

Classic Poetry Series

Alfred Noyes
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Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Alfred Noyes(16 September 1880 – 25 June 1958)

Alfred Noyes was an English poet, best known for his ballads, "The Highwayman" and "The Barrel-Organ."

Early Years

Noyes was born in Wolverhampton, England, the son of Alfred and Amelia Adams Noyes. When he was four, the family moved to Aberystwyth, Wales, where his father taught Latin and Greek. The Welsh coast and mountains were an early inspiration to Noyes. In 1898, he left Aberystwyth for Exeter College, Oxford, where he distinguished himself at rowing, but failed to get his degree because, on a crucial day of his finals in 1902, he was meeting his publisher to arrange publication of his first volume of poems, *The Loom of Years* (1902).

From 1903 to 1913, Noyes published five additional volumes of poetry, among them *The Flower of Old Japan* (1903) and *Poems* (1904), which included one of his most popular poems, "The Barrel-Organ". His most famous poem, "The Highwayman", was first published in the August 1906 issue of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and included the following year in *Forty Singing Seamen and Other Poems*. In a nationwide poll conducted by the BBC in 1995 to find Britain's favourite poem, "The Highwayman" was voted the nation's 15th favourite poem.

Noyes' major work in this phase of his career was *Drake*, a 200-page epic in blank verse about the Elizabethan naval commander Sir Francis Drake, which was published in two volumes (1906 and 1908). Both in style and subject, the poem shows the clear influence of Romantic poets such as ["The Highwayman"](#)

First marriage and America

In 1907, Noyes married Garnett Daniels, youngest daughter of U.S. Army Colonel Byron G. Daniels, a Civil War veteran who was for some years U.S. Consul at Hull, England. Noyes first visited America in February 1913, partly to lecture on world peace and disarmament and partly to satisfy his wife's desire that he should gather fresh experiences in her homeland. His first lecture tour lasted six weeks, extending as far west as Chicago. It proved so successful that he decided to make a second trip to the U.S. in October and to stay six months. In this trip, he visited the principal American universities, including Princeton, where the impression he made on the faculty and undergraduates was so favourable that in February 1914 he was asked to join the staff as a visiting professor, lecturing on modern English literature from February to June. He accepted, and for the next

nine years he and his wife divided their year between England and the U.S. At Princeton, Noyes' students included F. Scott Fitzgerald, Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop. He resigned his professorship in 1923, but continued to travel and lecture throughout the United States for the rest of his life. His wife died in 1926 at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where she and Noyes were staying with friends.

War

Noyes is often portrayed by hostile critics as a militarist and jingoist. Actually, he was a pacifist who hated war and lectured against it, but felt that, when threatened by an aggressive and unreasoning enemy, a nation could not but fight. On this principle, he opposed the Boer War, but supported the Allies in both the World Wars. In 1913, when it seemed that war might yet be avoided, he published a long anti-war poem called *The Wine Press*. One American reviewer wrote that Noyes was "inspired by a fervent hatred of war and all that war means", and had used "all the resources of his varied art" to depict its "ultimate horror". The poet and critic Helen Bullis found Noyes' "anti-militarist" poem "remarkable", "passionate and inspiring", but, in its "unsparing realism", lacking in "the large vision, which sees the ultimate truth rather than the immediate details". In her view, Noyes failed to address the "vital questions" raised, for example, by William James' observation that for modern man, "War is the strong life; it is life in extremis", or by John Fletcher's invocation in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* of war as the "great corrector" that heals and cures "sick" times. Bullis, a Freudian (unlike Noyes, for whom psychoanalysis was a pseudo-science), thought war had deeper roots than Noyes acknowledged. She saw looming "the great figures of the Fates back of the conflict, while Mr Noyes sees only the 'five men in black tail-coats' whose cold statecraft is responsible for it". In 1915, Upton Sinclair included some striking passages from *The Wine Press* in his anthology of the literature of social protest, *The Cry for Justice*.

During World War I, Noyes was debarred by defective eyesight from serving at the front. Instead, from 1916, he did his military service on attachment to the Foreign Office, where he worked with John Buchan on propaganda. He also did his patriotic chore as a literary figure, writing morale-boosting short stories and exhortatory odes and lyrics recalling England's military past and asserting the morality of her cause. These works are today justly forgotten, apart from two ghost stories, "The Lusitania Waits" and "The Log of the Evening Star", which are still occasionally reprinted in collections of tales of the uncanny. "The Lusitania Waits" is a ghost revenge story based on the sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine in 1915—although the tale hinges on an erroneous claim that the submarine crew had been awarded the Goetz medal for sinking the ship. During World War II, Noyes wrote the same kind of patriotic poems, but he also

wrote a much longer and more considered work, *If Judgement Comes*, in which Hitler stands accused before the tribunal of history. It was first published separately (1941) and then in the collection, *Shadows on the Down and Other Poems* (1945). The only fiction Noyes published in World War II was *The Last Man* (1940), a science fiction novel whose message could hardly be more anti-war. In the first chapter, a global conflict wipes out almost the entire human race.

Noyes' best-known anti-war poem, "The Victory Ball" (aka "A Victory Dance"), was first published in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1920. He wrote it after attending a ball held in London soon after the Armistice, where he found himself wondering what the ghosts of the soldiers who had died in the war would say if they could observe the thoughtless frivolity of the dancers. The message of the poem lies in the line, "Under the dancing feet are the graves." A brief passage about a girl "fresh from school" who "begs for a dose of the best cocaine" was replaced by something innocuous in the *Post* version, but reinstated when the poem appeared in a collection of Noyes' verse. "The Victory Ball" was turned into a symphonic poem by Ernest Schelling and into a ballet by Benjamin Zemach. In 1966, at the height of the Vietnam War, Congressman H. R. Gross, indignant at a White House dinner dance that went on until 3 a.m. while American soldiers were giving their lives, inserted Noyes' poem in the *Congressional Record* as bearing "directly on the subject matter in hand".

Middle years

In 1918, Noyes' short story collection, *Walking Shadows: Sea Tales and Others*, came out. It included both "The Lusitania Waits" and "The Log of the Evening Star". In 1924 Noyes published another collection, *The Hidden Player*, which included a novella, *Beyond the Desert: A Tale of Death Valley*, already published separately in America in 1920.

For the Pageant of Empire at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, Noyes wrote a series of poems set to music by Sir Edward Elgar and known as *Pageant of Empire*. Among these poems was *Shakespeare's Kingdom*.

In 1929, Noyes published the first of his three novels, *The Return of the Scare-Crow* (US title: *The Sun Cure*). A light-hearted story combining adventure, satire and comedy, it is about an earnest young clergyman named Basil who decides to take the sun cure to get over his infatuation with a beautiful girl and inadvertently ends up in a nudist camp. Having lost his clothes, he has to battle his way back to them through a terrifying series of mental hazards — all the latest intellectual fads and follies — and ends up rather less naïve than before.

Second marriage and Catholicism

In 1927, the year after his first wife's death, Noyes married Mary Angela née Mayne (1889–1976), widow of Lieutenant Richard Shireburn Weld-Blundell, a member of the old recusant Catholic Weld-Blundell family, who had been killed in World War I. Later that year, Noyes himself converted to Catholicism. He gives an account of his conversion in his autobiography, *Two Worlds for Memory* (1953), but sets forth the more intellectual steps by which he was led from agnosticism to the Catholic faith in *The Unknown God* (1934), a widely read work of Christian apologetics which has been described as "the spiritual biography of a generation". In 1929, Noyes and Mary Angela settled at Lisle Combe, on the Undercliff near Ventnor, Isle of Wight. They had three children: Hugh (1929–2000), Veronica and Margaret. Noyes' younger daughter married Michael Nolan (later Lord Nolan) in 1953.

The Torch-Bearers

Noyes' ambitious epic verse trilogy *The Torch-Bearers* — comprising *Watchers of the Sky* (1922), *The Book of Earth* (1925) and *The Last Voyage* (1930) — deals with the history of science. In the "Prefatory Note" to *Watchers of the Sky*, Noyes expresses his purpose in writing the trilogy:

This volume, while it is complete in itself, is also the first of a trilogy, the scope of which is suggested in the prologue. The story of scientific discovery has its own epic unity — a unity of purpose and endeavour — the single torch passing from hand to hand through the centuries; and the great moments of science when, after long labour, the pioneers saw their accumulated facts falling into a significant order — sometimes in the form of a law that revolutionised the whole world of thought — have an intense human interest, and belong essentially to the creative imagination of poetry. It is with these moments that my poem is chiefly concerned, not with any impossible attempt to cover the whole field or to make a new poetic system, after the Lucretian model, out of modern science.

Watchers of the Sky

Noyes adds that the theme of the trilogy had long been in his mind, but the first volume, dealing with *Watchers of the Sky*, began to take definite shape only on the night of November 1/2, 1917, when the 100-inch reflecting telescope at Mount Wilson Observatory was first tested by starlight. George Ellery Hale, the man who conceived and founded the observatory, had invited Noyes, who was then in California, to be his guest on this momentous occasion, and the prologue,

subtitled "The Observatory", gives Noyes' detailed description of that "unforgettable...night". In his review of *Watchers of the Sky*, the scholar and historian of science Frederick E. Brasch writes that Noyes' "journey up to the mountain's top, the observatory, the monastery, telescopes and mirrors, clockwork, switchboard, the lighted city below, planets and stars, atoms and electrons all are woven into...beautiful narrative poetry. It seems almost incredible that technical terms and concepts could lend themselves for that purpose."

After the prologue come seven long poems, each of which depicts salient episodes in the career of a major scientist, so as to bring out both the "intensely human drama" ("Prefatory Note") of his life and his contribution to astronomy. Noyes' seven scientists are Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and William and John Herschel — though due mention is also made of the contribution of Caroline Herschel, sister to William and aunt to John. In the epilogue, Noyes meditates once more upon the mountain in the morning, before bringing his narrative to a close in the form of a prayer.

In his review, Frederick E. Brasch writes that Noyes' "knowledge of the science of astronomy and its history...seems remarkable in one who is so entirely unrelated to the work of an observatory". *Watchers of the Sky*, he adds, will no doubt appeal to the layman "for its beauty and the music of its narrative verse, broken and interspersed with epic poetry. But it remains for the astronomer and other scholars in science to enjoy it to the fullness which is adequate to Noyes' ability as a poet."

The Book of Earth

The Book of Earth is the second volume in the trilogy. In eight sections framed by a meditative prologue and epilogue, it follows the discoveries of scientists in their struggles to solve the mysteries of the earth, of life forms, and of human origins. Starting in ancient Greece with Pythagoras and Aristotle, it then moves to the Middle East for Farabi and Avicenna. The scene then shifts successively to Italy for Leonardo, France for Guettard, Sweden for Linnaeus, France again for Buffon, Lamarck, Lavoisier, and Cuvier, and then Germany for Goethe, before ending in England with Darwin. Reviewing *The Book of Earth for Nature*, F. S. Marvin wrote, "It deals with a much more difficult subject from the point of view of poetic presentation, namely biology, or rather geology as a preface to zoology and evolution as crowning geology." Nevertheless, it does not "believe the...expectations" raised by its predecessor.

The Last Voyage

Before Noyes had begun proper work on the final volume in the trilogy, *The Last Voyage*, two events occurred which were to influence it greatly: his first wife's death and his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Death is a major theme in *The Last Voyage*, as its very title suggests. The tone, more sombre than that of its predecessors, is also more religious — though religion was hardly absent from the earlier volumes — and, as might be expected, more specifically Catholic.

The Last Voyage begins at night in mid-Atlantic, where an ocean liner, "a great ship like a lighted city", is battling through a raging storm. A little girl is mortally ill. The ship's surgeon prepares to operate, but with little hope of success, for the case is complicated and he is no specialist. Luckily, the captain knows from the wireless news that a top specialist from Johns Hopkins is on another liner 400 miles away — within wireless range. The ship's surgeon will be able to consult him, and stay in touch with him throughout the operation. Suddenly, the little girl's chances of survival are much improved. In a manner of speaking, all the scientific discoveries and inventions of the past are being brought to bear in the attempt to save her life. When the poet asks a casually-met fellow-passenger, "You think they'll save her?" the stranger replies, "They may save her," and then adds enigmatically, "But who are They?"

Reflecting, the poet realizes that They are all the seekers and discoverers of scientific truths through the ages — people like Harvey, Pasteur and Lister in the field of medicine or Faraday, Clerk Maxwell and Hertz in the development of the wireless. Nevertheless, despite the united efforts of all, the little girl dies, and in the darkness of that loss the poet finds that only in Faith can a flicker of light be found. Science cannot defeat death in the long run, and sometimes, as in the little girl's case, not even in the short run, but if "Love, not Death" is the ultimate reality, death will not have the final word. Of course, the "last voyage" of the title is not just that of the little girl or of Noyes' wife — though there are lyrics mourning her in Section XIII and another in the Dedication at the end — but of everyman and everywoman.

F. S. Marvin, who reviewed all three volumes of *The Torch-Bearers for Nature*, wrote that "the third volume is certainly the best from the artistic point of view. It contains one well-conceived and highly interesting incident, around which the author's pictures of the past and incidental lyrics are effectively grouped, and it leads up to a full and eloquent exposition of the religious synthesis with which the history of science inspires him."

The Last Man

In 1940 Noyes published a science-fiction novel, *The Last Man* (US title: *No Other Man*), in which the human race is almost wiped out by a powerful death ray capable of killing everyone, friend or foe, unless they are in a steel chamber deep under the surface of the sea. The inventor's chief assistant unscrupulously sells the plans to the leading nations of the world, who declare they will use the ray only as a "last resort". When events spiral out of control, however, they all activate it, killing everyone living on the earth.

When the death ray strikes, a 29-year-old Englishman named Mark Adams is trapped in a sunken submarine. Managing to escape, he finds himself the only survivor in Britain. He travels to Paris in the hope of finding another survivor. There he discovers a clue which gives him hope. His search leads him to Italy, where he finally finds the other survivor, an American girl named Evelyn Hamilton. At the time when the death ray struck, she was in a diving bell deep below the surface of the Mediterranean, where, under the guidance of Mardok, an immensely wealthy magnate and scientific genius, she was engaged in photographing the floor of the sea. Her companion turns out to be the villain of the story. Knowing the power of the ray, for whose development he had been largely responsible, he had made sure that, at the time of its activation, he was safely out of its reach, along with an attractive young woman with whom he could later begin the repopulation of the planet. Evelyn, however, finds him repulsive, and the arrival of the upstanding, handsome young Englishman further upsets Mardok's plan. In the ensuing competition between the two men for the girl, Mark Adams' surname is a clear hint at which of the two is better fitted to be Adam to Evelyn's Eve. The two young people fall in love, but Mardok kidnaps Evelyn. After her escape and Mardok's death, the novel concludes with the young couple's discovery of some other survivors at Assisi.

For Charles Holland, reviewing the novel in the 1940s, Noyes' combination of "such elements of human interest as apologetics, art, travel and a captivating love story" mean that the reader of *The Last Man* is assured of both "an intellectual treat and real entertainment". Eric Atlas, writing in an early science fiction fanzine, found the novel, despite some flaws, "well worth the reading — perhaps twice". The philosophico-religious theme, he wrote, "detracts in no way from the forceful characterizations...of Mark and Evelyn". Besides, most of the novel is set "in Italy, where Noyes' descriptive powers as a poet come to the fore". *The Last Man* seems to be the novel which introduced the idea of a doomsday weapon. It is thought to have been among the influences on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Later Years

In 1940, Noyes returned to North America, where he lectured and advocated the British war position. The following year, he gave the Josiah Wood lectures at Mount Allison University, New Brunswick, Canada. Titled *The Edge of the Abyss*, they were first published in Canada in 1942 and then, in a revised version, in the United States the same year and in Britain two years later. In *The Edge of the Abyss*, Noyes ponders the future of the world, attacking totalitarianism, bureaucracy, the pervasive power of the state, and the collapse of moral standards. George Orwell reviewed the book for *The Observer* and, like *The Last Man*, it is considered a probable influence on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In his review, Orwell wrote that *The Edge of the Abyss* "raises a real problem" — the "decay in the belief in absolute good and evil", with the result that the "rules of behaviour on which any stable society has to rest are dissolving" and "even the prudential reasons for common decency are being forgotten". Indeed, in Orwell's view, Noyes "probably even underemphasises the harm done to ordinary common sense by the cult of 'realism', with its inherent tendency to assume that the dishonest course is always the profitable one". On the other hand, Orwell finds Noyes' suggested remedy, a return to Christianity, "doubtful, even from the point of view of practicality". He agrees that the "real problem of our time is to restore the sense of absolute right and wrong", which in the past had ultimately rested on "faith", but he thinks that Noyes "is probably wrong in imagining that the Christian faith, as it existed in the past, can be restored even in Europe". Orwell offers no suggestion, however, as to what, other than faith, could serve as a basis for morality.

Noyes remained in retirement in California for some years. In 1943, he published *The Secret of Pooduck Island*, a children's story set off the coast of Maine. It features a family of squirrels threatened by natural enemies (skunks, weasels) and humans, the ghost of a Native American man who suffered a terrible sorrow in the colonial era, and a teenage boy who has ambitions to be an artist and who is able to help both the squirrels and the ghost.

In 1949, Noyes returned to his home on the Isle of Wight. As a result of increasing blindness, he dictated all his subsequent works. In 1952 he brought out another book for children, *Daddy Fell into the Pond and Other Poems*. The title poem has remained a firm favourite with children ever since. In 2005, it was one of the few poems that featured in both of two major anthologies of poetry for children published that year, one edited by Caroline Kennedy, the other by Elise Paschen.

In 1955, Noyes published the satirical fantasy novel *The Devil Takes A Holiday*, in which the Devil, in the guise of Mr Lucius Balliol, an international financier,

comes to Santa Barbara, California, for a pleasant little holiday. He finds however, that his work is being so efficiently performed by humankind that he has become redundant. The unwonted soul-searching this leads him to is not only painful but also — owing to a tragicomic twist at the end — ultimately futile.

Noyes' last book of poetry, *A Letter to Lucian and Other Poems*, came out in 1956, two years before his death.

The Accusing Ghost

In 1957, Noyes published his last book, *The Accusing Ghost*, or *Justice for Casement* (US title: *The Accusing Ghost of Roger Casement*). In 1916, the renowned human rights campaigner Roger Casement was hanged for his involvement in the Irish Nationalist revolt in Dublin known as the Easter Rising. To forestall calls for clemency, the British authorities showed public figures and known sympathizers selected pages from some of Casement's diaries — known as the Black Diaries — that exposed him as a promiscuous homosexual. In an era of unthinking homophobia, this underhand tactic worked and the expected protests and petitions for Casement's reprieve did not materialize.

Among those who read these extracts was Noyes, who was then working in the News Department of the Foreign Office and who described the pages as a "foul record" of "the lowest depths that human degradation has ever touched". Later that year in Philadelphia, when Noyes was about to give a lecture on the English poets, he was confronted by Casement's sister, Nina, who denounced him as a "blackguardly scoundrel" and cried, "Your countrymen hanged my brother Roger Casement."

Worse was to come. After Casement's death, the British authorities held the diaries in conditions of extraordinary secrecy, arousing strong suspicions among Casement's supporters that they were forged. In 1936, there appeared a book by an American doctor, William J. Maloney, called *The Forged Casement Diaries*. After reading it, [W.B. Yeats](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-butler-yeats/) wrote a protest poem, "Roger Casement", which was published with great prominence in *The Irish Press*. In the fifth stanza of the poem, Yeats named Alfred Noyes and called on him to desert the side of the forger and perjurer. Noyes immediately responded with a letter to *The Irish Press* in which he explained why he had assumed the diaries were authentic, confessed he might have been misled, and called for the setting up of a committee to examine the original documents and settle the matter. In response to what he called Noyes' "noble" letter, Yeats amended his poem, removing Noyes' name.

Over twenty years later, Casement's diaries were still being held in the same conditions of secrecy. In 1957, therefore, Noyes published *The Accusing Ghost, or Justice for Casement*, a stinging rebuke of British policy in which, making full amends for his previous harsh judgement, he argued that Casement had indeed been the victim of a British Intelligence plot.

In 2002, a forensic examination of the Black Diaries concluded that they were authentic.

Death

Noyes' last poem, "Ballade of the Breaking Shell", was written in May 1958, one month before his death. He died at the age of 77, and is buried in the Roman Catholic cemetery at Freshwater, Isle of Wight.

A Loom Of Years

In the light of the silent stars that shine on the struggling sea,
In the weary cry of the wind and the whisper of flower and tree,
Under the breath of laughter, deep in the tide of tears,
I hear the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

The leaves of the winter wither and sink in the forest mould
To colour the flowers of April with purple and white and gold:
Light and scent and music die and are born again
In the heart of a grey-haired woman who wakes in a world of pain.

The hound, the fawn, and the hawk, and the doves that croon and coo,
We are all one woof of the weaving and the one warp threads us through,
One flying cloud on the shuttle that carries our hopes and fears
As it goes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

The green uncrumpling fern and the rustling dewdrenched rose
Pass with our hearts to the Silence where the wings of music close,
Pass and pass to the Timeless that never a moment mars,
Pass and pass to the Darkness that made the suns and stars.

