

PEATSMOKE AND OTHER VERSE

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PEATSMOKE

TO A. G.

*TO you who love,
As I, the rolling moors and hidden glades
In lonely hill, where no man's voice is known,
I give these songs of sunlight, sweeping shades
And wind-spiced clouds ; the beauty of grey stone
Upon green grass where mighty boulders lie—
Cast on the hillside like blest altars set
For passing saints to pray below the sky
And leave a thought of God lest man forget.*

*For love of you
I sing, and for the sake of each glad hour,
Amid the purple mountains that we roam
Through heather and white cotton grass a-flower,
By sleeping tarns and waterfalls in foam.
There have we dreamed and, dreaming, ever drew
Nearer from earth's dear breast to heaven above.
Of those glad dreams I weave these songs for you
And set them here as symbols of my love.*

IT IS ENOUGH

WHEN the mist falls—blue mist of eventide—
Over the fields—like waves of some blue bay
Whose waters I have loved and dreamed beside
In other lives. When the winds die away
Along the rabbit pathways in the fern
And through the tangled undergrowth of pine;
When the last voice dies down beside the burn,
Then, God, thy world is thine, thy World is thine.

I came alone from the dark shadowed wood
Over the meadows—sweet with clover dew—
That break upon the purple miles of peace
As man-made music breaks upon the soul
Of some calm-minded monk who kneels in prayer,
Until the chanted rosary breaks through
The silence of his rapture and his pain.

Hill-top on hill-top ever led my gaze
Upward into the deepening blue of Heaven.
Green slopes before me drew me ever on
Beside the brawling river and the rock—
The red, red rocks that fringe the waterfall
And hold the amber pool in crimson cup—
There glowed a primrose—pallid as the star
Which shone beside the scarcely gilded moon,—
And there the water cried into the void
With voice of all the water in the world,
Calling my heart in tongues I cannot know.

Onward! Through miles of bloomless heatherland,
By walls where tangled honeysuckles yield
A wild, mad sweetness underneath the stars,
By grey moon-shadowed boulder, by green bog
Heavy with myrtle breath, full of low sounds
Of water, oozing under long soft grass,
And myriad creatures only named by God.
Onward! by paths and where no pathways are,
By ghostly fir trees—stretching arms of prayer
Toward the skyline where my eyes are set.
Onward ! the river-voices calling me
And the wild voice of Love in the wild hills.

God, do I love too well the things you made ?
The eyes of the stars, the water-song, the wind,
The sunlight, mist and moonlight in the hills

Or one man's voice and one man's silences ?
Loving these so—do I love them more than God ?
What is the madness throbbing through my veins
When I lie down upon some windy ridge
To share the little lives that thrill the grass
Or yield my spirit to the mountain's soul,
The crying birds, the singing in the trees ?
God, is this knowing other gods than Thee ?

I heard a voice—far off amid the fern,
It held the sense of sunlight on green leaves,
Or moonlight on the water and the song
Of all sweet winds that ever stirred the grass,
All birds that ever sang in summer dawn.
It held the brightness of bright eyes that shine
From little burrows underneath the fern,
The softness of shy footsteps that draw near
To trusted hands which seek but to caress,
It had the ring of one voice—far away—
That my heart yearns for in the silent hours,
All perfect Love of all perfected Life.

The Voice

“When you go through the silence of the hills
By sunlight or by starlight, when the mist
Folds you about beside the cold, black tarn
And you can only hear the waterfall
Crying far off, the curlews calling you,
When you lie down and yield your stirring soul
Unto the soul of the hills, the soul of the sky,
When the mad passion of the spring awakes
Within your blood and calls your spirit forth
To dance along the uplands of the world
And, at the last, you say—‘I cannot know,
I cannot know why this and this should be,
I only know it is ordained so
And thus God made me and the soul in me.’
It is enough, ask nothing more of Life,
No more of prayer, ask nothing more of God
And fear not, wonder not that this should be,
That such Earth joys—more near than Paradise—
Should fill your soul and stir the blood in you.
To some God comes in vigil and wan fast,
They, kneeling at the Tabernacle, see
The pale face of the Man Christ at their side.
Some find him where the little children play
In a dark street with strings of coloured beads.

Some find his footprints in the blood-stained fields
And hear his voice amid the voice of guns.
But unto you and to the like of heart—
He comes in the wild things of the Earth you love ;
Then God in You awakes to meet the God
Whose eyes are shining in the shining stars,
Whose voice is calling with the waterfall,
Who breathes on you in moments of sweet cairn
That fall upon your soul and your beloved.
Ah ! know no fear—the fair world God has made
Is God's expression of his highest thought
And only man has marred it here and there—
Ringing the perfect bell-notes out of tune.
Here no man comes and your soul's hands outstretch
To touch the fingers of Eternity.
It is enough.

SONGS OF THE THREE VALLEYS

I. PEATSMOKE

WE wanderers drawn from many a distant shore
Home to our loved grey land of sunlit tears,
What fragrance from the days that are no more
Bridges for us the gulf of vanished years ?
Not only heather and sense of trodden fern,
Nor broken blossoms sweetening all the air,
But peatsmoke from a cottage by a burn—
The gathered incense of this hour of prayer.

Breathe it, gather it to yourself, my soul,
How often have you seen with dreaming eyes,
That blue haze rising where the green hills roll
Into the grey mist of the Border skies ?
Peatsmoke—the life-breath of a happy Earth
And simple homes where, from the hearth-place deep
Flames dance with love or life and death or birth
And warm the darkness of man's last cold sleep.

Peatsmoke—Heart of the Silent Valley's dream,
Spirit of hill and heather, glen and wood,
Soul of the spate that fills the mountain stream
And wakens with the wind a rover's blood !
Through the long years below far distant skies—
Dreaming with never a soul to share his thought—
Ever the wanderer sees blue peatsmoke rise
O'er homes where kin of his have loved and wrought.

For those who far away in slumber lie
To tread no more the plains they held so dear,
Nor see the sunset on the valley die,
The hills so blue, the burns so brown and clear,
For them we pray, but human hearts will sleep,
Dust of long years will dim their ardour ; yet
Blue wreathes of smoke for ever heavenward creep—
Prayers of the hills that never will forget.

God, when I see the light of gleaming skies
Fade for the last, last time on Bodesbeck steep,
Ah ! let one drift of peatsmoke veil my eyes
And bless me e'er I find a dreamless sleep.
That when I wake on that dim River's shore,
If Heaven be not too high nor far above,
My eyes may rest upon the hills once more

And I may breathe the peatsmoke that I love.

II. VAGABOND SOULS

You who are ever young as I am young
With love of woodland, wind and sunlit dew,
E'er yet I wove this dream my harp has sung,
My soul was one with the wandering soul in you.

