



Dragonsfoot Poetry

Edited by

Will Oliver

Introduction

When I first began playing Dungeons & Dragons in the late 1970s, like so many others who discovered the game during that time period, I was hooked. I bought all of the books and every module I could lay my hands and after only half understanding how the game worked, I began playing with some of my neighborhood friends. We played in the World of Greyhawk, for just the map alone had our minds reeling with adventure. To carry out those adventures, I found myself making game after game after game, and only resorted to using the modules when I ran out of time. That was frequent because we usually played every weekend, starting on Friday afternoons after school and running until the early hours of Saturday morning. Then, usually by early afternoon, we were at it again until late Saturday night. I had a hard time keeping up and was always looking for ideas for new games during the week.

While many of my ideas came from the core rule books, right down to the troll waiting at the other end of the long string, I looked to many other sources from Lovecraft and Howard to Tolkein and C.S. Lewis. I watched “creature feature” in the wee hours of Saturday night after the guys had left, for more ideas. Then, Sunday mornings, I watched the double feature of a Tarzan movie followed by an Abbott & Costello movie, and, yes, I even found inspiration in some of those movies as well. One source, however, that always seemed to spark my imagination was poetry.

Poetry, by its very nature, is about invoking ideas, images, and emotions in the reader. So, merely finding the right poetry was the key to sparking ideas that would complement the creation of games in Dungeons & Dragons. Sometimes I was led to the poetry, such as when I watched an episode of Dr. Who and at the very end of the episode (Horror at Fang Rock), I heard Tom Baker recite a few lines of poetry. That was the pre-internet world, so it took me a few weeks to finally track down a copy of the poem, Flannan Isle by Wilfred Gibson. On another occasion, I was reading Shakespeare’s MacBeth and came across the scene with the witches – instantly a new idea for my D&D games was created.

On a number of occasions, an adventure poem would often become an entire game. The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner, Goblin Market, and Flannan Isle all became my very own “modules,” as I used to refer to them. I managed to turn The Ghost of the Murderer’s Hut into an entire game, featuring the devil described in the poem and drawing upon the artifact Baba Yaga’s hut from the Dungeon Master’s Guide. Little did I know, a few years later, someone else had a similar idea for a game. Another one I remember was the Bivouac of the Dead, which was written to honor the dead from the Civil War, but became a campsite of undead that my players stumbled upon one night. I even made games based on some very, very short poems by Stephen Crane (best known for *The Red Badge of Courage*), including Black Riders Came from the Sea, which nearly developed into a campaign against an evil race of black riders that, well, came from the sea. What I envisioned from the poem was something similar to Tolkein’s Nazgul taking over Oerth as they came out of the Dramidj Ocean.

Eventually I drifted away from Dungeons & Dragons, as life sort of got in the way. Married with kids and a career, I had very little time. But after my oldest son saw an advertisement for AD&D in an old Spiderman comic he was reading, a Christmas present was in order. Little did I know, once again I would be DMing again. Although this time around, it was easier for me to play the old modules and only occasionally make my own games. When I ran out of the original modules, that was when my boys introduced me to Dragonsfoot – definitely a time saver!

As we are a homeschooling family, one of the things I wanted to do was to foster a love for poetry among my children. I managed to get them to enjoy reading, but poetry was often a hard sell. I found with the boys, at least, adventure poetry was the only poetry they enjoyed and it sparked in them some ideas for various adventures of their own. The more I thought about that, and learning all about Dragonsfoot from my sons, I decided to share some of the same poetry with the readers of Dragonsfoot by creating this publication - *Dragonsfoot Poetry*.

A few comments on the poetry included in this volume is probably necessary. When I originally started this project, I gathered every poem that I thought worthy, but that ended up being over 150 poems. I realized I needed to select only the best, but I also had to be reasonable with length. I cut some of the longer poems such as Longfellow’s *Tales from a Wayside Inn* and G.K.

Chesterton's *The Ballad of the White Horse*, for purposes of brevity, not because these poems were inferior. In fact, I highly recommend both of these volumes as probably being far superior to the volume in hand. In addition, I had to be careful of copyright, so while some of the poetry of Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard is phenomenal, and from which I made many a game, their poetry was published too close to the cutoff date for being in the public domain under U.S. law.

Once I had my final list of poems, I then scoured a number of early sources to make sure the versions included in this volume were as close to the originals as possible. Then, another decision I had to reconcile was in what order I should place the poetry. I finally settled on placing them in the order in which they were first published, which is the year noted with each poem. Finally, in order to present the poetry as it was originally presented, the spacing for each poetry was left in the form in which the poem first appeared in print.

So good reader, I hope you find this little volume to be of some interest and that it fires up your imagination for the creation of your own old-school Dungeons & Dragons adventures.

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Hard is the Journey

By
Li Po
(Circa 730)

Gold vessels of fine wines,
thousands a gallon,
Jade dishes of rare meats,
costing more thousands,

I lay my chopsticks down,
no more can banquet,
I draw my sword and stare
wildly about me:

Ice bars my way to cross
the Yellow River,
Snows from dark skies to climb
the T'ai-hang mountains!

At peace I drop a hook
into a brooklet,
At once I'm in a boat
but sailing sunward...

(Hard is the journey,
Hard is the journey,
So many turnings,
And now where am I?)

So when a breeze breaks waves,
bringing fair weather,
I set a cloud for sails,
cross the blue oceans!

'Never Give Up War'

By
Bertrand de Bor
(12th Century)

My heart is filled with gladness when I see
Strong castles besieged, stockades broken and overwhelmed,
Many vassals stuck down,
Horses of the dead and wounded roving at random.
And when battle is joined, let all men of good lineage
Think of naught but the breaking of heads and arms,
For it is better to die than be vanquished and live . . .
I tell you I have no such joy as when I hear the shout
"On! On!" from both sides and the neighing of riderless steeds,
And groans of "Help me! Help me!"
And when I see both great and small
Fall in the ditches and on the grass
And see the dead transfixed by spear shafts!
Lords, mortgage your domains, castles, cities
But never give up war!

Tom O'Bedlam

By
Anonymous
(1600s)

From the hag and hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye,
The spirit that stands by the naked man
In the Book of Moons defend ye,
That of your five sound senses
You never be forsaken,
Nor wander from your selves with Tom
Abroad to beg your bacon,
While I do sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

Of thirty bare years have I
Twice twenty been enragèd,
And of forty been three times fifteen
In durance soundly cagèd
On the lordly lofts of Bedlam,
With stubble soft and dainty,
Brave bracelets strong, sweet whips ding-dong,
With wholesome hunger plenty,
And now I sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

With a thought I took for Maudlin
And a cruse of cockle pottage,
With a thing thus tall, sky bless you all,
I befell into this dotage.
I slept not since the Conquest,
Till then I never wakèd,
Till the roguish boy of love where I lay
Me found and stript me nakèd.
And now I sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

When I short have shorn my sow's face
And swigged my horny barrel,
In an oaken inn I pound my skin
As a suit of gilt apparel;
The moon's my constant mistress,
And the lowly owl my marrow;
The flaming drake and the night crow make
Me music to my sorrow.

While I do sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

The palsy plagues my pulses
When I prig your pigs or pullen,
Your culvers take, or matchless make
Your Chanticleer or Sullen.
When I want provant with Humphrey
I sup, and when benighted,
I repose in Paul's with waking souls
Yet never am affrighted.
But I do sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

I know more than Apollo,
For oft, when he lies sleeping
I see the stars at bloody wars
In the wounded welkin weeping;
The moon embrace her shepherd,
And the Queen of Love her warrior,
While the first doth horn the star of morn,
And the next the heavenly Farrier.
While I do sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

The gypsies, Snap and Pedro,
Are none of Tom's comrades,
The punk I scorn and the cutpurse sworn,
And the roaring boy's bravadoes.
The meek, the white, the gentle
Me handle, touch, and spare not;
But those that cross Tom Rynosseros
Do what the panther dare not.
Although I sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

With a host of furious fancies
Whereof I am commander,
With a burning spear and a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander.
By a knight of ghosts and shadows
I summoned am to tourney
Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end::
Methinks it is no journey.

Yet will I sing, Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink, or clothing;
Come dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.

The Witches Spell (From MacBeth)

By
William Shakespeare
(1606)

A dark Cave. In the middle, a Caldron boiling. Thunder.
Enter the three Witches.

WITCH 1: Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

WITCH 2: Thrice and once, the hedge-pig whin'd.

WITCH 3: Harpier cries:—'tis time! 'tis time!

