

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Archibald Thomas Strong**

**- poems -**

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## **Australia to England**

By all the deeds to Thy dear glory done,  
By all the life blood spilt to serve Thy need,  
By all the fettered lives Thy touch hath freed,  
By all Thy dream in us anew begun;  
By all the guerdon English sire to son  
Hath given of highest vision, kingliest deed,  
By all Thine agony, of God decreed  
For trial and strength, our fate with Thine is one.

Still dwells Thy spirit in our hearts and lips,  
Honour and life we hold from none but thee  
    And if we live Thy pensioners no more  
But seek a nation's might of men and ships,  
    'Tis but that when the world is black with war  
Thy sons may stand beside Thee strong and free.

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## Grey

LADY of Sorrow! What though laughing blue,  
Thy sister, mock men's anguish, and the sun  
Glare like a wrathful judge on many a one  
That longs for night his bitter shame to rue,  
Yet dost thou grant thy mercy of mist and dew  
And cloud and calm ere angry day be done,  
Weaving over the vault the weary shun  
Thy veil of peace, with pity trembling through.

When all light loves and all brave hues are flown,  
When beaten hope falls from the reeling fight,  
And life is lone upon her desolate way,  
And noon is fierce, and no men see aright,  
Then weary eyes turn unto thee, their own,  
Lady of Grief, the soul's madonna, Grey.

## II

Yet not in sorrow only art thou fair,  
For joy may know and love thee in the pall  
Of spray that slumbers on the waterfall,  
Or in low cottage-smoke in evening air  
Or in brave stone carven in glory rare,  
Or when the tender mists of Autumn fall  
Dappling the mead with beauty, and the tall  
Stark dreaming oaks thine ancient livery wear.

Yet none hath known thy loveliness aright  
Save him who gazing in his lady's eyes  
Sees dim lists tossing with plumes of many a knight  
And woods where elfin waters gleam and glance,  
And all the vision and faith of old romance  
And the great dream of youth that never dies.

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## Sonnets of the Empire

### Gloriana's England

FORTH sped thy gallant sailors, blithe and free,  
Fearing nor foeman's hate, nor iron clime,  
Nor Lima's flame, nor Plata's fever-slime,  
So they might give thee far Cathay in fee;  
Yet swept thy poets o'er a vaster sea,  
'Neath fairer gales to Indies more sublime,  
Questing along the golden shores of Rhyme  
For all the treasure of eternity.

One will, one end, one pulse of deep desire,  
Drove Hudson through the ice to joy and death,  
Sped Drake to glory through the long South roll:  
And kindled Marlowe's eager heart with fire,  
Set Spenser voyaging 'neath the spirit's breath,  
And won the world for Shakespeare's captain soul.

### Hawke

GREAT sea dog, fighter in the great old way!  
What though thy ships were tinder, and the pest  
Rotted thy ruffian crews that need had prest,  
And all thy keels were clogged with foul decay,  
Yet through the roaring months thy squadron lay  
A watch-dog eager at the throat of Brest  
While all the ocean smote her from the West  
And all the tempests tore her in their play.  
Thy soul was of the whirlwind, and thy cry  
Still leaps from out the crash of guns and waves  
To hurl us headlong on the foeman's van,  
As in the Bay of Death, 'mid breakers high  
And felon reefs whereo'er the Atlantic raves,  
Thy flagship foremost into glory ran.

### Nelson

WHITE soul of England's glory, sovereign star!  
Ne'er shall disaster beat her down, nor shame,  
While still she sees thee by the leaping flame  
That kindled o'er Aboukir, near and far,  
Or feels thee quivering through the onset's jar  
That filled the North with fear of England's name,  
Or trembles with the joy of all the fame  
That died and cast out death at Trafalgar.

Thy name was lightning, and like lightning ay  
Thine onset shivered, far and swift and fell:  
Ever thy watchword holds us, and whene'er  
The fierce Dawn breaks, and far along the sky  
Roars the last battle, yet with us 'tis well—  
We keep the touch, thy hand and soul are there.

