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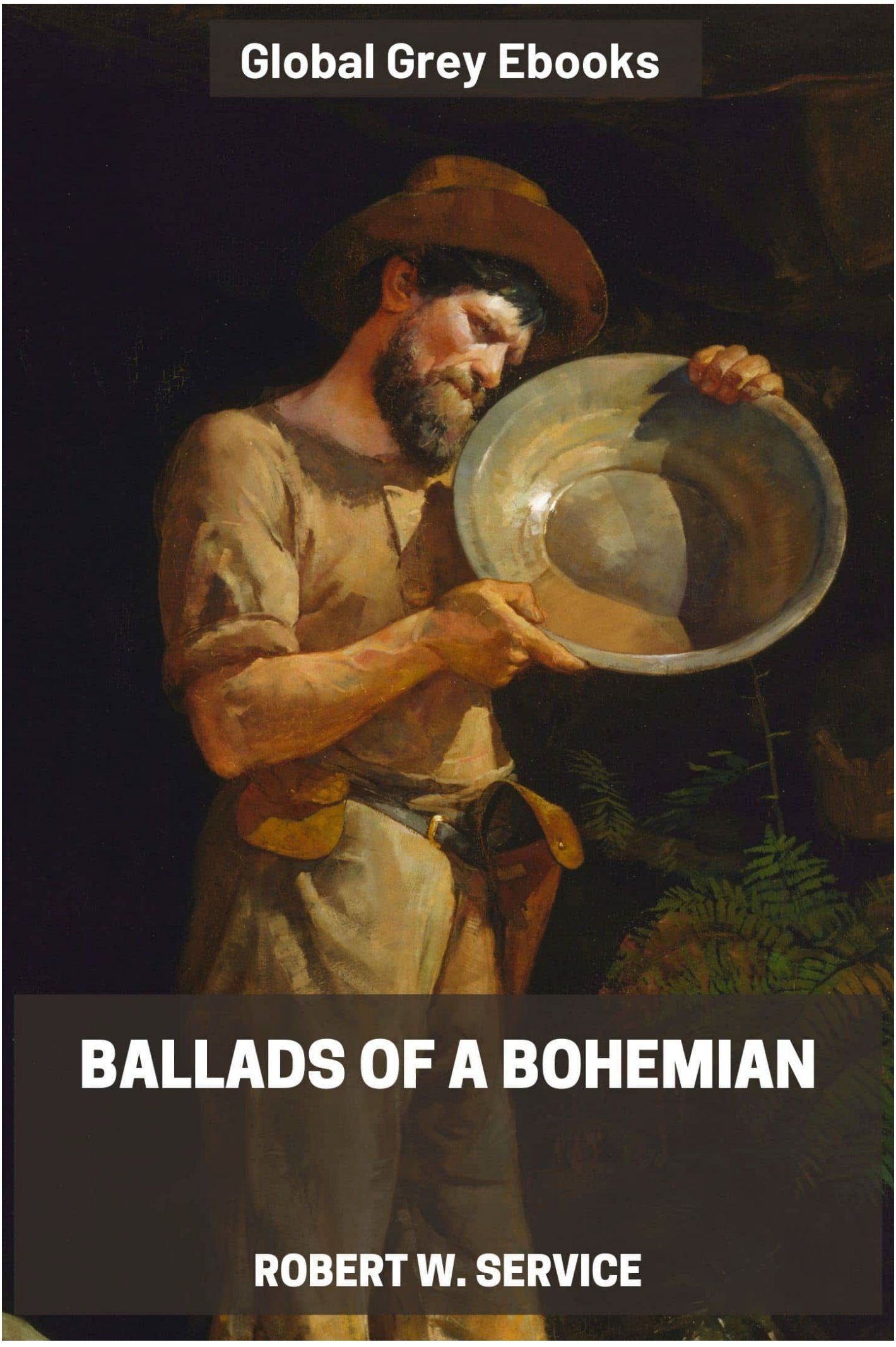

BALLADS OF A BOHEMIAN

ROBERT W. SERVICE

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Prelude

Alas! upon some starry height,
The Gods of Excellence to please,
This hand of mine will never smite
The Harp of High Serenities.
Mere minstrel of the street am I,
To whom a careless coin you fling;
But who, beneath the bitter sky,
Blue-lipped, yet insolent of eye,
Can shrill a song of Spring;
A song of merry mansard days,
The cheery chimney-tops among;
Of rolics and of roundelays
When we were young . . . when we were young;
A song of love and lilac nights,
Of wit, of wisdom and of wine;
Of Folly whirling on the Heights,
Of hunger and of hope divine;
Of Blanche, Suzette and Celestine,
And all that gay and tender band
Who shared with us the fat, the lean,
The hazard of Illusion-land;
When scores of Philistines we slew
As mightily with brush and pen
We sought to make the world anew,
And scorned the gods of other men;
When we were fools divinely wise,
Who held it rapturous to strive;
When Art was sacred in our eyes,
And it was Heav'n to be alive. . . .

O days of glamor, glory, truth,
To you to-night I raise my glass;
O freehold of immortal youth,
Bohemia, the lost, alas!
O laughing lads who led the romp,
Respectable you've grown, I'm told;
Your heads you bow to power and pomp,
You've learned to know the worth of gold.
O merry maids who shared our cheer,
Your eyes are dim, your locks are gray;
And as you scrub I sadly fear
Your daughters speed the dance to-day.
O windmill land and crescent moon!
O Columbine and Pierrette!
To you my old guitar I tune
Ere I forget, ere I forget. . . .

So come, good men who toil and tire,
Who smoke and sip the kindly cup,
Ring round about the tavern fire
Ere yet you drink your liquor up;
And hear my simple songs of earth,
Of youth and truth and living things;
Of poverty and proper mirth,
Of rags and rich imaginings;
Of cock-a-hoop, blue-heavened days,
Of hearts elate and eager breath,
Of wonder, worship, pity, praise,
Of sorrow, sacrifice and death;
Of lusting, laughter, passion, pain,
Of lights that lure and dreams that thrall . . .
And if a golden word I gain,
Oh, kindly folks, God save you all!
And if you shake your heads in blame . . .
Good friends, God love you all the same.

Book One. Spring

I

Montparnasse,

April 1914.

All day the sun has shone into my little attic, a bitter sunshine that brightened yet did not warm. And so as I toiled and toiled doggedly enough, many were the looks I cast at the three faggots I had saved to cook my evening meal. Now, however, my supper is over, my pipe alight, and as I stretch my legs before the embers I have at last a glow of comfort, a glimpse of peace.

My Garret

Here is my Garret up five flights of stairs;
Here's where I deal in dreams and ply in fancies,
Here is the wonder-shop of all my wares,
My sounding sonnets and my red romances.
Here's where I challenge Fate and ring my rhymes,
And grope at glory—aye, and starve at times.

Here is my Stronghold: stout of heart am I,
Greeting each dawn as songful as a linnet;
And when at night on yon poor bed I lie
(Blessing the world and every soul that's in it),
Here's where I thank the Lord no shadow bars
My skylight's vision of the valiant stars.

Here is my Palace tapestried with dreams.
Ah! though to-night ten sous are all my treasure,
While in my gaze immortal beauty gleams,
Am I not dowered with wealth beyond all measure?
Though in my ragged coat my songs I sing,
King of my soul, I envy not the king.

Here is my Haven: it's so quiet here;
Only the scratch of pen, the candle's flutter;
Shabby and bare and small, but O how dear!
Mark you—my table with my work a-clutter,
My shelf of tattered books along the wall,
My bed, my broken chair—that's nearly all.

Only four faded walls, yet mine, all mine.
Oh, you fine folks, a pauper scorns your pity.
Look, where above me stars of rapture shine;
See, where below me gleams the siren city . . .
Am I not rich?—a millionaire no less,
If wealth be told in terms of Happiness.

Ten sous. . . . I think one can sing best of poverty when one is holding it at arm's length. I'm sure that when I wrote these lines, fortune had for a moment tweaked me by the nose. To-night, however, I am truly down to ten sous. It is for that I have stayed in my room all day, rolled in my blankets and clutching my pen with clammy fingers. I must work, work, work. I must finish my book before poverty crushes me. I am not only writing for my living but for my life. Even to-day my Muse was mutinous. For hours and hours anxiously I stared at a paper that was blank; nervously I paced up and down my garret; bitterly I flung myself on my bed. Then suddenly it all came. Line after line I wrote with hardly a halt. So I made another of my Ballads of the Boulevards. Here it is:

Julot the Apache

You've heard of Julot the apache, and Gigolette, his môme. . . .
Montmartre was their hunting-ground, but Belville was their home.
A little chap just like a boy, with smudgy black mustache,—
Yet there was nothing juvenile in Julot the apache.
From head to heel as tough as steel, as nimble as a cat,
With every trick of twist and kick, a master of savate.
And Gigolette was tall and fair, as stupid as a cow,
With three combs in the greasy hair she banged upon her brow.
You'd see her on the Place Pigalle on any afternoon,
A primitive and strapping wench as brazen as the moon.
And yet there is a tale that's told of Clichy after dark,
And two gendarmes who swung their arms with Julot for a mark.
And oh, but they'd have got him too; they banged and blazed away,
When like a flash a woman leapt between them and their prey.
She took the medicine meant for him; she came down with a crash . . .
"Quick now, and make your get-away, O Julot the apache!" . . .
But no!He turned, ran swiftly back, his arms around her met;
They nabbed him sobbing like a kid, and kissing Gigolette.

Now I'm a reckless painter chap who loves a jamboree,
And one night in Cyrano's bar I got upon a spree;
And there were trollops all about, and crooks of every kind,
But though the place was reeling round I didn't seem to mind.
Till down I sank, and all was blank when in the bleary dawn
I woke up in my studio to find—my money gone;
Three hundred francs I'd scraped and squeezed to pay my quarter's rent.
"Some one has pinched my wad," I wailed; "it never has been spent."
And as I racked my brains to seek how I could raise some more,
Before my cruel landlord kicked me cowering from the door:
A knock . . . "Come in," I gruffly groaned; I did not raise my head,
Then lo! I heard a husky voice, a swift and silky tread:
"You got so blind, last night, mon vieux, I collared all your cash—
Three hundred francs. . . .There! Nom de Dieu," said Julot the apache.

And that was how I came to know Julot and Gigolette,
And we would talk and drink a bock, and smoke a cigarette.
And I would meditate upon the artistry of crime,
And he would tell of cracking cribs and cops and doing time;
Or else when he was flush of funds he'd carelessly explain
He'd biffed some bloated bourgeois on the border of the Seine.
So gentle and polite he was, just like a man of peace,
And not a desperado and the terror of the police.

Now one day in a bistro that's behind the Place Vendôme
I came on Julot the apache, and Gigolette his môme.
And as they looked so very grave, says I to them, says I,
"Come on and have a little glass, it's good to rinse the eye.
You both look mighty serious; you've something on the heart."

"Ah, yes," said Julot the apache, "we've something to impart.
When such things come to folks like us, it isn't very gay . . .
It's Gigolette—she tells me that a gosse is on the way."
Then Gigolette, she looked at me with eyes like stones of gall:
"If we were honest folks," said she, "I wouldn't mind at all.
But then . . . you know the life we lead; well, anyway I mean
(That is, providing it's a girl) to call her Angeline."
"Cheer up," said I; "it's all in life. There's gold within the dross.
Come on, we'll drink another verre to Angeline the gosse."

And so the weary winter passed, and then one April morn
The worthy Julot came at last to say the babe was born.
"I'd like to chuck it in the Seine," he sourly snarled, "and yet
I guess I'll have to let it live, because of Gigolette."
I only laughed, for sure I saw his spite was all a bluff,
And he was prouder than a prince behind his manner gruff.
Yet every day he'd blast the brat with curses deep and grim,
And swear to me that Gigolette no longer thought of him.
And then one night he dropped the mask; his eyes were sick with dread,
And when I offered him a smoke he groaned and shook his head:
"I'm all upset; it's Angeline . . . she's covered with a rash . . .
She'll maybe die, my little gosse," cried Julot the apache.

But Angeline, I joy to say, came through the test all right,
Though Julot, so they tell me, watched beside her day and night.
And when I saw him next, says he: "Come up and dine with me.
We'll buy a beefsteak on the way, a bottle and some brie."
And so I had a merry night within his humble home,
And laughed with Angeline the gosse and Gigolette the môme.
And every time that Julot used a word the least obscene,
How Gigolette would frown at him and point to Angeline:
Oh, such a little innocent, with hair of silken floss,
I do not wonder they were proud of Angeline the gosse.
And when her arms were round his neck, then Julot says to me:
"I must work harder now, mon vieux, since I've to work for three."
He worked so very hard indeed, the police dropped in one day,
And for a year behind the bars they put him safe away.

So dark and silent now, their home; they'd gone—I wondered where,
Till in a laundry near I saw a child with shining hair;
And o'er the tub a strapping wench, her arms in soapy foam;
Lo! it was Angeline the gosse, and Gigolette the môme.
And so I kept an eye on them and saw that all went right,
Until at last came Julot home, half crazy with delight.
And when he'd kissed them both, says he: "I've had my fill this time.
I'm on the honest now, I am; I'm all fed up with crime.
You mark my words, the page I turn is going to be clean,
I swear it on the head of her, my little Angeline."

And so, to finish up my tale, this morning as I strolled
Along the boulevard I heard a voice I knew of old.
I saw a rosy little man with walrus-like mustache . . .

I stopped, I stared. . . .By all the gods! ‘twas Julot the apache.
“I’m in the garden way,” he said, “and doing mighty well;
I’ve half an acre under glass, and heaps of truck to sell.
Come out and see. Oh come, my friend, on Sunday, wet or shine . . .
Say!—it’s the First Communion of that little girl of mine.”

II

Chez Moi, Montparnasse,

The same evening.

To-day is an anniversary. A year ago to-day I kicked over an office stool and came to Paris thinking to make a living by my pen. I was twenty then, and in my pocket I had twenty pounds. Of that, my ten *sous* are all that remain. And so to-night I am going to spend them, not prudently on bread, but prodigally on beer.

As I stroll down the Boul' Mich' the lingering light has all the exquisite tenderness of violet; the trees are in their first translucent green; beneath them the lamps are lit with purest gold, and from the Little Luxembourg comes a silver jangle of tiny voices. Taking the gay side of the street, I enter a cafe. Although it isn't its true name, I choose to call my cafe—

L’Escargot D’Or

O Tavern of the Golden Snail!
Ten sous have I, so I’ll regale;
Ten sous your amber brew to sip
(Eight for the bock and two the tip),
And so I’ll sit the evening long,
And smoke my pipe and watch the throng,
The giddy crowd that drains and drinks,
I’ll watch it quiet as a sphinx;
And who among them all shall buy
For ten poor sous such joy as I?
As I who, snugly tucked away,
Look on it all as on a play,
A frolic scene of love and fun,
To please an audience of One.

O Tavern of the Golden Snail!
You’ve stuff indeed for many a tale.
All eyes, all ears, I nothing miss:
Two lovers lean to clasp and kiss;
The merry students sing and shout,
The nimble garcons dart about;
Lo! here come Mimi and Musette
With: “S’il vous plait, une cigarette?”
Marcel and Rudolf, Shaunard too,
Behold the old rapscallion crew,
With flowing tie and shaggy head . . .
Who says Bohemia is dead?
Oh shades of Murger! prank and clown,
And I will watch and write it down.

O Tavern of the Golden Snail!
What crackling throats have gulped your ale!
What sons of Fame from far and near
Have glowed and mellowed in your cheer!
Within this corner where I sit
Banville and Coppée clashed their wit;
And hither too, to dream and drain,
And drown despair, came poor Verlaine.
Here Wilde would talk and Synge would muse,
Maybe like me with just ten sous.
Ah! one is lucky, is one not?
With ghosts so rare to drain a pot!
So may your custom never fail,
O Tavern of the Golden Snail!

There! my pipe is out. Let me light it again and consider. I have no illusions about myself. I am not fool enough to think I am a poet, but I have a knack of rhyme and I love to make verses. Mine is a tootling, tin-whistle music. Humbly and afar I follow in the footsteps of

Praed and Lampson, of Field and Riley, hoping that in time my Muse may bring me bread and butter. So far, however, it has been all kicks and no coppers. And to-night I am at the end of my tether. I wish I knew where to-morrow's breakfast was coming from. Well, since rhyming's been my ruin, let me rhyme to the bitter end.

It Is Later Than You Think

Lone amid the cafe's cheer,
Sad of heart am I to-night;
Dolefully I drink my beer,
But no single line I write.
There's the wretched rent to pay,
Yet I glower at pen and ink:
Oh, inspire me, Muse, I pray,
It is later than you think!

Hello! there's a pregnant phrase.
Bravo! let me write it down;
Hold it with a hopeful gaze,
Gauge it with a fretful frown;
Tune it to my lyric lyre . . .
Ah! upon starvation's brink,
How the words are dark and dire:
It is later than you think.

Weigh them well. . . .Behold yon band,
Students drinking by the door,
Madly merry, bock in hand,
Saucers stacked to mark their score.
Get you gone, you jolly scamps;
Let your parting glasses clink;
Seek your long neglected lamps:
It is later than you think.

Look again: yon dainty blonde,
All allure and golden grace,
Oh so willing to respond
Should you turn a smiling face.
Play your part, poor pretty doll;
Feast and frolic, pose and prink;
There's the Morgue to end it all,
And it's later than you think.

Yon's a playwright—mark his face,
Puffed and purple, tense and tired;
Pasha-like he holds his place,
Hated, envied and admired.
How you gobble life, my friend;
Wine, and woman soft and pink!
Well, each tether has its end:
Sir, it's later than you think.

See yon living scarecrow pass
With a wild and wolfish stare
At each empty absinthe glass,
As if he saw Heaven there.

Poor damned wretch, to end your pain
There is still the Greater Drink.
Yonder waits the sanguine Seine . . .
It is later than you think.

Lastly, you who read; aye, you
Who this very line may scan:
Think of all you planned to do . . .
Have you done the best you can?
See! the tavern lights are low;
Black's the night, and how you shrink!
God! and is it time to go?
Ah! the clock is always slow;
It is later than you think;
Sadly later than you think;
Far, far later than you think.

Scarcely do I scribble that last line on the back of an old envelope when a voice hails me. It is a fellow free-lance, a short-story man called MacBean. He is having a feast of Marennes and he asks me to join him.

MacBean is a Scotsman with the soul of an Irishman. He has a keen, lean, spectacled face, and if it were not for his gray hair he might be taken for a student of theology. However, there is nothing of the Puritan in MacBean. He loves wine and women, and money melts in his fingers.

He has lived so long in the Quarter he looks at life from the Parisian angle. His knowledge of literature is such that he might be a Professor, but he would rather be a vagabond of letters.

We talk shop. We discuss the American short story, but MacBean vows they do these things better in France. He says that some of the contes printed every day in the Journal are worthy of Maupassant. After that he buys more beer, and we roam airily over the fields of literature, plucking here and there a blossom of quotation. A fine talk, vivid and eager. It puts me into a kind of glow.

MacBean pays the bill from a handful of big notes, and the thought of my own empty pockets for a moment damps me. However, when we rise to go, it is well after midnight, and I am in a pleasant daze. The rest of the evening may be summed up in the following jingle:

Noctambule

Zut! it's two o'clock.
See! the lights are jumping.
Finish up your bock,
Time we all were humping.
Waiters stack the chairs,
Pile them on the tables;
Let us to our lairs
Underneath the gables.

Up the old Boul' Mich'
Climb with steps erratic.
Steady . . . how I wish
I was in my attic!
Full am I with cheer;
In my heart the joy stirs;
Couldn't be the beer,
Must have been the oysters.

In obscene array
Garbage cans spill over;
How I wish that they
Smelled as sweet as clover!
Charing women wait;
Cafes drop their shutters;
Rats perambulate
Up and down the gutters.

Down the darkened street
Market carts are creeping;
Horse with wary feet,
Red-faced driver sleeping.
Loads of vivid greens,
Carrots, leeks, potatoes,
Cabbages and beans,
Turnips and tomatoes.

Pair of dapper chaps,
Cigarettes and sashes,
Stare at me, perhaps
Desperate Apachès.
"Needn't bother me,
Jolly well you know it;
Parceque je suis
Quartier Latin poète.

"Give you villanelles,
Madrigals and lyrics;
Ballades and rondels,
Odes and panegyrics.

Poet pinched and poor,
Pricked by cold and hunger;
Trouble's troubadour,
Misery's balladmonger."

Think how queer it is!
Every move I'm making,
Cosmic gravity's
Center I am shaking;
Oh, how droll to feel
(As I now am feeling),
Even as I reel,
All the world is reeling.

Reeling too the stars,
Neptune and Uranus,
Jupiter and Mars,
Mercury and Venus;
Suns and moons with me,
As I'm homeward straying,
All in sympathy
Swaying, swaying, swaying.

Lord! I've got a head.
Well, it's not surprising.
I must gain my bed
Ere the sun be rising;
When the merry lark
In the sky is soaring,
I'll refuse to hark,
I'll be snoring, snoring.

Strike a sulphur match . . .
Ha! at last my garret.
Fumble at the latch,
Close the door and bar it.
Bed, you graciously
Wait, despite my scorning . . .
So, bibaciously
Mad old world, good morning.

III

My Garret,

Montparnasse, April.

Insomnia

Heigh ho! to sleep I vainly try;
Since twelve I haven't closed an eye,
And now it's three, and as I lie,
From Notre Dame to St. Denis
The bells of Paris chime to me;
"You're young," they say, "and strong and free."

I do not turn with sighs and groans
To ease my limbs, to rest my bones,
As if my bed were stuffed with stones,
No peevish murmur tips my tongue—
Ah no! for every sound upflung
Says: "Lad, you're free and strong and young."

And so beneath the sheet's caress
My body purrs with happiness;
Joy bubbles in my veins. . . .Ah yes,
My very blood that leaps along
Is chiming in a joyous song,
Because I'm young and free and strong.

Maybe it is the springtide. I am so happy I am afraid. The sense of living fills me with exultation. I want to sing, to dance; I am dithyrambic with delight.

I think the moon must be to blame:
It fills the room with fairy flame;
It paints the wall, it seems to pour
A dappled flood upon the floor.
I rise and through the window stare . . .
Ye gods! how marvelously fair!
From Montrouge to the Martyr's Hill,
A silver city rapt and still;
Dim, drowsy deeps of opal haze,
And spire and dome in diamond blaze;
The little lisping leaves of spring
Like sequins softly glimmering;
Each roof a plaque of argent sheen,
A gauzy gulf the space between;
Each chimney-top a thing of grace,
Where merry moonbeams prank and chase;
And all that sordid was and mean,
Just Beauty, deathless and serene.

O magic city of a dream!
From glory unto glory gleam;
And I will gaze and pity those
Who on their pillows drowse and doze . . .
And as I've nothing else to do,
Of tea I'll make a rousing brew,

And coax my pipes until they croon,
And chant a ditty to the moon.

There! my tea is black and strong. Inspiration comes with every sip. Now for the moon.

The moon peeped out behind the hill
As yellow as an apricot;
Then up and up it climbed until
Into the sky it fairly got;
The sky was vast and violet;
The poor moon seemed to faint in fright,
And pale it grew and paler yet,
Like fine old silver, rinsed and bright.
And yet it climbed so bravely on
Until it mounted heaven-high;
Then earthward it serenely shone,
A silver sovereign of the sky,
A bland sultana of the night,
Surveying realms of lily light.

Moon Song

A child saw in the morning skies
The dissipated-looking moon,
And opened wide her big blue eyes,
And cried: “Look, look, my lost balloon!”
And clapped her rosy hands with glee:
“Quick, mother! Bring it back to me.”

A poet in a lilied pond
Espied the moon’s reflected charms,
And ravished by that beauty blonde,
Leapt out to clasp her in his arms.
And as he’d never learnt to swim,
Poor fool! that was the end of him.

