

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Norman Rowland Gale**

**- poems -**

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## **A Dead Friend**

IT hardly seems that he is dead,  
So strange it is that we are here  
Beneath this great blue shell of sky  
With apple-bloom and pear:  
It scarce seems true that we can note  
The bursting rosebud's edge of flame,  
Or watch the blackbird's swelling throat  
While he is but a name.

No more the chaffinch at his step  
Pipes suddenly her shrill surprise,  
For in an ecstasy of sleep  
Unconsciously he lies,  
Not knowing that the sweet brown lark  
From off her bosom's feathery lace  
Shakes down the dewdrop in her flight  
To fall upon his face.

Norman Rowland Gale

## **A Prayer**

Tend me my birds, and bring again  
The brotherhood of woodland life,  
So shall I wear the seasons round  
A friend to need, a foe to strife;

Keep me my heritage of lawn,  
And grant me, Father, till I die  
The fine sincerity of light  
And luxury of open sky.

So, learning always, may I find  
My heaven around me everywhere,  
And go in hope from this to Thee,  
The pupil of Thy country air.

Norman Rowland Gale

## A Priest

NATURE and he went ever hand in hand  
Across the hills and down the lonely lane;  
They captured starry shells upon the strand  
And lay enchanted by the musing main.  
So She, who loved him for his love of her,  
Made him the heir to tracteries and signs  
On tiny children nigh too small to stir  
In great green plains of hazel leaf or vines.  
She taught the trouble of the nightingale;  
Revealed the velvet secret of the rose;  
She breathed divinity into his heart,  
That rare divinity of watching those  
Slow growths that make a nettle learn to dart  
The puny poison of its little throes.

Her miracles motion, butterflies,  
Rubies and sapphires skimming lily-crests,  
Carved on a yellow petal with their eye  
Tranced by the beauty of their powdered breasts,  
Seen in the mirror of a drop of dew,  
He loved as friends and as a friend he knew.  
The dust of gold and scarlet underwings  
More precious was to him than nuggets torn  
From all invaded treasure-crypts of time,  
And every floating, painted, silver beam  
Drew him to roses where it stayed to dream,  
Or down sweet avenues of scented lime.

And Nature trained him tenderly to know  
The rain of melodies in coverts heard.  
Let him but catch the cadences that flow  
From hollybush or lilac, elm or sloe,  
And he would mate the music with the bird.  
The faintest song a redstart ever sang  
Was redstart's piping, and the whitethroat knew  
No cunning trill, no mazy shake that rang  
Doubtful on ears unaided by the view.

But in his glory, as a young pure priest  
In that great temple, only roofed by stars,  
An angel hastened from the sacred East  
To reap the wisest and to leave the least.  
And as he moaned upon the couch of death,  
Breathing away his little share of breath,  
All suddenly he sprang upright in bed!  
Life, like a ray, poured fresh into his face,  
Flooding the hollow cheeks with passing grace.  
He listened long, then pointed up above;  
Laughed a low laugh of boundless joy and love—  
That was a plover called he softly said,  
And on his wife's breast fell, serenely dead!

Norman Rowland Gale

## An Orchard Dance

All work is over at the farm  
And men and maids are ripe for glee;  
Love slips among them sly and warm  
Or calls them to the chestnut-tree.  
As Colin looks askance at Jane  
He draws his hand across his mouth;  
She understands the rustic pain,  
And something of the tender south  
About her milkmaid beauty flits.  
Her dress of lilac print for guide  
Draws shepherd Colin where she sits,  
Who, faring to her lovely side  
To snatch his evening pension tries,  
But skimming like a bird from clutch  
The maid escapes his Cupid touch,  
And speeding down a passage flies  
Not fast enough to cheat his eyes.  
Ah, sweet-lip ways and sweet-lip days,  
And sweetheart captures of the waist,  
How swiftly still the virgin runs  
She's sure at last to be embraced!  
Now Colin fires at kiss delayed,  
And faster flits the red stone floor  
Till Fortune yields the tricky maid  
A captive at the pantry door!

