

She sings a wild, sweet song that throbs with pain,
The added pain of life that transcends art,
A song of home, a deep, celestial strain,
The glorious swan-song of a dying heart.

A lame tramp comes along the railway track,
A grizzled dog whose day is nearly done:
He passes, pauses, then comes slowly back
And listens there—an audience of one.

She sings—her golden voice is passion-fraught
As when she charmed a thousand eager ears;
He listens trembling, and she knows it not,
And down his hollow cheeks roll bitter tears.

She ceases and is still, as if to pray;
There is no sound, the stars are all alight—
Only a wretch who stumbles on his way,
Only a vagrant sobbing in the night.

The Rhyme of the Remittance Man

There's a four-pronged buck a-swinging in the shadow of my cabin,
And it roamed the velvet valley till to-day;

But I tracked it by the river, and I trailed it in the cover,
And I killed it on the mountain miles away.

Now I've had my lazy supper, and the level sun is gleaming
On the water where the silver salmon play;

And I light my little corn-cob, and I linger softly dreaming,
In the twilight, of a land that's far away.

Far away, so faint and far, is flaming London, fevered Paris,
That I fancy I have gained another star;

Far away the din and hurry, far away the sin and worry,
Far away—God knows they cannot be too far.

Gilded galley-slaves of Mammon—how my purse-proud brothers taunt me!
I might have been as well-to-do as they

Had I clutched like them my chances, learned their wisdom, crushed my fancies,
Starved my soul and gone to business every day.

Well, the cherry bends with blossom, and the vivid grass is springing,
And the star-like lily nestles in the green;

And the frogs their joys are singing, and my heart in tune is ringing,
And it doesn't matter what I might have been,

While above the scented pine-gloom, piling heights of golden glory,
The sun-god paints his canvas in the west;

I can couch me deep in clover, I can listen to the story
Of the lazy, lapping water—it is best.

While the trout leaps in the river, and the blue grouse thrills the cover,
And the frozen snow betrays the panther's track,

And the robin greets the dayspring with the rapture of a lover,
I am happy, and I'll nevermore go back.

For I know I'd just be longing for the little old log cabin,
With the morning-glory clinging to the door,

Till I loathed the city places, cursed the care on all the faces,
Turned my back on lazar London evermore.

So send me far from Lombard Street, and write me down a failure;
Put a little in my purse and leave me free.

Say: "He turned from Fortune's offering to follow up a pale lure,
He is one of us no longer—let him be."

I am one of you no longer: by the trails my feet have broken,
The dizzy peaks I've scaled, the camp-fire's glow,

By the lonely seas I've sailed in—yea, the final word is spoken,
I am signed and sealed to nature. Be it so.

•

Music in the Bush

O'er the dark pines she sees the silver moon,
And in the west, all tremulous, a star;
And soothing sweet she hears the mellow tune
Of cow-bells jangled in the fields afar.

Quite listless, for her daily stent is done,
She strands, sad exile, at her rose-wreathed door,
And sends her love eternal with the sun
That goes to gild the land she'll see no more.

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The grave, gaunt pines imprison her sad gaze,
All still the sky and darkling drearily;
She feels the chilly breath of dear, dead days
Come sifting through the alders eerily.

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Oh, how the roses riot in their bloom!
The curtains stir as with an ancient pain;
Her old piano gleams from out the gloom,
And waits and waits her tender touch in vain.

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But now her hands like moonlight brush the keys
With velvet grace, melodious delight;
And now a sad refrain from overseas
Goes sobbing on the bosom of the night.

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And now she sings. (O singer in the gloom,
Voicing a sorrow we can ne'er express,
Here in the Farness where we few have room
Unshamed to show our love and tenderness,

Our hearts will echo, till they bear no more,
That song of sadness and of motherland;

And stretched in deathless love to England's shore,
Some day she'll harken and she'll understand.)

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A prima-donna in the shining past,
But now a mother growing old and grey,
She thinks of how she held a people fast
In thrall, and gleaned the triumphs of a day.

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She sees a sea of faces like a dream;
She sees herself a queen of song once more;
She sees lips part in rapture, eyes agleam;
She sings as never once she sang before.

