stood and counted every one
As on to a careless pyre were tossed
Discarded pianos old and done,
Piled there for a flaming holocaust—
And memories old came crowding by,
When the flames leaped round them, red, and high.

Companions they of olden days,
Good friends to pleasure and foes to care;
There came from out the crackling blaze
Faint sounds of melody, sweet and rare—
As if ghosts, that recollection brings,
Were once more trying the worn-out strings.

I let my thoughts in fancy stray,
Nor did my fancy fail desire,
To trace the music grave or gay,
Of those old pianos in the fire—
Faded symphonies dead and gone,
Of Bach and Chopin and Mendelssohn.

And simple strains that youth endears—
And olden ballads that long had lain
Forgotten through the long gone years
Stole out from the trembling strings again.
Yet crackling flames and rushing breeze
Were the only players that touched the keys.

And discords rose as flames bit keen,
That spoke of pain or told of woe—
Only echoes they may have been,
Of melodies murdered years ago,
Or tortured souls of stately songs,
And those old pianos had borne the wrongs.

I longed to open, in Fancy's flight,
The treasured secrets they closed away,
Of whispered words that awoke delight
In tender breasts of a bygone day;
When Beauty had played to a lover's vow,
Those cherished chords that were silenced now.

Proud old pianos, their lives were done—
I watched them as their ashes fell—
I heard their strings snap one by one,
With vibrant dong, like a funeral knell,
Till they lay in a smouldering heap at last,
The worthless ashes of Music's past.

LEONORE.

Beside the sand hills, near the sea,
A valley lies that winds leap over,
Where Duigan's dwelling used to be—
Sheltered with boobyalla tree—
With garden plot and field of clover.

Long years ago, one summer day,
When, from the forest, coastward riding,
I found his homestead on my way,
And paused to note the garden gay,
And greet the lonely settler hiding.

Whilst perfume filled the lazy air
From climbing peas—their colour blazing—
And stocks and pinks and roses fair;
An incense exquisite and rare—
It held me, like a captive, gazing.

'Twas then I first saw Leonore—
The forest fairies surely caught her—
Some Nereid of the ocean shore,
She lingered by the cottage door,
A little wondering dark-eyed daughter.

So wild and wayward, and the wind
That over ocean billows blowing,
Within her cheeks the tints designed,
Like roses fairest of their kind,
That clambered o'er the cottage, growing.

No sweeter fay the forest knew,
I, grown and bearded, worshipped blindly,
And marvelled much if Duigan knew
What treasure in his homestead grew,
That life, had blessed him with, so kindly.

For he, I found, was suited ill—
A man of strange poetic notion—
All other knowledge to instil,
Save this, his daughter's mind to fill
With mythic tales of land and ocean.

Old fables of the forest drew—
Quaint stories of the winds that wander—
Thus Leonore, an infant, grew
To gentle maidenhood, and knew
But little of the life beyond her.

She heard but voices in the breeze—
She found queer faces in the flowers—
She saw the Dryads of the trees,
Disport in elfin companies,
'Mong shadows in the moonlit hours.

Or when the tempest roused the deep—
Its wondrous sight all else forestalling—
She'd often to the sand hills creep,
To watch the crested billows leap,
And hear the ocean voices calling.

And often, when the sea was kind,
And rocky reefs had left the water,
Far out, she'd venture, there to find
Choice shells the waves had left behind,
Forgetting all, till Duigan sought her.

Or on the sunlit beaches white—
The healthy blood within her glowing—
She'd race the sands, with footsteps light,
As though she were some ocean sprite,
Escaped without old Neptune knowing.

Now forty years have passed, and more—
Perhaps one or two are not worth noting—
Since lonely, dark-eyed Leonore,
When idling on the sand hills, saw
An object on the billows floating.

Some vessel, passing in the night,
Had lost, and left behind, unknown,
A luckless sailor lad to fight
The terrors of the sea, alone.

And as she gazed with wondering eyes—
Blown by the breeze, her brown hair streaming—
And face aglow in strange surprise,
She looked—that Art's skill deifies—
The idol of a poet's dreaming.

Watching the gulls on pinions white,
That wheeled about the struggling figure,
Until the surges brought to sight
A human form in hapless plight,
The victim of their ocean vigour.

Then ne'er a moment lost the maid,
Barefooted, to the sea before her,
She raced to take it, unafraid,
Although she found like death displayed
A lifeless sailor lad before her.

She raised him in her brown arms strong,
And cross her brave young bosom bore him,
Where marram grasses green and long,
The dry warm sand, made couch among,
And there she laboured to restore him.

Chafing his arms and hands and chest,
Blowing her breath in eager burning,
Sweet as the spices of the west,
Upon his cold and pulseless breast,
Until she saw the life returning.

The legends of the mystic deep
Came back to her in wondrous glory,
This was a Triton, hers to keep,
Could she but rouse him from his sleep,
And hearken to his mystic story.

He was her sea-god, young and fair,
The waves had lost and she had found him,
All hope awakened, toiling there,
Though, trembling in her sad despair,
She knew not death that hovered round him.

But when the eyes the waves had sealed,
Were opened by a faint endeavour,
There came to Leonore, revealed,
A rapture life before concealed,
But which would stay with her forever.

Blue thankful eyes that found her own,
But only for a moment, fleeting,
And then their vital light had flown,
As if, in Leonore's alone,
They'd found a long awaited meeting.

And, on the cold white lips, where spread
A smile that death alone could render,
She pressed her own lips warm and red,
And gently drew the sailor's head
Against her bosom pure and tender.

And thus did Duigan, there, behold
Her later, when the stars were waking,
Guarding, with wild and fearless fold,
That youthful body dead and cold,
Sobbing as if her heart was breaking.

So seasons sped their course away
Year after year, but, near the ocean,
Did Leonore in sadness stray,
Fretting and fading, day by day,
The victim of her strange devotion.

* * *

Not long ago there came to me
A wish, like memories oft awaken,
To wander back again and see
The home where Duigan used to be
But all was lonely—all forsaken.

I found a cross where roses twined,
Whose wooden frame with age was rotten;
And that is all the trace you'll find,
For sun and rain and ocean wind
Have long effaced the name forgotten.

And briars wild and nettles grow,
Where roofless walls are waste and falling—
Duigan had left long years ago
And Leonore, when tempests blow,
Hears not the ocean voices calling.

MORNING BY THE SEA.

(Queenscliff.)

With footsteps light upon the sea,
The sun in stippled glory danced;
Blue was the sky, as skies can be,
And gentle breeze the scene enhanced.

Mindful, I sauntered on the pier
  And marked the boats that idly lay
Upon the water, calm and clear,
  Sheltered by sea-wall from the bay.

Whilst out upon the briny blue—
  Where unbound waves their freedom found—
A yacht sailed by whose jovial crew
  Gave voice to song with merry sound.

Upon the beach, the waves at play
  Washed gently in with soft caress,
To lave the sands where sunshine lay
  In golden spread of loveliness.

Like flakes of foam the sea gulls sped
  Above the waves on fearless wing—
White waifs of life the ocean bred,
  Where mermaids had the fashioning.

The fishers' nets—I watched them draw,
  Expectantly, from out the wave;
Quick with their leaping, silvery store,
  The harvest that the ocean gave.

The air was laden heavily,
  With seaweed odour, quaint and fine,
And wave-washed breezes which, to me,
  Was nectar of the ocean brine.

