Classic Poetry Series

John Masefield

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John Masefield (1 June 1878 – 12 May 1967)

John Edward Masefield, OM, was an English poet and writer, and Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom from 1930 until his death in 1967. He is remembered as the author of the classic children's novels The Midnight Folk and The Box of Delights, and poems, including "The Everlasting Mercy" and "Sea-Fever".

Life

Early Life

Masefield was born in Ledbury in Herefordshire, to Caroline and George Masefield, a solicitor. His mother died giving birth to his sister when Masefield was only six, and he went to live with his aunt. His father died soon after following a mental breakdown. After an unhappy education at the King's School in Warwick (now known as Warwick School), where he was a boarder between 1888 and 1891, he left to board the HMS Conway, both to train for a life at sea, and to break his addiction to reading, of which his aunt thought little. He spent several years aboard this ship and found that he could spend much of his time reading and writing. It was aboard the Conway that Masefield's love for story-telling grew. While on the ship, he listened to the stories told about sea lore. He continued to read, and felt that he was to become a writer and story teller himself.

In 1894, Masefield boarded the Gilcruix, destined for Chile - this first voyage bringing him the experience of sea sickness. He recorded his experiences while sailing through the extreme weather, his journal entries reflecting a delight in seeing flying fish, porpoises, and birds, and was awed by the beauty of nature, including a rare sighting of a nocturnal rainbow on his voyage. On reaching Chile, Masefield suffered from sunstroke and was hospitalized. He eventually returned home to England as a passenger aboard a steam ship. In 1895, Masefield returned to sea on a windjammer destined for New York City. However, the urge to become a writer and the hopelessness of life as a sailor overtook him, and in New York, he deserted ship. He lived as a vagrant for several months, before returning to New York City, he did many odd jobs, finding work as an assistant to a bar keeper.

Sometime around Christmas in 1895, Masefield read the December 1895 edition of Truth, a New York periodical, which contained the poem "The Piper of Arll" by Duncan Campbell Scott. Ten years later, Masefield wrote to Scott to tell him what reading that poem had meant to him: "I had never (till that time) cared very much for poetry, but your poem impressed me deeply, and set me on fire. Since then poetry has been the one deep influence in my life, and to my love of poetry I owe all my friends, and the position I now hold."

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face, and a gray dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.
“”

From "Sea-Fever", in Salt-Water Ballads (1902)

For the next two years, Masefield was employed in a carpet factory, where long hours were expected and conditions were far from ideal. He purchased up to 20 books a week, and devoured both modern and classical literature. His interests at this time were diverse and his reading included works by George du Maurier, Dumas, Thomas Browne, Hazlitt, Dickens, Kipling, and R. L. Stevenson. Chaucer also became very important to him during this time, as well as poetry by Keats and Shelley. He eventually returned home to England in 1897 as a passenger aboard a steam ship. When Masefield was 23, he met his future wife, Constance Crommelin, who was 35. Educated in classics and English Literature, and a mathematics teacher, Constance was a match for Masefield despite the difference in age. The couple had two children (Judith, born in 1904, and Lewis, in 1910).

By 24, Masefield's poems were being published in periodicals and his first collected works, Salt-Water Ballads (1902) was published, the poem "Sea-Fever" appearing in this book. Masefield then wrote the novels, Captain Margaret (1908) and Multitude and Solitude (1909). In 1911, after a long drought of poem writing, he composed "The Everlasting Mercy", the first of his narrative poems, and within the next year, Masefield had produced two more, "The Widow in the Bye Street" and "Dauber". As a result, Masefield became widely known to the public and was praised by critics, and in 1912, he was awarded the annual Edmond de Polignac prize.

World War I to appointment as Poet Laureate

When World War I began, though old enough to be exempted from military service, Masefield joined the staff of a British hospital for French soldiers, Hôpital Temporaire d'Arc-en-Barrois, Haute-Marne, France, serving briefly in 1915 as a hospital orderly, later publishing his own account of his experiences.

After returning home, Masefield was invited to the United States on a three month lecture tour. Although Masefield's primary purpose was to lecture on English Literature, a secondary purpose was to collect information on the mood and views of Americans regarding the war in Europe. When he returned to England, he submitted a report to the British Foreign Office, and suggested that he be allowed to write a book about the failure of the allied efforts in the Dardanelles, which possibly could be used in the US in order to counter what he thought was German propaganda there. As a result, Masefield wrote Gallipoli. This work was a success, encouraging the British people, and lifting them somewhat from the disappointment they had felt as a result of the Allied losses in the Dardanelles. Due to the success of his wartime writings, Masefield met with the head of British Military Intelligence in France and was asked to write an account of the Battle of the Somme. Although Masefield had grand ideas for his book, he was denied access to the official records, and therefore, what was to be his preface to the book was published as "The Old Front Line", a description of the geography of the Somme area.

In 1918, Masefield returned to America on his second lecture tour. Masefield spent much of his time speaking and lecturing to American soldiers waiting to be sent to Europe. These speaking engagements were very successful, and on one occasion, a battalion of all black soldiers danced and sang for him after his talk. During this tour, he matured as a public speaker and realized

his ability to touch the emotions of his audience with his style of speaking, learning to speak publicly with his own heart, rather than from dry scripted speeches. Towards the end of his trip, both Yale and Harvard Universities conferred honorary Doctorates of Letters on him.

Masefield entered the 1920s as an accomplished and respected writer. His family was able to settle on Boar's Hill, a somewhat rural setting not far from Oxford, and Masefield took up beekeeping, goat-herding and poultry-keeping. He continued to meet with success, the 1923 edition of "Collected Poems" selling approximately 80,000 copies. He produced three poems early in this decade. The first was Reynard The Fox, a poem that has been critically compared with works of Geoffrey Chaucer. This was followed by Right Royal and King Cole, poems where the relationship of humanity and nature emphasized. While Reynard is the best known of these, all met with acclaim.

After King Cole Masefield turned away from the long poem and back to the novel, and from 1924 till the Second World War published twelve novels, which vary from stories of the sea (The Bird of Dawning, Victorious Troy) to social novels about modern England (The Hawbucks, The Square Peg), and from tales of an imaginary land in Central America (Sard Harker, Odtaa) to fantasies for children (The Midnight Folk, The Box of Delights). This variety in genre testifies most impressively to the breadth of his imagination, though it probably reduced his sales (which remained very respectable, however), since most readers of novels like knowing what to expect from their favourite authors. In this same period he wrote a large number of dramatic pieces. Most of these were based on Christian themes, and Masefield, to his amazement, encountered a ban on the performance of plays on biblical subjects that went back to the Reformation and had been revived a generation earlier to prevent production of Oscar Wilde's Salome. However, a compromise was reached, and in 1928 his "The Coming of Christ" was the first play to be performed in an English Cathedral since the Middle Ages.

In 1921, Masefield received an Honorary Doctorate of Literature from Oxford University, and in 1923, organized the Oxford Recitations, an annual contest whose purpose was "to discover good speakers of verse and to encourage 'the beautiful speaking of poetry.'" The Recitations were seen as a success given the numbers of contest applicants, the promotion of natural speech in poetical recitations, and the number of people learning how to listen to poetry. Masefield began to question however, whether the Recitations should continue as a contest, believing that the event should become more of a festival. In 1929, Masefield broke with the contest concept, and the Recitations came to an end.

Later Years and Death

In 1930, on the death of Robert Bridges, a new Poet Laureate was needed. Many felt that Rudyard Kipling was a likely choice, however, upon the recommendation of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, King George V appointed Masefield, who remained in office until his death in 1967. The only person to remain in the office for a longer period was Tennyson. On his appointment The Times newspaper said of him his poetry could touch to beauty the plain speech of everyday life In 1932, Masefield was commissioned to write a poem to be set to music by the Master of the King's Musick, Sir Edward Elgar and performed by choir and orchestra at the unveiling of the Queen Alexandra Memorial by the King on 8 June 1932. For this he wrote the ode "So many true Princesses who have gone". Although the requirements of Poet Laureate had changed, and those in the office were rarely required to write verse for special occasions, Masefield took his appointment seriously and produced a large quantity of verse. Poems composed in his official capacity were sent to The Times. Masefield's humility was shown by his inclusion of a stamped envelope with each submission so that his composition could be returned if it were found unacceptable for publication.

"Sonnet"
Is there a great green commonwealth of Thought

Which ranks the yearly pageant, and decides
How Summer's royal progress shall be wrought,
By secret stir which in each plant abides?
Does rocking daffodil consent that she, 5
The snowdrop of wet winters, shall be first?
Does spotted cowslip with the grass agree
To hold her pride before the rattle burst?
And in the hedge what quick agreement goes,
When hawthorn blossoms redden to decay, 10
That Summer's pride shall come, the Summer's rose,
Before the flower be on the bramble spray?
Or is it, as with us, unresting strife,
And each consent a lucky gasp for life?

“”

"Sonnet", in The Story of a Round-House (1915)

After his appointment, Masefield received the Order of Merit by King George V and many honorary degrees from British universities, in 1937 being elected as President of the Society of Authors. Masefield encouraged the continued development of English literature and poetry, and began the annual awarding of the Royal Medals for Poetry for a first or second published edition of poetry by a poet under the age of 35. Additionally, his speaking engagements were calling him further away, often on much longer tours, yet he still produced significant amounts of work in a wide variety of genres. To those he had already used he now added autobiography, producing New Chum, In the Mill, and So Long to Learn. Some critics judged Masefield to be an even finer writer of prose than of verse.

It was not until about the age of 70, that Masefield slowed his pace due to illness. In 1960, Constance died at 93, after long illness. Although her death was heartrending, he had spent a tiring year watching the woman he loved die. He continued his duties as Poet Laureate; In Glad Thanksgiving, his last book, was published when he was 88 years old. In late 1966, Masefield developed gangrene in his ankle. This spread to his leg, and he died of the infection on 12 May 1967. According to his wishes, he was cremated and his ashes placed in Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey. Later, the following verse was discovered, written by Masefield, addressed to his "Heirs, Administrators, and Assigns":

Let no religious rite be done or read
In any place for me when I am dead,
But burn my body into ash, and scatter
The ash in secret into running water,
Or on the windy down, and let none see;
And then thank God that there's an end of me.

The Masefield Centre at Warwick School, which Masefield attended, and a high school in Ledbury, Herefordshire have been named in his honour. In 1977, Folkways Records released an album of his poetry, including some read by Masefield himself.

Art song settings

Many of Masefield's short poems were set as art songs by British composers of the time. Best known by far is John Ireland's "Sea Fever", the lasting popularity of which belies any mismatch between the urgency of the language and the slow, swung melody. Frederick Keel crafted several songs drawn from the Salt-Water Ballads and elsewhere. Of these, "Trade Winds" was particularly popular in its day, despite the tongue-twisting challenges the text presents to the singer. Keel's defiant setting of "Tomorrow", written while interned at Ruhleben during World War I, was frequently programmed at the BBC Proms after the war. Another memorable wartime composition is Ivor Gurney's climactic declamation of "By a bierside", a setting quickly set down in 1916 during a brief spell behind the lines.

Works:

Poetry collections

Salt-Water Ballads (1902)
Ballads (1903)
Ballads and Poems (1910)
The Story of a Round House and Other Poems (1915)
Salt-Water Poems and Ballads (1916)
Philip the King and Other Poems (1916)
Lollingdon Downs and Other Poems with Sonnets (1917)
Enslaved and Other Poems (1920)
Selected Poems (1922)
King Cole and Other Poems (1923)
The Dream and Other Poems (1923)
The Collected Poems of John Masefield (1923)
Poems (1925)
Midsummer Night and Other Tales in Verse (1928)
A Letter from Pontus and Other Verse (1936)
The Country Scene (1937)
Some Verses to Some Germans (1939)
The Bluebells and Other Verses (1961)
Old Raiger and Other Verses (1964)

Novels

A Book of Discoveries (Date unknown)
A Tarpaulin Muster (1907)
Captain Margaret (1908)
Multitude and Solitude (1909)
Martin Hyde: The Duke's Messenger (1910)
Lost Endeavour (Nelson, 1910).
The Street of Today (1911)
Jim Davis (Wells Gardner, 1911).
The Dream (MacMillan, 1922) Illustrated by Judith Masefield.
Sard Harker (Heinemann, 1924)
ODTAA (1926)
The Midnight Folk (1927)
The Hawbucks (1929)
The Bird of Dawning (Heinemann, 1933).
The Taking of the Gry (1934)
The Box of Delights: or When the Wolves Were Running (1935)
Victorious Troy: or The Harrying Angel (1935)
Eggs and Baker (1936)
The Square Peg: or The Gun Fella (1937)
Dead Ned (1938)
Live and Kicking Ned (1939)
Basilissa: A Tale of the Empress Theodora (1940)
Conquer: A Tale of the Nika Rebellion in Byzantium (1941)
Badon Parchments (1947)

Plays

The Campden Wonder (1907)
The Tragedy of Pompey the Great (1910)
Good Friday: A Play in Verse (1916)
The Tragedy of Nan (Originally known as 'Nan)
"The Coming of Christ" (1928)

Non-fiction and autobiographical

Sea Life in Nelson's Time (1905)
The Conway: From her Foundation to the Present Day (1933)
Gallipoli
The Old Front Line
The Nine Days Wonder (The Operation Dynamo) (1941)
New Chum (1944)
So Long to Learn (1952)

Grace Before Ploughing (Heinemann, 1966)

A Ballad of John Silver

We were schooner-rigged and rakish,
with a long and lissome hull,
And we flew the pretty colours of the crossbones and the skull;
We'd a big black Jolly Roger flapping grimly at the fore,
And we sailed the Spanish Water in the happy days of yore.

We'd a long brass gun amidships, like a well-conducted ship,
We had each a brace of pistols and a cutlass at the hip;
It's a point which tells against us, and a fact to be deplored,
But we chased the goodly merchant-men and laid their ships aboard.

Then the dead men fouled the scuppers and the wounded filled the chains,
And the paint-work all was spatter dashed with other peoples brains,
She was boarded, she was looted, she was scuttled till she sank.
And the pale survivors left us by the medium of the plank.

O! then it was (while standing by the taffrail on the poop)
We could hear the drowning folk lament the absent chicken coop;
Then, having washed the blood away, we'd little else to do
Than to dance a quiet hornpipe as the old salts taught us to.

O! the fiddle on the fo'c'sle, and the slapping naked soles,
And the genial "Down the middle, Jake, and curtsey when she rolls!"
With the silver seas around us and the pale moon overhead,
And the look-out not a-looking and his pipe-bowl glowing red.

Ah! the pig-tailed, quidding pirates and the pretty pranks we played,
All have since been put a stop to by the naughty Board of Trade;
The schooners and the merry crews are laid away to rest,
A little south the sunset in the islands of the Blest.

John Masefield

A Creed

I HOLD that when a person dies
His soul returns again to earth;
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise
Another mother gives him birth.
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain
The old soul takes the road again.

Such is my own belief and trust;
This hand, this hand that holds the pen,
Has many a hundred times been dust
And turned, as dust, to dust again;
These eyes of mine have blinked and shown
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon.

All that I rightly think or do,
Or make, or spoil, or bless, or blast,
Is curse or blessing justly due
For sloth or effort in the past.
My life's a statement of the sum
Of vice indulged, or overcome.

I know that in my lives to be
My sorry heart will ache and burn,
And worship, unavailingly,
The woman whom I used to spurn,
And shake to see another have
The love I spurned, the love she gave.

And I shall know, in angry words,
In gibes, and mocks, and many a tear,
A carrion flock of homing-birds,
The gibes and scorns I uttered here.
The brave word that I failed to speak
Will brand me dastard on the cheek.

And as I wander on the roads
I shall be helped and healed and blessed;
Dear words shall cheer and be as goads
To urge to heights before unguessed.
My road shall be the road I made;
All that I gave shall be repaid.

So shall I fight, so shall I tread,
In this long war beneath the stars;
So shall a glory wreathe my head,
So shall I faint and show the scars,
Until this case, this clogging mould,
Be smithied all to kingly gold.

John Masefield

A Night At Dago Tom's

Oh yesterday, I t'ink it was, while cruisin' down the street,
I met with Bill. - 'Hullo,' he says, 'let's give the girls a treat.'
We'd red bandanas round our necks 'n' our shrouds new rattled down,
So we filled a couple of Santy Cruz and cleared for Sailor Town.

We scooted south with a press of sail till we fetched to a caboose,
The 'Sailor's Rest,' by Dago Tom, alongside 'Paddy's Goose.'
Red curtains to the windies, ay, 'n' white sand to the floor,
And an old blind fiddler liltin' the tune of 'Lowlands No More.'

He played the 'Shaking of the Sheets' 'n' the couples did advance,
Bowing, stamping, curtsying, in the shuffling of the dance;
The old floor rocked and quivered, so it struck beholders dumb,
'N' afterwards there was sweet songs 'n' good Jamaikey rum.

'N' there was many a merry yarn of many a merry spree
Aboard the ships with royals set a-sailing on the sea,
Yarns of the hooker
Spindrift
, her as had the clipper-bow, &mdash
'There ain't no ships,' says Bill to me, 'like that there hooker now.'

When the old blind fiddler played the tune of 'Pipe the Watch Below,'
The skew-eyed landlord dowsed the glim and bade us 'stamp 'n' go,'
'N' we linked it home, did Bill 'n' I, adown the scattered streets,
Until we fetched to Land o' Nod atween the linen sheets.

John Masefield

A Pier-Head Chorus

Oh I'll be chewing salted horse and biting flinty bread,
And dancing with the stars to watch, upon the fo'c's'le head,
Hearkening to the bow-wash and the welter of the tread
Of a thousand tons of clipper running free.

For the tug has got the tow-rope and will take us to the Downs,
Her paddles churn the river-wrack to muddy greens and browns,
And I have given river-wrack and all the filth of towns
For the rolling, combing cresters of the sea.

We'll sheet the mizzen-royals home and shimmer down the Bay,
The sea-line blue with billows, the land-line blurred and grey;
The bow-wash will be piling high and thrashing into spray,
As the hooker's fore-foot tramples down the swell.

She'll log a giddy seventeen and rattle out the reel,
The weight of all the run-out line will be a thing to feel,
As the bacca-quidding shell-back shambles aft to take the wheel,
And the sea-sick little middy strikes the bell.

John Masefield

A Valediction

We're bound for blue water where the great winds blow,
It's time to get the tacks aboard, time for us to go;
The crowd's at the capstan and the tune's in the shout,
'A long pull, a strong pull,
and warp the hooker out
.'

The bow-wash is eddying, spreading from the bows,
Aloft and loose the topsails and some one give a rouse;
A salt-Atlantic chanty shall be music to the dead,
'A long pull, a strong pull,
and the yard to the masthead
.'

Shrilly squeal the running sheaves, the weather-gear strains,
Such a clatter of chain-sheets, the devil's in the chains;
Over us the bright stars, under us the drowned,
'A long pull, a strong pull,
and we're outward bound
.'

Yonder, round and ruddy, is the mellow old moon,
The red-funnelled tug has gone, and now, sonny, soon
We'll be clear of the Channel, so watch how you steer,
'Ease her when she pitches,
and so-long, my dear
.'

John Masefield

A Wanderer's Song

A WIND'S in the heart of me, a fire's in my heels,
I am tired of brick and stone and rumbling wagon-wheels;
I hunger for the sea's edge, the limit of the land,
Where the wild old Atlantic is shouting on the sand.

Oh I'll be going, leaving the noises of the street,
To where a lifting foresail-foot is yanking at the sheet;
To a windy, tossing anchorage where yawls and ketches ride,
Oh I'l be going, going, until I meet the tide.

And first I'll hear the sea-wind, the mewing of the gulls,
The clucking, sucking of the sea about the rusty hulls,
The songs at the capstan at the hooker warping out,
And then the heart of me'll know I'm there or thereabout.

Oh I am sick of brick and stone, the heart of me is sick,
For windy green, unquiet sea, the realm of Moby Dick;
And I'll be going, going, from the roaring of the wheels,
For a wind's in the heart of me, a fire's in my heels.

John Masefield

An Epilogue

I have seen flowers come in stony places
And kind things done by men with ugly faces,
And the gold cup won by the worst horse at the races,
So I trust, too.

John Masefield

Beauty

I HAVE seen dawn and sunset on moors and windy hills
Coming in solemn beauty like slow old tunes of Spain:
I have seen the lady April bringing the daffodils,
Bringing the springing grass and the soft warm April rain.

I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old chant of the sea,
And seen strange lands from under the arched white sails of ships;
But the loveliest thing of beauty God ever has shown to me,
Are her voice, and her hair, and eyes, and the dear red curve of her lips.

John Masefield

Biography

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
And none will know the gleam there used to be
About the feast days freshly kept by me,
But men will call the golden hour of bliss
'About this time,' or 'shortly after this.'

Men do not heed the rungs by which men climb
Those glittering steps, those milestones upon time,
Those tombstones of dead selves, those hours of birth,
Those moments of the soul in years of earth.
They mark the height achieved, the main result,
The power of freedom in the perished cult,
The power of boredom in the dead man's deeds
Not the bright moments of the sprinkled seeds.

By many waters and on many ways
I have known golden instants and bright days;
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;
The summer day on which in heart's delight
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white,
The glittering day when all the waves wore flags
And the ship Wanderer came with sails in rags;
That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk
When life became more splendid than its husk,
When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains
Shone with a doorway opening beyond brains;
The dawn when, with a brace-block's creaking cry,
Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of red,
Then gone, with one raised hand and one turned head;
The howling evening when the spindrift's mists
Broke to display the four Evangelists,
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by breakers,
Wind-beaten bones of long-since-buried acres;
The night alone near water when I heard
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird;
The English dusk when I beheld once more
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citied shore,
The lines of masts, the streets so cheerly trod
In happier seasons, and gave thanks to God.
All had their beauty, their bright moments' gift,
Their something caught from Time, the ever-swift.

All of those gleams were golden; but life's hands
Have given more constant gifts in changing lands;
And when I count those gifts, I think them such
As no man's bounty could have bettered much:
The gift of country life, near hills and woods

Where happy waters sing in solitudes,
The gift of being near ships, of seeing each day
A city of ships with great ships under weigh,
The great street paved with water, filled with shipping,
And all the world's flags flying and seagulls dipping.

Yet when I am dust my penman may not know
Those water-trampling ships which made me glow,
But think my wonder mad and fail to find,
Their glory, even dimly, from my mind,
And yet they made me:

not alone the ships
But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to whips,
The two close friends of nearly twenty years
Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-peers,
Whose feet with mine wore many a bolthead bright
Treading the decks beneath the riding light.
Yet death will make that warmth of friendship cold,
And who'll know what one said and what one told,
Our hearts' communion, and the broken spells
When the loud call blew at the strike of bells?
No one, I know, yet let me be believed —
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a word
Live in the soul to make the being stirred;
Towns can be prisons where the spirit dulls
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,
Away from all bright water and great hills
And sheep-walks where the curlews cry their fills;
Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see
But dead museums and miles of misery
And floating life un-rooted from man's need
And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed
And life made wretched out of human ken
And miles of shopping women served by men.
So, if the penman sums my London days,
Let him but say that there were holy ways,
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old
With stinking doors where women stood to scold
And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born;
And windy gas lamps and the wet roads shining
And that old carol of the midnight whining,
And that old room above the noisy slum
Where there was wine and fire and talk with some
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and those friends,
Those glittering moments that a spirit lends,

That all may be imagined from the flash,
The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning gash;
Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took
Light to send out to men in song or book;
Those friends who heard St. Pancras' bells strike two,
Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew,
Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's best,
The thought beyond great poets not expressed,
The glory of mood where human frailty failed,
The forts of human light not yet assailed,
Till the dim room had mind and seemed to brood,
Binding our wills to mental brotherhood;
Till we became a college, and each night
Was discipline and manhood and delight;
Till our farewells and winding down the stairs
At each gray dawn had meaning that Time spares
That we, so linked, should roam the whole world round
Teaching the ways our brooding minds had found,
Making that room our Chapter, our one mind
Where all that this world soiled should be refined.

Often at night I tread those streets again
And see the alleys glimmering in the rain,
Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps,
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under lamps,
The secret house where once a beggar stood,
Trembling and blind, to show his woe for food.
And now I miss that friend who used to walk
Home to my lodgings with me, deep in talk,
Wearing the last of night out in still streets
Trodden by us and policemen on their beats
And cats, but else deserted; now I miss
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his
And that strange way he had of making gleam,
Like something real, the art we used to dream.
London has been my prison; but my books
Hills and great waters, labouring men and brooks,
Ships and deep friendships and remembered days
Which even now set all my mind ablaze —
As that June day when, in the red bricks' chinks
I saw the old Roman ruins white with pinks
And felt the hillside haunted even then
By not dead memory of the Roman men;
And felt the hillside thronged by souls unseen
Who knew the interest in me, and were keen
That man alive should understand man dead
So many centuries since the blood was shed,
And quickened with strange hush because this comer
Sensed a strange soul alive behind the summer.
That other day on Ercall when the stones
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied bones,
While the bees droned and all the air was sweet

From honey buried underneath my feet,
Honey of purple heather and white clover
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's over.
Then other days by water, by bright sea,
Clear as clean glass, and my bright friend with me;
The cove clean bottomed where we saw the brown
Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet down,
And saw the long fronds waving, white with shells,
Waving, unfolding, drooping, to the swells;
That sadder day when we beheld the great
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great cliff's gaps,
Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,
While drenching clouds drove by and every sense
Was water roaring or rushing or in offence,
And mountain sheep stood huddled and blown gaps gleamed
Where torn white hair of torrents shook and streamed.
That sadder day when we beheld again
A spate going down in sunshine after rain
When the blue reach of water leaping bright
Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked with white.
And that far day, that never blotted page
When youth was bright like flowers about old age,
Fair generations bringing thanks for life
To that old kindly man and trembling wife
After their sixty years: Time never made
A better beauty since the Earth was laid,
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair
For the great gift of life which brought them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the days
Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise.
The day they led my cutter at the turn,
Yet could not keep the lead, and dropped astern;
The moment in the spurt when both boats' oars
Dipped in each other's wash, and throats grew hoarse,
And teeth ground into teeth, and both strokes quickened
Lashing the sea, and gasps came, and hearts sickened,
And coxswains damned us, dancing, banking stroke,
To put our weights on, though our hearts were broke,
And both boats seemed to stick and sea seemed glue,
The tide a mill race we were struggling through;
And every quick recover gave us squints
Of them still there, and oar-tossed water-glints,
And cheering came, our friends, our foemen cheering,
A long, wild, rallying murmur on the hearing,
'Port Fore!' and 'Starboard Fore!' 'Port Fore' 'Port Fore,'
'Up with her,' 'Starboard'; and at that each oar
Lightened, though arms were bursting, and eyes shut,
And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut,
And the curse quickened from the cox, our bows
Crashed, and drove talking water, we made vows,

Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain
We numbered things we'd never eat again
If we could only win; then came the yell
'Starboard,' 'Port Fore,' and then a beaten bell
Rung as for fire to cheer us. 'Now.' Oars bent,
Soul took the looms now body's bolt was spent,
'Damn it, come on now.' 'On now,' 'On now,' 'Starboard.'
'Port Fore,' 'Up with her, Port'; each cutter harboured
Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, 'Heave, oh heave,'
Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking sheave.
'Heave,' and I saw a back, then two. 'Port Fore,'
'Starboard,' 'Come on'; I saw the midship oar,
And knew we had done them. 'Port Fore,' 'Starboard,' 'Now.'
I saw bright water spurting at their bow,
Their cox' full face an instant. They were done.
The watchers' cheering almost drowned the gun.
We had hardly strength to toss our oars; our cry
Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.

Other bright days of action have seemed great:
Wild days in a pampero off the Plate;
Good swimming days, at Hog Back or the Coves
Which the young gannet and the corbie loves;
Surf-swimming between rollers, catching breath
Between the advancing grave and breaking death,
Then shooting up into the sunbright smooth
To watch the advancing roller bare her tooth;
And days of labour also, loading, hauling;
Long days at winch or capstan, heaving, pawling;
The days with oxen, dragging stone from blasting,
And dusty days in mills, and hot days masting.
Trucking on dust-dry deckings smooth like ice,
And hunts in mighty wool-racks after mice;
Mornings with buckwheat when the fields did blanch
With White Leghorns come from the chicken ranch;
Days near the spring upon the sunburnt hill,
Plying the maul or gripping tight the drill;
Delights of work most real, delights that change
The headache life of towns to rapture strange
Not known by townsmen, nor imagined; health
That puts new glory upon mental wealth
And makes the poor man rich.

But that ends, too.
Health, with its thoughts of life; and that bright view,
That sunny landscape from life's peak, that glory,
And all a glad man's comments on life's story,
And thoughts of marvellous towns and living men,
And what pens tell, and all beyond the pen,
End, and are summed in words so truly dead
They raise no image of the heart and head,
The life, the man alive, the friend we knew,

The minds ours argued with or listened to,
None; but are dead, and all life's keenness, all,
Is dead as print before the funeral;
Even deader after, when the dates are sought,
And cold minds disagree with what we thought.

This many-pictured world of many passions
Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,
And what life is is much to very few;
Men being so strange, so mad, and what men do
So good to watch or share; but when men count
Those hours of life that were a bursting fount
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,
Gated by golden moments, each bright time
Opening to show the city white like lime,
High-towered and many-peopled. This made sure,
Work that obscures those moments seems impure,
Making our not-returning time of breath
Dull with the ritual and records of death,
That frost of fact by which our wisdom gives
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

Best trust the happy moments. What they gave
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,
And gives his work compassion and new eyes.
The days that make us happy make us wise.

John Masefield

By a Bier-Side

This is a sacred city built of marvellous earth.
Life was lived nobly here to give such beauty birth.

Beauty was in this brain and in this eager hand:
Death is so blind and dumb Death does not understand.
Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs' glory,
Death makes justice a dream, and strength a traveller's story.
Death drives the lovely soul to wander under the sky.
Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die.

John Masefield

C.L.M.

IN the dark womb where I began
My mother's life made me a man.
Through all the months of human birth
Her beauty fed my common earth.
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,
But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave
She cannot see the life she gave.
For all her love, she cannot tell
Whether I use it ill or well,
Nor knock at dusty doors to find
Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,
She would not know her little son,
I am so grown. If we should meet
She would pass by me in the street,
Unless my soul's face let her see
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind
My debt to her and womankind?
What woman's happier life repays
Her for those months of wretched days?
For all my mouthless body leeched
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said
In thanks to that dear woman dead?
Men triumph over women still,
Men trample women's rights at will,
And man's lust roves the world untamed.

* * * *

O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

John Masefield

Captain Stratton's Fancy

OH some are fond of red wine, and some are fond of white,
And some are all for dancing by the pale moonlight;
But rum alone's the tipple, and the heart's delight
Of the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of Spanish wine, and some are fond of French,
And some'll swallow tay and stuff fit only for a wench;
But I'm for right Jamaica till I roll beneath the bench,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are for the lily, and some are for the rose,
But I am for the sugar-cane that in Jamaica grows;
For it's that that makes the bonny drink to warm my copper nose,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of fiddles, and a song well sung,
And some are all for music for to lilt upon the tongue;
But mouths were made for tankards, and for sucking at the bung,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of dancing, and some are fond of dice,
And some are all for red lips, and pretty lasses' eyes;
But a right Jamaica puncheon is a finer prize
To the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some that's good and godly ones they hold that it's a sin
To troll the jolly bowl around, and let the dollars spin;
But I'm for toleration and for drinking at an inn,
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are sad and wretched folk that go in silken suits,
And there's a mort of wicked rogues that live in good reputes;
So I'm for drinking honestly, and dying in my boots,
Like an old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

John Masefield

Cargoes

QUINQUIREME of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amythysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

John Masefield

Dauber

I
Four bells were struck, the watch was called on deck,
All work aboard was over for the hour,
And some men sang and others played at check,
Or mended clothes or watched the sunset glower.
The bursting west was like an opening flower,
And one man watched it till the light was dim,
But no one went across to talk to him.

He was the painter in that swift ship's crew,
Lampman and painter-tall, a slight-built man,
Young for his years, and not yet twenty-two;
Sickly, and not yet brown with the sea's tan.
Bullied and damned at since the voyage began,
'Being neither man nor seaman by his tally,'
He bunked with the idlers just abaft the galley.

His work began at five; he worked all day,
Keeping no watch and having all night in.
His work was what the mate might care to say;
He mixed red lead in many a bouilli tin;
His dungarees were smeared with paraffin.
'Go drown himself' his round-house mates advised him,
And all hands called him 'Dauber' and despised him.

Si, the apprentice, stood beside the spar,
Stripped to the waist, a basin at his side,
Slushing his hands to get away the tar,
And then he washed himself and rinsed and dried;
Towelling his face,, hair-towzelled, eager eyed,
He crossed the spar to Dauber, and there stood
Watching the gold of heaven turn to blood.

They stood there by the rail while the swift ship
Tore on out of the tropics, straining her sheets,
Whitening her trackway to a milky strip,
Dim with green bubbles and twisted water meets,
Her clacking tackle tugged at pins and cleats,
Her great sails bellied stiff, her great masts leaned:
They watched how the seas struck and burst and greened.

Si talked with Dauber, standing by the side.
'Why did you come to sea, painter?' he said.
'I want to be a painter,' he replied,
'And know the sea and ships from A to Z,
And paint great ships at sea before I'm dead;
Ships under skysails running down the
Trade Ships and the sea; there's nothing finer made.

'But there's so much to learn, with sails and ropes,
And how the sails look, full or being furled,
And how the lights change in the troughs and slopes,

And the sea's colours up and down the world,
And how a storm looks when the sprays are hurled
High as the yard (they say) I want to see;
There's none ashore can teach such things to me.

'And then the men and rigging, and the way
Ships move, running or beating, and the poise
At the roll's end, the checking in the sway--
I want to paint them perfect, short of the noise;
And then the life, the half-decks full of boys,
The fo'c's'les with the men there, dripping wet:
I know the subjects that I want to get.

'It's not been done, the sea, not yet been done,
From the inside, by one who really knows;
I'd give up all if I could be the one,
But art comes dear the way the money goes.
So I have come to sea, and I suppose
Three years will teach me all I want to learn
And make enough to keep me till I earn.'

Even as he spoke his busy pencil moved,
Drawing the leap of water off the side
Where the great clipper trampled iron-hooved,
Making the blue hills of the sea divide,
Shearing a glittering scatter in her stride,
And leaping on full tilt with all sails drawing,
Proud as a war-horse, snuffing battle, pawing.

'I cannot get it yet-not yet,' he said;
'That leap and light, and sudden change to green,
And all the glittering from the sunset's red,
And the milky colours where the bursts have been,
And then the clipper striding like a queen
Over it all, all beauty to the crown.
I see it all, I cannot put it down.

'It's hard not to be able. There, look there!
I cannot get the movement nor the light;
Sometimes it almost makes a man despair
To try and try and never get it right.
Oh, if I could-oh, if I only might,
I wouldn't mind what hells I'd have to pass,
Not if the whole world called me fool and ass.

Down sank the crimson sun into the sea,
The wind cut chill at once, the west grew dun.
'Out sidelights!' called the mate. 'Hi, where is he?'
The Boatswain called, 'Out sidelights, damn you! Run!'
'He's always late or lazing,' murmured one'
The Dauber, with his sketching.' Soon the tints
Of red and green passed on dark waterglints.

Darker it grew, still darker, and the stars
Burned golden, and the fiery fishes came.
The wire-note loudened from the straining spars;
The sheet-blocks clacked together always the same;
The rushing fishes streaked the seas with flame,
Racing the one speed noble as their own:
What unknown joy was in those fish unknown!

Just by the round-house door, as it grew dark,
The Boatswain caught the Dauber with, 'Now, you;
Till now I've spared you, damn you! now you hark:
I've just had hell for what you didn't do;
I'll have you broke and sent among the crew
If you get me more trouble by a particle.
Don't you forget, you daubing, useless article!

'You thing, you twice-laid thing from Port Mahon!''
Then came the Cook's 'Is that the Dauber there?
Why don't you leave them stinking paints alone?
They stink the house out, poisoning all the air.
Just take them out.' 'Where to?' 'I don't care where.
I won't have stinking paint here.' From their plates:
'That's right; wet paint breeds fever,' growled his mates.

He took his still wet drawings from the berth
And climbed the ladder to the deck-house top;
Beneath, the noisy half-deck rang with mirth,
For two ship's boys were putting on the strop:
One, clambering up to let the skylight drop,
Saw him bend down beneath a boat and lay
His drawings there, till all were hid away.

And stand there silent, leaning on the boat,
Watching the constellations rise and bum,
Until the beauty took him by the throat,
So stately is their glittering overturn;
Armies of marching eyes, armies that yearn
With banners rising and falling, and passing by
Over the empty silence of the sky.

The Dauber sighed there looking at the sails,
Wind-steadied arches leaning on the night,
The high trucks traced on heaven and left no trails;
The moonlight made the topsails almost white,
The passing sidelight seemed to drip green light.
And on the clipper rushed with fire-bright bows;
He sighed, 'I'll never do't,' and left the house.

'Now,' said the reefer, 'up! Come Sam; come, Si,
Dauber's been hiding something.' Up they slid,
Treading on naked tiptoes stealthily

To grope for treasure at the long-boat skid.
'Drawings!' said Sam. 'Is this what Dauber hid?
Lord! I expected pudding, not this rot.
Still, come, we'll have some fun with what we've got.'

They smeared the paint with turpentine until
They could remove with mess-clouts every trace
Of quick perception caught by patient skill,
And lines that had brought blood into his face.
They wiped the pigments off and did erase,
With knives, all sticking clots, When they had done.
Under the boat they laid them every one.

All he had drawn since first he came to sea,
His six weeks' leisure fruits, they laid them there.
They chuckled then to think how mad he'd be
Finding his paintings vanished into air.
Eight bells were struck, and feet from everywhere
Went shuffling aft to muster in the dark;
The mate's pipe glowed above, a dim red spark.

Names in the darkness passed and voices cried;
The red spark glowed and died, the faces seemed
As things remembered when a brain has died,
To all but high intenseness deeply dreamed.
Like hissing spears the fishes' fire streamed,
And on the clipper rushed with tossing mast,
A bath of flame broke round her as she passed.

