

Classic Poetry Series

**Alice Duer Miller**  
**- poems -**

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# Alice Duer Miller(28 July 1874 - 22 August 1942)

Alice Duer Miller was an American writer and poet.

Alice Duer was born in New York City on July 28, 1874 into a wealthy family. She is the daughter of James Gore King Duer and Elizabeth Wilson Meads, daughter of Orlando Meads of Albany, New York. Her paternal great grandfather, was William Duer, an American lawyer, developer, and speculator from New York City. He had served in the Continental Congress and the convention that framed the New York Constitution. In 1778, he signed the United States Articles of Confederation and was the president of Columbia College, 1829-1842; and her great great grandfather was William Alexander, who claimed the disputed title of Earl of Stirling, and was an American Major-General during the American Revolutionary War.

She was also a descendant of Senator Rufus King, who was an American lawyer, politician, and diplomat. He was a delegate for Massachusetts to the Continental Congress. He also attended the Constitutional Convention and was one of the signers of the United States Constitution on September 17, 1787, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He represented New York in the United States Senate, served as Minister to Britain, and was the Federalist candidate for both Vice President (1804, 1808) and President of the United States (1816)

At the time of her entrance into society, her family lost most of its fortune. She entered Barnard College in 1895 studying mathematics and astronomy (she was a brilliant mathematician). She helped to pay for her studies by selling novels and short essays. She and her sister Caroline King Duer published a joint book of poems. Alice graduated in June 1899.

On October 5, 1899, she married Henry Wise Miller at Grace Church Chapel in New York City. He was born in 1877, the son of Lt. Commander Jacob Miller, in Nice, France, where his father was serving with the U.S. Navy. He was an 1892 graduate of Harvard University. They left for Costa Rica, where he attempted to develop rubber cultivation. This venture eventually failed; in 1903, she, her husband and young son returned to New York, where they lived in difficulty for some time, he working in the Stock Exchange, she teaching, which she hated. After a time, her husband earned more and she was able to dedicate her working time entirely to writing.

She became known as a campaigner for women's suffrage and published a brilliant series of satirical poems in the New York Tribune. These were published

subsequently as *Are Women People?*. These words became a catchphrase of the suffrage movement. She followed this collection with *Women are People!* (1917).

As a novelist, she scored her first real success with *Come Out of the Kitchen* in 1916. The story was made into a play and later the 1948 film *Spring in Park Lane*. She followed it with a series of other short novels, many of which were staged and (increasingly) made into films. At about the same time, her husband began to make money on the Exchange and their money problems were over.

Her marriage endured to the end of her life, but was not entirely tranquil. Her novel in verse *Forsaking All Others* (1933) about a tragic love affair, which many consider her greatest work, reflects this, though it is certainly not autobiographical.

In the 1920s and 1930s, many of her stories were used for motion pictures, such as *Roberta* (1935) and *Irene* (1940), taking her to Hollywood. She also became involved in a number of motion picture screenplays, including *Wife vs. Secretary* (1936). Her name appears in the very first issue of *The New Yorker* as an "advisory editor".

In 1940, she wrote the verse novel *The White Cliffs*. The story is of an American girl who coming to London as a tourist, meets and marries a young upper-class Englishman in the period just before the First World War. The War begins and he goes to the front. He is killed just before the end of the War, leaving her with a young son. Her son is the heir to the family estate. Despite the pull of her own country and the impoverished condition of the estate, she decides to stay and live the traditional life of a member of the English upper class. The story concludes as The Second World War commences and she worries that her son, like his father, will be killed fighting for the country he loves

...I am American bred  
I have seen much to hate here - much to forgive,  
But in a world in which England is finished and dead,  
I do not wish to live.

The poem was spectacularly successful on both sides of the Atlantic, selling eventually approaching a million copies - an unheard of number for a book of verse. It was broadcast and the story was made into the 1944 film *The White Cliffs of Dover*, starring Irene Dunne. Like her earlier suffrage poems, it had a significant effect on American public opinion and it was one of the influences leading the United States to enter the War. Sir Walter Layton, who held positions in the Ministries of Supply and Munitions during the Second World War, even

brought it to the attention of then-Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Alice Duer Miller died in 1942, and was interred at Evergreen Cemetery in Morristown, New Jersey.

# A Bread And Butter Letter

THERE is a willow grows beside a pool;  
Its long gray branches sweep the marble rim;  
And from those waters shadowy and cool,  
The stars shine, large and dim.

From open valleys filled with little lakes  
All through the night a hundred breezes blow,  
All through the night the little willow makes  
A whispering soft and low.

Here in the dusty street there are no trees  
To whisper, and the sky is dark and gray,  
And yet I see the stars, I feel the breeze,  
So far, so far away.

Alice Duer Miller

# A Creed

COURAGE to ask of love neither sign nor token,  
Wisdom to wait, silence and faith are better;  
Fear, not alone lest the bond be some day broken,  
But, that love, too desperately dear, become a fetter.

Alice Duer Miller

# A Dialouge

HE: I am in trouble, give me your advice.

SHE: No, for I'm sure 'twould not be carried out.

HE: It shall, I swear it shall, at any price.

SHE: If that's agreed, what is this all about?

HE: How can I win a woman who is fair  
And cold?

SHE: Be colder.

HE: But she's proud as well.

SHE: Be prouder.

HE: But she does not seem to care,  
Nor notice when I'm near.

SHE: How can you tell  
Whether she does or not, until you've tried  
Not being near? Avoid her, let her see  
The change, and should chance place you at her side,  
Be colder, prouder, civiler than she.

HE: But if she cares...

SHE: Then it will break her heart,  
Which will be easier won.

HE: 'Tis too severe  
On me: I could not.

SHE: Then you'd better part.

HE: Is this your counsel? Well, good-by, my dear.

SHE: Stay, there's one thing to do before you go.

HE: What?

SHE: If you really love her, tell her so.  
Perhaps you'll find her kinder than you know.

Alice Duer Miller

# A Lady's Choice

Her old love in tears and silence had been building her a palace  
Ringed by moats and flanked with towers, he had set it on a hill  
'Here,' he said, 'will come no whisper of the world's alarms and malice,  
In these granite walls imprisoned, I will keep you safe from ill'

As he spoke along the highway there came riding by a stranger,  
For an instant on her features, he a fleeting glance bestowed,  
Then he said: 'My heart is fickle and the world is full of danger,'  
And he offered her his stirrup and he pointed down the road.

Alice Duer Miller



## After A Quarrel

WE have quarreled; ugly things have been said,  
Bitter things, in a tone controlled, well-bred,  
Temperate; we weighed our words, lest the lust  
Of cruelty lose the edge of being just.

We have quarreled over a trifle, one of those trifles  
That strike their roots to the very heart of each,  
To the cold and earthy places where even love stifles,  
And kindness and friendly habit cannot reach ;  
Those unexplored vaults of the spirit, black, unknown,  
Where each is a king, but a king ashamed, alone,  
Afraid of the world, afraid of friend and foe.

Oh, human creatures must quarrel, my dear, I know;  
But if we must, let's quarrel for something great,  
For something final and dangerous - mastery; hate,  
Freedom, or jealousy, virtue, death, or life:  
For then two loves leap up on the wings of strife  
Into the sun and air of their own souls' sight,  
Locked together, joined, putting forth all their might  
That love may survive or fail, or perish or win,  
But perish not for a trifle. That is sin.

Alice Duer Miller

## After A Year

YES, you have guessed it. Do not blame me, dear.  
Indeed, I did not dream, O tender eyes,  
When first we met, that in a little year  
My words would dim you with pain's dumb surprise.

Do not reproach me, for I suffer too -  
An agony of shame and self-contempt;  
And know that I shall miss, far more than you,  
The lost illusions of this dream we've dreamt.

Why did you ever learn to love me, child?  
If you had let me only be your friend-  
Instead of weeping, had you only smiled  
Coldly, I might have worshipped to the end.

Worthless and aimless, what I was you knew,  
By all the wretched past to you confessed;  
The one good in me was my love of you,  
And that has proved as fickle as the rest.

Ah ! dear, the worst wrong in this world of shame,  
The hardest question to explain, is why  
Women like you, who barely know sin's name,  
Can be so wounded by such men as I.

Alice Duer Miller

# An American To France

O FRANCE, with what a shamed and sorry smile  
We now recall that in a bygone day  
We sought of you art, wit, perfection, style;  
You were to us a playground and a play.  
Paris was ours - its sudden green edged spaces  
And sweeping vistas to the coming night,  
Brocades and jewels, porcelains and laces  
All these we took for leisure and delight.  
And all the time we should have drunk our fill  
Of wisdom known to you and you alone,  
Clear-eyed self-knowledge, silent courage, will;  
And now too late, we see these things are one:  
That art is sacrifice and self-control,  
And who loves beauty must be stern of soul.

Alice Duer Miller

# An Exhortation To Gentleness

You who are strong, and do not know the need  
That weaker spirits feel, but do not plead --  
The need to lean on someone who is strong -  
Oh! see you give their silent want good heed.

Be not so busy with your own career,  
However noble, that you cannot hear  
The sighs of those who look to you for help,  
For this is purchasing success too dear.

Many strong men and good, I see, so bent  
Upon their own souls' high development  
That they have only scorn or tolerance  
To give to those who are not thus intent.

Yet, who can answer that it is not true  
That those weak souls who spare, where blame is due,  
And smile, because too gentle to be stern,  
Are not more needed in the world than you?

Alice Duer Miller

# Batalha

IN this still cloister where the roses grow  
Waist-high between the arches and the well,  
You would have walked a thousand years ago,  
So faithful, who are now so infidel;  
You would have fancied your wild heart's emotion  
Over the beauty of a scene like this,  
A mystic piety, a pure devotion -  
And so, perhaps, it is.

Under the shade of column and of tracing,  
Here in the dusk, where swallows dart and fly,  
Barefoot and cowled, I think I see you pacing,  
Brooding o'er thoughts of subtle mystery;  
Fasting and prayer, and music and desire  
Weaving a mood that men no longer know -  
Oh, yes, my dear, you would have been a friar,  
A thousand years ago.

Alice Duer Miller

# Before Spring

FARE you well, who love the highways,  
Love the cities, tall and bright,  
For the forest ways are my ways,  
And the birds' songs my delight,  
And the stars in river byways  
Are my only lamps by night.

I shall see the Spring awaking  
While you think it winter still,  
Watch the brittle ice forsaking  
Edge of marsh and pool and rill,  
And the little willows making  
Yellow mists against the hill.

Go you to the things you care for,  
Violins with trembling string,  
Jewels that men do and dare for,  
Every lovely, man-wrought thing;  
They have caught your spirit, therefore  
You have left me ere the Spring.

Alice Duer Miller

# Brandon

THE house is empty, and the garden alley,  
A shadowed aisle of linden and of yew,  
A marble vase, a glimpse of river-valley -  
Translucent white against transparent blue -  
A mystery of boxwood and of byway,  
Beneath barred windows and unopened door,  
And far below the river like a highway  
Sweeps on, but brings no travelers any more.  
Beauty alone is constant; where she chooses  
A dwelling-place, there would she ever stay;  
Fortune and friends and fashion though it loses,  
Beauty more faithful does not pass away,  
But most deserted, most herself she seems  
Left to her deep and solitary dreams.

Alice Duer Miller

# Easton's Beach

LAST night I saw a city by the sea,  
Outlined in sparks of fire;  
Those wreathed lamps made all a fantasy -  
Arch, dome and spire.

I saw above the waters pale and gray,  
The pale moon stand,  
I heard, but faint and sweet and far away,  
A martial band.

The distant voices in the streets, the sound  
Of laughter from the towers  
Made where we swam the solitude profound:  
The sea was ours.

Alice Duer Miller



# Exile

## I

At dead of night about the dying fire  
They told a story how the dead appear;  
And men, grown still with fear,  
Forgot their old desire  
For those who once were dear,  
And shook and trembled lest their dead be near.

Alas, poor dead who were so sweet and human!  
How are you grown a menace and a blight -  
A thing to shun, a thing of evil omen,-  
Stealing unwelcome through the halls of night?,  
Who knows? perhaps yourselves are much affrighted,  
And struggle back, remote and bodiless,  
Fearful of sounds unheard, visions unsighted,  
Black echoes, and the bitter loneliness.

But for me, in my heart is no dread  
Of the coming again of the dead,  
But a terror of life, without one  
Who made life to be life - and is gone.

## II

Yes, at these tales of how the dead return,  
Hope stirs within my spirit more than fear.  
So strange, so strange it seems, you are not here,  
And so unnatural to me 'tis to learn  
The trick of life without you, year by year,

That not so strange could any specter be  
Or fall of footsteps on the empty stair,  
Or shapes discerned upon the shadowy air,  
As is this haunting sense of vacancy,  
And your persisting absence everywhere.

Ah, could I see, as in the tranquil past,  
The form I long for - always and in vain, -

Should I not cry, like one released from pain:  
'Dear and long absent, you return at last,  
And life its natural aspect wears again!'

Alice Duer Miller

## Final Poem

The consciousness of my mortality  
Which used to blind and limit all my life  
Weighs on me not since I have been your wife.  
Death is the price of our felicity;  
And life eternal would not leave us free  
To love each other thus, setting above  
The grace of God, a common human love,  
Untouched, unthreatened by any heaven to be.  
For who, while waiting to be crowned a king  
Can relish all the humble every day?  
Who but must hasten when she sets a goal?  
For me, I could not make our life a thing  
So wise, so real, so tender and so gay  
Had I this other care - to save my soul.