One with all glad lovers of hill and stream
Who hear for ever the wind and waters cry,
The bee in the heather-afar the curlew scream
Over the mountains, under the blue, blue sky.

Vagabond souls are we who know no rest
So sweet as sunlit sleep amid the fern
When we lie alone upon Earth's mother breast
Lulled to dream by the ringing bells of the burn.

We are of silver dawns when the wan beam breaks
Over the peat moss miles and the still pale pool,
Of the blazing noon when the golden wind breath wakes
And the shadowed paths of the glen are sweetly cool.

Vagabond souls ! Our Heaven has no bars,
When twilight falls by some beloved stream
Ours is the glory of a myriad stars,
Eternal youth, the singing and the dream.

III. LOCH SKENE

ONLY the cry of a lamb on the hillside,
Only the splash of the trout as they leap,
Only the far, faint voice of the water
Falling over the rocky steep.

Only the wide, wind-wandered moorland
Broken and scarred where grey rocks lie—
Passionate prayers from the soul of the mountain
Breaking forth to the boundless sky.

Only a mountain loch wind ruffled,
Lapping the hills that gave it birth,
Hills that lean from the arc of Heaven
Telling God's thoughts to the lonely Earth.

Rough brown heather and half-curved bracken,
Joy of youth in the curlew's cry
Ringing over the rolling moorland
Under the blue of the boundless sky.

Only the call of the wind and water,
Only the thrill of the laughing air,
But here God stands alone for ever
Where hills are dreaming a dream of prayer.

IV. UNTO THE HILLS

I WILL away, away from the world of men—
Unto the hills, unto the silent hills—
Into the mist that fills the lonely glen,
 There will I stray—
Treading alone the dead leaves where they lie,
Crushing the broken brackens e'er they die,
Wandering far from the ways and the world of men.

Where pine boughs yearn to the Heaven I will rest,
Under the broken wall where scattered stones
Fall in the heather on the mountain's breast
 There will I lie,
And I will hear the slow rain falling down,
The weary cry of the sea-birds—landward blown
On winds that sweep the storm-clouds from the West.

When breathless darkness gathers o'er the sky—
Silently, as love comes into the heart,
When clouds part and the white moon-barque sails by
 There will I sleep—
With dreaming eyes turned upward to the stars
And roving spirit beating Heaven's bars,
There will I sleep where mountains seek the sky.

V. IN THE FIRE

THIS I see in the fire, this I see—
A mountain road, a rough road—far away,
Girded by purple hills and woods of pine
Framing the rocky glen whence sparkling spray
From mountain burns is dashed afar to shine
Whiter than any snow against the hill.
I see the bridge that foots the glen I love
More than all other glens and still, aye still

The brown, brown water, foaming from above,
Sings the old song I used to know so well—

“Oh, I haste to the sea, on to the sea,
But ah ! my heart is broken in farewell,
Blue hill that gave me Life, farewell to thee.”

I hear the young, young voices by the burn,
Calling across the water. On the breeze
Lingers the scent of dying flower and fern
And wind-song born amid the sighing trees.

Nearer they draw—those voices of the glen,
One more turn of the road and see, they rise—
Pilgrim ghosts of pilgrim women and men—
Trooping into the dusk with shining eyes.
Ah ! they have strayed, as I have strayed, afar
From yonder hills, yet still their hearts desire
The twilight of the glen, the first pale star
Shining athwart the pines, the heather fire
Rolling across the hills. They weave their dream,
As I have woven and with errant soul,
They wander homeward by the mountain-stream—
By yonder road that shines amid the coal.

This I see in the fire, this I see.

VI. CHAPEL BRAE

How calm the eve ! Scarce on the ruined wall
The ivy stirs and scarce the grasses wave.
Over the moor I hear a shepherd call
His dog, and in the wood one last sweet stave
Of faint bird-music trembles into rest,
As die the rose clouds in the faded West.

Grey ruined walls, arise from Earth once more,
Perfect the broken shadows that you throw
Across the grass till, through thine open door,
Dreaming, I see the blessèd candies glow
Or dimly hear some heavenly melody
Where voices chant the Holy Mystery.

Die out red rays, that o'er the arches shine
For there the incense clouds arise and fall,
Dim voices chant thy name—O Rose Divine,
Mother of Consolation, hear them call—
Who kneel, black-robed, with white cross on the breast

For Benediction where their ruins rest.

Like stars at dawn the altar candles die,
The kneeling figures fade, the voices fall.
Over the moor I hear a shepherd cry,
Far off the sheep-dog answers from the wall.
And here the ivy whispers as I pass
Of broken columns hidden in the grass.

So swiftly flash and yet more swiftly fade
The errant visions our dim eyes descry
In hallowed walls or faery haunted glade,
In flush of dawn or calm of evening sky—
Lighting the gloom of twilight as they pass,
Perfecting broken shadows on the grass.

VII. THE WAY TO ERICSTANE

'TIS on the way to Ericstane that ragged robins blow
 Among the windy grasses by the hedge,
And far beyond those quiet fields the Annan waters flow
 Where ripples rustle to the reedy sedge.

Oh, the road is rough and narrow on the way to Ericstane,
 And the path's a weary path to tread alone ;
But it's there I would be tramping to the purple hills again
 In the dusk-hour when the summer day is gone.

Come away, then, from the City, for there's not a heart so wise
 As the soul that's in the voices of the stream,
And there's not a jewel that sparkles like the first star in the skies
 When the dusk-dew wakes the fern from shadowed dream.

Come, the purple moorlands call you and the windy pine-woods sing,
 The musk-bloom blossoms in the grass again
Where the waters from the mountain through the mossy channels spring
 Beside the rugged road to Ericstane.

Come, there the hills are dreaming and the veils of twilight fall,
 The weary winds are dying o'er the fern,
And there's one who waits to claim you where the river-voices call
 Through the dewy dusk beside the little burn.

A shade, among the shadows, he comes as long ago ;
 He came to greet us in the eventide,
His eyes are full of pity, his voice is soft and low
 As the wind that wanders by the waterside.

He will fold us to the mountains, he has waited while we strayed
Through the mountains of the world to come again
From our pilgrimage triumphant and with spirit unafraid
To our Father hills than circle Ericstane.

VIII. THE LANTERN BEARER

You pass my doorway every night,
Your lantern casts upon the snow
A shaft of gold amid the white,
Wild wilderness—a friendly glow
Across my window's darkened glass
Where flickering fire-flames fall and leap.
I wake to hear you as you pass
And pray "God bless you," e'er I sleep.

I know not why you come and go,
So late across the lonely hill—
A light amid the darkened snow,
A moving form where all is still.
I only know you bless my sleep
With your clear shaft of golden light
That shines where my dim fire-flames leap
As God's eyes shine across the night.

