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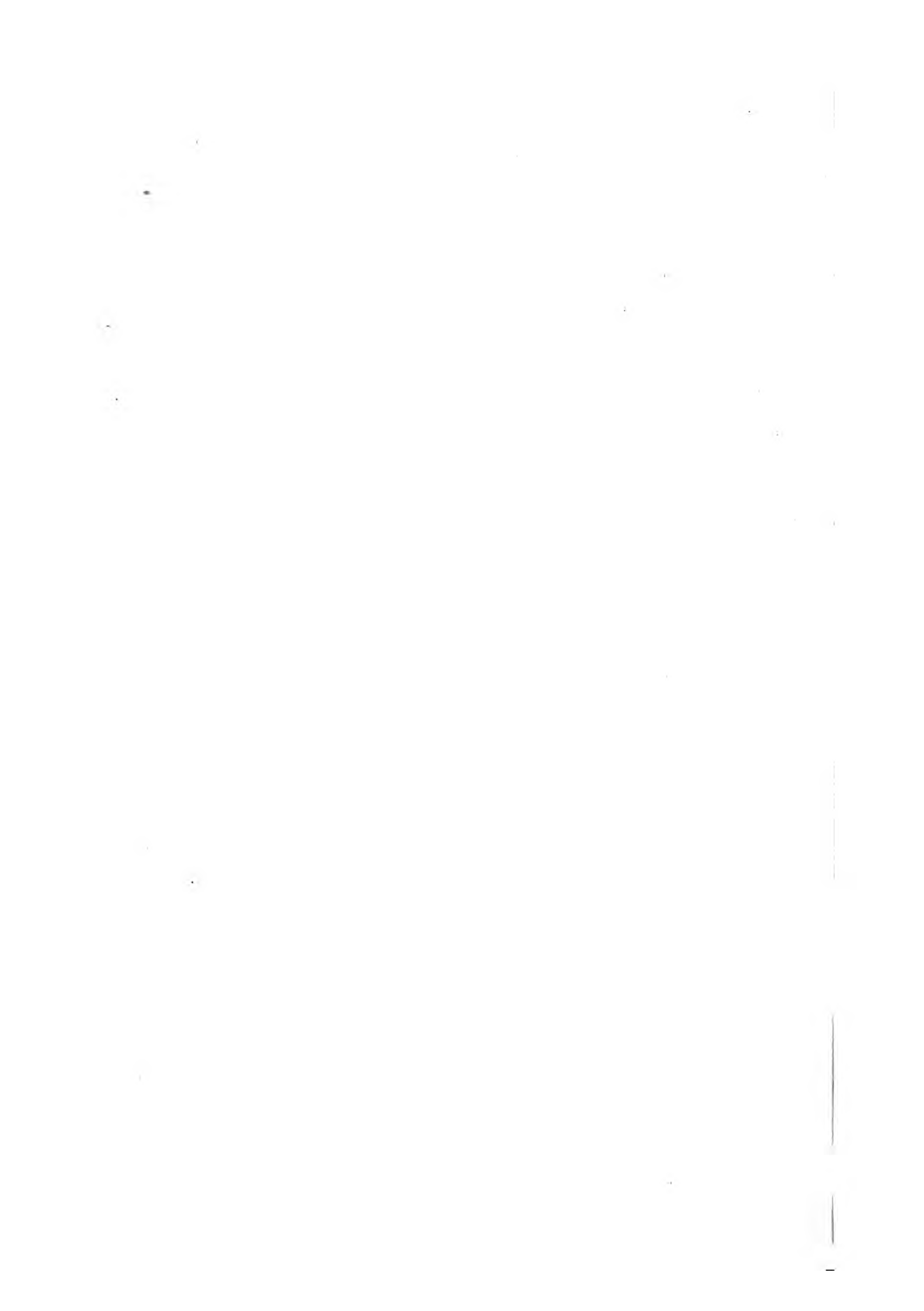
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POEMS BY OLIPHANT DOWN

POEMS

BY

THE LATE

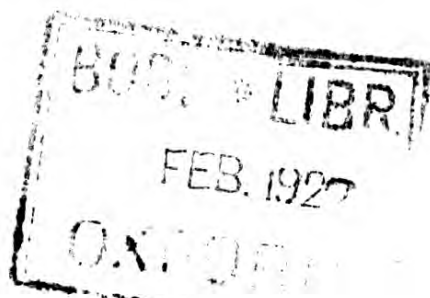
CAPT. OLIPHANT DOWN, M.C.

4TH BATTALION ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT

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A FOREWORD

It is with no little diffidence that this collection of verses from the pen of OLIPHANT DOWN is now presented in book form. Those of the public who have read and admired his delightful fantasy *The Maker of Dreams*, will forgive a certain crudity that is apparent in parts of the present work, as some of the poems were written in his later school-days; still, the reader will no doubt trace in many of the verses the birth of the dainty and charming expressions and quaint fancies that make the play so arresting.

In August, 1914, on the outbreak of the Great War, Oliphant Down, caught up in the wave of enthusiasm that swept over the youth of the country, laid aside the pen to wield the sword. He enlisted in the 15th Hussars, and later obtained a commission in the Royal Berkshire Regiment.

His was a nature that abhorred war and its attendant horrors; it is, therefore, remarkable that this dreamer and idealist should have developed into such a very gallant and capable soldier. He was killed near Demicourt in the Somme Area on the 23rd May, 1917. England has had to mourn the loss of many of her gifted young men in the world of Literature and Art, and it is amongst this band that the Author of these verses must be numbered.

In the collection of some of the verses I am indebted to Messrs. W. Ellis Reynolds, Elliot Makeham, T. J. Crawford, and the Editor of the *Fifth Gloster Gazette* for the help they have afforded me.

HAROLD VEASEY.

LONDON, *September*, 1921.



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MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

OUT ON THE MOORS WHERE THE HEATHERS BLOOM

Out on the moors where the heathers bloom,
Wind-swept from age to age,
Fashion me roughly an unknown tomb
With the lone earth for my cage.

