

SORROW  
OF WAR

POEMS

LOUIS GOLDING

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# SORROW OF WAR

POEMS

BY

LOUIS GOLDING

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*First Published in 1919*

FOR  
MOTHER  
AND THE  
OTHER MOTHER

Certain of these poems have appeared in the "English Review," "To-Day," the "Englishwoman," the "Red Triangle," the "Nation," the "Cambridge Magazine," the "Sphere," the "Herald," the "Manchester Guardian," and the "Westminster Gazette."

To the editors of these journals I tender my acknowledgments.

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## SORROW OF WAR

### LILAC, LABURNUM

Lilac, lilac, laburnum,  
How shall you bloom this Spring?  
Gathering birds, gathering birds,  
How shall you sing?  
  
Gathering birds, gathering birds,  
How shall you lift your singing head?  
Lilac, lilac, laburnum,  
Shall not your blossom be fiery red?  
  
Lilac, laburnum, gathering birds...?

*Spring* 1918

### STREETS OF GOLD

O there are streets of gold in Bethnal Green,  
With troughs of pearl where lovely horses drink,  
And tripping on the greenswards, silver-clean,  
The girls are marvellouser than you can think.  
Gawd blimey! Bethnal Green!  
(All this from Tommy Jones,  
Delirious in the trench with shattered bones).

O there is harvest now in Camden Town,  
And songs and laughing and old flasks of wine!  
O the grand moon of bronze! the wakeful brown  
Owl in the barn! ghost-poppies and dream-kine!  
Lor lumme! Camden Town!  
(This with the gasp of death  
From 'Erbert, chlorine-gassed and green for breath).

O what green seas sweep winds through Camberwell,  
Through all her islands where the palm-trees heave!  
O winding down the channels steals a bell  
Calling poor weary lads to bathe at eve!  
God blawst it! Camberwell!  
(This from old Bob, whose side  
Is pierced with wounds like Jesus crucified).

## "IN THE GALLERY WHERE THE FAT MEN GO"

("GREAT PICTURES OF THE SOMME OFFENSIVE,  
DAY BY DAY. THE ACTUAL FIGHTING")

*See Omnibus and Underground Notices,  
April 1918*

They are showing how we lie  
With our bodies run dry:  
The attitudes we take  
When impaled upon a stake.  
These and other things they show  
In the gallery where the fat men go.

In the gallery where the fat men go  
They're exhibiting our guts  
Horse-betrampled in the ruts;  
And Private Tommy Spout,  
With his eye gouged out;  
And Jimmy spitting blood;  
And Sergeant lying so  
That he's drowning in the mud,  
In the gallery where the fat men go.

They adjust their pince-nez  
In the gentle urban way,  
And they plant their feet tight  
For to get a clearer sight.  
They stand playing with their thumbs,  
With their shaven cheeks aglow.  
For the Terror never comes,  
And the worms and the woe.  
For they never hear the drums  
Drumming Death dead-slow,  
In the gallery where the fat men go.

If the gallery where the fat men go  
Were in flames around their feet,  
Or were sucking through the mud:  
If they heard the guns beat  
Like a pulse through the blood:  
If the lice were in their hair,  
And the scabs were on their tongue,  
And the rats were smiling there,  
Padding softly through the dung,  
Would they fix the pince-nez  
In the gentle urban way,  
Would the pictures still be hung  
In the gallery where the fat men go?

**DEAD IN GALLIPOLI**

He died in Gallipoli.  
What English flower  
That we cherish shall grow of him?  
Never a flower  
Shall grow that we know of him!  
No white daisy-coverlet  
Shall grow from the ground of him;  
No English bird-loverlet  
Pipe love-songs around of him.  
Under the sycamore  
His grave not appears,  
Where the crocuses flicker more  
Than armies with spears.  
Under no tree at all  
England designed  
His body may be at all  
Gently consigned.

He died in Gallipoli  
The death on a stake.  
Gallipoli poison  
Is now the great part of him.  
A flower like a snake  
Shall writhe from the heart of him.  
The desolate surf  
Below him is muttering.  
Over his turf  
A bird like a devil  
Is flapping and fluttering.  
The poisonous bird  
Whose scarlet eye glowers,  
The poisonous flowers  
With petals unclean  
Are the only things heard  
And the only things seen.

Is that the whole of you,  
White lad from England,  
Is that the soul of you,  
Dead in Gallipoli?  
You are dead to me, dead to me,  
Barren and far,  
But a Thing that was said to me,  
By a bird, by a star,  
—An old thing of solace,  
O stupid it seemed;  
And I now cannot tell at all  
If the whisper that fell at all  
I heard or I dreamed.  
It seemed that I caught a  
Faint whisper or sign,  
Being drunken with water,  
Or hallowed with wine.

Ah, would that I knew  
What the Word was that came,

What the Thing was that gleamed  
With a wind and a flame;  
Ah, would that I knew,  
Even as you,  
O white lad from England,  
White lad from England,  
Dead in Gallipoli,  
Would that I knew  
If I heard or I dreamed!

### A JOURNEY SOUTH

To the South lands, the green lands, from the  
North, the harsh  
Rocks, where the eagles whose granite bills  
Screech from the scars of toppling hills.  
To the South lands, the green lands, from the  
North, the marsh  
Hollows which black waste water fills,  
—The South green lands!

To the South lands, the green lands, where  
the flowers of fruit  
Are moons entangled in cosmic trees,  
Where birds are rocks in the foam of seas,  
The wind's a player, the grass a lute  
Whose wires are swept by the wings of bees,  
—The South green lands!

To the South lands, the green lands—but  
halt, O hark!  
A sob of birds in a poisoned wood!  
The fume of poppies crushed foul in mud!  
The whine of the wings of Death through the dark!  
A sunset of flame, a moon of blood!  
—The South red lands!

### THE NEW TRADE

In the market-places they have made  
A dolorous new trade.  
Now you will see in the fierce naphtha-light,  
Piled hideously to sight,  
Dead limbs of men bronzed in the over-seas,  
Bomb-wrenched from elbows and knees;  
Torn feet, that would, unwearied by harsh loads,  
Have tramped steep moorland roads;  
Torn hands that would have moulded exquisitely

Rare things for God to see.  
And there are eyes there—blue like blue doves' wings,  
Black like the Libyan kings,  
Grey as before-dawn rivers, willow-stirred,  
Brown as a singing-bird;  
But all stare from the dark into the dark,  
Reproachful, tense, and stark.  
Eyes heaped on trays and in broad baskets there,  
Feet, hands, and ropes of hair.  
In the market-places ... and women buy ...  
... Naphtha glares ... hawkers cry ...  
Fat men rub hands....  
O God, O just God, send  
Plague, lightnings ...  
Make an end!

### **THE WOMAN WHO SHRIEKED AGAINST PEACE**

Abundant woman panting there,  
Whose breast is flecked with spots of grease  
That splutter from your laboured hair,  
O dew-lapped woman, you who reek  
Of stout and steak and fish and chips,  
Why does the short indignant shriek  
Come toppling from your fleshy lips;  
Because, poor smitten fool, I dare  
To breathe the outcast name of Peace?

And shall your flesh grow less to view,  
And shall your chubby arms grow thin,  
And shall you miss your stout and stew,  
The bracelets which you wear so well,  
If blinded boys no more shall creep  
Along the scorching roads to Hell,  
If thick red blood no more shall steep  
Green fields in France, nor corpses smell;  
If Peace send down her blasting blight,  
O shall it spoil your sleep at night,  
And shall you lose your treble chin?

### **THE WOMEN AT THE CORNERS STAND**

The women at the corners stand. They say,  
"Where are the men you stole from us away?  
Where are they now, the laughing lovers whom  
You heaped in sombre ranks against the gloom?"  
They murmur ceaselessly and without haste,  
"Our arms are empty and our wombs are waste."

"Where are the men that marched into the dusk?"  
They say with voices withered like a husk.  
"Night is like cinders: day is lean and stern.  
Our hearts are parched with thirsting; yea, we burn.  
Where are the men you took? Bid them return."

The women at the corners stand. But no  
Reply is heard. They wait till night. They go  
Back to their homes. Once more they come next day,  
"Where are the men you stole from us away?"  
They draw their shawls around their heads. They wait.  
They say, "But we are weary. It is late."  
They murmur ceaselessly and without haste,  
"Our arms are empty and our wombs are waste."  
No word is said to them. But only they,  
The women at the corners, stand. They say,  
"Send back our lovers whom you stole away."

## JOINING-UP

No, not for you the glamour of emprise,  
Poor driven lad with terror in your eyes.

No dream of wounds and medals and renown  
Called you like Love from your drab Northern town.

No haunting fife, dizzily shrill and sweet,  
Came liltng drunkenly down your dingy street.

You will not change, with a swift catch of pride,  
In the cold hut among the leers and oaths,  
Out of your suit of frayed civilian clothes,  
Into the blaze of khaki they provide.

