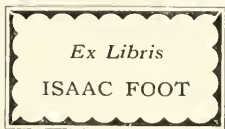




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FLOWERS IN THE GRASS



*POETICAL WORKS BY THE
SAME AUTHOR*

THE MASQUE OF
DEAD FLORENTINES.

PAN AND THE
YOUNG SHEPHERD.

ARTEMISION.

THE AGONISTS.

HELEN REDEEMED.

GAI SABER.

THE SONG OF THE PLOW.

THE VILLAGE WIFE'S LAMENT.

FLOWERS IN THE GRASS

(WILTSHIRE PLAINSONG)

BY
MAURICE HEWLETT



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The ballad "Helgi and Sigrun," which I have added to my Plainsong, is not a literal translation of the Icelandic original, but may fairly be called a rendering of it.

BROADCHALKE:
June 1919.



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FLOWERS IN THE GRASS

DEDICATION TO THE DEAD

I N days to come, when husht the strife,
And scab of rust aligns the blade
Wherewith, to save, you ventur'd life
And all the promise youth had made;
When the red roads are all relaid,
And a man dares to leave his wife
For his day's work, sure that his maid
And she are safe from German knife;

When all the kings are crown'd or dead,
And every general made a lord;
When all the thanksgivings are said,
Dealt every medal and award—
Let there be one found to record
Your deeds who were content to tread
The way of death, a nameless horde,
Unribbon'd and unheralded.

I think I see the bristled spills
That stud the field where thick you lie;

DEDICATION TO THE DEAD

I know what heavy taint distils
From countless graves in Picardy;
I see the hooded crow and pie
Preening themselves with sated bills
There where a sick and leaden sky
Hangs like a pall upon the hills:

Then, if I stand on that gray plain
Where the sea-wind for ever moans
And low clouds fling the sheeted rain
Over the sand that hides your bones,
I think I hear your undertones
That say, "Tell them there is no gain
To us in any churchyard stones
To guard the bed where we are lain.

"But say that what we had we gave
So men should hold their heads upright;
And if no man need be a slave
Henceforth, we were content to fight.
When the peace-beacon throws her light
It may not warm us in the grave:
Yet let them spare a thought that night
To us that sleep beyond the wave."

I who have learn'd your simple lore
And gain'd by everything you lose,
Chiefest to love that country more
Which breeds such men for such a use,

DEDICATION TO THE DEAD

How should I falter and refuse
What blood my heart has yet in store,
To write in it the holy dues
Of you who fought the Holy War?

THE MOTHER

SALUTE your mother on your knee,
Offspring of the Iberian,
Who lives yet while afield go ye,
Wiltshire woman, Wiltshire man!

Before the Norman spear was red,
Before the Saxon galleys felt
The shelving sand, or Roman dread
Betrayed the knees of flaming Kelt;

Before the Druid sluiced the Stone,
Before the pylons of Stonehenge
Fretted the sky, the deed was done
For which there yet may be revenge.

Salute your mother: she was here
Ere Westbury's white horse was blazed,
While in the coombe lurkt wolf and deer,
When Chesilbury's ramp was raised——

A slim white girl with cloud-black hair,
In leather smock from half her breast
To half her thigh, all else left bare,
Caught cowering in a gorsy nest

THE MOTHER

Long, long ago when came the Kelt
And brought to Albion the fair,
The gleaming white, his burning pelt,
His scythe and pike; she like a hare

Had fled the havoc, and she sat
With blank wide eyes her end awaiting,
And fought it like a mountain-cat
Whenas it came . . . a frantic mating

Then, there and breathless under sky
And wheeling hawks . . . borne like a spoil
Past effort and past carpentry,
Broken, with others in like toil,

To harvest duly of the sown
In her dark thought . . . all nature bent
To the blind imp, from anguish grown,
Fiercely regarding what she spent. . . .

Bondslave by day, bondslave by night,
Serving his needs who held her here,
An instrument of appetite,
A breeder of the household gear . . .

And then grown old, with nose and chin
At touching point, to huddle and brood,
Toothless, fierce, burnt brown and thin,
With cavernous eyes still unsubdued,

THE MOTHER

As if a wild beast croucht therein ;
 Watching her progeny hack wood,
Or draw the water up, or win
 From soggy earth the master's food. . . .

What secret lore, what rites, what passion
 She wove into the grain she bred,
You may still read in them you fashion,
 Issue of the black and red !

And last, to earth ! whereon her sires
 Had been since sea and land were twain :
There now, releast from all her hires,
 She and the earth are one again.

When to your daily task you fare,
 Having her dust beneath your foot,
Think, if you have a thought to spare,
 Of what stern mating ye are fruit.

