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# CANDLE FLAME

*By VIRNA SHEARD*

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## LARKSPUR

Blue larkspur—you remind me of her eyes;  
Long, long ago—oh, very long ago—  
Ere I grew grave, and grey and worldly-wise,  
In this enchanted place I told her so.

Ah, Larkspur! Your blue beauty is my bane,  
For you conjure old summers from the deep,  
And make the ghost of joy to walk again,  
And taunt me with delight I could not keep.

Come, now—remind me of far other things:  
Of lovely shining things all faintly cool;  
The light on sapphires, and on peacocks' wings;  
The noonday sky reflected in a pool.

Bring visions of the sun upon the sea,  
And darker hues of rivers, deep and cold;  
Bring shades of mellow ancient tapestry,  
And blues that only Chinese porcelains hold.

Let me remember the Madonna's shawl,  
In folds above her young, mysterious face;  
Woven of color He saw first of all—  
The little Christ—there in His resting-place.

Blue Larkspur—teach me how to break your spell!  
Bring me remembrance of tropic skies—  
Or blue of ice, of which old sailors tell—  
Or blue of anything—except her eyes.

## THE VEIL

How can I let you know that I am near—  
I who am reckoned with the vanished dead?  
The veil that falls between us now, most dear,  
Is wrought of stuff through which no word is said.  
But still I see your tears, and in the dark  
Beyond your reach—I hear you call my name;  
Your loveliness, where grief has set its mark  
Burns my strange peace away, as with a flame.  
Then, sometimes—sometimes when the sea-winds blow  
I find release, and on their wings pass by.  
How can I tell you? Will you never know  
That it is not the wind alone—but I?  
God does not send me far. He bids me wait  
Until you come—though it be soon or late.

## THE WIND

The wind! The wind! The great wind from the sea!

O little roses—you are doomed to pass!

And you will go as he did—suddenly;—

You will be broken—tossed upon the grass.

I cannot save you. I who love you well.

Not sun, nor moon, nor stars can bring you aid;

For roses, as for us, the passing bell,

The wind we meet, afraid, or unafraid.

But yet, the wind, that far and wide is led

By nothing—nothing but God's mighty hand,

Says sometimes, as with words, "Be comforted;"

My sweet! My sweet!—Nor try to understand—

For only One knows why the four winds blow,

Or why the new-blown roses needs must go.

## POSTMEN

I like postmen.

They are the winged Mercurys of our streets,

Though they may not realize it.

They only realize they carry letters—

Of different kinds.

Just letters. Letters.

But they know the different kinds,

By intuition,

Or something.

I like postmen. You don't have to explain to them.

They understand.

They are gifted that way. Dowered mysteriously.

If you are looking madly for a letter,

They know. Without being told.

If they don't bring it, their eyes say,

"Sorry,"

And their husky voices (usually husky; it's the weather)

Say, "There's another mail from the East;

Or West"—as it may be, for they know-1-

"To-day."

If they bring the letter—they smile in a priceless way.

It is as though one of the Fates smiled at you.

I like postmen.

They earn their stipend, or whatever it is.

They are the King's messengers,

And by the Crown they earn their stipend—

Or whatever it is.

If you doubt that, watch them.  
On bitter days watch them. On rough days,  
And when the silver runs away up.  
All weather is God's weather to them.  
They are always coming along, cheerily,  
And on time.  
No trips to the seaside for them.  
Hardly any golf.  
Baseball? O, yes. On holidays.

I like postmen; their unruffled spirit.  
They make so few mistakes,  
Even when the writing seems to have been done  
With a whisk.  
They are wise, these men of letters—  
Graduates of the School of Humanity.  
One I know has a limp;—  
Hill 70.  
He has four medals that he keeps in a box.

I like postmen,—  
Their weather-beaten faces, when they grow old;  
Their understanding eyes.  
They just appear—and disappear—without any fuss.  
Sometimes—like the Angels on the hill—they bring  
Tidings of great joy,  
Always they are the last link between ourselves  
And our own who are away.  
They are the winged Mercurys of the dull town,  
Though they may not know it.  
I like postmen.

## IN THE NIGHT-WATCHES

You counted life a light and tinted thing,  
That like a butterfly might soon take wing.

"Give me," you said, "as heaven is far above,—  
A little laughter—and a little love!"

"We all," you said, "must cross some bridge of sighs  
To find the land where beauty never dies."

Your heart was like a harp—but yesterday—  
On which each airy fancy stopped to play.

How have you drifted down such fathoms deep,  
Into this still unpenetrable sleep?

In webs of silence none can break or mar,  
You have been wrapped, as old lost Pharaohs are.

And yet—and yet—it is so short a while  
Since last you tossed to me your sun-lit smile!

Leave me a little sleep—for day is done  
And I who watch beside thee, dear, have none.

Give me a little portion of your peace  
So my rebellion—and my tears may cease.

## A LEGEND OF PAN

It is Pan who watches the mountain goats,  
And all the little wild sheep;  
He calls—and they answer from shaggy throats;  
He pipes—and they follow his April notes,  
Where the paths are rough and steep.

They need no shepherd with staff and crook,  
They need no sheltering fold;  
For Pan doth lead them up river and brook,  
To fir-tree shadow, and violet nook,  
With a wisdom ages old.

The beloved over-Lord said to him  
In the days when change began:  
"Far, far up from the mountain's rim,  
And into the cloud-mist purple and dim,  
Call my fearless flocks, O Pan!

"They are all away, that you used to know,—  
Save only Puck o' the hill,—  
The Dryads are lost with the last year's snow,  
The Fauns have gone where the swallows go,  
Or the ripples that pass the mill.

"You are brother-in-half to my untamed things;  
You are kin to the free and wild;  
On each hoof you wear invisible wings;  
From a reed you can make a flute that sings;  
Your heart is the heart of a child.

"So my mountain goats and little wild sheep,  
I will leave them, Pan, with you;  
You shall pipe them awake, and pipe them asleep,  
And every one of them you shall keep,  
Where the hills are high and blue!"

And if they see him,—Well! Who is it cares?  
Or if they love him,—Who knows?  
But he calls—and they climb the rocky stairs;  
He pipes,—and they follow where no man dares,—

And never a traveller goes!

## ALL ON A MAY MORNING

I saw a lovely lady walk along a leafy lane,  
When primroses were blowing and the cuckoo sang again;  
She wore a ruffled gown of pink, a hat of rosy hues,  
And twinkling silver buckles on her little high-heeled shoes;  
Most daintily she carried a tall tasselled cane,  
While a small beribboned poodle came following in her train.

Then said I to the morning sun: "O do not let her pass!  
A more bewitching, beauteous maid ne'er owned a looking-glass!  
And if she turns in any gate, and goes I know not where,  
It's probable I'll never see another maid as fair!"  
Without the faintest knowledge of her charming name, alas!  
I sallied forth to meet her across the young green grass.

My hand upon my fluttering heart, I bowed extremely low,  
And said: "A thousand pardons, but my way I do not know,  
For since I chanced to see you from yon blossoming orchard tree,  
The West is East, the South is North,—and all the same to me!  
And I have not any notion which way the four winds blow,  
Or on what highroad, up or down, t'would be the best to go!

"Of your kindness pray direct me to the left—or to the right;—  
(You really should—because 'tis you have put my wits to flight,)  
And I'd be quite madly joyful, and grateful this sweet day  
If it should hap, by any luck, that your way was my way.  
There surely never was a morn more gay and golden-bright,  
And I have not a thing to do, but walk about till night."