•

The Men that don't Fit in

There's a race of men that don't fit in,

A race that can't stay still;

So they break the hearts of kith and kin,

And they roam the world at will.

They range the field and they rove the flood,

And they climb the mountain's crest;

Theirs is the curse of the gipsy blood,

And they don't know how to rest.

If they just went straight they might go far;

They are strong and brave and true;

But they're always tired of the things that are,

And they want the strange and new.

They say: "Could I find my proper groove,

What a deep mark I would make!"

So they chop and change, and each fresh move

Is only a fresh mistake.

And each forgets, as he strips and runs,

With a brilliant, fitful pace,

It's the steady, quiet, plodding ones

Who win in the lifelong race.

And each forgets that his youth has fled,

Forgets that his prime is past,

Till he stands one day with a hope that's dead

In the glare of the truth at last.

He has failed, he has failed; he has missed his chance;

He has just done things by half.

Life's been a jolly good joke on him,

And now is the time to laugh.

Ha, ha! He is one of the Legion Lost;

He was never meant to win;

He's a rolling stone, and it's bred in the bone;

He's a man who won't fit in.

The Low-Down White

This is the pay-day up at the mines, when the bearded brutes come down;

There's money to burn in the streets to-night, so I've sent my klooch to town,

With a haggard face and a ribband of red entwined in her hair of brown.

And I know at the dawn she'll come reeling home with the bottles, one, two, three;

One for herself to drown her shame, and two big bottles for me,

To make me forget the thing I am and the man I used to be.

To make me forget the brand of the dog, as I crouch in this hideous place;

To make me forget once I kindled the light of love in a lady's face,

Where even the squalid Siwash now holds me a black disgrace.

Oh, I have guarded my secret well! And who would dream as I speak

In a tribal tongue like a rogue unhung, 'mid the ranch-house filth and reek,

I could roll to bed with a Latin phrase, and rise with a verse of Greek?

Yet I was a senior prizeman once, and the pride of a college eight;

Called to the bar—my friends were true! but they could not keep me straight;

Then came the divorce, and I went abroad and "died" on the River Plate.

But I'm not dead yet; though with half a lung there isn't time to spare,

And I hope that the year will see me out, and, thank God, no one will care—

Save maybe the little slim Siwash girl with the rose of shame in her hair.

She will come with the dawn, and the dawn is near; I can see its evil glow,

Like a corpse-light seen through a frosty pane in a night of want and woe;

And yonder she comes, by the bleak bull-pines, swift staggering through the snow.

The Little Old Log Cabin

When a man gits on his upperts in a hard-pan sort of town,
 An' he ain't got nothin' comin', an' he can't afford ter eat,
 An' he's in a fix fer lodgin', an' he wanders up an' down,
 An' you'd fancy he'd been boozin', he's so locoed 'bout the feet;
 When he's feelin' sneakin' sorry, an' his belt is hangin' slack,
 An' his face is peaked an' grey-like, an' his heart gits down an' whines,
 Then he's apt ter git a-thinkin' an' a-wishin' he was back
 In the little ol' log cabin in the shadder of the pines.

When he's on the blazin' desert, an' his canteen's sprung a leak,
 An' he's all alone an' crazy, an' he's crawlin' like a snail,
 An' his tongue's so black an' swollen that it hurts him fer to speak,
 An' he gouges down fer water, an' the raven's on his trail;
 When he's done with care and cursin', an' he feels more like to cry,
 An' he sees ol' Death a-grinnin', an' he thinks upon his crimes,
 Then he's like ter hev' a vision, as he settles down ter die,
 Of the little ol' log cabin an' the roses an' the vines.

Oh, the little ol' log cabin, it's a solemn shinin' mark
 When a feller gits ter sinnin', an' a-goin' ter the wall,
 An' folks don't understand him, an' he's gropin' in the dark,
 An' he's sick of bein' cursed at, an' he's longin' fer his call:
 When the sun of life's a-sinkin' you can see it 'way above,
 On the hill from out the shadder in a glory 'gin the sky,
 An' your mother's voice is callin', an' her arms are stretched in love,
 An' somehow you're glad you're goin', an' you ain't a-scared to die;
 When you'll be like a kid again, an' nestle to her breast,
 An' never leave its shelter, an' forget, an' love, an' rest.