WITCH 1: Round about the caldron go;

In the poison'd entrails throw.—

Toad, that under cold stone,

Days and nights has thirty-one;

Swelter'd venom sleeping got,

Boil thou first i' the charmed pot!

ALL: Double, double toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

WITCH 2: Fillet of a fenny snake,

In the caldron boil and bake;

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,

Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,

Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,—

For a charm of powerful trouble,

Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL: Double, double toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

WITCH 3: Scale of dragon; tooth of wolf;

Witches' mummy; maw and gulf

Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark;

Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark;

Liver of blaspheming Jew;

Gall of goat, and slips of yew

Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse;

Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips;

Finger of birth-strangled babe

Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,—

Make the gruel thick and slab:

Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,

For the ingrediants of our caldron.

ALL: Double, double toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

The Apparition

By
John Donne
(1633)

When by thy scorn, O murd'reuses, I am dead
And that thou think'st thee free
From all solicitation from me,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, feign'd vestal, in worse arms shall see;
Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,
And he, whose thou art then, being tir'd before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleep will from thee shrink;
And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou
Bath'd in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie
A verier ghost than I.
What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,
I' had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
Than by my threat'nings rest still innocent.

The Hag
By
Robert Herrick
(1648)

The Hag is astride,
This night for to ride;
The Devill and shee together:
Through thick, and through thin,
Now out, and then in,
Though ne'r so foule be the weather.

A Thorn or a Burr
She takes for a Spurre:
With a lash of a Bramble she rides now,
Through Brakes and through Bryars,
O're Ditches, and Mires,
She followes the Spirit that guides now.

No Beast, for his food,
Dares now range the wood;
But husht in his laire he lies lurking:
While mischiefs, by these,
On Land and on Seas,
At noone of Night are working,

The storme will arise,
And trouble the skies;
This night, and more for the wonder,
The ghost from the Tomb
Affrighted shall come,
Cal'd out by the clap of the Thunder.

Lenore
By
Gottfried August Bürger
(1773)

Up rose Lenore as the red morn wore,
From weary visions starting;
"Art faithless, William, or, William, art dead?
'Tis long since thy departing."
For he, with Frederick's men of might,
In fair Prague waged the uncertain fight;
Nor once had he writ in the hurry of war,
And sad was the true heart that sickened afar.

The Empress and the King,
With ceaseless quarrel tired,
At length relaxed the stubborn hate
Which rivalry inspired:
And the martial throng, with laugh and song,
Spoke of their homes as they rode along,
And clank, clank, clank! came every rank,
With the trumpet-sound that rose and sank.

And here and there and everywhere,
Along the swarming ways,
Went old man and boy, with music of joy,
On the gallant bands to gaze;
And the young child shouted to spy the vaward,
And trembling and blushing the bride pressed forward:
But ah! for the sweet lips of Lenore
The kiss and the greeting are vanished and o'er.

From man to man all wildly she ran
With a swift and searching eye;
But she felt alone in the mighty mass,
As it crushed and crowded by:
On hurried the troop, - a gladsome group, -
And proudly the tall plumes wave and droop:
She tore her hair and she turned her round,
And madly she dashed her against the ground.

Her mother clasped her tenderly
With soothing words and mild:
"My child, may God look down on thee, -
God comfort thee, my child."
"Oh! mother, mother! gone is gone!
I reckon no more how the world runs on:
What pity to me does God impart?
Woe, woe, woe! for my heavy heart!"

"Help, Heaven, help and favour her!
Child, utter an Ave Marie!

Wise and great are the doings of God;
He loves and pities thee."
"Out, mother, out, on the empty lie!
Doth he heed my despair, - doth he list to my cry?
What boots it now to hope or to pray?
The night is come, - there is no more day."

"Help, Heaven, help! who knows the Father
Knows surely that he loves his child:
The bread and the wine from the hand divine
Shall make thy tempered grief less wild."
"Oh! mother, dear mother! the wine and the bread
Will not soften the anguish that bows down my head;
For bread and for wine it will yet be as late
That his cold corpse creeps from the grim grave's gate."

"What if the traitor's false faith failed,
By sweet temptation tried, -
What if in distant Hungary
He clasp another bride? -
Despise the fickle fool, my girl,
Who hath ta'en the pebble and spurned the pearl:
While soul and body shall hold together
In his perjured heart shall be stormy weather."

"Oh! mother, mother! gone is gone,
And lost will still be lost!
Death, death is the goal of my weary soul,
Crushed and broken and crost.
Spark of my life! down, down to the tomb:
Die away in the night, die away in the gloom!
What pity to me does God impart?
Woe, woe, woe! for my heavy heart!"

"Help, Heaven, help, and heed her not,
For her sorrows are strong within;
She knows not the words that her tongue repeats, -
Oh! Count them not for sin!
Cease, cease, my child, thy wretchedness,
And think on the promised happiness;
So shall thy mind's calm ecstasy
Be a hope and a home and a bridegroom to thee."

"My mother, what is happiness?
My mother, what is Hell?
With William is my happiness, -
Without him is my Hell!
Spark of my life! down, down to the tomb:
Die away in the night, die away in the gloom!
Earth and Heaven, Heaven and earth,
Reft of William are nothing worth."

Thus grief racked and tore the breast of Lenore,
And was busy at her brain;
Thus rose her cry to the Power on high,
To question and arraign:
Wringing her hands and beating her breast, -
Tossing and rocking without any rest; -
Till from her light veil the moon shone thro',
And the stars leapt out on the darkling blue.

But hark to the clatter and the pat pat patter!
Of a horse's heavy hoof!
How the steel clanks and rings as the rider springs!
How the echo shouts aloof!
While silently and lightly the gentle bell
Tingles and jingles softly and well;
And low and clear through the door plank thin
Comes the voice without to the ear within:

"Holla! holla! unlock the gate;
Art waking, my bride, or sleeping?
Is thy heart still free and faithful to me?
Art laughing, my bride, or weeping?"
"Oh! wearily, William, I've waited for you, -
Woefully watching the long day thro', -
With a great sorrow sorrowing
For the cruelty of your tarrying."

"Till the dead midnight we saddled not, -
I have journeyed far and fast -
And hither I come to carry thee back
Ere the darkness shall be past."
"Ah! rest thee within till the night's more calm;
Smooth shall thy couch be, and soft, and warm:
Hark to winds, how they whistle and rush
Thro' the twisted twine of the hawthorn-bush."

"Thro' the hawthorn-bush let whistle and rush, -
Let whistle, child, let whistle!
Mark the flash fierce and high of my steed's bright eye,
And his proud crest's eager bristle.
Up, up and away! I must not stay:
Mount swiftly behind me! up, up and away!
An hundred miles must be ridden and sped
Ere we may lie down in the bridal-bed."

"What! ride an hundred miles to-night,
By thy mad fancies driven!
Dost hear the bell with its sullen swell,
As it rumbles out eleven?"
"Look forth! look forth! the moon shines bright:
We and the dead gallop fast thro' the night.
'Tis for a wager I bear thee away

To the nuptial couch ere break of day."

"Ah! where is the chamber, William dear,
And William, where is the bed?"

"Far, far from here: still, narrow, and cool:
Plank and bottom and lid."

"Hast room for me?" - "For me and thee;
Up, up to the saddle right speedily!
The wedding-guests are gathered and met,
And the door of the chamber is open set."

She busked her well, and into the selle
She sprang with nimble haste, -
And gently smiling, with a sweet beguiling,
Her white hands clasped his waist: -
And hurry, hurry! ring, ring, ring!
To and fro they sway and swing;
Snorting and snuffing they skim the ground,
And the sparks fly up, and the stones run round.

Here to the right and there to the left
Flew fields of corn and clover,
And the bridges flashed by to the dazzled eye,
As rattling they thundered over.
"What ails my love? the moon shines bright:
Bravely the dead men ride through the night.
Is my love afraid of the quiet dead?"
"Ah! no; - let them sleep in their dusty bed!"

On the breeze cool and soft what tune floats aloft,
While the crows wheel overhead? -
Ding dong! ding dong! 'tis the sound, 'tis the song, -
"Room, room for the passing dead!"
Slowly the funeral-train drew near,
Bearing the coffin, bearing the bier;
And the chime of their chant was hissing and harsh,
Like the note of the bull-frog within the marsh.

"You bury your corpse at the dark midnight,
With hymns and bells and wailing; -
But I bring home my youthful wife
To a bride-feast's rich regaling.
Come, chorister, come with thy choral throng,
And solemnly sing me a marriage-song;
Come, friar, come, - let the blessing be spoken,
That the bride and the bridegroom's sweet rest be unbroken."