GURD: A PORTRAIT

BLACK as a sloe his close-cropt poll,
A dusky cloud on throat and nape
And forearms, whence the shirt-sleeves roll
As if they've learn'd their only shape;

A pondering, gray and smut-rimmed eye,
Regard half timid and half sulky,
A glint of laughter, mimicry
Ready to pounce; a trunk not bulky

But hefty, on a pair of shanks
Short, straight, hard-planted;—see those feet
Firm upon France in order'd ranks
Rooted like swedes or sugar-beet;

Kindly, as gentle as a woman
To what is small or sick or sorry;
Modest and clean, in debt to no man,
Too slow for wrath, too wise for worry;

Servant not slave; a rule he has,
A law which doggedly he follows,
That that must be which ever was;
The evil with the good he swallows,

GURD: A PORTRAIT

Saying of sorrow, 'twas to be,
Of happiness, 'twere quite as well;
Working all day for a penny fee,
Judging, with never a word to tell;

He has a nose—no stoat a keener
For rabbit bunched upon the grass
(With ears laid back) to get his dinner—
You are done for if he knows you ass;

But you'll not know it; what he knows
You'll never learn; unless perchance
You are yourself; then he'll disclose,
May be, his eye for circumstance,

His gray, slow-moving level gaze
Which misses nothing, handsels all,
Accepts what is, gives neither praise
Nor blame, and waits for Doom to fall:

This is the warrior, this is he,
Whom not the Saxon nor the Roman
Have cowed beneath long mastery,
Whom now the Germans have for foeman.

Five nations of their funded worth
Lent brawn and heartstring, brain and bone
To make the creature named as Gurth
To Norman blades whose work was done;

GURD: A PORTRAIT

Whom they with manners all as curt
As his were blunt, lacking a word
So soft between the teeth, call'd Gurt:
To humour them, he answered, Gurd.

Square, glum and solid, sunburnt clean,
Glosst by weather to the bloom
Shot o'er the cheek of a nectarine
Whose gold proclaims his day of doom,

See Gurth undaunted by the sword
And ponder him, for he stood then
As he stood late before the horde
Of Teutons making dung of men—

Stood, and stood still, while shock on shock
Gray-crested waves heaved like a tide;
Stood, and stood still, blank as a rock,
Smiling and quiet and steady-eyed;

Stood, and stood still, when at his side
His brother hung his head and dropt,
While the shell screamed and shrapnel cried,
And the death-chatter never stopt;

Stood out the dragging winter days
Of dark and fog and blood and mud;
Stood thro' the green and crawling haze
That clung and strangled as he stood;

GURD: A PORTRAIT

Stood in advance, stood in retreat,
Slew without wrath, and met his slayer
As footballers each other greet
Before the match, then play it fair;

Stood for four years, nor turned a hair,
Marcht, thirsted, hungered, suffer'd lice,
Poison and murder, with an air
Of one who saw no sacrifice

In task-work plain beyond a doubt;
Needing no bolster-speech or sermon:
He, Gurd, was there to clean them out—
He'd kill a pig: why not a German?

THE SPIRE

WHERE'ER you walk about the shire,
If you may trust our people,
You'll not escape the arrowy spire
That beacons Sarum steeple—

Homing the way from Andover
She smites you thro' the haze;
You round a bluff, and she's so fair
It fills the heart with praise—

To see her stiff as Aaron's rod,
Dark in the purple gloom,
Lifting on high a swelling bud
Not broken into bloom.

She stares against a thundercloud
As ghastly as a finger
That singles you amidst a crowd
And will not let you linger ;

Or grows up in an open down
Like a tall poplar tree:
You look to see her bent and thrown
As the wind flings his gree.

THE SPIRE

And far away I've seen her ghost
 Across the hazy acres
A legionary of the host
 Whose poets were their makers.

But best of all, from Harnham meads,
 I see the homes of men
Beneath her shadow hide their heads
 Like chicks below a hen.

She spreads her wings and calls them there
 Safely beneath her height;
They cluster, while in upper air
 The great winds scream and fight.

Brave building there by men of old,
 Exulting and tremendous,
In summer heat or winter cold
 To 'monish or befriend us!

MIST MIRAGE

SUMMER days, the golden downs
Change as sunlight breaks or frowns;
Dreaming in the night, they lie
Naked to the cold moon's eye.

Winter's grass is starven white,
Stiffen'd by the sheep's close bite;
And the wrinkl'd darks declare
The faltering footfalls of the hare.

Dewy are the coombes and green
Where the rabbits bunch and preen:
Softfoot there you walk, and tread
On the vanisht ocean's bed.

But when the soft, wet south-east wind
Drives the mist that shrouds them blind,
Then do the antic hills retake
The semblance of their pristine make.

Then they rise in cliff and wall,
Then you may hear the sea-birds call,
Hear far below waves break and crash,
And spending waters run awash;

MIST MIRAGE

Hear the shingles, when the wave
Sucks them backwards, harshly rave:
Where you walkt on loamy sward
The hungry sea is overlord.

CHE SILBURY

TO THOMAS HARDY

THE turf girdles Chesilbury
On the dead folks' wall,
The plow drives in Chesilbury
Where cattle used to stall;
And there's no crying there now
Except the lapwing's call.