Across the stretch of water blue,
  My eye could mark the distant strand
Faintly, by sun-reflected hue,
  Through veiling mist that swept the land.

As though from waves the timid Night
  Had fled before the sun-god kind,
And she, lest captured in her flight,
  Had left her fog-spun wraps behind.

High on the cliffs above the Rip,
  The fortress flag one proudly saw,
Where black-mouthed cannon watch each ship
  That enter at the ocean door.

My morning stroll upon the pier,
  Where I and Nature gladly met,
Shall e'er remain a memory clear
  And one which I shall not forget.

THE SEA.

Oh! cold and grey mysterious sea,
  I gaze upon your restless breast—
A breast so filled with treachery
  And changing moods that never rest,
Yet, smoothly too, the silver sands
  You can with gentle surges lave,
And offer, as with friendly hands,
  The varied flotsam of the wave.

Your voice is ceaseless and it bears
  To me, as though from whispering lips—
Listening as one who faintly hears—
  The ghostly cries from sinking ships,
From phantom souls whose last despair
  Thy treach'rous bosom closely holds,
To nevermore its secrets share
  Of those your soundless deep enfolds.

Yet bright and blue 'neath sunny rays—
  By gentle breezes softly cheered—
Fit theme art thou for poet's praise,
  Or he who, naught, hath perils shared;
But now when viewed where wild grey skies
  Urge blustering winds, that whip to white
Your angry waves which sweep and rise
  To lash the shore—I dread your might.

Oh! cold grey sea, I fear you so!
  Despite the grandeur you command;
I only see in you a foe
  Awaiting victims from the land.
God guard the ships that ride your realm,
  For underneath each floating keel
Await the powers that overwhelm
  When loosed by you to wreck and steal.

Roll on for ever as you will!
  Your mighty force may grant no truce
To puny man who struggles still
  To tame your temper to his use;
Fling up your fury to display
  Your challenge unto human hands,
But, whilst earth's ramparts block the way,
  You'll waste your strength upon the sands.

MY WASTED YEARS.

And is it left to Age alone,
The fruits of wisdom, all, to own?
Could I but snatch from Time's embrace,
The year's he's stolen in the chase,
And fashion, in a different way,
The road I've tramped until to-day,
I should not mourn, through falling tears,
My wasted years—my wasted years.

MUST.

Ne'er did I think, from rich estate,
That poverty would pull me down,
To be pressed under by its weight—
Like some poor dupe destroyed by Fate
And on the human scrap-heap thrown,
Where courage almost strives in vain
To start life's upward climb again.

Here in' an attic room, am I,
High up above the city street;
Now and then a glimpse of sky,
Glad and sunny greets my eye,
Where the ridge and rafters meet;
Begrimed with many a dusty load,
Where stored-up records find abode.

Within this lumber room, alone,
Lit by a faint electric spark,
With pride of purpose overthrown—
Where, thank God! I'm quite unknown—
I labour in the light and dark;
The foe of spiders 'mong the slats—
A terror to the scampering rats.

But in this attic room to-night,
Thinking I thus philosophise,
"Self respect is still my right,
If I toil with honest might.
Work is only enterprise—
A man may be a prince one day,
A peasant next—for both are clay."

And thus I labour and I dream
Of better days,—nor deem it vain—
Of pride maintained that shall redeem
My place, and launch me on the stream
Of life in full success again;
This attic room—its rats and dust—
Mean but to me the one word MUST.

WHERE THE BELLBIRDS USED TO SING.

Home the mountain birds are flying for the sunset rays are dyeing
With their crimson tints the skyline, o'er the mountains far away,
And the song of the cicadas, harsh and vibrant, seems to fade as
Shadows creep among the bracken like a band of spectres grey.

For the bush is wild and lonely where I sit with memory only,
As a gaunt and grim companion, which the night shades send to me,
Hope that found fruition never—love that slipped away for ever—
And the wind among the timber seems to sob in every tree.

There's a picture in the fire where its flames leap red and higher,
Of a distant mountain valley where the crystal waters flow,
'Neath the hazel branches bending, and their babbling sounds ascending—
I can hear them still in fancy, though 'tis years and years ago.

There's a humble homestead yonder, o'er its walls the roses wander,
And the bellbird's note of gladness rings its tuneful echo back,
For 'tis springtime and the mating, and I see her watching, waiting,
With a welcome for the rider speeding down the mountain track.

But it fades—my horse bell's tinkle wakes me up like Rip Van Winkle,
To the fact that time has travelled and I'm bent and old and grey,
And that all my hope and scheming were but phases of a dreaming,
That have marked the past with sorrow just like milestones mark the way.

Ah! could my old steed bear me—down the track which used to dare me—
With its swift undaunted hoof beats that would make the echoes ring;
But, alas! no more to greet me, will a maiden haste to meet me,
For she sleeps beneath the hazels where the bellbirds used to sing.

THE ROSE BUSH.

In a garden alone with a soul distressed,
I sat with my grief, when the day was done,
Till the dusk had curtained the crimson west,
And the stars stole out of it, one by one,
The rose bush red with its fragrant flowers,
Over my thoughts, like an incense, threw
A spell of the sweetness of bygone hours,
And I dreamed by the rose bush, there, of you.

The pain at my heart took shape, and smiled
On my stricken soul, through the roses rare,
As glad as the face of a happy child,
And hid for a moment my load of care.
You had come with your circling arms to me,
And the roses red were your lips to mine,
Clinging again as they used to be,
With your breath of musk and your kiss like wine.

And the night with its glamour of warmth and stars,
Was your warmth of greeting and light of eyes,
And my soul was freed from its prison bars,
And its hell was changed to a paradise—
Oh, roses red!—Oh, stars that gleam!
Oh, fragrant night! that could cheat my pain,
Could you only be, what in vain you seem,
The love that would come to me once again.

Alas! for the hopes that you bid me hold,
Alas! for the promise you fondly made,
They were only as stars that the heavens enfold—
They were only as roses that bloom and fade—
And I dreamed of our lives that you'd torn apart—
And I stretched my hands for I heard you call—
But my flesh was torn, as you've torn my heart,
On the thorns of the rose bush—that was all.

MY DREAM.

You came to me in dreams, dear love,
  When hope was dark and life was grey,
Like some fair angel from above
  To take my loneliness away—
You came to me like some bright beam
From out the mazes of my dream.

'Twas in a garden gay with flowers,
  Where birds sang sweetly in the trees
To charm the round of sunlit hours,
  And add a welcome to the breeze;
Where golden leaves the green sward spread,
I heard you come with eager tread.

In your dear eyes the love-light shone—
  On your brown hair the sunlight played,
And so you came, but not alone,
  To meet me, glad and unafraid;
You led a little child with you—
Dear God! if such were only true.

"This is our child," you said to me,
  Take it and love it, it is thine,
And in the years that are to be,
  Its love shall link your life and mine."
You placed its hand in mine, apart—
That little child who filled my heart.

Eyes blue as violets of the South—
  I see them still in visioned bliss—
A rose-leaf cup, its tiny mouth,
  That angel lips would love to kiss—
I raised it in my arms, dear one,
And lo!—the child of dreams had gone.

But you were there beside me still,
  And it was you who came across,
That empty space my heart to fill
  With love, the greater for my loss—
Ah! if that dream would only stay
Till I could sleep the years away.

OUR CHRISTMAS GREETING: 1916.