Alack! That shining lady in that green primrosy lane,  
Turned first to whitest marble—and then turned back again!  
Her cheeks flamed red with fury—and her eyes flamed black with rage,  
And she looked at me as might a queen at a good-for-nothing page!  
She tossed her head, and firmly, set down the tasselled cane,  
"I do not know you Sir!" she said,—and walked on with disdain.

"Beauty altogether perfect, cannot possibly be rude,"  
Said I, and went the other way—but in a chastened mood;  
Nor did I start a-whistling—as on such a day one should—  
Till I reached the village common where a little goose-girl stood,  
Egad! The prettiest goose-girl that I have ever viewed!  
(Her flock was one grey gosling, by a frantic dog pursued.)

But tears were falling from her eyes, her eyes of blue-bell blue;  
So I said: "Come! Come! Now what's amiss? Why all of this ado?"  
And she cried: "O Sir! My darling geese! Of them I am bereft!  
Of all the lovely twenty-five, there's only this one left!  
What shall I do! What shall I do! Whatever shall I do!

The huntsmen came a-riding by—and all my geese just flew!"

I could not bear to see a little maiden so forlorn,  
(I noticed that her curls were just the color of ripe corn;)  
"Why go along with me!" said I, "tame geese will not fly far,  
And you and I together will discover where they are!"  
So hand in hand we hunted geese that mellow May-day morn,  
And I found that little goose-girl was a rose without a thorn.

## WILD BEES

You drink from ivory goblets held in a jasper pool,  
And dine from crimson moss-bells on the north side of a tree;  
On globes of misted clover when the violet dawn is cool,  
You swing in ecstasy.

You know the tiny honey-horns a-drop from many a vine,  
And the sweet of tasselled grasses no man may ever reap;  
On lace of elderberry bloom of marvellous design  
You sometimes deign to sleep.

You haunt the tangled water-weeds where purple iris grow  
And greet the moth of silver-grey, or the emerald dragon fly;  
But the shadow only falls on you;—you only, dimly know  
That summer passes by.

And so you store your amber sweets in a deep enchanted spot  
And keep your immemorial Law whose source is from afar,  
You fling no questions at the moon—but work and wonder not  
That things are as they are.

When Indian summer winds her gauzy veil around the hill,  
One day you drowse in some belated poppy's painted cup,  
Then fold your iridescent wings, and lie exceeding still,  
And never more wake up.

## JOCKEYS

Still there are Centaurs.  
When the year rolls round to Spring, they return  
From far away, different days.  
Now they only ride upon a track;  
A measured beaten track, bent to a circle.  
They are no longer shy and furtive things  
Fleeing across the plains from curious eyes;  
Fear left them long ago.—  
They have been melted in the crucible of time



And made over.  
We call them "Jockeys." But when they ride  
They are more.  
They are Reincarnations!  
Watch their young faces as they flash past,  
And you will understand,  
Perhaps.  
All eyes not blinded by the greed of gold  
Can see they ride for joy!  
For joy!  
An old-primeval joy!  
In those fine breathless moments  
They know a vast return to gay adventurings.  
So they rode—somewhere—sometime—  
In the abyss of vanished days.  
O once again for them the world is new  
And every tree has its own lovely dryad!  
The little fauns still dance—and dance—  
While from the hills the goat-foot pipes them on  
With a strange tune.  
So! To the post! To the post!  
On to the winning post, swift little feet!  
You beat an ancient music on the ground,  
A light and thudding music as of drums!  
A hundred thousand years has changed it  
Not at all.  
It dims the eyes with tears  
For old departed gladness.  
Who would not give a round of tedious hours  
To know this short, bright glory of a race!  
In truth they garner something priceless—  
Something more than gold—The Jockeys—  
The young and dauntless riders  
Of the track!

## BECALMED

My grand-daughter is over-kind,—  
She ties my tie for me,  
And sets me out of afternoons  
The strong pot o' tea.

She winds a muffler round me,—  
(Me with it round my throat!)  
And she buttons up the buttons  
Of my old pilot coat.

I who sailed the great ships  
Down the seven seas,  
Put out with the fishermen,—

Or rest at my ease.

Rest by the fireside,  
And walk along the sand,  
Holding the littlest baby  
By his small pink hand.

I who knew the Southern Cross,  
As friend knows a friend,  
Watch the North Star every night,  
At my journey's end.

I sit and think o' sailor-men  
That knew the ships I knew,—  
I sit and think o' far ports,  
And storms we weathered through.

Myself's outlasted all of them,  
Those good lads and strong,  
Who followed morning round the world  
With a light-hearted song.

Some o' them lie safe ashore  
In all security,  
And some are lost—'Tis God knows where,—  
But most went down at sea.

Ay! Most o' them went down at sea;—  
The sea took her own,  
And there be times I envy them,  
Smoking my pipe alone.

For one who used to hold me fast,  
When I must sail away,—  
She is not here—she is not here,  
Now I am home to stay.

But my little grand-daughter is kind,  
She ties my tie for me,—  
And sets me out of afternoons,  
The strong pot o' tea.

## SOLILOQUY

Patrick has a little farm with green hedges round it—  
And a little grey cottage with a door that latches tight;  
He says I have the heart of him—that I alone have found it,—  
Faith—he said the same to Norah when the moon was bright!

Dennis has the high hand, though his words are sweet as honey;  
And gold he has safe stored away, if all they say be true;

But his dogs and horses fear him—and money's only money,  
It won't put bloom upon the cheek the white shows through.

My father's anvil rings all day,—and himself is often saying  
"It's I that needs ye, Colleen—so just at home abide;"—  
And I'd rather rest beneath his roof—so there I'll be staying  
If I cannot wed a sailor, who sailed with the morn's tide.

'Tis true he has no place for me where all the winds are blowing  
The way they might be breaking up a ship however strong;—  
It's little home a sailor has—and this I'm well knowing;  
The grieving of his blue eyes said I could not go along.

They tell me there are other maids in other ports he's making;  
The gossips say he sails from them—as he sailed from me;—  
But there's no vow in all the Book my lips will be taking,  
Until his ship comes home again, and brings him from the Sea!

## CANDLE-FLAME

(The Irish home-steader's wife talks to the air.)

The stillness that is in it has a way would make you grieve,  
When you sit alone at shut of day and knit the soft grey sox;  
Who'd iver think at home they're singing in the Noel Eve  
With, "Shepherd's watched their flocks"?

'Tis time to set a candle by the silver frosted pane,  
Now dusk has veiled the prairie and its floating feathery foam;  
There sure must be a little shining path along the plain  
To let him know he's home.

The timber-wolves are running! There came their hunger cry!  
'Tis like the keening at a wake for a dreadful death, and wrong.  
It's best I'd not be listening;—I'll kape the fire high  
For now he won't be long.

A white owl passed the window! I heard his muffled wings,  
And glimpsed the golden eyes of him the snow-shoe rabbits fear;  
Oh, wirra! Wirra!—Burrow deep you little trembling things  
For sorrow's flying near!

His wolf-dog went beside him, and himself knows the trail,  
But the whirling snow is able to make men daft or blind,  
And the North wind never pities them ashore or a-sail,  
And the dark is not kind.

The house is filled with panic! The sea is not more lone;—  
No! No! 'Tis filled with joy! Hark his whistle! Hark my name!  
"Come—draw the bolt!" he cries; "We lost—and found the trail, aroon!  
We saw the candle-flame!"

"Aroon"—An old Irish word meaning "my dear".