A rustic glimpsed amid the trees
The bluff moon caught as in a snare.
“They say it do be made of cheese,”
Said Giles, “and that a chap bides there. . . .
That Blue Boar ale be strong, I vow—
The lad’s a-winkin’ at me now.”

Two lovers watched the new moon hold
The old moon in her bright embrace.
Said she: “There’s mother, pale and old,
And drawing near her resting place.”
Said he: “Be mine, and with me wed,”
Moon-high she stared . . . she shook her head.

A soldier saw with dying eyes
The bleared moon like a ball of blood,
And thought of how in other skies,
So pearly bright on leaf and bud
Like peace its soft white beams had lain;
Like Peace! . . .He closed his eyes again.

Child, lover, poet, soldier, clown,
Ah yes, old Moon, what things you’ve seen!
I marvel now, as you look down,
How can your face be so serene?
And tranquil still you’ll make your round,
Old Moon, when we are underground.

“And now, blow out your candle, lad, and get to bed. See, the dawn is in the sky. Open your window and let its freshness rouge your cheek. You’ve earned your rest. Sleep.”
Aye, but before I do so, let me read again the last of my Ballads.

The Sewing-Girl

The humble garret where I dwell
Is in that Quarter called the Latin;
It isn't spacious—truth to tell,
There's hardly room to swing a cat in.
But what of that! It's there I fight
For food and fame, my Muse inviting,
And all the day and half the night
You'll find me writing, writing, writing.

Now, it was in the month of May
As, wrestling with a rhyme rheumatic,
I chanced to look across the way,
And lo! within a neighbor attic,
A hand drew back the window shade,
And there, a picture glad and glowing,
I saw a sweet and slender maid,
And she was sewing, sewing, sewing.

So poor the room, so small, so scant,
Yet somehow oh, so bright and airy.
There was a pink geranium plant,
Likewise a very pert canary.
And in the maiden's heart it seemed
Some fount of gladness must be springing,
For as alone I sadly dreamed
I heard her singing, singing, singing.

God love her! how it cheered me then
To see her there so brave and pretty;
So she with needle, I with pen,
We slaved and sang above the city.
And as across my streams of ink
I watched her from a poet's distance,
She stitched and sang . . . I scarcely think
She was aware of my existence.

And then one day she sang no more.
That put me out, there's no denying.
I looked—she labored as before,
But, bless me! she was crying, crying.
Her poor canary chirped in vain;
Her pink geranium drooped in sorrow;
"Of course," said I, "she'll sing again.
Maybe," I sighed, "she will to-morrow."

Poor child; 'twas finished with her song:
Day after day her tears were flowing;
And as I wondered what was wrong
She pined and peaked above her sewing.

And then one day the blind she drew,
Ah! though I sought with vain endeavor
To pierce the darkness, well I knew
My sewing-girl had gone for ever.

And as I sit alone to-night
My eyes unto her room are turning . . .
I'd give the sum of all I write
Once more to see her candle burning,
Once more to glimpse her happy face,
And while my rhymes of cheer I'm ringing,
Across the sunny sweep of space
To hear her singing, singing, singing.

Heigh ho! I realize I am very weary. It's nice to be so tired, and to know one can sleep as long as one wants. The morning sunlight floods in at my window, so I draw the blind, and throw myself on my bed. . . .

IV

My Garret,

Montparnasse, April.

Hurrah! As I opened my eyes this morning to a hard, unfeeling world, little did I think what a surprise awaited me. A big blue envelope had been pushed under my door. Another rejection, I thought, and I took it up distastefully. The next moment I was staring at my first cheque.

It was an express order for two hundred francs, in payment of a bit of verse.. . . So to-day I will celebrate. I will lunch at the D'Harcourt, I will dine on the Grand Boulevard, I will go to the theater.

Well, here's the thing that has turned the tide for me. It is somewhat in the vein of "Sourdough" Service, the Yukon bard. I don't think much of his stuff, but they say he makes heaps of money. I can well believe it, for he drives a Hispano-Suiza in the Bois every afternoon. The other night he was with a crowd at the Dome Cafe, a chubby chap who sits in a corner and seldom speaks. I was disappointed. I thought he was a big, hairy man who swore like a trooper and mixed brandy with his beer. He only drank Vichy, poor fellow!

Lucille

Of course you've heard of the Nancy Lee, and how she sailed away
On her famous quest of the Arctic flea, to the wilds of Hudson's Bay?
For it was a foreign Prince's whim to collect this tiny cuss,
And a golden quid was no more to him than a copper to coves like us.
So we sailed away and our hearts were gay as we gazed on the gorgeous scene;
And we laughed with glee as we caught the flea of the wolf and the wolverine;
Yea, our hearts were light as the parasite of the ermine rat we slew,
And the great musk ox, and the silver fox, and the moose and the caribou.
And we laughed with zest as the insect pest of the marmot crowned our zeal,
And the wary mink and the wily "link", and the walrus and the seal.
And with eyes aglow on the scornful snow we danced a rigadoon,
Round the lonesome lair of the Arctic hare, by the light of the silver moon.

But the time was nigh to homeward hie, when, imagine our despair!
For the best of the lot we hadn't got—the flea of the polar bear.
Oh, his face was long and his breath was strong, as the Skipper he says to me:
"I wants you to linger 'ere, my lad, by the shores of the Hartic Sea;
I wants you to 'unt the polar bear the perishin' winter through,
And if flea ye find of its breed and kind, there's a 'undred quid for you."
But I shook my head: "No, Cap," I said; "it's yourself I'd like to please,
But I tells ye flat I wouldn't do that if ye went on yer bended knees."
Then the Captain spat in the seething brine, and he says: "Good luck to you,
If it can't be did for a 'undred quid, supposin' we call it two?"
So that was why they said good-by, and they sailed and left me there—
Alone, alone in the Arctic Zone to hunt for the polar bear.

Oh, the days were slow and packed with woe,
till I thought they would never end;
And I used to sit when the fire was lit, with my pipe for my only friend.
And I tried to sing some rollicky thing, but my song broke off in a prayer,
And I'd drowse and dream by the driftwood gleam; I'd dream of a polar bear;
I'd dream of a cloudlike polar bear that blotted the stars on high,
With ravenous jaws and flenzing claws, and the flames of hell in his eye.
And I'd trap around on the frozen ground, as a proper hunter ought,
And beasts I'd find of every kind, but never the one I sought.
Never a track in the white ice-pack that humped and heaved and flawed,
Till I came to think: "Why, strike me pink! if the creature ain't a fraud."
And then one night in the waning light, as I hurried home to sup,
I hears a roar by the cabin door, and a great white hulk heaves up.
So my rifle flashed, and a bullet crashed; dead, dead as a stone fell he,
And I gave a cheer, for there in his ear—Gosh ding me!—a tiny flea.

At last, at last! Oh, I clutched it fast, and I gazed on it with pride;
And I thrust it into a biscuit-tin, and I shut it safe inside;
With a lid of glass for the light to pass, and space to leap and play;
Oh, it kept alive; yea, seemed to thrive, as I watched it night and day.
And I used to sit and sing to it, and I shielded it from harm,
And many a hearty feed it had on the heft of my hairy arm.

For you'll never know in that land of snow how lonesome a man can feel;
So I made a fuss of the little cuss, and I christened it "Lucille".
But the longest winter has its end, and the ice went out to sea,
And I saw one day a ship in the bay, and there was the Nancy Lee.
So a boat was lowered and I went aboard, and they opened wide their eyes—
Yes, they gave a cheer when the truth was clear,
and they saw my precious prize.
And then it was all like a giddy dream; but to cut my story short,
We sailed away on the fifth of May to the foreign Prince's court;
To a palmy land and a palace grand, and the little Prince was there,
And a fat Princess in a satin dress with a crown of gold on her hair.
And they showed me into a shiny room, just him and her and me,
And the Prince he was pleased and friendly-like,
and he calls for drinks for three.
And I shows them my battered biscuit-tin, and I makes my modest spiel,
And they laughed, they did, when I opened the lid,
and out there popped Lucille.

Oh, the Prince was glad, I could soon see that, and the Princess she was too;
And Lucille waltzed round on the tablecloth as she often used to do.
And the Prince pulled out a purse of gold, and he put it in my hand;
And he says: "It was worth all that, I'm told, to stay in that nasty land."
And then he turned with a sudden cry, and he clutched at his royal beard;
And the Princess screamed, and well she might—for Lucille had disappeared.

"She must be here," said his Noble Nibbs, so we hunted all around;
Oh, we searched that place, but never a trace of the little beast we found.
So I shook my head, and I glumly said: "Gol darn the saucy cuss!
It's mighty queer, but she isn't here; so . . . she must be on one of us.
You'll pardon me if I make so free, but—there's just one thing to do:
If you'll kindly go for a half a mo' I'll search me garments through."
Then all alone on the shiny throne I stripped from head to heel;
In vain, in vain; it was very plain that I hadn't got Lucille.
So I garbed again, and I told the Prince, and he scratched his august head;
"I suppose if she hasn't selected you, it must be me," he said.
So he retired; but he soon came back, and his features showed distress:
"Oh, it isn't you and it isn't me." . . .Then we looked at the Princess.
So she retired; and we heard a scream, and she opened wide the door;
And her fingers twain were pinched to pain, but a radiant smile she wore:
"It's here," she cries, "our precious prize.
Oh, I found it right away. . . ."
Then I ran to her with a shout of joy, but I choked with a wild dismay.
I clutched the back of the golden throne, and the room began to reel . . .
What she held to me was, ah yes! a flea, but . . . it wasn't my Lucille.

After all, I did not celebrate. I sat on the terrace of the Cafe Napolitain on the Grand Boulevard, half hypnotized by the passing crowd. And as I sat I fell into conversation with a god-like stranger who sipped some golden ambrosia. He told me he was an actor and introduced me to his beverage, which he called a "Suze-Anni". He soon left me, but the effect of the golden liquid remained, and there came over me a desire to write. C'était plus fort que moi. So instead of going to the Folies Bergère I spent all evening in the Omnium Bar near the Bourse, and wrote the following:

On the Boulevard

Oh, it's pleasant sitting here,
Seeing all the people pass;
You beside your bock of beer,
I behind my demi-tasse.
Chatting of no matter what.
You the Mummer, I the Bard;
Oh, it's jolly, is it not?—
Sitting on the Boulevard.

More amusing than a book,
If a chap has eyes to see;
For, no matter where I look,
Stories, stories jump at me.
Moving tales my pen might write;
Poems plain on every face;
Monologues you could recite
With inimitable grace.

(Ah! Imagination's power)
See yon demi-mondaine there,
Idly toying with a flower,
Smiling with a pensive air . . .
Well, her smile is but a mask,
For I saw within her muff
Such a wicked little flask:
Vitriol—ugh! the beastly stuff.

Now look back beside the bar.
See yon curled and scented beau,
Puffing at a fine cigar—
Sale espèce de maquereau.
Well (of course, it's all surmise),
It's for him she holds her place;
When he passes she will rise,
Dash the vitriol in his face.

Quick they'll carry him away,
Pack him in a Red Cross car;
Her they'll hurry, so they say,
To the cells of St. Lazare.
What will happen then, you ask?
What will all the sequel be?
Ah! Imagination's task
Isn't easy . . . let me see . . .

She will go to jail, no doubt,
For a year, or maybe two;
Then as soon as she gets out
Start her bawdy life anew.

He will lie within a ward,
Harmless as a man can be,
With his face grotesquely scarred,
And his eyes that cannot see.

Then amid the city's din
He will stand against a wall,
With around his neck a tin
Into which the pennies fall.
She will pass (I see it plain,
Like a cinematograph),
She will halt and turn again,
Look and look, and maybe laugh.

Well, I'm not so sure of that—
Whether she will laugh or cry.
He will hold a battered hat
To the lady passing by.
He will smile a cringing smile,
And into his grimy hold,
With a laugh (or sob) the while,
She will drop a piece of gold.

"Bless you, lady," he will say,
And get grandly drunk that night.
She will come and come each day,
Fascinated by the sight.
Then somehow he'll get to know
(Maybe by some kindly friend)
Who she is, and so . . . and so
Bring my story to an end.

How his heart will burst with hate!
He will curse and he will cry.
He will wait and wait and wait,
Till again she passes by.
Then like tiger from its lair
He will leap from out his place,
Down her, clutch her by the hair,
Smear the vitriol on her face.

(Ah! Imagination rare)
See . . . he takes his hat to go;
Now he's level with her chair;
Now she rises up to throw. . . .
God! and she has done it too . . .
Oh, those screams; those hideous screams!
I imagined and . . . it's true:
How his face will haunt my dreams!

What a sight! It makes me sick.
Seems I am to blame somehow.
Garcon, fetch a brandy quick . . .

There! I'm feeling better now.
Let's collaborate, we two,
You the Mummer, I the Bard;
Oh, what ripping stuff we'll do,
Sitting on the Boulevard!

It is strange how one works easily at times. I wrote this so quickly that I might almost say I had reached the end before I had come to the beginning. In such a mood I wonder why everybody does not write poetry. Get a Roget's Thesaurus, a rhyming dictionary: sit before your typewriter with a strong glass of coffee at your elbow, and just click the stuff off.

Facility

So easy ‘tis to make a rhyme,
That did the world but know it,
Your coachman might Parnassus climb,
Your butler be a poet.

Then, oh, how charming it would be
If, when in haste hysteric
You called the page, you learned that he
Was grappling with a lyric.

Or else what rapture it would yield,
When cook sent up the salad,
To find within its depths concealed
A touching little ballad.

Or if for tea and toast you yearned,
What joy to find upon it
The chambermaid had coyly laid
A palpitating sonnet.

Your baker could the fashion set;
Your butcher might respond well;
With every tart a triolet,
With every chop a rondel.

Your tailor’s bill . . . well, I’ll be blowed!
Dear chap! I never knowed him . . .
He’s gone and written me an ode,
Instead of what I owed him.

So easy ‘tis to rhyme . . . yet stay!
Oh, terrible misgiving!
Please do not give the game away . . .
I’ve got to make my living.

V

My Garret
May 1914.

Golden Days

Another day of toil and strife,
Another page so white,
Within that fateful Log of Life
That I and all must write;
Another page without a stain
To make of as I may,
That done, I shall not see again
Until the Judgment Day.

Ah, could I, could I backward turn
The pages of that Book,
How often would I blench and burn!
How often loathe to look!
What pages would be meanly scrolled;
What smeared as if with mud;
A few, maybe, might gleam like gold,
Some scarlet seem as blood.

O Record grave, God guide my hand
And make me worthy be,
Since what I write to-day shall stand
To all eternity;
Aye, teach me, Lord of Life, I pray,
As I salute the sun,
To bear myself that every day
May be a Golden One.

I awoke this morning to see the bright sunshine flooding my garret. No chamber in the palace of a king could have been more fair. How I sang as I dressed! How I lingered over my coffee, savoring every drop! How carefully I packed my pipe, gazing serenely over the roofs of Paris.

Never is the city so lovely as in this month of May, when all the trees are in the fullness of their foliage. As I look, I feel a freshness of vision in my eyes. Wonder wakes in me. The simplest things move me to delight.

The Joy of Little Things

It’s good the great green earth to roam,
Where sights of awe the soul inspire;
But oh, it’s best, the coming home,
The crackle of one’s own hearth-fire!
You’ve hob-nobbed with the solemn Past;
You’ve seen the pageantry of kings;
Yet oh, how sweet to gain at last
The peace and rest of Little Things!

Perhaps you’re counted with the Great;
You strain and strive with mighty men;
Your hand is on the helm of State;
Colossus-like you stride . . . and then
There comes a pause, a shining hour,
A dog that leaps, a hand that clings:
O Titan, turn from pomp and power;
Give all your heart to Little Things.

Go couch you childwise in the grass,
Believing it’s some jungle strange,
Where mighty monsters peer and pass,
Where beetles roam and spiders range.
‘Mid gloom and gleam of leaf and blade,
What dragons rasp their painted wings!
O magic world of shine and shade!
O beauty land of Little Things!

I sometimes wonder, after all,
Amid this tangled web of fate,
If what is great may not be small,
And what is small may not be great.
So wondering I go my way,
Yet in my heart contentment sings . . .
O may I ever see, I pray,
God’s grace and love in Little Things.

So give to me, I only beg,
A little roof to call my own,
A little cider in the keg,
A little meat upon the bone;
A little garden by the sea,
A little boat that dips and swings . . .
Take wealth, take fame, but leave to me,
O Lord of Life, just Little Things.

Yesterday I finished my tenth ballad. When I have done about a score I will seek a publisher. If I cannot find one, I will earn, beg or steal the money to get them printed. Then if they do not sell I will hawk them from door to door. Oh, I’ll succeed, I know I’ll succeed. And yet I

don’t want an easy success; give me the joy of the fight, the thrill of the adventure. Here’s my last ballad:

The Absinthe Drinkers

He's yonder, on the terrace of the Cafe de la Paix,
The little wizened Spanish man, I see him every day.
He's sitting with his Pernod on his customary chair;
He's staring at the passers with his customary stare.
He never takes his piercing eyes from off that moving throng,
That current cosmopolitan meandering along:
Dark diplomats from Martinique, pale Rastas from Peru,
An Englishman from Bloomsbury, a Yank from Kalamazoo;
A poet from Montmartre's heights, a dapper little Jap,
Exotic citizens of all the countries on the map;
A tourist horde from every land that's underneath the sun—
That little wizened Spanish man, he misses never one.
Oh, foul or fair he's always there, and many a drink he buys,
And there's a fire of red desire within his hollow eyes.
And sipping of my Pernod, and a-knowing what I know,
Sometimes I want to shriek aloud and give away the show.
I've lost my nerve; he's haunting me; he's like a beast of prey,
That Spanish man that's watching at the Cafe de la Paix.

Say! Listen and I'll tell you all . . . the day was growing dim,
And I was with my Pernod at the table next to him;
And he was sitting soberly as if he were asleep,
When suddenly he seemed to tense, like tiger for a leap.
And then he swung around to me, his hand went to his hip,
My heart was beating like a gong—my arm was in his grip;
His eyes were glaring into mine; aye, though I shrank with fear,
His fetid breath was on my face, his voice was in my ear:
"Excuse my brusquerie," he hissed; "but, sir, do you suppose—
That portly man who passed us had a wen upon his nose?"

And then at last it dawned on me, the fellow must be mad;
And when I soothingly replied: "I do not think he had,"
The little wizened Spanish man subsided in his chair,
And shrouded in his raven cloak resumed his owlish stare.
But when I tried to slip away he turned and glared at me,
And oh, that fishlike face of his was sinister to see:
"Forgive me if I startled you; of course you think I'm queer;
No doubt you wonder who I am, so solitary here;
You question why the passers-by I piercingly review . . .
Well, listen, my bibacious friend, I'll tell my tale to you.

"It happened twenty years ago, and in another land:
A maiden young and beautiful, two suitors for her hand.
My rival was the lucky one; I vowed I would repay;
Revenge has mellowed in my heart, it's rotten ripe to-day.
My happy rival skipped away, vamoosed, he left no trace;
And so I'm waiting, waiting here to meet him face to face;

For has it not been ever said that all the world one day
Will pass in pilgrimage before the Cafe de la Paix?"

"But, sir," I made remonstrance, "if it's twenty years ago,
You'd scarcely recognize him now, he must have altered so."
The little wizened Spanish man he laughed a hideous laugh,
And from his cloak he quickly drew a faded photograph.
"You're right," said he, "but there are traits (oh, this you must allow)
That never change; Lopez was fat, he must be fatter now.
His paunch is senatorial, he cannot see his toes,
I'm sure of it; and then, behold! that wen upon his nose.
I'm looking for a man like that. I'll wait and wait until . . ."
"What will you do?" I sharply cried; he answered me: "Why, kill!
He robbed me of my happiness—nay, stranger, do not start;
I'll firmly and politely put—a bullet in his heart."

And then that little Spanish man, with big cigar alight,
Uprose and shook my trembling hand and vanished in the night.
And I went home and thought of him and had a dreadful dream
Of portly men with each a wen, and woke up with a scream.
And sure enough, next morning, as I prowled the Boulevard,
A portly man with wenny nose roamed into my regard;
Then like a flash I ran to him and clutched him by the arm:
"Oh, sir," said I, "I do not wish to see you come to harm;
But if your life you value aught, I beg, entreat and pray—
Don't pass before the terrace of the Cafe de la Paix."
That portly man he looked at me with such a startled air,
Then bolted like a rabbit down the rue Michaudière.
"Ha! ha! I've saved a life," I thought; and laughed in my relief,
And straightway joined the Spanish man o'er his apéritif.
And thus each day I dodged about and kept the strictest guard
For portly men with each a wen upon the Boulevard.
And then I hailed my Spanish pal, and sitting in the sun,
We ordered many Pernods and we drank them every one.
And sternly he would stare and stare until my hand would shake,
And grimly he would glare and glare until my heart would quake.
And I would say: "Alphonso, lad, I must expostulate;
Why keep alive for twenty years the furnace of your hate?
Perhaps his wedded life was hell; and you, at least, are free . . ."
"That's where you've got it wrong," he snarled; "the fool she took was me.
My rival sneaked, threw up the sponge, betrayed himself a churl:
'Twas he who got the happiness, I only got—the girl."
With that he looked so devil-like he made me creep and shrink,
And there was nothing else to do but buy another drink.

Now yonder like a blot of ink he sits across the way,
Upon the smiling terrace of the Cafe de la Paix;
That little wizened Spanish man, his face is ghastly white,
His eyes are staring, staring like a tiger's in the night.
I know within his evil heart the fires of hate are fanned,
I know his automatic's ready waiting to his hand.
I know a tragedy is near. I dread, I have no peace . . .

Oh, don't you think I ought to go and call upon the police?
Look there . . . he's rising up . . . my God!
He leaps from out his place . . .
Yon millionaire from Argentine . . . the two are face to face . . .
A shot! A shriek! A heavy fall! A huddled heap! Oh, see
The little wizened Spanish man is dancing in his glee. . . .
I'm sick . . . I'm faint . . . I'm going mad. . . .
Oh, please take me away . . .
There's BLOOD upon the terrace of the Cafe de la Paix. . . .

And now I'll leave my work and sally forth. The city is en fete. I'll join the crowd and laugh and sing with the best.

The sunshine seeks my little room
To tell me Paris streets are gay;
That children cry the lily bloom
All up and down the leafy way;
That half the town is mad with May,
With flame of flag and boom of bell:
For Carnival is King to-day;
So pen and page, awhile farewell.

Book Two. Early Summer

I

Parc Montsouris
June 1914.

The Release

To-day within a grog-shop near
I saw a newly captured linnet,
Who beat against his cage in fear,
And fell exhausted every minute;
And when I asked the fellow there
If he to sell the bird were willing,
He told me with a careless air
That I could have it for a shilling.

And so I bought it, cage and all
(Although I went without my dinner),
And where some trees were fairly tall
And houses shrank and smoke was thinner,
The tiny door I open threw,
As down upon the grass I sank me:
Poor little chap! How quick he flew . . .
He didn't even wait to thank me.

Life's like a cage; we beat the bars,
We bruise our breasts, we struggle vainly;
Up to the glory of the stars
We strain with flutterings ungainly.
And then—God opens wide the door;
Our wondrous wings are arched for flying;
We poise, we part, we sing, we soar . . .
Light, freedom, love. . . .Fools call it—Dying.

Yes, that wretched little bird haunted me. I had to let it go. Since I have seized my own liberty I am a fanatic for freedom. It is now a year ago I launched on my great adventure. I have had hard times, been hungry, cold, weary. I have worked harder than ever I did and discouragement has slapped me on the face. Yet the year has been the happiest of my life.

And all because I am free. By reason of filthy money no one can say to me: Do this, or do that. "Master" doesn't exist in my vocabulary. I can look any man in the face and tell him to go to the devil. I belong to myself. I am not for sale. It's glorious to feel like that. It sweetens the dry crust and warms the heart in the icy wind. For that I will hunger and go threadbare; for that I will live austerely and deny myself all pleasure. After health, the best thing in life is freedom.