What people had a home here
Long and long ago?
What man used to come here
With his yew bow?
What women used to roam here
When the light was low?

There's no fear of foeman now,
Nor of Druid's knife,
Nor man to love woman now,
Nor life to ask life:
Dust is the Bowman now,
And dust is his wife.

CHESILBURY

Now the wind o'er Chesilbury
Sings day and night,
The rain chides, the moon rides,
The flints gleam bright:
And *they* saw Chesilbury
When its walls were white.

THE GYPSY GIRL

FROM Harnham Down to Whitesheet Hill,
Barefoot in dewy grass,
On summer mornings clear and still
The gypsy folk do pass.

By Compton Hut and Chesilbury,
By gorse and fern and brake,
With none but shepherds there to see,
Their loitering way they take.

Just there beside my feeding flock
I stray'd, a stripling youth;
The light told me 'twas four o'clock
As I tell you the truth.

The sweet grave light that casts no shade
Show'd me a vision there,
A solitary gypsy maid
With dark, braided hair.

Just there beside the empty house
That stands on Compton Down
She was, with mayflower in her blouse,
And tatter'd skirt of brown.

THE GYPSY GIRL

Herself a tann'd and hardy slip,
Her eyes were of green ;
Her lips were crimson as the hip,
And white her teeth between.

But tho' her scarlet blouse so gay
Was draggled like her skirt,
Her neck was whiter than the may,
And royal she wore her dirt.

She lookt at me and wove a spell,
I lookt, and could not stir :
I 'low a fire was laid in Hell
When I lay down with her.

THE HAWK

BROWN hills and bare, blue fields of air,
That fold me with my love,
There in the sun make us two one,
Yon hawk on guard above.

With keen bright eye he'll watch us lie
Lapt in the golden weather,
And spread his wings o'er two poor things
Whom love has knit together.

With wings spread wide he'll slant and glide
From windy height to height,
And while he hovers keep for two lovers
A wary eye and bright.

LENCHES

UNDERNEATH these folded downs,
Outposts of the long-spent wave,
Men are lying, and their towns,
All one dust, and in one grave.

'Tis by law of give and take
This thymy turf that cuts as short
As a wedge of wedding-cake
Rounds us up and our resort.

Here 's a borstal, like a furrow,
Where they cower'd from the beast;
There 's a hearth, in that green burrow,
And the ashes of a feast.

Stand upon this narrow edge:
Here one wrought his husbandry
Under the same privilege
Of sun and shower as you and me.

Here he hackt the crumbling soil,
With his wife hard on his heel,
Sowing instant on his toil
Millet from an osier creel.

LENCHES

And say his mattock was a tine,
And his spade a shaven flint;
Say his rule of Mine and Thine
Rested on a timely dint—

Harvest came and harvest moon,
As they visit me and you:
Wife and child, and rest at noon—
Nothing better yet in view.

THE CEDAR

I N Vernditch Bottom stands a tree,
Lord of an open place,
The like of which you might not see
The length of Cranborne Chase.

O'er hazel brake and sapling oak
He lifts his lofty head
Like some old sea-bird on a rock
With lonely wings outspread.

His floating vans do call a hush
Over the quiet hollow:
It is as if the gorse and brush
Markt him but durst not follow;

As if they guess'd where he began
To open to the sun,
He and his kindred of the clan
Sighing on Lebanon.

A great old house stood hereabouts,
The Warden of the Walk,
Where now of all its ins and outs
Remains a grassy balk.

THE CEDAR

About him once a velvet lawn
 Show'd many a good tree growing;
But he was first to hail the dawn,
 And last to see day going.

Now all his pleasantness and peace
 Are ended like a story;
The woodland creeps about his knees
 But cannot hide his glory.

A NEW BALLAD OF THE MAID AND
THE FARMER'S WIFE

SUSANNA was a bonny girl,
A fine girl and tall;
She left her home and people,
At the plow's call,
To wear the saucy breeches
And white over-all.

She had not been upon the farm
A month more than three,
The farmer up and spoke to her,
Would have her on his knee.

But she was high in scorn of him:
"And what should I do there,
If your good wife should come along,
And me in that chair?"

The farmer was a coaxing man,
And so came a day,
Out in the field so early
She could not say him nay.
Beside the growing barley
He had his own way.

THE MAID AND THE FARMER'S WIFE

So kindly as he kist her,
“ My pretty one,” said he,
“ So God me use as you shall choose
For what you've done for me.”

Susanna rose up silent
And follow'd in the furrow ;
She neither pray'd a prayer,
Nor sat still with sorrow ;
Said, “ Let me do the more to-day
As I may none to-morrow.”

All day long, late and early,
She went about the farm,
Thro' hay-time and harvest,
Thro' rain and cold and warm.

Her thoughts were in her own keeping,
She askt advice of none,
But oftentimes went blindly weeping
To her cold bed alone.