This is our Christmas greeting, to you at the Front, to-day,
Cutting your path to glory, winning the Empire's way—
Those who have fallen nobly, have dimmed our eyes with tears,
But they've left a roll of honour, to last through endless years;
They have lifted up Australia, by sacrifice and pain,
To the forefront of the nations, and have not died in vain,
And you, with courage proven, the noble task fulfil
As keepers of their honour, you protect our country still—
There's not a heart amongst us in which the red blood runs,
But beats with pride acclaiming Australia's soldier sons;
This is our Christmas greeting, to you at the Front, to-day,
Cutting your path to glory, winning the Empire's way,
A merry, merry, Christmas! with a bright New Year in view,
Here's to you, boys! God bless you, boys! Australia's proud of you.

A GREETING.

(To the Visiting American Boys in 1913.)

American Boys! we greet you
  With feelings of right good will;
You were kindred nigh in the years gone by,
  And the red band binds us still—
And we're glad to-day to meet you.

The Stars and Stripes unfolding
  And the Austral flag beside,
Is an omen fair that we proudly share
  With a glow of kindred pride,
And a friendship worth the holding.

May never a discord sever
  The friendship that keeps us free;
Should the world's alarms e'er call to arms,
  We'll clasp hands o'er the sea
As kin and comrades ever.

American Boys! when meeting
  The folk of your native land,
You'll speak us fair if you tell them there,
  That you found us a kindred band,
And we gave you a kindred greeting.

A HIGHLY APPRECIATED GREETING.

In a letter to Mrs. T. Robertson, of Murroa, Mr. Perry Ivins, who was a member of the American party of boys who visited Hamilton in December, 1913, and at the time of writing was engaged on a lecturing tour in the United States, says:—"In all my lectures, to sum up Australia's wonderful hospitality to us boy travellers, I quote the lines of a really clever little poem that appeared in the 'Spectator' on one of our days in Hamilton. It commences, 'American boys, we greet you,' and it is always given a hearty applause. Whoever wrote those few lines has helped to boom America's good feelings towards Australia more than he ever imagined."

OLD SCHOOLMATES.

"Sing me a song! old schoolmates mine,
  Of days that the dead leaves strew,
When our youthful blood flowed warm as wine,
  And life had a roseate hue;
Come! lift the curtain that Time has drawn,
  And glimpse, ere the shadows fall,
Long faded visions of Youth's bright morn—
  In the old school days at Stawell.

'Tis fifty years, old schoolmates mine,
  With other long years beside,
And many who dreamed of a future fine
  Have sailed with the western tide;
And some have climbed Parnassus mount—
  And some have missed the view—
Since the days we drank at Learning's fount,
  At the old school five-o-two.

Pull on the bellrope once again,
  In memory make it swing,
Long years its tongue hath silent lain,
  To us who have heard it ring;
From Moonlight Hill to Cornish Town,
  Let tones once more prolong,
Forget for a space that years have flown,
  In sounds of its old ding dong.

Aye! those were days, and happy days,
  When cares were beyond our reach,
And "years to be" shed golden rays
  O'er roadways ahead for each;
Well! some of us found them hard to tread,
  And some of us found them fine,
But wherever they've been, or wherever they've led,
  We'll think of the "old lang syne."

So this be the song, old schoolmates mine,
  Of the days that dead leaves strew,
Though roads we've trod, through shade and shine,
  There was one bright time we knew;
The old classroom, in the old school days,
  With the old-time schoolmates all,
Who have bent their steps o'er a hundred ways,
  Since the old school days at Stawell.

THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME.

I crossed the old ford at the end of last May,
  The old pub had vanished, not even a shingle
Survived of the roof which, in years passed away,
  Saw friendships and devilry strangely commingle.
The few blackened wall-posts and panels of fencing
  That stand by the roadside are all that remain
To tell of old days; a new era commencing
  Has ended a gold-time we'll ne'er see again.

Then Kate was the barmaid, as handsome a girl
  As any fine lady; the smile that she gave
Had put heaps of poor fellows' heads in a whirl,
  And some poor unfortunates' bones in the grave.
She was worshipped, you see, by the coves all about,
  Who would fight like the devil her love to secure;
And Cupid, in those days, to settle a doubt,
  Had a way of his own which was certain and sure.

And Kate! why she'd drive one insane with her sighs,
  With her pearly-white teeth and her lips red as coral—
She looked like a witch, in the depths of whose eyes
  The light sparkled best at the sight of a quarrel.
I'll always remember that long-ago morning
  When, down from the Bogong, young Archie Mackay
Stood joking with Kate, and, without the least warning,
  Flash Jim interfered in his coarse-speaking way.

From Archie's warm heart to the roots of his hair
  The fiery blood rushed, with a leap and a bound;
Like a flash he stood off, then a blow planted square
  Sent Jim with a thud and an oath to the ground.
With some terrible threats the two men closed together,
  A clinch and a struggle—Flash Jim did the rest,
And, snatching his knife from its sheathing of leather,
  With Archie's throat gripped, drove it into his breast.

Flash Jim was the "ringer" of Moorabin shed,
  And a bit of a bully—they hated him, all;
The crowd tried to rush him—he cowed them instead
  And stood panting at bay, with his back to the wall.
They wavered an instant, "Stand back, or by God," he
  Exclaimed, "who comes near me comes straight to his death!
I'll bury the blade of this knife in his body;
  So damn you, stand off!—let a cove get his breath!"

Then he sped through the doorway and made for the creek,
  And the crowd with a shout followed closely behind;
Lithe-limbed and lean-flanked, Jim could stay for a week,
  A good even-timer, he sped like the wind.

They chased him through timber, to where the tall pines
  Rose out of the sandhills, set close as a furze;
Right on to the range, where the setting sun shines
  In a glory of crimson o'er ridges and spurs.

They lost him sometimes, till a stir of the branches
  Showed where he was threading the bracken and fern,
And they followed like sleuth-hounds the trail on his haunches—
  Each man as a bushman had nothing to learn;
So hard on his track pressed the resolute band,
  Impelled by a mixture of justice and passion;
And the flying man knew that lynch-law, out of hand,
  Would follow his capture in summary fashion.

Archie's mate, who throughout with a dogged persistence
  Had followed, stopped short, and without much delay,
As he saw the tall ferns gently moved at a distance
  Not greater than ten or twelve paces away,
With the skill of a sharpshooter marking a foe,
  His revolver discharged—ere the smoke-cloud departed,
A body rolled down through the bushwood below,
  Some twenty odd yards from the spot where it started.

The flash, the report, its wild echoes resounding,
  Fast summoned the crowd who, with ringing halloo,
Scrambled down to the creek, where, the victim surrounding,
  They found they had captured—a scrub kangaroo.
Methinks I can call up the asinine change
  Of expressions which tortured their features that day,
And hear in the silence that fell o'er the range
  Jim's wild peal of laughter die slowly away.

"Where's Archie?" you ask. Well, I guess I am he,
  'Neath the folds of my shirt, here, I still bear the scar.
"And Kate?" Married years ago—married to me—
  And as handsome as when she served drinks in the bar.
Here's the landlord for orders—I'm dry with this yabber;
  Yours the same? . . so is mine. . Bring your own . . How
    he winks!
You were asking just now what became of the stabber,
  Flash Jim. Why, that's he just gone out for the drinks.

THE JAILING OF THE BIRDS.

A criminal is deprived of freedom because he is a nuisance to his fellowman and a discord unto peace.