Here is the last of my ballads. It is by way of being an experiment. Its theme is commonplace, its language that of everyday. It is a bit of realism in rhyme.

The Wee Shop

She risked her all, they told me, bravely sinking
The pinched economies of thirty years;
And there the little shop was, meek and shrinking,
The sum of all her dreams and hopes and fears.
Ere it was opened I would see them in it,
The gray-haired dame, the daughter with her crutch;
So fond, so happy, hoarding every minute,
Like artists, for the final tender touch.

The opening day! I'm sure that to their seeming
Was never shop so wonderful as theirs;
With pyramids of jam-jars rubbed to gleaming;
Such vivid cans of peaches, prunes and pears;
And chocolate, and biscuits in glass cases,
And bon-bon bottles, many-hued and bright;
Yet nothing half so radiant as their faces,
Their eyes of hope, excitement and delight.

I entered: how they waited all a-flutter!
How awkwardly they weighed my acid-drops!
And then with all the thanks a tongue could utter
They bowed me from the kindliest of shops.
I'm sure that night their customers they numbered;
Discussed them all in happy, breathless speech;
And though quite worn and weary, ere they slumbered,
Sent heavenward a little prayer for each.

And so I watched with interest redoubled
That little shop, spent in it all I had;
And when I saw it empty I was troubled,
And when I saw them busy I was glad.
And when I dared to ask how things were going,
They told me, with a fine and gallant smile:
"Not badly . . . slow at first . . .There's never knowing . . .
'Twill surely pick up in a little while."

I'd often see them through the winter weather,
Behind the shutters by a light's faint speck,
Poring o'er books, their faces close together,
The lame girl's arm around her mother's neck.
They dressed their windows not one time but twenty,
Each change more pinched, more desperately neat;
Alas! I wondered if behind that plenty
The two who owned it had enough to eat.

Ah, who would dare to sing of tea and coffee?
The sadness of a stock unsold and dead;
The petty tragedy of melting toffee,
The sordid pathos of stale gingerbread.

Ignoble themes! And yet—those haggard faces!
Within that little shop. . . .Oh, here I say
One does not need to look in lofty places
For tragic themes, they're round us every day.

And so I saw their agony, their fighting,
Their eyes of fear, their heartbreak, their despair;
And there the little shop is, black and blighting,
And all the world goes by and does not care.
They say she sought her old employer's pity,
Content to take the pittance he would give.
The lame girl? yes, she's working in the city;
She coughs a lot—she hasn't long to live.

Last night MacBean introduced me to Saxon Dane the Poet. Truly, he is more like a blacksmith than a Bard—a big bearded man whose black eyes brood somberly or flash with sudden fire. We talked of Walt Whitman, and then of others.

"The trouble with poetry," he said, "is that it is too exalted. It has a phraseology of its own; it selects themes that are quite outside of ordinary experience. As a medium of expression it fails to reach the great mass of the people."

Then he added: "To hell with the great mass of the people! What have they got to do with it? Write to please yourself, as if not a single reader existed. The moment a man begins to be conscious of an audience he is artistically damned. You're not a Poet, I hope?"

I meekly assured him I was a mere maker of verse.

"Well," said he, "better good verse than middling poetry. And maybe even the humblest of rhymes has its uses. Happiness is happiness, whether it be inspired by a Rossetti sonnet or a ballad by G. R. Sims. Let each one who has something to say, say it in the best way he can, and abide the result. . . . After all," he went on, "what does it matter? We are living in a pygmy day. With Tennyson and Browning the line of great poets passed away, perhaps for ever. The world to-day is full of little minstrels, who echo one another and who pipe away tunefully enough. But with one exception they do not matter."

I dared to ask who was his one exception. He answered, "Myself, of course."
Here's a bit of light verse which it amused me to write to-day, as I sat in the sun on the terrace of the Closerie de Lilas:

The Philistine and the Bohemian

She was a Philistine spick and span,
He was a bold Bohemian.
She had the mode, and the last at that;
He had a cape and a brigand hat.
She was so riant and chic and trim;
He was so shaggy, unkempt and grim.
On the rue de la Paix she was wont to shine;
The rue de la Gaîté was more his line.
She doted on Barclay and Dell and Caine;
He quoted Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine.
She was a triumph at Tango teas;
At Vorticist's suppers he sought to please.
She thought that Franz Lehar was utterly great;
Of Strauss and Stravinsky he'd piously prate.
She loved elegance, he loved art;
They were as wide as the poles apart:
Yet—Cupid and Caprice are hand and glove—
They met at a dinner, they fell in love.

Home he went to his garret bare,
Thrilling with rapture, hope, despair.
Swift he gazed in his looking-glass,
Made a grimace and murmured: "Ass!"
Seized his scissors and fiercely sheared,
Severed his buccaneering beard;
Grabbed his hair, and clip! clip! clip!
Off came a bunch with every snip.
Ran to a tailor's in startled state,
Suits a dozen commanded straight;
Coats and overcoats, pants in pairs,
Everything that a dandy wears;
Socks and collars, and shoes and ties,
Everything that a dandy buys.
Chums looked at him with wondering stare,
Fancied they'd seen him before somewhere;
A Brummell, a D'Orsay, a beau so fine,
A shining, immaculate Philistine.

Home she went in a raptured daze,
Looked in a mirror with startled gaze,
Didn't seem to be pleased at all;
Savagely muttered: "Insipid Doll!"
Clutched her hair and a pair of shears,
Cropped and bobbed it behind the ears;
Aimed at a wan and willowy-necked
Sort of a Holman Hunt effect;
Robed in subtile and sage-green tones,

Like the dames of Rossetti and E. Burne-Jones;
Girdled her garments billowing wide,
Moved with an undulating glide;
All her frivolous friends forsook,
Cultivated a soulful look;
Gushed in a voice with a creamy throb
Over some weirdly Futurist daub—
Did all, in short, that a woman can
To be a consummate Bohemian.

A year went past with its hopes and fears,
A year that seemed like a dozen years.
They met once more. . . .Oh, at last! At last!
They rushed together, they stopped aghast.
They looked at each other with blank dismay,
They simply hadn't a word to say.
He thought with a shiver: "Can this be she?"
She thought with a shudder: "This can't be he?"
This simpering dandy, so sleek and spruce;
This languorous lily in garments loose;
They sought to brace from the awful shock:
Taking a seat, they tried to talk.
She spoke of Bergson and Pater's prose,
He prattled of dances and ragtime shows;
She purred of pictures, Matisse, Cezanne,
His tastes to the girls of Kirchner ran;
She raved of Tchaikovsky and Caesar Franck,
He owned that he was a jazz-band crank!
They made no headway. Alas! alas!
He thought her a bore, she thought him an ass.
And so they arose and hurriedly fled;
Perish Illusion, Romance, you're dead.
He loved elegance, she loved art,
Better at once to part, to part.

And what is the moral of all this rot?
Don't try to be what you know you're not.
And if you're made on a muttonish plan,
Don't seek to seem a Bohemian;
And if to the goats your feet incline,
Don't try to pass for a Philistine.

II

A Small Cafe in a Side Street,
June 1914.

The Bohemian Dreams

Because my overcoat's in pawn,
I choose to take my glass
Within a little bistro on
The rue du Montparnasse;
The dusty bins with bottles shine,
The counter's lined with zinc,
And there I sit and drink my wine,
And think and think and think.

I think of hoary old Stamboul,
Of Moslem and of Greek,
Of Persian in coat of wool,
Of Kurd and Arab sheikh;
Of all the types of weal and woe,
And as I raise my glass,
Across Galata bridge I know
They pass and pass and pass.

I think of citron-trees aglow,
Of fan-palms shading down,
Of sailors dancing heel and toe
With wenches black and brown;
And though it's all an ocean far
From Yucatan to France,
I'll bet beside the old bazaar
They dance and dance and dance.

I think of Monte Carlo, where
The pallid croupiers call,
And in the gorgeous, guilty air
The gamblers watch the ball;
And as I flick away the foam
With which my beer is crowned,
The wheels beneath the gilded dome
Go round and round and round.

I think of vast Niagara,
Those gulfs of foam a-shine,
Whose mighty roar would stagger a
More prosy bean than mine;
And as the hours I idly spend
Against a greasy wall,
I know that green the waters bend
And fall and fall and fall.

I think of Nijni Novgorod
And Jews who never rest;
And womenfolk with spade and hod
Who slave in Buda-Pest;

Of squat and sturdy Japanese
Who pound the paddy soil,
And as I loaf and smoke at ease
They toil and toil and toil.

I think of shrines in Hindustan,
Of cloistral glooms in Spain,
Of minarets in Ispahan,
Of St. Sophia's fane,
Of convent towers in Palestine,
Of temples in Cathay,
And as I stretch and sip my wine
They pray and pray and pray.

And so my dreams I dwell within,
And visions come and go,
And life is passing like a Cin-
Ematographic Show;
Till just as surely as my pipe
Is underneath my nose,
Amid my visions rich and ripe
I doze and doze and doze.

Alas! it is too true. Once more I am counting the coppers, living on the ragged edge. My manuscripts come back to me like boomerangs, and I have not the postage, far less the heart, to send them out again.

MacBean seems to take an interest in my struggles. I often sit in his room in the rue Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, smoking and sipping whisky into the small hours. He is an old hand, who knows the market and frankly manufactures for it.

"Give me short pieces," he says; "things of three verses that will fill a blank half-page of a magazine. Let them be sprightly, and, if possible, have a snapper at the end. Give me that sort of article. I think I can place it for you."

Then he looked through a lot of my verse: "This is the kind of stuff I might be able to sell," he said:

A Domestic Tragedy

Clorinda met me on the way
As I came from the train;
Her face was anything but gay,
In fact, suggested pain.
“Oh hubby, hubby dear!” she cried,
“I’ve awful news to tell. . . .”
“What is it, darling?” I replied;
“Your mother—is she well?”

“Oh no! oh no! it is not that,
It’s something else,” she wailed,
My heart was beating pit-a-pat,
My ruddy visage paled.
Like lightning flash in heaven’s dome
The fear within me woke:
“Don’t say,” I cried, “our little home
Has all gone up in smoke!”

She shook her head. Oh, swift I clasped
And held her to my breast;
“The children! Tell me quick,” I gasped,
“Believe me, it is best.”
Then, then she spoke; ‘mid sobs I caught
These words of woe divine:
“It’s coo-coo-cook has gone and bought
A new hat just like mine.”

At present I am living on bread and milk. By doing this I can rub along for another ten days. The thought pleases me. As long as I have a crust I am master of my destiny. Some day, when I am rich and famous, I shall look back on all this with regret. Yet I think I shall always remain a Bohemian. I hate regularity. The clock was never made for me. I want to eat when I am hungry, sleep when I am weary, drink—well, any old time.

I prefer to be alone. Company is a constraint on my spirit. I never make an engagement if I can avoid it. To do so is to put a mortgage on my future. I like to be able to rise in the morning with the thought that the hours before me are all mine, to spend in my own way—to work, to dream, to watch the unfolding drama of life.

Here is another of my ballads. It is longer than most, and gave me more trouble, though none the better for that.

The Pencil Seller

A pencil, sir; a penny—won't you buy?
I'm cold and wet and tired, a sorry plight;
Don't turn your back, sir; take one just to try;
I haven't made a single sale to-night.
Oh, thank you, sir; but take the pencil too;
I'm not a beggar, I'm a business man.
Pencils I deal in, red and black and blue;
It's hard, but still I do the best I can.
Most days I make enough to pay for bread,
A cup o' coffee, stretching room at night.
One needs so little—to be warm and fed,
A hole to kennel in—oh, one's all right . . .

Excuse me, you're a painter, are you not?
I saw you looking at that dealer's show,
The croûtes he has for sale, a shabby lot—
What do I know of Art? What do I know . . .
Well, look! That David Strong so well displayed,
"White Sorcery" it's called, all gossamer,
And pale moon-magic and a dancing maid
(You like the little elfin face of her?)—
That's good; but still, the picture as a whole,
The values,—Pah! He never painted worse;
Perhaps because his fire was lacking coal,
His cupboard bare, no money in his purse.
Perhaps . . . they say he labored hard and long,
And see now, in the harvest of his fame,
When round his pictures people gape and throng,
A scurvy dealer sells this on his name.
A wretched rag, wrung out of want and woe;
A soulless daub, not David Strong a bit,
Unworthy of his art. . . .How should I know?
How should I know? I'm Strong—I painted it.

There now, I didn't mean to let that out.
It came in spite of me—aye, stare and stare.
You think I'm lying, crazy, drunk, no doubt—
Think what you like, it's neither here nor there.
It's hard to tell so terrible a truth,
To gain to glory, yet be such as I.
It's true; that picture's mine, done in my youth,
Up in a garret near the Paris sky.
The child's my daughter; aye, she posed for me.
That's why I come and sit here every night.
The painting's bad, but still—oh, still I see
Her little face all laughing in the light.
So now you understand.—I live in fear

Lest one like you should carry it away;
A poor, pot-boiling thing, but oh, how dear!
"Don't let them buy it, pitying God!" I pray!
And hark ye, sir—sometimes my brain's awhirl.
Some night I'll crash into that window pane
And snatch my picture back, my little girl,
And run and run. . . .
I'm talking wild again;
A crab can't run. I'm crippled, withered, lame,
Palsied, as good as dead all down one side.
No warning had I when the evil came:
It struck me down in all my strength and pride.
Triumph was mine, I thrilled with perfect power;
Honor was mine, Fame's laurel touched my brow;
Glory was mine—within a little hour
I was a god and . . . what you find me now.

My child, that little, laughing girl you see,
She was my nurse for all ten weary years;
Her joy, her hope, her youth she gave for me;
Her very smiles were masks to hide her tears.
And I, my precious art, so rich, so rare,
Lost, lost to me—what could my heart but break!
Oh, as I lay and wrestled with despair,
I would have killed myself but for her sake. . . .

By luck I had some pictures I could sell,
And so we fought the wolf back from the door;
She painted too, aye, wonderfully well.
We often dreamed of brighter days in store.
And then quite suddenly she seemed to fail;
I saw the shadows darken round her eyes.
So tired she was, so sorrowful, so pale,
And oh, there came a day she could not rise.
The doctor looked at her; he shook his head,
And spoke of wine and grapes and Southern air:
"If you can get her out of this," he said,
"She'll have a fighting chance with proper care."

"With proper care!" When he had gone away,
I sat there, trembling, twitching, dazed with grief.
Under my old and ragged coat she lay,
Our room was bare and cold beyond belief.
"Maybe," I thought, "I still can paint a bit,
Some lilies, landscape, anything at all."
Alas! My brush, I could not steady it.
Down from my fumbling hand I let it fall.
"With proper care"—how could I give her that,
Half of me dead? . . .I crawled down to the street.
Cowering beside the wall, I held my hat
And begged of every one I chanced to meet.
I got some pennies, bought her milk and bread,

And so I fought to keep the Doom away;
And yet I saw with agony of dread
My dear one sinking, sinking day by day.
And then I was awakened in the night:
"Please take my hands, I'm cold," I heard her sigh;
And soft she whispered, as she held me tight:
"Oh daddy, we've been happy, you and I!"
I do not think she suffered any pain,
She breathed so quietly . . . but though I tried,
I could not warm her little hands again:
And so there in the icy dark she died. . . .
The dawn came groping in with fingers gray
And touched me, sitting silent as a stone;
I kissed those piteous lips, as cold as clay—
I did not cry, I did not even moan.
At last I rose, groped down the narrow stair;
An evil fog was oozing from the sky;
Half-crazed I stumbled on, I knew not where,
Like phantoms were the folks that passed me by.
How long I wandered thus I do not know,
But suddenly I halted, stood stock-still—
Beside a door that spilled a golden glow
I saw a name, my name, upon a bill.
"A Sale of Famous Pictures," so it read,
"A Notable Collection, each a gem,
Distinguished Works of Art by painters dead."
The folks were going in, I followed them.
I stood upon the outskirts of the crowd,
I only hoped that none might notice me.
Soon, soon I heard them call my name aloud:
"A 'David Strong', his Fete in Brittany."
(A brave big picture that, the best I've done,
It glowed and kindled half the hall away,
With all its memories of sea and sun,
Of pipe and bowl, of joyous work and play.
I saw the sardine nets blue as the sky,
I saw the nut-brown fisher-boats put out.)
"Five hundred pounds!" rapped out a voice near by;
"Six hundred!" "Seven!" "Eight!" And then a shout:
"A thousand pounds!" Oh, how I thrilled to hear!
Oh, how the bids went up by leaps, by bounds!
And then a silence; then the auctioneer:
"It's going! Going! Gone! Three thousand pounds!"
Three thousand pounds! A frenzy leapt in me.
"That picture's mine," I cried; "I'm David Strong.
I painted it, this famished wretch you see;
I did it, I, and sold it for a song.
And in a garret three small hours ago
My daughter died for want of Christian care.

Look, look at me! . . .Is it to mock my woe
You pay three thousand for my picture there?" . . .

O God! I stumbled blindly from the hall;
The city crashed on me, the fiendish sounds
Of cruelty and strife, but over all
"Three thousand pounds!" I heard; "Three thousand pounds!"

There, that's my story, sir; it isn't gay.
Tales of the Poor are never very bright . . .
You'll look for me next time you pass this way . . .
I hope you'll find me, sir; good-night, good-night.

III

The Luxembourg,

June 1914.

On a late afternoon, when the sunlight is mellow on the leaves, I often sit near the Fontaine de Medicis, and watch the children at their play. Sometimes I make bits of verse about them, such as:

Fi-Fi in Bed

Up into the sky I stare;
All the little stars I see;
And I know that God is there
O, how lonely He must be!

Me, I laugh and leap all day,
Till my head begins to nod;
He's so great, He cannot play:
I am glad I am not God.

Poor kind God upon His throne,
Up there in the sky so blue,
Always, always all alone . . .
"Please, dear God, I pity You."

Or else, sitting on the terrace of a cafe on the Boul' Mich', I sip slowly a Dubonnet or a Byrrh, and the charm of the Quarter possesses me. I think of men who have lived and loved there, who have groveled and gloried, who have drunk deep and died. And then I scribble things like this:

Gods in the Gutter

I dreamed I saw three demi-gods who in a cafe sat,
And one was small and crapulous, and one was large and fat;
And one was eaten up with vice and verminous at that.

The first he spoke of secret sins, and gems and perfumes rare;
And velvet cats and courtesans voluptuously fair:
“Who is the Sybarite?” I asked. They answered: “Baudelaire.”

The second talked in tapestries, by fantasy beguiled;
As frail as bubbles, hard as gems, his pageantries he piled;
“This Lord of Language, who is he?” They whispered “Oscar Wilde.”

The third was staring at his glass from out abysmal pain;
With tears his eyes were bitten in beneath his bulbous brain.
“Who is the sodden wretch?” I said. They told me: “Paul Verlaine.”

Oh, Wilde, Verlaine and Baudelaire, their lips were wet with wine;
Oh poseur, pimp and libertine! Oh cynic, sot and swine!
Oh votaries of velvet vice! . . .Oh gods of light divine!

Oh Baudelaire, Verlaine and Wilde, they knew the sinks of shame;
Their sun-aspiring wings they scorched at passion’s altar flame;
Yet lo! enthroned, enskied they stand, Immortal Sons of Fame.

I dreamed I saw three demi-gods who walked with feet of clay,
With cruel crosses on their backs, along a miry way;
Who climbed and climbed the bitter steep to which men turn and pray.

And while I am on the subject of the Quarter, let me repeat this, which is included in my Ballads of the Boulevards:

The Death of Marie Toro

We're taking Marie Toro to her home in Père-La-Chaise;
We're taking Marie Toro to her last resting-place.
Behold! her hearse is hung with wreaths till everything is hid
Except the blossoms heaping high upon her coffin lid.
A week ago she roamed the street, a draggle and a slut,
A by-word of the Boulevard and everybody's butt;
A week ago she haunted us, we heard her whining cry,
We brushed aside the broken blooms she pestered us to buy;
A week ago she had not where to rest her weary head . . .
But now, oh, follow, follow on, for Marie Toro's dead.

Oh Marie, she was once a queen—ah yes, a queen of queens.
High-throned above the Carnival she held her splendid sway.
For four-and-twenty crashing hours she knew what glory means,
The cheers of half a million throats, the délire of a day.
Yet she was only one of us, a little sewing-girl,
Though far the loveliest and best of all our laughing band;
Then Fortune beckoned; off she danced, amid the dizzy whirl,
And we who once might kiss her cheek were proud to kiss her hand.
For swiftly as a star she soared; she had her every wish;
We saw her roped with pearls of price, with princes at her call;
And yet, and yet I think her dreams were of the old Boul' Mich',
And yet I'm sure within her heart she loved us best of all.
For one night in the Purple Pig, upon the rue Saint-Jacques,
We laughed and quaffed . . . a limousine came swishing to the door;
Then Raymond Jolicoeur cried out: "It's Queen Marie come back,
In satin clad to make us glad, and witch our hearts once more."
But no, her face was strangely sad, and at the evening's end:
"Dear lads," she said; "I love you all, and when I'm far away,
Remember, oh, remember, little Marie is your friend,
And though the world may lie between, I'm coming back some day."
And so she went, and many a boy who's fought his way to Fame,
Can look back on the struggle of his garret days and bless
The loyal heart, the tender hand, the Providence that came
To him and all in hour of need, in sickness and distress.
Time passed away. She won their hearts in London, Moscow, Rome;
They worshiped her in Argentine, adored her in Brazil;
We smoked our pipes and wondered when she might be coming home,
And then we learned the luck had turned, the things were going ill.
Her health had failed, her beauty paled, her lovers fled away;
And some one saw her in Peru, a common drab at last.
So years went by, and faces changed; our beards were sadly gray,
And Marie Toro's name became an echo of the past.

You know that old and withered man, that derelict of art,
Who for a paltry franc will make a crayon sketch of you?
In slouching hat and shabby cloak he looks and is the part,

A sodden old Bohemian, without a single sou.
A boon companion of the days of Rimbaud and Verlaine,
He broods and broods, and chews the cud of bitter souvenirs;
Beneath his mop of grizzled hair his cheeks are gouged with pain,
The saffron sockets of his eyes are hollowed out with tears.
Well, one night in the D'Harcourt's din I saw him in his place,
When suddenly the door was swung, a woman halted there;
A woman cowering like a dog, with white and haggard face,
A broken creature, bent of spine, a daughter of Despair.
She looked and looked, as to her breast she held some withered bloom;
"Too late! Too late! . . . they all are dead and gone," I heard her say.
And once again her weary eyes went round and round the room;
"Not one of all I used to know . . ." she turned to go away . . .
But quick I saw the old man start: "Ah no!" he cried, "not all.
Oh Marie Toro, queen of queens, don't you remember Paul?"

"Oh Marie, Marie Toro, in my garret next the sky,
Where many a day and night I've crouched with not a crust to eat,
A picture hangs upon the wall a fortune couldn't buy,
A portrait of a girl whose face is pure and angel-sweet."
Sadly the woman looked at him: "Alas! it's true," she said;
"That little maid, I knew her once. It's long ago—she's dead."
He went to her; he laid his hand upon her wasted arm:
"Oh, Marie Toro, come with me, though poor and sick am I.
For old times' sake I cannot bear to see you come to harm;
Ah! there are memories, God knows, that never, never die. . . ."
"Too late!" she sighed; "I've lived my life of splendor and of shame;
I've been adored by men of power, I've touched the highest height;
I've squandered gold like heaps of dirt—oh, I have played the game;
I've had my place within the sun . . . and now I face the night.
Look! look! you see I'm lost to hope; I live no matter how . . .
To drink and drink and so forget . . . that's all I care for now."