But when the time was fully come
Too heavy was her load,
She went up to the gypsy folk
Upon the green road.

“ Is any here will have pity
Upon my poor estate?

THE MAID AND THE FARMER'S WIFE

For I must be a mother, it seems,
Before I have a mate."

And there the hours of travail
Were satisfied and done;
The gypsy woman held her up
Her new-born son.

Said Susan to the gypsy woman,
"This kindness more do me;
Take him down to the farmer's house
For his good wife to see.
Say you to her, 'I have brought him in
To lie upon your knee.'

"But if the dame should cry on you,
And bid you both begone,
Say you then, 'Mistress, I bring you here
Your own husband's son.'"

Now that good wife the farmer had,
She was a barren woman,
Cried, "How dare you bring me the child
Of my husband's leman!

"But and this baby might be mine
I would give my head."
Answer'd her the gypsy woman,
"The girl, she is dead."

THE MAID AND THE FARMER'S WIFE

“ And how am I to rear a child
Now that I am old,
With my breasts so thin and hard,
And milk gone cold?”

“ There is a girl out in your field,
With breasts like silk,
And well I reckon by her build
They are full of milk.”

“ Go call her up and fetch her in,
And set her down by me;
And she shall nurse the child I have
That wails on my knee.”

Susanna came in from the field,
And sat down in her place;
She offer'd to the child the breast,
A frown upon her face.

She offer'd him her beauteous pap,
And frown'd upon the child,
But as his thirsty lips caught fast
Her face grew mild;
Anon she lookt at the farmer's wife,
And nodded and smiled.

IN THE FIRE

THE fire burns low;
Now the dying embers
Twinkle and glow
Like village lights,
Seen from the heights
In dark Decembers.

There's the foggy gleam
From the Horse and Groom,
Where topers dream
In front of their liquor,
And candles flicker
As pipes allume.

Mark you there
That throbbing star—
It's just the glare
That floods the smithy
Where on the stithy
Men hammer the bar.

Yonder's a steading
In a snug gap:
One is reading,

IN THE FIRE

And one sits still,
Dreaming her fill,
Her hands on her lap.

There glimmers a blind; it
Is like amber silk;
Hiding behind it
Four rosy girls,
Stooping their curls
Over bread and milk.

And far and soft
A candle flame
Burns in the loft
Where a poet sits,
Nursing his wits
To build him a name.

Now slowly, slowly,
Spark by spark,
Wink by wink,
It vanishes wholly.
The toilers sink
To the restful dark.

One only
Is left to burn;
All night lonely

IN THE FIRE

It will show light
For one who might
 Even now return.

Now the fire 's cold,
And its village dead.
All the dream 's told—
Come we to bed.

CROSS FIRES

AS I was coming down the hill,
The white thorn all in bloom,
I past a couple standing still,
A maiden and her groom.

The light was falling to the dark,
But not too dark to catch
The glowing of a brighter spark
Than fired by any match.

I saw her kind eyes beam and burn,
I saw her colour glad.
She lookt most beautiful to learn
What great desire he had.

Yet other learning had a grip,
Got in her mother's college:
She bent her head and bit her lip
Lest he should know her knowledge.

I past and suddenly felt older,
But when I turn'd, her cheek
Was pressing close against his shoulder,
As if to make it speak.

THE JUSTIFIED MAID

I N Swallowcliffe where I was bred
I won so many glances,
The grudging said 'twas I that led,
But I say, circumstances.

For if a young man meets a girl
A-crossing of a meadow,
How 's she to know a straying curl
Should turn him to her shadow?

Or if it chance that after dark
You go to post your letters,
Is "Good night, Lucy," from a spark
To lay your tongue in fetters?

'Tis so acquaintances begin,
To wink at that is blindness;
And sure I am a walk 's no sin
If done in loving-kindness.

When I went out and took a place
'Twas just that same thing over;
A chap need only see my face
To vow himself my lover;

THE JUSTIFIED MAID

And all I'd had to do with it
Was just to say, "Good morning."
Is it my fault my gown's a fit,
Or must my eyes wear mourning?

But some there be who can't do right
In other people's judgment;
Go you to church as white as white
Some dust will find a lodgment.

They always say, who use me worst,
I kiss'd the second gardener;
But if a girl has kiss'd the first
How else will t'other pardon her?

'Twas only what might fall to you
If sure there was no one by:
I always learn'd that you should do
According as you're done by.

Try all my life from end to end
You'll find it open dealing;
I love my kind and stand a friend
To any fellow-feeling.

And how 's a girl to deal with love
When she is short of twenty?
If what I had was good enough
What I gave back was plenty.

FROM PAUL FORT

THE girl, she died; she died in her love-delight;
They laid her down in the grave, in the grave so
soon as 'twas light.

All alone, just as she was, they laid her under cover;
All alone she lay in her coffin, without a lover;
And back they came, laughing and talking at break of
day,

Laughing and singing: My turn next, as we say.
“That girl, she died, died in her love-delight”—
And so to work in the fields, in the fields from morning
to night.

