

Classic Poetry Series

Lesbia Harford
- poems -

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Lesbia Harford(1891 - 1927)

Lesbia Harford, nee; Keogh was born in 1891. She was the eldest of four children and was born with defective heart valves which restricted her mobility and caused her to tire easily, a continual problem that was to amplify with age. Raised firstly within the middle classes and then with the family bankruptcy and the consequential departure of her father who ran off to the West Australian goldfields, the fact that her mother entered paid work to make sure her children had an education ascribed Harford with a view of society based around both class struggle and feminism.

Her writing of poetry began in her adolescence and continued her work upon entering Melbourne University in 1915. She was one of the first women to study Law and stood apart from her fellow students not just because she was a woman or for her ill health, but for the fact that she was forced to work holidays and weekends to maintain her studies.

Initially she was attracted to free thought and socialism, so began attending lectures and joined a number of student political societies. As a strong believer in free love she entered into a number of relationships whilst sustaining a stern independent streak. The friendships she began at this time were to sustain her through the troubles of later life. One of these was Kate Lush with whom she was lovers for a short time.

she also had a physical relationship with famous Italian-Australian communist writer Guido Barrachi. There was a third person she related to and who was to help her through many troubles he was Percy Laidler, a left wing bookseller who was a member of the Victorian Socialist Party, the Industrial Workers of the World and a general mainstay of the Melbourne Left.

Through her friendship with Laidler she started to attend meetings outside of the university and soon began to favour his brand of syndicalist direct action over Barrachi's party joined the I.W.W. at its peak in 1915-6 and became a tireless worker. Barrachi described her in 1964 as a "Wobbly kind of girl. The idea of a strictly disciplined organisation did not appeal to her... (she was) very straightforward indeed. She would never concede anything that she did not thoroughly agree... very Irish-Australian, you know, very warm and romantic."

Harford threw herself into I.W.W. especially the fight against forced conscription and she spoke against it night after night until "her exhausted heart and throat landed her in hospital." She also recruited a number of others into the

organisation including her brother and famous cancer researcher Esmond Keogh. Barrachi was another she recruited with him later landing in prison for making statements "prejudicial to recruiting".

Once her studies were completed she decided to enter the clothing trade as a full time worker and activist, which considering her health was a monumental feat. Although an important member of Melbourne I.W.W her poetry did not follow the actions of her activism, the partial reason for this was that she felt that "poetry and fiction should not be consciously propagandised" and secondly that because the majority of her work did not resemble the bush worker ballad or satirical feel of much that was published. So she instead submitted her work to local poetry journals such as Birth and succeeded in getting a small number of them published.

A number of her poems concerned her life and that of her fellow workers in the clothing trade, but rather than their political status or future, the subject matter would concentrate greatly on the emotions and relationships of those trapped in such industries. She occasionally penned politically honed pieces such as "Suburban Dames", her attack on the wealthy female buyers of the products she created.

More often though her work focused on everyday life, taking a grassroots approach she hoped to reach people through celebrating and portraying life as it was really was. She remains one of the only Australian poets and one of the few anywhere to have written about menstruation and other intimate aspects of women's lives. Passion and its disappointments were often the focus of many works including "The Folk I Love"

she moved to Sidney fighting for the release of twelve of her activist friends, it was here she married Pat Harford, a working class artist from Redfern. Although she must have found something of worth in him, her family and many of her friends disliked him due to his taste for alcohol and tendency to violence. Ill health and the cost of keeping a husband was the reason Harford dropped out of the clothing industry and the activist work, she started work in a series of white collar jobs including teaching, research and clerical work.

The marriage didn't last long and she returned to Melbourne in 1921. There she restarted her legal career and began to move away from poetry towards prose. During this time she completed a book that showed that her political sensitivities had not been completely dimmed with the withdrawal from activism. A full length novel, "The Irreplaceable Mystery", concerned with the daily life of a young working class woman whose life is immeasurably changed by the internment of

her family during World War One. As with her other works this novel explored in detail the many dimensions of female working class life and provided no solutions or heroic figures. Most rebelliously her portrayal of its German characters as basically living the same lives as other ordinary people, redressed the racist beliefs of the war years. Although accessible and pacy in style, she could find no publishers for the book since it was far too radical and urban for Australia's mainstream publishers and yet not explicitly political enough for the radicals.

Having for many years been sustained by force of will alone she began to find herself unable to complete the most basic of tasks, during her final years in Melbourne her health rapidly declined and she lived with her mother. She was regularly visited by Lush and managed to intermittently work until her eventual death in 1927.

Nettie Palmer later wrote of Harford, "Her life had always hung by a fine thread, which perhaps made her words seem all the more poignant, as if final."

A Bad Snap

He: That isn't you.

She: It's me, in my blue skirt
And scarlet coat and little golden shoes.

He: Not good enough.

She: Well, burn it if you choose
And take myself.

He: Yourself like skies and days
To praise and live in, worship and abuse.

Lesbia Harford

A Blouse Machinist

Miss Murphy has blue eyes and blue-black hair,
Her machine's opposite mine
So I can stare
At her pale face and shining blue-black hair.
I'm sure that other people think her plain
But I could look at her
And look again
Although I see why people think her plain.
She's nice to watch when her machine-belt breaks.
She has such delicate hands
And arms, it takes
Ages for her to mend it when it breaks.
Oh, beauty's still elusive and she's fine.
Though all the moulding
Of her face, the line
Of nose, mouth, chin is Mongol, yet she's fine.
Of course things would be different in Japan.
They'd see her beauty.
On a silken fan
They'd paint her for a princess in Japan.
But still her loveliness eludes the blind.
They never use their eyes
But just their mind.
So must much loveliness elude the blind.

Lesbia Harford

A Bronte Legend

They say she was a creature of the moor,
A lover of the angels, silence bound.
She sought no friendships. She was too remote,
Her sister Charlotte found.
I know she nursed her brother till he died,
Although she didn't like him; that she had
Housework and all the ironing to do,
Because her maids were bad.
And in the midst of it she wrote a book.
There could have been small leisure for the moor
Or wandering! She used to mend and sew,
The family was so poor.
Her brother died. But she died just as soon
As she had nursed dear Charlotte through the shock
Of Patrick's death. Contemplative? Well, well!
No Simeon of the Rock!

Lesbia Harford

A Bunch Of Lilac And A Storm Of Hail

A bunch of lilac and a storm of hail
On the same afternoon! Indeed I know
Here in the South it always happens so,
That lilac is companioned by the gale.
I took some hailstones from the window sill
And swallowed them in a communion feast.
Their transitory joy is mine at least,
The lilac's loveliness escapes me still.
Mine are the storms of spring, but not the sweets.

Lesbia Harford

A Deity

Sometimes I think God has his days
For being friends.
He says: 'Forgive my careless ways.
No one pretends
I'm always kind; but for today
Do let's be friends.'
And grudgingly I make reply,
'Nice sort of friends.
I think it's time you had a try
To make amends
For things you've done; but after all
Suppose we're friends.'

Lesbia Harford

A Lady And I Were Walking

A lady and I were walking
Where waters flow;
A lady and I were talking
Softly and slow.
This is what you were saying,
Lady of mine,
'I will be sad without him,
Yea, I will pine.
But he would never leave me
If he were free.
That's what my love in prison
Whispered to me.'

Lesbia Harford

A Meaning Learnt

I'm not his wife. I am his paramour:
His wayside love, picked up in journeying:
Rose of the hedgerows; fragrant, till he fling
Me down beside the ditch, a drooped thing
Some country boy may stick into his hat.
A paramour has no more use than that.

Lesbia Harford

A Parlourmaid

'I want a parlourmaid.'
'Well, let me see
If you were God, what kind of maid she'd be.'
'She would be tall,
She would be fair,
She would have slender limbs,
A delicate air;
And yet for all her beauty
She would walk
Among my guests unseen
And through their talk
Her voice would be the sweet voice of a bird,
Not listened to, though heard.'
'And now I know the girl you have in mind
Tell me her duties, if you'd be so kind.'
'Why, yes!
She must know names of wines
And never taste them—
Must handle fragile cups
And never break them—
Must fill my rooms with flowers
And never wear them—
Must serve my daughter's secrets
And not share them.'
'Madam, you are no God, that's plain to see.
I'll just repeat what you have said to me.
You say your maid must look in Helen fashion
Golden and white
And yet her loveliness inspire no passion,
Give no delight.
Your intimate goods of home must owe their beauty
To this girl's care
But she'll not overstep her path of duty
Nor seek to share
Through loving or enjoying or possessing
The least of them.
Why, she's not human, by your own confessing,
And you condemn
Your rational self in every word you're speaking!

Please understand
You'll find the hollow maiden you are seeking
In fairyland.'

Lesbia Harford

A Prayer To Saint Rosa

When I am so worn out I cannot sleep
And yet I know I have to work next day
Or lose my job, I sometimes have recourse
To one long dead, who listens when I pray.
I ask Saint Rose of Lima for the sleep
She went without, three hundred years ago
When, lying on thorns and heaps of broken sherd,
She talked with God and made a heaven so.
Then speedily that most compassionate Saint
Comes with her gift of deep oblivious hours,
Treasured for centuries in nocturnal space
And heavy with the scent of Lima's flowers.

Lesbia Harford

A Sophistical Argument

Great crane o'ertopping the delicate trees
Why do you seem so fair,
Swaying and raising your load with ease
High in the misty air?
You are a wonder of pearl and grey
Lifting strong arms to the sky.
Have you a meaning that's lovely, pray?
Why are you lovely, why?
I have a friend with a theory strange,
Thriftless in unity,
None of my reasons avails to change.
'Beauty is truth,' says she.
Are you all ugliness, Fair-to-the-sense?
You are a symbol drear.
Though I should forfeit mine innocence,
Yet must I hold you dear.

Lesbia Harford

A Strike Rhyme

The strike's done.
The men won.
The ships sail the sea
To bring back
What we lack,
Coal, sugar, tea.
And I'm glad,
Though I had
Rather never use
Tea and spice
And what's nice
Than see the men lose.

