

THE  
PRODIGAL

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

PETER McARTHUR

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*AND OTHER*  
*POEMS*

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PETER McARTHUR



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*To My Wife*



## *THE PRODIGAL*

LAST night the boy came back to me again,  
The laughing boy, all-credulous of good—  
Long lost, far-wandered in the ways of men,  
He came and roused me with an olden mood.  
He came the lover and enthusiast,  
Shook off my years, and with enlightened eyes  
Smiled at the shadow that the world had cast,  
And looked at life with all the old surprise;  
And I, the slave of patience, took him in,  
Gave him my heart and bade him welcome home,  
Thrilled with his dreams of all I yet may win—  
Allured again in golden paths to roam,  
And now I know life has no greater joy  
Than, having lived, to be once more a boy.

## *ASPIRATION*

**H**OW should I be the master of my ways  
When every nerve is vibrant to the sweep  
Of dreams that fill the measure of my days—  
Too rare to lose and past all power to keep.  
How should I know what it were well to do  
When every path has its alluring strain,  
Each towering crest its world-revealing view  
Of realms for him that has the will to reign;  
And while I waver, lo! this earthly shard,  
Wherein is breathed the swift compelling fire,  
Breaks with the ardor it was shaped to guard.  
Yet, ever striving, humbly I aspire  
Ere all be spent, with reverent hands to light  
A guiding star on some hope-kindling height.

## *LIFE*

**D**EAR God, I thank Thee for this resting place,  
This fleshly temple where my soul may dwell,  
And, like an anchorite within his cell,  
Learn all Thy love and grow to perfect grace.  
Yet, while the veil still hides me from Thy face,  
Give me the light to know that all is well,  
With guiding truth my erring fears dispel,  
Be Thou the rock on which my faith I base.  
Thy guest, not captive, to my visioned goal  
I soar beyond the memory of strife,  
Upborn and shielded by Thy power benign:  
Thou art the strength of my unfaltering soul,  
And from the vantage of this mortal life  
The freedom of the infinite is mine.

## *EARTHBORN*

**H**URLED back, defeated, like a child I sought  
The loving shelter of my native fields,  
Where Fancy still her magic sceptre wields,  
And still the miracles of youth are wrought.  
'Twas here that first my eager spirit caught  
The rapture that relentless conflict yields,  
And, scorning peace and the content that shields,  
Took life's wild way, unguarded and untaught.  
Dear Mother Nature, not in vain we ask  
Of thee for strength! The visioned victories  
Revive my heart, and golden honors gleam:  
For here, once more, while in thy love I bask,  
My soul puts forth her rapid argosies  
To the uncharted ports of summer dream.

*THE TRUE EVANGEL*

**B**ECAUSE that men were deaf, and man to man  
I could not speak, but inarticulate  
Still felt the burden and the urge of fate,  
The strong compulsion of the perfect plan,  
From shrine to shrine with eager steps I ran  
Harkening to every tumult of debate  
Until my weary soul was desolate.  
Then turned I to the fields where life began;  
And lo! the evangel of the seed has taught  
That not through man to God can any rise;  
Alone and trusting he must lift his eyes  
Until the light of living truth be caught,  
And then will deeds with love and patience fraught  
Through God to man reveal life's high emprise.

## *GROWTH*

**T**HE dumb earth yearns for the expressive seed,  
The fruit fulfilled gives ear to her desire  
And she but conscious of her bitter need,  
In vernal beauty doth again aspire.  
The fruit perfected wooes the seeing eye,  
The eye demands it that the body grow;  
The soul, aspiring to the Most High,  
Demands the body seeking strength to know.  
And He that forged the all-embracing chain  
That binds us to him lest we fall, undone,  
What we may bear of what we seek to gain  
Accords in love and when the goal is won  
    Of perfect peace and poised self-control,  
    Lo, God himself has voice through such a soul!

## *DUTY*

**I**F “Yea” and “Nay” were words enough for Him,  
Who taught beyond the lessons of all teaching,  
With works nor Time nor Envy can bedim,  
How vain the burden of our foolish preaching?  
We but betray the spirit’s citadel,  
And waste on idle air the strength conferred,  
When life’s high message we essay to tell  
In aught so faithless as an uttered word.  
Deeds are the right and only alphabet  
Wherewith to teach what all the world should know;  
But still the tongue will evermore forget,  
And strive with sounds the perfect truth to show.  
Yet ever onward we must bravely press  
Till love through life reveals its loveliness.

