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DRAPER, Brenda Murray.
Dales of Derbyshire and
Other Poems.





The Dales of Derbyshire

By

BRENDA MURRAY DRAPER



APPRECIATIONS

The late MR. CECIL CHESTERTON, when Editor of the *New Witness*, wrote to the Author: "I appreciate your poems very much and consider it a distinct privilege to be allowed to publish them. Some of them seem to me to be among the best poetry that is now being written."

. .

Montrose Standard: "Mrs. MURRAY DRAPER'S first book will be eagerly welcomed by the many poetry-lovers who have discerned with her occasional pieces a fine gift of expression, and an uncommon, but very real sense of beauty. Its appearance should serve to win for her the meed of recognition which is her due as one of the finest of our younger Scottish poetesses."

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IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

THE DALES *of*
DERBYSHIRE

AND OTHER POEMS

By

BRENDA MURRAY DRAPER



Published by the Author

BRAESYDE
NEWTON ROAD
BURTON-ON-TRENT

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The Dales of Derbyshire

O, flowery dales of Derbyshire,
O, pastures, cool and fair;
I hear your courting cuckoos call,
And see the bright June sunshine fall
On your sorrel, rich and rare;
And little copper butterflies
Burnished, as if from tropic skies,
I follow everywhere;
And watch their wings, in colour wed
Unto the flaming sorrel bed.

O, sunny dales of Derbyshire,
O, pastures sweet with flowers;
I watch your singing brooklets go
Meandering to the Trent below,
A rosary of hours;
And lightly gather, as I pass,
The Timothy and Foxtail grass,
To blow, in coloured showers,
From princely spikelets one by one,
Their glorious pollen to the sun.

O, happy dales of Derbyshire,
Beneath an azure sky
I listen to the willow wren
Warbling his honeyed cadence, when
The summer sun is high;
Softly from poplars far above
Hear the sweet music of the dove;
And, like a jewel flash by,
The kingfisher, that haunts the pool,
I see beside your waters cool.

O, flowery dales of Derbyshire,
Mornings, and dewy eves
I roam your fragrant fields among
The flowering grasses, and along
Where, amid silvery leaves,
A solitude for birds a-dream,
And Myosotis in the stream . . .
The magic willow weaves.
O, sweet the summer of the year
Within the dales of Derbyshire!

Daphne

When the air is crystal clear
In the opening of the year,
Mute and still
Are the valleys and the woods,
And a wintry silence broods
On the hill.

When the trees are black and bare,
Silhouetted everywhere
Line by line;
When the fields are desolate,
And the birds all breathless wait
For a sign;

When the garden borders lone
Lie in sombre monotone,
Cheerless, dead;
Scented Daphne, flowering free,
By the southern wall, I see,
Rosy red.

Ere the vivid leafy green
Is unfurled, the blooms are seen
Flushing deep,
Like the crimson tips, at dawn,
Fringing daisies on the lawn
As they sleep.

Every stem is set with flower,
Till the bush grows hour by hour
To a flame.

God is manifest, and death
Cannot chill the fragrant breath
Of His name.

I abide the flood of spring,
When the mating bird's a-wing
In the sun;
But the odour and the glow
Of the Daphne, whisper low
Spring's begun!

To a Scarlet Pimpernel

My dainty flower, in bright vermilion hue,
With touch of violet in the heart of you,
 I can but wonder
To see you here, in such a sheltered spot,
With glossy, close-paired leaves all speckled under;
A wildling bloom within my garden plot!

 Dear flower, to me
You bring exulting memories of the sea;
And of those summer days of long ago,
When first I saw and loved you for yourself,
 You brilliant floral elf!

 But now, ah, now,
For all those memories, intrusive, dear
As you (an alien in my garden here),
 I love you more.
Upon the cliffs I found you, and below,
I used to watch the tawny fishers row
 Their boats ashore.
Far inland now am I; yet, on the sand
I see the glitter of the sun, and all
The fantasy of that familiar strand;
 And the great cliffs that fall
Precipitate, and jubilant with flowers.

 Ah! those were radiant hours,
 In isolation meet
For one who loved the sweet
Immunity of Nature. Yes, dear elf,
 I love you for yourself!
Yet how much more for memory's sake, that, I
 Can never, never tell.
 So when the sun is high,
 You need not wonder why
I come and peep at you, my pimpernel.

Colour

In the bright month of April, by green pastures
Lingering, I have sought
To fathom the enchantment o'er my spirit
The emerald fields enwrought.

I have stood, in summer, where flameth the yellow ragwort,
Like Field of the Cloth of Gold;
I have burned in its presence with a youthful ardour,
I, who am growing old.

I have seen, in a little, wayside garden,
The blue delphinium;
It smote my soul with a chord of ecstasy,
Striking me dumb!

I have been borne from the chill darkness of November
Far o'er the southern seas,
By the bright coral of the glowing Barberry
Swaying in the icy breeze.

On the soft, purpling haze that veils the mountains
Dreaming, at turn of day,
My thoughts seem fired by a large discernment,
Yet wordless, they fade away.

To a Late Flowering Rose

A rambler rose
Over the trellis in my garden blows;
Such tiny blossoms, bud and full-blown flower,
Amid the flaunting scarlet hips they peep
Like fairy flowers one scarcely hopes to keep
An hour.

Yet it has flowered through all
The desolation of the leafy fall;
And still the soft, pink beauty of it brings
Swift vision, in these dolorous hours of gloom,
Of summer's fullness and all fragrant bloom.