Lesbia Harford

Adventurers

This morning I got up before the sun
Had seized the hill,
And scrambled heart-hot, noisy, past each one
In sleep laid still.
There they lay helpless under the gold stars,
Good folk and kind,
By sleep the robber spoiled of heavenly wares,
Made deaf and blind.
The leaves cracked, the grass rustled as I passed.
I might have been
Myself the thief. Each minute seemed the last
Of freedom's teen.
But lonely down the hill in Levite's guise
Or priest's, I ran.
I had not proved myself, true loverwise,
Samaritan.
The wind went by me, pulling at my hair.
I left the track.
My last night's purpose terrible and fair
Came sweeping back.
Among the bracken under a white tree
I sat me down,
And slipped my shoulders very stealthily
From out my gown.
One minute I lay naked on the grass,
Then sat upright.
The hot wind had its will with me, and kissed
My bosom white.
The stars gleamed in the grey before the rose.
Were they not eyes
That peered and leered, and seemed about to close
In shocked surprise?
With the whole sky at gaze, there had I lain.
Had dared thus much.
I ran on frightened down the hill again,
With gown to clutch.
Down by the creek the blackberries grew thick,
And as I passed
They stretched long arms to hinder me and prick,

Make me shamefast?
Nay, they laughed, pulling at my slipping gown,
Would have laid bare
To chance men on the hillside looking down
The whiteness there.
Close by the blackwoods is the bathing pool
The men have made.
I was no sport for stars, no bramble's fool
In the trees' shade.
But when I stood with limbs and body free
And gleaming fair,
The little kind ferns screened and covered me
Like Agnes' hair.
I slipped into the shallow water, felt
The fine brown sand
Of the creek bottom, shuddered, splashed and knelt
Too cold to stand.
Happy and shivering, with trees overhead,
Fern walls around,
I listened to the water talking, led
To praise by sound.
So I have felt the wind and water's kiss,
Though I'm a maid.
Better be man than be a girl, and miss
Feeling afraid.

Lesbia Harford

After Rain

Today
I'd like to be a nun
And go and say
My rosary beneath the trees out there.
In this shy sun
The raindrops look like silver beads of prayer.
So blest
Am I, I'd like to tell
God and the rest
Of heaven-dwellers in the garden there
All that befell
Last week. Such gossip is as good as prayer.
Ah well!
I have, since I'm no nun,
No beads to tell,
And being happy must be all my prayer.
Yet 'twould be fun
To walk with God 'neath the wet trees out there.

Lesbia Harford

All Knowledge . . .

I know more about flowers,
And Pat knows about ships.
'Schooner' and 'barquentine'
Are words of note on his lips.
Even 'schooner, barque-rigged'
Has meaning for him. And yet
I don't believe he knows
Hearts' ease from mignonette.
And whenever the daffodils,
Like visiting golden dames,
Honour our humble flat,
He has to ask their names.

Lesbia Harford

All Through The Day At My Machine

All through the day at my machine
There still keeps going
A strange little tune through heart and head
As I sit sewing:
'There is a child in Hungary,
A child I love in Hungary'
The words come flowing.
When I am walking home at night
That song comes after,
And under the trees in holiday time
Or hearing laughter:
'I have a son in Hungary,
My little son in Hungary'
Comes following after.

Lesbia Harford

An Improver

Maisie's been holding down her head all day,
Her little red head. And her pointed chin
Rests on her neck that slips so softly in
The square-cut low-necked darling dress she made
In such a way, since it's high-waisted too,
It lets you guess how fair young breasts begin
Under the gentle pleasant folds of blue.
But on the roof at lunchtime when the sun
Shone warmly and the wind was blowing free
She lifted up her head to let me see
A little rosy mark beneath the chin—
The mark of kisses. If her mother knew
She'd be ashamed, but a girl-friend like me
Made her feel proud to show her kisses to.

Lesbia Harford

And Is Love Very Strong Where Honour Rules?

And is love very strong where honour rules?
Would the world ever speak of Lancelot's love
Or Tristram's love had they put honour first?
What would you think if Guinevere had knelt
And begged for kisses and had begged in vain?
Should she be constant had she been refused
Or would she laugh and turn to love elsewhere?
But Joseph is a hero nowadays
And young Paolo, the Italian blood,
Rather too rash and uncontrollable.
Lovers who are not free should sigh and part—
Lovers, you call them—and not free to love:
They may be wives or husbands, businessmen,
Saints even: they're not lovers. After all
I'd rather be a lover than a saint.

Lesbia Harford

Appearances

I hated them when I was four years old,
The bright pink berries on the pepper tree.
And now they seem quite beautiful to me.
My tower of dreams when I was four years old
Was such a tree. Its branches hid me well,
Although I so disliked the berries' smell.
I had my dreams when I was four years old . . .
But groundling now, who once could mount in air,
I judge the high-swung bright pink berries, fair.

Lesbia Harford

Ay, Ay, Ay, The Lilies Of The Garden

Ay, ay, ay, the lilies of the garden
With red threads binding them and stars about,
These shall be her symbols, for she is high and holy,
Holy in her maidenhood and very full of doubt.
Ay, ay, ay, for she is very girlish
Fearful her heart's lilies should be stained by sin.
Yet will I bind them with rosy threads of passion.
Surely human passion has a right to enter in.

Lesbia Harford

Beauty And Terror

Beauty does not walk through lovely days.
Beauty walks with horror in her hair.
Down long centuries of pleasant ways
Men have found the terrible most fair.
Youth is lovelier in death than life,
Beauty mightier in pain than joy.
Doubly splendid burn the fires of strife,
Brighter in the brightness they destroy.

Lesbia Harford

Birthday

I have a sister whom God gave to me;
He formed her out of trouble and the mists of the sea.
Like Aphrodite, she came to me full-grown.
Oh, I am blest forever with a sister of my own.

Lesbia Harford

Body And Soul

Through the Museum
I stroll, and see
Goblets fashioned in Arcady,
Spears from the Islands, and robes from Tyre—
Gew-gaws of pomp and of old desire.
On one of the walls
A looking glass
Catches my image as I pass.
Austerely from mirrored eyes, I see
The soul of the past look out at me.

Lesbia Harford

Buddha In The Workroom

Sometimes the skirts I push through my machine
Spread circlewise, strong petalled lobe on lobe,
And look for the rapt moment of a dream
Like Buddha's robe.

And I, caught up out of the workroom's stir
Into the silence of a different scheme,
Dream, in a sun-dark, templed elsewhere
His alien dream.

Lesbia Harford

Cherry Plum Blossom In An Old Tin Jug

Cherry plum blossom in an old tin jug —
Oh, it is lovely, beautiful and fair,
With sun on it and little shadows mixed
All in among the fragrant wonder there.
Cherry plum blossom on the workroom bench
Where we can see it all our working hours.
In all my garden days of ladyhood,
I never met girls who so loved sweet flowers.

Lesbia Harford

Child Sun

Child Sun

Why will you play Peep Bo

Now in, now out

The workroom window so?

True 'tis

That there are children here;

But they've no time

To play Peep Bo, my dear.

Lesbia Harford

Closing Time: Public Library

At ten o'clock the great gong sounds its dread
Prelude to splendour. I push back my chair,
And all the people leave their books. We flock,
Still acquiescent, down the marble stair
Into the dark where we can't read. And thought
Swoops down insatiate through the starry air.

Lesbia Harford

Day's End

Little girls,
You are gay,
Little factory girls,
At the end of your day.
There you stand,
Huddled close,
On the back of a tram,
Having taken your dose.
And you go
Through the gray
And the gold of the streets
At the close of the day,
Blind as moles.
You are crude,
You are sweet, little girls,
And amazingly rude,
But so fine
To be gay.
Gentle people are dull
At the end of the day.

Lesbia Harford

Dearest, Dearest

Dearest, dearest,
Bother the slow hours
That hold and keep me
From the leafy bowers
You make more lovely than a storm of flowers.
Dearest, dearest,
If they let me go
I'd hasten to you
Where the waters flow
In among the shadows and the dreams we know.

Lesbia Harford

Deliverance Through Art

When I am making poetry I'm good
And happy then.
I live in a deep world of angelhood
Afar from men.
And all the great and bright and fiery troop
Kiss me agen
With love. Deathless Ideas! I have no need
Of girls' lips then.
Goodness and happiness and poetry,
I put them by.
I will not rush with great wings gloriously
Against the sky
While poor men sit in holes, unbeautiful,
Unsouled, and die:
Better let misery and pettiness
Make me their sty.

Lesbia Harford

Do You Remember Still The Little Song

Do you remember still the little song
I mumbled on the hill at Aura, how
I told you it was made for Katie's sake
When I was fresh from school and loving her
With all the strength of girlhood? And you said
You liked my song, although I didn't know
How it began at first and gabbled then
In a half voice, because I was too shy
To speak aloud, much less to speak them out —
Words I had joined myself — in the full voice
And with the lilt of proper poetry.
You could have hardly heard me. Here's the girl,
The little girl from school you never knew.
She made this song. Read what you couldn't hear.
How bright the windows are
When the dear sun shineth.
They strive to reflect the sun,
To be bright like the sun,
To give heat like the sun.
My heart too has its chosen one
And so to shine designeth.
The windows on the opposite hill that day
Shone bright at sunset too and made me think
Of the old patter I had half forgot,
Do you remember? I remind you now,
Who wandered yesterday for half an hour
Into St Francis, where I thought of you
And how I would be glad to love you well
If I but knew the way. The rhyme came back
Teasing me till I knew I hated it.
I couldn't take that way of loving you.
That was the girl's way. Hear the woman now.
Out of my thinking in the lonely church
And the day's labour in a friendly room
Tumbled a song this morning you will like.
I love my love
But I could not be
Good for his sake.
That frightens me.

Nor could I do
Such things as I should
Just for the sake
Of being good.
Deeds are too great
To serve my whim,
Be ways of loving
Myself or him.
Whether my deeds
Are good or ill
They're done for their own,
Not love's sake, still.
I didn't know it till the song was done
But that's Ramiro in a nutshell, eh,
With his contempt for individual souls
And setting of the deed above the man.
Perhaps I like him better than I thought,
Or would like, if he'd give me leave to scorn
Chameleon, adjectival good and ill
And set the deed so far above the man
As to be out of reach of morals too.
There you and I join issue once again.