Quatrains

One said: Thy life is time to make or mar,
 To flicker feebly, or to soar, a star;
 It lies with thee—the choice is thine, is thine,
 To hit the ties or drive thy auto-car.

I answer Her: The choice is mine—ah, no!
 We all were made or marred long, long ago.
 The parts are written: hear the super wall:
 "Who is stage-managing this cosmic show?"

Blind fools of fate, and slaves of circumstance,
 Life is a fiddler, and we all must dance.
 From gloom where mocks that will-o'-wisp, Freewill,
 I heard a voice cry: "Say, give us a chance."

Chance! Oh, there is no chance. The scene is set.
 Up with the curtain! Man, the marionette,
 Resumes his part. The gods will work the wires.
 They've got it all down fine, you bet, you bet!

It's all decreed: the mighty earthquake crash;
 The countless constellations' wheel and flash;
 The rise and fall of empires, war's red tide,
 The composition of your dinner hash.

There's no haphazard in this world of ours:
 Cause and effect are grim, relentless powers.
 They rule the world. (A king was shot last night.
 Last night I held the joker and both bowers.)

From out the mesh of fate our heads we thrust.
 We can't do what we would, but what we must.
 Heredity has got us in a cinch.
 (Consoling thought, when you've been on a "bust.")

Hark to the song where spherul voices blend:
 "There's no beginning, never will be end."
 It makes us nutty; hang the astral chimes!
 The table's spread; come, let us dine, my friend.

The Reckoning

It's fine to have a blow-out in a fancy restaurant,
With terrapin and canvas-back and all the wine you want;
To enjoy the flowers and music, watch the pretty women pass,
Smoke a choice cigar, and sip the wealthy water in your glass;
It's bully in a high-toned joint to eat and drink your fill,
But it's quite another matter when you

Pay the bill.

It's great to go out every night on fun or pleasure bent,
To wear your glad rags always, and to never save a cent;
To drift along regardless, have a good time every trip;
To hit the high spots sometimes, and to let your chances slip;
To know you're acting foolish, yet to go on fooling still,
Till Nature calls a show-down, and you

Pay the bill.

Time has got a little bill—get wise while yet you may,
For the debit side's increasing in a most alarming way;
The things you had no right to do, the things you should have done,
They're all put down: it's up to you to pay for every one.
So eat, drink, and be merry, have a good time if you will,
But God help you when the time comes, and you

Foot the bill.

The Younger Son

If you leave the gloom of London and you seek a glowing land,
Where all except the flag is strange and new,
There's a bronzed and stalwart fellow who will grip you by the hand,
And greet you with a welcome warm and true;
For he's your younger brother, the one you sent away,
Because there wasn't room for him at home;
And now he's quite contented, and he's glad he didn't stray,
And he's building Britain's greatness o'er the foam.

When the giant herd is moving at the rising of the sun,
And the prairie is lit with rose and gold;
And the camp is all a-bustle, and the busy day's begun,
He leaps into the saddle sure and bold.
Through the round of heat and hurry, through the racket and the rout,
He rattles at a pace that nothing mars;
And when the night-winds whisper, and camp-fires flicker out,
He is sleeping like a child beneath the stars.

When the wattle-blooms are drooping in the sombre she-oak glade,
And the breathless land is lying in a swoon,
He leaves his work a moment, leaning lightly on his spade,
And he hears the bell-bird chime the Austral noon.
The parakeets are silent in the gum-tree by the creek;
The ferny grove is sunshine-steeped and still;
But the dew will gem the myrtle in the twilight ere he seek
His little lonely cabin on the hill.

Around the purple, vine-clad slope the argent river dreams;
The roses almost hide the house from view;
A snow-peak of the Winterberg in crimson splendour gleams;
The shadow deepens down on the karroo.
He seeks the lily-scented dusk beneath the orange-tree:
His pipe in silence glows and fades and glows,
And then two little maids come out and climb upon his knee,
And one is like the lily, one the rose.