The watch was set, the night came, and the men
Hid from the moon in shadowed nooks to sleep,
Bunched like the dead-, still, like the dead, as when
Plague in a city leaves none even to weep.
The ship's track brightened to a mile-broad sweep;
The mate there felt her pulse, and eyed the spars:
South-west by south she staggered under the stars.

Down in his bunk the Dauber lay awake
Thinking of his unfitness for the sea.
Each failure, each derision, each mistake,
There in the life not made for such as he;
A morning grim with trouble sure to be,
A noon of pain from failure, and a night
Bitter with men's contemning and despite.

This is the first beginning, the green leaf,
Still in the Trades before bad weather fell;
What harvest would he reap of hate and grief
When the loud Horn made every life a hell?
When the sick ship lay over, clanging her bell,
And no time came for painting or for drawing,
But all hands fought, and icy death came clawing?

Hell, he expected,-hell. His eyes grew blind;
The snoring from his messmates droned and snuffled,
And then a gush of pity calmed his mind.
The cruel torment of his thought was muffled,
Without, on deck, an old, old, seaman shuffled,
Humming his song, and through the open door
A moonbeam moved and thrust along the floor.

The green bunk curtains moved, the brass rings clicked,
The Cook cursed in his sleep, turning and turning,
The moonbeams' moving finger touched and picked,
And all the stars in all the sky were burning.
'This is the art I've come for, and am learning,
The sea and ships and men and travelling things.
It is most proud, whatever pain it brings.'

He leaned upon his arm and watched the light
Sliding and fading to the steady roll;
This he would some day paint, the ship at night,
And sleeping seamen tired to the soul;
The space below the bunks as black as coal,
Gleams upon chests, upon the unlit lamp,
The ranging door hook, and the locker clamp.

This he would paint, and that, and all these scenes,
And proud ships carrying on, and men their minds,
And blues of rollers toppling into greens,
And shattering into white that bursts and blinds,
And scattering ships running erect like hinds,
And men in oilskins beating down a sail
High on the yellow yard, in snow, in hail.

With faces ducked down from the slanting drive
Of half-thawed hail mixed with half-frozen spray,
The roaring canvas like a thing alive,
Shaking the mast, knocking their hands away,
The foot-ropes jerking to the tug and sway,
The savage eyes salt-reddened at the rims,
And icicles on the south-wester brims.

And sunnier scenes would grow under his brush,
The tropic dawn with all things dropping dew,
The darkness and the wonder and the hush,
The insensate grey before the marvel grew;
Then the veil lifted from the trembling blue,
The walls of sky burst in, the flower, the rose,
All the expanse of heaven a mind that glows.

He turned out of his bunk; the Cook still tossed,
One of the other two spoke in his sleep.
A cockroach scuttled where the moonbeam crossed;

Outside there was the ship, the night, the deep.
'It is worth while,' the youth said; 'I will keep
To my resolve, I'll learn to paint all this.
My Lord, my God, how beautiful it is!'

Outside was the ship's rush to the wind's hurry,
A resonant wire-hum from every rope,
The broadening bow-wash in a fiery flurry,
The leaning masts in their majestic slope,
And all things strange with moonlight: filled with hope
By all that beauty going as man bade,
He turned and slept in peace. Eight bells were made.
II
Next day was Sunday, his free painting day,
While the fine weather held, from eight till eight.
He rose when called at five, and did array
The round-house gear, and set the kit-bags straight;
Then kneeling down, like housemaid at a grate,
He scrubbed the deck with sand until his knees
Were blue with dye from his wet dungarees.

Soon all was clean, his Sunday tasks were done;
His day was clear for painting as he chose.
The wetted decks were drying in the sun,
The men coiled up, or swabbed, or sought repose.
The drifts of silver arrows fell and rose
As flying fish took wing; the breakfast passed,
Wasting good time, but he was free at last.

Free for two hours and more to tingle deep,
Catching a likeness in a line or tint,
The canvas running up in a proud sweep,
Wind-wrinkled at the clews, and white like lint,
The glittering of the blue waves into glint;
Free to attempt it all, the proud ship's pawings,
The sea, the sky-he went to fetch his drawings.

Up to the deck-house top he quickly climbed,
He stooped to find them underneath the boat.
He found them all obliterated, slimed,
Blotted, erased, gone from him line and note.
They were all spoiled: a lump came in his throat,
Being vain of his attempts, and tender skinned
Beneath the skylight watching reefers grinned.

He clambered down, holding the ruined things.
'Bosun,' he called, 'look here, did you do these:
Wipe off my paints and cut them into strings,
And smear them till you can't tell chalk from cheese?
Don't stare, but did you do it? Answer, please.'
The Bosun turned: 'I'll give you a thick ear!
Do it! I didn't. Get to hell from here!

'I touch your stinking daubs? The Dauber's daft.'
A crowd was gathering now to hear the fun;
The reefers tumbled out, the men laid aft,
The Cook blinked, cleaning a mess kid in the sun.
'What's up with Dauber now?' said everyone.
'Someone has spoiled my drawings-look at this!'
'Well, that's a dirty trick, by God, it is!'

'It is,' said Sam, 'a low-down dirty trick,
To spoil a fellow's work in such a way,
And if you catch him, Dauber, punch him sick,
For he deserves it, be he who he may.'
A seaman shook his old head wise and grey.
'It seems to me,' he said, 'who ain't no judge,
Them drawings look much better now they're smudge.'

'Where were they, Dauber? On the deck-house? Where ?'
'Under the long-boat, in a secret place.'
'The blackguard must have seen you put them there.
He is a swine! I tell him to his face:
I didn't think we'd anyone so base.'
'Nor I,' said Dauber. 'There was six weeks' time
Just wasted in these drawings: it's a crime!'

'Well, don't you say we did it,' growled his mates,
'And as for crime, be damned! the things were smears
Best overboard, like you, with shot for weights;
Thank God they're gone, and now go shake your ears.'
The Dauber listened, very near to tears.
'Dauber, if I were you,' said Sam again,
'I'd aft, and see the Captain and complain.'

A sigh came from the assembled seamen there.
Would he be such a fool for their delight
As go to tell the Captain? Would he dare?
And would the thunder roar, the lightning smite?
There was the Captain come to take a sight,
Handling his sextant by the chart-house aft.
The Dauber turned, the seamen thought him daft.

The Captain took his sights-a mate below
Noted the times; they shouted to each other,
The Captain quick with 'Stop,' the answer slow,
Repeating slowly one height then another.
The swooping clipper stumbled through the smother,
The ladder brasses in the sunlight burned,
The Dauber waited till the Captain turned.

There stood the Dauber, humbled to the bone,
Waiting to speak. The Captain let him wait,
Glanced at the course, and called in even tone,

'What is the man there wanting, Mr. Mate ?
The logship clattered on the grating straight,
The reel rolled to the scuppers with a clatter,
The Mate came grim: 'Well, Dauber, what's the matter?'

' Please, Sir, they spoiled my drawings.' 'Who did?' 'They.'
'Who's they?' 'I don't quite know, Sir.' 'Don't quite know, sir?
Then why are you aft to talk about it, hey?
Whom d'you complain of?' 'No one.' 'No one?' 'No, sir.'
'Well, then, go forward till you've found them. Go, Sir.
If you complain of someone, then I'll see.
Now get to hell! and don't come bothering me.'

'But, Sir, they washed them off, and some they cut.
Look here, Sir, how they spoiled them.' 'Never mind.
Go shove your head inside the scuttle butt,
And that will make you cooler. You will find
Nothing like water when you're mad and blind.
Where were the drawings? in your chest, or where?'
'Under the long-boat, Sir; I put them there.'

'Under the long-boat, hey? Now mind your tip.
I'll have the skids kept clear with nothing round them;
The long-boat ain't a store in this here ship.
Lucky for you it wasn't I who found them.
If I had seen them, Dauber, I'd have drowned them.
Now you be warned by this. I tell you plain--
Don't stow your brass-rags under boats again.

'Go forward to your berth.' The Dauber turned.
The listeners down below them winked and smiled,
Knowing how red the Dauber's temples burned,
Having lost the case about his only child.
His work was done to nothing and defiled,
And there was no redress: the Captain's voice
Spoke, and called 'Painter,' making him rejoice.

The Captain and the Mate conversed together.
'Drawings, you tell me, Mister?' 'Yes, sir; views:
Wiped off with turps, I gather that's his blether.
He says they're things he can't afford to lose.
He's Dick, who came to sea in dancing shoes,
And found the dance a bear dance. They were hidden
Under the long-boat's chocks, which I've forbidden.'

'Wiped off with turps?' The Captain sucked his lip.
'Who did it, Mister?' 'Reefers, I suppose;
Them devils do the most pranks in a ship;
The round-house might have done it, Cook or Bose.'
'I can't take notice of it till he knows.
How does he do his work?' 'Well, no offence;
He tries; he does his best. He's got no sense.'

'Painter,' the Captain called; the Dauber came. '
'What's all this talk of drawings? What's the matter?'
'They spoiled my drawings, sir.'' 'Well, who's to blame?
The long-boat's there for no one to get at her;
You broke the rules, and if you choose to scatter
Gear up and down where it's no right to be,
And suffer as result, don't come to me.

'Your place is in the round-house, and your gear
Belongs where you belong. Who spoiled your things?
Find out who spoiled your things and fetch him here.'
'But, sir, they cut the canvas into strings.'
'I want no argument nor questionings.
Go back where you belong and say no more,
And please remember that you're not on shore.'

The Dauber touched his brow and slunk away--
They eyed his going with a bitter eye.
'Dauber,' said Sam, 'what did the Captain say?'
The Dauber drooped his head without reply.
'Go forward, Dauber, and enjoy your cry.'
The Mate limped to the rail; like little feet
Over his head the drumming reef-points beat.

The Dauber reached the berth and entered in,
Much mockery followed after as he went,
And each face seemed to greet him with the grin
Of hounds hot following on a creature spent.
'Aren't you a fool?' each mocking visage meant.
'Who did it, Dauber? What did Captain say?
It is a crime, and there'll be hell to pay.'

He bowed his head, the house was full of smoke;
The Sails was pointing shackes on his chest.
'Lord, Dauber, be a man and take a joke'
He puffed his pipe----' and let the matter rest.
Spit brown, my son, and get a hairy breast;
Get shoulders on you at the crojick braces,
And let this painting business go to blazes.

'What good can painting do to anyone?
I don't say never do it; far from that--
No harm in sometimes painting just for fun.
Keep it for fun, and stick to what you're at.
Your job's to fill your bones up and get fat;
Rib up like Barney's bull, and thick your neck.
Throw paints to hell, boy; you belong on deck.'

'That's right,' said Chips; 'It's down-right good advice.
Painting's no good; what good can painting do
Up on a lower topsail stiff with ice,

With all your little fish-hooks frozen blue?
Painting won't help you at the weather clew,
Nor pass your gaskets for you, nor make sail.
Painting's a balmy job not worth a nail.'

The Dauber did not answer; time was passing.
He pulled his easel out, his paints, his stool.
The wind was dropping, and the sea was glassing
New realms of beauty waited for his rule;
The draught out of the crojick kept him cool.
He sat to paint, alone and melancholy.
'No turning fools,' the Chips said, 'from their folly.'

He dipped his brush and tried to fix a line
And then came peace, and gentle beauty came,
Turning his spirit's water into wine,
Lightening his darkness with a touch of flame:
O, joy of trying for beauty, ever the same,
You never fail, your comforts never end;
O, balm of this world's way; O, perfect friend!

III
They lost the Trades soon after; then came calm,
Light little gusts and rain, which soon increased
To glorious northers shouting out a psalm
At seeing the bright blue water silver fleeced;
Hornwards she rushed, trampling the seas to yeast.
There fell a rain-squall in a blind day's end
When for an hour the Dauber found a friend.

Out of the rain the voices called and passed,
The stay-sails flogged, the tackle yanked and shook.
Inside the harness-room a lantern cast
Light and wild shadows as it ranged its hook.
The watch on deck was gathered in the nook,
They had taken shelter in that secret place,
Wild light gave wild emotions to each face.

One beat the beef-cask, and the others sang
A song that had brought anchors out of seas
In ports where bells of Christians never rang,
Nor any sea mark blazed among the trees.
By forlorn swamps, in ice, by windy keys,
That song had sounded; now it shook the air
From these eight wanderers brought together there.

Under the poop-break, sheltering from the rain,
The Dauber sketched some likeness of the room,
A note to be a prompting to his brain,
A spark to make old memory reillume.
Dauber,' said someone near him in the gloom,
'How goes it, Dauber?' It was reefer Si.

'There's not much use in trying to keep dry.'

They sat upon the sail-room doorway coaming,
The lad held forth like youth, the Dauber listened
To how the boy had had a taste for roaming,
And what the sea is said to be and isn't.
Where the dim lamplight fell the wet deck glistened.
I said the Horn was still some weeks away,
'But tell me, Dauber, where d'you hail from? Eh?'

The rain blew past and let the stars appear;
The seas grew larger as the moonlight grew;
For half an hour the ring of heaven was clear,
Dusty with moonlight, grey rather than blue;
In that great moon the showing stars were few.
The sleepy time-boy's feet passed overhead.
'I come from out past Gloucester,' Dauber said;

'Not far from Pauntley, if you know those parts;
The place is Spital Farm, near Silver Hill,
Above a trap-hatch where a mill-stream starts.
We had the mill once, but we've stopped the mill;
My dad and sister keep the farm on still.
We're only tenants, but we've rented there,
Father and son, for over eighty year.

'Father has worked the farm since grandfer went;
It means the world to him; I can't think why.
They bleed him to the last half-crown for rent,
And this and that have almost milked him dry.
The land's all starved; if he'd put money by,
And corn was up, and rent was down two-thirds. . .
But then they aren't, so what's the use of words.

'Yet still he couldn't bear to see it pass
To strangers, or to think a time would come
When other men than us would mow the grass,
And other names than ours have the home.
Some sorrows come from evil thought, but some
Comes when two men are near, and both are blind
To what is generous in the other's mind.

'I was the only boy, and father thought
I'd farm the Spital after he was dead,
And many a time he took me out and taught
About manures and seed-corn white and red,
And soils and hops, but I'd an empty head;
Harvest or seed, I would not do a turn--
I loathed the farm,I didn't want to learn.

'He did not mind at first, he thought it youth
Feeling the collar, and that I should change.

Then time gave him some inklings of the truth,
And that I loathed the farm, and wished to range.
Truth to a man of fifty's always strange;
It was most strange and terrible to him
That I, his heir, should be the devil's limb.

'Yet still he hoped the Lord might change my mind.
I'd see him bridle-in his wrath and hate,
And almost break my heart he was so kind,
Biting his lips sore with resolve to wait.
And then I'd try awhile; but it was Fate:
I didn't want to learn; the farm to me
Was mire and hopeless work and misery.

'Though there were things I loved about it, too--
The beasts, the apple-trees, and going haying.
And then I tried; but no, it wouldn't do,
The farm was prison, and my thoughts were straying.
And there'd come father, with his grey head, praying,
'O, my dear son, don't let the Spital pass;
It's my old home, boy, where your grandfer was.

''And now you won't learn farming; you don't care
The old home's nought to you. I've tried to teach you;
've begged Almighty God, boy, all I dare,
To use His hand if word of mine won't reach you.
Boy, for your granfer's sake I do beseech you,
Don't let the Spital pass to strangers. Squire
Has said he'd give it you if we require.

''Your mother used to walk here, boy, with me;
It was her favourite walk down to the mill;
And there we'd talk how little death would be,
Knowing our work was going on here still.
You've got the brains, you only want the will--
Don't disappoint your mother and your father.
I'll give you time to travel, if you'd rather.'

'But, no, I'd wander up the brooks to read.
Then sister Jane would start with nagging tongue,
Saying my sin made father's heart to bleed,
And how she feared she'd live to see me hung.
And then she'd read me bits from Dr. Young.
And when we three would sit to supper,
Jane Would fillip dad till dad began again.

''I've been here all my life, boy. I was born
Up in the room above looks on the mead.
I never thought you'd cockle my clean corn,
And leave the old home to a stranger's seed.
Father and I have made here 'thout a weed:
We've give our lives to make that. Eighty years.

And now I go down to the grave in tears.'

'And then I'd get ashamed and take off coat,
And work maybe a week, ploughing and sowing
And then I'd creep away and sail my boat,
Or watch the water when the mill was going.
That's my delight-to be near water flowing,
Dabbling or sailing boats or jumping stanks,
Or finding moorhens' nests along the banks.

'And one day father found a ship I'd built;
He took the cart-whip to me over that,
And I, half mad with pain, and sick with guilt,
Went up and hid in what we called the flat,
A dusty hole given over to the cat.
She kittened there; the kittens had worn paths
Among the cobwebs, dust, and broken laths.

'And putting down my hand between the beams
I felt a leathery thing, and pulled it clear:
A book with white cocoons stuck in the seams.
Where spiders had had nests for many a year.
It was my mother's sketch-book; hid, I fear,
Lest dad should ever see it. Mother's life
Was not her own while she was father's wife.

'There were her drawings dated, pencilled faint.
March was the last one, eighteen eighty-three,
Unfinished that, for tears had smeared the paint.
The rest was landscape, not yet brought to be.
That was a holy afternoon to me;
That book a sacred book; the flat a place
Where I could meet my mother face to face.

'She had found peace of spirit, mother had,
Drawing the landscape from the attic there
Heart-broken, often, after rows with dad,
Hid like a wild thing in a secret lair.
That rotting sketch-book showed me how and where
I, too, could get away; and then I knew
That drawing was the work I longed to do.

Drawing became my life, I drew, I toiled,
And every penny I could get I spent
On paints and artists's matters, which I spoiled
Up in the attic to my heart's content,
Till one day father asked me what I meant;
The time had come, he said, to make an end.
Now it must finish; what did I intend?

Either I took to farming, like his son,
In which case he would teach me, early and late

(provided that my daubing mood was done),
Or I must go; it must be settled straight.
If I refused to farm, there was the gate.
I was to choose, his patience was all gone,
The present state of things could not go on.

'Sister was there; she eyed me while he spoke.
The kitchen clock ran down and struck the hour,
And something told me father's heart was broke,
For all he stood so set and looked so sour.
Jane took a duster, and began to scour
A pewter on the dresser; she was crying.
I stood stock still a long time, not replying.

'Dad waited, then he snorted and turned round.
Well, think of it,-' he said. He left the room,
His boots went Clop along the stony ground
Out to the orchard and the apple-bloom.
A cloud came past the sun and made a gloom;
I swallowed with dry lips, then sister turned.
She was dead white but for her eyes that burned.

''You're breaking father's heart, Joe,' she began;
'It's not as if---? she checked, in too much pain.
'O, Joe, don't help to kill so fine a man;
You're giving him our mother over again.
It's wearing him to death, Joe, heart and brain;
You know what store he sets on leaving this
To (it's too cruel)-to a son of his.

''Yet you go painting all the day. O, Joe,
Couldn't you make an effort? Can't you see
What folly it is of yours? It's not as though
You are a genius or could ever be.
O, Joe, for father's sake, if not for me,
Give up this craze for painting, and be wise
And work with father, where your duty lies.'

''It goes too deep,' I said; 'I loathe the farm;
I couldn't help, even if I'd the mind.
Even if I helped, I'd only do him harm;
Father would see it, if he were not blind.
I was not built to farm, as he would find.
O, Jane, its bitter hard to stand alone
And spoil my father's life or spoil my own.'

''Spoil both', she said, 'the way you're shaping now.
You're only a boy not knowing your own good.
Where will you go, suppose you leave here?
How Do you propose to earn your daily food?
Draw? Daub the pavements? There's a feckless brood
Goes to the devil daily, Joe, in cities

Only from thinking how divine their wit is.

''Clouds are they, without water, carried away.
And you'll be one of them, the way you're going,
Daubing at silly pictures all the day,
And praised by silly fools who're always blowing.
And you choose this when you might go a-sowing,
Casting the good corn into chosen mould
That shall in time bring forth a hundred-fold,'

'So we went on, but in the end it ended.
I felt I'd done a murder; I felt sick.
There's much in human minds cannot be mended,
And that, not I, played dad a cruel trick.
There was one mercy: that it ended quick.
I went to join my mother's brother: he
Lived down the Severn. He was kind to me.

'And there I learned house-painting for a living.
I'd have been happy there, but that I knew
I'd sinned before my father past forgiving,
And that they sat at home, that silent two,
Wearing the fire out and the evening through,
Silent, defeated, broken, in despair,
My plate unset, my name gone, and my chair.

'I saw all that; and sister Jane came white
White as a ghost, with fiery, weeping eyes.
I saw her all day long and half the night,
Bitter as gall, and passionate and wise.
'Joe, you have killed your father: there he lies.
You have done your work-you with our mother's ways.
She said it plain, and then her eyes would blaze.

'And then one day I had a job to do
Down below bridge, by where the docks begin,
And there I saw a clipper towing through,
Up from the sea that morning, entering in.
Raked to the nines she was, lofty and thin,
Her ensign ruffling red, her bunts in pile,
Beauty and strength together, wonder, style.

'She docked close to the gates, and there she lay
Over the water from me, well in sight;
And as I worked I watched her all the day,
Finding her beauty ever fresh delight.
Her house-flag was bright green with strips of white;
High in the sunny air it rose to shake
Above the skysail poles' most splendid rake.

'And when I felt unhappy I would look
Over the river at her; and her pride,

So calm, so quiet, came as a rebuke
To half the passionate pathways which I tried-,
And though the autumn ran its term and died,
And winter fell and cold December came,
She was still splendid there, and still the same.

'Then on a day she sailed; but when she went
My mind was clear on what I had to try:
To see the sea and ships, and what they meant,
That was the thing I longed to do; so I
Drew and worked hard, and studied and put by,
And thought of nothing else but that one end,
But let all else go hang--love, money, friend.

'And now I've shipped as Dauber I've begun.
It was hard work to find a dauber's berth;
I hadn't any friends to find me one,
Only my skill, for what it may be worth;
But I'm at sea now, going about the earth,
And when the ship's paid off, when we return,
I'll join some Paris studio and learn.'

He stopped, the air came moist, Si did not speak;
The Dauber turned his eyes to where he sat,
Pressing the sail-room hinges with his cheek,
His face half covered with a dropping hat.
Huge dewdrops from the stay-sails dropped and spat.
Si did not stir, the Dauber touched his sleeve;
A little birdlike noise came from a sheave.

Si was asleep, sleeping a calm deep sleep,
Still as a warden of the Egyptian dead
In some old haunted temple buried deep
Under the desert sand, sterile and red.
The Dauber shook his arm; Si jumped and said,
'Good yarn, I swear! I say, you have a brain
Was that eight bells that went?' He slept again.

Then waking up, 'I've had a nap,' he cried.
'Was that one bell? What, Dauber, you still here?'
'Si there?' the Mate's voice called. 'Sir,' he replied.
The order made the lad's thick vision clear;
A something in the Mate's voice made him fear.
'Si,' said the Mate, 'I hear you've made a friend--
Dauber, in short. That friendship's got to end.

'You're a young gentleman. Your place aboard
Is with the gentlemen abaft the mast.
You're learning to command; you can't afford
To yam with any man. But there . . . it's past.
You've done it once; let this time be the last.
The Dauber's place is forward. Do it again,

I'll put you bunking forward with the men.

'Dismiss.' Si went, but Sam, beside the Mate,
Timekeeper there, walked with him to the rail
And whispered him the menace of 'You wait'--
Words which have turned full many a reefer pale.
The watch was changed; the watch on deck trimmed sail
Sam, going below, called all the reefers down,
Sat in his bunk and eyed them with a frown.

'Si here,' he said, 'has soiled the half-decks' name
Talking to Dauber-Dauber, the ship's clout.
A reefer takes the Dauber for a flame,
The half-deck take the round-house walking out.
He's soiled the half-deck's honour; now, no doubt,
The Bosun and his mates will come here sneaking,
Asking for smokes, or blocking gangways speaking.

''I'm not a vain man, given to blow or boast;
I'm not a proud man, but I truly feel
That while I've bossed this mess and ruled this roast
I've kept this hooker's half-deck damned genteel.
Si must ask pardon, or be made to squeal.
Down on your knees, dog; them we love we chasten.
Jao, pasea, my son-in English, Hasten .'

Si begged for pardon, meekly kneeling down
Before the reefer's mess assembled grim.
The lamp above them smoked the glass all brown;
Beyond the door the dripping sails were dim.
The Dauber passed the door; none spoke to him.
He sought his berth and slept, or, waking, heard
Rain on the deck-house-rain, no other word.

IV
Out of the air a time of quiet came,
Calm fell upon the heaven like a drouth;
The brass sky watched the brassy water flame.
Drowsed as a snail the clipper loitered south
Slowly, with no white bone across her mouth;
No rushing glory, like a queen made bold,
The Dauber strove to draw her as she rolled.

There the four leaning spires of canvas rose,
Royals and skysails lifting, gently lifting,
White like the brightness that a great fish blows
When billows are at peace and ships are drifting;
With mighty jerks that set the shadows shifting,
The courses tugged their tethers: a blue haze
Drifted like ghosts of flocks come down to graze.

There the great skyline made her perfect round,

Notched now and then by the sea's deeper blue;
A smoke-smutch marked a steamer homeward bound,
The haze wrought all things to intenser hue.
In tingling impotence the Dauber drew
As all men draw keen to the shaken soul
To give a hint that might suggest the whole.

A naked seaman washing a red shirt
Sat at a tub whistling between his teeth;
Complaining blocks quavered like something hurt.
A sailor cut an old boot for a sheath,
The ship bowed to her shadow-ship beneath,
And little splash of spray came at the roll
On to the deck-planks from the scupper-hole.

He watched it, painting patiently, as paints,
With eyes that pierce behind the blue sky's veil,
The Benedictine in a Book of Saints
Watching the passing of the Holy Grail;
The green dish dripping blood, the trump, the hail,
The spears that pass, the memory and the passion,
The beauty moving under this world's fashion.

But as he painted, slowly, man by man,
The seamen gathered near; the Bosun stood
Behind him, jeering; then the Sails began
Sniggering with comment that it was not good.
Chips flicked his sketch with little scraps of wood,
Saying, 'That hit the top-knot,' every time.
Cook mocked, 'My lovely drawings; it's a crime.'

Slowly the men came nearer, till a crowd
Stood at his elbow, muttering as he drew;
The Bosun, turning to them, spoke aloud,
'This is the ship that never got there.
You Look at her here, what Dauber's trying to do.
Look at her! lummy, like a Christmas-tree.
That thing's a ship; he calls this painting. See?'

Seeing the crowd, the Mate came forward; then
Sir, ' said the Bosun, 'come and see the sight !
Here's Dauber makes a circus for the men.
He calls this thing a ship-this hell's delight!'
'Man,' said the Mate, 'you'll never get her right
Daubing like that. Look here!' He took a brush
'Now Dauber, watch; I'll put you to the blush.

'Look here. Look there. Now watch this ship of mine.'
He drew her swiftly from a memory stored.
'God, sir,'' the Bosun said, 'you do her fine!'
'Ay,' said the Mate, 'I do so, by the Lord !
I'll paint a ship with any man aboard.'

They hung about his sketch like beasts at bait.
'There now, I taught him painting,' said the Mate.

When he had gone, the gathered men dispersed;
Yet two or three still lingered to dispute
What errors made the Dauber's work the worst.
They probed his want of knowledge to the root.
' Bei Gott I ' they swore, ' der Dauber cannot do't
He haf no knolich how to put der pense.
Der Mate's is goot. Der Dauber haf no sense.''

'You hear?' the Bosun cried, 'you cannot do it!
'A gospel truth,' the Cook said, 'true as hell!
And wisdom, Dauber, if you only knew it;
A five year boy would do a ship as well.'
'If that's the kind of thing you hope to sell,
God help you,' echoed Chips. 'I tell you true,
The job's beyond you, Dauber; drop it, do.

'Drop it, in God's name drop it, and have done!
You see you cannot do it. Here's the Mate
Paints you to frazzles before everyone;
Paints you a dandy clipper while you wait.
While you, Lord love us, daub. I tell you straight
We've had enough of daubing; drop it; quit.
You cannot paint, so make an end of it.'

'That's sense,' said all; 'you cannot, why pretend.?
'The Dauber rose and put his easel by.
'You've said enough,' he said, 'now let it end.
Who cares how bad my painting may be? I
Mean to go on, and, if I fail, to try.
However much I miss of my intent,
If I have done my best I'll be content.

'You cannot understand that. Let it be.
You cannot understand, nor know, nor share.
This is a matter touching only me;
My sketch may be a daub, for aught I care.
You may be right. But even if you were,
Your mocking should not stop this work of mine;
Rot though it be, its prompting is divine.

'You cannot understand that-you, and you,
And you, you Bosun. You can stand and jeer,
That is the task your spirit fits you to,
That you can understand and hold most dear.
Grin, then, like collars, ear to donkey ear,
But let me daub. Try, you, to understand
Which task will bear the light best on God's hand.'

V

The wester came as steady as the Trades;
Brightly it blew, and still the ship did shoulder
The brilliance of the water's white cockades
Into the milky green of smoky smoulder.
The sky grew bluer and the air grew colder.
Southward she thundered while the westers held,
Proud, with taut bridles, pawing, but compelled.

And still the Dauber strove, though all men mocked,
To draw the splendour of the passing thing,
And deep inside his heart a something locked,
Long pricking in him, now began to sting
A fear of the disasters storm might bring;
His rank as painter would be ended then--
He would keep watch and watch like other men.

And go aloft with them to man the yard
When the great ship was rolling scuppers under,
Burying her snout all round the compass card,
While the green water struck at her and stunned her;
When the lee-rigging slacked, when one long thunder
Boomed from the black to windward, when the sail
Booted and spurred the devil in the gale.

For him to ride on men: that was the time
The Dauber dreaded; then lest the test would come,
When seas, half-frozen, slushed the decks with slime,
And all the air was blind with flying scum;
When the drenched sails were furled, when the fierce hum
In weather riggings died into the roar
Of God's eternal never tamed by shore.

Once in the passage he had worked aloft,
Shifting her suits one summer afternoon,
In the bright Trade wind, when the wind was soft,
Shaking the points, making the tackle croon.
But that was child's play to the future: soon
He would be ordered up when sails and spars
Were flying and going mad among the stars.

He had been scared that first time, daunted, thrilled,
Not by the height so much as by the size,
And then the danger to the man unskilled
In standing on a rope that runs through eyes.
'But in a storm,' he thought, 'the yards will rise
And roll together down, and snap their gear!'
The sweat came cold upon his palms for fear.

Sometimes. in Gloucester he had felt a pang
Swinging below the house-eaves on a stage.
But stages carry rails; here he would hang
Upon a jerking rope in a storm's rage,

Ducked that the sheltering oilskin might assuage
The beating of the storm, clutching the jack,
Beating the sail, and being beaten back.

Drenched, frozen, gasping, blinded, beaten dumb,
High in the night, reeling great blinding arcs
As the ship rolled, his chappy fingers numb,
The deck below a narrow blur of marks,
The sea a welter of whiteness shot with sparks,
Now snapping up in bursts, now dying away,
Salting the horizontal snow with spray.

A hundred and fifty feet above the deck,
And there, while the ship rolls, boldly to sit
Upon a foot-rope moving, jerk and check,
While half a dozen seamen work on it;
Held by one hand, straining, by strength and wit
To toss a gasket's coil around the yard,
How could he compass that when blowing hard?

And if he failed in any least degree,
Or faltered for an instant, or showed slack,
He might go drown himself within the sea,
And add a bubble to the clipper's track.
He had signed his name, there was no turning back,
No pardon for default-this must be done.
One iron rule at sea binds everyone.

Till now he had been treated with contempt
As neither man nor thing, a creature borne
On the ship's articles, but left exempt
From all the seamen's life except their scorn.
But he would rank as seaman off the Horn,
Work as a seaman, and be kept or cast
By standards set for men before the mast.

Even now they shifted suits of sails; they bent
The storm-suit ready for the expected time;
The mighty wester that the Plate had lent
Had brought them far into the wintry clime.
At dawn, out of the shadow, there was rime,
The dim Magellan Clouds were frosty clear,
The wind had edge, the testing-time was near.

And then he wondered if the tales were lies
Told by old hands to terrify the new,
For, since the ship left England, only twice
Had there been need to start a sheet or clew,
Then only royals, for an hour or two,
And no seas broke aboard, nor was it cold.
What were these gales of which the stories told?

The thought went by. He had heard the Bosun tell
Too often, and too fiercely, not to know
That being off the Horn in June is Hell:
Hell of continual toil in ice and snow,
Frostbitten hell in which the westers blow
Shrieking for days on end, in which the seas
Gulf the starved seamen till their marrows freeze.

Such was the weather he might look to find,
Such was the work expected: there remained
Firmly to set his teeth, resolve his mind,
And be the first, however much it pained,
And bring his honour round the Horn unstained,
And win his mates' respect; and thence, untainted,
Be ranked as man however much he painted.

He drew deep breath; a gantline swayed aloft
A lower topsail, hard with rope and leather,
Such as men's frozen fingers fight with oft
Below the Ramirez in Cape Hom weather.
The arms upon the yard hove all together,
Lighting the head along; a thought occurred
Within the painter's brain like a bright bird:

That this, and so much like it, of man's toil,
Compassed by naked manhood in strange places,
Was all heroic, but outside the coil
Within which modem art gleams or grimaces;
That if he drew that line of sailor's faces
Sweating the sail, their passionate play and change,
It would be new, and wonderful, and strange.

That that was what his work meant; it would be
A training in new vision-a revealing
Of passionate men in battle with the sea,
High on an unseen stage, shaking and reeling;
And men through him would understand their feeling,
Their might, their misery, their tragic power,
And all by suffering pain a little hour;

High on the yard with them, feeling their pain,
Battling with them; and it had not been done.
He was a door to new worlds in the brain,
A window opening letting in the sun,
A voice saying, 'Thus is bread fetched and ports won,
And life lived out at sea where men exist
Solely by man's strong brain and sturdy wrist.'

So he decided, as he cleaned his brasses,
Hearing without, aloft, the curse, the shout
Where the taut gantline passes and repasses,
Heaving new topsails to be lighted out.

It was most proud, however self might doubt,
To share man's tragic toll and paint it true.
He took the offered Fate: this he would do.

That night the snow fell between six and seven,
A little feathery fall so light, so dry--
An aimless dust out of a confused heaven,
Upon an air no steadier than a sigh;
The powder dusted down and wandered by
So purposeless, so many, and so cold,
Then died, and the wind ceased and the ship rolled.

Rolled till she clanged-rolled till the brain was tired,
Marking the acme of the heaves, the pause
While the sea-beauty rested and respired,
Drinking great draughts of roller at her hawse.
Flutters of snow came aimless upon flaws.
Lock up your paints,' the Mate said, speaking light:
'This is the Horn; you'll join my watch to-night!'

VI
All through the windless night the clipper rolled
In a great swell with oily gradual heaves
Which rolled her down until her time-bells tolled,
Clang, and the weltering water moaned like beeves.
The thundering rattle of slatting shook the sheaves,
Startles of water made the swing ports gush,
The sea was moaning and sighing and saying 'Hush!'

It was all black and starless. Peering down
Into the water, trying to pierce the gloom,
One saw a dim, smooth, oily glitter of brown
Heaving and dying away and leaving room
For yet another. Like the march of doom
Came those great powers of marching silences;
Then foe came down. dead-cold, and hid the seas.

They set the Dauber to the foghorn. There
He stood upon the poop, making to sound
Out of the pump the sailor's nasal blare,
Listening lest ice should make the note resound.
She bayed there like a solitary hound
Lost in a covert; all the watch she bayed.
The fog, come closelier down, no answer made.

Denser it grew, until the ship was lost.
The elemental hid her; she was merged
In mufflings of dark death, like a man's ghost,
New to the change of death, yet thither urged.
Then from the hidden waters something surged
Mournful, despairing, great, greater than speech,
A noise like one slow wave on a still beach.

Mournful, and then again mournful, and still
Out of the night that mighty voice arose;
The Dauber at his foghorn felt the thrill.
Who rode that desolate sea? What forms were those?
Mournful, from things defeated, in the throes
Of memory of some conquered hunting-ground,
Out of the night of death arose the sound.

'Whales!' said the Mate. They stayed there all night long
Answering the horn. Out of the night they spoke,
Defeated creatures who had suffered wrong,
But were still noble underneath the stroke.
They filled the darkness when the Dauber woke;
The men came peering to the rail to hear,
And the sea sighed, and the fog rose up sheer.

A wall of nothing at the world's last edge,
Where no life came except defeated life.
The Dauber felt shut in within a hedge,
Behind which form was hidden and thought was rife,
And that a blinding flash, a thrust, a knife
Would sweep the hedge away and make all plain,
Brilliant beyond all words, blinding the brain.

So the night passed, but then no morning broke
Only a something showed that night was dead.
A sea-bird, cackling like a devil, spoke,
And the fog drew away and hung like lead.
Like mighty cliffs it shaped, sullen and red;
Like glowering gods at watch it did appear,
And sometimes drew away, and then drew near.

Like islands, and like chasms, and like hell,
But always mighty and red, gloomy and ruddy,
Shutting the visible sea in like a well;
Slow heaving in vast ripples, blank and muddy,
Where the sun should have risen it streaked bloody.
The day was stillborn; all the sea-fowl scattering
Splashed the still water, mewing, hovering, clattering.

Then Polar snow came down little and light,
Till all the sky was hidden by the small,
Most multitudinous drift of dirty white
Tumbling and wavering down and covering all--
Covering the sky, the sea, the clipper tall,
Furring the ropes with white, casing the mast,
Coming on no known air, but blowing past.

And all the air seemed full of gradual moan,
As though in those cloud-chasms the horns were blowing
The mort for gods cast out and overthrown,

Or for the eyeless sun plucked out and going.
Slow the low gradual moan came in the snowing;
The Dauber felt the prelude had begun.
The snowstorm fluttered by; he saw the sun

Show and pass by, gleam from one towering prison
Into another, vaster and more grim,
Which in dull crags of darkness had arisen
To muffle-to a final door on him.
The gods upon the dull crags lowered dim,
The pigeons chattered, quarrelling in the track.
In the south-west the dimness dulled to black.

