**Classic Poetry Series**

# Harold Monro

## - poems -

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## Harold Monro (14 March 1879 - 16 March 1932)

Harold Edward Monro was a British poet, the proprietor of the Poetry Bookshop in London which helped many famous poets bring their work before the public. Monro was born in Brussels, but his parents were Scottish. He was educated at Radley and at Caius College, Cambridge. His first collection of poetry was published in 1906. He founded a poetry magazine, The Poetry Review, which was to be very influential. In 1912, he founded the Poetry Bookshop in Bloomsbury, London, publishing new collections at his own expense and rarely making a profit, as well as providing a welcoming environment for readers and poets alike. Several poets, including <a href="http://www.poemhunter.com/wilfred-owen/">Wilfred Owen</a>, actually lodged in the rooms above the bookshop. Monro was also closely involved with Edward Marsh in the publication of Georgian Poetry. Although homosexual, he married before World War I, but he and his wife separated and were divorced in 1916. In 1917, he was called up for military service, a very unhappy experience for him. His health soon gave way, and he returned to run the Poetry Bookshop in 1919. He was not a mainstream war poet, but did occasionally write about the subject. In 1920, he married his long-standing assistant, Alida Klementaski. Their relationship seems to have been an intellectual rather than a physical one. Monro continued to suffer from alcoholism, which contributed to his early death.

Works:

Strange Meetings (1917)
Children of Love (1919)

**Child of Dawn**

O gentle vision in the dawn:
My spirit over faint cool water glides,
Child of the day,
To thee;
And thou art drawn
By kindred impulse over silver tides
The dreamy way
To me.

I need thy hands, O gentle wonder-child,
For they are moulded unto all repose;
Thy lips are frail,
And thou art cooler than an April rose;
White are thy words and mild:
Child of the morning, hail!

Breathe thus upon mine eyelids -- that we twain
May build the day together out of dreams.
Life, with thy breath upon my eyelids, seems
Exquisite to the utmost bounds of pain.
I cannot live, except as I may be
Compelled for love of thee.
O let us drift,
Frail as the floating silver of a star,
Or like the summer humming of a bee,
Or stream-reflected sunlight through a rift.

I will not hope, because I know, alas,
Morning will glide, and noon, and then the night
Will take thee from me. Everything must pass
Swiftly -- but nought so swift as dawn-delight.
If I could hold thee till the day,
Is broad on sea and hill,
Child of repose,
What god can say,
What god or mortal knows,
What dream thou mightest not in me fulfil?

O gentle vision in the dawn:
My spirit over faint cool water glides,
Child of the day,
To thee;
And thou art drawn
By kindred impulse over silver tides
The dreamy way
To me.

Harold Monro

**Children Of Love**

The holy boy
Went from his mother out in the cool of the day
Over the sun-parched fields
And in among the olives shining green and shining grey.

There was no sound,
No smallest voice of any shivering stream.
Poor sinless little boy,
He desired to play and to sing; he could only sigh and dream.

Suddenly came
Running along to him naked, with curly hair,
That rogue of the lovely world,
That other beautiful child whom the virgin Venus bare.

The holy boy
Gazed with those sad blue eyes that all men know.
Impudent Cupid stood
Panting, holding an arrow and pointing his bow.

(Will you not play?
Jesus, run to him, run to him, swift for our joy.
Is he not holy, like you?
Are you afraid of his arrows, O beautiful dreaming boy?)

And now they stand
Watching one another with timid gaze;
Youth has met youth in the wood,
But holiness will not change its melancholy ways.

Cupid at last
Draws his bow and softly lets fly a dart.
Smile for a moment, sad world! -
It has grazed the white skin and drawn blood from the sorrowful heart.

Now, for delight,
Cupid tosses his locks and goes wantonly near;
But the child that was born to the cross
Has let fall on his cheek, for the sadness of life, a compassionate tear.

Marvellous dream!
Cupid has offered his arrows for Jesus to try
He as offered his bow for the game.
But Jesus went weeping away, and left him there wondering why.

Harold Monro

**Dog**

You little friend, your nose is ready; you sniff,
Asking for that expected walk,
(Your nostrils full of the happy rabbit-whiff)
And almost talk.

And so the moment becomes a moving force;
Coats glide down from their pegs in the humble dark;
The sticks grow live to the stride of their vagrant course.
You scamper the stairs,
Your body informed with the scent and the track and the mark
Of stoats and weasels, moles and badgers and hares.

We are going OUT. You know the pitch of the word,
Probing the tone of thought as it comes through fog
And reaches by devious means (half-smelt, half-heard)
The four-legged brain of a walk-ecstatic dog.