## A CITY GARDEN

God of the flowers, Painter of crimson roses,  
Spinner of mist, and Weaver of wind and rain,  
Send Thine angel of peace, when the long day closes,  
To Thy garden again.

This was Thy garden e'er the high walls were lifted;  
Here the wild apple grew, and the thornset pear;  
Oh, in the springtime how the scent of them drifted  
Out on the evening air!

Still an apple-tree lingers—just as a token;  
Still there's a sumach wearing one feathery plume;  
Yonder a dogwood lives—grey with the years, and broken—  
Dreaming of silver bloom.

Mignonette lines the walk, and many a pansy,—  
Though never a bee comes near to taste their sweet—  
Down by the gate grows tangled and bitter tansy,  
Longing to reach the street.

Here at the heart of tumult, and toil and malice,  
The lover finds his love—the dreamer his dream;  
And here, like a cup of Heaven, a lily's chalice  
Lifts to the white moonbeam!

## WHEN JONQUILS BLOW

When jonquils blow I think of one  
who sleeps beneath the green;  
And all the light and song of life  
And all the golden sheen  
Turn cold and still before my eyes,  
While pearl-edged boughs of May  
Seen through a sudden mist of tears  
Are rimmed with ashen-gray.

## TO A BLUE BUTTERFLY

You knew the jungles where the heat all day  
Came quivering up through tangled lace of green;  
Across old fever-swamps you used to play,  
Your loveliness unseen.

Your loveliness unseen, except by eyes  
That could not bear the dazzling gold of noon,  
Yet watched through shadows, envious, old and wise,  
Waiting the rising moon.

I think you are the bluest thing e'er made,  
The sea and sky know many a changing hue,  
But not your wings;—you died, but did not fade,  
Oh miracle of blue!

It seems the Lord of Beauty is the Lord  
Of all the lowliest, as the highest things.  
Perhaps His Angel of the flaming sword  
Had just such azure wings!

## THE TRAIL

I am hearing the call of the North again  
Now the forests are turning green.  
The pines lift their heads to the April rain,—  
(I am hearing the call of the North again!)  
And the birches are decked like little brides  
In gowns of a silver sheen.

I must go back to a star-lit hill  
And a lonely cabin I know;  
For an old brown hunter, steadfast and still,  
With faithfulness that no time can kill,  
Is shading his eyes from the setting sun  
And watching the trail below.

I must go back to paths that are mine  
And that lure no travelling feet,  
Save those that are swift as the wind, and fine;  
That make no sound, and that leave no sign;—  
I must go where the heron builds her nest—  
And the night is sane and sweet.

I am hearing the call of the North again,  
To beauty untouched and unmarred,  
To the doorless temples, built not in vain;—  
I, and my soul, must go back again;—  
To the temples where joy walks unafraid,  
And the aisles are flower-starred.

## FLIGHT

Wa-wa, the wild goose, is flying through the night!  
    Splintering the moon-beams in a silver spray!  
    Telling all the little world he has right of way!  
Free and far and joyous, safe beyond our sight,  
Wa-wa, the wild goose, takes his homeward flight!

Wa-wa, the wild goose, the strong one and the wise,  
    Calls as does a shepherd to his own grey flock,  
    And he bids them follow through gates that never lock;—  
Gauzy gates of mist, that swing along the skies;—  
Wa-wa, the wild goose, the ancient and wise.

Well he knows the rolling clouds, well he knows the rain;  
    All the immemorial stars are old friends to him;  
    Give they salutation above each mountain rim!  
So they banish weariness—make the dark road plain;  
Wa-wa, the wild goose, is going north again!

If we catch an echo of his wild March cry,  
    All our hearts give answer, and tears make us blind;  
    For we are heavy burdened—we are left behind—  
While he goes adventuring—he goes sweeping by—  
Wa-wa, the wild goose, free and glad and high!

## VALENTINES

Now little maid—with a Valentine;  
    Most blythesome be and gay;  
For Valentines come not—come not—  
    On every working day;  
And though they may, perchance on some  
    Like cherry-blossoms fall.  
Believe me, Sweet—there oft are those  
    Who don't get one at all!

So if you got a lacy one  
    With a swinging paper door,  
And a precious verse behind it—  
    (That's what Valentines are for),  
If a darling little cupid  
    With roses on his head,  
Was aiming at a lonely heart,  
    Most violently red—

Burn joss sticks! Oh, burn joss sticks—  
    To the god of Happy Fate,

For the postman does not enter  
At everybody's gate;  
And though on some, the Valentines  
Like cherry-blossoms fall—  
Believe me, there are often those  
Who don't get one at all!

### QUEEN ANNE'S LACE

There's an ivory-tinted, old-time flower  
That grows in many a place:  
By the roadside, or by ancient tower,  
You may find it any sweet summer hour,  
And they call it, "Queen Anne's Lace!"

But the little maidens of high degree  
All looked for such lace in vain;  
It is like the foam on waves o' the sea,  
Or the fabric the frost spins carelessly  
And hangs on the window pane.

Like a veil it floats up the hills and down,  
Tangling the dew in its net;  
Small wonder Queen Anne in her golden crown  
Would have given her burdensome velvet gown  
For a lace so gem-beset!

It blooms in old courtyards forgotten and grey,  
And in weed-grown castle moats;  
But often, at moonrise—well, so they say—  
The fairies come—and they take it away  
Just to trim their petticoats!

### LAVENDER

Those who sell lavender have blind, patient faces,  
That know rain or sunshine, whichever it may be;  
They haunt old corners, in old familiar places,—  
And their scented ware of violet-grey, they cry cheerily:—  
"Lavender! Lavender!"

Lavender from gardens where day comes and closes,  
Set about with sweetness, and humming of the bees;  
Lavender from gardens where bloom cinnamon roses,  
And blue beds of larkspur, and borders of heartsease.

The tide of the city, ever onward flowing,

Is a swift tide and heedless, a rough tide and strong;  
But over it sometimes when a light wind is blowing,  
The sweetness of lavender comes drifting along.

Ah! Strange key of perfume that turns locks long rusty,  
And opens doors of memory the years have shut fast;  
To one here and there on the highway long and dusty,  
You bring back old gardens—old gardens of the past:—  
"Lavender! Lavender! Lavender!"

## RENDEZVOUS

To-night I passed the silent empty house  
Where years ago we danced the hours away;-  
Now nothing stirred—unless some little mouse  
Fearing my footsteps—fled where shadows lay;  
Even the garden gate is padlocked fast  
As though to hold within the lovely past.

Still there are lilacs scenting all the air,  
And in the moonlight ghostly weeds grow tall;  
Wild musk and rosemary are everywhere;—  
Through tangled grass the fireflies flash and fall;  
The silver dogwood is in bloom again,  
And lifts its stars up to your window pane.

It seems so little while since you were here  
With all those joyous ones we used to know;—  
Yet only I come back—my dear—my dear—  
For you have gone where summer roses go;  
And I come back as one who walks in sleep  
A rendezvous with his young dreams to keep.

## TO ONE WHO SLEEPS

Fare not too far, my own,  
Down ways all strange and new,  
For I must find alone,  
The road that leads to you.

Enchantments may arise  
To lure thy little feet,  
And charm thy wondering eyes;—  
Yet;—wait for me, my sweet!

Already Earth doth seem  
A phantom place to me,



And thy far home of dream,  
Is my reality.

So this is just "good night";—  
Some stars will rise and wane,  
But sure as comes the light,  
I'll be with you again!—

## THE YOUNG KNIGHTS

Now they remain to us forever young  
Who with such splendor gave their youth away;  
Perpetual Spring is their inheritance,  
Though they have lived in Flanders and in France  
A round of years, in one remembered day.