Then came the cry of 'Call all hands on deck!''
The Dauber knew its meaning; it was come:
Cape Horn, that tramples beauty into wreck,
And crumples steel and smites the strong man dumb.
Down clattered flying kites and staysails: some
Sang out in quick, high calls: the fair-leads skirled,
And from the south-west came the end of the world.

'Caught in her ball-dress,' said the Bosun, hauling;
'Lee-ay, lee-ay!' quick, high, come the men's call;
It was all wallop of sails and startled calling.
'Let fly!' 'Let got' 'Clew up!' and 'Let go All'
'Now up and make them fast!' 'Here, give us a haul'
'Now up and stow them! Quick! By God ! we're done!'
The blackness crunched all memory of the sun.

'Up!' said the Mate. 'Mizen top-gallants. Hurry!''
The Dauber ran, the others ran, the sails
Slatted and shook; out of the black a flurry
Whirled in fine lines, tattering the edge to trails.
Painting and art and England were old tales
old in some other life to that pale man,
Who struggled with white fear and gulped and ran.

He struck a ringbolt in his haste and fell--
Rose, sick with pain, half-lamed in his left knee;
He reached the shrouds where clambering men pell-mell
Hustled each other up and cursed him; he
Hurried aloft with them: then from the sea
Came a cold, sudden breath that made the hair
Stiff on the neck, as though Death whispered there.

A man below him punched him in the side.
'Get up, you Dauber, or let me get past.'
He saw the belly of the skysail skied,
Gulped, and clutched tight, and tried to go more fast,
Sometimes he missed his ratline and was grassed,
Scraped his shin raw against the rigid line dine.
The clamberers reached the futtock-shrouds' incline.

Cursing they came; one, kicking out behind,
Kicked Dauber in the mouth, and one below
Punched at his calves; the futtock-shrouds inclined
It was a perilous path for one to go.
'Up, Dauber, up!'' A curse followed a blow.
He reached the top and gasped, then on, then on.
And one voice yelled ' Let go!' and one ' All gone!'

Fierce clamberers, some in oilskins, some in rags,
Hustling and hurrying up, up the steep stairs.
Before the windless sails were blown to flags,
And whirled like dirty birds athwart great airs,
Ten men in all, to get this mast of theirs
Snugged to the gale in time. 'Up! Damn you, run!'
The mizen topmast head was safely won.

'Lay out!' the Bosun yelled. The Dauber laid
Out on the yard, gripping the yard and feeling
Sick at the mighty space of air displayed
Below his feet, where mewing birds were wheeling.
A giddy fear was on him; be was reeling.
He bit his lip half through, clutching the jack.
A cold sweat glued the shirt upon his back.

The yard was shaking, for a brace was loose.
He felt that he would fall; he clutched, he bent,
Clammy with natural terror to the shoes
While idiotic promptings came and went.
Snow fluttered on a wind-flaw and was spent;
He saw the water darken. Someone yelled,
'Frap it; don't stay to fur I! Hold on!' He held.

Darkness came down-half darkness-in a whirl;
The sky went out, the waters disappeared.
He felt a shocking pressure of blowing hurl
The ship upon her side. The darkness speared
At her with wind; she staggered, she careered,
Then down she lay. The Dauber felt her go;
He saw his yard tilt downwards. Then the snow

Whirled all about-dense, multitudinous, cold--
Mixed with the wind's one devilish thrust and shriek,
Which whiffled out men's tears, deafened, took hold,
Flattening the flying drift against the cheek.
The yards buckled and bent, man could not speak.
The ship lay on her broadside; the wind's sound
Had devilish malice at having got her downed

How long the gale had blown he could not tell,
Only the world bad changed, his life had died.
A moment now was everlasting hell.

Nature an onslaught from the weather side,
A withering rush of death, a frost that cried,
Shrieked, till he withered at the heart; a hail
Plastered his oilskins with an icy mail.

'Cut!' yelled his mate. He looked-the sail was gone,
Blown into rags in the first furious squall;
The tatters drummed the devil's tattoo. On
The buckling yard a block thumped like a mall.
The ship lay--the sea smote her, the wind's bawl
Came, 'loo, loo, loo!' The devil cried his hounds
On to the poor spent stag strayed in his bounds.

'Cut! Ease her!' yelled his mate; the Dauber heard.
His mate wormed up the tilted yard and slashed,
A rag of canvas skimmed like a darting bird.
The snow whirled, the ship bowed to it, the gear lashed,
The sea-tops were cut off and flung down smashed;
Tatters of shouts were flung, the rags of yells--
And clang, clang, clang, below beat the two bells.

'O God!' the Dauber moaned. A roaring rang,
Blasting the royals like a cannonade;
The backstays parted with a crackling clang,
The upper spars were snapped like twigs decayed--
Snapped at their heels, their jagged splinters splayed,
Like white and ghastly hairs erect with fear.
The Mate yelled, 'Gone, by God, and pitched them clear !'

' Up! ' yelled the Bosun; ' up and clear the wreck!
'The Dauber followed where he led: below
He caught one giddy glimpsing of the deck
Filled with white water, as though heaped with snow.
He saw the streamers of the rigging blow
Straight out like pennons from the splintered mast,
Then, all sense dimmed, all was an icy blast

Roaring from nether hell and filled with ice,
Roaring and crashing on the jerking stage,
An utter bridle given to utter vice,
Limitless power mad with endless rage
Withering the soul; a minute seemed an age.
He clutched and hacked at ropes, at rags of sail.
Thinking that comfort was a fairy-tale.

Told long ago-long, long ago---long since
Heard of in other lives-imagined, dreamed--
There where the basest beggar was a prince
To him in torment where the tempest screamed,
Comfort and warmth and ease no longer seemed
Things that a man could know: soul, body, brain,
Knew nothing but the wind, the cold, the pain.

'Leave that!' the Bosun shouted; 'Crojick save!'
The splitting crojick, not yet gone to rags,
Thundered below, beating till something gave,
Bellying between its buntlines into bags.
Some birds were blown past, shrieking: dark, like shags,
Their backs seemed, looking down. 'Leu, leu!' they cried.
The ship lay, the seas thumped her; she had died.

They reached the crojick yard, which buckled, buckled
Like a thin whalebone to the topsail's strain.
They laid upon the yard and heaved and knuckled,
Pounding the sail, which jangled and leapt again.
It was quite hard with ice, its rope like chain,
Its strength like seven devils; it shook the mast.
They cursed and toiled and froze: a long time passed.

Two hours passed, then a dim lightening came.
Those frozen ones upon the yard could see
The mainsail and the foresail still the same,
Still battling with the hands and blowing free,
Rags tattered where the staysails used to be.
The lower topsails stood; the ship's lee deck
Seethed with four feet of water filled with wreck.

An hour more went by; the Dauber lost
All sense of hands and feet, all sense of all
But of a wind that cut him to the ghost,
And of a frozen fold he had to haul,
Of heavens that fell and never ceased to fall,
And ran in smoky snatches along the sea,
Leaping from crest to wave-crest, yelling. He

Lost sense of time; no bells went, but he felt
Ages go over him. At last, at last
They frapped the cringled crojick's icy pelt;
In frozen bulge and bunt they made it fast.
Then, scarcely live, they laid in to the mast.
The Captain's speaking trumpet gave a blare,
'Make fast the topsail, Mister, while you're there.'

Some seamen cursed, but up they had to go-
Up to the topsail yard to spend an hour
Stowing a topsail in a blinding snow,
Which made the strongest man among them cower.
More men came up, the fresh hands gave them power,
They stowed the sail; then with a rattle of chain
One half the crojick burst its bonds again.

They stowed the sail, frapping it round with rope,
Leaving no surface for the wind, no fold,
Then down the weather shrouds, half dead, they grope;

That struggle with the sail had made them old.
hey wondered if the crojick furl would hold.
'Lucky,' said one, 'it didn't spring the spar.'
'Lucky!' the Bosun said, 'Lucky! We are!'

She came within two shakes of turning top
Or stripping all her shroud-screws, that first quiff.
'Now fish those wash-deck buckets out of the slop.
Here's Dauber says he doesn't like Cape Stiff.
This isn't wind, man, this is only a whiff.
Hold on, all hands, hold on!' a sea, half seen,
Paused, mounted, burst, and filled the main-deck green.

The Dauber felt a mountain of water fall.
It covered him deep, deep, he felt it fill,
Over his head, the deck, the fife-rails, all,
Quieting the ship, she trembled and lay still.
Then with a rush and shatter and clanging shrill
Over she went; he saw the water cream
Over the bitts; he saw the half-deck stream.

Then in the rush he swirled, over she went;
Her lee-rail dipped, he Struck, and something gave;
His legs went through a port as the roll spent;
She paused, then rolled, and back the water drave.
He drifted with it as a part of the wave,
Drowning, half-stunned, exhausted, partly frozen,
He struck the booby hatchway; then the Bosun

Leaped, seeing his chance, before the next sea burst,
And caught him as fie drifted, seized him, held,
Up-ended him against the bitts, and Cursed.
'This ain't the George's Swimming Baths,' lie yelled;
'Keep on your feet! ' Another grey-back felled
The two together, and the Bose, half-blind,
Spat: 'One's a joke,' lie cursed, 'but two's unkind.'

'Now, damn it, Dauber!' said the Mate. 'Look out,
Or you'll be over the side!' The water freed;
Each clanging freeing-port became a spout.
The men cleared tip the decks as there was need.
The Dauber's head was cut, he felt it bleed
Into his oilskins as he Clutched and coiled.
Water and sky were devil's brews which boiled,

Boiled, shrieked, and glowered-, but the ship was saved.
Snugged safely down, though fourteen sails were split.
Out of the dark a fiercer fury raved.
The grey-backs died and mounted, each crest lit
With a white toppling gleam that hissed from it
And slid, or leaped, or ran with whirls of cloud,
Mad with inhuman life that shrieked aloud.

The watch was called; Dauber might go below.
'Splice the main brace! ' the Mate called. All laid aft
To get a gulp of momentary glow
As some reward for having saved the craft.
The steward ladled mugs, from which each quaff'd
Whisky, with water, Sugar, and lime-- juice hot,
A quarter of a pint each made the tot.

Beside the lamp-room door the stew stood
Ladling it out, and each man came in turn,
Tipped his sou'-wester, drank it, grunted 'Good!
And shambled forward, letting it slowly burn:
When all were gone the Dauber lagged astern,
Torn by his frozen body 's lust for heat,
The liquor's pleasant smell, so warm so sweet,

And by a promise long since made at home
Never to taste strong liquor. Now he knew
The worth of liquor; now lie wanted some.
His frozen body urged him to the brew;
Yet it seemed wrong, an evil thing to do
To break- that promise. ' Dauber,' said the Mate,
'Drink, and turn in, man; why the hell d'ye wait?'

'Please, sir, I'm temperance.' 'Temperance are you, hey?
That's all the more for me! So you're for slops?
I thought you'd had enough slops for to-day.
Go to your bunk and ease her when she drops.
And-damme, steward! you brew with too much hops!
Stir up the sugar, man!-and tell your girl
How kind the Mate was teaching you to furl.'

Then the Mate drank the remnants, six men's share
And ramped into his cabin, where he stripped
And danced unclad, and was uproarious there.
In waltzes with the cabin cat he tripped.
Singing in tenor clear that he was pipped--
That 'he who strove the tempest to disarm,
Must never first embrail the lee yard-arm.'

And that his name was Ginger. Dauber crept
Back to the round-house, gripping by the rail.
The wind howled by; the passionate water leapt;
The night was all one roaring with the gale.
Then at the door he stopped, uttering a wail;
His hands were perished numb and blue as veins,
He could not turn the knob for both the Spains.

A hand came shuffling aft, dodging the seas,
Singing 'her nut-brown hair' between his teeth;
Taking the ocean's tumult at his case

Even when the wash about his thighs did seethe.
His soul was happy in its happy sheath;
'What, Dauber, won't it open? Fingers cold?
You'll talk of this time, Dauber, when you're old.'

He flung the door half open, and a sea
Washed them both in, over the splashboard, down;
'You silly, salt miscarriage!' sputtered he.
'Dauber, pull out the plug before we drown!
That's spoiled my laces and my velvet gown.
Where is the plug?' Groping in pitch dark water,
He sang between his teeth 'The Farmer's Daughter.'

It was pitch dark within there; at each roll
The chests slid to the slant; the water rushed,
Making full many a clanging tin pan bowl
Into the black below-bunks as it gushed.
The dog-tired men slept through it; they were hushed.
The water drained, and then with matches damp
The man struck heads off till he lit the lamp.

'Thank you,' the Dauber said; the seaman grinned.
'This is your first foul weather?' 'Yes,' ' I thought
Up on the yard you hadn't seen much wind.
Them's rotten sea-boots, Dauber, that you brought.
Now I must cut on deck before I'm caught.'
He went; the lamp-flame smoked; he slammed the door;
A film of water loitered across the floor.

The Dauber watched it come and watched it go;
He had had revelation of the lies
Cloaking the truth men never choose to know;
He could bear witness now and cleanse their eyes.
He had beheld in suffering; he was wise;
This was the sea, this searcher of the soul--
This never-dying shriek fresh from the Pole.

He shook with cold; his hands could not undo
His oilskin buttons, so he shook and sat,
Watching his dirty fingers, dirty blue,
Hearing without the hammering tackle slat,
Within, the drops from dripping clothes went pat,
Running in little patters, gentle, sweet,
And 'Ai, ai!' went the wind, and the seas beat.

His bunk was sopping wet; he clambered in,
None of his clothes were dry; his fear recurred.
Cramps bunched the muscles underneath his skin.
The great ship rolled until the lamp was blurred.
He took his Bible and tried to read a word;
Trembled at going aloft again, and then
Resolved to fight it out and show it to men.

Faces recurred, fierce memories of the yard,
The frozen sail, the savage eyes, the jests,
The oaths of one great seaman, syphilis-scarred,
The tug of leeches jammed beneath their chests,
The buntlines bellying bunts out into breasts.
The deck so desolate-grey, the sky so wild,
He fell asleep, and slept like a young child.

But not for long; the cold awoke him soon,
The hot-ache and the skin-cracks and the cramp,
The seas thundering without, the gale's wild tune,
The sopping misery of the blankets damp.
A speaking-trumpet roared; a sea-boot's stamp
Clogged at the door. A man entered to shout:
'All hands on deck! Arouse here! Tumble out!'

The caller raised the lamp; his oilskins clicked
As the thin ice upon them cracked and fell.
'Rouse out!' he said. 'This lamp is frozen wick'd.
Rouse out!' His accent deepened to a yell.
'We're among ice; it's blowing up like hell.
We're going to hand both topsails. Time, I guess,
We're sheeted up. Rouse out! Don't stay to dress!'

'Is it cold on deck?' said Dauber. 'Is it cold?'
'We're sheeted up, I tell you, inches thick!'
The fo'c'sle's like a wedding-cake, I'm told.
Now tumble out, my sons; on deck here, quick!
Rouse Out, away, and come and climb the stick.
I'm going to call the half-deck. Bosun! Hey!
Both topsails coming in. Heave out! Away!'

He went; the Dauber tumbled from his bunk,
Clutching the side. He heard the wind go past,
Making the great ship wallow as if drunk.
There was a shocking tumult up the mast.
'This is the end,' he muttered, 'come at last!
I've got to go aloft, facing this cold.
I can't. I can't. I'll never keep my hold.

'I cannot face the topsail yard again.
I never guessed what misery it would be.'
The cramps and hot-ache made him sick with pain.
The ship stopped suddenly from a devilish sea,
Then, with a triumph of wash, a rush of glee,
The door burst in, and in the water rolled,
Filling the lower bunks, black, creaming, cold.

The lamp sucked out. 'Wash!' went the water back,
Then in again, flooding; the Bosun swore.
'You useless thing! You Dauber! You lee slack!

Get out, you heekapoota! Shut the door!
You coo-ilyaira, what are you waiting for?
Out of my way, you thing-you useless thing!'
He slammed the door indignant, clanging the ring.

And then he lit the lamp, drowned to the waist;
'Here's a fine house! Get at the scupper-holes'--
He bent against it as the water raced'--
And pull them out to leeward when she rolls.
They say some kinds of landsmen don't have souls.
I well believe. A Port Mahon baboon
Would make more soul than you got with a spoon.'

Down in the icy water Dauber groped
To find the plug; the racing water sluiced
Over his head and shoulders as she sloped.
Without, judged by the sound, all hell was loosed.
He felt cold Death about him tightly noosed.
That Death was better than the misery there
Iced on the quaking foothold high in air.

And then the thought came: 'I'm a failure.
All My life has been a failure. They were right.
It will not matter if I go and fall;
I should be free then from this hell's delight.
I'll never paint. Best let it end to-night.
I'll slip over the side. I've tried and failed.'
So in the ice-cold in the night he quailed.

Death would be better, death, than this long hell
Of mockery and surrender and dismay
This long defeat of doing nothing well,
Playing the part too high for him to play.
'O Death! who hides the sorry thing away,
Take me; I've failed. I cannot play these cards.
There came a thundering from the topsail yards.

And then he bit his lips, clenching his mind,
And staggered out to muster, beating back
The coward frozen self of him that whined.
Come what cards might he meant to play the pack.
'Ai!' screamed the wind; the topsail sheet went clack;
Ice filled the air with spikes; the grey-backs burst.
'Here's Dauber,' said the Mate, 'on deck the first.

'Why, holy sailor, Dauber, you're a man!
I took you for a soldier. Up now, come!'
Up on the yards already they began
That battle with a gale which strikes men dumb.
The leaping topsail thundered like a drum.
The frozen snow beat in the face like shots.
The wind spun whipping wave-crests into clots.

So up upon the topsail yard again,
In the great tempest's fiercest hour, began
Probation to the Dauber's soul, of pain
Which crowds a century's torment in a span.
For the next month the ocean taught this man,
And he, in that month's torment, while she wested,
Was never warm nor dry, nor full nor rested

But still it blew, or, if it lulled, it rose
Within the hour and blew again; and still
The water as it burst aboard her froze.
The wind blew off an ice-field, raw and chill,
Daunting man's body, tampering with his will;
But after thirty days a ghostly sun
Gave sickly promise that the storms were done.

VII
A great grey sea was running up the sky,
Desolate birds flew past; their mewings came
As that lone water's spiritual cry,
Its forlorn voice, its essence, its soul's name.
The ship limped in the water as if lame.
Then in the forenoon watch to a great shout
More sail was made, the reefs were shaken out.

A slant came from the south; the singers stood
Clapped to the halliards, hauling to a tune,
Old as the sea, a fillip to the blood.
The upper topsail rose like a balloon.
'So long, Cape Stiff. In Valparaiso soon,'
Said one to other, as the ship lay over,
Making her course again-again a rover.

Slowly the sea went down as the wind fell.
Clear rang the songs, 'Hurrah! Cape Horn is bet!'
The combless seas were lumping into swell;
The leaking fo'c'sles were no longer wet.
More sail was made; the watch on deck was set
To cleaning up the ruin broken bare
Below, aloft, about her, everywhere.

The Dauber, scrubbing out the roundhouse, found
Old pantiles pulped among the mouldy gear,
Washed underneath the bunks and long since drowned
During the agony of the Cape Horn year.
He sang in scrubbing, for he had done with fear--
Fronted the worst and looked it in the face;
He had got manhood at the testing-place.

Singing he scrubbed, passing his watch below,
Making the round-house fair; the Bosun watched,

Bringing his knitting slowly to the toe.
Sails stretched a mizen skysail which he patched;
They thought the Dauber was a bad egg hatched.
'Daubs,' said the Bosun cheerly 'can you knit?
I've made a Barney 's bull of this last bit.'

Then, while the Dauber counted, Bosun took
Some marline from his pocket. 'Here,' he said,
'You want to know square sennit? So fash. Look!
Eight foxes take, and stop the ends with thread.
I've known an engineer would give his head
To know square sennit.' As the Bose began,
The Dauber felt promoted into man.

It was his warrant that he had not failed--
That the most hard part in his difficult climb
Had not been past attainment; it was scaled:
Safe footing showed above the slippery slime.
He had emerged out of the iron time,
And knew that he could compass his life's scheme;
He had the power sufficient to his dream.

Then dinner came, and now the sky was blue.
The ship was standing north, the Horn was rounded;
She made a thundering as she weltered through.
The mighty grey-backs glittered as she bounded.
More sail was piled upon her; she was hounded
North, while the wind came; like a stag she ran
Over grey hills and hollows of seas wan.

She had a white bone in her mouth: she sped;
Those in the round-house watched her as they ate
Their meal of pork-fat fried with broken bread.
'Good old!' they cried. 'She's off; she's gathering gait !'
Her track was whitening like a Lammas spate.
'Good old!' they cried. 'Oh, give her cloth ! Hurray!
For three weeks more to Valparaiso Bay!

'She smells old Vallipo,' the Bosun cried.
'We'll be inside the tier in three weeks more,
Lying at double-moorings where they ride
Off of the market, half a mile from shore,
And bumboat pan, my sons, and figs galore,
And girls in black mantillas fit to make a
Poor seaman frantic when they dance the cueca.'

Eight bells were made, the watch was changed, and now
The Mate spoke to the Dauber: 'This is better.
We'll soon be getting mudhooks over the bow.
She'll make her passage still if this'll let her.
Oh run, you drogher! Dip your fo'c'sle wetter.
Well, Dauber, this is better than Cape Horn.

Them topsails made you wish you'd not been born.'

'Yes, sir,' the Dauber said. 'Now,' said the Mate,
'We've got to smart her up. Them Cape Horn seas
Have made her paint-work like a rusty grate.
Oh, didn't them topsails make your fishhooks freeze?
A topsail don't pay heed to 'Won't you, please?'
Well, you have seen Cape Horn, my son; you've learned,
You've dipped your hand and had your fingers burned.

'And now you'll stow that folly, trying to paint.
You've had your lesson; you're a sailor now.
You come on board a female ripe to faint.
All sorts of slush you'd learned, the Lord knows how.
Cape Horn has sent you wisdom over the bow
If you've got sense to take it. You're a sailor.
My God! before you were a woman's tailor.

'So throw your paints to blazes and have done.
Words can't describe the silly things you did
Sitting before your easel in the sun,
With all your colours on the paint-box lid.
I blushed for you . . . and then the daubs you hid.
My God! you'll have more sense now, eh? You've quit?'
'No, sir.' 'You've not?' 'No, sir.' 'God give you wit.

'I thought you'd come to wisdom.' Thus they talked,
While the great clipper took her bit and rushed
Like a skin-glistening stallion not yet baulked,
Till fire-bright water at her swing ports gushed;
Poising and bowing down her fore-foot crushed
Bubble on glittering bubble; on she went
The Dauber watched her, wondering what it meant.

To come, after long months, at rosy dawn,
Into the placid blue of some great bay.
Treading the quiet waters like a fawn
Ere yet the morning haze was blown away.
A rose-flushed figure putting by the grey,
And anchoring there before the city smoke
Rose, or the church-bells rang, or men awoke.

And then, in the first light, to see grow clear
That long-expected haven filled with strangers--
Alive with men and women; see and hear
Its clattering market and its money-changers;
And hear the surf beat, and be free from dangers,
And watch the crinkled ocean blue with calm
Drowsing beneath the Trade, beneath the palm.

Hungry for that he worked; the hour went by,
And still the wind grew, still the clipper strode,

And now a darkness hid the western sky,
And sprays came flicking off at the wind's goad.
She stumbled now, feeling her sail a load.
The Mate gazed hard to windward, eyed his sail,
And said the Horn was going to flick her tail.

Boldly he kept it on her till she staggered,
But still the wind increased; it grew, it grew,
Darkening the sky, making the water haggard;
Full of small snow the mighty wester blew.
More fun for little fish-hooks,' sighed the crew.
They eyed the taut topgallants stiff like steel;
A second hand was ordered to the wheel.

The Captain eyed her aft, sucking his lip,
Feeling the sail too much, but yet refraining
From putting hobbles on the leaping ship,
The glad sea-shattering stallion, halter-straining,
Wing-musical, uproarious, and complaining;
But, in a gust, he cocked his finger, so:
'You'd better take them off, before they go.'

All saw. They ran at once without the word
'Lee-ay! Lee-ay!' Loud rang the clewline cries;
Sam in his bunk within the half-deck heard,
Stirred in his sleep, and rubbed his drowsy eyes.
'There go the lower to'gallants.' Against the skies
Rose the thin bellying strips of leaping sail.
The Dauber was the first man over the rail.

Three to a mast they ran; it was a race.
'God!' said the Mate; 'that Dauber, he can go.'
He watched the runners with an upturned face
Over the futtocks, struggling heel to toe,
Up to the topmast cross-trees into the blow
Where the three sails were leaping. 'Dauber wins!'
The yards were reached, and now the race begins.

Which three will furI their sail first and come down?
Out to the yard-arm for the leech goes one,
His halt blown flagwise from a hatless crown,
His hands at work like fever to be done.
Out of the gale a fiercer fury spun.
The three sails leaped together, yanking high,
Like talons darting up to clutch the sky.

The Dauber on the fore-topgallant yard
Out at the weather yard-arm was the first
To lay his hand upon the buntline-barred
Topgallant yanking to the wester's burst;
He craned to catch the leech-, his comrades cursed;
One at the buntlines, one with oaths observed,

'The eye of the outer jib-stay isn't served.'

'No,' said the Dauber. 'No,' the man replied.
They heaved, stowing the sail, not looking round,
Panting, but full of life and eager-eyed;
The gale roared at them with its iron sound.
'That's you,' the Dauber said. His gasket wound
Swift round the yard, binding the sail in bands-,
There came a gust, the sail leaped from his hands,

So that he saw it high above him, grey,
And there his mate was failing; quick he clutched
An arm in oilskins swiftly snatched away.
A voice said 'Christ!' a quick shape stooped and touched,
Chain struck his hands, ropes shot, the sky was smutched
With vast black fires that ran, that fell, that furled,
And then he saw the mast, the small snow hurled,

The fore-topgallant yard far, far aloft,
And blankness settling on him and great pain;
And snow beneath his fingers wet and soft,
And topsail sheet-blocks shaking at the chain.
He knew it was he who had fallen; then his brain
Swirled in a circle while he watched the sky.
Infinite multitudes of snow blew by.

'I thought it was Tom who fell,' his brain's voice said.
'Down on the bloody deck!' the Captain screamed.
The multitudinous little snow-flakes sped.
His pain was real enough, but all else seemed..
Si with a bucket ran, the water gleamed
Tilting upon him; others came, the Mate . . .
They knelt with eager eyes like things that wait

For other things to come. He saw them there.
'It will go on,' he murmured, watching Si.
Colours and sounds seemed mixing in the air,
The pain was stunning him, and the wind went by.
'More water,' said the Mate. 'Here, Bosun, try.
Ask if he's got a message. Hell, he's gone!
Here, Dauber, paints.' He said, 'It will go on.'

Not knowing his meaning rightly, but he spoke
With the intenseness of a fading soul
Whose share of Nature's fire turns to smoke,
Whose hand on Nature's wheel loses control.
The eager faces glowered red like coal.
They glowed, the great storm glowed, the sails, the mast.
'It will go on,' he cried aloud, and passed.

Those from the yard came down to telll the tale.
'He almost had me off, said Tom. 'He slipped.

There come one hell of a jump-like from the sail. . .
He clutched at me and almost had me pipped.
He caught my 'ris'band, but the oilskin ripped.
It tore clean off. Look here. I was near gone.
I made a grab to catch him; so did John.

'I caught his arm. My God! I was near done.
He almost had me over; it was near.
He hit the ropes and grabbed at every one.'
'Well,' said the Mate, 'we cannot leave him here.
Run, Si, and get the half-deck table clear.
We'll lay him there. Catch hold there, you, and you,
He's dead, poor son; there's nothing more to do.'

Night fell, and all night long the Dauber lay
Covered upon the table; all night long
The pitiless storm exulted at her prey,
Huddling the waters with her icy thong.
But to the covered shape she did no wrong.
He lay beneath the sailcloth. Bell by bell
The night wore through; the stars rose, the stars fell.

Blowing most pitiless cold out of clear sky
The wind roared all night long; and all night through
The green seas on the deck went washing by,
Flooding the half-deck; bitter hard it blew.
But little of it all the Dauber knew-
The sopping bunks, the floating chests, the wet,
The darkness, and the misery, and the sweat.

He was off duty. So it blew all night,
And when the watches changed the men would come
Dripping within the door to strike a light
And stare upon the Dauber lying dumb,
And say, 'He come a cruel thump, poor chum.'
Or, 'He'd a-been a fine big man;' or, 'He. . .
A smart young seaman he was getting to be.'

Or, 'Damn it all, it's what we've all to face!
I knew another fellow one time . . .' then
Came a strange tale of death in a strange place
Out on the sea, in ships, with wandering men.
In many ways Death puts us into pen.
The reefers came down tired and looked and slept.
Below the skylight little dribbles crept

Along the painted woodwork, glistening, slow,
Following the roll and dripping, never fast,
But dripping on the quiet form below,
Like passing time talking to time long past.
And all night long 'Ai, ai!' went the wind's blast,
And creaming water swished below the pale,

Unheeding body stretched beneath the sail.

At dawn they sewed him up, and at eight bells
They bore him to the gangway, wading keep,
Through the green-clutching, white-toothed water-hells
That flung his carriers over in their sweep.
They laid an old red ensign on the heap,
And all hands stood bare-headed, stooping, swaying,
Washed by the sea while the old man was praying

Out of a borrowed prayer-book. At a sign
They twitched the ensign back and tipped the grating
A creamier bubbling broke the bubbling brine.
The muffled figure tilted to the weighting;
It dwindled slowly down, slowly gyrating.
Some craned to see; it dimmed, it disappeared;
The last green milky bubble blinked and cleared.

Mister, shake out your reefs,' the Captain called.
'Out topsail reefs!' the Mate cried; then all hands
Hurried, the great sails shook, and all hands hauled,
Singing that desolate song of lonely lands,
Of how a lover came in dripping bands,
Green with the wet and cold, to tell his lover
That Death was in the sea, and all was over.

Fair came the falling wind; a seaman said
The Dauber was a Jonah; once again
The clipper held her course, showing red lead,
Shattering the sea-tops into golden rain.
The waves bowed down before her like blown grain;
Onwards she thundered, on; her voyage was short,
Before the tier's bells rang her into port.

Cheerly they rang her in, those beating bells,
The new-come beauty stately from the sea,
Whitening the blue heave of the drowsy swells,
Treading the bubbles down. With three times three
They cheered her moving beauty in, and she
Came to her berth so noble, so superb,
Swayed like a queen, and answered to the curb.

Then in the sunset's flush they went aloft,
And unbent sails in that most lovely hour,
When the light gentles and the wind is soft,
And beauty in the heart breaks like a flower.
Working aloft they saw the mountain tower,
Snow to the peak; they heard the launch-men shout;
And bright along the bay the lights came out.

And then the night fell dark, and all night long
The pointed mountain pointed at the stars,

Frozen, alert, austere; the eagle's song
Screamed from her desolate screes and splintered scars.
On her intense crags where the air is sparse
The stars looked down; their many golden eyes
Watched her and burned, burned out, and came to rise.

Silent the finger of the summit stood,
Icy in pure, thin air, glittering with snows.
Then the sun's coming turned the peak to blood,
And in the rest-house the muleteers arose.
And all day long, where only the eagle goes,
Stones, loosened by the sun, fall; the stones falling
Fill empty gorge on gorge with echoes calling.

John Masefield

For the Fallen

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

John Masefield

Fragments

Troy Town is covered up with weeds,
The rabbits and the pismires brood
On broken gold, and shards, and beads
Where Priam's ancient palace stood.

The floors of many a gallant house
Are matted with the roots of grass;
The glow-worm and the nimble mouse
Among her ruins flit and pass.

And there, in orts of blackened bone,
The widowed Trojan beauties lie,
And Simois babbles over stone
And waps and gurgles to the sky.

Once there were merry days in Troy,
Her chimneys smoked with cooking meals,
The passing chariots did annoy
The sunning housewives at their wheels.

And many a lovely Trojan maid
Set Trojan lads to lovely things;
The game of life was nobly played,
They played the game like Queens and Kings.

So that, when Troy had greatly passed
In one red roaring fiery coal,
The courts the Grecians overcast
Became a city in the soul.

In some green island of the sea,
Where now the shadowy coral grows
In pride and pomp and empery
The courts of old Atlantis rose.

In many a glittering house of glass
The Atlanteans wandered there;
The paleness of their faces was
Like ivory, so pale they were.

And hushed they were, no noise of words
In those bright cities ever rang;
Only their thoughts, like golden birds,
About their chambers thrilled and sang.

They knew all wisdom, for they knew
The souls of those Egyptian Kings
Who learned, in ancient Babilu,
The beauty of immortal things.

They knew all beauty -- when they thought
The air chimed like a stricken lyre,

The elemental birds were wrought,
The golden birds became a fire.

And straight to busy camps and marts
The singing flames were swiftly gone;
The trembling leaves of human hearts
Hid boughs for them to perch upon.

And men in desert places, men
Abandoned, broken, sick with fears,
Rose singing, swung their swords agen,
And laughed and died among the spears.

The green and greedy seas have drowned
That city's glittering walls and towers,
Her sunken minarets are crowned
With red and russet water-flowers.

In towers and rooms and golden courts
The shadowy coral lifts her sprays;
The scrawl hath gorged her broken orts,
The shark doth haunt her hidden ways.

But, at the falling of the tide,
The golden birds still sing and gleam,
The Atlanteans have not died,
Immortal things still give us dream.

The dream that fires man's heart to make,
To build, to do, to sing or say
A beauty Death can never take,
An Adam from the crumbled clay.

John Masefield

Hell's Pavement

“When I’m discharged at Liverpool ‘n’ draws my bit o’ pay,
I won’t come to sea no more;
I’ll court a pretty little lass ‘n’ have a weddin’ day,
‘N’ settle somewhere down shore;
I’ll never fare to sea again a-temptin’ Davy Jones,
A-hearkening to the cruel sharks a-hungerin’ for my bones;
I’ll run a blushin’ dairy-farm or go a-crackin’ stones,
Or buy ‘n’ keep a little liquor-store” &mdash
So he said.

They towed her in to Liverpool, we made the hooker fast,
And the copper-bound official paid the crew,
And Billy drew his money, but the money didn’t last,
For he painted the alongshore blue, &mdash
It was rum for Poll, and rum for Nan, and gin for Jolly Jack;
He shipped a week later in the clothes upon his back;
He had to pinch a little straw, he had to beg a sack
To sleep on, when his watch was through, &mdash
So he did.

John Masefield

Laugh and be Merry

Laugh and be merry, remember, better the world with a song,
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.
Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of a span.
Laugh and be proud to belong to the old proud pageant of man.

Laugh and be merry: remember, in olden time.
God made Heaven and Earth for joy He took in a rhyme,
Made them, and filled them full with the strong red wine of
His mirth
The splendid joy of the stars: the joy of the earth.

So we must laugh and drink from the deep blue cup of the sky,
Join the jubilant song of the great stars sweeping by,
Laugh, and battle, and work, and drink of the wine outpoured
In the dear green earth, the sign of the joy of the Lord.

Laugh and be merry together, like brothers akin,
Guesting awhile in the rooms of a beautiful inn,
Glad till the dancing stops, and the lilt of the music ends.
Laugh till the game is played; and be you merry, my friends.

John Masefield

Lollingdon Downs VIII

THE Kings go by with jewled crowns;
Their horses gleam, their banners shake, their spears are many.
The sack of many-peopled towns
Is all their dream:
The way they take
Leaves but a ruin in the brake,
And, in the furrow that the plowmen make,
A stampless penny, a tale, a dream.

The Merchants reckon up their gold,
Their letters come, their ships arrive, their freights are glories;
The profits of their treasures sold
They tell and sum;
Their foremen drive
Their servants, starved to half-alive,
Whose labors do but make the earth a hive
Of stinking stories; a tale, a dream.

The Priests are singing in their stalls,
Their singing lifts, their incense burns, their praying clamors;
Yet God is as the sparrow falls,
The ivy drifts;
The votive urns
Are all left void when Fortune turns,
The god is but a marble for the kerns
To break with hammers; a tale, a dream.

O Beauty, let me know again
The green earth cold, the April rain, the quiet waters figuring sky,
The one star risen.
So shall I pass into the feast
Not touched by King, Merchant, or Priest;
Know the red spirit of the beast,
Be the green grain;
Escape from prison.

John Masefield

Mother Carey (As told Me by the Bo'sun)

Mother Carey? She's the mother o' the witches
'N' all
them
sort o' rips;
She's a fine gell to look at, but the hitch is,
She's a sight too fond of ships;
She lives upon an iceberg to the norred,
'N' her man he's Davy Jones,
'N' she combs the weeds upon her forred
With pore drowned sailors' bones.

She's the mother o' the wrecks, 'n' the mother
Of all big winds as blows;
She's up to some deviltry or other
When it storms, or sleets, or snows;
The noise of the wind's her screamin',
'I'm arter a plump, young, fine,
Brass-buttoned, beefy-ribbed young seam'n
So as me 'n' my mate kin dine.'

She's a hungry old rip 'n' a cruel
For sailor-men like we,
She's give a many mariners the gruel
'N' a long sleep under sea;
She's the blood o' many a crew upon her
'N' the bones of many a wreck,
'N' she's barnacles a-growin' on her
'N' shark's teeth round her neck.

I ain't never had no schoolin'
Nor read no books like you,
But I knows 't ain't healthy to be foolin'
With that there gristly two;
You're young, you thinks, 'n' you're lairy,
But if you're to make old bones,
Steer clear, I says, o' Mother Carey,
'N' that there Davy Jones.

John Masefield

Night Is On The Downland

Night is on the downland, on the lonely moorland,
On the hills where the wind goes over sheep-bitten turf,
Where the bent grass beats upon the unplowed poorland
And the pine-woods roar like the surf.