Died the dirge and vanished the bier: -
Obedient to his call,
Hard hard behind, with a rush like the wind,
Came the long steps' pattering fall:
And ever further! ring, ring, ring!

To and fro they sway and swing;
Snorting and snuffing they skim the ground,
And the sparks spurt up, and the stones run round.

How flew to the right, how flew to the left,
Trees, mountains in the race!
How to the left, and the right and the left,
Flew town and market-place!
"What ails my love? the moon shines bright:
Bravely the dead men ride thro' the night.
Is my love afraid of the quiet dead?"
"Ah! let them alone in their dusty bed!"

See, see, see! by the gallows-tree,
As they dance on the wheel's broad hoop,
Up and down, in the gleam of the moon
Half lost, an airy group: -
"Ho, ho! mad mob, come hither amain,
And join in the wake of my rushing train; -
Come, dance me a dance, ye dancers thin,
Ere the planks of the marriage bed close us in."

And hush, hush, hush! the dreamy rout
Came close with a ghastly bustle,
Like the whirlwind in the hazel-bush,
When it makes the dry leaves rustle:
And faster, faster! ring, ring, ring!
To and fro they sway and swing;
Snorting and snuffing they skim the ground,
And the sparks spurt up, and the stones run round.

How flew the moon high overhead,
In the wild race madly driven!
In and out, how the stars danced about,
And reeled o'er the flashing heaven!
"What ails my love? the moon shines bright:
Bravely the dead men ride thro' the night.
Is my love afraid of the quiet dead?"
"Alas! let them alone in their dusty bed!"

"Horse, horse! meseems 'tis the cock's shrill note,
And the sand is well nigh spent;
Horse, horse, away! 'tis the break of day, -
'Tis the morning air's sweet scent.
Finished, finished is our ride:
Room, room for the bridegroom and the bride!
At last, at last, we have reached the spot,
For the speed of the dead man has slackened not!"

And swiftly up to an iron gate
With reins relaxed they went;
At the rider's touch the bolts flew back,

And the bars were broken and bent;
The doors were burst with a deafening knell,
And over the white graves they dashed pell mell:
The tombs around looked grassy and grim,
As they glimmered and glanced in the moonlight dim.

But see! But see! in an eyelid's beat,
 Towhoo! a ghastly wonder!
The horseman's jerkin, piece by piece,
 Dropped off like brittle tinder!
Fleshless and hairless, a naked skull,
The sight of his weird head was horrible;
The lifelike mask was there no more,
And a scythe and a sandglass the skeleton bore.

Loud snorted the horse as he plunged and reared,
And the sparks were scattered round: -
What man shall say if he vanished away,
 Or sank in the gaping ground?
Groans from the earth and shrieks in the air!
Howling and wailing everywhere!
Half dead, half living, the soul of Lenore
Fought as it never had fought before.

The churchyard troop, - a ghostly group, -
 Close round the dying girl;
Out and in they hurry and spin
 Through the dancer's weary whirl:
"Patience, patience, when the heart is breaking;
With thy God there is no question-making:
Of thy body thou art quit and free:
Heaven keep thy soul eternally!"

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

By
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(1798)

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,

Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!

From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,

Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
Is DEATH that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made

My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free

The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge,
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,

Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI

First Voice

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?'

Second Voice

Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

First Voice
'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

Second Voice
'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:

Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with mariners
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'—
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'—
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,

Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

Address to the Mummy at Belzoni's Exhibition

By
Horace Smith
(1804)

AND thou hast walked about (how strange a story!)
In Thebes's streets three thousand years ago,
When the Memnonium was in all its glory,
And time had not begun to overthrow
Those temples, palaces, and piles stupendous,
Of which the very ruins are tremendous.

Speak! for thou long enough hast acted dummy;
Thou hast a tongue,—come, let us hear its tune;
Thou 'rt standing on thy legs, above ground, mummy!
Revisiting the glimpses of the moon,—
Not like thin ghosts or disembodied creatures,
But with thy bones and flesh and limbs and features.

Tell us—for doubtless thou canst recollect—
To whom should we assign the Sphinx's fame?
Was Cheops or Cephrenes architect
Of either pyramid that bears his name?
Is Pompey's Pillar really a misnomer?
Had Thebes a hundred gates, as sung by Homer?

Perhaps thou wert a Mason, and forbidden
By oath to tell the secrets of thy trade,—
Then say what secret melody was hidden
In Memnon's statue, which at sunrise played?
Perhaps thou wert a priest,—if so, my struggles
Are vain, for priestcraft never owns its juggles.

Perhaps that very hand, now pinioned flat,
Has hob-a-nobbed with Pharaoh, glass to glass;
Or dropped a halfpenny in Homer's hat;
Or doffed thine own to let Queen Dido pass;
Or held, by Solomon's own invitation,
A torch at the great temple's dedication.

I need not ask thee if that hand, when armed,
Has any Roman soldier mauled and knuckled;
For thou wert dead and buried and embalmed
Ere Romulus and Remus had been suckled:
Antiquity appears to have begun
Long after thy primeval race was run.

Thou couldst develop—if that withered tongue
Might tell us what those sightless orbs have seen—
How the world looked when it was fresh and young,
And the great deluge still had left it green;
Or was it then so old that history's pages

Contained no record of its early ages?

Still silent! incommunicative elf!

Art sworn to secrecy? then keep thy vows;
But prithee tell us something of thyself,
Reveal the secrets of thy prison-house;
Since in the world of spirits thou hast slumbered,
What hast thou seen, what strange adventures numbered?

Since first thy form was in this box extended
We have, above ground, seen some strange mutations:
The Roman empire has begun and ended,
New worlds have risen, we have lost old nations;
And countless kings have into dust been humbled,
While not a fragment of thy flesh has crumbled.

Didst thou not hear the pother o'er thy head,
When the great Persian conqueror, Cambyses,
Marched armies o'er thy tomb with thundering tread,—
O'erthrew Osiris, Orus, Apis, Isis;
And shook the pyramids with fear and wonder,
When the gigantic Memnon fell asunder?

If the tomb's secrets may not be confessed,
The nature of thy private life unfold:
A heart has throbbed beneath that leathern breast,
And tears adown that dusty cheek have rolled;
Have children climbed those knees, and kissed that face?
What was thy name and station, age and race?

Statue of flesh,—immortal of the dead!
Imperishable type of evanescence!
Posthumous man,—who quit'st thy narrow bed,
And standest undecayed within our presence!
Thou wilt hear nothing till the judgment morning,
When the great trump shall thrill thee with its warning.

Why should this worthless tegument endure,
If its undying guest be lost forever?
O, let us keep the soul embalmed and pure
In living virtue, that when both must sever,
Although corruption may our frame consume,
The immortal spirit in the skies may bloom!

The Giaour [Unquenched, unquenchable]

By

George Gordon, Lord Byron

(1813)

. . . But thou, false Infidel! shalt writhe
Beneath avenging Monkir's scythe;
And from its torment 'scape alone
To wander round lost Eblis' throne;
And fire unquenched, unquenchable,
Around, within, thy heart shall dwell;
Nor ear can hear nor tongue can tell
The tortures of that inward hell!
But first, on earth as vampire sent,
Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent:
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race;
There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
At midnight drain the stream of life;
Yet loathe the banquet which perforce
Must feed thy livid living corse:
Thy victims ere they yet expire
Shall know the demon for their sire,
As cursing thee, thou cursing them,
Thy flowers are withered on the stem.
But one that for thy crime must fall,
The youngest, most beloved of all,
Shall bless thee with a father's name -
That word shall wrap thy heart in flame!
Yet must thou end thy task, and mark
Her cheek's last tinge, her eye's last spark,
And the last glassy glance must view
Which freezes o'er its lifeless blue;
Then with unhallowed hand shalt tear
The tresses of her yellow hair,
Of which in life a lock when shorn
Affection's fondest pledge was worn,
But now is borne away by thee,
Memorial of thine agony!
Wet with thine own best blood shall drip
Thy gnashing tooth and haggard lip;
Then stalking to thy sullen grave,
Go - and with Gouls and Afrits rave;
Till these in horror shrink away
From spectre more accursed than they!