Like a trapped animal you crouch and choke  
In the packed carriage where the veterans smoke  
And tell such pitiless tales of Over There,  
They stop your heart dead short and freeze your hair.

Your body's like a flower on a snapt stalk,  
Your head hangs from your neck as blank as chalk.

What horrors haunt you, head upon your breast!  
... O but you'll die as bravely as the rest!

## DURING THE BATTLE

O the terror of the Battle at this ending of the days!  
O the thunder of the wings through the gloom!

O the thousand thousand companies that strew the sombre ways  
To achieve this final doom!

Where the flames disrupt the night and the hell-fumes flee,  
'Mid the darkness and the splitting of the skies,  
Only your young white wistful face I see,  
My brother, only your eyes!

*March 1918*

## JACK

The heavy smells of Spring  
Are flooding through my skin.  
My body drinks them in.  
Like rich red veils they cling  
About my prostrate head.  
I swoon into a bed,  
The heavy smells of Spring.

I now almost forget  
The pain, the pain, the pain;  
Now being lulled by rain,  
And smells and warm wings wet.  
I swoon into a bed,  
Almost forget you're dead,  
Almost, almost forget.

Now, now my memories drowse  
Amid the whine of bells,  
The fumes of rich red smells,  
The stupor round my brows.  
My nerves and veins are lead.  
I swoon into a bed,  
Where all my sorrows drowse.

Then suddenly you return,  
O marrow of my bone,  
Blood flowing through my own!  
My pulses yearn and burn.  
I battle round my head,  
Cry strickenly from my bed.  
Suddenly you return!

O God of War and Dearth,  
O shattering Blast that blew,  
Blood-eyed, blood-fingered, you  
Damned God of War and Dearth!  
He whom you wrenched from me  
To monstrous things and vain,  
Burned, broken, buried, *he*,  
*He* is this smell of earth,  
This dead moist smell of rain!

## GERMAN BOY

German boy with cold blue eyes,  
In the cold and blue moonrise,  
I who live and still shall know  
Flowers that smell and winds that blow,  
I who live to walk again,  
Fired the shot that broke your brain.

By your hair all stiff with blood,  
By your lips befouled with mud,  
By your dreams that shall no more  
Leave the nest and sing and soar,  
By the children never born  
From your body smashed and torn,  
—When I too shall stand at last  
In the deadland vast,  
Shall you heap upon my soul  
Agonies of coal?  
Shall you bind my throat with cords,  
Stab me through with swords?  
Or shall you be gentler far  
Than a bird or than a star?  
Shall you know that I was bound  
In the noose that choked you round?  
Shall you say, "The way was hid.  
Lord, he knew not what he did"?  
Shall your eyes that day be mild,  
Like the Sacrifice, the Child?  
... German boy with cold blue eyes,  
In the cold and blue moonrise.

## SKYLARK AND DAWN

(To Maurice Samuel)

Stretched and silent they lie to the furious gold of the dawn,  
And the earth like a leper's face is pitted and scarred.  
Firm in the grip of the wire relentless and hard,  
They lie with their dead young faces pallid and drawn.

Somewhere stupidly, thickly, a big gun booms!  
A rifle cracks like the spit of a snake in the trees!  
And ever the great sun rises, rolling the glooms  
Of the sulphurous night to the fields and the cliffs and the seas.

The groan of a dying man crawls out from his teeth!  
He groans no more: his lips become leaden and cold!

And ever the sun flashes forth like a sword from its sheath,  
And dazzles the dawn with terrors of scarlet and gold.

The guns snarl out like a dog reluctant and grim.  
The triggers of rifles loosen in blue numb hands.  
Faintly the wings of a silence frightened and dim  
Hover down closer over the blasted lands.

Gods of the great wars,  
Gods that stand  
Somewhere afar off,  
Cruel and grand,  
Silence, Silence,  
In No Man's Land!

Gods of the great wars,  
Cruel and high,  
Listen afar off!  
Grant us to die  
With the song of Silence  
In the morning sky!

Gods of the great wars,  
Gas-wave and gun,  
Are ye not happy  
With the red work done?  
Drown ye the planets,  
Shatter the sun!

Not a twitching of bloodless lip or of glazing eye!  
For the Silence is deeper than Noon and older than Time,  
The Silence inert and intense of the far first sky  
When never a wind breathed over the primal slime.

The Sun is stayed in his march, and even Death  
With the flush of triumph mantling his cheeks of gloom,  
He too stands still for an instant and holds his breath.  
A million of years passes by in a moment of doom.

Suddenly!  
Terrible! Wild!  
A skylark shatters the spell,  
With a music more fiery than hell,  
More frail than the laugh of a child!

His little brown wings soar high to assault the sun.  
His little round throat sends a challenge audacious and far  
To the pale-faced legions of Silence that waver and run,  
To the uprisen dawn and every invisible star.

Ah God! the song cuts deeper than tempered steel!  
The eyes overflow with the surge of a salt harsh tear,  
Again to listen to Music, again to feel  
The uttermost glory of living when Death is so near!

Scream of a shell! ...  
Dull dead thud in a trench,

Curses and flame and stench! ...

Instantly all the white dawn,  
Fragrant and frail and cool,  
Breaks like a vase in the hands of a fool.  
For the thick sick lips of Death have spoken,  
The fine gold chain of the bird-song is broken.  
The lank dank hand of Death has withdrawn  
The curtain of bird-song and magic dawn  
From the sullen red windows of Hell.

Rattle of rifle and shriek of gun,  
Gas-cloud sickly and heavy and dun,  
Death has taken his armies in hand,  
And the bodies lie countless in No Man's Land.

Out of the shock of the storm  
Where the foul winds meet and cry,  
Something drops down at my feet,  
A little brown body and sweet,  
A little dead body and warm.

The tiny dead throat shall sing no more,  
Nor the quick eyes flash nor the swift wings soar;  
But the shells shall hurtle, the grim guns roar,  
O skylark out of the sky!

My singing is ended, the pall descended on land and sea.  
I sang my song to the tune of my own heart-beat  
Between the sound of the wars, and there sang with me  
My little brother the skylark, dead at my feet.

France, 1917

## JACK OF APRIL

April!—this is when  
All the flowers beloved of men,  
This is when they laugh all day,  
Birds and they.  
Then are they not opened quite  
To the singing year's delight.  
This is when the April showers  
Make a running road of noise;  
Woods are stormed by boyish flowers,  
Flowery boys.  
Would you then not weep with me,  
Wring your hands,  
Sing a dirge of saddest grief,  
If your eyes should chance to see  
Blight upon the April leaf;  
O, but more,  
Would you not weep long and sore,

If an April flower that stands  
Waiting for the kiss of May,  
Suddenly, swift, were snapt away,  
Down, deep down, were crushed in clay?  
Then would you not almost say,  
    "Curst be April!  
Never sunlight bring in May!  
    Curst be June!  
Death hath seized the budding year.  
Never flush of copper stir  
On the unrisen harvest moon!  
May stark winter come straightway  
—Now my little flower of April,  
    Now is cold and clay!"

April!—this was when  
Jack went laughing to the wars.  
    Now he knew  
What a boy in Spring must do.  
There are flowers to learn, he said,  
In the countries where I go.  
There are birds to talk to and  
Skies and winds to understand.  
Never a moment knew he pause.  
Jack went swinging to the ships  
With a laughter on his lips,  
Jack went singing to the wars.  
Jack among the boys and men  
Went to France in April when  
Flowers and boys laughed all the day,  
    Birds and they.  
... Till the Doom came down that day,  
Even though the time was Spring,  
    Even April,  
Even though he had not sung  
Half the songs a lad should sing,  
When the nesting-time is young,  
    April, Spring.

And he shuddered for a moment,  
Blood and flame convulsed the day,  
And he crumpled on the way,  
And the scarlet tide went sweeping,  
    Heaping, heaping  
Clay upon his trodden clay,  
    April, Spring!  
April!—can you wonder then  
That my bitten lips have said,  
    "Curst be men,  
Now that Jack in lyric April,  
    Jack is dead.  
Curst be all the race of men!  
May the last child die away  
From the poisoned air of day!  
Never May-time come, nor summer;  
    Never autumn

Crown the dim uncertain ending  
To the fevers of the race  
With a drowsy peace descending  
On their spirits racked and rending,  
On the evil human face.  
May the last supernal winter  
Freeze the earth straightway,  
Now my little Jack of April,  
    Now is cold and clay!"

### STATESMEN DEBONAIR

O ye statesmen debonair,  
With the partings in your hair;  
Statesmen, ye who do your bit  
In the arm-chairs where you sit;  
You with top-hats on your head  
Even when you lie in bed;  
O superbly happy, ye  
Traders in Humanity;  
    Every time you smile, sweet friends,  
    A moan goes up, a plague descends.  
    Every time you show your teeth,  
    A hundred swords desert the sheath.  
    Every time you pare your nails,  
    The manhood of a city fails.  
    Every time you dip your pen,  
    You slaughter ten platoons of men.  
    For every glass of port you hold,  
    Blood is spilt ten thousandfold....  
O ye statesmen debonair,  
With the partings in your hair;  
O ye statesmen pink and white,  
Sleep like little lambs to-night.