HEREAFTER

WHERE are we going?
Ah, if we knew—
As surely as knowing
Part will be dust—
Would it help us win thro'
When go we must?

Shall we haunt the green places
We have loved so dearly?
Watch the faces
That love us to day,
Watch them nearly,
And then slip away?

No—no—
If they have forgotten
We will let them go,
And turn to the dust,
And rot with the rotten,
And sleep, we trust.

HEREAFTER

But for me if, hereafter
Some girl to her lover
Betwixt sob and laughter
Say, How could he know it?
Then let earth cover
The rest of the poet.

JACOB'S LADDER

LIGHT-FINGER'D Jacob, as he swung
His eye aloft from rung to rung
That vista where the angels clomb,
Saw over-archt the purple dome,
And burning deep therein and far,
The home of God, one golden star.

And if the crown of your degrees
Report no such immensities,
Your stairway green no angel freight
Convoy to no celestial gate,
The earth-bound eye demurely dwells
Upon your little peal of bells,
Violet each, with golden eye,
Heav'n in a pretty mimicry;—
Nay, if to some each may disclose
The pivot of the Mystic Rose,
Happy are you, the hierophants
Of *Primum Mobile* to ants.

DAISIES

THERE are who see your face
As innocently bold
In this our world of chace
As any twelve-year-old,
Safe in the apron lace,
Nor yet in kissing case.

Or when your blood runs free
One singles for his praise
Your golden axle-tree
Whirling a thousand rays.
I see what he can see—
'Tis there, but not for me.

One says, A spur dis-heeled,
The rowels dight in red;
Another sees a shield,
'Ομφαλόεσσα, dread
Of Hector when the steel'd
Peleides took the field.

For me, at evening's close
Whenas I pace the sward,

DAISIES

Your fires remember those
Which make the Heavens adored,
And, as the Latin goes,
On stars I set my toes.

My careful feet I steer
Among the Pleiades;
Aldebaran is here,
And here the Wain; and these
The Pointer Pair; and near
Is Venus shining clear.

Now Saturn, fiery Mars;
That cloud 's the Galaxy:
Avoid it, those are stars
Fragile as filigree:
Foot not, less footprint jars
The filmy dust, or scars.

So be you bold, and white,
And all that poets say,
Fond lover of the light,
The golden eye of day—
Give me for my delight
To walk your stars at night.

AUTUMN CROCUS

LAX and wan from Pluto's kiss,
Proserpine is frail like this,
Offering to who will sup
Her wine in such a hectic cup:
Winter's warning, summer's keening,
Spring's palinode, and autumn's gleaning.
Love, where her mute lips have kist,
Stains the chalice amethyst,
And the stream of frozen breath
That stirs the bever comes from death.

Moment's wonder of unthrift,
Gone so soon as you're uplift;
Like a wet dawn's accolade,
Like the rainbow, bent to fade;
Like love that follows love's excess
And but suspires old loveliness;
Hierodule whose service vain
Is to give and never gain—
You glow an hour, and pale, and pass,
A flush upon the dying grass.

WILLOW-PALM

WHEN wintry peewits wail and dip,
Sport of the blust'ring wind,
And lambkins nose with tremulous lip
Half-frozen turnip-rind;
Before the primrose galaxy
Breaks thro' the southward sods,
You hold up to the bitter sky
Your sheaf of budded rods.

Was Aaron such an optimist,
Like you, as undismay'd?
First of our prophets at the tryst,
Like him you shall be paid.
Tho' piping east the wind may veer
The girls shall give you vails
When to a wither'd land and sere
You fling your rabbits' tails.

They'll hunt the ditches up and down,
The ingles of the copse,
Warm with their own your fingers brown,
And kiss your silver knops;
And Margery with eyes alight
Across the flood where some is,
Will strain, with Moll to hold her tight,
To reach the buds of promise.

ANEMONES

ANEMONES, which droop their eyes
Earthward before they dare arise
To flush the border, question not
The urgency which them begot,
Nor ask nor care to know what rite
Procured them in the warm wet night;
But being young to light and love
Dread their great Soldan up above.

So the belovéd hangs her head
To know herself encompasséd,
And burning hotly, shuns to view
What next the hardy one may do;
But when the throbbing of the fire
Thrills her like music in a wire,
Stiff as a stalk that feels the shower,
She lifts her flaming face to flower.

NIGHT-STOCK

NIGHT falls,
Husht earth lies;
In the thicket
No bird calls;
The first bat flickers,
The last swift flies,
The wind in the tree
Falters and sighs.

Without leaf or stalk,
Afloat on the night,
Smouldering disks
Lamp a catafalque.
The trees are the plumes
About the dead,
And they the tapers
At feet and head.

What waft comes thronging
Thick on the wind?
Hot and faint
With a burden of longing

NIGHT-STOCK

As a young man's mind;
Sharp with the taint
Of death in the air
From autumn behind.