Lesbia Harford

Each Morning I Pass On My Way To Work

Each morning I pass on my way to work
A clock in a tower
And I look towards it with anxious eyes
To make sure of the hour.
But the sun gets up at the back of the tower
With a flare and a blaze
Hiding the time and the tower from my sight
In a blissful haze.
'I am the marker of time' says the sun.
Taken unawares,
I believe for the nonce he is lord of the day
And am rid of my cares.

Lesbia Harford

Emmie, Emmie Adams

Emmie, Emmie Adams,
With her insolent air,
Tied a little bit of rag
In her yellow hair.
When Lena, wondering,
Asked why it was there,
Emmie said she didn't know
And she didn't care.
I think Emmie Adams,
Though you are so fair,
That must be the devil's horn
In your yellow hair.

Lesbia Harford

Every Night I Hurry Home To See

Every night I hurry home to see
If a letter's there from you to me.
Every night I bow my head and say,
'There's no word at all from him today.'

Lesbia Harford

Fatherless

I've had no man
To guard and shelter me,
Guide and instruct me
From mine infancy.
No lord of earth
To show me day by day
What things a girl should do
And what she should say.
I have gone free
Of manly excellence
And hold their wisdom
More than half pretence.
For since no male
Has ruled me or has fed,
I think my own thoughts
In my woman's head.

Lesbia Harford

Florence Kneels Down To Say Her Prayers

Florence kneels down to say her prayers
At night.
I wonder what she says and why she cares
To pray at night.
I think when she kneels down to pray
At night
The names that have been on her lips all day
Are there, at night.
She interferes with destinies
At night.
My loves are free to do the things they please
By day, or night.

Lesbia Harford

Flowers And Light

Flowers have uncountable ways of pretending to be
Not solid, but moonlight or sunlight or starlight with scent.
Primroses strive for the colour of sunshine on lawns
Dew-besprent.
Freesias are flames wherein light more than heat is desired,
As candles on altars burn amethyst, golden and white.
Wall-flowers are sun streaked with shade. Periwinkles blue noon
At the height.

Lesbia Harford

Girl's Love

I lie in the dark
Grass beneath and you above me,
Curved like the sky,
Insistent that you love me.
But the high stars
Admonish to refuse you
And I'm for the stars
Though in the stars I lose you.

Lesbia Harford

God Speaks

I made a heaven for you filled with stars,
Each star a song
Meant to give happy music to your ear,
Day and night long.
But in your workshop you are closed away
From the fair sky,
Deafened by noise until you cannot hear
My stars that sigh.
And when night comes your sleepy eyes are blind
To heavens blue;
That was a foolish toy, my dearest dear,
I made for you.

Lesbia Harford

Green And Blue

Green and blue

First-named of colours believe these two.

They first of colours by men were seen

This grass colour, tree colour,

Sky colour, sea colour,

Magic-named, mystic-souled, blue and green.

Later came

Small subtle colours like tongues of flame,

Small jewel colours for treasure trove,

Not fruit colour, flower colour,

Cloud colour, shower colour,

But purple, amethyst, violet and mauve.

These remain,

Two broad fair colours for our larger gain

Stretched underfoot or spreading wide on high,

Green beech colour, vine colour,

Gum colour, pine colour,

Blue of the noonday and the moonlit sky.

Lesbia Harford

Grotesque

My
Man
Says
I weigh about four ounces,
Says I must have hollow legs.
And then say I,
'Yes,
I've hollow legs and a hollow soul and body.
There is nothing left of me.
You've burnt me dry.
You
Have
Run
Through all my veins in fever,
Through my soul in fever for
An endless time.
Why,
This small body is like an empty snail shell,
All the living soul of it
Burnt out in lime.'

Lesbia Harford

He Had Served Eighty Masters. They'D Have Said

He had served eighty masters. They'd have said
He 'worked for these employers' to earn bread.
And they, if they had heard him, would have sneered
To brand him inefficient whom they feared.
For to know eighty masters is to know
What sort of thing men who are masters grow.

Lesbia Harford

He Has A Fairy Wife

He has a fairy wife.
He does not know her.
She is the heart of the storm,
Of the clouds that lower.
And as the clouds are torn
Into rain and thunder,
She in her brightness tears
His heart asunder.

Lesbia Harford

He Has Picked Grapes In The Sun.

He has picked grapes in the sun. Oh it seems
Like a fairy tale,
Like a tale of dreams.
'He in his slender youth, with vines, with sun,
Under a blazing sky'—
The tale might run.
There's beauty for eye and mind, for sight and thought,
Here on the surface.
Plunge. This beauty's nought.
Vision succeeds to dream. Deep in his heart
Fierier beauty lives
Than this surface art.
He has no song to sing of fragrant soil
Who in his heart revolts
At unlovely toil.
He has known the real, the truth of it. It seems
Misery eats the heart
Out of fairest dreams.
He in his slender youth, at strife, in vain
Offers his life to set
The world right again.

Lesbia Harford

He Looks In My Heart And The Image There

He looks in my heart and the image there
Is himself, himself, than himself more fair.
And he thinks of my heart as a mirror clear
To reflect the image I hold most dear.
But my heart is much more like a stream, I think,
Where my lover may come when he needs to drink.
And my heart is a stream that seems asleep
But the tranquil waters run strong and deep;
They reflect the image that seems most fair
But their meaning and purpose are elsewhere.
He may come, my lover, and lie on the brink
And gaze at his image and smile and drink
While the hidden waters run strong and free,
Unheeded, unguessed at, the soul of me.

Lesbia Harford

Hecate's Due

You who are dead,
Do you know
They've dug up half the irises
That used to grow
Here in the quadrangle a year ago?
Those left are mere
Points of blue
That can't make sky of earth, as once
They used to do,
Didn't they? Buried flowers . . . Proserpin's due.

Lesbia Harford

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Lesbia Harford

How Funny It Would Be If Dreamy I

How funny it would be if dreamy I
Should leave one book behind me when I die
And that a book of Law—this silly thing
Just written for the money it will bring.
I do hope, when it's finished, I'll have time
For other books and better spurts of rhyme.

Lesbia Harford

I Am No Mystic

I am no mystic. All the ways of God
Are dark to me.
I know not if he lived or if he died
In agony.
My every act has reference to man.
Some human need
Of this one, or of that, or of myself
Inspires the deed.
But when I hear the Angelus, I say
A Latin prayer
Hoping the dim incanted words may shine
Some way, somewhere.
Words and a will may work upon my mind
Till ethics turn
To that transcendent mystic love with which
The Seraphim burn.

Lesbia Harford

I Bought A Red Hat

I bought a red hat
To please my lover.
He will hardly see it
When he looks me over,
Though it's a fine hat.
Yet he never misses
Noticing my red mouth
When it's shaped for kisses.

Lesbia Harford

I Came To Live In Sophia Street

I came to live in Sophia Street,
In a little house in Sophia Street
With an inch of floor
Between door and door
And a yard you'd measure in children's feet.
When I'd been ten days in Sophia Street
I remembered its name was Wisdom Street;
For I'd learned much more
Than in all the score
Of years I clamoured for books to eat.

Lesbia Harford

I Can'T Feel The Sunshine

I can't feel the sunshine
Or see the stars aright
For thinking of her beauty
And her kisses bright.
She would let me kiss her
Once and not again.
Deeming soul essential,
Sense doth she disdain.
If I should once kiss her,
I would never rest
Till I had lain hour long
Pillowed on her breast.
Lying so, I'd tell her
Many a secret thing
God has whispered to me
When my soul took wing.
Would that I were Sappho,
Greece my land, not this!
There the noblest women,
When they loved, would kiss.

Lesbia Harford

I Count The Days Until I See You

I count the days until I see you, dear,
But the days only.
I dare not reckon up the nights and hours
I shall be lonely.
But when at last I meet you, dearest heart,
How can it cheer me?
Desire has power to turn me into stone,
When you come near me.
I give my heart the lie against my will,
Seem not to see you,
Glance aside quickly if I meet your eye,
Love you and flee you.

Lesbia Harford

I Dare Not Leave The Splendid Town

I dare not leave the splendid town
To go where morning meadows are,
For somewhere here the Future's hid
In factory, shop, or liquor bar.
And when the picture shows are closed
She goes to roam about the docks.
Oh, she has wisdom on her mouth
And blood with honey in her locks.
I dare not read of Rosamund
Or such sweet ladyhood in books,
Lest dreaming on their excellence
I should forget the Future's looks.
And I'll walk lonely all my days
Down city pavements without end,
For with young love on flowery paths
I'd have small need of her to friend.
Yea, I would fain forget to sing,
Like larks in city prison bound,
In case I should not hear her voice
Above that clatter of sweet sound.

Lesbia Harford

I Dreamt Last Night

I dreamt last night
That spring had come.
Across green fields I saw a blur
Of crimson-blossomed plum.
I've never known
So fair a thing.
And yet I wish it were a dream
Of some forgotten spring.
Today the sun
Our workroom blest
And there was hard young wattle pinned
On our forewoman's breast.

Lesbia Harford

I Dreamt Last Night Of Happy Home-Comings

I dreamt last night of happy home-comings.
Friends I had loved and had believed were dead
Came happily to visit me and said
I was a part of their fair home-coming
It's strange that I should dream of welcomings
And happy meetings when my love, last week
Returned from exile, did not even speak
Or write to me or need my welcoming.

Lesbia Harford

I Found An Orchid In The Valley Fair,

I found an orchid in the valley fair,
And named it for us both,
And left it there.
Two flowers upon one stem, white-souled, alone.
I couldn't pull them up,
And bring them home.

Lesbia Harford

I Had A Lover Who Betrayed Me

I had a lover who betrayed me.
First he implored and then gainsaid me.
Hopeless I dared no more importune.
I found new friends, a kinder fortune.
Silence, indifference did greet me.
Twice in long years he's chanced to meet me.
Yet when I see him I discover
I was inconstant, he the lover.

Lesbia Harford

I Hate Work So

I hate work so
That I have found a way
Of making one small task outlast the day.
I will not leave
The garden and the sun,
In spite of all the work that should be done.
So when I go
To really make my bed
I've made it ten times over in my head.
Then as for meals!
I think I'd rather be
A nervous wreck than make a cup of tea.
The fire's so low
It isn't any good—
While I sit planning to put on some wood.
One thing is sure,
I pity other drones,
God having made me such a lazy-bones.