### OVER IN FLANDERS ...

They were writing for the Poetry bookshops,  
    Poetry no doubt well worth reading.  
Over in Flanders, in the wet weather,  
    Love lay bleeding!  
  
If you carefully record your emotions,  
    Lyric or Sonnet that haunts your head,  
Will you revive for me over in Flanders  
    Love stone dead?

## WILD WEATHER

Wild weather, O my heart, and strong winds beating  
The great trees straining in their despair.  
The crumpled leaves that fall and flee  
Whistle like ghosts across the air.  
And how should I, lone mortal fleeting,  
Not be uprooted by winds that, meeting,  
Wrench at my limbs to cast them in the sea!

Wild weather, O my heart, for all my lovers,  
The lads I loved in the time entombed,  
Crumpled and stark against trench and tree,  
Whistle like leaves through the woods engloomed.  
There all year long my poor ghost hovers,  
Never to see what the darkness covers,  
The faces I loved of old that so loved me.

## BROKEN BODIES

Not for the broken bodies,  
When the War is over and done,  
For the miserable eyes that never  
Again shall see the sun;  
Not for the broken bodies  
Crawling over the land,  
The patchwork limbs, the shoddies,  
Not for the broken bodies,  
Dear Lord, we crave your hand.

Not for the broken bodies,  
We pray your dearest aid,  
When the ghost of War for ever  
Is levelled at last and laid;  
Not for the broken bodies  
That wrought their sorrowful parts  
Our chiefest need of God is,  
Not for the broken bodies,  
Dear Lord—the broken hearts!

## A THOUGHT

To-night a thought leapt in my head like flame.  
Suppose one night I walked into my room  
And found that someone filling all the gloom

Was waiting on my bed until I came;  
And I walked in and switched the light on straight,  
And found the figure sitting on my bed,  
Limp with contrition and with sunken head,  
Was God bowed down under His burden's weight;  
And He looked up with sorrow and surmise  
To see how deep the tale the Wars have written  
Lay on my mortal features, battle-smitten,  
And in the shadows of my deathless eyes;  
—This was the thought and flame that pierced me through:  
If God sat waiting there, anxious and grey,  
Then should I have the charity to say,  
"God, we forgive you; you know not what you do"?

## THE VINTNER

The War-God now is happy.  
His sunken eyeballs shine.  
The War-God is a Vintner  
Who makes the rarest wine.  
His vineyard is not bounded  
Between the West and East.  
A thousand mothers hourly  
Grow pregnant for his feast.  
The grapes the Vintner presses  
Below his granite feet  
Are bodies, bodies, bodies,  
Alive and brown and sweet.  
O how the red juice splashes  
Around his pounding limbs!  
It stains the deepest rivers,  
The furthest sunset rims.  
O how the Gods his comrades,  
When he, the Vintner, calls,  
Drain deep the lurid beakers  
In their carousal halls!  
All night they hold red riot,  
"For this is wine indeed!  
Then bravo! merry Vintner,  
We wish thy work good speed!"  
And still the Vintner presses  
The grapes with feet of stone,  
Until the deep green ocean-cup  
Shall hold red wine alone.

## FOR NOW COMES SUMMER

For now comes Summer with a thousand birds.  
And I must add up figures all the day.  
And I must drive a tram the whole day long.  
And I must make a living out of words.  
For now comes Summer with a thousand birds;  
And in green fields the little lambs will play,  
Brown birds will lift so loud a storm of song,  
For now comes Summer with a thousand birds.

For now comes Summer with a thousand birds.  
And I must make munitions right away.  
And I must check the biscuits at the base.  
And I must plan to slaughter men in herds,  
For now comes Summer with a thousand birds.  
My brother's lying quiet on his face.  
And I must sit and wait and die to-day,  
For now comes Summer with a thousand birds.

HARFLEUR

## THE ADVENT OF MARS

(To Thomas Moulton)

Then suddenly ...  
A thunder was heard like the cracking of suns,  
A blackness blacker than blood there came  
To choke the world with a fume and a flame.  
    A palsy fell on the guns.  
    A numbness froze the hands  
    Of the gunners in all the lands.  
    Half-way over the parapet  
    The limbs of the climbing infantry set  
    Like limbs of basalt-stone.  
The bayonets fell from the fingers numb,  
The throats of the officers dried dead-dumb,  
For the Terror had come, the Terror had come,  
The Terror out of the stark Unknown!  
    The Shadow was fallen upon the wars  
    That had raged three centuries long  
    To shatter the Lie and Wrong,  
    From the ice-fanged polar jaws,  
    With never a lull nor pause,  
    And over the Temperate Zone,  
    With never a moment's rest,  
    And over the Burning Line,

With never a halting sign,  
And over the East and West,  
And down to the ultimate mouth  
Of the white Antarctic South.  
From the torpid Esquimo-man  
Who slew his Esquimo-mate  
And poured his fat in a plate,  
And lit up a wick therein,  
And studied the secret plan  
For the poisonous new harpoon.  
Wherewith he was going to win  
The Esquimo-battle soon.  
From the Esquimo-man to the sinister black  
Cannibal-boy in his skeleton-shack,  
Whose ardent patriot labours  
Were extracting the eyes of his foes,  
The bones of their fingers and toes,  
To teach them never to violate  
The inter-cannibal laws of State,  
And the boundary-stone of his weaker neighbours.

But now ...  
Great God,  
What is the menace,  
Now,  
The shadow, the thunder,  
Now,  
Ice on my heart,  
Flame on my brow,  
The skies dispart,  
Lightnings rift through the obscene glooms,  
The thews of the darkness are rent in sunder,  
And a voice, a voice, a voice,  
A great voice booms!

"Children of Earth,  
Listen a moment before ye die.  
We have waited long, we have waited long,  
(Children of Mars, lift up your song,  
For the children of Mars shall be lords of the sky!)  
Long have we patiently waited  
In a huge red planetous hall.  
But never a wind of ruth or grace  
Blew through the marshes of your earth-face.  
And deeper into the hole  
Of your cavernous earthen soul,  
Deeper than God and Love and all,  
Boulders of evil fall.  
Long have we patiently waited  
In a huge red planetous hall,  
But never a grace not violated,  
Never a devil ye did not call!  
You have torn, you have torn,  
The flowers by their roots, consumed the seed,  
Wherever a flower was, planted a weed.  
In the pitch of your scorn

Defiled the morn,  
Bitten deep death in the mould and the corn.  
You have eaten the wings  
Of the lily-like frail  
Butterfly caught in your treacherous veil.  
You have festered the springs  
With the corpses ye slew  
And given your children to drink of the brew.  
Never a grace not violated,  
Left God never a roof nor wall;  
Never a passion ye have not sated,  
Never a devil ye did not call.  
And a Word came forth from the Sun to Mars,  
'Gird ye now for the final wars!  
For over the planet of Earth,  
Wooden and waste and wide,  
Great red wounds in his side,  
A shadow, a bloodless dearth  
Ashen-pale in the caves of his eyes,  
Throwing the ghost of a Cross on the skies,  
The body of Christ lies crucified!'  
We have come with a gladness terrible to behold.  
We have come to reclaim the Godhead that was sold.  
The levins we shall loosen ye have not ever known,  
And the breath of our singing shall fall on you like stone.

Our weapons shall be flame and the blades be keen,  
And they shall not rest again till the skies be clean.  
Our weapons shall be tides, the tide of the sea,  
The surgings of the tide  
Shall not again subside,  
Until the Sun's sky-ways again shall be free!"

So the voice spake,  
Thunderous and proud,  
So the voice spake,  
Then died in a cloud.  
And then again the Darkness, the Darkness gathered round,  
And the hushed world waited, but heard not a sound.  
So hushed was the world, the slaying and the weeping,  
So hushed was the world, the world seemed sleeping,  
But lo! in the West,  
Lo! in the West!  
Leaping, leaping,  
A tongue of fire ...

## PROPHET AND FOOL

From twigs of visionary boughs  
I gather berries red and rare.  
I twine around my pallid brows  
An insubstantial dryad's hair.

Such song I hear in mission-halls,  
As Jason heard in violet seas,  
While bodiless birds sing madrigals  
In tumult round my head and knees;

The draper-shops that light their jets  
To blink along the lanes of mire,  
Weave splendours round the muddy sets  
And tip my feet with points of fire.

For I pursue the Golden Fleece  
Down slum-ways magical and cool;  
And there I hear the flutes of peace,  
Being a prophet and a fool.

