

Classic Poetry Series

Annie Campbell Huestis
- poems -

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Annie Campbell Huestis(1878-1960)

Annie Campbell Huestis began very early in life to write verse acceptable to magazine editors, for she was but a small child, under her teens, when Charles G. D. Roberts sent her first poem to the New York Independent. It was accepted and paid for.

She is the youngest of a family of six, and was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her father is Mr. Martin Bent Huestis, of United Empire Loyalist descent, and her mother, Victoire Ayrton Johnson, a sister of the late George Johnson, Dominion Statistician. Mrs. Huestis is of English and Irish extraction,—one of whose ancestors was a Doctor of Music, so distinguished that he was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, and another, a Privy Councillor of the United Kingdom.

After attendance at public and high schools, Miss Huestis continued her studies at the Sacred Heart Convent. Since then she has travelled abroad twice, the second time as a writer of descriptive articles for newspapers. She has contributed frequently to magazines. A recent number of Harper's Weekly contained 'On the Stair,' and Harper's Magazine, of July, 1916, has a story by this author, entitled 'Flannigan.'

Aldaran

Aldaran, who loved to sing,
Here lieth dead.
All the glory of the Spring,
All its birds and blossoming,
Near his still bed,
Cannot waken him again,
Cannot lure to hill and plain
Aldaran, the singer,
Who is dead.

Homeward through the early dusk
Idly he would stray,
Through the woodland dim and still
Harp in hand and heart athrill,
Singing on his way,–
Singing neath a dark'ning sky
To the birds their lullaby;
To the owls a plaintive note,
Mournful, from his happy throat;
To the brooks, in lighter tone,
Merry music like their own;
To the dreaming fields a tune
Like the wind of afternoon
When it drifts through sunlit spaces
Cooling weary flower faces;
To the wee folk in their beds
Gentle croons for sleepy heads,
And to every timid thing,
Hushed and hidden, he would sing,
Till it crept in wonder sweet,
Fear forgetting, to his feet.
It was so he charmed them, singing,

Bird and beast and man,
Yet no voice can ever waken
Sleeping Aldaran.

Aldaran, who loved to sing,
Here lieth still.

Let the bird upon the bough,
Near where he is sleeping now,
Call if it will.
Never voice of bird or man
Shall awaken Aldaran.
Hushed he lies, whose happy throat
Woke the wood with silver note,
Stirred the slumbering hills, and then
Charmed them all to sleep again.
Hushed he lies, as if content
With the silent way he went,
But the winds come seeking him,
Through the forest to and fro,
In the twilight strange and dim,
Calling, calling as they go.
'Must you lie in silence ever,
Gentle Singer?' cries the river.
And the birds from hill to hill,
Seem to wait and listen still.
'Aldaran, O Aldaran,
Haste thee back, the day is sped!'
So the wind and twilight calleth,
Wild and wistful, near his bed,-
Aldaran, the Singer,
Who is dead!'

It was in the purple dusk
Of a golden day,
Through the woodland that he loved,
Home he made his way.
Here he lay awhile to dream
In the forest dim,
And the bank beside the stream
Was a couch for him;
Kind above him bent the willow,

And the low moss was his pillow,
And his wall the thicket grim.
One by one, the quiet sky
Lit its candles pure and high
Till their light shone swift and far,
Like a smile, from star to star,

And the wind was like a prayer
Chanted in the silence there.
It was so, while he lay sleeping,
Hushed, a weary man,
Death came through the darkness creeping
Unto Aldaran.

Like an enemy it came,
Through the shade it crept,
With a footstep swift and drear,
In the shadows drawing near,
Softly, while he slept.
Laid a hand upon his eyes,
That they might not see the Spring,
Laid a seal upon his lips,
That they might not sing.