Alice Duer Miller

# Forsaking All Others Part 1

'NOT that you'll like him,' Nell said,  
'No mystery - no romance,  
A fine, stern, eagle-like head,  
But he simply reeks of finance, --  
Started from nothing - self-made --  
And rather likes you to know it,  
And now collects porcelain and jade,  
Or some Seventeenth Century poet.

'Married in simpler days,  
A poor little wren of a being,  
Who exists to pray and praise,  
And spends her life agreeing,  
Thin and dowdy and pale,  
And getting paler and thinner-  
Well, the point of this dreary tale  
Is I've asked them both to dinner.

'I'd leave her out like a shot,  
For I'm not so keen about her,  
But, my dear, believe it or not,  
He won't dine out without her.  
She has that terrible hold  
That aging wives exert to  
Replace young charms grown old-  
Poor health and impeccable virtue.

'Lightly I asked them to dine,  
And now I perceive the dangers,  
My friends-yours and mine-  
Are so terribly rude to strangers.  
But you, dear girl, I can trust  
To come and be brilliant and tender;  
Vamp the man, if you must,  
But give an impression of splendor.'

II

LEE sat before her mirror... rouged her lips,

Set dripping diamond earrings in her ears,  
Polished a little at her finger tips,  
Thought that she did not look her thirty years;

Thought, 'Poor dear Nellie's ill-assorted feasts!  
I want to be as helpful as I can  
Among that group of men and gods and beasts...  
Why does she think I shall not like this man?

She made him sound entrancing... strong and crude,  
Successful, dominant...I, who for so long  
Have known a somewhat pitiful servitude  
To weakness, have no terror of the strong.'  
Her maid held up her cloak of furry white,  
And gave her money in a golden purse.  
She sighed: 'Not even third-rate bridge to-night,  
Just third-rate conversation... which is worse.'

### III

'NELLIE, I'm sorry I'm late,  
Edward, I honestly am.  
Just the malignance of fate  
I always get caught in a jam  
Whenever I'm coming to you.  
'Mrs. Wayne back of you, Lee,  
And Mr. Wayne.'

'How do you do.  
Isn't that cocktail for me?

### IV

#### MENU

CAVIAR, cocktails, soup of black bean,  
Shad, Moet-Chandon of 1919,  
A saddle of mutton, a stuffed aubergine,  
With some creme de menthe jelly of beautiful green,  
Avocados and lettuce and cold galantine  
And baba au rhum with a sauce grenadine,  
Coffee and fruit and some excellent fine.

## V

SOME women - hard, beautiful women - know a way  
Of looking up at a man, so gentle and gay,  
A magical child-like look that seems to say:  
Let us be happy together for an hour, a day,  
A night, or forever. Let us yield to the charm.

Lee looked at Wayne and put her hand on his arm,  
Under the broadcloth and linen she felt his muscles like steel,  
Feeling, she said to herself, as a man's arm ought to feel.  
And she glanced at her own hand there, so slim and cool  
With its single cabochon emerald, like a deep green pool.  
'Shall we go first,' she asked him, 'or let them all go ahead? '  
And so they spoke of leading... and being led.

And then she told him a story, heard she didn't know when,  
Of an arctic expedition, from which two men  
Had got lost and while they were off and away  
They met a dog, starving like them and astray...  
A clever heroic creature, who in the end  
Guided them back, and they loved that dog like a friend; -  
Loved him and worried about him all the way back...  
What would he do when he met the head of the pack,  
The leader of dogs, the old dog, cruel and stern,  
Who brooked no rival. How could this new dog learn...  
Himself a leader and used to his own wild way,  
How could he learn to be one of the pack and obey?  
Would he not fight for mastery... hopeless...they caught their breath.  
Were they not leading this friend they loved to death?

And now the crisis was on them... they saw camp now,  
Two men in a fragile boat and a dog standing up in the prow.  
They pushed the boat as near as they could to the bank,  
And someone to help them land shoved out a plank,  
The new dog leaped on the plank, and the old dog, bristling and proud  
Made one step to meet him in front of the crowd,  
And they looked at each other a moment, and the old dog lay on his back,  
And the new dog stepped ashore... the head of the pack.  
'A very interesting story. Why did you tell it to me? '

Asked Wayne, with his black eyes on her.  
'Why do you think? ' asked Lee.

## VI

CANDLE light beams, flickers and blazes  
On panelled pine walls, fashioned of old;  
Pale pink roses in golden vases,  
Hothouse grapes in a bowl of gold;  
Crystal goblets, and plenty of them,  
Flashing their points of rainbow light.  
Tall, grave men servants bending above them,  
Everyone talking with all his might: -

'Why didn't Archie go with Jessie? '  
'My dear, she didn't want him, of course.'  
'Aren't things getting a trifle messy? '  
'There's nothing messy about divorce.'  
'Algy's a sort of weak Othello.'  
'Poor creature. Jessie is quite a bird.'  
'I hear Nan's doing her room in yellow.'  
'Her room? I think it's her hair you heard.'

'Tom never could resist a title.'  
'Well, I'm rather a snob myself-'  
'The woman is large and rich and vital  
And does not mean to be laid on the shelf.'  
'Nonsense, she's older than Tom's own mother,  
And ought to be laid on a couple of shelves.'  
While Lee and Wayne just talked to each other,  
Talked to each other about themselves.

## VII

NELLIE and Edward left alone,  
Feeling their house again their own,  
Stood by the fire. 'It seemed to me

The Great Man fell with a crash for Lee...'

'Nellie, the dinner was very good.'

'Darling, so glad you liked your food:  
I'm afraid it's all the fun you had,  
With Mrs. Wayne...'

'No, not so bad.  
I rather liked her. The old girl said  
Good things; she's got a tongue in her head.  
But why the deuce need she look like that?  
She isn't old and she isn't fat.  
Wayne's probably generous, certainly rich,  
Why need she dress like a Salem witch? '

'Oh, I could talk an hour,' said Nell,  
'On the psychic basis of dressing well.  
It isn't a question of pocket-books,  
It isn't a figure, it isn't looks.  
It isn't going to first-rate places.  
Believe me, the thing has a psychic basis.  
It's caring... caring a terrible lot...  
Whether you're right, or whether you're not.  
It's being a slave, yet now and then  
Snapping your fingers at gods and men.  
It's art, it's genius, it's using your mind...  
What does the Bible say-'that kind  
Comes not forth but by fasting and prayer...'  
Well, that's the answer... you've got to care:  
And Mrs. Wayne clearly has not been caring  
For twenty years about what she was wearing.'

NELLIE and Edward left alone,  
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## VII

AT first the Waynes were silent driving home.  
Park Avenue tilted southward mile by mile  
Until a pale, golden, exotic dome  
Stood like a gate across the steep defile.  
Rain had been falling and the streets were black.  
The traffic lights-emerald and carmine pink-  
Were clearly, perfectly reflected back  
As in dark mirrors or a pool of ink.  
And it was doubly beautiful and gay  
When green or red flashed down the polished way.

Wayne in his corner, staring at the skies,

Thought, with his air of easy self-command:  
'God, what a woman! What a skin, what eyes,  
Lashes a man could feel against his hand.  
She lacks a leader, and she knows her lack,  
For all her skill and pride... I understood,  
If I could turn Time's moving finger back  
How easily I could lead her, if I would.  
'Why do you tell that tale,' I asked, 'to me? '  
She looked at me. 'Why do you think? ' said she.

'If I were free... but I have led my life  
With Ruth, and I am bound beyond repeal,  
Bound faster to her than she knows: my wife  
Is sceptical and wise, and true as steel.  
I will not hurt her, as I once before  
Hurt her. I have an oath in heaven; and so  
I shall not see this lady any more.  
Thank God I have the art of saying No.  
I shall not go to see her in her flat  
Or telephone or write her... that is that.'  
Ruth, staring at the polished onyx street,  
Thought: 'Merciful God, must I again endure  
This agony: must I again compete,  
I who am old and tired and insecure?  
And she is beautiful and white and slim,  
And confident of stirring men's desire...  
I felt even as she first looked at him,  
Something that flashed between the two like fire.  
I always know when these wild passions start,  
By something sharp and sickening at my heart.

'Honey-toned Emily, my childhood friend  
Who sweetly laid her plans to take my place;  
And that stenographer in Little Bend  
With her mad eyes and her impassive face...  
Wild midnight scenes over the telephone,  
In office hours a most respectful 'Sir'  
And yet her heart was set on him alone,  
She really loved him, and I pitied her.  
We had so much in common, she and I,  
She almost told me, when she said good-bye.

'But worst was Grace. Grace with her secret art...  
She made him feel in some Satanic way  
They were Olympians... she and he... apart,  
Superior to me... to common clay.  
They were spectators at a childish play,  
They were all-seeing, in a world of blind...  
I could have killed them both with ecstasy..  
She so contemptuous and he so kind '

And suddenly his voice was at her ear,  
Saying: 'Did you enjoy yourself, my dear? '

IX

LEE alone in her room in the dark  
Stared out over Central Park.  
The rain brought out the primitive smell  
Of cold wet earth. Lee thought: 'Ah, well,  
There is a man I certainly can  
Have if I want... and he is a man;  
A man who might possibly seethe and bubble,  
And be a good deal of fun, and a lot of trouble.'

Alice Duer Miller

# Forsaking All Others Part 3

I

THERE was an instant when he might have said  
He could not see the lady; but instead  
He nodded with a blank, impassive face,  
And waited, never moving from his place  
Beside the window, till a moment more  
And she was there, leaning against the door  
Which she had closed. She stood there, silent, staring,  
Trembling with fear at her own act of daring,  
But not with fear of him. Erect and slim,  
White as the daytime moon, she spoke to him.

'I know,' she said, 'that it was not your plan  
That we should ever meet: I know a man  
Assumes despotic power, assumes his voice  
In cases such as ours shall have the choice...

'But is that just, I ask... is that fair play  
That you should have the right to throw away,  
Crush and destroy and utterly deny  
Our joint possession... or rather mine, for I  
Value our friendship so much more than you  
Appear to...' 'No,' he said, 'That is not true.'

She shook her head. 'Ah, if you thought it rare,  
Precious and wonderful, you would not dare  
Destroy it by yourself... not even you.'

He answered: 'I not only would. I do.  
You speak of friendship. What a silly word,  
And as dishonest as I ever heard.  
Let us at least be candid, for God's sake,  
And speak the truth... what difference does it make?  
It is not friendship we are speaking of,  
But the first moments of a passionate love....'

'You're wrong,' she cried, 'you're absolutely wrong.  
Not everything emotional and strong

Between a man and woman needs must be  
Physical love... People like you and me  
Are wise enough and old enough to take  
This fiery elemental thing and make  
Something for every day, serene and cool...  
I am not of the all-or-nothing school.'

He smiled. 'We light hell-fires, and you engage  
They'll warm our palsied hands in our old age,'  
At this she paused, and then she said: 'Your tone  
Wounds me. I live so terribly alone,  
I am perhaps too eager for a friend...  
But not a lover. Oh, please comprehend  
I want no lovers. Think me vain or not  
But I assure you I might have a lot  
Of them. But friendship such as you could give -  
Wisdom and strength and knowledge how to live  
In this harsh world in which I draw my breath  
With so much pain... it seems a sort of death  
To yield so rich a promise... to forego  
Such happiness..,' She heard him laugh. 'You know  
All that is nonsense,' 'Nonsense?' 'All but this.'  
And on her willing lips she felt his kiss.

## II

'I HAVE a new friend,' thought Lee, 'I have a lover,  
Made of steel and fire as a lover ought to be,  
And I do not much care if all the world discover  
That I adore him madly and that he loves me.

'Everything I do nowadays is pleasant,-  
Talking, walking, brushing out my hair-  
Oh, isn't it fine a friend, not being even present,  
Can give the world a meaning, and common things an air! '

## III

O, AGONY infernal  
That lovers undergo!  
O, secret trysts diurnal  
That nobody must know.

O, vigilance eternal  
The whole world for a foe.

But Lee and Wayne were clever  
And all that springtime through  
They met and met, and never  
Were noticed so to do.  
And no one whatsoever  
Suspected them - or knew.

#### IV

LOVE in a city in spring,  
Not so divine a thing  
As love the poet dreams-  
Meadows and brimming streams,  
Yet there is much to say  
For love in New York in May-  
Parks set in tulip beds,  
Yellows and whites and reds,  
Japanese plums in flower  
And that wisteria bower  
Dripping its blossoms sweet  
Over a rustic seat  
Where tramps and nursemaids meet...

New York in early May  
Breaks out in awnings gay;  
Daisies and ivy trailing  
From every window railing.  
And at this time of year  
Strange open hacks appear,  
Shabby and old and low  
Wherein strange couples go  
Generally after dark,  
Clop-clopping round the park.

And with it all, the loud,  
Noisy, indifferent crowd  
Offers to lovers shrewd  
Infinite solitude.

## V

FOUR thousand years ago a great king died,  
And there were rites and hymns and long processions,  
And he was buried in his pomp and pride,  
With all his vast possessions.

Gold beds with lapis-lazuli inlay,  
And chairs, and perfume jars of alabaster,  
And many slaves were slain, lest they betray  
The tomb that held their master.

Lee leant her hand upon his mummy case,  
(Opened to show the gold and silver plating) ,  
And as Wayne came her look was an embrace:  
'Darling, I don't mind waiting.

'I like,' she said, 'to settle in my seat  
A moment ere the rising of the curtain,  
Waiting for something certain can be sweet...  
For something almost certain.'