They drained life's goblet as a joyous draught  
And left within the cup no bitter lees.  
Sweetly they answered to the King's behest,  
And gallantly fared forth upon a quest,  
Beset by foes on land and on the seas.

So in the ancient world hath bloomed again  
The rose of old romance—red as of yore;  
The flower of high emprise hath whitely blown  
Above the graves of those we call our own,  
And we will know its fragrance evermore.

Now if their deeds were written with the stars,  
In golden letters on the midnight sky  
They would not care. They were so young, and dear,  
They loved the best the things that were most near,  
And gave no thought to glory far and high.

They need no shafts of marble pure and cold—  
No painted windows radiantly bright;  
Across our hearts their names are carven deep—  
In waking dreams, and in the dreams of sleep,  
They bring us still ineffable delight.

## A SONG OF POPPIES

I love red poppies! Imperial red poppies!  
Sun-worshippers are they;  
Gladly as trees live through a hundred summers,  
They live one little day.

I love red poppies! Impassioned scarlet poppies!  
Ever their strange perfume  
Seems like an essence brewed by fairy people  
From an immortal bloom.

I love red poppies! Red, silken, swaying poppies!  
Deep in their hearts they keep  
A magic cure for woe, a draught of Lethe,  
A lotus-gift of sleep.

I love red poppies! Soft silver-stemmed, red poppies,  
That from the rain and sun  
Gather a balm to heal some earth-born sorrow,  
When their glad day is done.

## THE OLD TREE

The tree beyond my window is my friend;  
When little light winds ruffle it,  
Or snow-storms come and muffle it,  
It brings me wealth of beauty without end!

Though over it in waves the years have rolled,  
Yet April so bewitches it,  
And sunshine so enriches it,  
It blossoms in a foam of fairy gold!

It knows the beating of the Autumn rain;  
Mad storms have rent and riven it,  
Wild winds have bent and driven it,  
Still in the Springtime, it is young again.

Its leaves are patterned like an ancient lace;  
In truth it gives such dreams to me,  
On moon-light nights it seems to me,  
Through silver boughs I glimpse a dryad's face!

I would I knew the tales that it could tell;—  
But while the robins' nest in it,  
And folded wings find rest in it,  
It is content,—and keeps its secrets well.

## ROSES

Lovely is the dawn when the first birds awaken,—  
Sweet the red rose of day, to little hearts and light;  
But when they grow tired and their toys are foresaken,

Sweeter is the blooming of the dark rose of night.

## THE FAUN

These are the painted days—  
The days of unreality and dream;  
Now morning swings her gauzy veil of haze  
Across the sun's first beam.

Some old faun fills his brush  
Once more with colors of metallic hue.  
With bronze he touches every reed and rush,  
His hills are silver-blue.

He madly gilds the trees  
With richer gold than any queen may wear;  
The ferns he makes into a shining frieze  
To hang upon the air.

Over the grey moth's wing  
He paints a pattern all in silver dust;  
His lustre falls on every passing thing,  
Hiding each shade of rust.

Each lowly shadowed pool  
He turns into a jewel brown and bright,  
Where every lily-pad uncurled and cool,  
Shines green as malachite.

But, oh! I think he grieves,  
The little faun—so hopeful—yet so old—  
When the rains come that spoil his painted leaves,  
And dull his fairy gold.

## A SONG OF WINGS

Birds are such joyous things! Now, who would not follow  
The silver gull, the oriole, the purple winged swallow,  
Seaward and home again, over hill and hollow!

Blue heron, moon-entranced, where may you be going?  
What is that far call you hear? Are fairy flutes a-blowing?  
Tell me what it is you know, that I'm not knowing!

Robin of the tinted dawn, why are you singing?  
With madrigal and roundelay the high trees are ringing!  
Why all this wild delight the daybreak is bringing?

Little grey-bird passing by, you're a sober fellow;  
Never a jester touch on you of pied red and yellow;  
Yet all the merriest tunes you pipe—old tunes and mellow.

Hermit thrush, dear hermit thrush, what are you saying  
In that darling way of yours when the day is greying?  
Chant you a vesper hymn? Mayhap, are you praying?

White owl with folded wings, why so unblinking?  
Do you watch for the little moon? Tell me what you're thinking,  
Hidden in the silver leaves when the sun is sinking.

Wild goose! With summer days a rendezvous you're keeping!  
But no sound of earth breaks through, no hint of weeping,  
In those deep blue silences your wings are sweeping.

Whip-poor-will, your free cry sets the heart to aching;  
But there is star-dust on your wings! New roads you're taking,  
And you know a magic the wood-gods are making!

Birds are such joyous things! Now, who would not follow  
The shining gull, the oriole, the purple-winged swallow,  
Seaward and home again, over hill and hollow!

## VILLAGE GOSSIP

This morn when I went through the deep green wood,  
I came on daft Kathleen dancing there!  
Yes—little Kathleen with her moonlight hair—  
In a fairy ring she was dancing there  
As ye wouldn't think she could!  
She looked like a tattered butterfly,  
Or a leaf the wind whirled by.

Her cloak was all ragged and russet brown;  
A wreath of rose-berries decked her head,—  
Ay, pretty Kathleen who was never wed,—  
Her sleeves had patches of green and of red;  
They fluttered up and down!  
Her petticoat, yellow as mustard bloom,  
Was like sunshine in the gloom.

Sure she belongs in the house on the hill,  
That holds the poor—and the partly queer.  
Heaven save us from ending there, my dear!  
I sign the cross when I'm passing it near,  
For it gives my heart a chill.  
But Kathleen is queer this many a day;—  
She lost her lover, they say.

Well, truly God knows they should lock them in;

But the doors hang loose; the keys are lost;  
The rattling windows are warped by frost,  
And the old bent roof is all overmossed.  
To hold them there would be sin!  
Faith, the weary lot of them come and go,  
The way that the four winds blow.

So Herself was down in the forest dell;  
And softly I called: "O woman dear,  
Are ye quite bewitched that ye'r dancing here!  
'Tis the young should dance, not the worn and sere—  
And have ye no beads to tell?"  
She threw me a smile from her merry lips;  
A kiss from his finger tips!

"Come and see!" she said, "'tis a fairy ring,  
A fairy ring—and it's hard to find!  
See! I dance for Youth I have left behind!  
For joys I'd have known, if life had been kind;  
And for True-love that ne-er takes wing.  
O when I am here—and free—and away—  
It's always midsummer day!"

Was ever a creature as daft as this?  
Can ye name me one under the sun?  
Dancing for youth that was over and done—  
Dancing for joys that were never begun—  
And for love that went amiss!  
Yet—considering—maybe it's not too bad  
Old Kathleen's a little mad.

## THE DICTATOR

*Lenin is dead.*  
*Take for his covering a flag blood-red,—*  
*Fasten a cap of crimson on his head,*  
*Call a dumb priest—lest any prayer be said,*  
*Lenin is dead.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The four little daughters of the great white Czar,  
Lovely as the wind-flowers of a far northern May;  
Sometimes shy and silent;—just too old to play,—  
Seeing all the road of life as a radiant way;  
Tell us, dead man, e'er you pass—tell us, where are they?

The four little daughters of the great white Czar,—  
What was their crime that their souls were put to flight?  
They were only little maids dancing in the light,  
Like the swinging blossoms all of pink and white;

Tell us, dead man, where they went—down the aisles of night?

