

"I were better to die a thousand deaths than live each day as I live!
I have sinned, I have sunk to the lowest depths—but oh, I have suffered so!

Hark! Oh hark! I can hear the bells!... Look! I can see her there,

Fair as a dream ... but it fades ... And now—I can hear the dreadful hum
Of the crowded court ... See! the Judge looks down ...

Not Guilty, my Lord, I swear ...

The bells, I can hear the bells again ...

Eh! I come, I come!...

"Rouse up, old man, it's twelve o'clock. You can't sleep here, you know.

Say! ain't you got no sentiment? Lift up your muddled head;

Have a drink to the glad New Year, a drop before you go—

You damned old dirty hobo ... My God! Here, boys! He's DEAD!"

Comfort

Say! You've struck a heap of trouble—

Bust in business, lost your wife;

No one cares a cent about you,

You don't care a cent for life;

Hard luck has of hope bereft you,

Health is failing, wish you'd die—

Why, you've still the sunshine left you,

And the big, blue sky.

Sky so blue it makes you wonder

If it's heaven shining through;

Earth so smiling 'way out yonder,

Sun so bright it dazzles you;

Birds a-singing, flowers a-flinging

All their fragrance on the breeze;

Dancing shadows, green, still meadows—

Don't you mope, you've still got these.

These, and none can take them from you;

These, and none can weigh their worth.

What! you're tired and broke and beaten?—

Why, you're rich—you've got the earth!

Yes, if you're a tramp in tatters,

While the blue sky bends above,

You've got nearly all that matters,

You've got God, and God is love.

Premontion

"Twas a year ago and the moon was bright
(Oh, I remember so well, so well),
I walked with my love in a sea of light,
And the voice of my sweet was a silver bell.

And sudden the moon grew strangely dull,
And sudden my love had taken wings;
I looked on the face of a grinning skull,
I strained to my heart a ghastly thing.

"Twas but fantasy, for my love lay still
In my arms with her tender eyes aglow,
And she wondered why my lips were chill,
Why I was silent and kissed her so.

A year has gone and the moon is bright,
A gibbous moon like a ghost of woe;
I sit by a new-made grave-to-night,
And my heart is broken—it's strange, you know.

New Year's Eve

It's cruel cold on the water-front, silent and dark and drear;
Only the black tide weltering, only the hissing snow;
And I, alone, like a storm-tossed wreck, on this night of the glad New Year,
Shuffling along in the icy wind, ghastly and gaunt and slow.

They're playing a tune in McGuffy's saloon, and it's cheery and bright in there
(God! but I'm weak—since the bitter dawn, and never a bite of food);
I'll just go over and slip inside—I mustn't give way to despair—
Perhaps I can bum a little booze if the boys are feeling good.

They'll jeer at me, and they'll sneer at me, and they'll call me a whiskey soak;
("Have a drink? Well, thankee kindly, sir, I don't mind if I do.")
A drivelling, dirty gin-joint fiend, the butt of the bar-room joke;
Sunk and sodden and hopeless—"Another? Well, here's to you!"

McGuffy is showing a bunch of the boys how Bob Fitzsimmons hit;
The barman is talking of Tammany Hall, and why the ward boss got fired;
I'll just sneak into a corner, and they'll let me alone a bit;
The room is reeling round and round... O God, but I'm tired, I'm tired....

Roses she wore on her breast that night. Oh, but their scent was sweet;
Alone we sat on the balcony, and the fan-palms arched above;
The witching strain of a waltz by Strauss came up to our cool retreat,
And I prisoned her little hand in mine, and I whispered my plea of love.

Then sudden the laughter died on her lips, and lowly she bent her head;
And oh, there came in the deep, dark eyes a look that was heaven to see
And the moments went, and I waited there, and never a word was said,
And she plucked from her bosom a rose of red, and shyly gave it to me.

Then the music swelled to a crash of joy, and the lights blazed up like day;
And I held her fast to my throbbing heart, and I kissed her bonny brow;
"She is mine, she is mine for evermore!" the violins seemed to say,
And the bells were ringing the New Year in—O God! I can hear them now.

