

Classic Poetry Series

Arthur Patchett Martin

- poems -

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Bushland

Not sweeter to the storm-tossed mariner
Is glimpse of home, where wife and children wait
To welcome him with kisses at the gate,
Than to the town-worn man the breezy stir
Of mountain winds on rugged pathless heights:
His long-pent soul drinks in the deep delights
That Nature hath in store. The sun-kissed bay
Gleams thro' the grand old gnarled gum-tree boughs
Like burnished brass; the strong-winged bird of prey
Sweeps by, upon his lonely vengeful way --
While over all, like breath of holy vows,
The sweet airs blow, and the high-vaulted sky
Looks down in pity this fair Summer day
On all poor earth-born creatures doomed to die.

Arthur Patchett Martin

Love and War

THE CHANCELLOR mused as he nibbled his pen
(Sure no Minister ever looked wiser),
And said, "I can summon a million of men
To fight for their country and Kaiser;

"While that shallow charlatan ruling o'er France,
Who deems himself deeper than Merlin,
Thinks he and his soldiers have only to dance
To the tune of the Can-can to Berlin.

"But as soon as he gets to the bank of the Rhine,
He'll be met by the great German army."
Then the Chancellor laughed, and he said, "I will dine,
For I see nothing much to alarm me."

Yet still as he went out he paused by the door
(For his mind was in truth heavy laden),
And he saw a stout fellow, equipped for the war,
Embracing a fair-haired young maiden.

"Ho! ho!" said the Chancellor, "this will not do,
For Mars to be toying with Venus,
When these Frenchmen are coming—a rascally crew!—
And the Rhine only flowing between us."

So the wary old fox, just in order to hear,
Strode one or two huge paces nearer;
And he heard the youth say, "More than life art thou dear;
But, O loved one, the Fatherland's dearer."

Then the maid dried her tears and looked up in his eyes,
And she said, "Thou of loving art worthy:
When all are in danger no brave man e'er flies,
And thy love should spur on—not deter thee."

The Chancellor took a cigar, which he lit,
And he muttered, "Here 's naught to alarm me;
By Heaven! I swear they are both of them fit
To march with the great German army."

Arthur Patchett Martin

The Cynic of the Woods

Come I from busy haunts of men,
With nature to commune,
Which you, it seems, observe, and then
Laugh out, like some buffoon.

You cease, and through the forest drear
I pace, with sense of awe;
When once again upon my ear
Breaks in your harsh guffaw.

I look aloft to yonder place,
Where placidly you sit,
And tell you to your very face,
I do not like your wit.

I'm in no mood for blatant jest,
I hate your mocking song,
My weary soul demands the rest
Denied to it so long.

Besides, there passes through my brain
The poet's love of fame—
Why should not an Australian strain
Immortalize my name?

And so I pace the forest drear,
Filled with a sense of awe,
When louder still upon my ear
Breaks in your harsh guffaw.

Yet truly, Jackass, it may be,
My words are all unjust:
You laugh at what you hear and see,
And laugh because you must.

You've seen Man civilized and rude,
Of varying race and creed,
The black-skinned savage almost nude,
The Englishman in tweed.

And here the lubra oft has strayed,
To rest beneath the boughs,
Where now, perchance, some fair-haired maid
May hear her lover's vows;

While you from yonder lofty height
Have studied human ways,
And, with a satirist's delight,
Dissected hidden traits.

Laugh on, laugh on! Your rapturous shout
Again on me intrudes;

But I have found your secret out,
O cynic of the woods!

Well! I confess, grim mocking elf,
Howe'er I rhapsodize,
That I am more in love with self
Than with the earth or skies.

So I will lay the epic by,
That I had just begun:
Why should I scribble? Let me lie
And bask here in the sun.

And let me own, were I endowed
With your fine humorous sense,
I, too, should laugh—ay, quite as loud,
At all Man's vain pretence.

Arthur Patchett Martin