And so she went her heedless way, and all our help was vain.
She trailed along with tattered shawl and mud-corroded skirt;
She gnawed a crust and slept beneath the bridges of the Seine,
A garbage thing, a composite of alcohol and dirt.
The students learned her story and the cafes knew her well,
The Pascal and the Panthéon, the Sufflot and Vachette;
She shuffled round the tables with the flowers she tried to sell,
A living mask of misery that no one will forget.
And then last week I missed her, and they found her in the street
One morning early, huddled down, for it was freezing cold;
But when they raised her ragged shawl her face was still and sweet;
Some bits of broken bloom were clutched within her icy hold.
That's all. . . .Ah yes, they say that saw: her blue, wide-open eyes
Were beautiful with joy again, with radiant surprise. . . .

A week ago she begged for bread; we've bought for her a stone,
And a peaceful place in Père-La-Chaise where she'll be well alone.
She cost a king his crown, they say; oh, wouldn't she be proud
If she could see the wreaths to-day, the coaches and the crowd!

So follow, follow, follow on with slow and sober tread,
For Marie Toro, gutter waif and queen of queens, is dead.

IV

The Cafe de Deux Magots,
June 1914.

The Bohemian

Up in my garret bleak and bare
I tilted back on my broken chair,
And my three old pals were with me there,
Hunger and Thirst and Cold;
Hunger scowled at his scurvy mate:
Cold cowered down by the hollow grate,
And I hated them with a deadly hate
As old as life is old.

So up in my garret that's near the sky
I smiled a smile that was thin and dry:
"You've roomed with me twenty year," said I,
"Hunger and Thirst and Cold;
But now, begone down the broken stair!
I've suffered enough of your spite . . . so there!"
Bang! Bang! I slapped on the table bare
A glittering heap of gold.

"Red flames will jewel my wine to-night;
I'll loose my belt that you've lugged so tight;
Ha! Ha! Dame Fortune is smiling bright;
The stuff of my brain I've sold;
Canaille of the gutter, up! Away!
You've battened on me for a bitter-long day;
But I'm driving you forth, and forever and aye,
Hunger and Thirst and Cold."

So I kicked them out with a scornful roar;
Yet, oh, they turned at the garret door;
Quietly there they spoke once more:
"The tale is not all told.
It's au revoir, but it's not good-by;
We're yours, old chap, till the day you die;
Laugh on, you fool! Oh, you'll never defy
Hunger and Thirst and Cold."

Hurrah! The crisis in my financial career is over. Once more I have weathered the storm, and never did money jingle so sweetly in my pocket. It was MacBean who delivered me. He arrived at the door of my garret this morning, with a broad grin of pleasure on his face.

"Here," said he; "I've sold some of your rubbish. They'll take more too, of the same sort."

With that he handed me three crisp notes. For a moment I thought that he was paying the money out of his own pocket, as he knew I was desperately hard up; but he showed me the letter enclosing the cheque he had cashed for me.

So we sought the Grand Boulevard, and I had a Pernod, which rose to my head in delicious waves of joy. I talked ecstatic nonsense, and seemed to walk like a god in clouds of gold. We dined on frogs' legs and Vouvray, and then went to see the Revue at the Marigny. A very merry evening.

Such is the life of Bohemia, up and down, fast and feast; its very uncertainty its charm. Here is my latest ballad, another attempt to express the sentiment of actuality:

The Auction Sale

Her little head just topped the window-sill;
She even mounted on a stool, maybe;
She pressed against the pane, as children will,
And watched us playing, oh so wistfully!
And then I missed her for a month or more,
And idly thought: “She’s gone away, no doubt,”
Until a hearse drew up beside the door . . .
I saw a tiny coffin carried out.

And after that, towards dusk I’d often see
Behind the blind another face that looked:
Eyes of a young wife watching anxiously,
Then rushing back to where her dinner cooked.
She often gulped it down alone, I fear,
Within her heart the sadness of despair,
For near to midnight I would vaguely hear
A lurching step, a stumbling on the stair.

These little dramas of the common day!
A man weak-willed and fore-ordained to fail . . .
The window’s empty now, they’ve gone away,
And yonder, see, their furniture’s for sale.
To all the world their door is open wide,
And round and round the bargain-hunters roam,
And peer and gloat, like vultures avid-eyed,
Above the corpse of what was once a home.

So reverent I go from room to room,
And see the patient care, the tender touch,
The love that sought to brighten up the gloom,
The woman-courage tested overmuch.
Amid those things so intimate and dear,
Where now the mob invades with brutal tread,
I think: “What happiness is buried here,
What dreams are withered and what hopes are dead!”

Oh, woman dear, and were you sweet and glad
Over the lining of your little nest!
What ponderings and proud ideas you had!
What visions of a shrine of peace and rest!
For there’s his easy-chair upon the rug,
His reading-lamp, his pipe-rack on the wall,
All that you could devise to make him snug—
And yet you could not hold him with it all.

Ah, patient heart, what homelike joys you planned
To stay him by the dull domestic flame!
Those silken cushions that you worked by hand
When you had time, before the baby came.

Oh, how you wove around him cozy spells,
And schemed so hard to keep him home of nights!
Aye, every touch and turn some story tells
Of sweet conspiracies and dead delights.

And here upon the scratched piano stool,
Tied in a bundle, are the songs you sung;
That cozy that you worked in colored wool,
The Spanish lace you made when you were young,
And lots of modern novels, cheap reprints,
And little dainty knick-knacks everywhere;
And silken bows and curtains of gay chintz . . .
And oh, her tiny crib, her folding chair!

Sweet woman dear, and did your heart not break,
To leave this precious home you made in vain?
Poor shabby things! so prized for old times' sake,
With all their memories of love and pain.
Alas! while shouts the raucous auctioneer,
And rat-faced dames are prying everywhere,
The echo of old joy is all I hear,
All, all I see just heartbreak and despair.

Imagination is the great gift of the gods. Given it, one does not need to look afar for subjects.

There is romance in every face.

Those who have Imagination live in a land of enchantment which the eyes of others cannot see. Yet if it brings marvelous joy it also brings exquisite pain. Who lives a hundred lives must die a hundred deaths.

I do not know any of the people who live around me. Sometimes I pass them on the stairs.

However, I am going to give my imagination rein, and string some rhymes about them.

Before doing so, having money in my pocket and seeing the prospect of making more, let me blithely chant about.

The Joy of Being Poor

I

Let others sing of gold and gear, the joy of being rich;
But oh, the days when I was poor, a vagrant in a ditch!
When every dawn was like a gem, so radiant and rare,
And I had but a single coat, and not a single care;
When I would feast right royally on bacon, bread and beer,
And dig into a stack of hay and doze like any peer;
When I would wash beside a brook my solitary shirt,
And though it dried upon my back I never took a hurt;
When I went romping down the road contemptuous of care,
And slapped Adventure on the back—by Gad! we were a pair;
When, though my pockets lacked a coin, and though my coat was old,
The largess of the stars was mine, and all the sunset gold;
When time was only made for fools, and free as air was I,
And hard I hit and hard I lived beneath the open sky;
When all the roads were one to me, and each had its allure . . .
Ye Gods! these were the happy days, the days when I was poor.

II

Or else, again, old pal of mine, do you recall the times
You struggled with your storyettes, I wrestled with my rhymes;
Oh, we were happy, were we not?—we used to live so "high"
(A little bit of broken roof between us and the sky);
Upon the forge of art we toiled with hammer and with tongs;
You told me all your rippling yarns, I sang to you my songs.
Our hats were frayed, our jackets patched, our boots were down at heel,
But oh, the happy men were we, although we lacked a meal.
And if I sold a bit of rhyme, or if you placed a tale,
What feasts we had of tenderloins and apple-tarts and ale!
And yet how often we would dine as cheerful as you please,
Beside our little friendly fire on coffee, bread and cheese.
We lived upon the ragged edge, and grub was never sure,
But oh, these were the happy days, the days when we were poor.

III

Alas! old man, we're wealthy now, it's sad beyond a doubt;
We cannot dodge prosperity, success has found us out.
Your eye is very dull and drear, my brow is creased with care,
We realize how hard it is to be a millionaire.
The burden's heavy on our backs—you're thinking of your rents,
I'm worrying if I'll invest in five or six per cents.
We've limousines, and marble halls, and flunkeys by the score,
We play the part . . . but say, old chap, oh, isn't it a bore?
We work like slaves, we eat too much, we put on evening dress;
We've everything a man can want, I think . . . but happiness.

Come, let us sneak away, old chum; forget that we are rich,
And earn an honest appetite, and scratch an honest itch.
Let’s be two jolly garreteers, up seven flights of stairs,
And wear old clothes and just pretend we aren’t millionaires;
And wonder how we’ll pay the rent, and scribble ream on ream,
And sup on sausages and tea, and laugh and loaf and dream.

And when we’re tired of that, my friend, oh, you will come with me;
And we will seek the sunlit roads that lie beside the sea.
We’ll know the joy the gipsy knows, the freedom nothing mars,
The golden treasure-gates of dawn, the mintage of the stars.
We’ll smoke our pipes and watch the pot, and feed the crackling fire,
And sing like two old jolly boys, and dance to heart’s desire;
We’ll climb the hill and ford the brook and camp upon the moor . . .
Old chap, let’s haste, I’m mad to taste the Joy of Being Poor.

V

My Garret, Montparnasse,
June 1914.

My Neighbors

To rest my fagged brain now and then,
When wearied of my proper labors,
I lay aside my lagging pen
And get to thinking on my neighbors;
For, oh, around my garret den
There's woe and poverty a-plenty,
And life's so interesting when
A lad is only two-and-twenty.

Now, there's that artist gaunt and wan,
A little card his door adorning;
It reads: "Je ne suis pour personne",
A very frank and fitting warning.
I fear he's in a sorry plight;
He starves, I think, too proud to borrow,
I hear him moaning every night:
Maybe they'll find him dead to-morrow.

Room 4: The Painter Chap

He gives me such a bold and curious look,
That young American across the way,
As if he'd like to put me in a book
(Fancies himself a poet, so they say.)
Ah well! He'll make no "document" of me.
I lock my door. Ha! ha! Now none shall see. . . .

Pictures, just pictures piled from roof to floor,
Each one a bit of me, a dream fulfilled,
A vision of the beauty I adore,
My own poor glimpse of glory, passion-thrilled . . .
But now my money's gone, I paint no more.

For three days past I have not tasted food;
The jeweled colors run . . . I reel, I faint;
They tell me that my pictures are no good,
Just crude and childish daubs, a waste of paint.
I burned to throw on canvas all I saw—
Twilight on water, tenderness of trees,
Wet sands at sunset and the smoking seas,
The peace of valleys and the mountain's awe:
Emotion swayed me at the thought of these.
I sought to paint ere I had learned to draw,
And that's the trouble. . . .
Ah well! here am I,
Facing my failure after struggle long;
And there they are, my croutes that none will buy
(And doubtless they are right and I am wrong);
Well, when one's lost one's faith it's time to die. . . .

This knife will do . . . and now to slash and slash;
Rip them to ribands, rend them every one,
My dreams and visions—tear and stab and gash,
So that their crudeness may be known to none;
Poor, miserable daubs! Ah! there, it's done. . . .

And now to close my little window tight.
Lo! in the dusking sky, serenely set,
The evening star is like a beacon bright.
And see! to keep her tender tryst with night
How Paris veils herself in violet. . . .

Oh, why does God create such men as I?—
All pride and passion and divine desire,
Raw, quivering nerve-stuff and devouring fire,
Foredoomed to failure though they try and try;
Abortive, blindly to destruction hurled;
Unfound, unfit to grapple with the world. . . .

And now to light my wheezy jet of gas;
Chink up the window-crannies and the door,
So that no single breath of air may pass;
So that I'm sealed air-tight from roof to floor.
There, there, that's done; and now there's nothing more. . . .

Look at the city's myriad lamps a-shine;
See, the calm moon is launching into space . . .
There will be darkness in these eyes of mine
Ere it can climb to shine upon my face.
Oh, it will find such peace upon my face! . . .

City of Beauty, I have loved you well,
A laugh or two I've had, but many a sigh;
I've run with you the scale from Heav'n to Hell.
Paris, I love you still . . . good-by, good-by.
Thus it all ends—unhappily, alas!
It's time to sleep, and now . . . blow out the gas. . . .
Now there's that little midinette
Who goes to work each morning daily;
I choose to call her Blithe Babette,
Because she's always humming gaily;
And though the Goddess "Comme-il-faut"
May look on her with prim expression,
It's Pagan Paris where, you know,
The queen of virtues is Discretion.

Room 6: The Little Workgirl

Three gentlemen live close beside me—
A painter of pictures bizarre,
A poet whose virtues might guide me,
A singer who plays the guitar;
And there on my lintel is Cupid;
I leave my door open, and yet
These gentlemen, aren't they stupid!
They never make love to Babette.

I go to the shop every morning;
I work with my needle and thread;
Silk, satin and velvet adorning,
Then luncheon on coffee and bread.
Then sewing and sewing till seven;
Or else, if the order I get,
I toil and I toil till eleven—
And such is the day of Babette.

It doesn't seem cheerful, I fancy;
The wage is unthinkably small;
And yet there is one thing I can say:
I keep a bright face through it all.
I chaff though my head may be aching;
I sing a gay song to forget;
I laugh though my heart may be breaking—
It's all in the life of Babette.

That gown, O my lady of leisure,
You begged to be "finished in haste."
It gives you an exquisite pleasure,
Your lovers remark on its taste.
Yet . . . oh, the poor little white faces,
The tense midnight toil and the fret . . .
I fear that the foam of its laces
Is salt with the tears of Babette.

It takes a brave heart to be cheery
With no gleam of hope in the sky;
The future's so utterly dreary,
I'm laughing—in case I should cry.
And if, where the gay lights are glowing,
I dine with a man I have met,
And snatch a bright moment—who's going
To blame a poor little Babette?

And you, Friend beyond all the telling,
Although you're an ocean away,
Your pictures, they tell me, are selling,
You're married and settled, they say.

Such happiness one wouldn't barter;
Yet, oh, do you never regret
The Springtide, the roses, Montmartre,
Youth, poverty, love and—Babette?
That blond-haired chap across the way
With sunny smile and voice so mellow,
He sings in some cheap cabaret,
Yet what a gay and charming fellow!
His breath with garlic may be strong,
What matters it? his laugh is jolly;
His day he gives to sleep and song:
His night's made up of song and folly.
Room 5:The Concert Singer
I'm one of these haphazard chaps
Who sit in cafes drinking;
A most improper taste, perhaps,
Yet pleasant, to my thinking.
For, oh, I hate discord and strife;
I'm sadly, weakly human;
And I do think the best of life
Is wine and song and woman.

Now, there's that youngster on my right
Who thinks himself a poet,
And so he toils from morn to night
And vainly hopes to show it;
And there's that dauber on my left,
Within his chamber shrinking—
He looks like one of hope bereft;
He lives on air, I'm thinking.

But me, I love the things that are,
My heart is always merry;
I laugh and tune my old guitar:
Sing ho! and hey-down-derry.
Oh, let them toil their lives away
To gild a tawdry era,
But I'll be gay while yet I may:
Sing tira-lira-lira.

I'm sure you know that picture well,
A monk, all else unheeding,
Within a bare and gloomy cell
A musty volume reading;
While through the window you can see
In sunny glade entrancing,
With cap and bells beneath a tree
A jester dancing, dancing.

Which is the fool and which the sage?
I cannot quite discover;
But you may look in learning's page

And I’ll be laughter’s lover.
For this our life is none too long,
And hearts were made for gladness;
Let virtue lie in joy and song,
The only sin be sadness.

So let me troll a jolly air,
Come what come will to-morrow;
I’ll be no cabotin of care,
No souteneur of sorrow.
Let those who will indulge in strife,
To my most merry thinking,
The true philosophy of life
Is laughing, loving, drinking.
And there’s that weird and ghastly hag
Who walks head bent, with lips a-mutter;
With twitching hands and feet that drag,
And tattered skirts that sweep the gutter.
An outworn harlot, lost to hope,
With staring eyes and hair that’s hoary
I hear her gibber, dazed with dope:
I often wonder what’s her story.

Room 7: The Coco-Fiend

I look at no one, me;
I pass them on the stair;
Shadows! I don't see;
Shadows! everywhere.
Haunting, taunting, staring, glaring,
Shadows! I don't care.
Once my room I gain
Then my life begins.
Shut the door on pain;
How the Devil grins!
Grin with might and main;
Grin and grin in vain;
Here's where Heav'n begins:
Cocaine! Cocaine!

A whiff! Ah, that's the thing.
How it makes me gay!
Now I want to sing,
Leap, laugh, play.
Ha! I've had my fling!
Mistress of a king
In my day.
Just another snuff . . .
Oh, the blessed stuff!
How the wretched room
Rushes from my sight;
Misery and gloom
Melt into delight;
Fear and death and doom
Vanish in the night.
No more cold and pain,
I am young again,
Beautiful again,
Cocaine! Cocaine!

Oh, I was made to be good, to be good,
For a true man's love and a life that's sweet;
Fireside blessings and motherhood.
Little ones playing around my feet.
How it all unfolds like a magic screen,
Tender and glowing and clear and glad,
The wonderful mother I might have been,
The beautiful children I might have had;
Romping and laughing and shrill with glee,
Oh, I see them now and I see them plain.
Darlings! Come nestle up close to me,
You comfort me so, and you're just . . . Cocaine.

It’s Life that’s all to blame:
We can’t do what we will;
She robes us with her shame,
She crowns us with her ill.
I do not care, because
I see with bitter calm,
Life made me what I was,
Life makes me what I am.
Could I throw back the years,
It all would be the same;
Hunger and cold and tears,
Misery, fear and shame,
And then the old refrain,
Cocaine! Cocaine!

A love-child I, so here my mother came,
Where she might live in peace with none to blame.
And how she toiled! Harder than any slave,
What courage! patient, hopeful, tender, brave.
We had a little room at Lavilette,
So small, so neat, so clean, I see it yet.
Poor mother! sewing, sewing late at night,
Her wasted face beside the candlelight,
This Paris crushed her. How she used to sigh!
And as I watched her from my bed I knew
She saw red roofs against a primrose sky
And glistening fields and apples dimmed with dew.
Hard times we had. We counted every sou,
We sewed sacks for a living. I was quick . . .
Four busy hands to work instead of two.
Oh, we were happy there, till she fell sick. . . .

My mother lay, her face turned to the wall,
And I, a girl of sixteen, fair and tall,
Sat by her side, all stricken with despair,
Knelt by her bed and faltered out a prayer.
A doctor’s order on the table lay,
Medicine for which, alas! I could not pay;
Medicine to save her life, to soothe her pain.
I sought for something I could sell, in vain . . .
All, all was gone! The room was cold and bare;
Gone blankets and the cloak I used to wear;
Bare floor and wall and cupboard, every shelf—
Nothing that I could sell . . . except myself.

I sought the street, I could not bear
To hear my mother moaning there.
I clutched the paper in my hand.
‘Twas hard. You cannot understand . . .
I walked as martyr to the flame,
Almost exalted in my shame.
They turned, who heard my voiceless cry,

“For Sale, a virgin, who will buy?”
And so myself I fiercely sold,
And clutched the price, a piece of gold.
Into a pharmacy I pressed;
I took the paper from my breast.
I gave my money . . . how it gleamed!
How precious to my eyes it seemed!
And then I saw the chemist frown,
Quick on the counter throw it down,
Shake with an angry look his head:
“Your louis d’or is bad,” he said.

Dazed, crushed, I went into the night,
I clutched my gleaming coin so tight.
No, no, I could not well believe
That any one could so deceive.
I tried again and yet again—
Contempt, suspicion and disdain;
Always the same reply I had:
“Get out of this. Your money’s bad.”

Heart broken to the room I crept,
To mother’s side. All still . . . she slept . . .
I bent, I sought to raise her head . . .
“Oh, God, have pity!” she was dead.

That’s how it all began.
Said I:Revenge is sweet.
So in my guilty span
I’ve ruined many a man.
They’ve groveled at my feet,
I’ve pity had for none;
I’ve bled them every one.
Oh, I’ve had interest for
That worthless louis d’or.

But now it’s over; see,
I care for no one, me;
Only at night sometimes
In dreams I hear the chimes
Of wedding-bells and see
A woman without stain
With children at her knee.
Ah, how you comfort me,
Cocaine! . . .

Book Three. Late Summer

I

The Omnium Bar, near the Bourse,

Late July 1914.

MacBean, before he settled down to the manufacture of mercantile fiction, had ideas of a nobler sort, which bore their fruit in a slender book of poems. In subject they are either erotic, mythologic, or descriptive of nature. So polished are they that the mind seems to slide over them: so faultless in form that the critics hailed them with highest praise, and as many as a hundred copies were sold.

Saxon Dane, too, has published a book of poems, but he, on the other hand, defies tradition to an eccentric degree. Originality is his sin. He strains after it in every line. I must confess I think much of the free verse he writes is really prose, and a good deal of it blank verse chopped up into odd lengths. He talks of assonance and color, of stress and pause and accent, and bewilders me with his theories.

He and MacBean represent two extremes, and at night, as we sit in the Cafe du Dôme, they have the hottest of arguments. As for me, I listen with awe, content that my medium is verse, and that the fashions of Hood, Thackeray and Bret Harte are the fashions of to-day.

Of late I have been doing light stuff, "fillers" for MacBean. Here are three of my specimens:

The Philanderer

Oh, have you forgotten those afternoons
With riot of roses and amber skies,
When we thrilled to the joy of a million Junes,
And I sought for your soul in the deeps of your eyes?
I would love you, I promised, forever and aye,
And I meant it too; yet, oh, isn't it odd?
When we met in the Underground to-day
I addressed you as Mary instead of as Maude.

Oh, don't you remember that moonlit sea,
With us on a silver trail afloat,
When I gracefully sank on my bended knee
At the risk of upsetting our little boat?
Oh, I vowed that my life was blighted then,
As friendship you proffered with mournful mien;
But now as I think of your children ten,
I'm glad you refused me, Evangeline.

Oh, is that moment eternal still
When I breathed my love in your shell-like ear,
And you plucked at your fan as a maiden will,
And you blushed so charmingly, Guenivere?
Like a worshiper at your feet I sat;
For a year and a day you made me mad;
But now, alas! you are forty, fat,
And I think: What a lucky escape I had!

Oh, maidens I've set in a sacred shrine,
Oh, Rosamond, Molly and Mignonette,
I've deemed you in turn the most divine,
In turn you've broken my heart . . . and yet
It's easily mended. What's past is past.
To-day on Lucy I'm going to call;
For I'm sure that I know true love at last,
And She is the fairest girl of all.

The Petit Vieux

"Sow your wild oats in your youth," so we're always told;
But I say with deeper sooth: "Sow them when you're old."
I'll be wise till I'm about seventy or so:
Then, by Gad! I'll blossom out as an ancient beau.

I'll assume a dashing air, laugh with loud Ha! ha! . . .
How my grandchildren will stare at their grandpapa!
Their perfection aureoled I will scandalize:
Won't I be a hoary old sinner in their eyes!

Watch me, how I'll learn to chaff barmaids in a bar;
Scotches daily, gayly quaff, puff a fierce cigar.
I will haunt the Tango teas, at the stage-door stand;
Wait for Dolly Dimpleknees, bouquet in my hand.

Then at seventy I'll take flutters at roulette;
While at eighty hope I'll make good at poker yet;
And in fashionable togs to the races go,
Gayest of the gay old dogs, ninety years or so.

"Sow your wild oats while you're young," that's what you are told;
Don't believe the foolish tongue—sow 'em when you're old.
Till you're threescore years and ten, take my humble tip,
Sow your nice tame oats and then . . .Hi, boys! Let 'er rip.