Lesbia Harford

I Have Golden Shoes

I have golden shoes
To make me fleet.
They are like the wind
Underneath my feet.
When my lover's kiss
Is overbold,
I can run away
In my shoes of gold.
Nay, when I am shod
With this bright fire,
I am forced to run
From my own desire.
From the love I love
Whose arms enfold
I must run away
In my shoes of gold.

Lesbia Harford

I Have Three Loves Who Are All Most Dear

I have three loves who are all most dear.
Each one has cost me many a tear.
The one who is dead yet lives in me.
I were too poor had I less than three.

Lesbia Harford

I Have To Make A Soul For One

I have to make a soul for one
Who lost his soul in childhood's hour.
And I'm not sure—not really sure—
If I have power.
I don't know whether souls are made
With laughter or with faith or pain
But though I fail a thousand times,
I'll try again.

Lesbia Harford

I Have Two Wings

I have two wings
To raise me to the skies.
Withouten these
My soul could never rise.
My shining friends,
All white and gold are ye
Who make my soul
A winged victory.

Lesbia Harford

I Love To See

I love to see
Her looking up at me,
Stretched on a bed
In her pink dressing gown,
Her arms above her head,
Her hair all down.
I love to see
Her smiling up at me.

Lesbia Harford

I Must Be Dreaming Through The Days

I must be dreaming through the days
And see the world with childish eyes
If I'd go singing all my life
And my songs be wise
And in the kitchen or the house
Must wonder at the sights I see.
And I must hear the throb and hum
That moves to song in factory.
So much in life remains unsung,
And so much more than love is sweet.
I'd like a song of kitchenmaids
With steady fingers and swift feet.
And I could sing about the rest
That breaks upon a woman's day
When dinner's over and she lies
Upon her bed to dream and pray
Until the children come from school
And all her evening work begins.
There's more in life than tragic love
And all the storied, splendid sins.

Lesbia Harford

I Read A Statement In A Newspaper

I read a statement in a newspaper
That Twentyman, the manufacturer,
Found it was cheaper to deliver goods
By horse and lorry than by motor-truck
Or motor-van. So he had sold his trucks
To purchase horses. He dismissed those men
Who had mechanics' minds to re-employ
Drivers of horses, friends of animals.
Then life grew stronger in me because life
Had triumphed in this case and would perhaps
Finally triumph over the machine.
Even such mean commercial victory
Being better than no victory at all.

Lesbia Harford

I Saw A Flight Of Sparrows Through The Air

I saw a flight of sparrows through the air.
Oh, let us rise
Out of the weaknesses of our despair
To burning skies.
Let us take wings for flight from home and friends
And sweet desire.
From comfortable earth the soul ascends
To heavens of fire.

Lesbia Harford

I Thought I Heard Something Move In The House

I thought I heard something move in the house
When I was alone in bed.
And I was afraid . . . and I was afraid . . .
I lay—I quaked for dread.
Then all of a sudden the rain began
And I knew that the sound I'd heard
Was only the sound of the coming of rain.
Me, I've the heart of a bird!

Lesbia Harford

I Used To Be Afraid To Meet

I used to be afraid to meet
The lovers going down our street.
I'd try to shrink to half my size
And blink and turn away my eyes
But now I'm one of them I know
I never need have bothered so.
And they won't mind it if I stare
Because they'll never know I'm there
Or if they do, they're proud to be
Fond lovers for the world to see.

Lesbia Harford

I Used To Have Dozens Of Handkerchiefs

'I used to have dozens of handkerchiefs
Of finest lawn.
I used to have silk shirts and fine new suits.'
He's like a faun
This darling out-at-elbows Irish boy.
'Those were the days
Before the war
When money could be earned a thousand ways.
But now—last week I had a muslin bag
For handkerchief!
No socks, no shirts'—but wiles and smiles and gleams
Beyond belief.

Lesbia Harford

I Was Sad

I was sad
Having signed up in a rebel band,
Having signed up to rid the land
Of a plague it had.
For I knew
That I would suffer, I would be lost,
Be bitter and foolish and tempest tost
And a failure too.
I was sad;
Though far in the future our light would shine
For the present the dark was ours, was mine,
I couldn't be glad.

Lesbia Harford

I Went Down To Post A Letter

I went down to post a letter
Through the garden, through the garden.
All the lovely stars were shining
As I went.
They were free as I, unhappy
Only he to whom the letter
Must be sent.
Even stars forget the prisons,
Stars and clouds and moonlit waters,
I believe the wind would shun them
If it could.
He at least rebels, remembers
Dawn breaks eastward, where the prisons
Erstwhile stood.

Lesbia Harford

I'D Like To Spend Long Hours At Home

I'd like to spend long hours at home
With a small child to bother me.
I'd take her out to see the shops
And fuss about my husband's tea.
Instead of this I spend my days
In noisy schoolrooms, harsh and bare.
Unloved am I, since people give
Too many children to my care.

Lesbia Harford

I'D Love To Have You On A Rainy Day

I'd love to have you on a rainy day
Tucked in a chair, my head against your knee
To sit and dream with. Sometime you must be
My home-sharer whom rain can't keep away.

Lesbia Harford

If I Had Six White Horses

If I had six white horses
And six sturdy friends,
I'd sell them into slavery,
If that would gain your ends.
I'd sell them into slavery,
If you so willed.
Thus were the hearts blood o' the world
By treason spilled.

Lesbia Harford

If You Have Loved A Brave Story

If you have loved a brave story
Tell it but rarely;
And, with due faith in its glory,
Render it barely.
Then must the listener, hearing
Your tale of wonder,
Let his own hoping and fearing
Tear him asunder.

Lesbia Harford

I'M Like All Lovers, Wanting Love To Be

I'm like all lovers, wanting love to be
A very mighty thing for you and me.
In certain moods your love should be a fire
That burnt your very life up in desire.
The only kind of love then to my mind
Would make you kiss my shadow on the blind
And walk seven miles each night to see it there,
Myself within, serene and unaware.
But you're as bad. You'd have me watch the clock
And count your coming while I mend your sock.
You'd have my mind devoted day and night
To you and care for you and your delight.
Poor fools, who each would have the other give
What spirit must withhold if it would live.
You're not my slave, I wish you not to be.
I love yourself and not your love for me,
The self that goes ten thousand miles away
And loses thought of me for many a day.
And you loved me for loving much beside
But now you want a woman for your bride.
Oh, make no woman of me, you who can,
Or I will make a husband of a man.
By my unwomanly love that sets you free
Love all myself, but least the woman in me.

Lesbia Harford

In The Public Library

Standing on tiptoe, head back, eyes and arm
Upraised, Kate groped to reach the higher shelf.
Her sleeve slid up like darkness in alarm
At gleam of dawn. Impatient with herself
For lack of inches, careless of her charm,
She strained to grasp a volume; then she turned
Back to her chair, an unforgetful Eve
Still snatching at the fruit for which she yearned
In Eden. She read idly to relieve
The forehead where her daylong studies burned,
Tales of an uncrowned queen who fed her child
On poisons, till death lurked, in act to spring,
Between the girl's breasts; who with soft mouth smiled
With soft eyes tempted the usurping King
Then dealt him death in kisses. Kate had piled
Her books three deep before her and across
This barricade she watched an old man nod
Over a dirty paper, until loss
Of life seemed better than possession. Shod
With kisses death might skid like thistle floss
Down windy slides, might prove at heart as gay
As Cinderella in glass slippers.
Life goes awkwardly so sandalled. Had decay
Been the girl's gift in that Miltonic strife
She would have rivalled God, Kate thought. A ray
Of sunshine carrying gilded flecks of dust
And minutes bright with fancies, touched her hair
To powder it with gold and silver, just
As if being now admitted she should wear
The scholar's wig, colleague of those whose lust
For beauty hidden in an outworn tongue
Had made it possible for her to read
Tales that were fathered in Arabia, sung
By trouvères and forgotten with their creed
Of love and magic. Beams that strayed among
Kate's fingers lit a rosy lantern there
To glow in twilight. Suddenly afraid
She seemed to see her beauty in a flare
Of light from hell. A throng of devils swayed

Before her, devils that had learned to wear
The shape of scholar, poet, libertine.
They smiled, frowned, beckoned, swearing to estrange
Kate from reflection that her soul had been
Slain by her woman's body or would change
From contact with it to a thing unclean.
Woman was made to worship man, they preached,
Not God, to serve earth's purpose, not to roam
The heavens of thought . . . A factory whistle screeched,
Someone turned up the lights. On her way home
Kate wondered in what mode were angels breeched.

Lesbia Harford

In This Little School

In this little school
Life goes so sweetly,
Day on azure day
Is lost completely.
No one thinks too much,
Or worries greatly.
In a pleasant shade
We dream sedately.
There's no struggle here
Or conflict showing;
Only the sweet pain
Of young limbs growing.

Lesbia Harford

Into Old Rhyme

Into old rhyme
The new words come but shyly.
Here's a brave man
Who sings of commerce dryly.
Swift-gliding cars
Through town and country winging,
Like cigarettes,
Are deemed unfit for singing.
Into old rhyme
New words come tripping slowly.
Hail to the time
When they possess it wholly.

Lesbia Harford

Inventory

We've a room
That we call home,
With a bed in it,
And a table
And some chairs,
A to Z in it.
There's a mirror,
And a safe,
And a lamp in it.
Were there more,
Our mighty love
Might get cramp in it.

Lesbia Harford

Last Night, In A Dream

Last night, in a dream, I felt the peculiar anguish
Known to me of old;
And there passed me, not much changed, my earliest lover,
Smiling, suffering, cold.
This morning, I lay with closed lids under the blankets,
Lest with night depart
The truthful dream which restored to me with my lover
My passionate heart.