## VI

THEY would meet for luncheon every day  
At a small unknown French cafe  
Half-way up town and half-way down  
With a chef deserving great renown.  
And Pierre the waiter would smile and say:  
'Bonjour, Monsieur, dame,' and they  
Would see by his smile discreet and sly  
That he knew exactly the reason why  
A couple so proud and rich should come  
To eat each day in a squalid slum.  
And nothing delighted his Gallic heart  
More than to find he could play a part  
And protect 'ces amoureux foux d' amour'  
And guide their choice through the carte du jour.

## VII

BUT most of all Lee loved the hours

When streets filled full of violet mists  
And after-gloves on taller towers  
Prove that the sunset still exists:  
And in Wayne's long dark car reclining  
They'd cross a bridge, and bye and bye  
Turn back to see the city shining  
Against a pale blue, star-sewn sky.

## VIII

'I KNOW,' she said, 'I am a fool to weep,  
I know the time will pass, however black.  
Oh, Jim, if I could take a drug, and sleep  
And sleep till you come back.

'Do you remember how poor Juliet said:  
'Think you that we shall ever meet again? '  
And what was poor weak Romeo instead  
Of you... a king of men!

'Don't be surprised to find me at the train  
With pipes and garlands and a choric dance,  
Telling the porters: 'That is J. H. Wayne,  
My one supreme romance.' '

So it seemed natural to Lee to speak,  
If Wayne were going away for a week.

## IX

HE had been gone three days, when wearily strolling about  
She stopped and sent him a wire, writing it out  
With a pencil chained to a desk: 'This is to say  
There are over eighty thousand seconds a day,  
Each one of them longer than seconds ought to be  
And a personal foe of yours devotedly Lee.'

## X

A letter from Ruth - a letter from Lee.  
Wayne took them both with his bedroom key.  
Every day since he went away



Lee had written him - every day -  
How kind, how tender! And yet his wife  
Had always written him, all his life,  
Since that first Fall day, since that first fond year  
When to part was really 'un peu mourir.'  
Ruth's letters had come in her small, black writing,  
So faithful - and now so unexciting-  
A long unbreakable chain whose fetters  
Were formed of those little daily letters,  
Leading him back to his alien youth,  
And his love - his first deep love of Ruth.

Once he had waited, young and lonely,  
For those daily letters to come, the only  
Solace in absence, terror-smitten,  
Thinking, Dear God, if she hasn't written!  
When did they change? what day, what hour  
Did her letters lose their magical power?  
He was the same man, and she the same  
Woman - and still her letters came...

A letter from Ruth - a letter from Lee.  
Wayne took them both with his bedroom key.  
Was it a habit - a memory  
Of that deep old love that his heart once nursed?  
Who knows?  
He opened Ruth's letter first

XI

THE day that Wayne was coming home,  
Lee flitted fleet-footed among the throng  
Of suburbanites shuffling their feet along  
Under the turquoise dome  
With the signs of the zodiac all turned wrong.

A blue-capped official, proud and remote,  
Was writing unmoved as the crowd increased  
Messages brief as those fingers wrote  
On the wall at Belshazzar's dreadful feast:  
'Train Fifty-One is on time. Train Eleven  
On time. Train Nineteen an hour late.'

And then the announcement, big with fate:  
'Train Fifteen on Track Forty-Seven.'

And Lee's heart beat with a wild elation,  
And she ran like a child in a childish game,  
Pushed without pity or grace or shame  
Past women and children to take her station  
Where she could perfectly see  
Down the dark hole where the train would be -  
See Wayne as soon as he came.

The passengers came streaming out,  
Some with bags and some without,  
Some with babies, some with pets,  
All about her was greeting,  
Kissing and meeting,  
Talking and lighting cigarettes.

And when she saw him coming,  
His head above the stream,  
No miracle so startling,  
So magical could seem,  
As this - that he was coming -  
A real man, not a dream!

Alice Duer Miller

# Forsaking All Others Part 4

I

WAYNE was looking near and far  
After the theatre to find his car.  
He had taken his wife to the play that night;

Broadway was glittering hard and bright  
With every sort of electric light-  
Green and scarlet and diamond-white;  
And moving letters against the sky  
Told you exactly the reason why  
This or that was the thing to buy.  
And suddenly there at his side was Nell  
Vainly seeking her car as well  
They talked. for a moment... of meeting again...  
And how were Edward and Ruth, and then  
'I wonder,' said Nell, 'if you ever see  
My lovely friend...' 'You mean,' said he,  
'That blue-eyed lady I once sat next..' '  
'Exactly,' said Nellie. 'I feel so vexed  
With Lee. I haven't seen her this season,  
And between you and me, I know the reason.'  
'Do you indeed?' said Wayne. 'Oh, yes,'  
Nell answered. 'I know... at least I guess.  
When a woman like that whom I've seen so much  
All of a sudden drops out of touch,  
Is always busy and never can  
Spare you a moment, it means a MAN.'

Wayne did not smile. 'I am sure you are  
Right,' he said. 'Do you go so far  
In the magic art as to tell us who  
The man may be?' 'I certainly do,'  
Said Nell. 'It's that handsome young romantic  
Doctor who's driving the ladies frantic,  
So that they flock to be cured in shoals  
And talk of nothing but sex and souls,  
And self-expression, and physical passion..  
Of course, no wonder the man's the fashion.'

'Does Mrs. Kent flock? ' 'Oh, no, I meant  
They've called him in to take care of Kent.  
Imagine the long deep conversations,  
The tears, the intimate revelations...  
I wish to all ladies, lonely and sad,  
Tied to a husband hopelessly mad  
A handsome psychiatrist... good or bad.  
Oh, there's my car,' and so with a gay  
Good night to Wayne she was driven away.

People will come for miles, they say,  
To see a man burnt at the stake, yet none  
Turned in that crowd to look at one  
Standing quietly burning there,  
Suffering more than a man can bear,  
Consumed with hideous inner fire,  
Believing his love a cheat and a liar...  
Believing the moment that Nell had spoken,  
For that day of all days Lee had broken  
A date... at the time he had thought it queer,  
And now, by God, it was perfectly clear,  
Perfectly clear, no doubt whatever...  
A doctor, handsome and young and clever,  
With all this rotten erotic learning....

Strange indeed that no head was turning  
To watch this gentleman quietly burning,  
In a trance of pain he heard Ruth say:  
'Well, dear, what did you think of that play? '

## II

'HOW could you think such a thing? '  
'Try to forgive if you can.'  
'Spoiling our beautiful Spring! '  
'Well, I am only a man.'

'I will forgive, if I can.'  
'Jealousy made me insane.'  
'I never spoke to the man.'  
'I'll never doubt you again.'

'Jealousy made you insane.'  
'Lee, you have much to forgive.'  
'Oh, never doubt me again.'  
'Never as long as I live.'

'Jim, I have much to forgive.'  
'Yes, but I've suffered like hell.'  
'Trust me as long as you live.'  
'Dearest, I love you too well.'

'Poor darling, going through hell.'  
'Spoiling our beautiful Spring.'  
'I also love you too well.'  
'How could I think such a thing? '

### III

LOVERS after a quarrel say to each other lightly:  
'Dear, we are closer than ever: I love you better by far;  
After the rainstorm is over, the sun shines even more brightly...'  
Poor pitiful lovers, trying to hide the unsightly  
Stain on the surface of love... the ineffaceable scar.

### IV

THE Spring was over, and Summer far advanced,-  
Lee spent many a hidden week in town,  
Days long and enchanted, and nights entranced,  
But one thought would not down:

'Is he content with this snatched and broken life? '  
She thought, 'when we might be free?  
He cannot love that dowdy middle-aged wife.  
Does he really love me? '

She was not burnt by jealousy sudden and hot,  
But poisoned and chilled that he would not break  
A meagre tie to a wife she knew he could not  
Love, - yet would not forsake.

One night at her window, looking over the Park,

With his strong hand on her shoulder prest,  
And a thunder-cloud rolling up out of the dark,  
Rolling out of the West,

Suddenly she heard herself quoting Macbeth:  
' 'To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus.' '  
He answered after a pause on a long-drawn breath:  
'Safety is not for us.'

V

AND from that moment Lee began - not nagging,  
She was too wise for that - but she began  
A secret steady pull, a silent dragging  
To break the other tie that bound this man.

And she would brood, injured, remote, self-centred  
At any mention that he had a wife;  
And something chill and faintly hostile entered  
The magic circle of this hidden life.

O lovers, those legitimately united  
In holy wedlock, and less happy, those  
Whose troth may never openly be plighted-  
(Less happy did I say? Alas, who knows?)

But lovers all, beware, and know the strongest  
Of wills may make a strong antagonist:  
And that love will not always linger longest  
With those who hold it in too clenched a fist.

VI

YET on the whole they were happy, as day by day  
The long mysterious Summer passed away.  
None guessed their secret - except far off on a shady  
Lawn by the coast of Maine, a middle-aged lady  
Spending a quiet Summer almost alone  
In a great Victorian house of dark gray stone,  
Knew as she sat and stared at the cold Maine ocean  
Every event, every phase, every emotion  
Of that great romance. She knew, none better,  
Not by a chance or slip, or anonymous letter,

Not through gossip by any tattler carried,  
But because she perfectly knew the man she had married.

## VII

'DO not go home for Sunday,  
Darling,' Lee's letter said.  
'How I hate Friday to Monday!  
Stay with me here, instead.  
Life is so short, and one day  
Soon, we shall both be dead.

'The curse of love like ours  
Is that we seem to be  
Always cut short by powers  
Stronger than you and me.  
But if you stayed-what hours,  
Glorious, alone and free'

## VIII

RUTH in her quiet garden beside the sea  
Thinking, 'To-morrow at this time Jim will be  
Here at my side. It's something to be a wife -  
The background dull and assured of everyday life.  
He must come home, whether he wants to or not,  
To me, to me... All other women must plot,  
Arrange, manoeuver to see him...'

And then behind her  
She heard the steps of a servant coming to find her:  
A footman stood with a telegram held on a tray:  
'Terribly sorry I cannot get away  
This week-end. Better luck next. Love. Jim.'

She turned her head to the footman, and said to him,  
'Say Mr. Wayne will not be here to-morrow.'  
And the man withdrew and left her alone with her sorrow.

The sun went down behind the great blue hill;  
And she sat there alone in her garden, perfectly still,  
Watching the wraiths of fog blow in like smoke,

And her heart as she sat there gently and quietly broke.

## IX

AN August Sunday in town,  
The Park all sere and brown,  
The noise of wheels died down.

Faint tepid breezes wake  
Now and again, and make  
Lee's slatted curtains shake.

Now and again in the street  
The sound of passing feet,  
And church bells, faint and sweet.

Faint bells that ought to mean  
A village spire seen  
Across a meadow green.

Faint bells... Wayne's early youth....  
Going to church... in truth  
Going to church with Ruth.

Faint bells, and Lee cries, 'Oh,  
How I should like to know  
Why bells depress me so! '

## X

BEFORE the skulls of Primitive Man,  
Lee stood and thought: 'Are we part of a plan  
Of Nature's; or are we just a sort  
Of Cosmic Coincidence - a sport  
Of God - or worse, a sport of chance-  
Or of Ether - Nature's great romance?

'How queer it would be, if it turned out we  
Were merely eddies - Jim and me  
Meaningless eddies in ether swirled  
In and out of a meaningless world.  
Well, if we are it's nice to think



We've had some moments upon the brink  
Of dissolution - of absolute chaos  
Moments of joy that well repay us.'

And she paused to note that her fellow eddy  
Was fifteen minutes late already.

Waiting she wandered from floor to floor,  
Every instant becoming more  
Uneasy, and going back to the door,  
Where Wayne ought to have been at exactly four.

She went from the skulls of Primitive Man  
To the mystic temples of Yucatan,  
Or studied gray elephants, vast and haughty,  
But with eyes like pigs' eyes, shrewd and naughty,  
Flamingoes of beautiful coral pink-  
The ancestry of the missing link-  
But in between she was always hurrying  
Back to the doorway, wondering, worrying -  
And then she saw with a horrid sinking  
Of heart, it was five! And she went home thinking,  
'Something has happened - he's been struck  
By a ruthless, rollicking, rumbling truck,  
Or crushed by a taxi, and now is lying  
In some hospital ward - unknown and dying -  
Or if they knew would they send in truth  
For me? Oh, no, they would send for Ruth.'

And hurrying fast as the laws enable,  
She found a telegram on her table,  
Signed as usual, 'J. H. Wayne:'

'Ruth has pneumonia alone in Maine,  
Of course I am taking the very first train.  
Sorry to miss you before I go.  
When I know my plans, I'll let you know.'

The first emotion felt by Lee  
Was pure and perfect relief that he  
Was safe. And then she felt the force  
Of that cruel, domestic calm 'of course.'

And then undeniably into her head  
Came the thought unbidden: - 'If Ruth were dead - '  
And standing alone: 'Poor thing,' she said

Alice Duer Miller

# Forsaking All Others Part 5

## I

TRAINED nurses, trained nurses everywhere-  
Trained nurses by night, trained nurses by day -  
In the corridors, on the stair,  
Looking for towels, carrying a tray;  
Saying, 'you mustn't,' 'you must,' 'you may.'  
Smooth as to hair, stiff as to skirt,  
Kind in a cool, impersonal way,-  
Angels of mercy, bright-eyed, alert,  
Hard young angels, sent to avert  
That older angel of dark despair -  
Stiff starched angels, a trifle curt -  
Trained nurses, trained nurses everywhere.

## II

A WHITE figure spoke from the doorway  
In a tone deliberately bright:  
'Would you like to see the patient  
For a moment, and say goodnight?'

Shepherded in like a stranger  
He stood beside her bed,  
Gazed at those pale, blank eyelids  
In that carven ivory head.