The King and the Poet

By

Justinus Andreas Christian Kerner
(1815)

Away in the old cathedral
Two coffins stand alone:
In one of them sleeps King Ottmar,
And a singer rests in one.
The king sat once in power,
High throned in his father's land;
The crown still graces his temples,
The falchion his kingly hand.
But near the proud king, the singer
Is peacefully sleeping on,
In his lifeless hand still clasping
The harp of the pious tone.
The castles around are falling,
The war-cry rings through the land,
The sword it stirreth never
There in the dead king's hand.
Blossoms and vernal breezes
Are floating the vale along,
And the singer's harp is sounding
In never-ending song !

Totentanz

by
Goethe
(1815)

The warder looks down at the mid hour of night,
On the tombs that lie scatter'd below:
The moon fills the place with her silvery light,
And the churchyard like day seems to glow.
When see! first one grave, then another opens wide,
And women and men stepping forth are descried,
In cerements snow-white and trailing.-

In haste for the sport soon their ankles they twitch,
And whirl round in dances so gay;
The young and the old, and the poor, and the rich,
But the cerements stand in their way;
And as modesty cannot avail them aught here,
They shake themselves all, and the shrouds soon appear
Scatter'd over the tombs in confusion.-

Now waggles the leg, and now wriggles the thigh,
As the troop with strange gestures advance,
And a rattle and clatter anon rises high,
As of one beating time to the dance.
The sight to the warder seems wondrously queer,
When the villainous Tempter speaks thus in his ear:
"Seize one of the shrouds that lie yonder!"-

Quick as thought it was done! and for safety he fled
Behind the church-door with all speed;
The moon still continues her clear light to shed
On the dance that they fearfully lead.
But the dancers at length disappear one by one,
And their shrouds, ere they vanish, they carefully don,
And under the turf all is quiet.

But one of them stumbles and shuffles there still,
And gropes at the graves in despair;
Yet 'tis by no comrade he's treated so ill
The shroud he soon scents in the air.
So he rattles the door--for the warder 'tis well
That 'tis bless'd, and so able the foe to repel,
All cover'd with crosses in metal.-

The shroud he must have, and no rest will allow,
There remains for reflection no time;
On the ornaments Gothic the wight seizes now,
And from point on to point hastes to climb.
Alas for the warder! his doom is decreed!
Like a long-legged spider, with ne'er-changing speed,
Advances the dreaded pursuer. -

The warder he quakes, and the warder turns pale,
The shroud to restore fain had sought;
When the end,--now can nothing to save him avail,--
In a tooth formed of iron is caught.
With vanishing lustre the moon's race is run,
When the bell thunders loudly a powerful One,
And the skeleton fails, crush'd to atoms.-

Darkness

By

George Gordon, Lord Byron
(1816)

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd,
And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smil'd;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twin'd themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again: a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,

And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lur'd their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies: they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they rak'd up,
And shivering scrap'd with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon, their mistress, had expir'd before;
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

Kubla Khan
By
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(1816)

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,

To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Ozymandias

By

Percy Bysshe Shelley
(1817)

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

By
John Keats
1819

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Oh what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful - a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said -
'I love thee true'.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep
And there I dreamed - Ah! woe betide! -
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;

They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

The Prophet
By
Alexander Pushkin
(1821)

With fainting soul athirst for Grace,
I wandered in a desert place,
And at the crossing of the ways
I saw a sixfold Seraph blaze;
He touched mine eyes with fingers light
As sleep that cometh in the night:
And like a frightened eagle's eyes,
They opened wide with prophecies.
He touched mine ears, and they were drowned
With tumult and a roaring sound:
I heard convulsion in the sky,
And flight of angel hosts on high,
And beasts that move beneath the sea,
And the sap creeping in the tree.
And bending to my mouth he wrung
From out of it my sinful tongue,
And all its lies and idle rust,
And 'twixt my lips a-perishing
A subtle serpent's forkèd sting
With right hand wet with blood he thrust.
And with his sword my breast he cleft,
My quaking heart thereout he reft,
And in the yawning of my breast
A coal of living fire he pressed.
Then in the desert I lay dead,
And God called unto me and said:
"Arise, and let My voice be heard,
Charged with My will go forth and span
The land and sea, and let My word
Lay waste with fire the heart of man."

A Ballad: The Lake of the Dismal Swamp

By
Thomas Moore
(1823)

"They made her a grave, too cold and damp
For a soul so warm and true;
And she's gone to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp,
Where, all night long, by a fire-fly lamp,
She paddles her white canoe.

"And her fire-fly lamp I soon shall see,
And her paddle I soon shall hear;
Long and loving our life shall be,
And I'll hide the maid in a cypress tree,
When the footstep of death is near."

Away to the Dismal Swamp he speeds—
His path was rugged and sore,
Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,
Through many a fen where the serpent feeds,
And man never trod before.

And when on the earth he sunk to sleep,
If slumber his eyelids knew,
He lay where the deadly vine doth weep
Its venomous tear and nightly steep
The flesh with blistering dew!

And near him the she-wolf stirr'd the brake,
And the copper-snake breath'd in his ear,
Till he starting cried, from his dream awake,
"Oh! when shall I see the dusky Lake,
And the white canoe of my dear?"

He saw the Lake, and a meteor bright
Quick over its surface play'd—
"Welcome," he said, "my dear one's light!"
And the dim shore echoed for many a night
The name of the death-cold maid.

Till he hollow'd a boat of the birchen bark,
Which carried him off from shore;
Far, far he follow'd the meteor spark,
The wind was high and the clouds were dark,
And the boat return'd no more.

But oft, from the Indian hunter's camp,
This lover and maid so true
Are seen at the hour of midnight damp
To cross the Lake by a fire-fly lamp,
And paddle their white canoe!

The Lorelei
By
Heinrich Heine
(1824)

I KNOW not whence it rises,
This thought so full of woe;
But a tale of times departed
Haunts me, and will not go.

The air is cool, and it darkens,
And calmly flows the Rhine,
The mountain-peaks are sparkling
In the sunny evening-shine.

And yonder sits a maiden,
The fairest of the fair;
With gold is her garment glittering,
And she combs her golden hair:

With a golden comb she combs it;
And a wild song singeth she.
That melts the heart with a wondrous
And powerful melody.

The boatman feels his bosom
With a nameless longing move;
He sees not the gulfs before him,
His gaze is fixed above.

Till over boat and boatman
The Rhine's deep waters run:
And this, with her magic singing,
The Lore-lei has done!

The Haunted Palace

by
Edgar Allan Poe
(1839)

In the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion—
It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair!

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow,
(This—all this—was in the olden
Time long ago),
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A winged odor went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley,
Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically,
To a lute's well-tuned law,
Bound about a throne where, sitting
(Porphyrogene!)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate.
(Ah, let us mourn!—for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate !)
And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed,
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

And travellers, now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see

Vast forms, that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever
And laugh—but smile no more.

The Skeleton in Armor
By
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(1841)

“Speak! speak! thou fearful guest!
Who, with thy hollow breast
Still in rude armor drest,
 Comest to daunt me!
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,
But with thy fleshless palms
Stretched, as if asking alms,
 Why dost thou haunt me?”

Then, from those cavernous eyes
Pale flashes seemed to rise,
As when the Northern skies
 Gleam in December;
And, like the water’s flow
Under December’s snow,
Came a dull voice of woe
 From the heart’s chamber.

“I was a Viking old!
My deeds, though manifold,
No Skald in song has told,
 No Saga taught thee!
Take heed, that in thy verse
Thou dost the tale rehearse,
Else dread a dead man’s curse;
 For this I sought thee.

“Far in the Northern Land,
By the wild Baltic’s strand,
I, with my childish hand,
 Tamed the gerfalcon;
And, with my skates fast-bound,
Skimmed the half-frozen Sound,
That the poor whimpering hound
 Trembled to walk on.

“Oft to his frozen lair
Tracked I the grisly bear,
While from my path the hare
 Fled like a shadow;
Oft through the forest dark
Followed the were-wolf’s bark,
Until the soaring lark
 Sang from the meadow.

“But when I older grew,
Joining a corsair’s crew,

O'er the dark sea I flew
With the marauders.
Wild was the life we led;
Many the souls that sped,
Many the hearts that bled,
By our stern orders.

"Many a wassail-bout
Wore the long Winter out;
Often our midnight shout
Set the cocks crowing,
As we the Berserk's tale
Measured in cups of ale,
Draining the oaken pail,
Filled to o'erflowing.

"Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes did gaze on me,
Burning yet tender;
And as the white stars shine
On the dark Norway pine,
On that dark heart of mine
Fell their soft splendor.

"I wooed the blue-eyed maid,
Yielding, yet half afraid,
And in the forest's shade
Our vows were plighted.
Under its loosened vest
Fluttered her little breast,
Like birds within their nest
By the hawk frightened.