### WHATEVER PATH I WALK UPON

(To George Fasnacht)

Whatever path I walk upon  
That path itself is Avalon.  
Whatever woman talks to me,  
Venus' foamy self is she.  
The floors of factories are made  
Of jasper, porphyry and jade.  
All that I drink, all food I eat,  
Is my Lord's blood and body sweet.

But if a moth should singe his wings,  
The world is black with dismal things.  
And if a strangled sparrow fall,  
There is not any God at all.  
And if a baby moan for food,  
My eyes blaze red with rage for blood.

### LONDON MAGDALENE

How she is careful to make manifest  
The budded beauty of her breast;  
To hint beneath her unconcealing blouse  
The curved seductions there that house.  
Would that some Christ your mournful care had seen,  
Unmaiden'd maiden, London Magdalene.

God gave you roses warm from Paradise,  
And they are bleaker now than ice.  
God gave you fountains flowing honey-sweet,  
And they are spilt upon the street.  
All your seductions are the Dead Sea Fruit,

O rifled nest, blown flower, O string-snapt lute.

In those breast-seas no baby-boat will swim  
Through channels warm and dim;  
You'll not awake to a twittering in the leaves  
When baby bird-throat heaves.  
Poor London Magdalene, before you sleep,  
Ah weep with me, if not too late to weep.

## SECRET GIRL

(To Bessie McKellen)

Thy nudity, like a white flame,  
I shall inviolably guard:  
O Secret Girl, mine eyes have yet  
Not in the place of mortals met.  
O Secret Girl whom, splendour-starred,  
Some lordly noon my soul shall claim.

More than the Brahman Heart of Ind,  
I shall be spears about thy breasts:  
When thou no more, O Secret Goal,  
Art secret from mine eyes and soul,  
O Mother of my waiting nests,  
O dew and dark, O day and wind.

Thou shalt be sheer beyond the wars,  
And sacred from the waste of words:  
O Secret Girl, O Dove, O Pard,  
I shall inviolably guard.  
For we shall crowd the trees with birds,  
The sky with swarms of shouting stars!

## LANKY TIM

A narrow world is Lanky Tim's,  
The funnel and the griding lift.  
Never the blank walls drop or shift  
To show the far fields thro' a rift  
Where he might go and stretch his limbs.

Hour after hour the storeys rise.  
"First floor? Yes, round the corner just,  
For Madame Smirkey's Wig and Bust.  
Second? That way for Lawyer Thrust.  
Fifth?"—The quack doctor, spiders, dust ...  
These are his depths and these his skies.

And did Life take you unawares  
While you were dreaming still your dreams,  
And eyes were wild and shy with gleams,  
And heart was thick with aching themes?  
—But someone's pushed the bell downstairs.

And did you fly thro' boyland dells  
To catch the songs of youthful kings,  
And fly before the flight of Springs?  
—But there's no room in here for wings,  
Where Life is only these three things—  
A lift, a grid, a screech of bells.

Poor Lanky Tim, the days that drift  
Thro' your drab dismal prison, they  
Have drifted all those dreams away,  
Till your heart's just a pumping clay.  
And now I often wonder, say,  
If you'll be nearer God some day  
Than the fifth storey up the lift.

### **MRS. BRIGGS**

Her ample breasts like moons are seen  
Beneath her thin alpaca blouse.  
Mrs. Briggs of Sausage Green,  
She is an old Egyptian queen,  
And she has Cheops Briggs for spouse.

And when she shouts down Turnip Street,  
"Lawks! of all the dirty sights!  
'Enry, quit that puddle quick!"  
She has the regal voice that beat  
The eardrums of the Israelites,  
And turned the tribal bosoms sick.

But when 'Enry drooped and ailed,  
And 'Enry from her side was torn  
In a hearse down Dingy Lane,  
O she wept the lad in vain,  
As that other queen bewailed  
The slaying of the eldest born.

### **ATHENS NOW**

Behold Athens! What is Athens now?  
Cinders and weeds where the eyeballs were, filth for  
the marble brow.

Ilissus, Ilissus of the plain?  
—Sardine-tins and a dead cat in a drain!  
Dead, dead, dead are the Caryatids  
Because of the horror that smote their petal-thin lids.  
And the Parthenon now is a jawful of yellow teeth  
In the snarling skull of an animal humped in death.  
For Athens is only a squalor of traders that hope  
To retire on the profits from soap.  
And the trousers of half of the children of Pallas are  
    dirty with grease,  
And the other half ardently brush them and keep them  
    in crease.  
Then pray, O London, my city, when you are dead,  
That none know the place where you reared your mad proud head;  
That there be not a mound nor a stone nor even a tree,  
But only the ignorant river or the desert sea!

### DOWN TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD

Down Tottenham Court Road they ululate,  
    The droning choruses of Fate.  
    They walk the length of every wind,  
The women who sin, the women who have sinned.  
This evening's crime, all immemorial crimes,  
    Here gather from all lands and times.  
    Here with Orestes through the mart  
Walks the grey lad who stabbed his mother's heart.  
Gaunt Clytæmnestra stumbles round the feet  
    Of Sarah from a Soho street,  
    Who slew her sallow man to-night  
With thin-lipped poison in the street lamp-light.  
Pale Helen braids her legendary hair,  
    Lurking outside a gallery-stair,  
    While softly through the music calls  
Aspasia to her lover in the stalls.  
Here broken Orpheus searches, drunken-wild,  
    Eurydice, the fallen child,  
    Who, leagues down in the underworld,  
Flaunts her white bosom, rouged lips, and gilt hair curled.  
Behind the plate-glass windows drum the looms  
    Of Destinies spinning antique dooms.  
    The droning choruses of Fate,  
Down Tottenham Court Road they ululate.

### IN A STATION

A station drizzling like a hymn  
Sung out of tune by neurasthenes,

In a tin church where darkness leans  
Down through the windows bleak and grim!  
A miserable oil-lamp winks  
Like a drab slut, and stares and stinks.  
The train snorts out a large disgust,  
And snorts again and spits out dust.

Then suddenly a lightning wakes!  
The fumes, the squalors dissipate.  
Then suddenly a young voice breaks  
Into the darkness like a knife;  
—Full of choked hopes and whipt regrets,  
Hungry for love, half-dumb with hate,  
Intense with death and sick for life,  
—Into the darkness like a knife!  
"Buy Choc-o-late and Cig-ar-ettes!  
Buy Cig-ar-ettes and Choc-o-late!"

## LIZA

Liza sits on a three-legged stool all day  
    beneath the railway-stairs.  
(Liza is a shadowy woman selling shadowy wares.)  
The boots that Liza wears to-day were worn  
    a score of years ago  
By Dick the tramp who threw them away as  
    far as ever he could throw.  
The petticoats that Liza wears around her  
    limbs of sticks and skin  
Were thrown aside with tall disdain into a  
    back-street rubbish bin.  
But O the bonnet that Liza wears, it is the  
    summit of her pride;  
A big limp feather hangs over her nose and  
    two more hang on either side.  
There's no more stately woman than Liza,  
    be she the sought of a score of kings.  
(Liza is a shadowy woman, selling shadowy things.)  
All day long she sits upright, waiting upon  
    her three-legged stool,  
Until the hosts of little children come tumbling  
    homeward out of school.  
Then Liza shows her wooden tray whenever  
    the children meet her eye.  
"Come along, babies, only a kiss for any  
    little dainty you may buy.  
Purple figs from a Grecian garden, pomegranate  
    blossoms blazing red.  
Jangle bells of langling silver to wrangle  
    around of a wee girl's head."  
Liza's fingers twitch and tighten, her deep-down  
    eyes they are flecked and starred.

But her voice is like a moan in a rifted chimney  
and you can only hear it if you listen very hard.  
Never the little children hear, they toddle  
homeward day by day.  
—Who would look at a bogey-woman whispering  
over an empty tray?  
Ironically floats the bobbing feather over  
Liza's hungry eye.  
"Isn't there just one wee little baby to come  
to my face and kiss and buy?"  
... All day long and all year round she  
waits, but no one pays her price.  
(Liza is a shadowy woman selling shadowy merchandise.)

## WOMEN OF THE NIGHT

Come, I will take you, O ye empty-eyed,  
Into my heart as sheep into a fold  
Upon the waste hill-steep.  
For ye are weary, O unsatisfied,  
Whose breasts were filled for love and sell for gold;  
Come, I will give you sleep.

All night your bodies move like furtive ghosts,  
All the black futile night, your hands and feet  
Heavy as sunken lead;  
Sad, numberless, immortal, bloodless hosts,  
Who haunt the hollows of the ashen street,  
O ye my living-dead!

Only a scent of Death, sweet and corrupt,  
Breathes from the false flower-gardens of your hair,  
O and in your eyes,  
No, not the light of the mad wine you supped,  
Not tears nor laughter, O but swaying there,  
Unweepable miseries!