Ah, little tender rose!
Like all delightful, unexpected things,
Thy delicate grace in these sad, sombre days
Sweet inspirations raise;
And a bright bud of hope, tear dewèd, breaks;
And sight of thee so bravely blowing wakes
New courage in an unilluminèd hour,
Dear, unexpected flower.

Carnival of Flowers

(ST. CYRUS, N.B.)

There are cliffs beside the sea,
Sloping fair, and flowering free,
They are bound by rolling ribbons of red sand;
There are cornfields waving o'er them
And an azure sea before them,
And the haunts of men stretch out on either hand.

There are Bugles in the cornfield,
Bugles blue;
Bladder Campions for the little people too;
Bladder Campions fair and white,
Balloons so airy light,
They could bear the fairies over
To the scented fields of clover,
Where the bees are honey-laden in their flight.

There are Pimpernels in scarlet,
And each saucy little varlet
Goes to sleep just after two,
The very wisest thing to do!
But if throughout the morning
Rain's about,
He will give you ample warning,
Never doubt;
His scarlet jerkin closing,
You will find him, just reposing,
And his forecast of the weather's pretty true.

From the craggy heights, uplifted
High and sheer,
To the bents where sand has drifted—
Far and near
A carnival of flowers
Colours all the sunny hours
Of the day.

Campanulas in blue, the royal tint,
Wild Marjoram, and Thyme, and flowering Mint;
And up the cliff, half-way,
On a bare and rocky strip
There's a Viper's Bugloss towering
In a crevice, wildly flowering
Stem to tip!

There's St. John's Wort, and the yellow
Agrimony;
The Queen of all the Meadows, sweet as honey;
The Rock Rose, and the Rattle, and the starry Tormentil
The Sundew, catching flies, upon that little rocky rill,
And the Butterwort, a very sticky fellow.

There's a flower, it is my favourite,
Soft and downy, like the leveret,
Haresfoot Trefoil, with the flush of evening skies;
Lady's Mantle, Meadow Rue,
Milkworts, white and pink and blue,
And Euphrasia, bringing healing to the eyes.

The dainty Maiden Pink—
Such a pretty modest link
With that courtly garden dame, Dianthus proud—
The Ragwort, and the Tansy,
And the little wildling Pansy,
And the Stitchworts tangled brightly in a crowd.

O, the beauty of them all
As they bud, and flower, and fall;
O, the glory of their colours in the sun!
Holding Carnival together,
Through the joyous summer weather,
They are elfin blooms of wonder, every one!

To a Starling

Shot silk and pearls! In sooth a stately dress!
And thou among the birds art gypsy queen;
Sable as night, yet brilliant none the less,
 With strange, metallic sheen
Of purple, interchanging with the green
Of darkling skies. Thy feathers tipped with white,
 Like stars that fleck the night,
Are regal wearing for thy queenliness.

And yet, marauder in my garden, thou,
 Bold in thy beauty, hast a knavish heart,
With cunning eye on every fruitful bough;
 Bent on thy pilfering art.
Ah, Romany of birds, when thou depart,
 How shall the memory of my trees stripped bare
 Of ruddy fruit compare
With the bright lustre of thy robes, ah, how?

Thou know'st that with impunity thou'lt strip
 The juicy crop from my most fruitful tree,
Then just beyond my range thus pertly slip,
 Casting thy spell on me.
My luscious cherries though not grown for thee
 Are thine at last. Their sweets I'll never know!
 And—yet, I let thee go,
O, gypsy bird, despite thy robbery, free!

Ecstasy

In a shining, little pool
Of the river's overflow,
Where the grass is green and cool
In the meadow, down below;
A thrush, in the sunshine, like a roguish boy,
Was bathing himself in an ecstasy of joy.

He was flirting with his wings,
(Never throstle looked so fair!)
Thinking pools are heavenly things,
Dipping his bright bosom there;
Ardour in his motion, and love in his eye;
And a dream pulsing through him of a nest by and by.

From that pool he fared away
O'er the meadow green,
Leaving drops of diamond spray
To sparkle where he'd been.
Then, through the crystal air, on a breaking thorn,
From a high bough, he sang, praising the morn.

Birds of the Air

Birds of the air,
Flitting, flying, singing everywhere;
How I love and would befriend you,
Compassionate you and defend you,
But being human I must stand without
Your gracious kingdom, leaving you in doubt
Of my sincerity.

If for an hour in Spring-time I could be
Like one amongst you, wingèd, on a tree,
No other bird of all your warbling throng
Would rival me in song;
Since I, once human and a slave to words,
Would know the sweet sensation of all birds
Whose speech is melody.

You who have ne'er been human could not know
The limitations that beset us so;
The speech that fails us when we deeply feel,
And fails us most when prayerfully we kneel
To the good God,
Who sent the essence of His praise abroad
In you, glad heralds of divinity.

I, who on common ground
Walking had found
The clumsiness of my poor human tread,
My weakness shed,
Poised in aerial blue
Would taste the ecstasy of flight with you.
You who have never known a wingless day,
Who, darting, poise, then skim the ethereal way,
Could never voice such exquisite delight
As I, in flight.

That hour of rapture over,
Lying half-hidden in the scented clover,
Watching the lark, high up,
I'd quaff the brimming cup
Of joyous memory;
When I, a feathered changeling spoke in song,
And through the airy spaces swept along
On beating wing.

The Song of Life

There is music throbbing in my soul,
The wondrous song of life;
It thrills me with the mighty force
Of elemental strife.

The winds of heaven pulse through it,
It beats with rushing rain,
And crested waves of a pitiless sea
Leap in its surging strain.