IX. PEACE

THERE is a tarn where reeds cry to the wind,
High in the wintry hills above Loch Skene,
Where suns of June shine on the slopes to find
Unmelted snowdrifts in the clefts between
Dark rock and rock. There where the red moss creeps,
Where sweet hill blossoms bloom unseen and die—
High in the hollow of the mountain sleeps
A little tarn where reeds and rushes cry.
They cry, they cry.

There have I wandered where the red grouse calls
"Come back, come back," and curlews cry "Away."
Where shorn sheep gather to the grey stone walls-
Fearing the wind ; where lapping waters sway
The tall green reeds. There, wandering, I have found
That peace of heart which once, with eyes of prayer,
I sought in vain where cities set me round.
Locked in the dim eternal hills—

'Tis there, 'tis there.

X. EVAN WATER

DOWN by the Evan Water
When summer lights are low
The meadow grasses murmur,
The dusky breezes blow
Across the Evan Water where we wandered long ago.

Where ripples fall for ever
From boulders old and grey
We plucked the golden king-cups
And trod the rocky way,
Down by the Evan Water on many a summer day.

Ah, shining ripples glowing
To the glory of the noon ;
Ah. shadows of the darkness,
You gathered all too soon
Over the Evan Water at the dawning of the moon.

The ripples fall for ever
Across the rocky shore,
The king-cups by the roadway
Are golden as before
Where, by the Evan Water, we love and laugh no more.

Only in dreams we wander
And sing when lights are low
Where meadow grasses murmur
The songs we used to know
Down by the Evan Water where we wandered long ago.

THE LOVE OF MORAG

*Oh, golden hills, lit up by sunset fire,
Oh, roaming wind, you bring your dream to me,
You bring the song, the love, the wild desire
Of tinker souls that are for ever free—*

*The passions that in still, dark waters sleep
For those who watch them when the stars are high
You bring me, till I hear, where forests weep,
The spent leaves sing of summer e'er they die.*

*That I, who greatly love, may weave this dream—
Of Morag's love and Morag's singing born—
Love pure as dawn yet fierce as sunset's gleam,
Deep as the night, eternal as God's morn.*

I. MORAG OF THE BIRD SOUL

ISLAH of Skye—sad Islah of the Tears—
Wife of a year, made widow by the sea—
Sailed to the mainland that her unborn child
Might first draw breath in its dead father's home—
The far, far Border land of wide green plains
And hills less passionate than her own Ben Mhor.
Here, Islah, weary-hearted, sought for rest
Far from the sound and sorrow of grey seas
That knew her dead joy, pillowed her lost love.
But evermore the sea-bells called to her,
The splash of waves for ever tore her heart.
Waking or dreaming always Islah heard
The sweep of wings—the crying of white birds
Who wheeled afar above her sea-girt home.

In a deep valley under quiet hills
Islah bore Morag and then smiled on Death.
But e'er the Smooth Hand stilled her last long pang
She looked on Morag, named her and prophesied : —

*“She has a wild sea bird within her heart
And ocean bells for ever calling her.”*

So Islah died and the child, Morag, grew—
A wanderer of the glens with a bird's soul
In a maid's body-blend of Highland fire
With Lowland calm like to some inland lake

That sleeps amid the passion of the hills
And mirrors all their glory in its face.
Thus Morag grew amid the shepherd folk,
Who succoured Islah in her hour of need,
Until her spirit outgrew childish play
And the bird-soul within her stirred her dream.
Then, when grown maids about her spoke of love,
Touch of man's lips or whisper of man's voice,
She only knew the kisses of the breeze,
She only craved the vast arms of the hills.
Till in the deep hour of summer dawn
Alone she wandered forth and came no more—
Bird-souled and star-souled—wanderer of the glen—
Seeking the fire from whence her spirit sprang.

II. DEPARTURE

(The Farewell of Morag to her foster-father—the shepherd whom she loved)

DEAR home in the valley—good-bye, good-bye,
And you who sleep e'er the sky grows grey,
Farewell—In the dusk hour far away
I shall dream your voice. When the young lambs cry
I shall see you gather them from the glen
As the King of the World lifts souls from Earth
To bless them in their hour of birth—
Great Herd of my heart, man of all men,
Farewell,—ah my heart's grief !—Farewell.

Dearer to me than words will ever tell
Is your window that shines by night across the moor,
The wind-bent pine tree by the open door,
The pathway and the wet stones by the well.
So dear to me and yet I cannot stay.
Ah, could you hear them as I hear them call—
Those voices in the wind and waterfall,
You would not grieve when I go far away—
Farewell—ah, my heart's grief !—Farewell,

III. SONG OF MORAG ALONE IN THE HILLS

“COME back, come back,” I hear the red grouse calling,
The strayed sheep lead me and the wheeling tern.
Far from me now echoes the water falling—
The wild, wild roaring of the white Tail Burn.
Here on the hillside great grey rocks surround me,

The sunlight turns the silent Loch to gold.
With the vast arms of the White Coombe around me
To-night my dreams will bring the gods of old—
 My joy! My joy !

Only Morag—the birds and the wind together,
Only Morag to-night—alone, alone,
The hillside and the stars above the heather,
The singing of the water to the stone.
And, when I wake—white mist on all the water,
In yon lone thorn—hoarse chirp of waking bird,
Sunbeams that pierce the mist like High Gods' laughter,
Afar, the footsteps of some homing herd.
 My joy! My joy!

IV. SEA-BELLS

(Morag sings, at rest, by a lonely shieling fire)

I, WHO have never seen the sea
 Nor heard the breakers roar-
I have a dream within my heart
 Of sun on a Northern shore,
And white foam tossed on the jagged rocks
 For ever, for ever more.

My mother came of a sea-girt land,
 My father sleeps in the sea.
Did Islah hear the ocean's voice
 When she died in bearing me ?
For she left me a dream of ocean bells
 And the soul of a bird at sea.

Ah ! I will hear those ocean bells,
 Wild bells of joy and sorrow,
Ring "Rest" to the roving heart of me
 When the night that knows no morrow
Sweeps down and the sea-birds' song is blent
 With the bells' forgotten sorrow.

V. "SLEEP"

(Morag sings to her bird-soul)

Now falls the night—the Silent Vale is still,
White mist fills every pass—your wild wings rest.

Sleep walks calm-eyed along the quiet hill
And Sleep is best.

In sleep the sorrow of your rending cry
Will ring no more where no lament is heard.
Far, far where no clouds veil the sun we fly
In sleep, my bird.