'Tis the night-flower
Calling her lover,
The moth, to kiss her
In fragrant bower;
With his wings, to cover
Her well of bliss,
To quench her drouth
With the balm of his.

THE DRUMMING SNIPE

SPEED you, drummer,
Herald of summer!
Was e'er such a lover,
With business to cry
Thro' each wing-cover,
Beating the sky?

You at your questing,
Fleeting of air,
And she a-nesting
For all her affair—
The poet you are,
Moth after a star!

Husband and lover—
How to discover
What she makes of you?
If coursing and drumming
Stir her to love you,
To thrill for your coming?

She, with no glory
In musical feathers

THE DRUMMING SNIPE

To bleat out her story
In all sorts of weathers,
Ruffles her breast,
One eye for the nest.

No doubt but she misses
Poetical blisses,
The frenzy of rapture
That drives you to madness,
Quest, pursuit, capture,
All poured out in gladness—

Rather, her fancy
Is laying an egg down,
And not aeromancy
Will tempt her tuckt leg down;
Her heart 's where her thought is,
And a poet's wife nought is.

You, quiring the sun,
Dreamer, have done!
How is she the fairer
For your passage adoring;
How can she prepare her
For your heart's outpouring?

She knows no good fortune
When with one eye

THE DRUMMING' SNIPE

She sees you importune
 The breadth of the sky,
Bleating and bleating—
And she sitting and sitting.

Artist unstaying,
Who sing night in, day in!
Brave minnesinger,
 With pinions for harp,
Whence the wind's finger
 Plucks melody sharp,

Wring your heart's song out,
 Then drop and say
Love, I've been long out,
 Bid me and I stay!
Perorate, and away—
She'll not say you nay.

MAY MORNING

F AIR are the pastures
Where sunlight lies
And the elms dip their high heads
In blue skies.

Lovely is the young corn
White in the wind,
And sweet the mayflower
That stirs the mind.

Happy pipes the blackbird
In the flusht apple tree;
And the wren in the quickset,
Happy is he.

SUMMER NIGHT

THIS hot summer night the day so slowly dies
That the dark is an image of death pacing
stealthily on;
So very slow, like a windless tide
That invades the shore largely and wide,
Yet point by point possesses our sanctuaries,
And point after point is brimm'd, floated over, and
gone.

A moment ago and I saw the little brown owl
A-perch on the barn, and read his rapt wise face;
I could see the light thro' his blunt spread wings
As he sail'd noiselessly down on hidden things
Droning about the elm—but now he can prowl
Unseen in a garden one inky vast of space.

A moment ago and the sky was green and gray,
And the sweet cool air was like a balmy sleep,
Turning the mind to gentle and fragrant themes,
To times of old, mother's love, childish dreams;
But now the dark blue flood of night has washt all
away,
And a frozen moon rides out upon the deep.

ON A WINTER'S DAY

ON a winter's day
When the air is a-chill
And the north-west wind is crying over the hill,
I hug myself, and I say,
Let come what will ;
Let the rain drive,
Let night-birds ruffle to keep them alive,
What matter to me so long as I thrive?

For she is at home, waiting for me
By the light of the fire ;
The children are fed, and Peace like a tree
Sheltereth homestead, garth and byre,
Where steadfastly
She awaits my homing heart and my long desire.

SOFT WEATHER

THE wind blows mild
 Out of the west,
Soft as the lips of a child
 On a woman's breast ;

And the gray earth
 Stirs in her deeps,
In all her intimate valleys
 Where the wind creeps,

Sighing in the bents,
 Crying beyond,
Ruffling with soft laments
 The still dew-pond.

The shepherds are telling
 Of open weather
When the ewes and they in the shealing
 Must labour together.

Come Christmas soon,
 With an earth-sigh,
With a blurr'd ring to the moon,
 And a mackerel sky ;

SOFT WEATHER

And Christmas mirth
Stream over the hill,
And peace be yet upon earth
For men of good will!

THIS MAIDEN YOU SEEK

THIS maiden you seek,
What makes her so fair,
With bloom on her cheek,
With soft shining eyes,
With light in her hair,
With pure lips and wise?

And you, instant wooer,
As blythe as the morning,
Wherein are you sure
Of yourself, taking pride
In your body's adorning
To walk at her side?

“Tis hers to be courted,
And mine to commend me,
That her beauty reported
In my gallant seeming
May draw her attend me
To the heights of my dreaming.”

TO THE POET GROWING OLD

CONTENT you, son of man,
Nor hunt beyond your gate;
Keep fill'd your porridge pan,
And ask no other fate
O' the Sacristan,
Death, but come not too late.

If the gods grant you this,
To work while lasts the light,
Having your true love's kiss
For balm upon the night,
Guerdon that is
Any man to requite.

Contentment and good health
You had to serve your wit,
A woman sweet for wealth,
Children to add to it:
So rich by stealth,
You and the world were quit.

