

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Charles Kingsley**

**- poems -**

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## **A Farewell**

I

My fairest child, I have no song to give you;  
No lark could pipe to skies so dull and grey:  
Yet, ere we part, one lesson I can leave you  
For every day.

II

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;  
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long:  
And so make life, death, and that vast for-ever  
One grand, sweet song.

Charles Kingsley

## **A Farewell: To C.E.G**

My fairest child, I have no song to give you;  
No lark could pipe in skies so dull and gray;  
Yet, if you will, one quiet hint I'll leave you,  
For every day.

I'll tell you how to sing a clearer carol  
Than lark who hails the dawn or breezy down;  
To earn yourself a purer poet's laurel  
Than Shakespeare's crown.

Be good, sweet maid, and let who can be clever;  
Do lovely things, not dream them, all day long;  
And so make Life, and Death, and that For Ever,  
One grand sweet song.

Charles Kingsley

## A Myth

A FLOATING, a floating  
Across the sleeping sea,  
All night I heard a singing bird  
Upon the topmast tree.

"Oh, came you from the isles of Greece  
Or from the banks of Seine;  
Or off some tree in forests free,  
Which fringe the western main?"

"I came not off the old world  
Nor yet from off the new—  
But I am one of the birds of God  
Which sing the whole night through."

"Oh, sing and wake the dawning—  
Oh, whistle for the wind;  
The night is long, the current strong,  
My boat it lags behind."

"The current sweeps the old world,  
The current sweeps the new;  
The wind will blow, the dawn will glow,  
Ere thou hast sail'd them through."

Charles Kingsley

## **Airly Beacon**

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;  
Oh, the pleasant sight to see  
Shires and towns from Airly Beacon,  
While my love climbed up to me!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;  
Oh, the happy hours we lay  
Deep in fern on Airly Beacon,  
Courting through the summer's day!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;  
Oh, the weary haunt for me,  
All alone on Airly Beacon,  
With his baby on my knee!

Charles Kingsley

## **Dartside, 1849**

I cannot tell what you say green leaves,  
I cannot tell what you say :  
But I know that there is a spirit in you,  
And a word in you this day.

I cannot tell what you say, rosy rocks,  
I cannot tell what you say :  
But I know that there is a spirit in you,  
And a word in you this day.

I cannot tell what you say, brown streams,  
I cannot tell what you say :  
But I know that in you too a spirit doth live,  
And a word doth speak this day.

"Oh green is the colour of faith and truth,  
And rose the colour of love and youth,  
And brown of the fruitful clay.  
Sweet Earth is faithful, and fruitful, and young,  
And her bridal day shall come ere long,  
And you shall know what the rocks and the streams  
And the whispering woodlands say."

Charles Kingsley

## **Easter Week**

See the land, her Easter keeping,  
Rises as her Maker rose.  
Seeds, so long in darkness sleeping,  
Burst at last from winter snows.  
Earth with heaven above rejoices;  
Fields and gardens hail the spring;  
Shaughs and woodlands ring with voices,  
While the wild birds build and sing.

You, to whom your Maker granted  
Powers to those sweet birds unknown,  
Use the craft by God implanted;  
Use the reason not your own.  
Here, while heaven and earth rejoices,  
Each his Easter tribute bring-  
Work of fingers, chant of voices,  
Like the birds who build and sing.

Charles Kingsley

## Lorraine

"ARE you ready for your steeplechase, Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorree?  
Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Baree.  
You're booked to ride your capping race to-day at Coulterlee,  
You're booked to ride Vindictive, for all the world to see,  
To keep him straight, and keep him first, and win the run for me."  
Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Baree.

She clasp'd her newborn baby, poor Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorrèe,  
Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Barum, Baree.  
"I cannot ride Vindictive, as any man might see,  
And I will not ride Vindictive, with this baby on my knee;  
He 's kill'd a boy, he 's kill'd a man, and why must he kill me?"

"Unless you ride Vindictive, Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorree,  
Unless you ride Vindictive to-day at Coulterlee,  
And land him safe across the brook, and win the blank for me,  
It 's you may keep your baby, for you 'll get no keep from me."

"That husbands could be cruel," said Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorrèe,  
"That husbands could be cruel, I have known for seasons three;  
But oh, to ride Vindictive while a baby cries for me,  
And be kill'd across a fence at last for all the world to see!"

She master'd young Vindictive—O, the gallant lass was she!  
And kept him straight and won the race as near as near could be;  
But he kill'd her at the brook against a pollard willow tree;  
Oh! he kill'd her at the brook, the brute, for all the world to see,  
And no one but the baby cried for poor Lorraine, Lorree.

Charles Kingsley

## Ode to the Northeast Wind

Welcome, wild Northeaster!  
Shame it is to see  
Odes to every zephyr;  
Ne'er a verse to thee.  
Welcome, black Northeaster!  
O'er the German foam;  
O'er the Danish moorlands,  
From thy frozen home.  
Tired are we of summer,  
Tired of gaudy glare,  
Showers soft and steaming,  
Hot and breathless air.  
Tired of listless dreaming,  
Through the lazy day--  
Jovial wind of winter  
Turn us out to play!  
Sweep the golden reed-beds;  
Crisp the lazy dike;  
Hunger into madness  
Every plunging pike.  
Fill the lake with wild fowl;  
Fill the marsh with snipe;  
While on dreary moorlands  
Lonely curlew pipe.  
Through the black fir-forest  
Thunder harsh and dry,  
Shattering down the snowflakes  
Off the curdled sky.  
Hark! The brave Northeaster!  
Breast-high lies the scent,  
On byholt and headland,  
Over heath and bent.  
Chime, ye dappled darlings,  
Through the sleet and snow.  
Who can override you?  
Let the horses go!  
Chime, ye dappled darlings,  
Down the roaring blast;  
You shall see a fox die  
Ere an hour be past.  
Go! and rest tomorrow,  
Hunting in your dreams,  
While our skates are ringing  
O'er the frozen streams.  
Let the luscious Southwind  
Breathe in lovers' sighs,  
While the lazy gallants  
Bask in ladies' eyes.  
What does he but soften  
Heart alike and pen?  
'Tis the hard gray weather  
Breeds hard English men.