## *DREAMS*

**I**F every thought shall weigh in the award,  
And every dream as if fulfilled shall stand,  
Who may complain or deem the justice hard  
That heaven shall deal when his account is scanned?  
The dreams I shattered when with mortal power  
I strove to give them form and worthy act  
Shall weigh against me in that searching hour  
For all their promise in fulfilment lacked;  
But if upon the other scale shall lie  
The pure, resplendent raptures of my youth,  
Of deeds pre-visionsed, born of purpose high,  
Undimmed by earth and lit by living truth,  
    Aspiring dreams shall gloss what ill befel,  
    For he whose thoughts are pure hath builded well.



## QUESTIONINGS

LAUGHTER and Silence for a sword and shield!

O aching heart, what war is this you wage?  
What part have you upon this furious field  
Where mailed pride and reckless folly rage?  
Though skilled your fencing in the mimic strife,  
What is its triumph but a shallow race?  
What can it stead you in the lists of life  
Where Envy levels at a smiling face?  
Is there no answer? Then, if Hope abide,  
Let still your shield be guard to Peace or Pain;  
Kept virgin from the blazonry of pride—  
Free from heraldic boast or earthly stain—  
    And haply when this shadowed coil is done  
    Its field will mirror the victorious sun.

## *RETICENCE*

**W**E may not babble unto alien ears  
The truth revealed, nor show to heedless eyes  
The visioned beauty, lest with shame and tears  
We mourn our folly—and with futile sighs.  
For words are weak, and every form of sense  
Wherewith in Time we tell our hopes and needs.  
To do aright is to have recompense,  
And highest thought is ever told in deeds;  
And He, upon whose mighty arm we lean,  
Is silent, save in works of love and power—  
Most Merciful, enthroned in the Unseen,  
He tries yet shields us in our mortal hour.  
    So faint not thou, for He who gave the will  
    The strength will give, and will Himself fulfil.

## *CONSECRATION*

**I**T is no bondage to be free to give  
Our all to Him who first so freely gave,  
That in his living we may ever live;  
For, losing all, the all we lose we save.  
It is not folly to become so wise  
That earthly wisdom shall be known a snare,  
Nor are they blind who have the light to rise  
Where science stumbles in its dark despair.  
The seed corrupted in the humid soil  
Sends yet its flower to the bewildering sun:  
Strong without will and perfect without toil,  
Helpless yet doing all that may be done.  
So we, through God, though doing naught, do all,  
Nor grope in darkness nor in weakness fall.

*SOLACE*

WHEN friends forsake and fortune in despite  
Of Thy rich bounty strips me to the wind,  
With eye undimmed I mark their faithless flight  
Because in Thee a refuge still I find.  
To them Thy love I may not tell nor teach  
Lest they bemock not me, but Thee through me;  
What Thou dost give I may not give to speech  
Because in deeds my speech must ever be.  
O let me live so that my life will show  
That I have treasure that they know not of,  
So if through envy they would seek to know  
And rob my secret they will learn Thy love:  
    For thus the glory will be ever Thine  
    And the reward of faithful service mine.

*DE PROFUNDIS*

NOT yet are deeds fruition of my thought,  
Nor is this body symbol of my soul,  
For evil ever in this life is wrought  
That shuns the will and its divine control.  
Surely I shall not be forever weak,  
Halting and stumbling on the chosen way,  
Blinded by the pure and perfect light I seek  
Upon the threshold of eternal day.  
I do not mourn discredit to my fame  
Who smile at Time and his confining shores;  
'Tis this provokes the burning blush of shame:  
The flesh still grovels though the spirit soars—  
    But my heart's anguish who can understand,  
    Or stay my folly with a guiding hand?

## *COURAGE*

THE dead are buried facing to the sun,  
In foolish epitaphs their faith is told,  
And yet they die without a victory won,  
Leaving a world in folly growing old.  
Now why should we among these futile graves  
Proclaim the truth to dead or living dust,  
Bow to the earth like overburdened slaves?—  
Re-born the freemen of a higher trust!  
Have words a substance whereon light may shine?  
Can beauty glow upon a trembling sound?  
Can aught but deeds foreshadow the divine?  
Or save in symbols can the truth be found?  
    Let no weak doubt defeat your eager hand;  
    For all must heed though few may understand.