Out in the garden your head is already low.
(Can you smell the rose? Ah, no.)
But your limbs can draw
Life from the earth through the touch of your padded paw.

Now, sending a little look to us behind,
Who follow slowly the track of your lovely play,
You carry our bodies forward away from mind
Into the light and fun of your useless day.

* * * * *

Thus, for your walk, we took ourselves, and went
Out by the hedge and the tree to the open ground.
You ran, in delightful strata of wafted scent,
Over the hill without seeing the view;
Beauty is smell upon primitive smell to you:
To you, as to us, it is distant and rarely found.

Home ... and further joy will be surely there:
Supper waiting full of the taste of bone.
You throw up your nose again, and sniff, and stare
For the rapture known
Of the quick wild gorge of food and the still lie-down
While your people talk above you in the light
Of candles, and your dreams will merge and drown
Into the bed-delicious hours of night.

Harold Monro

**Every Thing**

Since man has been articulate,
Mechanical, improvidently wise,
(Servant of Fate),
He has not understood the little cries
And foreign conversations of the small
Delightful creatures that have followed him
Not far behind;
Has failed to hear the sympathetic call
Of Crockery and Cutlery, those kind
Reposeful Teraphim
Of his domestic happiness; the Stool
He sat on, or the Door he entered through:
He has not thanked them, overbearing fool!
What is he coming to?

But you should listen to the talk of these.
Honest they are, and patient they have kept,
Served him without his Thank you or his Please. . .
I often heard
The gentle Bed, a sigh between each word,
Murmuring, before I slept.
The Candle, as I blew it, cried aloud,
Then bowed,
And in a smoky argument
Into the darkness went.

The Kettle puffed a tentacle of breath : --
' Pooh! I have boiled his water, I don't know
Why; and he always says I boil too slow,
He never calls me 'Sukie, dear,' and oh,
I wonder why I squander my desire
Sitting submissive on his fire.'

Now the old Copper Basin suddenly
Rattled and tumbled from the shelf,
Bumping and crying: ' I can fall by myself;
Without a woman's hand
To patronize and coax and flatter me,
I understand
The lean and poise of gravitable land.'
It gave a raucous and tumultuous shout,
Twisted itself convulsively about,
Rested upon the foor, and, while I stare,
It stares and grins at me.

The old impetuous Gas above my head
Begins irascibly to flare and fret,
Wheezing into its epileptic jet,
Reminding me I ought to go to bed.

The Rafters creak; an Empty-Cupboard door
Swings open; now a wild Plank of the floor

Breaks from its joist, and leaps behind my foot.
Down from the chimney half a pound of Soot
Tumbles, and lies, and shakes itself again.
The Putty cracks against hte window-pane.
A piece of Paper in the basket shoves
Another piece, and toward the bottom moves.
My independent Pencil, while I write,
Breaks at the point: the ruminating Clock
Stirs all its body and begins to rock,
Warning the waiting presence of the Night,
Strikes the dead hour, and tumbles to the plain
Ticking of ordinary work again.

You do well to remind me, and I praise
Your strangely individual foreign ways.
You call me from myself to recognize
Companionship in your unselfish eyes.
I want your dear acquaintances, although
I pass you arrogantly over, throw
Your lovely sounds, and squander them along
My busy days. I 'll do you no more wrong.

Purr for me, Sukie, like a faithful cat.
You, my well trampled Boots, and you, my Hat,
Remain my friends: I feel, though I don't speak,
Your touch grow kindlier from week to week.
It well becomes our mutual happiness
To go toward the same end more or less.
There is not much dissimilarity,
Not much to choose, I know it well, in fine,
Between the purposes of you and me,
And your eventual Rubbish Heap, and mine.

Harold Monro

**Goldfish**

They are the angels of that watery world,
With so much knowledge that they just aspire
To move themselves on golden fins,
Or fill their paradise with fire
By darting suddenly from end to end.

Glowing a thousand centuries behind
In pools half-recollected of the mind,
Their large eyes stare and stare, but do not see
Beyond those curtains of Eternity.

When twilight flows into the room
And air becomes like water, you can feel
Their movements growing larger in the gloom,
And you are led
Backward to where they live beyond the dead.

But in the morning, when the seven rays
Of London sunlight one by one incline,
They glide to meet them, and their gulping lips
Suck the light in, so they are caught and played
Like salmon on a heavenly fishing line.

* * * *

Ghosts on a twilight floor,
Moving about behind their watery door,
Breathing and yet not breathing day and night,
They give the house some gleam of faint delight.

Harold Monro

**Gravikty**

I
Fit for perpetual worship is the power
That holds our bodies safely to the earth.

When people talk of their domestic gods,
Then privately I think of You.