The farmer with his fifty years  
Is not too old to join the fun;  
He pulls the milkmaids' pinky ears  
And bids a likely stripling run  
To find the fiddlers for a dance:  
And in the cherry orchard there  
A tune shall mingle with romance,  
And love be brave in open air.

The village wakens to the bliss,  
The crones and gaffers crawl to see  
The country game of step and kiss  
Beneath the laden cherry-tree.  
The chairs and benches now are set,  
Old John is wheedled from his pet,  
The cider cup with beady eyes  
Responds to winkings of the skies.  
The farmer, burly in his chair,  
Now claps for ev'ry fond and fair  
To foot it on the grassy patch  
While rustic violinists snatch  
From out those varnished birds of wood  
A tune to jink it in the blood.  
Now Jane and Colin in a trice  
Float sweetly round not less than thrice  
Before their motion draws a pair

To revel with the dancing air.  
The thrush, that on his velvet wipes  
His juicy bill, protesting pipes,  
And, somewhat as a piccolo,  
Doth race the concord of the bow.  
A virgin yonder by the tree  
Rejects a mate who saucily  
Would press, if she might only start,  
Her modest homespun to his heart.  
Ah, sweet-lip ways and sweet-lip days,  
And sweetheart captures of the waist,  
Though like a finch the maiden flies  
She's sure at last to be embraced.

The orchard now is in full bloom  
With rosy cheek and snowdrop throat;  
The stars invade the growing gloom,  
And rarelier sounds the blackbird's note.  
But in this dewy little park  
Love burns the brighter for the dark,  
And till he use a stricter rule  
Dear Cicely's cheek shall never cool!  
The fiddlers storm a tomboy tune,  
The shepherds closer clasp the girls  
While skirts the more desert the shoon,  
And rebel leap the loely curls.  
The farmer glows within his chair  
And muses on the dancing time  
When he and she--a matchless pair--  
Were warm and nimble in their prime.  
God bless the man who, duller grown,  
Can feel the younger heaven anew  
By granting to his maids and men  
A romp by starlight in the dew!  
Ah, greenwood ways and greenwood days,  
And soft pursuings of the waist,  
The cheek must yellow out of praise,  
And bent be those who once embraced!

And now they pant against the trees,  
And, using darkness for their plan,  
Girls loose the garters at their knees  
And mend the clumsiness of man.  
One virgin, thankful for the dance,  
About the music shyly trips--  
Her Love's a fiddler, and her love  
Pops fruit in Paganini's lips;  
Or finding on the starlit tree  
The wife and husband cherry there,  
She hangs the couple at his cheek  
And hides the stalk with tufts of hair.  
The girls are at the cider-cup,

And shepherds tilt the yellow base  
Until a giddy amber flood  
Runs, kissing, over Cicely's face,  
And Dora's upper lip doth shine  
With winking beads of apple-wine.  
The fiddlers scrape a farewell tune,  
The dancers dwindle in the dusk  
While summer puffs of easy wind  
Bring hints of cottage garden musk.

And thus the revel dearly ends  
With milkmaid's palm in shepherd's hand,  
And lovers grow from only friends  
Where plum and pear and apple stand.  
Ah, sweet-lip ways and sweet-lip days,  
And sweetheart captures of the waist,  
How fast so-e'er the virgin flies  
She's sure at last to be embraced!

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Bees**

You voluble,  
Velvety  
Vehement fellows  
That play on your  
Flying and  
Musical cellos,  
All goldenly  
Girdled you  
Senerade clover,  
Each artist in  
Bass but a  
Bibulous rover!

You passionate,  
Powdery  
Pastoral bandits,  
Who gave you your  
Roaming and  
Rollicking mandates?  
Come out of my  
Foxglove; come  
Out of my roses  
You bees with the  
Plushy and  
Plausible noses!

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Cicely Bathing**

The brook told the dove  
And the dove told me  
That Cicely's bathing at the pool  
With other virgins three.

The brook told the dove  
And the dove told me  
That Cicely floating on the wave  
Woke music in the tree.