You rang your batch of rhyme,
With love for underflow;

TO THE POET GROWING OLD

A time to grow, a time
 You had to make to grow ;
An hour at prime ;
 Soon 'twill be time to go.

What more need you to bind
 Or hoard upon a shelf?
The gods gave you the mind
 To forage for yourself,
And seeking, find
 More ponderable pelf.

You had the uxorious eye
 Which woos the universe,
To make a marriage-tie
 For better or for worse,
Whose progeny
 Your heart receiv'd to nurse.

You held him for a clod
 Who saw not every bell
Of crocus breaking sod
 As past the tongue to tell,
Which only God
 Knew for no miracle ;

And thought him worse than dark
 Who with dull ears and eyes

TO THE POET GROWING OLD

Could heed the soaring lark
Spray with clear song the skies,
Or watch to his arc
The golden sun arise.

So past your round of days
From morn to shut of eve
That you found much to praise
And had some to receive :
Now few delays
Before you take your leave!

What then? To fold the hands,
Your work-hour over and done,
Knowing you leave your lands
The better for your son,
Thankful he stands
To reap what you have won.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

THE gate is padlockt, and the blinds
Close-drawn, the chimney's task is o'er;
Pity the traveller who finds
His journey's ending at this door.

How still, how watchful! Like a grave,
It keeps a secret in its hold;
The very tree-tops fear to wave,
The very shadows are a-cold.

Come in the garden. Cabbage-stalks
Withered and bleacht in sorry rows;
But arabis aligns the walks,
And still the golden wallflower blows;

And tangled o'er the apple-stump
A budding Gloire or Maiden Blush;
And there's a thriving lily-clump,
And ribës still a burning bush.

Tread lightly, for this place is haunted;
Who knows what guarded eyes might peer
Between those curtain-folds enchanted?
The ghost of Love inhabits here.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

Those curtains, poor and yet discreet,
I know not how they hold the air
Of hearts which must have loved and beat,
And drawn each other up the stair.

Pass lightly, lest the dead should waken;
Ask no more questions, lest the dumb
Should tell of love forsworn, forsaken:
Respect this house of shadows—come.

THE WREN

ON topmost twig the happy wren
Pipes high his news to God and men,
Pufft as a herald and as shrill,
As full in throat and charged in bill :
“Oyez, oyez! It is the case,
My wife being in a state of grace,
Four perfect eggs reward her care ;
The which her increase to declare,
Not hesitating to disturb ye,
I now relate *orbi et urbi!*”

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

A CHILD I had, a pretty chit
No higher than my knee;
In summer when the days did fit
She'd go about with me.
Sing Hey, my pretty!
Now come along with me.

When she grew to be a maid,
And wore the linen gown,
She had no call to be afraid,
But kept her apron down—
With Hey, my pretty!
Your kisses are your own.

The likely lads of our village
Were after her like bees;
She told them she was still of age
When she herself could please—
With Hey, my pretty!
The men are but a tease.

About the flowering of the gorse,
Before the eglantine,

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

The King came riding on his horse
Where she was keeping swine—
With Hey, my pretty!
I would that you were mine.

She had no will with his to meet,
Nor wit him to gainsay;
He took her up to his high seat,
And taught her how to play.
Alack, my pretty!
A King must have his way.

He kept her by him as his leman,
And gave her what she bore:
I'd rather she had ne'er been woman
Than woman made a whore.
Farewell, my pretty!
We'll meet again no more.

HELGI AND SIGRUN

(FROM THE ICELANDIC)

THE eagles they were screaming
 (It was in days of old),
The waterfloods were streaming
 From Heaven's high threshold,
The day Borghild brought forth the child
 Helgi in dark Braehold.

About the house in whispers
 The busy bondmaids run,
About the bed the Nornir
 The strands of fate have spun,
Each hooded wife to rede the life
 Of Sigmund's splendid son.

Midmost the moon's high bower
 The golden woof they spread;
By east, by west, with power
 They strain the golden thread;
They knot the twine to mark the time
 When Helgi shall be dead.

Says raven unto raven,
 Swaying upon the thorn,

HELGI AND SIGRUN

“News, news for who goes hungry,
I bring thee news this morn.
A babe stands hale in coat of mail
Who overnight was born.”

So lordly as an elm-tree
He grew in sun and shade,
Nor spared the red gold's plenty,
Nor harbour'd long his blade;
Or ever he told fifteen year old
Hunding in death he laid.

Then claim'd the sons of Hunding
Riches and rings galore,
But little weregild got they
Of Helgi's golden store.
He gave them tryst with spear in fist
To fight on Lowfell Moor.

And there the peace of Frodi
Was broke betwixt the twain,
There reiv'd the hounds of Odin
The harvest of red rain;
Of his sons four went out to war,
But none came back again.

Now sits the hero Helgi
Beneath the Eagle-Rock,

HELGI AND SIGRUN

Now overhead the lightnings
Leap from the thunder-shock;
High in the air the War-maids fair
Come riding in a flock.