Lesbia Harford

Lawstudent And Coach

Each day I sit in an ill-lighted room
To teach a boy;
For one hour by the clock great words and dreams
Are our employ.
We read St Agnes' Eve and that more fair
Eve of St Mark
At a small table up against the wall
In the half-dark.
I tell him all the wise things I have read
Concerning Keats.
'His earlier work is overfull of sense
And sensual sweets.'
I tell him all that comes into my mind
From God-knows-where,
Remark, 'In English poets Bertha's type
Is jolly rare.
She's a real girl that strains her eyes to read
And cricks her neck.
Now Madeline could pray all night nor feel
Her body's check.
And Bertha reads, p'rhaps the first reading girl
In English rhyme.'
It's maddening work to say what Keats has said
A second time.
The boy sits sideways with averted head.
His brown cheek glows.
I like his black eyes and his sprawling limbs
And his short nose.
He, feeling, dreads the splendour of the verse,
But he must learn
To write about it neatly and to quote
These lines that burn.
He drapes his soul in my obscuring words,
Makes himself fit
To go into a sunny world and take
His part in it.
'Examiners' point of view, you know,' say I,
'Is commonsense.
You must sift poetry before you can

Sift Evidence.'

Lesbia Harford

Learning Geography

They have a few little hours
To study the world—
Its lovely absence of clouds,
Or the thunderbolts hurled
By hidden powers—
All the soft shapes of the vales
And the trees of the north
They dream of a minute, no longer,
No longer—then forth
Ere the year fails
To cities where carnival glows
Or the furnace is bright.
So is measured or leisured
According as teachers dispose
Their cosmic delight.

Lesbia Harford

Lie-A-Bed

My darling lies down in her soft white bed,
And she laughs at me.
Her laughter has flushed her pale cheeks with red.
Her eyes dance with glee.
My darling lies close in her warm white bed,
And she will not rise.
I will shower kisses down on her sleepyhead
Till she close her eyes.
Gioja's no happier fresh from the South.
But my kisses free
Will straiten the curves of this teasing mouth,
If it laughs at me.

Lesbia Harford

Little Ships

The little ships are dearer than the great ships
For they sail in strange places,
They lean nearer the green waters.
One may count by wavelets how the year slips
From their decks; and hear the Sea-King's daughters
Laughing at their play whene'er the boat dips.

Lesbia Harford

Lovers Parted

Old memories waken old desires
Infallibly. While we're alive
With eye or ear or sense at all,
Sometimes, must love revive.
But we'll not think, when some stray gust
Relumes the flicker of desire,
That fuel of circumstance could make
A furnace of our fire.
The past is gone. We must believe
It has no power to change our lives.
Yet still our constant hearts rejoice
Because the past survives.

Lesbia Harford

Machinist Talking

I sit at my machine,
Hour long beside me Vera aged nineteen,
Babbles her sweet and innocent tale of sex.

Her boy, she hopes, will prove
Unlike his father in the act of love,
Twelve children are too many for her taste.

She looks sidelong, blue-eyed
And tells a girlish story of a bride
With the sweet licence of Arabian queens.

Her child, she says, saw light
Minute for minute, nine months from the night
The mother first lay in her lover's arms.

She says a friend of hers
Is a man's mistress who gives jewels and furs
But will not have her soft limbs cased in stays.

Lesbia Harford

Machinist's Song

The foot of my machine
Sails up and down
Upon the blue of this fine lady's gown.
Sail quickly, little boat,
With gifts for me,
Night and the goldy streets and liberty.

Lesbia Harford

Martha

Sometimes I lose
My power of loving for an hour or two,
Then I misuse
My knowledge of friends' secrets to abuse
Them far more heartily than others do.
Then I forget
Their splendid selves, the victories they've won,
And only fret
Because they fail me, when my needs are set
Above the dreams they've fixed their hopes upon.

Lesbia Harford

Miss Mary Fairfax

Every day Miss Mary goes her rounds,
Through the splendid house and through the grounds,
Looking if the kitchen table's white,
Seeing if the great big fire's alight,
Finding specks on shining pans and pots,
Never praising much, but scolding lots.
If the table's white, she does not see
Roughened hands that once were ivory.
It is fires, not cheeks, that ought to glow;
And if eyes are dim, she doesn't know.
Poor Miss Mary! Poor for all she owns,
Since the things she loves are stocks and stones.

Lesbia Harford

Mortal Poems

I think each year should bring
Little fresh songs
Like flowers in spring.
That they might deck the hours
For a brief while
And die like flowers.
Flower-like content to be
Sharers in man's
Mortality.

Lesbia Harford

Most People Have A Way Of Making Friends

Most people have a way of making friends
That's very queer.
They don't choose whom they like, but anyone
In some way near.
The girl beside them on the factory bench,
The girl next door
Does. If they move then they forget the friend
They had before.
I choose the friends who suit me (one I found
Shut up in jail)—
Some nuns, some clerks, Anne whose beauty was
Frankly for sale.
Of course I cannot see them every day.
That's as Fate sends.
Blind Fate may choose my times for me, but not,
Oh not, my friends.

Lesbia Harford

My Heart Is A Pomegranate Full Of Sweet Fancies

My heart is a pomegranate full of sweet fancies,
To crimson with sunshine and swell with the dew.
Warmed by your smile and besprent by your glances
See, it has opened for you!

Lesbia Harford

My Lovely Pixie, My Good Companion,

My lovely pixie, my good companion,
You do not love me, bed-mate of mine,
Save as a child loves,
Careless of loving,
Rather preferring raspberry wine.
How can you help it? You were abandoned.
Your mother left you. Your father died.
All your young years of
Pain and desertion
Are not forgotten, here at my side.

Lesbia Harford

My Mission In The World

My mission in the world
Is to prolong
Rapture by turning it
Into a song.
A song of liberty
Bound by no rule!
No marble meaning's mine
Fixed for a school.
My singing ecstasy
Winged for the flight,
Each will hear differently,
And hear aright.

Lesbia Harford

My Window Pane Is Broken

My window pane is broken
Just a bit
Where the small curtain doesn't
Cover it.
And in the afternoon
I like to lie
And watch the pepper tree
Against the sky.
Pink berries and blue sky
And leaves and sun
Are very fair to rest
One's eyes upon.
And my tired feet are resting
On the bed
And there's a pillow under
My tired head.
Parties and balls and books
I know are best
But when I've finished work
I like to rest.

Lesbia Harford

Noli Me Tangere

We watched the dawn breaking across the sea
While just above us hung the evening star.
The nearer waters took a hint of white
And clouds and waves together massed afar,
Narrowed our morning world of pallid light
Till dawn seemed very close to you and me.
'Nay, dawn, stay farther off. Be Magdalen.
Go back into the distance whence you came.
The Near is meaningless when Far is nought,'
So I; and you. 'Wait but a little then,
And day, whole day, uprising like a flame,
Will show us the far reaches of our thought.'

Lesbia Harford

Now All The Lovely Days Are Past

Now all the lovely days are past,
The hours of sun and leagues of sea,
And starry nights that lay between
Yourself and me.
Our boat has left the sea behind.
She lies beside the friendly dock.
And soon the gangway will go down,
And lips will meet, and hands will lock,
And carriers will come climbing up
To take my things and leave us free.
There's trams and streets and home at last
For you and me.

Lesbia Harford

Now I've Been Three Days

Now I've been three days
In the place where I am staying,
I've taken up new ways—
Land-owning and flute playing.
There's an orchard ground
Seen, that set me sighing.
Should I give ten pounds,
It is mine for the buying.
With the door set wide,
I could sit there playing,
Send the magic notes
Through the gully straying.
Since the roof is sound
And the trees are growing,
I will give ten pounds,
All my gold bestowing.
Now I've been three days
In the place where I am staying,
I've taken up new ways—
Land-owning and flute playing.

Lesbia Harford

O Great Golden Head Lie In My Lap'

O great golden head lie in my lap,
Sweet, sweet, lie there.
Sleep and I'll watch thee lest evil behap.
Sweet, sweet and fair.
O great golden head lie on my breast,
Sleep, sleep thou there,
Who in thy beauty hast stolen my rest,
Sweet, sweet and fair.

Lesbia Harford

O Little Plum Tree In The Garden, You'Re

O little plum tree in the garden, you're
Aflower again,
With memories of a million springs and my
Brief years of pain.
O little tree, you have the power to find
Your youth again,
Grow young, while I grow old in tenderness
And wise in pain.

Lesbia Harford

O Little Year, Cram Full Of Duty

O little year, cram full of duty,
Rapture and sorrow, too,
Show me the way from old paths of beauty
Into the fields of dew.
Strange lorn fields where the moon goes riding
Over a lonely sky.
Kind little year, in your onward gliding
Let me not pass them by.

Lesbia Harford

O Man, O Woman, Grievest So?

O man, O woman, grievest so?
Art shut away from all delight,
And must thou leave this garden plot?
O Eve, O Adam, question not.
The God is kind who would be cruel.
He does not know the hearts he made.
Turn unreluctant to the shade,
To bitterest struggle, darkest night;
man, O woman, happier so.

Lesbia Harford

O Sweet And Fair! These Words Are Mine To Use

O sweet and fair! These words are mine to use.

O sweet and fair! A year ago I'd choose

Some better words of praise

Than sweet and fair.

O sweet and fair, and weak, and most untrue!

O sweet and fair! I still may speak of you

After my year of pain

As sweet and fair.

Lesbia Harford

O You, Dear Trees, You Have Learned So Much Of Beauty

O you, dear trees, you have learned so much of beauty,
You must have studied this only the ages long!
Men have thought of God and laughter and duty.
And of love. And of song.
But you, dear trees, from your birth to your hour of dying,
Have cared for this one way only of being wise.
Lovely, lovely, lovely, the sapling sighing.
Lovely the dead tree lies.

Lesbia Harford

Oh, Oh Rosalie

Oh, oh Rosalie,
Oh, oh Rosalie,
What would you have of me?
Oh, oh Rosalie.
I have kisses fine,
I have kisses fine.
Will you take kiss of mine?
Oh, oh Rosalie.
I have dreams in store,
I have dreams in store,
Fine spun as lace of yore.
Oh, oh Rosalie.
Many a mighty thought,
Many a mighty thought
By men of old time wrought
Is mine, Rosalie.
I have golden days,
I have golden days,
Green trees, and leafy ways.
Oh, oh Rosalie.
I have tears for you,
I have tears for you,
And roses filled with dew.
Oh, oh Rosalie.
Oh, oh Rosalie,
What do you want of me?
You would have nought of me.
Oh, oh Rosalie.