Took her hand and heard her  
Murmur: 'Is that you, Jim?'  
But he knew she was very tired -  
Tired even of him.

Too much spent with the struggle  
Of drawing breath to afford  
A brief smile - utterly weary,  
And more than utterly bored.

## III

NEVER before had Ruth been out of reach:  
Barriers had been - but only of his making.  
Now she had passed beyond the power of speech,  
Quite, quite indifferent that his heart was breaking.

Here in the bedroom that he used to share  
She lived day after day, averse to living,  
Indifferent, unforgiving, unaware  
That he had any need of her forgiving.

#### IV

AT first Lee wrote to him every day  
Tactful letters, that let him see  
She knew very well he would rather be  
With her - but it wasn't the thing to say.

Tactful letters at first, and then  
Letters less tactful and more sincere,  
Ending: 'Why don't you write to me, dear?'  
Write to me . . . over and over again.

But he could not answer her piteous call;  
Not exactly that he forgot  
Their love, but only that she had not  
Any reality for him at all.

She seemed like a pleasant book he had read -  
Read and enjoyed; but the printed page  
Cannot compete with the heritage  
Of Nature. . . the living, and Oh, the dead!

At last he sent her a brief reply:  
'I cannot write - or eat or sleep  
Just now. I am going through the deep  
Waters. Forgive me, dear Lee. Good-bye.'

#### V

THEN a night came  
When in sleep broken

He heard his name  
Suddenly spoken.  
Into his dream  
Horrors flocked thickly-  
Was that a scream?  
'Better come quickly!'

Cold was his room  
And his hands shaking;  
Out of the gloom  
Dawn was just breaking-  
Dawn cool and green  
Over the ocean,  
Never more seen  
Without emotion  
Of death - agony -  
Somebody crying -  
All dawns that dawn, when he  
Knew Ruth was dying.

VI

WHAT can you do with a woman's things  
After a woman is dead?  
Not the bracelets and rings and strings  
Of pearls, but the small unvalued things -  
What can I do, Wayne said.

What can you do with a woman's dresses,  
After a woman is dead?  
Hanging limp in the cedar presses,  
They are part of herself, her pretty dresses -  
What can I do, Wayne said.

What can you do with a woman's shoes,  
After a woman is dead?  
Shoes that perhaps you helped her choose,  
Poor little empty half-worn shoes-  
What can I do, Wayne said.

What can you do with her brush and comb,

After a woman is dead?  
What in God's name can you do with her home  
And her loss and her love and her brush and comb -  
What can I do, Wayne said.

## VII

UP a little river  
Where salmon used to play,  
Not twenty miles distant  
A little village lay --  
Ruth's native village,  
Where Wayne used to go  
To see his mother's mother  
Many years ago.  
Here in a churchyard  
With pines along the wall  
And a wooden church steeple  
Almost too tall,  
Here in September,  
On a bright clear day  
Among the graves of sailors,  
They laid Ruth away.

In this same churchyard,  
Sitting on the stones,  
He had first said he loved her  
In young shaken tones.  
That had been September,  
But not this bright light.  
Between the pine-needles  
The stars shone white,-  
Such a little maiden,  
Such a young man-  
'I love you.' - And she answered:  
'I don't see how you can.'  
They had been so happy  
They had not cared at all  
That the place was a churchyard  
With pines along the wall.

## VIII

WAYNE stood bareheaded on the churchyard sward  
By the open grave under the open sky:  
'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord,  
He who believeth in Me shall never die.'

Beautiful, terrible service! He heard a word  
Here and there, and then he would drift away  
To other memories and things not heard-  
Ruth's laugh when she used to laugh, so little and gay.

'When thou with rebukes dost chasten a man from sin..'  
Was it sin that had parted him from Ruth?  
Was sin the secret corrosion that entered in  
Like a moth fretting the garment of love in youth?

Too late, too late! He heard the parson say:  
'Before I go hence and be no more seen. . .  
A thousand years in thy sight is but as yesterday. . .  
Too late, too late! 'As grass in the morning green...'

'Was it Ruth he was leaving here in the churchyard plot-  
Could it be Ruth who had gone, not saying good-bye?  
'What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?  
Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.'

How can a man help eating and drinking?  
Die to-morrow! To-day, if he had his will.  
How many years must he spend in thinking, thinking  
Of the thing which someone has said that all men kill?

Well, he could bear what he must bear - even the sound  
Of earth on a coffin falling. What must be must.  
'We therefore commit her body to the ground,  
Ashes to ashes, earth to earth, dust to dust.'

Prayers! Would they never be done, these killing  
Rites for the dead! Ah, there was the organ's roll  
From the little church, and children's shrilling,  
Piping Ruth's favourite hymn, 'Hark, hark, my soul...'

'Hark, hark, my soul! Angelic songs are swelling

O'er earth's green fields and ocean's wave-beat shore;  
How sweet the truth those blessed strains are telling  
Of that new life where sin shall be no more!

Angels of Jesus,  
Angels of light,  
Singing to welcome  
The pilgrims of the night.'

IX

'Dear Lee:-  
I've tried so many times to write,  
And now I must write, for I sail next week  
For Italy - Sardinia - I might  
Go on to Egypt later, and the Greek Islands.  
I may be several years away.

'I loved you, Lee. I wonder if I can  
Explain at all what's happened? From your wealth  
You gave me freely - more than any man  
Has ever had - beauty, wit, youth and health-  
I loved you passionately; and now my wife  
Is dead. One might expect a mild distress,  
A briefly pensive mood. . . Instead, my life  
Is shattered. . . is dissolved. . . is meaningless. . .  
She whom of late I thought so little of  
And saw so little, was, I find, the spring  
Of all I did and felt - even of my love  
Of you. . . What an insane, incredible thing!  
But there it is.

'Dear Lee, this is the truth:  
That any marriage founded on devotion  
Though that devotion die, as mine for Ruth,  
Is not a state, but a unique emotion,  
Potent, unalterable - not romantic  
Love, though romantic love is where it starts  
Marriage begins only when those hot, frantic  
Fires have finished welding human hearts.  
It is not love, friendship, or partnership,  
But this emotion-marriage, of a force



That when it once has held you in its grip  
Nothing will free you wholly - not divorce,  
Or death, for these destroy not it, but you,  
As I am now destroyed.

'Beware, dear Lee,  
Of a true marriage, if you are not true  
Yourself - or you will be destroyed - like me.'

Alice Duer Miller

## From The German

ONCE for thy brow a wreath I wished to wind,  
And, seeking long, I could no flowers find.  
Now golden flowers are blooming far and near,  
But, ah! dear love, thou art no longer here.

Alice Duer Miller

# Harbor

AND will you rest at last, storm-beaten spirit,  
In this poor heart, who would your haven be,  
Will you sink down at last, content to inherit  
The common treasures of tranquillity?  
Will you forget your high and fierce endeavor  
The hinted island and the hidden seas,  
Defeats, escapes, adventures, that forever  
Left you more sad, and never more at ease?

When the west wind on summer evenings blowing  
Brings to your ears the sound of sails that fill,  
And moving ships eclipse your starlight, going  
To lands unseen, and fates that beckon still;  
When you shall see beneath the moon new risen,  
The hissing wake of other vessels' foam,  
Will not this land-locked harbor seem a prison  
Where calms and shallows mock the name of home?

Ah, when your longing for the open ocean  
Captures your heart, and bids you set your sail,  
Feeble will be the bonds of my devotion;  
Little will love - your own or mine - avail:  
Happy to you will seem some ship-wrecked stranger,  
Keener than love the zest of being free,  
Sweeter than peace, the summoning of danger; -  
Some day at sunrise you will put to sea.

Alice Duer Miller

# House Pets

THE white cat is sleeping by the fire,  
With her paws tucked under her chin,  
Very tame and gentle she is sleeping  
Whom I saw but now come in,

Come in from the dark night and the wild wood,  
A hunter with her prey she came,  
And her chin and her little paws were bloody,  
And she was not kind and tame,

But wild and strong and cruel with her victim,  
For she let it go, and caught it as it ran,  
And she tossed it in the air and danced about it,  
And once she stood erect like a man.

And I thought, 'What wild things are they that we harbor,  
Who bend to the routine of daily life; '  
And I looked across the room and by the fire  
I saw my sleeping wife.

Alice Duer Miller

# How Like A Woman

I WANTED you to come to-day-  
Or so I told you in my letter-  
And yet, if you had stayed away,  
I should have liked you so much better.  
I should have sipped my tea unseen,  
And thrilled at every door-bell's pealing,  
And thought how nice I could have been  
Had you evinced a little feeling.

I should have guessed you drinking tea  
With someone whom you loved to madness;  
I should have thought you cold to me,  
And revelled in a depth of sadness.  
But, no! you came without delay-  
I could not feel myself neglected:  
You said the things you always say,  
In ways not wholly unexpected.

If you had let me wait in vain,  
We should, in my imagination,  
Have held, what we did not attain,  
A most dramatic conversation.  
Had you not come, I should have known  
At least a vague anticipation,  
Instead of which, I grieve to own,  
You did not give me one sensation.

Alice Duer Miller

## In A School Chapel

THE clear young voices rise and soar: 'Oh, pray  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they  
Shall prosper that love thee.' Yet each boy's heart  
Harbors the hope that he may have a part  
In war- the roar of guns, the roll of drums -  
Before this anthemed peace he prays for comes.  
But in the quiet gallery above  
Where eyes grown dim look down on those they love  
The prayer for peace rings true; although in truth  
Worse things than death can come to eager youth.  
But nothing worse can come to age than knowing  
That it is safe, and boys are going, going,  
Are going forth to war till all wars cease:  
The old, so safe and lonely, pray for peace.

Alice Duer Miller

# Invocation

NIGHT after night within the grove  
The night wind spares the sacred fire --  
The breath made visible of love,  
Of worship and desire.

I set the tripod at thy shrine;  
The silver bowl, the amber flame,  
And in the dark where no stars shine  
I speak thy name.

By the high name I call on thee  
Which only I, thy priestess, know.  
I tread thy dance in ecstasy,  
Sweet steps and slow.

O God, the hour has come. Appear!  
I have performed the appointed rite --  
The dance, the fire; I long to hear  
Wings in the night.

Alice Duer Miller

## Late Comers

Oft on my way, my daily task pursuing,  
Meet I two fairy figures face to face,  
Beauty and Peace, who smile on me, embuing  
All else I see with something of their grace.

Not in my youth did I their shapes discover,  
Not in those hours of transport and despairs,  
Rather they come now that high noon is over,  
And like sweet ghosts they make the twilight theirs.

Constant and shy, they seek those spirits only  
Who have made silence for their soft behests;  
Whose garnished thresholds, welcoming and lonely,  
Faithful await the long desired guests.

Alice Duer Miller



# Newport

ON these brown rocks the waves dissolve in spray  
As when our fathers saw them first alee.  
If such a one could come again and see  
This ancient haven in its latter day,  
These haughty palaces and gardens gay,  
These dense, soft lawns, bedecked by many a tree  
Borne like a gem from Ind or Araby;  
If he could see the race he bred, at play -  
Bright like a flock of tropic birds allured  
To pause a moment on their southward wing  
By these warm sands and by these summer seas -  
Would he not cry, 'Alas, have I endured  
Exile and famine, hate and suffering,  
To win religious liberty for these?'

Alice Duer Miller

# Overheard In A Conservatory

HE (after a pause) : Dear, are you angry?

SHE: Yes, though not at you,  
But at myself. Of course, we know it's true  
That when a man respects a girl...

HE (interrupting) : I thought  
You'd say that. It's the nonsense girls are taught.  
You know, as well as I do, I revere  
You more than any other woman, dear.

SHE (indignantly) : You'd not have done it to Elfrida Hood.

HE: Immortal gods! I shouldn't think I would.

SHE (haughtily) : If this but seems to you fit food for jest  
I say no more. Silence were plainly best.

HE (very seriously) : Dear, if I jest, it is because I read  
The hopelessness of aught that I could plead  
In your stern eyes, which righteous wrath betray.

Were you another woman, I should say  
That you were fair, and I, it seems, was mad,  
But that the last long waltz that we had had :  
Might very well have turned a wiser head.

A hundred things like this I might have said  
To women who would take them as excuse.  
You think none possible - so what's the use?

SHE: Then why discuss it further? Let us go.

HE: One minute! I should like you first to know  
I did not think that this would be the end  
When, two weeks since, you said you'd be my friend.

SHE (reflectively) : Only two weeks.

HE: Not long, 'tis true, and yet,  
You've stopped my doing much I should regret.  
Nor should I murmur that you teach how far  
More hard than others all good women are.

SHE (emphatically) : That is not true, indeed it is not true.  
Some men I could forgive this, but not you.  
You would go home, and smile, and think I meant-  
I viewed it merely as a...

HE (politely) : Precedent!  
Was that the word? Indeed, in this respect  
You wrong, to say the least, my intellect.  
If you forgave me, I should understand

Just what it meant. . .

SHE (hastily) : Oh, please let go my hand!

Here is papa, who comes, I know, to say

That it is late, and time to go away.

HE: I do not care a bit how late it is,

I only know we cannot part like this.

Show me, at least, you do not doubt my sorrow.

SHE (hesitatingly) : Well - come as usual at five to-morrow.

Alice Duer Miller

# Song

THE LIGHT of spring  
On the emerald earth,  
A man, a maid,  
And a mood of mirth,  
A foolish jest,  
That a smile amends --  
It took no more  
To make us friends.

An evening breeze,  
The year in bloom,  
Lips quickly met  
In the garden's gloom;  
The trees about us,  
The stars above --  
It took no more  
To teach us love.