A bird is deprived of freedom because its God-given voice is a blessing unto man, and a harbinger of peace.

Civilisation is a mirror wherein barbarism may gaze unchecked upon its own features.

—H.O.

They've journeyed the town both east and west,
And they've come to the west again,
To reckon the coin of a thoughtless quest—
'Tis well if conscience can find a rest
When is finished its purpose vain—
To build them a jail for the songsters free,
That warble their notes in the wildwood tree.

Was there ever a man on this bright round earth,
Who his freedom of life held cheap,
Be he sunk in sorrow or mounted on mirth,
But would ever that freedom keep?
Was there ever such one upon history's page
Who would barter a home for the best-made cage?

Parrot and goldfinch, linnet and lark,
Magpie and cockatoo, 'prisoned and pent,
Sent to their doom in the people's park
Till their birthright of God-gift life is spent;
Whence the wildwood joys and the nests of yore,
Shall welcome their sorrowing breasts no more.

Humanity mocks with the voice of Right,
Whilst it works with the hand of Wrong;
E'en the beasts of the meadow may claim the right
Denied to the waifs of song—
'Tis strange that man for his freedom stirred
Doth freedom grudge to the helpless bird.

THE EAGLE.

(In the Public Gardens.)

Under a dismal cypress tree the borough eagle mopes,
A bird of draggled plume is he,
In prison cell some four by three—
And eight by ten feet high, may be—
His moulted feathers flutter down like long-abandoned hopes;
Perched there, alas, in durance vile,
For folks to gaze upon, and smile.

Under the dismal cypress tree I stood his prison, by,
His wings beat vainly on the wood,
Then folded in dejected mood;
I marked the clouded eye that could
Out-stare the sun, when poised on wing a thousand feet on high.
Where mountains lift their purple crests,
And eagles like to build their nests.

Under the dismal cypress tree, I heard that eagle's cry,
A dreadful plaint it seemed to me,
Of dull depairing misery—
A cry for freedom, to the free;
And for the hapless bird immured, and robbed of earth and sky,
In ruffled, prideless plume arrayed,
I write the words its cry conveyed.

"Let me have liberty once again,
To spread my wings in the sunlight fair,
Over the mountain top, over the plain—
To cleave my course through the lofty air,
Where never a bird can follow my flight,
Upward and swift till I pass from sight."

"Let me have liberty once again—
My eaglets wait where the clouds are spent,
On the mountain high and they call in vain,

I hear their cry where I'm caged and pent;
Why am I doomed in this place to die,
I who was bred to the air and sky?"

"Open my jail and let me go—
Ye Christian men that, the virtues, own,
Is it that Mercy is locked below
A public heart that is hard as stone?
I wonder at time what the people say,
Who gaze on my misery day by day."

Under the dismal cypress tree there is an empty jail,
An eagle was imprisoned there,
A denizen of sky and air—
But that is neither here nor there
For lots more eagles, I am told, can people catch for sale—
But this one pined away, you see,
Beneath the dismal cypress tree.

THE VOLUNTEER.

1916.

A lad—yet he shouldered his country's cares
When others had shirked aside;
What could he boast but a score of years,
And a strength that was barely tried;
He loved the pleasures that youth delight—
He had his dreams of a future bright,
That a duty would now decide.

For his country's need was the call he heard,
As clear as the pipes of Pan;
'Twas the call that always the brave has stirred,
Since ever the world began;
He was only a lad as the seasons go,
But he shouldered his rifle to face the foe,
For he had the heart of a man.

SHALL WE FORGET?

11th Hour — 11th Day — 11th Month.

We watched them march through the city street,
With proud heart-joy the while;
We heard the tread of their passing feet,
With flaunting banners and drums that beat,
Mustered from township and bush retreat—
Rank upon rank and file.

Proudly and gay they marched along—
Manhood as yet untried—
There was never a one in that endless throng,
But sung in his heart the olden song,
That told of glory and purpose strong,
For which Crusaders died.

But bands and banners, and martial tread,
What are they each to-day?
Save symbols vanished and sounds that fled,
And nought remains in their stately stead,
But memories proud of a glorious dead—
The lads whom we waved away.

Only in memory, home, they hie—
Brave hearts now ceased to beat—
List! we may hear them passing by,
In thought, though veiled to the gazing eye,
And hear that sound that will never die,
The tramp of their marching feet.

TO THE FALLEN SOLDIERS.

(In Memoriam.)

He won no medal at the war,
  To lift his name above his kind,
But, in the cause he battled for,
  He left an honoured name behind.
And when I read of blazoned breast,
  Or guerdon that the strife bestowed,
My thoughts go forth to all the rest
  Who marched the same hard, bloody road.

Lads of the office, farm and school—
  For some were scarce to manhood grown;
And courage has no standard rule
  Where age or stature make it known—
Great-hearted lads no vengeance knew,
  It was to them but Duty's call,
And so they went to see it through
  As men decide, and that was all.

I bade a lad a sad farewell—
  It seemed as though my life was done—
Though pride had made my bosom swell,
  To think that soldier was my son;
And yet, I might have called him back,
  Had I but counted up the cost,
But pride forbade it, so, alack!
  I wavered and the chance was lost.

And now I see them passing by,
  With noiseless tread, line after line,
Those brave great lads who went to die,
  And in their ranks that son of mine;
Whilst in their faces, set and grey,
  The same courageous look is cast—
Grim phantoms of the war are they,
  In dead battalions trooping past.

Ship after ship brought home again,
  Those others whom the war sped by,
But those who fell, o'er seas, remain
  In France or far Gallipoli;
Sound trump or drum! blow banners free!
  Gleam spangled breasts that throb with pride!
I cannot join your jubilee,
  My thoughts remain with those who've died.

THE TRAITOR.

1914.

Who is the traitor? Is it truly he
Who to his country's foemen bends a knee,
And when his country is by foes oppressed
Spreads fell dissension all the world may see?

Is he the traitor in his country's camp,
Who holds aloft the dastard signal lamp,
To guide oppression on its ruthless way
Where guards are deafened to the foemen's tramp?

Who is the traitor? Is it some poor fool
Untutored in the wisdom of the school,
Bred of the dirt and fed on human hate—
Some hapless creature blind to ordered rule?

Or is it he, who, armed with every art
That academic teaching can impart,
Can with glib tongue and eloquence unchecked,
A dagger make to stab his country's heart?

Perish such creatures of the Empire born,
Revealed as traitors when their garb is shorn;
There is one end for humble and for high—
"A rifle squad and volley at the dawn."

A GREETING.

Lo! every Christmas season lends
Itself to thoughts of absent friends,
And so to prove that words are true,
To-day, old friend, I think of you,
And wonder, if, wher'er you be,
You still retain kind thoughts of me.
The happy days we shared in twain,
We may not share their like again.
However, as each Christmas Day
Comes back to snatch the years away,
Just make the best of what remains
And, 'midst your losses or your gains,
Forget not this, that friendship true
Brings kindest thoughts from me to you.

SPRINGTIME.

How could one fail with joy to sing,
In prose or verse the praise of Spring?
Yet, there are those who, 'midst the throng,
Deride the poet's Springtime song
A song, in rhythm, choice or crude,
That measures heartfelt gratitude,
For that which, each quarternate span,
Nature brings forth to gladden man.