We ride through space upon your shoulders
Conveniently and lightly set,
And, so accustomed, we relax our hold,
Forget the gentle motion of your body--
But You do not forget.

Sometimes you breathe a little faster,
Or move a muscle:
Then we remember you, O Master.

II

When people meet in reverent groups
And sing to their domestic God,
You, all the time, dear tyrant, (How I laugh!)
Could, without effort, place your hand among them,
And sprinkle them about the desert.

But all your ways are carefully ordered,
For you have never questioned duty.
We watch your everlasting combinations;
We call them Fate; we turn them to our pleasure,
And when they most delight us, call them beauty.

III

I rest my body on your grass,
And let my brain repose in you;
I feel these living moments pass,
And, from within myself to those far places
To be imagined in your times and spaces,
Deliberate the various acts you do:--

Sorting and re-arranging worlds of Matter
Keenly and wisely. Thus you brought our earth
Through stages, and from purpose back to purpose,
From fire to fog, to dust, to birth
Through beast to man, who led himself to brain--
Then you invoked him back to dust again.

By leave of you he places stone on stone;
He scatters seed: you are at once the prop
Among the long roots of his fragile crop.

You manufacture for him, and insure
House, harvest, implement and furniture,
And hold them all secure.

IV

The hill ... The trees ... From underneath
I feel You pull me with your hand:
Through my firm feet up to my heart
You hold me,--You are in the land,
Reposing underneath the hill.

You keep my balance and my growth.
I lift a foot, but where I go
You follow: you, the ever-strong,
Control the smallest thing I do.

I have some little human power
To turn your purpose to my end,
For which I thank you every hour.
I stand at worship, while you send
Thrills up my body to my heart,
And I am all in love to know
How by your strength you keep me part
Of earth, which cannot let me go;
How everything I see around,
Whether it can or cannot move,
Is granted liberty of ground,
And freedom to enjoy your love;

Though you are silent always, and, alone
To You yourself, your power remains unknown.

Harold Monro

**Great City**

When I returned at sunset,
The serving-maid was singing softly
Under the dark stairs, and in the house
Twilight had entered like a moon-ray.
Tune was so dead I could not understand
The meaning of midday or of midnight,
But like falling waters, falling, hissing, falling,
Silence seemed an everlasting sound.

I sat in my room,
And watched sunset,
And saw starlight.
I heard the tramp of homing men,
And the last call of the last child;
Then a lone bird twittered,
And suddenly, beyond the housetops,
I imagined dew in the country,
In the hay, on the buttercups;
The rising moon,
The scent of early night,
The songs, the echoes,
Dogs barking,
Day closing,
Gradual slumber,
Sweet rest.

When all the lamps were lighted in the town
I passed into the street ways and I watched,
Wakeful, almost happy,
And half the night I wandered in the street.

Harold Monro

**Lake Leman**

It is the sacred hour: above the far
Low emerald hills that northward fold,
Calmly, upon the blue the evening star
Floats, wreathed in dusky gold.
The winds have sung all day; but now they lie
Faint, sleeping; and the evening sounds awake.
The slow bell tolls across the water: I
Am haunted by the spirit of the lake.
It seems as though the sounding of the bell
Intoned the low song of the water-soul,
And at some moments I can hardly tell
The long-resounding echo from the toll.
O thou mysterious lake, thy spell
Holds all who round thy fruitful margin dwell.
Oft have I seen home-going peasants' eyes
Lit with the peace that emanates from thee.
Those who among thy waters plunge, arise
Filled with new wisdom and serenity.
Thy veins are in the mountains. I have heard,
Down-stretched beside thee at the silent noon,
With leaning head attentive to thy word,
A secret and delicious mountain-tune,
Proceeding as from many shadowed hours
In ancient forests carpeted with flowers,
Or far, where hidden waters, wandering
Through banks of snow, trickle, and meet, and sing.
Ah, what repose at noon to go,
Lean on thy bosom, hold thee with wide hands,
And listen for the music of the snow!
But most, as now,
When harvest covers thy surrounding lands,
I love thee, with a coronal of sheaves
Crowned regent of the day;
And on the air thy placid breathing leaves
A scent of corn and hay.
For thou hast gathered (as a mother will
The sayings of her children in her heart)
The harvest-thoughts of reapers on the hill,
When the cool rose and honeysuckle fill
The air, and fruit is laden on the cart.
Thou breathest the delight
Of summer evening at the deep-roofed farm
And meditation of the summer night,
When the enravished earth is lying warm
From the recent kisses of the conquering sun.

Dwell as a spirit in me, O thou one
Sweet natural presence. In the years to be
When all the mortal loves perchance are done,
Them I will bid farewell, but, oh, not thee.
I love thee. When the youthful visions fade,
Fade thou not also in the hopeless past.