My Masterpiece

It’s slim and trim and bound in blue;
Its leaves are crisp and edged with gold;
Its words are simple, stalwart too;
Its thoughts are tender, wise and bold.
Its pages scintillate with wit;
Its pathos clutches at my throat:
Oh, how I love each line of it!
That Little Book I Never Wrote.

In dreams I see it praised and prized
By all, from plowman unto peer;
It’s pencil-marked and memorized,
It’s loaned (and not returned, I fear);
It’s worn and torn and travel-tossed,
And even dusky natives quote
That classic that the world has lost,
The Little Book I Never Wrote.

Poor ghost! For homes you’ve failed to cheer,
For grieving hearts uncomforted,
Don’t haunt me now. . . .Alas! I fear
The fire of Inspiration’s dead.
A humdrum way I go to-night,
From all I hoped and dreamed remote:
Too late . . . a better man must write
That Little Book I Never Wrote.

Talking about writing books, there is a queer character who shuffles up and down the little streets that neighbor the Place Maubert, and who, they say, has been engaged on one for years. Sometimes I see him cowering in some cheap bouge, and his wild eyes gleam at me through the tangle of his hair. But I do not think he ever sees me. He mumbles to himself, and moves like a man in a dream. His pockets are full of filthy paper on which he writes from time to time. The students laugh at him and make him tipsy; the street boys pelt him with ordure; the better cafes turn him from their doors. But who knows? At least, this is how I see him:

My Book

Before I drink myself to death,
God, let me finish up my Book!
At night, I fear, I fight for breath,
And wake up whiter than a spook;
And crawl off to a bistro near,
And drink until my brain is clear.

Rare Absinthe! Oh, it gives me strength
To write and write; and so I spend
Day after day, until at length
With joy and pain I'll write The End:
Then let this carcase rot; I give
The world my Book—my Book will live.

For every line is tense with truth,
There's hope and joy on every page;
A cheer, a clarion call to Youth,
A hymn, a comforter to Age:
All's there that I was meant to be,
My part divine, the God in me.

It's of my life the golden sum;
Ah! who that reads this Book of mine,
In stormy centuries to come,
Will dream I rooted with the swine?
Behold! I give mankind my best:
What does it matter, all the rest?

It's this that makes sublime my day;
It's this that makes me struggle on.
Oh, let them mock my mortal clay,
My spirit's deathless as the dawn;
Oh, let them shudder as they look . . .
I'll be immortal in my Book.

And so beside the sullen Seine
I fight with dogs for filthy food,
Yet know that from my sin and pain
Will soar serene a Something Good;
Exultantly from shame and wrong
A Right, a Glory and a Song.

How charming it is, this Paris of the summer skies! Each morning I leap up with joy in my heart, all eager to begin the day of work. As I eat my breakfast and smoke my pipe, I ponder over my task. Then in the golden sunshine that floods my little attic I pace up and down, absorbed and forgetful of the world. As I compose I speak the words aloud. There are difficulties to overcome; thoughts that will not fit their mold; rebellious rhymes. Ah! those moments of despair and defeat.

Then suddenly the mind grows lucid, imagination glows, the snarl unravels. In the end is always triumph and success. O delectable métier! Who would not be a rhymesmith in Paris, in Bohemia, in the heart of youth!

I have now finished my twentieth ballad. Five more and they will be done. In quiet corners of cafes, on benches of the Luxembourg, on the sunny Quays I read them over one by one. Here is my latest:

My Hour

Day after day behold me plying
My pen within an office drear;
The dullest dog, till homeward hieing,
Then lo! I reign a king of cheer.
A throne have I of padded leather,
A little court of kiddies three,
A wife who smiles whate'er the weather,
A feast of muffins, jam and tea.

The table cleared, a romping battle,
A fairy tale, a "Children, bed,"
A kiss, a hug, a hush of prattle
(God save each little drowsy head!)
A cozy chat with wife a-sewing,
A silver lining clouds that low'r,
Then she too goes, and with her going,
I come again into my Hour.

I poke the fire, I snugly settle,
My pipe I prime with proper care;
The water's purring in the kettle,
Rum, lemon, sugar, all are there.
And now the honest grog is steaming,
And now the trusty briar's aglow:
Alas! in smoking, drinking, dreaming,
How sadly swift the moments go!

Oh, golden hour! 'twixt love and duty,
All others I to others give;
But you are mine to yield to Beauty,
To glean Romance, to greatly live.
For in my easy-chair reclining . . .
I feel the sting of ocean spray;
And yonder wondrously are shining
The Magic Isles of Far Away.

Beyond the comber's crashing thunder
Strange beaches flash into my ken;
On jetties heaped head-high with plunder
I dance and dice with sailor-men.
Strange stars swarm down to burn above me,
Strange shadows haunt, strange voices greet;
Strange women lure and laugh and love me,
And fling their bastards at my feet.

Oh, I would wish the wide world over,
In ports of passion and unrest,
To drink and drain, a tarry rover
With dragons tattooed on my chest,

With haunted eyes that hold red glories
Of foaming seas and crashing shores,
With lips that tell the strangest stories
Of sunken ships and gold moidores;

Till sick of storm and strife and slaughter,
Some ghostly night when hides the moon,
I slip into the milk-warm water
And softly swim the stale lagoon.
Then through some jungle python-haunted,
Or plumed morass, or woodland wild,
I win my way with heart undaunted,
And all the wonder of a child.

The pathless plains shall swoon around me,
The forests frown, the floods appall;
The mountains tiptoe to confound me,
The rivers roar to speed my fall.
Wild dooms shall daunt, and dawns be gory,
And Death shall sit beside my knee;
Till after terror, torment, glory,
I win again the sea, the sea. . . .

Oh, anguish sweet! Oh, triumph splendid!
Oh, dreams adieu! my pipe is dead.
My glass is dry, my Hour is ended,
It's time indeed I stole to bed.
How peacefully the house is sleeping!
Ah! why should I strange fortunes plan?
To guard the dear ones in my keeping—
That's task enough for any man.

So through dim seas I'll ne'er go spoiling;
The red Tortugas never roam;
Please God! I'll keep the pot a-boiling,
And make at least a happy home.
My children's path shall gleam with roses,
Their grace abound, their joy increase.
And so my Hour divinely closes
With tender thoughts of praise and peace.

II

The Garden of the Luxembourg,

Late July 1914.

When on some scintillating summer morning I leap lightly up to the seclusion of my garret, I often think of those lines: "In the brave days when I was twenty-one."

True, I have no loving, kind Lisette to pin her petticoat across the pane, yet I do live in hope. Am I not in Bohemia the Magical, Bohemia of Murger, of de Musset, of Verlaine? Shades of Mimi Pinson, of Trilby, of all that immortal line of laughterful grisettes, do not tell me that the days of love and fun are forever at an end!

Yes, youth is golden, but what of age? Shall it too not testify to the rhapsody of existence? Let the years between be those of struggle, of sufferance—of disillusion if you will; but let youth and age affirm the ecstasy of being. Let us look forward all to a serene sunset, and in the still skies "a late lark singing".

This thought comes to me as, sitting on a bench near the band-stand, I see an old savant who talks to all the children. His clean-shaven face is alive with kindliness; under his tall silk hat his white hair falls to his shoulders. He wears a long black cape over a black frock-coat, very neat linen, and a flowing tie of black silk. I call him "Silvester Bonnard". As I look at him I truly think the best of life are the years between sixty and seventy.

A Song of Sixty-Five

Brave Thackeray has trolled of days when he was twenty-one,
And bounded up five flights of stairs, a gallant garreteer;
And yet again in mellow vein when youth was gaily run,
Has dipped his nose in Gascon wine, and told of Forty Year.
But if I worthy were to sing a richer, rarer time,
I'd tune my pipes before the fire and merrily I'd strive
To praise that age when prose again has given way to rhyme,
The Indian Summer days of life when I'll be Sixty-five;

For then my work will all be done, my voyaging be past,
And I'll have earned the right to rest where folding hills are green;
So in some glassy anchorage I'll make my cable fast,—
Oh, let the seas show all their teeth, I'll sit and smile serene.
The storm may bellow round the roof, I'll bide beside the fire,
And many a scene of sail and trail within the flame I'll see;
For I'll have worn away the spur of passion and desire. . . .
Oh yes, when I am Sixty-five, what peace will come to me.

I'll take my breakfast in my bed, I'll rise at half-past ten,
When all the world is nicely groomed and full of golden song;
I'll smoke a bit and joke a bit, and read the news, and then
I'll potter round my peach-trees till I hear the luncheon gong.
And after that I think I'll doze an hour, well, maybe two,
And then I'll show some kindred soul how well my roses thrive;
I'll do the things I never yet have found the time to do. . . .
Oh, won't I be the busy man when I am Sixty-five.

I'll revel in my library; I'll read De Morgan's books;
I'll grow so garrulous I fear you'll write me down a bore;
I'll watch the ways of ants and bees in quiet sunny nooks,
I'll understand Creation as I never did before.
When gossips round the tea-cups talk I'll listen to it all;
On smiling days some kindly friend will take me for a drive:
I'll own a shaggy collie dog that dashes to my call:
I'll celebrate my second youth when I am Sixty-five.

Ah, though I've twenty years to go, I see myself quite plain,
A wrinkling, twinkling, rosy-cheeked, benevolent old chap;
I think I'll wear a tartan shawl and lean upon a cane.
I hope that I'll have silver hair beneath a velvet cap.
I see my little grandchildren a-romping round my knee;
So gay the scene, I almost wish 'twould hasten to arrive.
Let others sing of Youth and Spring, still will it seem to me
The golden time's the olden time, some time round Sixty-five.

From old men to children is but a step, and there too, in the shadow of the Fontaine de Medicis, I spend much of my time watching the little ones. Childhood, so innocent, so helpless, so trusting, is somehow pathetic to me.

There was one jolly little chap who used to play with a large white Teddy Bear. He was always with his mother, a sweet-faced woman, who followed his every movement with delight. I used to watch them both, and often spoke a few words.

Then one day I missed them, and it struck me I had not seen them for a week, even a month, maybe. After that I looked for them a time or two and soon forgot.

Then this morning I saw the mother in the rue D'Assas. She was alone and in deep black. I wanted to ask after the boy, but there was a look in her face that stopped me.

I do not think she will ever enter the garden of the Luxembourg again.

Teddy Bear

O Teddy Bear! with your head awry
And your comical twisted smile,
You rub your eyes—do you wonder why
You've slept such a long, long while?
As you lay so still in the cupboard dim,
And you heard on the roof the rain,
Were you thinking . . . what has become of him?
And when will he play again?

Do you sometimes long for a chubby hand,
And a voice so sweetly shrill?
O Teddy Bear! don't you understand
Why the house is awf'ly still?
You sit with your muzzle propped on your paws,
And your whimsical face askew.
Don't wait, don't wait for your friend . . . because
He's sleeping and dreaming too.

Aye, sleeping long. . . .You remember how
He stabbed our hearts with his cries?
And oh, the dew of pain on his brow,
And the deeps of pain in his eyes!
And, Teddy Bear! you remember, too,
As he sighed and sank to his rest,
How all of a sudden he smiled to you,
And he clutched you close to his breast.

I'll put you away, little Teddy Bear,
In the cupboard far from my sight;
Maybe he'll come and he'll kiss you there,
A wee white ghost in the night.
But me, I'll live with my love and pain
A weariful lifetime through;
And my Hope: will I see him again, again?
Ah, God! If I only knew!

After old men and children I am greatly interested in dogs. I will go out of my way to caress one who shows any desire to be friendly. There is a very filthy fellow who collects cigarette stubs on the Boul' Mich', and who is always followed by a starved yellow cur. The other day I came across them in a little side street. The man was stretched on the pavement brutishly drunk and dead to the world. The dog, lying by his side, seemed to look at me with sad, imploring eyes. Though all the world despise that man, I thought, this poor brute loves him and will be faithful unto death.

From this incident I wrote the verses that follow:

The Outlaw

A wild and woeful race he ran
Of lust and sin by land and sea;
Until, abhorred of God and man,
They swung him from the gallows-tree.
And then he climbed the Starry Stair,
And dumb and naked and alone,
With head unbowed and brazen glare,
He stood before the Judgment Throne.

The Keeper of the Records spoke:
"This man, O Lord, has mocked Thy Name.
The weak have wept beneath his yoke,
The strong have fled before his flame.
The blood of babes is on his sword;
His life is evil to the brim:
Look down, decree his doom, O Lord!
Lo! there is none will speak for him."

The golden trumpets blew a blast
That echoed in the crypts of Hell,
For there was Judgment to be passed,
And lips were hushed and silence fell.
The man was mute; he made no stir,
Erect before the Judgment Seat . . .
When all at once a mongrel cur
Crept out and cowered and licked his feet.

It licked his feet with whining cry.
Come Heav'n, come Hell, what did it care?
It leapt, it tried to catch his eye;
Its master, yea, its God was there.
Then, as a thrill of wonder sped
Through throngs of shining seraphim,
The Judge of All looked down and said:
"Lo! here is ONE who pleads for him.

"And who shall love of these the least,
And who by word or look or deed
Shall pity show to bird or beast,
By Me shall have a friend in need.
Aye, though his sin be black as night,
And though he stand 'mid men alone,
He shall be softened in My sight,
And find a pleader by My Throne.

"So let this man to glory win;
From life to life salvation glean;
By pain and sacrifice and sin,
Until he stand before Me—clean.

For he who loves the least of these
(And here I say and here repeat)
Shall win himself an angel's pleas
For Mercy at My Judgment Seat."

I take my exercise in the form of walking. It keeps me fit and leaves me free to think. In this way I have come to know Paris like my pocket. I have explored its large and little streets, its stateliness and its slums.

But most of all I love the Quays, between the leafage and the sunlit Seine. Like shuttles the little steamers dart up and down, weaving the water into patterns of foam. Cigar-shaped barges stream under the lacework of the many bridges and make me think of tranquil days and willow-fringed horizons.

But what I love most is the stealing in of night, when the sky takes on that strange elusive purple; when eyes turn to the evening star and marvel at its brightness; when the Eiffel Tower becomes a strange, shadowy stairway yearning in impotent effort to the careless moon.

Here is my latest ballad, short if not very sweet:

The Walkers

(He speaks.)

Walking, walking, oh, the joy of walking!
Swinging down the tawny lanes with head held high;
Striding up the green hills, through the heather stalking,
Swishing through the woodlands where the brown leaves lie;
Marveling at all things—windmills gaily turning,
Apples for the cider-press, ruby-hued and gold;
Tails of rabbits twinkling, scarlet berries burning,
Wedge of geese high-flying in the sky's clear cold,
Light in little windows, field and furrow darkling;
Home again returning, hungry as a hawk;
Whistling up the garden, ruddy-cheeked and sparkling,
Oh, but I am happy as I walk, walk, walk!
(She speaks.)

Walking, walking, oh, the curse of walking!
Slouching round the grim square, shuffling up the street,
Slinking down the by-way, all my graces hawking,
Offering my body to each man I meet.
Peering in the gin-shop where the lads are drinking,
Trying to look gay-like, crazy with the blues;
Halting in a doorway, shuddering and shrinking
(Oh, my draggled feather and my thin, wet shoes).
Here's a drunken drover: "Hullo, there, old dearie!"
No, he only curses, can't be got to talk. . . .
On and on till daylight, famished, wet and weary,
God in Heaven help me as I walk, walk, walk!

III

The Cafe de la Source,

Late in July 1914.

The other evening MacBean was in a pessimistic mood.

"Why do you write?" he asked me gloomily.

"Obviously," I said, "to avoid starving. To produce something that will buy me food, shelter, raiment."

"If you were a millionaire, would you still write?"

"Yes," I said, after a moment's thought. "You get an idea. It haunts you. It seems to clamor for expression. It begins to obsess you. At last in desperation you embody it in a poem, an essay, a story. There! it is disposed of. You are at rest. It troubles you no more. Yes; if I were a millionaire I should write, if it were only to escape from my ideas."

"You have given two reasons why men write," said MacBean: "for gain, for self-expression. Then, again, some men write to amuse themselves, some because they conceive they have a mission in the world; some because they have real genius, and are conscious they can enrich the literature of all time. I must say I don't know of any belonging to the latter class. We are living in an age of mediocrity. There is no writer of to-day who will be read twenty years after he is dead. That's a truth that must come home to the best of them."

"I guess they're not losing much sleep over it," I said.

"Take novelists," continued MacBean. "The line of first-class novelists ended with Dickens and Thackeray. Then followed some of the second class, Stevenson, Meredith, Hardy. And to-day we have three novelists of the third class, good, capable craftsmen. We can trust ourselves comfortably in their hands. We read and enjoy them, but do you think our children will?"

"Yours won't, anyway," I said.

"Don't be too sure. I may surprise you yet. I may get married and turn *bourgeois*."

The best thing that could happen to MacBean would be that. It might change his point of view. He is so painfully discouraging. I have never mentioned my ballads to him. He would be sure to throw cold water on them. And as it draws near to its end the thought of my book grows more and more dear to me. How I will get it published I know not; but I will. Then even if it doesn't sell, even if nobody reads it, I will be content. Out of this brief, perishable Me I will have made something concrete, something that will preserve my thought within its dusty covers long after I am dead and dust.

Here is one of my latest:

Poor Peter

Blind Peter Piper used to play
All up and down the city;
I'd often meet him on my way,
And throw a coin for pity.
But all amid his sparkling tones
His ear was quick as any
To catch upon the cobble-stones
The jingle of my penny.

And as upon a day that shone
He piped a merry measure:
"How well you play!" I chanced to say;
Poor Peter glowed with pleasure.
You'd think the words of praise I spoke
Were all the pay he needed;
The artist in the player woke,
The penny lay unheeded.

Now Winter's here; the wind is shrill,
His coat is thin and tattered;
Yet hark! he's playing trill on trill
As if his music mattered.
And somehow though the city looks
Soaked through and through with shadows,
He makes you think of singing brooks
And larks and sunny meadows.

Poor chap! he often starves, they say;
Well, well, I can believe it;
For when you chuck a coin his way
He'll let some street-boy thieve it.
I fear he freezes in the night;
My praise I've long repented,
Yet look! his face is all alight . . .
Blind Peter seems contented.

A day later.

On the terrace of the Closerie de Lilas I came on Saxon Dane. He was smoking his big briar and drinking a huge glass of brown beer. The tree gave a pleasant shade, and he had thrown his sombrero on a chair. I noted how his high brow was bronzed by the sun and there were golden lights in his broad beard. There was something massive and imposing in the man as he sat there in brooding thought.

MacBean, he told me, was sick and unable to leave his room. Rheumatism. So I bought a cooked chicken and a bottle of Barsac, and mounting to the apartment of the invalid, I made him eat and drink. MacBean was very despondent, but cheered up greatly.

I think he rather dreads the future. He cannot save money, and all he makes he spends. He has always been a rover, often tried to settle down but could not. Now I think he wishes for security. I fear, however, it is too late.

The Wistful One

I sought the trails of South and North,
I wandered East and West;
But pride and passion drove me forth
And would not let me rest.

And still I seek, as still I roam,
A snug roof overhead;
Four walls, my own; a quiet home. . . .
“You’ll have it—when you’re dead.”

MacBean is one of Bohemia’s victims. It is a country of the young. The old have no place in it. He will gradually lose his grip, go down and down. I am sorry. He is my nearest approach to a friend. I do not make them easily. I have deep reserves. I like solitude. I am never so surrounded by boon companions as when I am all alone.

But though I am a solitary I realize the beauty of friendship, and on looking through my note-book I find the following:

If You Had a Friend

If you had a friend strong, simple, true,
Who knew your faults and who understood;
Who believed in the very best of you,
And who cared for you as a father would;
Who would stick by you to the very end,
Who would smile however the world might frown:
I'm sure you would try to please your friend,
You never would think to throw him down.

And supposing your friend was high and great,
And he lived in a palace rich and tall,
And sat like a King in shining state,
And his praise was loud on the lips of all;
Well then, when he turned to you alone,
And he singled you out from all the crowd,
And he called you up to his golden throne,
Oh, wouldn't you just be jolly proud?

If you had a friend like this, I say,
So sweet and tender, so strong and true,
You'd try to please him in every way,
You'd live at your bravest—now, wouldn't you?
His worth would shine in the words you penned;
You'd shout his praises . . . yet now it's odd!
You tell me you haven't got such a friend;
You haven't? I wonder . . . What of God?

To how few is granted the privilege of doing the work which lies closest to the heart, the work for which one is best fitted. The happy man is he who knows his limitations, yet bows to no false gods.

MacBean is not happy. He is overridden by his appetites, and to satisfy them he writes stuff that in his heart he despises.

Saxon Dane is not happy. His dream exceeds his grasp. His twisted, tortured phrases mock the vague grandiosity of his visions.

I am happy. My talent is proportioned to my ambition. The things I like to write are the things I like to read. I prefer the lesser poets to the greater, the cackle of the barnyard fowl to the scream of the eagle. I lack the divinity of discontent.

True Contentment comes from within. It dominates circumstance. It is resignation wedded to philosophy, a Christian quality seldom attained except by the old.

There is such an one I sometimes see being wheeled about in the Luxembourg. His face is beautiful in its thankfulness.

The Contented Man

“How good God is to me,” he said;
“For have I not a mansion tall,
With trees and lawns of velvet tread,
And happy helpers at my call?
With beauty is my life abrim,
With tranquil hours and dreams apart;
You wonder that I yield to Him
That best of prayers, a grateful heart?”

“How good God is to me,” he said;
“For look! though gone is all my wealth,
How sweet it is to earn one’s bread
With brawny arms and brimming health.
Oh, now I know the joy of strife!
To sleep so sound, to wake so fit.
Ah yes, how glorious is life!
I thank Him for each day of it.”

“How good God is to me,” he said;
“Though health and wealth are gone, it’s true;
Things might be worse, I might be dead,
And here I’m living, laughing too.
Serene beneath the evening sky
I wait, and every man’s my friend;
God’s most contented man am I . . .
He keeps me smiling to the End.”

To-day the basin of the Luxembourg is bright with little boats. Hundreds of happy children romp around it. Little ones everywhere; yet there is no other city with so many childless homes.

The Spirit of the Unborn Babe

The Spirit of the Unborn Babe peered through the window-pane,
Peered through the window-pane that glowed like beacon in the night;
For, oh, the sky was desolate and wild with wind and rain;
And how the little room was crammed with coziness and light!
Except the flirting of the fire there was no sound at all;
The Woman sat beside the hearth, her knitting on her knee;
The shadow of her husband's head was dancing on the wall;
She looked with staring eyes at it, she looked yet did not see.
She only saw a childish face that topped the table rim,
A little wistful ghost that smiled and vanished quick away;
And then because her tender eyes were flooding to the brim,
She lowered her head. . . ."Don't sorrow, dear," she heard him softly say;
"It's over now. We'll try to be as happy as before
(Ah! they who little children have, grant hostages to pain).
We gave Life chance to wound us once, but never, never more. . . ."
The Spirit of the Unborn Babe fled through the night again.

The Spirit of the Unborn Babe went wildered in the dark;
Like termagants the winds tore down and whirled it with the snow.
And then amid the writhing storm it saw a tiny spark,
A window broad, a spacious room all goldenly aglow,
A woman slim and Paris-gowned and exquisitely fair,
Who smiled with rapture as she watched her jewels catch the blaze;
A man in faultless evening dress, young, handsome, debonnaire,
Who smoked his cigarette and looked with frank admiring gaze.
"Oh, we are happy, sweet," said he; "youth, health, and wealth are ours.
What if a thousand toil and sweat that we may live at ease!
What if the hands are worn and torn that strew our path with flowers!
Ah, well! we did not make the world; let us not think of these.
Let's seek the beauty-spots of earth, Dear Heart, just you and I;
Let other women bring forth life with sorrow and with pain.
Above our door we'll hang the sign: 'No children need apply. . . .'"
The Spirit of the Unborn Babe sped through the night again.