Along the road, tree after tree,
The wattle blossoms beckon me
In sprays of soft and downy bloom,
Whose clust'ring faces press for room,
As though each one would claim a share
In adding sweetness to the air—
Their golden glory seems to bring
Youth back to Age—the joy of Spring!

O days of Spring! O days of Spring!
What happy recollections cling
About you when, in magic way,
You spread for us your garlands gay;

One hears the drone of robber bees
Among the honeyed blossom-trees;
And skies are blue, no clouds appall,
And dreamy sunshine bathes them all.

Ah! Could such season always stay,
In which our lives would pass away;
The clouded part of life that's held
By Fate to fret us, be expelled;
If one could always have the Spring,
When birds like feathered angels sing,
And Nature walks in fairest guise,
This earth would be a Paradise.

COOTAMUNDRA.

(The Cootamundra Wattle is in bloom.)

Beautiful tree in your gown of gold,
  Decked in the pride of a richness rare,
No grander guest doth the Spring behold,
  Gracing her court in the woodland fair;
Gorgeous the blossom thy form arrays,
  Lavish of wealth in its golden bloom;
Beautiful tree in your wondrous blaze,
  Breaking the thrall of the Winter's gloom.
    Fair Cootamundra,
    Thou art Queen of the Wattle bloom.

Glorious tree in your robe displayed,
  Hiding your leaves 'neath your burdened gold,
Tell me the secret how wealth is made
  That alchemists sought for in vain of old;
Billowy blossoms too soon to fall—
  Nature cares nought for thy chosen pride,—
All of thy wealth but a golden shawl,
  Soon to be folded and laid aside.
    Fair Cootamundra,
    Queen of Blossoms in woodland wide.

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON.

Gordon! though thou art dead, thy spirit stays
Embalmed in golden blossoms of our bush,
Thou who wert first amidst the list'ning hush,
To voice the music of our lonesome ways—
Who gave'st to us, of Nature, every phase—
Who, searching, found the secret of her gloom'd heart,
And saw therein that cordial counterpart
Which offered comfort in thy darkest days.

The lonely coast where billows boom, and break—
The silent woods where echoes seldom wake—
Wild bird—wild bloom, whose ways thou seemed'st to know—
The changing seasons—life with reckless end
Stockhorse—unbroken steed, each was thy friend!
And thou, alas! thine own relentless foe.

THE SPIRIT OF THE VIOLIN.

I walked within a garden fair,
  Where climbing roses scattered down
Their snow white petals in the air,
  O'er grass with trembling poppies sown;
And from a window opened wide,
  A violin, in tones, confessed
Some Master's skill, as if its tide
  Of music flowed from human breast.

I paused and listened with delight,
  As one whose hungered soul receives
A message, like the sunbeams bright
  That danced light-footed on the leaves;
Its voice was like the Siren's spell—
  Its wondrous tones in weird refrain,
Awak'd a power I fain would tell,
  That bade me live for love again.

Its theme was Love, it sang of Love,
  Of woman's face, of eyes that shine
Impassioned and whose beauty strove
  To spur the soul to deeds divine.
It sang of woman's breaking heart—
  Of wild despair—of sobbing pain—
Of ruthless Fate, whose hand, apart,
  The ties of life had snapped in twain.

Then ebbed and flowed in golden tide,
  Till all within that garden gay,
Seemed like a future stretching wide
  Across a sea of dreams, away,
Where on the Soul, with idle oar,
  Drifted o'er waves of sound—no sea
That murmured music to its shore,
  Bore such enraptured melody.

Till pictured in my senses, stood—
  'Midst roses' perfume ushered in,
Whilst poppies smiled with lips of blood—
  The Spirit of the Violin;
I saw it in its beauty pass
  From Music's paradise, released,
And moved to meet it, but—alas!
  It vanished as the music ceased.

UNDER THE OAKS IN THE GARDENS.

Droning of bees where the foxglove blooms,
  Lazy and low in its languor borne,
Where the "bottle brush" gleams among feathery plumes
  Scarlet as flame o'er the greenspread lawn;
And the whistling notes of the finches play
On my mind like a carol this Christmas Day
  Under the oaks in the gardens.

What blissful minutes a man may pass—
With an idle holiday feeling—
Stretched in the shade on the soft fresh grass,
With reverie picturing thoughts that pass
In the smoke from his pipe, revealing
Visions that move in his mind again,
Of pleasures approved, of promises vain,
Of pleadings, passions and pardons;
Out they flow in their fetish type,
From the magic bowl, when he smokes his pipe
Under the oaks in the gardens.

Golden tresses that now are grey—
Eyes that have, death, lived after—
Perfume of violets passed away,
O'er hearts that have reigned with a regal sway,
'Midst music and light and laughter;
Cold brunette and amorous blonde—
Loves that ever were false or fond,
Or fickle as "Dolly Varden's"—
They live in the glamour a dead past lends,
When the eddying smoke from the pipe ascends,
Under the oaks in the gardens.

They pass through the chinks of the canopied leaves,
And a fretwork of sky cerulean,
Is the blinking void, which the shade retrieves
From the noonday sun by the moving leaves
That rustle with sound Æolian.
And a man may lie in the shade and dream
That things are different from what they seem,
In a world which, his nature, hardens;
Whilst care departs with a courser's speed,
When his pipe is filled with the fragrant weed,
Under the oaks in the gardens.

THE CULT OF DEVIL-MAY-CARE.

Let those of sober mind beware,
This is the cult of Devil-May-Care;
A worship that may many vex,
Whose view of life is more complex.
Since Eve and Adam—hapless pair—
Were driven forth from Eden fair,
Their progeny, right down the ages,
Have plagued the peace of priests and sages.

• • • • •

Take Life's pleasures whilst they offer—
Life is but a game of chance—
Heed no warning of the scoffer,
Join the careless human dance;
Life was only made for pleasure—
Wine to drink in stintless measure—
Jest and music, love and leisure—
Life is but a gay romance.

Youth and years last not for ever,
Beauty's blandishments decay,
Let lightheartedness endeavour,
Every care, to drive away;
Come, be foolish and be jolly,
Wisdom grave is only folly,
Mount your ass and spread your brolly,
Life is but a game to play.

Join the dance for time is flying—
Beauty's eyes have always led,
'Tis the fool stands prophesying
Future woes with shaking head;
Quickly catch the hand of gladness,
In the whirl of Pleasure's madness,
Love can always conquer sadness,
And to-morrow you'll be dead.

Life is only for a season,
And at best is but a span,
Thus by every rule and reason
Pleasure should be in the van;
Banish sober care behind you—
Let the glare of pleasure blind you—
And when Gabriel comes to find you,
Well—he'll only find a man.

ARBOR DAY ORATORY AT A STATE SCHOOL. 1913.

"Everything that is in the world, God put there . . . they would notice that wild flowers never had any scent."

"There was no pleasure in the perfume of wild flowers, and that was just like the boy and girl seeking his or her own end. There was no perfume in their character."

'Tis odd how Truth may wounded be,
In teaching done by simile,
  Or preaching rules at random,
By which to point some moral end,
Or some pedantic thought defend,
And clinch it with our classic friend,
  "Quod erat demonstrandum."

We're told that all around arrayed
God has, for some wise purpose, made,
  Although we miss the meaning,
That flowers in our gardens pent
May spread their petals in content,
Possessed of that celestial scent,
  No wild-bush flower redeeming.