Here the Roman lived on the wind-barren lonely,
Dark now and haunted by the moorland fowl;
None comes here now but the peewit only,
And moth-like death in the owl.

Beauty was here in on this beetle-droning downland;
The thought of a Caesar in the purple came
From the palace by the Tiber in the Roman townland
To this wind-swept hill with no name.

Lonely Beauty came here and was here in sadness,
Brave as a thought on the frontier of the mind,
In the camp of the wild upon the march of madness,
The bright-eyed Queen of the Blind.

Now where Beauty was are the wind-withered gorses,
Moaning like old men in the hill-wind's blast;
The flying sky is dark with running horses,
And the night is full of the past.

John Masefield

On Eastnor Knoll

SILENT are the woods, and the dim green boughs are
Hushed in the twilight: yonder, in the path through
The apple orchard, is a tired plough-boy
Calling the cows home.

A bright white star blinks, the pale moon rounds, but
Still the red, lurid wreckage of the sunset
Smoulders in smoky fire, and burns on
The misty hill-tops.

Ghostly it grows, and darker, the burning
Fades into smoke, and now the gusty oaks are
A silent army of phantoms thronging
A land of shadows.

John Masefield

On Growing Old

Be with me, Beauty, for the fire is dying;
My dog and I are old, too old for roving.
Man, whose young passion sets the spindrift flying,
Is soon too lame to march, too cold for loving.
I take the book and gather to the fire,
Turning old yellow leaves; minute by minute
The clock ticks to my heart. A withered wire,
Moves a thiun ghost of music in the spinet.
I cannot sail your seas, I cannot wander
Your cornland, nor your hill-land, nor your valleys
Ever again, nore share the battle yonder
Where the young knight the broken squadron rallies.
Only stay quiet while my mind remembers
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers.

Beauty, have pity! for the strong have power,
The rich their wealth, the beautiful their grace,
Summer of man its sunlight and its flower.
Spring-time of man, all April in a face.
Only, as in the jostling in the Strand,
Where the mob thrusts, or loiters, or is loud,
The beggar with the saucer in his hand
Asks only a penny from the passing crowd,
So, from this glittering world with all its fashion,
Its fire, and play of men, its stir, its march,
Let me have wisdom, Beauty, wisdom and passion,
Bread to the soul, rain when the summers parch.
Give me but these, and though the darkness close
Even the night will blossom as the rose.

John Masefield

One of the Bo'sun's Yarns

Loafin' around in Sailor Town, a-bluin' o' my advance,
I met a derelict donkyman who led me a merry dance,
Till he landed me 'n blanched me fair in the bar of a rum-saloon,
'N' there he spun me a juice of a yarn to this-yer brand of tune.

'It's a solomn gospel, mate,' he says, 'but a man as ships abroad
A steamer-tramp, he gets his whack of the wonders of the Lord --
Such as roaches crawlin' over his bunk, 'n' snakes inside his bread,
And work by night and work by day enough to strike him dead.

'But that there's by the way,' says he; 'the yarn I'm goin' to spin
Is about myself 'n' the life I led in the last ship I was in,
The 'Esmeralda,' casual tramp, from Hull towards the Hook,
Wi' one o' the brand o' Cain for mate 'n' a human mistake for cook.

'We'd a week or so of dippin' around in a wind from outer hell,
With a fathom or more off broken sea at large in the forrard well,
Till our boats were bashed and bust and broke and gone to Davy Jones,
'N' then comes white Atlantic fog as chilled us to the bones.

'We slowed her down and started the horn and watch and watch about,
We froze the marrow in all our bones a-keepin' a good look-out,
'N' the ninth night out, in the middle watch, I woke from a pleasant dream,
Withthe smash of a steamer ramming our plates a point abaft the beam.

'Twas cold and dark when I fetched the deck, dirty 'n' cold 'n' thick,
'N' there was a feel in the way she rode as fairly turned me sick; --
She was settlin', listin' quickly down, 'n' I heard the mates a-cursin',
'N' I heard the wash 'n' the grumble-grunt of a steamer's screws reversin'.

'She was leavin' us, mate, to sink or swim, 'n' the words we took 'n' said
They turned the port-light grassy-green 'n' the starboard rosy-red;
We give her a hot perpetual taste of the singeing curse of Cain,
As we heard her back 'n' clear the wreck 'n' off to her course again.

'Then the mate came dancin' on to the scene, 'n' he says, 'Now quit yer chin,
Or I'll smash yer skulls so help me James, 'n' let some wisdom in.
Ye dodderin' scum o' the slums,' he says, 'are ye drunk or blazin' daft?
If ye wish to save yer sickly hides, ye'd best contrive a raft.'

'So he spoke us fair and turned us to, 'n' we wrought wi' tooth and nail
Wi' scantling, casks, 'n' coops 'n' ropes, 'n' boiler-plates 'n' sail,
'N' all the while it were dark 'n' cold 'n' dirty as it could be,
'N' she was soggy 'n' settlin' down to a berth beneath the sea.

'Soggy she grew, 'n' she didn't lift, 'n' she listed more 'n' more,
Till her bell struck 'n' her boiler-pipes began to wheeze 'n' snore;
She settled, settled, listed, heeled, 'n' then may I be cust,
If her sneezin', wheezin' boiler-pipes did not begin to bust!

''N' then the stars began to shine, 'n' the birds began to sing,
'N' the next I knowed I was bandaged up 'n' my arm were in a sling,

'N' a swab in uniform were there, 'n' 'Well,' says he, ''n' how
Are yer arms, 'n' legs, 'n' liver, 'n' lungs, 'n' bones a-feelin' now?'

''Where am I?' says I, 'n' he says, says he, a-cantin' to the roll,
'You're aboard the R.M.S. 'Marie' in the after Glory-Hole,
'N' you've had a shave, if you wish to know, from the port o' Kingdom Come.
Drink this,' he says, 'n' I takes 'n' drinks, 'n' s'elp me, it was rum!

'Seven survivors seen 'n' saved of the 'Esmeralda's' crowd,
Taken aboard the sweet 'Marie' 'n' bunked 'n' treated proud,
'N' D.B.S.'d to Mersey Docks ('n' a joyful trip we made),
'N' there the skipper were given a purse by a grateful Board of Trade

'That's the end o' the yarn,' he says, 'n' he takes 'n' wipes his lips,
'Them's the works o' the Lord you sees in steam 'n' sailin' ships, --
Rocks 'n' fogs 'n' shatterin' seas 'n' breakers right ahead,
'N' work o' nights 'n' work o' days enough to strike you dead.'

John Masefield

Reynard the Fox - Part 1

The meet was at 'The Cock and Pye
By Charles and Martha Enderby,'
The grey, three-hundred-year-old inn
Long since the haunt of Benjamin
The highwayman, who rode the bay.
The tavern fronts the coaching way,
The mail changed horses there of old.
It has a strip of grassy mould
In front of it, a broad green strip.
A trough, where horses' muzzles dip,
Stands opposite the tavern front,
And there that morning came the hunt,
To fill that quiet width of road
As full of men as Framilode,
Is full of sea when tide is in.
The stables were alive with din
From dawn until the time of meeting.
A pad-groom gave a cloth a beating,
Knocking the dust out with a stake.
Two men cleaned stalls with fork and rake,
And one went whistling to the pump,
The handle whined, ker-lump, ker-lump,
I The water splashed into the pail,
And, as he went, it left a trail,
Lipped over on the yard's bricked paving.
Two grooms (sent on before) were shaving
There in the yard, at glasses propped
On jutting bricks; they scraped and stropped,
And felt their chins and leaned and peered,
A woodland day was what they feared
(As second horseman), shaving there.
Then, in the stalls where hunters were,
Straw rustled as the horses shifted,
The hayseeds ticked and haystraws drifted
From racks as horses tugged their feed.
Slow gulping sounds of steady greed
Came from each stall, and sometimes stampings,
Whinnies (at well-known steps) and rampings,
To see the horse in the' next stall.
Outside, the spangled cock did call
To scattering grain that Martha flung.
And many a time a mop was wrung
By Susan ere the floor was clean.
The harness-room, that busy scene,
Clinked and chinked from ostlers brightening
Rings and bits with ,dips of whitening,
Rubbing fox-flecks out of stirrups,
Dumbing buckles of their chirrups
By the touch of oily feathers.
Some, with stag's bones rubbed at leathers,
Brushed at saddle-flaps or hove
Saddle-linings to the stove.

Blue smoke from strong tobacco drifted
Out of the yard, the passers snifft it,
Mixed with the strong ammonia flavour
Of horses' stables and the savour
Of saddle-paste and polish spirit
Which put the gleam on flap and tirrit.
The grooms in shirts with rolled-up sleeves,
Belted by girths of coloured weaves,
Groomed the clipped hunters in their stalls.
One said: 'My dad cured saddle-galls,
He called it Dr. Barton's cure-
Hog's lard and borax, laid on pure.'
And others said: 'Ge' back, my son,'
'Stand over, girl; now, girl, ha' done.'
'Now, boy, no snapping; gently. Crikes!
He gives a rare pinch when he likes.'
'Drawn blood? I thought he looked a biter.'
'I give 'em all sweet spit of nitre
For that, myself.: that sometimes cures.'
'Now, Beauty, mind them feet of yours.'
They groomed, and sissed with hissing notes
To keep the dust out of their throats.

There came again and yet again
The feed-box lid, the swish of grain,
Or Joe's boots stamping in the loft,
The hay-fork's stab and then the soft
Hay's scratching slither down the shoot.
Then with a thud some horse's foot
Stamped, and the gulping munch again
Resumed its lippings at the grain.

The road outside the inn was quiet
Save for the poor, mad, restless pyat
Hopping his hanging wicker-cage.
No calmative of sleep or sage
Will cure the fever to be free.
He shook the wicker ceaselessly
Now up, now down, but never out,
On wind-waves, being blown about,
Looking for dead things good to eat.
His cage was strewn with scattered wheat.

At ten o'clock, the Doctor's lad
Brought up his master's hunting pad
And put him in a stall, and leaned
Against the stall, and sissed, and cleaned
The port and cannons of his curb.
He chewed a sprig of smelling herb.
He sometimes stopped, and spat, and chid
The silly things his master did.

At twenty past, old Baldock strode
His plough man's straddle down the road.
An old man with a gaunt, burnt face,
His eyes rapt back on some far place
Like some starved, half-mad saint in bliss
In God's world through the rags of this.
He leaned upon a stake of ash
Cut from a sapling: many a gash
Was in his old, full-skirted coat.
The twisted muscles in his throat
Moved, as he swallowed, like taut cord.
His oaken face was seamed and gored;
He halted by the inn and stared
On that far bliss, that place prepared,
Beyond his eyes, beyond his mind.

Then Thomas Copp, of Cowfoot's Wynd,
Drove up; and stopped to take a glass.
'I hope they'll gallop on my grass,'
He said; 'my little girl does sing
To see the red coats galloping.
It's good for grass, too, to be trodden
Except they poach it, where it's sodden.'

Then Billy Waldrist, from the Lynn,
With Jockey Hill, from Pitts, came in
And had a sip of gin and stout
To help the jockey's sweatings out.

'Rare day for scent,' the jockey said.
A pony like a feather bed
On four short sticks, took place aside.
The little girl who rode astride
Watched everything with eyes that glowed
With glory in the horse she rode.

At half-past ten some lads on foot
Came to be beaters to a shoot
Of rabbits on the Warren Hill.
Rough sticks they had, and Hob and Jill,
Their ferrets, in a bag, and netting.
They talked of dinner-beer and betting,
And jeered at those who stood around.,
They rolled their dogs upon the ground,
And teased them: 'Rats,' they cried, 'go fetch!'
'Go seek, good Roxer; 'z bite, good betch.
What dinner-beer 'll they give us, lad?
Sex quarts the lot last year we had.
They'd ought to give us seven this.
Seek, Susan; what a betch it is.'

A pommle cob came trotting up,
Round-bellied like a drinking-cup,
Bearing on back a pommle man,
Round-bellied like a drinking-can,
The clergyman from Condicote.
His face was scarlet from his trot,
His white hair bobbed about his head
As halos do round clergy dead.
He asked Tom Copp, ' How long to wait?'
His loose mouth opened like a gate,
To pass the wagons of his speech.
He had a mighty voice to preach,
Though indolent in other matters.
He let his children go in tatters.

His daughter Madge on foot, flush-cheekt,
In broken hat and boots that leakt,
With bits of hay all over her,

Her plain face grinning at the stir
(A broad pale face, snub-nosed, with speckles
Of sandy eyebrows sprinkt with freckles),
Came after him and stood apart
Beside the darling of her heart,
Miss Hattie Dyce from Baydon Dean,
A big young fair one, chiselled clean
Brow, chin and nose, with great blue eyes
All innocence and sweet surprise,
And golden hair piled coil on coil,
Too beautiful for time to spoil.
They talked in undertones together-
Not of the hunting, nor the weather.

Old Steven from Scratch Steven Place
(A white beard and a rosy face)
Came next on his stringhalty grey.
'I've come to see the hounds away,'
He said 'and ride a field or two.
We old have better things to do
Than breaking all our necks for fun.'
He shone on people like the sun,
And on himself for shining so.

Three men came riding in a row:
John Pym, a bull-man, quick to strike,
Gross and blunt-headed like a shrike,
Yet sweet-voiced as a piping flute;
Tom See, the trainer, from the Toot,
Red, with an angry, puzzled face
And mouth twitched upward out of place,
Sucking cheap grapes and spitting seeds;
And Stone, of Bartle's Cattle Feeds,
A man whose bulk of flesh and bone
Made people call him Twenty Stone.
He was the man who stood a pull
At Tencombe with the Jersey bull,
And brought the bull back to his stall.

Some children ranged the tavern-wall,

Sucking their thumbs and staring hard;
Some grooms brought horses from the yard.
Jane Selbie said to Ellen Tranter,
'A lot on 'em come doggin', ant her?'
' A lot on 'em,' said Ellen. 'Look,
'There'm Mr. Gaunt of Water's Hook.
They say he…' (whispered). 'Law!' said Jane.
Gaunt flung his heel across the mane,
And slithered from his horse and stamped.
'Boots tight,' he said, 'my, feet are cramped.'
A loose-shod horse came clicking-clack;
Nick Wolvesey on a hired hack
Came tittup, like a cup and ball.
One saw the sun, moon, stars, and all
The great green earth twixt him and saddle;
Then Molly Wolvesey riding straddle,
Red as a rose with eyes like sparks;
Two boys from college out for larks
Hunted bright Molly for a smile,
But were not worth their quarry's while.

Two eyeglassed gunners dressed in tweed
Came with a spaniel on a lead
And waited for a fellow-gunner.
The parson's son, the famous runner,
Came dressed to follow hounds on foot.
His knees were red as yew-tree root
From being bare, day in, day out.
He wore a blazer, and a clout
(His sweater's arms) tied round his neck.
His football shorts had many a speck
And splash of mud from many a fall
Got as he picked the slippery ball
Heeled out behind a breaking scrum.
He grinned at people, but was dumb,
Not like these lousy foreigners.
The otter-hounds and harriers
From Godstow to the Wye all knew him.
And with him came the stock which grew him,
The parson and his sporting wife;
She was a stout one, full of life,
With red, quick, kindly, manly face.
She held the knave, queen, king and ace,
In every hand she played with men.
She was no sister to the hen,
But fierce and minded to be queen.
She wore a coat and skirt of green,
A waistcoat cut of hunting red,

Her tiepin was a fox's head.
The parson was a manly one,
His jolly eyes were bright with fun.
His jolly mouth was well inclined
To cry aloud his jolly mind
To everyone, in jolly terms.
He did not talk of churchyard worms,
But of our privilege as dust
To box a lively bout with lust
Ere going to heaven to rejoice.
He loved the sound of his own voice,
His talk was like a charge of horse,
His build was all compact, for force,
Well-knit, well-made, well-coloured, eager.
He kept no Lent to make him meagre,
He loved his God, himself and man,
He never said, 'Life's wretched span;
This wicked world,' in any sermon.
This body that we feed the worm on,
To him, was jovial stuff that thrilled.
He liked to see the foxes killed;
But most he felt himself in clover
To hear, 'Hen left, hare right, cock over,'
At woodside, when the leaves are brown.
Some grey cathedral in a town
Where drowsy bells toll out the time
To shaven closes sweet with lime,
And wallflower roots rive out the mortar
All summer on the Norman dortar
Was certain some day to be his;
Nor would a mitre go amiss
To him, because he governed well.
His voice was like the tenor bell
When services were said and sung.
And he had read in many a tongue,
Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Greek.

Two bright young women, nothing meek,
Rode up on bicycles and propped
Their wheels in such wise that they dropped
To bring the parson's son to aid.
Their cycling suits were tailor-made,
Smart, mannish, pert, but feminine.
The colour and the zest of wine
Were in their presence and their bearing;
Like spring, they brought the thought of pairing.
The parson's lady thought them pert.
And they could mock a man and flirt,

Do billiard tricks with corks and pennies,
Sing ragtime songs and win at tennis
The silver cigarette-case prize.
They had good colour and bright eyes,
Bright hair, bright teeth and pretty skin,
Which many lads had longed to win
On darkened stairways after dances.
Their reading was the last romances,
And they were dashing hockey players.
Men called them 'Jill and Joan, the slayers.'
They were as bright as fresh sweet-peas.
Old Farmer Bennett followed these
Upon his big-boned savage black,
Whose mule-teeth yellowed to bite back
Whatever came within his reach.
Old Bennett sat him like a leech,
The grim old rider seemed to be
As hard about the mouth as he.

The beaters nudged each other's ribs.
With 'There he goes, his bloody Nibs.
He come on Joe and Anty Cop,
And beat 'em with his hunting-crop
Like tho' they'd bin a sack of beans.
His pickers were a pack of queans,
And Joe and Anty took a couple.
He caught 'em there, and banged 'em supple.
Women and men, he didn't care
(He'd kill 'em some day, if he dare),
He beat the whole four nearly dead:
'I'll learn 'ee rabbit in my shed;
That's how my ricks get set afire.'
That's what he said, the bloody liar;
Old oaf! I'd like to burn his ricks,
Th' old swine's too free with fists and sticks.
He keeps that Mrs. Jones himselve.'

Just like an axehead on its helve
Old Bennett sat and watched the gathering.
He'd given many a man a lathering
In field or barn, and women too.
His cold eye reached the women through
With comment, and the men with scorn.
He hated women gently born,

He hated all beyond his grasp,
For he was minded like the asp,
That strikes whatever is not dust.

Charles Copse, of Copse Hold Manor, thrust
Next into view. In face and limb
The beauty and the grace of him
Were like the Golden Age returned.
His grave eyes steadily discerned
The good in men and what was wise.
He had deep blue, mild-coloured eyes
And shocks of harvest-coloured hair
Still beautiful with youth. An air
Or power of kindness went about him;
No heart of youth could ever doubt him
Or fail to follow where he led.
He was a genius, simply bred,
And quite unconscious of his power.
He was the very red rose flower
Of all that coloured countryside.
Gauchos had taught him how to ride.
He knew all arts, but practised most
The art of bettering flesh and ghost
In men and lads down in the mud.
He knew no class in flesh and blood.
He loved his kind. He spent some pith,
Long since, relieving Ladysmith.
Many a horse he trotted tame
Heading commandos from their aim
In those old days upon the veldt.

An old bear in a scarlet pelt
Came next, old Squire Harridew,
His eyebrows gave a man the grue,
So bushy and so fierce they were;
He had a bitter tongue to swear.
A fierce, hot, hard, old, stupid squire,
With all his liver made of fire,
Small brain, great courage, mulish will.
The hearts in all his house stood still
When someone crossed the Squire's path.
For he was terrible in wrath,
And smashed whatever came to hand.
Two things he failed to understand,

The foreigner and what was new.
His daughters, Carrie, Jane and Lou,
Rode with him, Carrie at his side.
His son, the ne'er-do-well, had died
In Arizona long before.
The Squire set the greatest store
By Carrie, youngest of the three,
And lovely to the blood was she;
Blonde, with a face of blush and cream,
And eyes deep violet in their gleam,
Bright blue when quiet in repose.
She was a very golden rose.
And many a man when sunset came
Would see the manor windows flame,
And think, 'My beauty's home is there.'
Queen Helen had less golden hair,
Queen Cleopatra paler lips,
Queen Blanche's eyes were in eclipse
By golden Carrie's glancing by.
She had a wit for mockery
And sang mild, pretty, senseless songs
Of sunsets, Heav'n and lovers' wrongs,
Sweet to the Squire when he had dined.
A rosebud need not have a mind.
A lily is not sweet from learning.

Jane looked like a dark-lantern, burning,
Outwardly dark, unkempt, uncouth,
But minded like the living truth,
A friend that nothing shook nor wearied.
She was not 'Darling Jane'd' nor ' Dearie'd.'
She was all prickles to the touch,
So sharp that many feared to clutch,
So keen that many thought her bitter,
She let the little sparrows twitter.
She had a hard, ungracious way.
Her storm of hair was iron-grey,
And she was passionate in her heart
For women's souls that burn apart,
Just as her mother's had, with Squire.
She gave the sense of smouldering fire.
She was not happy being a maid,
At home, with Squire, but she stayed,
Enduring life, however bleak,
To guard her sisters, who were weak,
And force a life for them from Squire.
And she had roused and stood his fire
A hundred times, and earned his hate,

To win those two a better state.
Long years before the Canon's son
Had cared for her, but he had gone
To Klondyke, to the mines, for gold;
To find, in some strange way untold,
A foreign grave that no men knew.

No depth, nor beauty, was in Lou,
But charm and fun, for she was merry,
Round, sweet and little, like a cherry,
With laughter like a robin's singing;
She was not kitten-like and clinging,
But pert and arch and fond of flirting,
In mocking ways that were not hurting,
And merry ways that women pardoned.
Not being married yet she gardened.
She loved sweet music; she would sing
Songs made before the German King
Made England German in her mind.
She sang 'My lady is unkind,'
'The Hunt is up,' and those, sweet things
Which Thomas Campion set to strings,
'Thrice toss,' and ' What,' and 'Where are now? '

The next to come was Major Howe
Driv'n in a dog-cart by a groom.
The testy major was in fume
To find no hunter standing waiting;
The groom who drove him caught a rating,
The groom who had the horse in stable
Was damned in half the tongues of Babel,
The Major being hot and heady
When horse or dinner was not ready.
He was a lean, tough, liverish fellow,
With pale blue eyes (the whites pale yellow),
Moustache clipped toothbrush-wise, and jaws
Shaved bluish like old partridge claws.
When he had stripped his coat he made
A speckless presence for parade,
New pink, white cords, and glossy tops,
New gloves, the newest thing in crops,
Worn with an air that well expressed
His sense that no one else was dressed.

Quick trotting after Major Howe
Came Doctor Frome of Quickemshow,
A smiling silent man whose brain
Knew all of every secret pain
In every man and woman there.
Their inmost lives were all laid bare
To him, because he touched their lives
When strong emotions sharp as knives
Brought out what sort of soul each was.
As secret as the graveyard grass
He was, as he had need to be.
At some time he had had to see
Each person there, sans clothes, sans mask,
Sans lying even, when to ask
Probed a tamed spirit into truth.

Richard, his son, a jolly youth,
Rode with him, fresh from Thomas's,
As merry as a yearling is
In May-time in a clover patch.
He was a gallant chick to hatch;
Big, brown and smiling, blithe and kind,
With all his father's love of mind
And greater force to give it act.
To see him when the scrum was packt,
Heave, playing forward, was a sight.
His tackling was the crowd's delight
In many a danger close to goal.
The pride in the three-quarter's soul
Dropped, like a wet rag, when he collared.
He was as steady as a bollard,
And gallant as a skysail yard,
He rode a chestnut mare which sparred.
In good St. Thomas' Hospital
He was the crown imperial
Of all the scholars of his year.

The Harold lads, from Tencombe Weir,
Came all on foot in corduroys,
Poor widowed Mrs. Harold's boys,

Dick, Hal and Charles, whose father died.
(Will Masemore shot him in the side
By accident at Masemore Farm.
A hazel knocked Will Masemore's arm
In getting through a hedge; his gun
Was not half-cocked, so it was done,
And those three boys left fatherless.)
Their gaitered legs were in a mess
With good red mud from twenty ditches,
Hal's face was plastered like his ,breeches,
Dick chewed a twig of juniper.
They kept at distance from the stir;
Their loss had made them lads apart.

Next came the Colways' pony-cart
From Coln St. Evelyn's with the party.
Hugh Colway, jovial, bold and hearty,
And Polly Colway's brother, John
(Their horses had been both sent on,
And Polly Colway drove them there).
Poor pretty Polly Colway's hair!
The grey mare killed her at the brook
Down seven springs mead at Water Hook
Just one month later, poor sweet woman.
Her brother was a rat-faced Roman,
Lean, puckered, tight-skinned from the sea,
Commander in the Canace,
Able to drive a horse, or ship,
Or crew of men without a whip
By will, as long as they could go.
His face would wrinkle, row on row,
From mouth to hair-roots when he laught.
He looked ahead as though his craft
Were with him still, in dangerous channels.
He and Hugh Colway tossed their flannels
Into the pony-cart and mounted.
Six foiled attempts the watchers counted,
The horses being bickering things
That so much scarlet made like kings,
Such sidling and such pawing and shifting.

When Hugh was up his mare went drifting
Sidelong and feeling with her heels
For horses' legs and poshay wheels,

While lather creamed her neat clipt skin.
Hugh guessed her foibles with a grin.
He was a rich town-merchant's son,
A wise and kind man, fond of fun,
Who loved to have a troop of friends
At CoIn St. Eves for all week-ends,
And troops of children in for tea.
He gloried in a Christmas-Tree,
And Polly was his heart's best treasure,
And Polly was a golden pleasure,
To everyone, to see or hear.

Poor Polly's dying struck him queer,
He was a darkened man thereafter,
Cowed, silent, he would wince at laughter
And be so gentle it was strange
Even to see. Life loves to change.

Now Coln St. Evelyn's hearths are cold,
The shutters up, the hunters sold,
And green mould damps the locked front door.
But this was still a month before,
And Polly, golden in the chaise,
Still smiled, and there were golden days,
Still thirty days, for those dear lovers.

The Riddens came, from Ocle Covers,
Bill Ridden riding Stormalong
(By Tempest out of Love-me-Long),
A proper handful of a horse
That nothing but the Aintree course
Could bring to terms, save Bill perhaps.
All sport, from bloody war to scraps,
Came well to Bill, that big-mouthed smiler.
They nicknamed him 'the mug-beguiler,'
For Billy lived too much with horses,
In copers' yards and sharpers' courses,
To lack the sharper-coper streak.
He did not turn the other cheek
When struck (as English Christians do);

He boxed like a Whitechapel Jew,
And many a time his knuckles bled
Against a racecourse-gipsy's head.
For 'hit him first and argue later'
Was truth at Billy's Alma Mater,
Not love, not any bosh of love.
His hand was like a chamois glove,
And riding was his chief delight.
He bred the chaser Chinese-White
From Lilybud by Mandarin.
And when his mouth tucked corners in,
And scent was high and hounds were going,
He went across a field like snowing
And tackled anything that came.

His wife, Sal Ridden, was the same,
A loud, bold, blonde, abundant mare
With white horse-teeth and stooks of hair
(Like polished brass) and such a manner
It flaunted from her like a banner.
Her father was Torn See the trainer.
She rode a lovely earth-disdainer
Which she and Billy wished to sell.

Behind them rode her daughter Belle,
A strange, shy, lovely girl, whose face
Was sweet with thought and proud with race,
And bright with joy at riding there.
She was as good as blowing air,
But shy and difficult to know.
The kittens in the barley-mow,
The setter's toothless puppies sprawling,
The blackbird in the apple calling,
All knew her spirit more than we.
So delicate these maidens be
In loving lovely helpless things.
The Manor set, from Tencombe Rings,
Came with two friends, a set of six.
Ed Manor with his cockerel chicks,
Nob, Cob and Bunny, as they called them
(God help the school or rule which galled them;
They carried head), and friends from town.
Ed Manor trained on Tencombe Down,
He once had been a famous bat;

He had that stroke, 'the Manor-pat,'
Which snicked the ball for three, past cover.
He once scored twenty in an over.
But now he cricketed no more.
He purpled in the face and swore
At all three sons, and trained, and told
Long tales of cricketing of old,
When he alone had saved his side.
Drink made it doubtful if he lied.
Drink purpled him, he could not face
The fences now, nor go the pace,
He brought his friends to meet; no more.

His big son Nob, at whom he swore,
Swore back at him, for Nob was surly,
Tall, shifty, sullen-smiling, burly,
Quite fearless, built with such a jaw
That no man's rule could be his law
Nor any woman's son his master.
Boxing he relished. He could plaster
All those who boxed out Tencombe way.
A front tooth had been knocked away
Two days before, which put his mouth
A little to the east of south,
And put a venom in his laughter.

Cob was a lighter lad, but dafter,
Just past eighteen, while Nob was twenty.
Nob had no nerves but Cob had plenty,
So Cobby went where Nobby led.
He had no brains inside his head,
Was fearless, just like Nob, but put
Some clog of folly round his foot,
Where Nob put will of force or fraud.
He spat aside and muttered Gawd
When vext; he took to whisky kindly
And loved and followed Nobby blindly,
And rode as in the saddle born.

Bun looked upon the two with scorn.

He was the youngest, and was wise.
He too was fair, with sullen eyes,
He too (a year before) had had
A zest for going to the bad,
With Cob and Nob. He knew the joys
Of drinking with the stable-boys,
Or smoking while he filled his skin
With pints of Guinness dashed with gin
And Cobby yelled a bawdy ditty,
Or cutting Nobby for the kitty,
And damning people's eyes and guts,
Or drawing evening-church for sluts;
He knew them all and now was quit.

Sweet Polly Colway managed it
And Bunny changed. He dropped his drink
(The pleasant pit's seductive brink),
He started working in the stable,
And well, for he was shrewd and able.
He left the doubtful female friends
Picked up at Evening-Service ends,
He gave up cards and swore no more.
Nob called him 'The Reforming Whore,'
'The Soul's A wakening,' or 'The Text,'
Nob being always coarse when vext.

Ed Manor's friends were Hawke and Sladd,
Old college friends, the last he had,
Rare horsemen, but their nerves were shaken
By all the whisky they had taken.
Hawke's hand was trembling on his rein.
His eyes were dead-blue like a vein,
His peaked, sad face was touched with breeding,
His querulous mind was quaint from reading,
His piping voice still quirked with fun.
Many a mad thing he had done,
Riding to hounds and going to races.
A glimmer of the gambler's graces,
Wit, courage, devil, touched his talk.

Sladd's big fat face was white as chalk,
His mind went wandering, swift yet solemn,
Twixt winning-post and betting-column,
The weights and forms and likely colts.
He said, 'This road is full of jolts.
I shall be seasick riding here.
Oh, damn last night with that liqueur! '
Len Stokes rode up on Peterkin;
He owned the downs by Baydon Whin,
And grazed some thousand sheep; the boy
Grinned round at men with jolly joy
At being alive and being there.
His big round face and mop of hair
Shone, his great teeth shone in his grin. '
The clean blood in his clear tanned skin
Ran merry, and his great voice mocked
His young friends present till they rocked.

Steer Harpit came from Rowell Hill,
A small, frail man, all heart and will,
A sailor, as his voice betrayed.
He let his whip-thong droop and played
At snicking off the grass-blades with it.
John Hankerton, from Compton Lythitt,
Was there with Pity Hankerton,
And Mike, their good-for-little son,
Back, smiling, from his seventh job.
Joan Urch was there upon her cob,
Tom Sparsholt on his lanky grey,
John Restrop from Hope Goneaway,
And Vaughan, the big black handsome devil,
Loose-lipped with song and wine and revel,
All rosy from his morning tub.

The Godsdown tigress with her cub
(Lady and Tommy Crow marsh) came.
The great eyes smouldered in the dame,
Wit glittered, too, which few men saw.
There was more beauty there than claw.
Tommy in bearing, horse and dress,
Was black, fastidious handsomeness,
Choice to his trimmed soul's finger-tips,
Heredia's sonnets on his lips.
A line undrawn, a plate not bitten,

A stone uncut, a phrase unwritten
That would be perfect, made his mind.
A choice pull from a rare print, signed,
Was Tommy. He collected plate
(Old Sheffield), and he owned each state
Of all the Meryon Paris etchings.
Colonel Sir Button Budd of Fletchings
Was there; Long Robert Thrupp was there
(Three yards of him men said there were),
Long as the King of Prussia's fancy.
He rode the long-legged Necromancy,
A useless racehorse that could canter.
George Childrey with his jolly banter
Was there, Nick Childrey, too, come down
The night before from London town
To hunt and have his lungs blown.clean.
The Ilsley set from Tuttocks Green
Was there (old Henry Ilsley drove).
Carlotta Ilsley brought her love,
A flop-jowled broker from the city.
Men pitied her, for she was pretty.
*

Some grooms and second horsemen mustered.
A lot of men on foot were clustered
Round the inn-door all busy drinking,
One heard the kissing glasses clinking
In passage as the tray was brought.
Two terriers (which they had there) fought
There on the green, a loud, wild whirl.
Bell stopped them like a gallant girl.
The hens behind the tavern clucked.
Then on a horse which bit and bucked
(The half-broke four-year-old Marauder)
Came Minton-Price of th' Afghan border,
Lean, puckered, yellowed, knotted, scarred,
Tough as a hide-rope twisted hard,
Tense tiger-sinew knit to bone.
Strange-wayed from having lived alone
With Kafir, Afghan and Beloosh,
In stations frozen in the Koosh
Where nothing but the bullet sings.
His mind had conquered many things
Painting, mechanics, physics, law.
White-hot, hand-beaten things to draw
Self-hammered from his own soul's stithy.
His speech was blacksmith-sparked and pithy.
Danger had been his brother bred;
The stones had often been his bed
In bickers with the border-thieves.

A chestnut mare with swerves and heaves
Came plunging, scattering all the crowd,
She tossed her head and laughed aloud
And bickered sideways past the meet.
From pricking ears to mincing feet
She was all tense with blood and quiver,
You saw her clipt hide twitch and shiver
Over her netted cords of veins.
She carried Cothill, of the Sleins,
A tall, black, bright-eyed, handsome lad.
Great power and great grace he had.
Men hoped the greatest things of him.
His grace made people think him slim,
But he was muscled like a horse,
A sculptor would have wrought his torse
In bronze or marble for Apollo.
He loved to hurry like a swallow
For miles on miles of short-grassed sweet,
Blue, hare-belled downs where dewy feet
Of pure winds hurry ceaselessly,
He loved the downland like a sea.
The downland where the kestrels hover
The downland had him for a lover.

And every other thing he loved
In which a clean free spirit moved.

So beautiful he was, so bright,
He looked to men like young delight
Gone courting April maidenhood,
That has the primrose in her blood,
He on his mincing lady mare.

Ock Gurney and old Pete were there
Riding their bonny cobs and swearing;
Ock's wife had giv'n them both a fairing,
A horse-rosette, red, white and blue.

Their cheeks were brown as any brew,
And every comer to the meet
Said, 'Hello, Ock,' or ' Morning, Pete,
Be you a-going to a wedding? '
'Why, noa,' they said, ' we'm going a-bedding;
Now ben't us, uncle, ben't us, Ock ?'
Pete Gurney was a lusty cock
Turned sixty-three, but bright and hale,
A dairy-farmer in the vale,
Much like a robin in the face,
Much character in little space,
With little eyes like burning coal;
His mouth was like a slit or hole
In leather that was seamed and lined.
He had the russet-apple mind
That betters as the weather worsen.
He was a manly English person,
Kind to the core, brave, merry, true.
One grief he had, a grief still new,
That former Parson joined with Squire
In putting down the Playing Quire
In church, and putting organ in.
'Ah, boys, that was a pious din,
That Quire was; a pious praise
The noise was that we used to raise,
I and my serpent, George with his'n,
On Easter Day in ' He is risen,'
Or blessed Christmas in 'Venite.'
And how the trombone came in mighty
In Alleluias from the heart!
Pious, for each man played his part,
Not like 'tis now.' Thus he, still sore
For changes forty years before
When all (that could) in time and tune
Blew trumpets to the newe moon.
He was a bachelor from choice.
He and his nephew farmed the Boyce,
Prime pasture land for thirty cows.
Ock's wife, Selina Jane, kept house,
And jolly were the three together.

Ock had a face like summer weather.
A broad red sun, split by a smile.
He mopped his forehead all the while
And said ' By damn,' and ' Ben' t us, Unk ? '
His eyes were close and deeply sunk.
He cursed his hunter like a lover:
'Now blast your soul, my dear, give over.

Woa, now, my pretty, damn your eyes.
'Like Pete, he was of middle size,
Dean-oak-like, stuggy, strong in shoulder.
He stood a wrestle like a boulder.
He had a back for pitching hay.
His singing voice was like a bay.
In talk he had a sideways spit,
Each minute to refresh his wit.
He cracked Brazil-nuts with his teeth.
He challenged Cobbet of the Heath
(Weight-lifting champion) once, but lost.
Hunting was what he loved the most
Next to his wife and Uncle Pete.
With beer to drink and cheese to eat
And rain in May to fill the grasses,
This life was not a dream that passes
To Ock, but like the summer flower.

But now the clock had struck the hour,
And round the corner down the road
The bob-bob-bobbing serpent flowed
With three black knobs upon its spine,
Three bobbing black caps in a line.
A glimpse of scarlet at the gap
Showed underneath each bobbing cap,
And at the corner by the gate
One heard Tom Dansey give a rate:
'Hep, drop it, Jumper; have a care!'
There came a growl, half-rate, half-swear,
A spitting crack, a tuneful whimper
And sweet religion entered Jumper.

There was a general turn of faces,
The men and horses shifted places,
And round the corner came the hunt,
Those feathery things, the hounds, in front.
Intent, wise, dipping, trotting, straying,
Smiling at people, shoving, playing,
Nosing to children's faces, waving
Their feathery sterns, and all behaving,
One eye to Dansey on Maroon.
Their padding cat-feet beat a tune,
And though 'they trotted up so quiet
Their noses brought them news of riot,

Wild smells of things with living blood,
Hot smells, against the grippers good,
Of weasel, rabbit, cat and hare,
Whose feet had been before them there,
Whose taint still tingled every breath;
But Dansey on Maroon was death,
So, though their noses roved, their feet
Larked and trit-trotted to the meet.