The Summer ecstasy is there,
An Autumnal cadence falls;
And from the Winter's sounding bass
A dulcet mystery calls.

The haunting sweetness of the Spring
Breaks in a dance divine,
The living beauty of the earth
Is in this song of mine.

And in this music of my soul,
This pageantry of song,
The chords of love and courage
Make my spirit wise and strong.
There is no theme more sweet than love,
Than courage none more great,
The notes that weave their melodies
Are the Dominants of Fate.

O music throbbing in my soul!
O wondrous song of life!
From all thy ecstasy, thy pain,
Thy passion, and thy strife,
Resolve in me throughout the years
A majesty supreme,
That I may bear as I pass on
The music of my dream!

The Street Musician

Exposure, and the weary fight for bread,
Had worn her fragile form; yet being fed,
Her soul was starved within her, and her eyes
Were mournful with the loneliness that lies
In the unsated spirit. Deep within
She bore a passion for her violin.
And music, captive in the breast of her,
Wrought in her being with a passionate stir;
And, lacking guidance, sought in vain to free
Its pent-up force. And mastery, the key
To full expression, lying beyond her, seemed
A fateful phantasy for which she dreamed.
Yet sweetly, and so purely, could she play
Some old-world lyric's haunting melody,
That note by note, in liquid music, fell
Bird-like and clear, and deep-toned as a bell.
Bewitching airs ran riot in her heart,
Wasting her with desire. Her latent art—
Crude, undeveloped, in her yearning breast—
Awoke a very tumult of unrest.

.

And there, amid the clamour of the throng,
She played her simple and untutored song,
Wordless, but eloquent. Yet none could read
The secret of her soul's imperious need!

Music—In the Winter Evenings

When hill and valley, hamlet, town, and glen,
The wilds of nature, and the haunts of men,
In wintry nights are swept by rising gales,
With wayward gusts that drift the fallen snow;
The lamps are lit within and warmth prevails,
The wood-fire sparkles with a cheery glow.

The wind may whistle through the gathering gloom,
It cannot chill our cosy, curtained room;

And pleasant are the evenings spent alone,
When restful quiet crowns departing day;
Or joined by spirits kindred to our own,
When music brightly charms the hours away.

With tender thoughts of master-spirits fled,
We play the treasures of the mighty dead;
And linger long o'er movements sweet and slow,
Those grand *andantes* of the world of sound,
Or lightly *scherzo* with a dancing bow
Capricious measures with a *presto* crowned.

But to our native land our hearts are leal,
We love our Scottish song, strathspey, and reel,
Those noble melodies, emotive strains;
And tenderly, caressingly we play
The lyric gems of Scotland, old refrains;
No foreign airs more classical than they.

With nimbler fingers, and with bolder strokes,
We play the tunes our Highland birth evokes.
What heart but thrills, what Scottish blood but leaps
At this, the music of our heath and glen?

It finds an echo in our mountain steeps,
And fires the souls of patriotic men.

The harmonies of nature are sublime,
The ever changeful symphonies of time;
And he who best interprets nature feels
That Music, like the Master who inspires,
Shall live for ever—Genius thus reveals
The source and reason of our best desires.

After the Dead March

Th' immortal requiem's triumphant close
In jubilation defies the thrall of death;
And like the flowering of a blood red rose
In mystic beauty swells; a subtle breath
As of elysian fragrance lingers till
The last chord, rolling, thunders, and is still.

The silence is astir with aerial thought
Bearing a sweet compassion on its wings.
The grim fortuity of death is wrought
Into a faith, illuminant, that brings
A solace, an inviolable peace.

We commune with the spirits of our dead.
The cavil and unrest of living cease.
We, too, are of the nation that has bred
Heroic peer and peasant; all who give
To the ensanguined visage of dread war
A majesty, a glory that will live.

The wintry darkness deepens, but afar
We glimpse the light of Spring's bright vernal hour.
God rest our patriot dead, and after war
Bring peace, and after death, new life to flower.

To an Old Violin

What artist compassed thy perfection, moulded
With delicate touch each slight and vital part?
With what emotion saw he thy completion,
The passionate lover who made thee what thou art:

I hold, love, and caress thee, and I know thee,
Melodious sphinx, by vision; but my quest,
From that far, dim, divine obscurity,
The secret of thy being can never wrest.

The great heart of some wild, primeval forest
Pulses within thee, I have heard it beat!
Was he a forest lover who endowed thee,
With strange wood-magic, mystically sweet?

Thou hast the resonance of those chambered caverns
Where booms th' unfathomable, restless sea;
Yet like the crystal falling of a cascade,
Thy tone is liquid in its purity.

I come to thee at morn, at noon, at nightfall;
Thou hast a mood for every mood of mine;
And yet, withal, thy rare aloofness taunts me,
Dear mystic, wilful violin divine!

In other years, when other hands caress thee,
Perchance to woo thee with a finer touch,
Ah! wilt thou then, thine inmost spirit wholly
Reveal? Yet none will cherish thee so much!

Years have bequeathed thee richer, deeper vibrance;
And age hath only graces to impart;
With what emotion would he now embrace thee,
The passionate lover who made thee what thou art!