Frost in the air --  
The air like wine --  
Go you your way,  
And I'll go mine.  
Lightly we part  
Who lightly met -  
What more is needed,  
When both forget?

Alice Duer Miller

## Song In Exile

THE rustling palms bend readily  
Between the sun and me;  
The trades blow warm and steadily  
Across the turquoise sea;  
But I'd rather feel the March wind bite  
In the country of the free.

Hibiscus and camellias  
Bloom here abundantly,  
And roses and gardenias -  
The sweetest flowers there be -  
But I'd rather see through the bare north woods  
One bridal dogwood tree.

The tropic light is mellow  
As a lamp in a lighted room;  
The sun shines high and yellow  
In the quivering cloudless dome;  
But, oh, for the snow and the cruel cold  
And the rigors of my home!

Alice Duer Miller

## Sonnet

DEAR, if you love me, hold me most your friend,  
Chosen from out the many who would bear  
Your gladness gladly - heavily your care;  
Who best can sympathize, best comprehend,  
Where others fail; who, breathless to the end,  
Follows your tale of joy or of despair:  
Hold me your counsellor, because I dare  
To lift my hand to guide you, that I lend  
My love to help you. And I would you knew  
That I am fair enough to win men's hearts,  
If so I willed; yet honor me above  
All other women, since I am too true  
To trap you with my sex's smaller arts.  
Deem me all these, but love me as your love.

Alice Duer Miller

# Spring

'YES, Spring has come,' the grocer said,  
And tied a final knot of string,  
Rang up the change and becked his head,  
Elated at the breath of Spring.

'Yes, Spring has come,' the poet said,  
And poured his ecstasy in rhymes,  
Which eager, homesick exiles read  
Long winter-locked in frozen climes.

Perhaps the grocer's way was best, -  
If joy can better be, or worse:  
He saved his rapture unexpressed,  
The poet spent his for a verse.

Alice Duer Miller

# Strange Gods

THE great religions, like men great of mind,  
Draw to them even those of hostile view.  
Many a barbarian in Athens knew  
The temple porches who was grossly blind  
To any god save one long left behind -  
Some hideous idol on a mountain blue,  
For whom his heart ached, timorous and true,  
And, lonely in the Parthenon, repined.  
But home returning over difficult seas  
To his own people, had he no regret?  
No envy for those Greeks who bent their knees  
Only where beauty and religion met?  
Could he forget the temple and the trees?  
Could he the grey-eyed Pallas so forget?

Alice Duer Miller



# The Heritage

ON summer evenings when the full moon shines  
Serene and fair,  
High in the crystal air,  
On hillsides deep in birches and in pines,  
Then in all hearts there stirs a hidden fire  
Of hope, or memory;  
Some their beloved dead more yearningly desire,  
Some dream of loves to be,  
Some weep their swift and sweet mortality.

But I remember only,  
Long centuries ago,  
A glen more dark and lonely  
Than these which now I know;  
The noise of waters flowing,  
And faint, salt breezes blowing,  
Ivy and myrtle growing,  
As here they do not grow.

There, when the moon was at full we would come, we would come,  
To the shrilling of pipes, and the terrible tone of the drum ,  
Rolling long, rolling loud, as the voice that presages the rain,  
We would come to the cavern profound, to the holy domain.  
Then in the moonlight entrancing,  
Figures moved agile and fleet,  
Then there was dancing, ay, dancing,  
Leaping and stamping of feet, -  
Dancers that drifted and darted,  
Light as a leaf in the breeze,  
Circles that met and that parted,  
While the stars danced through the trees.  
Quickening, the drums beat the measure,  
All the night long on the hill, -  
Such was the Thunderer's pleasure. . . .  
This I remember me still.

O placid northern moon on this calm lake  
Beaming demure and tame,  
How can I take

Aught of delight in thy pale flame?  
I ache  
For a communion I have known  
Long centuries ago,  
Which nevermore the world will seek, or know;  
For a belief outgrown,  
Yet how much more my own  
Than creeds that hold me quiet on my knees;  
For rites, that brought delights like these,  
And Gods I once knew how to please.

Alice Duer Miller

# The History Of A Minute

I saw a lady on the stair,  
And she was, oh, so strangely fair,  
With a knot of butter-colored hair,  
And a waiting, listening, wondering air.  
She was tall as a lady ought to be,  
And down she looked and smiled at me.  
Her eyes were queerly brightly blue  
As the bit of sky that last shines through  
The gathering clouds, oppressive, gray,  
On a chilly windy Autumn day.  
There she paused on the stairs and smiled  
Like a child who sees another child  
With whom it would dearly like to play  
If it only could get its nurse away.  
And I know not what divine surmise.  
Leapt up like fire in my eyes,  
But I know her smiling suddenly stopped,  
And a curtain between us blankly dropped,  
And she passed me by as if I were  
A man invisible to her.

Alice Duer Miller

# The Party

THE house is bright with lights and lights,  
Like a palace in the Arabian Nights,  
Lights in festoons and lights in clusters,  
In chandeliers and crystal lustres;  
And all the length of the stairs' broad way,  
Tapestries green and pink and gray  
Tell a story of ladies' bowers  
Hung with apples and paved with flowers;  
And beyond, an open arch discloses  
An inner garden of palms and roses,  
With lines of lilies against the walls,  
And a fountain that falls - and waits - and falls.  
And from the ballroom comes the beat  
Of dance music and dancing feet,  
And through the doorways of gold and glass  
Figures of dancers pass and pass,  
Lovely creatures in dripping laces,  
And all have sad, unhopeful faces.  
One person only yields to joy,  
And he is a footman - a round-faced boy -  
Stiff in a livery of black and green,  
And he laughs at something heard or seen,  
Laughs with a loud and lonely gladness,  
Laughs perhaps at the dancers' sadness;  
He only seemed for an instant gay,  
And he was instantly sent away.

Alice Duer Miller

# The Penitent

'NEVER,' he said, 'nevermore,  
In the murmuring stillness of night  
Shall I wait for her hand on my door,  
Confident, light;  
Still is the night as before,  
And the stars unforgettably bright.

'Once from the deep woodland calms  
At midnight a wild wind broke,  
Shaking the cedars and palms  
And the silver-gray oak;  
And she, who had slept in my arms,  
Suddenly woke.

'Pity me then, for it blew  
Last night again from the woodlands so deep,  
Where mosses and moisture and dew  
Verdure eternal keep;  
From the brooks and the glades that we knew,  
It woke me from sleep.

'How can she know and refrain?  
How being mine can she leave me like this?  
Go, when this only is plain,  
Life is no more than our kiss-  
Life is so lavish of pain,  
So niggard of bliss!'

Alice Duer Miller

# The Price To Peace

LONG since I taught my spirit to obey  
The Sage's great commandment - to forget -  
And so to lose life's bitterness and fret  
And taste its sweetness; and I went my way  
Eluding joy and sorrow, grave and gay,  
And lived exempt, my being always set  
Upon the striking hour, without regret,  
Secure, refreshed, remote from yesterday.  
But oh my friend, my love, my very dear,  
My practised wisdom is a curse to me;  
I do forget, and when you are not near  
It is, by Heaven, as if you ceased to be;  
And I would buy with agony and fear  
One hour, one little hour of memory.

Alice Duer Miller

# The Railroad Station

JUST a very common thing -  
Shouts and whistles, bells that ring,  
Just a platform in the rain  
And a slowly moving train;  
Just a woman dressed in black  
Standing by a station-track,  
Gazing with her eyes profound  
As the train goes outward bound;  
And her bearing does not say  
Who it is that goes away,  
One who made her pulses stir,  
Or a guest who wearied her.

Alice Duer Miller

# The Snare Of The Fowler

' Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.'

I WRITE for those, of whom I know a few,  
Young, pretty, and a little bit flirtatious,  
Who would do even more harm, if they knew  
The science of the Art of being Gracious.  
Science in any game, we know, will tell,  
And those who play this ought to play it well.

First, do not doubt that rivals please a man  
(Not too successful ones, 'tis understood) --  
They flatter him as nothing you do can,  
And give him certainty his taste is good;  
And though, at times, a little in his way,  
They make him find the house he haunts more gay.

Do not abuse the girls he likes - 'tis far  
From wise - for he will only think you spiteful;  
Praise them, and show how ludicrous they are,  
And, ten to one, he'll find the joke delightful.  
From which I draw this never-failing rule:  
Love lives through slander but not ridicule.

Do not appear incredulous of vows,  
As is the way of self-distrusting youth;  
A little doubt civility allows,  
But not too long should you impugn their truth.  
In short, if you would give true satisfaction,  
Express belief in words, and doubt in action.

Should the day come when he is not the same,  
Do not reproach and treat him like a sinner -  
The fault is yours. Find out the lady's name,  
And be a friend, and ask them both to dinner;  
And, I have heard, the game not always ends  
When two old lovers change to two good friends.

Alice Duer Miller



# The Stars

ONLY the stars remain to travelers' eyes  
Unalterable; the waters change their hue  
Beneath the flattery of alien skies  
From jade to silver and from bronze to blue.

Sunrise and sunset spread their lovely light  
As slow as solemn music in the North;  
But southward, like a dart descends the night,  
And like a meteor the day breaks forth.

And faiths and manners vary - friends, they say, --  
And even lovers of a constant mind; .  
Not the light loves we meet upon our way  
But those enchained by vows we left behind.

Only unchanged the patterned stars endure,  
As when they first assured or threatened man;  
Still Vega glitters, crystalline and pure,  
Still like an angry eye Aldebaran.

Alice Duer Miller

# The Way

THERE is a magic pathway through the wood,  
There is a current in the troubled stream,  
A happy course to steer, if one but could,  
A meaning to the dream.

And some in love and some in dogma find  
The hint eternal as they kiss or pray;  
Some through the crystal circle of the mind  
Discern the way.

And some no hint, no pattern of the whole,  
Nor star, nor path, nor channel can perceive -  
Attempt no answer to the questing soul,  
And yet believe

There is a magic pathway through the wood,  
There is a current in the troubled stream,  
A happy course to steer, if one but could,  
A meaning to the dream.

Alice Duer Miller

# The White Cliffs

I

I have loved England, dearly and deeply,  
Since that first morning, shining and pure,  
The white cliffs of Dover I saw rising steeply  
Out of the sea that once made her secure.  
I had no thought then of husband or lover,  
I was a traveller, the guest of a week;  
Yet when they pointed 'the white cliffs of Dover',  
Startled I found there were tears on my cheek.  
I have loved England, and still as a stranger,  
Here is my home and I still am alone.  
Now in her hour of trial and danger,  
Only the English are really her own.

II

It happened the first evening I was there.  
Some one was giving a ball in Belgrave Square.  
At Belgrave Square, that most Victorian spot.—  
Lives there a novel-reader who has not  
At some time wept for those delightful girls,  
Daughters of dukes, prime ministers and earls,  
In bonnets, berthas, bustles, buttoned basques,  
Hiding behind their pure Victorian masks  
Hearts just as hot - hotter perhaps than those  
Whose owners now abandon hats and hose?  
Who has not wept for Lady Joan or Jill  
Loving against her noble parent's will  
A handsome guardsman, who to her alarm  
Feels her hand kissed behind a potted palm  
At Lady Ivry's ball the dreadful night  
Before his regiment goes off to fight;  
And see him the next morning, in the park,  
Complete in busbee, marching to embark.  
I had read freely, even as a child,  
Not only Meredith and Oscar Wilde  
But many novels of an earlier day—  
Ravenshoe, Can You Forgive Her?, Vivien Grey,  
Ouida, The Duchess, Broughton's Red As a Rose,  
Guy Livingstone, Whyte-Melville— Heaven knows

What others. Now, I thought, I was to see  
Their habitat, though like the Miller of Dee,  
I cared for none and no one cared for me.

### III

A light blue carpet on the stair  
And tall young footmen everywhere,  
Tall young men with English faces  
Standing rigidly in their places,  
Rows and rows of them stiff and staid  
In powder and breeches and bright gold braid;  
And high above them on the wall  
Hung other English faces—all  
Part of the pattern of English life—  
General Sir Charles, and his pretty wife,  
Admirals, Lords-Lieutenant of Shires,  
Men who were served by these footmen's sires  
At their great parties—none of them knowing  
How soon or late they would all be going  
In plainer dress to a sterner strife—  
Another pattern of English life.

I went up the stairs between them all,  
Strange and frightened and shy and small,  
And as I entered the ballroom door,  
Saw something I had never seen before  
Except in portraits— a stout old guest  
With a broad blue ribbon across his breast—  
That blue as deep as the southern sea,  
Bluer than skies can ever be—  
The Countess of Salisbury—Edward the Third—  
No damn merit— the Duke— I heard  
My own voice saying; 'Upon my word,  
The garter!' and clapped my hands like a child.

Some one beside me turned and smiled,  
And looking down at me said: 'I fancy,  
You're Bertie's Australian cousin Nancy.  
He told me to tell you that he'd be late  
At the Foreign Office and not to wait  
Supper for him, but to go with me,

And try to behave as if I were he.'  
I should have told him on the spot  
That I had no cousin—that I was not  
Australian Nancy—that my name  
Was Susan Dunne, and that I came  
From a small white town on a deep-cut bay  
In the smallest state in the U.S.A.  
I meant to tell him, but changed my mind—  
I needed a friend, and he seemed kind;  
So I put my gloved hand into his glove,  
And we danced together— and fell in love.