Be constant and delightful, as a maid
Sought over all the world, and found at last.

Harold Monro

**Living**

Slow bleak awakening from the morning dream
Brings me in contact with the sudden day.
I am alive – this I.
I let my fingers move along my body.
Realization warns them, and my nerves
Prepare their rapid messages and signals.
While Memory begins recording, coding,
Repeating; all the time Imagination
Mutters: You'll only die.

Here's a new day. O Pendulum move slowly!
My usual clothes are waiting on their peg.
I am alive – this I.
And in a moment Habit, like a crane,
Will bow its neck and dip its pulleyed cable,
Gathering me, my body, and our garment,
And swing me forth, oblivious of my question,
Into the daylight – why?

I think of all the others who awaken,
And wonder if they go to meet the morning
More valiantly than I;
Nor asking of this Day they will be living:
What have I done that I should be alive?
O, can I not forget that I am living?
How shall I reconcile the two conditions:
Living, and yet – to die?

Between the curtains the autumnal sunlight
With lean and yellow finger points me out;
The clock moans: Why? Why? Why?
But suddenly, as if without a reason,
Heart, Brain, and Body, and Imagination
All gather in tumultuous joy together,
Running like children down the path of morning
To fields where they can play without a quarrel:
A country I'd forgotten, but remember,
And welcome with a cry.

O cool glad pasture; living tree, tall corn,
Great cliff, or languid sloping sand, cold sea,
Waves; rivers curving; you, eternal flowers,
Give me content, while I can think of you:
Give me your living breath!
Back to your rampart, Death.

Harold Monro

**London Interior**

Autumn is in the air,
The children are playing everywhere.

One dare not open this old door too wide;
It is so dark inside.
The hall smells of dust;
A narrow squirt of sunlight enters high,
Cold, yellow.
The floor creaks, and I hear a sigh,
Rise in the gloom and die.

Through the hall, far away,
I just can see
The dingy garden with its wall and tree.
A yellow cat is sitting on the wall
Blinking toward the leaves that fall.
And now I hear a woman call
Some child from play.

Then all is still. Time must go
Ticking slow, glooming slow.

The evening will turn grey.
It is sad in London after two.
All, all the afternoon
What can old men, old women do?

It is sad in London when the gloom
Thickens, like wool,
In the corners of the room;
The sky is shot with steel,
Shot with blue.

The bells ring the slow time;
The chairs creak, the hours climb;
The sunlight lays a streak upon the floor.

Harold Monro

**Man Carrying Bale**

The tough hand closes gently on the load;
Out of the mind, a voice
Calls 'Lift!' and the arms, remembering well their work,
Lengthen and pause for help.
Then a slow ripple flows from head to foot
While all the muscles call to one another:
'Lift! 'and the bulging bale
Floats like a butterfly in June.

So moved the earliest carrier of bales,
And the same watchful sun
Glowed through his body feeding it with light.
So will the last one move,
And halt, and dip his head, and lay his load
Down, and the muscles will relax and tremble.
Earth, you designed your man
Beautiful both in labour and repose.

Harold Monro

**Midnight Lamentation**

When you and I go down
Breathless and cold,
Our faces both worn back
To earthly mould,
How lonely we shall be!
What shall we do,
You without me,
I without you?

I cannot bear the thought
You, first, may die,
Nor of how you will weep,
Should I.
We are too much alone;
What can we do
To make our bodies one:
You, me; I, you?

We are most nearly born
Of one same kind;
We have the same delight,
The same true mind.
Must we then part, we part;
Is there no way
To keep a beating heart,
And light of day?

I could now rise and run
Through street on street
To where you are breathing–you,
That we might meet,
And that your living voice
Might sound above
Fear, and we two rejoice
Within our love.

How frail the body is,
And we are made
As only in decay
To lean and fade.
I think too much of death;
There is a gloom
When I can’t hear your breath
Calm in some room.

O, but how suddenly
Either may droop;
Countenance be so white,
Body stoop.
Then there may be a place
Where fading flowers

dropp on a lifeless face
Through weeping hours.

Is then nothing safe?
Can we not find
Some everlasting life
In our one mind?
I feel it like disgrace
Only to understand
Your spirit through your word,
Or by your hand.

I cannot find a way
Through love and through;
I cannot reach beyond
Body, to you.
When you or I must go
Down evermore,
There'll be no more to say
–But a locked door.

Harold Monro

**Milk For The Cat**

When the tea is brought at five o'clock,
And all the neat curtains are drawn with care,
The little black cat with bright green eyes
Is suddenly purring there.

At first she pretends, having nothing to do,
She has come in merely to blink by the grate,
But, though tea may be late or the milk may be
sour,
She is never late.