And none need grieve for a soul that is gone,
A soul that was rough and scarred;
In the night of to-day is to-morrow born,
When the gates of to-day are barred.

THE POET'S PEN

O love, thou greatest hunter upon earth,
Get thee from hence and seek a further game;
Glide through the pastures, part a city's smoke,
Seek where thou wilt, finding or tears or mirth,
Hunt where gold glints the eye, God but a name.
I set no bounds, I wrap thee in no cloak;
But cruel and heedless as thou cam'st to me,
Get thee to them who first shall cross thy way.
O'er their fair hearts float thy white canopy.
Do that which pleaseth thee; no one can stay.
Do thou to others as to me thou didst!
Nay, but I meant it not. Rather I hold
Thy gold-shot wings and pluck quills from the midst
To write of love, for love should be enscrolled.

A NIGHT-SONG

Pines throw scent on the air,
The night-bird sings on the tree,
Sleep has unwound her hair,
And rises out of the sea;
May sleep find thee.

Light of the moon falls soft,
Stars are pale in the height,
The swallow dreams in the croft;
May dreams be thy delight
This silent night.

Her dew-drenched robes display,
"Where the green east has torn,"
Night's limbs of opal day;
In thy dear heart with dawn
May love be born.

A CREED

Wherefore ask me of creation?
Wherefore ask of man?
These be not the consummation
Of a mighty plan.
Love it is that has the keeping
Of a woman's joy and weeping;
And a woman is the fan
That awakes the spark from sleeping,
Wakes it to the guise of man.
Therefore ask not of Creation,
Love is all, the consummation
Of the Universal Plan.

Wherefore ask of Worlds to follow?
Wherefore ask me of the soul?
We be clay and dust and hollow,
Blinder than the mole.
Love creates a woman's spirit,
From a woman we inherit
All that rings from Pole to Pole.
Love is fused by its own merit
To a dim immortal soul.
Wherefore ask of worlds to follow?
We be dust and clay and hollow,
We be nothing; Love the Whole.

A DEFINITION

'Tis a breeze on the face of the water,
A breath on the mirror of glass.
It is gone! For its ages are shorter
Than the grasshopper's chirp in the grass.

'Tis the roseate colours of even,
The dews of ambrosial night.
The vaporous stars in the heaven
Are contented to borrow its light.

It is come! It is gone! Ever fleeting,
Then hold it more dear when it slips
Through the jessamine breath of a greeting,
And build it a prison of lips.

A LUTE-SONG

After the battle and striving,
A rest in the shade;
After the blaring of trumpets,
The song of a maid.

As in the bitter of winter,
For the song-bird, hips;
So, in my anguish of longing,
The sweet of your lips.

OUT INTO THE EARLY MORNING

Out into the early morning
Let us wander, you and I,
Where laburnums form an awning,
Hanging, golden, from the sky,
And the lilacs fall, dew-wetting
Face and forehead on the sly.
Do not tarry, lest, forgetting,
We should let the Spring go by.

Lightly green the oak is shining
Where the new-born sunshine plays;
Birth-ripe is the poppy's lining,
Soon t'will burst in scarlet blaze.
Do not dally, do not linger,
Never can regret erase
Wrinkled touches of Time's finger;
Youth returns not when it strays.

Therefore let us wander, wander;
'Twas for love the world was made:
Only fools its follies ponder.
Life is but a fool's parade!
Let us sing, before Youth closes
His Gold Book,—the songs displayed;
Soon the sun will drop the roses;
Love comes not when roses fade.

THE GIFT

He opens the star-studded gate, and, down bending,
He scatters the roses, each petal a song;
He whispers, "The world is too hard; I am sending
These flames from My Altar to lessen the wrong."

But we in our wisdom, professors and laymen,
Just quiz them through glasses and learnedly say,
"Blooms terminal, corymbose, series of stamen,"
And note in our books that they flourish on clay.

THE BALLAD OF A SONGLESS MINSTREL

SHE

"Say, wherefore is the minstrel hushed?
His harp no more a ringing?

His depth of eye all songs defy;
Where are his wild thoughts winging?"

HE

"A flower is by the wanderer crushed,
The wanderer goes unheeding;
The feet pass by, the flower must lie,
And none to mark its bleeding."

SHE

"But wherefore is the minstrel sad
Who one time harped so lightly?
The strings are slack; his fingers lack
The mirth that moved them nightly."

HE

"You would not have the song-bird glad
Whose pulsing breast was shattered.
And sorrow can possess a man,
Although his clothes be tattered."

SHE

"But wherefore comes his brooding look?
And wherefore should he sorrow?"

HE

"They ay must mope who have no hope
That waits a fair to-morrow."

SHE

"His song was like a shaded brook."

HE

"Dried are its pleasant courses.
He loved a maid who loved a blade
Who came with gold and horses.

"The minstrel sang a love-song gay,
The three were in her bower.
His harp-strings rang and as he sang
She plucked and kissed a flower.

"She smiled and tossed the flower away;
It would not long be lying;
A blossom kissed should not be missed.
The twain, with swords, were vying.

"The minstrel had the subtler wrist;
His foe must soon be bleeding.
In dire alarm, the minstrel's arm
The maiden held a pleading:

" 'Oh, why have I a blossom kissed
In wayward, idle token!
Oh, stay your strife, and spare his life,
Or else my heart lies broken.'

“He sheathed his sword, he made his bow,
He kissed her garment trailing;
Or sink or swim, 'twas not for him
Her faerie cheeks were paling.”

BOTH

“Ah, saddening is the minstrel's brow,
He sings nor late nor early.
He spared the life, that calls her wife,
Because he loved her dearly.”

SON, LITTLE SON, BE STRAIGHT
OF LIMB

Son, little son, be straight of limb,
Supple of body and firm of feet;
Though in my arms thou art feeble now,
There is no deer that shall be so fleet,
Son, little son, as thou.

Son, little son, be quick to act,
Ready to spring when the time shall be;
Love me well, but forget not hate
For one who bereaved us! . . . Ah, but we,
Son, little son, can wait.