Come, I will take you to a still green place,  
Where birds that hover above the laden nests,  
Birds shall make song.  
There shall ye wash with dew the painted face,  
Press two wild flowers against the barren breasts,  
There hold a vigil long.

A vigil long until the evening go,  
Then sleep, long sleep; till with a shout, O then,  
Our Lord the Sun shall rise.  
With hearts invincible and bodies like snow,  
Back ye shall turn into the place of men,  
Love peerless in your eyes!

*August* 1918

## I STANDING IN THE STREET

I standing in the street, I standing,  
Gaze on the unwashed windows, dingy walls,  
When lo! a clarion ...  
Lo! thro' the slum a spring-time trumpet calls.  
Lo! on the roofs a rose-leaf magic falls.  
Thro' all the windows dance and jewels shine.  
Thro' all the rooms go lissome girls with scent.  
The window-frames are tendrilled with the vine.  
(Ah, God! I weep in my content.)

I standing in the street, I standing,  
Gaze on my vision splendid and most dear,  
When lo! a chimney ...  
Lo! on my dreams the soot drifts dry and sere.  
Lo! all my flowers wilt in a reek of beer.  
On the drab flags squat children dusty-eyed,  
Cursed at by blousy women with dank hair.  
Just down the street there sprawls a suicide.  
(Ah, God! I laugh in my despair.)

## SLUM EVENING

A dove-grey evening, dusk empearled  
By lamps along the fading slums.  
Out of the sky a silence comes,  
A honey on the wormwood world.

The flirting adolescents stand  
And hush their tingling turbid vows.  
For softly on their foolish brows  
The evening lays a sober hand.

Even the butcher, he who shares  
The corner-shop with "Boots and Shoes,"  
Although he has no time to lose,  
Delays to light the naphtha flares.

A bleary woman down the road  
With a large twin on either arm,  
Her wits are stolen by the charm,  
She quite forgets her puling load.

I know not in what twilight stream  
She bathes her dropsy-swollen feet,  
But they were fair as dawn and fleet,  
In the dead girlhood of her dream.

## FIRES OF CHANGE

Think you that Athens and Jerusalem  
Rot in the places where they builded them?  
This is the Temple, this the Parthenon  
The priests of old days laid their hands upon?  
No more a stream sends the same waters twice  
Along its channels to sea-sacrifice.  
Not God Himself shall bid Time stand to lock  
The midmost atom in the mightiest rock.  
Still the most secret atom shall be hurled  
Into the riotous wind-ways of the world.  
Still, the most ancient town, up wrenched, shall float  
Freer than flame and light as a bird's note.  
Still shall the crumbling globe itself be spun  
Into fresh ethers conquered by the sun.

So, even so, my soul shall wear no more  
The countless shapes my soul endued of yore.  
Yea, the stout granite of my soul shall range  
Molten across the blasting fires of change.  
Not this am I you saw an hour ago.  
Me fluid as thought your science shall not know.  
Hourly my conquering spirit digs and delves  
A grave to hold a hundred slaughtered selves.  
Hourly through cowering moons and stellar dins,  
I stride across buried virtues and slain sins.

## POETRY

A star that was mute  
Was heard to sing.  
A flower took wing,  
A bird took root.

The Right is a Wrong,  
The Wrong is a Right.  
I fought with the Night,  
I sang you a song.

I slaughtered Time,  
For the path I trod  
To the feet of God  
Was the road of a rhyme.

A flower took wing,  
A bird took root.  
A star that was mute

Was heard to sing.

### THE PRISONER

If you have not a bird inside you,  
You have no reason to sing.  
But if a pent bird chide you,  
A beak and a bleeding wing,  
Then you have reason to sing.

If merely you are clever  
With thoughts and rhymes and words,  
Then always your poems sever  
The veins of our singing-birds,  
With blades of glinting words.

Yet if a Song, without ending,  
Inside you choke for breath,  
And a beak, devouring, rending,  
Tear through your lungs for breath,  
Sing—or you bleed to death.

### NERVES

You are like an ebony sea with derelict ships,  
Cold as my lover is cold;  
Until Beauty rises like the moon and whips  
You into shivering gold.

You are like a tree-top at the bleak last hour  
When birds to the tombs belong;  
Until Beauty blows like the dawn, and you flower  
Into buds of innumerable song.

You are like a virginal and a most pale  
Girl in a secret mead;  
Until Beauty, like the indomitable Male,  
Enflames you with innermost seed.

You are like a corpse with worms in the holes of the head,  
Between a board and a board;  
Until Beauty shouts like the Trump that convulses the dead,  
And you enter the House of the Lord.

## A POET

He has a voice so exquisite  
You can hardly hear it at all:  
Tragedy's there and there is wit,  
Both faint as a leaf's fall.

His feet pass hardly like human feet,  
Five-toed and leathern-shod,  
But more with the sound of bended wheat,  
Swayed by the skirts of God.

His eyes are a wistful and grey sea,  
Till a song stir his blood.  
Then are they flowers that suddenly  
Open from the pent bud.

But when at the shutting of the day,  
He sings faint songs for me,  
Then is it very hard to say  
If the wind sings or he.

## FOR MY FRIEND

(F. V. B.)

Go forth and conquer with the wind for a sword,  
O scorching might;  
Go forth and blaze through the jungles of night,  
Lead in the tameless stars with a cord;  
Go forth, Lover of Right!

Make moons thy pebbles and suns thy coins,  
And thy language light.  
Fill highest space with thy depth and height;  
Gather the nebulae round thy loins;  
Go forth and fight!

Go forth and conquer—return, return,  
When the hawthorn's white.  
Encompass the void; then turn and learn  
The veins of the grass and the bee's delight;  
Return, Lover of Right!

## "I SHALL BE SPLENDIDLY AND TENSELY YOUNG"

I shall be splendidly and tensely young,  
While yet my limbs are mine.

Each of them shall be strung  
As a bowstring by an archer  
With fingers strict and fine.

I shall be splendidly and tensely young,  
My heart being whole, my brain  
Keen as a hawk's flight flung  
Against my victim seen securely  
From my austere Inane.

But when my limbs no more are mine,  
My feet to walk, my hands to hold,  
I shall be most supremely young.  
Then shall my flawless songs be sung,  
My brow be sealed with a proud sign:  
When I am deaf and blind and fleshless,  
I shall be most supremely young,  
When I am old.

"I"

I shall slough my self as a snake its skin,  
My white spots of virtue, my black spots of sin.  
I shall abandon my sex, my brain,  
My scheming for pleasure, escaping from pain.  
I shall dig roots deep down and be  
A weed or a reed, a flower, a tree.  
I shall lose body and miry feet,  
Float with the clouds and sway with the wheat.  
I am a fool and foolisher than  
Anything else that is not a man.  
For of all the things that I see or feel,  
The I-that-is-I is far the least real.  
And only when I shall learn at the last  
That a stream-bed pebble is far more vast  
In the scale of Mind and its secret schemes  
Than all my passion and blunders and dreams;  
Then only that I that shall not be I  
Shall play due part beneath sun and sky,  
Ranked below sparrow, just above sod,  
I shall take my place in the Self of God.

### **I KNOW NOT WHENCE MY POEMS COME**

I know not why nor whence you come,  
My poems. Only this I know.  
You fall like petals falling down  
Upon the dustbins of a town.

You fall like flakes of doubtful snow.  
Like fairy flutes your musics flow.  
*You thunder like a madman's drum.*

You falter on my worthless lips.  
You give me grapes to press for wine.  
Unmasked, you bring me balm and spice,  
You lead me into fields of kine,  
With tinted dreams and anodyne.  
*You freeze my flesh with flames of ice.*  
*You scorch my shrieking soul with whips.*

## LYRRIA

Lyrria is an old country.  
Lost travellers tremble and call.  
A very white, wan, weird country  
Where never came traveller at all.

I am an old, old poet.  
Lost poems tremble and call.  
A very white, wan, weird poet  
Who never wrote poems at all.

## FARINGDON FROM SALONICA

There's a far road off to Faringdon,  
Under the downs it goes;  
Into the fine wood, the beech, the pine wood  
The dim road shadows and glows.

My cycle hums to Faringdon,  
Hums like a joyful bee,  
Through dropping shy light of green tree twilight,  
Music of wind and tree.

Springtime, bluebells, Faringdon,  
And a cycle through all three;  
Great shadow reaches of English beeches,  
Downs far down to the sea.

There's a far road down to Faringdon.  
There no more I ride.  
The boys hear mostly a rider ghostly,  
The girls they run and hide.

But that's my ghost in Faringdon,  
All year cycling it goes.  
Into the fine wood, the beech, the pine wood,

The dim ghost shadows and glows.

Salonica, 1916

## CALL OF THE PLOVER

(To Harry Owen)

The crying of the lonely plover  
From the morning cloud!  
Do the wings and clouds still hover  
Where my heart sang loud?