The four little daughters of the great white Czar,  
How could they have harmed you and bound you foot and hand?  
They had children's eyes, but brave as any in the land,—  
Oft perhaps they wondered at their titles long and grand;—  
Tell us, dead man, why you feared such delicate command?

The four little daughters of the great white Czar,—  
They are forgotten, as flowers when they fall;  
And the four sweet names of them none will ever call  
Down a long green garden—or through a castle hall.  
Do you dream of them, dead man, underneath your pall?

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*Lenin is dead.*  
*Take for his covering a flag blood-red,—*  
*Fasten a cap of crimson on his head,*  
*Call a dumb priest—lest any prayer be said—*  
*Lenin is dead.*

## THE PHARAOH

They may not wake thy long-embalmed sleep,  
Or stir thee, Pharaoh, from thy deep repose;  
Thine are the secrets still that thou did'st keep,  
While through three thousand summers bloomed the rose.

They may not wrest a single sign from thee,  
Who art so rich in old forgotten lore.  
What are thy gems? Thou art the mystery  
That they will carry through the broken door.

Who shall say what thy love was—or thy hate?  
Thy lips are sealed far closer than thy tomb;  
Thou art inscrutable—a King in state—  
With golden dust upon thee like a bloom.

They marvel at thy treasures; pearls banked high;  
Jasper and ebony; ivory turned to lace;  
But still to-day the caravans go by,  
Bearing such precious things from place to place.

Thy glittering chariots that were locked away;—  
The alabaster jars the potters made;  
The painted gods to whom you used to pray;  
When these are touched,—what man will be afraid?

But when they cross the threshold of that place  
Where silence wove its web year after year,

And drew its curtain o'er thy dreaming face,—  
They may move slowly, shod perchance with fear.

## JEAN DE BRÉBOEUF

Jean de Bréboeuf, a priest of the Jesuit Order, came to Canada as a missionary to the Indians about the year 1625. He belonged to an old and honourable French family that had given many sons to the army, and was a man of great physical strength, one who possessed an iron will, that was yet combined with sweetness and gentleness of temper.

He lived with the Indians for many years, and spoke the dialects of different tribes, though his mission was chiefly to the Hurons. By them he was much beloved.

At the time of the uprising of the Iroquois in 1649, there was a massacre of the Hurons at the little mission village of St. Louis upon the shores of Georgian Bay. There Jean de Bréboeuf, refusing to leave his people, met death by torture at the hands of the conquering Iroquois. Lalement, his friend a priest of the same order, was also martyred by these Indians upon the same day, March 16th, 1649.

As Jean de Bréboeuf told his rosary  
At sundown in his cell, there came a call!—  
Clear as a bell rung on a ship at sea,  
Breaking the beauty of tranquillity—  
Down from the heart of Heaven it seemed to fall:

"Hail, Jean de Bréboeuf! Lift thee to thy feet!  
Not, for thy sins, by prayer shalt thou atone;  
Thou wert not made for peace so deeply sweet;  
Thine be the midnight cold, the noonday heat,  
The journey through the wilderness, alone.

"Too well thou lovest France—her very air  
Is wine against thy lips—and all her weeds  
Are in thine eyes as flowers. She is fair  
In all her moods to thee—and even there.  
See! thou dost dream of her above thy beads.

"Rouse thee from out thy dreams! Awake! Awake!  
Thou priest who cometh of a martial line!—  
Thou hast its strength, thy will no man can break:  
Go forth unarmed, the law of love to take  
Into a lonely land, that yet is Mine."

Then straightway fell the monk upon his face,  
Trembling with awe throughout his mighty frame.  
"I hear Thee, Lord!" he cried, "Give me Thy grace,  
That I may follow thee to any place,  
And speak to any people—in Thy name."

The vine-leaf shadows darkened in the cell—  
And barefoot friars passed the close-shut door:  
At vespers rang the monastery bell,  
Yet still he lay, unheeding, where he fell,—

A cross of black outstretched upon the floor.

Northward into the silence, night and day,  
Through the unknown, with faith that did not fail,  
Into the lands beneath the redman's sway,  
The priest called Jean de Bréboeuf took his way,  
Led by the Polestar and the far-blazed trail.

He bore the sacred wine cups, and a bell  
Of beaten bronze, whose tongue should warn or bless;  
As had been done in France, so he as well  
Would ring a marriage chime or funeral knell  
For his lone flock, out in the wilderness.

And like a phantom ever at his side  
Pointing each hour to paths he scarce could see,  
By wood and waterway, went one still guide,  
Who drifted with the shades, when daylight died,  
Into the deep of night, and mystery.

But when they reached the place of many pines,  
God's country, that no white man yet had named,—  
They beached their birch canoe 'neath swinging vines,  
For here, the Indian read by many signs,  
Lay the wild land the tribe of Huron claimed.

Then like down-dropping pearls the rounded years,  
One after one, slipped off the thread of Time,  
And Jean de Bréboeuf laboured—oft with fears  
Safe-hidden, oftener still with smiles and tears,—  
Among the people of this northern clime.

The forest children had become a part  
Of his own life—always he spoke their tongue,  
He dwelt within their tents—with all his heart  
He learned their ancient woodcraft, and each art  
Their race had practised when the world was young.

He gave a simple truth and faithfulness  
To men of silence and of subtle ways;  
He shared with them long hunger and distress,—  
When they had little, he himself had less,  
Through all the dark and lonely winter days.

High in the vast cathedral of the trees  
He hung the bell of bronze; there in God's name  
He taught the law of Love; there on his knees  
In the sun-dappled gloom, midst birds and bees,  
He lifted up the cross, with words of flame.

But evil days were come. The arrowhead  
Was dipped in poison, and de Bréboeuf saw  
The painted faces and the swift-slain dead,—  
The deep, unhealing wound—the rent of red  
Made by the weapon of the Iroquois.



Closed in the village with its palisade,  
Guarded by many a mighty Huron brave,  
The women and the little children stayed,  
Lest forest fire or sweeping midnight raid  
Make all their hunting ground a common grave.

It was at daybreak that they heard the cry:  
"The Iroquois!—The Iroquois! They come!  
Fly to the hidden forest places! Fly!—  
To linger in the village is to die—  
Steal through the river grasses—and be dumb!"

Swiftly the women and the children fled,  
But with the braves de Bréboeuf stayed behind.  
"Go!" cried the chief, "good father—we be dead!"  
Yet soft he answered as he shook his head:  
"I stay with thee—and with thy old and blind."

When the red sun came creeping up the sky  
Grey death had reaped the harvest hate had sown;  
The Jesuit heard no longer curse or sigh,—  
His prayers were said for those about to die,—  
He faced the living Iroquois alone.

They bound him fast beneath the forest green,  
And when was come the shadowy edge of night,—  
Nay—ask not what the horned owl hath seen,  
Nor what the moon doth know—white and serene  
The soul of Jean de Bréboeuf took its flight.

## NEWGATE

Newgate—Newgate, the Queen's prison,  
Gazed through its dark windows at St. Sepulchre's  
And the prisoners heard the ancient church bells, chiming  
Chiming—chiming—chiming—  
All that day.  
For it was Easter; Easter and April.

When November fogs came rolling in,  
Or when December winds blew bitterly,  
Newgate was the very House of Misery;  
But April was its added curse.  
April! with sunlight or sudden sweet rain  
Falling against iron bars.  
April—with little new lambs again,  
And apple-flowers in the orchards;  
April with hawthorne a-bloom and primroses starring the lanes;  
And all the old enchantments on the air.  
Ah then! Then if a full moon silvered a grated door,  
Or if a nightingale's song drifted in,—

They fastened the madmen to the floor  
With double chains,  
For on such nights they had double strength:  
And on the death-cells they set a double watch,—  
So strange a magic the moon made  
At Newgate.