Has the soul gone out in the Darkness? Is the dust sealed from sight?
Ah, hush, for the woof of the ages returns thro' the warp of the night!
Never that shuttle loses one thread of our hopes and fears,
As it comes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

O, woven in one wide Loom thro' the throbbing weft of the whole,
One in spirit and flesh, one in body and soul,
Tho' the leaf were alone in its falling, the bird in its hour to die,
The heart in its muffled anguish, the sea in its mournful cry,

One with the flower of a day, one with the withered moon
One with the granite mountains that melt into the noon
One with the dream that triumphs beyond the light of the spheres,
We come from the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

Alfred Noyes

A New Madrigal To An Old Melody

(It is supposed that Shadow-of-a-Leaf uses the word 'clear' in a more ancient sense of 'beautiful'.)

As along a dark pine-bough, in slender white mystery
The moon lay to listen, above the thick fern,
In a deep dreaming wood that is older than history
I heard a lad sing, and I stilled me to learn;
So rarely he lilted his long-forgot litany,--
_Fall, April; fall, April, in dew on our dearth!
Bring balm, and bring poppy, bring deep sleepy dittany
For Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth._

Then I drew back the branches. I saw him that chanted it.
I saw his fool's bauble. I knew his old grief.
I knew that old greenwood and the shadow that haunted it,--
My fool, my lost jester, my _Shadow-of-a-Leaf_!
And 'why,' I said, 'why, all this while, have you left me so
Luckless in melody, lonely in mirth?'
'Oh, why,' he sang, 'why has this world then bereft me so
Soon of my Marian, so long laid in earth?

'In the years that are gone,' he said, 'love was more fortunate.
Grief was our minstrel of things that endure.
Now, ashes and dust and this world grow importunate.
Time has no sorrow that time cannot cure.
Once, we could lose, and the loss was worth cherishing.
Now, we may win, but, O, where is the worth?
Memory and true love,' he whispered, 'are perishing,
With Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth.'

'Ah, no!' I said, 'no! Since we grieve for our grief again,
Touch the old strings! Let us try the old stave!
And memory may wake, like my _Shadow-of-a-Leaf_ again,
Singing of hope, in the dark, by a grave.'
So we sang it together--that long-forgot litany:--
_Fall, April; fall, April; bring new grief to birth.
Bring wild herb of grace, and bring deep healing dittany,
For Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth._

Alfred Noyes

A Prayer In Time Of War

<i>The war will change many things in art and life, and among them, it is to be hoped, many of our own ideas as to what is, and what is not, "intellectual." </i>

Thou, whose deep ways are in the sea,
Whose footsteps are not known,
To-night a world that turned from Thee
Is waiting -- at Thy Throne.

The towering Babels that we raised
Where scoffing sophists brawl,
The little Antichrists we praised --
The night is on them all.

The fool hath said . . . The fool hath said . . .
And we, who deemed him wise,
We who believed that Thou wast dead,
How should we seek Thine eyes?

How should we seek to Thee for power
Who scorned Thee yesterday?
How should we kneel, in this dread hour?
Lord, teach us how to pray!

Grant us the single heart, once more,
That mocks no sacred thing,
The Sword of Truth our fathers wore
When Thou wast Lord and King.

Let darkness unto darkness tell
Our deep unspoken prayer,
For, while our souls in darkness dwell,
We know that Thou art there.

Alfred Noyes

A Song Of Sherwood

Sherwood in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake?
Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake,
Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again: all his merry thieves
Hear a ghostly bugle-note shivering through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Merry, merry England has kissed the lips of June:
All the wings of fairyland were here beneath the moon,
Like a flight of rose-leaves fluttering in a mist
Of opal and ruby and pearl and amethyst.

Merry, merry England is waking as of old,
With eyes of blither hazel and hair of brighter gold:
For Robin Hood is here again beneath the bursting spray
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Love is in the greenwood building him a house
Of wild rose and hawthorn and honeysuckle boughs:
Love is in the greenwood, dawn is in the skies,
And Marian is waiting with a glory in her eyes.

Hark! The dazzled laverock climbs the golden steep!
Marian is waiting: is Robin Hood asleep?
Round the fairy grass-rings frolic elf and fay,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Oberon, Oberon, rake away the gold,
Rake away the red leaves, roll away the mould,
Rake away the gold leaves, roll away the red,
And wake Will Scarlett from his leafy forest bed.

Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together
With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose-feather.
The dead are coming back again, the years are rolled away
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Softly over Sherwood the south wind blows.
All the heart of England his in every rose
Hears across the greenwood the sunny whisper leap,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Hark, the voice of England wakes him as of old
And, shattering the silence with a cry of brighter gold
Bugles in the greenwood echo from the steep,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Where the deer are gliding down the shadowy glen
All across the glades of fern he calls his merry men--
Doublets of the Lincoln green glancing through the May
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day--

Calls them and they answer: from aisles of oak and ash
Rings the Follow! Follow! and the boughs begin to crash,
The ferns begin to flutter and the flowers begin to fly,
And through the crimson dawning the robber band goes by.

Robin! Robin! Robin! All his merry thieves
Answer as the bugle-note shivers through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Alfred Noyes

Alzuna

The forest of Alzuna hides a pool.

Beside that pool, a shadowy tree up-towers.

High on that tree, a bough most beautiful

Bends with the fragrant burden of its flowers.

Among those flowers a nest is buried deep.

Warm in that nest, there lies a freckled shell.

Packed in that shell, a bird is fast asleep.

This is the incantation and the spell.

For, when the north wind blows, the bird will cry,

“Warm in my freckled shell, I lie asleep.

The freckled shell is in the nest on high.

The nest among the flowers is buried deep.

The flowers are on a bough most beautiful.

The bough is on a tree no axe can fell.

The sky is at its feet in yonder pool.

This is the incantation and the spell!”

Alfred Noyes

An Open Boat

O, what is that whimpering there in the darkness?

'Let him lie in my arms. He is breathing, I know.
Look. I'll wrap all my hair round his neck' - 'The sea's rising,
The boat must be lightened. He's dead. He must go.'

See - quick - by that flash, where the bitter foam tosses,
The cloud of white faces, in the black open boat,
And the wild pleading woman that clasps her dead lover
And wraps her loose hair round his breast and his throat.

'Come, lady, he's dead.' - 'No, I feel his heart beating,
He's living, I know. But he's numbed with the cold.
See, I'm wrapping my hair all around him to warm him.' -
- 'No. We can't keep the dead, dear. Come, loosen your hold.

'Come. Loosen your fingers.' - ' O God, let me keep him!' -

O, hide it, black night! Let the winds have their way!
And there are no voices or ghosts from that darkness,
To fret the bare seas at the breaking of day.

Alfred Noyes

Art

I

Yes! Beauty still rebels!
Our dreams like clouds disperse:
She dwells
In agate, marble, verse.

No false constraint be thine!
But, for right walking, choose
The fine,
The strict cothurnus, Muse.

Vainly ye seek to escape
The toil! The yielding phrase
Ye shape
Is clay, not chrysoprase.

And all in vain ye scorn
That seeming ease which ne'er
Was born
Of aught but love and care.

Take up the sculptor's tool!
Recall the gods that die
To rule
In Parian o'er the sky.

II

Poet, let passion sleep
Till with the cosmic rhyme
You keep
Eternal tone and time,

By rule of hour and flower,
By strength of stern restraint
And power
To fail and not to faint.

The task is hard to learn
While all the songs of Spring
Return
Along the blood and sing.

Yet hear—from her deep skies,
How Art, for all your pain,
Still cries
Ye must be born again!

Reject the wreath of rose,
Take up the crown of thorn
That shows
To-night a child is born.

The far immortal face
In chosen onyx fine
Enchase,
Delicate line by line.

Strive with Carrara, fight
With Parian, till there steal
To light
Apollo's pure profile.

Set the great lucid form
Free from its marble tomb
To storm
The heights of death and doom.

Take up the sculptor's tool!
Recall the gods that die
To rule
In Parian o'er the sky.

Alfred Noyes

At Dawn

O Hesper-Phosphor, far away
Shining, the first, the last white star,
Hear'st thou the strange, the ghostly cry,
That moan of an ancient agony
From purple forest to golden sky
Shivering over the breathless bay?
It is not the wind that wakes with the day;
For see, the gulls that wheel and call,
Beyond the tumbling white-topped bar,
Catching the sun-dawn on their wings,
Like snow-flakes or like rose-leaves fall,
Flutter and fall in airy rings;
And drift, like lilies ruffling into blossom
Upon a golden lake's unwrinkled bosom.

Are not the forest's deep-lashed fringes wet
With tears? Is not the voice of all regret
Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?
She too, she too, has loved and lost; and we—
We that remember our lost Arcady,
Have we not known, we too,
The primal greenwood's arch of blue,
The radiant clouds at sunrise curled
Around the brows of the golden world;
The marble temples, washed with dew,
To which with rosy limbs aflame
The violet-eyed Thalassian came,
Came pitiless, only to display
How soon the youthful splendour dies away;
Came, only to depart
Laughing across the gray-grown bitter sea?
For each man's life is earth's epitome,
And though the years bring more than aught they take,
Yet might his heart and hers well break
Remembering how one prayer must still be vain,
How one fair hope is dead,
One passion quenched, one glory fled,
With those first loves that never come again.

How many, how many generations,
Have heard that sigh in the dawn,
When the dark earth yearns to the unforgotten nations
And the old loves withdrawn,
Old loves, old lovers, wonderful and unnumbered
As waves on the wine-dark sea,
'Neath the tall white towers of Troy and the temples that slumbered;
In Thessaly?

From the beautiful palaces, from the miraculous portals,
The swift white feet are flown!
They were taintless of dust, the proud, the peerless Immortals
As they sped to their loftier throne!
Perchance they are there, earth dreams, on the shores of Hesper,
Her rosy-bosomed Hours,
Listening the wild fresh forest's enchanted whisper,
Crowned with its new strange flowers;
Listening the great new ocean's triumphant thunder
On the stainless unknown shore,
While that perilous queen of the world's delight and wonder
Comes white from the foam once more.

When the mists divide with the dawn o'er those glittering waters,
Do they gaze over unoared seas—
Naiad and nymph and the woodland's rose-crowned daughters
And the Oceanides?
Do they sing together, perchance, in that diamond splendour,
That world of dawn and dew,
With eyelids twitching to tears and with eyes grown tender,
The sweet old songs they knew,
The songs of Greece? Ah, with harp-strings mute do they falter
As the earth like a small star pales?
When the heroes launch their ship by the smoking altar
Does a memory lure their sails?
Far, far away, do their hearts resume the story
That never on earth was told,
When all those urgent oars on the waste of glory
Cast up its gold?

Are not the forest fringes wet
With tears? Is not the voice of all regret
Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?
She too, she too, has loved and lost; and though
She turned last night in disdain
Away from the sunset-embers,
From her soul she can never depart;
She can never depart from her pain.
Vainly she strives to forget;
Beautiful in her woe,
She awakes in the dawn and remembers.

Alfred Noyes

Beethoven In Central Park

(After a glimpse of a certain monument in New York, during the Victory Celebration)

The thousand-windowed towers were all alight.
Throngs of all nations filled that glittering way;
And, rich with dreams of the approaching day,
Flags of all nations trampled down the night.
No clouds, at sunset, die in airs as bright.
No clouds, at dawn, awake in winds as gay;
For Freedom rose in that august array,
Crowned with the stars and weaponed for the right.

Then, in a place of whispering leaves and gloom,
I saw, too dark, too dumb for bronze or stone,
One tragic head that bowed against the sky;
O, in a hush too deep for any tomb
I saw Beethoven, dreadfully alone
With his own grief, and his own majesty.

Alfred Noyes

Cap'n Storm-Along

They are buffeting out in the bitter grey weather,

-Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!-

Sea-lark

singing to

Golden Feather

,

And burly blue waters all swelling aroun'.

There's

Thunderstone

butting ahead as they wallow,

With death in the mesh of their deep-sea trawl;

There's

Night-hawk

swooping by wild

Sea-swallow,

And old Cap'n Storm-along leading 'em all.

Bashing the seas to a welter of white,

Look at the fleet that he leads to the fight.

O, they're dancing like witches to open the ball;

And old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of 'em all.

Now, where have you seen such a bully old sailor?

His eyes are as blue as the scarf at his throat;

And he rolls on the bridge of his broad-beamed whaler,

In yellow sou'-wester and oilskin coat.

In trawler and drifter, in dinghy and dory,

Wherever he signals, they leap to his call;

They batter the seas to a lather of glory,

With old Cap'n Storm-along leading 'em all.

You'll find he's from Devon, the sailor I mean;

Look at his whaler now, shipping it green.
O, Fritz and his 'U'-boat must crab it and crawl
When old Cap'n Storm-along sails to the ball.

Ay, there is the skipper that knows how to scare 'em

-Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!&mdash:

Look at the sea-wives he keeps in his harem,
Wicked young merry-maids, buxom and brown :
There's
Rosalind,
the sea-witch, and
Gipsy
so lissom,
All dancing like ducks in the teeth of the squall,
With a bright eye for Huns, and a Hotchkiss to kiss 'em;
For old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of 'em all.

Look at him, battering darkness to light!
Look at the fleet that he leads to the fight!
O, hearts that are mighty, in ships that are small,
Your old Cap'n Storm-along's king of us all.

Alfred Noyes

Compensations

Not with a flash that rends the blue
Shall fall the avenging sword.
Gently as the evening dew
Descends the mighty Lord.

His dreadful balances are made
To move with moon and tide;
Yet shall not mercy be afraid
Nor justice be denied.

The dreams that seemed to waste away,
The kindness forgot,
Were singing in your heart today
Although you knew them not.

The sun shall not forget his road,
Nor the high stars their rhyme,
The traveller with the heavier load
Has one less hill to climb.

And, though a darker shadow fall
On every struggling age,
How shall it be if, after all,
He share our pilgrimage?

The end we mourn is not the end.
The dust has nimble wings.
But truth and beauty have a friend
At the deep heart of things.

He will not speak? What friend belies
His love with idle breath?
We read it in each others' eyes,
And ask no more in death.

Alfred Noyes

Cotton-Wool

Shun the brush and shun the pen,
Shun the ways of clever men,
When they prove that black is white,
When they swear that wrong is right,
When they roast the singing stars
Like chestnuts, in between the bars,
_Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool._

When you see a clever man
Run as quickly as you can.
You must never, never, never
Think that Socrates was clever.
The cleverest thing I ever knew
Now cracks walnuts at the Zoo.
_Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool._

Homer could not scintillate.
Milton, too, was merely great.
That's a very different matter
From talking like a frantic hatter.
Keats and Shelley had no tricks.
Wordsworth never climbed up sticks.
_Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool._

Lincoln would create a gloom
In many a London drawing-room;
He'd be silent at their wit,
He would never laugh at it.
When they kissed Salome's toes,
I think he'd snort and blow his nose.
_Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool._

They'd curse him for a silly clown,
They'd drum him out of London town.
Professor Flunkey, the historian,

Would say he was a dull Victorian.
Matthew, Mark, and Luke and John,
Bless the bed I rest upon.
_Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool._
Amen.

Alfred Noyes

Daddy Fell Into The Pond.

Everyone grumbled. The sky was grey.
We had nothing to do and nothing to say.
We were nearing the end of a dismal day,
And there seemed to be nothing beyond,

THEN

Daddy fell into the pond!

And everyone's face grew merry and bright,
And Timothy danced for sheer delight.
'Give me the camera, quick, oh quick!
He's crawling out of the duckweed.'
Click!

Then the gardener suddenly slapped his knee,
And doubled up, shaking silently,
And the ducks all quacked as if they were daft
And is sounded as if the old drake laughed.

O, there wasn't a thing that didn't respond

WHEN

Daddy fell into the pond!

Alfred Noyes

Dead Man's Morrice

There came a crowder to the Mermaid Inn,
One dark May night,
Fiddling a tune that quelled our motley din,
With quaint delight,
It haunts me yet, as old lost airs will do,
A phantom strain:
_Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain._

In that old wood, where ghosts of lovers walk,
At fall of day,
Gleaning such fragments of their ancient talk
As poor ghosts may,
From leaves that brushed their faces, wet with dew,
Or tears, or rain,...
_Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain._

Have we not seen them--pale forgotten shades
That do return,
Groping for those dim paths, those fragrant glades,
Those nooks of fern,
Only to find that, of the may they knew,
No wraiths remain;
_Yet they still look, as I should look for you,
And look in vain._

They see those happier ghosts that waned away--
Whither, who knows?--
Ghosts that come back with music and the may,
And Spring's first rose,
Lover and lass, to sing the old burden through,
Stave and refrain:
_Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain._

So, after death, if in that starless deep,
I lose your eyes,
I'll haunt familiar places. I'll not keep

Tryst in the skies.
I'll haunt the whispering elms that found us true,
The old grass-grown lane.
_Look for me there, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain._

There, as of old, under the dreaming moon,
A phantom throng
Floats through the fern, to a ghostly morrice tune,
A thin sweet song,
Hands link with hands, eyes drown in eyes anew,
Lips meet again....
_Look for me, once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain._

Alfred Noyes

Dedication : To The Memory Of Cecil Spring-Rice

STEADFAST as any soldier of the line
He served his England, with the imminent death
Poised at his heart. Nor could the world divine
The constant peril of each burdened breath.

England, and the honour of England, he still served
Walking the strict path, with the old high pride
Of those invincible knights who never swerved
One hair's breadth from the way until they died.

Quietness he loved, and books, and the grave beauty
Of England's Helicon, whose eternal light
Shines like a lantern on that road of duty,
Discerned by few in this chaotic night;

And his own pen, foretelling his release,
Told us that he foreknew ' the end was peace.'

II.

Soldier of England, he shall live unsleeping
Among his friends, with the old proud flag above;
For even to-day her honour is in his keeping,
He has joined the hosts that guard her with their love.

They shine like stars, unnumbered happy legions,
In that high realm where all our darkness dies.
He moves with honour, in those loftier regions,
Above this ' world of passion and of lies ';

For so he called it, keeping his own pure passion
A silent flame before the true and good;
Not fawning on the throng in this world's fashion
To come and see what all might see who would.

Soldier of England, perfect, gentle knight,
The soul of Sidney welcomes you to-night.

Epilogue

Carol, every violet has
Heaven for a looking-glass!

Every little valley lies
Under many-clouded skies;
Every little cottage stands
Girt about with boundless lands.
Every little glimmering pond
Claims the mighty shores beyond—
Shores no seamen ever hailed,
Seas no ship has ever sailed.

All the shores when day is done
Fade into the setting sun,
So the story tries to teach
More than can be told in speech.

Beauty is a fading flower,
Truth is but a wizard's tower,
Where a solemn death-bell tolls,
And a forest round it rolls.

We have come by curious ways
To the light that holds the days;
We have sought in haunts of fear
For that all-enfolding sphere:
And lo! it was not far, but near.
We have found, O foolish-fond,
The shore that has no shore beyond.

Deep in every heart it lies
With its untranscended skies;
For what heaven should bend above
Hearts that own the heaven of love?

Carol, Carol, we have come
Back to heaven, back to home.

Fashions

Fashion on fashion on fashion,
(With only the truth growing old!)
And here's the new purple of passion,
(And love waiting out in the cold)
Who'll buy?

They are crying new lamps for Aladdin,
New worlds for the old and the true;
And no one remembers the story
The magic was not in the new.

They are crying a new rose for Eden,
A rose of green glass. I suppose
The only thing wrong with their rose is
The fact that it isn't a rose.
Who'll buy?

And here is a song without metre;
And, here again, nothing is wrong;
(For nothing on earth could be neater)
Except that--it isn't a song.

Well. Walk on your hands. It's the latest!
And feet are Victorian now;
And even our best and our greatest
Before that dread epithet bow.
Who'll buy?

The furniture goes for a song, now.
The sixties had horrible taste.
But the trouble is this--they've included
Some better things, too, in their haste.

Were they wrapped in the antimacassars,
Or sunk in a sofa of plush?
Did an Angelican bishop forget them,
And leave them behind in the crush?
Who'll buy?

Here's a turnex. It's going quite cheaply.
(It lived with stuffed birds in the hall!
And, of course, to a mind that thinks deeply
That settles it, once and for all.)

Here's _item_, a ring (very plain, sirs!),
And _item_, a God (but He's dead!);
They say we shall need Him again, sirs,
So--_item_, a cross for His head.
Who'll buy?

Yes, you'll need it again, though He's dead, sirs.
It is only the fashions that fly.
So here are the thorns for His head, sirs.
They'll keep till you need 'em. Who'll buy?

Alfred Noyes

Fishers Of Men

Long, long ago, He said,
He who could wake the dead
And walk upon the sea-

'Come, follow Me.

Leave your brown nets and bring
Only your hearts to sing,
Only your souls to pray,
Rise, come away.

Shake out your spirit-sails,
And brave those wilder gales,
And I will make you then
Fishers of men.'

Was this, then, what He meant?
Was this His high intent,
After two thousand years
Of blood and tears?

God help us, if we fight
For right and not for might.
God help us if we seek
To shield the weak.

Then, though His heaven be far
From this blind welter of war,
He'll bless us, on the sea
From Calvary.

Alfred Noyes

Five Criticisms

I.

(_On many recent novels by the conventional unconventionalists_.)

Old Pantaloon, lean-witted, dour and rich,
After grim years of soul-destroying greed,
Weds Columbine, that April-blooded witch
'Too young' to know that gold was not her need.