To Chopin . . of the Nocturnes

Thou poet of delicate sound! Thy music fills
The chalice of my heart. The soft enchantment
Of Italian skies, serene and undefiled,
And blue as the blue seas of the Hebrides,
Stirs in my soul. And from the grey-green Olives
Shadows move, haunting me with strange fears
And wistful griefs. I see thy wasted form,
Thou child of song, angelic dreamer, there
In the lone villa, bending o'er the keys,
Weaving out of the darkness songs of night;
Of rain-drenched vines; and nightingales in pain;
And of thy lover, the passionate, the great-hearted,
Coming to find her Chopin mad with music,
And the darkness alive with dreams . . Immortal child,
How bitter-sweet the secrets of thy soul!
And thy imperishable nocturnes breathe
Love, in its ecstasy; and, in its anguish, life;
And death, that is but life in some far altitude
For such as thee . . .

Unity

"Follow the light that guides you homeward, and do not
get lost in the darkness."

"This I call using the eternal."—*Laotze*.

I heard one say . . . The stars in the dark of night
Are cold and alien to me; seeing them there,
I have no sense of friendliness, their light
Brings me no comfort; homely things and fair
Come with the dawn,
And dewy grass, and daisies on the lawn.

I, too, love intimate things, that make me feel
The sense of homeliness, in which I move
An individual queen; that make appeal
To the timorous heart of me, that would not prove—
But, opening, flower
In the glad sunshine, and the passing shower.

But stars to me, loving slow evenfall,
Shine with the fellowship of friendly eyes
Out of the darkness that enveileth all.
When day, with its sweet intimate beauty, dies,
I seek afar
Questing the night for some familiar star.

Sometimes in crowds strange eyes will beam on mine
With understanding light, that swiftly brings
A sense of unity: and I divine
That is the secret at the heart of things;
The flame to fan
Into the brotherhood of man to man.

And so, I look to the skies at eventide,
Seeking the visible stars, when the day has flown;
They are the friendly eyes in that concourse wide
Shining upon my spirit from worlds unknown,
Making me one
With the dust of the earth, and the magical life
of the sun.

The Simple Way

I am a child at heart,
And would be so alway;
I live my life apart,
I shun the world's rude play.

I love all beauteous things,
The trees, the wild flowers' bloom,
The sheen on swallows' wings,
The stars that light the gloom.

My spirit is serene,
Unsmirched by grip of gold;
And love has ever been
The greatest wealth I hold.

To-day indeed is mine,
But not an hour beyond;
No future I divine;
No past can be my bond.

Ambition, with its fire,
Has ne'er importuned me;
I limit my desire,
I love simplicity.

The simple joys I feel,
A fragrant peace distil;
As I, through woe or weal
My destiny fulfil.

To Pain

Chastened by thy goad, until
I have curbed my restless will,
From thy scourge, I pass, oh pain
To the height I shall attain.
From those anguished, weary hours,
Harried by thy ruthless powers,
Calm, regenerate, I rise,
Seeing life with clearer eyes.

By thy bondage I've been bound
Many a day's slow, chafing round;
In thy power I, writhing, proved
Night thy dark accomplice. Moved
Not thy pitiless grip when I
Spent, importuned thee to fly:
Yet, unvanquished, I have grown
Wiser by the thrall I've known.

Foes are oft-times maskèd friends
Daring us to greater ends;
This we learn, when parted from
Their unwelcome spur, we come
To the gifts that lie in wait
Just beyond their alien gate.
Such art thou, oh pain, I know
Friend indeed, though seeming foe.

Pastoral

Having no flocks, I shepherd gentle thoughts;
And when the travail of the year is past
I lead them forth into the freshening fields,
Where Nature's healing springs well joyously.
Freed from my inner soul (their wonted fold
When churlish storms of wintry petulance
Ruffle their sweet composure) they will range
O'er all the Spring-girt land:

I wait alone,
Tranquil amid the pastures, knowing well
They will respond unto my shepherding;
Bearing me fragrance from the flowering fields,
The melodies of tuneful birds, the keen
Impalpable delight of growing things;
Soothing my spirit with a pregnant peace;
Until the golden mesh of silken sleep
Falleth, in dreamful silence, with the night.

Those Little Nameless Fears

Why fearest thou those little nameless fears?

Like little puffs of night-wind o'er the meres,
They do but mock thee, ruffling, as they pass,
Thy peace of mind.

Why wilt thou parley with them on their way?

Why let them haunt thee? Impotent are they;
Coming and going, like shadows on the grass,
With every wind.

Withdraw thy spirit from their with'ring clutch.

Like palsied fingers, trembling overmuch,
They are akin to death; and drain the sap
Of life in thee.

The world needs life, a quick'ning flowing tide

That casts all dark abortive fears aside;
Life that will rise unstemmed by evil hap,
Triumphant, free.

So brush those little nameless fears away,

Like ghostly forms, that, at the close of day,
Invade the hostel of sweet sleep, they'll fly,
If thou but will.

Thy courage, wearing thin, grows faint before

Those beating wings of fear. Set wide the door,
And drive them from thy spirit, till it lie
Radiant and still.

Immortelle

A little maid, whose lissom grace
Was as a flower, scarce blown,
I kissed to-night. Her pensive face
In death had flower-like grown.
And Peace, within that sacred place,
Companioned her alone.

So pure and fair, she lay at rest
Upon her snow-white bed;
Dark purple pansies on her breast,
And rosebuds at her head.
The sun, about her, from the west
A twilight radiance shed.

Those purple pansies, dark as night,
I plucked, at dawn, to-day;
And bore, with rosebuds red and white,
To crown her where she lay,
A vision, delicately bright,
And innocent as they.

Her thoughts took little fairy wings,
And fluttered everywhere;
Their purity and fragrance clings
To memory. The air
Is tremulous, as if she sings
To solace my despair.