But to-day, it was a blue morning, shot with gold.  
Even so, within the prison the light was grey.  
Grey.  
There the walls were always damp,  
And the footworn flagstones were mottled with mould,  
Of the color of fear.  
Ashen-grey, it showed, or ashen-blue, or ashen-violet.  
A color without a name.  
Everything in Newgate was tinted with a shade of it:  
The prisoners' faces, their hands and their hair.  
Like an intangible pall it covered even their garments,  
And could not be washed away.  
Now, on this Easter Monday morning,  
The pallid prisoners heard St. Sepulchre's bells;  
Where they toiled they listened;  
Where they lay ill and idle, they listened;  
And where they waited for death.  
"Easter!" the bells rang joyously, "It is Easter!  
The Lord hath risen!  
He hath risen from the dead!  
Hallelujah!  
There is no death for He hath conquered!  
No death!—No death!  
No death!—  
'Lift up your heads, O ye gates  
And the King of Glory will come in!  
Easter! It is Easter!  
April! April! April!  
April!—"  
So they seemed to say—ringing on madly,  
The old bells—  
For it was their great festival and England's spring holiday.

The highwayman looked at the sky through his barred window,  
And he listened with the rest.  
Few prisoners could reach this window—try they ever so desperately,  
But the highwayman was tall, and strong and young.  
They had taken him red-handed on the London road,—  
And this not for the first time:  
Hitherto he had escaped his captors,  
And now three officers of the law had been killed in his taking.  
Therefore by reason of this, and that, and the other,—  
Sonorously charged against him in Her Majesty's High Court of Justice,—  
He had been swiftly tried, condemned, and sentenced  
To be hung on the morrow, at daybreak,  
On Tyburn Hill.

For his greater humiliation he would hang with a common sheep-stealer.  
He! The boldest outlaw in the country!  
Elizabeth Herself had been told of his taking.  
The Court—then at White-hall—had laughed over it:  
He had been so defiant a fellow and so vastly successful!  
There were stories told of him at every fireside.  
Moreover he had been scornful of the gentry;  
Scornful of the nobility also—if it came to that.  
He had many times blithely jested as he took their purses,  
Thus taking their dignity with their gold.  
And his doublet, and hose and ruffled linen,—  
His cordovan long-boots,—  
His velvet cloak and feathered hat,  
Had been finer than most gentlemen wore.  
And he had boasted in taverns of having nine lives  
Like a cat,—  
But he had always made a mock of life, everywhere,  
Saying that those who held it lightly held it longest.  
"Egad! He was well taken," they swore at Court.  
They wished him joy of his other eight lives  
When this one went out on Tyburn.  
"So perish all masked men o' the road,"  
They said.  
"God knew the good English law was slow in taking thieves,  
But 'twas swift to act—once it had them,"  
They said.  
"A gibbet for every one of them, and a short shrift,"  
They said.

Thus his name was bandied about Whitehall  
A full half-hour.  
And it was spoken in castles, and taverns,  
And little wayside Inns and cottages.  
There were those who wept hidden tears at this news of him,  
For he had many and motley friends.  
And some went white and stared unspeaking—at nothing.  
But these mostly were women.  
Coachmen who often took the road to London, breathed more freely;  
And some drank to his quick death on the morrow,  
As though they themselves had taken him  
Single-handed.

None of this disturbed the highwayman looking through his barred window  
And harkening to the bells.  
An old prison priest, a Franciscan friar, who had seen many men die,  
Stood near, and watched him from out his brown hooded habit.  
The bells went on and on,—more slowly now.  
"Christ, the Lord, is risen to-day!" rang the ancient tune,  
"Halleluiah!  
Halleluiah!—" they quivered and were still.  
A deep silence followed. A long silence.  
Then the highwayman broke it, whistling softly.  
It was the melody of a little new love song—the rage in London.  
He smiled as he whistled.

Suddenly he stopped, turned to the priest; and looked hard at him.  
"Tis a right sweet world gone wrong, holy father," he said,  
"Yet, by the Rood! I like not this leaving it.  
The Heavens—or Hells—the Church provides for us,  
Are damned uncertain places.  
We may, or may not, find them.  
But the green Earth is real.  
We get a foothold on it, and 'tis all we know.  
So, methinks, it be pity to leave it over soon.  
This body o' mine is too strong to need long rest,  
Should there be naught but—sleep.  
And it is April,—the witching month, good friar.  
Cast back in thy dolorous mind;  
Cans't not find a thing called 'Love' or that which was Youth?  
I grant thou art but the shell of a man,  
But something must once have lived in thee beside pity and prayer.  
Something passing sweet, peradventure!  
Nay then! Forego thinking on't,—  
I would not torture thee with memory.  
Thou art a patient kindly soul, and the look in thine eyes,  
Doth trouble me.  
What need hast thou to look so grief-stricken?  
It is not thee, they will hang.  
But come close!—Closer.—  
Harken!  
Know you not some loop-hole hereabout—  
Some hidden outlet a trapped thing might find?  
Come!—You know the windings of Newgate,—  
What way of escape will you show me—to-night, when dark falls,  
For much gold?"

The brown friar trembled like a withered leaf in the wind.  
"Ah! My Son! My Son!" he cried breathlessly, "count not on escape.  
Racking might follow—an they caught thee!  
Without thy cell, the guard hath been doubled,  
And it is doubled on the prison walls.  
'Tis but seldom they take thy kind—alive.  
And thou hast cost them many lives, in this capture.  
Newgate to-day is hedged about with guards who will be relieved by more  
Till daybreak.  
There is no way from the cell save by this iron door  
And yonder archery window—too narrow for passing.  
In truth most bitterly I grieve for thee—I scarce know why  
For thou hast greatly merited punishment.—  
Yet, were't possible, I would take thy place on Tyburn.  
No prisoner hath so deeply stirred me to pity—and many were pitiful.  
Thy face, or thy youth, or thy way of smiling,  
Or what I know not,—  
Gives me a new pity, a sorrow intolerable to bear.  
If this be sin, then, Christ forgive me!  
But I will not bring thee false hope,—earthly hope,  
For there is none.  
And I will not ask what turned thee to evil ways.  
Perchance 'twas something evil done thee, in the first place;

Or of two roads you took the wrong one, by mischance,—  
And in the dark.  
Whatever it was, God will deal with that.  
But, oh, I pray thee, confess thy sins!  
Set thine own soul free!  
Life is short, and Heaven long, Beloved,  
So repent, as did the thief upon the cross.  
Repent—and thou wilt be forgiven. Ay! So saith the Lord!  
Repeat thy rosary but once, and I will go."

The highwayman glanced down at the bent figure, as though he  
scarcely noted it,  
Then at some thought, he laughed lightly.  
The sound swept through the grated iron door, and out through the prison.  
Never had Newgate echoed to so sweet a sound as far back as the  
priest could remember.  
"I laugh not at thee—old friar," the man said, presently,—  
But at myself.  
I have fooled myself to the top o' my bent,—this time,  
I—who fooled so many.  
The end of the game is other than I counted on,  
And was brought about by a careless move.  
I was off guard for once.  
Mind not my laughter. 'Tis my way to be merry;  
Especially when things go amiss,—  
And they have gone damnably amiss this time, as you perceive.