Then enters Pierrot, young, rebellious, warm,
With well-lined purse, to teach the fine-souled wife
That the old fool's gold should aid a world-reform
(Confused with sex). This wrecks the old fool's life.

O, there's no doubt that Pierrot was clever,
Quick to break hearts and quench the dying flame;
But why, for his own pride, does Pierrot never
Choose his own mate, work for his own high aim,

Stand on his feet, and pay for his own tune?
Why scold, cheat, rob and kill poor Pantaloon?

II.

(_On a certain goddess, acclaimed as 'new' but known in Babylon._)

I saw the assembled artists of our day
Waiting for light, for music and for song.
A woman stood before them, fresh as May
And beautiful; but, in that modish throng,

None heeded her. They said, 'In our first youth
Surely, long since, your hair was touched with grey.'
'I do not change,' she answered. 'I am Truth.'
'Old and banal,' they sneered, and turned away.

Then came a formless thing, with breasts dyed scarlet.
The roses in her hair were green and blue.

'I am new,' she said. 'I change, and
Death knows why.'

Then with the eyes and gesture of a harlot
She led them all forth, whinneying, 'New, how new!
Tell us your name!' She answered, 'The
New Lie.'

III.

(_On Certain of the Bolsheviki 'Idealists.'_)

With half the force and thought you waste in rage
Over your neighbor's house, or heart of stone,
You might have built your own new heritage,
O fools, have you no hands, then, of your own?

Where is your pride? Is this your answer still,
This the red flag that burns above our strife,
This the new cry that rings from Pisgah hill,
'_Our neighbor's money, or our neighbor's life_'?

Be prouder. Let us build that nobler state
With our own hands, with our own muscle and brain!
Your very victories die in hymns of hate;
And your own envies are your heaviest chain.

Is there no rebel proud enough to say
'We'll stand on our own feet, and win the day'?

IV.

(_On Certain Realists._)

You with the quick sardonic eye
For all the mockeries of life,
Beware, in this dark masque of things that seem,
Lest even that tragic irony,
Which you discern in this our mortal strife,
Trick you and trap you, also, with a dream.

Last night I saw a dead man borne along
The city streets, passing a boisterous throng
That never ceased to laugh and shout and dance:
And yet, and yet,
For all the poison bitter minds might brew
From themes like this, I knew
That the stern Truth would not permit her glance
Thus to be foiled by flying straws of chance,
For her keen eyes on deeper skies are set,
And laws that tragic ironists forget.

She saw the dead man's life, from birth to death,--
All that he knew of love and sin and pain,
Success and failure (not as this world sees),
His doubts, his passions, inner loss and gain,
And borne on darker tides of constant law
Beyond the margin of this life she saw
All that had left his body with the breath.
These things, to her, were still realities.

If any mourned for him unseen,
She saw them, too.
If none, she'd not pretend
His clay were colder, or his God less true,
Or that his grave, at length, would be less green.
She'd not deny
The boundless depths of her eternal sky
Brooding above a boundless universe,
Because he seemed to man's unseeing eye
Going a little further to fare worse;
Nor would she assume he lacked that unseen friend
Whom even the tragic ironists declare
Were better than the seen, in his last end.

Oh, then, beware, beware,
Lest in the strong name of 'reality'
You mock yourselves anew with shapes of air,
Lest it be you, agnostics, who re-write
The fettering creeds of night,
Affirm you know your own Unknowable,
And lock the wingéd soul in a new hell;

Lest it be you, lip-worshippers of Truth,
Who break the heart of youth;
Lest it be you, the realists, who fight
With shadows, and forget your own pure light;
Lest it be you who, with a little shroud
Snatched from the sightless faces of the dead,
Hoodwink the world, and keep the mourner bowed
In dust, real dust, with stones, real stones, for bread;
Lest, as you look one eighth of an inch beneath
The yellow skin of death,
You dream yourselves discoverers of the skull
That old *_memento mori_* of our faith;
Lest it be you who hunt a flying wraith
Through this dissolving stuff of hill and cloud;
Lest it be you, who, at the last, annul
Your covenant with your kind;
Lest it be you who darken heart and mind,
Sell the strong soul in bondage to a dream,
And fetter us once more to things that seem.

V

(*_An Answer_*)

[After reading an article in a leading London journal by an 'intellectual' who attacked one of the noblest poets and greatest artists of a former century (or any century) on the ground that his high ethical standards were incompatible with the new lawlessness. This vicious lawlessness the writer described definitely, and he paid his tribute to dishonour as openly and brutally as any of the Bolsheviki could have done. I had always known that this was the real ground of the latter-day onslaught on some of the noblest literature of the past; but I had never seen it openly confessed before. The time has now surely come when, if our civilization is to make any fight at all against the new 'red ruin and breaking up of laws,' we must cease to belaud our slack-minded, latter-day 'literature of rebellion' for its cleverness in making scraps of paper out of the plain laws of right and wrong. It has been doing this for more than twenty-five years, and the same has become fashionable among those who are too busy to read carefully or understand fully what pitfalls are being prepared for their own feet and the feet of their

children.]

I

If this were true, England indeed were dead.
If the wild fashion of that poisonous hour
Wherein the new Salome, clothed with power,
Wriggled and hissed, with hands and feet so red,
Should even now demand that glorious head,
Whose every word was like an English flower,
Whose every song an English April shower,
Whose every thought immortal wine and bread;
If this were true, if England should prefer
Darkness, corruption, and the adulterous crew,
Shakespeare and Browning would cry shame on her,
And Milton would deny the land he knew;
And those who died in Flanders yesterday
Would thank their God they sleep in cleaner clay.

II

It is not true. Only these 'rebel' wings,
These glittering clouds of 'intellectual' flies
Out of the stagnant pools of midnight rise
From the old dead creeds, with carrion-poisoned stings
They strike at noble and ignoble things,
Immortal Love with the old world's out-worn lies,
But even now, a wind from clearer skies
Dissolves in smoke their coteries and wings.

See, their divorced idealist re-divorces
The wife he stole from his own stealing friend!
And these would pluck the high stars from their courses,
And mock the fools that praise them, till the end!
Well, let the whole world praise them. Truth can wait
Till our new England shall unlock the gate.

III

Yes. Let the fools go paint themselves with woad,
For we've a jest between us, Truth and I.
We know that those who live by fashion die
Also by fashion, and that mode kills mode.
We know the great new age is on the road,
And death is at the heart of every lie.
But we've a jest between us, Truth and I.
And we have locked the doors to our abode.

Yet if some great new 'rebel' in his pride
Should pass that way and hear us laughing low
Like lovers, in the darkness, side by side,
He might catch this:--'The dullards do not know
That names are names. New 'rebel' is old 'thrall.'
And we're the lonely dreamers after all.

Alfred Noyes

Haunted In Old Japan

I

Music of the star-shine shimmering o'er the sea
Mirror me no longer in the dusk of memory:
Dim and white the rose-leaves drift along the shore
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

II

All along the purple creek, lit with silver foam,
Silent, silent voices, cry no more of home;
Soft beyond the cherry-trees, o'er the dim lagoon,
Dawns the crimson lantern of the large low moon.

III

We that loved in April, we that turned away
Laughing, ere the wood-dove crooned across the May,
Watch the withered rose-leaves drift along the shore.
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

IV

We that saw the winter waste the weeping bower,
We that saw the young love perish like a flower,
We that saw the dark eyes deepening with tears,
Hear the vanished voices in the land beyond the years.

V

We that hurt the thing we loved; we that went astray,
We that in the darkness idly dreamed of day . . .
. . . Ah! The dreary rose-leaves drift along the shore.
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

VI

Lonely starry faces, wonderful and white,
Yearning with a cry across the dim sweet night,
All our dreams are blown a-drift as flowers before a fan,
All our hearts are haunted in the heart of old Japan.

VII

Haunted, haunted, haunted; we that mocked and sinned
Hear the vanished voices wailing down the wind,

Watch the ruined rose-leaves drift along the shore;
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

VIII

We, the sons of reason, we that chose to bride
Knowledge and rejected the Dream that we denied,
We that mocked the Holy Ghost and chose the Son of Man, [1]
Now must wander haunted in the heart of old Japan

IX

Haunted, haunted, haunted, by the sound of falling tears,
Haunted, haunted, haunted, by the yearning of the years;
Ah! the phantom rose-leaves drift along the shore;
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

X

All along the purple creek, lit with silver foam,
Sobbing, sobbing voices, cry no more of home:
Soft beyond the cherry trees, o'er the dim lagoon,
Dawns the crimson lantern of the large, low moon.

Alfred Noyes

Immortal Sails

Now, in a breath, we'll burst those gates of gold,
And ransack heaven before our moment fails.
Now, in a breath, before we, too, grow old,
We'll mount and sing and spread immortal sails.

It is not time that makes eternity.
Love and an hour may quite out-span the years,
And give us more to hear and more to see
Than life can wash away with all its tears.

Dear, when we part, at last, that sunset sky
Shall not be touched with deeper hues than this;
But we shall ride the lightning ere we die
And seize our brief infinitude of bliss,

With time to spare for all that heaven can tell,
While eyes meet eyes, and look their last farewell.

Alfred Noyes

Kilmeny (A Song Of The Trawlers)

Dark, dark, lay the drifters, against the red west,
As they shot their long meshes of steel overside;
And the oily green waters were rocking to rest
When Kilmeny went out, at the turn of the tide.
And nobody knew where that lassie would roam,
For the magic that called her was tapping unseen.
It was well nigh a week ere Kilmeny came home,
And nobody knew hwere Kilmeny had been.

She'd a gun at her bow that was Newcastle's best,
And a gun at her stern that was fresh from the Clyde,
And a secret her skipper had never confessed,
Not even at dawn, to his newly wed bride;
And a wireless that whispered above like a gnome,
The laughter of London, the boasts of Berlin.
O, it may have been mermaids that lured her from home,
But nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

It was dark when Kilmeny came home from her quest,
With her bridge dabbled red where her skipper had died;
But she moved like a bride with a rose at her breast;
And "Well done, Kilmeny!" the admiral cried.
Now at sixty-four fathom a conger may come,
And nose at the bones of a drowned submarine;
But late in the evening Kilmeny came home,
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

There's a wandering shadow that stares at the foam,
Though they sing all night to old England, their queen,
Late, late in the evening Kilmeny came home,
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

Alfred Noyes

Lines For A Sun-Dial

With shadowy pen I write,
Till time be done,
Good news of some strange light,
Some far off sun.

Alfred Noyes

Memories Of The Pacific Coast

I know a land, I, too,
Where warm keen incense on the sea-wind blows,
And all the winter long the skies are blue,
And the brown deserts blossom with the rose.

Deserts of all delight,
Cactus and palm and earth of thirsty gold,
Dark purple blooms round eaves of sun-washed white,
And that Hesperian fruit men sought of old.

O, to be wandering there,
Under the palm-trees, on that sunset shore,
Where the waves break in song, and the bright air
Is crystal clean; and peace is ours, once more.

There Beauty dwells,
Beauty, re-born in whiteness from the foam;
And Youth returns with all its magic spells,
And the heart finds its long-forgotten home,--

Home--home! Where is that land?
For, when I dream it found, the old hungering cry
Aches in the soul, drives me from all I planned,
And sets my sail to seek another sky.

Alfred Noyes

Michael Oaktree

Under an arch of glorious leaves I passed
Out of the wood and saw the sickle moon
Floating in daylight o'er the pale green sea.

It was the quiet hour before the sun
Gathers the clouds to prayer and silently
Utters his benediction on the waves
That whisper round the death-bed of the day.
The labourers were returning from the farms
And children danced to meet them. From the doors
Of cottages there came a pleasant clink
Where busy hands laid out the evening meal.
From smouldering elms around the village spire
There soared and sank the caw of gathering rooks.
The faint-flushed clouds were listening to the tale
The sea tells to the sunset with one sigh.
The last white wistful sea-bird sought for peace,
And the last fishing-boat stole o'er the bar,
And fragrant grasses, murmuring a prayer,
Bowed all together to the holy west,
Bowed all together thro' the golden hush,
The breathing hush, the solemn scented hush,
The holy, holy hush of eventide.

And, in among the ferns that crowned the hill
With waving green and whispers of the wind,
A boy and girl, carelessly linking hands,
Into their golden dream drifted away.
On that rich afternoon of scent and song
Old Michael Oaktree died. It was not much
He wished for; but indeed I think he longed
To see the light of summer once again
Blossoming o'er the far blue hills. I know
He used to like his rough-hewn wooden bench
Placed in the sun outside the cottage door
Where in the listening stillness he could hear,
Across the waving gilly-flowers that crowned
His crumbling garden wall, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills

The sacred consolation of the sea.
He did not hope for much: he longed to live
Until the winter came again, he said;
But on the last sweet eve of May he died.

I wandered sadly through the dreaming lanes
Down to the cottage on that afternoon;
For I had known old Michael Oaktree now
So many years, so many happy years.
When I was little he had carried me
High on his back to see the harvest home,
And given me many a ride upon his wagon
Among the dusty scents of sun and hay.
He showed me how to snare the bulky trout
That lurked under the bank of yonder brook.
Indeed, he taught me many a country craft,
For I was apt to learn, and, as I learnt,
I loved the teacher of that homely lore.
Deep in my boyish heart he shared the glad
Influence of the suns and winds and waves,
Giving my childhood what it hungered for--
The rude earth-wisdom of the primal man.

He had retained his childhood: Death for him
Had no more terror than his bed. He walked
With wind and sunlight like a brother, glad
Of their companionship and mutual aid.
We, toilers after truth, are weaned too soon
From earth's dark arms and naked barbarous breast.
Too soon, too soon, we leave the golden feast,
Fetter the dancing limbs and pluck the crown
Of roses from the dreaming brow. We pass
Our lives in most laborious idleness.
For we have lost the meaning of the world;
We have gone out into the night too soon;
We have mistaken all the means of grace
And over-rated our small power to learn.
And the years move so swiftly over us:
We have so little time to live in worlds
Unrealised and unknown realms of joy,
We are so old before we learn how vain
Our effort was, how fruitlessly we cast

Our Bread upon the waters, and how weak
Our hearts were, but our chance desires how strong!
Then, in the dark, our sense of light decays;
We cannot cry to God as once we cried!
Lost in the gloom, our faith, perhaps our love,
Lies dead with years that never can return.

But Michael Oaktree was a man whose love
Had never waned through all his eighty years.
His faith was hardly faith. He seemed a part
Of all that he believed in. He had lived
In constant conversation with the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of peace;
In absolute communion with the Power
That rules all action and all tides of thought,
And all the secret courses of the stars;
The Power that still establishes on earth
Desire and worship, through the radiant laws
Of Duty, Love and Beauty; for through these
As through three portals of the self-same gate
The soul of man attains infinity,
And enters into Godhead. So he gained
On earth a fore-taste of Nirvana, not
The void of eastern dream, but the desire
And goal of all of us, whether thro' lives
Innumerable, by slow degrees, we near
The death divine, or from this breaking body
Of earthly death we flash at once to God.
Through simple love and simple faith, this man
Attained a height above the hope of kings.

Yet, as I softly shut the little gate
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossom ached like inmost pain
Deep in my heart, I know not why. They seemed
Distinct, distinct as distant evening bells
Tolling, over the sea, a secret chime
That breaks and breaks and breaks upon the heart
In sorrow rather than in sound, a chime
Strange as a streak of sunset to the moon,
Strange as a rose upon a starlit grave,
Strange as a smile upon a dead man's lips;

A chime of melancholy, mute as death
But strong as love, uttered in plangent tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the rose-wreathed porch.

At last I tapped and entered and was drawn
Into the bedroom of the dying man,
Who lay, propped up with pillows, quietly
Gazing; for through his open casement far
Beyond the whispers of the gilly-flowers
He saw the mellow light of eventide
Hallow the west once more; and, as he gazed,
I think I never saw so great a peace
On any human face. There was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the garden and, far off,
The sacred consolation of the sea.

His wife sat at his bed-side: she had passed
Her eightieth year; her only child was dead.
She had been wedded more than sixty years,
And she sat gazing with the man she loved
Quietly, out into that unknown Deep.

A butterfly floated into the room
And back again, pausing awhile to bask
And wink its painted fans on the warm sill;
A bird piped in the roses and there came
Into the childless mother's ears a sound
Of happy laughing children, far away.

Then Michael Oaktree took his wife's thin hand
Between his big rough hands. His eyes grew dark,
And, as he turned to her and died, he spoke
Two words of perfect faith and love--_Come soon_!

O then in all the world there was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the leaves and far away,
The infinite compassion of the sea.
But, as I softly passed out of the porch

And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossoms ached like inmost joy,
Distinct no more, but like one heavenly choir
Pealing one mystic music, still and strange
As voices of the holy Seraphim,
One voice of adoration, mute as love,
Stronger than death, and pure with wedded tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the garden gate.

O then indeed I knew how closely knit
To stars and flowers we are, how many means
Of grace there are for those that never lose
Their sense of membership in this divine
Body of God; for those that all their days
Have walked in quiet communion with the Life
That keeps the common secret of the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of man.
There is one God, one Love, one everlasting
Mystery of Incarnation, one creative
Passion behind the many-coloured veil.

We have obscured God's face with partial truths,
The cause of all our sorrow and sin, our wars
Of force and thought, in this unheavened world.
Yet, by the battle of our partial truths,
The past against the present and the swift
Moment of passing joy against the deep
Eternal love, ever the weaker truth
Falls to the stronger, till once more we near
The enfolding splendour of the whole. Our God
Has been too long a partial God. We are all
Made in His image, men and birds and beasts,
Mountains and clouds and cataracts and suns,
With those great Beings above our little world,
A height beyond for every depth below,
Those long-forgotten Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
Existences that live and move in realms
As far beyond our thought as Europe lies
With all its little arts and sciences
Beyond the comprehension of the worm.

We are all partial images, we need
What lies beyond us to complete our souls;
Therefore our souls are filled with a desire
And love which lead us towards the Infinity
Of Godhead that awaits us each and all.

Peacefully through the dreaming lanes I went.
The sun sank, and the birds were hushed. The stars
Trembled like blossoms in the purple trees.
But, as I paused upon the whispering hill
The mellow light still lingered in the west,
And dark and soft against that rosy depth
A boy and girl stood knee-deep in the ferns.
Dreams of the dead man's youth were in my heart,
Yet I was very glad; and as the moon
Brightened, they kissed; and, linking hand in hand,
Down to their lamp-lit home drifted away.

Under an arch of leaves, into the gloom
I went along the little woodland road,
And through the breathless hedge of hawthorn heard
Out of the deepening night, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacrament and sabbath of the sea.

Alfred Noyes

Moving Through The Dew

I

Moving through the dew, moving through the dew,
Ere I waken in the city—Life, thy dawn makes all things new!
And up a fir-clad glen, far from all the haunts of men,
Up a glen among the mountains, oh my feet are wings again!

Moving through the dew, moving through the dew,
O mountains of my boyhood, I come again to you,
By the little path I know, with the sea far below,
And above, the great cloud-galleons with their sails of rose and snow

As of old, when all was young, and the earth a song unsung
And the heather through the crimson dawn its Eden incense flung
From the mountain-heights of joy, for a careless-hearted boy,
And the lavrocks rose like fountain sprays of bliss that ne'er could cloy,

From their little beds of bloom, from the golden gorse and broom,
With a song to God the Giver, o'er that waste of wild perfume;
Blowing from height to height, in a glory of great light,
While the cottage-clustered valleys held the lilac last of night,

So, when dawn is in the skies, in a dream, a dream, I rise,
And I follow my lost boyhood to the heights of Paradise.
Life, thy dawn makes all things new! Hills of Youth, I come to you,
Moving through the dew, moving through the dew.

II

Moving through the dew, moving through the dew,
Floats a brother's face to meet me! Is it you? Is it you?
For the night I leave behind keeps these dazzled eyes still blind!
But oh, the little hill-flowers, their scent is wise and kind;

And I shall not lose the way from the darkness to the day,
While dust can cling as their scent clings to memory for aye;
And the least link in the chain can recall the whole again,
And heaven at last resume its far-flung harvests, grain by grain.

To the hill-flowers clings my dust, and tho' eyeless Death may thrust
All else into the darkness, in their heaven I put my trust;
And a dawn shall bid me climb to the little spread of thyme
Where first I heard the ripple of the fountain-heads of rhyme.

And a fir-wood that I know, from dawn to sunset-glow,
Shall whisper to a lonely sea, that swings far, far below.
Death, thy dawn makes all things new. Hills of Youth, I come to you,
Moving through the dew, moving through the dew.

Alfred Noyes

Name Sakes

BUT where's the brown drifter that went out alone ?

-Roll and go, and fare you well-

' Was her name

Peggy Nutten?

' That name is my own.

Fare you well, my sailor.

They sang in the dark, ' Let her go ! Let her go ! '

And she sailed to the West, where the broad waters flow;

And the others come back, but . . . the bitter winds blow.

Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

The women, at evening, they wave and they cheer.

-Roll and go, and fare you well-

They're waiting to welcome their lads at the pier.

Fare you well, my sailor.

They're all coming home in the twilight below;

But there's one little boat. . . . Let her go ! Let her go!

She carried my heart, and a heart for the foe.

Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

The

Nell

and the

Maggie

, the

Ruth

and the Joan,

-'-Roll and go, and fare you well-

They come to their name-sakes, and leave me alone.

Fare you well, my sailor.

And names are kep' dark, for the spies mustn't know;

But they'll look in my face, an' I think it will show;

Peggy Nutten's my name. Let her go ! Let her go!

Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

Alfred Noyes

Niobe

How like the sky she bends above her child,
One with the great horizon of her pain!
No sob from our low seas where woe runs wild,
No weeping cloud, no momentary rain,
Can mar the heaven-high visage of her grief,
That frozen anguish, proud, majestic, dumb.
She stoops in pity above the labouring earth,
Knowing how fond, how brief
Is all its hope, past, present, and to come,
She stoops in pity, and yearns to assuage its dearth.

Through that fair face the whole dark universe
Speaks, as a thorn-tree speaks thro' one white flower;
And all those wrenched Promethean souls that curse
The gods, but cannot die before their hour,
Find utterance in her beauty. That fair head
Bows over all earth's graves. It was her cry
Men heard in Rama when the twisted ways
With children's blood ran red.
Her silence towers to Silences on high;
And, in her face, the whole earth's anguish prays.

It is the pity, the pity of human love
That strains her face, upturned to meet the doom,
And her deep bosom, like a snow-white dove
Frozen upon its nest, ne'er to resume
Its happy breathing o'er the golden brace
That she must shield till death. Death, death alone
Can break the anguished horror of that spell.
The sorrow on her face
Is sealed: the living flesh is turned to stone;
She knows all, all, that Life and Time can tell.

Ah, yet, her woman's love, so vast, so tender,
Her woman's body, hurt by every dart,
Braving the thunder, still, still hide the slender

Soft frightened child beneath her mighty heart.
She is all one mute immortal cry, one brief
Infinite pang of such victorious pain
That she transcends the heavens and bows them down!
The majesty of grief
Is hers, and her dominion must remain
Eternal. Grief alone can wear that crown.

Alfred Noyes

Nippon

Last night, I dreamed of Nippon....

I saw a cloud of white
Drifting before the sunset
On seas of opal light.

Beyond the wide Pacific
I saw its mounded snow
Miraculously changing
In that deep evening glow,

To rosy rifts and hillocks,
To orchards that I knew,
To snows of peach and cherry,
And feathers of bamboo.

I saw, on twisted bridges,
In blue and crimson gleams,
The lanterns of the fishers,
Along the brook of dreams.

I saw the wreaths of incense
Like little ghosts arise,
From temples under Fuji,
From Fuji to the skies.

I saw that fairy mountain....
I watched it form and fade.
No doubt the gods were singing,
When Nippon isle was made.

Alfred Noyes

Old Japan

In old Japan, by creek and bay,
The blue plum-blossoms blow,
Where birds with sea-blue plumage gay
Through sea-blue branches go:
Dragons are coiling down below
Like dragons on a fan;
And pig-tailed sailors lurching slow
Through streets of old Japan.

There, in the dim blue death of day
Where white tea roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow;
Then lovers wander whispering low
As lovers only can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow
Through streets of old Japan.

From Wonderland to Yea-or-Nay
The junks with painted prow
Dream on the purple water-way
Nor ever meet a foe;
Though still, with stiff mustachio
And crooked ataghan,
Their pirates guard with pomp and show
The ships of old Japan.

How far beyond the dawning day
The glories ebb and flow,
Where still the wonder-children play,
The witches mop and mow;
How far, how far, no chart may show,
The heart of mortal man,
The light, the splendour, and the glow
That once were old Japan!

That land is very far away
We lost it long ago!
In old Japan the grass is grey,

The trees are white with snow;
The sea-blue bird became a crow,
The lizards leapt and ran,
No dragon mourned that overthrow,
The dream of old Japan.

In old Japan, at windows grey,
Where scents of opium flow,
Strange smiling faces, white as clay,
Nod idly to and fro;
There life and death may come and go,
With blessing or with ban,
And still no better gift bestow
Than this, in old Japan.

And now the wistful years delay
To wonder why and how
The blue fantastic twisted day,
When Emperor Hwang or Chow
Dreamed in the colour and the glow
That light the heart of man,
Could e'er such hours of flowers bestow
Through streets of old Japan.

In old Japan they used to play
A game forgotten now;
They filled a nacre-coloured tray
With perfumes in a row,
Breathing of all the flowers that blow
Where dark-blue rivers ran,
Like those upon the plates, you know,
Through fields of old Japan;

Then with silver spatula
The mandarins would go
To test the scented dust and say,
With many a hum and ho,
What flower of all the flowers that grow
For joy of maid or man,
Conceived the scents that puzzled so
The brains of old Japan.

In old Japan, where poets pray
With white uplifted brow,
What mystic floating scents delay
Below the purple bough,
O'er plains no scythe of death may mow,
Nor power of reason scan?
What mandarin musicians know
The flower of old Japan?

There, in the dim blue death of day
Where white tea-roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow,
Then lovers wander, whispering low
As lovers only can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow
Through streets of old Japan.

Alfred Noyes

On A Mountain Top

On this high altar, fringed with ferns
That darken against the sky,
The dawn in lonely beauty burns
And all our evils die.

The struggling sea that roared below
Is quieter than the dew,
Quieter than the clouds that flow
Across the stainless blue.

On this bare crest, the angels kneel
And breathe the sweets that rise
From flowers too little to reveal
Their beauty to our eyes.

I have seen Edens on the earth
With queenly blooms arrayed;
But here the fairest come to birth,
The smallest flowers He made.

O, high above the sounding pine,
And richer, sweeter far,
The wild thyme wakes. The celandine
Looks at the morning star.

They may not see the heavens unfold.
They breathe no out-worn prayer;
But, on a mountain, as of old,
His glory fills the air.

Alfred Noyes

On The Western Front

I

I found a dreadful acre of the dead,
Marked with the only sign on earth that saves.
The wings of death were hurrying overhead,
The loose earth shook on those unquiet graves;

For the deep gun-pits, with quick stabs of flame,
Made their own thunders of the sunlit air;
Yet, as I read the crosses, name by name,
Rank after rank, it seemed that peace was there;

Sunlight and peace, a peace too deep for thought,
The peace of tides that underlie our strife,
The peace with which the moving heavens are fraught,
The peace that is our everlasting life.

The loose earth shook. The very hills were stirred.
The silence of the dead was all I heard.

II

We, who lie here, have nothing more to pray.
To all your praises we are deaf and blind.
We may not ever know if you betray
Our hope, to make earth better for mankind.

Only our silence, in the night, shall grow
More silent, as the stars grow in the sky;
And, while you deck our graves, you shall not know
How many scornful legions pass you by.

For we have heard you say (when we were living)
That some small dream of good would "cost too much."
But when the foe struck, we have watched you giving,
And seen you move the mountains with one touch.

What can be done, we know. But, have no fear!
If you fail now, we shall not see or hear.

Alfred Noyes

Peace

Give me the pulse of the tide again
And the slow lapse of the leaves,
The rustling gold of a field of grain
And a bird in the nested eaves;

And a fishing-smack in the old harbour
Where all was happy and young;
And an echo or two of the songs I knew
When songs could still be sung.

For I would empty my heart of all
This world's implacable roar,
And I would turn to my home, and fall
Asleep in my home once more;

And I would forget what the cities say,
And the folly of all the wise,
And turn to my own true folk this day,
And the love in their constant eyes.

There is peace, peace, where the sea-birds wheel,
And peace in the breaking wave;
And I have a broken heart to heal,
And a broken soul to save.

Alfred Noyes

Peace In A Palace

'You were weeping in the night,' said the Emperor,
'Weeping in your sleep, I am told.'
'It was nothing but a dream,' said the Empress;
But her face grew gray and old.
'You thought you saw our German God defeated?'
'Oh, no!' she said. 'I saw no lightnings fall.
I dreamed of a whirlpool of green water,
Where something had gone down. That was all.

_ 'All but the whimper of the sea gulls flying,
Endlessly round and round,
Waiting for the faces, the faces from the darkness,
The dreadful rising faces of the drowned._

'It was nothing but a dream,' said the Empress.
'I thought I was walking on the sea;
And the foam rushed up in a wild smother,
And a crowd of little faces looked at me.

They were drowning! They were drowning,' said the Empress,
'And they stretched their feeble arms to the sky;
But the worst was--they mistook me for their mother,
And cried as my children used to cry.

_ 'Nothing but a whimper of the sea-gulls flying,
Endlessly round and round,
With the cruel yellow beaks that were waiting for the faces,
The little floating faces of the drowned.'_

'It was nothing but a dream,' said the Emperor,
'So why should you weep, dear, eh?'--
'Oh, I saw the red letters on a life belt
That the green sea washed my way!'--
'What were they?' said the Emperor. 'What were they?'--
'Some of them were hidden,' said the Empress,
'But I plainly saw the L and the U!'
'In God's name, stop!' said the Emperor.
'You told me that it was not true!

_ 'Told me that you dreamed of the sea gulls flying,
Endlessly round and round,
Waiting for the faces, and the eyes in the faces,
The eyes of the children that we drowned._

'Kiss me and forget it,' said the Emperor,
'Dry your tears on the tassel of my sword.
I am going to offer peace to my people,
And abdicate, perhaps, as overlord.
I shall now take up My Cross as Count of Prussia--
Which is not a heavy burden, you'll agree.
Why, before the twenty million dead are rotten
There'll be yachting days again for you and me.
Cheer up!
It would mean a rope for anyone but Me.'

_ 'Oh, take care!' said the Empress. 'They are flying,
Endlessly round and round.
They have finished with the faces, the dreadful little faces,
The little eyeless faces of the drowned.'_

Alfred Noyes

Princeton, May, 1917

*Here Freedom stood by slaughtered friend and foe,
And, ere the wrath paled or that sunset died,
Looked through the ages; then, with eyes aglow,
Laid them to wait that future, side by side.*

(Lines for a monument to the American and British soldiers of the Revolutionary War who fell on the Princeton battlefield and were buried in one grave.)

Now lamp-lit gardens in the blue dusk shine
Through dogwood, red and white;
And round the gray quadrangles, line by line,
The windows fill with light,
Where Princeton calls to Magdalen, tower to tower,
Twin lanterns of the law;
And those cream-white magnolia boughs embower
The halls of "Old Nassau."

The dark bronze tigers crouch on either side
Where redcoats used to pass;
And round the bird-loved house where Mercer died,
And violets dusk the grass,
By Stony Brook that ran so red of old,
But sings of friendship now,
To feed the old enemy's harvest fifty-fold
The green earth takes the plow.

Through this May night, if one great ghost should stray
With deep remembering eyes,
Where that old meadow of battle smiles away
Its blood-stained memories,
If Washington should walk, where friend and foe
Sleep and forget the past,
Be sure his unquenched heart would leap to know
Their souls are linked at last.

Be sure he walks, in shadowy buff and blue,
Where those dim lilacs wave.
He bends his head to bless, as dreams come true,
The promise of that grave;

Then, with a vaster hope than thought can scan,
Touching his ancient sword,
Prays for that mightier realm of God in man:
"Hasten thy kingdom, Lord.

"Land of our hope, land of the singing stars,
Type of the world to be,
The vision of a world set free from wars
Takes life, takes form from thee;
Where all the jarring nations of this earth,
Beneath the all-blessing sun,
Bring the new music of mankind to birth,
And make the whole world one."

And those old comrades rise around him there,
Old foemen, side by side,
With eyes like stars upon the brave night air,
And young as when they died,
To hear your bells, O beautiful Princeton towers,
Ring for the world's release.
They see you piercing like gray swords through flowers,
And smile, from souls at peace.

Alfred Noyes

Republic And Motherland

(Written after entering New York Harbor at Daybreak)

Up the vast harbor with the morning sun
The ship swept in from sea;
Gigantic towers arose, the night was done,
And--there stood Liberty.

Silent, the great torch lifted in one hand,
The dawn in her proud eyes,
Silent, for all the shouts that vex her land,
Silent, hailing the skies;

Hailing that mightier Kingdom of the Blest
Our seamen sought of old,
The dream that lured the nations through the West,
The city of sunset gold.

Saxon and Norman in one wedded soul
Shook out one flag like fire;
But westward, westward, moved the gleaming goal,
Westward, the vast desire.

Westward and ever westward ran the call,
They followed the pilgrim sun,
Seeking that land which should enfold them all,
And weld all hearts in one.

Here on this mightier continent apart,
Here on these rolling plains,
Swells the first throb of that immortal heart,
The pulse of those huge veins.

Still, at these towers, our Old-World cities jest,
And neither hear nor see
The brood of gods at that gigantic breast,
The conquering race to be.

Chosen from many--for no sluggard soul
Confronts that night of stars--

The trumpets of the last Republic roll
Far off, an end to wars;

An end, an end to that wild blood-red age,
That made and keeps us blind;
A mightier realm shall be her heritage,
The kingdom of mankind.

Chosen from many nations, and made one;
But first, O Mother, from thee,
When, following, following on that Pilgrim sun,
Thy Mayflower crossed the sea.

Alfred Noyes

Resurrection

Once more I hear the everlasting sea
Breathing beneath the mountain's fragrant
breast,
Come unto Me, come unto Me,
And I will give you rest.

We have destroyed the Temple and in three days
He hath rebuilt it -- all things are made new:
And hark what wild throats pour His praise
Beneath the boundless blue.

We plucked down all His altars, cried aloud
And gashed ourselves for little gods of clay!
Yon floating cloud was but a cloud,
The May no more than May.

We plucked down all His altars, left not one
Save where, perchance (and ah, the joy was fleet),
We laid our garlands in the sun
At the white Sea-born's feet.

We plucked down all His altars, not to make
The small praise greater, but the great praise less,
We sealed all fountains where the soul could slake
Its thirst and weariness.

"Love" was too small, too human to be found
In that transcendent source whence love was
born:
We talked of "forces": heaven was crowned
With philosophic thorn.

"Your God is in your image," we cried, but O,

'Twas only man's own deepest heart ye gave,
Knowing that He transcended all ye know,
While -- we dug His grave.

Denied Him even the crown on our own brow,
E'en these poor symbols of His loftier reign,
Levelled His Temple with the dust, and now
He is risen, He is risen again,

Risen, like this resurrection of the year,
This grand ascension of the choral spring,
Which those harp-crowded heavens bend to hear
And meet upon the wing.

"He is dead," we cried, and even amid that gloom
The wintry veil was rent! The new-born day
Showed us the Angel seated in the tomb
And the stone rolled away.

It is the hour! We challenge heaven above
Now, to deny our slight ephemeral breath
Joy, anguish, and that everlasting love
Which triumphs over death.

Alfred Noyes

Riddles Of Merlin

As I was walking
Alone by the sea,
'_What is that whisper?_'
Said Merlin to me.
'Only,' I answered,
'The sigh of the wave'--
'_Oh, no_,' replied Merlin,
'_'Tis the grass on your grave_.'

As I lay dreaming
In churchyard ground
'_Listen_,' said Merlin,
'_What is that sound_?'
'The green grass is growing,'
I answered; but he
Chuckled, '_Oh, no!'
'Tis the sound of the sea_.'

As I went homeward
At dusk by the shore,
'_What is that crimson?_'
Said Merlin once more.
'Only the sun,' I said.
'Sinking to rest'--
'_Sunset for East_,' he said,
'_Sunrise for West_.'

Alfred Noyes

Shadow-of-a-Leaf

Elf-blooded creature, little did he reck
Of this blind world's delights,
Content to wreath his legs around his neck
For warmth on winter nights;
Content to ramble away
Through his deep woods in May;
Content, alone with Pan, to observe his forest rites.

Or, cutting a dark cross of beauty there
All out of a hawthorn-tree,
He'd set it up, and whistle to praise and prayer,
Field-mouse and finch and bee;
And, as the woods grew dim
Brown squirrels knelt with him,
Paws to blunt nose, and prayed as well as he.

For, all his wits being lost, he was more wise
Than aught on earthly ground.
Like haunted woodland pools his great dark eyes
Where the lost stars were drowned,
Saw things afar and near.
'Twas said that he could hear
The music of the spheres which had no sound.

And so, through many an age and many a clime,
He strayed on unseen wings;
For he was fey, and knew not space or time,
Kingdoms or earthly kings.
Clear as a crystal ball
One dew-drop showed him all, -
Earth and its tribes, and strange translunar things.

But to the world's one May, he made in chief
His lonely woodland vow,
Praying - as none could pray but Shadow-of-a-Leaf,
Under that fresh-cut bough
Which with two branches grew,
Dark, dark, in sun and dew, -
"The world goes maying. Be this my maypole now!

"Make me a garland, Lady, in thy green aisles
For this wild rood of may,
And I will make thee another of tears and smiles
To match thine own, this day.
For every rose thereof
A rose of my heart's love,
A blood-red rose that shall not waste away.

"For every violet here, a gentle thought
To worship at thine eyes;
But, most of all, for wildings few have sought,
And careless looks despise,
For ragged-robins' birth
Here, in a ditch of earth,
A tangle of sweet prayers to thy pure skies."

Bird, squirrel, bee, and the thing that was like no other
Played in the woods that day,
Talked in the heart of the woods, as brother to brother,
And prayed as children pray, -
Make me a garland, Lady, a garland, Mother,
For this wild rood of may.

Alfred Noyes

Shakespeare's Kingdom

When Shakespeare came to London
He met no shouting throngs;
He carried in his knapsack
A scroll of quiet songs.

No proud heraldic trumpet
Acclaimed him on his way;
Their court and camp have perished;
The songs live on for ay.

Nobody saw or heard them,
But, all around him there,
Spirits of light and music
Went treading the April air.

He passed like any pedlar,
Yet he had wealth untold.
The galleons of th' armada
Could not contain his gold.

The kings rode on to darkness.
In England's conquering hour,
Unseen arrived her splendour;
Unknown, her conquering power.

Alfred Noyes

Sherwood

Sherwood in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake?
Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake;
Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again: all his merry thieves
Hear a ghostly bugle-note shivering through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Merry, merry England has kissed the lips of June:
All the wings of fairyland were here beneath the moon;
Like a flight of rose-leaves fluttering in a mist
Of opal and ruby and pearl and amethyst.

Merry, merry England is waking as of old,
With eyes of blither hazel and hair of brighter gold:
For Robin Hood is here again beneath the bursting spray
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Love is in the greenwood building him a house
Of wild rose and hawthorn and honeysuckle boughs;
Love it in the greenwood: dawn is in the skies;
And Marian is waiting with a glory in her eyes.

Hark! The dazzled laverock climbs the golden steep:
Marian is waiting: is Robin Hood asleep?
Round the fairy grass-rings frolic elf and fay,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Oberon, Oberon, rake away the gold,
Rake away the red leaves, roll away the mould,
Rake away the gold leaves, roll away the red,
And wake Will Scarlett from his leafy forest bed.

Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together
With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose-feather;
The dead are coming back again; the years are rolled away
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Softly over Sherwood the south wind blows;
All the heart of England hid in every rose
Hears across the greenwood the sunny whisper leap,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Hark, the voice of England wakes him as of old
And, shattering the silence with a cry of brighter gold,
Bugles in the greenwood echo from the steep,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Where the deer are gliding down the shadowy glen
All across the glades of fern he calls his merry men;
Doublets of the Lincoln green glancing through the May,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day;

Calls them and they answer: from aisles of oak and ash
Rings the Follow! Follow! and the boughs begin to crash;
The ferns begin to flutter and the flowers begin to fly;
And through the crimson dawning the robber band goes by.

Robin! Robin! Robin! All his merry thieves
Answer as the bugle-note shivers through the leaves:
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Alfred Noyes

Slave And Emperor

'Our cavalry have rescued Nazareth from the enemy whose supermen described Christianity as a creed for slaves.'

The Emperor mocked at Nazareth
In his almighty hour.
The Slave that bowed himself to death
And walked with slaves in Nazareth,
What were his words but wasted breath
Before that 'will to power'?

Yet, in the darkest hour of all,
When black defeat began,
The Emperor heard the mountains quake,
He felt the graves beneath him shake,
He watched his legions rally and break,
And he whimpered as they ran.

'I hear a shout that moves the earth,
A cry that wakes the dead!
Will no one tell me whence they come,
For all my messengers are dumb?
What power is this that comes to birth
And breaks my power?' he said.

Then, all around his foundering guns,
Though dawn was now not far,
The darkness filled with a living fear
That whispered at the Emperor's ear,
'_The armies of the dead draw near
Beneath an eastern star._'

_The trumpet blows in Nazareth.
The Slave is risen again.
Across the bitter wastes of death
The horsemen ride from Nazareth,
And the Power we mocked as wasted breath
Returns, in power, to reign;
Rides on, in white, through Nazareth,

To save His world again._

Alfred Noyes

Song

I came to the door of the House of Love
And knocked as the starry night went by;
And my true love cried "Who knocks?" and I said
"It is I."

And Love looked down from a lattice above
Where the roses were dry as the lips of the dead:
"There is not room in the House of Love
For you both," he said.

I plucked a leaf from the porch and crept
Away through a desert of scoffs and scorns
To a lonely place where I prayed and wept
And wove me a crown of thorns.

I came once more to the House of Love
And knocked, ah, softly and wistfully,
And my true love cried "Who knocks?" and I said
"None now but thee."