The Spirit of the Unborn Babe went whirling on and on;
It soared above a city vast, it swept down to a slum;
It saw within a grimy house a light that dimly shone;
It peered in through a window-pane and lo! a voice said: "Come!"
And so a little girl was born amid the dirt and din,
And lived in spite of everything, for life is ordered so;
A child whose eyes first opened wide to swinishness and sin,
A child whose love and innocence met only curse and blow.
And so in due and proper course she took the path of shame,
And gladly died in hospital, quite old at twenty years;
And when God comes to weigh it all, ah! whose shall be the blame
For all her maimed and poisoned life, her torture and her tears?
For oh, it is not what we do, but what we have not done!

And on that day of reckoning, when all is plain and clear,
What if we stand before the Throne, blood-guilty every one? . . .
Maybe the blackest sins of all are Selfishness and Fear.

IV

The Cafe de la Paix, August 1, 1914.

Paris and I are out of tune. As I sit at this famous corner the faint breeze is stale and weary; stale and weary too the faces that swirl around me; while overhead the electric sign of Somebody's Chocolate appears and vanishes with irritating insistency. The very trees seem artificial, gleaming under the arc-lights with a raw virility that rasps my nerves.

"Poor little trees," I mutter, "growing in all this grime and glare, your only dryads the loitering ladies with the complexions of such brilliant certainty, your only Pipes of Pan orchestral echoes from the clamorous cafes. Exiles of the forest! what know you of full-blossomed winds, of red-embered sunsets, of the gentle admonition of spring rain! Life, that would fain be a melody, seems here almost a malady. I crave for the balm of Nature, the anodyne of solitude, the breath of Mother Earth. Tell me, O wistful trees, what shall I do?"

Then that stale and weary wind rustles the leaves of the nearest sycamore, and I am sure it whispers: "Brittany."

So to-morrow I am off, off to the Land of Little Fields.

Finistère

Hurrah !I'm off to Finistère, to Finistère, to Finistère;
My satchel's swinging on my back, my staff is in my hand;
I've twenty louis in my purse, I know the sun and sea are there,
And so I'm starting out to-day to tramp the golden land.
I'll go alone and glorying, with on my lips a song of joy;
I'll leave behind the city with its canker and its care;
I'll swing along so sturdily—oh, won't I be the happy boy!
A-singing on the rocky roads, the roads of Finistère.

Oh, have you been to Finistère, and do you know a whin-gray town
That echoes to the clatter of a thousand wooden shoes?
And have you seen the fisher-girls go gallivantin' up and down,
And watched the tawny boats go out, and heard the roaring crews?
Oh, would you sit with pipe and bowl, and dream upon some sunny quay,
Or would you walk the windy heath and drink the cooler air;
Oh, would you seek a cradled cove and tussle with the topaz sea!—
Pack up your kit to-morrow, lad, and haste to Finistère.

Oh, I will go to Finistère, there's nothing that can hold me back.
I'll laugh with Yves and Léon, and I'll chaff with Rose and Jeanne;
I'll seek the little, quaint buvette that's kept by Mother Merdrinaç
Who wears a cap of many frills, and swears just like a man.
I'll yarn with hearty, hairy chaps who dance and leap and crack their heels;
Who swallow cupfuls of cognac and never turn a hair;
I'll watch the nut-brown boats come in with mullet, plaice and conger eels,
The jeweled harvest of the sea they reap in Finistère.

Yes, I'll come back from Finistère with memories of shining days,
Of scaly nets and salty men in overalls of brown;
Of ancient women knitting as they watch the tethered cattle graze
By little nestling beaches where the gorse goes blazing down;
Of headlands silvering the sea, of Calvarys against the sky,
Of scorn of angry sunsets, and of Carnac grim and bare;
Oh, won't I have the leaping veins, and tawny cheek and sparkling eye,
When I come back to Montparnasse and dream of Finistère.

Two days later.

Behold me with staff and scrip, footing it merrily in the Land of Pardons. I have no goal. When I am weary I stop at some auberge; when I am rested I go on again. Neither do I put any constraint on my spirit. No subduing of the mind to the task of the moment. I dream to heart's content.

My dreams stretch into the future. I see myself a singer of simple songs, a laureate of the under-dog. I will write books, a score of them. I will voyage far and wide. I will . . .

But there! Dreams are dangerous. They waste the time one should spend in making them come true. Yet when we do make them come true, we find the vision sweeter than the reality.

How much of our happiness do we owe to dreams? I have in mind one old chap who used to herd the sheep on my uncle's farm.

Old David Smail

He dreamed away his hours in school;
He sat with such an absent air,
The master reckoned him a fool,
And gave him up in dull despair.

When other lads were making hay
You'd find him loafing by the stream;
He'd take a book and slip away,
And just pretend to fish . . . and dream.

His brothers passed him in the race;
They climbed the hill and clutched the prize.
He did not seem to heed, his face
Was tranquil as the evening skies.

He lived apart, he spoke with few;
Abstractedly through life he went;
Oh, what he dreamed of no one knew,
And yet he seemed to be content.

I see him now, so old and gray,
His eyes with inward vision dim;
And though he faltered on the way,
Somehow I almost envied him.

At last beside his bed I stood:
"And is Life done so soon?" he sighed;
"It's been so rich, so full, so good,
I've loved it all . . ."—and so he died.

Another day.

Framed in hedgerows of emerald, the wheat glows with a caloric fervor, as if gorged with summer heat. In the vivid green of pastures old women are herding cows. Calm and patient are their faces as with gentle industry they bend over their knitting. One feels that they are necessary to the landscape.

To gaze at me the field-workers suspend the magnificent lethargy of their labors. The men with the reaping hooks improve the occasion by another pull at the cider bottle under the stook; the women raise apathetic brown faces from the sheaf they are tying; every one is a study in deliberation, though the crop is russet ripe and crying to be cut.

Then on I go again amid high banks overgrown with fern and honeysuckle. Sometimes I come on an old mill that seems to have been constructed by Constable, so charmingly does Nature imitate Art. By the deserted house, half drowned in greenery, the velvety wheel, dipping in the crystal water, seems to protest against this prolongation of its toil.

Then again I come on its brother, the Mill of the Wind, whirling its arms so cheerily, as it turns its great white stones for its master, the floury miller by the door.

These things delight me. I am in a land where Time has lagged, where simple people timorously hug the Past. How far away now seems the welter and swelter of the city, the

hectic sophistication of the streets. The sense of wonder is strong in me again, the joy of looking at familiar things as if one were seeing them for the first time.

The Wonderer

I wish that I could understand
The moving marvel of my Hand;
I watch my fingers turn and twist,
The supple bending of my wrist,
The dainty touch of finger-tip,
The steel intensity of grip;
A tool of exquisite design,
With pride I think: “It’s mine! It’s mine!”

Then there’s the wonder of my Eyes,
Where hills and houses, seas and skies,
In waves of light converge and pass,
And print themselves as on a glass.
Line, form and color live in me;
I am the Beauty that I see;
Ah! I could write a book of size
About the wonder of my Eyes.

What of the wonder of my Heart,
That plays so faithfully its part?
I hear it running sound and sweet;
It does not seem to miss a beat;
Between the cradle and the grave
It never falters, stanch and brave.
Alas! I wish I had the art
To tell the wonder of my Heart.

Then oh! but how can I explain
The wondrous wonder of my Brain?
That marvelous machine that brings
All consciousness of wonderings;
That lets me from myself leap out
And watch my body walk about;
It’s hopeless—all my words are vain
To tell the wonder of my Brain.

But do not think, O patient friend,
Who reads these stanzas to the end,
That I myself would glorify. . . .
You’re just as wonderful as I,
And all Creation in our view
Is quite as marvelous as you.
Come, let us on the sea-shore stand
And wonder at a grain of sand;
And then into the meadow pass
And marvel at a blade of grass;
Or cast our vision high and far
And thrill with wonder at a star;

A host of stars—night's holy tent
Huge-glittering with wonderment.

If wonder is in great and small,
Then what of Him who made it all?
In eyes and brain and heart and limb
Let's see the wondrous work of Him.
In house and hill and sward and sea,
In bird and beast and flower and tree,
In everything from sun to sod,
The wonder and the awe of God.

August 9, 1914.

For some time the way has been growing wilder. Thickset hedges have yielded to dykes of stone, and there is every sign that I am approaching the rugged region of the coast. At each point of vantage I can see a Cross, often a relic of the early Christians, stumpy and corroded.

Then I come on a slab of gray stone upstanding about fifteen feet. Like a sentinel on that solitary plain it overwhelms me with a sense of mystery.

But as I go on through this desolate land these stones become more and more familiar. Like soldiers they stand in rank, extending over the moor. The sky is cowled with cloud, save where a sullen sunset shoots blood-red rays across the plain. Bathed in that sinister light stands my army of stone, and a wind swooping down seems to wail amid its ranks. As in a glass darkly I can see the skin-clad men, the women with their tangled hair, the beast-like feast, the cowering terror of the night. Then the sunset is cut off suddenly, and a clammy mist shrouds that silent army. So it is almost with a shudder I take my last look at the Stones of Carnac.

But now my pilgrimage is drawing to an end. A painter friend who lives by the sea has asked me to stay with him awhile. Well, I have walked a hundred miles, singing on the way. I have dreamed and dawdled, planned, exulted. I have drunk buckets of cider, and eaten many an omelette that seemed like a golden glorification of its egg. It has all been very sweet, but it will also be sweet to loaf awhile.

Oh, It Is Good

Oh, it is good to drink and sup,
And then beside the kindly fire
To smoke and heap the faggots up,
And rest and dream to heart's desire.

Oh, it is good to ride and run,
To roam the greenwood wild and free;
To hunt, to idle in the sun,
To leap into the laughing sea.

Oh, it is good with hand and brain
To gladly till the chosen soil,
And after honest sweat and strain
To see the harvest of one's toil.

Oh, it is good afar to roam,
And seek adventure in strange lands;
Yet oh, so good the coming home,
The velvet love of little hands.

So much is good. . . .We thank Thee, God,
For all the tokens Thou hast given,
That here on earth our feet have trod
Thy little shining trails of Heaven.

V

August 10, 1914.

I am living in a little house so near the sea that at high tide I can see on my bedroom wall the reflected ripple of the water. At night I waken to the melodious welter of waves; or maybe there is a great stillness, and then I know that the sand and sea-grass are lying naked to the moon. But soon the tide returns, and once more I hear the roistering of the waves.

Calvert, my friend, is a lover as well as a painter of nature. He rises with the dawn to see the morning mist kindle to coral and the sun's edge clear the hill-crest. As he munches his coarse bread and sips his white wine, what dreams are his beneath the magic changes of the sky! He will paint the same scene under a dozen conditions of light. He has looked so long for Beauty that he has come to see it everywhere.

I love this friendly home of his. A peace steals over my spirit, and I feel as if I could stay here always. Some day I hope that I too may have such an one, and that I may write like this:

I Have Some Friends

I have some friends, some worthy friends,
And worthy friends are rare:
These carpet slippers on my feet,
That padded leather chair;
This old and shabby dressing-gown,
So well the worse of wear.

I have some friends, some honest friends,
And honest friends are few;
My pipe of briar, my open fire,
A book that's not too new;
My bed so warm, the nights of storm
I love to listen to.

I have some friends, some good, good friends,
Who faithful are to me:
My wrestling partner when I rise,
The big and burly sea;
My little boat that's riding there
So saucy and so free.

I have some friends, some golden friends,
Whose worth will not decline:
A tawny Irish terrier, a purple shading pine,
A little red-roofed cottage that
So proudly I call mine.

All other friends may come and go,
All other friendships fail;
But these, the friends I've worked to win,
Oh, they will never stale;
And comfort me till Time shall write
The finish to my tale.

Calvert tries to paint more than the thing he sees; he tries to paint behind it, to express its spirit. He believes that Beauty is God made manifest, and that when we discover Him in Nature we discover Him in ourselves.

But Calvert did not always see thus. At one time he was a Pagan, content to paint the outward aspect of things. It was after his little child died he gained in vision. Maybe the thought that the dead are lost to us was too unbearable. He had to believe in a coming together again.

The Quest

I sought Him on the purple seas,
I sought Him on the peaks aflame;
Amid the gloom of giant trees
And canyons lone I called His name;
The wasted ways of earth I trod:
In vain! In vain! I found not God.

I sought Him in the hives of men,
The cities grand, the hamlets gray,
The temples old beyond my ken,
The tabernacles of to-day;
All life that is, from cloud to clod
I sought. . . .Alas! I found not God.

Then after roamings far and wide,
In streets and seas and deserts wild,
I came to stand at last beside
The death-bed of my little child.
Lo! as I bent beneath the rod
I raised my eyes . . . and there was God.

A golden mile of sand swings hammock-like between two tusks of rock. The sea is sleeping sapphire that wakes to cream and crash upon the beach. There is a majesty in the detachment of its lazy waves, and it is good in the night to hear its friendly roar. Good, too, to leap forth with the first sunshine and fall into its arms, to let it pummel the body to living ecstasy and send one to breakfast glad-eyed and glowing.

Behind the house the greensward slopes to a wheat-field that is like a wall of gold. Here I lie and laze away the time, or dip into a favorite book, Stevenson’s Letters or Belloc’s Path to Rome. Bees drone in the wild thyme; a cuckoo keeps calling, a lark spills jeweled melody.

Then there is a seeming silence, but it is the silence of a deeper sound.

After all, Silence is only man’s confession of his deafness. Like Death, like Eternity, it is a word that means nothing. So lying there I hear the breathing of the trees, the crepitation of the growing grass, the seething of the sap and the movements of innumerable insects. Strange how I think with distaste of the spurious glitter of Paris, of my garret, even of my poor little book.

I watch the wife of my friend gathering poppies in the wheat. There is a sadness in her face, for it is only a year ago they lost their little one. Often I see her steal away to the village graveyard, sitting silent for long and long.

The Comforter

As I sat by my baby's bed
That's open to the sky,
There fluttered round and round my head
A radiant butterfly.

And as I wept—of hearts that ache
The saddest in the land—
It left a lily for my sake,
And lighted on my hand.

I watched it, oh, so quietly,
And though it rose and flew,
As if it fain would comfort me
It came and came anew.

Now, where my darling lies at rest,
I do not dare to sigh,
For look! there gleams upon my breast
A snow-white butterfly.

My friends will have other children, and if some day they should read this piece of verse, perhaps they will think of the city lad who used to sit under the old fig-tree in the garden and watch the lizards sun themselves on the time-worn wall.

The Other One

“Gather around me, children dear;
The wind is high and the night is cold;
Closer, little ones, snuggle near;
Let’s seek a story of ages old;
A magic tale of a bygone day,
Of lovely ladies and dragons dread;
Come, for you’re all so tired of play,
We’ll read till it’s time to go to bed.”

So they all are glad, and they nestle in,
And squat on the rough old nursery rug,
And they nudge and hush as I begin,
And the fire leaps up and all’s so snug;
And there I sit in the big arm-chair,
And how they are eager and sweet and wise,
And they cup their chins in their hands and stare
At the heart of the flame with thoughtful eyes.

And then, as I read by the ruddy glow
And the little ones sit entranced and still . . .
He’s drawing near, ah! I know, I know
He’s listening too, as he always will.
He’s there—he’s standing beside my knee;
I see him so well, my wee, wee son. . . .
Oh, children dear, don’t look at me—
I’m reading now for—the Other One.

For the firelight glints in his golden hair,
And his wondering eyes are fixed on my face,
And he rests on the arm of my easy-chair,
And the book’s a blur and I lose my place:
And I touch my lips to his shining head,
And my voice breaks down and—the story’s done. . . .
Oh, children, kiss me and go to bed:
Leave me to think of the Other One.

Of the One who will never grow up at all,
Who will always be just a child at play,
Tender and trusting and sweet and small,
Who will never leave me and go away;
Who will never hurt me and give me pain;
Who will comfort me when I’m all alone;
A heart of love that’s without a stain,
Always and always my own, my own.

Yet a thought shines out from the dark of pain,
And it gives me hope to be reconciled:
That each of us must be born again,
And live and die as a little child;

So that with souls all shining white,
White as snow and without one sin,
We may come to the Gates of Eternal Light,
Where only children may enter in.

So, gentle mothers, don't ever grieve
Because you have lost, but kiss the rod;
From the depths of your woe be glad, believe
You've given an angel unto God.
Rejoice! You've a child whose youth endures,
Who comes to you when the day is done,
Wistful for love, oh, yours, just yours,
Dearest of all, the Other One.

Catastrophe

Brittany, August 14, 1914.

And now I fear I must write in another strain. Up to this time I have been too happy. I have existed in a magic Bohemia, largely of my own making. Hope, faith, enthusiasm have been mine. Each day has had its struggle, its failure, its triumph. However, that is all ended. During the past week we have lived breathlessly. For in spite of the exultant sunshine our spirits have been under a cloud, a deepening shadow of horror and calamity. . . . WAR.

Even as I write, in our little village steeple the bells are ringing madly, and in every little village steeple all over the land. As he hears it the harvester checks his scythe on the swing; the clerk throws down his pen; the shopkeeper puts up his shutters. Only in the cafes there is a clamor of voices and a drowning of care.

For here every man must fight, every home give tribute. There is no question, no appeal. By heredity and discipline all minds are shaped to this great hour. So to-morrow each man will seek his barracks and become a soldier as completely as if he had never been anything else. With the same docility as he dons his baggy red trousers will he let some muddle-headed General hurl him to destruction for some dubious gain. To-day a father, a home-maker; to-morrow fodder for cannon. So they all go without hesitation, without bitterness; and the great military machine that knows not humanity swings them to their fate. I marvel at the sense of duty, the resignation, the sacrifice. It is magnificent, it is FRANCE.

And the Women. Those who wait and weep. Ah! to-day I have not seen one who did not weep. Yes, one. She was very old, and she stood by her garden gate with her hand on the uplifted latch. As I passed she looked at me with eyes that did not see. She had no doubt sons and grandsons who must fight, and she had good reason, perhaps, to remember the war of soixante-dix. When I passed an hour later she was still there, her hand on the uplifted latch.
August 30th.

The men have gone. Only remain graybeards, women and children. Calvert and I have been helping our neighbors to get in the harvest. No doubt we aid; but there with the old men and children a sense of uneasiness and even shame comes over me. I would like to return to Paris, but the railway is mobilized. Each day I grow more discontented. Up there in the red North great things are doing and I am out of it. I am thoroughly unhappy.

Then Calvert comes to me with a plan. He has a Ford car. We will all three go to Paris. He intends to offer himself and his car to the Red Cross. His wife will nurse. So we are very happy at the solution, and to-morrow we are off.
Paris.

Back again. Closed shutters, deserted streets. How glum everything is! Those who are not mobilized seem uncertain how to turn. Every one buys the papers and reads grimly of disaster. No news is bad news.

I go to my garret as to a beloved friend. Everything is just as I left it, so that it seems I have never been away. I sigh with relief and joy. I will take up my work again. Serene above the storm I will watch and wait. Although I have been brought up in England I am American born. My country is not concerned.

So, going to the Dôme Cafe, I seek some of my comrades. Strange! They have gone. MacBean, I am told, is in England. By dyeing his hair and lying about his age he has

managed to enlist in the Seaforth Highlanders. Saxon Dane too. He has joined the Foreign Legion, and even now may be fighting.

Well, let them go. I will keep out of the mess. But why did they go? I wish I knew. War is murder. Criminal folly. Against Humanity. Imperialism is at the root of it. We are fools and dupes. Yes, I will think and write of other things. . . .

MacBean has enlisted.

I hate violence. I would not willingly cause pain to anything breathing. I would rather be killed than kill. I will stand above the Battle and watch it from afar.

Dane is in the Foreign Legion.

How disturbing it all is! One cannot settle down to anything. Every day I meet men who tell the most wonderful stories in the most casual way. I envy them. I too want to have experiences, to live where life's beat is most intense. But that's a poor reason for going to war.

And yet, though I shrink from the idea of fighting, I might in some way help those who are. MacBean and Dane, for example. Sitting lonely in the Dôme, I seem to see their ghosts in the corner. MacBean listening with his keen, sarcastic smile, Saxon Dane banging his great hairy fist on the table till the glasses jump. Where are they now? Living a life that I will never know. When they come back, if they ever do, shall I not feel shamed in their presence? Oh, this filthy war! Things were going on so beautifully. We were all so happy, so full of ambition, of hope; laughing and talking over pipe and bowl, and in our garrets seeking to realize our dreams. Ah, these days will never come again!

Then, as I sit there, Calvert seeks me out. He has joined an ambulance corps that is going to the Front. Will I come in?

"Yes," I say; "I'll do anything."

So it is all settled. To-morrow I give up my freedom.

Book Four. Winter

I

The Somme Front, January 1915.

There is an avenue of noble beeches leading to the Chateau, and in the shadow of each glimmers the pale oblong of an ambulance. We have to keep them thus concealed, for only yesterday morning a Taube flew over. The beggars are rather partial to Red Cross cars. One of our chaps, taking in a load of wounded, was chased and pelted the other day.

The Chateau seems all spires and towers, the glorified dream of a Parisian pastrycook. On its terrace figures in khaki are lounging. They are the volunteers, the owner-drivers of the Corps, many of them men of wealth and title. Curious to see one who owns all the coal in two counties proudly signing for his sou a day; or another, who lives in a Fifth Avenue palace, contentedly sleeping on the straw-strewn floor of a hovel.

Here is a rhyme I have made of such an one:

Priscilla

Jerry MacMullen, the millionaire,
Driving a red-meat bus out there—
How did he win his Croix de Guerre?
Bless you, that's all old stuff:
Beast of a night on the Verdun road,
Jerry stuck with a woeful load,
Stalled in the mud where the red lights glowed,
Prospect devilish tough.

"Little Priscilla" he called his car,
Best of our battered bunch by far,
Branded with many a bullet scar,
Yet running so sweet and true.
Jerry he loved her, knew her tricks;
Swore: "She's the beat of the best big six,
And if ever I get in a deuce of a fix
Priscilla will pull me through."

"Looks pretty rotten right now," says he;
"Hanged if the devil himself could see.
Priscilla, it's up to you and me
To show 'em what we can do."
Seemed that Priscilla just took the word;
Up with a leap like a horse that's spurred,
On with the joy of a homing bird,
Swift as the wind she flew.

Shell-holes shoot at them out of the night;
A lurch to the left, a wrench to the right,
Hands grim-gripping and teeth clenched tight,
Eyes that glare through the dark.
"Priscilla, you're doing me proud this day;
Hospital's only a league away,
And, honey, I'm longing to hit the hay,
So hurry, old girl. . . .But hark!"

Howl of a shell, harsh, sudden, dread;
Another . . . another. . . ."Strike me dead
If the Huns ain't strafing the road ahead
So the convoy can't get through!
A barrage of shrap, and us alone;
Four rush-cases—you hear 'em moan?
Fierce old messes of blood and bone. . . .
Priscilla, what shall we do?"

Again it seems that Priscilla hears.
With a rush and a roar her way she clears,
Straight at the hell of flame she steers,
Full at its heart of wrath.

Fury of death and dust and din!
Havoc and horror! She's in, she's in;
She's almost over, she'll win, she'll win!
Woof! Crump! right in the path.

Little Priscilla skids and stops,
Jerry MacMullen sways and flops;
Bang in his map the crash he cops;
Shriek from the car: "Mon Dieu!"
One of the blessés hears him say,
Just at the moment he faints away:
"Reckon this isn't my lucky day,
Priscilla, it's up to you."

Sergeant raps on the doctor's door;
"Car in the court with couchés four;
Driver dead on the dashboard floor;
Strange how the bunch got here."
"No," says the Doc, "this chap's alive;
But tell me, how could a man contrive
With both arms broken, a car to drive?
Thunder of God! it's queer."

Same little blessé makes a spiel;
Says he: "When I saw our driver reel,
A Strange Shape leapt to the driving wheel
And sped us safe through the night."
But Jerry, he says in his drawling tone:
"Rats! Why, Priscilla came in on her own.
Bless her, she did it alone, alone. . . ."
Hanged if I know who's right.