*SUMMUM BONUM*

HOW blest is he that can but love and do  
And has no skill of speech nor trick of art  
Wherewith to tell what faith approveth true  
And show for fame the treasures of his heart.  
When wisely weak upon the path of duty  
Divine accord hath made his footing sure  
With humble deeds he builds his life to beauty,  
Strong to achieve and patient to endure.  
But they that in the market-place we meet,  
Each with his trumpet and his noisy faction,  
Are leaky vessels, pouring on the street  
The truth they know ere it hath known its action.  
    Yet which think ye, in His benign regard,  
    Or words or deeds shall merit the reward?

## *AN ODE OF EMPIRE*

### I.

UNDER a night of dim and alien stars,  
With homeless heart and angry tears I cried:  
“Is this the land of immemorial pride?  
Of sainted chivalry and heroic wars?  
Of happy vales and glooms of witchery?  
My farborn boyhood’s land of dream and song?  
Of manhood’s faith and sternest loyalty,  
Britannia the just and strong?  
O heart defrauded, what is here to cherish?  
And what to hope amid this wide disgrace  
Where hunger stalks and where the faithful perish,  
While sullen sluggards crowd the market-place?  
Britannia’s sons across the seas are calling,  
Joyous and strong from many a fruitful plain;  
On heedless ears their love and cheer are falling,  
Their birthright bartered for a cold disdain.  
But they of British sires were born,  
And they shall answer scorn for scorn:  
Nor long shall fools their youth deride,  
Sons of the proud are born to pride.”



## II.

“O, for an hour of the ampler stainless spaces  
That breathe the health of nations, where the sun  
Spreads his wide tent upon the hallowed places  
That toil’s long battle from the waste has won.  
Give me my birthland, still unknown to story,  
Dearer than dream remembered from afar,  
Where love and plenty yield a golden glory,  
That shames the cruel barren pomp of war.  
And O ye spirits of that world unsung,  
That serve the god of solitude, once more  
Send me the vision though with faltering tongue  
I voice your music on a friendless shore.  
Strike your wide harp and to Æolian numbers  
Marshal the legions of the patient dead  
From noteless fields whereon their lives were sped,  
Where harvest winds and birdsong lull their slumbers;  
Call them again that men may see  
Heroes of bloodless victory;  
May see and learn to love and bless  
The silent vanguard of the wilderness.”

### III.

A rousing wind among the wintry trees  
    Made ancient murmuring and the huddling night  
Thrilled with the fear of whispered mysteries;  
    When lo, around me fell the olden light  
And rank on rank I saw them marching by,  
    With cloudless brow and dreadless eye,  
The heroes of my eager youth,  
    Druid and saint and kings of chivalry;  
    Fierce plunderers of the uncharted sea,  
Unknown alike to fear and ruth:  
Warriors and minstrels and the lords of truth,  
    All memory's roster of idolatry.  
And not from guarded graves they came,  
    But from the lands where honor leads,  
Where still they serve and by their fame  
    Urge humble hearts to mighty deeds,  
And through that vision at their side  
My brothers marched with fearless stride  
And voiced with that heroic throng  
    The choral music of prophetic song.

#### IV.

Fool, to be wroth with but a noteless day,  
    To heed its spawn or have their scorn in mind,  
The dead are all imperial and their sway  
    Not islanded and to no shore confined.  
Once more my soul puts out to ports of daring  
    With all the lordly comrades of my choice.  
The soaring wind is master of our faring,  
    The sea's wide freedom bids our hearts rejoice.  
Far as the day span our adventure urges  
    A dateless voyage through the reach of time,  
The past goes down behind oblivious surges,  
    The future rises with a dawn sublime.  
Fronting the world with calm and level vision,  
New sons of empire, heirs to all its pride,  
    Smile back their answer to a dull derision,  
Serving and building where their fathers died.  
    Theirs is the strength and not the boastful seeming,  
    Theirs is the deed and not the foolish dreaming,  
    Theirs is the harvest of life's proudest pages,  
    And theirs the empire that shall awe the ages.

LONDON, England, 1904.

*THE OCEAN LINER*

LIKE some bewildered monster of the deep,  
    Groping to freedom through the baffling tide,  
    She blunders forth, while nuzzling at her side  
The bustling harbor craft about her creep.  
Anon she feels her iron pulses leap,  
    And, symbol of the age's mastering pride,  
    Looks out to where the ocean stretches wide,  
Scorning the fears that in its mystery sleep.