And the great doors opened wide apart
And a voice rang out from a glory of light,
"Make room, make room for a faithful heart
In the House of Love, to-night."

Alfred Noyes

Sunlight And Sea

Give me the sunlight and the sea
And who shall take my heaven from me?

Light of the Sun, Life of the Sun,
O happy, bold companion,
Whose golden laughters round me run,
Making wine of the blue air
With wild-rose kisses everywhere,
Browning the limb, flushing the cheek,
Apple-fragrant, leopard-sleek,
Dancing from thy red-curtained East
Like a Nautch-girl to my feast,
Proud because her lord, the Spring,
Praised the way those anklets ring;
Or wandering like a white Greek maid
Leaf-dappled through the dancing shade,
Where many a green-veined leaf imprints
Breast and limb with emerald tints,
That softly net her silken shape
But let the splendour still escape,
While rosy ghosts of roses flow
Over the supple rose and snow.

But sweetest, fairest is thy face,
When we meet, when we embrace,
Where the white sand sleeps at noon
Round that lonely blue lagoon,
Fringed with one white reef of coral
Where the sea-birds faintly quarrel
And the breakers on the reef
Fade into a dream of grief,
And the palm-trees overhead
Whisper that all grief is dead.

Sister Sunlight, lead me then
Into thy healing seas again....
For when we swim out, side by side,
Like a lover with his bride,
When thy lips are salt with brine,

And thy wild eyes flash in mine,
The music of a mightier sea
Beats with my blood in harmony.
I breast the primal flood of being,
Too clear for speech, too near for seeing;
And to his heart, new reconciled,
The Eternal takes his earth-bound child.

Who the essential secret spells
In those gigantic syllables,--
Flowing, ebbing, ebbing, flowing,--
Gathers wisdom past all knowing.
Song of the Sea, I hear, I hear,
That deeper music of the sphere,
Catch the rhythm of sun and star,
And know what light and darkness are;
Ay, faint beginnings of a rhyme
That swells beyond the tides of time;
Beat with thy rhythm in blood and breath,
And make one song of life and death.
I hear, I hear, and rest content,
Merged in the primal element,
The old element whence life arose,
The fount of youth, to which it goes.

Give me the sunlight and the sea
And who shall take my heaven from me?

Alfred Noyes

The Admiral's Ghost

I tell you a tale to-night
Which a seaman told to me,
With eyes that gleamed in the lanthorn light
And a voice as low as the sea.

You could almost hear the stars
Twinkling up in the sky,
And the old wind woke and moaned in the spars
And the same old waves went by.

Singing the same old song
As ages and ages ago,
While he froze my blood in that deep-sea night
With the things he seemed to know.

A bare foot pattered on deck;
Ropes creaked; then-all grew still,
And he pointed his finger straight in my face
And growled, as a sea-dog will.

'Do 'ee know who Nelson was?
That pore little shrivelled form
With the patch on his eye and the pinned-up sleeve
And a soul like a North Sea storm?

'Ask of the Devonshire men!
They know, and they'll tell you true;
He wasn't the pore little chawed-up chap
That Hardy thought he knew.

'He wasn't the man you think!
His patch was a dern disguise!
For he knew that they'd find him out, d'you see,
If they looked him in both his eyes.

'He was twice as big as he seemed;
But his clothes were cunningly made.
He'd both of his hairy arms alright!
The sleeve was a trick of the trade.

'You've heard of sperrits, no doubt;
Well there's more in the matter than that!
But he wasn't the patch and he wasn't the sleeve,
And he wasn't the laced cocked-hat.

'Nelson was just-a Ghost!
You may laugh! But the Devonshire men
They knew that he'd come when England called,
And they know that he'll come again.

'I'll tell you the way it was
(For none of the landsmen know) ,
And to tell it you right, you must go a-starn
Two hundred years or so.

* * * * *

'The waves were lapping and slapping
The same as they are today;
And Drake lay dying aboard his ship
In Nobre Dios Bay.

'The scent of foreign flowers
Came floating all around;
'But I'd give my soul for the smell o' the pitch, '
Says he, 'in Plymouth Sound.

"What shall I do, ' he says,
'When the guns begin to roar,
An' England wants me, and me not there
To shatter 'er fores once more? '

'(You've heard what he said, maybe,
But I'll mark you the p'int's again;
For I want you to box your compass right
And get my story plain.)

' 'You must take my drum', he says,
'To the old sea-wall at home;
And if ever you strike that drum, ' he says,
'Why, strike me blind, I'll come!

"If England needs me, dead
Or living, I'll rise that day!
I'll rise from the darkness under the sea
Ten thousand miles away.'

'That's what he said; and he died;
An' his pirates, listenin' roun'
With their crimson doublets and jewelled swords
That flashed as the sun went down.

'They sewed him up in his shroud
With a round-shot top and toe,
To sink him under the salt-sharp sea
Where all good seamen go.

'They lowered him down in the deep,
And there in the sunset light
They boomed a broadside over his grave,
As meaning to say 'Good night.'

'They sailed away in the dark
To the dear little isle they knew;
And they hung his drum by the old sea-wall
The same as he told them to.

* * * * *

'Two hundred years went by,
And the guns began to roar,
And England was fighting hard for her life,
As ever she fought of yore.

'It's only my dead that count, '
She said, as she says today;
'It isn't the ships and it isn't the guns
'Ull sweep Trafalgar's Bay.'

'D'you guess who Nelson was?
You may laugh, but it's true as true!
There was more in that pore little chawed-up chap
Than ever his best friend knew.

'The foe was creepin' close,
In the dark, to our white-cliffed isle;
They were ready to leap at England's throat,
When-O, you may smile, you may smile;

'But-ask of the Devenshire men;
For they heard in the dead of night
The roll of a drum, and they saw him pass
On a ship all shining white.

'He stretched out his dead cold face
And he sailed in the grand old way!
The fishes had taken an eye and his arm,
But he swept Trafalgar's Bay.

'Nelson-was Francis Drake!
O, what matters the uniform,
Or the patch on your eye or your pinned-up sleeve,
If your soul's like a North Sea storm? '

Alfred Noyes

The Avenue Of The Allies

This is the song of the wind as it came
Tossing the flags of the nations to flame:

_I am the breath of God. I am His laughter.
I am His Liberty. That is my name._

So it descended, at night, on the city.
So it went lavishing beauty and pity,
Lighting the lordliest street of the world
With half of the banners that earth has unfurled;
Over the lamps that are brighter than stars.
Laughing aloud on its way to the wars,
Proud as America, sweeping along
Death and destruction like notes in a song,
Leaping to battle as man to his mate,
Joyous as God when he moved to create,--
Never was voice of a nation so glorious,
Glad of its cause and afire with its fate!
Never did eagle on mightier pinion
Tower to the height of a brighter dominion,
Kindling the hope of the prophets to flame,
Calling aloud on the deep as it came,

_Cleave me a way for an army with banners.
I am His Liberty. That is my name._

Know you the meaning of all they are doing?
Know you the light that their soul is pursuing?
Know you the might of the world they are making,
This nation of nations whose heart is awaking?
What is this mingling of peoples and races?
Look at the wonder and joy in their faces!
Look how the folds of the union are spreading!
Look, for the nations are come to their wedding.
How shall the folk of our tongue be afraid of it?
England was born of it. England was made of it,
Made of this welding of tribes into one,
This marriage of pilgrims that followed the sun!
Briton and Roman and Saxon were drawn

By winds of this Pentecost, out of the dawn,
Westward, to make her one people of many;
But here is a union more mighty than any.
Know you the soul of this deep exultation?
Know you the word that goes forth to this nation?

_I am the breath of God. I am His Liberty.
Let there be light over all His creation._

Over this Continent, wholly united,
They that were foemen in Europe are plighted.
Here, in a league that our blindness and pride
Doubted and flouted and mocked and denied,
Dawns the Republic, the laughing, gigantic
Europe, united, beyond the Atlantic.
That is America, speaking one tongue,
Acting her epics before they are sung,
Driving her rails from the palms to the snow,
Through States that are greater than Emperors know,
Forty-eight States that are empires in might,
But ruled by the will of one people tonight,
Nerved as one body, with net-works of steel,
Merging their strength in the one Commonweal,
Brooking no poverty, mocking at Mars,
Building their cities to talk with the stars.
Thriving, increasing by myriads again
Till even in numbers old Europe may wane.
How shall a son of the England they fought
Fail to declare the full pride of his thought,
Stand with the scoffers who, year after year,
Bring the Republic their half-hidden sneer?
Now, as in beauty she stands at our side,
Who shall withhold the full gift of his pride?
Not the great England who knows that her son,
Washington, fought her, and Liberty won.
England, whose names like the stars in their station,
Stand at the foot of that world's Declaration,--
Washington, Livingston, Langdon, she claims them,
It is her right to be proud when she names them,
Proud of that voice in the night as it came,
Tossing the flags of the nations to flame:

_I am the breath of God. I am His laughter.
I am His Liberty. That is my name._

Flags, in themselves, are but rags that are dyed.
Flags, in that wind, are like nations enskied.
See, how they grapple the night as it rolls
And trample it under like triumphing souls.
Over the city that never knew sleep,
Look at the riotous folds as they leap.
Thousands of tri-colors, laughing for France,
Ripple and whisper and thunder and dance;
Thousands of flags for Great Britain aflame
Answer their sisters in Liberty's name.
Belgium is burning in pride overhead.
Poland is near, and her sunrise is red.
Under and over, and fluttering between,
Italy burgeons in red, white, and green.
See, how they climb like adventurous flowers,
Over the tops of the terrible towers....
_There, in the darkness, the glories are mated.
There, in the darkness, a world is created.
There, in this Pentecost, streaming on high.
There, with a glory of stars in the sky.
There the broad flag of our union and liberty
Rides the proud night-wind and tyrannies die._

Alfred Noyes

The Ballad Of Dick Turpin

The daylight moon looked quietly down
Through the gathering dusk on London town

A smock-frocked yokel hobbled along
By Newgate, humming a country song.

Chewing a straw, he stood to stare
At the proclamation posted there:

“Three hundred guineas on Turpins head,
Trap him alive or shoot him dead;
And a hundred more for his mate, Tom King.”

He crouched like a tiger about to spring.
Then he looked up, and he looked down;
And chuckling low, like a country clown,

Dick Turpin painfully hobbled away
In quest of his inn – “The Load of Hay”...

Alone in her stall, his mare, Black Bess,
Lifted her head in mute distress;
For five strange men had entered the yard
And looked at her long, and looked at her hard.

They went out, muttering under their breath;
And then – the dusk grew still as death.

But the velvet ears of the listening mare
Lifted and twitched. They were there – still there;

Hidden and waiting; for whom? And why?
The clock struck four, a set drew nigh.

It was King! Dick Turpins’ mate.
The black mare whinnied. Too late! Too late!

They rose like shadows out of the ground
And grappled him there, without a sound.

“Throttle him – quietly – choke him dead!
Or we lose this hawk for a jay, they said.”

They wrestled and heaved, five men to one;
And a yokel entered the yard, alone;

A smock-frocked yokel, hobbling slow;
But a fight is physic as all men know.

His age dropped off, he stood upright.
He leapt like a tiger into the fight.

Hand to hand, they fought in the dark;
For none could fire at a twisting mark.

Where he that shot at a foe might send
His pistol ball through the skull of a friend.

But “Shoot Dick, Shoot” gasped out Tom King
“Shoot! Or damn it we both shall swing!
Shoot and chance it!” Dick leapt back.

He drew. He fired. At the pistols crack
The wrestlers whirled. They scattered apart
And the bullet drilled through Tom Kings heart...

Dick Turpin dropped his smoking gun.
They had trapped him five men to one.

A gun in the hand of the crouching five.
They could take Dick Turpin now alive;

Take him and bind him and tell their tale
As a pot house boast, when they drank their ale.

He whistled, soft as a bird might call
And a head rope snapped in his birds dark stall.

He whistled, soft as a nightingale
He heard the swish of her swinging tail.

There was no way out that the five could see
To heaven or hell, but the Tyburn tree;

No door but death; and yet once more
He whistled, as though at a sweethearts door.

The five men laughed at him, trapped alive;
And – the door crashed open behind the five!

Out of the stable, a wave of thunder,
Swept Black Bess, and the five went under.

He leapt to the saddle, a hoof turned stone,
Flashed blue fire, and their prize was gone.....

**

He rode for one impossible thing; that in the
morning light
The towers of York might waken him-
from London and last night.

He rode to prove himself another,
and leave himself behind.
And the hunted self was like a cloud;
but the hunter like the wind.

Neck and neck they rode together;
that, in the day's first gleam,
each might prove that the other self
was but a mocking dream.

And the little sleeping villages, and the
breathless country side
Woke to the drum of the ghostly hooves,
but missed that ghostly ride.

The did not see, they did not hear as the ghostly
hooves drew nigh,
The dark magnificent thief in the night
that rode so subtly by.

They woke, they rushed to the way-side door,
They saw what the midnight showed,-
A mare that came like a crested wave,
Along the Great North Road.

A flying spark in the formless dark,
a flash from the hoof-spurned stone,
And the lifted face of a man –
that took the starlight and was gone.

The heard the sound of a pounding chase
three hundred yards away
There were fourteen men in a stream of sweat
and a plaster of Midland clay.

The starlight struck their pistol-butts as they
passed in the clattering crowd
But the hunting wraith was away like the wind
at the heels of the hunted cloud.

He rode by the walls of Nottingham,
and over him as he went
Like ghosts across the Great North Road,
the boughs of Sherwood bent.

By Bawtry, all the chase but one has dropped
a league behind,
Yet, one rider haunted him, invisibly, as the wind.

And northward, like a blacker night, he saw the moors up-loom
And Don and Derwent sang to him, like memory in the gloom.

And northward, northward as he rode, and sweeter than a prayer
The voices of those hidden streams,
the Trent, the Ouse and the Aire;

Streams that could never slake his thirst.
He heard them as he flowed
But one dumb shadow haunted him along the
Great North Road.

Till now, at dawn, the towers of York rose on

the reddening sky.
And Bess went down between his knees,
like a breaking wave to die.

He lay beside her in the ditch, he kissed her lovely head,
And a shadow passed him like the wind and left him with his dead.

He saw, but not that one as wakes, the city that he sought,
He had escaped from London town, but not from his own thought.

He strode up to the Mickle-gate, with none to say him nay.
And there he met his Other Self in the stranger light of day.

He strode up to the dreadful thing that in the gateway stood
And it stretched out a ghostly hand that the dawn had stained with blood.

It stood as in the gates of hell, with none to hear or see,
"Welcome," it said, "Thou'st ridden well, and outstript all but me".

Alfred Noyes

The Barrel-Organ

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks low;
And the music's not immortal; but the world has made it sweet
And fulfilled it with the sunset glow;
And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the pain
That surround the singing organ like a large eternal light;
And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And now it's marching onward through the realms of old romance,
And trolling out a fond familiar tune,
And now it's roaring cannon down to fight the King of France,
And now it's prattling softly to the moon.
And all around the organ there's a sea without a shore
Of human joys and wonders and regrets;
To remember and to recompense the music evermore
For what the cold machinery forgets...

Yes; as the music changes,
Like a prismatic glass,
It takes the light and ranges
Through all the moods that pass;
Dissects the common carnival
Of passions and regrets,
And gives the world a glimpse of all
The colours it forgets.

And there *La Traviata* sighs
Another sadder song;
And there *Il Trovatore* cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
And bolder knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance,
Than ever here on earth below
Have whirled into--a dance!--

Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time;
Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)
And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland;

Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)

The cherry-trees are seas of bloom and soft perfume and sweet perfume,
The cherry-trees are seas of bloom (and oh, so near to London!)
And there they say, when dawn is high and all the world's a blaze of sky
The cuckoo, though he's very shy, will sing a song for London.

The nightingale is rather rare and yet they say you'll hear him there
At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London!)
The linnet and the throstle, too, and after dark the long halloo
And golden-eyed <i>tu-whit, tu-whoo</i> of owls that ogle London.

For Noah hardly knew a bird of any kind that isn't heard
At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London!)
And when the rose begins to pout and all the chestnut spires are out
You'll hear the rest without a doubt, all chorusing for London:--

<i>Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)
And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (is isn't far from London!) </i>

And then the troubadour begins to thrill the golden street,
In the city as the sun sinks low;
And in all the gaudy busses there are scores of weary feet
Marking time, sweet time, with a dull mechanic beat,
And a thousand hearts are plunging to a love they'll never meet,
Through the meadows of the sunset, through the poppies and the wheat,
In the land where the dead dreams go.

Verdi, Verdi, when you wrote <i>Il Trovatore</i> did you dream
Of the City when the sun sinks low,
Of the organ and the monkey and the many-coloured stream
On the Piccadilly pavement, of the myriad eyes that seem
To be litten for a moment with a wild Italian gleam
As <i>A che la morte</i> parodies the world's eternal theme
And pulses with the sunset-glow?

There's a thief, perhaps, that listens with a face of frozen stone
In the City as the sun sinks low;
There's a portly man of business with a balance of his own,
There's a clerk and there's a butcher of a soft reposeful tone,

And they're all of them returning to the heavens they have known:
They are crammed and jammed in busses and--they're each of them alone
In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a labourer that listens to the voices of the dead
In the City as the sun sinks low;
And his hand begins to tremble and his face is rather red
As he sees a loafer watching him and--there he turns his head
And stares into the sunset where his April love is fled,
For he hears her softly singing and his lonely soul is led
Through the land where the dead dreams go...

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks low;
Though the music's only Verdi there's a world to make it sweet
Just as yonder yellow sunset where the earth and heaven meet
Mellows all the sooty City! Hark, a hundred thousand feet
Are marching on to glory through the poppies and the wheat
In the land where the dead dreams go.

So it's Jeremiah, Jeremiah,
What have you to say
When you meet the garland girls
Tripping on their way?
All around my gala hat
I wear a wreath of roses
(A long and lonely year it is
I've waited for the May!)
If any one should ask you,
The reason why I wear it is--
My own love, my true love is coming home to-day.

And it's buy a bunch of violets for the lady
<i>(It's lilac-time in London; it's lilac-time in London!) </i>
Buy a bunch of violets for the lady;
While the sky burns blue above:

On the other side the street you'll find it shady
<i>(It's lilac-time in London; it's lilac-time in London!) </i>
But buy a bunch of violets for the lady,
And tell her she's your own true love.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks glittering and slow;
And the music's not immortal; but the world has made it sweet
And enriched it with the harmonies that make a song complete
In the deeper heavens of music where the night and morning meet,
As it dies into the sunset glow;

And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the pain
That surround the singing organ like a large eternal light,
And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And there, as the music changes,
The song runs round again;
Once more it turns and ranges
Through all its joy and pain:
Dissects the common carnival
Of passions and regrets;
And the wheeling world remembers all
The wheeling song forgets.

Once more *La Traviata* sighs
Another sadder song:
Once more *Il Trovatore* cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
Once more the knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance
Till once, once more, the shattered foe
Has whirled into--a dance!

*Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)
And you shall wander hand in hand with Love in summer's wonderland,
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)*

Alfred Noyes

The Big Black Trawler

THE very best ship that ever I knew
-Ah-way O, to me O-
Was a big black trawler with a deep-sea crew-
Sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

There was one old devil with a broken nose
-Ah-way O, to me O-
He was four score years, as I suppose-
But sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

We was wrecked last March, in a Polar storm
-Ah-way O, to me O-
And we asked the old cripple if his feet was warm-
Sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

And the old, old devil (he was ninety at the most)
-Ah-way O, to me O-
Roars, ' Ay, warm as a lickle piece of toast '-
So sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

' For I soaked my sea-boots and my dungarees
-Ah-way O, to me O-
In the good salt water that the Lord don't freeze '-
Oh sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

Alfred Noyes

The Companions

How few are they that voyage through the night
On that eternal quest,
For that strange light beyond our light,
That rest beyond our rest.

And they who, seeking beauty, once descry
Her face, to most unknown;
Thenceforth like changelings from the sky
Must walk their road alone.

So once I dreamed. So idle was my mood;
But now, before these eyes,
From those foul trenches, black with blood,
What radiant legions rise!

And loveliness over the wounded earth awakes
Like wild-flowers in the Spring.
Out of the mortal chrysalis breaks
Immortal wing on wing.

They rise like flowers, they wander on wings of light,
Through realms beyond our ken.
The loneliest soul is companied tonight
By hosts of unknown men.

Alfred Noyes

The Double Fortress

Time, wouldst thou hurt us? Never shall we grow old.
Break as thou wilt these bodies of blind clay,
Thou canst not touch us here, in our stronghold,
Where two, made one, laugh all thy powers away.

Though ramparts crumble and rusty gates grow thin,
And our brave fortress dwine to a hollow shell,
Thou shalt hear heavenly laughter, far within,
Where, young as Love, two hidden lovers dwell.

We shall go clambering up our twisted stairs
To watch the moon through rifts in our grey towers.
Thou shalt hear whispers, kisses, and sweet prayers
Creeping through all our creviced walls like flowers.

Wouldst wreck us, Time? When thy dull leaguer brings
The last wall down, look heavenward. We have wings.

Alfred Noyes

The Elfin Artist

In a glade of an elfin forest
When Sussex was Eden-new,
I came on an elvish painter
And watched as his picture grew,
A harebell nodded beside him.
He dipt his brush in the dew.