He sees his white sheep dapple o'er the green New Zealand plain,
And where Vancouver's shaggy ramparts frown,
When the sunlight threads the pine-gloom he is fighting might and main
To clinch the rivers of an Empire down.
You will find him toiling, toiling, in the south or in the west,
A child of nature, fearless, frank and free;

And the warmest heart that beats for you is beating in his breast,
And he sends you loyal greeting o'er the sea.

You've a brother in the Army, you've another in the Church;
One of you is a diplomatic swell;

You've had the pick of everything and left him in the lurch;

And yet I think he's doing very well.

I'm sure his life is happy, and he doesn't envy yours;

I know he loves the land his pluck has won;

And I fancy in the years unborn, while England's fame endures,

She will come to bless with pride—the Younger Son.

Unforgotten

I know a garden where the lilies gleam,

And one who lingers in the sunshine there;

She is than white-stoled lily far more fair,

And oh, her eyes are heaven-lit with dream.

I know a garret, cold and dark and drear,

And one who toils and toils with tireless pen,

Until his brave, sad eyes grow weary—then

He seeks the stars, pale, silent as a seer.

And ah, it's strange, for desolate and dim

Between these two there rolls an ocean wide;

Yet he is in the garden by her side,

And she is in the garret there with him.

My Madonna

I haled me a woman from the street,
Shameless, but, oh, so fair!

I bade her sit in the model's seat,
And I painted her sitting there.

I hid all trace of her heart unclean;

I painted a babe at her breast;

I painted her as she might have been

If the Worst had been the Best.

She laughed at my picture, and went away.

Then came, with a knowing nod,

A connoisseur, and I heard him say:

„’Tis Mary, the Mother of God.”

So I painted a halo round her hair,

And I sold her, and took my fee,

And she hangs in the church of Saint Hilaire,

Where you and all may see.

The March of the Dead

The cruel war was over—oh, the triumph was so sweet!

We watched the troops returning, through our tears;

There was triumph, triumph, triumph down the scarlet glittering street,

And you scarce could hear the music for the cheers.

And you scarce could see the house-tops for the flags that flew between,

The bells were pealing madly to the sky;

And every one was shouting for the Soldiers of the Queen,

And the glory of an age was passing by.

And then there came a shadow, swift and sudden, dark and drear;

The bells were silent, not an echo stirred.

The flags were drooping sullenly, the men forgot to cheer;

We waited, and we never spoke a word.

The sky grew darker, darker, till from out the gloomy rack

There came a voice that checked the heart with dread:

„Tear down, tear down your bunting now, and hang up sable black;

They are coming—it's the Army of the Dead.”

They were coming, they were coming, gaunt and ghastly, sad and slow;

They were coming, all the crimson wrecks of pride;

With faces seared, and cheeks red smeared, and haunting eyes of woe,

And clotted holes the khaki couldn't hide.

Oh, the clammy brow of anguish! the livid, foam-flecked lips!

The reeling ranks of ruin swept along!

The limb that trailed, the hand that failed, the bloody finger-tips!

And oh, the dreary rhythm of their song!

„They left us on the veldt-side, but we felt we couldn't stop,

On this, our England's crowning festival day;

We're the men of Magersfontein, we're the men of Spion Kop,

Colenso,—we're the men who had to pay.

We're the men who paid the blood-price. Shall the grave be all our gain?

You owe us. Long and heavy is the score.

Then cheer us for our glory now, and cheer us for our pain,

And cheer us as ye never cheered before.”

The folks were white and stricken, and each tongue seemed weighed with lead;

Each heart was clutched in hollow hand of ice;

And every eye was staring at the horror of the dead,

The pity of the men who paid the price.

They were come, were come to mock us, in the first flush of our peace;

Through writhing lips their teeth were all aglaim;

They were coming in their thousands—oh, would they never cease!
I closed my eyes, and then—it was a dream.
There was triumph, triumph, triumph down the scarlet gleaming street;
The town was mad, a man was like a boy.
A thousand flags were flaming where the sky and city meet;
A thousand bells were thundering the joy.
There was music, mirth and sunshine; but some eyes shone with regret:
And while we stun with cheers our homing braves,
O God, in Thy great mercy, let us nevermore forget
The graves they left behind, the bitter graves.

*The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.*