Son, little son, be sure of eye;
I keep an arrow that brought us shame.
To thy father's heart it has found its way,
But thou shalt return it whence it came,
Son, little son, some day.

TO A BALLAD

I kiss you, ballad, ere you go
To be a gilded parchment scroll,
Beside her trinkets all arow,
When lady mine, in camisole
And dainty wear,
Shall loose the fragrance of her hair.

And maybe, ballad, you shall see,
As soft as junket in the West,
A shoulder rounded cunningly,
And by her heart may find a nest
(Where I would be)
Within her creamy lingerie.

And, ballad, if with tender sigh
She lay you there, then tell her this:
You cannot render thanks, but I
Have lips that weary for a kiss;
Say what you will,
Then nestle to her and be still.

But, ballad, ere your rest you take,
Say love needs lips, as flowers need rain;
Say I would kiss her eyes awake,
And kiss them into sleep again.
Ah, ballad mine,
She is a rose whose life is wine.

It may be, ballad, in an hour
You'll hear her speak, and, after drouth
Of silence, love will be a flower

And blossom in her splendid mouth.
Then you shall teach
My heart the garden of her speech.

THE PITY ON'T

Now he was tall and she was fair,
And that's the pity on't.
They looked, and tried
To smile, and sighed,
And that's the pity on't.
He caught the sun-glint in her hair,
He wondered if the maid could care;
She thought his eyes
Were deep and wise;
And that's the pity on't.

At first she fenced with cold disdain,
And that's the pity on't.
But he was strong
And courted long,
And that's the pity on't.
Ah me! His heart brooked no restrain;
Who fights to win must always gain.
The pair, I vow,
Are married now;
And that's the pity on't.

MARGUERITE

Ah, Marguerite, I see you there;
Where are you going, Marguerite?
The flowers are dancing on the air
Before the music of your feet.
Ah, Marguerite, beware, beware,
Lest I should find your kisses sweet,
And clasp you so, and, kissing, dare
To say, "I love you, Marguerite."

LADY SANS-SANG

So this is the end of the scarlet dream
I dreamed when you first loomed large in my life.
You hung your soul on the stars; but a seam
Now shows in that garment,—you call it “wife”—
I call it a prostitute’s cry, for you
Would wed at the altar and give me all;
Yet I know—did I ask you this as my due—
You could not return true love at my call!

I look in the cold, deep seas of your eyes,
And there, like coral and sea-grown weed,
The poor drowned body of fair love lies.
The strongest swimmers need help, but need
Of further strength than a hand held out
To be kissed, like a saint’s white sinless feet,
Had love; for he looked for your lips’ red pout,
And the warmth of your body to lend him heat.

But you are the last of a lordly race;
And you say your name you have guarded pure:
’Tis true they have left you a rare-cut face,
But I think it is less than a sinecure
To be guard of your honour; for honour falls
Only from treachery hid within,
And æons have so thinned your blood, there calls
No voice of the virgin longing for sin.

I see you walk under orchard boughs,
The pollen of flowers is gold on your hem,
And milk-white petals are on your brow,—
Yet know you nought but an earth-born gem;

A beautiful, useless gift of years,
Whose breast is faultless, though framed so small,
And whose sapless blood has so dulled her ears
That she hears no voice of the unborn call.

You carry a hymn-book, churchward go.
Believe you then, that, beyond the tomb,
God waits with a smile? Will you never know
That God is born in a woman's womb?
That hot night-passion creates his soul
And his heart starts beating when, lip to lip,
The fractions fuse to the perfect whole,
And the spirit of life is a fellowship?

I know you, now, to be barren of life,—
I speak of a life that is more than clay.
Should ever a man take you for his wife,
The child thereof will weep for the day
You fashioned his body; for he will know
He is lacking in that which is his by right,
And his footsteps, move he never so slow,
Will lead him at last to the Endless Night.

ONE OF THEM

“Mais j’ai eu connaissance qu’une d’elles avait éprouvé dans sa vie un amour sérieux.” DUMAS FILS.

I know that I am light of love, for I have used the
simple art
God gave me, as a means to live; but you have
made my pulses start
With that which I had thought was dead, yet now
unfolds new life in me;
And all I was fades out beneath this newly-found
virginity.

My body is a thing of lust; but will my sin not
find a grave,
When I give back to earth again the sinful body
that she gave?
The soul is all that can outlive the little term we
mortals stay;
And, in my nights’ deep wantonings, I never gave
my soul away!

I kept it pure,—though I denied its being, for I
feared the rod
Of judgement, and I dared not face with lack-love
eyes a vengeful God.
But you become my morning-star, and God’s red
rose is on your cheek,
And in your eyes I see Him smile, and with your
lips I hear Him speak.

Oh, will your love outlive my life—the doctors
scarce will voice their fears—,

Or will my life outlive your love, and I pass out
unshrieved by tears?

Ah, no! I vex your brimming eyes; they seem to
speak their love aloud.

We grand immortals shall look back on life as but
a summer cloud!

LOVE AND LOGIC

Oh, mention not the name of love
And logic in the selfsame breath!
For logic is the velvet glove
That hides the iron-cold hand of Death,
Before whose yet unstricken blow
Love fades away and, fading, dies,
As western suns droop through the skies;
And, like them, leaves a burning glow,
A cloud of memories in its train.
Shower ye on love a crimson rain,
The petals of a heart-red rose;
With rose-red kisses eyelids close,
But logic name ye ne'er again.

A SERENADE

Hear ye the little stream
That, flowing, dimples to the nodding rush?
The silent fishes dream,
And bended willows murmur, "Hush thee, hush."
The nightingale is still.
The pale, clear circle of the August moon
Rests on the hill.
Sleepest thou, too? O loved one, wake, wake soon!

Soft may thy slumbers go.
I, waking, think of thee, and, sleeping, dream.
See, now, a rose I throw
In through thy casement,—t'is a lover's theme.
There, where thy pillow's lace
Frames in thy roving hair, may my rose be;
And, when thy face
Feels its soft touch, wake thou and long for me.