Here red flames dance along the shieling wall
And fade but when the red dawn-flames grow deep,
As Dreams, Love, Life and Death blend all with all
In sleep, in sleep,

VI. THE COMING OF MICHAEL

(Morag on an autumn day)

THE bracken curls to gold, the heather fades
From its rich purple like the blood of kings.
Last night a wind blew coldly from the East.
The swallows southward fly. In every glen
I hear the step of Winter drawing near,
See her white fingers toss the scattered leaves
And menace lingering blossoms. In the vale
Each homestead, farm or shieling warmly glows.
Fond hearts dream tenderly of long, long hours
In story weaving spent o'er winter fires
And old, old songs in childish voices sung.
Man's heart glows kindlier then toward his mate,
Waking the peat fire in the winter dawn,
Singing the glad, glad love days of their youth.
Heart draws to heart when the house door is barred,
When snow piles on the window-ledge without
And all the world is centred round one hearth.

I, only, have no hearth to gather for ;
No one sweet life that looks to me for warmth,
No one to ask my love or seek my aid.
A woman must bestow or her soul dies.
Mine is a bird's soul. Each bird has her mate.
I thought the wind was mine, the stars, the gleam
Of water sleeping under purple hills'
The far free spaces of the peat moss miles.

Men sing that spring-tide brings desire of love,
Yet, through the spring days I could happy be
Straying alone along the budding glens,

Answering here a bird and there a breeze,
Asking no human comrade for my joy.

Now, while the Woods draw daily nearer death
And the fresh crispness of the morning tells
Of icy dawns to be and bitter nights,
This wandering heart would fain rest on a heart
More high, more strong, of steadfast purpose born—
Not of the wind and waves and crying Woods,
But of the granite rock and long straight road.

Oh, Gods of old, who rise beside my path
To fill my heart and eyes with your red fire,
Oh, Gods of old, send me a mate to-day.

VII. THE COMING OF MICHAEL

(Michael's dream)

IF in the world I find her—the woman of my dream—
She has red fire in her eyes at dawn
 Like the sunrise gleam
And a bird's soul in the heart of her,
 A wild, wandering bird.
In many a lowly shieling
 They speak her name to-day.
I have seen her on the high braeside—
 Far from me—far away,
And I love her eyes I have never seen,
 Her voice I have never heard.

On the day of days when I find you,
 Woman, with eyes of flame,
Your hands will seek my own two hands
 And you will speak my name,
For you have heard my spirit call
 Your spirit of a bird.

Over the fading heather,
 Into the winter's cold
I seek for her, unwearied,
 Love grows not old.
Till I find those eyes I have never seen
 The voice I have not heard.

VIII. THE FIRST LOVE SONG

(Morag and Michael by the silent loch)

OH, let me gaze a lifetime in thine eyes.
Even the hills are nothing now to me.
Even the loch—mirroring the noonrise—
Is nought—since I have thee, since I have thee.

Michael, I made the mountains all my love,
The winds' arms lulled me nightly to my rest.
I found Love dreaming in the stars above
And passion burning in the fiery West.

The coral dawns were once my lovers' lips.
What are they now ? Blest heralds of the hour
That brings thee to me e'er the last star slips
Into oblivion like a faded flower.

The glens are full of sorrow, and dead leaves
Along the hill like fleeing hosts are hurled.
Through all the Woods a weary spirit weaves
Sorrowful dreamings of an autumn world.

For thee and me Love thrills along the wind
Through dying woods a deathless triumph throbs.
We dream of sunlight when the tempests blind
And spring birds singing when the black lake sobs.

Ah ! Let me gaze a lifetime in thine eyes.
The bitter snows are blessed new for me
And no lone fear beyond the darkness lies,
Michael—since I have thee, since I have thee.

IX. MORAG'S MARRIAGE SONG

HERDING the sheep at dawn,
Lone shepherds tell our love,
But none shall bless our mating
Save God and the stars above,
The black lake sleeping through the white moon hours
The incense of a myriad hidden flowers.

Where many a lofty cairn
Draws near to Heaven's door
We two will tell of our love
That the grey pile evermore

May pray for us where it stands—on high, alone,
So near to God—a deathless prayer of stone.

Thine through a life of love,
 Thine for eternity—
Strong as the hills have made me
 I yield my strength to thee
In love that knows no roof save God's deep skies,
No lamp but starlight and my lover's eyes.

X. THE HOUR OF LOVE

(A song of the grey rocks)

OH ! woman, with the sea-bird in your heart,
You stand before the wind, as we have stood
Through centuries, where still grey mountains brood—
Watching, with God, the long slow years depart
In mists of time, leaving on us no trace.
Oh, Morag ! Born to dream and born to stray
In lonely joy through all the sunlit day,
You feared no shadowing of the mountain's face,
Your high, proud heart had troubled no man's fate.
'Twixt Love and you were scattered stars at play
Until you reached into the vaster day
And sought eternal sunlight for your mate.

When mists of Autumn covered all the glen
And the red leaves wandered the mountain-side
Like harried children seeking where to hide,
He came to You—Michael—the singer of men,
Oh, Morag—mighty in your yielded power !
Oh, Michael, face to face at last with love,
The grey rocks bless you and the stars above
Lean down to share the wonder of this hour.

XI. BY THE RED BURN

LITTLE Red Burn where the brown water ripples
Under the bridge of green turf and pine bough,
And a wee foaming waterfall down the rock dashes
Into the pool that is sleeping below,

Marigolds blossom like stars in the shadow
Under your banks that are laden with fern,
Never were primroses sweeter or paler

Than yours, in the Spring-time, Little Red Burn.

Blue marsh forget-me-nots bloom on the moorland
As though Heaven fell in a cloud at our feet
Where the red pathway curves down to the water
And breath of bog-myrtle for ever is sweet.

Birds never sang as they sing flying over you,
Lonely sheep call us below the blue skies
Over the heath to a wind-haunted hollow
Where, like a blest prayer from the hill's heart, you rise.
Little Red Burn—If our love were all dreaming
And Heaven should fade like the dew on the fern
Still, through the slumber that held us for ever,
Your singing would call to us, Little Red Burn.

XII. MORNING

THE fields are full of sunlight,
 The summer skies are blue,
Beside the Moffat Water,
 Morag, I wait for you
'Mid buttercups and gowans,
 Fresh with the morning dew.
I hear the young lambs bleating,
 I see the lazy kine
Troop slowly through the gateway,
 A long unbroken line.
The wind blows down the Vale—a breath
 Of peatsmoke and of pine.
Beyond the golden meadow,
 Above the furrowed loam,
A little larch wood tosses
 Her boughs of green, green foam
In sunlight to the mountains
 Where grey cloud shadows roam.
God give to me in Heaven
 This day eternally,
The singing of the river,
 Sunlight on flower and tree,
My one love coming o'er the hills
 And through the fields to me.