And presently her agate eyes
Take a soft large milky haze,
And her independent casual glance
Becomes a stiff, hard gaze.

Then she stamps her claws or lifts her ears,
Or twists her tail and begins to stir,
Till suddenly all her lithe body becomes
One breathing, trembling purr.

The children eat and wriggle and laugh;
The two old ladies stroke their silk:
But the cat is grown small and thin with desire,
Transformed to a creeping lust for milk.

The white saucer like some full moon descends
At last from the clouds of the table above;
She sighs and dreams and thrills and glows,
Transfigured with love.

She nestles over the shining rim,
Buries her chin in the creamy sea;
Her tail hangs loose; each drowsy paw
Is doubled under each bending knee.

A long, dim ecstasy holds her life;
Her world is an infinite shapeless white,
Till her tongue has curled the last holy drop,
Then she sinks back into the night,

Draws and dips her body to heap
Her sleepy nerves in the great arm-chair,
Lies defeated and buried deep
Three or four hours unconscious there.

Harold Monro

**Overheard on a Salmarsh**

Nymph, nymph, what are your beads?
Green glass, goblin. Why do you stare at them?
Give them me.
No.
Give them me. Give them me.
No.
Then I will howl all night in the reeds,
Lie in the mud and howl for them.

Goblin, why do you love them so?

They are better than stars or water,
Better than voices of winds that sing,
Better than any man's fair daughter,
Your green glass beads on a silver ring.

Hush, I stole them out of the moon.
Give me your beads, I want them.
No.

I will howl in the deep lagoon
For your green glass beads, I love them so.
Give thme me. Give them.
No.

Harold Monro

**Real Property**

Tell me about that harvest field.
Oh! Fifty acres of living bread.
The colour has painted itself in my heart;
The form is patterned in my head.

So now I take it everywhere,
See it whenever I look round;
Hear it growing through every sound,
Know exactly the sound it makes —
Remembering, as one must all day,
Under the pavement the live earth aches.

Trees are at the farther end,
Limes all full of the mumbling bee:
So there must be a harvest field
Whenever one thinks of a linden tree.

A hedge is about it, very tall,
Hazy and cool, and breathing sweet.
Round paradise is such a wall,
And all the day, in such a way,
In paradise the wild birds call.

You only need to close your eyes
And go within your secret mind,
And you'll be into paradise:
I've learnt quite easily to find
Some linden trees and drowsy bees,
A tall sweet hedge with the corn behind.

I will not have that harvest mown:
I'll keep the corn and leave the bread.
I've bought that field; it's now my own:
I've fifty acres in my head.
I take it as a dream to bed.
I carry it about all day....

Sometimes when I have found a friend
I give a blade of corn away.

Harold Monro

**Solitude**

WHEN you have tidied all things for the night,
And while your thoughts are fading to their sleep,
You'll pause a moment in the late firelight,
Too sorrowful to weep.

The large and gentle furniture has stood
In sympathetic silence all the day
With that old kindness of domestic wood;
Nevertheless the haunted room will say:
'Someone must be away.'

The little dog rolls over half awake,
Stretches his paws, yawns, looking up at you,
Wags his tail very slightly for your sake,
That you may feel he is unhappy too.

A distant engine whistles, or the floor
Creaks, or the wandering night-wind bangs a door

Silence is scattered like a broken glass.
The minutes prick their ears and run about,
Then one by one subside again and pass
Sedately in, monotonously out.

You bend your head and wipe away a tear.
Solitude walks one heavy step more near.

Harold Monro

**Suburb**

Dull and hard the low wind creaks
Among the rustling pampas plumes.
Drearily the year consumes
Its fifty-two insipid weeks.

Most of the grey-green meadowland
Was sold in parsimonious lots;
The dingy houses stand
Pressed by some stout contractor's hand
Tightly together in their plots.

Through builded banks the sullen river
Gropes, where its houses crouch and shiver.
Over the bridge the tyrant train
Shrieks, and emerges on the plain.

In all the better gardens you may pass,
(Product of many careful Saturdays),
Large red geraniums and tall pampas grass
Adorn the plots and mark the gravelled ways.

Sometimes in the background may be seen
A private summer-house in white or green.
Here on warm nights the daughter brings
Her vacillating clerk,
To talk of small exciting things
And touch his fingers through the dark.

He, in the uncomfortable breach
Between her trilling laughters,
Promises, in halting speech,
Hopeless immense Hereafters.
She trembles like the pampas plumes.
Her strained lips haggle. He assumes
The serious quest. . .

Now as the train is whistling past
He takes her in his arms at last.

It's done. She blushes at his side
Across the lawn-a bride, a bride.