All day with headlong and undoubting haste,  
    And all the night upon her path she flames  
    Like some weird shape from olden errantry;  
And when some wafted wanderer of the waste  
    A storm-worn pennant dips afar, proclaims  
    With raucous voice her strong supremacy.

## *A CONFESSIO*

DEAR little boy, with wondering eyes  
That for the light of knowledge yearn,  
Who have such faith that I am wise  
And know the things that you would learn.  
Though oft I shake my head and smile  
To hear your childish questions flow,  
I must not meet your faith with guile;  
I cannot tell, I do not know.

Dear little boy with eager heart,  
Forever on the quest of truth,  
Your riddles oft are past my art  
To answer to your tender youth.  
But some day you will understand  
The things that now I cannot say,  
When life shall take you by the hand  
And lead you on its wondrous way.

Dear little boy with hand in mine,  
Together through the world we fare,  
Where much that I would fain divine  
I have not yet the strength to bear.  
Like you with riddling words I ask,  
Like you I hold another hand,  
And haply when I do my task,  
I, too, shall understand.

*A PARENT'S PLEA*

**M**Y little boy is eight years old,  
He goes to school each day;  
He doesn't mind the tasks they set—  
They seem to him but play.  
He heads his class at raffia work,  
And also takes the lead  
At making dinky paper boats—  
But I wish that he could read.

They teach him physiology,  
And, O, it chills our hearts  
To hear our prattling innocent  
Mix up his inward parts.  
He also learns astronomy  
And names the stars by night—  
Of course he's very up-to-date,  
But I wish that he could write.

They teach him things botanical,  
They teach him how to draw,  
He babbles of mythology  
And gravitation's law;  
And the discoveries of science  
With him are quite a fad,  
They tell me he's a clever boy,  
But I wish that he could add.

## *SUGAR WEATHER*

WHEN snow-balls pack on the horses' hoofs  
And the wind from the south blows warm,  
When the cattle stand where the sunbeams beat  
And the noon has a dreamy charm,  
When icicles crash from the dripping eaves  
And the furrows peep black through the snow,  
Then I hurry away to the sugar bush,  
For the sap will run, I know.

With auger and axe and spile and trough  
To each tree a visit I pay,  
And every boy in the country-side  
Is eager to help to-day.  
We roll the backlogs into their place,  
And the kettles between them swing,  
Then gather the wood for the roaring fire  
And the sap in pailfuls bring.

A fig for your arches and modern ways,  
A fig for your sheet-iron pan,  
I like the smoky old kettles best  
And I stick to the good old plan;  
We're going to make sugar and taffy to-night  
On the swing pole under the tree,  
And the girls and the boys for miles around  
Are all sworn friends to me.  
The hens are cackling again in the barn,  
And the cattle beginning to bawl,  
And neighbors, who long have been acting cool,  
Now make a forgiving call;  
For there's no love-feast like a taffy pull,  
With its hearty and sticky fun,  
And I know the whole world is at peace with me,  
For the sap has commenced to run.

*A THAW*

THE farm-house fire is dull and black,  
The trailing smoke rolls white and low  
Along the fields till by the wood  
It banks and floats unshaken, slow;  
The scattering sounds seem near and loud,  
The rising sun is clear and white,  
And in the air a mystery stirs  
Of wintry hosts in coward flight.

Anon the south-wind breathes across  
The frozen earth its bonds to break,  
Till at the call of life returned  
It softly stirs but half awake.  
The cattle clamor in their stalls,  
The house-dog barks, he knows not why,  
The cock crows by the stable door,  
The snow-birds, sombre-hued, go by.

The busy housewife on the snow  
To bleach lays out her linen store,  
And scolds because with careless feet  
The children track the spotless floor.  
With nightfall comes the slow warm rain,  
The purl of waters fills the air,  
And save where roll the gleaming drifts  
The fields lie sullen, black and bare.



## *CORN-PLANTING*

THE earth is awake and the birds have come,  
There is life in the beat of the breeze,  
And the basswood tops are alive with the hum  
And the flash of the hungry bees;  
The frogs in the swale in concert croak,  
And the glow of the spring is here,  
For the bursting leaves on the rough old oak  
Are as big as a red squirrel's ear.

