

Classic Poetry Series

Marie E J Pitt

- poems -

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A Gallop of Fire

When the north wind moans thro' the blind creek courses
And revels with harsh, hot sand,
I loose the horses, the wild red horses,
I loose the horses, the mad, red horses,
And terror is on the land.

With prophetic murmur the hills are humming,
The forest-kings bend and blow;
With hoofs of brass on the baked earth strumming,
O brave red horses, they hear us coming,
And the legions of death lean low.

O'er the wooded height, and the sandy hollow
Where the boles to the axe have rung,
Tho' they fly the foreman as flies the swallow,
The fierce red horses, my horses, follow
With flanks to the faint earth flung.

Or with frenzied hieroglyphs, fear embossing
Night's sable horizon bars,
Thro' tangled mazes of death-darts crossing,
I swing my leaders and watch them tossing
Their red manes against the stars.

But when South winds sob in the drowned creek courses
And whisper to hard wet sand,
I hold the horses, the spent red horses,
I hold the horses, the tired red horses,
And silence is on the land.

Yea, the South wind sobs among the drowned creek courses
For sorrows no man shall bind---
Ah, God! For the horses, the black plumed horses,
Dear God! For the horses, Death's own pale horses,
That raced in the tracks behind.

Marie E J Pitt

Ballad of Autumn

DOWN harvest headlands the fairy host
Of the poppy banners have flashed and fled,
The lilies have faded like ghost and ghost,
The ripe rose rots in the garden bed.
The grain is garnered, the blooms are shed,
Convolvulus springs on the snowdrop's bier,
In her stranded gold is the silver thread
Of the first grey hair i' the head o' the year.

Like an arrant knave from a bootless boast,
The fire-wind back to his North has sped
To harry the manes of a haunted coast
On a far sea-rim where the stars are dead.
Wistful the welkin with wordless dread,
Mournful the uplands, all ashen sere—
Sad for the snow on a beauteous head—
For the first grey hair i' the head o' the year.

Time trysts with Death at the finger-post,
Where the broken issues of life are wed—
Intone no dirges, fill up the toast
To the troops that trip it with silent tread,
Merry we'll make it tho' skies be lead,
And March-wind's moan be a minstrel drear—
A truce to trouble!—we'll drink instead
To the first grey hair i' the head o' the year.

South Esk sings on where the furze-fires spread,
But we'll mourn no more as of old, my dear,
When gorse flames golden and briars flush red
With the first grey hair i' the head o' the year.

Marie E J Pitt

Evil

NOT Beelzebub, but white archangel, I
Turn the dim glass and shift the sands again,
And touch the eyelids of the sons of men
Lest they forget—forget and drowsy lie
In Fate's unfurrowed fallow till they die—
As seed that quickens not for dawns that leap
From out the dark of immemorial years,
With kiss of wind and sun and wizard tears
Of fugitive clouds to wake them from their sleep.
With milestones I have set the crumbling sod
Of human judgement that they stray not wide,
Nor languish lost in labyrinths alway;
And smile in pity when I hear them pray
That Wrong's rude whips from them be turned aside,
Who call me Evil—not discerning God.

Marie E J Pitt

Hamilton

WILD and wet, and windy wet falls the night on Hamilton,
Hamilton that seaward looks unto the setting sun,
Lady of the patient face, lifted everlastingly,
Veiled and hushed and mystical as a cloistered nun.

O the days, the cruel days creeping over Hamilton
Like a train of haggard ghosts, homeless and accursed,
Moaning for a fleet o' dream silver-sailed and wonderful,
Moaning for a sorrow's sake, the fairest and the first.

O the moon, the lonely moon, leaning low on Hamilton,
Thro' the years that sunder us the dead come back, come back,
Scent of white eucraphia stars blown on winds of Memory,
Glint and gleam of fagus gold adown the torrent's track.

Half my heart is buried there, buried high on Hamilton,
Lonely is the sepulchre with never stone for sign,
Where the nodding myrtle-plumes stand like sable sentinels
And the ruddy rimony wreathes the hooded pine.

Half my heart is yearning yet, yearning yet for Hamilton,
Hamilton beyond the surge of sobbing Southern main,
O the croon of wistful winds calling, calling, calling me,
Where the mottled mountain thrush is singing in the rain.

We shall ne'er go back again, back again to Hamilton,
Heart o' me, our track is toward the heart of burning day,
Hills beyond the call of hills beaoning and beckoning—
Westward, westward winds the track, a thread of dusky grey.

Marie E J Pitt