Don't you remember that long, last waltz, with its sobbing, sad refrain?
Don't you remember that last goodbye, and the dear eyes dim with tears?
Don't you remember that golden dream, with never a hint of pain,
Of lives that would blend like an angel-song in the bliss of the coming year?
Oh, what have I lost! What have I lost! Ethel, forgive, forgive!
The red, red rose is faded now, and it's fifty years ago.

And they'd better far forget—
 Those who say they love us yet—
 Forget, blot out with bitterness our name.

The Tramps

Can you recall, dear comrade, when we tramped
 God's land together,
 And we sang the old, old Earth-song, for our
 youth was very sweet;
 When we drank and fought and lusted, as we
 mocked at tie and tether,
 Along the road to Anywhere, the wide world at
 our feet.

Along the road to Anywhere, when each day had
 its story;
 When time was yet our vassal, and life's jest
 was still unstale;
 When peace unfathomed filled our hearts as,
 bathed in amber glory,
 Along the road to Anywhere we watched the
 sunsets pale.

Alas! the road to Anywhere is pitfalled with
 disaster;
 There's hunger, want, and weariness, yet oh,
 we loved it so!
 As on we tramped exultantly, and no man was
 our master,
 And no man guessed what dreams were ours,
 as swinging heel and toe,
 We tramped the road to Anywhere, the magic
 road to Anywhere,
 The tragic road to Anywhere, such dear, dim
 years ago.

L'Envoi

*You who have lived in the Land,
 You who have trusted the trail;
 You who are strong to withstand,
 You who are swift to assail;
 Songs have I sung to beguile,
 Vintage of desperate years
 Hard as a harlot's smile,
 Bitter as unshed tears.*

*Little of joy or mirth,
 Little of ease I sing;
 Sagas of men of earth,
 Humanly suffering,
 Such as you all have done;
 Savagely faring forth,
 Sons of the midnight sun,
 Argonauts of the North.*

*Far in the land God forgot
 Glimmers the lure of your trail;
 Still in your lust are you taught
 Even to win is to fail.*

*Still must you follow and fight
 Under the vampire wing;
 There in the long, long night
 Hoping and vanquishing.*

*Husbandmen of the Wild,
 Reaping a barren gain;
 Scourged by desire, reconciled
 Unto disaster and pain;
 These my songs are for you,
 You who are scared with the brand:
 God knows I have tried to be true;
 Please God you will understand.*

The Rhyme of the Restless Ones

We couldn't sit and study for the law;
 The stagnation of a bank we couldn't stand;
 For our riot blood was surging, and we didn't need much urging
 To excitements and excesses that are banned.
 So we took to wine and drink and other things,
 And the devil in us struggled to be free;
 Till our friends rose up in wrath, and they pointed out the path,
 And they paid our debts and packed us o'er the sea.

Oh, they shook us off and shipped us o'er the foam,
 To the larger lands that lure a man to roam;
 And we took the chance they gave
 Of a far and foreign grave,
 And we bade goodbye for evermore to home.

And some of us are climbing on the peak,
 And some of us are camping on the plain;
 By pine and palm you'll find us, with never claim to bind us,
 By track and trail you'll meet us once again.

We are fated serfs to freedom—sky and sea;
 We have failed where slummy cities overflow;
 But the stranger ways of earth know our pride and know our worth,
 And we go into the dark as fighters go.

Yes, we go into the night as brave men go,
 Though our faces they be often streaked with woe;
 Yet we're hard as cats to kill,
 And our hearts are reckless still,
 And we've danced with death a dozen times or so.

And you'll find us in Alaska after gold,
 And you'll find us herding cattle in the South.
 We like strong drink and fun; and when the race is run,
 We often die with curses in our mouth.

We are wild as colts unbroke, but never mean;
 Of our sins we've shoulders broad to bear the blame;
 But we'll never stay in town, and we'll never settle down,
 And we'll never have an object or an aim.

No, there's that in us that time can never tame;
 And life will always seem a careless game;

The ancient, outworn, puritanic traditions of
Right and Wrong.”

Then the Master feared for His angel, and called
him again to His side,
For oh, the woman was wondrous, and oh, the
angel was tried.