Lesbia Harford

Once I Thought My Love Was Worth The Name

Once I thought my love was worth the name
If tears came.
When the wound is mortal, now I know,
Few tears flow.

Lesbia Harford

Ours Was A Friendship In Secret

Ours was a friendship in secret, my dear,
Stolen from fate.

I must be secret still, show myself calm
Early and late.

'Isn't it sad he was killed!' I must hear
With a smooth face.

'Yes, it is sad.' — Oh, my darling, my own,
My heart of grace.

Lesbia Harford

Pat Wasn'T Pat Last Night At All

Pat wasn't Pat last night at all.
He was the rain,
The Spring,
Young Dionysus, white and warm,
Lilac and everything.

Lesbia Harford

Periodicity

My friend declares
Being woman and virgin she
Takes small account of periodicity
And she is right.
Her days are calmly spent
For her sex-function is irrelevant.
But I whose life
Is monthly broke in twain
Must seek some sort of meaning in my pain.
Women, I say,
Are beautiful in change,
Remote, immortal, like the moon they range.
Or call my pain
A skirmish in the whole
Tremendous conflict between body and soul.
Meaning must lie,
Some beauty surely dwell
In the fierce depths and uttermost pits of hell.
Yet still I seek,
Month after month in vain,
Meaning and beauty in recurrent pain.

Lesbia Harford

Pink Eucalyptus Flowers

Pink eucalyptus flowers
(The flowers are out)
Are scented honey sweet
For bees to buzz about.
Pink eucalyptus flowers
(The flowers are out)
Are fair as any rose
For us to sing about.

Lesbia Harford

Polytheist

One comes to love the little saints,
As years go by.
One learns to love the little saints.
'O hear me sigh,
St. Anthony,
Find this for me,
I wish you'd try.'
There must be many garden gods,
A gardener sees.
There'd have to be an orchard god. 'Divinities,
Take honour due.
The long year through
Protect these trees.'
The Mother and the Holy Child
Are friends to me.
I pray, 'I am my mother's child.
I trust you'll see
That days are bright
And all goes right
With her and me.'

Lesbia Harford

Pruning Flowering Gums

One summer day, along the street,
Men pruned the gums
To make them neat.
The tender branches, white with flowers,
Lay in the sun
For hours and hours,
And every hour they grew more sweet,
More honey-like
Until the street
Smelt like a hive, withouten bees.
But still the gardeners
Lopped the trees.
Then came the children out of school,
Noisy and separate
As their rule Of being is. The spangled trees
Gave them one heart:
Such power to please
Had all the flowering branches strown
Around for them
To make their own.
Then such a murmuring arose
As made the ears
Confirm the nose
And give the lie to eyes. For hours
Child bees hummed
In the honey flowers.
They gathered sprigs and armfuls. Some
Ran with their fragrant
Burdens home,
And still returned; and after them
Would drag great boughs.
Some stripped a stem
Of rosy flowers and played with these.
Never such love
Had earthly trees
As these young creatures gave. By night,
The treasured sprays
Of their delight
Were garnered every one. The street

Looked, as the council liked it, neat.

Lesbia Harford

Raging Winter Wind

'Raging winter wind
Let loose in springtime
What is the message your cold touch brings?
Spite of days and dreams,
Warm and easy and sublime,
Terror crouches always at the heart of things.

Lesbia Harford

Raiment

I cannot be tricked out in lovely clothes
All times, all days.
My mind has moods of hating pearl and rose
And jewel-blaze.
Nor is the body worthily attired
Unless the soul
Has visibly to nobleness aspired
And self-control.

Lesbia Harford

Revolution

She is not of the fireside,
My lovely love;
Nor books, nor even a cradle,
She bends above.
No, she is bent with lashes,
Her flesh is torn.
From blackness into blackness
She walks forlorn.
But factories and prisons
Are far more fair
Than home or palace gardens
If she is there.

Lesbia Harford

She Has All Ireland In Her Blood

She has all Ireland in her blood,
All Ireland's need of sword and tears,
With memories dim before the flood,
And conflicts of a thousand years.
No son of Italy should love
A heart the centuries have worn.
She had no thought of kissing lips—
She held her womanhood in scorn.
And all her joy is blackest pain,
And all her love is bitter woe.
Then you must leave her side again.
That is no path for you to go.

Lesbia Harford

Skirt Machinist

I am making great big skirts
For great big women—
Amazons who've fed and slept
Themselves inhuman.
Such long skirts, not less than two
And forty inches.
Thirty round the waist for fear
The webbing pinches.
There must be tremendous tucks
On those round bellies.
Underneath the limbs will shake
Like wine-soft jellies.
I am making such big skirts
And all so heavy,
I can see their wearers at
A lord-mayor's levee.
I, who am so small and weak
I have hardly grown,
Wish the skirts I'm making less
Unlike my own.

Lesbia Harford

Somebody Brought In Lilac

Somebody brought in lilac,
Lilac after rain.
Isn't it strange, beloved of mine
You'll not see it again?
Lilac glad with the sun on it
Flagrant fair from birth,
Mourns in colour, beloved of mine,
You laid in the earth.

Lesbia Harford

Sometimes I Am Too Tired

Sometimes I am too tired
To think of you.
Today was such a day,
But then I knew
Today, for certain, you'd be weary too
You there in hospital
With health to seek—
And me at my machine
Too tired to speak—
We're very funny lovers of a week.

Lesbia Harford

Sometimes I Think The Happiest Of Love's Moments

Sometimes I think the happiest of love's moments
Is the blest moment of release from loving.
The world once more is all one's own to model
Upon one's own and not another's pattern.
And each poor heart imprisoned by the other's
Is suddenly set free for splendid action.
For no two lovers are a single person
And lovers' union means a soul's suppression.
Oh, happy then the moment of love's passing
When those strong souls we sought to slay recover.

Lesbia Harford

Sometimes I Watch You, Mark Your Brooding Eyes

Sometimes I watch you, mark your brooding eyes,
Your grave brow over-weighted with deep thought,
Your mouth's straight line — details of such a sort
That all aloofness in your aspect lies.

And yet when in the dark down from above
You swoop like a great bird or God himself
To kiss, your lips have curves. What changeling elf
Is that soft mouth of passionate close love?

Lesbia Harford

Sometimes I Wish That I Were Helen-Fair

Sometimes I wish that I were Helen-fair
And wise as Pallas,
That I might have most royal gifts to pour
In love's sweet chalice.
Then I reflect my dear love is no god
But mortal only
And in this heavenly wife might deem himself
Not blest, but lonely.

Lesbia Harford

Street Music

There's a band in the street, there's a band in the street.
It will play you a tune for a penny—
It will play you a tune, you a tune, you a tune,
And you, though you haven't got any,
For the music's free, and the music's bold.
It cannot really be bought and sold.
And the people walk with their heads held high
Whether or not they've a penny.
And the music's there as the bandsmen know,
For the poor though the poor are many.
Oh the music's free and the music's bold.
It cannot really be bought and sold.

Lesbia Harford

Street Scene—little Lonsdale St.

I wish you'd seen that dirty little boy,
Finger at nose,
Peeking and ginking at some girls in rows
Seated on the high window-sills to rest.
One of the girls had hair as bright as corn.
And one was red.
And over their soft forms a glow was shed
From lamps new-lighted in the laundry there.
That boy, beneath them, wheeled a hand-cart full
Of cast-off busts
From sewing rooms. They looked like shells of lusts.
And all the girls around the windows laughed.

Lesbia Harford

Suburban Dames

All day long
We sew fine muslin up for you to wear,
Muslin that women wove for you elsewhere,
A million strong.

Just like flames,
Insatiable, you eat up all our hours,
And sun and loves and talk and flowers,
Suburban dames.

Lesbia Harford

Summer Lightning

Just now, as warm day faded from our sight
Hosts of archangels, fleet
On lightning-winged feet
Passed by, all glimmering in the busy night

Sweet angels, bringing no blinding truth to birth
Give us no messages
From heavenly palaces;
Leave us our dark trees and our starlight earth.

Lesbia Harford

Summer Lightning

Just now, as warm day faded from our sight
Hosts of archangels, fleet
On lightning-winged feet
Passed by, all glimmering in the busy night

Sweet angels, bringing no blinding truth to birth
Give us no messages
From heavenly palaces;
Leave us our dark trees and our starlight earth.

Lesbia Harford

Tall Trees Along The Road,

Tall trees along the road,
I never saw you
Last year in summertime.
He came before you
With his blue eyes.
Warm wind along the road,
I never knew you
Last year in summertime.
We could outdo you
With our hot sighs.
This year, oh wind and trees,
We're friends together.
Else should I be alone
In this sweet weather
Beneath fair skies.

Lesbia Harford

The Contest

Our palm designed to grow
In deserts, sent roots seeking far and wide
Channels where waters flow.
And in the city found
Intricate pipings where the waters flow
Imprisoned underground.
Since iron strength was nought
Against the clever groping fingers, meant
To find the thing they sought
Our palm's condemned to go;
While on through streets and houses at men's will
Rivers of crystal flow.
Be sad awhile. And then
Exult in visible beauty overthrown
By the fair will of men.

Lesbia Harford

The Electric Tram To Kew

Through the swift night
I go to my love.
Tram bells are joy bells,
Bidding us move
On a golden path
Beneath balls of fire
Up hill and down dale,
To o'ertake desire.
Past the old shops
That my childhood knew,
Past hidden houses
And fields of dew
Lovely and secret
As thou, my friend,
Who art all heaven
At journey's end.

Lesbia Harford

The Folk I Love

I do hate the folk I love-
They hurt so.
Their least word and act may be
Source of woe.
'Won't you come to tea with me?'
'Not today'
I'm so tired, I've been to church
Such folk say.

All the dreary afternoon
I must clutch
At the strength to love like them
Not too much

Lesbia Harford

The Immigrant

When Gertie came in
To work today
She was much less weary
And far more gay.
We asked her the reason
Of this delight.
She had been dreaming
Of home all night.

Lesbia Harford

The Invisible People

When I go into town at half past seven
Great crowds of people stream across the ways,
Hurrying, although it's only half past seven.
They are the invisible people of the days.