The stout contractor will design,
The lazy laborers will prepare,
Another villa on the line;
In the little garden-square
Pampas grass will rustle there.

Harold Monro

**The Bird at Dawn**

What I saw was just one eye
In the dawn as I was going :
A bird can carry all the sky
In that little button glowing.

Never in my life I went
So deep into the firmament.

He was standing on a tree,
All in blossom overflowing;
And he purposely looked hard at me,
At first, as if to question merrily :
' Where are you going ? '
But next some far more serious thing to say :
I could not answer, could not look away.

Oh, that hard, round, and so distracting eye :
Little mirror of all the sky ! --
And then the after-song another tree
Held, and sent radiating back on me.

If no man had invented human word,
And a bird-song had been
The only way to utter what we mean,
What would we men have heard,
What understood, what seen,
Between the trills and pauses, in between
The singing and the silence of a bird?

Harold Monro

## The Nightingale Near The House

Here is the soundless cypress on the lawn:
It listens, listens. Taller trees beyond
Listen. The moon at the unruffled pond
Stares. And you sing, you sing.

That star-enchanted song falls through the air
From lawn to lawn down terraces of sound,
Darts in white arrows on the shadowed ground;
And all the night you sing.

My dreams are flowers to which you are a bee
As all night long I listen, and my brain
Receives your song, then loses it again
In moonlight on the lawn.

Now is your voice a marble high and white,
Then like a mist on fields of paradise,
Now is a raging fire, then is like ice,
Then breaks, and it is dawn.

Harold Monro

**The Rebellious Vine**

One day, the vine
That clomb on god’s own house
Cried, “I will not
grow

And, ‘I will
not
grow,’
And, I
will
not grow,’
And,
‘I
will not grow,’
So God leaned out his head,
And said:

‘You need
not
Then the vine
fluttered its leaves, and cried to all the winds:
‘Oh have I not permission from the Lord?
And may I not begin to cease to grow?’
But that wise God had pondered on the vine
Before he made it.
And all the while it laboured not to grow,
It grew; it grew;
And all the time God knew.

Harold Monro

**The Silent Pool**

I have discovered finally to-day
This home that I have called my own
Is built of straw and clay,
Not, as I thought, of stone.

I wonder who the architect could be,
What builder made it of that stuff;
When it was left to me
The house seemed good enough.

Yet, slowly, as its roof began to sink,
And as its walls began to split,
And I began to think,
Then I suspected it;

But did not clearly know until today
That it was only built of straw and clay.

II

Now I will go about on my affairs
As though I had no cares,
Nor ever think at all
How one day soon that house is bound to fall,
So when I'm told the wind has blown it down
I may have something else to call my own.

I have enquired who was the architect,
What builder did erect.
I'm told they did design
Million and million others all like mine,
And argument with all men ends the same:-
It is impossible to fix the blame.

I am so glad that underneath our talk
Our minds together walk.
We argue all the while,
But down below our argument we smile,
We have our houses, but we understand
That our real property is common land.

III

At night we often go
With happy comrades to that real estate,
Where dreams in beauty grow,
And every man enjoys a common fate.

At night in sleep one flows
Below the surface of all argument;
The brain, with all it knows,
Is covered by the waters of content.

But when the dawn appears
Brain rises to the surface with a start,
And, waking, quickly sneers
At the old natural brightness of the heart.

Oh, that a man might choose
To live unconsciously like beast or bird,
And our clear thought not lose
Its beauty when we turn it into word.

IV

Those quarrelings between my brain and heart
(In which I'd take no part)
Pursue their violent course
Corrupting my most vital force
So that my natural property is spent
In fees to keep alive their argument.

V

Look downward in the silent pool:
The weeds cling to the ground they love;
They live so quietly, are so cool;
They do not need to think, or move.

Look down in the unconscious mind:
There everything is quiet too
And deep and cool, and you will find
Calm growth and nothing hard to do,
And nothing that need trouble you.

Harold Monro

**Thistledown**

This might have been a place for sleep,
But, as from that small hollow there
Hosts of bright thistledown begin
Their dazzling journey through the air,
An idle man can only stare.

They grip their withered edge of stalk
In brief excitement for the wind;
They hold a breathless final talk,
And when their filmy cables part
One almost hears a little cry.

Some cling together while they wait,
And droop and gaze and hesitate,
But others leap along the sky,
Or circle round and calmly choose
The gust they know they ought to use;

While some in loving pairs will glide,
Or watch the others as they pass,
Or rest on flowers in the grass,
Or circle through the shining day
Like silvery butterflies at play.

Some catch themselves to every mound,
Then lingeringly and slowly move
As if they knew the precious ground
Were opening for their fertile love:
They almost try to dig, they need
So much to plant their thistle-seed.