XIII. THROUGH THE YEARS

WHAT have we garnered out of the years—you and I ?

Treading the roads and mountains day by day,
Sleeping under the rocks and the jewelled sky,
What have we garnered together—you and I ?

The cry of a heron wailing over the sedge,
Sunlight and skylarks for ever seeking the sun,
Hawthorn and thrushes singing in every hedge.
Moonlit trees and the grey owl talking alone.

Others will come—treading the roads we tread,
But none will know as we each twist and turn.
None will follow, as we, to their hidden head,
One by one each wee wandering burn.

Lovers will come through the years and see us pass—
Shades who cast no shade on the waters pale,
Who shake no moonlit dew from the clover grass
But bless for ever their love in the Silent Vale.

What have we won? The stars' unwearied eyes
That see no Winter-only sleeping Spring
The gate of Heaven in the Western skies,
On trackless hills the footprints of the King.

XIV MORAG GOES SEAWARD

FAREWELL, Silent Valley, white road, farewell.
Ah ! to stand but once again at the turn
Where the grey bridge arches and hear once more the burn
Calling my heart in words no lips can tell.

Oh ! to dream for ever upon your breast,
Grey Bodesbeck Mountain, and feel the noontide sun
Blessing the Earth, watch the wee wild things run
Through the grass in the Valley below me while I rest.

Oh ! to lie again in the little deep pool
Of Blac'up Glen ; to feel the ripples wash
My naked body, to watch the water splash
In burning heat while I am cool—so cool

Only to lie at last by your shore—Loch Skene,
Though I could see no stars above White Coombe,
Nor hear the wild duck stir her reedy home,
Happy, happy my sleep if this had been.

But I must go where strange sea voices cry

And sea-bells ring into my wild bird-soul
From a far shore where foam-white breakers roll
And hills I know not loom into the sky.

XV. THE WAVES

(Morag and Michael on the shore at dawn)

THE waves are calling o'er the sands,
Horo ! Horo !
They draw me down with pleading hands
"Thig an so."
They call as through the long, long years
With lover's lips.
They sang to me of Earth's old tears
And sunken ships.
The stars are shining o'er the sands,
Horo ! Horo !
And Michael's heart still holds my hands,
Yet I must go.
For I have dreamed of nine grey waves
For evermore,
Sweeping sea flowers from sailors' graves
Across the shore.

And now they call me o'er the sands
"Thig an so,"
"Ma tha sin an dan" pleading hands,
I can but go;
My mother came of islands wild.
Below the sea
My father wakes and calls his child
Eternally.

For in that sweet Vale far away
Muirnean-mò
I heard them call me night and day
"Thig an so,"
Luring me on where sea-bells ring
Far from my home,
And shell-crowned mermaids ever sing
Below the foam.

The stars are fading o'er the sands,
And morning breaks,
"Seol dhough an rathad" pleading hands
My heart awakes,

Grieve not, beloved, my soul will rise
Above the sea
And fly from these red morning skies
To follow thee.

XVI. MORAG'S FAREWELL

BELOVÉD, do you hear the bells ? —
Bells of ocean, ringing,
Pealing, pealing in my heart,
Do you hear the singing

Of the wild sea voice that calls—
Voice of fatal sorrow ? —
I must follow where it leads
To the nameless morrow.

Ah ! Beloved, hold my hands
Fast, my strength is failing,
Yet I would see the wild grey waves
And hear the white gulls wailing;
I would set my bird-heart free
O'er the ocean flying.
Death will only dim my eyes,
My soul can know no dying.

Kiss my eye—one last long kiss;
Claim them, Love, for ever.
Dreaming, you will see them shine
O'er the Hidden River.
Dreaming, you will ever hear
Birds about you winging,
Till you sleep to dream no more
And wake to hear me singing.

*OVER the Silent Vale the light is dying
And voices call to me across the stream.
Pale on the loch a spectral mist is lying,
Through the white veil, afar, some bird is crying
In sweet, sad accents of a wondered dream—
My dream, My dream.*

*Michael and Morag, where are you abiding ?
Heart of the Hills, sleep you in Heaven above ?
Or is that white bird, in the grey mist hiding,*

*The soul of Morag—still untamed—abiding
For ever in the mountains of her love ?
Wild love, bird love.*

*I, who have dreamed of you amid the heather
So long, have seen you dimly from afar,
Have heard your footsteps ring the road together,
Your voices singing o'er the sunlit heather,
Have seen you bow before the evening star—
Your star, your star.*

*Oh ! I have known your joy, the love that blent you
With all the passion of the hills a part.
Each song and storm, each dream that Heaven sent you
I shared and knew the bitterness that rent you
When Death's cairn hand stilled Morag's wild, bird-heart-
The bird of Michael's heart.*

*Where are you now ? Wild bird—set free for ever,
Roaming eternally the realm of love,
I cannot know, but from the Hidden River
Your voices ring—your love dream lives for ever
Here in the hills—there in the stars above—
Your stars of love.*

SONGS IN WAR AND PEACE

I. A SPRING SONG

(For a soldier of the Grey Country, April, 1916)

DO you know the blackthorn boughs are bearing
Once again their snow-white bloom to-day ?
Do you smell the sweet-briar where you're faring
O'er the plains of Flanders—far away ?
Dream you of the cotton grasses blowing
On the high bank over Dead Man Burn
And the early star-pale primrose glowing
In the hollows underneath the fern ?

Do you hear the young lambs' voices calling
Far away upon some windy height,
Splash of trout or song of water falling,
In your heart by day and through the night ?
As you stand where shells of hate are screaming,
Tearing God's beloved world in twain,
Throbs your heart less bravely for its dreaming
Of the hills that shadow Ericstane ?

Nay—to you who face that gun-wracked fever
As to us who wait through lonely days—
Comes dream-born the strength that dwells for ever
Far, far off amid those windy ways.
Strength of uplands where the breeze is playing
Over sun-sweet grasses dashed with dew,
In the land where faithful hearts are praying
To the God of Spring for Peace and—you.

II. THE RETURN

SOME day we two will tread the far free spaces,
The windy gullies where the brown burns foam,
The dear grey hills that bend with loving faces
Above the Vale that used to be our home.
Some day through twilit meadows we will wander
Where moon-white gowans blossom and the sweet
Blue lilac falls or rosy may-blooms squander
Their scattered beauty all about our feet.

Some day our eyes will rest on Bodesbeck mountain,
The spray-dashed boulders over Grey Mare's Tail

Where the wild waters toss their foaming fountain
Under the grey sky where the white gulls wail.
On Birkbill we will see the peatsmoke wreathing
In heavenward spires and hear the bird-songs fail
When twilight dies and cooler winds are breathing
Over the quiet fields of Moffatdale.