Bill Tall and Ell and Mirtie Key
(Aged fourteen years between the three)
Were flooded by them at the bend,
They thought their little lives would end;
The grave, sweet eyes looked into theirs,
Cold noses came, and clean short hairs,
And tails all crumpled up like ferns,
A sea of moving heads and sterns,
All round them, brushing coat and dress,
One paused, expecting a caress.
The children shrank into each other,
Shut eyes, clutched tight, and shouted 'Mother!'
With mouths wide open, catching tears.

Sharp Mrs. Tall allayed their fears,
'Err out the road, the dogs won't hurt 'ee.
There now, you've cried your faces dirty.
More cleaning up for me to do.
What? Cry at dogs, great lumps like you?
'She licked her handkerchief and smeared
Their faces where the dirt appeared.

The hunt trit-trotted to the meeting,
Tom Dansey touching cap to greeting,
Slow lifting crop-thong to the rim,
No hunter there got more from him
Except some brightening of the eye.
He halted at the Cock and Pye,
The hounds drew round him on the green,
Arrogant, Daffodil and Queen
Closest, but all in little space.

Some lolled their tongues, some made grimace,
Yawning, or tilting nose in quest,
All stood and looked about with zest,
They were uneasy as they waited.
Their sires and dams had been well mated,
They were a lovely pack for looks;
Their forelegs drums ticked without crooks,
Straight, without over-tread or bend,
Muscled to gallop to the end,
With neat feet round as any cat's.
Great-chested, muscled in the slats,
Bright, clean, short-coated, broad in shoulder,
With stag-like eyes that seemed to smoulder.
The heads well-cocked, the clean necks strong,
Brows broad, ears close, the muzzles long,
And all like racers in the thighs;
Their noses exquisitely wise,
Their minds being memories of smells;
Their voices like a ring of bells;
Their sterns all spirit, cock and feather;
Their colours like the English weather,
Magpie and hare, and badger pye,
Like minglings in a double dye,
Some smutty-nosed, some tan, none bald;
Their manners were to come when called,
Their flesh was sinew knit to bone,
Their courage like a banner blown.
Their joy to push him out of cover,
And hunt him till they rolled him over.
They were as game as Robert Dover.

Tom Dansey was a famous whip,
Trained as a child in horsemanship,
Entered, as soon as he was able,
As boy at Caunter's racing-stable;
There, like the other boys, he slept
In stall beside the horse he kept,
Snug in the straw; and Caunter's stick
Brought morning to him all too quick.
He learned the high, quick gingery ways
Of thoroughbreds; his stable days
Made him a rider, groom and vet.
He promised to be too thick-set
For jockeying, so left it soon.
Now he was whip and rode Maroon.
He was a small, lean, wiry man,
With sunk cheeks weathered to a tan
Scarred by the spikes of hawthorn sprays

Dashed thro' head down, on going days,
In haste to see the line they took.
There was a beauty in his look,
It was intent. His speech was plain.
Maroon's head, reaching to the rein,
Had half his thought before he spoke.
His ' Gone away! ' when foxes broke
Was like a bell. His chief delight
Was hunting fox from noon to night.
His pleasure lay in hounds and horses;
He loved the Seven Springs water-courses,
Those flashing brooks (in good sound grass,
Where scent would hang like breath on glass).
He loved the English countryside:
The wine-leaved bramble in the ride,
The lichen on the apple-trees,
The poultry ranging on the lees,
The farms, the moist earth-smelling cover,
His wife's green grave at Mitcheldover,
Where snowdrops pushed at the first thaw.
Under his hide his heart was raw
With joy and pity of these things.

The second whip was Kitty Myngs,
Still but a lad but keen and quick
(Son of old Myngs, who farmed the Wick),
A horse-mouthed lad who knew his work.
He rode the big black horse, the Turk,
And longed to be a huntsman bold.
He had the horse-look, sharp and old,
With much good-nature in his face.
His passion was to go the pace,
His blood was crying for a taming.
He was the Devil's chick for gaming,
He was a rare good lad to box.
He sometimes had a main of cocks
Down at the Flags. His job with hounds
At present kept his blood in bounds
From rioting and running hare.
Tom Dansey made him have a care.
He worshipped Dansey heart and soul.
To be a huntsman was his goal;
To be with hounds, to charge full tilt
Blackthorns that made the gentry wilt
Was his ambition and his hope.
He was a hot colt needing rope,
He was too quick to speak his passion
To suit his present huntsman's fashion.

The huntsman, Robin Dawe, looked round,
He sometimes called a favourite hound
Gently, to see the creature turn,
Look happy up and wag his stern.
He smiled and nodded and saluted
To those who hailed him, as it suited,
And patted Pip's, his hunter's neck.
His new pink was without a speck.
He was a red-faced smiling fellow,
His voice clear tenor, full and mellow,
His eyes, all fire, were black and small.
He had been smashed in many a fall.
His eyebrow had a white curved mark
Left by the bright shoe of The Lark
Down in a ditch by Seven Springs.
His coat had all been trod to strings,
His ribs laid bare and shoulder broken,
Being jumped on down at Water's Oaken
The time his horse came down and rolled.
His face was of the country mould
Such as the mason sometimes cutted
On English moulding-ends which jutted
Out of the church walls, centuries since.
And as you never know the quince,
How good he is, until you try,
So, in Dawe's face, what met the eye
Was only part; what lay behind
Was English character and mind,
Great kindness, delicate sweet feeling
(Most shy, most clever in concealing
Its depth) for beauty of all sorts,
Great manliness and love of sports,
A grave, wise thoughtfulness and truth,
A merry fun outlasting youth,
A courage terrible to see,
And mercy for his enemy.
He had a clean-shaved face, but kept
A hedge of whisker neatly clipt,
A narrow strip or picture-frame
(Old Dawe, the woodman, did the same),
Under his chin from ear to ear.

But now the resting hounds gave cheer,

Joyful and Arrogant and Catch-him
Smelt the glad news and ran to snatch him;
The Master's dogcart turned the bend.
Damsel and Skylark knew their friend,
A thrill ran through the pack like fire
And little whimpers ran in quire.
The horses cocked and pawed and whickered,
Young Cothill 's chaser kicked and bickered
And stood on end and struck out sparks,
Joyful and Catch-him sang like larks.
There was the Master in the trap,
Clutching old Roman in his lap,
Old Roman, crazy for his brothers,
And putting frenzy in the others,
To set them at the dogcart wheels,
With thrusting heads and little squeals.

The Master put old Roman by,
And eyed the thrusters heedfully.
He called a few pet hounds and fed
Three special friends with scraps of bread,
Then peeled his wraps, climbed down and strode
Through all those clamourers in the road,
Saluted friends, looked round the crowd,
Saw Harridew's three girls and bowed,
Then took White Rabbit from the groom.

He was Sir Peter Bynd, of Coombe;
Past sixty now, though hearty still,
A living picture of good-will,
An old, grave soldier, sweet and kind,
A courtier with a knightly mind,
Who felt whatever thing he thought.
His face was scarred, for he had fought
Five wars for us. Within his face
Courage and power had their place,
Rough energy, decision, force.
He smiled about him from his horse.
He had a welcome and salute
For all, on horse or wheel or foot,
Whatever kind of life each followed.
His tanned, drawn cheeks looked old and hollowed,
But still his bright blue eyes were young,
And when the pack crashed into tongue,

And stanch White Rabbit shook like fire,
He sent him at it like a flier,
And lived with hounds while horses could

They'm lying in the Ghost Heath Wood,
Sir Peter,' said an earth-stopper,
(Old Baldy Hill), 'you'll find 'em there.
'Z I come'd across I smell 'em plain.
There's one up back, down Tuttock's drain,
But, Lord, it's just a bog, the Tuttocks,
Hounds would be swallered to the buttocks.
Heath Wood, Sir Peter's best to draw.'

Sir Peter gave two minutes' law
For Kingston Challow and his daughter;
He said, 'They're late. We'll start the slaughter.
Ghost Heath, then, Dansey. We'll be going.'

Now, at his word, the tide was flowing.
Off went Maroon, off went the hounds,
Down road, then off, to Chols Elm Grounds,
Across soft turf with dead leaves cleaving
And hillocks that the mole was heaving,
Mild going to those trotting feet.
After the scarlet coats the meet
Came clopping up the grass in spate;
They poached the trickle at the gate,
Their horses' feet sucked at the mud,
Excitement in the horses' blood.
Cocked forward every ear and eye,
They quivered as the hounds went by,
They trembled when they first trod grass,
They would not let another pass,
They scattered wide up Chols Elm Hill.
The wind was westerly but still,
The sky a high fair-weather cloud,
Like meadows ridge-and-furrow ploughed,
Just glinting sun but scarcely moving.
Blackbirds and thrushes thought of loving,
Catkins were out; the day seemed tense

It was so still. At every fence
Cow-parsley pushed its thin green fern.
White-violet leaves showed at the burn.

Young Cothill let his chaser go
Round Chols Elm Field a turn or so
To soothe his edge. The riders went
Chatting and laughing and content
In groups of two or three together;
The hounds, a flock of shaking feather,
Bobbed on ahead, past Chols Elm Cop,
The horses' shoes went clip-a-clop,
Along the stony cart-track there,
The little spinney was all bare,
But in the earth-moist winter day
The scarlet coats twixt tree and spray,
The glistening horses pressing on,
The brown-faced lads, Bill, Dick and John,
And all the hurry to arrive,
Were beautiful like spring alive.

The hounds melted away with Master,
The tanned lads ran, the field rode faster,
The chatter joggled in the throats
Of riders bumping by like boats,
'We really ought to hunt a bye day.'
'Fine day for scent,' 'A fly or die day.'
'They chopped a bagman in the check,
He had a collar round his neck.'
'Old Ridden's girl's a pretty flapper.'
'That Vaughan's a cad, the whippersnapper.'
'I tell' ee, lads, I seed' em plain
Down in the Rough at Shifford's Main,
Old Squire stamping like a Duke,
So red with blood I thought he'd puke
In appleplexie, as they do.
Miss Jane stood just as white as dew
And heard him out in just white heat,
And then she trimmed him down a treat.
About Miss Lou it was, or Carrie
(She'd be a pretty peach to marry).'

'Her'll draw up-wind, so us'll go
Down by the furze, we'll see 'em so.'

'Look, there they go, lad!'
There they went,
Across the brook and up the bent,
Past Primrose Wood, past Brady Ride,
Along Ghost Heath to cover side.
The bobbing scarlet, trotting pack,
Turf scatters tossed behind each back,
Some horses blowing with a whinny,
A jam of horses in the spinney,
Close to the ride-gate; leather straining,
Saddles all creaking, men complaining,
Chaffing each other as they past,
On Ghost Heath turf they trotted fast.

Now as they neared the Ghost Heath Wood
Some riders grumbled, 'What's the good?
It's shot all day and poached all night.
We shall draw blank and lose the light,
And lose the scent and lose the day.
Why can't he draw Hope Goneaway,
Or Tuttocks Wood, instead of this?
There's no fox here, there never is.'

But as he trotted up to cover
Robin was watching to discover
What chance there was, and many a token
Told him that though no hound had spoken,
Most of them stirred to something there.
The old hounds' muzzles searched the air,
Thin ghosts of scents were in their teeth
From foxes which had crossed the Heath
Not very many hours before.
'We'll find,' he said, 'I'll bet, a score.'

Along Ghost Heath they trotted well,
The hoof-cuts made the bruised earth smell,
The shaken brambles scattered drops,
Stray pheasants kukkered out of copse,
Cracking the twigs down with their knockings
And planing out of sight with cockings;
A scut or two lopped white to bramble.

And now they gathered to the gamble
At Ghost Heath Wood on Ghost Heath Down.
The hounds went crackling through the brown
Dry stalks of bracken killed by frost.
The wood stood silent in its host
Of halted trees all winter bare.
The boughs, like veins that suck the air,
Stretched tense, the last leaf scarcely stirred,
There came no song from any bird;
The darkness of the wood stood still
Waiting for fate on Ghost Heath Hill.

The whips crept to the sides to view,
The Master gave the nod, and 'Leu,
Leu in. Ed-hoick, ed-hoick. Leu in !
Went Robin, cracking through the whin
And through the hedge-gap into cover.
The binders crashed as hounds went over,
And cock-cock-cock the pheasants rose.
Then up went stern and down went nose,
And Robin's cheerful tenor cried,
Through hazel-scrub and stub and ride:
'Oh, wind him! beauties, push him out,
Yooi, on to him, Yahout, Yahout,
Oh, push him out, Yooi, wind him, wind him!”
The beauties burst the scrub to find him;
They nosed the warren’s clipped green lawn,
The bramble and the broom were drawn,
The covert's northern end was blank.
They turned to draw along the bank
Through thicker cover than the Rough,
Through three-and-four-year understuff
Where Robin's forearm screened his eyes;

'Yooi, find him, beauties,' came his cries.
'Hark, hark to Daffodil,' the laughter
Fall'n from his horn, brought whimpers after,
For ends of scents were everywhere.
He said, 'This Hope's a likely lair,
And there's his billets, grey and furred.
And George, he's moving, there's a bird.'

*
A blue uneasy jay was chacking
(A swearing screech, like tearing sacking)
From tree to tree, as in pursuit,
He said, 'That's it. There’s fox afoot.
And there, they're feathering, there she speaks.
Good Daffodil, good Tarrybreeks,
Hark there to Daffodil, hark, hark!'
The mild horn's note, the soft-flaked spark
Of music fell on that rank scent.
From heart to wild heart magic went.
The whimpering quivered, quavered, rose.
'Daffodil has it. There she goes.
Oh, hark to her!' With wild high crying
From frantic hearts the hounds went flying
To Daffodil, for that rank taint.
A waft of it came warm but faint
In Robin's mouth, and faded so.
'First find a fox, then let him go,'
Cried Robin Dawe. 'For any sake
Ring, Charley, till you're fit to break.'
He cheered his beauties like a lover,
And charged beside them into cover.

John Masefield

Reynard The Fox - Part 2

On old Cold Crendon's windy tops
Grows wintrily Blown Hilcote Copse,
Wind-bitten beech with badger barrows,
Where brocks eat wasp-grubs with their marrows,
And foxes lie on short-grassed turf,
Nose between paws, to hear the surf
Of wind in the beeches drowsily.
There was our fox bred lustily
Three years before, and there he berthed,
Under the beech-roots snugly earthed,
With a roof of flint and a floor of chalk
And ten bitten hens' heads each on its stalk,
Some rabbits' paws, some fur from scuts,
A badger's corpse and a smell of guts.
And there on the night before my tale
He trotted out for a point in the vale.

He saw, from the cover edge, the valley
Go trooping down with its droops of sally
To the brimming river's lipping bend,
And a light in the inn at Water's End.
He heard the owl go hunting by
And the shriek of the mouse the owl made die,
And the purr of the owl as he tore the red
Strings from between his claws and fed;
The smack of joy of the horny lips
Marbled green with the blob by strips.
He saw the farms where the dogs were barking,
Cold Crendon Court and Copsecote Larking;
The fault with the spring as bright as gleed,
Green-slash-laced with water-weed.
A glare in the sky still marked the town,
Though all folk slept and the blinds were down,
The street lamps watched the empty square,
The night-cat sang his evil there.

The fox's nose tipped up and round,
Since smell is a part of sight and sound.
Delicate smells were drifting by,
The sharp nose flaired them heedfully;
Partridges in the clover stubble,
Crouched in a ring for the stoat to nubble.
Rabbit bucks beginning to box;
A scratching place for the pheasant cock

A hare in the dead grass near the drain,
And another smell like the spring again.

A faint rank taint like April coming,
It cocked his ears and his blood went drumming,
For somewhere out by Ghost Heath Stubs
Was a roving vixen wanting cubs.
Over the valley, floating faint
On a warmth of windflaw, came the taint;
He cocked his ears, he' upped his brush,
And he went upwind like an April thrush

By the Roman Road to Braiches Ridge,
Where the fallen willow makes a bridge,
Over the brook by White Hart's Thorn
To the acres thin with pricking corn,
Over the sparse green hair of the wheat,
By the Clench Brook Mill at Clench Brook Leat,
Through Cowfoot Pastures to Nonely Stevens,
And away to Poltrewood St. Jevons.
Past Tott Hill Down all snaked with meuses,
Past Clench St. Michael and Naunton Crucis,
Past Howle's Oak Farm where the raving brain
Of a dog who heard him foamed his chain;
Then off, as the farmer's window opened,
Past Stonepits Farm to Upton Hope End,
Over short sweet grass and worn flint arrows
And the three dumb hows of Tencombe Barrows.
And away and away with a rolling scramble,
Through the sally and up the bramble,
With a nose for the smells the night wind carried,
And his red fell clean for being married;
For clicketting time and Ghost Heath Wood
Had put the violet in his blood.

At Tencombe Rings near the Manor Linney
His foot made the great black stallion whinny,
And the stallion's whinny aroused the stable
And the bloodhound bitches stretched their cable,
And the clink of the bloodhounds' chain aroused

The sweet-breathed kye as they chewed and drowsed,
And the stir of the cattle changed the dream
Of the cat in the loft to tense green gleam.
The red-wattled black cock hot from Spain
Crowed from his perch for dawn again,
His breast-pufft hens, one-legged on perch,
Gurgled, beak-down, like men in church,
They crooned in the dark, lifting one red eye
In the raftered roost as the fox went by.

By Tencombe Regis and Slaughters Court,
Through the great grass square of Roman Fort,
By Nun's Wood Yews and the Hungry Hill,
And the Corpse Way Stones all standing still.
By Seven Springs Mead to Deerlip Brook,
And a lolloping leap to Water Hook.
Then with eyes like sparks and his blood awoken,
Over the grass to Water's Oaken,
And over the hedge and into the ride
In Ghost Heath Wood for his roving bride.

Before the dawn he had loved and fed,
And found a kennel, and gone to bed
On a shelf of grass in a thick of gorse
That would bleed a hound and blind a horse.
There he slept in the mild west weather
With his nose and brush well tuckt together,
He slept like a child, who sleeps yet hears
With the self who needs neither eyes nor ears.

He slept while the pheasant cock untucked
His head from his wing, flew down and kukked,
While the drove of the starlings whirred and wheeled
Out of the ash-trees into field,
While with great black flags that flogged and paddled
The rooks went out to the plough and straddled,
Straddled wide on the moist red cheese
Of the furrows driven at Uppat's Leas.

Down in the village men awoke,
The chimneys breathed with a faint blue smoke;
The fox slept on, though tweaks and twitches,
Due to his dreams, ran down his flitches.

The cows were milked and the yards were sluict,
And the cocks and hens let out of roost,
Windows were opened, mats were beaten,
All men's breakfasts were cooked and eaten;
But out in the gorse on the grassy shelf
The sleeping fox looked after himself.

Deep in his dream he heard the life
Of the woodland seek for food or wife,
The hop of a stoat, a buck that thumped
The squeal of a rat as a weasel jumped,
The blackbird's chackering scattering crying,
The rustling bents from the rabbits flying,
Cows in a byre, and distant men,
And Condicote church-clock striking ten.

At eleven o'clock a boy went past,
With a rough-haired terrier following fast.
The boy's sweet whistle and dog's quick yap
Woke the fox from out of his nap.

He rose and stretched till the claws in his pads
Stuck hornily out like long black gads.
He listened a while, and his nose went round
To catch the smell of the distant sound.

The windward smells came free from taint
They were rabbit, strongly, with lime-kiln, faint,
A wild-duck, likely, at Sars Holt Pond,
And sheep on the Sars Holt Down beyond.

The leeward smells were much less certain,
For the Ghost Heath Hill was like a curtain,
Yet vague, from the leeward, now and then,
Came muffled sounds like the sound of men.

He moved to his right to a clearer space,
And all his soul came into his face,
Into his eyes and into his nose,
As over the hill a murmur rose.
His ears were cocked and his keen nose flaired,
He sneered with his lips till his teeth were bared,
He trotted right and lifted a pad,
Trying to test what foes he had.

On Ghost Heath turf was a steady drumming
Which sounded like horses quickly coming,
It died as the hunt went down the dip,
Then Malapert yelped at Myngs's whip.
A bright iron horseshoe clinkt on stone,
Then a man's voice spoke, not one alone,
Then a burst of laughter, swiftly still,
Muffled away by Ghost Heath Hill.
Then, indistinctly, the clop, clip, clep,
On Brady Ride, of a horse's step.
Then silence, then, in a burst, much clearer,
Voices and horses coming nearer,
And another noise, of a pit-pat beat
On the Ghost Hill grass, of foxhound feet.

He sat on his haunches listening hard,
While his mind went over the compass card.
Men were coming and rest was done,
But he still had time to get fit to run;
He could outlast horse and outrace hound,
But men were devils from Lobs's Pound.
Scent was burning, the going good,
The world one lust for a fox's blood,
The main earths stopped and the drains put to,
And fifteen miles to the land he knew.
But of all the ills, the ill least pleasant
Was to run in the light when men were present.
Men in the fields to shout and sign
For a lift of hounds to a fox's line.
Men at the earth, at the long point's end,
Men at each check and none his friend,
Guessing each shift that a fox contrives;
But still, needs must when the devil drives. .

He readied himself, then a soft horn blew,
Then a clear voice carolled, 'Ed-hoick! Eleu! '
Then the wood-end rang with the clear voice crying
And the crackle of scrub where hounds were trying.
Then the horn blew nearer, a hound's voice quivered,
Then another, then more, till his body shivered,
He left his kennel and trotted thence
With his ears flexed back and his nerves all tense.
He trotted down with his nose intent
For a fox's line to cross his scent,
It was only fair (he being a stranger)
That the native fox should have the danger.
Danger was coming! so swift, so swift,
That the pace of his trot began to lift.
The blue-winged Judas, a jay began
Swearing, hounds whimpered, air stank of man.

He hurried his trotting, he now felt frighted,
It was his poor body made hounds excited.
He felt as he ringed the great wood through
That he ought to make for the land he knew.

Then the hounds' excitement quivered and quickened,
Then a horn blew death till his marrow sickened,
Then the wood behind was a crash of cry
For the blood in his veins; it made him fly.

They were on his line; it was death to stay.
He must make for home by the shortest way,
But with all this yelling and all this wrath
And all these devils, how find a path?

He ran like a stag to the wood's north corner,
Where the hedge was thick and the ditch a yawner,
But the scarlet glimpse of Myngs on Turk,
Watching the woodside, made him shirk.

He ringed the wood and looked at the south.
What wind there was blew into his mouth.
But close to the woodland's blackthorn thicket
Was Dansey, still as a stone, on picket.
At Dansey's back were a twenty more
Watching the cover and pressing fore.

The fox drew in and flaired with his muzzle.
Death was there if he messed the puzzle.
There were men without and hounds within,
A crying that stiffened the hair on skin,
Teeth in cover and death without,
Both deaths coming, and no way out.

His nose ranged swjftly, his heart beat fast,
Then a crashing cry rose up in a blast,

Then horsehooves trampled, then horses' flitches
Burst their way through the hazel switches.
Then the horn again made the hounds like mad,
And a man, quite near, said, 'Found, by Gad! '
And a man, quite near, said, 'Now he'll break.
Larks Ley bourne Copse is the line he'll take.'
And men moved up with their talk and stink
And the traplike noise of the horseshoe clink.
Men whose coming meant death from teeth
In a worrying wrench, with him beneath.

The fox sneaked down by the cover side
(With his ears flexed back) as a snake would glide;
He took the ditch at the cover-end,
He hugged the ditch as his only friend.
The blackbird cock with the golden beak
Got out of his way with a jabbering shriek,
And the shriek told Tom on the raking bay
That for eighteen pence he was gone away.

He ran in the hedge in the triple growth
Of bramble and hawthorn, glad of both,
Till a couple of fields were past, and then
Came the living death of the dread of men.

Then, as he listened, he heard a 'Hoy ! '
Tom Danser's horn and 'A wa-wa-woy ! '
Then all hounds crying with all their forces,
Then a thundering down of seventy horses.
Robin Dawe's horn and halloos of ' Hey,
Hark Hollar, Hoik ! 'and' Gone away! '
'Hark Hollar, Hoik ! 'and a smack of the whip'
A yelp as a tail hound caught the clip.
'Hark Hollar, Hark Hollar! ' then Robin made
Pip go crash through the cut and laid.
Hounds were over and on his line
With a head like bees upon Tipple Tine.
The sound of the nearness sent a flood
Of terror of death through the fox's blood.
He upped his brush and he cocked his nose,

And he went upwind as a racer goes.

Bold Robin Dawe was over first,
Cheering his hounds on at the burst;
The field were spurring to be in it.
'Hold hard, sirs, give them half a minute,'
Came from Sir Peter on his white.
The hounds went romping with delight
Over the grass and got together,
The tail hounds galloped hell-for-leather
After the pack at Myngs's yell.
A cry like every kind of bell
Rang from these rompers as they raced.

The riders, thrusting to be placed,
Jammed down their hats and shook their horses;
The hounds romped past with all their forces,
They crashed into the blackthorn fence.
The scent was heavy on their sense,
So hot, it seemed the living thing,
It made the blood within them sing;
Gusts of it made their hackles rise,
Hot gulps of it were agonies
Of joy, and thirst for blood and passion.
'Forrard ! ' cried Robin, ' that's the fashion.'
He raced beside his pack to cheer.
The field's noise died upon his ear,
A faint horn, far behind, blew thin
In cover, lest some hound were in.
Then instantly the great grass rise
Shut field and cover from his eyes,
He and his racers were alone.
'A dead fox or a broken bone,'
Said Robin, peering for his prey.

The rise, which shut the field away,
Showed him the vale's great map spread out,
The down's lean flank and thrusting snout,
Pale pastures, red-brown plough, dark wood,
Blue distance, still as solitude,

Glitter of water here and there,
The trees so delicately bare,
The dark green gorse and bright green holly.
'0 glorious God,' he said, 'how jolly!”
And there downhill two fields ahead
The lolloping red dog-fox sped
Over Poor Pastures to the brook.
He grasped these things in one swift look,
Then dived into the bullfinch heart
Through thorns that ripped his sleeves apart
And skutched new blood upon his brow.
'His point's Lark's Leybourne Covers now,
'Said Robin, landing with a grunt.
'Forrard, my beautifuls ! '
The hunt
Followed downhill to race with him,
White Rabbit, with his swallow's skim,
Drew within hail. 'Quick burst, Sir Peter,'
'A traveller. Nothing could be neater.
Making for Godsdown Clumps, I take it?'
'Lark's Leybourne, sir, if he can make it.
Forrard !'
Bill Ridden thundered down,
His big mouth grinned beneath his frown,
The hounds were going away from horses.
He saw the glint of watercourses,
Yell Brook and Wittold's Dyke, ahead,
His horseshoes sliced the green turf red.
Young Cothill's chaser rushed and past him,
Nob Manor, running next, said ' Blast him!
The poet chap who thinks he rides.'
Hugh Colway's mare made straking strides
Across the grass, the Colonel next,
Then Squire, volleying oaths, and vext,
Fighting his hunter for refusing;
Bell Ridden, like a cutter cruising,
Sailing the grass; then Cob on Warder;
Then Minton Price upon Marauder ;
Ock Gurney with his eyes intense,
Burning as with a different sense,
His big mouth muttering glad 'By damns!'
Then Pete, crouched down from head to hams,
Rapt like a saint, bright focussed flame;
Bennett, with devils in his wame,
Chewing black cud and spitting slanting;
Copse scattering jests and Stukely ranting;
Sal Ridden taking line from Dansey;
(Long Robert forcing Necromancy;
A dozen more with bad beginnings;
Myngs riding hard to snatch an innings.
A wild last hound with high shrill yelps
Smacked forrard with some whipthong skelps.

Then last of all, at top of rise,
The crowd on foot, all gasps and eyes;
The run up hill had winded them.

They saw the Yell Brook like a gem
Blue in the grass a short mile on ;
They heard faint cries, but hounds were gone
A good eight fields and out of sight,
Except a rippled glimmer white
Going away with dying cheering,
And scarlet flappings disappearing,
And scattering horses going, going,
Going like mad, White Rabbit snowing
Far on ahead, a loose horse taking
Fence after fence with stirrups shaking,
And scarlet specks and dark specks dwindling.

Nearer, were twigs knocked into kindling,
A much-bashed fence still dropping stick,
Flung clods still quivering from the kick;
Cut hoof-marks pale in cheesy clay,
The horse-smell blowing clean away;
Birds flitting back into the cover.
One last faint cry, then all was over.
The hunt had been, and found, and gone.

At Neaking's Farm three furlongs on,
Hounds raced across the Waysmore Road,
Where many of the riders slowed
To tittup down a grassy lane
Which led as hounds led in the main,
And gave no danger of a fall.
There as they tittupped one and all,
Big Twenty Stone came scattering by,
His great mare made the hoof-casts fly.
'By leave!' he cried. 'Come on! Come up !
This fox is running like a tup ;
Let's leave this lane and get to terms,
No sense in crawling here like worms.
Come, let me pass and let me start.

This fox is running like a hart,
And this is going to be a run.
Come on, I want to see the fun.
Thanky. By leave! Now, Maiden, do it.
'He faced the fence and put her through it,
Shielding his eyes lest spikes should blind him;
The crashing blackthorn closed behind him.
Mud-scatters chased him as he scudded;
His mare's ears cocked, her neat feet thudded.

The kestrel cruising over meadow
Watched the hunt gallop on his shadow,
Wee figures, almost at a stand,
Crossing the multicoloured land,
Slow as a shadow on a dial. ,

Some horses, swerving at a trial,
Balked at a fence: at gates they bunched.
The mud about the gates was dunched
Like German cheese; men pushed for places,
And kicked the mud into the faces
Of those who made them room to pass.
The half-mile's gallop on the grass
Had tailed them out and warmed their blood.
'His point's the Banner Barton Wood.'
'That, or Goat's Gorse.' 'A stinger, this.'
'You're right in that; by Jove, it is.'
'An upwind travelling fox, by George!'
'They say Tom viewed him at the forge.'
'Well, let me pass and let's be on.'

They crossed the lane to Tolderton,
The hill-marl died to valley clay,
And there before them ran the grey
Yell Water, swirling as it ran,
The Yell Brook of the hunting man.
The hunters eyed it and were grim.

They saw the water snaking slim
Ahead, like silver; they could see
(Each man) his pollard willow-tree
Firming the bank; they felt their horses
Catch the gleam's hint and gather forces;
They heard the men behind draw near.
Each horse was trembling as a spear
Trembles in hand when tense to hurl.
They saw the brimmed brook's eddies curl;
The willow-roots like water-snakes;
The beaten holes the ratten makes.
They heard the water's rush; they heard
Hugh Colway's mare come like a bird;
A faint cry from the hounds ahead,
Then saddle-strain, the bright hooves' tread,
Quick words, the splash of mud, the launch,
The sick hope that the bank be staunch,
Then Souse, with Souse to left and right.
Maroon across, Sir Peter's white
Down but pulled up, Tom over, Hugh
Mud to the hat but over too,
Well splashed by Squire, who was in.

With draggled pink stuck close to skin
The Squire leaned from bank and hauled
His mired horse's rein; he bawled
For help from each man racing by.
'What, help you pull him out? Not I.
What made you pull him in ? ' they said.
Nob Manor cleared and turned his head,
And cried, 'Wade up. The ford's upstream.'
'Ock Gurney in a cloud of steam
Stood by his dripping cob and wrung
The taste of brook mud from his tongue,
And scraped his poor cob's pasterns clean.
'Lord, what a crowner we've a-been.
This jumping brook's a mucky job.'
He muttered, grinning, 'Lord, poor cob!
Now, sir, let me.' He turned to Squire
And cleared his hunter from the mire
By skill and sense and strength of arm.

Meanwhile the fox passed Nonesuch Farm,
Keeping the spinney on his right.
Hounds raced him here with all their might
Along the short firm grass, like fire.
The cowman viewed him from the byre
Lolloping on, six fields ahead,
Then hounds, still carrying such a head
It made him stare, then Rob on Pip,
Sailing the great grass like a ship,
Then grand Maroon in all his glory,
Sweeping his strides, his great chest hoary
With foam fleck and the pale hill-marl.
They strode the Leet, they flew the Snarl,
They knocked the nuts at Nonesuch Mill,
Raced up the spur of Gallows Hill
And viewed him there. The line he took
Was Tineton and the Pantry Brook,
Going like fun and hounds like mad.
Tom glanced to see what friends he had
Still within sight, before he turned
The ridge's shoulder; he discerned,
One field away, young Cothill sailing
Easily up. Pete Gurney failing,
Hugh Colway quartering on Sir Peter,
Bill waiting on the mare to beat her,
Sal Ridden skirting to the right.
A horse, with stirrups flashing bright
Over his head at every stride,
Looked like the Major's; Tom espied
Far back a scarlet speck of man
Running, and straddling as he ran.
Charles Copse was up, Nob Manor followed,
Then Bennett's big-boned black that wallowed,
Clumsy, but with the strength of ten.
Then black and brown and scarlet men,
Brown horses, white and black and grey,
Scattered a dozen fields away.
The shoulder shut the scene away.

From the Gallows Hill to the Tineton Copse
There were ten ploughed fields, like ten full-stops,
All wet red clay, where a horse's foot
Would be swathed, feet thick, like an ash-tree root.
The fox raced on, on the headlands firm,
Where his swift feet scared the coupling worm;
The rooks rose raving to curse him raw,
He snarled a sneer at their swoop and caw.
Then on, then on, down a half-ploughed field

Where a ship-like plough drove glitter-keeled,
With a bay horse near and a white horse leading,
And a man saying 'Zook,' and the red earth bleeding.
He gasped as he saw the ploughman drop
The stilts and swear at the team to stop.
The plough man ran in his red clay clogs,
Crying, 'Zick un, Towzer; zick, good dogs! '
A couple of wire-haired lurchers lean
Arose from his wallet, nosing keen;
With a rushing swoop they were on his track,
Putting chest to stubble to bite his back.
He swerved from his line with the curs at heel,
The teeth as they missed him clicked like steel.
With a worrying snarl, they quartered on him,
While the ploughman shouted, 'Zick; upon him.'

The lurcher dogs soon shot their bolt,
And the fox raced on by the Hazel Holt,
Down the dead grass tilt to the sandstone gash
Of the Pantry Brook at Tineton Ash.
The loitering water, flooded full,
Had yeast on its lip like raddled wool,
It was wrinkled over with Arab script
Of eddies that twisted up and slipt.
The stepping-stones had a rush about them,
So the fox plunged in and swam without them.

He crossed to the cattle's drinking shallow,
Firmed up with rush and the roots of mallow;
He wrung his coat from his draggled bones
And romped away for the Sarsen Stones.

A sneaking glance with his ears flexed back
Made sure that his scent had failed the pack,
For the red clay, good for corn and roses,
Was cold for scent and brought hounds to noses.

He slackened pace by the Tineton Tree
(A vast hollow ash-tree grown in three),
He wriggled a shake and padded slow,
Not sure if the hounds were on or no.

A horn blew faint, then he heard the sounds
Of a cantering huntsman; lifting hounds;
The ploughman had raised his hat for sign,
And the hounds were lifted and on his line.
He heard the splash in the Pantry Brook,
And a man's voice: 'Thiccy's the line he took.'
And a clear 'Yoi doit !' and a whimpering quaver,
Though the lurcher dogs had dulled the savour.

The fox went off while the hounds made halt,
And the horses breathed and the field found fault,
But the whimpering rose to a crying crash
By the hollow ruin of Tineton Ash.
Then again the kettledrum horsehooves beat,
And the green blades bent to the fox's feet,
And the cry rose keen not far behind
Of the ' Blood, blood, blood,' in the foxhounds' mind.

The fox was strong, he was full of running,
He could run for an hour and then be cunning,
But the cry behind him made him chill,
They were nearer now and they meant to kill.
They meant to run him until his blood
Clogged on his heart as his brush with mud,
Till his back bent up and his tongue hung flagging,
And his belly and brush were filthed from dragging;
Till he crouched stone-still, dead-beat and dirty,
With nothing but teeth against the thirty.
And all the way to that blinding end
He would meet with men and have none his friend:
Men to holloa and men to run him,
With stones to stagger and yells to stun him;
Men to head him, with whips to beat him,
Teeth to mangle and mouths to eat him.

And all the way, that wild high crying,
To cold his blood with the thought of dying,
The horn and the cheer, and the drum-like thunder
Of the horsehooves stamping the meadows under.
He upped his brush and went with a will
For the Sarsen Stones on Wan Dyke Hill.

As he ran the meadow by Tineton Church
A christening party left the porch;
They stood stock still as he pounded by,
They wished him luck but they thought he'd die.
The toothless babe in his long white coat
Looked delicate meat, the fox took note;
But the sight of them grinning there, pointing finger,
Made him put on steam till he went a stinger.

Past Tineton Church, over Tineton Waste,
With the lolloping ease of a fox's haste,
The fur on his chest blown dry with the air,
His brush still up and his cheek-teeth bare.
Over the Waste, where the ganders grazed,
The long swift lilt of his loping lazed,
His ears cocked up as his blood ran higher,
He saw his point, and his eyes took fire.
The Wan Dyke Hill with its fir-tree barren,
Its dark of gorse and its rabbit-warren,
The Dyke on its heave like a tightened girth,
And holes in the Dyke where a fox might earth.
He had rabbited there long months before,
The earths were deep and his need was sore;
The way was new, but he took a bearing,
And rushed like a blown ship billow-sharing.