Night

Softly the Day
Steals like a tender Mother-heart away;
Leaving the infant Night
Cradled in peace. Her opalescent light
She beareth to the portals of the west,
Then, lingering, turns to watch her child at rest.

Slowly the Night
Droopeth in quiet sleep, until the light,
Drawn from the western sky,
Leaveth her startled, strangely wondering why,
Alone, unmothered in the dark, she lies,
To sob the slumber from her sleepy eyes.

Deep and more deep,
Groweth the darkness, and the lids of sleep
Droop in the old, old way.
Listening beyond the portals, weary Day
Heareth the Night moan cease, and hearing flies!
When lo! a myriad stars shine in the skies!

The Poet

Of life, I am the fragrance and the flower;
The beauty, and the rhythm, and the glow.
I am the sentry of the passing hour,
Interpreting its word of joy or woe.

I am a watcher in the starry night,
The silence and the darkness speak to me;
And in the fulness of the noonday light
I am the symbol of earth's mystery.

On the high altar of my votive art,
My thoughts, emotions, passions offering up;
I glean the harvest of the human heart,
And pledge it in the visionary's cup.

Spring Song

I watched the brown earth for the peeping spring;
 In secret harbouring
 A grudge against the long,
Grey desolation of the wintry ways;
 Praying for healthful days
 Of sunshine, and the song
Of birds full-throated; still the cold winds blew;
Though everywhere the pallid snowdrop grew;
Then one by one, in purple, white, and yellow
Each crocus, blooming prettier than its fellow,
Came trumpeting the Spring with martial flare;
I lingered near them, brow, and cheek, and mouth
 All thirsting for the south,
 The fragrant south wind's blowing;
 The soft and perfumed air
That beareth summer dreams—a sudden gale
Blew coldly sharp and stinging, and the hail
Beat from the dark'ning clouds—but in the flowing,
The clear and crystal flowing of a brook,
 (When the swift storm had gone,
And the gay sun in playful dalliance shone,)
I found the spirit of the tardy Spring;
And by the brook-side in a grassy nook,
Where star-like gleamed the golden Celandine,
 I heard the waters sing
A spring song sweeter, brighter far than mine;
For they had borne the winter of the year
 Far on its snowy bier;
 And fountain free,
 They rippled in their glee
 The Spring, the Spring is here!

Friendship

I see you now, just as you used to be,
 Within the door, in your familiar place;
They tell me you are dead, and yet, to me
 You are alive with tender, smiling face.

Your love is my companion everywhere,
 I see your eyes, I hear your gentle tread;
Your spirit hovers near me, radiant, fair;
 I ask myself—are there, indeed, no dead?

Do souls as near akin as yours and mine
 See truth in this strange passing of the breath,
A beacon-light, that will for ever shine
 Beside the veiled arbiter of death?

.

And yet I dare not go within the door
 Of that familiar place, where, when I came,
You stood to greet me, lest for evermore
 I lose you and your friendship's living flame!

Liberty

“Liberty does not fail those who are determined to have it.”

—*Garibaldi*

Strong in the will to be free,
Inspired by the freedom to be,
Grapple the hope that has shone through the years;
Strengthen the zeal that is stranger to fears;
Liberty faileth not those who are strong,
Weary not, falter not, struggle along!

Hold to the faith, it will win,
Impelled by the spirit within;
Cowards fall out when the day seemeth lost,
Courage goes forward, nor counteth the cost;
Victory waiteth the spirits that dare
Covert deny to the traitor despair!

Fight through the clouds, till the sun
Illumines the field that is won.
False is the vision that seeth not light
Dawning to day, through the darkness of night;
Liberty fails not the dauntless, 'twill be
Freedom indeed, then be strong, and be free!

The Cry of the Refugee

Lurid with war, day dies, and twilight falling
Filleth my spirit with an awful dread:
Anguished I hear the vain and pitiful calling
Of desecrated Belgium for her dead!

God! If the solace of brief slumber shun me,
How can I face the long hours' merciless beat?
When night falls, and the darkness comes upon me,
I fear the sinister sound of alien feet!

Stricken at heart, past hoping, and past weeping,
With loved ones buried in the carnage there;
I see a blood-red harvest for the reaping,
Thereafter—desolation everywhere.

England, a beacon shines in friendly beckoning;
A haven proffereth inviolate, free;
On England's shore, until the war's last reckoning,
My bruised spirit's harbourage shall be.

Bound by a word of honour, none shall falter;
For Honour, even unto death, the Allies stand.
Witness, oh God, our sacrificial altar,
And break the menace of the Prussian hand!

La Bonne Dame

Close to the firing line, where screaming shell
 Red ruin bore;
Within the cottage home she loved so well,
 Haven no more—
She lingered; ah, by what invisible thread
Of memory bound? What thoughts of days long dead?
Her only son entreated; not even he
 Could part her from
That one loved spot—"Ah, do not stay! To me
 What harm can come?"
Was all she answered, and for months was known
Cheerfully, fearlessly, to live alone.
The fiery blast of war, that breath accurst,
 One awful night,
With withering shell fire, o'er the village burst;
 And dawning light
Revealed her little home to wreckage swept;
And she lay dead, where lately she had slept!
The soldiers loved her, *la bonne dame* was brave,
 She had no fear;
They, with her son, in sorrow to the grave
 Followed the bier.
Ah! They would miss her passing every day
With bright *Bon jour, mes enfants*, on her way.
They bore, all tenderly, her poor torn form
 To burial;
Amid the rattling bullets' hellish storm,
 Her last roll call
She answered. Destiny had strangely run
Unto a martial close; her day was done!

