

Classic Poetry Series

Blanche Edith Baughan

- poems -

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Five Prayers

To taste

Wild wine of the mountain-spring, fresh, living, strong,
Running and rushing like a triumph-song
Round hearts new-braced:

To smell

A growing cowslip, some glad morn of Spring,
And breathe the breath of every fragrant thing
From every bell:

To touch

A sliding wavelet, supple, smooth and thin,—
Just ere the pois'd and perfect crests begin
To bend too much:

To hear

Amid May twilight, by the murmuring sea,
Some blackbird warbling from a budded tree,
Tender and clear:

To see

Down young rose-petals how the deepening light
Glides gradually, till, somewhere out of sight,
What light must be!—

O Thou, intense

Rapture of Beauty! All-pervading Lord!
Is not this worship? So art Thou ador'd
By every sense

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God's Acre

'NEATH the spiring of spruces
Above the blue sea,
Lo, a field of white crosses,
A garden of grief!
—And a riot of roses,
Of red and white roses,
Rich Death! all in blossom,
Fair Loss! all in leaf.
Aye, their warm cherub-cheeks
To cold marble they press;
With sweet summer-kisses
Dead names they caress;
Yon tomb, see, all garlands,
All roses this cross!
—So breathe, my lamenting!
So bloom, O my loss!

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On the Just and the Unjust

OUTCAST, a horror to his kind,
At night he to the forest fled.
There, the birch-bark made fire for him,
The brown fern made a bed.

The river murmured lullaby,
The moisty mosses breathed of balm,
The clean stars carried light to him,
Unterrified and calm.

Aye, as they would have served a saint
Freely all served the guilty guest.
They only saw their Father's son,
And brought their brother rest.

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The Greatest Gift

IF of us two might only one be glad,
Pain I'd pursue, and struggle to be sad.
If of us two one only might be great,
Safely obscure I'd triumph in my fate.
O Soul more dear than mine! if of us two
One only might love God, it should be you.

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The 'Mary Ross'

'What was the hardest hour', you ask,
'Ever I had at sea?'
There was that in the wreck of the Mary Ross
Is bitten into me.

Five merry weeks of sun and speed,
A ship well mann'd and stout—
One hour from home she falter'd, stopp'd
Short ... and the lights went out.

What follow'd—O just-dealing God,
How firm must be Thy mind,
Such a beginning to have given
And such an end design'd!

...Sudden, from human eyes and hands
And kindred human breath,
Into the wild black Void, into
The unthought-on fangs of Death...

...The bitter cold was all—then breath
Again, and something cross'd
My clutching fingers; with a spar
Now was I driven and toss'd.

Where were the rest? My strain'd ear caught
No answer ... Dazed and stark,
Moments it may have been, or hours,
Dash'd thro' the roaring dark.

I thought that I must have traversed Time
And touch'd Eternity,
When, high in the air, a cry, a wail:
'I am afraid! Save me!'

And yonder!—Oh what 's that blacker black
Bulged out upon the gloom?
By the glint of the whirling spray I saw
Her lifted stern-post loom.

'Save me!' Oh what 's yon whiter speck
O'er the yeasty glimmer wild?
Terribly flashed the hasty moon
On—the face of a little child!

Back chased the blessed dark—but, oh!
I'd seen! Aye, all too clear
I see her still—the piteous mouth,
The great eyes fixt with fear.

Not an hour since upon my knee
Her good-night pranks were play'd,

And now—to face Death ... and alone...
God! and afraid? 'Afraid!'

Oh, I cried from the trough—I promised her
The help that I could not give.
The wind drove back my words—the waves
Drove on their fugitive.

'Somebody save me!' And again
For one mad second's space,
'Mid the rushing rack the quiet moon,
'Mid the wide void, that face!

And she saw me! Great Heaven, she smiled!
Stretch'd out her arms and cried,
'Save me!' and half my name—and then...
Then she was pacified.

For ... a swirl ... a suck ... when next I rose,
Naught, save the stormy roar!
Down in the darkness I thank'd God.
She was afraid no more.

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The Old Place

SO the last day's come at last, the close of my fifteen year—
The end of the hope, an' the struggles, an' messes I've put in here.
All of the shearings over, the final mustering done,—
Eleven hundred an' fifty for the incoming man, near on.
Over five thousand I drove 'em, mob by mob, down the coast;
Eleven-fifty in fifteen year...it isn't much of a boast.

Oh, it's a bad old place! Blown out o' your bed half the nights,
And in the summer the grass burnt shiny an' bare as your hand, on the heights:
The creek dried up by November, and in May a thundering roar
That carries down toll o' your stock to salt 'em whole on the shore.
Clear'd I have, and I've clear'd an' clear'd, yet everywhere, slap in your face,
Briar, tauhinu, 1 an' ruin! God! it's a brute of a place.
...An' the house got burnt which I built, myself, with all that worry and pride;
Where the Missus was always homesick, and where she took fever, and died.

Yes, well! I'm leaving the place. Apples look red on that bough.
I set the slips with my own hand. Well—they're the other man's now.
The breezy bluff: an' the clover that smells so over the land,
Drowning the reek o' the rubbish, that plucks the profit out o' your hand:
That bit o' Bush paddock I fall'd myself, an' watch'd, each year, come clean
(Don't it look fresh in the tawny? A scrap of Old-Country green):
This air, all healthy with sun an' salt, an' bright with purity:
An' the glossy karakas 2 there, twinkling to the big blue twinkling sea:
Aye, the broad blue sea beyond, an' the gem-clear cove below,
Where the boat I'll never handle again; sits rocking to and fro:
There's the last look to it all! an' now for the last upon
This room, where Hetty was born, an' my Mary died, an' John...
Well! I'm leaving the poor old place, and it cuts as keen as a knife;
The place that's broken my heart—the place where I've lived my life.

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