From the ridge-pole dry the corn we pluck,  
Ears ripe and yellow and sound,  
That were saved apart, with a red for luck,  
The best that the huskers found;  
We will shell them now, for the Indian folk  
Say, "Plant your corn without fear  
When the bursting leaves on the rough old oak  
Are as big as a red squirrel's ear."

No crow will pull and no frost will blight,  
Nor grub cut the tender sprout,  
No rust will burn and no leaves turn white,  
But the stalks will be tall and stout;  
And never a weed will have power to choke,  
Or blasting wind to sear,  
The corn that we plant when the leaves of the oak  
Are as big as a red squirrel's ear.

## *AN INDIAN WIND SONG*

THE wolf of the winter wind is swift,  
And hearts are still and cheeks are pale,  
When we hear his howl in the ghostly drift,  
As he rushes past on a phantom trail;  
And all the night we huddle and fear,  
For we know that his path is the path of Death,  
And the flames burn low, when his steps are near,  
And the dim hut reeks with his grave-cold breath.

The fawn of the wind of the spring is shy,  
Her light feet rustle the sere, white grass,  
The trees are roused as she races by,  
In the pattering rain we hear her pass;  
And the bow unstrung we cast aside,  
While we winnow the golden, hoarded maize,  
And the earth awakes with a thrill of pride  
To deck her beauty for festal days.

The hawk of the summer wind is proud,  
She circles high at the throne of the sun;  
When the storm is fierce her scream is loud,  
And the scorching glance of her eye we shun;  
And oftentimes, when the sun is bright,  
A silence falls on the choirs of song,  
And the partridge shrinks in a wild affright,  
Where a searching shadow swings along.

The hound of the autumn wind is slow,  
He loves to bask in the heat and sleep,  
When the sun through the drowsy haze bends low,  
And frosts from the hills through the starlight creep;  
But oftentimes he starts in his dreams,  
When the howl of the winter wolf draws nigh,  
Then lazily rolls in the gold-warm beams,  
While the flocking birds to the south drift by.

*BIRDS OF PASSAGE*

WHEN the maples flame with crimson  
And the nights are still with frost,  
Ere the summer's luring beauty  
Is in autumn glory lost,  
Through the marshes and the forests  
An imperious summons flies,  
And from all the dreaming north-land  
The wild birds flock and rise.

From streams no oar hath rippled  
And lakes that waft no sail,  
From reaches vast and lonely  
That know no hunter's trail,  
The clamor of their calling  
And the whistling of their flight  
Fill all the day with marvel,  
And with mystery, the night.

As ebb along the ocean  
The great obedient tides,  
So wave on wave they journey  
Where an ancient wisdom guides;  
A-through the haze of autumn  
They vanish down the wind,  
With the summer world before them  
And the crowding storms behind.

## *THE END OF THE DROUGHT*

LAST night we marked the twinkling stars,  
This morn no dew revived the grass,  
And oft across the parching fields  
We see the dusty eddies pass;  
The eager hawk forgets to swing  
And scream across the burning sky,  
And from the oak's slow-dying crest  
Sends forth a strange and plaintive cry.

The geese on unaccustomed wings  
Flap wildly in ungainly flight,  
The peacock's fierce defiant scream  
Scatters the fowls in wild affright,  
The crows are barking in the woods,  
The maple leaves their silver show,  
The cattle sniff the coming storm,  
Then toss their heads and softly low.

And now along the hazy west  
The swiftly building clouds uprear;  
High overhead the winds are loud,  
The thunder rolls and grumbles near;  
The housewife trims the leaky eaves,  
The farmer frets of lodging grain,  
Till all the world, rejoicing, drinks  
The long-denied, long-prayed-for rain.

*TO BERNHARDT*

**O**F all that felt thy spell I envied one,  
A youth whose sightless eyes were dimly turned  
Where Tosca's soul with breathless passion burned,  
Or thrilled with fury, agonized, undone.

He shrank, as dazzled by the gorgeous sun,  
When from melodious words her love he learned,  
And purest faith such rapture never earned  
As his swift spirit from the darkness won.

But when the torture of a lover's wrongs  
Roused all the fierceness of her fruitless rage,  
He wrung his helpless hands with many a moan.  
Ah, queen of passion! not to cheering throngs  
You played that hour, but on a visioned stage,  
Past mortal art, to one blind youth alone.