#### IV

Young and in love-how magical the phrase!  
How magical the fact! Who has not yearned  
Over young lovers when to their amaze  
They fall in love and find their love returned,  
And the lights brighten, and their eyes are clear  
To see God's image in their common clay.  
Is it the music of the spheres they hear?  
Is it the prelude to that noble play,  
The drama of Joined Lives? Ah, they forget  
They cannot write their parts; the bell has rung,  
The curtain rises and the stage is set  
For tragedy-they were in love and young.

#### V

We went to the Tower,  
We went to the Zoo,  
We saw every flower  
In the gardens at Kew.  
We saw King Charles a-prancing  
On his long-tailed horse,  
And thought him more entrancing  
Than better kings, of course.  
At a strange early hour,  
In St. James's palace yard,  
We watched in a shower  
The changing of the guard.  
And I said, what a pity,  
To have just a week to spend,  
When London is a city

Whose beauties never end!

## VI

When the sun shines on England, it atones  
For low-hung leaden skies, and rain and dim  
Moist fogs that paint the verdure on her stones  
And fill her gentle rivers to the brim.  
When the sun shines on England, shafts of light  
Fall on far towers and hills and dark old trees,  
And hedge-bound meadows of a green as bright—  
As bright as is the blue of tropic seas.  
When the sun shines, it is as if the face  
Of some proud man relaxed his haughty stare,  
And smiled upon us with a sudden grace,  
Flattering because its coming is so rare.

## VII

The English are frosty  
When you're no kith or kin  
Of theirs, but how they alter  
When once they take you in!  
The kindest, the truest,  
The best friends ever known,  
It's hard to remember  
How they froze you to a bone.  
They showed me all London,  
Johnnie and his friends;  
They took me to the country  
For long week-ends;  
I never was so happy,  
I never had such fun,  
I stayed many weeks in England  
Instead of just one.

## VIII

John had one of those English faces  
That always were and will always be  
Found in the cream of English places  
Till England herself sink into the sea—  
A blond, bowed face with prominent eyes  
A little bit bluer than English skies.  
You see it in ruffs and suits of armour,

You see it in wigs of many styles,  
Soldier and sailor, judge and farmer—  
That face has governed the British Isles,  
By the power, for good or ill bestowed,  
Only on those who live by code.

Oh, that inflexible code of living,  
That seems so easy and unconstrained,  
The Englishman's code of taking and giving  
Rights and privileges pre-ordained,  
Based since English life began  
On the prime importance of being a man.

IX

And what a voice he had—gentle, profound,  
Clear masculine!—I melted at the sound.  
Oh, English voices, are there any words  
Those tones to tell, those cadences to teach!  
As song of thrushes is to other birds,  
So English voices are to other speech;  
Those pure round 'o's'—those lovely liquid 'l's'  
Ring in the ears like sound of Sabbath bells.

Yet I have loathed those voices when the sense  
Of what they said seemed to me insolence,  
As if the dominance of the whole nation  
Lay in that clear correct enunciation.

Many years later, I remember when  
One evening I overheard two men  
In Claridge's— white waistcoats, coats I know  
Were built in Bond Street or in Savile Row—  
So calm, so confident, so finely bred—  
Young gods in tails— and this is what they said:  
'Not your first visit to the States?' 'Oh no,  
I'd been to Canada two years ago.'  
Good God, I thought, have they not heard that we  
Were those queer colonists who would be free,  
Who took our desperate chance, and fought and won  
Under a colonist called Washington?

One does not lose one's birthright, it appears.

I had been English then for many years.

X

We went down to Cambridge,  
Cambridge in the spring.  
In a brick court at twilight  
We heard the thrushes sing,  
And we went to evening service  
In the chapel of the King.  
The library of Trinity,  
The quadrangle of Clare,  
John bought a pipe from Bacon,  
And I acquired there  
The Anecdotes of Painting  
From a handcart in the square.

The Playing fields at sunset  
Were vivid emerald green,  
The elms were tall and mighty,  
And many youths were seen,  
Carefree young gentlemen  
In the Spring of 'Fourteen.

XI

London, just before dawn—immense and dark—  
Smell of wet earth and growth from the empty Park,  
Pall Mall vacant—Whitehall deserted. Johnnie and I  
Strolling together, averse to saying good-bye—  
Strolling away from some party in silence profound,  
Only far off in Mayfair, piercing, the sound  
Of a footman's whistle—the rhythm of hoofs on wood,  
Further and further away. . . . And now we stood  
On a bridge, where a poet came to keep  
Vigil while all the city lay asleep—  
Westminster Bridge, and soon the sun would rise,  
And I should see it with my very eyes!  
Yes, now it came— a broad and awful glow  
Out of the violet mists of dawn. 'Ah, no',  
I said. 'Earth has not anything to show  
More fair— changed though it is— than this.'  
A curious background surely for a kiss—  
Our first— Westminster Bridge at break of day—



Settings by Wordsworth, as John used to say.

XII

Why do we fall in love? I do believe  
That virtue is the magnet, the small vein  
Of ore, the spark, the torch that we receive  
    At birth, and that we render back again.  
That drop of godhood, like a precious stone,  
    May shine the brightest in the tiniest flake.  
Lavished on saints, to sinners not unknown;  
    In harlot, nun, philanthropist, and rake,  
It shines for those who love; none else discern  
    Evil from good; Men's fall did not bestow  
That threatened wisdom; blindly still we yearn  
    After a virtue that we do not know,  
Until our thirst and longing rise above  
The barriers of reason—and we love.

XIII

And still I did not see my life was changed,  
Utterly different—by this love estranged  
For ever and ever from my native land;  
That I was now of that unhappy band  
Who lose the old, and cannot gain the new  
However loving and however true  
To their new duties. I could never be  
An English woman, there was that in me  
Puritan, stubborn that would not agree  
To English standards, though I did not see  
The truth, because I thought them, good or ill,  
So great a people—and I think so still.

But a day came when I was forced to face  
Facts. I was taken down to see the place,  
The family place in Devon— and John's mother.  
'Of course, you understand,' he said, 'my brother  
Will have the place.' He smiled; he was so sure  
The world was better for primogeniture.  
And yet he loved that place, as Englishmen  
Do love their native countryside, and when  
The day should be as it was sure to be—  
When this was home no more to him— when he

Could go there only when his brother's wife  
Should ask him—to a room not his— his life  
Would shrink and lose its meaning. How unjust,  
I thought. Why do they feel it must  
Go to that idle, insolent eldest son?  
Well, in the end it went to neither one.

XIV

A red brick manor-house in Devon,  
In a beechwood of old grey trees,  
Ivy climbing to the clustered chimneys,  
Rustling in the wet south breeze.  
Gardens trampled down by Cromwell's army,  
Orchards of apple-trees and pears,  
Casements that had looked for the Armada,  
And a ghost on the stairs.

XV

Johnnie's mother, the Lady Jean,  
Child of a penniless Scottish peer,  
Was handsome, worn high-coloured, lean,  
With eyes like Johnnie's—more blue and clear—  
Like bubbles of glass in her fine tanned face.  
Quiet, she was, and so at ease,  
So perfectly sure of her rightful place  
In the world that she felt no need to please.  
I did not like her—she made me feel  
Talkative, restless, unsure, as if  
I were a cross between parrot and eel.  
I thought her blank and cold and stiff.

XVI

And presently she said as they  
Sooner or later always say:  
'You're an American, Miss Dunne?  
Really you do not speak like one.'  
She seemed to think she'd said a thing  
Both courteous and flattering.  
I answered though my wrist were weak  
With anger: 'Not at all, I speak—  
At least I've always thought this true—  
As educated people do

In any country—even mine.'  
'Really?' I saw her head incline,  
I saw her ready to assert  
Americans are easily hurt.

XVII

Strange to look back to the days  
So long ago  
When a friend was almost a foe,  
When you hurried to find a phrase  
For your easy light dispraise  
Of a spirit you did not know,  
A nature you could not plumb  
In the moment of meeting,  
Not guessing a day would come  
When your heart would ache to hear  
Other men's tongues repeating  
Those same light phrases that jest and jeer  
At a friend now grown so dear— so dear.  
Strange to remember long ago  
When a friend was almost a foe.

XVIII

I saw the house with its oaken stair,  
And the Tudor Rose on the newel post,  
The panelled upper gallery where  
They told me you heard the family ghost—  
'A gentle unhappy ghost who sighs  
Outside one's door on the night one dies.'  
'Not,' Lady Jean explained, 'at all  
Like the ghost at my father's place, St. Kitts,  
That clanks and screams in the great West Hall  
And frightens strangers out of their wits.'  
I smiled politely, not thinking I  
Would hear one midnight that long sad sigh.

I saw the gardens, after our tea  
(Crumpets and marmalade, toast and cake)  
And Drake's Walk, leading down to the sea;  
Lady Jean was startled I'd heard of Drake,  
For the English always find it a mystery  
That Americans study English history.

I saw the picture of every son—  
Percy, the eldest, and John; and Bill  
In Chinese Customs, and the youngest one  
Peter, the sailor, at Osborne still;  
And the daughter, Enid, married, alas,  
To a civil servant in far Madras.

A little thing happened, just before  
We left— the evening papers came;  
John, flicking them over to find a score,  
Spoke for the first time a certain name—  
The name of a town in a distant land  
Etched on our hearts by a murderer's hand.

Mother and son exchanged a glance,  
A curious glance of strength and dread.  
I thought: what matter to them if Franz  
Ferdinand dies? One of them said:  
This might be serious.' 'Yes, you're right.'  
The other answered, 'It really might.'

XIX

Dear John: I'm going home. I write to say  
Goodbye. My boat-train leaves at break of day;  
It will be gone when this is in your hands.  
I've had enough of lovely foreign lands,  
Sightseeing, strangers, holiday and play;  
I'm going home to those who think the way  
I think, and speak as I do. Will you try  
To understand that this must be good-bye?  
We both rooted deeply in the soil  
Of our own countries. But I could not spoil  
Our happy memories with the stress and strain  
Of parting; if we never meet again  
Be sure I shall remember till I die  
Your love, your laugh, your kindness. But—goodbye.  
Please do not hate me; give the devil his due,  
This is an act of courage. Always, Sue.

XX

The boat-train rattling

Through the green country-side;  
A girl within it battling  
With her tears and pride.  
The Southampton landing,  
Porters, neat and quick,  
And a young man standing,  
Leaning on his stick.  
'Oh, John, John, you shouldn't  
Have come this long way. . .  
'Did you really think I wouldn't  
Be here to make you stay?'  
I can't remember whether  
There was much stress and strain,  
But presently, together,  
We were travelling back again.

#### XXI

The English love their country with a love  
Steady, and simple, wordless, dignified;  
I think it sets their patriotism above  
All others. We Americans have pride—  
We glory in our country's short romance.  
We boast of it and love it. Frenchmen when  
The ultimate menace comes, will die for France  
Logically as they lived. But Englishmen  
Will serve day after day, obey the law,  
And do dull tasks that keep a nation strong.  
Once I remember in London how I saw  
Pale shabby people standing in a long  
Line in the twilight and the misty rain  
To pay their tax. I then saw England plain.

#### XXII

Johnnie and I were married. England then  
Had been a week at war, and all the men  
Wore uniform, as English people can,  
Unconscious of it. Percy, the best man,  
As thin as paper and as smart as paint,  
Bade us good-by with admirable restraint,  
Went from the church to catch his train to hell;  
And died-saving his batman from a shell.

XXIII

We went down to Devon,  
In a warm summer rain,  
Knowing that our happiness  
Might never come again;  
I, not forgetting,  
'Till death us do part,'  
Was outrageously happy  
With death in my heart.  
Lovers in peacetime  
With fifty years to live,  
Have time to tease and quarrel  
And question what to give;  
But lovers in wartime  
Better understand  
The fullness of living,  
With death close at hand.

XXIV

My father wrote me a letter—  
My father, scholarly, indolent, strong,  
Teaching Greek better  
Than high-school students repay—  
Teaching Greek in the winter, but all summer long  
Sailing a yawl in Narragansett Bay;  
Happier perhaps when I was away,  
Free of an anxious daughter,  
He could sail blue water  
Day after day,  
Beyond Brenton Reef Lightship, and Beavertail,  
Past Cuttyhunk to catch a gale  
Off the Cape, while he thought of Hellas and Troy,  
Chanting with joy  
Greek choruses— those lines that he said  
Must be written some day on a stone at his head:  
'But who can know  
As the long years go  
That to live is happy, has found his heaven.'  
My father, so far away—  
I thought of him, in Devon,  
Anchoring in a blind fog in Booth Bay.

XXV

'So, Susan, my dear,' the letter began,  
'You've fallen in love with an Englishman.  
Well, they're a manly, attractive lot,  
If you happen to like them, which I do not.  
I am a Yankee through and through,  
And I don't like them, or the things they do.  
Whenever it's come to a knock-down fight  
With us, they were wrong, and we right;  
If you don't believe me, cast your mind  
Back over history, what do you find?  
They certainly had no justification  
For that maddening plan to impose taxation  
Without any form of representation.  
Your man may be all that a man should be,  
Only don't you bring him back to me  
Saying he can't get decent tea—  
He could have got his tea all right  
In Boston Harbour a certain night,  
When your great-great-grandmother— also a Sue—  
Shook enough tea from her husband's shoe  
To supply her house for a week or two.  
The war of 1812 seems to me  
About as just as a war could be.  
How could we help but come to grips  
With a nation that stopped and searched our ships,  
And took off our seamen for no other reason  
Except that they needed crews that season.  
I can get angry still at the tale  
Of their letting the Alabama sail,  
And Palmerston being insolent  
To Lincoln and Seward over the Trent.  
All very long ago, you'll say,  
But whenever I go up Boston-way,  
I drive through Concord—that neck of the wood,  
Where once the embattled farmers stood,  
And I think of Revere, and the old South Steeple,  
And I say, by heck, we're the only people  
Who licked them not only once, but twice.  
Never forget it—that's my advice.  
They have their points—they're honest and brave,  
Loyal and sure—as sure as the grave;

They make other nations seem pale and flighty,  
But they do think England is god almighty,  
And you must remind them now and then  
That other countries breed other men.  
From all of which you will think me rather  
Unjust. I am. Your devoted Father.