"Bright in her father's hall
Shields gleamed upon the wall,
Loud sang the minstrels all,
Chanting his glory;
When of old Hildebrand
I asked his daughter's hand,
Mute did the minstrels stand
To hear my story.

"While the brown ale he quaffed,
Loud then the champion laughed,
And as the wind-gusts waft
The sea-foam brightly,
So the loud laugh of scorn,
Out of those lips unshorn,
From the deep drinking-horn
Blew the foam lightly.

“She was a Prince’s child,
I but a Viking wild,
And though she blushed and smiled,
 I was discarded!
Should not the dove so white
Follow the sea-mew’s flight,
Why did they leave that night
 Her nest unguarded?”

“Scarce had I put to sea,
Bearing the maid with me,
Fairest of all was she
 Among the Norsemen!
When on the white sea-strand,
Waving his armed hand,
Saw we old Hildebrand,
 With twenty horsemen.

“Then launched they to the blast,
Bent like a reed each mast,
Yet we were gaining fast,
 When the wind failed us;
And with a sudden flaw
Came round the gusty Skaw,
So that our foe we saw
 Laugh as he hailed us.

“And as to catch the gale
Round veered the flapping sail,
‘Death!’ was the helmsman’s hail,
 ‘Death without quarter!’
Mid-ships with iron keel
Struck we her ribs of steel;
Down her black hulk did reel
 Through the black water!

“As with his wings aslant,
Sails the fierce cormorant,
Seeking some rocky haunt,
 With his prey laden, —
So toward the open main,
Beating to sea again,
Through the wild hurricane,
 Bore I the maiden.

“Three weeks we westward bore,
And when the storm was o’er,
Cloud-like we saw the shore
 Stretching to leeward;
There for my lady’s bower
Built I the lofty tower,
Which, to this very hour,

Stands looking seaward.

“There lived we many years;
Time dried the maiden’s tears;
She had forgot her fears,
 She was a mother;
Death closed her mild blue eyes,
Under that tower she lies;
Ne’er shall the sun arise
 On such another!

“Still grew my bosom then,
Still as a stagnant fen!
Hateful to me were men,
 The sunlight hateful!
In the vast forest here,
Clad in my warlike gear,
Fell I upon my spear,
 Oh, death was grateful!

“Thus, seamed with many scars,
Bursting these prison bars,
Up to its native stars
 My soul ascended!
There from the flowing bowl
Deep drinks the warrior’s soul,
Skoal! to the Northland! skoal!”
 Thus the tale ended.

The Winners

By
Rudyard Kipling
(1841)

("The Story of the Gadsbys")

What the moral? Who rides may read.
When the night is thick and the tracks are blind
A friend at a pinch is a friend, indeed,
But a fool to wait for the laggard behind.
Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne,
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

White hands cling to the tightened rein,
Slipping the spur from the booted heel,
Tenderest voices cry " Turn again!"
Red lips tarnish the scabbarded steel,
High hopes faint on a warm hearth-stone--
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

One may fall but he falls by himself--
Falls by himself with himself to blame.
One may attain and to him is pelf--
Loot of the city in Gold or Fame.
Plunder of earth shall be all his own
Who travels the fastest and travels alone.

Wherefore the more ye be helpen-.en and stayed,
Stayed by a friend in the hour of toil,
Sing the heretical song I have made--
His be the labour and yours be the spoil.
Win by his aid and the aid disown--
He travels the fastest who travels alone!

Dream Land

By
Edgar Allan Poe
(1844)

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule —
From a wild weird clime, that lieth, sublime,
Out of Space — out of Time.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms, and caves, and Titian woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the dews that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead, —
Their still waters, still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule.

By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead, —
Their sad waters, sad and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily, —
By the mountains — near the river
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever, —
By the gray woods, — by the swamp
Where the toad and the newt encamp, —
By the dismal tarns and pools
Where dwell the Ghouls, —
By each spot the most unholy —
In each nook most melancholy, —
There the traveller meets aghast
Sheeted Memories of the Past —
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by —
White-robed forms of friends long given,
In agony, to the worms, and Heaven.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule —

For the heart whose woes are legion
'T is a peaceful, soothing region —
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'T is — oh 't is an Eldorado!
But the traveler, traveling through it,
May not — dare not openly view it;
Never its mysteries are exposed
To the weak human eye unclosed;
So wills its King, who hath forbid
The uplifting of the fringed lid;
And thus the sad Soul that here passes
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have wandered home but newly
From this ultimate dim Thule.

The Raven
By
Edgar Allan Poe
(1845)

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
“’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you”—here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, “Lenore?”
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, “Lenore!”—
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
’Tis the wind and nothing more!”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never—nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—

Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting—
“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

The Bivouac of the Dead

By
Theodore O'Hara
(1847)

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on life's parade shall meet
The brave and daring few.
On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead.

No rumour of the foe's advance
Now swells upon the wind;
No troubled thought at midnight haunts
Of loved ones left behind;
No vision of the morrow's strife
The warrior's dream alarms;
No braying horn nor screaming fife
At dawn shall call to arms.

Their shivered swords are red with rust,
Their plumed heads are bowed;
Their haughty banner trailed in dust
Is now their martial shroud,
And plenteous funeral tears have washed
The red stains from each brow,
And their proud forms in battle gashed
Are free from anguish now.

The neighing steed, the flashing blade,
The trumpet's stirring blast,
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,
The din and shout are past;
No war's wild note, nor glory's peal,
Shall thrill with fierce delight
Those breasts that never more shall feel
The rapture of the fight.

Like the dread northern hurricane
That sweeps this broad plateau,
Flushed with the triumph yet to gain
Came down the serried foe;
Our heroes felt the shock, and leapt
To meet them on the plain;
And long the pitying sky hath wept
Above our gallant slain.
Sons of our consecrated ground,
Ye must not slumber there,
Where stranger steps and tongues resound

Along the heedless air.
Your own proud land's heroic soil
Shall be your fitter grave;
She claims from War his richest spoil -
The ashes of her brave.

So 'neath their parent turf they rest,
Far from the gory field;
Borne to a Spartan mother's breast
On many a bloody shield;
The sunshine of their native sky
Smiles sadly on them here,
And kindred hearts and eyes watch by
The heroes' sepulcher.

Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead!
Dear as the blood you gave,
No impious footsteps here shall tread
The herbage of your grave;
Nor shall your glory be forgot
While Fame her record keeps,
Or Honor points the hallowed spot
Where Valor proudly sleeps.

Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone
In deathless songs shall tell,
When many a vanished age hath flown,
The story how ye fell;
Nor wreck, nor change, or winter's blight
Not Time's remorseless doom,
Shall dim one ray of holy light
That gilds your glorious tomb.

Annabel Lee

By
Edgar Allan Poe
(1849)

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
I and my Annabel Lee—
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
Went envying her and me—
Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we—
Of many far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in Heaven above
Nor the demons down under the sea
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea—
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

Eldorado
By
Edgar Allan Poe
(1849)

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

Oh, The Pleasant Days of Old!

By
Frances Brown
(1850)

Oh, the pleasant days of old, which so often people
praise!
True, they wanted all the luxuries that grace our modern days:
Bare floors were strewed with rushes — the walls let in the cold:
Oh, how they must have shivered in those pleasant days of old!

Oh, those ancient lords of old! How magnificent they were!
They threw down and imprisoned kings — to thwart them, who might dare?
They ruled their serfs right sternly; they took from Jews their gold —
Above both law and equity were those great lords of old!

Oh, the gallant knights of old, for their valor so renowned!
With sword and lance and armor strong, they scoured the country round;
And whenever aught to tempt them they met by wood or wold,
By right of sword, they seized the prize — those gallant knights of old!

Oh, those gentle dames of old, who, quite free from fear or pain,
Could gaze on joust and tournament, and see their champion slain!
They lived on good beefsteaks and ale, which made them strong and bold —
Oh, more like men than women were those gentle dames of old!

Oh, those mighty towers of old, with their turrets, moat, and keep,
Their battlements and bastions, their dungeons dark and deep!
Full many a baron held his court within the castle hold;
And many a captive languished there in those strong towers of old!

Oh, the troubadours of old, with their gentle minstrelsie

Of hope and joy or deep despair, whiche'er their lot
might be! —
For years they served their ladye-love ere they their
passion told;
Oh, wondrous patience must have had those troubadours
of old!