*SHAKESPEARE*

I MAY not tell what hidden springs I find  
Of living beauty in this deathless page,  
Lest the dull world, that chooses to be blind,  
Mock me to shame or lash me in its rage.  
Alas for me that am a thing of dreams  
Without the skill to show where others shine—  
Because I hold their truth a thing that seems  
While worse than seeming seems all truth of mine.  
And yet let others on his music dote,  
Or burnish every line with housewife care,  
With glutton learning get his words by rote  
And fail to find the spirit prisoned there!  
    For while I read, as thrilled by fire I start  
    To feel the pulsing of the poet's heart.

*THE SHAW MEMORIAL*

*(As it appeared during a snowstorm.)*

THE chiselled fineness we can but surmise;  
All that is delicate in form and mould  
To-day has vanished under fold on fold  
Of crystal whiteness that upon it lies.  
But still against the storm with blinded eyes  
The warriors lean, invincible and bold,  
Like some stern legion, in Cimmerian cold  
By Death transfigured, on a high emprise.

And so methinks heroic deeds will show,  
Graved on the tablets of Eternity—  
Blurred by Oblivion, but instinct with power—  
Till God's rewarding light shall strongly glow  
And the benign, all-seeing eye shall see  
The unclouded beauty of their amplest hour.

## *HEARTSEASE*

**I**N some strange way God understands  
Her dreaming lips were fondly pressed,  
The playful touch of childish hands  
Her wan cheek lingeringly caressed.

With joy she woke, but to her heart  
A grief of loss the waking gave;  
She rose to live her lonely part—  
A simple woman true and brave.

And all the day she softly sung  
Low crooning airs that mothers sing,  
For to her weary heart there clung  
The peace that childish kisses bring.



*THE INNOCENTS*

**T**O make perfect the heaven of mothers  
The little children die,  
For what care they for the praise of God  
Who have sung a lullaby?

The arms that have ached with nursing  
Would ache with their emptiness  
Were there no little children  
To fondle and caress.

And while the saints and angels  
Sing loud in adoring throngs,  
God hears the mothers and children  
Singing their crooning songs.

## *IN OBLIVION*

COME, friend, there's going to be a merry meeting  
After the play. Our masks we'll throw aside,  
And after chaff and chat and friendly greeting  
Our glasses fill and all, like cronies tried,  
Drink draughts whose richness was so devil-cheating.  
The ancients drank until their flasks were dried,  
Then lost the art of making more such wine;  
And we'll on long-forgotten viands dine.

"Who will be there?" you ask. Why, you and I  
And all good fellows who were never great;  
No warrior there will roll commanding eye;  
No statesman weary with affairs of weight;  
No prosy sage to proselyte will try;  
No bard will drone; no orator will prate;  
To pine in pompous glory they have gone,  
But we'll be merry in Oblivion.

The watchword of that banquet hall's "Forgotten,"  
And if forgotten, why, we will forget  
Our foolish dreams, the mocking goals we sought in  
The days when hope could lure and failure fret;  
The weary days when all our souls were caught in  
The snare of life that like a tangling net  
Holds us in agony and durance till  
The spoiler stretches forth his hand to kill.

Methinks that there, my friend, both you and I  
Can fleet away eternity content;  
No curious fool into our lives can pry  
And moralize on how our days were spent;  
And soon, how soon! the names that flare on high  
Will wane and with the closing night be blent;  
For while we revel in Oblivion  
The great themselves must join us one by one.

## TO THE BIRDS

How dare you sing such cheerful notes?

You show a woful lack of taste;  
How dare you pour from happy throats  
Such merry songs with raptured haste,  
While all our poets wail and weep,  
And readers sob themselves to sleep?

'Tis clear to me, you've never read  
The turgid tomes that Ibsen writes,  
Nor mourned with Tolstoi virtue dead,  
Nor over Howells pored o' nights:  
For you are glad with all your power;  
For shame! Go study Schopenhauer.

You never sing save when you feel  
The ecstasy of thoughtless joy;  
All silent through the boughs you steal  
When storms or fears or pains annoy;  
With bards 'tis quite a different thing,  
The more they ache the more they sing.

All happiness they sadly shirk,  
And from all pleasure hold aloof,  
And are so tearful when they work  
They write on paper waterproof,  
And on each page express a yearn  
To fill a cinerary urn.

Go, little birds, it gives me pain  
To hear your happy melodies.  
My plaudits you can never gain  
With old and worn-out tunes like these;  
More up-to-date your songs must be  
Ere you can merit praise from me.