VALEDICTION

Sing me the songs you used to sing,
When all was well;
Tell me the tales that no one else,
Save you, could tell;
But pull not again on the cord that sounds
My curfew-bell.

I know that dark is knocking on the door.
Make fast! make fast!
I see the silhouette of western trees
The sun has passed.
I feel the gliding footsteps of the moon
Will come at last.

Ah, take me to the window looking south,
Where once we sat;
To-night weaves up my little skein of days
In one short plait.
I have no fear; I feel I do but pass
From this to that.

I want to hear your voice as I depart,
But not a sigh.
I want to hold your hand; then I shall know
That you are nigh.
How dark the world grows! bend your head to kiss
Our last Good-bye.

THE BALLAD OF JACK THE GENTLEMAN

Will the day be fair to-morrow? Tell me, sparrows,
as you fly;

For they caught me stopping coaches, and to-
morrow I must die.

I cannot see to westward, but is the sunset red?
I've a fancy for the sunlight to be playing on my head
When they whip away the horses and leave me in
the air.

Especially as the ladies of the land will all be there.
You bet your boots and spurs, my lad, the ladies
will be there.

I'll mark the best and prettiest and smile as I go by;
I'll leave 'em all admiring when I show 'em how
to die.

Though men-folk call us blackguards when they get
us in the ruck,

We can always win the ladies with a little show of
pluck.

But now I'm just a prisoner, with a crawling night
to pass

Before they put the halter on and turn me out to
grass.

They put a halter on, my lad, when *we* go out to
grass.

I've a chain upon my ankle, and another on the
wrist,

For they mustn't let the miller lose his well-earned
bit o' grist.

The night will go so slowly, and I'm half afeared
to pray;
But no matter! I'll be happier with the coming of
the day.
The rooks will all be cawing, but they'll never give
a thought
To this gentleman of honour who has sinned in
being caught.
The only sort of sin, my lad, consists in being caught.

For where's the sin in taking from a man whose
pockets own
That he's filled them with red Caroluses and the
half-starved worker's groan?
I was just as much deserving as the well-fed,
bloated sot,
And I only took folk's money-bags, and never fired
a shot;
For my name was quite sufficient. Aye, throughout
the countryside
They'll talk of Jack the Gentleman long after he
has died.
The poor folk will remember, lad, long after Jack
has died.

I've worked the road for nine odd years,—lord, how
the time goes by!
Nine years ago an honest man, and now I've got
to die.
It was all that damned young marquis with his
sensuous, roving glance;
God curse the day he crossed the green to join our
village dance!

A diamond this, a diamond that, and of course the
maiden fell;
'That's nothing but the oldest tale the first of men
could tell.
'The oldest tale of all, my lad, that men could always
tell.

I took the road and tracked him down when I found
the harm was done.
I lay in wait night after night, from dusk till morn-
ing sun.
But he kept aloof; he somehow knew that, given
half a chance,
I'd claim him as a partner in a deadlier village dance.
With all his care, there came a night when he had
to pass my way,
And I put my horse across his path, and he asked,
"How much to pay?"
He couldn't bolt and so, my lad, he asked, "How
much to pay?"

His words were light, he even smiled, but his face
was ashen pale;
For my eyeballs told him death was there, like a
bloodhound on his trail.
'The fears of death so pressed his heart and spoiled
his easy grace,
That he pulled a pistol from its holt and fired it in
my face.
The bullet whistled through my hat, but the pow-
der struck instead,
And I tumbled on my horse's neck for all as I were
dead.

Right on my horse's neck, my lad, for all as I were
dead.

Then, with a sneer, "Good-night," said he, "the
boot is shifted now;

You'll find it on your own damn foot and the bullet
in your brow."

For all as if I were a corpse, upon my horse I lay.

When next I got my senses back the buck was far
away.

Till now my horse had never stirred, but, finding
me restored,

He took the road my lord had ta'en, all of his own
accord.

A horse for work like mine, my lad, must work of
his own accord.

No need to touch him with the spur, no need to use
the whip,

The roadway slipped beneath his hoofs, like water
'neath a ship

That a good aft wind has struck full fair, with her
canvas bellied tight,

And thus away and away we rode into the echoing
night.

'Fore long the marquis showed ahead, for we had
made good speed;

He ever rides the faster horse who rides the greater
need.

You bear that fact in mind, my lad, when yours is
the greater need.

He heard our sounding hoofs and turned, as fright-
ened as a sheep;

He thought a corpse was hunting him, and he dug
his spurs rowel-deep.
He rode for life, and I for life, a life that was not mine,
But I swore to tear it from its sheath before the
sun could shine.
Rood after rood we hurled along upon the chalky
road,
His horse's girth was reeking blood beneath his
craven goad.
Good horse-flesh wasn't made, my lad, to be urged
with a craven goad.

Soon Melbury Hill loomed up in front, we passed
it to the right,
And then away and away we rode into the echoing
night.
Through Cann we went; down Shaftesbury Hill,
my God! a hellish ride.
The man who goes sling gallop there, has the devil
at his side.
At such a pace, down such a hill, no horse could
stand for long.
I think there must be saints who guard the aven-
gers of a wrong;
You offer a prayer to the saints, my lad, if ever you
ride for a wrong.

For soon his horse struck some loose stone and neck
and crop came down,
But I rode safe, though I could not check till sight-
ing Motcombe Town,
Then riding back a baffled man, though still with
life and health,

I found that God had beaten me and done the work
himself.

A fearsome, bloody, mangled corpse the titled
scoundrel lay,

Whilst his poor dumb beast, with broken neck, lay
several yards away.

His horse still pouring sweat, my lad, lay several
yards away.

Well, after that they put a price upon my murder-
ing head,

And, from an honest man, I turned a highwayman
instead.

For nine odd years I worked the road and aided
those in need;

No cottage but had thanks for Jack and food for
Jack's good steed.