Oh, those blessed times of old, with their chivalry and
state!
I love to read their chronicles which such brave deeds
relate;
I love to sing their ancient rhymes, to hear their legends
told:
But, Heaven be thanked, I lived not in those blessed
times of old!

The Charge of the Light Brigade

By
Alfred, Lord Tennyson
(1854)

I

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
“Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!” he said.
Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

II

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
 Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
 Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
 Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
 All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
 Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
 Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
 Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
 Left of six hundred.

VI
When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
 All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
 Noble six hundred!

The Fairies
By
William Allingham
(1855)

UP the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

Down along the rocky shore
Some make their home,
They live on crispy pancakes
Of yellow tide-foam;
Some in the reeds
Of the black mountain lake,
With frogs for their watch-dogs,
All night awake.

High on the hill-top
The old King sits;
He is now so old and gray
He's nigh lost his wits.
With a bridge of white mist
Columbkille he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieveleague to Rosses;
Or going up with music
On cold starry nights
To sup with the Queen
Of the gay Northern Lights.

They stole little Bridget
For seven years long;
When she came down again
Her friends were all gone.
They took her lightly back,
Between the night and morrow,
They thought that she was fast asleep,
But she was dead with sorrow.
They have kept her ever since
Deep within the lake,
On a bed of flag-leaves,
Watching till she wake.

By the craggy hill-side,
Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn-trees

For pleasure here and there.
If any man so daring
As dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns
In his bed at night.

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

Haunted Houses

By
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(1858)

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the door-way, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more guests at table than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit-world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapours dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipoise
By opposite attractions and desires;
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
And the more noble instinct that aspires.

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
Come from the influence of an unseen star
An undiscovered planet in our sky.

And as the moon from some dark gate of cloud
Throws o'er the sea a floating bridge of light,
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd
Into the realm of mystery and night,—

So from the world of spirits there descends
A bridge of light, connecting it with this,

O'er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,
Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.

Song
By
Thomas Hood
(1861)

A lake and a fairy boat
To sail in the moonlight clear, -
And merrily we would float
From the dragons that watch us here!

Thy gown should be snow-white silk
And strings of oriental pearls,
Like gossamers dipped in milk,
Should twine with thy raven curls!

Red rubies should deck thy hands,
And diamonds should be thy dower -
But fairies have broke their wands,
And wishing has lost its power!

Goblin Market

By
Christina Rossetti
(1862)

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins

Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;

Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Thro' those fruit bushes."

"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;

Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
“Come buy, come buy,” was still their cry.

Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money:
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr’d,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried “Pretty Goblin” still for “Pretty Polly;”—
One whistled like a bird.
But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
“Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather.”
“You have much gold upon your head,”
They answered all together:
“Buy from us with a golden curl.”
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel-stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
“Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;

Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the moonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so.”
“Nay, hush,” said Laura:
“Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
Tomorrow night I will
Buy more:” and kissed her:
“Have done with sorrow;
I’ll bring you plums tomorrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.”
Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other’s wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall’n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their rest:

Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homewards said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill:
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.
Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.

The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Tho' this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us thro';
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy;"—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none:
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.
She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,

Fetch'd honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest Winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.
Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,

Chattering like magpies,
 Fluttering like pigeons,
 Gliding like fishes,—
 Hugged her and kissed her,
 Squeezed and caressed her:
 Stretched up their dishes,
 Panniers, and plates:
 “Look at our apples
 Russet and dun,
 Bob at our cherries,
 Bite at our peaches,
 Citrons and dates,
 Grapes for the asking,
 Pears red with basking
 Out in the sun,
 Plums on their twigs;
 Pluck them and suck them,
 Pomegranates, figs.”—
 “Good folk,” said Lizzie,
 Mindful of Jeanie:
 “Give me much and many:”—
 Held out her apron,
 Tossed them her penny.
 “Nay, take a seat with us,
 Honour and eat with us,”
 They answered grinning:
 “Our feast is but beginning.
 Night yet is early,
 Warm and dew-pearly,
 Wakeful and stary:
 Such fruits as these
 No man can carry;
 Half their bloom would fly,
 Half their dew would dry,
 Half their flavour would pass by.
 Sit down and feast with us,
 Be welcome guest with us,
 Cheer you and rest with us.”—
 “Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one waits
 At home alone for me:
 So without further parleying,
 If you will not sell me any
 Of your fruits tho’ much and many,
 Give me back my silver penny
 I tossed you for a fee.”—
 They began to scratch their pates,
 No longer wagging, purring,
 But visibly demurring,
 Grunting and snarling.
 One called her proud,
 Cross-grained, uncivil;
 Their tones waxed loud,

Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.
White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Tho' the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrugged all her face,
And lodged in dimples other chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people
Worn out by her resistance
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with chaste
And inward laughter,

She cried "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me:
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?"—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.
Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,

Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread thro' her veins, knocked at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.
Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,

Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them other early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town:)
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
“For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands.”

O Captain! My Captain!

By
Walt Whitman
(1867)

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
 Here Captain! dear father!
 The arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

Jabberwocky

By
Lewis Carroll
(1871)

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Because I Could Not Stop For Death

by
Emily Dickinson
(1890)

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed us –
The Dews drew quivering and chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

Burning Drift-Wood
By
John Greenleaf Whittier
(1890)

Before my drift-wood fire I sit,
And see, with every waif I burn,
Old dreams and fancies coloring it,
And folly's unlaid ghosts return.

O ships of mine, whose swift keels cleft
The enchanted sea on which they sailed,
Are these poor fragments only left
Of vain desires and hopes that failed?

Did I not watch from them the light
Of sunset on my towers in Spain,
And see, far off, uploom in sight
The Fortunate Isles I might not gain?

Did sudden lift of fog reveal
Arcadia's vales of song and spring,
And did I pass, with grazing keel,
The rocks whereon the sirens sing?

Have I not drifted hard upon
The unmapped regions lost to man,
The cloud-pitched tents of Prester John,
The palace domes of Kubla Khan?

Did land winds blow from jasmine flowers,
Where Youth the ageless Fountain fills?
Did Love make sign from rose blown bowers,
And gold from Eldorado's hills?

Alas! the gallant ships, that sailed
On blind Adventure's errand sent,
Howe'er they laid their courses, failed
To reach the haven of Content.

And of my ventures, those alone
Which Love had freighted, safely sped,
Seeking a good beyond my own,
By clear-eyed Duty piloted.

O mariners, hoping still to meet
The luck Arabian voyagers met,
And find in Bagdad's moonlit street,
Haroun al Raschid walking yet,

Take with you, on your Sea of Dreams,
The fair, fond fancies dear to youth.

I turn from all that only seems,
And seek the sober grounds of truth.

What matter that it is not May,
That birds have flown, and trees are bare,
That darker grows the shortening day,
And colder blows the wintry air!

The wrecks of passion and desire,
The castles I no more rebuild,
May fitly feed my drift-wood fire,
And warm the hands that age has chilled.

Whatever perished with my ships,
I only know the best remains;
A song of praise is on my lips
For losses which are now my gains.

Heap high my hearth! No worth is lost;
No wisdom with the folly dies.
Burn on, poor shreds, your holocaust
Shall be my evening sacrifice!

Far more than all I dared to dream,
Unsought before my door I see;
On wings of fire and steeds of steam
The world's great wonders come to me,

And holier signs, unmarked before,
Of Love to seek and Power to save,—
The righting of the wronged and poor,
The man evolving from the slave;

And life, no longer chance or fate,
Safe in the gracious Fatherhood.
I fold o'er-wearied hands and wait,
In full assurance of the good.

And well the waiting time must be,
Though brief or long its granted days,
If Faith and Hope and Charity
Sit by my evening hearth-fire's blaze.

And with them, friends whom Heaven has spared,
Whose love my heart has comforted,
And, sharing all my joys, has shared
My tender memories of the dead,—

Dear souls who left us lonely here,
Bound on their last, long voyage, to whom
We, day by day, are drawing near,
Where every bark has sailing room.

I know the solemn monotone
Of waters calling unto me;
I know from whence the airs have blown
That whisper of the Eternal Sea.

As low my fires of drift-wood burn,
I hear that sea's deep sounds increase,
And, fair in sunset light, discern
Its mirage-lifted Isles of Peace.

The Ghost of the Murderer's Hut

by
A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson
(1893)

My horse had been lamed in the foot
In the rocks at the back of the run,
So I camped at the Murderer's Hut,
At the place where the murder was done.

The walls were all spattered with gore,
A terrible symbol of guilt;
And the bloodstains were fresh on the floor
Where the blood of the victim was spilt.