What's the soft Southwester?  
'Tis the ladies' breeze,  
Bringing home their trueloves  
Out of all the seas.  
But the black Northeaster,  
Through the snowstorm hurled,  
Drives our English hearts of oak  
Seaward round the world.  
Come, as came our fathers,  
Heralded by thee,  
Conquering from the eastward,  
Lords by land and sea.  
Come; and strong, within us  
Stir the Vikings' blood;  
Bracing brain and sinew;  
Blow, thou wind of God!

Charles Kingsley

## Oh! That We Two Were Maying

1 Oh! that we two were Maying  
2 Down the stream of the soft spring breeze;  
3 Like children with violets playing  
4 In the shade of the whispering trees.

5 Oh! that we two sat dreaming  
6 On the sward of some sheep-trimmed down,  
7 Watching the white mist steaming  
8 Over river and mead and town.

9 Oh! that we two lay sleeping  
10 In our nest in the churchyard sod,  
11 With our limbs at rest on the quiet earth's breast,  
12 And our souls at home with God!

Charles Kingsley

## The Last Buccaneer

OH, England is a pleasant place for them that 's rich and high;  
But England is a cruel place for such poor folks as I;  
And such a port for mariners I ne'er shall see again,  
As the pleasant Isle of Avès, beside the Spanish main.

There were forty craft in Avès that were both swift and stout,  
All furnish'd well with small arms and cannons round about;  
And a thousand men in Avès made laws so fair and free  
To choose their valiant captains and obey them loyally.

Thence we sail'd against the Spaniard with his hoards of plate and gold,  
Which he wrung by cruel tortures from the Indian folk of old;  
Likewise the merchant captains, with hearts as hard as stone,  
Which flog men and keelhaul them and starve them to the bone.

Oh, the palms grew high in Avès and fruits that shone like gold,  
And the colibris and parrots they were gorgeous to behold;  
And the negro maids to Avès from bondage fast did flee,  
To welcome gallant sailors a sweeping in from sea.

Oh, sweet it was in Avès to hear the landward breeze  
A-swing with good tobacco in a net between the trees,  
With a negro lass to fan you while you listen'd to the roar  
Of the breakers on the reef outside that never touched the shore.

But Scripture saith, an ending to all fine things must be,  
So the King's ships sail'd on Avès and quite put down were we.  
All day we fought like bulldogs, but they burst the booms at night;  
And I fled in a piragua sore wounded from the fight.

Nine days I floated starving, and a negro lass beside,  
Till for all I tried to cheer her, the poor young thing she died;  
But as I lay a gasping a Bristol sail came by,  
And brought me home to England here to beg until I die.  
And now I 'm old and going I 'm sure I can't tell where;  
One comfort is, this world's so hard I can't be worse off there:  
If I might but be a sea-dove I 'd fly across the main,  
To the pleasant Isle of Avès, to look at it once again.

Charles Kingsley

## The Sands of Dee

1 "O Mary, go and call the cattle home,  
2 And call the cattle home,  
3 And call the cattle home  
4 Across the sands of Dee";  
5 The western wind was wild and dank with foam,  
6 And all alone went she.

7 The western tide crept up along the sand,  
8 And o'er and o'er the sand,  
9 And round and round the sand,  
10 As far as eye could see.  
11 The rolling mist came down and hid the land:  
12 And never home came she.

13 "Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair--  
14 A tress of golden hair,  
15 A drownèd maiden's hair  
16 Above the nets at sea?  
17 Was never salmon yet that shone so fair  
18 Among the stakes on Dee."

19 They rowed her in across the rolling foam,  
20 The cruel crawling foam,  
21 The cruel hungry foam,  
22 To her grave beside the sea:  
23 But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home  
24 Across the sands of Dee.

Charles Kingsley

## The Three Fishers

1 Three fishers went sailing away to the west,  
2 Away to the west as the sun went down;  
3 Each thought on the woman who loved him the best,  
4 And the children stood watching them out of the town;  
5 For men must work, and women must weep,  
6 And there's little to earn, and many to keep,  
7 Though the harbour bar be moaning.

8 Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower,  
9 And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down;  
10 They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,  
11 And the night-rack came rolling up ragged and brown.  
12 But men must work, and women must weep,  
13 Though storms be sudden, and waters deep,  
14 And the harbour bar be moaning.

15 Three corpses lay out on the shining sands  
16 In the morning gleam as the tide went down,  
17 And the women are weeping and wringing their hands  
18 For those who will never come home to the town;  
19 For men must work, and women must weep,  
20 And the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep;  
21 And good-bye to the bar and its moaning.

Charles Kingsley

## Young and Old

1     When all the world is young, lad,  
2     And all the trees are green;  
3     And every goose a swan, lad,  
4     And every lass a queen;  
5     Then hey for boot and horse, lad,  
6     And round the world away!  
7     Young blood must have its course, lad,  
8     And every dog his day.

9     When all the world is old, lad,  
10    And all the trees are brown;  
11    And all the sport is stale, lad,  
12    And all the wheels run down;  
13    Creep home, and take your place there,  
14    The spent and maimed among;  
15    God grant you find one face there,  
16    You loved when all was young.

Charles Kingsley