But the law is the law. I have no grudge against it.  
'Twas my business to keep out of its drag-net.  
And I have no grudge against life either,—I would fain  
have my full three score and ten years of it.  
Its sweetness makes up for its bitter,  
So I have found.  
Yet as for confession;—nathless the time is overshoot  
For that, father—even were I of the mind.  
My sins be like the leaves of the trees in number.  
All the uncomfortable Jewish laws I have broken  
More or less—well, rather more than less peradventure.  
The one regarding 'false witness' had a distaste for me  
So I respected it.  
But I have robbed outrageously—though I grant you,  
Chiefly, like the outlaw of Sherwood Forest from the rich.  
In the taking of purses, and the like, men oft chanced to die.  
This not by my desire, good father; But 'they rushed upon their fate,'  
As some poet hath it,—  
(Nay, count not this 'confession' as the Church calls it,  
'Tis too general.)  
But I tell thee, it is true, by reason o' me some died swiftly.  
Ay, poor souls, so swiftly they said no prayer of any creed.  
They could not even sign the Cross, for lack of time.  
Now, I would have you believe I regret these dead men,  
Cut off untimely, by reason of my adventuring.

So, say masses for their souls,

If thereby they may be released from whatever they feared—beyond death.  
I leave to thee a vast deal of treasure, old friar, a vast deal—  
Seeing I cannot convey it hence.  
And I will tell thee straightway where 'tis hidden.  
Newgate hath ears! Step nearer!—  
Nearer still. So!—So!—There thou hast the secret entire.  
Lock it in thy memory. And give no one the key.  
Thine is a face to be trusted, else had I not trusted thee.  
Harbour no scruples. I know not to whom the guineas belong.  
'Twas taken—a jewel here,—a purse there,—  
A box o' gems going up to London to be re-set;  
The flotson and jetson o' the highroad.  
The jewels have been turned into gold. All, all into gold.  
So spend it,—and trouble not whence it came.  
Feed thy poor;—cover them from the cold;  
And burn candles and say prayers for the quickly slain.  
As for me—old shaking priest—as for me—  
Marry! I will depart with my pack o' sins on my back.  
And the way I have lived is the way I will die.  
Come!—Wouldst have me a hypocrite?—  
Then! Hark thee!  
Were I to live—Verily I would still take the road.  
'Tis a merry life—if a short one.  
But one thing—one thing, I do ask of thee;  
For sake of Christ's mercy look you to my body when 'tis cut down.  
Me 'seemeth it is best to be dead when one is counted dead,  
And I desire to take no sigh—no beat of the heart into my grave.  
Convicts be thrust all too quickly into the Earth,  
So 'tis said.  
Od'so! of this one thing I have an unspeakable horror.  
Now the Queen hath newly decreed that no gibbet shall long bear its burden  
During Easter week.  
'Tis a law now in force,—as perhaps you know?  
Therefore I deeply pray thee—look well to me—  
After.  
But, good father, I have a sudden thought!  
It may work out as I would desire.  
Listen. Ask for my body thysself—for burial.  
Use the name I be called by; though it is not mine.  
I own no name save my Mother's.  
She, sweet soul, was of the common folk  
Who sin the common sins,—occasionally,—  
And be punished in the common way. Always.  
She is long since gone, but he who is my father, lives.  
Most amazing to relate, he holds high authority  
Under the Queen!  
His titles be many and too tedious to tell over.  
But he is old; much older than she would be now  
Had she lived.  
And he is broken by cares o' State and weary o' life  
Like thee—old friar!  
Furthermore, Fate hath played him a scurvy trick.  
I—I born out o' wedlock—I be his only son.  
'Tis in a fashion amusing—think'st not so?

Life hath given him everything—everything,—  
Save the thing he wanted most; a son;  
An heir to his titles and estates  
That must all now go to one he deeply hates.  
This is gossip o' the tavern near his Castle; but quite true gossip.  
He knows not of me, save that I was born.  
That much indeed he knows so said my Mother.  
She died,—and I—I fended for myself like a wild thing o' the woods.  
None kept track of me, or held me those young days.  
But of this irregular birth of mine I hold proof.  
Ay! certain proof.  
This ring I wear he gave to my Mother. Observe it well!  
It bears his carven Coat of Arms.  
He would remember this ring—and her—until his death.  
She was not one easily to be forgotten.  
And further, I have letters written her by his own hand.  
One there is regarding me, when I was a year old,—  
Or thereabouts.  
These letters none could gainsay.  
You will find the little packet of them hidden with the treasure  
Where I told thee.  
But there is a greater proof of who I am;  
I am as like—as marvellous like this man as youth can be to age!  
Even now to send to him might bring release—quick release,  
For he hath great influence with Elizabeth,  
And the bar sinister is not unknown at Court.  
Peradventure—and all things considered—what think you?—  
I might be better than no son at all?  
In all the road adventures none saw my face,  
None could more than surmise who was behind the mask.  
Never have I taken life save in fair fighting; man to man.  
Some fools would have it so—against my will.  
A highwayman I am—not a murderer.  
But robbers be not all on the open road. In truth, no.  
Even at Whitehall may be discovered a few here and there  
Though of a different stripe.  
And this courtier who is my father knows the sins of the Court.  
The little sins—and the scarlet sins.  
I do not think he would be overcome by mine.  
Particularly an they could be well hidden—.  
Still, good friar, I will not send to him.  
His pride is mine, though I wear not his name,  
And to petition his favour likes me not.  
Therefore I tell thee this dull tale of old unfaith and sorrow  
But for one reason.  
Should they, on thy request, refuse to allow thee my body for burial,  
Use his name—and say who I am.  
The Sheriff will then permit it with small ado, I take oath!  
Into the question of my identity he would not court inquiry  
After execution. No! No! Not that; if I know him.  
Also methinks my trial was somewhat hasty.  
He might not care for that investigation neither.  
I think they will accede to thee quite heartily.  
God knows thou hast served the prison long

And asked little,  
So I desperately pray thee, take me away from them—afterwards!  
Look to me,—See I breath not.  
Lay me under the sky, and not under Newgate flagstones—  
The dreadful flagstones i' the prison yard  
Under which all the hanged men lie.  
Do this, and I will return to thank thee in some way;  
Ay! Bring thee word of the beyond thou art so anxious about,  
Should it be possible!  
'Tis a strange bargain—but full o' interest,  
And my part of it I will keep in good faith.  
Now go—Thou dost look faint.  
But stand by me at to-morrow's dawn—as thou hast promised.  
I will watch for thee on Tyburn.  
In truth I think the Christ will not be less kind  
Than thou art—dear friar.  
And now again—I bid thee go."

\* \* \* \* \*

The dawn had laid its rose-leaf light on the sea;  
It had painted with pearl and amethyst  
Old Tyburn Hill.  
The dew still jewelled the cobwebs on the grass,  
And a lark was singing ecstatically far overhead,  
When a motley group of Londoners melted away  
Towards the City.  
They were disappointed and sour-visaged, and grumbled, among themselves.  
For they had risen so early, and seen so little.  
"It had been a monstrous dull hanging," they complained.  
"Not worth the trouble of crossing a road."  
The two felons,—the famous highwayman,  
And the sheep-stealer,  
Had died swiftly, and without any ado.  
The sheep-stealer was a half-wit  
Who dumbly submitted as was his duty, to the law.  
And the highwayman showed naught but a vast indifference.  
The only sport had been from an old Franciscan friar  
Who trembled so violently during the execution  
His hands dropped his beads.  
The small curious crowd had lingered until all was over,  
But when the Newgate physician with hand on their wrists  
Pronounced first one,—and then the other robber,—dead,  
There was no further use to wait.  
Dead men were dead men, and all alike,  
Sheep-stealers, and notorious highwaymen;  
And even Kings for that matter.  
All alike,  
Their cutting down would be accomplished quickly,—  
It being Easter week and the new law now in force,—  
And there was little to see in that.  
"Elizabeth had too many fancies," they gossiped  
Moving away.  
She grew odd and unreasonable;



It had come that she could not endure the sight o' gibbet-prey  
Blowing in the wind.—

A wholesome sight for all evil-doers, as was well known,  
And consequently to be endured by even the Queen.  
It made for law, and order and peace,  
In England.