Off Tineton Common to Tineton Dean,
Where the wind-hid elders pushed with green;
Through the Dean's thin cover across the lane,
And up Midwinter to King of Spain.
Old Joe, at digging his garden grounds,
Said: 'A fox, being hunted; where be hounds?
0 lord, my back, to be young again,

‘Stead a zellin' zider in King of Spain!
0 hark! I hear' em, 0 sweet, 0 sweet.
Why there be redcoat in Gearge's wheat.
And there be redcoat, and there they gallop.
Thur go a browncoat down a wallop.
Quick, Ellen, quick! Come, Susan, fly !
Here'm hounds. I zeed the fox go by,
Go by like thunder, go by like blasting,
With his girt white teeth all looking ghasting.
Look, there come hounds.! Hark, hear 'em crying?
Lord, belly to stubble, ain't they flying!
There's huntsman, there. The fox come past
(As I was digging) as fast as fast.
He's only been gone a minute by ;
A girt dark dog as pert as pye.'
Ellen and Susan came out scattering
Brooms and dustpans till all was clattering;
They saw the pack come head-to-foot
Running like racers, nearly mute;
Robin and Dansey quartering near,
All going gallop like startled deer.
A half-dozen flitting scarlets showing
In the thin green Dean where the pines were growing.
Blackcoats and browncoats thrusting and spurring,
Sending the partridge coveys whirring.
Then a rattle uphill and a clop up lane,
It emptied the bar of the King of Spain.

Tom left his cider, Dick left his bitter,
Granfer James left his pipe and spitter ;
Out they came from the sawdust floor.
They said, 'They'm going.'They said, '0 Lor' ! '
The fox raced on, up the Barton Balks,
With a crackle of kex in the nettle stalks,
Over Hammond's grass to the dark green line
Of the larch-wood smelling of turpentine.
Scratch Steven Larches, black to the sky,
A sadness breathing with one long sigh,
Grey ghosts of trees under funeral plumes,
A mist of twig over soft brown glooms.
As he entered the wood he heard the smacks,
Chip-jar, of the fir-pole feller's axe.
He swerved to the left to a broad green ride,
Where a boy made him rush for the farther side.
He swerved to the left, to the Barton Road,
But there were the timberers come to load
Two timber-carts and a couple of carters
With straps round their knees instead of garters.

He swerved to the right, straight down the wood,
The carters watched him, the boy hallooed.
He leaped from the larch-wood into tillage,
The cobbler's garden of Barton village.

The cobbler bent at his wooden foot,
Beating sprigs in a broken boot;
He wore old glasses with thick horn rim,
He scowled at his work, for his sight was dim.
His face was dingy, his lips were grey,
From primming sparrowbills day by day.
As he turned his boot he heard a noise
At his garden-end, and he thought, 'It's boys.'

He saw his cat nip up on the shed,
Where her back arched up till it touched her head;
He saw his rabbit race round and round
Its little black box three feet from ground.
His six hens cluckered and flocked to perch,
'That's boys,' said cobbler,'so I'll go search.'
He reached his stick and blinked in his wrath,
When he saw 'a fox in his garden path.

The fox swerved left and scrambled out,
Knocking crinked green shells from the brussels-sprout,
He scrambled out through the cobbler's paling,
And up Pill's orchard to Purton's Tailing,
Across the plough at the top of bent,
Through the heaped manure to kill his scent,
Over to Aldam's, up to Cappell's.
Past Nursery Lot with its whitewashed apples,
Past Colston's Broom, past Gaunt's, past Shere's,
Past Foxwhelps' Oasts with their hooded ears,
Past Monk's Ash Clerewell, past Beggars' Oak,
Past the great elms blue with the Hinton smoke.
Along Long Hinton to Hinton Green,
Where the wind-washed steeple stood serene
With its golden bird still sailing air.
Past Banner Barton, past Chipping Bare,
Past Madding's Hollow, down Dundry Dip,

And up Goose Grass to the Sailing Ship.

The three black firs of the Ship stood still
On the bare chalk heave of the Dundry Hill.
The fox looked back as he slackened past
The scaled red-bole of the mizen-mast.

There they were coming, mute but swift
A scarlet smear in the blackthorn rift,
A white horse rising, a dark horse flying,
And the, hungry hounds too tense for crying.
Stormcock leading, his stern spear straight,
Racing as though for a piece of plate,
Little speck horsemen field on field;
Then Dansey viewed him and Robin squealed.

At the 'View Halloo ! ' the hounds went frantic:
Back went Stormcock and up went Antic,
Up went Skylark as Antic sped,
It was zest to blood how they carried head.
Skylark drooped as Maroon drew by,
Their hackles lifted, they scored to cry.

The fox knew well that, before they tore him,
They should try their speed on the downs before him.
There were three more miles to the Wan Dyke Hill,
But his heart was high that he beat them still.
The wind of the downland charmed his bones,
So off he went for the Sarsen Stones.

The moan of the three great firs in the wind
And the 'Ai ' of the foxhounds died behind;

Wind-dapples followed the hill-wind's breath
On the Kill Down Gorge where the Danes found death.
Larks scattered up; the peewits feeding
Rose in a flock from the Kill Down Steeding.
The hare leaped up from her form and swerved
Swift left for the Starveall, harebell-turved.
On the wind-bare thorn some longtails prinking
Cried sweet as though wind-blown glass were chinking.
Behind came thudding and loud halloo,
Or a cry from hounds as they came to view.

The pure clean air came sweet to his lungs,
Till he thought foul scorn of those crying tongues.
In a three mile more he would reach the haven
In the Wan Dyke croaked on by the raven.
In a three mile more he would make his berth
On the hard cool floor of a Wan Dyke earth,
Too deep for spade, too curved for terrier,
With the pride of the race to make rest the merrier.
In a three mile more he would reach his dream,
So his game heart gulped and he put on steam.

Like a rocket shot to a ship ashore
The lean red bolt of his body tore,
Like a ripple of wind running swift on grass;
Like a shadow on wheat when a cloud blows past,
Like a turn at the buoy in a cutter sailing
When the bright green gleam lips white at the railing,
Like the April snake whipping back to sheath,
Like the gannets' hurtle on fish beneath,
Like a kestrel chasing, like a sickle reaping,
Like all things swooping, like all things sweeping,
Like a hound for stay, like a stag for swift,
With his shadow beside like spinning drift.

Past the gibbet-stock all stuck with nails,
Where they hanged in chains what had hung at jails,
Past Ashmundshowe where Ashmund sleeps,
And none but the tumbling peewit weeps,
Past Curlew Calling, the gaunt grey corner

Where the curlew comes as a summer mourner,
Past Blowbury Beacon, shaking his fleece,
Where all winds hurry and none brings peace;
Then down on the mile-long green decline,
Where the turf's like spring and the air's like wine,
Where the sweeping spurs of the downland spill
Into Wan Brook Valley and Wan Dyke Hill.

On he went with a galloping rally
Past Maesbury Clump for Wan Brook Valley.
The blood in his veins went romping high,
'Get on, on, on, to the earth or die.'
The air of the downs went purely past .
Till he felt the glory of going fast,
Till the terror of death, though there indeed,
Was lulled for a while by his pride of speed. "
He was romping away from hounds and hunt,
He had Wan Dyke Hill and his earth in front,
In a one mile more when his point was made
He would rest in safety from dog or spade;
Nose between paws he would hear the shout
Of the 'Gone to earth! ' to the hounds without,
The whine of the hounds, and their cat-feet gadding,
Scratching the earth, and their breath pad-padding;
He would hear the horn call hounds away,
And rest in peace till another day.

In one mile more he would lie at rest,
So for one mile more he would go his best.
He reached the dip at the long droop's end
And he took what speed he had still to spend.
So down past Maesbury beech-clump grey
That would not be green till the end of May,
Past Arthur's Table, the white chalk boulder,
Where pasque flowers purple the down's grey shoulder,
Past Quichelm's Keeping, past Harry's Thorn,
To Thirty Acre all thin with corn.

As he raced the corn towards Wan Dyke Brook
The pack had view of the way he took;

Robin hallooed from the downland's crest,
He capped them on till they did their best.
The quarter-mile to the Wan Brook's brink
Was raced as quick as a man can think.

And here, as he ran to the huntsman's yelling,
The fox first felt that the pace was telling;
His body and lungs seemed all grown old,
His legs less certain, his heart less bold,
The hound-noise nearer, the hill-slope steeper,
The thud in the blood of his body deeper.
His pride in his speed, his joy in the race
Were withered away, for what use was pace?
He had run his best, and the hounds ran better,
Then the going worsened, the earth was wetter.
Then his brush drooped down till it sometimes dragged,
And his fur felt sick and his chest was tagged
With taggles of mud, and his pads seemed lead;
It was well for him he'd an earth ahead.
Down he went to the brook and over,
Out of the corn and into the clover,
Over the slope that the Wan Brook drains,
Past Battle Tump where they earthed the Danes,
Then up the hjll that the Wan Dyke rings
Where the Sarsen Stones stand grand like kings.

Seven Sarsens of granite grim,
As he ran them by they looked at him;
As he leaped the lip of their earthen paling
The hounds were gaining and he was failing.

He passed the Sarsens, he left the spur,
He pressed uphill to the blasted fir,
He slipped as he leaped the hedge; he slithered.
'He's mine,' thought Robin. 'He's done; he's dithered.'

At the second attempt he cleared the fence,
He turned half-right where the gorse was dense,
He was leading hounds by a furlong clear,
He was past his best, but his earth was near.
He ran up gorse to the spring of the ramp,
The steep green wall of the dead men's camp,
He sidled up it and scampered down
To the deep green ditch of the Dead Men's Town.

Within, as he reached that soft green turf,
The wind, blowing lonely, moaned like surf,
Desolate ramparts rose up steep
On either side, for the ghosts to keep.
He raced the trench, past the rabbit warren,
Close-grown with moss which the wind made barren;
He passed the spring where the rushes spread,
And there in the stones was his earth ahead.
One last short burst upon failing feet -
There life lay waiting, so sweet, so sweet,
Rest in a darkness, balm for aches.

The earth was stopped. It was barred with stakes.

With the hounds at head so close behind
He had to run as he changed his mind.
This earth, as he saw, was stopped, but still
There was one earth more on the Wan Dyke Hill-
A rabbit burrow a furlong on ;
He could kennel there till the hounds were gone.
Though his death seemed near he did not blench,
He upped his brush and he ran the trench.

He ran the trench while the wind moaned treble,
Earth trickled down, there were falls of pebble.
Down in the valley of that dark gash
The wind-withered grasses looked like ash.

Trickles of stones and earth fell down
In that dark alley of Dead Men's Town.
A hawk arose from a fluff of feathers,
From a distant fold came a bleat of wethers.
He heard no noise from the hounds behind
But the hill-wind moaning like something blind.

He turned the bend in the hill, and there
Was his rabbit-hole with its mouth worn bare;
But there, with a gun tucked under his arm,
Was young Sid Kissop of Purlpit's Farm,
With a white hob ferret to drive the rabbit
Into a net which was set to nab it.
And young Jack Cole peered over the wall,
And loosed a pup with a 'Z'bite en, Saul! '
The terrier pup attacked with a will,
So the fox swerved right and away downhill.

Down from the ramp of the Dyke he ran
To the brackeny patch where the gorse began,
Into the gorse, where the hill's heave hid
The line he took from the eyes of Sid;
He swerved downwind and ran like a hare
For the wind-blown spinney below him there.

He slipped from the gorse to the spinney dark
(There were'curled grey growths on the oak-tree bark) ;
He saw no more of the terrier pup,
But he heard men speak and the hounds come up.

He crossed the spinney with ears intent
For the cry of hounds on the way he went;
His heart was thumping, the hounds were near now,
He could make no sprint at a cry and cheer now,
He was past his perfect, his strength was failing,
His brush sag-sagged and his legs were ailing.

He felt, as he skirted Dead Men's Town,
That in one mile more they would have him down.

Through the withered oak's wind-crouching tops
He saw men's scarlet above the copse,
He heard men's oaths, yet he felt hounds slacken,
In the frondless stalks of the brittle bracken.
He felt that the unseen link which bound
His spine to the nose of the leading hound
Was snapped, that the hounds no longer knew
Which way to follow nor what to do;
That the threat of the hound's teeth left his neck,
They had ceased to run, they had come to check.
They were quartering wide on the Wan Hill's bent.

The terrier's chase had killed his scent.

He heard bits chink as the horses shifted,
He heard hounds cast, then he heard hounds lifted,
But there came no cry from a new attack;
His heart grew steady, his breath came back.

He left the spinney and ran its edge
By the deep dry ditch of the blackthorn hedge;
Then out of the ditch and down the meadow, ,
Trotting at ease in the blackthorn shadow,
Over the track called Godsdown Road,
To the great grass heave of the gods' abode.
He was moving now upon land he knew:
Up Clench Royal and Morton Tew,
The Pol Brook, Cheddesdon, and East Stoke Church,
High Clench St. Lawrence and Tinker's Birch.
Land he had roved on night by night,
For hot blood-suckage or furry bite.
The threat of the hounds behind was gone;
He breathed deep pleasure and trotted on.

While young Sid Kissop thrashed the pup
Robin on Pip came heaving up,
And found his pack spread out at check.
'I'd like to wring your terrier's neck,'
He said, 'you see? He's spoiled our sport.
He's killed the scent.' He broke off short,
And stared at hounds and at the valley.
No jay or magpie gave a rally,
Down in the copse, no circling rooks ,
Rose over fields; old Joyful's looks
Were doubtful in the gorse, the pack
Quested both up and down and back.
He watched 'each hound for each small sign.
They tried, but could not hit the line,
The scent was gone. The field took place
Out of the way of hounds. The pace
Had tailed them out; though four remained:
Sir Peter, on White Rabbit, stained
Red from the brooks, Bill Ridden cheery,
Hugh Colway with his mare dead weary,
The Colonel with Marauder beat.
They turned towards a thud of feet;
Dansey, and then young Cothill came
(His chestnut mare was galloped tame).
'There's Copse a field behind,' he said.
'Those last miles put them all to bed.
They're strung along the downs like flies.'
Copse and Nob Manor topped the rise.
'Thank God! A check,' they said, 'at last.'

'They cannot own it; you must cast,'
Sir Peter said. The soft horn blew,
Tom turned the hounds upwind. They drew
Upwind, downhill, by spinney-side.
They tried the brambled ditch; they tried
The swamp, all choked with bright green grass
And clumps of rush, and pools like glass,
Long since the dead men's drinking pond.
They tried the white-leaved oak beyond,
But no hound spoke to it or feathered.
The horse-heads drooped like horses tethered,
The men mopped brows. 'An hour's hard run.
Ten miles,' they said, 'we must have done.
It's all of six from Colston's Gorses.'
The lucky got their second horses.

The time ticked by. 'He's lost,' they muttered.
A pheasant rose. A rabbit scuttered.
Men mopped their scarlet cheeks and drank.
They drew downwind along the bank
(The Wan Way) on the hill's south spur,
Grown with dwarf oak and juniper,
Like dwarves alive, but no hound spoke.
The seepings made the ground one soak.
They turned the spur; the hounds were beat.
Then Robin shifted in his seat
Watching for signs, but no signs showed.
'I'll lift across the Godsdown Road
Beyond the spinney,' Robin said.
Tom turned them; Robin went ahead.

Beyond the copse a great grass fallow
Stretched towards Stoke and Cheddesdon Mallow,
A rolling grass where hounds grew keen.
' Yoi do it, then! This is where he's been,'
Said Robin, eager at their joy.
'Yooi, Joyful, lad! Yooi, Cornerboy !
They're on to him.'
At his reminders
The keen hounds hurried to the finders.
The finding hounds began to hurry,
Men jammed their hats, prepared to scurry.
The 'Ai, Ai,' of the cry began,
Its spirit passed to horse and man;
The skirting hounds romped to the cry.
Hound after hound cried 'Ai, Ai, Ai,'
Till all were crying, running, closing,
Their heads well up and no heads nosing.
Joyful ahead with spear-straight stern
They raced the great slope to the burn,
Robin beside them, Tom behind
Pointing past Robin down the wind.

For there, two furlongs on, he viewed
On Holy Hill or Cheddesdon Rood,
Just where the plough land joined the grass,
A speck down the first furrow pass,
A speck the colour of the plough.

'Yonder he goes. We'll have him now,'
He cried. The speck passed slowly on,
It reached the ditch, paused, and was gone.

Then down the slope and up the Rood
Went the hunt's gallop. Godsdown Wood
Dropped its last oak-leaves at the rally.
Over the Rood to High Clench Valley
The gallop led: the redcoats scattered,
The fragments of the hunt were tattered
Over five fields, ev'n since the check.
“A dead fox or a broken neck,'
Said Robin Dawe. 'Come up, the Dane.'
The hunter lent against the rein,
Cocking his ears; he loved to see
The hounds at cry. The hounds and he
The chiefs in all that feast of pace.

The speck in front began to race.
The fox heard hounds get on to his line,
And again the terror went down his spine;
Again the back of his neck felt cold,
From the sense of the hound's teeth taking hold.
But his legs were rested, his heart was good,
He had breath to gallop to Mourne End Wood;
It was four miles more, but an earth at end,
So he put on pace down the Rood Hill Bend.

Down the great grass slope which the oak-trees dot,
With a swerve to the right from the keeper's cot,
Over High Clench Brook in its channel deep,
To the grass beyond, where he ran to sheep.

The sheep formed line like a troop of horse,
They swerved, as he passed, to front his course.
From behind, as he ran, a cry arose:

'See the sheep there. Watch them. There he goes! '

He ran the sheep that their smell might check
The hounds from his scent and save his neck,
But in two fields more he was made aware
That the hounds still ran ; Tom had viewed him there.

Tom had held them on through the taint of sheep;
They had kept his line, as they meant to keep.
They were running hard with a burning scent,
And Robin could see which way he went.
The pace that he went brought strain to breath,
He knew as he ran that the grass was death.

He ran the slope towards Morton Tew
That the heave of the hill might stop the view,
Then he doubled down to the Blood Brook red,
And swerved upstream in the brook's deep bed.
He splashed the shallows, he swam the deeps,
He crept by banks as a moorhen creeps;
He heard the hounds shoot over his line,
And go on, on, on, towards Cheddesdon Zine.

In the minute's peace he could slacken speed,
The ease from the strain was sweet indeed.
Cool to the pads the water flowed.
He reached the bridge on the Cheddesdon Road.

As he came to light from the culvert dim
Two boys on the bridge looked down on him;
They were young Bill Ripple and Harry Meun :
'Look, there be squirrel, a-swimmin', see 'un? '

'Noa, ben't a squirrel, be fox, be fox.
Now, Hal, get pebble, we'll give 'en socks.'
Get pebble, Billy, dub 'un a plaster;
There's for thy belly, I'll learn 'ee, master.'

The stones splashed spray in the fox's eyes,
He raced from brook in a burst of shies,
He ran for the reeds in the withy car,
Where the dead flags shake and the wild-duck are.

He pushed through the reeds, which cracked at his passing,
To the High Clench Water, a grey pool glassing;
He heard Bill Ripple, in Cheddesdon Road,
Shout, 'This way, huntsmen, it's here he goed.'

Then 'Leu, Leu, Leu,' went the soft horn's laughter,
The hounds (they had checked) came romping after;
The clop of the hooves on the road was plain,
Then the crackle of reeds, then cries again.

A whimpering first, then Robin's cheer,
Then the 'Ai, Ai, Ai '; they were all too near;
His swerve had brought but a minute's rest;
Now he ran again, and he ran his best.

With a crackle of dead dry stalks of reed
The hounds came romping at topmost speed;
The redcoats ducked as the great hooves skittered
The Blood Brook's shallows to sheets that glittered;
With a cracking whip and a 'Hoik, Hoik, Hoik,
Forrard !" Tom galloped. Bob shouted ' Yoick ! '
Like a running fire the dead reeds crackled;

The hounds' heads lifted, their necks were hackled.
Tom cried to Bob, as they thundered through,
'He is running short, we shall kill at Tew.'
Bob cried to Tom as they rode in team,
'I was sure, that time, that he turned upstream.
As the hounds went over the brook in stride
I saw old Daffodil fling to side,
So I guessed at once, when they checked beyond.'

The ducks flew up from the Morton Pond;
The fox looked up at their tailing strings,
He wished (perhaps) that a fox had wings,
Wings with his friends in a great V straining
The autumn sky when the moon is gaining;
For better the grey sky's solitude
Than to be two miles from the Mourne End Wood
With the hounds behind, clean-trained to run,
And your strength half spent and your breath half done.
Better the reeds and the sky and water
Than that hopeless pad from a certain slaughter.
At the Morton Pond the fields began-
Long Tew's green meadows; he ran, he ran.

First the six green fields that make a mile,
With the lip-ful Clench at the side the while,
With rooks above, slow-circling, showing
The world of men where a fox was going;
The fields all empty, dead grass, bare hedges,
And the brook's bright gleam in the dark of sedges.
To all things else he was dumb and blind;
He ran with the hounds a field behind.

At the sixth green field came the long slow climb
To the Mourne End Wood, as old as time;
Yew woods dark, where they cut for bows,
Oak woods green with the mistletoes,
Dark woods evil, but burrowed deep
With a brock's earth strong, where a fox might sleep.
He saw his point on the heaving hill,
He had failing flesh and a reeling will ;

He felt the heave of the hill grow stiff,
He saw black woods, which would shelter-if
Nothing else, but the steepening slope
And a black line nodding, a line of hope-
The line of the yews on the long slope's brow,
A mile, three-quarters, a half-mile now.

A quarter-mile, but the hounds had viewed;
They yelled to have him this side the wood.
Robin capped them, Tom Dansey steered them;
With a 'Yooi! Yooi! Yooi!' Bill Ridden cheered them.
Then up went hackles as Shatterer led.
'Mob him! ' cried Ridden, 'the wood's ahead.
Turn him, damn it! Yooi! beauties, beat him!
0 God, let them get him: let them eat him!
0 God! ' said Ridden, 'I'll eat him stewed,
If you'll let us get him this side the wood.'

But the pace, uphill, made a horse like stone;
The pack went wild up the hill alone.

Three hundred yards and the worst was past,
The slope was gentler and shorter-grassed;
The fox saw the bulk of the woods grow tall
On the brae ahead, like a barrier-wall.
He saw the skeleton trees show sky
And the yew-trees darken to see him die,
And the line of the woods go reeling black:
There was hope in the woods-and behind, the pack.

Two hundred yards and the trees grew taller,
Blacker, blinder, as hope grew smaller;
Cry seemed nearer, the teeth seemed gripping,
Pulling him back; his pads seemed slipping.
He was all one ache, one gasp, one thirsting,
Heart on his chest-bones, beating, bursting;

The hounds were gaining like spotted pards,
And the wood hedge still was a hundred yards.

The wood hedge black was a two-year, quick
Cut-and-laid that had sprouted thjck
Thorns all over and strongly plied,
With a clean red ditch on the take-off side.

He saw it now as a redness, topped
With a wattle of thorn-work spiky cropped,
Spiky to leap on, stiff to force,
No safe jump for a failing horse;
But beyond it darkness of yews together,
Dark green plumes over soft brown feather,
Darkness of woods where scents were blowing-
Strange scents, hot scents, of wild things going,
Scents that might draw these hounds away.
So he ran, ran, ran to that clean red clay.

Still, as he ran, his pads slipped back,
All his strength seemed to draw, the pack,
The trees drew over him dark like Norns,
He was over the ditch and at the thorns.

I He thrust at the thorns, which would not yield;
He leaped, but fell, in sight of the field.
The hounds went wild as they saw him fall,
The fence stood stiff like a Bucks flint wall.

He gathered himself for a new attempt;
His life before was an old dream dreamt,
All that he was was a blown fox quaking,

Jumping at thorns too stiff for breaking,
While over the grass in crowd, in cry,
Came the grip teeth grinning to make him die,
The eyes intense, dull, smouldering red,
The fell like a ruff round each keen head,
The pace like fire, and scarlet men
Galloping, yelling, 'Yooi, eat him, then! '

He gathered himself, he leaped, he reached
The top of the hedge like a fish-boat beached.
He steadied a second and then leaped down
To the dark of the wood where bright things drown.

He swerved, sharp right, under young green firs.
Robin called on the Dane with spurs.
He cried, 'Come, Dansey; if God's not good,
We shall change our fox in this Mourne End Wood.'
Tom cried back as he charged like spate,
'Mine can't jump that, I must ride to gate.'
Robin answered, 'I'm going at him.
I'll kill that fox, if it kills me, drat him!
We'll kill in covert. Gerr on, now, Dane.'
He gripped him tight and he made it plain,
He slowed him down till he almost stood,
While his hounds went crash into Mourne End Wood.

Like a dainty dancer, with footing nice
The Dane turned side for a leap in twice.
He cleared the ditch to the red clay bank,
He rose at the fence as his quarters sank,
He barged the fence as the bank gave way,
And down he came in a fall of clay.

Robin jumped off him and gasped for breath,
He said, 'That's lost him as sure as death.
They've overrun him. Come up, the Dane.

We'll kill him yet, if we ride to Spain.'

He scrambled up to his horse's back,
He thrust through cover, he called his pack;
He cheered them on till they made it good,
Where the fox had swerved inside the wood.

The fox knew well as he ran the dark,
That the headlong hounds were past their mark:
They had missed his swerve and had overrun,
But their devilish play was not yet done.

For a minute he ran and he heard no sound,
Then a whimper came from a questing hound,
Then a 'This way, beauties,' and then 'Leu, Leu,'
The floating laugh of the horn that blew.
Then the cry again, and the crash and rattle
Of the shrubs burst back as they ran to battle,
Till the wood behind seemed risen from root,
Crying and crashing, to give pursuit,
Till the trees seemed hounds and the air seemed cry,
And the earth so far that he needs but die,
Die where he reeled in the woodland dim,
With a hound's white grips in the spine of him;
For one more burst he could spurt, and then
Wait for the teeth, and the wrench, and men.

He made his spurt for the Mourne End rocks.
The air blew rank with the taint of fox;
The yews gave way to a greener space
Of great stones strewn in a grassy place.
And there was his earth at the great grey shoulder,
Sunk in the ground, of a granite boulder.
A dry, deep burrow with a rocky roof,
Proof against crowbars, terrier-proof,
Life to the dying, rest for bones.

The earth was stopped; it was filled with stones.

Then, for a moment, his courage failed,
His eyes looked up as his body quailed,
Then the coming of death, which all things dread,
Made him run for the wood ahead.

The taint of fox was rank on the air,
He knew, as he ran, there were foxes there.
His strength was broken, his heart was bursting,
His bones were rotten, his throat was thirsting;
His feet were reeling, his brush was thick
From dragging the mud, and his brain was sick.

He thought as he ran of his old delight
In the wood in the moon in an April night,
His happy hunting, his winter loving,
The smells of things in the midnight roving,
The look of his dainty-nosing, red,
Clean-felled dam with her footpad's tread;
Of his sire, so swift, so game, so cunning,
With craft in his brain and power of running;
Their fights of old when his teeth drew blood,
Now he was sick, with his coat all mud.

He crossed the covert, he crawled the bank,
To a meuse in the thorns, and there he sank,
With his ears flexed back and his teeth shown white,
In a rat's resolve for a dying bite.

And there, as he lay, he saw the vale,
That a struggling sunlight silvered pale:
The Deerlip Brook like a strip of steel,
The Nun's Wood Yews where the rabbits squeal,
The great grass square of the Roman Fort,
And the smoke in the elms at Crendon Court.

And above the smoke in the elm-tree tops
Was the beech-clump's blur, Blown Hilcote Copse
Where he and his mates had long made merry
In the bloody joys of the rabbit-herry.

And there as he lay and looked, the cry
Of the hounds at head came rousing by ;
He bent his bones in the blackthorn dim.

But the cry of the hounds was not for him.
Over the fence with a crash they went,
Belly to grass, with a burning scent;
Then came Dansey, yelling to Bob:
'They've changed! Oh, damn it! now here's a job.'
And Bob yelled back: 'Well, we cannot turn 'em,
It's jumper and Antic, Tom, we'll learn 'em!
We must just go on, and I hope we kill.'
They followed hounds down the Mourne End Hill.

The fox lay still in the rabbit-meuse,
On the dry brown dust of the plumes of yews.
In the bottom below a brook went by,
Blue, in a patch, like a streak of sky.
There one by one, with a clink of stone,
Came a red or dark coat on a horse half-blown.
And man to man with a gasp for breath

Said: 'Lord, what a run! I’m fagged to death.'

After an hour no riders came,
The day drew by like an ending game;
A robin sang from a pufft red breast,
The fox lay quiet and took his rest.
A wren on a tree-stump carolled clear,
Then the starlings wheeled in a sudden sheer,
The rooks came home to the twiggy hive
In the elm-tree tops which the winds do drive.
Then the noise of the rooks fell slowly still,
And the lights came out in the Clench Brook Mill ;
Then a pheasant cocked, then an owl began,
With the cry that curdles the blood of man.

The stars grew bright as the yews grew black,
The fox rose stifly and stretched his back.
He flaired the air, then he padded out
To the valley below him, dark as doubt,
Winter-thin with the young green crops,
For old Cold Crendon and Hilcote Copse.

As he crossed the meadows at Naunton Larking
The dogs in town all started barking,
For with feet all bloody and flanks all foam,
The hounds and the hunt were limping home;
Limping home in the dark dead-beaten,
The hounds all rank from a fox they'd eaten.
Dansey saying to Robin Dawe :
'The fastest and longest I ever saw.'
And Robin answered: 'Oh, Tom, 'twas good!
I thought they'd changed in the Mourne End Wood,
But now I feel that they did not change.
We've had a run that was great and strange;
And to kill in the end, at dusk, on grass!
We'll turn to the Cock and take a glass,
For the hounds, poor souls! are past their forces;
And a gallon of ale for our poor horses,
And some bits of bread for the hounds, poor things!
After all they've done (for they've done like kings),

Would keep them going till we get in.
We had it alone from the Nun's Wood Whin'.
Then Tom replied: 'If they changed or not,
There've been few runs longer and none more hot.
We shall talk of to-day until we die.'

The stars grew bright in the winter sky,
The wind came keen with a tang of frost,
The brook was troubled for new things lost,
The copse was happy for old things found,
The fox came home and he went to ground.

And the hunt came home and the hounds were fed,
They climbed to their bench and went to bed;
The horses in stable loved their straw.
'Good-night, my beauties,' said Robin Dawe.

Then the moon came quiet and flooded full
Light and beauty on clouds like wool,
On a feasted fox at rest from hunting,
In the beech-wood grey where the brocks were grunting.

The beech-wood grey rose dim in the night
With moonlight fallen in pools of light,
The long dead leaves on the ground were rimed;
A clock struck twelve and the church-bells chimed.

John Masefield

Roadways

ONE road leads to London,
One road leads to Wales,
My road leads me seawards
To the white dipping sails.

One road leads to the river,
And it goes singing slow;
My road leads to shipping,
Where the bronzed sailors go.

Leads me, lures me, calls me
To salt green tossing sea;
A road without earth's road-dust
Is the right road for me.

A wet road heaving, shining,
And wild with seagull's cries,
A mad salt sea-wind blowing
The salt spray in my eyes.

My road calls me, lures me
West, east, south, and north;
Most roads lead men homewards,
My road leads me forth.

To add more miles to the tally
Of grey miles left behind,
In quest of that one beauty
God put me here to find.

John Masefield

Sea Change

"Goneys an' gullies an' all o' the birds o' the sea
They ain't no birds, not really", said Billy the Dane.
"Not mollies, nor gullies, nor goneys at all", said he,
"But simply the sperrits of mariners livin' again.

"Them birds goin' fishin' is nothin' but the souls o' the drowned,
Souls o' the drowned, an' the kicked as are never no more
An' that there haughty old albatross cruisin' around,
Belike he's Admiral Nelson or Admiral Noah.

"An' merry's the life they are living. They settle and dip,
They fishes, they never stands watches, they waggle their wings;
When a ship comes by, they fly to look at the ship
To see how the nowaday mariners manages things.

"When freezing aloft in a snorter I tell you I wish --
(Though maybe it ain't like a Christian) -- I wish I could be
A haughty old copper-bound albatross dipping for fish
And coming the proud over all o' the birds o' the sea."

John Masefield

Sea Fever

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way, where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

John Masefield

Seven Poems

I
Here in the self is all that man can know
Of Beauty, all the wonder, all the power,
All the unearthly colour, all the glow,
Here in the self which withers like a flower;
Here in the self which fades as hours pass,
And droops and dies and rots and is forgotten
Sooner, by ages, than the mirroring glass
In which it sees its glory still unrotten.
Here in the flesh, within the flesh, behind,
Swift in the blood and throbbing on the bone,
Beauty herself, the universal mind,
Eternal April wandering alone;
The God, the holy Ghost, the atoning Lord,
Here in the flesh, the never yet explored.

II
What am I, Life? A thing of watery salt
Held in cohesion by unresting cells
Which work they know not why, which never halt,
Myself unwitting where their master dwells.
I do not bid them, yet they toil, they spin;
A world which uses me as I use them,
Nor do I know which end or which begin,
Nor which to praise, which pamper, which condemn.
So, like a marvel in a marvel set,
I answer to the vast, as wave by wave
The sea of air goes over, dry or wet,
Or the full moon comes swimming from her cave,
Or the great sun comes north, this myriad I
Tingles, not knowing how, yet wondering why.

III
If I could get within this changing I,
This ever altering thing which yet persists,
Keeping the features it is reckoned by,
While each component atom breaks or twists;
If, wandering past strange groups of shifting forms,
Cells at their hidden marvels hard at work,
Pale from much toil, or red from sudden storms,
I might attain to where the Rulers lurk;
If, pressing past the guards in those grey gates,
The brain's most folded, intertwisted shell,
I might attain to that which alters fates,
The King, the supreme self, the Master Cell;
Then, on Man's earthly peak, I might behold
The unearthly self beyond, unguessed, untold.

IV
Ah, we are neither heaven nor earth, but men;
Something that uses and despises both,
That takes its earth's contentment in the pen,

Then sees the world's injustice and is wroth,
And flinging off youth's happy promise, flies
Up to some breach, despising earthly things,
And, in contempt of hell and heaven, dies
Rather than bear some yoke of priests or kings.
Our joys are not of heaven nor earth, but man's,
A woman's beauty, or a child's delight,
The trembling blood when the discoverer scans
The sought-for world, the gussed-at satellite;
The ringing scene, the stone at point to blush
For unborn men to look at and say 'Hush.'

V
Roses are beauty, but I never see
Those blood drops from the burning heart of June
Glowing like thought upon the living tree
Without a pity that they die so soon,
Die into petals, like those roses old,
Those women, who were summer in men's hearts
Before the smile upon the Sphinx was cold
Or sand had hid the Syrian and his arts.
O myriad dust of beauty that lies thick
Under our feet that not a single grain
But stirred and moved in beauty and was quick
For one brief moon and died nor lived again;
But when the moon rose lay upon the grass
Pasture to living beauty, life that was.

VI
I went into the fields, but you were there
Waiting for me, so all the summer flowers
Were only glimpses of your starry powers;
Beautiful and inspired dust they were.

I went down by the waters, and a bird
Sang with your voice in all the unknown tones
Of all that self of you I have not heard,
So that my being felt you to the bones.

I went into the house, and shut the door
To be alone, but you were there with me;
All beauty in a little room may be,
Though the roof lean and muddy be the floor.

Then in my bed I bound my tired eyes
To make a darkness for my weary brain;
But like a presence you were there again,
Being and real, beautiful and wise,

So that I could not sleep, and cried aloud,
' You strange grave thing, what is it you would say? '
The redness of your dear lips dimmed to grey,

The waters ebbed, the moon hid in a cloud.

VII
Death lies in wait for you, you wild thing in the wood,
Shy-footed, beauty dear, half-seen, half-understood,
Glimpsed in the beech-wood dim and in the dropping fir,
Shy like a fawn and sweet and beauty's minister.
Glimpsed as in flying clouds by night the little moon,
A wonder, a delight, a paleness passing soon.

Only a moment held, only an hour seen,
Only an instant known in all that life has been,
One instant in the sand to drink that gush of grace,
The beauty of your way, the marvel of your face.

Death lies in wait for you, but few short hours he gives;
I perish even as you by whom all spirit lives.
Come to me, spirit, come, and fill my hour of breath
With hours of life in life that pay no toll to death.

John Masefield

Sonnet

FLESH, I have knocked at many a dusty door,
Gone down full many a midnight lane,
Probed in old walls and felt along the floor,
Pressed in blind hope the lighted window-pane,
But useless all, though sometimes when the moon
Was full in heaven and the sea was full,
Along my body's alleys came a tune
Played in the tavern by the Beautiful.
Then for an instant I have felt at point
To find and seize her, whosoe'er she be,
Whether some saint whose glory doth anoint
Those whom she loves, or but a part of me,
Or something that the things not understood
Make for their uses out of flesh and blood.

John Masefield

Sonnet II

Forget all these, the barren fool in power,
The madman in command, the jealous O,
The bitter world, biting its bitter hour,
The cruel now, the happy long ago.

Forget all these, for, though they truly hurt,
Even to the soul, they are not lasting things,
Men are no gods, men tread the city dirt,
But in our souls we can be queens and kings.

And I, O Beauty, O divine white wonder,
On whom my dull eyes, blind to all else, peer,
Have you for peace, that not the whole war's thunder,
Nor the world's hate, can threat or take from here.

So you remain, though all man's passionate seas
Roar their blind tides, I can forget all these.

John Masefield

Tewkesbury Road

IT is good to be out on the road, and going one knows not where,
Going through meadow and village, one knows not whither or why;
Through the grey light drift of the dust, in the keen cool rush of the air,
Under the flying white clouds, and the broad blue lift of the sky.

And to halt at the chattering brook, in a tall green fern at the brink
Where the harebell grows, and the gorse, and the foxgloves purple and white;
Where the shifty-eyed delicate deer troop down to the brook to drink
When the stars are mellow and large at the coming on of the night.

O, to feel the beat of the rain, and the homely smell of the earth,
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, and joy past power of words;
And the blessed green comely meadows are all a-ripple with mirth
At the noise of the lambs at play and the dear wild cry of the birds.

John Masefield

The Everlasting Mercy

Thy place is biggyd above the sterrys cleer,
Noon erthely paleys wrouhte in so statly wyse,
Com on my freend, my brothir moost enteer,
For the I offryd my blood in sacrifise.
John Lydgate.