# *TO THE SPONSORS*

FOR

DANIEL CARMAN McARTHUR,

Baptized January 2d, 1898.

**Y**E hardy folk who boldly stand  
Between this boy and sin,  
I trust you quite appreciate  
The fix that you are in;  
For when the threshold of the church  
Was crossed, he raised a roar;  
Hereditary cussedness  
Just oozed from every pore.

He kicked at all the promises,  
He howled at every prayer,  
And when the water touched him  
He raised the roof for fair;  
But when the Mayor and the Priest,  
Your proxies, by the way,  
Renounced the devil and his works  
He stopped and smiled, they say.

Now tell us, pray, for that's your task,  
Just when we should begin  
To pound his father's failings out,  
His mother's virtues in:  
Yet in a work so good and great  
Perhaps I might suggest  
That to divide the labor  
In this way would be best:

Let Carman teach the Gospels,  
And Smith expound the Law,  
Let Clara to the Catechism  
His soul devoutly draw;

And I doubt not that he'll yet grow up  
To be a worthy man,  
A credit to his country  
And an honor to his clan.

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE,  
January Second, 1898.

*TO MY FASHIONABLE FIANCÉE*

**I** SOMETIMES think it would be sweet  
If we were like the olden lovers—  
The simple-hearted ones we meet  
In musty books with vellum covers.

For lovers in those times were blest,  
Or else our poets all are lying,  
And if fate crossed them in their quest  
They had most charming ways of dying.

But you are not a shepherdess  
With woolen frock and linen wimple,  
And if you were I'd love you less,  
I couldn't kiss a swarthy dimple.

And I am not a woodsman wight,  
Nor yet a leather-jerkined yeoman,  
And I am glad I'm not a knight  
With many a boiler-plated foeman.

Yet though for lovers of those days  
I have poetic predilections,  
To wooing in their artless ways  
I own there are a few objections.

A crown of flowers your head might grace,  
But it would spoil your frizzled tresses,  
And burrs would hardly look in place  
Upon your tailor-fashioned dresses.

And I'd not care to gather haws  
And sit in thorny shades to chew them,  
And who would pipe on oaten straws  
When he might suck mint-juleps through them!

In sooth, we're better as we are:  
Your gravest task to baffle freckles,  
And mine to keep all care afar  
And work for the elusive shekels.

“*ALL IN!*”

“I’m all in!”—*Bob Fitzsimmons*

NOT on your life, Bob; not on your life!  
The Muse salutes you!  
And if there still be virtue left in catgut,  
In brass or wood, she’ll sound a stave that’s worthy  
The squarest, hardest hitting slugger that ever pawed the sawdust!  
The man with the wallop!  
“All in!”  
Not on your life!  
Your place is with the veteran heroes, with the elder statesmen.  
Another may wear your laurels, but cannot blur your record!  
Hero of twenty score hard-fought battles,  
An in-fighter who gave and took with a joyous ferocity!  
Who fought manfully and as manfully lost!  
Move up there, you Immortals!  
Make room for a gladiator—not for a grafter!  
Here is a tall fellow of his hands—whose hands are clean!  
A rough-jointed, red-headed, slant-browed troglodyte!  
Such a one as might have wielded the cestus  
Before applauding Rome!  
Make room, I say!  
While we who have roared and catcalled by the ring-side,  
Whooped, yelled, howled, and trampled on our hats  
As he grinned back at us in his hour of triumph—  
A freckled, fierce, loose lipped satyr—  
Take off our hats to add state to his exit.  
“All in!”  
Not on your life, Bob!  
You have fought your last battle,  
But it was the last of many,  
And though lost, was not without glory.  
Step up to your place with the Immortals  
And live long to awe the youngsters  
With the tales of your prowess.



*DOLCE FAR NIENTE*

[*From Aguilar*]

**I**S life worth loafing? Come, recline with me  
And lazily this fragrant afternoon  
We'll weigh the idle theme. I often think,  
If with protean versatility  
I might luxuriously loaf my days,  
I would no longer quarrel with the powers  
That called me forth. I would not be a man,  
Nor god, nor beast, nor bird, nor anything;  
Yet each whene'er I listed.