The Queen should marry," they whispered.  
"She grew full o' whims—and tempers," they said,  
And discontentedly went onward.

The sun was but a little above the sky-line,  
When the two robbers lay covered side by side  
On the bright grass.

The gaol physician, having done his duty, had hastily gone,  
And the hangman was at his heels.

Only the friar, the Sheriff, and two grave-diggers—  
In a rough cart, drawn by a rough pony,—  
Remained.

The friar knelt by the highwayman, drew back the covering,  
And skilfully cut the rope from his throat.

All his trembling was done, and his old hands did not falter.

"I pray you Master Sheriff," he said, rising,

"Give me this man's body for burial.

I have served Newgate long.

I have given God's absolution, many times to men about to die,  
At scenes I will not mention.

Our Order being poor—and now nearly disbanded in England—  
Has yet asked nothing.

Now I ask this one thing, in your power to grant.

I greatly desire this man shall not be buried at Newgate,

But in a little garden outside our Monastery walls.

'Tis not holy ground there—but common earth.

Let me take him, I pray thee.

He was an outlaw, but one of rare courage,

Amazing courage,—for he could have saved his life

I firmly believe, had he so determined!

Therefore this grace I pray you grant him

For my sake, or rather the sake of any little work I have done

At Newgate."

"No? You do not see fit to allow it?

Then Master Sheriff, there is more I must tell thee.

This highwayman was the bastard son,

Of one in high authority at Whitehall;

One the Queen greatly honours, and favours, and trusts.

There are proofs of it I can show thee, shortly,—

Or take elsewhere.

The wind carries names, so move nearer—So.

This is his father's title—commonly known,

But he hath other titles by reason of various Court offices.

Now look you at this man's face—Master Sheriff.

Study it well, I pray thee."

The Sheriff glanced down, and shuddered.

"Thine is a true word, Father!" he exclaimed.

"This dead man—even as he is—is like the old Duke.  
Ay! Marvellous like! Marvellous like!  
I am convinced, and ask to see no further proof.  
I desire no trouble brewed over this;  
No question to be broached as to his identity.  
No question at all of this or that, regarding him.  
I wish no rumour started that the trial was short,  
Or the execution hasty, as sometimes rumours go,  
Nay, God forbid!  
I want no report that he was the old Duke's son,  
Whether his natural son or no.—  
Whether true or no.—  
Take him. Take him away quickly.  
I myself will silence any question at Newgate.  
Bury him in thy outer garden, and say naught.  
By Heaven! My honours are bought too dearly  
With the horrors of this office.  
Make an ending.—Take him away.—And keep thy lips sealed."

So the two robbers were put in the prison cart,  
And one was taken to the Monastery near by,  
While the other went on to Newgate's flagged yard.  
The low-ceiled hall in the Monastery  
Was cool and empty:  
For it was the hour of devotion.  
They had laid the highwayman on an oaken bench  
In the hall.  
There the friar who knew him, came to him,  
Alone.  
Beyond the garden walls,—in the little outer garden—  
Two lay-brothers dug a grave, and spoke nothing,  
As they had been commanded.  
In the Chapel the monks chanted long Latin prayers,  
And the sound of their voices floated through the silence,  
To where the old friar knelt by the oaken bench.  
Presently he rose and uncovered the highwayman's face.  
Then he held a small bright steel mirror to the ashen lips.  
"No mist," he said, watching. "No mist.  
No littlest mist."—  
The mirror shone like silver undimmed.  
He waited; then again held it as before.  
"No. No mist."  
Softly he drew open the man's linen shirt,  
Its lace ruffles torn to shreds in his capture.  
"I must listen at the heart," he muttered to himself.  
"So I promised,—so I promised.  
I must listen long—"  
And then suddenly the priest who had gone in silence  
Through that dread sunrise,  
Gave a sharp cry,—A sharp broken cry.—  
For he saw over the heart of the highwayman  
A crucifix!  
It was tattooed plainly—beautifully—on the white skin,  
A picture of wonder, the length of a man's hand;

And beneath it were pricked in red, the words,  
"Jesu pity me!"  
This, the priest knew, was the fashion of some sailors  
And soldiers of the time, whose end might be sudden  
And with no spoken prayer.  
Slowly he bent down and touched the Cross  
With his lips,  
And with that touch he seemed to feel,—No! he felt—  
The faint beating of a heart.  
The faint, faint, beating.  
"O Christ!" he cried. "He is not dead.  
Without breath—he yet is not dead.  
His spirit hath come again into his body  
As did the spirits of Lazarus, and of the little maid.  
Bring him back. Bring him back. Dear Christ! Bring him back.  
He hath sinned—but he hath suffered—oh, grievously.  
And he hath prayed.  
I know Thou hast seen his prayer, scarred here upon his heart.  
Sweet Jesu! It is the week of resurrection,—of resurrection!  
And it is the month of love.—  
It is April,—April.—"

So he fell to weeping and praying, and withal doing what he could  
To bring back breath to that young body.  
Long he prayed, with tears, a rain of tears,  
And ceaselessly he did what he could.  
Little by little—oh, very slowly,—  
The highwayman came back.  
They had not quite quenched the little flame  
We call life;  
Or else God had relighted it;  
The old friar knew not which—  
But many weeks went by before it burned brightly.  
They kept him to themselves, the good brothers,  
And they were silent—for they knew his story.  
To them he was God's Miracle—  
A living proof of resurrection.  
Looking at him their souls were uplifted in praise.  
For some great purpose he had been brought back  
They agreed. Ay! For some inscrutable purpose.—  
Thus, they wondered, and waited, and prayed for him.

So in peace and quiet the Summer went by—  
And now the hunter's moon was a thin silver crescent,  
In the evening sky.  
The highwayman had grown strong again, and restless  
With the restlessness of wild things caged.  
It was then the old friar of Newgate heard of a ship  
About to sail to the Americas.  
In the Monastery garden when the leaves were falling,—  
Gold, and russet, and red,—  
He told of it.  
"'Tis a good road out for thee, my son," he said.  
"The best way out methinks. The sea-road! The blue sea-road

That leads to new lands!  
They need more sailors on this ship;—  
It carries some of Sir Walter's men, to the Virginian Coast.  
And they need men in the far world. Men of courage, and high spirit.  
It is surely thy way out."

"Then will I take it, faithful one," he answered.  
"By the Crown! I knew thou wouldst find some road  
I could take.  
The Americas! The Virginian Coast!  
Sir Walter's men! There is magic in the very words.  
New life, they mean to me; new life, and liberty,  
And pleasant adventuring, that hath no evil in it.  
It doth entrance me to think on't.  
But thee; thee I do dread to leave."

The friar smiled as at something very sweet.  
"Not so, my Son," he replied. "I sail also.  
There be teachers of Christ needed in the new world.  
Ay! Simple men like myself.  
For some reason they have chosen me to go.  
So I sail with thee,—my work at Newgate  
Being finished."

[End of *Candle Flame*, by Virna Sheard]