#### XXVI

I read, and saw my home with sudden yearning—  
The small white wooden house, the grass-green door,  
My father's study with the fire burning,  
And books piled on the floor.

I saw the moon-faced clock that told the hours,  
The crimson Turkey carpet, worn and frayed,  
The heavy dishes—gold with birds and flowers—  
Fruits of the China trade.

I saw the jack o' lanterns, friendly, frightening,  
Shine from our gateposts every Hallow-e'en;  
I saw the oak tree, shattered once by lightning,  
Twisted, stripped clean.

I saw the Dioscuri— two black kittens,  
Stalking relentlessly an empty spool;  
I saw a little girl in scarlet mittens  
Trudging through snow to school.

#### XXVII

John read the letter with his lovely smile.  
'Your father has a vigorous English style,  
And what he says is true, upon my word;  
But what's this war of which I never heard?  
We didn't fight in 1812.' 'Yes, John,  
That was the time when you burnt Washington.'  
'We couldn't have, my dear. . . ' 'I mean the city.'  
'We burnt it?' 'Yes, you did.' 'What a pity!  
No wonder people hate us. But, I say,  
I'll make your father like me yet, some day.'

#### XXVIII

I settled down in Devon,  
When Johnnie went to France.  
Such a tame ending



To a great romance—  
Two lonely women  
With nothing much to do  
But get to know each other;  
She did and I did, too.  
Mornings at the rectory  
Learning how to roll  
Bandages, and always  
Saving light and coal.  
Oh, that house was bitter  
As winter closed in,  
In spite of heavy stockings  
And woollen next the skin.  
I was cold and wretched,  
And never unaware  
Of John more cold and wretched  
In a trench out there.

XXIX

All that long winter I wanted so much to complain,  
But my mother-in-law, as far as I could see,  
Felt no such impulse, though she was always in pain,  
An, as the winter fogs grew thick,  
Took to walking with a stick,  
Heavily.  
Those bubble-like eyes grew black  
Whenever she rose from a chair—  
Rose and fell back,  
Unable to bear  
The sure agonizing  
Torture of rising.  
Her hands, those competent bony hands,  
Grew gnarled and old,  
But never ceased to obey the commands  
Of her will— only finding new hold  
Of bandage and needle and pen.  
And not for the blinking  
Of an eye did she ever stop thinking  
Of the suffering of Englishmen  
And her two sons in the trenches. Now and then  
I could forget for an instant in a book or a letter,  
But she never, never forgot— either one—

Percy and John—though I knew she loved one better—  
Percy, the wastrel, the gambler, the eldest son.  
I think I shall always remember  
Until I die  
Her face that day in December,  
When in a hospital ward together, she and I  
Were writing letters for wounded men and dying,  
Writing and crying  
Over their words, so silly and simple and loving,  
Suddenly, looking up, I saw the old Vicar moving  
Like fate down the hospital ward, until  
He stood still  
Beside her, where she sat at a bed.  
'Dear friend, come home. I have tragic news,' he said  
She looked straight at him without a spasm of fear,  
Her face not stern or masked—  
'Is it Percy or John?' she asked.  
'Percy.' She dropped her eyes. 'I am needed here.  
Surely you know  
I cannot go  
Until every letter is written. The dead  
Must wait on the living,' she said.  
'This is my work. I must stay.'  
And she did— the whole long day.

XXX

Out of the dark, and dearth  
Of happiness on earth,  
Out of a world inured to death and pain;  
On a fair spring mom  
To me a son was born,  
And hope was born—the future lived again.  
To me a son was born,  
The lonely hard forlorn  
Travail was, as the Bible tells, forgot.  
How old, how commonplace  
To look upon the face  
Of your first-born, and glory in your lot.

To look upon his face  
And understand your place  
Among the unknown dead in churchyards lying,

To see the reason why  
You lived and why you die—  
Even to find a certain grace in dying.

To know the reason why  
Buds blow and blossoms die,  
Why beauty fades, and genius is undone,  
And how unjustified  
Is any human pride  
In all creation— save in this common one.

XXXI

Maternity is common, but not so  
It seemed to me. Motherless, I did not know—  
I was all unprepared to feel this glow,  
Holy as a Madonna's, and as crude  
As any animal's beatitude—  
Crude as my own black cat's, who used to bring  
Her newest litter to me every spring,  
And say, with green eyes shining in the sun:  
'Behold this miracle that I have done.'  
And John came home on leave, and all was joy  
And thankfulness to me, because my boy  
Was not a baby only, but the heir—  
Heir to the Devon acres and a name  
As old as England. Somehow I became  
Almost an English woman, almost at one  
With all they ever did— all they had done.

XXXII

'I want him called John after you, or if not that I'd rather—'  
'But the eldest son is always called Percy, dear.'  
'I don't ask to call him Hiram, after my father—'  
'But the eldest son is always called Percy, dear.'  
'But I hate the name Percy. I like Richard or Ronald,  
Or Peter like your brother, or Ian or Noel or Donald—'  
'But the eldest is always called Percy, dear.'  
So the Vicar christened him Percy; and Lady Jean  
Gave to the child and me the empty place  
In her heart. Poor Lady, it was as if she had seen  
The world destroyed— the extinction of her race,  
Her country, her class, her name— and now she saw

Them live again. And I would hear her say:  
'No. I admire Americans; my daughter-in-law  
Was an American.' Thus she would well repay  
The debt, and I was grateful— the English made  
Life hard for those who did not come to her aid.

XXXIII

'They must come in in the spring.'  
'Don't they care sixpence who's right?'  
'What a ridiculous thing—  
Saying they're too proud to fight.'  
'Saying they're too proud to fight.'  
'Wilson's pro-German, I'm told.'  
'No, it's financial.' 'Oh, quite,  
All that they care for is gold.'  
'All that they care for is gold.'  
'Seem to like writing a note.'  
'Yes, as a penman, he's bold.'  
'No. It's the Irish vote.'

'Oh, it's the Irish vote.'  
'What if the Germans some night  
Sink an American boat?'  
'Darling, they're too proud to fight.'

XXXIV

What could I do, but ache and long  
That my country, peaceful, rich, and strong,  
Should come and do battle for England's sake.  
What could I do, but long and ache.  
And my father's letters I hid away  
Lest some one should know the things he'd say.  
'You ask me whether we're coming in—  
We are. The English are clever as sin,  
Silently, subtly they inspire  
Most of youth with a holy fire  
To shed their blood for the British Empire  
We'll come in— we'll fight and die  
Humbly to help them, and by and by,  
England will do us in the eye.  
They'll get colonies, gold and fame,  
And we'll get nothing at all but blame.

Blame for not having come before,  
Blame for not having sent them more  
Money and men and war supplies,  
Blame if we venture to criticise.  
We're so damn simple— our skins so thin  
We'll get nothing whatever, but we'll come in.'

XXXV

And at last—at last—like the dawn of a calm, fair day  
After a night of terror and storm, they came—  
My young light-hearted countrymen, tall and gay,  
Looking the world over in search of fun and fame,  
Marching through London to the beat of a boastful air,  
Seeing for the first time Piccadilly and Leicester Square,  
All the bands playing: 'Over There, Over There,  
Send the word, send the word to beware—'  
And as the American flag went fluttering by  
Englishmen uncovered, and I began to cry.

XXXVI

'We're here to end it, by jingo.'  
'We'll lick the Heinies okay.'  
'I can't get on to the lingo.'  
'Dumb-they don't get what we say.'  
'Call that stuff coffee? You oughter  
Know better. Gee, take it away.'  
'Oh, for a drink of ice water! '  
'They think nut-sundae's a day.'

'Say, is this chicken feed money?'  
'Say, does it rain every day?'  
'Say, Lady, isn't it funny  
Every one drives the wrong way?'

XXXVII

How beautiful upon the mountains,  
How beautiful upon the downs,  
How beautiful in the village post-office,  
On the pavements of towns—  
How beautiful in the huge print of newspapers,  
Beautiful while telegraph wires hum,  
While telephone bells wildly jingle,

The news that peace has come—  
That peace has come at last—that all wars cease.  
How beautiful upon the mountains are the footsteps  
Of the messengers of peace!

XXXVIII

In the depth of the night betwixt midnight and morning,  
In the darkness and silence forerunning the dawn,  
The throb of my heart was a drum-beat of warning,  
My ears were a-strain and my breath was undrawn.  
In the depth of the night, when the old house was sleeping,  
I lying alone in a desolate bed,  
Heard soft on the staircase a slow footstep creeping—  
The ear of the living—the step of the dead.  
In the depth of the night betwixt midnight and morning  
A step drawing near on the old oaken floor—  
On the stair— in the gallery— the ghost that gives warning  
Of death, by that heartbreaking sigh at my door.

XXXIX

Bad news is not broken,  
    By kind tactful word;  
The message is spoken  
    Ere the word can be heard.  
The eye and the bearing,  
    The breath make it clear,  
And the heart is despairing  
    Before the ears hear.  
I do not remember  
    The words that they said:  
'Killed—Douai—November—'  
    I knew John was dead.  
All done and over—  
    That day long ago—  
The while cliffs of Dover—  
    Little did I know.

XL

As I grow older, looking back, I see  
Not those the longest planted in the heart  
Are the most missed. Some unions seem to be  
Too close for even death to tear apart.

Those who have lived together many years,  
And deeply learnt to read each other's mind,  
Vanities, tempers, virtues, hopes, and fears—  
One cannot go—nor is one left behind.  
Alas, with John and me this was not so;  
I was defrauded even of the past.  
Our days had been so pitifully few,  
Fight as I would, I found the dead go fast.  
I had lost all—had lost not love alone,  
But the bright knowledge it had been my own.

XLI

Oh, sad people, buy not your past too dearly,  
Live not in dreams of the past, for understand,  
If you remember too much, too long, too clearly,  
If you grasp memory with too heavy a hand,  
You will destroy memory in all its glory  
For the sake of the dreams of your head upon your bed.  
You will be left with only the worn dead story  
You told yourself of the dead.

XLII

Nanny brought up my son, as his father before him,  
Austere on questions of habits, manners, and food.  
Nobly yielding a mother's right to adore him,  
Thinking that mothers never did sons much good.  
A Scot from Lady Jean's own native passes,  
With a head as smooth and round as a silver bowl,  
A crooked nose, and eyes behind her glasses  
Grey and bright and wise—a great soul !  
Ready to lay down her life for her charge, and ready  
To administer discipline without consulting me:  
'Is that the way for you to answer my leddy?  
I think you'll get no sweet tonight to your tea.'

Bringing him up better than I could do it,  
Teaching him to be civil and manly and cool  
In the face of danger. And then before I knew it  
The time came for him to go off to school.

Off to school to be free of women's teaching,  
Into a world of men— at seven years old;

Into a world where a mother's hands vainly reaching  
Will never again caress and comfort and hold.

XLIII

My father came over now and then  
To look at the boy and talk to me,  
Never staying long,  
For the urge was strong  
To get back to his yawl and the summer sea.  
He came like a nomad passing by,  
Hands in his pockets, hat over one eye,  
Teasing every one great and small  
With a blank straight face and a Yankee drawl;  
Teasing the Vicar on Apostolic Succession  
And what the Thirty-Nine Articles really meant to convey,  
Teasing Nanny, though he did not  
Make much impression  
On that imperturbable Scot.  
Teasing our local grandee, a noble peer,  
Who firmly believed the Ten Lost Tribes  
Of Israel had settled here—  
A theory my father had at his fingers' ends—  
Only one person was always safe from his jibes—  
My mother-in-law, for they were really friends.

XLIV

Oh, to come home to your country  
After long years away,  
To see the tall shining towers  
Rise over the rim of the bay,  
To feel the west wind steadily blowing  
And the sunshine golden and hot,  
To speak to each man as an equal,  
Whether he is or not.

XLV

Was this America—this my home?  
Prohibition and Teapot Dome—  
Speakeasies, night-clubs, illicit stills,  
Dark faces peering behind dark grills,  
Hold-ups, kidnappings, hootch or booze—  
Every one gambling—you just can't lose,



Was this my country? Even the bay  
At home was altered, strange ships lay  
At anchor, deserted day after day,  
Old yachts in a rusty dim decay—  
Like ladies going the primrose way—  
At anchor, until when the moon was black,  
They sailed, and often never came back.

Even my father's Puritan drawl  
Told me shyly he'd sold his yawl  
For a fabulous price to the constable's son—  
My childhood's playmate, thought to be one  
Of a criminal gang, rum-runners all,  
Such clever fellows with so much money—  
Even the constable found it funny,  
Until one morning his son was found,  
Floating dead in Long Island Sound.  
Was this my country? It seemed like heaven  
To get back, dull and secure, to Devon,  
Loyally hiding from Lady Jean  
And my English friends the horrors I'd seen.

XLVI

That year she died, my nearest, dearest friend;  
Lady Jean died, heroic to the end.  
The family stood about her grave, but none  
Mourned her as I did. After, one by one,  
They slipped away—Peter and Bill—my son  
Went back to school. I hardly was aware  
Of Percy's lovely widow, sitting there  
In the old room, in Lady Jean's own chair.  
An English beauty glacially fair  
Was Percy's widow Rosamund, her hair  
Was silver gilt, and smooth as silk, and fine,  
Her eyes, sea-green, slanted away from mine,  
From any one's, as if to meet the gaze  
Of others was too intimate a phase  
For one as cool and beautiful as she.