From Bath to Salisbury, all the way, they knew
me as a friend

And all loved Jack the gentleman, who knew the
way to spend.

If you would win good friends, my lad, you must
learn the way to spend.

I've helped true lovers, God forgive, when love's
path ran awry,

But they caught me stopping coaches and now I
have to die.

Oh, what a crowd there'll be at dawn to see this
laddie hanged!

I'll lay there's many a sad-eyed maid who will not
hear me slanged.

I'll mark the best and prettiest, and smile as I go by,

And the girls will love me better when they see
how game I die.

But, Jack, say I, lie down, you'll look much fresher
when you've slept;

You're booked for dawn to-morrow and appointments
must be kept.

Be it God, or the devil, or hangman, lad, appointments
must be kept.

ALCHYMY

THREE CONNECTED SONNETS

I was a streamlet running in the sun,
Dancing on pebbles, bubbling at each stone,
Playing with grasses that had downward grown,
But now my course of waywardness is run.
As from the mountain, sparkling as it goes,
Into a river swells the little stream,
So to full manhood and a soul's repose
Pass I a lover, loving; Life a dream.
I had not thought that flowers could smell so
sweet;
I had not thought a summer sky so blue;
Surely the morning rose more fair, to greet
Our happiness new-found; each bird anew
Silvers its song, and in each green retreat
Shine daffodils where only grasses grew.

I loved to hear the skylark as it sang
Hanging, a voice, midway twixt earth and sky;
I loved to hear the distant forge's clang;
I loved to hear the lowing cows go by;
But now each sound is music twice enhanced,
For every note is echoed in my heart,
And every echo wakes into a song.
I walk as one who, sudden, has advanced
Out of a shade to where the sunbeams dart
From bud to blossom in a glorious throng.
And you and I and love, which is the sum
Of life and hope hereafter, hand in hand
Have sole permission in the days to come
To walk in full enjoyment of the land.

Across our path, as shadows candle-thrown,
A thousand peoples changing come and go;
But, feeling not your heart-beats on their own,
Life's rarest worth they know not, nor can know
I hold you mine and I am yours alone;
We live, we twain, and round us roses blow.
I look into your eyes and there I read
That which no ink or pen has ever marred;
I read the wisdom of a spirit freed
From a close cell, and know that I unbarred
The door and gave it freedom; then I take
Your face in my two hands: in one long kiss
I draw your soul to mine, never to wake
To empty longing more; love grants us this.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR

They hurried him into the shadows,
But the other,—they left him to lie
In a frost-bitten patch of the moonlight,
Because he had chosen to die.

The one had spoke slightly of her,
Had scoffingly tarnished her name,
So the youngster he up'd with his challenge,
Though little he knew of the game.

He had never a chance, and he guessed it!
But no bully should see him afraid,
Though the hedge between this and hereafter
Was thirty-six inches of blade.

His eye was as cool as the moonlight,
Come thrust or give parry or pass.
Then he lost the cross steel,—and he lived for an
age
Ere he dropped in a heap on the grass.

They hurried him into the shadows,
The bully whose blade was of red.
But for it—they sent out the paid servants,
Clinking gold, and so nothing was said.

They called it fair play in that era.
A meeting of gentlemen born!
But those won't be the words of the Angel
When the Minutes are read at the Dawn.

AN ECHO

Only a rose, once a lip-coloured rose,
Now faded and brown by its burden of woes.
Wrap it up tenderly, put it away,
Hid in a drawer from the sight of the day.

Token of love, of love that has faded,
It bloomed by a thorn in a spot that was shaded.
Plucked by a god, O shadow so fleeting!
Saying "Good-bye" in a breath with the greeting.

Brown faded rose, a perfume thou hast,
Redolent still of a midsummer passed.
Robbed of the bush, thou fadest away;
Roses and love are but things of the day.

SWEET-O'-MINE

The daylight wanders as the shadows fall;
The night-winds answer to the peacock's call;
Eyelids are heavy and the world would sleep;
Hasten, O midnight, spread thine inky pall.

Grant the moon's face upon thine arms be bowed;
Blot out the stars in one gigantic cloud;
Would thou couldst veil Almighty God Himself,
What time the arms of lust are made a shroud!

She whom I loved, and who swore love to me;
He whom I loved, my brother, even he!
The blade is ready and my heart is chill.
Ah, sweet-o'-mine, is't well with thee?

O sleeping lids, forbid those eyes to shine,
Whilst blood of him, my brother, pours like wine
And mingles with the ruby life of her.
Tis done!—
And yet I love thee still, Sweet-o'-mine.

IN MEMORIAM

(MAY 28, 1908)

He built a house in the meadows,
In the years that have long gone by;
And the sparrows nest in its shadows,
And the starlings stop, as they fly,
To look through the window-glasses.
But a tear lurks now in the eye
For the love of a life that passes,
And a soul that can never die.

And *they* had planted a garden,
And *they* had made it rare
With pines whose rosins harden
In the depth of the summer air;
And oh, the love of each blossom
That brightens that garden fair!
But a sigh lies deep in each bosom
For a blossom that is not there.

A CASHMERE LOVE-SONG

O love beside the waters of Cashmere,
Hear thou my song.
Though desert sands lie in between,
And hills of snow and jungle green,
Yet, nightly, at the Muezzin gong,
O love beside the waters of Cashmere,
Hear thou my song.

When in thy sleep thy lashes brush thy cheek,
Grant that a sigh of love to me confessed
Fall from thy lips, impelled by heaving breast.
Then, when thou wakest and thy love be strong,
O love beside the waters of Cashmere,
Hear thou my song.

AN EASTERN LYRIC

The panther through the jungle creeps,
And through the jungle creeps his mate.
They fell the wild deer as he leaps,
And this is fate.

A song-bird whistling on the stalk
That trembles 'neath its added weight.
Swift as a meteor swoops the hawk,
And this is fate.

I saw your eyes like burning coal.
Your languid eyelids drooped too late,
For I have looked into your soul,
And this is fate.