O the valley and the stream there.  
Where we shouted, being young!  
Are there boys still dream a dream there,  
Are the boys' songs sung?

O the winds that once blew round us,  
O the sun! the rain!  
Shall the ancient spells that bound us,  
Bind us ever again?

O a great Word then was spoken,  
Then was a boy's will clean and strong!  
Is the boy's will broken  
That went straight along?

O our ageing ears are ringing  
With many sad things!  
Shall we come again with singing  
Where the plover sings?

CLOUD END

## THE GALLANT ROAD

(For my School—without permission)

Grant us, O Lord, to do the thing  
Clean men and boys have always done;  
These works to do, these songs to sing,  
The gallant road to run.

Grant us, O Lord, that we go straight  
Along the path where shines the sun;  
These things to love, these things to hate,  
The gallant road to run.

Grant us, O Lord, to win the fight  
That all the cleanly hearts have won,  
Having sure feet, even at night  
The gallant road to run.

Grant us, O Lord, when Death enfold,  
That we take Death as half in fun;  
Like men and boys that knew of old  
The gallant road to run.

1915

### THE QUEST

"I have sought you," I said; "I have  
found you," I said, "in the pitch of your  
intimate midnight lair."  
He drew back with a sob like the swish of a  
stick thro' the smarting air.

"I have moved like Death on deliberate  
feet thro' a thousand towns and a hundred lands.  
Thinking you found, I have squeezed men's  
throats with pulsing, twitching, inquisitive hands.

"But the fire that waned in their blood-starred  
eyes was not the flame of the fire I sought,  
And I went my way with the sword in my  
heart and the sword in my hand of passion  
and thought.

"My blood spurted over the boulders of far  
intolerant mountains of iron and ice,  
But never in crevice or cave or chasm I found  
the flesh of my sacrifice.

"I burned with the wrath of a wind from hell  
thro' molten deserts panting and pent;  
But ever my foeman fled me afar, the sinister  
goal of my intent.

"I have sought you," I said, "I have found  
you," I said; "we shall die together, for  
I am you."  
The foam and fever oozed out of my forehead,  
with a dew like blood, with a blood like dew.

He wailed like a child that recoils from a  
shadow that moves with menace over his bed;  
But I pierced my heart with the sword in my  
hand, and his body at last lay stretched  
and dead.

## HAVING FINISHED "JUDE THE OBSCURE"

Such purposeless and iron wings  
Obscure our mortal music quite?  
Such gloom to monstrous gloom outflings  
The stench of a churchyard night?

We are no more for God or Sin  
Than parasites in rotting hair,  
No different but only in  
The boundlessness of our despair?

Glories have sprung before our gaze  
From the wet wood the grey tide warps!  
We have heard peals of music blaze  
Sheer from the cold heart of a corpse!

## GHOST AND BODY

I that am wiser than most,  
Have yielded the tract of my ghost  
To a panting and flat-eyed ghost who gathers these useless things.  
In a country of seventeen moons,  
He sits in the sound of bassoons  
Playing terrible stupid tunes to the first of the ghostly kings.

He has gathered my ghost with the rest  
To plough it, or do what is best,  
And doubtless he does it with zest in the country wherever  
he reigns.  
I am glad—for the thing was a pest;  
It lay at the roots of my chest,  
And it darkened the East and the West and it plastered  
my eyes with stains.

But heigh-ho! my arms and my feet  
Now are mine as I swing down the street,  
And my heart for to storm and to beat whenever my body desires.  
My eyes will look when they please  
Down the drains or high to the trees.  
My body is mine to freeze or shrivel with whitest fires!

## GALLOP

My drunken head is a whirl of song,  
My heart is a drumstick beating time.  
My pen goes swiftly galloping along  
The echoing roads of rhythm and rhyme.

The stars are dizzy, for they circle in a ring.  
Round about the Pole Star all hold hands.  
The moon lifts her skirts up to do a giddy fling,  
The trees in the forest dance in big black bands.

The river is bounding from place to place,  
The fishes in the cold air rise and shine.  
The parallel hedgerows are running in a race,  
For each of them and all of them are drunk with wine.

The grand old buildings, alas and woe is me!  
Sway about unsteadily from side to side.  
The streets are moreover crooked things to see;  
There is no object anywhere will stand and bide.

The goblins are assembled in a mad-moon crowd  
Upon the hazy summit of the palpitating hill.  
Let the things that have no voice shout out loud!  
Let them dance, the fickle things, and have their fill!

And if again they will not sub-subside,  
(For round-around-around ho! and dance shall we!)  
The road of the rebel stars is cool and wide,  
The mad waves dance on the sea!

Then beat like thunder heart, then! round go head!  
The red stars swing in time.  
For soon enough, the Lord knows, shall I be dead,  
And dead my rhythm and rhyme!

OXFORD

## WE LADS WHO BARTER RHYMES

There's some be red of face, they be,  
Like jolly suns in harvest times,  
And some be haggard men to see,  
Because of certain hidden crimes.  
But let us sing with one accord  
That we're the chosen of the Lord,  
We lads who barter rhymes.

There's some so tall and fair and free,  
Like policemen in their leisure times,  
And some are like a wizened pea,  
Some worth no more than twenty dimes.  
But here's our sober view expressed,  
We're three times better than the best,

We lads who barter rhymes.

### WHO KNOWS ME?

Who knows me? None knows me.  
I hobble on two blistered feet  
Round the corner, down the street.  
Now and then a child will cry,  
Seeing a strange thing in my eye,  
A Bogey Man, a Thing of Dread,  
Stand from each eye in my head.  
Now and then a baby 'll smile,  
—But that's only once a while.  
Boys of thirteen all throw stones  
At my stiff and creaky bones.  
Middle-aged people, fat and bright,  
Shrug and sniff "It serves him right."  
Round the corner, out of sight,  
Down the Street, across the Night.

Who knows me? None knows me.  
I am young and I am proud,  
Strong as sun and pure as cloud.  
All the five seas wash my veins  
With stinging foam and swinging rains.  
With the white stars I commune  
In a silent spheric tune.  
Who knows me? None knows me.  
Only but a brown Bird,  
Only but a little Child,  
A little Child, a little Bird,  
Only they know me.

### JUDÆUS ERRANS

He hath no place to rest his head.  
O happy nations, weep indeed.  
He is forlorn till he be dead.  
O pity him his wretched meed,  
His wounds that bleed.

There is no resting in his eyes,  
And he hath scars upon his feet.  
He is a stranger to all skies.  
He walks sad-eyed along the street,  
And shadow-wise.

For with the dawn must he depart,

And with the sunset make his way.  
All day he bears an aching heart,  
All night his aching sorrows stay,  
Yea, night and day.

Then look a moment as he goes,  
A little sadly, in his eyes.  
For there are written all the woes,  
And a surprise.  
For he is sadder than God knows.

## COLD STARS

Cold night, cold with pointed stars  
That swing like instant scimitars,  
How you reproach with acid fire  
The smoky lamps of our desire.

Cold stars, inexorably aloof,  
That freeze from Vision's dizziest roof,  
On these our human sins you brood  
In pride of glacial rectitude.

Cold stars, come down and walk along  
Our avenues of Sense and Song;  
Take human shape one night and vex  
Your bowels with the scourge of sex.

When you return at last to those  
Cold skies from whence your travel rose,  
Will you still stare with such disdain,  
When you, cold stars, are stars again?

## REACTIONARY

My heart's blood leaps high, O my Lady, in a  
fountain of restless aspiring.  
That you should dangle within it the dissolute  
gold of your hair.  
I have shattered the doors of my spirit that  
you might thereinto retiring  
Reposefully lie on my pain and reflect that  
the morning is fair.

You may go to the devil, my Lady, yourself  
and the rest of your species!  
I mean it, O desperate damsel, O Lady most  
anxious and coy!  
I shall retire to my chamber to see that my

clothes are in creases,  
For I see by the tilt of your brow the minuteness  
of brain you enjoy.

You have set the clear bells of my spirit to  
crack in a dissonant jangle.  
You are fair in your way, O my Lady, but rather  
oppressively sexed.  
There is no such fatal mistake as a primitive  
facial angle.  
Good-bye, O my dispossessed Lady, remember  
my name to the next.

## LATE

I am very desolate.  
I am afraid.  
I am alone.  
The shadows wait  
Till I am laid  
Beneath a stone.

I am very desolate.  
I can hear feet.  
I can see ghosts.  
Fear's by the gate,  
Death's in the street  
By the dark posts.

I am very desolate.  
What have I made  
Of the dead time?  
The night is late.  
I am afraid  
Of my own rhyme.

## WIND OF BLACK NIGHT

I would go where you go,  
You sole monarch that I know.  
Wind, wind of black night,  
I would go with your delight.  
Take me by my streaming hair,  
Take me where in the air  
Planets meet, stars fight.

I have need of the speed  
Of your thunder-shattering steed.