Some day we'll tread the road that's ever calling
My yearning heart, the road of windy fern
And gold laburnum blooms of Springtide falling
Amid the haunted woods of Craigieburn.
Some day, some day beyond this watch of weeping
When God stoops down to give the Kiss of Peace,
We will go home where all our dreams lie sleeping
Until the Daybreak of the World's release.

III. THE THREE ROADS

THERE is no road we two have trod together
But lives within my heart for evermore—
That little corner of Killiney shore
Where we went tramping in the sweet May weather—
Grey stones and seaweed gathering together—
Oh, I shall see the place for evermore,
The sunlight and the waves upon the shore.

Always I will feel the March wind blowing
Over Hampstead Heath--through groves of pine,
I will see the red, red sunset shine
As it shone when you and I were going
Up the hill with winds of spring a-blowing
Through the pathway underneath the pine—
Up the long, long hill—your hand on mine.

I will see the winter rainstorm falling
On that high road over Oxford Town
Where we stood together—looking down
On grey spires and heard bell-voices calling
While the starless, rain-filled night was falling.
I will dream your footsteps coming down
Every street I know in Oxford Town.

There is no road we two have trod together
That lives not in my heart by day and night.
God grant that when he sets the world aright
We two may tramp through Oxford Town together
And see Killiney Bay in sweet May weather,

Or sunset fading over Hampstead height-
Sunset that brings no more a lonely night,

IV. THE FARM OF THE SHADOWY CLUMP OF TREES

FAR up the valley, below the mountain's shadow,
Where water foams from the high rocks above
And sunlight falls upon the buttercup meadow,
Five beech trees guard the little house I love.

Here are three green trees and two trees that are red and golden,
A pathway scored by the wheels of my little cart
That carries me home to my houseplace grey and olden-
The home of my heart, the home of my heart.

Sweetly here, rich with the fragrance gathered
From lilac blossom and sunlight, sings the breeze,
Cool is the grass where my old grey goat is tethered
By the door of my home—the Farm of the Shadowy Trees.

Look from my window. All around my garden
Only the moorland's purple miles I see,
Only the rock-strewn mountain-mighty warden
Of the Valley that is the gate of Heaven to me.

V. THE FARM OF THE APPLE TREE

I SAW you standing by the gate,
I heard you call to me
With the wind cry and the bird cry and the far-off cry of the sea.
Was there fire in your eyes that they could light
Such fire in the heart of me,
When the young moon sailed from amber clouds
O'er the Farm of the Apple Tree ?

A light from the window flashed and leapt
Through the night in a golden stream,
With the moonfire and the starfire and the fire of a world a-dream ;
But I only saw your burning eyes
Implore me silently,
And felt your hands upon my own
By the Farm of the Apple Tree.

A night, a day, a day, a night
You gave your love to me
With the wind love, the bird love and the wandering love of the sea ;

You left me roaming a world of pain
With a space alone set free
Where my embered fires for ever sleep
In the Farm of the Apple Tree.

You woke the life within my life,
My soul from her sleep of years.
You lighted a lamp in the World for me that is blinding my eyes with tears,
But you left me a dream I cannot lose
Of fire in the heart of me,
And the touch of your hands upon my own
In the Farm of the Apple Tree.

VI. THE HAUNTED ROOM

LITTLE brown room, the flames are glancing
Out of the dusk to the dusk again ;
Shadow and light are dancing, dancing
Like laughter lighting a heart in pain.
Little brown room where, with speech inspiring,
We tear the universe into shreds—
Rebuilding it nearer our hearts' desiring
With wisdom woven in wiser heads.

Little brown room, where we're always smoking
From morning till midnight's come and gone—
Always talking and always joking
Of what we will do when the War is done.
What we will do when our ships come sailing
Home with their hoard of yellow gold,
Where we sit and plan while the firelight's failing
And the shadows are growing grey and old.

Ah, little brown room, when your shadows darken,
What faces smile from your flower-sweet gloom ?
What voices speak while we wait and hearken—
Wait for the ghosts of the little brown room?
Are they ghosts with their music and light and laughter
Sweet as Life in her youngest years ?
Is that Death that breaks to such dawnlight after,
Such smiles to lighten a World in tears ?

Little brown room, they are coming and going—
The dear dim comrades we cannot see,
With Love like a wind from Paradise blowing
Over the hills of Eternity,
To lift the veil for a precious minute,

Lighting our eyes till they pierce the gloom,
Meeting the eyes that shine within it—
Eyes of the ghosts of the little brown room.

VII. WHO PRAYS FOR ME

(L. N. H.)

I DREAMED I stood within a silent room,
And, in the shadow, saw you lying there.
You looked at me—not with a dead man's eyes—
But with your strange grave smile that lit the gloom.
All my poor sins of love and hate I told
To you my heart's fear and the hidden pride
That bound my soul since you could no more hear
My voice, and no more answer as of old.

For when I prayed my prayers had rung less true
Lacking your love, your fire, your hand to guide
And, most of all, the mercy of your eyes,
Their still deep calm that was God's speech in you.
Out of the shade I heard you speak my name,
And, as of old, my sin, my bitterness
Turned at your touch to some God-given good,
The cross to honour that before was shame.

I knew no passing from that silent place.
For ever I shall see you lying there
And hear your voice for ever blessing me.
Always I read God's love upon your face,
Knowing that when I err you lay your hand
Only in blessing on my soul and turn
My very fault to sacrifice for God
Who, seeing all, the sin will understand.

VIII. MO GRAIDH, MO CHRIDE (My dear one, my heart's delight)

(A Lullaby)

GATHER the winds to your heart, little dreamer of mine,
As you sleep where twilight sweetens the hush of the glen
With homing footfalls, with lowing of milkladen kine
And far, faint echoing voices of maidens and men,
Mo graidh, mo chride.

Gather the winds that wander the lone hillside
Where the cotton-grass blows and the plover hides her nest,
The winds that wander afar from the gold-girdled tide
Of seas that gather the world-weary sun to his rest,
Mo graidh, mo chride.

Gather the winds that blow through the steading at dawn,
And waken your mother to sparkle the ash-dead peat,
The winds that dance afar on a faery lawn
Where moon-shadows glide through the grass upon silver feet.
Mo graidh, mo chride.

Gather the winds to your breast, little dreamer, my own,
They will sing in your heart when voices can sing no more
And when you go forth to the Silence at last and alone
They will call me to meet you afar on the sundown shore.
Mo graidh, me chride,

IX. A FAREWELL

GIVE me thy hand and bless me in farewell,
I will not stay my step nor turn again
Where bends the roadway from the windy fell
Down to the far green silence of the plain.

Dreaming alone beside thy dying fire,
Remember how I came at dawn to thee,
Remember how I go with heart's desire,
Seeking afar the silence of the sea.