And thus the simile portrays
That girls and boys who walk the ways
  To their own selfish ending,
Are like the wild and weedy bloom,
They symbolise no sweet perfume,
But emphasise that awful doom
  Which Nature fails in mending.

Poor wild-wood weed!—and is it kind
That thou shouldst be by man maligned,—
  Of Nature's broad dominions;
Hast thou no perfume? tell me, pray,
Boronia wild and blossom spray,
Orchids whose dainty breathings stray
  When Spring expands her pinions.

Shalt thou for gaudy garden hues
All thy God-gifted virtue lose,
  Because some minds are word-dumb?
I'll hold a brief for thee and thine,
Attest thy perfume, sweet! divine!
And to the simile assign,
  "Reductio ad absurdum."

WOMBELANO.

(Aboriginal word signifying beautiful.)

Sitting by the creek side, lone,
Where the sun's warm kisses thrown
Through the forest's green recesses,
Linger on thy raven tresses,
Like a lover's fond caresses,
  Bright-eyed Wombelano.

And the breeze along the creek
Whispers soft beside thy cheek,
Whilst, in listless attitude,
Thou dost sit in pensive mood—
Vision-seeing in the flood,
  Dream-eyed Wombelano.

Vainly thinkest thou, perchance,
Of thy strange inheritance;
For thine eyes with restive glancing,
Seem to set the warm blood dancing
In thy cheeks, like flame advancing,
  Fierce-eyed Wombelano.

Art thou, or not, discontent
With thy Soul's environment?
Half of white and dusky brood—
Half of wild and gentle blood—
Soul of racial solitude,
Wild-eyed Wombelano.

Charm doth reign in thee supreme—
Maiden thou of fairest dream—
Perhaps that Israelitish race,
Lost in ages past, doth grace
Thee with some ancestral trace,
Dark-eyed Wombelano.

Yet my soul doth weep for thine,
Seeing bands which, it, entwine,
Cramping, with a strange dark power,
That white portion of thy dower,
Flung thee in some evil hour;
Sad-eyed Wombelano.

THE LITTLE OLD CHURCH AT KINGOWER.

It stands by the roadside, with face to the west,
The church that old friendships recall,
Stone-built and endowed with the thoughts that were best,
In the days of the good Parson Hall;
'Tis a humble abode for the children of Light,
And boasts neither spire nor tower,
But it points out the pathway of straightness and right,
The little old church at Kingower.

How thoughts wander back to the days that have gone,
When the village was busy and gay,
With the sound of the workers the hill sides upon,
And the homes with their gardens array;
There was gold in the gullies around to be won,
And diggers were keen in the quest;
The sounds of their labour began with the sun,
And ceased when it sank in the west.

Now is changed the old village—no longer the same—
And friends, with the flight of the years,

Have passed from the scenes it can never reclaim,
And to-day but the stranger appears;
But 'tis balm to my soul when I think of the past,
And all that in memory I hold
Of friends and their friendships that always will last,
As rich as old Kingower gold.

RETROSPECT.

Back to the dear old home!—well, yes,
Fifty seasons' storm and stress,
Bring their changes, more or less;
Home of my youth—I find instead,
The waste of some poor ruined thing.
The garden where the roses red,
And lilac and laburnum shed
Their fragrance in the days of Spring,
No more remain—a cypress lone
Is all that stands—the rest have gone.

Back to the dear old home!—I see,
In fancy, where it used to be,
Sad faces peering wistfully;
Kindred and friends that youth endears,—
Dim pictures that in mind remain,—
They greet me through my falling tears,
Across the long forgotten years,
Then fade to come no more again—
On cottage path and township way
I meet but strangers there to-day.

Back to the dear old home!—Alas!
That human lives so quickly pass—
Like cloud-blown shadows o'er the grass.
And has old Time no other gift,
To offer us, than stolen youth,
And manhood blinded to the drift?
'Tis only when the curtains lift
Our hearts find comfort in the truth;
For memories fond, which griefs assuage,
Then grant their recompense to age.

IN MEMORIAM.

Our Late Beloved Sovereign—King George V.

23/1/36.

The King is dead! An Empire mourns
  A mighty Monarch and a friend.
Grim Death, who human effort scorns,
  Has brought a glorious reign to end.
Loved, honoured for the human part
  He wrought to lead the Nation's way;
No loyal subject lives whose heart
  Beats not with poignant grief to-day.

The King is dead! God rest him now
  That all his arduous work is done.
The frost of death has bound the brow
  Of him whose kingly might has gone.
But there remains, to lift our pride,
  The memory of a Monarch wise,
Who, ever, through his Empire wide,
  Spared not himself in sacrifice.

The King is dead! No tears can shame
  The manhood rank of those who share
The Nation's loss, whilst thoughts acclaim
  The griefs of commoner or peer.
Yet, as the tomb receives the dust,
  Though conquering Death has shown its sting,
We, still triumphant, and with trust,
Can cry aloud, "LONG LIVE THE KING!"

PERPLEXED.

I make no claim to being wise,
  Like most, I've followed those who've led—
Though God has furnished me with eyes
  To see His roadway lights ahead;
But man hath many lights designed
  To make that roadway hard to find.

Where do we go to? Who can tell
  When fifty different creeds contend;
Is there a Heaven? Is there a Hell?
  When life has ceased, is that the end?
I voice this quest to all below,
For I'm perplexed and seek to know.

I see the Universe around
  The work of the Creator's hand—
The sea, where wondrous forms abound—
  The myriad life that fills the land,
And, marvelling at mystery,
I wonder what the end will be.

Is Heaven above us or around?
  I look in vain towards the stars
Which light a space that has no bound,
  Or note the nearer gleam of Mars,
And wonder if the home of bliss
Awaits us there when freed from this.

I hear the storm winds loud and strong—
  The roll of thunder and the rain—
See lightning with its fatal prong,
  Companion of the hurricane,
And wonder if, through such a choice,
The world's Creator sends His voice.

This life of ours, where does it go
  With all its high-developed brain?
Can no one tell? Does no one know
  If back to earth it comes again?
These entities whom God hath planned,...
Are they but "castles built of sand"?

Are human lives but globules ta'en
  From that great stream the worlds divide,
To join, in death, that stream again,
  And lose themselves within the tide?
That like a river towards the sea
Flows onward through eternity.

When Death has quenched Life's vital spark
  And claimed the Body as of earth,
Does then the Soul, thus freed, embark
  To seek a new incarnate birth?
Or does it speed to join, from here,
The spirit world in stratosphere?

Perhaps life holds joy Death cannot touch—
  Those dearest ones who've passed away,
As guardian souls they linger such—
  If we the teaching full obey
Of those who, with clairvoyant sight,
Can pierce the veil of endless night.

Vainly I strive and try to reach
  That place from whence, with joyous sight—
Claimed to be seen by those who preach—
  One may behold God's roadway light,
And by its radiant clearness know
The road He purposed us to go.

LIFE'S TIDE.

The tide of life it ebbs and flows,
  And on its heaving bosom bears
The load of human joys and woes
  That all come floating down the years.
For life is like an unknown sea
  Whereon we drift, at Fate's command,
On tracks uncharted, helplessly,
  And only some may reach the strand.

A SPRING MEMORY.

You ask me to write you a poem, dear.
  Well! where shall my fancy roam?
Shall I search for a suitable subject near,
  Or wander afar from home?

'Twas Spring, when our fortune did Fate unfold,
  Bedecked in her brightest gown;
Now the apple tree leaves have turned to gold
  And the withered ones fall down.