Wind, wind of black night,  
I would battle with your might.  
Take me by my soaring mind.  
No more blind, I shall find  
Hell's depth and sky's height.

I would follow where you lead,  
Freed, freed of sense and creed.  
Wind, wind of black night,  
I would see with your sight.  
Take me by my burning soul,  
Stark, whole, to God my goal,  
Clean darkness, sheer light.

## YELLOW SATINS

(To Janey Golding)

When I am rich, mother,  
You will sit in satins,  
Yellow satins, looking out upon the street.  
You will smile out on the neighbours,  
Who will have no yellow satins;  
And there'll be a great big hassock to rest your tired feet.

You'll have a gold-clasped family album,  
And a grand piano in the corner;  
But yellow satins, yellow satins, I have chiefly dreamed of them.  
And the most wonderful silk-lined work-box,  
With the clothes of my first baby,  
For your dear pale fingers to hem.

And the neighbours will come to see you,  
And pretend not to be looking  
At the wonderful yellow satins, till I take you away to bed.  
But in dreaming of the yellow satins,  
I have forgotten, I have forgotten....  
Isn't it seven years, little mother, since you've been dead?

## MY MOTHER'S PORTRAIT

Dost thou turn thine eyes away from me,  
thy stern and gentle eyes,  
From the error of my living days, O thou in  
Death most wise?  
O thou in Death most wise,  
With thy stern and gentle eyes,  
Then is thy sleep disturbed by doubt, thy

coffin by surprise?

Have I not trodden then the ways which thou  
wouldst have me tread?  
Then was it but a wind of words, the passionate  
vows I said?  
    The passionate vows I said,  
    The ways which I should tread,  
So have I quite forgotten these now thou art  
safely dead?

Unless I take thy buried lips my final word to say,  
Unless I take thy crumbled eyes to light my tangled way,  
    To light my tangled way,  
    My final word to say,  
Suddenly, Death, come down in flame and  
shrive me from the day!

### TO A. L. O.

My soul is a white flame that has burned longer  
    Than Mars or Aldebaran or all the stars,  
And gentler than a snowdrop, and far stronger  
    Than all the steel of its containing bars.  
In cosmic triumphs upon timeless cars  
    My lordly soul hath lain. My soul is younger  
Than the new-fallen dews in flowery jars:  
    My soul, my godly food, my godly hunger.

Where shall I place my soul for most safe keeping  
    From boisterous intention and omnivorous wave?  
And sow it in what field for goodliest reaping,  
    From night to shield it and from sins to save?  
Thou art my treasure-house, awake or sleeping,  
    Or wind-free in meadows or in the obscure grave.

### THE DARK KNIGHT OF THE ROAD

Three tall poplars are his plumes,  
    The Dark Knight of the Road.  
And he is cuirassed round with glooms,  
    And all his stern abode  
Is loud with seas and dooms.

A rock he takes to be his shield.  
    Loud winds his clarions are.  
Should banded warriors take the field,  
    Though strong troops come from far,

Naught know they but to yield.  
But if a sparrow taunt his helm,  
    Froth-like his power is blown.  
Him shall the mating thrush o'erwhelm.  
    Yea, I have even known  
Tom-tit usurp his realm.

### TO THE SWIFT

Swift, feathered lightning, swift,  
    Flesh of flame, wind-fleet,  
God who gave you your good gift  
    Gave me only two slow feet.  
Countries merge within the span  
    Of your single hour's essay.  
I being but a wingless man  
    Plod my score of miles a day.  
Fading into blankness now,  
    Song that flies and flight that sings,  
I am chained to clay, but thou,  
    Winds are leashed around thy wings.  
Art thou faded, swift? then see,  
    Poet where the swift shall halt,  
Poet see the sun assault  
    The stone towers of Finity.  
Swift, dreamless atom, clod,  
    Swift, thou art slower than  
Any eyeless, limbless man.  
    Him his soul shall drive to God.

### FRESHWATER

### GREEN WIND

The wind of course is Green.  
    There is no other word  
For what no man has seen  
    And every man has heard.  
It's neither man nor fowl,  
    And neither fish nor beast.  
But it comes out of the West  
    And goes into the East.

It never was defined  
By instrument or mouth.  
But it comes out of the North  
And goes into the South.

The wind it is a Green Thing  
That swishes thro' the corn,  
And shouts you to praise loudly  
The day that you were born.

The wind it is a Wise Thing  
That rumbles thro' the beech,  
And bids you to learn there  
A wisdom it can teach.

The wind's as Green as Greenness  
Possibly can be,  
And lashes to a foam of Green  
The deepest bluest sea.

And even in the grassless towns,  
The murky streets and mean,  
Along the greys, behind the browns,  
It sings a Song of Green.

And whither does it go then,  
And whence does it come forth?  
It comes out of the South,  
And goes into the North.

It comes out of the East,  
And goes into the West,  
And why the wind is Green as Green,  
God alone knows best.

### **THE MIDMOST FIELD IN KENT**

There is a time of charm and chime,  
And this is Sabbath evening time.  
There is a place of dear content,  
This is the midmost field in Kent.  
This is the time and this the place  
Where boughs droop down with dew's of grace;  
Where under hedges hung with sleep,  
Through atmospheres of music creep  
Sheep like ghosts and ghosts like sheep.  
Here a great Lord of Magic comes  
Fanfarronading with far drums,  
And deep athwart the night he throws  
His banners of white fire and rose.  
From the great town unto the sea,  
He thunders through his empire.  
But when his drums are heard no more,

The quiet is quiet as before.  
And there's a drowsy dreamy scent  
Drenches the midmost field in Kent.  
Neither more quickly nor more slow,  
Shadows come, shadows go.  
Shadows that reap while others sow,  
Shadows that sow while others reap,  
Shadows whose windy singings keep,  
Sheep like ghosts and ghosts like sheep.

### MURMURYNGEHAM

In Murmuryngeham, in Murmuryngeham,  
The bees is always singing,  
The flowers is always chiming,  
The sheep stands on their head.  
There's lads and lasses clinging,  
And minor poets rhyming,  
In Murmuryngeham, in Murmuryngeham,  
When they should be in bed.  
So now my feet is winging,  
When other men's are climbing,  
To Murmuryngeham, which I shall find  
If my good Patron be inclined,  
Murmuryngeham, Murmuryngeham,  
Some day before I'm dead.

### WINCHESTER DOWNS

In Winchester on the white downs  
This is not mist at all,  
But the thin silk of fairy gowns  
Which is not woven in the towns  
And all behind a wall.

In Winchester, be taught of me,  
The fairies seize your wrist.  
Their gowns are caught in every tree;  
—But if you have no eyes to see,  
Then sure, it's only mist.

### CYCLING IN OCTOBER

O the wind blowing round me, the wind

blowing round me, the same wind that  
blew when the grey world was green!  
The high hills before me, the brown hills before  
me, that stand in their places where Death  
has not been.  
The blue sky over my head is singing, is singing,  
is singing, as loudly as I.  
For Death was only a seeming, a dreaming,  
and Life is as clouds that fade and fly.  
The strong hills vanish, as thin clouds vanish,  
as I shall vanish, my dream, my pain;  
But all my dreams and I the dreamer, clouds  
and hills shall sing again.  
Then birds of October, hills of October, winds  
of October, wrap me round.  
Carry me forward, road of October, sped on  
the wheels of light and sound.  
For the birds are on wings now and I am on  
wings now over the white road the dead  
men trod.  
And there are no dead men, there are no dead  
men, but living men only and dead men  
are God!

## THE SHEPHERD

"Ah me," the shepherd said  
Who dwelt beside a fold  
Upon the Northern hills.  
"Ah me, 'tis bitter cold,  
My oldest friends be dead.  
And O a humming fills  
My nid-nod-nodding head."

The guns lie in the beams.  
The shepherd feeds the fire  
With fingers old and numb.  
The lamplight flickers higher.  
A double winter seems  
Surely to have come.  
The old friends hover nigher  
In simple shepherd dreams.

The frost lies on the fells.  
The moon's a great white flower.  
The stars have cruel hearts.  
And loud and very clear,  
With sudden silly starts,  
The old clock ticks and tells  
The changing of the hour.  
But the shepherd hears the bells  
No other man may hear.

A look's within his eyes  
I have not seen before  
In shepherd North or South.  
The old head sinketh lower.  
The shadows fall and rise  
Along the earthen floor.  
—God wot, he'll go no more  
Beneath the windy skies.

No more the shepherd will  
Lead down the misty scars  
The small sheep frail and lost,  
Nor thread the bracken hill  
Singing a shepherd's rune.  
The moorland wind is still,  
Beneath the ancient moon.  
The fells are white with frost.  
The white peaks touch the stars.

## DERWENTWATER

(To J. L. Paton)

God give me Derwentwater when I die.  
Let no one else be by  
To say prayers over me or close my eye.

On Friar's Crag my body will lie down.  
On green grass and earth brown.  
I will forget the fever and the town.