The brook told the dove  
And the dove told me  
That Cicely's drying in the sun,  
A snowy sight to see.

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Content**

THOUGH singing but the shy and sweet  
Untrod by multitudes of feet,  
Songs bounded by the brook and wheat,  
I have not failed in this,  
The only lure my woodland note,  
To win all England's whitest throat!  
O bards in gold and fire who wrote,  
Be yours all other bliss!

Norman Rowland Gale

## Cricket on the Hearth

When red-nosed Winter takes the road,  
An icicle his walking-stick,  
When frost is on the woodman's load,  
And snow is falling fast and thick,  
Come, lusty youth and sapless eld,  
Let's make a circle round the blaze  
And talk of stumps,  
Of nasty bumps,  
That flew and came in sunny days.  
For Cricket is played again, again,  
At freezing time in Hull or Bath;  
When summer's done the game's not gone--  
There's Cricket on the Hearth!

Here's Jones from Rugby, Eton Jack,  
And Grandpapa who, long ago,  
Loved hitting when the Field was slack,  
And crumped the bowling, swift or slow!  
No more he's nimble on the green,  
But what a history he tells  
Of Surrey men  
And hits for ten,  
And heaps of most tremendous Swells!  
For Cricket is played again, again,  
At freezing time in Hull or Bath;  
When summer's done the game's not gone--  
There's Cricket on the Hearth!

The girls may call to Hide-and-Seek,  
And lovely lasses take the floor;  
But we discuss the Lob and Sneak,  
The Canvas, Umpire, Over, Score!  
How great a game to fill July,  
May, June, and August with delights,  
Yet in the frost  
Be never lost,  
But stir the blood on nipping nights!  
For Cricket is played again, again,  
At freezing times in Hull or Bath;  
When summer's done the game's not gone--  
There's Cricket on the Hearth!

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Dawn And Dark**

GOD with His million cares  
Went to the left or right,  
Leaving our world; and the day  
Grew night.

Back from a sphere He came  
Over a starry lawn,  
Looked at our world; and the dark  
Grew dawn.

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Golf Steals Our Youth**

Have you seen the golfers airy  
Prancing forth to their vagary,  
Just as frisky in their gaiters  
As a flock of Grecian Satyrs,  
Looking everything heroic,  
And magnificently stoic,  
In a dress of such a pattern  
As would fright the good God Saturn?

Have you heard them curse the sparrow  
Fit to freeze your inmost marrow,  
When the ball, that should be flitting,  
On the grass remaineth sitting?  
Have you watched their cheerful scrambles  
In the soft and soothing brambles  
While the foe, elate and sneering,  
Passes gradually from hearing?

After blaming all the witches,  
After rending holes in breeches,  
After getting in a muddle  
With each rivulet and puddle,  
They return, a ll labour ended,  
To record their prowess splendid,  
And renew by dictionary  
Their fatigued vocabulary.

Let these gentlemen ecstatic,  
In their costumes so emphatic,  
Crawl to find a rounded treasure  
In the horse-pond at their pleasure.  
What so good when time is sunny,  
And the air as sweet as honey,  
At the game of crease and wicket,  
England's proper pastime--Cricket?

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Holy Ground**

Shy maids have haunts of still delight,  
The lover glades he never tells;  
And one is mine where mass the bright  
And odoured chimes of foxglove-bells.

A dewy, covert, silent place  
Where surely long ago God walked  
Close to His creature's blinded face,  
And for his finer moulding talked.

There hawthorn glows as if, white-hot,  
God present, it were sacred found  
To preach a creed too oft forgot--  
That all we tread is holy ground.

Ah, could we but remember this,  
Our thoughts would spring as purely up  
To labour for our fellows' bliss  
As doth to heaven a snowdrop's cup!

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Most Anglers are Very Humane**

The kind-hearted angler was sadly pursuing  
His calling unhallowed of choking the fishes;  
He bitterly wept, for of course he was doing  
An action most strongly opposed to his wishes!