From '41 to '51
I was folk's contrary son;
I bit my father's hand right through
And broke my mother's heart in two.
I sometimes go without my dinner
Now that I know the times I've gi'n her.

From '51 to '61
I cut my teeth and took to fun.
I learned what not to be afraid of
And what stuff women's lips are made of;
I learned with what a rosy feeling
Good ale makes floors seem like the ceiling,
And how the moon give shiny light
To lads as roll home singing by't.
My blood did leap, my flesh did revel,
Saul Kane was tokened to the devil.

From '61 to'71
I lived in disbelief of Heaven.
I drunk, I fought, I poached, I whored,
I did despite unto the Lord.
I cursed, 'would make a man look pale,
And nineteen times I went to gaol

Now, friends, observe and look upon me,
Mark how the Lord took pity on me.
By Dead Man's Thorn, while setting wires,
Who should come up but Billy Myers,
A friend of mine, who used to be
As black a sprig of hell as me,
With whom I'd planned, to save encroachin',
Which fields and coverts each should poach in.
Now when he saw me set my snare,
He tells me "Get to hell from there.
This field is mine," he says, "by right;
If you poach here, there'll be a fight.
Out now," he says, "and leave your wire;
It's mine."
"It ain't."
"You put."
"You liar."
"You closhy put."
"You bloody liar."
"This is my field."

"This is my wire."
"I'm ruler here."
"You ain't."
"I am."
"I'll fight you for it."
"Right, by damn.
Not now, though, I've a-sprained my thumb,
We'll fight after the harvest hum.
And Silas Jones, that bookie wide,
Will make a purse five pounds a side."
Those were the words, that was the place
By which God brought me into grace.

On Wood Top Field the peewits go
Mewing and wheeling ever so;
And like the shaking of a timbrel
Cackles the laughter of the whimbrel..

In the old quarry-pit they say
Head-keeper Pike was made away.
He walks, head-keeper Pike, for harm,
He taps the windows of the farm;
The blood drips from his broken chin,
He taps and begs to be let in.
On Wood Top, nights, I've shaked to hark
The peewits wambling in the dark
Lest in the dark the old man might
Creep up to me to beg a light.

But Wood Top grass is short and sweet
And springy to a boxer's feet;
At harvest hum the moon so bright
Did shine on Wood Top for the fight.

When Bill was stripped down to his bends
I thought how long we two'd been friends,
And in my mind, about that wire,
I thought "He's right, I am a liar.
As sure as skilly's made in prison
The right to poach that copse is his'n.
I'll have no luck tonight," thinks I.
"I'm fighting to defend a lie.
And this moonshiny evening's fun
Is worse than aught I've ever done."
And thinking that way my heart bled so
I almost stept to Bill and said so.
And now Bill's dead I would be glad
If I could only think I had.
But no. I put the thought away
For fear of what my friends would say.
They'd backed me, see? O Lord, the sin
Done for things there's money in.

The stakes were drove, the ropes were hitched,
Into the ring my hat I pitched.
My corner faced the Squire's park
Just where the fir trees make it dark;
The place where I begun poor Nell
Upon the woman's road to hell.
I thought of't, sitting in my corner
After the time-keep struck his warner
(Two brandy flasks, for fear of noise,
Clinked out the time to us two boys).
And while the seconds chafed and gloved me
I thought of Nell's eyes when she loved me,
And wondered how my tot would end,
First Nell cast off and now my friend;
And in the moonlight dim and wan
I knew quite well my luck was gone;
And looking round I felt a spite
At all who'd come to see me fight;
The five and forty human faces
Inflamed by drink and going to races,
Faces of men who'd never been
Merry or true or live or clean;
Who'd never felt the boxer's trim
Of brain divinely knit to limb,
Nor felt the whole live body go
One tingling health from top to toe;
Nor took a punch nor given a swing,
But just soaked dead round the ring
Until their brains and bloods were foul
Enough to make their throttles howl,
While we whom Jesus died to teach
Fought round on round, three minutes each.

And think that, you'll understand
I thought, "I'll go and take Bill's hand.
I'll up and say the fault was mine,
He shan't make play for these here swine."
And then I thought that that was silly,
They'd think I was afraid of Billy;
They'd think (I thought it, God forgive me)
I funked the hiding Bill could give me.
And that thought made me mad and hot.
"Think that, will they? Well, they shall not.
They shan't think that. I will not. I'm
Damned if I will. I will not."
Time!

From the beginning of the bout
My luck was gone, my hand was out.
Right from the start Bill called the play,
But I was quick and kept away

Till the fourth round, when work got mixed,
And then I knew Bill had me fixed.
My hand was out, why, Heaven knows;
Bill punched me when and where he chose.
Through two more rounds we quartered wide,
And all the time my hands seemed tied;
Bill punched me when and where he pleased.
The cheering from my backers eased,
But every punch I heard a yell
Of "That's the style, Bill, give him hell."
No one for me, but Jimmy's light
"Straight left! Straight left!" and "Watch his right."

I don't know how a boxer goes
When all his body hums from blows;
I know I seemed to rock and spin,
I don't know how I saved my chin;
I know I thought my only friend
Was that clinked flash at each round's end
When my two seconds, Ed and Jimmy,
Had sixty seconds help to gimme.
But in the ninth, with pain and knocks
I stopped: I couldn't fight nor box.
Bill missed his swing, the light was tricky,
But I went down, and stayed down, dicky.
"Get up," cried Jim. I said, "I will."
Then all the gang yelled, "Out him, bill.
Out him." Bill rushed . . . and Clink, Clink, Clink.
Time! And Jim's knee, and rum to drink.
And round the ring there ran a titter:
"Saved by the call, the bloody quitter."

They drove (a dodge that never fails)
A pin beneath my finger nails.
They poured what seemed a running beck
Of cold spring water down my neck;
Jim with a lancet quick as flies
Lowered the swelling round my eyes.
They sluiced my legs and fanned my face
Through all that blessed minute's grace;
They gave my calves a thorough kneading,
They salved my cuts and stopped the bleeding.
A gulp of liquor dulled the pain,
And then the flasks clinked again.
Time!

There was Bill as grim as death,
He rushed, I clinched, to get more breath,
And breath I got, though Billy bats
Some stinging short-arms in my slats.
And when we broke, as I foresaw,
He swung his right in for the jaw.

I stopped it on my shoulder bone,
And at the shock I heard Bill groan
A little groan or moan or grunt
As though I'd hit his wind a bunt.
At that, I clinched, and while we clinched,
His old time right arm dig was flinched,
And when we broke he hit me light
As though he didn't trust his right,
He flapped me somehow with his wrist
As though he couldn't use his fist,
And when he hit he winced with pain.
I thought, "Your sprained thumb's crocked again."
So I got strength and Bill gave ground,
And that round was an easy round.

During the wait my Jimmy said,

What's making Billy fight so dead?
He's all to pieces. Is he blown?"
"His thumb's out."
"No? Then it's your own.
It's all your own, but don't be rash
He's got the goods if you've got the cash,
And what one hand can do he'll do.
Be careful this next round or two."

Time. There was Bill, and I felt sick
That luck should play so mean a trick
And give me leave to knock him out
After he'd plainly won the bout.
But by the way the man came at me
He made it plain he meant to bat me;
If you'd a seen the way he come
You wouldn't think he'd crocked a thumb.
With all his skill and all his might
He clipped me dizzy left and right;
The Lord knows what the effort cost,
but he was mad to think he'd lost,
And knowing nothing else could save him
He didn't care what pain it gave him.
He called the music and the dance
For five rounds more and gave no chance.

Try to imagine if you can
The kind of manhood in the man,
And if you'd like to feel his pain
You sprain your thumb and hit the sprain.
And hit it hard with all your power
On something hard for half-an-hour,
While someone thumps you black and blue,
And then you'll know what Billy knew.
Bill took that pain without a sound

Till halfway through the eighteenth round,
And then I sent him down and out,
And Silas said, "Kane wins the bout."

When Bill came to, you understand,
I ripped the mitten from my hand
And across to ask Bill shake,
My limbs were all one pain and ache,
I was so weary and so sore
I don't think I'd a stood much more.
Bill in his corner bathed his thumb,
Buttoned his shirt and glowered glum.
"I'll never shake your hand" he said.
"I'd rather see my children dead.
I've been about had some fun with you,
But you're a liar and I've done with you.
You've knocked me out, you didn't beat me;
Look out the next time that you meet me,
There'll be no friend to watch the clock for you
And no convenient thumb to crock for you,
And I'll take care, with much delight,
You'll get what you'd a got tonight;
That puts my meaning clear, I guess,
Now get to hell; I want to dress."

I dressed. My backers one and all
Said, "Well done you" or "Good old Saul."
"Saul is a wonder and a fly 'un,
What'll you have, Saul, at the Lion?"
With merry oaths they helped me down
The stony wood path to the town.

The moonlight shone on Cabbage Walk,
It made the limestone look like chalk.
It was too late for any people,
Twelve struck as we went by the steeple.
A dog barked, and an owl was calling,
The squire's brook was still a-falling,
The carved heads on the church looked down
On "Russell, Blacksmith of this Town,"
And all the graves of all the ghosts
Who rise on Christmas Eve in hosts
To dance and carol in festivity
For joy of Jesus Christ's Nativity
(Bell-ringer Dawe and his two sons
Beheld 'em from the bell-tower once},
To and two about about
Singing the end of Advent out,
Dwindling down to windlestraws
When the glittering peacock craws,

As craw the glittering peacock should
When Christ's own star come over the wood.
Lamb of the sky comes out of fold
Wandering windy heavens cold.
So they shone and sang till twelve
When all the bells ring out of theirselve.
Rang a peal for Christmas morn,
Glory, men, for Christ is born.

All the old monks' singing places

Glimmered quick with flitting faces,
Singing anthems, singing hymns
Under carven cherubims.
Ringer Dave aloft could mark
Faces at the window dark
Crowding, crowding, row on row,
Till all the church began to glow.
The chapel glowed, the nave, the choir,
All he faces became fire
Below the eastern window high
To see Christ's star come up the sky.
Then they lifted hands and turned,
And all their lifted fingers burned,
Burned like the golden altar tallows,
Burned like a troop of God's own Hallows,
Bringing to mind the burning time
When all the bells will rock and chime
And burning saints on burning horses
Will sweep the planets from their courses
And loose the stars to burn up night.
Lord, give us eyes to bear the light.

We all went quiet down the Scallenge
Lest Police Inspector Drew should challenge.
But 'Spector Drew was sleeping sweet,
His head upon a charges sheet,
Under the gas jet flaring full,
Snorting and snoring like a bull,
His bull cheeks puffed, his bull lips plowing,
His ugly yellow front teeth showing.
Just as we peeped we saw him fumble
And scratch his head, and shift, and mumble.
Down in the lane so thick and dark
The tan-yards stank of bitter bark,
The curate's pigeons gave a flutter,
A cart went courting down the gutter,
And none else stirred a foot or feather.
The houses put their heads together,
Talking, perhaps, so dark and sly,
Of all the folk they'd seen go by,
Children, and men and women, merry all,

Who'd some day pass that way to burial.
It was all dark, but at the turning
The Lion had a window burning.
So in we went and up the stairs,
Treading as still as cats and hares.
The way the stairs creaked made you wonder
If dead men's bones were hidden under.
At head of stairs upon the landing
A woman with a lamp was standing;
she greet each gent at head of stairs,
With "Step in, gents, and take your chairs.
The punch'll come when kettle bubble,
But don't make noise or there'll be trouble."
'Twas Doxy Jane, a bouncing girl
With eyes all sparks and hair all curl,
And cheeks all red and lips all coal,
And thirst for men instead of soul.
She's trod her pathway to the fire.
Old Rivers had his nephew by her.

I step aside from Tom and Jimmy
To find if she'd a kiss to gimme.
I blew out lamp 'fore she could speak.
She said, "If you ain't got a cheek,"
And then beside me in the dim,
"Did he beat you or you beat him?"
"Why, I beat him" (though that was wrong).
She said, "You must be turble strong,
I'd be afraid you'd beat me, too."
"You'd not," I said, "I wouldn't do."
"Never?"
"No, never."
"Never?"
"No."
"O Saul. Here's missus. Let me go."
It wasn't missus, so I didn't,
Whether I mid do or I midn't,
Until she'd promised we should meet
Next evening, six, at top of street,
When we could have a quiet talk
On that low wall up Worcester Walk.
And while we whispered there together
I give her silver for a feather
And felt a drunkenness like wine
And shut out Christ in husks and swine.
I felt the dart strike through my liver.
God punish me for't and forgive her.

Each one could be a Jesus mild,
Each one has been a little child,
A little child with laughing look,
A lovely white unwritten book;

A book that God will take, my friend,
As each goes out a journey's end.
The Lord Who gave us Earth and Heaven
Takes that as thanks for all He's given.
The book He lent is given back
All blotted red and smutted black.

"Open the door," said Jim, "and call."
Jane gasped "They'll see me. Loose me, Saul."
She pushed me by, and ducked downstair
With half the pins out of her hair.
I went inside the lit room rollen
Her scented handkerchief I'd stolen.
"What would you fancy, Saul?" they said.
"A gin punch hot and then to bed."
"Jane, fetch the punch bowl to the gemmen;
And mind you don't put too much lemon.
Our good friend Saul has had a fight of it,
Now smoke up, boys, and make a night of it."

The room was full of men and stink
Of bad cigars and heavy drink.
Riley was nodding to the floor
And gurgling as he wanted more.
His mouth was wide, his face was pale,
His swollen face was sweating ale;
And one of those assembled Greeks
Had corked black crosses on his cheeks.
Thomas was having words with Goss,
He "wouldn't pay, the fight was cross."
And Goss told Tom that "cross or no,
The bets go as the verdicts go,
By all I've ever heard or read of.
So pay, or else I'll knock your head off."
Jim Gurvil said his smutty say
About a girl down Bye Street way,
And how the girl from Froggatt's circus
Died giving birth in Newent work'us.
And Dick told how the Dymock wench
Bore twins, poor things, on Dog Hill bench;
And how he'd owned to one Court
And how Judge made him sorry for't.
Jack set a jew's harp twanging drily;
"gimme another cup," said Riley.
A dozen more were in their glories
With laughs and smokes and smutty stories;
And Jimmy joked and took his sup
And sang his song of "Up, come up."
Jane brought the bowl of stewing gin
And poured the egg and lemon in,
And whisked it up and served it out
While bawdy questions went about.

Jack chucked her chin, and Jim accost her
With bits out of the "Maid of Gloster."
And fifteen arms went round her waist.
(And then men ask, Are Barmaids chaste?}

O young men, pray to be kept whole
from bringing down a weaker soul.
Your minute's joy so meet in doin'
May be the woman's door to ruin;
The door to wandering up and down,
A painted whore with half a crown.
The bright mind fouled, the beauty gay
All eaten out and fallen away,
By drunken days and weary tramps
From pub to pub by city lamps
Till men despise the game they started
Till health and beauty are departed,
and in a slum the reeking hag
Mumbles a crust with toothy jag,
Or gets the river's help to end
The life too wrecked for man to mend.
We spat and smoked and took our swipe
Till Silas up and tap his pipe,
And begged us all to pay attention
Because he'd several things to mention.
We'd seen the fight (Hear, hear. That's you);
But still one task remained to do.
That task was his, he didn't shun it,
To give the purse to him as won it.
With this remark, from start to out
He'd never seen a brisker bout.
There was the purse. At that he'd leave it.
Let Kane come forward to receive it.

I took the purse and hemmed and bowed,
And called for gin punch for the crowd;
And when the second bowl was done,
I called, "Let's have another one."
Si's wife come in and sipped and sipped
(As women will) till she was pipped.
And Si hit Dicky Twot a clouter
Because he put his arms about her;
But after Si got overtasked
She sat and kissed whoever asked.
My Doxy Jane was splashed by this,
I took her on my knee to kiss.
And Tom cried out, "O damn the gin;
Why can't we all have women in?
Bess Evans now, or Sister Polly,
Or those two housemaids at the Folly?
Let someone nip to Biddy Price's,
They'd all come in a brace of trices.

Rose Davies, Sue, and Betsy Perks;
One man, one girl, and damn all Turks."
But, no. "More gin," they cried; "Come on.
We'll have the girls in when it's gone."
So round the g in went, hot and heady,
Hot Hollands punch on top of deady.

Hot Hollands punch on top of stout
Puts madness in and wisdom out.
From drunken man to drunken man
The drunken madness raged and ran.
"I'm climber Joe who climbed the spire."
"You're climber Joe the bloody liar."
"Who says I lie?" "I do."
"You lie,
I climbed the spire and had a fly."
"I'm French Suzanne, the Circus Dancer,
I'm going to dance a bloody Lancer."
"If I'd my rights I'm Squire's heir."
"By rights I'd be a millionaire."
"By rights I'd be the lord of you,
But Farmer Scriggins had his do,
He done me, so I've had to hoove it,
I've got it all wrote down to prove it.
And one of these dark winter nights
He'll learn I mean to have my rights;
I'll bloody him a bloody fix,
I'll bloody burn his bloody ricks."

From three long hours of gin and smokes,
And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes,
A warmish night, and windows shut,
The room stank like a fox's gut.
The heat and smell and drinking deep
Began to stun the gang to sleep.
Some fell downstairs to sleep on mat,
Some snored it sodden where they sat.
Dick Twot had lost a tooth and wept;
But all the drunken others slept.
Jane slept beside me in the chair,
And I got up; I wanted air.

I opened window wide and leaned
Out of that pigstye of the fiend
And felt a cool wind go like grace
About the sleeping market-place.
The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy;
And in a second's pause there fell
The cold note of the chapel bell.
And then a cock crew, flapping wings,
And summat made me think of things.

How long those ticking clocks had gone
From church to chapel, on and on,
Ticking the time out, ticking slow
To men and girls who'd come and go,
And how they ticked in belfry dark
When half the town was bishop's park,
And how they'd run a chime full tilt
The night after the church was built,
And that night was Lambert's Feast,
The night I'd fought and been a beast.
And how a change had come. And then
I thought, "You tick to different men."
What with the fight and what with drinking
And being awake alone there thinking,
My mind began to carp and tetter,
"If this life's all, the beasts are better."
And then I thought, "I wish I'd seen
The many towns this town has been;
I wish I knew if they'd a got
A kind of summat we've a-not,
If them as built the church so fair
Were half the chaps folk say they were;
For they'd the skill to draw their plan,
And skill's a joy to any man;
And they'd the strength, not skill alone,
To build it beautiful in stone;
And strength and skill together thus
O, they were happier men than us.
But if they were, they had to die
The same as every one and I.
And no one lives again, but dies,
And all the bright goes out of eyes,
and all the skill goes out of hands,
And all the wise brain understands,
And all the beauty, all the power
Is cut down like a withered flower.
In all the show from birth to rest
I give the poor dumb cattle best."

I wondered, then, why life should be,
And what would be the end of me
When youth and health and strength were gone
And cold old age came creeping on?
A keeper's gun? The Union ward?
Or that new quod at Hereford?
And looking round I felt disgust
At all the nights of drink and lust,
And all the looks of all the swine
Who'd said that they were friends of mine;
And yet I knew, when morning came,
The morning would be just the same,
for I'd have drinks and Jane would meet me

And drunken Silas Jones would greet me,
And I'd risk quod and keeper's gun
Till all the silly game was done.
"For parson chaps are mad, supposin'
A chap can change the road he's chosen."
And then the Devil whispered, "Saul,
Why should you want to live at all?
Why fret and sweat and try to mend?
It's all the same thing in the end.
But when it's done," he said, "it's ended.
Why stand it , since it can't be mended?"
And in my heart I heard him plain,
"Throw yourself down and end it, Kane."

"Why not?" said I. "Why not? But no.
I won't. I've never had my go.
I've not had all the world can give.
Death by and by, but first I'll live.
The world owes me my time of times,
And that time's coming now, by crimes."

A madness took me then. I felt
I'd like to hit the world a belt.
I felt that I could fly through air,
A screaming star with blazing hair,
A rushing comet, crackling, numbing
The folk with fear of judgment coming,
A 'Lijah in a fiery car,
Coming to tell folk what they are.
"That's what I'll do," I shouted loud.
"I'll tell this sanctimonious crowd
This town of window peeping, prying,
Maligning, peering, hinting, lying,
Male and female human blots
Who would, but daren't be, whores and sots,
That they're so steeped in petty vice
That they're less excellent than lice,
That touching one of them will dirt you,
Dirt you with the stain of mean
Cheating trade and going between,
Pinching, starving, scraping, hoarding
To see if Sue, the prentice lean,
Dares to touch the margarine.
Fawning, cringing, oiling boots,
Raging in the crowd's pursuits,
Flinging stones at all the Stephens,
Standing firm with all the evens
Making hell for all the odd,
All the lonely ones of God,
Those poor lonely ones who find
Dogs more mild than human kind.
For dogs," I said, "are nobles born

To most of you, you cockled corn.
I've known dogs to leave their dinner,
Nosing a kind heart in a sinner.
Poor old Crafty wagged his tail
The day I first came home from jail.
When all my folk, so primly clad,
Glowered black and thought me mad,.
And muttered how they'd all expected.
(I've thought of that old dog for years,
And of how near I come to tears.)

But you, you minds of bread and cheese,
Are less divine tha[n] that dog's fleas,
You suck blood from kindly friends,
And kill them when it serves your ends.,
Double traitors, double black,
Stabbing only in the back,
Stabbing with the knives you borrow
From the friends you bring to sorrow.
You stab all that's true and strong,
Truth and strength you say are wrong,
Meek and mild, and sweet and creeping,
Repeating, canting cadging, peeping,
That's the art and that's the life
To win a man his neighbour's wife.
All that's good and all that's true,
You kill that, so I'll kill you."
At that I tore my clothes in shreds
And hurled them on the window leads;
I flung my boots through both the winders
And knocked the glass to little flinders;
The punch bowl and the tumblers followed,
and then I seized the lamps and holloed,
And down the stairs, and tore back bolts,
As mad as twenty blooded colts;
And out into the street I pass,
As mad as two-year-olds at grass
A naked madman saving grand
A blazing lamp in either hand.
I yelled like twenty drunken sailors,
:The devil's come among the tailors."
A blaze of flame behind me streamed,
And then I clashed the lamps and screamed
"I'm Satan, newly come from hell."
And then I spied the fire bell.

I've been a ringer, so I know
How best to make a big bell go.
So on to bell-rope swift swoop,
And stick my one foot in the loop
And heave a down-swig till I groan
"Awake, you swine, you devil's own."

I made the fire-bell awake,
I felt the bell-rope throb and shake;
I felt the air mingle and clang
And beat the walls a muffled bang,
And stifle back and boom and bay
Like muffled peals on Boxing Day,
And then surge up and gather shape,
And spread great pinions and escape;
And each great bird of clanging shrieks
O Fire! Fire, from iron beaks.
My shoulders cracked to send around
Those shrieking birds made out of sound
With news of fire in their bills.
(They heard 'em plain beyond Wall Hills.).

Up go the winders, out come heads,
I heard the springs go creak in beds;
But still I heave and sweat and tire,
And still the clang goes "Fire, Fire!"
"Where is it, then? Who is it, there?
You ringer, stop, and tell us where."
"Run round and let the Captain know."
"It must be bad, he's ringing so,"
"It's in the town, I see the flame;
Look there! Look there, how red it came."
"Where is it, then? O stop the bell."
I stopped and called: "It's fire of hell;
And this is Sodom and Gomorrah,
And now I'll burn you up, begorra."

By this time firemen were mustering,
The half-dressed stable men were flustering,
Backing the horses out of stalls
While this man swears and that man bawls,
"Don't take th'old mare. Back, Toby, back.
Back, Lincoln. Where's the fire, Jack?"
"Damned if I know. Out Preston way."
"No. It's at Chancey's Pitch, they say."
"It's sixteen ricks at Pauntley burnt."
"You back old Darby out, I durn't."
They ran the big red engine out,
And put 'em to with damn and shout.
And then they start to raise the shire,
"Who brought the news, and where's the fire?"
They's moonlight, lamps, and gas to light 'em.
I give a screech-owl's screech to fright 'em,
And snatch from underneath their noses
The nozzles of the fire hoses.
"I am the fire. Back, stand back,
Or else I'll fetch your skulls a crack;
D'you see these copper nozzles here?
They weigh ten pounds a piece, my dear;

I'm fire of hell come up this minute
To burn this town and burn you clean,
You cogwheels in a stopped machine,
You hearts of snakes, and brains of pigeons,
You dead devout of dead religions,
You offspring of the hen and ass,
By Pilate ruled, and Caiaphas.
Now your account is totted. Learn
Hell's flames are loose and you shall burn."

At that I leaped and screamed and ran,
I heard their cries go, "Catch him, man."
"Who was it?" "Down him." "Out him, Em."
"Duck him at pump, we'll see who'll burn."
A policeman clutched, a fireman clutched,
A dozen others snatched and touched.
"By God, he's stripped down to his buff."
"By God, we'll make him warm enough."
"After him," "Catch him," "Out him," " Scrob him."
"We'll give him hell." "By God, we'll mob him."
"We'll duck him, scrout him, flog him, fratch him."
"All right," I said. "But first you'll catch him."

The men who don't know to the root
The joy of being swift of foot,
Have never known divine and fresh
The glory of the gift of flesh,
Nor felt the feet exult, not gone
Along a dim road, on and on,
Knowing again the bursting glows,
the mating hare in April knows,
Who tingles to the pads with mirth
At being the swiftest thing on earth.
O, if you want to know delight,
Run naked in an autumn night,
And laugh, as I laughed then, to find
A running rabble drop behind,
and whang, on ever door you pass,
Two copper nozzles, tipped with brass,
And double whang at every turning,
And yell, "All hell's loose, and burning."

I beat my brass and shouted fire
At doors of parson, lawyer, squire,
at all three doors I threshed and slammed
And yelled aloud that they were damned.
I clodded squire's glass with turves
Because he spring-gunned his preserves.
Through parson's glass my nozzle swishes
Because he stood for loaves and fishes,
but parson's glass I spared a tittle.
He give me a orange once when little,

And he who gives a child a treat
Makes joy-bells ring in Heaven's street,
And he who gives a child a home
Build palaces in Kingdom come
and she who gives a baby birth
Brings Saviour Christ again to Earth,
For life is joy, and mind is fruit,
And body's precious earth and root.
But lawyer's glass-well, never mind,
Th' old Adam's strong in me, I find.
God pardon man, and may God's son
Forgive the evil things I've done.

What more? By Dirty Lane I crept
Back to the Lion, where I slept.
The raging madness hot and floodin'
Boiled itself out and left me sudden,
Left me worn out and sick and cold,
Aching as though I'd all grown old;
So there I lay, and there they found me
On door-mat, with a curtain round me.
Si took my heels and Jane my head
And laughed, and carried me to bed.
And from the neighbouring street they reskied
My boots and trousers, coat and weskit;
They bath-bricked both the nozzles bright
To be mementoes of the night,
And knowing what I should awake with,
They flanelled me a quart to slake with
And sat and shook till half past two
Expecting Police Inspector Drew.
I woke and drank, nd went to meat
In clothes still dirty from the street.
Down in the bar I hear 'em tell
How someone rang the fire bell,
And how th'inspector's search had thriven,
And how five pounds reward was given.
And shepherd Boyce, of Marley, glad us
By saying was blokes from mad'us.
Or two young rips lodged at the Prince
Whom none had seen nor heard of since,
Or that young blade from Worcester Walk
(You know how country people talk).
Young Joe the ostler come in sad,
He said th'old mare had bit his dad.
He said there'd come a blazing screeching
Daft Bible-prophet chap a-preaching,
Had put th'old mare in such a taking
she'd thought the bloody earth was quaking.
And others come and spread a tale
Of cut-throats out of Gloucester jail,
And how we needed extra cops

With all them Welsh come picking hops:
With drunken Welsh in all our sheds
We might be murdered in our beds.

By all accounts, both men and wives
Had had the scare up of their lives.

I ate and drank and gathered strength,
And stretched along the bench full length,
Or crossed to window seat to pat
Black Silas Jones's little cat.
At four I called, "You devil's own,
The second trumpet shall be blown.
The second trump, the second blast;
Hell's flames are loosed, and judgment's passed.
Too late for mercy now. Take warning.
I'm death and hell and Judgment morning."
I hurled the bench into the settle,
I banged the table on the kettle,
I sent Joe's quart of cider spinning.
"Lo, here begins my second inning."
Each bottle, mug, and jug and pot
I smashed to crocks in half a tot;
And Joe, and Si, and Nick, and Percy
I rolled together topsy versy.
And as I ran I heard 'em call,
"Now damn to hell, what's gone with Saul?"
Out into street I ran uproarious
The devil dancing in me glorious.
And as I ran I yell and shriek
"Come on, now, turn the other cheek."
Across the way by almshouse pump
I see old puffing parson stump.
Old parson, red-eyed as a ferret
From nightly wrestlings with the spirit;
I ran acrosss, and barred his path.
His turkey gills went red as wrath
And then he froze as parsons can.
"The police will deal with you, my man."
"Not yet, "said I, "not yet they won't;
And now you'll hear me, like or don't.
The English Church both is and was
A subsidy of Caiaphas.
I don't believe in Prayer or Bible,
They're lies all through, and you're a libel,
A libel on the Devil's plan
When first he miscreated man.
You mumble through a formal code
To get which martyrs burned and blowed.

I look on martyrs as mistakes,
But still they burned for it at stakes;

Your only fire's the jolly fire
Where you can guzzle port with Squire,
And back and praise his damned opinions
About his temporal dominions.
You let him give the man who digs,
A filthy hut unfit for pigs,
Without a well, without a drain,
With mossy thatch that lets in rain,
Without a 'lotment, 'less he rent it,
And never meat, unless he scent it,
But weekly doles of 'leven shilling
To make a grown man strong and willing,
To do the hardest work on earth
And feed his wife when she gives birth,
And feed his little children's bones.
I tell you, man, the Devil groans.
With all your main and all your might
You back what is against what's right;
You let the Squire do things like these,
You back him in't and give him ease,
You take his hand and drink his wine,
And he's a hog, but you're a swine.
For you take gold to teach God's ways
And teach man how to sing God's praise.
And now I'll tell you what you teach
In downright honest English speech.

"You teach the ground-down starving man
That Squire's greed's Jehovah's plan.
You get his learning circumvented
Lest it should make him discontented
(Better a brutal, starving nation
Than men with thoughts above their station),
You let him neither read nor think,
You goad his wretched soul to drink
And then to jail, the drunken boor;
O sad intemperance of the poor.
You starve his soul till it's rapscallion,
Then blame his flesh for being stallion.
You send your wife around to paint
The golden glories of "restraint."
How moral exercise bewild'rin'
Would soon result in fewer children.
You work a day in Squire's fields
And see what sweet restraint it yields,
A woman's day at turnip picking,
Your hearts too fat for plough or ricking.

"And you whom luck taught French and Greek
Have purple flaps on either cheek,
A stately house, and time for knowledge,
And gold to send your sons to college,

That pleasant place, where getting learning
Is also key to money earning.
But quite your damndest want of grace
Is what you do to save your face;
The way you sit astride the gates
By padding wages out of rates;
Your Christmas gifts of shoddy blankets
That every working soul may thank its
Loving parson, loving squire
Through whom he can't afford a fire.
Your well-packed bench, your prison pen,
To keep them something less than men;
Your friendly clubs to help 'em bury.
Your charities of midwifery.
Your bidding children duck and cap
To them who give them workhouse pap.
O, what you are, and what you preach,
And what you do, and what you teach
Is not God's Word, nor honest schism,
But Devil's scant and pauperism."

By this time many folk had gathered
To listen to me while I blathered;
I said my piece, and when I'd said it,
I'll do the purple parson credit,
He sunk (as sometimes parsons can)
His coat's excuses in the man.
"You'd think the Squire and I are kings
Who made the existing state of things,
And made it ill. I answer, No,
States are not made, nor patched; they grow,
Grow slow through centuries of pain
And grow correctly in the main,
But only grow by certain laws
Of certain bits in certain jaws.
You want to doctor that. Let be.
You cannot patch a growing tree.
Put these two words beneath your hat,
These two: securus judicat.
The social states of human kinds
Are made by multitudes of minds,
And after multitudes of years
A little human growth appears
Worth having, even to the soul
Who sees most plain it's not the whole.

This state is dull and evil, both,
I keep it in the path of growth;
You think the Church an outworn fetter;
Kane, keep it, till you've built a better.
And keep the existing social state;
I quite agree it's out of date,

One does too much, another shirks,
Unjust, I grant; but still. . . it works.
To get the whole world out of bed
And washed, and dressed, and warmed, and fed,
To work, and back to bed again,
Believe me, Saul, costs worlds of pain.
Then, as to whether true or sham
That book of Christ, Whose priest I am;
The Bible is a lie, say you,
where do you stand, suppose it true?
Goodbye. But if you've more to say
My doors are open night and day.
Meanwhile, my friend, 'twould be no sin
To mix more water in your gin.
We're neither saints nor Philip Sidneys,
But mortal men with mortal kidneys."

He took his snuff, and wheezed a greeting,
And waddled off to mother's meeting;
I hung my head upon my chest,
I give old purple parson best.
For while the Plough tips round the Pole
The trained mind outs the upright soul,
As Jesus said the trained mind might,
Being wiser than the sons of light,
But trained men's minds are spread so thin
They let all sorts of darkness in;
Whatever light man finds they doubt it
They love, not light, but talk about it.

But parson'd proved to people's eyes
That I was drunk, and he was wise;
And people grinned and women tittered,
And little children mocked and twittered.
So, blazing mad, I stalked to bar
To show how noble drunkards are,
And guzzled spirits like a beast,
To show contempt for Church and priest,
Until, by six, my wits went round
Like hungry pigs in parish pound.
At half past six, rememb'ring Jane,
I staggered into street again
With mind made up (or primed for gin)
To bash the coop who'd run me in;
For well I knew I'd have to cock up
My legs that night inside the lock-up,
And it was my most fixed intent
To have a fight before I went.
Our Fates are strange, and no one now his;
Our lovely Saviour Christ disposes.

Jane wasn't where we'd planned, the jade.
She'd thought me drunk and hadn't stayed.
So I went up the Walk to look for her
And lingered by the little brook for her,
And dowsed my face, and drank at spring,
And watched two wild ducks on the wing,
The moon come pale, the wind come cool,
A big pike leapt in Lower Pool,
The Peacock screamed, the clouds were straking,
My cut cheek felt the weather breaking;
An orange sunset waned and thinned
Foretelling rain and western wind,
And while I watched I heard distinct
The metals on the railway clinked.
The blood-edged clouds were all in tatters,
The sky and earth seemed mad as hatters;
they had a death look, wild and odd,
Of something dark foretold by God.
And seeing it so, I felt so shaken
I wouldn't keep the road I'd taken,
But wandered back towards the inn
Resolved to brace myself with gin.
And as I walked, I said, "It's strange,
There's Death let loose to-night, and Change."

In Cabbage Walk, I made a haul
Of two big pears from lawyer's wall,
And, munching one, I took the lane
Back into Market-place again.
Lamp-lighter Dick had passed the turning.
And all the Homend lamps were burning,
The windows shone, the shops were busy,
But that strange Heaven made me dizzy.
The sky had all God's warning writ
In bloody marks all over it,
And over all I thought there was
A ghastly light besides the gas.
The Devil's tasks and Devil's rages
Were giving me the Devil's wages.

In Market-place it's always light,
The big shop windows make it bright;
And in the press of people buying
I spied a little fellow crying
Because his mother'd gone inside
And left him there, and so he cried.
And mother'd beat him when she found him,
And mother's whip would curl right round him,
And mother'd say h'ed done to crost her,
Though there being crowds about he'd lost her.

Lord, give to men who are old and rougher
The things that little children suffer,
And let keep bright and undefiled
The young years of the little child.
I pat his head at edge of street
And gi'm my second pear to eat.
Right under lamp I pat his head,
"I'll stay till mother come," I said,
And stay I did, and joked and talked,
And shoppers wondered as they walked,
"There's that Saul Kane, the drunken blaggard,
Talking to little Jimmy Jaggard.
The drunken blaggard reeks of drink."
"Whatever will his mother think?"
"Wherever has his mother gone?
Nip round to Mrs. Jaggard's, John,
And say her Jimmy's out again,
In Market-place with boozer Kane."
"When he come out to-day he staggered.
O, Jimmy Jaggard, Jimmy Jaggard."
"His mother's gone inside to bargain,
Run in and tell her , Polly Margin,
And tell her poacher Kane is tipsy
And selling Jimmy to a gipsy."
"Run in to Mrs. Jaggard, Ellen,
Or else, dear knows, there'll be no tellin',
And don't dare leave yer till you've fount her,
You'll find her at the linen counter."
I told a tale, to Jim's delight
Of where the tom-cats go by night,
And how when moonlight came they went
Among the chimneys black and bent,
From roof to roof, from house to house,
With little baskets full of mouse
All red and white, both joint and chnop
Like meat out of a butcher's shop;
Then all along the wall they creep
And everyone is fast asleep,
And honey-hunting moths go by,
And by the bread-batch crickets cry;
Then on they hurry, never waiting
To lawyer's backyard cellar grating
where Jaggard's cat, with clever paw,'
Unhooks a broke-brick's secret door;
Then down into the cellar black,
Across the wood slug's slimy track,
Into an old cask's quiet hollow,
Where they've got seats for what's to follow;
Then each tom-cats light little candles,
And O, the stories and the scandals,
And O, the songs and Christmas carols,
And O, the milk from little barrels.

They light a fire fit for roasting
(And how good mouse-meat smells when toasting),
Then down they sit to merry feast
While moon goes west and sun comes east.

Sometimes they make so merry there
Old lawyer comes to head of stair
To 'fend with fist and poker took firm
His parchments channeled by the bookworm,
And all his deeds, and all his packs
Of withered ink and sealing wax;
And there he stands, with candle raised,
And listens like a man amazed,
Or like ghost a man stands dumb at,
He says, "Hush! Hush! I'm sure there's summat."
He hears outside the brown owl call,
He hears the death-tick tap the wall,
the gnawing of the wainscot mouse,
The creaking ujp and down the house,
The unhooked window's hinges ranging,
The sounds that say the wind is changing.
At last he turns and shakes his head,
"It's nothing. I'll go back to bed."