I would rise  
And, as an eagle, float in circles slow,  
That swing too wide and high for mortal ken,  
Or as a flesh-gorged leopard, in the sun  
Bask by a rocky den, or as a god  
Of some hushed sea lie sweltering on the sand,  
While crawled the servile waves to kiss my feet.  
Yet with environment I would not keep  
Strict correspondence, but with every whim  
Would loll where'er, whene'er I pleased.

Before Jove's throne, upon Olympus stretched  
With hands beneath my head, with careless eyes  
Exploring the vasty, vaulted heavens, I'd munch  
The rustic straw, or in the fatted form  
Of some church-going citizen would yawn  
While Hermes or Apollo spake.

Again  
Like that famed, errant Babylonian king,  
In horn-deep pastures I would graze and stray;  
And under odorous, knoll-crowning trees  
At noonday ruminates the leisurely cud.  
When all aweary of each languorous change  
I longed for sleep, with drooping wings I'd sink

A down the ether till some gloom I found,  
Where cool and mornless night would woo my soul  
To dreamless rest. When I awaked again  
Some newer charm of indolence I'd find.  
Ah, friend, for living life has little worth—  
But for such loafing! Let us dream of it.

*MAN*

[*From Aguilar*]

**H**E marks his shadow in the sun,  
His form is fair, his dream is proud;  
But shadow, form, and dream are one  
And vanish like an empty cloud.

The graven cliffs have crumbled down,  
The temples worn to drifting sand;  
His deeds with fame he could not crown  
With all the cunning of his hand.

The idle and forgetful air  
Has heard his boast, has borne his woe;  
The night has seen his cities flare  
And holds no gleam their place to show.

Within this crystal sphere of light,  
Where soaring constellations flame,  
He has no skill his deeds to write  
And has no art to show his fame.

On things of Time alone can man  
For years of Time record his pride;  
On nothing of eternal span  
Will aught that he has sealed abide.

*TO D. A. MACKELLAR*

*[In Dedication of Aguilar]*

**M**Y cherished dead, when last your placid brow  
I saw through tears and ne'er on earth again,  
With trembling lips I made a holy vow  
To show our love in a remembered strain,  
In self-defeated discord of the streets  
Where life had called us when our hearts were strong,  
Where friend a friend so true but seldom greets,  
I heard a voice of unrecorded song.  
With such poor means as are by nature mine  
And faith that raised me from despairing gloom,  
To-day I come as to a sacred shrine  
And lay this tribute on your lowly tomb,  
And plead, if any question or admire  
The living do but what the dead inspire.

# *SILENCE*

## I

Toiling through ruined temple-halls, where Time  
    Had dwelt with Havoc, eager searchers found,  
    With shattered idols that bestrewed the ground,  
An image strange, of lineaments sublime.  
No god was he of rapine or of crime;  
    With ample brows his brooding face was crowned;  
    But lips and eyes were curiously bound  
With golden circlets hoar with ageless grime.

One who was skilled in runes the gravings read,  
    And learned the wondrous image was the god  
    Of endless Silence. The searchers mutely bowed,  
And mourned that faith so lofty should be dead;  
    And I their prone idolatry applaud  
    When strife and tumult in my paths are loud.

## II

**B**EYOND the search of sun or wandering star,  
In that deep cincture of eternal night  
That shrouds and stays this orbèd flare of light  
Where many a god hath wheeled his griding car,  
Silence is brooding, patient and afar,  
Secure and steadfast in his primal right,  
Reconquering slowly, with resistless might,  
Dominions lost in immemorial war.  
The throngèd suns are paling to their doom,  
The constellations waver, and a breath  
Shall blur them all into eternity;  
Then Ancient Silence in oblivious gloom  
Shall reign—where holds this dream of Time and Death  
Like some brief bubble in a shoreless sea.

## *THE SALT MARSHES*

**T**HERE was a light upon the sea that made  
Familiar things mysterious, which to teach,  
With inarticulate, alluring speech,  
The living wind with lispings tongue essayed.  
O'er sand and weed and spongy moss I strayed  
And lifeless, orient shells, musing on each;  
While casting nets with ever wider reach  
A fisher plied his immemorial trade.  
A sea-bird winged the aërial solitude  
Searching the deep for his appointed dole,  
Where his wide-wandering flocks the ocean feeds;  
And with the day's full orbèd strength indued,  
At one with all, by all illumed, my soul  
Pulsed to the rhythmus of immortal deeds.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Prodigal and Other Poems* by Peter McArthur]