His vertebra shook as he musingly planned  
How kindly to threadle the worm he'd begun--it  
Was plain had the reptile possessed a right hand  
The penitent angler would gladly have wrung it!

He cast in his float filled with tearful emotion  
And murmured "How fearful, how terrible this is!"  
And just at that moment, amid some commotion,  
He jerked out a panting and rather small piscis!

"Unfortunate fishlet, what dread impulse brought you  
To meddle with bait which I carelessly threw in?  
My dear little swimmer, I'm sorry I caught you,  
So please don't blame me for contriving your ruin!"

"O barbel and salmon-trout, tench, dace and gudgeon,  
O ev'ry fat jack and each eel (not a conger)  
Why, why will you grieve me and stir up my dudgeon?  
Go, die on his hooks who has eyes that are stronger!"

But, however, whilst moaning he pulled out a score,  
And continued his wonderful luck till at last--it  
Was plain that his soft heart could bear it no more,  
Too deep were his groans, and--too full was his basket!

Norman Rowland Gale

## **My Country Love**

If you passed her in your city  
You would call her badly dressed,  
But the faded homespun covers  
Such a heart in such a breast!  
True, her rosy face is freckled  
By the sun's abundant flame,  
But she's mine with all her failings,  
And I love her just the same.

If her hands are red they grapple  
To my hands with splendid strength,  
For she's mine, all mine's the beauty  
Of her straight and lovely length!  
True, her hose be thick and homely  
And her speech is homely, too;  
But she's mine! her rarest charm is  
She's for me, and not for you!

Norman Rowland Gale

## Old Letters

Last night some yellow letters fell  
From out a scrip I found by chance;  
Among them was the silent ghost,  
The spirit of my first romance:  
And in a faint blue envelope  
A withered rose long lost to dew  
Bore witness to the dashing days  
When love was large and wits were few.

Yet standing there all worn and grey  
The teardrops quivered in my eyes  
To think of Youth's unshaken front,  
The forehead lifted to the skies;  
How rough a hill my eager feet  
Flung backward when upon its crest  
I saw the flutter of the lace  
The wind awoke on Helen's breast!

How thornless were the roses then  
When fresh young eyes and lips were kind  
When Cupid in our porches proved  
How true the tale that Love is blind!  
But Red-and-White and Poverty  
Would only mate while shone the May;  
Then came a Bag of Golden Crowns  
And jingled Red-and-White away.

Grown old and niggard of romance  
I wince not much at aught askew,  
And often ask my favourite cat  
What else had Red-and-White to do?  
And here's the bud that rose and sank,  
A crimson island on her breast--  
Why should I burn it? Once again  
Hide, rose, and dream. God send me rest.

Norman Rowland Gale

## **On Seeing a Train Start for the Seaside**

O might I leave this grassy place  
For spreading foam about my feet!  
The splendid spray upon my face,  
The flying brine itself were sweet  
If I might hear on Cromer beach  
The freedom of Old Neptune's speech!

Ah, never language like to this  
For those whose ears can understand!  
Sometimes the coming of a kiss  
To mate the ocean with the strand;  
Sometimes the nameless oath is heard  
The sea-god thunders through his beard!

I have a sea of blue on high,  
I have a sea of green beneath;  
For me sweet inland birds do cry  
Until with joy I hold my breath;  
But Ocean's harp of wave and stone  
Is bird and leaf and stream in one!

Upon my dancing apple-sprays  
The blackbird whistles melodies;  
Half through a mellow run he stays  
And flashes to a neighbour's trees:  
He's rare, but rarer now would be  
The strident pebbles of the sea.

And is it strange that round the shore  
The lyric water should rejoice?  
Ah no! for ever more and more  
The happy dead are in its voice.  
Majestic poet! might I be  
As full of song, as finely free!

Norman Rowland Gale

## **Song - Wait But A Little While**

WAIT but a little while—  
The bird will bring  
A heart in tune for melodies  
Unto the spring,  
Till he who 's in the cedar there  
Is moved to trill a song so rare,  
And pipe her fair.