There by the grey rocks I will tread the shore
And watch the white foam from the breakers hurled,
Where wind and wave impose for evermore,
Their rule upon the margin of the world.

For here are dreams to stir my haunted sleep,
Where stream and starlight work their mystic will,
And here are voices in the woods that weep
Amid the lonely hollows of the hill.

But there is silence 'neath the breakers' roar,
For there no dreaming voices call to me,
Only the grey waves thunder to the shore,
And God's voice rings amid the raging sea.

Give me thy hands and bless me in farewell,
Remember how I came at dawn to thee,

Remember how I go across the fell
Seeking afar the silence of the sea.

THE SILVER CLARSACH

BESIDE YOUR FIRE

WHEN we two sat beside your fire and told
Over and over the dear names of home,
Red glens Of Autumn, rocks where torrents foam,
Green fields that girdle ruins grey and old ;
Out of my dreaming mist there seemed to rise
A greater dreamer born in older years
Who shed, as we have shed, an exile's tears
Yet came, at last, home below happy skies.

So, if these fitful songs should bring to you
A little of that joy we sought to name—
Dreaming of sunlight by the Winter flame
And windy uplands drenched with morning dew,
Seek, through my woof of dream, one golden warp,
Hear in my faltered song one ringing tone
Of that dead bard who strayed, afar, alone—
Ian—the seeker of the Silver Harp.

I. THE DREAM OF IAN

LONG have I sung in Southern lands
Of roses sweet as secret love
And felt the hearts of women move
Below the music of my hands.

But evermore at dawn I dream
Of songs that I can never sing,
And of some sweet but hidden thing
Buried beside a nameless stream
That through a secret orchard flows,
Where dwells the woman of my heart—
Guarding from all the world apart,
My harp where apple blossom blows.

Sometimes in visioned sleep I see
A silver harp on floating wings,
And when I wake the silent strings
I hear my own voice sing to me

Songs greater far than I can sing,
Tales I have sought in vain to tell,
The tears of Heaven, the smiles of Hall-
Dreams of my heart that knew no wing.
It is the Silver Harp that lies
'Neath apple-blossom far away
Where blue hills seek eternal day
Under the arc of sunny skies.

And ever, though the road is long,
I seek to find the nameless stream,
The buried harp that stirs my dream
And wake the sleeping strings to song.
 Then will I look in deeper eyes
 Than those of any Southern Rose
 That blooms and all too swiftly blows
 Before the fire of morning skies.
 For evermore in dreams I stray
 By that far stream—my spirit sings
 To those sweet hidden silver strings
 The harp that I am born to play.

II. NIGHT

(I am searching the world for the Silver Harp)

MY grey horse crops sweet grass on the hillside,
 Where the winds croon
Through the little pine wood. I will rest
 Below the moon.

All around me the blue hills lie
 In shadow deep.
Gather my heart to your heart, O hills
 And give me sleep.

Green and gold the grass in the valley fields,
 Fragrant the flowers,
Yet ever I turn to the mighty hills
 And silent hours.

Sometimes my heart is lonely when winds blow
 And curlews cry,
When broken branches weep and grey rains fall
 From a grey sky.

Sometimes my heart is sad when the moon shines

O'er the black tarn,
Fearful am I sometimes when shadows fall
From the high cairn.

Yet I would give you all the emerald vale
For one long night
In the shadowed hills with the roaming wind
And the moonlight.

For the lonely song of the little wood
Where winds croon,
For the sound of my grey horse cropping grass
Below the moon.

III. THE MOON AND THE SEA

(The song of Agnes, the Woman of the Orchard)

THIS, my song, was sung to the night
Long, long ago,
When the moon rode o'er the pine-woods,
And low—ah, low
Sang the wind through the hills that girt my little home
Long, long ago.

I awoke from dreams that strayed
In far-off lands,
When the moon blessed my sleeping eyes
And kissed my hands,
I heard the voice of waves that sweep to the shore
From far-off lands.

Low set the moon above the fields
Of golden corn,
The stars died and the Heavens paled
Unto the morn ;
Yet still the sea beat on the shore beyond the fields
Of golden corn.

And mirrored still the moon that shone
For me no more;
Still of her beauty sang the waves
To the calm shore
So sing men of their vanished loves that light the heart
For evermore.

IV. THE SECRET ORCHARD

(Ian singing to Agnes)

STAR eyes amid the apple-bloom,
 Voice by the nameless stream,
Oh, Woman of the Silver Harp,
 True love of my life's dream,
I heard thee singing in the night,
 I saw thy shadow pass
Where trellised branches whisper o'er
 The wild thyme in the grass.

Oh, Silver Clarsach, I have sought
 Through all the yearning years
Oh, silver strings I long to touch,
 God's singing and God's tears,
All Heaven songs my heart has dreamed—
 So high, so sweet, so deep
Shall break from thee when with the dawn
 My hands break through thy sleep.

Come to me 'neath the apple-bloom.
 True lover of my dream,
That I may see thy angel eyes
 Like stars above the stream.
Oh light my eyes that they may gaze
 Below the grass-clad Earth
Where buried lies the Silver Harp
 That called me from my birth.

V. THE DEAD HOUR

(Agnes)

ONLY to sleep and dream it all away,
 Only to wake and know this hour a dream,
At every dusk through scented fields to stray
 With thee and hear thee singing by the stream.

Only to wake at dawn and kiss thine eyes,
 Knowing that all thy dreaming was of me.
God knit thy soul with mine in Paradise
 And only gave me life to live for thee.

I would have stirred thy minstrel fires to flame
 Till thy hand woke the Silver Clarsach's string,

Leaving the world more happy for thy fame,
Tears kinder for the songs thy heart did sing.

I would have loved thy every erring mood
And sat beside thee—silent in the grass—
Counting the long slow shadows of the wood
Until the shadows of thy soul should pass.

But I have dimmed the stars above the stream
By one dead hour I never can forget,
That shatters all the wonder of thy dream
And leaves to me eternity's regret.

The Silver Clarsach draws thy footsteps on.
Not here, not here but by some distant shore
The Harp will wake and there will sing alone
Of how I love thee, Ian, evermore.

VI. REGRET

(Ian has left Agnes and set forth to seek the harp without her)

SHALL I never forget her—never regain
The life that was all promise of bloom to me ?
Now, in the Springtide, blossom on the tree
Seems but her sweet pale face and a stab of pain
Pierces my groping soul like a burning dart.
How, when I left you, Agnes, could I know
That far away I still would love you so
Although I strive to tear you from my heart ?

Oh, God of love, since your love is so vast
And Life so cruel, was it worth your while
To strike me thus and let the Devil smile
To see my house of dreaming overcast ?