Suspense

Dawn, the full light of day, the long, still night—
What are they now to me but hours that wait
On the opening and the closing of a gate?

What is the darkness? The delicate, changing light
Of the slow dawning spring? But haunted sleep—
And the grim doing to stifle a thought hid deep.

I do not live, I move scarce drawing breath;
Beyond me there, like shadows on a screen,
Men come, and go as if they ne'er had been.

I long to be alone—the phantom Death
Pursueth my drooping spirit. Hope is dumb
In presence of a myriad fears that come.

I am but one of many; aye, but one
Suffering this awful anguish. War is hell—
Oh God! How could I bear it if he fell?

Departure

The last hour closes, like a flower each day
So brief, so bright from bud to fall hath flown;
And soon the petalled beauty will be blown
Into the shrinal coves of memory.

You, in a moment, going so far away!
Why will th' autumnal eve make windy moan,
Chilling my heart with hopeless monotone,
Stifling my spirit with its brooding grey?

But as you pass beyond me in the gloom,
To you a smiling face will be uplifted,
Courage will come to me, 'tis strangely gifted;
And, after, in my lonely, silent room,
The lightning from your fearless eyes will come
To strike the phantoms of foreboding dumb!

Battle

Sleepers, whose night is gone
With the first, faint streak of dawn,
Rise! At the gates of sleep
Day importunes, and the steep
Ways of endeavour wait
Where the blinding blows of fate
Stagger the weak, and bar
From the bravest souls that are
Spoils of a fight, hard-fought;
And prize of a work, well-wrought.
Wounded, discouraged, still
Ye must face the fight with will.
Urged by the spurs of time,
In the span of your manhood's prime;
Wrestling, day out, day in,
Till the thread of life wears thin.
Men in the pit, and mart;
And the craftsman at his art;
Limners of beauty, souls
That aspire to highest goals;
Toilers in mill, and field;
Taught and teachers; healers and healed;
All on the self-same road,
At the point of a ruthless goad.
On! To the last, long turn,
With a spirit that needs must spurn
Cowardice, doubt, despair,
And the thrusts of a poignant care.
Better to fight at bay,
Though the forfeit ye must pay;
Better to front the worst,
Than flee the ranks accurst.

Never a voice rings true,
But the riches of truth accrue;
Truth that is best of all
Whatever end befall.
Never a soul is brave,
But it speedeth a subtle wave
Over the world of men,
And they rise to a strength again.
Life has a thousand ills,
But the fear of them 'tis that kills;
And since ever the world began
Courage hath made the man!

The White Beam . . in the Woodlands

In Spring-time, in the woodlands,
When other trees are leafless,
And catkins from the Poplars tall,
 Wine-red, and soft as velvet, fall;
 A little White Beam breaks for me,
 A slight, and very comely tree.

From it no green buds burgeon,
Like other trees, in Spring-time,
 But lightly, from the branches brown,
 And silky as soft cider-down,
 The leaflets of the White Beam blow
 From darkling boughs, like flowers of snow.

And passing by the woodlands,
In Spring-time, in the sunshine,
 All exquisite and full of grace,
 Lyrical in a silent place,
 That little White Beam, comely tree,
 Breaks, like the dawn, and sings for me.

Acceptance

In the silence of the night,
When th' enchanted darkness droppeth down
Veiling the hills from sight,
And the old, grey town;
Softly the owls call from the far off wood,
Deeply the spirits of the four winds brood.

I hear from the old Cathedral tower
The booming of the hour;
The world is all withdrawn
From dark till merge of dawn;
Lying aloof
Beneath the old, home roof,
Ere yet I pass into the haunts of sleep,
The ritual of my early faith I keep.

My thoughts I, in the pool of darkness, dip,
They rise from that immersion, sane and pure;
Then doth the silence slip
Over my soul its soft investiture,
Clinging and sweet and clean.

I see again the beauties I have seen;
The many duties of the day apprise,
Remembering weakness, that I may be wise;
Sweet music, laughter, joyous words I hear,
Feel closer to me all I hold most dear;
Purge all the venom from the tongues that sting,
Make fruitful use of every bitter thing;
Thank God for life, activity, and light,
And for the silence, and the dark of night.

Song of the Grampians

I see a ribboned roadway
 Winding upward through the Glen,
And my heart is ever aching
 For the mountains once again.
Of the Grampians, scarred and rugged,
 How I long to be in sight,
Of the Wirren, and Mount Battock,
 And the Caters, brown and white.
 O, I hear the Uplands calling,
 And a day will come, I know,
 When on that ribboned roadway
 To the Grampians I will go.

When the Rowan's turning scarlet,
 And the Birch is minting gold;
When the Whin and Broom are flaming,
 And the Summer's nearly told;
I would scent the dark Bog Myrtle
 'Neath the sky's unclouded blue;
See the bonny, ferny Bracken,
 And the Heather purpling through.

The Blackcock I would startle
 From the covert where he lies;
I would hear the Whaup complaining
 When the sunset splendour dies.
The Red Deer in his fastness,
 And the Grouse on moorland lone
Know the solitudes that haunt me
 When the night winds softly moan.

I would see dark Craig Maskeldie,
 Craig Eagle, wild and bare;
And the silent peaks enfolding
 Lee's silvery loch and fair.

I would hear Mark's mountain torrent
To the falls go foaming down;
See Glen Effock's sparkling waters,
And the North Esk, peaty brown.