And it might be the wild thyme round him
That shone in the dark strange ring;
But his brushes were bees' antennae,
His knife was a wasp's blue sting;
And his gorgeous exquisite palette
Was a butterfly's fan-shaped wing.

And he mingled its powdery colours,
And painted the lights that pass,
On a delicate cobweb canvas
That gleamed like a magic glass,
And bloomed like a banner of elf-land,
Between two stalks of grass;

Till it shone like an angel's feather
With sky-born opal and rose,
And gold from the foot of the rainbow,
And colours that no man knows;
And I laughed in the sweet May weather,
Because of the themes he chose.

For he painted the things that matter,
The tints that we all pass by,
Like the little blue wreaths of incense
That the wild thyme breathes to the sky;
Or the first white bud of the hawthorn,
And the light in a blackbird's eye;

And the shadows on soft white cloud-peaks
That carolling skylarks throw,--
Dark dots on the slumbering splendours
That under the wild wings flow,

Wee shadows like violets trembling
On the unseen breasts of snow;

With petals too lovely for colour
That shake to the rapturous wings,
And grow as the bird draws near them,
And die as he mounts and sings,--
Ah, only those exquisite brushes
Could paint these marvellous things.

Alfred Noyes

The Escape Of The Old Grey Squirrel

Old Grey Squirrel might have been
Almost anything -
Might have been a soldier, sailor,
Tinker, tailor
(Never a beggar-man, though, nor thief).
Might have been, perhaps, a king,
Or an Indian chief.

He remained a City clerk
Doubled on a great high stool,
Totting up, from dawn to dark,
Figures, figures, figures, figures,
Red ink, black ink, double rule,
Tot-tot-totting with his pen,
Up and down and round again -
Curious Old Grey Squirrel.

No one ever really knew
What he did at night,
In his room so near the roof,
Up those steep and narrow stairs.
Old Grey Squirrel wasn't quite
The same as other men.
What he said was always true;
He was like a little child
In a thousand things.
Something shy and delicate,
Cold and grave and undefiled,
Seemed to keep him quite aloof.
You could never call him lonely,
Though he lived with memory there.

When he knelt beside his bed
He had nothing much to say
But the simplest little prayer
Learned in childhood, long ago,
And he didn't know or care
Whether Calvinists might call it
Praying for the dead.

Father, mother, sister, brother -
Memories clear as evening bells;
Yes, the very sort of thing
All your clever little scribblers
Love to satirize and sting,
So let's talk of something else.
He collected stamps, you know,
Commonplace Old Squirrel.

Ah, but could you see him there,
When the day's grey work was done,
Poring over his new stamps
With that wise old air;
Looking up the curious places
In his tattered atlas, too
Lands of jungle and of sun,
Ivory tusks and dusky faces,
Whence his latest treasure flew
Like a tropic moth, he thought,
To flutter round his dying lamp. . . .

Visions are not bought and sold;
But, when the foreign mail came in
Bringing his employers news
Of copper, sulphide, zinc and tin
(And the red resultant gold),
Envelopes were thrown away,
So, of course, one clearly sees
He could pick, and he could choose,
Having, as he used to say,
'Very great advantages.'
Rarities could not be bought.
Bus fares don't leave much for spending
On a flight to Zipangu.

All the same, one never knew.
All things come to those who wait -
Isles of palm in rose and blue,
India, China and Peru,
And the Golden Gate.

So he'd turn his treasures over -
Mauve and crimson, buff and cream -
Every stamp an elfin window
Opening on a boy's lost dream.
'Curious, curious, that's Jamaica,
That's Hong Kong (the twopenny red),
I've no doubt they are well worth seeing,
Well worth seeing,' Old Squirrel said.

'Curious' - curious was his word -
Old Grey Squirrel remembered a day
Sitting alone in a whispering fir-wood
(This was in boyhood before they caught him)
Writing a story of far Cathay,
A tale that his friends would think absurd
But would make him famous when he was dead.
'Curious' - thinking of all those years,
All those dreams that had drifted away -
Once, he had thought - but the years had taught him,
Taught him better, and bowed his head.

'Curious' - memory clings and lingers -
Clings - the smell of the fir wood - clings . . .
Through his wrinkled ink-stained fingers,
'Curious, curious,' trickled the tears,
Curious Old Grey Squirrel.

No, you'd hardly call it weeping.
Old Grey Squirrel could not weep.
Head on arm, he might have been
Sleeping; but he did not know.
Most of us are sound asleep;
And, that Christmas Eve, it seems,
He awoke, at last, from dreams.
Gently, as a woman's hand
Something touched him on the brow,
And he woke, in that strange land -
Where he lives for ever now.

All things come to those who wait -
Palms against a deeper blue,
Far Cathay and Zipangu,

And the Golden Gate.

Alfred Noyes

The Ghost Of The New World

'_There are no ghosts in America._'

There are no ghosts, you say,
To haunt her blaze of light;
No shadows in her day,
No phantoms in her night.
Columbus' tattered sail
Has passed beyond our hail.

What? On that magic coast,
Where Raleigh fought with fate,
Or where that Devon ghost
Unbarred the Golden Gate,
No dark, strange, ear-ringed men
Beat in from sea again?

No ghosts in Salem town
With silver buckled shoon?
No lovely witch to drown
Or burn beneath the moon?
Not even a whiff of tea,
On Boston's glimmering quay.

O, ghostly Spanish walls,
Where brown Franciscans glide,
Is there no voice that calls
Across the Great Divide,
To pilgrims on their way
Along the Santa Fe?

Then let your Pullman cars
Go roaring to the West,
Till, watched by lonelier stars,
The cactus lifts its crest.
There, on that painted plain,
One ghost will rise again.

Majestic and forlorn,

Wreck of a dying race,
The Red Man, half in scorn,
Shall raise his haughty face,
Inscrutable as the sky,
To watch our ghosts go by.

What? Is earth dreaming still?
Shall not the night disgorge
The ghosts of Bunker Hill
The ghosts of Valley Forge,
Or, England's mightiest son,
The ghost of Washington?

No ghosts where Lincoln fell?
No ghosts for seeing eyes?
I know an old cracked bell
Shall make ten million rise
When one immortal ghost
Calls to the slumbering host.

Alfred Noyes

The Highwayman

PART ONE

I

THE wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

II

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin;
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh!

And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a-twinkle,

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard,
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

IV

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened; his face was white and peaked;
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's red-lipped daughter,

Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say—

V

'One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
 Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way.'

VI

He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt like a brand
As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
 (Oh, sweet, black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the West.

PART TWO

I

He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at noon;
And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the moon,
When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor,
A red-coat troop came marching—
 Marching—marching—
King George's men came matching, up to the old inn-door.

II

They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale instead,
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the foot of her narrow bed;
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their side!
There was death at every window;
 And hell at one dark window;
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that he would ride.

III

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest;

They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel beneath her breast!
'Now, keep good watch!' and they kissed her.

She heard the dead man say—
Look for me by moonlight;
Watch for me by moonlight;
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!

IV

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held good!
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like
years,
Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,
Cold, on the stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

V

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for the rest!
Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath her breast,
She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;
For the road lay bare in the moonlight;
Blank and bare in the moonlight;
And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to her love's refrain .

VI

 Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs ringing clear;
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,
The highwayman came riding,
 Riding, riding!
The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up, straight and still!

VII

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence! Tlot-tlot, in the echoing night!
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
 Her musket shattered the moonlight,

Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.

VIII

He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood
Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own red blood!
Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
 The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

IX

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high!
Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat,
When they shot him down on the highway,
 Down like a dog on the highway,
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch of lace at his throat.

X

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
A highwayman comes riding—
 Riding—riding—
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

XI

Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard;
He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred;
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
 Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

Alfred Noyes

The Hills Of Youth

Once, on the far blue hills,
Alone with the pine and the cloud, in those high still places;
Alone with a whisper of ferns and a chuckle of rills,
And the peat-brown pools that mirrored the angels' faces,
Pools that mirrored the wood-pigeon's grey-blue feather,
And all my thistledown dreams as they drifted along;
Once, oh, once, on the hills, thro' the red-bloomed heather
I followed an elfin song.

Once, by the wellsprings of joy,
In the glens of the hart's-tongue fern, where the brooks came leaping
Over the rocks, like a scrambling bare-foot boy
That never had heard of a world grown old with weeping;
Once, thro' the golden gorse (do the echoes linger
In Paradise woods, where the foam of the may runs wild?)
I followed the flute of a light-foot elfin singer,
A god with the eyes of a child.

Once, he sang to me there,
From a crag on a thyme-clad height where the dew still glistened;
He sang like the spirit of Spring in that dawn-flushed air,
While the angels opened their doors and the whole sky listened:
He sang like the soul of a rainbow, if heaven could hear it,
Beating to heaven, on wings that were April's own;
A song too happy and brave for the heart to bear it,
Had the heart of the hearer known.

Once, ah, once, no more,
The hush and the rapture of youth in those holy places,
The stainless height, the hearts that sing and adore
Till the sky breaks out into flower with the angels' faces!
Once, in the dawn, they were mine; but the noon bereft me.
At midnight now, in an ebb of the loud world's roar,
I catch but a broken stave of the songs that left me
On hills that are mine no more.

The Humming Birds

Green wing and ruby throat,
What shining spell, what exquisite sorcery,
Lured you to float
And fight with bees round this one flowering tree?

Petulant imps of light,
What whisper or gleam or elfin-wild perfumes
Thrilled through the night
And drew you to this hive of rosy bloom?

One tree, and one alone,
Of all that load this magic air with spice,
Claims for its own
Your brave migration out of Paradise;

Claims you, and guides you, too,
Three thousand miles across the summer's waste
Of blooms ye knew
Less finely fit for your ethereal taste.

To poets' youthful hearts,
Even so the quivering April thoughts will fly,--
Those irised darts,
Those winged and tiny denizens of the sky.

Through beaks as needle-fine,
They suck a redder honey than bees know.
Unearthly wine
Sleeps in this bloom; and, when it falls, they go.

Alfred Noyes

The Inn Of Apollo

Have you supped at the Inn of Apollo,
While the last light fades from the West?
Has the Lord of the Sun, at the world's end,
Poured you his ripest and best?
O, there's wine in that Inn of Apollo;

Wine, mellow and deep as the sunset,
With mirth in it, singing as loud
As the skylark sings in a high wind,
High over a crisp white cloud.
Have you laughed in that Inn of Apollo?

Was the whole world molten in music
At once, by the heat of that wine?
Did the stars and the tides and your own heart
Dance with the heavenly Nine?
For they dance in that Inn of Apollo.

Was their poetry croaked by the sages,
Or born in a whisper of wings?
For the music that masters the ages,
Be sure, is the music that sings!
Yes, they sing in that Inn of Apollo.

Alfred Noyes

The Island Hawk

Hushed are the whimpering winds on the hill,
Dumb is the shrinking plain,
And the songs that enchanted the woods are still
As I shoot to the skies again!
Does the blood grow black on my fierce bent beak,
Does the down still cling to my claw?
Who brightened these eyes for the prey they seek?
Life, I follow thy law!
For I am the hawk, the hawk, the hawk!
Who knoweth my pitiless breast?
Who watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way?
Flee – flee – for I quest, I quest.

As I glide and glide with my peering head,
Or swerve at a puff of smoke,
Who watcheth my wings on the wind outspread,
Here – gone – with an instant stroke?
Who toucheth the glory of life I feel
As I buffet this great glad gale,
Spire and spire to the cloud-world, wheel,
Loosen my wings and sail?
For I am the hawk, the island hawk,
Who knoweth my pitiless breast?
Who watcheth me sway in the sun's bright way?
Flee – flee – for I quest, I quest.

My mate in the nest on the high bright tree
Blazing with dawn and dew,
She knoweth the gleam of the world and the glee
As I drop like a bolt from the blue.
She knoweth the fire of the level flight
As I skim, close, close to the ground,
With the long grass lashing my breast and the bright
Dew-drops flashing around.
She watcheth the hawk, the hawk, the hawk
(Oh, the red-blotched eggs in the nest!)
Watcheth him sway in the sun's bright way.
Flee – flee – for I quest, I quest.

She builded her nest on the high bright wold,
She was taught in a world afar
The lore that is only an April old
Yet old as the evening star.
Life of a far off ancient day
In an hour unhooded her eyes.
In the time of the budding of one green spray
She was wise as the stars are wise.
An eyas in eyry, a yellow-eyed hawk,
On the old elm's burgeoning breast,
She watcheth me sway in the wild wind's way.
Flee – flee – for I quest, I quest.

She hath ridden on white Arabian steeds
Thro' the ringing English dells,
For the joy of a great queen, hunting in state,
To the music of golden bells.
A queen's fair fingers have drawn the hood
And tossed her aloft in the blue,
A white hand eager for needless blood.
I hunt for the needs of two.
A haggard in yarak, a hawk, a hawk!
Who knoweth my pitiless breast?
Who watcheth me sway in the sun's bright way?
Flee – flee – for I quest, I quest.

Who fashioned her wide and splendid eyes
That have stared in the eyes of kings?
With a silken twist she was looped to their wrist:
She has clawed at their jewelled rings!
Who flung her first thro' the crimson dawn
To pluck him a prey from the skies,
When the love-light shone upon lake and lawn
In the valleys of Paradise?
Who fashioned the hawk, the hawk, the hawk,
Bent beak and pitiless breast?
Who watcheth him sway in the wild wind's way?
Flee – flee – for I quest, I quest.

Is there ever a song in all the world
Shall say how the quest began
With the beak and the wings that have made us kings

And cruel – almost – as man?
The wild wind whimpers across the heath
Where the sad little tufts of blue
And the red-stained grey little feathers of death
Flutter! Who fashioned us? Who?
Who fashioned the scimitar wings of the hawk,
Bent beak and arrowy breast?
Who watcheth him sway in the sun's bright way?
Flee – flee – for I quest, I quest.

Alfred Noyes

The Little Roads

The great roads are all grown over
That seemed so firm and white.
The deep black forests have covered them.
How should I walk aright?
How should I thread these tangled mazes,
Or grope to that far off light?
I stumble round the thickets, and they turn me
Back to the thickets and the night.

Yet, sometimes, at a word, an elfin pass-word,
(O, thin, deep, sweet with beaded rain!)
There shines, through a mist of ragged-robins,
The old lost April-coloured lane,
That leads me from myself; for, at a whisper,
Where the strong limbs thrust in vain,
At a breath, if my heart help another heart,
The path shines out for me again.

A thin thread, a rambling lane for lovers
To the light of the world's one May,
Where the white dropping flakes may wet our faces
As we lift them to the bloom-bowed spray:
O Master, shall we ask Thee, then, for high-roads,
Or down upon our knees and pray
That Thou wilt ever lose us in Thy little lanes,
And lead us by a wandering way.

Alfred Noyes

The Loom Of Years

In the light of the silent stars that shine on the struggling sea,
In the weary cry of the wind and the whisper of flower and tree,
Under the breath of laughter, deep in the tide of tears,
I hear the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

The leaves of the winter wither and sink in the forest mould
To colour the flowers of April with purple and white and gold:
Light and scent and music die and are born again
In the heart of a grey-haired woman who wakes in a world of pain.

The hound, the fawn, and the hawk, and the doves that croon and coo,
We are all one woof of the weaving and the one warp threads us through,
One flying cloud on the shuttle that carries our hopes and fears
As it goes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

The green uncrumpling fern and the rustling dewdrenched rose
Pass with our hearts to the Silence where the wings of music close,
Pass and pass to the Timeless that never a moment mars,
Pass and pass to the Darkness that made the suns and stars.

Has the soul gone out in the Darkness? Is the dust sealed from sight?
Ah, hush, for the woof of the ages returns thro' the warp of the night!
Never that shuttle loses one thread of our hopes and fears,
As it comes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

O, woven in one wide Loom thro' the throbbing weft of the whole,
One in spirit and flesh, one in body and soul,
Tho' the leaf were alone in its falling, the bird in its hour to die,
The heart in its muffled anguish, the sea in its mournful cry,

One with the flower of a day, one with the withered moon
One with the granite mountains that melt into the noon
One with the dream that triumphs beyond the light of the spheres,
We come from the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

Alfred Noyes

The Lost Battle

It is not over yet-the fight
Where those immortal dreamers failed.
They stormed the citadels of night,
And the night praised them-and prevailed.
So long ago the cause was lost
We scarce distinguish friend from foe;
But-if the dead can help it most-
The armies of the dead will grow.

The world has all our banners now,
And filched our watchwords for its own.
The world has crowned the ' rebel's ' brow
And millions crowd his lordly throne.
The masks have altered. Names are names.
They praise the 'truth' that is not true.
The ' rebel' that the world acclaims
Is not the rebel Shelley knew.

We may not build that Commonweal,
We may not reach the goal we set;
But there's a flag they dare not steal.
Forward! It is not over yet.
We shall be dust and under dust,
Before we end that ancient wrong;
But there's a sword that cannot rust,
And where's the death can touch a song?

So, when our bodies rot in earth,
The singing souls that once were ours,
Weaponed with light and helmed with mirth,
Shall front the kingdoms and the powers.
The ancient lie is on its throne,
And half the living still forget;
But, since the dead are all our own,
Courage, it is not over yet.

Alfred Noyes

The Man Who Discovered The Use Of A Chair

The man who discovered the use of a chair,
_Odds--bobs--
What a wonderful man!_
He used to sit down on it, tearing his hair,
Till he thought of a highly original plan.
For years he had sat on his chair, like you,
_Quite--still!
But his looks were grim_
For he wished to be famous (as great men do)
And nobody ever would listen to him.

Now he went one night to a dinner of state
_Hear! hear!
In the proud Guildhall!_
And he sat on his chair, and he ate from a plate;
But nobody heard his opinions at all;

There were ten fat aldermen down for a speech
(_Grouse! Grouse!
What a dreary bird!_)
With five fair minutes allotted to each,
But never a moment for him to be heard.

But, each being ready to talk, I suppose,
Order! Order!
They cried, _for the Chair!_
And, much to their wonder, our friend arose
And fastened his eye on the eye of the Mayor.

'We have come,' he said, 'to the fourteenth course!
'_High--time,
for the Chair_, ' he said.
Then, with both of his hands, and with all of his force,
He hurled his chair at the Lord Mayor's head.

It missed that head by the width of a hair.
_Gee--whizz!
What a horrible squeak!_
But it crashed through the big bay-window there

And smashed a bus into Wednesday week.

And the very next day, in the decorous Times
(_Great--Guns--
How the headlines ran!_)
In spite of the kings and the wars and the crimes,
There were five full columns about that man.

ENVOI

Oh, if you get dizzy when authors write
(_My stars!
And you very well may!_)
That white is black and that black is white,
You should sit, quite still, in your chair and say:

It is easy enough to be famous now,
(_Puff--Puff!
How the trumpets blare!_)
Provided, of course, that you don't care how,
Like the man who discovered the use of a chair.

Alfred Noyes

The Matin-Song Of Friar Tuck

I.

If souls could sing to heaven's high King
As blackbirds pipe on earth,
How those delicious courts would ring
With gusts of lovely mirth!
What white-robed throng could lift a song
So mellow with righteous glee
As this brown bird that all day long
Delights my hawthorn tree.
Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,
<i> Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus! </i>

II.

If earthly dreams be touched with gleams
Of Paradisal air,
Some wings, perchance, of earth may glance
Around our slumbers there;
Some breaths of may might drift our way
With scents of leaf and loam,
Some whistling bird at dawn be heard
From those old woods of home.
Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,
<i> Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus! </i>

III.

No King or priest shall mar my feast
Where'er my soul may range.
I have no fear of heaven's good cheer
Unless our Master change.
But when death's night is dying away,
If I might choose my bliss,
My love should say, at break of day,
With her first waking kiss:--

Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast,
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,
<i> Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus! </i>

Alfred Noyes

The Moon Is Up

The moon is up, the stars are bright.
the wind is fresh and free!
We're out to seek the gold tonight
across the silver sea!
The world is growing grey and old:
break out the sails again!
We're out to see a Realm of Gold
beyond the Spanish Main.

We're sick of all the cringing knees,
the courtly smiles and lies
God, let Thy singing channel breeze
lighten our hearts and eyes!
Let love no more be bought and sold
for earthly loss or gain;
We're out to seek an Age of Gold
beyond the Spanish Main.

Beyond the light of far Cathay,
beyond all mortal dreams,
Beyond the reach of night and day
Our El Dorado gleams,
Revealing - as the skies unfold -
A star without a stain,
The Glory of the Gates of Gold
beyond the Spanish Main.

Alfred Noyes

The New Duckling

'I want to be new,' said the duckling.
'O, ho!' said the wise old owl,
While the guinea-hen clattered off chuckling
To tell all the rest of the fowl.

'I should like a more elegant figure,'
That child of a duck went on.
'I should like to grow bigger and bigger,
Until I could swallow a swan.

'I _won't_ be the bond slave of habit,
I _won't_ have these webs on my toes.
I want to run round like a rabbit,
A rabbit as red as a rose.

'I _don't_ want to waddle like mother,
Or quack like my silly old dad.
I want to be utterly other,
And _frightfully_ modern and mad.'

'Do you know,' said the turkey, 'you're quacking!
There's a fox creeping up thro' the rye;
And, if you're not utterly lacking,
You'll make for that duck-pond. Good-bye!'