THE RULER OF THY HEART

If men from lands across the sea,
Or far-off places of renown,
With robes and horses came to me,
And offered me a golden crown
To be their king, I should refuse;
Since we have met I could not choose.

I would not be a King, except
The ruler of thy heart.
There, like a monarch on his throne,
I'd keep the kingdom for my own;
And all the time and every day
I'd kiss my subjects' tears away.
We'd ever dwell in Arcady.
Ah, what a monarch I should be,
The ruler of thy heart!

A king would have no time to spare
For love and such-like things.
They always climb the upward stair
Who claim the rank of kings.
I'd rather be a peasant free
And in a cottage dwell with thee.

I would not be a king, except
The ruler of thy heart.
Day after day, and week on week
My subjects' welfare I would seek.
Oh, make me sovereign of thy heart,
And I will play a subject's part,
And in obeisance bend the knee.

Ah, what a monarch I should be,
The ruler of thy heart!

IN APRIL

Let us brave the wind and the rain, and face it,
shoulders back,
Our lips alive to the glamour and our eyes a dancing
flame,
Our nostrils all aquiver, and our ears attuned to
hear,
So on and over the moorland with the wild thyme
underfoot.

Who would be glad of a shelter or who would be
pent in walls!
We be content with the weather and glad of the
driving rain;
When the hares start up from before us, we laugh
as we see them run,
They think we be man for they know not we are
one with the wild to-day.

This is an April season and the clouds must yield
their place,
Yield to the great life-giver, and drive before the
wind;
Then we, who are all atingle and glad that our
skins are wet,
Turn with our backs on the rainbow and dazzle our
eyes with sun.

Then does the poet within us rise to a full delight,
Simple as hedgerow blossoms and not less fair than
they,
And we sing, as we stride, some fragments of
a dear, dim wonder song,

Fragments we cannot recapture though they be but
a line in length,
For they be spun from the wind and the rain and
the sunlight over all.

COME NOT NEAR

Come not near, O bitter death,
To this orchard walk of ours.
Love breathes here, and on his breath
Wreathes new perfume from the flowers
Hollyhock above us towers;
On each side do small flames trace
Circles round the sunflower's face,
Whereon hang the bees who steal
A honey-meal.

Underneath our feet, the lawn
Springs away like woodland fawn;
But, when we have passed along,
Lifts again to hear the song
A leaf-hid thrush loud carolleth.
Therefore, whilst love falls in showers,
Come not near, O bitter death,
To this orchard walk of ours.

MY LADY —

I made for my lady a song so sweet,
Filled with the patter of soft doves' feet;
And I stole a note from the blackbird's throat,
Up to her window I made it float,
 But she gave me no heart's beat.

I made for my lady a house so fine,
Clothed her in silks of a rare design;
And I walked before to the open door,
I led her through from floor to floor,
 But her hand lay still in mine.

I made for my love on an anvil old
A shining circle of beaten gold;
And I slipped the band on my lady's hand,
And not till then would she understand
 The things I had left untold.

AN APPEAL

Aheeda, just a little word
To make your loveliness complete:
Have mercy, when beneath the lids,
Down-drooping, of your eyes, you meet
Another's glance,—and call unheard
Yet understood, as one who bids
For swift obedience,—for the sweet
Though burning power of eyes too fair
Is more than weak-willed man may feel,
And not be conquered; therefore spare,
And work no woe who ne'er grant weal.

VERSES TO MARGARETA
(AGED NINE YEARS)

MARGARETA LOVES ME DEARLY

Margareta loves me dearly,
Margaret is mine.
Never eyes that did so nearly
Frosty stars outshine.
They are glorious lakes, and deeper
Than the ocean. Oh, but steeper
Was the path she made me climb
Ere her heart would call me keeper
Ere my heart could call her mine.
But I climbed it, therefore queenly
Margareta reigns supremely,
Margaret divine
And just struck nine.

GOOD-MORNING

Awake, Margareta; The Day is around you.
Over the tree-tops, the sunlight has found you.
See how the gossamers sparkle and glisten,
Sweet is the robin's note; listen, oh, listen!
Race on the daisy-lawns; fountains are playing,
Down by the sunny hedge wild bees are straying.
Honey and sunlight, what can be sweeter?
Only a morning kiss, my Margareta.

ON A ROOK

My little black boots are cleaned each day,
But they never look half so bright
As the two wings look
Of the big black rook
When he flies in the warm sunlight.

He has no blacking or brush to use,
But a beautiful shine he gets.
Is it 'cos he wakes
When the daylight breaks
And sleeps when the big sun sets?

JIM SQUIRREL

They put me in the corner,
And kept me there an age,
Because I used my tooth-brush
To clean the squirrel's cage.

The wires were dull and dirty,
The wood was turning green,
With tooth-brush and some water
I quickly scrubbed them clean.

They told me I was naughty,
They called me "dirty child;"
But I thought of clean Jim Squirrel,
And clenched my teeth and smiled.

I could see him from the corner
And his cage was ripping bright.
As I watched him gay and happy
I knew that I was right.

I'd made Jim Squirrel comfy
As I always try to do;
And I haven't hurt the tooth-brush,
For its just as good as new!

MARGARETA'S TRUANT

I chased a little sunbeam
That played upon the grass;
I caught that little sunbeam
And put him in a glass.

I looked at him and clapped my hands;
I thought his merry light
Would be a very jolly thing
To look at in the night.

But when the day was all but done,
The sun was very cruel.
He called from out beyond the hills,
And stole my little jewel.

I couldn't stop the merry rogue,
But as he slipped away
He said, "I've other lands to light,
I really must not stay.

"In far Australia, little mites
For me begin to yearn.
So go to sleep and dream of me;
To-morrow I'll return."

FAIRIES

If you want to see a fairy,
All that you have got to do,
Is to listen, very wary,
When the ground is wet with dew.
You must make no noise whatever,
Then perhaps, if you are clever,
In and out amongst the heather
Fairies will appear to you.
Twos and threes they'll come a-dancing
Hopping, skipping, jumping, prancing,
Moonlight on their faces glancing,
Like an iridescent gem.
But you must not move a finger,
For the fairies will not linger,
If they think you are watching them.