The wind hurried past with a shout,
The thunderstorm doubled its din
As I shrank from the danger without,
And recoiled from the horror within.

When lo! at the window a shape,
A creature of infinite dread;
A thing with the face of an ape,
And with eyes like the eyes of the dead.

With the horns of a fiend, and a skin
That was hairy as satyr or elf,
And a long, pointed beard on its chin --
My God! 'twas the Devil himself.

In anguish I sank on the floor,
With terror my features were stiff,
Till the thing gave a kind of a roar,
Ending up with a resonant 'Biff!'

Then a cheer burst aloud from my throat,
For the thing that my spirit did vex
Was naught but an elderly goat --
Just a goat of the masculine sex.

When his master was killed he had fled,
And now, by the dingoes bereft,
The nannies were all of them dead,
And only the billy was left.

So we had him brought in on a stage
To the house where, in style, he can strut,
And he lives to a fragrant old age
As the Ghost of the Murderer's Hut.

The Witch

By

Mary Elizabeth Coleridge
(1893)

I HAVE walked a great while over the snow,
And I am not tall nor strong.
My clothes are wet, and my teeth are set,
And the way was hard and long.
I have wandered over the fruitful earth,
But I never came here before.
Oh, lift me over the threshold, and let me in at the door!

The cutting wind is a cruel foe.
I dare not stand in the blast.
My hands are stone, and my voice a groan,
And the worst of death is past.
I am but a little maiden still,
My little white feet are sore.
Oh, lift me over the threshold, and let me in at the door!

Her voice was the voice that women have,
Who plead for their heart's desire.
She came--she came--and the quivering flame
Sunk and died in the fire.
It never was lit again on my hearth
Since I hurried across the floor,
To lift her over the threshold, and let her in at the door.

Black Riders Came From the Sea

By
Stephen Crane
(1895)

Black riders came from the sea.
There was clang and clang of spear and shield,
And clash and clash of hoof and heel,
Wild shouts and the wave of hair
In the rush upon the wind:
Thus the ride of sin.

In the Desert
By
Stephen Crane
(1895)

In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it.
I said, "Is it good, friend?"
"It is bitter—bitter," he answered;

"But I like it
"Because it is bitter,
"And because it is my heart."

Mystic Shadow, Bending Near Me

By
Stephen Crane
(1895)

Mystic shadow, bending near me,
Who art thou?
Whence come ye?
And -- tell me -- is it fair
Or is the truth bitter as eaten fire?
Tell me!
Fear not that I should quaver.
For I dare -- I dare.
Then, tell me!

The Vampire
By
Rudyard Kipling
(1897)

A fool there was and he made his prayer
 (Even as you or I!)

To a rag and a bone and a hank of hair,
(We called her the woman who did not care),
But the fool he called her his lady fair—
 (Even as you or I!)

Oh, the years we waste and the tears we waste,
 And the work of our head and hand
Belong to the woman who did not know
(And now we know that she never could know)
 And did not understand!

A fool there was and his goods he spent,
 (Even as you or I!)

Honour and faith and a sure intent
(And it wasn't the least what the lady meant),
But a fool must follow his natural bent
 (Even as you or I!)

Oh, the toil we lost and the spoil we lost
 And the excellent things we planned
Belong to the woman who didn't know why
(And now we know that she never knew why)
 And did not understand!

The fool was stripped to his foolish hide,
 (Even as you or I!)

Which she might have seen when she threw him aside—
(But it isn't on record the lady tried)
So some of him lived but the most of him died—
 (Even as you or I!)

And it isn't the shame and it isn't the blame
 That stings like a white-hot brand—
It's coming to know that she never knew why
(Seeing, at last, she could never know why)
 And never could understand!

All Souls
By
Edith Wharton
(1903)

I

A thin moon faints in the sky o'erhead,
And dumb in the churchyard lie the dead.
Walk we not, Sweet, by garden ways,
Where the late rose hangs and the phlox delays,
But forth of the gate and down the road,
Past the church and the yews, to their dim abode.
For it's turn of the year and All Souls' night,
When the dead can hear and the dead have sight.

II

Fear not that sound like wind in the trees:
It is only their call that comes on the breeze;
Fear not the shudder that seems to pass:
It is only the tread of their feet on the grass;
Fear not the drip of the bough as you stoop:
It is only the touch of their hands that grope —
For the year's on the turn, and it's All Souls' night,
When the dead can yearn and the dead can smite.

III

And where should a man bring his sweet to woo
But here, where such hundreds were lovers too?
Where lie the dead lips that thirst to kiss,
The empty hands that their fellows miss,
Where the maid and her lover, from sere to green,
Sleep bed by bed, with the worm between?
For it's turn of the year and All Souls' night,
When the dead can hear and the dead have sight.

IV

And now that they rise and walk in the cold,
Let us warm their blood and give youth to the old.
Let them see us and hear us, and say: "Ah, thus
In the prime of the year it went with us!"
Till their lips drawn close, and so long unkist,
Forget they are mist that mingles with mist!
For the year's on the turn, and it's All Souls' night,
When the dead can burn and the dead can smite.

V

Till they say, as they hear us — poor dead, poor dead! —

“Just an hour of this, and our age-long bed —
Just a thrill of the old remembered pains
To kindle a flame in our frozen veins,
Just a touch, and a sight, and a floating apart,
As the chill of dawn strikes each phantom heart —
For it's turn of the year and All Souls' night,
When the dead can hear, and the dead have sight.”

VI

And where should the living feel alive
But here in this wan white humming hive,
As the moon wastes down, and the dawn turns cold,
And one by one they creep back to the fold?
And where should a man hold his mate and say:
“One more, one more, ere we go their way”?
For the year's on the turn, and it's All Souls' night,
When the living can learn by the churchyard light.

VII

And how should we break faith who have seen
Those dead lips plight with the mist between,
And how forget, who have seen how soon
They lie thus chambered and cold to the moon?
How scorn, how hate, how strive, we too,
Who must do so soon as those others do?
For it's All Souls' night, and break of the day,
And behold, with the light the dead are away

The Haunted Oak

By

Paul Laurence Dunbar
(1903)

Pray why are you so bare, so bare,
Oh, bough of the old oak-tree;
And why, when I go through the shade you throw,
Runs a shudder over me?

My leaves were green as the best, I trow,
And sap ran free in my veins,
But I saw in the moonlight dim and weird
A guiltless victim's pains.

I bent me down to hear his sigh;
I shook with his gurgling moan,
And I trembled sore when they rode away,
And left him here alone.

They'd charged him with the old, old crime,
And set him fast in jail:
Oh, why does the dog howl all night long,
And why does the night wind wail?

He prayed his prayer and he swore his oath,
And he raised his hand to the sky;
But the beat of hoofs smote on his ear,
And the steady tread drew nigh.

Who is it rides by night, by night,
Over the moonlit road?
And what is the spur that keeps the pace,
What is the galling goad?

And now they beat at the prison door,
"Ho, keeper, do not stay!
We are friends of him whom you hold within,
And we fain would take him away

"From those who ride fast on our heels
With mind to do him wrong;
They have no care for his innocence,
And the rope they bear is long."

They have fooled the jailer with lying words,
They have fooled the man with lies;
The bolts unbar, the locks are drawn,
And the great door open flies.

Now they have taken him from the jail,
And hard and fast they ride,

And the leader laughs low down in his throat,
As they halt my trunk beside.

Oh, the judge, he wore a mask of black,
And the doctor one of white,
And the minister, with his oldest son,
Was curiously bedight.

Oh, foolish man, why weep you now?
'Tis but a little space,
And the time will come when these shall dread
The mem'ry of your face.

I feel the rope against my bark,
And the weight of him in my grain,
I feel in the throe of his final woe
The touch of my own last pain.

And never more shall leaves come forth
On the bough that bears the ban;
I am burned with dread, I am dried and dead,
From the curse of a guiltless man.

And ever the judge rides by, rides by,
And goes to hunt the deer,
And ever another rides his soul
In the guise of a mortal fear.

And ever the man he rides me hard,
And never a night stays he;
For I feel his curse as a haunted bough,
On the trunk of a haunted tree.

Once Upon a Time

By
James W. Foley
(1905)

Once upon a time rare flowers grew
On every shrub and bush we used to see;
The skies above our heads were always blue,
The woods held secrets deep for you and me;
The hillsides had their caves where tales were told
Of swart-cheeked pirates from a far-off clime,
When cutlasses were fierce and rovers bold -
Don't you remember? - Once upon a time.