'I won't,' said the duckling. 'I'll lift him
A beautiful song, like a sheep;
And when I have--as it were--biffed him,
I'll give him my feathers to keep.'

Now the curious end of this fable,
So far as the rest ascertained,
Though they searched from the barn to the stable,
Was that _only his feathers remained_.

So he _wasn't_ the bond slave of habit,
And he _didn't_ have webs on his toes;
And _perhaps_ he runs round like a rabbit,
A rabbit as red as a rose.

Alfred Noyes

The Night Of The Lion

'_And that a reply be received before midnight._'
British Ultimatum.

Their Day was at twelve of the night,
When the graves give up their dead.
And still, from the City, no light
Yellow the clouds overhead.
Where the Admiral stands there's a star,
But his column is lost in the gloom;
For the brazen doors are ajar,
And the Lion awakes, and the doom.

_He is not of a chosen race.
His strength is the strength of the skies,
In whose glory all nations have place,
In whose downfall Liberty dies.
He is mighty, but he is just.
He shall live to the end of years.
He shall bring the proud to the dust.
He shall raise the weak to the spheres._

It is night on the world's great mart,
But the brooding hush is awake
With the march of a steady heart
That calls like the drum of Drake,
Come! And a muttering deep
As the pulse of the distant guns,
Or the thunder before the leap
Thro' the rolling thoroughfare runs.

And the wounded men go by
Like thoughts in the Lion's brain.
And the clouds lift on high
Like the slow waves of his mane
And the narrowing lids conceal
The furnaces of his eyes.
Their gold is gone out. They reveal
Only two search-lights of steel

Steadily sweeping the skies.

And we hoped he had peace in his lair
Where the bones of old tyrannies lay,
And the skulls that his cubs have stripped bare,
The old skulls they still toss in their play.
But the tyrants are risen again,
And the last light dies from their path;
For the midnight of his mane
Lifts to the stars with his wrath.

From the East to the West he is crouching.
He snuffs at the North-East wind.
His breast upon Britain is couching.
His haunches quiver on Ind.
It is night, black night, where he lies;
But a kingdom and a fleet
Shall burn in his terrible eyes
When he leaps, and the darkness dies
With the War-gods under his feet.

_Till the day when a little child,
Shall lay but a hand on his mane,
And his eyes grow golden and mild
And he stands in the heavens again;
Till the day of the seventh seal,
Which the Lion alone shall rend,
When the stars from their courses reel,
His Freedom shall not end._

Alfred Noyes

The Old Fool In The Wood

'If I could whisper you all I know,'
Said the Old Fool in the Wood,
'You'd never say that green leaves grow.
You'd say, 'Ah, what a happy mood
The Master must be in today,
To think such thoughts,'
That's what you'd say.'

'If I could whisper you all I've heard,'
Said the Old Fool in the fern,
'You'd never say the song of a bird.
You'd say, 'I'll listen, and p'raps I'll learn
One word of His joy as He passed this way,
One syllable more,'
That's what you'd say.'

'If I could tell you all the rest,'
Said the Old Fool under the skies,
'You'd hug your griefs against your breast
And whisper with love-lit eyes,
'I am one with the sorrow that made the may,
And the pulse of His heart,'
That's what you'd say.'

Alfred Noyes

The Old Gentleman With The Amber Snuff-Box

_The old gentleman, tapping his amber snuff-box
(A heart-shaped snuff-box with a golden clasp)
Stared at the dying fire. 'I'd like them all
To understand, when I am gone,' he muttered.
'But how to do it delicately! I can't
Apologize. I'll hint at it ... in verse;
And, to be sure that Rosalind reads it through,
I'll make it an appendix to my will!'
--Still cynical, you see. He couldn't help it.
He had seen much, felt much. He snapped the snuff box,
Shook his white periwig, trimmed a long quill pen,
And then began to write, most carefully,
These couplets, in the old heroic style:--_

O, had I known in boyhood, only known
The few sad truths that time has made my own,
I had not lost the best that youth can give,
Nay, life itself, in learning how to live.
This laboring heart would not be tired so soon,
This jaded blood would jog to a livelier tune:
And some few friends, could I begin again,
Should know more happiness, and much less pain.
I should not wound in ignorance, nor turn
In foolish pride from those for whom I yearn.
I should have kept nigh half the friends I've lost,
And held for dearest those I wronged the most.

Yet, when I see more cunning men evade
With colder tact, the blunders that I made;
Sometimes I wonder if the better part
Is not still mine, who lacked their subtle art.
For I have conned my book in harsher schools,
And learned from struggling what they worked by rules;
Learned--with some pain--more quickly to forgive
My fellow-blunderers, while they learn to live;
Learned--with some tears--to keep a steadfast mind,
And think more kindly of my own poor kind.

_He read the verses through, shaking his wig.

'Perhaps ... perhaps'--he whispered to himself,
'I'd better leave it to the will of God.
They might upset my own. I do not think
They'd understand. Jocelyn might, perhaps;
And Dick, if only they were left alone.
But Rosalind never; nor that nephew of mine,
The witty politician. No. No. No.
They'd say my mind was wandering, I'm afraid.'
So, with a frozen face, reluctantly,
He tossed his verses into the dying fire,
And watched the sparks fly upward.
There, at dawn,
They found him, cold and stiff by the cold hearth,
His amber snuff-box in his ivory hand.
'You see,' they said, 'he never needed friends.
He had that curious antique frozen way.
He had no heart--only an amber snuff-box.
He died quite happily, taking a pinch of snuff.'

His nephew, that engaging politician,
Inherited the snuff-box, and remarked
His epitaph should be 'Snuffed Out.' The clubs
Laughed, and the statesman's reputation grew. _

Alfred Noyes

The Old Grey Squirrel

A great while ago there was a schoolboy
who lived in a cottage by the sea,
And the very first thing he could remember
was the rigging of the schooners by the quay.
He could watch 'em from his bedroom window
with the big cranes a-hauling out the freight,
And he used to dream of shipping as a sea-cook
and a-sailing for the Golden Gate.

He used to buy the yellow penny dreadfuls,
he'd read 'em where he fished for conger eels,
As he listened to the slapping of the water
the green and oily water round the keels,
There were trawlers with their shark-mouthed flatfish
and the nets a-hanging out to dry,
And the skate the skipper kept because he liked 'em
and the landsmen never knew which ones to fry.
There were brigantines with timber out of Norway
just oozing with the syrups of the pine,
There were rusty dusty freighters out of Sunderland
and clippers of the Blue Cross Line.

To tumble down the hatch into a cabin
was better than the best of broken rules,
For the smell of 'em was like a Christmas dinner
and the feel of 'em was like a box of tools,
And before he went to sleep in the evenings
the last thing that he would ever see,
Was the sailormen a-dancing in the moonlight
by the capstan that stood beside the quay.

Now he's sitting on a high-stool in London,
the Golden Gate is far away,
For they caught him like a squirrel and they caged him,
now he's totting up accounts and turning grey,
And he'll never get to San Francisco
and the last thing that he will ever see,
Is the sailormen a-dancing in the moonlight
by the capstan that stands beside the quay.

To the tune of the old concertina
by the capstan that stands beside the quay.

Alfred Noyes

The Old Meeting House

Its quiet graves were made for peace till Gabriel blows his horn.
Those wise old elms could hear no cry
Of all that distant agony—
Only the red-winged blackbird, and the rustle of thick ripe corn.

The blue jay, perched upon that bronze, with bright unweeing eye
Could never read the names that signed
The noblest charter of mankind;
But all of them were names we knew beneath our English skies.

And on the low gray headstones, with their crumbling weather-stains,
—Though cardinal birds, like drops of blood,
Flickered across the haunted wood,—
The names you'd see were names that woke like flowers in English lanes

John Applegate was fast asleep; and Temperance Olden, too.
And David Worth had quite forgot
If Hannah's lips were red or not;
And Prudence veiled her eyes at last, as Prudence ought to do.

And when, across that patch of heaven, that small blue leaf-edged space
At times, a droning airplane went,
No flicker of astonishment
Could lift the heavy eyelids on one gossip's upturned face.

For William Speakman could not tell—so thick the grasses grow—
If that strange humming in the sky
Meant that the Judgment Day were nigh,
Or if 'twere but the summer bees that blundered to and fro.

And then, across the breathless wood, a Bell began to sound,
The only Bell that wakes the dead,
And Stockton Signer raised his head,

And called to all the deacons in the ancient burial-ground.

“The Bell, the Bell is ringing! Give me back my rusty sword.
Though I thought the wars were done,
Though I thought our peace was won,
Yet I signed the Declaration, and the dead must keep their word.

“There’s only one great ghost I know could make that ‘larum ring.
It’s the captain that we knew
In the ancient buff and blue,
It’s our Englishman, George Washington, who fought the German king!”

So the sunset saw them mustering beneath their brooding boughs,
Ancient shadows of our sires,
Kindling with the ancient fires,
While the old cracked Bell to southward shook the shadowy meeting house.

Alfred Noyes

The Open Door

O Mystery of life,
That, after all our strife,
Defeats, mistakes,
Just as, at last, we see
The road to victory,
The tired heart breaks.

Just as the long years give
Knowledge of how to live,
Life's end draws near;
As if, that gift being ours,
God needed our new powers
In worlds elsewhere.

There, if the soul whose wings
Were won in suffering, springs
To life anew,
Justice would have some room
For hope beyond the tomb,
And mercy, too.

And since, without this dream
No light, no faintest gleam
Answers our 'why';
But earth and all its race
Must pass and leave no trace
On that blind sky;

Shall reason close that door
On all we struggled for,
Seal the soul's doom;
Make of this universe
One wild answering curse,
One lampless tomb?

Mine be the dream, the creed
That leaves for God, indeed,
For God, and man,
One open door whereby

To prove His world no lie
And crown His plan.

Alfred Noyes

The People's Fleet

OUT of her darkened fishing-ports they go,
A fleet of little ships, whose every name -

Daffodil, Sea-lark, Rose
and
Surf
and
Snow,

Burns in this blackness like an altar-flame;

Out of her past they sail, three thousand strong,
The people's fleet that never knew its worth,
And every name is a broken phrase of song
To some remembered loveliness on earth.

There's
Barbara Cowie, Comely Bank
and
May,

Christened, at home, in worlds of dawn and dew :
There's
Ruth
and
Kindly Light
and
Robin Gray,

With
Mispah.
(May that simple prayer come true!)

Out of old England's inmost heart they sail,
A fleet of memories that can never fail.

Alfred Noyes

The Phantom Fleet

The sunset lingered in the pale green West:
In rosy wastes the low soft evening star
Woke; while the last white sea-mew sought for rest;
And tawny sails came stealing o'er the bar.

But, in the hillside cottage, through the panes
The light streamed like a thin far trumpet-call,
And quickened, as with quivering battle-stains,
The printed ships that decked the parlour wall.

From oaken frames old admirals looked down:
They saw the lonely slumberer at their feet:
They saw the paper, headed _Talk from Town;
Our rusting trident, and our phantom fleet_:

And from a neighbouring tavern surged a song
Of England laughing in the face of war,
With eyes unconquerably proud and strong,
And lips triumphant from her Trafalgar.

But he, the slumberer in that glimmering room,
Saw distant waters glide and heave and gleam;
Around him in the softly coloured gloom
The pictures clustered slowly to a dream.

He saw how England, resting on her past,
Among the faded garlands of her dead,
Woke; for a whisper reached her heart at last,
And once again she raised her steel-clad head.

Her eyes were filled with sudden strange alarms;
She heard the westering waters change and chime;
She heard the distant tumult of her arms
Defeated, not by courage, but by Time.

Knowledge had made a deadlier pact with death,
Nor strength nor steel availed against that bond:
Slowly approached--and Britain held her breath--
The battle booming from the deeps beyond.

O, then what darkness rolled upon the wind,
Threatening the torch that Britain held on high?
Where all her navies, baffled, broken, blind,
Slunk backward, snarling in their agony!
Who guards the gates of Freedom now? The cry
Stabbed heaven! _England, the shattered ramparts fall!_
Then, like a trumpet shivering through the sky
O, like white lightning rending the black pall
Of heaven, an answer pealed: _Her dead shall hear that call._

Then came a distant light of great waves breaking
That brought the sunset on each crumbling crest,
A rumour as of buried ages waking,
And mighty spirits rising from their rest;
Then ghostly clouds arose, with billowing breast,
White clouds that turned to sails upon their way,
Red clouds that burned like flags against the West,
Till even the conquering fleet in silence lay
Dazed with that strange old light, and night grew bright as day.

We come to fight for Freedom! The great East
Heard, and was rent asunder like a veil.
Host upon host out of the night increased
Its towering clouds and crowded zones of sail:
_England, our England, canst thou faint or fail?
We come to fight for Freedom yet once more!_
This, this is ours at least! Count the great tale
Of all these dead that rise to guard thy shore
By right of the red life they never feared to pour.

We come to fight for Freedom! On they came,
One cloud of beauty sweeping the wild sea;
And there, through all their thousands, flashed like flame
That star-born signal of the Victory:
Duty, that deathless lantern of the free;
Duty, that makes a god of every man.
And there was Nelson, watching silently
As through the phantom fleet the message ran;
And his tall frigate rushed before the stormy van.

Nelson, our Nelson, frail and maimed and blind,

Stretched out his dead cold face against the foe:
And England's Raleigh followed hard behind,
With all his eager fighting heart aglow;
Glad, glad for England's sake once more to know
The old joy of battle and contempt of pain;
Glad, glad to die, if England willed it so,
The traitor's and the coward's death again;
But hurl the world back now as once he hurled back Spain.

And there were all those others, Drake and Blake,
Rodney and Howard, Byron, Collingwood;
With deathless eyes aflame for England's sake,
As on their ancient decks they proudly stood,--
Decks washed of old with England's purplest blood;
And there, once more, each rushing oaken side
Bared its dark-throated, thirsty, gleaming brood
Of cannon, watched by laughing lads who died
Long, long ago for England and her ancient pride.

We come to fight for England! The great sea
In a wild light of song began to break
Round that tall phantom of the Victory
And all the foam was music in her wake:
Ship after phantom ship, with guns a-rake
And shot-rent flags a-stream from every mast
Moved in a deepening splendour, not to make
A shield for England of her own dead past;
But, with a living dream to arm her soul at last.

We come to die for England: through the hush
Of gathered nations rose that regal cry,
From naked oaken walls one word could crush
If those vast armoured throats dared to reply:
But there the most implacable enemy
Felt his eyes fill with gladder, prouder tears,
As Nelson's calm eternal face went by,
Gazing beyond all perishable fears
To some diviner goal above the waste of years.

Through the hushed fleets the vision streamed away,
Then slowly turned once more to that deep West,
While voices cried, O, England, the new day

Is dawning, but thy soul can take no rest.

Thy freedom and thy peace are only thine
By right of toil on every land and sea
And by that crimson sacrificial wine
Of thine own heart and thine own agony.

Peace is not slumber. Peace, in every hour,
Throbs like the heart of music. This alone
Can save thy heritage and confirm that power
Whereof the past is but the cushioned throne.

Look to the fleet! Again and yet again,
Hear us who storm thy heart with this one cry.
Hear us, who cannot help, though fair and fain,
To hold thy seas before thee, and to die.

Look to the fleet! Thy fleet, the first, last line:
The sword of Liberty, her strength, her shield,
Her food, her life-blood! Britain, it is thine,
Here, now, to hold that birth-right, or to yield.

So, through the dark, those phantom ships of old
Faded, it seemed, through mists of blood and tears.
Sails turned to clouds, and slowly westward rolled
The sad returning pageant of the years.
On tides of light, where all our tumults cease,
Through that rich West, the Victory returned;
And all the waves around her whispered 'peace,'
And from her mast no battle-message burned.

Like clouds, like fragments of those fading skies,
The pageant passed, with all its misty spars,
While the hushed nations raised their dreaming eyes
To that great light which brings the end of wars.

Ship after ship, in some strange glory drowned,
Cloud after cloud, was lost in that deep light
Each with a sovran stillness haloed round.
Then--that high fleet of stars led on the night.

The Realms Of Gold

(Written after hearing a line of Keats repeated by a passing stranger under the palms of Southern California.)

Under the palms of San Diego
Where gold-skinned Mexicans loll at ease,
And the red half-moons of their black-pipped melons
Drop from their hands in the sunset seas,
And an incense, out of the old brown missions,
Blows through the orange trees;

I wished that a poet who died in Europe
Had found his way to this rose-red West;
That Keats had walked by the wide Pacific
And cradled his head on its healing breast,
And made new songs of the sun-burned sea-folk,
New poems, perhaps his best.

I thought of him, under the ripe pomegranates
At the desert's edge, where the grape-vines grow,
In a sun-kissed ranch between grey-green sage-brush
And amethyst mountains, peaked with snow,
Or watching the lights of the City of Angels
Glitter like stars below.

He should walk, at dawn, by the lemon orchards,
And breathe at ease in that dry bright air;
And the Spanish bells in their crumbling cloisters
Of brown adobe would sing to him there;
And the old Franciscans would bring him their baskets
Of apple and olive and pear.

And the mandolins, in the deep blue twilight,
Under that palm with the lion's mane,
Would pluck, once more, at his golden heart-strings,
And tell him the old sea-tales of Spain;
And there should the daughters of Hesperus teach him
Their mystical songs again.

Then, the dusk blew sweet over seas of peach-bloom;
The moon sailed white in the cloudless blue;
The tree-toads purred, and the crickets chirruped;
And better than anything dreamed came true;
For, under the murmuring palms, a shadow
Passed, with the eyes I knew;

A shadow, perhaps, of the tall green fountains
That rustled their fronds on that glittering sky,
A hungering shadow, a lean dark shadow,
A dreaming shadow that drifted by;
But I heard him whisper the strange dark music
That found it so 'rich to die.'

And the murmuring palms of San Diego
Shook with stars as he passed beneath.
The Paradise palms, and the wild white orchards,
The night, and its roses, were all one breath,
Bearing the song of a nightingale seaward,
A song that had out-soared death.

Alfred Noyes

The Reward Of Song

Why do we make our music?
Oh, blind dark strings reply:
Because we dwell in a strange land
And remember a lost sky.
We ask no leaf of the laurel,
We know what fame is worth;
But our songs break out of our winter
As the flowers break out on the earth.

And we dream of the unknown comrade,
In the days when we lie dead,
Who shall open our book in the sunlight,
And read, as ourselves have read,
On a lonely hill, by a firwood,
With whispering seas below,
And murmur a song we made him
Ages and ages ago.

If making his may-time sweeter
With dews of our own dead may,
One pulse of our own dead heart-strings
Awake in his heart that day,
We would pray for no richer guerdon,
No praise from the careless throng;
For song is the cry of a lover
In quest of an answering song.

As a child might run to his elders
With news of an opening flower
We should walk with our young companion
And talk to his heart for an hour,
As once by my own green firwood,
And once by a Western sea,
Thank God, my own good comrades
Have walked and talked with me.

Too mighty to make men sorrow,
Too weak to heal their pain
(Though they that remember the hawthorn

May find their heaven again),
We are moved by a deeper hunger;
We are bound by a stronger cord;
For love is the heart of our music,
And love is its one reward.

Alfred Noyes

The Road Through Chaos

I.

There is one road, one only, to the Light:
A narrow way, but Freedom walks therein;
A straight, firm road through Chaos and old Night,
And all these wandering Jack-o-Lents of Sin.

It is the road of Law, where Pilate stays
To hear, at last, the answer to his cry;
And mighty sages, groping through their maze
Of eager questions, hear a child reply.

Truth? What is Truth? Come, look upon my tables.
Begin at your beginnings once again.
Twice one is two! Though all the rest be fables,
Here's one poor glimpse of Truth to keep you sane.

For Truth, at first, is clean accord with fact,
Whether in line or thought, or word, or act.

II.

Then, by those first, those clean, precise, accords,
Build to the Lord your temples and your song;
The curves of beauty, music's wedded chords
Resolving into heaven all hate and wrong.

Let harmonies of colour marry and follow
And breaking waves in a rhythmic dance ensue;
And all your thought fly free as the wings of the swallow,
Whose arrowy curves obey their measure, too.

Then shall the marching stars and tides befriend you,
And your own heart, and the world's heart, pulse in rhyme;
Then shall the mob of the passions that would rend you
Crown you their Captain and march on in time.

So shall you repossess your struggling soul,

Conquer your world, and find the eternal goal.

Alfred Noyes

The Searchlights

Political morality differs from individual morality, because there is no power above the State. -- General von Bernardi.

Shadow by shadow, stripped for fight,
The lean black cruisers search the sea.
Night-long their level shafts of light
Revolve, and find no enemy.
Only they know each leaping wave
May hide the lightning, and their grave.

And in the land they guard so well
Is there no silent watch to keep?
An age is dying and the bell
Rings midnight on a vaster deep.
But over all its waves, once more
The searchlights move, from shore to shore.

And captains that we thought were dead,
And dreamers that we thought were dumb,
And voices that we thought were fled,
Arise, and call us, and we come;
And "Search in thine own soul," they cry;
"For there, too, lurks thine enemy."

Search for the foe in thine own soul,
The sloth, the intellectual pride;
The trivial jest that veils the goal
For which our father lived and died;
The lawless dreams, the cynic Art,
That rend thy nobler self apart.