We met unsought and the odds we hurled
  To the stars and the night outside,
We were lonely souls in a lonely world
  Who were caught by the turning tide.
Was it just by chance? was it ruled by Fate?
  Do you think can the wisest tell?
Is it God in His goodness who opes the gate
  On the road that is trod so well?

If God is love then love is God.
  So why have we need to fear?
The path that lovers have always trod
  Is the one we are treading, dear;
The skies may change and the seasons go
  And the best of days take wing—
But I met you at first in the Springtime, so
  To me 'twill be always Spring.

THE PATH OF OLDEN MEMORIES.

"Listening In."

I am sitting idly dreaming in my chair before the fire,
As old-time music, out of space, comes in upon the wire,
And with it are the voices of the long, long years ago,
That charmed me with their joyousness in songs I used to know.

Oh, the magic of the music, how its olden charms remain
To stir anew my feelings as I hear it once again;
Old friends, old joys, old sorrows—comrades of smiles and tears—
Come stealing from the shadows where they've hid through all the years.

Aye! Twenty! Forty! Sixty! Can they be so far to-day,
Those faded recollections which old Time has stored away?
When we shared our joys together and lived those scenes
among?
Yet, to-night, I live them over through the magic of a song.

Naught grips the heart so fondly or defies the march of Time,
(Though valued not when present but with years become
sublime),
As the tones of some old melody entwined around the past,
With its aureole of tenderness which shall for ever last.

And thus I sit before the fire and welcome each refrain,
As back to me, in visioned form, old friends return again,
To tell once more of happy hours that used our hearts to please,
And shed a radiance on the path of olden memories.

THE BUSH.

I think of the bush in the evening hours—
Of years long past—as the light grows dim,
When the moist earth blends with the wild scrub flowers
A perfume sweet, and the wild birds' hymn;
Of the bloom of wattle against the dusk,
In golden clusters on branches low;
Fragrance of orchid and mint and musk
Of the old bush days in the long ago.

I long for the bush in the evening light,
When the west is coloured with sunset dye,
Ere the unseen hands of the silent night
Draw starry curtains across the sky;
To list in the hush for the secrets heard
In eerie tones when all else is mute,
Caught in the note of some lonely bird;
Sweet as the tone of a silver flute.

But here in my office I fretful sit,
And the bush is only a vision dim;
Its sunset glow is the street lamps lit;
The tramway bells are its wild birds' hymn;
And the hurrying crowd, and the city's ways—
A river of life in its restless flow—
They have no charm like those joyous days,
Of the bush I loved in the long ago.

MAID OF MY DREAMING.

Sweet like the violet,
Lingers your memory yet,
Fondness and vain regret,
Eyes soft and beaming,
Words that were dear to me,
Said in the past by thee
There by an idle sea,
Maid of my dreaming:
Sweet as the violet, lingers your memory yet.

Far though the years may fly,
Ever shall you and I,
Roam 'neath our vision-sky,
Love, all redeeming.
Shall when the days are old,
Shall when the world is cold,
Last till the end is told,
Maid of my dreaming:
Sweet as the violet, lingers your memory yet.

OFT DID I DREAM OF LOVE.

Oft did I dream of love so fair,
And sought in vain through waking hours.
It ever mocked me with despair,
To vanish like Elysian flow'rs,
Or rainbow gold that fades again,
To eager hands that reach in vain.

Oft did I dream of love so true,
  That maketh all the world divine;
That gives to life its golden hue,
  Ah! if such love were only mine
Earth had no guerdon I'd not give,
Only to find it and to live.

Oft did I dream of love so fair,
  Till fate did fondest hope repay,
With scent of roses in the air,
  And gladness of the springtime gay,
O'er silver sands beside the sea,
Love of my dream you came to me.

BEYOND THE STARS.

You promised in the years long, long ago,
  When first, beloved, you came with joy to me,
If we should meet no more on earth below,
  That unto death our pledge would faithful be;
The glitt'ring cross should be our trysting sign,
  To span the distance that an ocean bars,
Until, at last, within that home divine,
  We'd meet—beyond the stars.

I watched you go away into the night,
  And all the gladness of my soul was gone;
The years have passed—my hair is silver white—
  Yet I, beloved, believing, still wait on;
Though hope has died, there shines the cross above,
  Our steadfast sign no doubtful vision mars,
The brighter promise of a greater love,
  To share beyond the stars.

LINES WRITTEN TO AN OLD LADY ON HER BIRTHDAY.

Life and health at seventy-one,
We can say to you, "Well done!"
And may Fate our wish fulfil,
To grant you many birthdays still,

Where health and happiness unite
To make your onward pathway bright;
Though all the year's you've left behind—
Whose brightness lost may wake regret—
There's much of brightness still to find,
And happiness awaiting yet;
In Life's extent Age has no voice—
Although it seems our lives to steal—
Remember always and rejoice,
WE'RE NEVER OLDER THAN WE FEEL."

WITHERED LEAVES.

And so my dream, sweet as the roses' breath,
Has passed away into the land of death;
That land of vanished hope and vain desire,
And tear-eyed memory twines a burial wreath.

Alas! the hope that dies, which life deceives
By broken pledges—worthless as the leaves
That fall in Autumn when the sunshine fails;
Or barren stubble from the garnered sheaves.

Do you remember in those nights that were?—
Do you remember how you met me there?—
There, when the moon her golden radiance swept
O'er bush and hillside—did you truly care?

Do you remember love that used to be?
Pledges you swore to keep, in esctasy?
How could you, loving, as you said you loved,
Prove false to vows which pledged your heart to me?

The moist and musky odours of the night,
That then seemed but the breathings of delight,
Their memories now my senses overpower,
And seem as if, for sorrow, they'd requite.

Deep-breathing trees, touched by the wind's caress,
And faint wild flowers sleeping in loneliness,
All treasured partners of past hours to me—
They fadeless stay as comfort in distress.

Farewell! to that bright vision of a day
That's past and gone—evanishing away
Like things terrene—your promises and all
Just withered leaves, that Autumn breezes sway.

FORGOTTEN.

When the violets bloom again,
In the Springtime yet to be,
There will always come the pain
With their perfume, back to me.
Oh! 'tis ever at my heart,
It is there and will remain.

When the violets bloom again—
Ah! those dear and vanished hours!
That I lived through all in vain,
They have passed like purple flowers,
That I used to bring to you,
Symbol of my love so true,
From the crowded city lane.

There's a song of long ago,
That in memory comes to me,
Ah! I never thought it so
Sad, as now it seems to be;
Just a sweet old-fashioned song,
Full of heart-sob and of wrong,
Plaintive, when the lights are low.

Shall I tell it now to you?
It may touch some tender chord;
Ever old though ever new,
There is love in every word:—
"When the winds are sobbing faintly
With a sad and unknown woe,
Will you think of me and love me,
As you did once long ago?"

THE PLEDGE.

And 'twas but yesterday I knew you not,
  The world was empty of your presence then,
Why Fate prepared my happiness to plot,
  And Hope brought comfort to my soul again,
I know not, and I do not seek to know,
My heart exults to think it happened so.

I might have, vainly, searched the world for you,
  I might have dreamed of such like joy above,
And thought the gods, who favour but the few,
  Would feed my soul, that hungered long for love—
In you, I found my life anew on earth,
Which, halved with yours, gives to my life its worth.