Once upon a time from sun to sun
The hours were full of joy - there was no care,
And webs of gaudy dreams in air were spun
Of deeds heroic and of fortunes fair;
The jangling schoolhouse bell was all the woe
Our spirits knew, and in its tuneless chime.
Was all the sorrow of the long ago-
Don't you remember? - Once upon a time.

Once upon a time the witches rode
In sinister and ominous parade
Upon their sticks at night, and queer lights glowed
With eerie noises by the goblins made;
And many things mysterious there were .
For boyish cheeks to pale at through the grime
That held them brown; and shadows queer would stir-
Don't you remember? - Once upon a time.

Once upon a time our faith was vast
To compass all the things on sea and land
That boys have trembled o'er for ages past,
Nor ever could explain or understand,
And in that faith found happiness too deep
For all the gifted tongues of prose or rime,
And joys ineffable we could not keep -
Don't you remember? - Once upon a time.

Treasures of the Deep
By
Felicia Dorothea Hemans
(1907)

What hid'st thou in thy treasure-caves and cells?
Thou hollow-sounding and mysterious main!
-Pale glistening pearls, and rainbow-colour'd shells,
Bright things which gleam unreck'd-of, and in vain!
-Keep, keep thy riches, melancholy sea!
We ask not such from thee.

Yet more, the depths have more!-what wealth untold,
Far down, and shining through their stillness lies!
Thou hast the starry gems, the burning gold,
Won from ten thousand royal Argosies!
-Sweep o'er thy spoils, thou wild and wrathful main!
Earth claims not these again.

Yet more, the depths have more!-thy waves have roll'd
Above the cities of a world gone by!
Sand hath fill'd up the palaces of old,
Sea-weed o'ergrown the halls of revelry.
-Dash o'er them, ocean! in thy scornful play!
Man yields them to decay.

Yet more! the billows and the depths have more!
High hearts and brave are gather'd to thy breast!
They hear not now the booming waters roar,
The battle thunders will not break their rest.
-Keep thy red gold and gems, thou stormy grave!
Give back the true and brave!

Give back the lost and lovely!-those for whom
The place was kept at board and hearth so long,
The prayer went up through midnight's breathless gloom,
And the vain yearning woke 'midst festal song!
Hold fast thy buried Isles, thy towers o'erthrown-
But all is not thine own.

To thee the love of woman hath gone down,
Dark flow thy tides o'er manhood's noble head,
O'er youth's bright locks, and beauty's flowery crown,
-Yet must thou hear a voice-restore the dead!
Earth shall reclaim her precious things from thee!
-Restore the dead, thou sea!

Sea Sorcery

By

Robert William Service
(1909)

Oh how I love the laughing sea,
Sun lances splintering;
Or with a virile harmony
In salty caves to sing;
Or mumbling pebbles on the shore,
Or roused to monster might:
By day I love the sea, but more
I love it in the night.

High over ocean hangs my home
And when the moon is clear
I stare and stare till fairy foam
Is music in my ear;
Till glamour dances to a tune
No mortal man could make;
And there bewitched beneath the moon
To beauty I awake.

Then though I seek my bed again
And close the shutters tight,
Still, still I hear that wild refrain
And see that mystic light . . .
Oh reckon me a crazy loon,
But blessed I will be
If my last seeing be the moon,
My last sound--the Sea.

The Ghost
By
Stefan George
(1909)

Just like an angel with evil eye,
I shall return to thee silently,
Upon thy bower I'll alight,
With falling shadows of the night

With thee, my brownie, I'll commune,
And give thee kisses cold as the moon,
And with a serpent's moist embrace,
I'll crawl around thy resting-place.

And when the livid morning falls,
Thou'lt find alone the empty walls,
And till the evening, cold 'twill be.

As others with their tenderness,
Upon thy life and youthfulness,
I'll reign alone with dread o'er thee.

The Land God Forgot

By

Robert William Service

(1909)

The lonely sunsets flare forlorn
Down valleys dreadly desolate;
The lordly mountains soar in scorn
As still as death, as stern as fate.

The lonely sunsets flame and die;
The giant valleys gulp the night;
The monster mountains scrape the sky,
Where eager stars are diamond-bright.

So gaunt against the gibbous moon,
Piercing the silence velvet-piled,
A lone wolf howls his ancient rune --
The fell arch-spirit of the Wild.

O outcast land! O leper land!
Let the lone wolf-cry all express
The hate insensate of thy hand,
Thy heart's abysmal loneliness.

If—
By
Rudyard Kipling
(1910)

('Brother Square-Toes'—*Rewards and Fairies*)

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Flannan Isle
by
Wilfrid Wilson Gibson
(1912)

Though three men dwell on Flannan Isle
To keep the lamp alight,
As we steer'd under the lee, we caught
No glimmer through the night!

A passing ship at dawn had brought
The news; and quickly we set sail,
To find out what strange thing might all
The keepers of the deep-sea light.

The winter day broke blue and bright,
With glancing sun and glancing spray,
As o'er the swell our boat made way,
As gallant as a gull in flight.

But, as we near'd the lonely Isle;
And look'd up at the naked height;
And saw the lighthouse towering white,
With blinded lantern, that all night
Had never shot a spark
Of comfort through the dark,
So ghastly in the cold sunlight
It seem'd, that we were struck the while
With wonder all too dread for words.

And, as into the tiny creek
We stole beneath the hanging crag,
We saw three queer, black, ugly birds--
Too big, by far, in my belief,
For guillemot or shag--
Like seamen sitting bold upright
Upon a half-tide reef:
But, as we near'd, they plunged from sight,
Without a sound, or spurt of white.

And still too mazed to speak,
We landed; and made fast the boat;
And climb'd the track in single file,
Each wishing he was safe afloat,
On any sea, however far,
So it be far from Flannan Isle:
And still we seem'd to climb, and climb,
As though we'd lost all count of time,
And so must climb for evermore.
Yet, all too soon, we reached the door--
The black, sun-blister'd lighthouse door,
That gaped for us ajar.

As, on the threshold, for a spell,
We paused, we seem'd to breathe the smell
Of limewash and of tar,
Familiar as our daily breath,
As though 'twere some strange scent of death:
And so, yet wondering, side by side,
We stood a moment, still tongue-tied:
And each with black foreboding eyed
The door, ere we should fling it wide,
To leave the sunlight for the gloom:
Till, plucking courage up, at last,
Hard on each other's heels we pass'd
Into the living-room.

Yet, as we crowded through the door,
We only saw a table, spread
For dinner, meat and cheese and bread;
But all untouch'd; and no one there:
As though, when they sat down to eat,
Ere they could even taste,
Alarm had come; and they in haste
Had risen and left the bread and meat:
For on the table-head a chair
Lay tumbled on the floor.
We listen'd; but we only heard
The feeble cheeping of a bird
That starved upon its perch:
And, listening still, without a word,
We set about our hopeless search.

We hunted high, we hunted low,
And soon ransack'd the empty house;
Then o'er the island, to and fro,
We ranged, to listen and to look
In every cranny, cleft or nook
That might have hid a bird or mouse:
But, though we searched from shore to shore,
We found no sign in any place:
And soon again stood face to face
Before the gaping door:
And stole into the room once more
As frighten'd children steal.

Aye: though we hunted high and low,
And hunted everywhere,
Of the three men's fate we found no trace
Of any kind in any place,
But a door ajar, and an untouch'd meal,
And an overtoppled chair.

And, as we listen'd in the gloom

Of that forsaken living-room--
O chill clutch on our breath--
We thought how ill-chance came to all
Who kept the Flannan Light:
And how the rock had been the death
Of many a likely lad:
How six had come to a sudden end
And three had gone stark mad:
And one whom we'd all known as friend
Had leapt from the lantern one still night,
And fallen dead by the lighthouse wall:
And long we thought
On the three we sought,
And of what might yet befall.

Like curs a glance has brought to heel,
We listen'd, flinching there:
And look'd, and look'd, on the untouch'd meal
And the overtoppled chair.

We seem'd to stand for an endless while,
Though still no word was said,
Three men alive on Flannan Isle,
Who thought on three men dead.

Haunted Seas

By
Cale Young Rice
(1912)

A gleaming glassy ocean
Under a sky of grey;
A tide that dreams of motion,
Or moves, as the dead may;
A bird that dips and wavers
Over lone waters round,
Then with a cry that quavers
Is gone—a spectral sound.

The brown sad sea-weed drifting
Far from the land, and lost;
The faint warm fog unlifting,
The derelict long tossed,
But now at rest—though haunted
By the death-scenting shark,
Whose prey no more undaunted
Slips from it, spent and stark.