You can hear the fairies calling
To each other through the trees,
When the shadows are a-falling
You can watch them if you please.
But in breathing make no wheezing,
Never coughing, never sneezing,
For the noise is most displeasing
And it puts them ill at ease.
First you'll see perhaps a couple,
Or a dozen light and supple,
Then a thousand springing up'll
Make the woodland like a gem.
But you must not move a finger
For the fairies will not linger
If they think you are watching them.

MARGARETA'S TAD

I saw a tadpole in a pond
With little wriggly tail.
I scooped him in my fishing-net,
And popped him in a pail.

I put some duckweed on the top
With other sorts of plant;
I did so want to hear him talk,
But little tadpoles can't.

He grew two funny little legs,
And then his tail grew short,
Until one day I found he'd got
No tail of any sort.

Two other legs had sprouted out,
His tummy, too, was thin;
My taddy had become a frog
With green and yellow skin.

I took him to the pond again,
He dived with such a flop!
I'd sooner have one wriggly tad
Than all the frogs that hop.

THE YOUNGSTERS

Two little sparrows
Built a nest,
Choosing an ivy-tree
They loved best.

Four little dainty eggs,
Fragile and blue.
Who was it painted them?
Nobody knew.

Day and night tenderly,
Warmed by her breast,
Mother-bird cared for them
Down in the nest.

Came a fine morning.
"Hatched," cried mama.
"Four little hungry mouths,"
Grumbled papa.

Then came a busy time
Searching for flies.
Four little yellow beaks
Wait for the prize.

Soon father says to them,
"Time you could fly."
"Hurrah for liberty!"
Four youngsters cry.

Then they are happy birds
Skimming the air.

"Good-bye," four sparrows say.
What do they care!

"Call them back," mother cries;
"Oh, what a shame!"
"Once," sighs the father-bird,
"We did the same."

THE FAIRIES' PARADE

When you see the stars a-creeping up along the sky,
Twinkling to each other as they climb;
And the flitter-mice begin to chatter as they fly,
When the clock is striking candle-time;
Then you'll know that there's a Fairy Party some-
where near,
Though you'll never find their meeting-place;
Yet if you will listen you may chance to overhear
The Fairy people calling as they race:—

Hurry up! and join us,
It's the Fairies' Parade;
Skip along, keep moving,
Don't be afraid.
Hurry up! and join us,
For the grasshoppers have promised they
will hop
To the Party, and their shins
Will be used as violins
Till the dancing has to stop.

Don't disturb the blossoms, or the dandelion's roar
Will bring the dog-rose barking from his bed;
And for you there'll be no Fairy Party any more
If a fir-cone tumbles down upon your head.
When we reach the river, we'll be safe from danger,
for
We'll cut adrift the water-lily leaves,
And then go swiftly gliding with a sail spread out
before,
Stolen from the web the spider weaves.

Hurry up! and join us,
It's the Fairies' Parade;
Skip along, keep moving,
Don't be afraid.
Hurry up! and join us,
For the grasshoppers have promised they
will hop
To the Party, and their shins
Will be used as violins
Till the dancing has to stop.

As we go
To and fro,
Oh, we get such horrid shocks.
There's a hare
Over there!
No it isn't; it's a fox.
There's a toad
In the road,
There's a beetle overhead.
There's a snake
By the lake,
So be careful where you tread.
There's a mole
In a hole,
Won't you let me take your arm?
Never mind,
He is blind,
He won't do you any harm.
Oh, hurry, hurry on,
For the time will soon be gone,
And we're going to a Fairies' Party.

MR. SLEEP

Somewhere, hark! a clock begins to strike
And it's striking bedtime too.
Somewhere, hark! there's a creepy sleepy footstep,
Some one has come for you.
Every night when they put out the light
And through the window peeps a little star,
I hear you calling, soft as shadows falling.
Won't you tell me who you are?

"I'm Sleep—Mr. Sleep,
Eerie, weary, dreary, drowsy Mr. Sleep.
When the brown owl sings too-whoo
And the stars begin to peep,
Then I creep along—to you—too-whoo,
And, although to keep awake you may
intend,
Mr. Sleep, he will not let you,
Mr. Sleep, you see has met you,
Mr. Sleep will always get you in the end,
Mr. Sleep will get you in the end."

Mr. Sleep, you are very wide awake,
But I'm wide awake as well,
So I ask before I let you get me,
Have you any dreams to sell?
"I have got quite a wonderful lot,
Every kind of dream that you could wish,
On your eyes atwinkle, star-dust I will sprinkle,
Then we'll go to dreamland swish, . . .

"For I'm Sleep—Mr. Sleep,
Eerie, weary, dreary, drowsy Mr. Sleep.

When the brown owl sings too-who
And the stars begin to peep,
Then I creep along—to you—too-who,
And, although to keep awake you may
intend,
Mr. Sleep, he will not let you,
Mr. Sleep, you see has met you,
Mr. Sleep will always get you in the end,
Mr. Sleep will get you in the end.”

GOOD-NIGHT

The night-winds are calling and bid you away,
For darkness is coming with starry array.
So come, Margareta, and fade into sleep,
And the musk of the roses your spirit shall keep.

If we play any longer, I fear you will get
Such a cold in the head, for the grass is so wet.
But during the night, Margareta divine,
I will hang the wet grass up to dry on the line.

We shall meet in our dreams, that's a thing under-
stood;
You dream of the river, I'll dream of the wood.
I am visiting you, if the river it be;
If we meet in the wood, you are visiting me.

SOME TRENCH VERSES

F. T. BLANK BLANK

A whisper wandered around
Of a plan of the G. O. C.'s,
And figures surveyed the ground
In stealthy groups of threes;
But the whole Brigade was there
Or pretty well all the lot,
When we dug a trench at Never-mind-where
On April the Never-mind-what.