Harold Monro

**Two Poems: (Numbers i and x in 'Strange Meetings.')**

I
If suddenly a clod of earth should rise,
And walk about, and breathe, and speak, and love,
How one would tremble, and in what surprise
Gasp: 'Can you move?'

I see men walking, and I always feel:
'Earth! How have you done this? What can you be?'
I can't learn how to know men, or conceal
How strange they are to me.

II
A flower is looking through the ground,
Blinking at the April weather;
Now a child has seen the flower:
Now they go and play together.

Now is seems the flower will speak,
And will call the child its brother --
But, oh strange forgetfulness! --
They don't recognize each other.

Harold Monro

**Unknown Country**

Here, in this other world, they come and go
With easy dream-like movements to and fro.
They stare through lovely eyes, yet do not seek
An answering gaze, or that a man should speak.
Had I a load of gold, and should I come
Bribing their friendship, and to buy a home,
They would stare harder and would slightly frown:
I am a stranger from the distant town.

Oh, with what patience I have tried to win
The favour of the hostess of the Inn!
Have I not offered toast on frothing toast
Looking toward the melancholy host;
Praised the old wall-eyed mare to please the groom;
Laughed to the laughing maid and fetched her broom;
Stood in the background not to interfere
When the cool ancients frolicked at their beer;
Talked only in my turn, and made no claim
For recognition or by voice or name,
Content to listen, and to watch the blue
Or grey of eyes, or what good hands can do?

Sun-freckled lads, who at the dusk of day
Stroll through the village with a scent of hay
Clinging about you from the windy hill,
Why do you keep your secret from me still?
You loiter at the corner of the street;
I in the distance silently entreat.
I know too well I'm city-soiled, but then
So are today ten million other men.
My heart is true: I've neither will nor charms
To lure away your maidens from your arms.
Trust me a little. Must I always stand
Lonely, a stranger from an unknown land?

There is a riddle here. Though I'm more wise
Than you, I cannot read your simple eyes.
I find the meaning of their gentle look
More difficult than any learned book.
I pass: perhaps a moment you may chaff
My walk, and so dismiss me with a laugh.
I come: you all, most grave and most polite,
Stand silent first, then wish me calm Good-Night.
When I go back to town some one will say:
'I think that stranger must have gone away.'
And 'Surely!' some one else will then reply.
Meanwhile, within the dark of London, I
Shall, with my forehead resting on my hand,
Not cease remembering your distant land;
Endeavouring to reconstruct aright
How some treed hill has looked in evening light;
Or be imagining the blue of skies

Now as in heaven, now as in your eyes;
Or in my mind confusing looks or words
Of yours with dawnlight, or the song of birds:
Not able to resist, not even keep
Myself from hovering near you in my sleep:
You still as callous to my thought and me
As flowers to the purpose of the bee.

Harold Monro

**Week-End**

I
The train! The twleve o'clock for paradise.
Hurry, or it will try to creep away.
Out in the country every one is wise:
We can be only wise on Saturday.
There you are waiting, little friendly house:
Those are your chimney-stacks with you between
Surrounded by old trees and strolling cows,
Staring through all your windows at the green.
Your homely floor is creaking for our tread;
The smiling tea-pot with contented spout
Thinks of the boiling water, and the bread
Longs for the butter. All their hands are out
To greet us, and the gentle blankets seem
Purring and crooning: 'Lie in us, and dream.'

II
The key will stammer, and the door reply,
The hall wake, yawn, and smile; the torpid stair
Will grumble at our feet, the table cry:
'Fetch my bolongings for me; I am bare.'
A clatter! something in the attic falls,
A ghost has lifted up his robes and fled.
Then silence very slowly lifts his head.
The starling with impatient screech has flown
The chimney, and is watching from the tree.
They thought us gone for ever: mouse alone
Stops in the middle of the floor to see.
Now all you idle things, resume your toil.
Hearth, put your flames on. Sulky kettle, boil.

III
Contented evening; comfortable joys;
The snoozing fire, and all the fields are still:
Tranquil delight, no purpose, and no noise --
Unless the slow wind flowing round the hill.
'Murry' (the kettle) dozes; little mouse
Is rambling prudently about the floor.
There's lovely conversation in this house:
Words become princes that were slaves before.
What a sweet atmosphere for you and me
The people that have been here left behind. . . .
Oh, but I fear it may turn out to be
Built of a dream, erected in the mind:
So if we speak too loud, we may awaken
To find it vanished, and ourselves mistaken.