And deep in his hell sang the Devil, and this was
the strain of his song:

”The ancient, outworn, puritanic traditions of
Right and Wrong.”

The Woman And The Angel

An angel was tired of heaven, as he lounged in
the golden street;

His halo was tilted sideways, and his harp lay
mute at his feet;

So the Master scooped in His pity, and gave him
a pass to go,

For the space of a moon, to the earth-world, to
mix with the men below.

He doffed his celestial garments, scarce waiting
to lay them straight;

He bade goodbye to Peter, who stood by the
golden gate;

The sexless singers of heaven chanted a fond
farewell,

And the imps looked up as they pattered on the
red-hot flags of hell.

Never was seen such an angel: eyes of a heavenly
blue,

Features that shamed Apollo, hair of a golden
hue;

The women simply adored him, his lips were like
Cupid's bow;

But he never ventured to use them—and so they
voted him slow.

Till at last there came One Woman, a marvel of
loveliness,

And she whispered to him: "Do you love me?"

And he answered that woman, "Yes."

And she said: "Put your arms around me, and
kiss me, and hold me—so—"

But fiercely he drew back, saying: "This thing
is wrong, and I know."

Then sweetly she mocked his scruples, and softly
she him beguiled:

"You, who are verily man among men, speak
with the tongue of a child.

We have outlived the old standards; we have
burst, like an over-tight thong,

Blood-slaked and rapine swept. He seems to stand
Upon the gory plain of Ondurman.

Then Magerfontein, and supreme command
Over his Highlanders. To shake his hand
A King is proud, and princes call him friend,
And glory crowns his life—and now the end.

The awful end. His eyes are dark with doom;

He hears the shrapnel shrieking overhead:

He sees the ravaged ranks, the flame-stabbed gloom.

Oh, to have fallen! the battle-field his bed,

With Wauchope and his glorious brother-dead.

Why was he saved for this, for this? And now

He raises the revolver to his brow.

* * * * *

In many a Highland home, framed with rude art,

You'll find his portrait, rough-hewn, stern and square:

It's graven in the Fuyam fellah's heart;

The Ghurka reads it at his evening prayer;

The raw lands know it, where the fierce suns glare;

The Dervish fears it. Honour to his name,

Who holds aloft the shield of England's fame.

Mourn for our hero, men of Northern race!

We do not know his sin; we only know

His sword was keen. He laughed death in the face,

And struck, for Empire's sake, a giant blow.

His arm was strong. Ah! well they learnt, the foe.

The echo of his deeds is ringing yet,

Will ring for aye. All else ... let us forget.

“FIGHTING MAC”

A LIFE TRAGEDY

A pistol-shot rings round and round the world:

In pitiful defeat a warrior lies,

A last defiance to dark Death is hurled,

A last wild challenge shocks the sunlit skies.

Alone he falls with wide, wan, woeful eyes:

Eyes that could smile at death—could not face shame.

Alone, alone he paced his narrow room,

In the bright sunshine of that Paris day;

Saw in his thought the awful hand of doom;

Saw in his dream his glory pass away;

Tried in his heart, his weary heart, to pray:

”O God! who made me, give me strength to face

The spectre of this bitter, black disgrace.”

The burn brawls darkly down the shaggy glen,

The bee-kissed heather blooms around the door;

He sees himself a barefoot boy again,

Bending o’er page of legendary lore.

He hears the pibroch, grips the red claymore,

Runs with the Fiery Cross a clansman true,

Sworn kinsman of Rob Roy and Roderick Dhu.

Eating his heart out with a wild desire,

One day, behind his counter trim and neat,

He hears a sound that sets his brain afire—

The Highlanders are marching down the street.

Oh, how the pipes shrill out, the mad drums beat!

”On to the gates of Hell, my Gordons gay!”

He flings his hated yardstick far away.

He sees the sullen pass, high-crowned with snow,

Where Afghans cower with eyes of gleaming hate.

He hurls himself against the hidden foe.

They try to rally—ah, too late, too late!

Again, defenceless, with fierce eyes that wait

For death, he stands, like baited bull at bay,

And flouts the Boers, that mad Majuba day.

He sees again the murderous Soudan,