VII. THE QUESTION

(Ian)

WIND on the high hillside,
The red sun setting
Over the Valley wide,
As though regretting
The pallid gleaming that will come to you,
Oh, folded blossom, with the falling dew.

Mists from the Valley rise
 Over the heather,
Blue peatsmoke curls to the skies.
 Afar together
The old herd and his dog rest by their door
In peace my heart will know—no more, no more.

What dreams he all alone
 With life behind him?
Of Heaven where his own
 Beloved will find him,
Of Love that led him o'er a flowery way,
The hidden Silver Harp Love used to play.

Sing me the songs you knew
 In your days of blossom,
When Love came treading the dew
 With a harp in his bosom.
How shall they find that Harp—who passion worn
Stray as I stray, weary and tossed and torn ?

VIII. THE HERDSMAN'S ANSWER

LOVE is no little thing
To quail at sight of sin.
Love gathers good and ill within
His hands when lovers hear the Heavens sing.

Love faints at no surprise,
Bewails no memory.
Love has eternity
And deathless stars for ever in his eyes.

If one who loves shall stray
From his Beloved afar—
Seeking some hidden star
Beyond her sight who sees but Love's to-day.

Oh ! let him turn again.
His stars are in her eyes.
Love's Silver Clarsach lies
Within her lands—hushed by her years of pain.

Oh, Lover, wake the string
Love is a thing so vast.
What is a vanished past

When loved and lover hear the Heavens sing ?

IX. THE AWAKENING

(Ian)

MISTS that were sad as tears,
Hills that were dark as sleep,
Has some new radiance blessed you from the years
When, in your hollows, faeries used to reap
White moonlight blossoms full of twilight tears ?

Why is the vale so fair,
That but an hour ago
Was cold and waste to me ? Now soft and rare
Over the fields the valley breezes blow
Into the hills that are so fair, so fair.

The village street, the bell
Waking the tree-girt tower
Seem kindly friends that bid a sweet farewell
And bless me setting forth, this happy hour.
The harsh note almost seems a marriage bell.

I have been blind, so blind.
I sought the stars too high,
With soul too proud in Agnes' heart to find
Love's Silver Harp—hushed by her agony.
Dear God, forgive me, I was proud and blind,

I will be humble now,
Nor ever seek to sing
Heaven's song myself, but of the winds that blow
At summer dawn I'll tell, of wells that spring
In fairy caves, of twilights sweet as now.

Or I will sing of Love
That dwells in simple homes
Where happy peace around the threshold moves
And Love sits by the hearth nor ever roams
The distant stars—Ah ! sweet and lowly Love

Oh ! since Love is so vast,
Beloved, you will forgive
My blindness and the sorrow of the past.
To-night, to-night the silver strings will live
And we will sing of Love so deep, so vast.

X. AT LAST

(Ian)

HOME, home, at last to thee,
To tread the hill-road o'er the little town
To see, once more, the furrow's sunlit brown,
The meadows' green that is so dear to me.

Home, home at last to thee—
No more, no more to seek some errant star,
But know that in thine eyes my Heavens are
And thy heart is the only harp for me.

XI. WHEN THE HARP SANG

(Ian)

MOONLIGHT on apple-blossom
And stars above the stream,
A far faint breath of the moorland
Like bells in a waking dream,
Only thy love for ever, thy hands within my own,
The Silver Harp by the river—
Singing, singing alone.

No hands of mine need waken
Those silver strings to-night.
Love soars into the silence,
No voice can reach his height,
But where we blend for ever
Our lives for life to be
The harp beside the river
Sings of my love for thee.

Moonlight on apple-blossom
And stars above the stream,
Thy voice amid the shadows
Crowning my life's long dream,
My roaming o'er for ever,
Heaven's song at last my own,
The Silver Harp by the river
Singing, singing alone.

XII. REVERIE

PROUD passionate dreams, I thought would never die,
You marshal in the darkness silently
And wave farewell to me e'er one by one
You fade from me for ever and are gone ,
And, as at last you go—lone passionate things,
I hear afar the lilt of silver strings.
Once, in my pride, I thought those strings asleep
And sought for them with hands that yearned to reap
Harvests of song—thinking that I alone
Could wake them when the winds of love had blown
Over the garden. Ah ! the lonely pride
Of those who wrapped in their own thoughts abide,—
Seeking yet blind, deaf yet insatiable—
Why should I grieve to bid my dreams farewell
For now I know that Harp could never sleep
Since God's first lovers their first watch did keep
In gardens, sweet as these, of scented gloom
And moonlight falling through the apple-bloom.
Ah ! Silver Harp, my soul—proud lonely thing,
Was deaf to every whisper of thy string.
I ever saw the sunlight on thee gleam
And yearned my hands to thee in many a dream,
Yet never knew thy song until alone
I stood where winds of sorrowing had blown.
Then, only then, borne by the breeze along
I learnt the deathless burden of thy song—

"Love is more vast than sin, more true than tears,
The years of Love are God's eternal years."

*WE too have come where fields of Spring are golden
And rapturous birds sing, all along the glade,
One last song of those minstrel lovers olden
Who plucked the flower of love that cannot fade.*

*We too have set Spring in our hearts for ever
And sometimes hear—a s lan long ago—
A silver harp-string thrill beside a river,
A voice that calls where apple-blossoms blow.*

*For not in lan's grave these strings are sleeping,
They woke not only to his minstrelsy
But ever sing in hearts where love is keeping
Life's spring afire through centuries to be.*

*Those are the hearts that are for ever straying
Through fields of Spring that fade not with the years,
Who hear afar the Silver Clarsach playing
One song of Love more vast than sin or tears.*

ON THE LAST HILL

"THE Silent Valley never says 'Good-bye'."
Look back, look back from Hunter Heck's high shoulder—
Radiant with sunset all the meadows lie.
Gather for ever in your memory
Each tawny wood, each hoary scattered boulder,
The Silent Valley and the hills that hold her
Then turn away. Stay not to say "Good-bye."

For we will roam once more the hills together
When thrushes wake the woods we love so well—
Spring lit with primrose star and pale bluebell—
And we will find once more in golden weather
That secret hollow where amid the heather
White orchids bloom like snow upon the fell.

All through the world are errant spirits yearning
Ever to thee, Grey Land, and, one by one,
They come when all their wandering is done,
To seek old thresholds and the peat-fires burning
On hearths of home, the Autumn forests turning
To gold amid thy mountains grey and lone.

So will we come o'er Hunter Heck's high shoulder
Once more and see the radiant meadows lie—
Fair as the dreams that stir our memory
Far from the Valley and the hills that hold her—
Dreams of a bluebell wood, a hoary boulder,
Waters that glisten to a sunlit sky
Along the Vale that never says "Good-bye."