IV
Lift up the curtain carefully. All the trees
Stand in the dark like drowsy sentinels.
The oak is talkative to-night; he tells
The little bushes crowding at his knees

That formidable, hard, voluminous
History of growth from acord into age.
They titter like school-children; they arouse
Their comrades, who exclaim: ' He is very sage. '
Look how the moon is staring through that cloud,
Laying and lifting idle streaks of light.
O hark! was that the monstrous wind, so loud
And sudden, prowling always through the night?
Let down the shaking curtain. They are queer,
Those foreigners. They and we live so near.

V
Come, come to bed. The shadows move about,
And some one seems to overhear our talk.
The fire is low; the candles flicker out;
The ghosts of former tenants want to walk.
Already they are shuffling through the gloom.
I felt on old man touch my shoulder-blade;
Once he was married here; they love this room,
He and his woman and the child they made.
Dead, dead, they are, yet some familiar sound,
Creeping along the brink of happy life,
Revives their memory from under ground --
The farmer and his troublesome old wife.
Let us be going: as we climb the stairs,
They'll sit down in our warm half-empty chairs.

VI
Morning! Wake up! Awaken! All the boughs
Are rippling on the air across the green.
The youngest birds are singing to the house.
Blood of the world! -- and is the country clean?
Disturb the precinct. Cool it with a shout.
Sing as you trundle down to light the fire.
Turn the encumbering shadows tumbling out,
And fill the chambers with a new desire.
Life is no good, unless the morning brings
White happiness and quick delight of day.
These half-inanamate domestic things
Must all be useful, or must go away.
Coffee, be fragrant. Porridge in my plate,
Increase the vigour to fulfil my fate.

VII
The fresh air moves like water round a boat.
The white clouds wander. Let us wander too.
The whining, wavering plover flap and float.
That crow is flying after that cuckoo.
Look! Look! . . . They're gone. What are the great trees calling?
Just come a little farther, by that edge
Of green, to where the stormy ploughland, falling
Wave upon wave, is lapping to the hedge.

Oh, what a lovely bank! Give me your hand.
Lie down and press your heart against the ground.
Let us both listen till we understand,
Each through the other, every natural sound. . . .
I can't hear anything to-day, can you,
But, far and near: ' Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! ' ?

VIII
The everlasting grass -- how bright, how cool!
The day has gone too suddenly, too soon.
There's something white and shiny in that pool --
Throw in a stone, and you will hit the moon.
Listen, the church-bell ringing! Do not say
We must go back to-morrow to our work.
We'll tell them we are dead: we died to-day.
We're lazy. We're too happy, We will shirk,
We're cows. We're kettles. We'll be anything
Except the manikins of time and fear.
We'll start away to-morrow wandering,
And nobody will notice in a year. . . .
Now the great sun is slipping under ground.
Grip firmly! -- How the earth is whirling round!

IX
Be staid; be careful; and be not too free.
Temptation to enjoy your liberty
May rise against you, break into a crime,
And smash the habit of employing Time.
It serves no purpose that the careful clock
Mark the appointment, the officious train
Hurry to keep it, if the minutes mock
Loud in you ear: 'Late. Late. Late. Late again.'
Week-end is very well on Saturday:
On Monday it's a different affair --
A little episode, a trivial stay
In some oblivious spot somehow, somewhere.
On Sunday night we hardly laugh or speak:
Week-end begins to merges itself in Week.

X
Pack up the house, and close the creaking door.
The fields are dull this morning in the rain.
It's difficult to leave that homely floor.
Wave a light hand; we will return again.
(What was that bird?) Good-bye, ecstatic tree,
Floating, bursting, and breathing on the air.
The lonely farm is wondering that we
Can leave. How every window seems to stare!
That bag is heavy. Share it for a bit.
You like that gentle swashing of the ground
As we tread ? . . .
It is over. Now we sit

Reading the morning paper in the sound
Of the debilitating heavy train.
London again, again. London again.

Harold Monro

**Youth in Arms**

HAPPY boy, happy boy,
David the immortal-willed,
Youth a thousand thousand times
Slain, but not once killed,
Swaggering again today
In the old contemptuous way;

Leaning backward from your thigh
Up against the tinselled bar—
Dust and ashes! is it you?
Laughing, boasting, there you are!
First we hardly recognized you
In your modern avatar.

Soldier, rifle, brown khaki—
Is your blood as happy so?
Where’s your sling or painted shield,
Helmet, pike or bow?
Well, you’re going to the wars—
That is all you need to know.

Graybeards plotted. They were sad.
Death was in their wrinkled eyes.
At their tables—with their maps,
Plans and calculations—wise
They all seemed; for well they knew
How ungrudgingly Youth dies.

At their green official baize
They debated all the night
Plans for your adventurous days
Which you followed with delight,
Youth in all your wanderings,
David of a thousand slings

Harold Monro