Wept the wind, with voice of fear,
'Wake thee, danger lurketh near!'
Cried the flying owl, 'O follow!'
Hurrying through the silent hollow.
And its shadow weird and grey
Seemed to beckon him away.
So they pled with him, the while
In the woodland that he knew,
Aldaran, with fearless smile,
Lay asleep mid flowers and dew.
What to watch or dread had he,
Who had known no enemy?
Yet, from shadow into light,
Flashed a dagger fierce and bright,
Unto shadow drew again,
False and shamed with crimson stain,
And the grasses trembling near

Felt a step that fled in fear.
Never troubled word he spake,
Never cry of grief or pain,
But in wonder strove to wake,
Stirred, and sighed, and slept again
Flowers in that piteous place
Bent to screen his paling face,

And the dark, with touch that blest;
Hid the wound upon his breast.
In the friendly wood that knew him,
Sweet with fern and flower,
So it was that Death came to him,
In his trusting hour.

Aldaran who loved to sing
Here lieth low,
Not again his heart shall spring,
At the time of blossoming.-
Ah, who can know?
Still at dusk and break of day
Some can hear him on his way,-
Aldaran, the vanished one,
Walking hidden in the sun,
Moving mistlike by the streams
When the early twilight dreams,
Speeding on his quiet way,
Never seen, by night or day,
But in pity drawing near
To the help of those who fear,
To the beds of those who die,
Singing their last lullaby,
Singing still, when they are far
Where the mist and silence are,
Singing softly still, that they
May not fear the unknown way.
So to those whose day is sped,
In the hour lone and dread,
Cometh Aldaran, the Singer,
Who is dead.

Annie Campbell Huestis

On The Stair

As I went lonely up the stair
Ah me, the ghost that I saw there!
So bright and near it seemed to be,
It laid a hand with tender touch
On my sad eyes that wept too much,
And bent a wistful face to me,—
It was the friend whose heart I brake
With many a grief for my false sake.

The hand that sought to dry my tears
Had dried her own in earlier years—
The patient tears I made her shed.
The face that bent to comfort me
From the dark hall where none could see
Had smiled on me as she lay dead.
It was the friend I did not spare
Who met me on the lonely stair.

If I could live those years again
And break no trust, and give no pain,
And nobly grieve to see her die,
We could forget that she was dead,
And all the years so strangely fled,
And love this meeting, she and I;
But I was false as friend could be
And she comes back to comfort me.

Annie Campbell Huestis

The Little White Sun

THE sky had a gray, gray face,
The touch of the mist was chill,
The earth was an eerie place,
For the wind moaned over the hill;
But the brown earth laughed, and the sky turned blue,
When the little white sun came peeping through.

The wet leaves saw it and smiled,
The glad birds gave it a song—
A cry from a heart, glee-wild,
And the echoes laugh it along:
And the wind and I went whistling, too,
When the little white sun came peeping through.

So, welcome the chill of rain
And the world in its dreary guise—
To have it over again,
That moment of sweet surprise,
When the brown earth laughs, and the sky turns blue,
As the little white sun comes peeping through.

Annie Campbell Huestis

The Will-O'-The-Wisp

The Will-o'-the-Wisp is out on the marsh,
And all alone he goes;
There's not a sight of his glimmering light
From break of day to close;
But all night long, from dusk till dawn,
He drifts where the night wind blows.

The Will-o'-the-Wisp, he has no roof,
Yet he seeks not hut nor hall;
He will not wait for a friendly foot,
But starts if a shadow fall;
And never a voice can make him turn,
But the far off winds that call.

The twilight covers the dreaming hills,
The evening dews begin;
There's none to care that he wanders there,
There's none to call him in;
And all the night, with his lonely light,
He goes where the mists have been.

From firelit window and open doors,
The roads have golden bars;
And round and round the world is bound
By a girdle of radiant stars;
But I watch to-night for a fleeting light
That a moment makes or mars.

Flit, flit, with the hurrying hours,
In shadow and mist and dew
Will-o'-the-Wisp, O Will-o'-the-Wisp,
I would I could follow you,
With your elfin light for a lantern bright
The bogs and the marshes through!

O Will-o'-the-Wisp, in silver dusk
Who'd wish for golden dawn?
In purple night, with stars a-light,
Who'd dream of noontide gone?

Who would not stray by the glimmering way
Your wandering feet are drawn?

The dawn comes over the silent hills,
And calls to the winds of morn;
The stars grow pale, and the sun cries, 'Hail! '
To the shadowy fields forlorn;
And good-bye, good-bye, to the Will-o'-the-Wisp,
Who dies when the day is born!

Annie Campbell Huestis