Shouldst thou demand a tribute of my soul,
  Some pledge of constancy your soul can reach,
To forge the bands which henceforth shall control
  Our destinies and make us each for each,
I then can say with life's exultant breath,
"I will be faithful, even unto death."

REMORSE.

I sit alone beside my fire
  And listen to the wind without,
As sinking low, then mounting higher,
  It whirls the Autumn leaves about;
Then seeking out each cranny round,
It fills the same with eerie sound,
  As though it whispered secrets dire.

This Autumn wind, it seems to me,
  Like some impeachment Fate has cast—
A voice it were of stern decree,
  Which finds expression in the blast—
It unlocks visions in my brain,
I ne'er had thought would come again,
  Out of the dim forgotten past.

In silent form, these phantoms creep,
  And, passing by me, each appears,
Like those who wander in their sleep.
  Some faces smile, but most have tears;
The latter move with lowered eye,
And murmur as they pass me by,
  "We represent the wasted years."

One is a fair-haired winsome lad,
  Of bright blue eye and happy mien,
With look that speaks of future glad,
  And heart to face the years between;
A youth whose strength would e'er prevail
O'er daunting trials which assail,
  And, all that Pleasure held, to glean,

One is a maid with tresses brown,
  Of beauteous face, where Nature spent
Her deftest art to earn renown
  In all that makes for merriment;
Her voice is music, pure and free,
As sweet as wild birds' melody—
  Some magic which the angels lent.

One is a student, lank and slim,
  With stooping frame and tired tread,
And premature expression grim
  Marks features from which joy had fled;
Deep thought has hastened to endow
Its hero with a furrowed brow,
  That frowns o'er youthful pleasures dead.

One is a woman sad and lone,
  Who waited until youth had waned,
Till all the hopes of life had gone,
  And only echoes had remained;
Those promises of wedded bliss,
Heaven's world may grant, though lost in this—
  But, loving still, had ne'er complained.

And now a form whose hidden face,
  Beneath the sombre garb of woe,

Moves by with melancholy grace,
  Alas! I cannot view but know.
The vision grips my heart with dread—
Cold as the fingers of the dead—
  Of perished vows of long ago.

'Tis but the brown-haired maiden fair;
  'Tis but the woman lone and sad;
One wasted life, of two that were,
  And gone—remorse will drive me mad—
Vain bookish-toil that stole my years,
What has it brought me? nought but tears,
  And stripped my soul that love had clad.

And now, alone, beside my fire,
  I listen to the ceaseless wind.
It calls with tones that never tire,
  It seeks for those it cannot find.
Alas! could it but blow away
These ghosts that gather round to-day,
  And now as torments tear my mind.

A CHRISTMAS GREETING.

'Tis now the time for Christmas joys,
For men and women, girls and boys.
Live and be happy, waste no sighs
As old years set so new ones rise.
We're only here for one brief spell
Let's value most the time we dwell.
Forget all cares that life annoys
This is the time for Christmas joys.

Christmas time is a time of glee,
In homes on land—on ships at sea—
Where'er a human heart beats true,
That once in life some kinsfolk knew,
That still some bygone hours can prize
Which Christmas seasons bid arise—
Let glad thoughts stay, let sad ones flee,
Christmas time is a time of glee.

Christmas time! and it takes me back
Over many a hard-walked track,
Alas! like all the human kind,
I've seen companions fall behind,
But that's the way right on through life,
You pass unscathed or fall in strife,
And still ahead's the same old track
Where all go forth but none come back.

Each Christmas Day a milestone stands,
And marks the way like human hands.
Just view the sum of years you've had—
Though p'raps the number'll make you sad—
The balance which you still may claim,
Might prove a stairway unto fame.
Don't worry then of what's to be,
Christmas time is a time of glee.

Then "Here's to Christmas!" now at hand
With all its old traditions grand,
Its tales and carols, smiles and tears
Which bring old friendships down the years.
Let's hope that every human mite
Will find the Christmas season bright,
And may this greeting nought forestall
"A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO US ALL."

TO MY WIFE.

My dear! when you became my wife,
God put the sunshine in my life;
Till then Life's road, which stretched ahead,
I trudged for years with hopeless tread,
Like some poor outcast of his kind,
Whose days were but to gloom consigned.

Now all the world is bright for me,
For joy comes dancing down the way,
Proclaiming life an ecstasy,
And clothing it in glad array,
As though the hand Divine did bless
And touch me with its happiness.

Thus life unfolds for me to-day;
With fear of future swept away;
I feel as one whom Fate has planned
To walk with comrade hand in hand.
Not as before with faltering pace
Lonely, in life's disheartened race.

Henceforth my journey stretches clear
Which ends on this terrestrial sphere;
And so in ages, yet unknown,
When both our earthly lives have flown,
I pray that God will grant to me
My comrade through eternity.

DANIEL FAY.

Sometimes when thoughts, unbridled, stray,
And visions rise of Portland Bay,
'Tis then I think of Daniel Fay.

He boiled the meat and brought the news,
Cut survey pegs and made the stews,
And, when he could, went on the booze.

His father, old Nathaniel Fay,
Who lived down Tyrendarra way,
At one time drove a bullock dray.

The grandfather, before he died,
Had also trudged, his teams, beside,
And flogged the hair off many a hide.

'Twas with his father, Dan, when young,
Had learned to speak his mother tongue,
With volleying whip and bell'w'ng lung.

Despite the Church's counterblast,
The Fays for generations past
Had fashioned language that would last.

So Dan from youth to manhood grew,
And mastered all his father knew,
Of bullock-driving "parleyvoo."

Thus slowly had he climbed to fame,
When he to occupation came
With us upon the survey game.

However, he could swing the axe,
Slash down the scrub and blaze the tracks,
And knew the country like the blacks.

As he one day did work pursue—
And messmate chips around him flew—
There came a bounding kangaroo.

Out of the tea-tree thicket, grey,
By dog pursued, in dread dismay,
It bounded fair on Daniel Fay.

He, hampered by his survey pegs,
Was knocked completely off his legs,
And scattered, you might say, like eggs.

I heard him yell, but dare not say
The things he said—he'll have to pay
A heavy fine on Judgment Day.

For teachings of the house of Fay
Rushed to his aid without delay,
Like reinforcements to the fray.

Daniel was active as a cat,
And though the 'roo had knocked him flat,
He grabbed its tail and held to that.

He'd held a kangaroo before,
And knew full well the fate in store
By failing to escape its claw.

The 'roo endeavoured every way
To get its hind legs into play,
And rid the world of Daniel Fay.

And so a combat then began
Betwixt marsupial and man,
Which wrestlers call "catch-as-catch-can."

Around the camp fire, over logs,
Urged on by yells and barking dogs,
And names not found in catalogues.

That frantic acrobatic feud
Might have continued, loud and rude,
Had someone not the beast lassoed.

Then came the question, "What to do?"
With that wild old-man kangaroo—
It puzzled all the survey crew.

At length said Daniel, "I've a plan:
I'll dress him up just like a man,
And let him go to join the clan."

In guernsey, pants and belt required
He got the kangaroo attired,
Then loaded up his gun and fired.

One frightened look it cast around,
Then swiftly fled, bound after bound,
As if 'twere chased by Charon's hound.

* * * * *

Folks oft declare that they've been shown,
Back, in the forest sparsely known,
A creature strange that lives alone.

Subsisting there on grass and root—
Clad ever in the same old suit—
It may be man—it may be brute.

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