When the dawn creeps o'er the mountains,
And the morning air's like wine,
I would see the sunshine filter
Through the belts of Larch and Pine;
I would hear the first, faint stirring
Of the wild life in the Glen;
O, my heart is aching, aching
For the mountains once again.
O, I hear the Uplands calling,
And a day will come, I know,
When on that ribboned roadway
To the Grampians I will go!

Under the Open Sky

There is no carpet like the grassy meads,
Or the soft, leafy pathways in the wood;
No mirror like bright pools in crystal mood,
Or the calm waters where the halcyon breeds.

There are no portals like the East and West,
Where come and go glad day and kindly night;
No casement swinging open to the light
To match the south by fragrant airs caresst.

There are no curtains like the clouds that veil
The wild horizons of a windy sky,
Or the soft fleece the golden stars loop high
When Dian proudly rides o'er hill and dale.

What couch can, yielding to the form, compare
With the soft moss luxurious in the glade;
What canopy more glorious than the shade
Of forest Beeches, spreading cool and fair?

What hearth flame lures when the warm sun hath shone?
What book compares with Nature's script unrolled?
To the wild woodland, or the fragrant wold
O, follow, follow where the path leads on!

To a Bloodhound

(On seeing one for the first time)

Forgive me, noble hound, in penitence
I stand before thy massive beauty, I
Who doubted thee erstwhile. Thine innocence
Is witnessed by thy clear and luminous eye.

I am arraigned; the wide intelligence
Man mouldeth to his use, I deemed a lust,
A strain of cruelty; my confidence
I now repose in thee; thy face I trust.

I had misjudged thee, and I stand confessed!
Affection, candour, wisdom, I discern,
Where hate and treach'ry I surmised. Impressed
By thy nobility, I look and learn.

Thou hast an air of kingly reticence,
As to the loyal alone thou would'st unbend;
Who has thy company, has opulence;
Who gains thy love, has gained indeed a friend.

To My Pet Aversion

(With apologies to admirers)

Intruding by the hedgerow that encloses
My fair, green garden from the world without,
From a far corner stealing, near the roses,
Instinctively I know thou art about.
I may not hear thee, stealthy, velvet-footed;
I may not see the cunning in thine eye;
But with a strange aversion, deeply-rooted,
I know when, furtively, thou pass me by.
With friendly overtures, so sleek, obtrusive,
Fain would'st thou move the barriers of my hate;
I have no liking for thine arts elusive,
For well thou knowest to dissimulate.
What sorcery in thy green luminous glances!
What exquisite disdainment in thy gaze!
I do distrust thy purring, soft advances,
I see a devil in thy sinuous ways.
Untamed, untamable, yet still permitting
Caresses from the all-pervading—Man!
Art thou an evil spirit that, unwitting,
We have allured, where, spurning, we should ban?
Ah! treacherous feline, in thy midnight revel,
I wot that—by some incantation vile
Preserving thine identity as devil—
Thou spittest out thy scorn of man the while!

Charity

Along the cold, deserted street,
I hastened on my homeward way;
With stinging wind, and driving sleet,
 Ended the sullen day.

A starving wretch, unkempt, unclean,
Before me, in the lamplight, stood,
With outstretched hands, and cringing mien,
 One of a homeless brood.

A silver piece for alms, I flung,
And, glance averted, passed him by;
Nor questioned why my conscience stung,
 Heedless indeed was I.

But through my troubled sleep there crept
A ghastly dream, that very night;
I lived my life, the while I slept,
 Poor, and in wretched plight.

A beggar, in the street, I stood,
For mercy craving all who passed;
And one there came, in haughty mood,
 Hearing my cry at last.

A shining coin (no look, no word,)
I caught, and as he passed me, cried—
“Cold charity is like a sword
 Thrust in a wounded side.”

Dead Leaves

I trod the dead leaves underfoot,
With a fierce, insatiate glee;
Dead leaves that were falling, falling,
From ev'ry wind-swept tree.
Falling, swirling, rustling,
Shrivelled, and brown, and sere;
Last of the riotous pageant
In the autumn of the year!

Aye! Underfoot I trod them,
Keen of heart, and young of blood;
Dead leaves and years in the flux of youth
Can never stem its flood!

I trod the dead leaves underfoot,
With a dull and bitter pain;
Dead leaves that were falling, falling,
In the beat of the pitiless rain,
Trembling, floating, drifting,
Desolate, limp, and drear;
The last and ghostly portents
At the dying of the year.

Aye! Underfoot I trod them,
Frail of limb, and faint of breath;
Dead leaves and years at the ebb of life
Have but one whisper, "Death."

I trod the dead leaves underfoot,
With a spirit calm and free;
And never a one of them falling
Could darken the faith in me.
Budding, sprouting, growing,
Tender, and young, and green,
I held in vision the new-born life,
And the Springs that I had seen!

Thus underfoot I trod them,
Trusting nor youth, nor age,
Dead leaves and years, as the æons roll,
Verily seem to the wise man's soul
But the turning of a page!

Bretby Woods

I am haunted by the woods,
By a spirit that eludes;
It is near me in the dawn,
Nearer still at dark of night;
Coming closer, passing on,
Out of hearing, out of sight.

I am haunted by the woods,
By their silence and their song;
By their frankness in the day,
Of open glade, and mossy way;
Where Patterans allure
To limpid water, pooled, and pure;
Little side-tracks leading only
To some secret dell, and lonely.

O the woods, magic woods!
Fairy shadows lightly spun
In the bright loom of the sun;
And the flowers!
'Mid the green blades of the sod,
Little anchorites of God
Telling praises by the hours
As they run.