When you go in to town about eleven
The hurrying, morning crowds are hid from view.
Shut in the silent buildings at eleven
They toil to make life meaningless for you.

Lesbia Harford

The Love I Look For

The love I look for
Could not come from you.
My mind is set to fall
At Peterloo.
But you'd protect me,
I'd be safe with you.
You could but love me
In the olden way,
With gifts of jewels, children,
Time to play,
Be man to woman
In the olden way.
The love that's love has
Other gifts to bring,
A share in weakness, dreams,
And suffering.
These are the only
Gifts I'd have to bring.
The love I look for
Does not come from you.
I see it dawning in
Deep eyes of blue.
I dare to hope for
Love, but not from you.

Lesbia Harford

The Melbourne Cup

I like the riders
Clad in rose and blue;
Their colours glitter
And their horses too.
Swift go the riders
On incarnate speed.
My thought can scarcely
Follow where they lead.
Delicate, strong, long
Lines of colour flow,
And all the people
Tremble as they go.

Lesbia Harford

The Moonlit Room

I know a room that's dark in daytime hours;
No sunbeams light it,
Whether in months of gloom or months of flowers,
So people slight it.
Yet in the noon of each succeeding night
The moon shines in it,
Goldenly waking dreamers to delight
For a love's minute.
In a dream light, they sigh and burn and kiss
And fall to slumber
Deeply once more. Thus bliss is piled on bliss
In goodly number.
Praise first is giv'n to sunshine and to rooms
Sunbright, with reason.
Yet a wise man should choose a moonlit room
In his blood's season.

Lesbia Harford

The Nuns And The Lilies

The lilies in the garden walk
Are out today.
The nuns all came to look at them,
To look and say
They wouldn't last to deck the crib
On Christmas day.
They had outstripped the Holy Child.
And yet at least
They should have been for Ursula,
Lucy, Joan, Perpetua,
Have glittered on the altar through some virgin feast.
The lilies in the convent walk
Are fair to see.
They have forgotten baby Christs,
It seems to me.
They laugh and toss their royal heads
In ecstasy.
And still they say I must believe
Like princely churls
For all your lovely purity,
Catherine, Mary, Dorothy,
We will not die as altar flowers for dreaming girls.

Lesbia Harford

The People Have Drunk The Wine Of Peace

The people have drunk the wine of peace
In the streets of town.
They smile as they drift with hearts at rest
Uphill and down.
The people have drunk the wine of peace,
They are mad with joy.
Never again need they lie and fear
Death for a boy.

Lesbia Harford

The Psychological Craze

I in the library,
Looking for books to read,
Pulled one out twice to see
If it fulfilled my need.
Butler had written this
Autobiography.
Which of the Butlers, then?
I opened it to see.
He's an old general
Mounted upon a horse.
Thinkers don't write their lives,
But soldiers can, of course.
They write: 'The regiment
Was sent to Omdurman,
Where Gordon died. To catch
The Mahdi was our plan.'
Later—'The bride wore white
And she had golden hair.
Four bridesmaids bore her train
Up to the altar where
His Grace of Birmingham'—
It's the old rigmarole,
Names, facts and dates—no word
In this about the soul.
No dreams, no sin, no tears!
Only the body thrives.
Upon such worthless things
Great soldiers base their lives.
No wonder wars are fought.
Loss of such life is small,
Life bound to space and time,
Not infinite at all.

Lesbia Harford

The Silent Dead

There's a little boy who lives next door
With hair like you,
Pale, pale hair and a rose-white skin
And his eyes are blue.
When I get a chance I peep at him,
Who is so like you,
Terribly like, my dead, my fair,
For he's dumb, too.

Lesbia Harford

The Sisters

They used to say
Our mother brought us up like hot-house flowers,
From day to day
Such wondrous cares were ours
Her love inspired.
In truth we grew
Strangely. Unsought, as priestesses might be.
The girls we knew
Found tenderness. But we
Were more desired.
No doubt at all
Our spirits drew the secret souls of men.
They would recall
Old dreams through us; and then
Make dreams their choice.
Creatures of light,
Sun-darkened by the shining of her love,
We knew the plight
Of Sibyls, thus to prove
The incarnate voice.

Lesbia Harford

The Two Swans

There's a big park just close to where we live —
Trees in a row
And shaggy grass whereon the dead leaves blow.
And in the middle round a great lagoon
The fair yachts sail
In loveliness that makes the water pale.
Last night I went to walk along the road
Beside the park
And feel the kisses of the wintry dark.
It's the best place to watch the evening come
For mists are there
And lights and shadows and the lake is fair
And last night looking up I saw two swans
Fly overhead
With long black necks and their white wings outspread.
Above the houses citywards they went,
An arrowy pair
In secret — white and black and dark and fair.

Lesbia Harford

The Tyrant

When I was a child,
I felt the fairies' power.
Of a sudden my dry life
Would burst into flower.
The skies were my path,
The sun my comrade fair,
And the night was a dark rose
I wore in my hair.
But thou camest, love,
Who madest me unfree.
I will dig myself a grave
And hide there from thee.

Lesbia Harford

The Wife

He's out of work!
I tell myself a change should mean a chance,
And he must look for changes to advance,
And he, of all men, really needs a jerk.
But I hate change.
I like my kitchen with its pans and pots
That shine like new although we've used them lots.
I wouldn't like a kitchen that was strange.
And it's not true
All changes are for better. Some are worse.
A man had rather work, though work's a curse,
Than mope at home with not a thing to do.
No surer thing
Than that he'll get another job. But soon!
Or else I'll have to change. This afternoon
Would be the time, before I sell my ring.

Lesbia Harford

They Are So Glad Of A Young Companion,

They are so glad of a young companion,
They hail and bless me, these boys of mine,
And I whose pathway was dark and lonely
Have no more need of the sun to shine.
We'll walk in darkness, obscure, despised,
We'll mourn each other at prison gates.
These boys are splendid as mountain eagles,
But mountain eagles have eagle mates.
The girls who prattle of work and pleasure,
Of last week's picnic and this week's joys,
Of past and present, nor heed the future,
Are lagging comrades for dawnstruck boys.

Lesbia Harford

They Say — Priests Say

They say — priests say —
That God loves the world.
Maybe he does,
When the dew is pearl'd
On the emerald grass,
Or the young dawns shine
Would you be satisfied,
Proteus mine,
Just to be loved
When your hair was curled,
As Earth is beloved
When earth is fine?
I love you more
Than God loves the world.

Lesbia Harford

This Evening I'M Alone.

This evening I'm alone.
I wish there'd be
Someone to come along
And talk to me.
Yet out of all my friends
There isn't one
I'd like to come and talk
To me alone.
But if a stranger came
With newer brain
We'd yarn until we felt
Alive again.

Lesbia Harford

This Year I Have Seen Autumn With New Eyes

This year I have seen autumn with new eyes,
Glimpsed hitherto undreamt of mysteries
In the slow ripening of the town-bred trees;
Horse-chestnut lifting wide hands to the skies;
And silver beech turned gold now winter's near;
And elm, whose leaves like little suns appear
Scattering light — all, all have made me wise
And writ me lectures in earth's loveliness,
Whether they laugh through the grey morning mist,
Or by the loving sun at noon are kissed
Or seek at night the high-swung lamp's caress.
Does autumn such a novel splendour wear
Simply because my love has yellow hair?

Lesbia Harford

Those Must Be Masts Of Ships The Gazer Sees

Those must be masts of ships the gazer sees
On through the little gap in the park trees
So far away that seeing almost fails.
Those must be masts, the lovely masts of ships
Stripped bare of sails.
There's nothing here to please the seeing eyes,
Four poles with crossway beams against the skies.
But beauty's not for sight. True beauty sings
Of latent movement to the unsensed soul
In love with wings.

Lesbia Harford

Though I Had Lost My Love

Though I had lost my love,
The hills could calm me.
Deep in a woodland grove
No loss could harm me.
But when I came to town,
And saw around me
Lovers pass up and down —
Then sorrow crowned me.

Lesbia Harford

Three Teachers

Sometimes I can see
When I teach
Half my children talk
Each to each.
Then I almost wish
I could be
Very fierce and they
Scared of me.
They will all be still
For one man
Who could never teach
As I can.
He is kind and strong,
Narrow-souled.
He has never sought
Dangerous gold.
If he might do both
That were good.
In my life I knew
One who could.
She was dark and sweet,
Irish born,
Very full of dreams,
Full of scorn.
Hell and heav'n was she,
Like the sun.
My dear children need
Such a one.

Lesbia Harford

To Leslie

Across the sea
Come homeward ships
With freight of boys.
And still must we
Forgo the joys
Of meeting lips.

Lesbia Harford

To Look Across At Moira Gives Me Pleasure

To look across at Moira gives me pleasure.
She has a red tape measure.
Her dress is black and all the workroom's dreary,
And I am weary.
But that's like blood—like a thin blood stream trickling
Like a fire quickening.
It's Revolution. Ohé, I take pleasure
In Moira's red tape measure.

Lesbia Harford

To Plato's Dictum

To Plato's dictum
Assent she lends.
All things in common
We hold, as friends.
I share her riches.
In days to be
She'll come and share in
My poverty.

Lesbia Harford

Today I Saw

Today I saw

A market cart going along the road,
High-piled and creaking with a sony load
Of cabbages.

The driver sat

Under a little tent himself had made
To give him shelter from the rain or shade
In summertime.

Such men as he,

Backed by the riches of a country side,
Should have kings' faces, full of jolly pride
In comeliness.

But he was tired

After a night's work under starlit skies,
And crouched like a poor slave, with anxious eyes
Turned citywards.

Lesbia Harford

Today Is Rebels' Day. And Yet We Work

Today is rebels' day. And yet we work—
All of us rebels, until day is done.
And when the stars come out we celebrate
A revolution that's not yet begun.
Today is rebels' day. And men in jail
Tread the old mill-round until day is done.
And when night falls they sit alone to brood
On revolution that's not yet begun.
Today is rebels' day. Let all of us
Take courage to fight on until we're done—
Fight though we may not live to see the hour
The Revolution's splendidly begun.

Lesbia Harford

Today They Made A Bonfire

Today they made a bonfire
Close to the cherry tree
And smoke like incense drifted
Through the white tracery.
I think the gardener really
Played a tremendous game,
Offering beauty homage
In soft blue smoke and flame.