They rode on fairy horses,
Their breasts wore gleaming mail;
The light upon their spear-points
Made the sun's beams show pale;
In the green wood the king's son stood
And cried the War-maids hail.

Then spake King Hogni's daughter,
Sitting her good gray steed,
"We drink the reek of slaughter
But quaff with Kings no mead;
Yet of thee, Lord, I ask thy sword
To help me in my need.

"My father hath me plighted
To Grani's surly son
Unless thou have me righted
And win my freedom soon,
Unless, O peer, thou serve with spear
The Battle-maid Sigrun."

Quoth Helgi, "Fear not, Maiden,
Sigrun of Seva-fell,

HELGI AND SIGRUN

The sea shall soon be laden
With ships and hosts in mail,
So by my side thou lie a bride,
Content with me to dwell."

Three times he kiss'd that fairy
Under the greenwood tall,
And three times claspt her fairly
About her middle small:
There was no heed for Hodbrord's meed
After her first downfall.

King Helgi calls his liegemen
To tryst at Hedinseye;
The ships are lined with shieldmen,
The shields look dangerously;
With creaming wake their ways they take
Across the yeasty sea.

Said Godmund, Hodbrord's porter,
"Now who are these come here?
Whose war-standard is golden?
Who standeth up to steer?
No shields of peace, the like of these,
But war is in their gear."

Said Hodbrord, "Bit my horses,
And spur them east and west;

HELGI AND SIGRUN

Call Hogni and his sons up,
Call Atli and his best.
Let no man stand, for close at hand
I see the Volsung crest."

With sounding shock the spears met,
Now sword met fallow sword,
Foremost of all rode Helgi
To break the Niflung horde;
High overhead the Maids of Dread
Cried him with arrowy word.

Sigrun, that wing'd war-fairy,
Cried, "Hail, of Yngwi's race,
Thou who hast brought a King down,
To thee belongs his grace,
The fairy head to joy thy bed
And light thy dwelling-place."

But Helgi's brow was heavy,
He spake her heavily,
"Alas the day's endeavour,
Alas for me and thee,
For in that strife thy father's life
Was taken, and by me."

Now stands by Sigrun's bedside
Her rueful brother Gray:

HELGI AND SIGRUN

“Haro upon thee, Sigrun,
Woe worth the thing I say.
There met my bolt at Fetterholt
A King as bright as day.”

“May the ship beneath thee right not
When the eager wave lips over!
May the sword thou wieldest bite not
When the foeman breaks from cover!
May thy good horse abate his force,
Since thou hast slain my lover!”

Deep in her darkening chamber
The lady sits alone—
“Now had he chosen for me
Here had been Sigmund’s son,
But the eagles drowse on the high ash-boughs,
And outgait have I none.”

Forth of the guarded casement,
To see the mirk night fall,
There stood a maid abiding
Her lady’s beck and call.
She saw a corse rode on a horse
A little west the hall.

“What ghost is this rides hither,
Or is the Doom’s day come?”

HELGI AND SIGRUN

Shall dead men cross the river,
Shall they ride forth the tomb?
Ho, thou pale head of mortal dread,
Who gives thee leave for home?"

A dead man gives the answer—
"Alack, it is no ghost
Comes this way, nor the Judgment,
What though the flood be crost,
What though the gold spurs find a hold
On heels as white as frost."

He has rein'd him up and halloa'd—
"Sigrun of Seva-fell,
Come out thy maiden bower
With thy dead love to dwell;
For e'er the cock call up the stock
I must be back in Hell.

"Or e'er be red the highways,
Or e'er the gray cock shrill,
My horse must fare the sky-ways
And I be o'er the hill;
There is no gree for thee and me
Unless I have my will."

Sigrun stands on the threshold,
The doors are open wide;

HELGI AND SIGRUN

“Go not, O Hogni’s daughter,
With that dead man to bide.”
But she has past the ford in haste
And stands by Helgi’s side.

With her two hands she holdeth
His wounded face and wan,
In her close arms enfoldeth
That woeful stricken man;
With mouth she clips his clay-cold lips
As tho’ his red blood ran.

“As glad I am to meet thee
As hawks to find the slain!
Behold, O King, I greet thee
With lips as soft as rain!
With my quick breath I staunch thy death
Which was my brother’s bane.”

Dead Helgi lift his head high—
“Now death is no more dree.
Let no man raise the lykewake
Altho’ my wounds he see.
For light falls doom upon my tomb
Now Sigrun lies with me.”

“Here is our bed made, Helgi,
And here the bride undrest;

HELGI AND SIGRUN

Soft shall our bridal bed be,
And sweet our after rest;
For we shall sleep and slumber deep,
Thy dead face on my breast."

Never a marvel greater
Did Seva-fell behold,
Nor magic ever whiter
By Nornir was enscroll'd.
That living child of Hogni's smiled,
Fast in a dead man's hold.



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