I am haunted by the woods,
By their phantasy at night;
By the flaming sun that shines
Sullen red beyond the pines;
By each wild and living thing
Underfoot, or on the wing;
By the shrill and ceric cry
Of the tawny owl on high,
When the pale and fitful light
Of the moon, in drifting cloud,
Seeketh through the woods and through
Till the birches slip to view
In silver shroud.

An Autumn stillness broods;
And the branches, beck'ning, leaning
From the trees, have spectral meaning.
Twigs are crackling on the grass,
As with fearful foot I pass.
O the woods, haunted woods!
Eerie lights grow faint and flicker
Where the forest boles mass thicker . . .
Forms are gathering in the gloom,
Uncanny shapes arise and loom
There is laughter, there are tears,
There are strange and stealthy fears
That close round me in the night
From some covert out of sight.

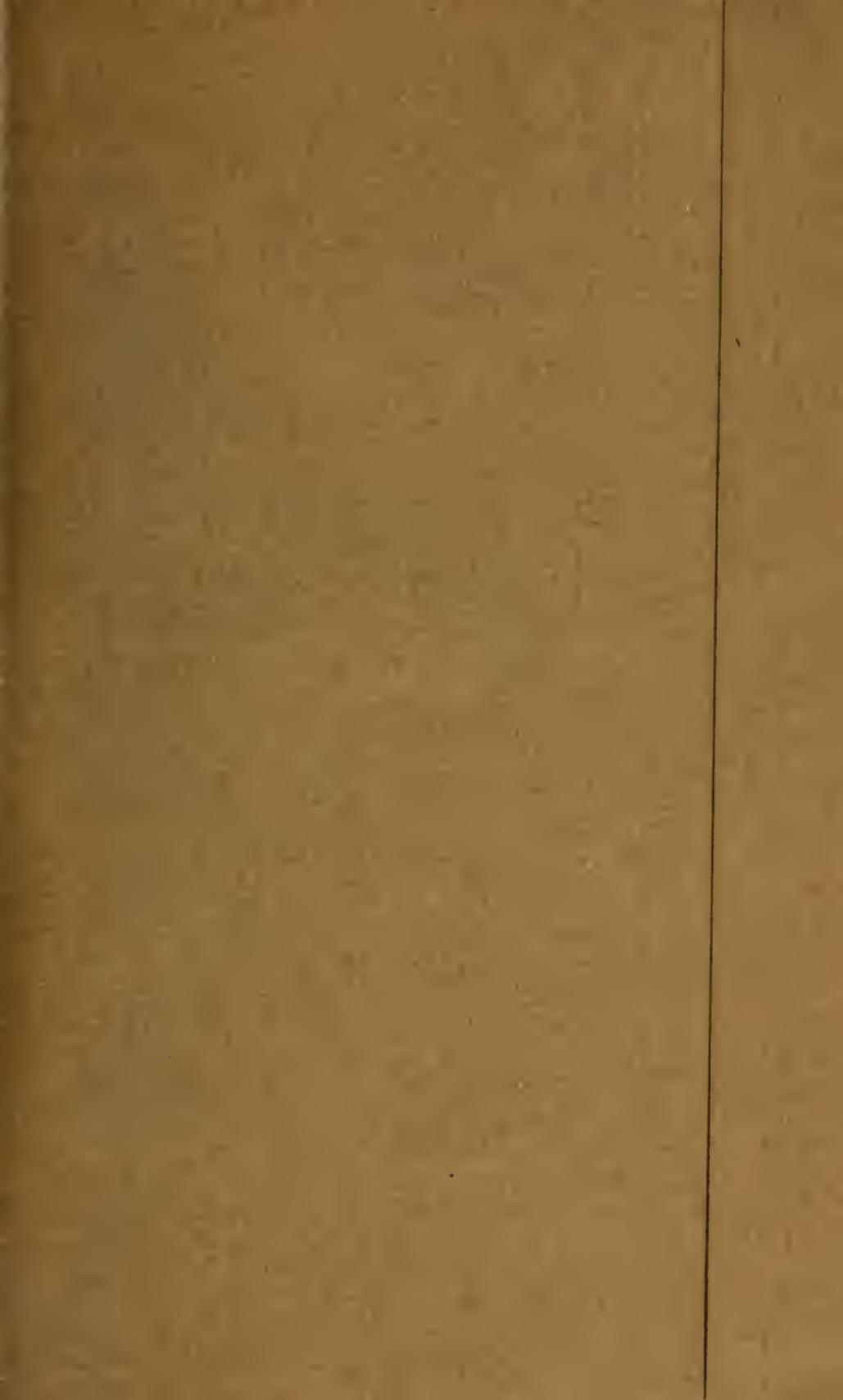
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A spell is o'er the woods
Muffling the forest song,
Drifting, drifting along,
Enchantment of soft snow
Layeth the spirit low.
Silence is in the woods,
And a sleep,
Secret as death, and deep,
Falleth upon the trees;
In the clear crystal dawn
Only the pines dream on
Of the far seas.

Note

I thank the Editors of the
New Witness, *Colour*, *Millgate*
Monthly, *Country Side*, *Animals'*
Guardian, *Glasgow Herald*, *Pall*
Mall Gazette & *Observer*, by
whom some of these poems
were first printed : B.M.D.





Printed at THE WILLIAM MORRIS PRESS LTD
41a GARTSIDE STREET, DEANSGATE,
MANCHESTER, *and Published by* THE AUTHOR at
BRAESYDE, NEWTON RD., BURTON-ON-TRENT

Price - Three Shillings and Six Pence

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