Not far, not far into the night,
These level swords of light can pierce;
Yet for her faith does England fight,
Her faith in this our universe,
Believing Truth and Justice draw
From founts of everlasting law;

The law that rules the stars, our stay,

Our compass through the world's wide sea,
The one sure light, the one sure way,
The one firm base of Liberty;
The one firm road that men have trod
Through Chaos to the throne of God.

Therefore a Power above the State,
The unconquerable Power, returns,
The fire, the fire that made her great
Once more upon her altar burns,
Once more, redeemed and healed and whole,
She moves to the Eternal Goal.

Alfred Noyes

The Sussex Sailor

O, once, by Cuckmere Haven,
I heard a sailor sing
Of shores beyond the sunset,
And lands of lasting spring,
Of blue lagoons and palm trees
And isles where all was young;
But this was ever the burden
of ev'ry note he sung:

"O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?
Or have you seen her footprints
Upon that shining sand?
Beneath the happy palmtrees,
By Eden whispers fanned...
O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?"

And, once in San Diego,
I heard him sing again,
Of Amberley, Rye, and Bramber,
And Brede and Fairlight Glen:
The nestling hills of Sussex,
The russet-roofed elfin towns,
And the skylark up in a high wind
Carolling over the downs.

"From Warbleton to Wild Brook,
When May is white as foam,
O, have you seen my dearling
on any hills of home?
Or have you seen her shining,
Or only touch'd her hand.
O, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land?"

And, once again, by Cowfold,
I heard him singing low,
'Tis not the leagues of ocean

That hide the hills I know.
The May that shines before me
Has made a ghost of May.
The valleys that I would walk in
Are twenty years away.

"Ah, have you seen my true love
A-walking in that land...
On hills that I remember,
In valleys I understand,
So far beyond the sunset,
So very close at hand,
O have you seen my true love
In that immortal land?"

Alfred Noyes

The Symphony

Wonder in happy eyes
Fades, fades away:
And the angel-coloured skies
Whisper farewell.

Loveliness over the strings of the heart may stray
In fugitive melodies;
But Oh, the hand of the Master must not stay,
Even for a breath;

For to prolong one joy, or even to dwell
On one rich chord of pain,
Beyond the pulse of the song, would untune heaven
And drown the stars in death.

So youth with its love-note dies;
And beauty fades in the air,
To make the master-symphony immortal,
And find new life and deeper wonder there.

Alfred Noyes

The Trumpet Call

Trumpeter, sound for the last Crusade!
Sound for the fire of the red-cross kings,
Sound for the passion, the splendour, the pity
That swept the world for a dead Man's sake,
Sound, till the answering trumpet rings
Clear from the heights of the holy City,
Sound till the lions of England awake,
Sound for the tomb that our lives have betrayed;
O'er broken shrine and abandoned wall,
Trumpeter, sound the great recall,
Trumpeter, rally us, rally us, rally us;
Sound for the last Crusade!

Trumpeter, sound for the splendour of God!
Sound the music whose name is law,
Whose service is perfect freedom still,
The order august that rules the stars.
Bid the anarchs of night withdraw,
Too long the destroyers have worked their will,
Sound for the last, the last of the wars.
Sound for the heights that our fathers trod,
When truth was truth and love was love,
With a hell beneath, but a heaven above,
Trumpeter, rally us, up to the heights of it!
Sound for the City of God.

Alfred Noyes

The Union

You that have gathered together the sons of all races,
And welded them into one,
Lifting the torch of your Freedom on hungering faces
That sailed to the setting sun;

You that have made of mankind in your own proud regions
The music of man to be,
How should the old earth sing of you, now, as your legions
Rise to set all men free?

How should the singer that knew the proud vision and loved it,
In the days when not all men knew,
Gaze through his tears, on the light, now the world has approved it;
Or dream, when the dream comes true?

How should he sing when the Spirit of Freedom in thunder
Speaks, and the wine-press is red;
And the sea-winds are loud with the chains that are broken asunder
And nations that rise from the dead?

Flag of the sky, proud flag of that wide communion,
Too mighty for thought to scan;
Flag of the many in one, and that last world-union
That kingdom of God in man;

Ours was a dream, in the night, of that last federation,
But yours is the glory unfurled--
The marshalled nations and stars that shall make one nation
One singing star of the world.

Alfred Noyes

The Vindictive

How should we praise those lads of the old
Vindictive

Who looked Death straight in the eyes,
Till his gaze fell,
In those red gates of hell?

England, in her proud history, proudly enrolls them,
And the deep night in her remembering skies
With purer glory
Shall blazon their grim story.

There were no throngs to applaud that hushed adventure.
They were one to a thousand on that fierce emprise.
The shores they sought
Were armoured, past all thought.

O, they knew fear, be assured, as the brave must know it,
With youth and its happiness bidding their last good-byes;
Till thoughts, more dear
Than life, cast out all fear.

For if, as we think, they remembered the brown-roofed homesteads,
And the scent of the hawthorn hedges when daylight dies,
Old happy places,
Young eyes and fading faces;

One dream was dearer that night than the best of their boyhood,
One hope more radiant than any their hearts could prize.
The touch of your hand,
The light of your face, England!

So, age to age shall tell how they sailed through the darkness
Where, under those high, austere, implacable stars,
Not one in ten
Might look for a dawn again.

They saw the ferry-boats,
Iris

and
Daffodil
, creeping
Darkly as clouds to the shimmering mine-strewn bars,
Flash into light!
Then thunder reddened the night.

The wild white swords of the search-lights blinded and stabbed them,
The sharp black shadows fought in fantastic wars.
Black waves leapt whitening,
Red decks were washed with lightning.

But, under the twelve-inch guns of the black land-batteries
The hacked bright hulk, in a glory of crackling spars,
Moved to her goal
Like an immortal soul;

That, while the raw rent flesh in a furnace is tortured,
Reigns by a law no agony ever can shake,
And shines in power
Above all shocks of the hour.

O, there, while the decks ran blood, and the star-shells lightened
The old broken ship that the enemy never could break,
Swept through the fire
And grappled her heart's desire.

There, on a wreck that blazed with the soul of England,
The lads that died in the dark for England's sake
Knew, as they died,
Nelson was at their side;

Nelson, and all the ghostly fleets of his island,
Fighting beside them there, and the soul of Drake!-
Dreams, as we knew,
Till these lads made them true.

_How should we praise you, lads of the old Vindictive,
Who looked death straight in the eyes,
Till his gaze fell
In those red gates of hell?_

The War Widow

I.

Black-veiled, black-gowned, she rides in bus and train,
With eyes that fill too listlessly for tears.
Her waxen hands clasp and unclasp again.
Good News, they cry. She neither sees nor hears.

Good News, perhaps, may crown some far-off king.
Good News may peel the glory of the state--
Good News may cause the courts of heaven to ring.
She sees a hand waved at a garden gate.

For her dull ears are tuned to other themes;
And her dim eyes can never see aright.
She glides--a ghost--through all her April dreams,
To meet his eyes at dawn, his lips at night.

Wraiths of a truth that others never knew;
And yet--for her--the only truth that's true.

II.

Good News! Good News! There is no way but this.
Out of the night a star begins to rise.
I know not where my soul's deep Master is;
Nor can I hear those angels in the skies;

Nor follow him, as childhood used of old,
By radiant seas, in those time-hallowed tales.
Only, at times, implacable and cold,
From this blind gloom, stand out the iron nails.

Yet, at this world's heart stands the Eternal Cross,
The ultimate frame of moon and star and sun,
Where Love with out-stretched arms, in utter loss,
Points East and West and makes the whole world one.

Good News! Good News! There is no hope, no way,

No truth, no life, but leads through Christmas Day.

Alfred Noyes

The Young Friar

When leaves broke out on the wild briar,
And bells for matins rung,
Sorrow came to the old friar
– Hundreds of years ago it was! –
And May came to the young.

The old was ripening for the sky,
The young was twenty-four.
The Franklin's daughter passed him by,
Reading a painted missal-book,
Beside the chapel door.

With brown cassock and sandalled feet,
And red Spring wine for blood;
The very next noon he chanced to meet
The Franklin's daughter, in a green May twilight,
Walking through the wood.

Pax vobiscum – to a maid
The crosiered ferns among!
But hers was only the Saxon,
And his the Norman tongue;
And the Latin taught by the old friar
Made music for the young.

And never a better deed was done
By Mother Church below
Than when she made old England one,
– Hundreds of years ago it was! –
Hundreds of years ago.

Rich was the painted page they read
Before that sunset died;
Nut-brown hood by golden head,
Murmuring Rosa Mystica,
While nesting thrushes cried.

A Saxon maid with flaxen hair,
And eyes of Sussex grey;

A young monk out of Normandy: –
'May is our Lady's month,' he said,
'And O, my love, my May!'

Then over the fallen missal-book
The missel-thrushes sung
Till – Domus Aurea – rose the moon
And bells for vespers rung.
It was gold and blue for the old friar,
But hawthorn for the young.

For gown of green and brown hood,
Before that curfew tolled,
Had flown for ever through the wood
– Hundreds of years ago it was! –
But twenty summers old.

And empty stood his chapel stall,
Empty his thin grey cell,
Empty her seat in the Franklin's hall;
And there were swords that searched for them
Before the matin bell.

And, crowders tell, a sword that night
Wrought them an evil turn,
And that the may was not more white
Than those white bones the robin found
Among the roots of fern.

But others tell of stranger things
Half-heard on Whitsun eves,
Of sweet and ghostly whisperings –
Though hundreds of years ago it was –
Among the ghostly leaves: –

Sero te amavi –
Grey eyes of sun-lit dew! –
Tam antiqua, tam nova –
Augustine heard it, too.
Late have I loved that May, Lady,
So ancient, and so new!

And no man knows where they were flown,
For the wind takes the may:
But white and fresh the may was blown
– Though hundreds of years ago it was –
As this that blooms to-day.

And the leaves break out on the wild briar,
And bells must still be rung;
But sorrow comes to the old friar,
For he remembers a May, a May,
When his old heart was young.

Alfred Noyes

To A Successful Man

(WHAT THE GHOSTS SAID.)

And after all the labour and the pains,
After the heaping up of gold on gold,
After success that locked your feet in chains,
And left you with a heart so tired and old,

Strange-is it not?-to find your chief desire
Is what you might have had for nothing then-
The face of love beside a cottage fire
And friendly laughter with your fellow-men?

You were so rich when fools esteemed you poor.
You ruled a field that kings could never buy:
The whisper of the sea was at your door,
And all those quiet stars were in your sky,

The nook of ferns below the breathless wood
Where one poor book could unlock Paradise. . . .
What will you give us now for that lost good?
Better forget. You cannot pay the price.

You left them for the fame in which you trust.
But youth, and hope-did you forsake them too?
Courage! When dust at length returns to dust,
In your last dreams they may come back to you.

Alfred Noyes

To The R.A.F

Never since English ships went out
To sing the beard of Spain,
Or English sea-dogs hunted death
Along the Spanish Main,
Never since Drake and Raleigh won
Our freedom of the seas,
Have sons of Britain dared and done
More valiantly than these.

Whether at midnight or at noon,
Through mist or open sky,
Eagles of freedom, all our hearts
Are up with you on high;
While Britain's mighty ghosts look down
From realms beyond the sun
And whisper, as their record pales,
Their breathless, deep, Well Done!

Alfred Noyes

Touchstone On A Bus

Last night I rode with Touchstone on a bus
From Ludgate Hill to World's End. It was he!
Despite the broadcloth and the bowler hat,
I knew him, Touchstone, the wild flower of folly,
The whetstone of his age, the scourge of kings,
The madcap morning star of elfin-land,
Who used to wrap his legs around his neck
For warmth on winter nights. He had slipped back,
To see what men were doing in a world
That should be wiser. He had watched a play,
Read several books, heard men discourse of art
And life; and he sat bubbling like a spring
In Arden. Never did blackbird, drenched with may,
Chuckle as Touchstone chuckled on that ride.
Lord, what a world! Lord, what a mad, mad world!
Then, to the jolt and jingle of the engine,
He burst into this bunch of madcap rhymes:--

Alfred Noyes

Unity

I.

Heart of my heart, the world is young;
Love lies hidden in every rose!
Every song that the skylark sung
Once, we thought, must come to a close:
Now we know the spirit of song,
Song that is merged in the chant of the whole,
Hand in hand as we wander along,
What should we doubt of the years that roll?

II.

Heart of my heart, we cannot die!
Love triumphant in flower and tree,
Every life that laughs at the sky
Tells us nothing can cease to be:
One, we are one with the song to-day,
One with the clover that scents the world,
One with the Unknown, far away,
One with the stars, when earth grows old.

III.

Heart of my heart, we are one with the wind,
One with the clouds that are whirled o'er the lea,
One in many, O broken and blind,
One as the waves are at one with the sea!
Ay! When life seems scattered apart,
Darkens, ends as a tale that is told,
One, we are one, O heart of my heart,
One, still one, while the world grows old.

Alfred Noyes

Veterans

When the last charge sounds
And the battle thunders o'er the plain,
Thunders o'er the trenches where the red streams flow,
Will it not be well with us,
Veterans, veterans,
If, beneath your torn old flag, we burst upon the foe?

When the last post sounds
And the night is on the battle-field,
Night and rest at last from all the tumult of our wars,
Will it not be well with us,
Veterans, veterans,
If, with duty done like yours, we lie beneath the stars?

When the great réveillé sounds
For the terrible last Sabbath,
All the legions of the dead shall hear the trumpet ring!
Will it not be well with us,
Veterans, veterans,
If, beneath your torn old flag, we rise to meet our King?

Alfred Noyes

Victory

I.

Before those golden altar-lights we stood,
Each one of us remembering his own dead.
A more than earthly beauty seemed to brood
On that hushed throng, and bless each bending head.

Beautiful on that gold, the deep-sea blue
Of those young seamen, ranked on either side,
Blent with the khaki, while the silence grew
Deep, as for wings--Oh, deep as England's pride.

Beautiful on that gold, two banners rose--
Two flags that told how Freedom's realm was made,
One fair with stars of hope, and one that shows
The glorious cross of England's long crusade;

Two flags, now joined, till that high will be done
Which sent them forth to make the whole world one.

II.

There were no signs of joy that eyes could see.
Our hearts were all three thousand miles away.
There were no trumpets blown for victory.
A million dead were calling us that day.

And eyes grew blind, at times; but grief was deep,
Deeper than any foes or friends have known;
For Oh, my country's lips are locked to keep
Her bitterest loss her own, and all her own.

Only the music told what else was dumb,
The funeral march to which our pulses beat;
For all our dead went by, to a muffled drum
We heard the tread of all those phantom feet.

Yes. There was victory! Deep in every soul.
We heard them marching to their unseen goal.

III.

There, once again, we saw the Cross go by,
The Cross that fell with all those glorious towers,
Burnt black in France or mocked on Calvary,
Till--in one night--the crosses rose like flowers,
Legions of small white crosses, mile on mile,
Pencilled with names that had outfought all pain,
Where every shell-torn acre seems to smile--
Who shall destroy the cross that rose again?

Out of the world's Walpurgis, where hope perished,
Where all the forms of faith in ruin fell,
Where every sign of heaven that earth had cherished
Shrivelled among the lava-floods of hell,

The eternal Cross that conquers might with right
Rose like a star to lead us through the night.

IV.

How shall the world remember? Men forget:
Our dead are all too many even for Fame!
Man's justice kneels to kings, and pays no debt
To those who never courted her acclaim.

Cheat not your heart with promises to pay
For gifts beyond all price so freely given.
Where is the heart so rich that it can say
To those who mourn, 'I will restore your heaven'?

But these, with their own hands, laid up their treasure
Where never an emperor can break in and steal,
Treasure for those that loved them past all measure
In those high griefs that earth can never heal,

Proud griefs, that walk on earth, yet gaze above,
Knowing that sorrow is but remembered love.

V.

Love that still holds us with immortal power,
Yet cannot lift us to His realm of light;
Love that still shows us heaven for one brief hour
Only to daunt the heart with that sheer height;

Love that is made of loveliness entire
In form and thought and act; and still must shame us
Because we ever acknowledge and aspire,
And yet let slip the shining hands that claim us.

O, if this Love might cloak with rags His glory,
Laugh, eat and drink, and dwell with suffering men,
Sit with us at our hearth, and hear our story,
This world--we thought--might be transfigured then.

'But Oh,' Love answered, with swift human tears,
'All these things have I done, these many years.'

VI.

'This day,' Love said, 'if ye will hear my voice;
I mount and sing with birds in all your skies.
I am the soul that calls you to rejoice.
And every wayside flower is my disguise.

'Look closely. Are the wings too wide for pity?
Look closely. Do these tender hues betray?
How often have I sought my Holy City?
How often have ye turned your hearts away?

'Is there not healing in the beauty I bring you?
Am I not whispering in green leaves and rain,
Singing in all that woods and seas can sing you?
Look, once, on Love, and earth is heaven again.

'O, did your Spring but once a century waken,
The heaven of heavens for this would be forsaken.'

VII.

There's but one gift that all our dead desire,
One gift that men can give, and that's a dream,
Unless we, too, can burn with that same fire
Of sacrifice; die to the things that seem;

Die to the little hatreds; die to greed;
Die to the old ignoble selves we knew;
Die to the base contempts of sect and creed,
And rise again, like these, with souls as true.

Nay (since these died before their task was finished)
Attempt new heights, bring even their dreams to birth:--
Build us that better world, Oh, not diminished
By one true splendor that they planned on earth.

And that's not done by sword, or tongue, or pen,
There's but one way. God make us better men.

Alfred Noyes

What Grandfather Said

(_An epistle from a narrow-minded old gentleman to a young artist of superior intellect and intense realism._)

Your thoughts are for the poor and weak?
Ah, no, the picturesque's your passion!
Your tongue is always in your cheek
At poverty that's not in fashion.

You like a ploughman's rugged face,
Or painted eyes in Piccadilly;
But bowler hats are commonplace,
And thread-bare tradesmen simply silly.

The clerk that sings 'God save the King,'
And still believes his Tory paper,--
You hate the anæmic fool? I thought
You loved the weak! Was that all vapour?

Ah, when you sneer, dear democrat,
At such a shiny-trouser'd Tory
Because he doffs his poor old hat
To what he thinks his country's glory,

To you it's just a coloured rag.
You hate the 'patriots' that bawl so.
Well, my Ulysses, there's a flag
That lifts men in Republics also.

No doubt his thoughts are cruder far;
And, where those linen folds are shaking,
Perhaps he sees a kind of star
Because his eyes are tired and aching.

Banal enough! Banal as truth!
But I'm not thinking of his banners.
I'm thinking of his pinched white youth
And your disgusting 'new art' manners.

His meek submission stirs your hate?
Better, my lad, if you're so fervent,
Turn your cold steel against the State
Instead of sneering at the servant.

He does his job. He draws his pay.
You sneer, and dine with those that pay him;
And then you write a snobbish play
For democrats, in which you play him.

Ah, yes, you like simplicity
That sucks its cheeks to make the dimple.
But this domestic bourgeoisie
You hate,--because it's all too simple.

You hate the hearth, the wife, the child,
You hate the heavens that bend above them.
Your simple folk must all run wild
Like jungle-beasts before you love them.

You own a house in Cheyne Walk,
(You say it costs three thousand fully)
Where subtle snobs can talk and talk
And play the intellectual bully.

Yes. I say 'snobs.' Are names alone
Free from all change? Your word 'Victorian'
Could bite and sting in ninety one
But now--it's deader than the saurian.

You think I live in yesterday,
Because I think your way the wrong one;
But I have hewed and ploughed my way,
And--unlike yours--it's been a long one.

I let Victoria toll her bell,
And went with Strindberg for a ride, sir.
I've fought through your own day as well,
And come out on the other side, sir,--

The further side, the morning side,
I read free verse (the Psalms) on Sunday.

But I've decided (you'll decide)
That there is room for song on Monday.

I've seen the new snob on his way,
The intellectual snob I mean, sir,
The artist snob, in book and play,
Kicking his mother round the scene, sir.

I've heard the Tories talk like fools;
And the rich fool that apes the Tory.
I've seen the shopmen break your rules
And die like Christ, in Christ's own glory.

But, as for you, that liberal sneer
Reminds me of the poor old Kaiser.
He was a 'socialist,' my dear.
Well, I'm your grandson. You'll grow wiser.

Alfred Noyes

Wireless.

Now to those who search the deep,

Gleam of Hope
and
Kindly Light,

Once, before you turn to sleep,
Breathe a message through the night.
Never doubt that they'll receive it.
Send it, once, and you'll believe it.

Wrecks that burn against the stars,
Decks where death is wallowing green,
Snare the breath among their spars,
Hear the flickering threads between,
Quick, through all the storms that blind them,
Quick with worlds that rush to find them.

Think you those aerial wires
Whisper more than spirits may ?
Think you that our strong desires
Touch no distance when we pray ?
Think you that no wings are flying
'Twixt the living and the dying ?

Inland, here, upon your knees,
You shall breathe from urgent lips,
Round the ships that guard your seas,
Fleet on fleet of angel ships ;
Yea, the guarded may so bless them .
That no terrors can distress them.

You shall guide the darkling prow,
Kneeling thus-and far inland-
You shall touch the storm-beat brow
Gently as a spirit-hand.
Even a blindfold prayer may speed them,
And a little child may lead them.