As I am sitting down to my midday meal an orderly gives me a telegram:

Hill 71. Two couchés. Send car at once.

The uptilted country-side is a checker-board of green and gray, and, except where groves of trees rise like islands, cultivated to the last acre. But as we near the firing-line all efforts to till the land cease, and the ungathered beets of last year have grown to seed. Amid rank unkempt fields I race over a road that is pitted with obus-holes; I pass a line of guns painted like snakes, and drawn by horses dyed khaki- color; then soldiers coming from the trenches, mud-caked and ineffably weary; then a race over a bit of road that is exposed; then, buried in the hill-side, the dressing station.

The two wounded are put into my car. From hip to heel one is swathed in bandages; the other has a great white turban on his head, with a red patch on it that spreads and spreads. They stare dully, but make no sound. As I crank the car there is a shrill screaming noise. . . . About thirty yards away I hear an explosion like a mine-blast, followed by a sudden belch of coal-black smoke. I stare at it in a dazed way. Then the doctor says: "Don't trouble to analyze your sensations. Better get off. You're only drawing their fire."

Here is one of my experiences:

A Casualty

That boy I took in the car last night,
With the body that awfully sagged away,
And the lips blood-crisped, and the eyes flame-bright,
And the poor hands folded and cold as clay—
Oh, I've thought and I've thought of him all the day.

For the weary old doctor says to me:
"He'll only last for an hour or so.
Both of his legs below the knee
Blown off by a bomb. . . .So, lad, go slow,
And please remember, he doesn't know."

So I tried to drive with never a jar;
And there was I cursing the road like mad,
When I hears a ghost of a voice from the car:
"Tell me, old chap, have I 'copped it' bad?"
So I answers "No," and he says, "I'm glad."

"Glad," says he, "for at twenty-two
Life's so splendid, I hate to go.
There's so much good that a chap might do,
And I've fought from the start and I've suffered so.
'Twould be hard to get knocked out now, you know."

"Forget it," says I; then I drove awhile,
And I passed him a cheery word or two;
But he didn't answer for many a mile,
So just as the hospital hove in view,
Says I: "Is there nothing that I can do?"

Then he opens his eyes and he smiles at me;
And he takes my hand in his trembling hold;
"Thank you—you're far too kind," says he:
"I'm awfully comfy—stay . . . let's see:
I fancy my blanket's come unrolled—
My feet, please wrap 'em—they're cold . . . they're cold."

There is a city that glitters on the plain. Afar off we can see its tall cathedral spire, and there we often take our wounded from the little village hospitals to the rail-head. Tragic little buildings, these emergency hospitals—town-halls, churches, schools; their cots are never empty, their surgeons never still.

So every day we get our list of cases and off we go, a long line of cars swishing through the mud. Then one by one we branch off to our village hospital, puzzling out the road on our maps. Arrived there, we load up quickly.

The wounded make no moan. They lie, limp, heavily bandaged, with bare legs and arms protruding from their blankets. They do not know where they are going; they do not care. Like live stock, they are labeled and numbered. An orderly brings along their battle-scarred equipment, throwing open their rifles to see that no charge remains. Sometimes they shake our hands and thank us for the drive.

In the streets of the city I see French soldiers wearing the Fourragère.

It is a cord of green, yellow or red, and corresponds to the Croix de Guerre, the Médaille militaire and the Legion of Honor.

The red is the highest of all, and has been granted only to one or two regiments. This incident was told to me by a man who saw it:

The Blood-Red Fourragère

What was the blackest sight to me
Of all that campaign?
A naked woman tied to a tree
With jagged holes where her breasts should be,
Rotting there in the rain.

On we pressed to the battle fray,
Dogged and dour and spent.
Sudden I heard my Captain say:
“Voilà! Kultur has passed this way,
And left us a monument.”

So I looked and I saw our Colonel there,
And his grand head, snowed with the years,
Unto the beat of the rain was bare;
And, oh, there was grief in his frozen stare,
And his cheeks were stung with tears!

Then at last he turned from the woeful tree,
And his face like stone was set;
“Go, march the Regiment past,” said he,
“That every father and son may see,
And none may ever forget.”

Oh, the crimson strands of her hair downpoured
Over her breasts of woe;
And our grim old Colonel leaned on his sword,
And the men filed past with their rifles lowered,
Solemn and sad and slow.

But I’ll never forget till the day I die,
As I stood in the driving rain,
And the jaded columns of men slouched by,
How amazement leapt into every eye,
Then fury and grief and pain.

And some would like madmen stand aghast,
With their hands upclenched to the sky;
And some would cross themselves as they passed,
And some would curse in a scalding blast,
And some like children cry.

Yea, some would be sobbing, and some would pray,
And some hurl hateful names;
But the best had never a word to say;
They turned their twitching faces away,
And their eyes were like hot flames.

They passed; then down on his bended knee
The Colonel dropped to the Dead:
“Poor martyred daughter of France!” said he,

“O dearly, dearly avenged you’ll be
Or ever a day be sped!”

Now they hold that we are the best of the best,
And each of our men may wear,
Like a gash of crimson across his chest,
As one fierce-proved in the battle-test,
The blood-red Fourragère.

For each as he leaps to the top can see,
Like an etching of blood on his brain,
A wife or a mother lashed to a tree,
With two black holes where her breasts should be,
Left to rot in the rain.

So we fight like fiends, and of us they say
That we neither yield nor spare.
Oh, we have the bitterest debt to pay. . . .
Have we paid it?— Look—how we wear to-day
Like a trophy, gallant and proud and gay,
Our blood-red Fourragère.

It is often weary waiting at the little poste de secours. Some of us play solitaire, some read a “sixpenny”, some doze or try to talk in bad French to the poilus. Around us is discomfort, dirt and drama.

For my part, I pass the time only too quickly, trying to put into verse the incidents and ideas that come my way. In this way I hope to collect quite a lot of stuff which may some day see itself in print.

Here is one of my efforts:

Jim

Never knew Jim, did you? Our boy Jim?
Bless you, there was the likely lad;
Supple and straight and long of limb,
Clean as a whistle, and just as glad.
Always laughing, wasn't he, dad?
Joy, pure joy to the heart of him,
And, oh, but the soothering ways he had,
Jim, our Jim!

But I see him best as a tiny tot,
A bonny babe, though it's me that speaks;
Laughing there in his little cot,
With his sunny hair and his apple cheeks.
And my! but the blue, blue eyes he'd got,
And just where his wee mouth dimpled dim
Such a fairy mark like a beauty spot—
That was Jim.

Oh, the war, the war! How my eyes were wet!
But he says: "Don't be sorrowing, mother dear;
You never knew me to fail you yet,
And I'll be back in a year, a year."
'Twas at Mons he fell, in the first attack;
For so they said, and their eyes were dim;
But I laughed in their faces: "He'll come back,
Will my Jim."

Now, we'd been wedded for twenty year,
And Jim was the only one we'd had;
So when I whispered in father's ear,
He wouldn't believe me—would you, dad?
There! I must hurry . . . hear him cry?
My new little baby. . . .See! that's him.
What are we going to call him? Why,
Jim, just Jim.

Jim! For look at him laughing there
In the same old way in his tiny cot,
With his rosy cheeks and his sunny hair,
And look, just look . . . his beauty spot
In the selfsame place. . . .Oh, I can't explain,
And of course you think it's a mother's whim,
But I know, I know it's my boy again,
Same wee Jim.

Just come back as he said he would;
Come with his love and his heart of glee.
Oh, I cried and I cried, but the Lord was good;
From the shadow of Death he set Jim free.

So I'll have him all over again, you see.
Can you wonder my mother-heart's a-brim?
Oh, how happy we're going to be!
Aren't we, Jim?

II

In Picardy,

January 1915.

The road lies amid a malevolent heath. It seems to lead us right into the clutch of the enemy; for the star-shells, that at first were bursting overhead, gradually encircle us. The fields are strangely sinister; the splintered trees are like giant toothpicks. There is a lisping and a twanging overhead.

As we wait at the door of the dugout that serves as a first-aid dressing station, I gaze up into that mysterious dark, so alive with musical vibrations. Then a small shadow detaches itself from the greater shadow, and a gray-bearded sentry says to me: “You’d better come in out of the bullets.”

So I keep under cover, and presently they bring my load. Two men drip with sweat as they carry their comrade. I can see that they all three belong to the Foreign Legion. I think for a moment of Saxon Dane. How strange if some day I should carry him! Half fearfully I look at my passenger, but he is a black man. Such things only happen in fiction.
This is what I have written of the finest troops in the Army of France:

Kelly of the Legion

Now Kelly was no fighter;
He loved his pipe and glass;
An easygoing blighter,
Who lived in Montparnasse.
But ‘mid the tavern tattle
He heard some guinney say:
“When France goes forth to battle,
The Legion leads the way.

“The scourings of creation,
Of every sin and station,
The men who’ve known damnation,
Are picked to lead the way.”

Well, Kelly joined the Legion;
They marched him day and night;
They rushed him to the region
Where largest loomed the fight.
“Behold your mighty mission,
Your destiny,” said they;
“By glorious tradition
The Legion leads the way.

“With tattered banners flying
With trail of dead and dying,
On! On! All hell defying,
The Legion sweeps the way.”

With grim, hard-bitten faces,
With jests of savage mirth,
They swept into their places,
The men of iron worth;
Their blooded steel was flashing;
They swung to face the fray;
Then rushing, roaring, crashing,
The Legion cleared the way.

The trail they blazed was gory;
Few lived to tell the story;
Through death they plunged to glory;
But, oh, they cleared the way!

Now Kelly lay a-dying,
And dimly saw advance,
With split new banners flying,
The fantassins of France.
Then up amid the melee
He rose from where he lay;
“Come on, me boys,” says Kelly,
“The Layjun lades the way!”

Aye, while they faltered, doubting
(Such flames of doom were spouting),
He caught them, thrilled them, shouting:
“The Layjun lades the way!”

They saw him slip and stumble,
Then stagger on once more;
They marked him trip and tumble,
A mass of grime and gore;
They watched him blindly crawling
Amid hell’s own affray,
And calling, calling, calling:
“The Layjun lades the way!”

And even while they wondered,
The battle-wrack was sundered;
To Victory they thundered,
But . . . Kelly led the way.

Still Kelly kept agoing;
Berserker-like he ran;
His eyes with fury glowing,
A lion of a man;
His rifle madly swinging,
His soul athirst to slay,
His slogan ringing, ringing,
“The Layjun lades the way!”

Till in a pit death-baited,
Where Huns with Maxims waited,
He plunged . . . and there, blood-sated,
To death he stabbed his way.

Now Kelly was a fellow
Who simply loathed a fight:
He loved a tavern mellow,
Grog hot and pipe alight;
I’m sure the Show appalled him,
And yet without dismay,
When Death and Duty called him,
He up and led the way.

So in Valhalla drinking
(If heroes meek and shrinking
Are suffered there), I’m thinking
‘Tis Kelly leads the way.

We have just had one of our men killed, a young sculptor of immense promise.

When one thinks of all the fine work he might have accomplished, it seems a shame. But, after all, to-morrow it may be the turn of any of us. If it should be mine, my chief regret will be for work undone.

Ah! I often think of how I will go back to the Quarter and take up the old life again. How sweet it will all seem. But first I must earn the right. And if ever I do go back, how I will find Bohemia changed! Missing how many a face!

It was in thinking of our lost comrade I wrote the following:

The Three Tommies

That Barret, the painter of pictures, what feeling for color he had!
And Fanning, the maker of music, such melodies mirthful and mad!
And Harley, the writer of stories, so whimsical, tender and glad!

To hark to their talk in the trenches, high heart unfolding to heart,
Of the day when the war would be over, and each would be true to his part,
Upbuilding a Palace of Beauty to the wonder and glory of Art . . .

Yon's Barret, the painter of pictures, yon carcass that rots on the wire;
His hand with its sensitive cunning is crisped to a cinder with fire;
His eyes with their magical vision are bubbles of glutinous mire.

Poor Fanning! He sought to discover the symphonic note of a shell;
There are bits of him broken and bloody, to show you the place where he fell;
I've reason to fear on his exquisite ear the rats have been banqueting well.

And speaking of Harley, the writer, I fancy I looked on him last,
Sprawling and staring and writhing in the roar of the battle blast;
Then a mad gun-team crashed over, and scattered his brains as it passed.

Oh, Harley and Fanning and Barret, they were bloody good mates o' mine;
Their bodies are empty bottles; Death has guzzled the wine;
What's left of them's filth and corruption. . . .Where is the Fire Divine?

I'll tell you. . . .At night in the trenches, as I watch and I do my part,
Three radiant spirits I'm seeing, high heart revealing to heart,
And they're building a peerless palace to the splendor and triumph of Art.

Yet, alas! for the fame of Barret, the glory he might have trailed!
And alas! for the name of Fanning, a star that beaconed and paled,
Poor Harley, obscure and forgotten. . . .
Well, who shall say that they failed!

No, each did a Something Grander than ever he dreamed to do;
And as for the work unfinished, all will be paid their due;
The broken ends will be fitted, the balance struck will be true.

So painters, and players, and penmen, I tell you: Do as you please;
Let your fame outleap on the trumpets, you'll never rise up to these—
To three grim and gory Tommies, down, down on your bended knees!

Daventry, the sculptor, is buried in a little graveyard near one of our posts. Just now our section of the line is quiet, so I often go and sit there. Stretching myself on a flat stone, I dream for hours.

Silence and solitude! How good the peace of it all seems! Around me the grasses weave a pattern, and half hide the hundreds of little wooden crosses. Here is one with a single name:

AUBREY.

Who was Aubrey I wonder?

Then another:

To Our Beloved Comrade.

Then one which has attached to it, in the cheapest of little frames, the crude water-color daub of a child, three purple flowers standing in a yellow vase. Below it, painfully printed, I read:

To My Darling Papa—Thy Little Odette.

And beyond the crosses many fresh graves have been dug. With hungry open mouths they wait. Even now I can hear the guns that are going to feed them. Soon there will be more crosses, and more and more. Then they will cease, and wives and mothers will come here to weep.

Ah! Peace so precious must be bought with blood and tears. Let us honor and bless the men who pay, and envy them the manner of their dying; for not all the jeweled orders on the breasts of the living can vie in glory with the little wooden cross the humblest of these has won. . . .

The Twa Jocks

Says Bauldy MacGreegor frae Gleska tae Hecky MacCrimmon frae Skye:
“That’s whit I hate maist aboot fechtin’—it makes ye sae deevilish dry;
Noo jist hae a keek at yon ferm-hoose them Gairmans are poundin’ sae fine,
Weel, think o’ it, doon in the dunnie there’s bottles and bottles o’ wine.
A’ hell’s fairly belchin’ oot yonner, but oh, lad, I’m ettlin’ tae try. . . .”
“If it’s poose she’ll be with ye whateffer,”
says Hecky MacCrimmon frae Skye.

Says Bauldy MacGreegor frae Gleska: “Whit price fur a funeral wreath?
We’re dodgin’ a’ kinds o’ destruction, an’ jist by the skin o’ oor teeth.
Here, spread yersel oot on yer belly, and slither along in the glaur;
Confoond ye, ye big Hielan’ deevil! Ye don’t realize there’s a war.
Ye think that ye’re back in Dunvegan, and herdin’ the wee bits o’ kye.”
“She’ll neffer trink wine in Dunfegan,” says Hecky MacCrimmon frae Skye.

Says Bauldy MacGreegor frae Gleska: “Thank goodness! the ferm-hoose at last;
There’s no muckle left but the cellar, an’ even that’s vanishin’ fast.
Look oot, there’s the corpse o’ a wumman, sair mangelt and deid by her lane.
Quick! Strike a match. . . .Whit did I tell ye!
A hale bonny box o’ shampane;
Jist knock the heid aff o’ a bottle. . . .
Haud on, mon, I’m hearing a cry. . . .”
“She’ll think it’s a wean that wass greetin’,”
says Hecky MacCrimmon frae Skye.

Says Bauldy MacGreegor frae Gleska:
“Ma conscience! I’m hanged but yer richt.
It’s yin o’ thae waifs of the war-field, a’ sobbin’ and shakin’ wi’ fricht.
Wheesht noo, dear, we’re no gaun tae hurt ye.
We’re takin’ ye hame, my wee doo!
We’ve got tae get back wi’ her, Hecky. Whit mercy we didna get fou!
We’ll no touch a drap o’ that likker—
that’s hard, man, ye canna deny. . . .”
“It’s the last thing she’ll think o’ denyin’,”
says Hecky MacCrimmon frae Skye.

Says Bauldy MacGreegor frae Gleska: “If I should get struck frae the rear,
Ye’ll tak’ and ye’ll shield the wee lassie, and rin for the lines like a deer.
God! Wis that the breenge o’ a bullet? I’m thinkin’ it’s cracket ma spine.
I’m doon on ma knees in the glabber; I’m fearin’, auld man, I’ve got mine.
Here, quick! Pit yer erms roon the lassie.
Noo, rin, lad! good luck and good-by. . . .
“Hoots, mon! it’s ye baith she’ll be takin’,”
says Hecky MacCrimmon frae Skye.

Says Corporal Muckle frae Rannoch: “Is that no’ a picture tae frame?
Twa sair woundit Jocks wi’ a lassie jist like ma wee Jeannie at hame.
We’re prood o’ ye baith, ma brave heroes. We’ll gie ye a medal, I think.”
Says Bauldy MacGreegor frae Gleska: “I’d raither ye gied me a drink.

I'll no speak for Private MacCrimmon, but oh, mon, I'm perishin' dry. . . ."
"She'll wush that Loch Lefen wass whuskey," says Hecky MacCrimmon frae Skye.

III

Near Albert,

February 1915.

Over the spine of the ridge a horned moon of reddish hue peers through the splintered, hag-like trees. Where the trenches are, rockets are rising, green and red. I hear the coughing of the Maxims, the peevish nagging of the rifles, the boom of a “heavy” and the hollow sound of its exploding shell.

Running the car into the shadow of a ruined house, I try to sleep. But a battery starts to blaze away close by, and the flame lights up my shelter. Near me some soldiers are in deep slumber; one stirs in his sleep as a big rat runs over him, and I know by experience that when one is sleeping a rat feels as heavy as a sheep.

But how can one possibly sleep? Out there in the dark there is the wild tattoo of a thousand rifles; and hark! that dull roar is the explosion of a mine. There! the purring of the rapid firers. Desperate things are doing. There will be lots of work for me before this night is over.

What a cursed place!

As I cannot sleep, I think of a story I heard to-day. It is of a Canadian Colonel, and in my mind I shape it like this:

His Boys

"I'm going, Billy, old fellow. Hist, lad! Don't make any noise.
There's Boches to beat all creation, the pitch of a bomb away.
I've fixed the note to your collar, you've got to get back to my Boys,
You've got to get back to warn 'em before it's the break of day."

The order came to go forward to a trench-line traced on the map;
I knew the brass-hats had blundered, I knew and I told 'em so;
I knew if I did as they ordered I would tumble into a trap,
And I tried to explain, but the answer came like a pistol: "Go."

Then I thought of the Boys I commanded—I always called them "my Boys"—
The men of my own recruiting, the lads of my countryside;
Tested in many a battle, I knew their sorrows and joys,
And I loved them all like a father, with more than a father's pride.

To march my Boys to a shambles as soon as the dawn of day;
To see them helplessly slaughtered, if all that I guessed was true;
My Boys that trusted me blindly, I thought and I tried to pray,
And then I arose and I muttered: "It's either them or it's you."

I rose and I donned my rain-coat; I buckled my helmet tight.
I remember you watched me, Billy, as I took my cane in my hand;
I vaulted over the sandbags into the pitchy night,
Into the pitted valley that served us as No Man's Land.

I strode out over the hollow of hate and havoc and death,
From the heights the guns were angry, with a vengeful snarling of steel;
And once in a moment of stillness I heard hard panting breath,
And I turned . . . it was you, old rascal, following hard on my heel.

I fancy I cursed you, Billy; but not so much as I ought!
And so we went forward together, till we came to the valley rim,
And then a star-shell sputtered . . . it was even worse than I thought,
For the trench they told me to move in was packed with Boche to the brim.

They saw me too, and they got me; they peppered me till I fell;
And there I scribbled my message with my life-blood ebbing away;
"Now, Billy, you fat old duffer, you've got to get back like hell;
And get them to cancel that order before it's the dawn of day.

"Billy, old boy, I love you, I kiss your shiny black nose;
Now, home there. . . .Hurry, you devil,
or I'll cut you to ribands. . . .See . . ."
Poor brute! he's off! and I'm dying. . . .I go as a soldier goes.
I'm happy. My Boys, God bless 'em! . . .It had to be them or me.

Ah! I never was intended for a job like this. I realize it more and more every day, but I will stick it out till I break down. To be nervous, over-imaginative, terribly sensitive to suffering, is a poor equipment for the man who starts out to drive wounded on the battlefield. I am haunted by the thought that my car may break down when I have a load of wounded. Once

indeed it did, and a man died while I waited for help. Now I never look at what is given me. It might unnerve me.

I have been at it for over six months without a rest. When an attack has been going on I have worked day and night, until as I drove I wanted to fall asleep at the wheel.

The winter has been trying; there is rain one day, frost the next. Mud up to the axles. One sleeps in lousy barns or dripping dugouts. Cold, hunger, dirt, I know them all singly and together. My only consolation is that the war must soon be over, and that I will have helped.

When I have time and am not too tired, I comfort myself with scribbling.

The Booby-Trap

I'm crawlin' out in the mangolds to bury wot's left o' Joe—
Joe, my pal, and a good un (God! 'ow it rains and rains).
I'm sick o' seein' him lyin' like a 'eap o' offal, and so
I'm crawlin' out in the beet-field to bury 'is last remains.

'E might 'a bin makin' munitions—'e 'adn't no need to go;
An' I tells 'im strite, but 'e arnsers, "'Tain't no use chewin' the fat;
I've got to be doin' me dooty wiv the rest o' the boys" . . . an' so
Yon's 'im, yon blob on the beet-field wot I'm tryin' so 'ard to git at.

There was five of us lads from the brickyard; 'Enry was gassed at Bapome,
Sydney was drowned in a crater, 'Erbert was 'alved by a shell;
Joe was the pick o' the posy, might 'a bin sifely at 'ome,
Only son of 'is mother, 'er a widder as well.

She used to sell bobbins and buttons—'ad a plice near the Waterloo Road;
A little, old, bent-over lydy, wiv glasses an' silvery 'air;
Must tell 'er I planted 'im nicely,
cheer 'er up like. . . .(Well, I'm blowed,
That bullet near catched me a biffer)—I'll see the old gel if I'm spared.

She'll tike it to 'eart, pore ol' lydy, fer 'e was 'er 'ope and 'er joy;
'Is dad used to drink like a knot-'ole, she kept the 'ome goin', she did:
She pinched and she scriped fer 'is scoolin', 'e was sich a fine 'andsome boy
('Alf Flanders seems packed on me panties)—
'e's 'andsome no longer, pore kid!

This bit o' a board that I'm packin' and draggin' around in the mire,
I was tickled to death when I found it. Says I, "'Ere's a nice little glow."
I was chilled and wet through to the marrer, so I started to make me a fire;
And then I says: "No; 'ere, Goblimy, it'll do for a cross for Joe."

Well, 'ere 'e is.Gawd!' Ow one chinges a-lyin' six weeks in the rain.
Joe, me old pal, 'ow I'm sorry; so 'elp me, I wish I could pray.
An' now I 'ad best get a-diggin' 'is grave (it seems more like a drain)—
And I 'opes that the Boches won't git me till I gits 'im safe planted away.

(As he touches the body there is a tremendous explosion.
He falls back shattered.)