We were not friends or foes. She seemed to be  
Always a little irked— fretted to find  
That other women lived among mankind.

Now for the first time after years of meeting,  
Never exchanging more than formal greeting,  
She spoke to me— that sharp determined way  
People will speak when they have things to say.

XLVII

ROSAMUND: Susan, go home with your offspring. Fly.

Live in America. SUSAN: Rosamund, why?

ROSAMUND: Why, my dear girl, haven't you seen

What English country life can mean

With too small an income to keep the place

Going? Already I think I trace

A change in you, you no longer care

So much how you look or what you wear.

That coat and skirt you have on, you know

You wouldn't have worn them ten years ago.

Those thick warm stockings— they make me sad,

Your ankles were ankles to drive men mad.

Look at your hair— you need a wave.

Get out— go home— be hard— be brave,

Or else, believe me, you'll be a slave.

There's something in you— dutiful— meek—

You'll be saving your pin-money every week

To mend the roof. Well, let it leak.

Why should you care? SUSAN: But I do care,

John loved this place and my boy's the heir.

ROSAMUND: The heir to what? To a tiresome life

Drinking tea with the vicar's wife,

Opening bazaars, and taking the chair

At meetings for causes that you don't care

Sixpence about and never will;

Breaking your heart over every bill.

I've been in the States, where everyone,

Even the poor, have a little fun.

Don't condemn your son to be

A penniless country squire. He

Would be happier driving a tram over there

Than mouldering his life away as heir.

SUSAN: Rosamund dear, this may all be true.

I'm an American through and through.

I don't see things as the English do,  
But it's clearly my duty, it seems to me,  
To bring up John's son, like him, to be  
A country squire—poor alas,  
But true to that English upper class  
That does not change and does not pass.

ROSAMUND: Nonsense; it's come to an absolute stop.  
Twenty years since we sat on top  
Of the world, amusing ourselves and sneering  
At other manners and customs, jeering  
At other nations, living in clover—  
Not any more. That's done and over.  
No one nowadays cares a button  
For the upper classes— they're dead as mutton.  
Go home. SUSAN: I notice that you don't go.

ROSAMUND: My dear, that shows how little you know.  
I'm escaping the fate of my peers,  
Marrying one of the profiteers,  
Who hasn't an 'aitch' where an 'aitch' should be,  
But millions and millions to spend on me.  
Not much fun— but there wasn't any  
Other way out. I haven't a penny.  
But with you it's different. You can go away,  
And oh, what a fool you'd be to stay.

#### XLVIII

Rabbits in the park,  
Scuttling as we pass,  
Little white tails  
Against the green grass.  
'Next time, Mother,  
I must really bring a gun,  
I know you don't like shooting,  
But—!' John's own son,  
That blond bowed face,  
Those clear steady eyes,  
Hard to be certain  
That the dead don't rise.  
Jogging on his pony  
Through the autumn day,

'Bad year for fruit, Mother,  
But good salt hay.'  
Bowling for the village  
As his father had before;  
Coming home at evening  
To read the cricket score,  
Back to the old house  
Where all his race belong,  
Tired and contented—  
Rosamund was wrong.

#### XLIX

If some immortal strangers walked our land  
And heard of death, how could they understand  
That we—doomed creatures—draw our meted breath  
Light-heartedly—all unconcerned with death.  
So in these years between the wars did men  
From happier continents look on us when  
They brought us sympathy, and saw us stand  
Like the proverbial ostrich-head in sand—  
While youth passed resolutions not to fight,  
And statesmen muttered everything was right—  
Germany, a kindly, much ill-treated nation—  
Russia was working out her own salvation  
Within her borders. As for Spain, ah, Spain  
Would buy from England when peace came again!  
I listened and believed— believed through sheer  
Terror. I could not look whither my fear  
Pointed— that agony that I had known.  
I closed my eyes, and was not alone.

Later than many, earlier than some,  
I knew the die was cast— that war must come;  
That war must come. Night after night I lay  
Steeling a broken heart to face the day  
When he, my son— would tread the very same  
Path that his father trod. When the day came  
I was not steeled— not ready. Foolish, wild  
Words issued from my lips— 'My child, my child,  
Why should you die for England too?' He smiled:  
'Is she not worth it, if I must?' he said.

John would have answered yes— but John was dead.

L  
Is she worth dying for? My love, my one  
And only love had died, and now his son  
Asks me, his alien mother, to assay  
The worth of England to mankind today—  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war;  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea—  
Ah, no, not that—not Shakespeare—I must be  
A sterner critic. I must weigh the ill  
Against the good, must strike the balance, till  
I know the answer— true for me alone—  
What is she worth— this country— not my own?

I thought of my father's deep traditional wrath  
Against England— the redcoat bully— the ancient foe—  
That second reaping of hate, that aftermath  
Of a ruler's folly and ignorance long ago—  
Long, long ago— yet who can honestly say  
England is utterly changed— not I— not I.  
Arrogance, ignorance, folly are here today,  
And for these my son must die?  
I thought of these years, these last dark terrible years  
When the leaders of England bade the English believe  
Lies at the price of peace, lies and fears,  
Lies that corrupt, and fears that sap and deceive.  
I thought of the bars dividing man from man,  
Invisible bars that the humble may not pass,  
And how no pride is uglier, crueller than  
The pride unchecked of class.  
Oh, those invisible bars of manners and speech,  
Ways that the proud man will not teach  
The humble lest they too reach  
Those splendid heights where a little band  
Have always stood and will always stand  
Ruling the fate of this small green land,  
Rulers of England—for them must I  
Send out my only son to die?

LI

And then, and then,  
I thought of Elizabeth stepping down  
Over the stones of Plymouth town  
To welcome her sailors, common men,  
She herself, as she used to say,  
Being 'mere English' as much as they—  
Seafaring men who sailed away  
From rocky inlet and wooded bay,  
Free men, undisciplined, uncontrolled,  
Some of them pirates and all of them bold,  
Feeling their fate was England's fate,  
Coming to save it a little late,  
Much too late for the easy way,  
Much too late, and yet never quite  
Too late to win in that last worst fight.

And I thought of Hampden and men like him,  
St John and Eliot, Cromwell and Pym,  
Standing firm through the dreadful years,  
When the chasm was opening, widening,  
Between the Commons and the King;  
I thought of the Commons in tears— in tears,  
When Black Rod knocked at Parliament's door,  
And they saw Rebellion straight before—  
Weeping, and yet as hard as stone,  
Knowing what the English have always known  
Since then— and perhaps have known alone—  
Something that none can teach or tell—  
The moment when God's voice says; 'Rebel.'

Not to rise up in sudden gust  
Of passion— not, though the cause be just;  
Not to submit so long that hate,  
Lava torrents break out and spill  
Over the land in a fiery spate;  
Not to submit for ever, until  
The will of the country is one man's will,  
And every soul in the whole land shrinks  
From thinking—except as his neighbour thinks.  
Men who have governed England know

That dreadful line that they may not pass  
And live. Elizabeth long ago  
Honoured and loved, and bold as brass,  
Daring and subtle, arrogant, clever,  
English, too, to her stiff backbone,  
Somewhat a bully, like her own  
Father— yet even Elizabeth never  
Dared to oppose the sullen might  
Of the English, standing upon a right.

LII

And were they not English, our forefathers, never more  
English than when they shook the dust of her sod  
From their feet for ever, angrily seeking a shore  
Where in his own way a man might worship his God.  
Never more English than when they dared to be  
Rebels against her—that stern intractable sense  
Of that which no man can stomach and still be free,  
Writing: 'When in the course of human events. . .'  
Writing it out so all the world could see  
Whence come the powers of all just governments.  
The tree of Liberty grew and changed and spread,  
But the seed was English.

I am American bred,  
I have seen much to hate here— much to forgive,  
But in a world where England is finished and dead,  
I do not wish to live.

Alice Duer Miller

# The Woman At The Cross-Roads

(Her lover speaks.)

AN equal love between a man and woman,  
This is the only charm to set us free,  
And this the only omen  
Of immortality.  
Only for us the long, long war is over  
Between our aspiring spirits,  
And all the flesh inherits,  
Because, dear saint, your soul no less  
Has got a lover,  
Than has your body's long slim loveliness.  
Ah, my beloved, think not renunciation  
Of such a love as ours  
Will bring you any strengthening of your powers,  
Or calm, or dignity, or peace of mind  
To be compared with that which you will find  
In love's full consummation.  
Talk not to me of other, older ties,  
Of duty, and of narrower destinies,  
Nor bid me see that we have met too late,  
While we have lips and eyes  
To kiss and call;  
But rather thank our fate,  
For this mad gift - that we have met at all.  
Come to me then. Ah, must I bid you come?  
Your heart is mine. Is then your will so loath?  
Leave him from whom your spirit long since fled,  
Whose house is not your home; your only home,  
Although the same roof never cover both,  
Is where I am, until we both are dead.

(Her child speaks.)

Why do you look at me with such a shade  
Upon your eyes, so still and steadily?  
I am not naughty, but I am afraid;  
I know not why.  
The world is huge and puzzling and perverse -



Even my nurse,  
When most my heart is stirred,  
Will put me by, with some complacent word;  
Or, if she listens, in a little while  
Babbles my deepest secret with a smile,  
My mother, oh my mother, only you  
Are kind and just and honorable and true.  
Others are fond, others will play and sing,  
Will kiss me, or will let me kiss and cling;  
But only you, my mother, comprehend  
How little children feel and love the truth;  
Only you cherish like an equal friend  
The shy and tragic dignity of youth.

(the woman answers her lover.)

All my life long, I think I dreamed of this.  
Even as a girl, my visions were of you.  
Alas, I grew incredulous of bliss;  
And now too late, too late, the dream comes true.  
Sweet are the charms you offer me, my lover,  
To read the riddle of the universe,  
And in your arms I should not soon discover  
Our old, old mortal curse.  
And yet I put them by, because I trust  
In other magic, far beyond the ken,  
Even of you, the tenderest of men,  
In spells more permanent than any sorrow,  
Which bind me to the past, and make to-morrow  
My own, although I sleep it through in dust,-  
The revelation which to every woman  
Her children bring,  
Making her one not only with things human, -  
With every living thing,  
For only mothers raise no passionate cry  
Against mortality;  
For only they have learned the reason why  
It is worth while to live; and presently,  
Seeing nature's meaning, are content to die.

Alice Duer Miller

## To A Certain Gentleman

(' Women are often tempters to sexual sin and delight in it. . . A recent report of a female probation officer relates that some of the girls who, as we may say euphemistically' had gone astray,' owned to her that they enjoyed the life of the evil house.'

- The Case Against Woman Suffrage, published by the Man-Suffrage Association Opposed to Political Suffrage for Women.)

IT may be so, good sir, it may be so,  
Not all who sin are tempted - that we know:  
It may be darker things than this are true,  
And yet, upon my soul, if I were you -  
A man, no longer young, at peace, secured  
From all that tempting women have endured  
Of poverty and ignorance and fear  
And joy that make youth terrible and dear,  
If I were you, before I took my pen  
And wrote those words to hearten other men,  
And give them greater sense of moral ease  
In the long score of common sins like these,  
If I were you, I would have held my hand  
In fire.

- Ah, well; you would not understand.

Alice Duer Miller

# To An Old Lady In A Train

HER hair was beautifully white  
Beneath her bonnet, black as night,  
Which, plainly of New England kin,  
Was tied with strings beneath her chin.  
And when she spoke I had no choice  
But listened to that soft crisp voice;  
And when she smiled, I saw the truth,  
She had been lovely in her youth,  
And with those quick, observing eyes,  
Was charming still to all the wise.  
And still, in spite of bonnet strings,  
She thought keen, quaint, amusing things,  
With gaiety that many hold  
Remarkable in one so old.

We talked ten minutes in a train,  
And when we came to part again,  
Good-bye, enjoy yourself,' said she,  
I told her that ahead of me  
No pleasure beckoned, no, I said,  
Stern duty only lay ahead!  
Oh, well,' her parting answer ran,  
Enjoy yourself the best you can.'  
And so unconquerably gay,  
She went upon her darkening way.

Alice Duer Miller

# To Remorse

MAGIC for fitful souls whose aim is still  
Pleasures that forfeit not the mansions blest,  
Who deem themselves absolved to approve the best .  
While they, protesting hate, pursue the ill;  
Who lack strength to attain or else lack will  
To keep what was their will's supreme behest;  
Daring in dreams but fearful of the test  
When Time and Fate their dearest wish fulfil.  
I will not taste of thy pale anodyne;  
I will not alter, listening to a voice  
That tells me joys immortal may be mine  
Were I but traitor to my clearest choice.  
Courage I count above all gifts of thine -  
Courage or to refrain or to rejoice.

Alice Duer Miller

# To The Night Breeze

BREEZE of the night, across my pillow straying-  
Breeze of the night, of summer dews begot,  
Salt from the sea-shore, where the waves are playing,  
Slow, to and fro, my window curtains swaying-  
Cool my flushed cheeks, by recent sleep left hot.

Alice Duer Miller

## Won'T It Be Curious

WON'T it be curious when I am dead;  
Some one, unknown to me, here in my stead?  
Curious surely for others to see  
Trifles I made or marred outlasting me;  
All my possessions - bracelets and rings,  
Young and unaltered like immortal things

Young and unaltered, always the same  
Changeless the lamp though we blow out the flame.

Alice Duer Miller