Wait but a little while—  
The bud will break;  
The inner rose will open and glow  
For summer's sake;  
Fond bees will lodge within her breast  
Till she herself is plucked and prest  
Where I would rest.

Wait but a little while—  
The maid will grow  
Gracious with lips and hands to thee,  
With breast of snow.  
To-day Love 's mute, but time hath sown  
A soul in her to match thine own,  
Though yet ungrown.

Norman Rowland Gale

## **The Amateur Photographer**

Beware of those who slyly pilch  
In many cunning ways;  
Beware of little lyres that filch  
From undisputed bays!  
Beware the tumbler's beaded brim,  
The ass in fiercer fur;  
But most of all beware of him  
Who makes my pen to stir--  
The Insecure  
And Amateur  
Implacable Photographer!

Beware lest, thieving for your thirst,  
An earwig's in the plum!  
Beware of folly, gay at first,  
That later makes you glum!  
Beware of pits when stars are dim,  
The tooth of vagrant cur;  
But most of all beware of him  
That makes my pen to stir--  
The masterful  
Disasterful  
Implacable Photographer!

Beware of angling in a stream  
Whose trout are not for you;  
Beware of trusting in a dream  
That's gone before the dew!  
Beware of truckling to a whim;  
Of folks that always purr;  
But most of all beware of him  
That makes my pen to stir--  
The premature  
And Amateur  
Implacable Photographer!

Norman Rowland Gale

## The Ballade of the Glutton

I'm greedy by nature, and often in vain  
Have lingered too long o'er the succulent hare,  
Accepting the jelly, ignoring the pain,  
Intent on receiving far more than my share.  
I worship the plover's egg, tasty and rare,  
And idolize fanciful French fricasses;  
But what, darling dainties, with you can compare,  
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas?

I ask for real turtle, again and again--  
Observe the Lord Mayor's John Thomases stare!  
For kitchen-recitals to Susan and Jane,  
And powdered impertinence, what do I care?  
I sit down to eat, and I vow and declare,  
I'd honour a dish were it made of stewed bees,  
Though loyal to you, should you chance to be there,  
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas.

I cherish a chef, be he Grecian or Dane;  
I even can relish a collop of bear;  
I love ev'ry calf--if it boasts a fine brain--  
And melt at a pullet, or even a pair.  
Though gold's on the table and stately the fare,  
I greet a grand entree with almost a sneeze  
If you, dearest dainties, are sweet on the air--  
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas.

L'envoi:

O Redcoats of England, who struggle and dare,  
Your glory's a morsel no glutton can please;  
My yearning is all for a soft-cushioned chair,  
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas.

Norman Rowland Gale

## **The Country Faith**

HERE in the country's heart  
Where the grass is green,  
Life is the same sweet life  
As it e'er hath been.

Trust in a God still lives,  
And the bell at morn  
Floats with a thought of God  
O'er the rising corn.

God comes down in the rain,  
And the crop grows tall—  
This is the country faith,  
And the best of all!

Norman Rowland Gale

## The Decimal Point

When first sent to School (now the Station was Rugby)  
I fancied my masters and took to the boys;  
I thought to myself--here 'tis plain I shall snug be  
Revolving at last in an orbit of joys:  
The Alphabet Grecian I quickly could stammer,  
Nor ran any risk of a jaw out of joint;  
I waddled sedately through Fatherland Grammar,  
But own I was floored by the Decimal Point!

Le Roi de Montagnes was my Gallic translation,  
And soon I was praised by my master, who said:--  
"I certainly deem that, with good education,  
A Scholarship laurel should circle your head!"  
I revelled in idioms; I thrilled at the phrases;  
I knew how to render "avaunt" and "aroint,"  
But own that I shed many tears on the daisies  
Of Rugby when stumped by the Decimal Point!

I mastered the building proceedings of Balbus,  
And rarely omitted a requisite cum;  
I never remarked that an equa was albus,  
And deftly supplied the subjunctive with quum!  
No canis to me was a dog in the manger--  
A classic by Fate I was clearly anoint!  
I own, though, I ran into desperate danger  
When fogged and be-fooled by the Decimal Point!