The Whats-a-names dug the trench,
The Who-is-its found the screen,
And we mustn't forget to mench
The Thingummies in between;
The Tothermies built the fence
And the R.E.'s also ran;
For we didn't spare any expense
With labour a shilling a man.

There isn't much else to tell,
Though the enemy made a song
And tried to blow it to Hell,
But got the address all wrong,
For you'll find it is still out there
In the bally old selfsame spot!
That trench which we dug at Never-mind-where
On April the Never-mind-what.

MINNIE

I'll sing you a song of a lady,
A song about Minnie the maid—
Though Maid in Germany's all she is,
For here we call her a jade;
And her pedigree runs:—"By Johnson
Out of a hand Grenade."

Oh, it's "Look out!
Minnies about,"
CRUMP! !
My! What a lump
Of poor old France
Is obliged to dance!

She's a jolly fine game to play at,
A sort of Diabolo;
But the fellow who tries to catch her
Is after a D.S.O.,
And I reckon he'd spend the rest of the war
Making the daisies grow.

Run for your lives!
Minnie arrives,
CRUMP! !
She's dug us a sump,
But don't you forget
There'll be yards to revet.

To be chivalrous-minded to women
Is a Britisher's natural code,
But you can't feel kind towards Minnie
When once you've heard her explode.

For she'll do more harm to your morals
Than the whole of the Charing Cross Road.

Here she comes!
Hooray! Thumbs
UP! !
Fraulein B. Krupp
Hasn't shed blood—
Minnie's a dud.

THE DIGGERS

It is our fate that we must wait
And sit in a ditch and gaze,
All weary and wet, o'er the parapet,
Until we end our days
In slow decline (where neither wine
Nor women cheer us up),
Exchanging cards with Prussian Guards
Viâ Kynochs, Paine and Krupp.

Each day we clean with ardour keen
(Or leave may hang in doubt)
Our rifles which the watery ditch
Could almost do without.
For, though the hype may serve to snipe,
It's really rather tame
To see each day's Communiqués
Remark, "Our snipers claim."

We get no chance when great advance
Goes battering down the Hun;
Though once we thought the dawn was fraught
With trenches to be won.
They marched us out and none had doubt
Objectives we'd attain,
And do dam well; but then—O hell!
They marched us home again.

As days go by the gum-boots (thigh)
Will issue from the store,
And in the flood of winter's mud
We'll wallow as before,

Whilst 'Undterstande' contrives to guard
The Huns from all we do;
Though, when the war is almost o'er,
We may have dug-outs too.

Yet now and then we patient men
Creep softly out o' nights,
A whole brigade with pick and spade,
Despite the Véry lights;
And never pig did ever dig
For truffles with his snitch
With heartier glee than foolish we
Another blasted ditch.

Here 'tis our fate that we must wait
Knee-deep in slush and gaze,
All weary wet, o'er the parapet,
Until we end our days
In slow decline (where neither wine
Nor women cheer us up),
Exchanging cards with Prussian Guards
Viâ Kynochs, Paine and Krupp.

PICARDY PARODIES

No. 1

(T-NN-S-N)

Come into the trenches, Rum,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the trenches, Rum,
I am here in the mud alone;
And the flying pig has been strafing some
And the nose of the shrapnel blown.

It is coming, my Rum, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear it and beat,
Were cap comforters over my head;
My face would turn white as a sheet
Were it drunk by the Sergeant instead;
I'd go sick with trench-foot, for my feet
Would blossom in purple and red.

All night like a ceaseless drum
The heavies have shelled this spot;
All night has my aching tum
Been longing for something hot.
(Then a silence fell with the issued rum,
And a hush with the swallowed tot.)

PICARDY PARODIES

No. 2

(W. B. Y - - ts)

I will arise and go now, and go to Picardy,
And a new trench-line hold there, of clay and
shell-holes made,
No dug-outs shall I have there, nor a hive for the
Lewis G.,
But live on top in the b. loud glade.

And I may cease to be there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the mouth of the Minnie to
where the sentry sings;
There noon is high explosive, and night a gunfire
glow,
And evening full of torpedoes' wings.

I will arise and go now, though always night and
day
I'll feel dark waters lapping with low sounds
by the store,
Where all our bombs grow rusty and countless
S.A.A.;
I'll feel it in my trench-feet sore.

PICARDY PARODIES

No. 3

(TO THE TUNE OF "THEY WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME")

Got the 'cutest little trench
With the acutest little stench,
Where yer've gotter stand and freeze,
Up in the water to your knees,
And there's rats beyond belief
Growing fat on bully beef;
Oh, it certainly seems fine
Just to think you're in the line.

But, when I tell them how sick of it I am,
They'll never relieve me, they'll never relieve
me:

My clothes, my boots, my face, my hair
Are in a state beyond repair,

I'm the dirtiest thing that one could see.

But, when I tell them, and I'm certainly going to
tell them,

That is not what I came out to do:

They'll never relieve me, they'll never relieve me,
But leave me here until the moon turns blue.

Got the 'cutest little trench,
Which we undertook to wrench
From the Alleyman one day,
When the dawn was turning grey;
And we gave those Bosches hell,
So that they turned grey as well;
We were rather rough, I fear,
From Ovillers to Poseer.

For, when they told us they wanted to give in,
They couldn't deceive us, they couldn't deceive
us,
And so with bombs and bayonets
We made an end of poor old Fritz.
'Twas the bloodiest day that one could see,
For, when they told us, and they certainly tried to
tell us,
That they'd surrender if we would desist,
We wouldn't believe them, we wouldn't believe
them,
But wiped them off the German Army List.



L'ENVOI

L'ENVOI

Bee and beetle homeward spin,
Booming through the dusky air,
As deep organ-chords begin
And soften to a mute despair.

Gold and crimson burns the west,
Since the summer sun declined;
Night, in waking from her rest,
Sighs and sends the evening wind.

In the meadows daisies close;
Close we, too, this book and rise
To keep tryst with sleep, who throws
Spice-of-night upon our eyes.