Lesbia Harford

Today When You Went Up The Hill

Today when you went up the hill
And all that I could see
Was just a speck of black and white
Very far from me,
It seemed more strange than words can say,
The dot that I could see,
Really was the dearest thing
The world holds for me.

Lesbia Harford

Today, In Class,

Today, in class,
I read aloud to forty little boys
The legend of King Croesus' boasted joys.
They were so young,
Restless, and eager, I believed they'd find
This moral story little to their mind.
But they were pleased
With the old legend, quick to comprehend
Sorrowful wisdom's triumph at the end:
They seemed to feel,
In hush of wonder, hurry of amaze,
The sure uncertainty of all men's days.

Lesbia Harford

Up In My Room On My Unmade Bed

Up in my room on my unmade bed
I sat and read.
There was work waiting for me below.
I didn't go.
For in my little green room the song
Flickered along.
If the singer had seen the way it fared
She would have stared,
Have wondered and stared at me who read
With tumbled bed,
Wide-open window, wide-open door,
Books on the floor.
Hers was a disciplined, comely, wise
Christina-guise.
But what's the hell of a mess to me
When I am free
And wind blows in and a delicate song
Flickers along.

Lesbia Harford

We Climbed That Hill,

We climbed that hill,
The road flushed red in pride
At being beauty's boundary. Either side
Stretched beauty, beauty ever, beauty still.
For on the left
Rose sandhills bound together by the deft
Long fingers of sea-grass,
Humped like the Punch and Judy of a farce,
Comical, cleft
With gaps for wind to pass,
Spotted
With dark
Clumped tea-tree, stark
With rushes, fierce with burrs,
Blotted
With purple earth,
Stains, remnants, marks of birth
On too-exuberant beauty.
On the right
Long paddocks stooped under a cloudy sky.
'They're lovely paddocks. Look at them,' you said.
I turned my head.
What I'd thought gray
Was seen
To be the young beginning of live green
Under a spray
Of ghostly weed-stalks—lilacs, mauves and blues
At interplay—
A delicate tracery of shadow hues.
'There's colour,' I began
And straightway knew
I saw what you
Saw not, and yet your vision was not mine.
Your eyes were on the line
The sweep and curve of the fields against the sky.
You'd heard
My poor beginning of a word.
I had no more to praise
An unfamiliar loveliness. To gaze

Was all my praise.
At the hilltop it was your turn to say
'There's colour.' You had found
Silver and gold on my Tom Tiddler's ground.
At the roadside
A clump of grasses, all
Caught round a little bush and tangled, tied
With unimagined colours people call
Green when they see them. This was treasure spied
By your eyes with my soul.
You'd liked the whole
Broad sweep of things, had scarcely seen such small
Jewel incidents until
I showed you, who had never watched a hill
Remote in contemplation 'neath far, far skies,
Except with eyes
That had no mind to see
A present beauty, only what might be
If distance were annihilate.
And then,
Where the road crossed the creek we could not cross,
We found again
Our power of sight redoubled by the loss
Of what I'd planned.
You said it was no sense
To pull off shoes and fasten up a skirt
And plunge through dirt
And mud
And water, water
Muddy,
Ruddy,
As zinnias and paint-water and a flood
Of heavy auburn hair. We'd better go
Round by the beach,
Not by the cliffs, to reach
That farthest cliff
I wanted to see tower
Above the waves in colour and in power,
More solid than the sky.
And so
We turned
Seaward among the sea-grass. I had learned

Some of your alien sense of beauty, line
Preferred to colour, distance to the near.
For it was I
Who saw
The lovely curve of the creek.
But the whole shore
Yellow, untrodden, (more
The loveliest thing of our whole lovely week
For subtle curve, unbroken surface, than
For colour) this wide shore
Was yours and mine
And yours and mine the foam
When it would shine
Flower-coloured in a glint of sun. But mine
The hurry
And swift scurry
Of wind-blown tea-tree up the cliff.
We gave
A double dower
Of beauty to each wave
That trailed its hair in the wind before it broke.
For all the power
Of alien philosophies awoke
Our power of sight.
You still proclaim the far
Eternal unity of things that are
Like Plato and the mountains. I prefer
Inchoate beauty, for my part aver
Plurality essential, am content
To find a gain in difference, in a while
Admit there's gain in union. Argument
Rekurs. Oh well, at any rate we know
That walk was lovely;
Ecstasies of mind
And subtle mysteries of sight combined
With the dear love of friends to make it so.

Lesbia Harford

Weekend At Mt. Dandenong

Frolic mountain winds
Innocent and shy,
Kiss my darling's cheek
As they scurry by.
Little fragrant leaves
With the dawn astir,
Make a million songs
Full of love for her.
Will she wake or sleep
These two nights she'll spend
Up the mountain-side,
My dear truant friend?

Lesbia Harford

What Were The Good Of Stars If None Looked On Them

What were the good of stars if none looked on them
But mariners, astronomers and such!
The sun and moon and stars were made for lovers.
I know that much.

Lesbia Harford

When Day Is Over

When day is over
I climb up the stair,
Take off my dark dress,
Pull down my hair,
Open my window
And look at the stars.
Then my heart breaks through
These prison bars
Of space and darkness
And finds what is true,
Up past the stars where
I'm one with you.

Lesbia Harford

When I Am Articled

When I am articled
The Law decrees
I shall devote my time
To stating fees
And learning about Actions
Suits and Courts.
Then Deeds and Briefs and Grants
Must fill my thoughts.
While if a naughty
Little verse should find
Its way into a corner
Of my mind
I must not tell the chap
For whom I work.
He pays the penalty
If I should shirk
And take to writing books
And verse instead
Of 'hereinafter', 'duly',
'Viz', 'the said'.

Lesbia Harford

When I Get Up To Light The Fire,

When I get up to light the fire,
And dress with all the speed I may
By candle-light, I dread the hours
That go to make a single day.
But then I leave my room, and see
How brightly, clearly darkness shines,
When stars ten thousand miles away
Are caught in our verandah vines.
And I am almost glad that fires
Have to be lit, before the day
Comes up between the trees and drives
The strange familiar dark away.

Lesbia Harford

When I Go Up To Work The Young Blue Sea

When I go up to work the young blue sea
Has not awaked from dreams:
It fades to meet the blue sky mistily:
It gleams.
I say,
'All day
It will not wake from dreams.'
And yet, when I come back from work, the sea
Has a green sombreness;
As if the hours between were somehow hours
Of stress.
I read
Its need
Of dim forgetfulness.

Lesbia Harford

When I Was Still A Child

When I was still a child
I thought my love would be
Noble, truthful, brave,
And very kind to me.
Then all the novels said
That if my lover prove
No such man as this
He had to forfeit love.
Now I know life holds
Harder tasks in store.
If my lover fail
I must love him more.
Should he prove unkind,
What am I, that he
Squander soul and strength
Smoothing life for me?
Weak or false or cruel
Love must still be strong.
All my life I'll learn
How to love as long.

Lesbia Harford

When My Lover Put The Sea Between Us

When my lover put the sea between us
And went wandering in Italy
My poor silly heart miscalled his journey—
'Leaving me'.

Towns of Spain and Italy he stayed in,
Each and all of them to me unknown;
How could he find pleasure being a lover,
Being alone!

Truly I was not as fair as Venice,
Noble as Siena, strange as Rome.
Certainly he loved Milan and Florence
More than home.

I believed his absence had estranged us
And across the heart-dividing sea
Sent him word that I no longer loved him.
Foolish me!

Came his answer after months of waiting
Echoing my letter, lie for lie.
Truth or lies I know not. Which unfaithful,
He or I.

Lesbia Harford

Whenever I Think Of You, You Are Alone

Whenever I think of you, you are alone,
Shut by yourself between
Great walls of stone.
There is a stool, I think, and a table there,
And a mat underneath your feet;
And the rest is bare.
I cannot stop remembering this, my own,
Seventeen hours of the day
You are alone.

Lesbia Harford

White Sunshine

The sun's my fire.
Golden, from a magnificence of blue,
Should be its hue.
But woolly clouds,
Like boarding-house old ladies, come and sit
In front of it.
White sunshine, then,
That has the frosty glimmer of white hair,
Freezes the air.
They must forget,
So self-absorbed are they, so very old,
That I'll be cold.

Lesbia Harford

Why Does She Put Me To Many Indignities

Why does she put me to many indignities,
Shifts to prevent myself thinking upon her,
My golden Katie, who loveth not kisses?
I wear my new dresses and put on silk stockings,
All to prevent myself thinking upon her,
Who is more lovely than fair river-lilies.

Lesbia Harford

Work-Girls' Holiday

A lady has a thousand ways
Of doing nothing all her days,
And so she thinks that they're well spent,
She can be idle and content.
But when I have a holiday
I have forgotten how to play.
I could rest idly under trees
When there's some sun or little breeze
Or if the wind should prove too strong
Could lie in bed the whole day long.
But any leisured girl would say
That that was waste of holiday.
Perhaps if I had weeks to spend
In doing nothing without end,
I might learn better how to shirk
And never want to go to work.

Lesbia Harford

You May Have Other Loves,

You may have other loves,
Red mouths to kiss.
Why should you lose
That loveliness for this?
No loveliness of mine
That comes and goes
Wild-fuchsia-like,
Need blind you to the rose.
So I, who bless
Your hot and passionate ways,
Still need the starry loves
Of virgin days.

Lesbia Harford

You Want A Lily

You want a lily
And you plead with me
'Give me my lily back.'
I went to see
A friend last night and on her mantelshelf
I saw some lilies,
Image of myself,
And most unlike your dream of purity.
They had been small green lilies, never white
For man's delight
In their most blissful hours.
But now the flowers
Had shrivelled and instead
Shone spikes of seeds,
Burned spikes of seeds,
Burned red
As love and death and fierce futurity.
There's this much of the lily left in me.

Lesbia Harford

You, Whom The Grave Cannot Bind

You, whom the grave cannot bind,
Shall a song hold you?
Still you escape from the mesh
Spun to enfold you.
Your woven texture of flesh
Short time confined you.
Sib to the sun and the wind,
Shall a song bind you?

Lesbia Harford