Norman Rowland Gale

## **The First Kiss**

On Helen's heart the day were night!  
But I may not adventure there:  
Here breast is guarded by a right,  
And she is true as fair.

And though in happy days her eyes  
The glow within mine own could please,  
She's purer than the babe who cries  
For empire on her knees.

Her love is for her lord and child,  
And unto them belongs her snow;  
But none can rob me of her wild  
Young kiss of long ago!

Norman Rowland Gale

## The Great Beech

With heart disposed to memory, let me stand  
Near this monarch and this minstrel of the land,  
Now that Dian leans so lovely from her car.  
Illusively brought near by seeming falsely far,  
In yon illustrious summit sways the tangled evening star.

From trembling towers of greenery there heaves  
In glorious curves a precipice of leaves.  
Superbly rolls thy passionate voice along,  
Withstander of the tempest, grim and strong,  
When at the wind's imperative thou burstest into song.

Still must I love thy gentle music most,  
Utterly innocent of challenge or of boast,  
And playmate of the sun's adoring beam.  
Close kindred to thy softer tremblings seem  
The sighs of her I covet, when she kindles in a dream.

Oft at thy branching altar have I knelt,  
Searched for the secret, and thy lesson spelt  
Before the athletes of the night had done  
Their starry toil and joyous beams had run  
To melt the ancient silversmith who loves the set of sun.

When Spring was budding in my heart anew,  
Thy prayer for foliage soared into the blue.  
Within thy branches myriad children heard:  
Pale were their lips and fingers as they stirred  
And promised leafiness enough to tempt thy favourite bird.

Quick was the wonder to amaze my sight:  
Where stood the leafless suppliant towered a knight  
Green to the helm and touching lips with May!  
Far on the hill the wheatstalks stopped from play  
To call across the valley love to leaves more fine than they.

Then wert thou vocal, hospitable king!  
Safe in thy heart the birds were glad to sing,  
For dove and stormcock to thy breast had come;  
And at the perfect hour a moony foam  
And starlight fell upon the thrush that made thy bosom home.

As gentle gatherer of the weary wing,  
Happy to quaff from the eternal spring  
That damps the woodwren's feather-swollen breast,  
Thou lendest to my heart a deeper rest,  
Working with priceless balm a miracle for thy guest.

On thee, in green and sunshine greatly stoled,  
Thy kindred of the undulating wold  
Obeisance, as befits their stature, spend:  
Sweet is the embassy, with wind for friend,

When lofty limes of Todenham Church their fragrant homage send.

Rightly they worship. Rightly comes the maid  
To look for love beneath thy bounteous shade;  
Rightly as these the village children haste,  
And with their sunburned fingers interlaced  
Fasten a living girdle round thy cool and stalwart waist.

For games and grief thou hast an equal heart,  
Giving to all petitioners the needed part.  
Often I ask the shape of him who fled  
To drink of knowledge at the fountain-head:  
He pulses in the shadow as a fugitive from the dead.

Old noble of the county, once we twain  
Beneath thy roof discoursed of bliss and pain;  
And, looking upward for the star Content,  
Laughed deep at soul to watch the sunbeams sent  
In coveys glittering all along the field of firmament.

If ever the travelled spirit can return  
Where once in earthly bliss 'twas proud to burn  
In hard-won triumph over resolute clay,  
'Tis here my friend shall fold his wings and stay  
To fill my unforgetting heart with tremulous holiday.

The tryst is here. Brother, I shall not fail  
Whether in Summer's ripeness, Winter's hail.  
Come most in Autumn's sympathetic charms,  
When opal hazes touch the red-roofed farms,  
And in the night the beech-tree holds the red moon in his arms.

And tell me, Brother, if the shining plan  
Of resurrection chooses only man;  
If every friend of plain and upland dies.  
For I would have this turreted tree arise  
To lord it over beeches in the forest of Paradise.