## Dawn at Liverpool

THE SUNLIGHT laughs along the serried stone  
About whose feet the wastrel tide runs free;  
Light lie the shipmasts, fairy-like to see,  
Athwart the royal city's splendour thrown;  
On runs the noble river, wide and lone,  
Like some great soul that presses to the sea  
Where life is rendered to eternity  
And eager thought hath rest in the Unknown.

So sets thy tide, my country, to the deep  
Whose face is black with thunder near and far,  
And vexed with fleering gusts and tyrannous rain.  
Shall the cloud lift and give thee rest and sleep,  
Or wilt thou 'mid the surge and crash of war  
Shatter thy life against the invading main?

## Australia, 1902

GALLANT is Spring along thy laughing hills,  
With wattle's loveliest scent and gleam of gold,  
When the good rain hath quickened all thy mould,  
And the hot musk thine air with incense fills.  
Sweet is the chime of all thy tinkling rills,  
And fair thy Summer's glory to behold,  
And soft is life for thee, the sunny-souled,  
Far from the world and all its olden ills.

Yet 'tis not calm that builds the hero breed,  
High hearts are tempered 'neath a stormy star,  
Through want and danger doth the soul increase,  
Stern rings the clarion voice of Angel Need  
To bid thee vanquish self, and gaze afar  
And save thy soul alive from Harlot Peace.

## Australia, 1905

CARELESS she lies along the Southern Main,  
The lovely maiden, wanton with the spell  
Of sun and vastness and the ocean swell:  
Northward the great gnomes watch her beauty, fain  
To snatch her wealth of gold and fleece and grain,  
And bend her being to their purpose fell:  
But she lies lazy, and the passing bell  
Of older glory stirs her sense in vain.

Nor shall she wake and know her danger near  
Till some high heart and true, her fated lord,  
Shall kiss her lips, and all her will control,  
And fill her wayward heart with holy fear,

And cross her forehead with his iron sword,  
And bring her strength, and armour, and a soul.

Australia, 1914

THE NIGHT is thick with storm and driving cloud,  
Lurid at instants through the blackness break  
Quick gleams of war across the perilous lake  
From yonder isles that awe and magic shroud:  
Far in the northland smite Thor's hammers loud  
On steel that warlocks for her spoilure make,  
Till lo! from sleep Australia starts awake  
And lifts the queenly head that sloth had bowed.

Not yet her eyes are clear: throughout her brain  
Still swarm the antic creatures of her dream,  
The idiot jests, the sports that kill the soul,  
Yet shall not night lay hold on her again,  
For through the rack she spies the morning gleam  
Clear on the sword that lights her to her goal.

Australia to England

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## Vain Death

ALL the first night she might not weep  
But watched till morning came,  
And when she slept at dawn, she heard  
The dead man call her name.

The second night she watched and wept  
And called on death for grace,  
And when she slept before the dawn  
She saw the dead man's face.

The third night through she laughed as one  
That knows her way to bliss,  
And in the instant ere she slept  
She felt the dead man's kiss.

She rose and faced the flickering fire  
(And oh, but she was fair!),  
Like a wild witch behind her danced  
The shadow of her hair.

She took her penknife from its sheath,  
The tender blade she kissed,  
And by the firelight's dying leap  
She bared her little wrist.

And where the vein ran large and blue  
She cut, once and again,  
Yet ere she swooned from life, she knew  
Her death had been in vain.

For while life thundered in her ears,  
Ere yet her pulse might fail,  
Far off across the kindless night  
She heard the dead man's wail,

And knew her doom was one with theirs  
That kill the life God gave,  
And that she might not leave this earth  
Her soul alive to save,  
But ay must dwell within that house  
As in a living grave,

While he for whom she died might ne'er  
Win to her in that place,  
But must for ever make his moan  
Ranging in agony alone  
The trackless void of space

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