And just then Mrs. Jaggard came
To view and end her Jimmy's shame.

She made on rush and gi'm a bat
And shook him like a dog a rat.
"I can't turn round but what you're straying.
I'll give you tales and gipsy playing.
I'll give you wand'ring off like this
And listening to whatever 'tis,
You'll laugh the little side of the can,
You'll have the whip for his, my man;
And not a bite of meat nor bread
You'll touch before you go to bed.
Some day you'll break your mother's heart,
After God knows she done her part,
Working her arms off day and night
Trying to keep your collars white.
Look at your face, too, in the street.
What dirty filth've you found to eat?
Now don't you blubber here, boy, or
I'll give you sum't to blubber for."
She snatched him off from where we stand
And knocked the pear-core from his hand,
and looked at me, "You Devil's limb,
How dare you talk to Jaggard's Jim;
You drunken, poaching, boozing brute, you,
If Jaggard was a man, he'd shoot you."
She glared all this, but didn't speak,

she gasped, white hollows in her cheek;
Jimmy was writhing, screaming wild,
The shoppers thought I'd killed the child.

I had to speak, so I begun.
"You oughtn't beat your little son;
He did no harm, but seeing him there
I talked to him and gi'm a pear;
I'm sure the poor child meant no wrong,
It's all my fault he stayed so long,
He'd not have stayed, mum, I'll be bound
If I'd not chanced to come around.
It's all my fault he stayed, not his.
I kept him here, that's how it is."
"Oh!" And how dare you, then?" says she,
How dare yo tempt my boy from me?
How dare you do't, you drunken swine,
Is he your child or is he mine?
A drunken sot they've had the beak to,
Has got his dirty whores to speak to,
His dirty mates with home he drink,
Not little children, one would think.
"Look on him, there," she says, "Look on him
And smell the stinking gin upon him,
The lowest sot, the drunknest liar,
The dirtiest dog in all the shire:
Nice friends for any woman's son
After ten years, and all she's done.

"For I've had eight, and buried five,
And only three are left alive.
I've given them all we could afford.
I've taught them all to fear the Lord.
They've had the best we had to give,
The only three the Lord let live.

"For Minnie whom I love the worst
Died mad in childbirth with her first.
And John and Mary died of measles,
And Rob was drowned at the Teasels.
And little Nan, dear little sweet,
A cart run over in the street;
Her little shift was all one stain,
I prayed God put her out of pain.
And all the rest are gone or going
The road to hell, and there's no knowing
For all I've done and all I've made them
I'd better not have overlaid them.
For Susan went the ways of shame
The time the 'till'ry regiment came,
And t'have her child without a father
I think I'd have her buried father.

And Dicky boozes, God forgimme,
And now't's to be the same with Jimmy.
And all I've done and all I've bore
Has made a drunkard and a whore,,
A bastard boy who wasn't meant,
And Jimmy gwine where Dicky went;
For Dick began the self-same way
And my old hairs are going gray,
And my poor man's a withered knee,
And all the burden falls on me.
"I've washed eight little children's limbs,
I've taught eight little souls their hymns,
I've risen sick and lain down pinched
And borne it all and never flinched;
But to see him, the town's disgrace,
With God's commandments broke in's face,
Who never worked, not he, nor earned,
Nor will do till the seas are burned,
Who never did since he was whole
A hand's turn for a human soul,
But poached and stole and gone with women,
And swilled down gin enough to swim in,
To see him only lift a finger
To make my little Jimmy linger.
In spite of all his mother's prayers,
And all her ten long years of cares,
and all her broken spirit's cry
That drunkard's finger puts them by,
And Jimmy turns. And now I see
That just as Dick was, Jim will be,
And all my life will have been in vain.
I might have spared myself the pain,
And done the world a blessed riddance
If I'd a drowned 'em all like kittens.
And he the sot, so strong and proud,
Who'd make white shirts of a mother's shroud,
He laughs now, it's a joke to him,
Though it's the gates of hell for Jim.

"I've had my heart burnt out like coal,
And drops of blood wrung from my soul
Day in, day out, in pain and tears,
For five and twenty wretched years;
And he, he's ate the fat and sweet,
And loafed and spat at top of street,
And drunk and leched from day till morrow,
And never known a moment's sorrow.
He come out drunk from th'inn to look
the day my little Nan was took;
He sat there drinking, glad and gay,
The night my girl was led astray;
He praised my Dick for singing well,

The night Dick took the road to hell;
And when my corpse goes stiff and blind,
Leaving four helpless souls behind,
He will be there still, drunk and strong.
It do seem hard. It do seem wring.
But "Woe to him by whom the offense,"
Says our Lord Jesus' Testaments.
Whatever seems, God doth not slumber
Though he lets pass times without number.
He'll come with trump to call his own,
And t his world's way'll be overthrown.
He'll come with glory and with fire
To cast great darkness on the liar,
To burn the drunkard and the treacher,
And do his judgment on the lecher,
To glorify the spirit's faces
Of those whose ways were stony places
Who chose with Ruth the better part;
O Lord, i see Thee as Thou are,
O God, the fiery, four-edged sword,
The thunder of the wrath outpoured,
The fiery four-faced creatures burning,
And all the four-faced wheels all turning,
Coming with trump and fiery saint.
Jim, take me home, I'm turning faint."
They went, and some cried, "Good old sod."
"She put it to him straight, by God."

Summat, whe was, or looked, or said,
Went home and made me hang my head.
I slunk away into the night
Knowing deep down that she was right.
I'd often hear[d] religious ranters,
And put them down as windy canters,
But this old mother made me see
the harm I done by being me.
Being both strong and given to sin
I 'stracted weaker vessels in.
So back to bar to get more drink,
I didn't dare begin to think,
And there were drinks and drunken singing,
As though this life were dice for flinging;
Dice to be flung, and nothing furder,
And Christ's blood just another murder.
"Come on, drinks round, salue, drink hearty,
Now, Jane, the punch-bowl for the party.
If any here won't drink with me
I'll knock his bloody eyes out. See?
Come on, cigars round, rum for mine,
Sing us a smutty song, some swine."
But though the drinks and songs went round
That thought remained, it was not drowned.

And when I'd rise to get a light
I'd think, "What's come to me tonight?"

There's always crowds when drinks are standing.
The house doors slammed along the landing,
The rising wind was gusty yet,
And those who cam in late were wet;
And all my body's nerves were snappin'
With sense of summat 'bout to happen,
And music seemed to come and go
And seven lights danced in a row.
There used be a custom then,
Miss Bourne, the Friend, went round at ten
To all the pubs in all the place,
To bring the drunkards' souls to grace;
Some sulked, of course, and some were stirred,
But none give her a dirty word.
A tall pale woman, grey and bent,
Folk said of her that she was sent
She wore Friend's clothes, and women smiled,
But she'd a heart just like a child.
She come to us near closing time
when we were at some smutty rhyme,
And I was mad, and ripe for fun;
I wouldn't a minded what I done.
So when she come so prim and grey
I pound the bar and sing, "Hooray,
Here's Quaker come to bless and kiss us,
Come, have a gin and bitters, missus,
Or may be Quaker girls so prim
Would rather start a bloody hymn.
Now Dick, oblige. A hymn, you swine,
Pipe up the 'Officer of the Line,'
A song to make one's belly ache,
Or 'Nell and Roger at the Wake,'
Or that sweet song, the talk in town,
'The lady fair and Abel Brown.'
'O, who's that knocking at the door,'
Miss Bourne'll play the music score."
The men stood dumb as cattle are,
They grinned, but thought I'd gone too far,
There come a hush and no one break it,
They wondered how Miss Bourne would take it.
She up to me with black eyes wide,
She looked as though her spirit cried;
She took my tumbler from the bar
Beside where all the matches are
And poured it out upon the floor dust,
Among the fag-ends, spit and saw-dust.

"Saul Kane," she said, "when next you drink,
Do me the gentleness to think

That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon his way,
Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross.
All that you are is that Christ's loss."
The clock run down and struck a chime
And Mrs. Si said, "Closing time."

The wet was pelting on the pane
And something broke inside my brain,
I heard the rain drip from the gutters
And Silas putting up the shutters,
While one by one the drinkers went;
I got a glimpse of what it meant,
How she and I had stood before
In some old town by some old door
Waiting intent while someone knocked
Before the door for ever locked;
She was so white that I was scared,
A gas jet, turned the wrong way, flared,
And Silas snapped the bars in place.
Miss Bourne stood white and searched my face.
When Silas done, with ends of tunes
He 'gan a gathering the spittoons,
His wife primmed lips and took the till.
Miss Bourne stood still and I stood still.
Miss Bourne stood still and I stood still,
And "Tick. Slow. Tick. Slow" went the clock.
She said, "He waits until you knock."
She turned at that and went out swift,
Si grinned and winked, his missus sniffed.

I heard her clang the Lion door,
I marked a drink-drop roll to floor;
It took up scraps of sawdust, furry,
And crinkled on, a half inch, blurry;
A drop from my last glass of gin;
And someone waiting to come in,
A hand upon the door latch gropen
Knocking the man inside to open.
I know the very words I said,
They bayed like bloodhounds in my head.
"The water's going out to sea
And there's a great moon calling me;
But there's a great sun calls the moon,
And all God's bells will carol soon
For joy and glory and delight
Of someone coming home to-night."
Out into darkness, out to night,

My flaring heart gave plenty light,
So wild it was there was no knowing
Whether the clouds or stars were blowing;
Blown chimney pots and folk blown blind,
And puddles glimmering in my mind,
And chinking glass from windows banging,
And inn signs swung like people hanging,
And in my heart the drink unpriced,
The burning cataracts of Christ.

I did not think, I did not strive,
The deep peace burnt my me alive;
The bolted door had broken in,
I knew that I had done with sin.
I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth,
And every bird and every beast
Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

O glory of the lighted mind.
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind.
The station brook, to my new eyes,
Was babbling out of Paradise,
The waters rushing from the rain
Were singing Christ has risen again.
I thought all earthly creatures knelt
From rapture of the joy I felt.
The narrow station-wall's brick ledge,
The wild hop withering in the hedge,
The lights in huntsmans' upper storey
Were parts of an eternal glory,
Were God's eternal garden flowers.
I stood in bliss at this for hours.

O glory of the lighted soul.
The dawn came up on Bradlow Knoll,
The dawn with glittering on the grasses,
The dawn which pass and never passes.

"It's dawn," I said, "And chimney's smoking,
And all the blessed fields are soaking.'
It's dawn, and there's an engine shunting;
And hounds, for huntsman's going hunting.
It's dawn, and I must wander north
Along the road Christ led me forth."

So up the road I wander slow
Past where the snowdrops used to grow
With celandines in early springs,
When rainbows were triumphant things

And dew so bright and flowers so glad,
Eternal joy to lass and lad.
And past the lovely brook I paced,
The brook whose source I never traced,
The brook, the one of two which rise
In my green dream in Paradise,
In wells where heavenly buckets clink
To give God's wandering thirsty drink
By those clean cots of carven stone
Where the clear water sings alone.
Then down, past that white-blossomed pond,
And past the chestnut trees beyond,
And past the bridge the fishers knew,
Where yellow flag flowers once grew,
Where we'd go gathering cops of clover,
In sunny June times long since over.
O clover-cops half white, half red,
O beauty from beyond the dead.
O blossom, key to earth and heaven,
O souls that Christ has new forgiven.
Then down the hill to gipsies' pitch
By where the brook clucks in the ditch.
A gipsy's camp was in the copse,
Three felted tents, with beehive tops,
And round black marks where fires had been,
And one old waggon painted green,
And three ribbed horses wrenching grass,
And three wild boys to watch me pass,
And one old woman by the fire
Hulking a rabbit warm from wire.
I loved to see the horses bait,
I felt I walked at Heaven's gate,
That Heaven's gate was opened wide
Yet still the gipsies camped outside.
The waste souls will prefer the wild,
Long after life is meek and mild.
Perhaps when man has entered in'
His perfect city free from sin,
The campers will come past the walls
With old lame horses full of galls,
And waggons hung about with withies,
And burning coke in tinker's stithies,
And see the golden town, and choose,
And think the wild to good to lose.
And camp outside, as these camped then
With wonder at the entering men.
So past, and past the stone heap white
That dewberry trailers hid from sight,
And down the field so full of springs,
Where mewing peewits clap their wings,
And past the trap made for the mill
Into the field below the hill.

There was a mist along the stream,
A wet mist, dim, like in a dream;
I heard the heavy breath of cows
And waterdrops from th'alder boughs;
And eels, or snakes, in dripping grass,
Whipping aside to let me pass.
The gate was backed against the ryme
To pass the cows at milking time.
And by the gate as I went out
A moldwarp rooted earth wi's snout.
A few steps up the Callow's Lane
Brought me above the mist again,
The two great fields arose like death
Above the mists of human breath.

All earthly things that blessèd morning
Were everlasting joy and warning,
The gate was Jesus'way made plain,
the mole was Satan foiled again,
black blinded Satan snouting way
Along the red of Adam's clay;
The mist was error and damnatiion,
The lane the road unto salvation.
Out of the mist into the light,
O blessèd gift of inner sight.
The past was faded like a dream;
There come the jingling of a team,
A ploughman's voice, a clink of chain,
Slow hoofs, and harness under strain.
Up the slow slope a team came bowing,
Old Callow at his autumn ploughing,
Old Callow, stooped above the hales,
Ploughing the stubble into wales.
His grave eyes looking straight ahead,
Shearing a long straight furrow red;
His plough-foot high to give it earth
To bring new food for men to birth.
O wet red swathe of earth laid bare,
O truth, O strength, O gleaming share,
O patient eyes that watch the goal,
O ploughman of the sinner's soul.
O Jesus, drive the coulter deep
To plough my living man from sleep.

Slow up the hill the plough team plod,
Old Callow at the task of God,
Helped by man's wit, helped by the brute,
Turning a stubborn clay to fruit,
His eyes forever on some sign
To help him plough a perfect line.
At top of rise the plough team stopped,
The fore-horse bent his head and cropped.

Then the chains chack, the brasses jingle,
The lean reins gather through the cringle,
The figures move against the sky,
The clay wave breaks as they go by.
I kneeled there in the muddy fallow,
I knew that Christ was there with Callow,
That Christ was standing there with me,
That Christ had taught me what to be,
That I should plough, and as I ploughed
My Saviour Christ would sing aloud,
And as I drove the clods apart
Christ would be ploughing in my heart,
Through rest-harrow and bitter roots,
Through all my bad life's rotten fruits.

O Christ who holds the open gate,
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter
Of holy white birds flying after,
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,
And Thou wilt bring the young green corn,
The young green corn divinely springing,
The young green corn forever singing;
And when the field is fresh and fair
Thy blessèd feet shall glitter there,
And we will walk the weeded field,
And tell the holden harvests's yield,
The corn that makes the holy bread
By which the soul of man is fed,
The holy bread, the food unpriced,
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ.

The share will jar on many a stone,
Thou wilt not let me stand alone;
And I shall feel (thou wilt not fail),
Thy hand on mine upon the hale.
Near Bullen Bank, on Gloucester Road,
Thy everlasting mercy showed
The ploughman patient on the hill
Forever there, forever still,
Ploughing the hill with steady yoke
Of pine-trees lightning-struck and broke.
I've marked the May Hill ploughman stay
There on his hill, day after day
Driving his team against the sky,
While men and women live and die.
And now and then he seems to stoop
To clear the coulter with the scoop,
Or touch an ox to haw or gee
While Severn stream goes out to sea.
The sea with all her ships and sails,
And that great smoky port in Wales,

And Gloucester tower bright i' the sun,
All know that patient wandering one.
And sometimes when they burn the leaves
The bonfires' smoking trails and heaves,
And girt red flamës twink and twire
As though he ploughed the hill afire.
And in men's hearts in many lands
A spiritual ploughman stands
Forever waiting, waiting now,
The heart's "Put in, man, zook the plough."

By this the sun was all one glitter,
The little birds were all atwitter;
Out of a tuft a little lark
Went higher up than I could mark,
His little throat was all one thirst
To sing until his heart should burst
To sing aloft in golden light
His song from blue air out of sight.
The mist drove by, and now the cows
Came plodding up to milking house.
Followed by Frank, the Callow's cowman,
Who whistled, "Adam was a ploughman."
There came such cawing from the rooks,
Such running chuck from little brooks,
One thought it March, just budding green,
With hedgerows full of celandine.
An otter' out of stream and played,
Two hares come loping up and stayed;
Wide-eyed and tender-eared but bold.
Sheep bleated up from Penny's fold.
I heard a partridge covey call,
The morning sun was bright on all.
Down the long slope the plough team drove
The tossing rooks arose and hove.
A stone struck on the share. A word
Came to the team. The red earth stirred.

I crossed the hedge by shooter's gap,
I hitched my boxer's belt a strap,
I jumped the ditch and crossed the fallow:
I took the hales from framer Callow.

How swift the summer goes,
Forget-me-not, pink, rose.
The young grass when I started
And now the hay is carted,
And now my song is ended,
And all the summer splended;
The blackbirds' second brood
Routs beech leaves in the wood;
The pink and rose have speeded,

Forget-me-not has seeded.
Only the winds that blew,
The rain that makes things new,
The earth that hides things old,
And blessings manifold.

O lovely lily clean,
O lily springing green,
O lily bursting white,
Dear lily of delight,
Spring my heart agen
That I may flower to men.

John Masefield

The Golden City of St. Mary

Out beyond the sunset could I but find the way,
Is a sleepy blue laguna which widens to a bay,
And there's the Blessed City &mdash so the sailors say &mdash
The Golden City of St. Mary.

It's built of fair marble &mdash white &mdash without a stain,
And in the cool twilight when the sea-winds wane
The bells chime faintly, like a soft warm rain,
In the Golden City of St. Mary.

Among the green palm-trees where the fire-flies shine,
Are the white tavern tables where the gallants dine,
Singing slow Spanish songs like old mulled wine,
In the Golden City of St. Mary.

Oh I'll be shipping sunset-wards and westward-ho
Through the green topping combers a-shattering into snow,
Till I come to quiet moorings and a watch below,
In the Golden City of St. Mary.

John Masefield

The Island of Skyros

Here, where we stood together, we three men,
Before the war had swept us to the East
Three thousand miles away, I stand again
And hear the bells, and breathe, and go to feast.
We trod the same path, to the selfsame place,
Yet here I stand, having beheld their graves,
Skyros whose shadows the great seas erase,
And Seddul Bahr that ever more blood craves.
So, since we communed here, our bones have been
Nearer, perhaps, than they again will be,
Earth and the worldwide battle lie between,
Death lies between, and friend-destroying sea.
Yet here, a year ago, we talked and stood
As I stnad now, with pulses beating blood.

I saw her like a shadow on the sky
In the last light, a blur upon the sea,
Then the gale's darkness put the shadow by,
But from one grave that island talked to me;
And, in the midnight, in the breaking storm,
I saw its blackness and a blinking light,
And thought, "So death obscures your gentle form,
So memory strives to make the darkness bright;
And, in that heap of rocks, your body lies,
Part of the island till the planet ends,
My gentle comrade, beautiful and wise,
Part of this crag this bitter surge offends,
While I, who pass, a little obscure thing,
War with this force, and breathe, and am its king."

John Masefield

The Lemmings

Once in a hundred years the Lemmings come
Westward, in search of food, over the snow;
Westward until the salt sea drowns them dumb;
Westward, till all are drowned, those Lemmings go.
Once, it is thought, there was a westward land
Now drowned where there was food for those starved things,
And memory of the place has burnt its brand
In the little brains of all the Lemming Kings.
Perhaps, long since, there was a land beyond
Westward from death, some city, some calm place
Where one could taste God's quiet and be fond
With the little beauty of a human face;
But now the land is drowned. Yet we still press
Westward, in search, to death, to nothingness.

John Masefield

The Passing Strange

Out of the earth to rest or range
Perpetual in perpetual change,
The unknown passing through the strange.

Water and saltness held together
To tread the dust and stand the weather,
And plough the field and stretch the tether,

To pass the wine-cup and be witty,
Water the sands and build the city,
Slaughter like devils and have pity,

Be red with rage and pale with lust,
Make beauty come, make peace, make trust,
Water and saltness mixed with dust;

Drive over earth, swim under sea,
Fly in the eagle’s secrecy,
Guess where the hidden comets be;

Know all the deathy seeds that still
Queen Helen’s beauty, Caesar’s will,
And slay them even as they kill;

Fashion an altar for a rood,
Defile a continent with blood,
And watch a brother starve for food:

Love like a madman, shaking, blind,
Till self is burnt into a kind
Possession of another mind;

Brood upon beauty, till the grace
Of beauty with the holy face
Brings peace into the bitter place;

Prove in the lifeless granites, scan
The stars for hope, for guide, for plan;
Live as a woman or a man;

Fasten to lover or to friend,
Until the heart break at the end:
The break of death that cannot mend;

Then to lie useless, helpless, still,
Down in the earth, in dark, to fill
The roots of grass or daffodil.

Down in the earth, in dark, alone,
A mockery of the ghost in bone,
The strangeness, passing the unknown.

Time will go by, that outlasts clocks,
Dawn in the thorps will rouse the cocks,
Sunset be glory on the rocks:

But it, the thing, will never heed
Even the rootling from the seed
Thrusting to suck it for its need.

Since moons decay and suns decline,
How else should end this life of mine?
Water and saltness are not wine.

But in the darkest hour of night,
When even the foxes peer for sight,
The byre-cock crows; he feels the light.

So, in this water mixed with dust,
The byre-cock spirit crows from trust
That death will change because it must;

For all things change, the darkness changes,
The wandering spirits change their ranges,
The corn is gathered to the granges.

The corn is sown again, it grows;
The stars burn out, the darkness goes;
The rhythms change, they do not close.

They change, and we, who pass like foam,
Like dust blown through the streets of Rome,
Change ever, too; we have no home,

Only a beauty, only a power,
Sad in the fruit, bright in the flower,
Endlessly erring for its hour,

But gathering, as we stray, a sense
Of Life, so lovely and intense,
It lingers when we wander hence,

That those who follow feel behind
Their backs, when all before is blind,
Our joy, a rampart to the mind.

John Masefield

The Seekers

FRIENDS and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blessed abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road.

Not for us are content, and quiet, and peace of mind,
For we go seeking a city that we shall never find.

There is no solace on earth for us--for such as we--
Who search for a hidden city that we shall never see.

Only the road and the dawn, the sun, the wind, and the rain,
And the watch fire under stars, and sleep, and the road again.

We seek the City of God, and the haunt where beauty dwells,
And we find the noisy mart and the sound of burial bells.

Never the golden city, where radiant people meet,
But the dolorous town where mourners are going about the street.

We travel the dusty road till the light of the day is dim,
And sunset shows us spires away on the world's rim.

We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by,
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blest abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road.

John Masefield

The Tarry Buccaneer

I'm going to be a pirate with a bright brass pivot-gun,
And an island in the Spanish Main beyond the setting sun,
And a silver flagon full of red wine to drink when work is done,
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry Buccaneer.

With a sandy creek to careen in, and a pig-tailed Spanish mate,
And under my main-hatches a sparkling merry freight
Of doubloons and double moidores and pieces of eight,
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry Buccaneer.

With a taste for Spanish wine-shops and for spending my doubloons,
And a crew of swart mulattoes and black-eyed octoroons,
And a thoughtful way with mutineers of making them maroons,
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry Buccaneer.

With a sash of crimson velvet and a diamond-hiked sword,
And a silver whistle about my neck secured to a golden cord,
And a habit of taking captives and walking them along a board,
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry Buccaneer.

With a spy-glass tucked beneath my arm and a cocked hat cocked askew,
And a long low rakish schooner a-cutting of the waves in two,
And a flag of skull and cross-bones the wickedest that ever flew,
Like a fine old salt-sea scavenger, like a tarry Buccaneer.

John Masefield

The Wanderer

ALL day they loitered by the resting ships,
Telling their beauties over, taking stock;
At night the verdict left my messmate's lips,
"The Wanderer is the finest ship in dock."

I had not seen her, but a friend, since drowned,
Drew her, with painted ports, low, lovely, lean,
Saying, "The Wanderer, clipper, outward bound,
The loveliest ship my eyes have ever seen--

"Perhaps to-morrow you will see her sail.
She sails at sunrise": but the morrow showed
No Wanderer setting forth for me to hail;
Far down the stream men pointed where she rode,

Rode the great trackway to the sea, dim, dim,
Already gone before the stars were gone.
I saw her at the sea-line's smoky rim
Grow swiftly vaguer as they towed her on.

Soon even her masts were hidden in the haze
Beyond the city; she was on her course
To trample billows for a hundred days;
That afternoon the northerner gathered force,

Blowing a small snow from a point of east.
"Oh, fair for her," we said, "to take her south."
And in our spirits, as the wind increased,
We saw her there, beyond the river mouth,

Setting her side-lights in the wildering dark,
To glint upon mad water, while the gale
Roared like a battle, snapping like a shark,
And drunken seamen struggled with the sail.

While with sick hearts her mates put out of mind
Their little children, left astern, ashore,
And the gale's gathering made the darkness' blind,
Water and air one intermingled roar.

Then we forgot her, for the fiddlers played,
Dancing and singing held our merry crew;
The old ship moaned a little as she swayed.
It blew all night, oh, bitter hard it blew!

So that at midnight I was called on deck
To keep an anchor-watch: I heard the sea
Roar past in white procession filled with wreck;
Intense bright stars burned frosty over me,

And the Greek brig beside us dipped and dipped,
White to the muzzle like a half-tide rock,

Drowned to the mainmast with the seas she shipped;
Her cable-swivels clanged at every shock.

And like a never-dying force, the wind
Roared till we shouted with it, roared until
Its vast virality of wrath was thinned,
Had beat its fury breathless and was still.

By dawn the gale had dwindled into flaw,
A glorious morning followed: with my friend
I climbed the fo'c's'le-head to see; we saw
The waters hurrying shoreward without end.

Haze blotted out the river's lowest reach;
Out of the gloom the steamers, passing by,
Called with their sirens, hooting their sea-speech;
Out of the dimness others made reply.

And as we watched, there came a rush of feet
Charging the fo'c's'le till the hatchway shook.
Men all about us thrust their way, or beat,
Crying, "Wanderer! Down the river! Look!"

I looked with them towards the dimness; there
Gleamed like a spirit striding out of night,
A full-rigged ship unutterably fair,
Her masts like trees in winter, frosty-bright.

Foam trembled at her bows like wisps of wool;
She trembled as she towed. I had not dreamed
That work of man could be so beautiful,
In its own presence and in what it seemed.

"So, she is putting back again," I said.
"How white with frost her yards are on the fore."
One of the men about me answer made,
"That is not frost, but all her sails are tore,

"Torn into tatters, youngster, in the gale;
Her best foul-weather suit gone." It was true,
Her masts were white with rags of tattered sail
Many as gannets when the fish are due.

Beauty in desolation was her pride,
Her crowned array a glory that had been;
She faltered tow'rds us like a swan that died,
But altogether ruined she was still a queen.

"Put back with all her sails gone," went the word;
Then, from her signals flying, rumor ran,
"The sea that stove her boats in killed her third;
She has been gutted and has lost a man."

So, as though stepping to a funeral march,
She passed defeated homewards whence she came,
Ragged with tattered canvas white as starch,
A wild bird that misfortune had made tame.

She was refitted soon: another took
The dead man's office; then the singers hove
Her capstan till the snapping hawsers shook;
Out, with a bubble at her bows, she drove.

Again they towed her seawards, and again
We, watching, praised her beauty, praised her trim,
Saw her fair house-flag flutter at the main,
And slowly saunter seawards, dwindling dim;

And wished her well, and wondered, as she died,
How, when her canvas had been sheeted home,
Her quivering length would sweep into her stride,
Making the greenness milky with her foam.

But when we rose next morning, we discerned
Her beauty once again a shattered thing;
Towing to dock the Wanderer returned,
A wounded sea-bird with a broken wing.

A spar was gone, her rigging's disarray
Told of a worse disaster than the last;
Like draggled hair dishevelled hung the stay,
Drooping and beating on the broken mast.

Half-mast upon her flagstaff hung her flag;
Word went among us how the broken spar
Had gored her captain like an angry stag,
And killed her mate a half-day from the bar.

She passed to dock along the top of flood.
An old man near me shook his head and swore:
"Like a bad woman, she has tasted blood--
There'll be no trusting in her any more."

We thought it truth, and when we saw her there
Lying in dock, beyond, across the stream,
We would forget that we had called her fair,
We thought her murderess and the past a dream.

And when she sailed again, we watched in awe,
Wondering what bloody act her beauty planned,
What evil lurked behind the thing we saw,
What strength there was that thus annulled man's hand,

How next its triumph would compel man's will

Into compliance with external fate,
How next the powers would use her to work ill
On suffering men; we had not long to wait.

For soon the outcry of derision rose,
"Here comes the Wanderer!" the expected cry.
Guessing the cause, our mockings joined with those
Yelled from the shipping as they towed her by.

She passed us close, her seamen paid no heed
To what was called: they stood, a sullen group,
Smoking and spitting, careless of her need,
Mocking the orders given from the poop.

Her mates and boys were working her; we stared.
What was the reason of this strange return,
This third annulling of the thing prepared?
No outward evil could our eyes discern.

Only like one who having formed a plan
Beyond the pitch of common minds, she sailed,
Mocked and deserted by the common man,
Made half divine to me for having failed.

We learned the reason soon: below the town
A stay had parted like a snapping reed,
"Warning," the men thought, "not to take her down."
They took the omen, they would not proceed.

Days passed before another crew would sign.
The Wanderer lay in dock alone, unmanned,
Feared as a thing possessed by powers malign,
Bound under curses not to leave the land.

But under passing Time fear passes too;
That terror passed, the sailors' hearts grew bold.
We learned in time that she had found a crew
And was bound out southwards as of old.

And in contempt we thought, "A little while
Will bring her back again, dismantled, spoiled.
It is herself; she cannot change her style;
She has the habit now of being foiled."

So when a ship appeared among the haze,
We thought, "The Wanderer back again"; but no,
No Wanderer showed for many, many days,
Her passing lights made other waters glow.

But we would oft think and talk of her,
Tell newer hands her story, wondering, then,
Upon what ocean she was Wanderer,

Bound to the cities built by foreign men.

And one by one our little conclave thinned,
Passed into ships and sailed and so away,
To drown in some great roaring of the wind,
Wanderers themselves, unhappy fortune's prey.

And Time went by me making memory dim,
Yet still I wondered if the Wanderer fared
Still pointing to the unreached ocean's rim,
Brightening the water where her breast was bared.

And much in ports abroad I eyed the ships,
Hoping to see her well-remembered form
Come with a curl of bubbles at her lips
Bright to her berth, the sovereign of the storm.

I never did, and many years went by,
Then, near a Southern port, one Christmas Eve,
I watched a gale go roaring through the sky,
Making the cauldrons of clouds upheave.

Then the wrack tattered and the stars appeared,
Millions of stars that seemed to speak in fire;
A byre cock cried aloud that morning neared,
The swinging wind-vane flashed upon the spire.

And soon men looked upon a glittering earth,
Intensely sparkling like a world new-born;
Only to look was spiritual birth,
So bright the raindrops ran along the thorn

So bright they were, that one could almost pass
Beyond their twinkling to the source, and know
The glory pushing in the blade of grass,
That hidden soul which makes the flowers grow.

That soul was there apparent, not revealed,
Unearthly meanings covered every tree,
That wet grass grew in an immortal field,
Those waters fed some never-wrinkled sea.

The scarlet berries in the hedge stood out
Like revelations but the tongue unknown;
Even in the brooks a joy was quick: the trout
Rushed in a dumbness dumb to me alone.

All of the valley was loud with brooks;
I walked the morning, breasting up the fells,
Taking again lost childhood from the rooks,
Whose cawing came above the Christmas bells.

I had not walked that glittering world before,
But up the hill a prompting came to me,
"This line of upland runs along the shore:
Beyond the hedgerow I shall see the sea."

And on the instant from beyond away
The long familiar sound, a ship's bell, broke
The hush below me in the unseen bay.
Old memories came, that inner prompting spoke.

And bright above the hedge a seagull's wings
Flashed and were steady upon empty air.
"A Power unseen," I cried, "prepares these things;
Those are her bells, the Wanderer is there."

So, hurrying to the hedge and looking down,
I saw a mighty bay's wind-crinkled blue
Ruffling the image of a tranquill town,
With lapsing waters glimmering as they grew.

And near me in the road the shipping swung,
So stately and so still in such a great peace
That like to drooping crests their colors hung,
Only their shadows trembled without cease.

I did but glance upon these anchored ships.
Even as my thought had told, I saw her plain;
Tense, like a supple athlete with lean hips,
Swiftness at pause, the Wanderer come again--

Come as of old a queen, untouched by Time,
Resting the beauty that no seas could tire,
Sparkling, as though the midnight's rain were rime,
Like a man's thought transfigured into fire,

And as I looked, one of her men began
To sing some simple tune of Christmas day;
Among her crew the song spread, man to man,
Until the singing rang across the bay;

And soon in other anchored ships the men
Joined in the singing with clear throats, until
The farm-boy heard it up the windy glen,
Above the noise of sheep-bells on the hill.

Over the water came the lifted song--
Blind pieces in a mighty game we sing;
Life's battle is a conquest for the strong;
The meaning shows in the defeated thing.

John Masefield

The West Wind

IT'S a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills.
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired as mine,
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like wine.
There is cool green grass there, where men may lie at rest,
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the nest.

"Will ye not come home brother? ye have been long away,
It's April, and blossom time, and white is the may;
And bright is the sun brother, and warm is the rain,--
Will ye not come home, brother, home to us again?

"The young corn is green, brother, where the rabbits run.
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain and sun.
It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's brain,
To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring again.

"Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the green wheat,
So will ye not come home, brother, and rest your tired feet?
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for aching eyes,"
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries.

It's the white road westwards is the road I must tread
To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest for heart and head,
To the violets, and the warm hearts, and the thrushes' song,
In the fine land, the west land, the land where I belong.

John Masefield

The Wild Duck

TwilightT. Red in the West.
Dimness. A glow on the wood.
The teams plod home to rest.
The wild duck come to glean.
O souls not understood,
What a wild cry in the pool;
What things have the farm ducks seen
That they cry so--huddle and cry?
Only the soul that goes.
Eager. Eager. Flying.
Over the globe of the moon,
Over the wood that glows.
Wings linked. Necks a-strain,
A rush and a wild crying.

A cry of the long pain
In the reeds of a steel lagoon,
In a land that no man knows.

John Masefield

The Yarn of the Loch Achray

The Loch Achray was a clipper tall
With seven-and-twenty hands in all.
Twenty to hand and reef and haul,
A skipper to sail and mates to bawl
'Tally on to the tackle-fall,
Heave now 'n' start her, heave 'n' pawl!'
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

Her crew were shipped and they said 'Farewell,
So-long, my Tottie, my lovely gell;
We sail to-day if we fetch to hell,
It's time we tackled the wheel a spell.'
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

The dockside loafers talked on the quay
The day that she towed down to sea:
'Lord, what a handsome ship she be!
Cheer er, sonny boys, three times three!'
And the dockside loafers gave her a shout
As the red-funnelled tug-boat towed her out;
They gave her a cheer as the custom is,
And the crew yelled 'Take our loves to Liz--
Three cheers, bullies, for old Pier Head
'N' the bloody stay-at-homes!' they said.
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

In the grey of the coming on of night
She dropped the tug at the Tuskar Light,
'N' the topsails went to the topmast head
To a chorus that fairly awoke the dead.
She trimmed her yards and slanted South
With her royals set and a bone in her mouth.
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

She crossed the Line and all went well,
They ate, they slept, and they struck the bell
And I give you a gospel truth when I state
The crowd didn't find any fault with the Mate,
But one night off the river Plate.
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

It freshened up till it blew like thunder
And burrowed her deep, lee-scuppers under.
The old man said, 'I mean to hang on
Till her canvas busts or her sticks are gone'--
Which the blushing looney did, till at last
Overboard went her mizzen-mast.

Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

Then a fierce squall struck the 'Loch Achray'
And bowed her down to her water-way;
Her main-shrouds gave and her forestay,
And a green sea carried her wheel away;
Ere the watch below had time to dress
She was cluttered up in a blushing mess.
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

She couldn't lay-to nor yet pay-off,
And she got swept in the bloody trough;
Her masts were gone, and afore you knowed
She filled by the head and down she goed.
Her crew made seven-and-twenty dishes
For the big jack-sharks and the little fishes,
And over their bones the water swishes.
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

The wives and girls they watch in the rain
For a ship as won't come home again.
'I reckon it's them head-winds,' they say,
'She'll be home to-morrow, if not to-day.
I'll just nip home 'n' I'll air the sheets
'N' buy the fixins 'n' cook the meats
As my man likes 'n' as my man eats.'
So home they goes by the windy streets,
Thinking their men are homeward bound
With anchors hungry for English ground,
And the bloody fun of it is, they're drowned!
Hear the yarn of a sailor,
An old yarn learned at sea.

John Masefield

Trade Winds

IN the harbor, in the island, in the Spanish Seas,
Are the tiny white houses and the orange trees,
And day-long, night-long, the cool and pleasant breeze
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

There is the red wine, the nutty Spanish ale,
The shuffle of the dancers, the old salt's tale,
The squeaking fiddle, and the soughing in the sail
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

And o' nights there's fire-flies and the yellow moon,
And in the ghostly palm-trees the sleepy tune
Of the quiet voice calling me, the long low croon
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

John Masefield

Twilight

Twilight it is, and the far woods are dim, and the rooks
cry and call.
Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a star over all,
There by the rick, where they thresh, is the drone at an end,
Twilight it is, and I travel the road with my friend.

I think of the friends who are dead, who were dear
long ago in the past,
Beautiful friends who are dead, though I know that
death cannot last;

Friends with the beautiful eyes that the dust has defiled,
Beautiful souls who were gentle when I was a child.

John Masefield