Fast in the ample chamber of his bole  
There dwells, perchance, an unintelligible soul  
Destined to tower in some celestial wold,  
Where you and I, conversing as of old,  
May watch the Alps of Heaven become as mountains made of gold.

Or bend to watch how cunningly the earth  
Tangles our kin in webs of tears and mirth,  
And soils them even as they fly the stain;  
And, seeing this, may find that Heaven is vain  
To keep earth-broken hearts from breaking in Heaven again

Till shines the hour when Home is truly Home,  
With all the brave and dear familiars come:

Assembled ripely in the lustrous sheaf  
Of Love, and radiant in divine relief  
From Joy that used to spoil the earth by whispering to Grief.

Norman Rowland Gale

## **The Hidden Wealth**

Adam and Eve together stood  
Amid the crop they both were tending,  
While far away the feathery wood  
Of Eden in the wind was bending.

And Adam, feeling in his veins  
The better for his splendid tussle,  
Laughed at his body for its pains,  
And showed to Eve his hardening muscle.

Fine was the bread his sweat had earned,  
Despite the fields of rock and thistle,  
While daily wounds and baulkings turned  
His olden softness into gristle.

So, thinking deeply of the life  
Of chartered idleness and blisses,  
Suddenly he seized his comely wife  
And took her mouth by storm with kisses.

"Dear heart!" he cried, "we fare the best  
When earth and labour roughly grapple.  
Who could have thought the only rest  
Worth having, centred in an apple!"

Norman Rowland Gale

## **This Peach Is Pink With Such a Pink**

This peach is pink with such a pink  
As suits the peach divinely;  
The cunning colour rarely spread  
Fades to the yellow finely;  
But where to spy the truest pink  
Is in my Love's soft cheek, I think.

The snowdrop, child of windy March,  
Doth glory in her whiteness;  
Her golden neighbours, crocuses,  
Unenvious praise her brightness!  
But I do know where, out of sight,  
My sweetheart keeps a warmer white.

Norman Rowland Gale

## To My Brothers

O BROTHERS, who must ache and stoop  
O'er wordy tasks in London town,  
How scanty Laura trips for you—  
A poem in a gown!  
How rare if Grub-street grew a lawn!  
How sweet if Nature's lap could spare  
A dandelion for the Strand,  
A cowslip for Mayfair!

But here, from immaterial lyres,  
There rings in easy confidence  
The blackbird's bright philosophy  
On apple-spray or fence:  
For ploughmen wending home from toil  
Some patriot thrush outpours his lay,  
And voices, wildly eloquent,  
The diary of his day.

These living lyrics you may hear  
Remembering the lane's romance,  
All hung in wicker heels to chirp  
Thin ghosts of utterance:  
But where the gusts of liberty  
Make Ragged Robin wisely bend,  
They quicken hedgerows with their song,  
Melodiously unpenned.

If souls of mighty singers leave  
The vacant body to its hush,  
Does Shelley linger in the lark,  
Or Keats possess the thrush?  
The end is undecaying doubt,  
And in some blackbird's bosom still  
Great Tennyson may sweeten eve  
And whistle on the hill.

Come, brothers, to this clean delight,  
And watch the velvet-headed tit.  
Here 's honest sorrel in the grass  
And sturdy cuckoo-spit:  
What shepherds hear you shall not miss,  
And at deliverance of dawn  
Shall see a miracle of bloom  
Across the sparkling lawn.

The forest musically begs  
To fan you with its leafy love;  
Oh, fall asleep upon this moss  
Entreated by the dove!  
Here shall that sweet Conservative,<sup>5</sup>  
Dear Mother Nature, lend to you  
Her lovely rural elements

Beneath the primal blue.

O brothers, who must ache and stoop  
O'er wordy tasks in London town,  
How scanty Laura trips for you—  
A poem in a gown!  
How good if Fleet-street grew a lawn!  
How sweet if garden-plots could spare  
A bed of cloves to scent the Strand,  
A pansy for Mayfair!

Norman Rowland Gale