Over the tops of ancient Borrowdale,  
Slowly the clouds will sail  
Through great sky spaces, exquisite and frail.

And grandly will the flames of heather climb  
Up Skiddaw-Hill sublime,  
With head unbowed before the knees of time.

Thro' the still dusk a little bird will sing  
Sweetly a holy thing,  
And fade in silence on a drowsy wing.

The winds will pass along the quiet lake,  
And God will gently take  
My own breath with them for His Godhead's sake.

**"I VOWED THAT I WOULD BE A TREE"**

I vowed that I would be a tree.  
I went up to an oak and said,  
"What shall I do that I might be  
A beech, an oak, or any tree,  
With branches leafing from my head?"

There was a sound of sap that ran,  
There was a wind of leaves that spoke.  
"So you would cease to be a man,  
And be a green tree, if you can,  
A pine, a beech, an oak?"

I answered, "I am tired of men,  
As tired as they of me.  
I fain would not return again  
To the perplexity of men,  
But straightway be a tree."

There was a sound of winds that went  
To summon every oldest tree,  
To hold their austere Parliament  
About the thing had craved to be  
Elect of their calm company.

There was a sound of bursting tide,  
There was a wash of clanging foam,  
A crumbling shore, a bursting tide.  
There came a thunder that outcried,  
"Go, wretched mortal, get thee home!

"Who art thou that would be a tree,  
Least of the weeds that shoot and pass?  
Bide till a Wisdom come, and see  
Before a mortal be a tree,  
He first must be a blade of grass!"

## WOUNDED SOLDIERS

Have you no arms, soldier?  
See, I have two.  
Whatever deeds for arms there be,  
These still I can do.  
Out of clay I still can make  
Living things like me and you.  
I still can cleave the lake  
With strong arms true.

Have you no feet, soldier,  
No feet at all?  
I still have feet to climb  
Oak-tree and tall.  
Still as in our boyhood,  
I leap the hedge and climb the wall.

Still my feet will chase the Spring  
When birds call.

Have you no eyes, soldier,  
Keen eyes like me?  
My eyes still have light that draw  
Strength from the great sea.  
O soldier, is it hard to lose  
The first Spring-whisper on the tree,  
Sun foaming round the love you choose,  
Whosoever she?

Ah! but you have something, soldier,  
Never we shall know.  
You shall hear the holy winds  
We can not hear blow.  
From your garden-soul shall start  
Flowers of flaming snow.  
There's the secret at your heart  
Never we shall know.

### STILL LIFE IN FRANCE

Sweet peas drooping in a vase  
Like the tears of Niobe,  
Poppies like the cheeks of Mars  
Kissing the Aphrodite.

Pansies like a dryad's eyes,  
Open-wide and half-afraid,  
Like unfolded butterflies  
In a little Tempe glade.

\* \* \* \* \*

Flowers and words might be my toys  
Half a drowsy summer day,  
But at night I hear the noise  
Of bombardment far away.

Very quiet I am then,  
Like a moon-enchanted boy,  
As I see the khaki men  
Storm the granite walls of Troy.

HARFLEUR, 1917

### I DREAM'D I DIED

I dream'd I died.  
The green of Spring was not yet manifest  
Upon the cold hillside.  
They bore me slowly to my place of rest,  
And let me bide.  
Far from the pale I lay of space and light,  
Of dusk and dawn.  
I knew the sharp stars of the winter night  
Were far withdrawn.  
Silent I lay upon my bed,  
In sooth at rest.  
The earth pressed heavily on my head,  
My lean hands cross'd my breast.  
I saw not through my eyes.  
When I had faded from the room of sighs,  
Someone had sealed them down with clay,  
Had whispered, "He hath seen the whole  
Of summer earth and starlit skies,  
Or yellow hills of tumbled hay  
That he shall see.  
Here till the time of Judgment let him be.  
God soothe his soul."

Under the moon  
I lay remote from the dear nightingale.  
Late and soon,  
Faintly I heard the wan wind drone and wail.  
I dream'd,  
Thro' many years it seemed:  
Until I wearied me of dreaming  
And closed the windows of my soul,  
Where no sun streaming  
Show'd how God's far far days did westward roll.  
All blind, blind,  
A sea of sleep did drown me unconfin'd,  
Wide and deep,  
A sea of utter sleep,  
Its levels no time stirred by any wind.  
And so I slept,  
My hands across my breast.  
My clamped spirit kept  
A total rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Earth of the Earth I slumber'd long,  
I slumber'd in the untrod glooms,  
And then Dawn came.  
I felt the world was glad with song,  
I felt the hillsides were a flame  
Of king-cup blooms.  
And when Dawn came,  
Three times I knocked upon the door  
Which was my seal, my world and sky,  
Three times with might.  
There came a burst of sound and light,

A knowledge broad and deep and high,  
The long breath of a sloping moor.  
I looked into the daylight wide,  
A bird sang thro' the singing blue,  
And then, O heart, and then I knew  
I *dream'd* I died.

## FLOWERS IN WAR

Still, still, with all your ancient bloom,  
You glow athwart our gloom.  
Still, O too callous flowers,  
You load with gems these swooning hours.  
Still, still, the lilac foams and falls  
Against our hollow silenced walls.  
Against the cinders of our homes,  
Wistaria falls and foams.

When all the Spring is all a loaded grave,  
How can your banners wave?  
How when the wind goes round your way,  
How can your trumpets play?

For whom your splendours chiefly shone,  
All those, all those, are gone.  
Now Spring is nipped and hoar,  
Too callous flowers, why bloom ye more?  
Still, still, the scarlet sorrel gleams  
All noon along the noon-gold streams.  
Still, still, the meadow-pippet's feet  
Are dewed on meadow-sweet.

Be curst, O callous flowers that come so fair  
With taunts at our despair.  
Or if next Spring shall lead you back,  
Be all your petals black!

## EVENING—KENT

Sheep, like woolly clouds dropt from the sky,  
Drift through the quiet meads.  
From over the seas, a little cry,  
—Europe bleeds!

Clouds, like woolly sheep, hardly stir'd,  
Drift through the quiet skies.  
From over the seas, a little word,  
—Europe dies!

## BLACK MAGIC

Hands on the window-sill  
I hear but cannot see.  
Ghosts riding down the hill  
I see but cannot hear.  
My heart is cold with fear  
Of every trembling tree.

The day has never been,  
And day will never be.  
And Night is very lean,  
And Death is very swift.  
And green eyes blink and shift  
Through every monstrous tree.

Black arms across the night,  
And hands I may not flee,  
And fingers grasping tight  
That choke my little cries,  
And I shall have green eyes  
Within a phantom tree.

## A SOLDIER DYING

"Lad, why are your fingers twitching,  
What is the thing they strain to hold?  
Why does your blood flow thick, enriching  
A bleak strange place?"

"Dying, dying—then do not task me!"  
"Tell me before your lips are cold."  
"I am afraid of the thing you ask me."  
"—Before the dark is in your face."

"This is why my blood is oozing.  
Because my masters did the choosing.  
Blood is cheap and bought for gold."

"Are they masters of your knowing?"  
"I know not who my masters be.  
I only know my blood is flowing,  
Because my secret masters said,  
'We shall live and he be dead.'"

"This is why your fingers straining  
Clutch the thing they shall not hold?"  
"This is why the blood is waning,  
Waning from my face.

They gathered in the market-place,  
They gathered to buy merchandise.  
My blood was bought for little price,  
My masters bought and I was sold.  
This is why my blood is oozing,  
Blood is cheap and bought for gold."

## AT LAST WAR ENDS

And still the War went on: till only ten  
Were left to win the War; they fought; and then,  
Then there were no more men.

There was a gloom of apprehension lest  
For lack of flesh the first and last and best  
Of wars might be suppressed.

But Mars was far too sage to be surprised.  
Now that the race of men were quite demised,  
The women mobilized.

So now for gassier gas and flamier flame!  
Compared with what the present War became,  
The old War was a game.

The old had fifty years in which to thrive;  
When this had lasted only twenty-five,  
Two dames remained alive.

With flammen-werfer strictly up-to-date,  
They stalked each other, singing Hymns of Hate:  
—But one was just too late!

The Victress trying vainly to decide  
For whom her late opponent had just died,  
Committed suicide.

So now the world consisted but of trees  
And dogs and beetles livid with disease,  
And babies blue with fleas.

Trees, dogs, and beetles perished from the day.  
Like flies brought crawling earthwards by a spray,  
The babies dropped away.

Now truly War seemed ended. Mars was pained  
Beyond expression till he ascertained,  
Two babes, thank God! remained.

He fired them with the fury of all wars.  
A bloody hunger stung their toothless jaws.  
They squealed—"The Cause! The Cause!"

Black to the blinding noon they foamed and swore.  
Each from his brother's breast the red heart tore.  
Then there was War no more.

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