A booby-trap! Ought to 'a known it! If that's not a bastardly trick!
Well, one thing, I won't be long goin'.Gawd! I'm a 'ell of a sight.
Wish I'd died fightin' and killin'; that's wot it is makes me sick. . . .
Ah, Joe! we'll be pushin' up dysies . . .
together, old Chummie . . . good-night!

To-day I heard that MacBean had been killed in Belgium. I believe he turned out a wonderful soldier. Saxon Dane, too, has been missing for two months. We know what that means.

It is odd how one gets callous to death, a mediaeval callousness. When we hear that the best of our friends have gone West, we have a moment of the keenest regret; but how soon again we find the heart to laugh! The saddest part of loss, I think, is that one so soon gets over it.

Is it that we fail to realize it all? Is it that it seems a strange and hideous dream, from which we will awake and rub our eyes?

Oh, how bitter I feel as the days go by! It is creeping more and more into my verse. Read this:

Bonehead Bill

I wonder ‘oo and wot ‘e was,
That ‘Un I got so slick.
I couldn’t see ‘is face because
The night was ‘ideous thick.
I just made out among the black
A blinkin’ wedge o’ white;
Then biff! I guess I got ‘im crack—
The man I killed last night.

I wonder if account o’ me
Some wench will go unwed,
And ‘eaps o’ lives will never be,
Because ‘e’s stark and dead?
Or if ‘is missis damns the war,
And by some candle light,
Tow-headed kids are prayin’ for
The Fritz I copped last night.

I wonder, ‘struth, I wonder why
I ‘ad that ‘orful dream?
I saw up in the giddy sky
The gates o’ God agleam;
I saw the gates o’ ‘eaven shine
Wiv everlastin’ light:
And then . . . I knew that I’d got mine,
As ‘e got ‘is last night.

Aye, bang beyond the broodin’ mists
Where spawn the mother stars,
I ‘ammered wiv me bloody fists
Upon them golden bars;
I ‘ammered till a devil’s doubt
Fair froze me wiv affright:
To fink wot God would say about
The bloke I corpsed last night.

I ‘ushed; I wilted wiv despair,
When, like a rosy flame,
I sees a angel standin’ there
‘Oo calls me by me name.
‘E ‘ad such soft, such shiny eyes;
‘E ‘eld ‘is ‘and smiled;
And through the gates o’ Paradise
‘E led me like a child.

‘E led me by them golden palms
Wot ‘ems that jeweled street;
And seraphs was a-singin’ psalms,
You’ve no ideer ‘ow sweet;

Wiv cheroobs crowdin' closer round
Than peas is in a pod,
'E led me to a shiny mound
Where beams the throne o' God.

And then I 'ears God's werry voice:
"Bill 'agan, 'ave no fear.
Stand up and glory and rejoice
For 'im 'oo led you 'ere."
And in a nip I seemed to see:
Aye, like a flash o' light,
My angel pal I knew to be
The chap I plugged last night.

Now, I don't claim to understand—
They calls me Bonehead Bill;
They shoves a rifle in me 'and,
And show me 'ow to kill.
Me job's to risk me life and limb,
But . . . be it wrong or right,
This cross I'm makin', it's for 'im,
The cove I croaked last night.

IV

A Lapse of Time and a Word of Explanation

The American Hospital, Neuilly,

January 1919.

Four years have passed and it is winter again. Much has happened. When I last wrote, on the Somme in 1915, I was sickening with typhoid fever. All that spring I was in hospital.

Nevertheless, I was sufficiently recovered to take part in the Champagne battle in the fall of that year, and to “carry on” during the following winter. It was at Verdun I got my first wound.

In the spring of 1917 I again served with my Corps; but on the entry of the United States into the War I joined the army of my country. In the Argonne I had my left arm shot away.

As far as time and health permitted, I kept a record of these years, and also wrote much verse.

All this, however, has disappeared under circumstances into which there is no need to enter here. The loss was a cruel one, almost more so than that of my arm; for I have neither the heart nor the power to rewrite this material.

And now, in default of something better, I have bundled together this manuscript, and have added to it a few more verses, written in hospitals. Let it represent me. If I can find a publisher for it, tant mieux. If not, I will print it at my own cost, and any one who cares for a copy can write to me—

Stephen Poore,

12 bis, Rue des Petits Moineaux,

Paris.

Michael

“There’s something in your face, Michael, I’ve seen it all the day;
There’s something quare that wasn’t there when first ye wint away. . . .”

“It’s just the Army life, mother, the drill, the left and right,
That puts the stiffinin’ in yer spine and locks yer jaw up tight. . . .”

“There’s something in your eyes, Michael, an’ how they stare and stare—
You’re lookin’ at me now, me boy, as if I wasn’t there. . . .”

“It’s just the things I’ve seen, mother, the sights that come and come,
A bit o’ broken, bloody pulp that used to be a chum. . . .”

“There’s something on your heart, Michael, that makes ye wake at night,
And often when I hear ye moan, I trimble in me fright. . . .”

“It’s just a man I killed, mother, a mother’s son like me;
It seems he’s always hauntin’ me, he’ll never let me be. . . .”

“But maybe he was bad, Michael, maybe it was right
To kill the inimy you hate in fair and honest fight. . . .”

“I did not hate at all, mother; he never did me harm;
I think he was a lad like me, who worked upon a farm. . . .”

“And what’s it all about, Michael; why did you have to go,
A quiet, peaceful lad like you, and we were happy so? . . .”

“It’s thim that’s up above, mother, it’s thim that sits an’ rules;
We’ve got to fight the wars they make, it’s us as are the fools. . . .”

“And what will be the end, Michael, and what’s the use, I say,
Of fightin’ if whoever wins it’s us that’s got to pay? . . .”

“Oh, it will be the end, mother, when lads like him and me,
That sweat to feed the ones above, decide that we’ll be free. . . .”

“And when will that day come, Michael, and when will fightin’ cease,
And simple folks may till their soil and live and love in peace? . . .”

“It’s coming soon and soon, mother, it’s nearer every day,
When only men who work and sweat will have a word to say;
When all who earn their honest bread in every land and soil
Will claim the Brotherhood of Man, the Comradeship of Toil;
When we, the Workers, all demand: ‘What are we fighting for?’ . . .
Then, then we’ll end that stupid crime, that devil’s madness—War.”

The Wife

"Tell Annie I'll be home in time
To help her with her Christmas-tree."
That's what he wrote, and hark! the chime
Of Christmas bells, and where is he?
And how the house is dark and sad,
And Annie's sobbing on my knee!

The page beside the candle-flame
With cruel type was overfilled;
I read and read until a name
Leapt at me and my heart was stilled:
My eye crept up the column—up
Unto its hateful heading: Killed.

And there was Annie on the stair:
"And will he not be long?" she said.
Her eyes were bright and in her hair
She'd twined a bit of riband red;
And every step was daddy's sure,
Till tired out she went to bed.

And there alone I sat so still,
With staring eyes that did not see;
The room was desolate and chill,
And desolate the heart of me;
Outside I heard the news-boys shrill:
"Another Glorious Victory!"

A victory. . . .Ah! what care I?
A thousand victories are vain.
Here in my ruined home I cry
From out my black despair and pain,
I'd rather, rather damned defeat,
And have my man with me again.

They talk to us of pride and power,
Of Empire vast beyond the sea;
As here beside my hearth I cower,
What mean such words as these to me?
Oh, will they lift the clouds that low'r,
Or light my load in years to be?

What matters it to us poor folk?
Who win or lose, it's we who pay.
Oh, I would laugh beneath the yoke
If I had him at home to-day;
One's home before one's country comes:
Aye, so a million women say.

“Hush, Annie dear, don’t sorrow so.”
(How can I tell her?)”See, we’ll light
With tiny star of purest glow
Each little candle pink and white.”
(They make mistakes. I’ll tell myself
I did not read that name aright.)
Come, dearest one; come, let us pray
Beside our gleaming Christmas-tree;
Just fold your little hands and say
These words so softly after me:
“God pity mothers in distress,
And little children fatherless.”

“God pity mothers in distress,
And little children fatherless.”

. . . . .

What’s that?—a step upon the stair;
A shout!—the door thrown open wide!
My hero and my man is there,
And Annie’s leaping by his side. . . .
The room reels round, I faint, I fall. . . .
“O God! Thy world is glorified.”

Victory Stuff

What d’ye think, lad; what d’ye think,
As the roaring crowds go by?
As the banners flare and the brasses blare
And the great guns rend the sky?
As the women laugh like they’d all gone mad,
And the champagne glasses clink:
Oh, you’re grippin’ me hand so tightly, lad,
I’m a-wonderin’: what d’ye think?

D’ye think o’ the boys we used to know,
And how they’d have topped the fun?
Tom and Charlie, and Jack and Joe—
Gone now, every one.
How they’d have cheered as the joy-bells chime,
And they grabbed each girl for a kiss!
And now—they’re rottin’ in Flanders slime,
And they gave their lives—for this.

Or else d’ye think of the many a time
We wished we too was dead,
Up to our knees in the freezin’ grime,
With the fires of hell overhead;
When the youth and the strength of us sapped away,
And we cursed in our rage and pain?
And yet—we haven’t a word to say. . . .
We’re glad. We’d do it again.

I’m scared that they pity us. Come, old boy,
Let’s leave them their flags and their fuss.
We’d surely be hatin’ to spoil their joy
With the sight of such wrecks as us.
Let’s slip away quietly, you and me,
And we’ll talk of our chums out there:
You with your eyes that’ll never see,
Me that’s wheeled in a chair.

Was It You?

"Hullo, young Jones! with your tie so gay
And your pen behind your ear;
Will you mark my cheque in the usual way?
For I'm overdrawn, I fear."
Then you look at me in a manner bland,
As you turn your ledger's leaves,
And you hand it back with a soft white hand,
And the air of a man who grieves. . . .

"Was it you, young Jones, was it you I saw
(And I think I see you yet)
With a live bomb gripped in your grimy paw
And your face to the parapet?
With your lips a snarl and your eyes gone mad
With a fury that thrilled you through. . . .
Oh, I look at you now and I think, my lad,
Was it you, young Jones, was it you?

"Hullo, young Smith, with your well-fed look
And your coat of dapper fit,
Will you recommend me a decent book
With nothing of War in it?"
Then you smile as you polish a finger-nail,
And your eyes serenely roam,
And you suavely hand me a thrilling tale
By a man who stayed at home.

"Was it you, young Smith, was it you I saw
In the battle's storm and stench,
With a roar of rage and a wound red-raw
Leap into the reeking trench?
As you stood like a fiend on the firing-shelf
And you stabbed and hacked and slew. . . .
Oh, I look at you and I ask myself,
Was it you, young Smith, was it you?

"Hullo, old Brown, with your ruddy cheek
And your tummy's rounded swell,
Your garden's looking jolly chic
And your kiddies awf'ly well.
Then you beam at me in your cheery way
As you swing your water-can;
And you mop your brow and you blithely say:
'What about golf, old man?'

"Was it you, old Brown, was it you I saw
Like a bull-dog stick to your gun,
A cursing devil of fang and claw
When the rest were on the run?

Your eyes aflame with the battle-hate. . . .
As you sit in the family pew,
And I see you rising to pass the plate,
I ask: Old Brown, was it you?

“Was it me and you? Was it you and me?
(Is that grammar, or is it not?)
Who groveled in filth and misery,
Who gloried and groused and fought?
Which is the wrong and which is the right?
Which is the false and the true?
The man of peace or the man of fight?
Which is the ME and the YOU?”

V

Les Grands Mutiles

I saw three wounded of the war:
And the first had lost his eyes;
And the second went on wheels and had
No legs below the thighs;
And the face of the third was featureless,
And his mouth ran cornerwise.
So I made a rhyme about each one,
And this is how my fancies run.

The Sightless Man

Out of the night a crash,
A roar, a rampart of light;
A flame that leaped like a lash,
Searing forever my sight;
Out of the night a flash,
Then, oh, forever the Night!

Here in the dark I sit,
I who so loved the sun;
Supple and strong and fit,
In the dark till my days be done;
Aye, that's the hell of it,
Stalwart and twenty-one.

Marie is stanch and true,
Willing to be my wife;
Swears she has eyes for two . . .
Aye, but it's long, is Life.
What is a lad to do
With his heart and his brain at strife?

There now, my pipe is out;
No one to give me a light;
I grope and I grope about.
Well, it is nearly night;
Sleep may resolve my doubt,
Help me to reason right. . . .

(He sleeps and dreams.)

I heard them whispering there by the bed . . .
Oh, but the ears of the blind are quick!
Every treacherous word they said
Was a stab of pain and my heart turned sick.
Then lip met lip and they looked at me,
Sitting bent by the fallen fire,
And they laughed to think that I couldn't see;
But I felt the flame of their hot desire.
He's helping Marie to work the farm,
A dashing, upstanding chap, they say;
And look at me with my flabby arm,
And the fat of sloth, and my face of clay—
Look at me as I sit and sit,
By the side of a fire that's seldom lit,
Sagging and weary the livelong day,
When every one else is out on the field,
Sowing the seed for a golden yield,
Or tossing around the new-mown hay. . . .

Oh, the shimmering wheat that frets the sky,
Gold of plenty and blue of hope,
I'm seeing it all with an inner eye
As out of the door I grope and grope.
And I hear my wife and her lover there,
Whispering, whispering, round the rick,
Mocking me and my sightless stare,
As I fumble and stumble everywhere,
Slapping and tapping with my stick;
Old and weary at thirty-one,
Heartsick, wishing it all was done.
Oh, I'll tap my way around to the byre,
And I'll hear the cows as they chew their hay;
There at least there is none to tire,
There at least I am not in the way.
And they'll look at me with their velvet eyes
And I'll stroke their flanks with my woman's hand,
And they'll answer to me with soft replies,
And somehow I fancy they'll understand.
And the horses too, they know me well;
I'm sure that they pity my wretched lot,
And the big fat ram with the jingling bell . . .
Oh, the beasts are the only friends I've got.
And my old dog, too, he loves me more,
I think, than ever he did before.
Thank God for the beasts that are all so kind,
That know and pity the helpless blind!

Ha! they're coming, the loving pair.
My hand's a-shake as my pipe I fill.
What if I steal on them unaware
With a reaping-hook, to kill, to kill? . . .
I'll do it . . . they're there in the mow of hay,
I hear them saying: "He's out of the way!"
Hark! how they're kissing and whispering. . . .
Closer I creep . . . I crouch . . . I spring. . . .

(He wakes.)

Ugh! What a horrible dream I've had!
And it isn't real . . . I'm glad, I'm glad!
Marie is good and Marie is true . . .
But now I know what it's best to do.
I'll sell the farm and I'll seek my kind,
I'll live apart with my fellow-blind,
And we'll eat and drink, and we'll laugh and joke,
And we'll talk of our battles, and smoke and smoke;
And brushes of bristle we'll make for sale,
While one of us reads a book of Braille.
And there will be music and dancing too,
And we'll seek to fashion our life anew;
And we'll walk the highways hand in hand,

The Brotherhood of the Sightless Band;
Till the years at last shall bring respite
And our night is lost in the Greater Night.

The Legless Man

(The Dark Side)

My mind goes back to Fumin Wood, and how we stuck it out,
Eight days of hunger, thirst and cold, mowed down by steel and flame;
Waist-deep in mud and mad with woe, with dead men all about,
We fought like fiends and waited for relief that never came.
Eight days and nights they rolled on us in battle-frenzied mass!
"Debout les morts!"We hurled them back. By God! they did not pass.

They pinned two medals on my chest, a yellow and a brown,
And lovely ladies made me blush, such pretty words they said.
I felt a cheerful man, almost, until my eyes went down,
And there I saw the blankets—how they sagged upon my bed.
And then again I drank the cup of sorrow to the dregs:
Oh, they can keep their medals if they give me back my legs.

I think of how I used to run and leap and kick the ball,
And ride and dance and climb the hills and frolic in the sea;
And all the thousand things that now I'll never do at all. . . .
Mon Dieu! there's nothing left in life, it often seems to me.
And as the nurses lift me up and strap me in my chair,
If they would chloroform me off I feel I wouldn't care.

Ah yes! we're "heroes all" to-day—they point to us with pride;
To-day their hearts go out to us, the tears are in their eyes!
But wait a bit; to-morrow they will blindly look aside;
No more they'll talk of what they owe, the dues of sacrifice
(One hates to be reminded of an everlasting debt).
It's all in human nature. Ah! the world will soon forget.

My mind goes back to where I lay wound-rotted on the plain,
And ate the muddy mangold roots, and drank the drops of dew,
And dragged myself for miles and miles when every move was pain,
And over me the carrion-crows were retching as they flew.
Oh, ere I closed my eyes and stuck my rifle in the air
I wish that those who picked me up had passed and left me there.
(The Bright Side)

Oh, one gets used to everything!
I hum a merry song,
And up the street and round the square
I wheel my chair along;
For look you, how my chest is sound
And how my arms are strong!

Oh, one gets used to anything!
It's awkward at the first,
And jolting o'er the cobbles gives
A man a grievous thirst;

But of all ills that one must bear
That's surely not the worst.

For there's the cafe open wide,
And there they set me up;
And there I smoke my caporal
Above my cider cup;
And play manille a while before
I hurry home to sup.

At home the wife is waiting me
With smiles and pigeon-pie;
And little Zi-Zi claps her hands
With laughter loud and high;
And if there's cause to growl, I fail
To see the reason why.

And all the evening by the lamp
I read some tale of crime,
Or play my old accordion
With Marie keeping time,
Until we hear the hour of ten
From out the steeple chime.

Then in the morning bright and soon,
No moment do I lose;
Within my little cobbler's shop
To gain the silver sous
(Good luck one has no need of legs
To make a pair of shoes).

And every Sunday—oh, it's then
I am the happy man;
They wheel me to the river-side,
And there with rod and can
I sit and fish and catch a dish
Of goujons for the pan.

Aye, one gets used to everything,
And doesn't seem to mind;
Maybe I'm happier than most
Of my two-legged kind;
For look you at the darkest cloud,
Lo! how it's silver-lined.

The Faceless Man

I’m dead.
Officially I’m dead. Their hope is past.
How long I stood as missing! Now, at last
I’m dead.
Look in my face—no likeness can you see,
No tiny trace of him they knew as “me”.
How terrible the change!
Even my eyes are strange.
So keyed are they to pain,
That if I chanced to meet
My mother in the street
She’d look at me in vain.

When she got home I think she’d say:
“I saw the saddest sight to-day—
A poilu with no face at all.
Far better in the fight to fall
Than go through life like that, I think.
Poor fellow! how he made me shrink.
No face. Just eyes that seemed to stare
At me with anguish and despair.
This ghastly war! I’m almost cheered
To think my son who disappeared,
My boy so handsome and so gay,
Might have come home like him to-day.”

I’m dead. I think it’s better to be dead
When little children look at you with dread;
And when you know your coming home again
Will only give the ones who love you pain.
Ah! who can help but shrink? One cannot blame.
They see the hideous husk, not, not the flame
Of sacrifice and love that burns within;
While souls of satyrs, riddled through with sin,
Have bodies fair and excellent to see.
Mon Dieu! how different we all would be
If this our flesh was ordained to express
Our spirit’s beauty or its ugliness.

(Oh, you who look at me with fear to-day,
And shrink despite yourselves, and turn away—
It was for you I suffered woe accurst;
For you I braved red battle at its worst;
For you I fought and bled and maimed and slew;
For you, for you!
For you I faced hell-fury and despair;
The reeking horror of it all I knew:
I flung myself into the furnace there;

I faced the flame that scorched me with its glare;
I drank unto the dregs the devil's brew—
Look at me now—for you and you and you. . . .)

. . . . .

I'm thinking of the time we said good-by:
We took our dinner in Duval's that night,
Just little Jacqueline, Lucette and I;
We tried our very utmost to be bright.
We laughed. And yet our eyes, they weren't gay.
I sought all kinds of cheering things to say.
"Don't grieve," I told them. "Soon the time will pass;
My next permission will come quickly round;
We'll all meet at the Gare du Montparnasse;
Three times I've come already, safe and sound."
(But oh, I thought, it's harder every time,
After a home that seems like Paradise,
To go back to the vermin and the slime,
The weariness, the want, the sacrifice.
"Pray God," I said, "the war may soon be done,
But no, oh never, never till we've won!")

Then to the station quietly we walked;
I had my rifle and my haversack,
My heavy boots, my blankets on my back;
And though it hurt us, cheerfully we talked.
We chatted bravely at the platform gate.
I watched the clock. My train must go at eight.
One minute to the hour . . . we kissed good-by,
Then, oh, they both broke down, with piteous cry.
I went. . . .Their way was barred; they could not pass.
I looked back as the train began to start;
Once more I ran with anguish at my heart
And through the bars I kissed my little lass. . . .

Three years have gone; they've waited day by day.
I never came. I did not even write.
For when I saw my face was such a sight
I thought that I had better . . . stay away.
And so I took the name of one who died,
A friendless friend who perished by my side.
In Prussian prison camps three years of hell
I kept my secret; oh, I kept it well!
And now I'm free, but none shall ever know;
They think I died out there . . . it's better so.

To-day I passed my wife in widow's weeds.
I brushed her arm. She did not even look.
So white, so pinched her face, my heart still bleeds,
And at the touch of her, oh, how I shook!
And then last night I passed the window where
They sat together; I could see them clear,

The lamplight softly gleaming on their hair,
And all the room so full of cozy cheer.
My wife was sewing, while my daughter read;
I even saw my portrait on the wall.
I wanted to rush in, to tell them all;
And then I cursed myself: “You’re dead, you’re dead!”
God! how I watched them from the darkness there,
Clutching the dripping branches of a tree,
Peering as close as ever I might dare,
And sobbing, sobbing, oh, so bitterly!

But no, it’s folly; and I mustn’t stay.
To-morrow I am going far away.
I’ll find a ship and sail before the mast;
In some wild land I’ll bury all the past.
I’ll live on lonely shores and there forget,
Or tell myself that there has never been
The gay and tender courage of Lucette,
The little loving arms of Jacqueline.

A man lonely upon a lonely isle,
Sometimes I’ll look towards the North and smile
To think they’re happy, and they both believe
I died for France, and that I lie at rest;
And for my glory’s sake they’ve ceased to grieve,
And hold my memory sacred. Ah! that’s best.
And in that thought I’ll find my joy and peace
As there alone I wait the Last Release.

L’Envoi

We’ve finished up the filthy war;
We’ve won what we were fighting for . . .
(Or have we? I don’t know).
But anyway I have my wish:
I’m back upon the old Boul’ Mich’,
And how my heart’s aglow!
Though in my coat’s an empty sleeve,
Ah! do not think I ever grieve
(The pension for it, I believe,
Will keep me on the go).

So I’ll be free to write and write,
And give my soul to sheer delight,
Till joy is almost pain;
To stand aloof and watch the throng,
And worship youth and sing my song
Of faith and hope again;
To seek for beauty everywhere,
To make each day a living prayer
That life may not be vain.

To sing of things that comfort me,
The joy in mother-eyes, the glee
Of little ones at play;
The blessed gentleness of trees,
Of old men dreaming at their ease
Soft afternoons away;
Of violets and swallows’ wings,
Of wondrous, ordinary things
In words of every day.

To rhyme of rich and rainy nights,
When like a legion leap the lights
And take the town with gold;
Of taverns quaint where poets dream,
Of cafes gaudily agleam,
And vice that’s overbold;
Of crystal shimmer, silver sheen,
Of soft and soothing nicotine,
Of wine that’s rich and old,

Of gutters, chimney-tops and stars,
Of apple-carts and motor-cars,
The sordid and sublime;
Of wealth and misery that meet
In every great and little street,
Of glory and of grime;
Of all the living tide that flows—

From princes down to puppet shows—
I'll make my humble rhyme.

So if you like the sort of thing
Of which I also like to sing,
Just give my stuff a look;
And if you don't, no harm is done—

In writing it I've had my fun;
Good luck to you and every one—
And so
Here ends my book.

THE END

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