

Classic Poetry Series

George Essex Evans
- poems -

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George Essex Evans(18 June 1863 – 10 November 1909)

George Essex Evans was an Australian poet.

Biography

Evans was born in London on 18 June 1863. Both his parents were Welsh. Evans's father, John Evans, Q.C., died in 1864 when Evans was only a few months old. John Evans, who was the Treasurer of the Inner Temple and a member of the House of Commons, left his family a fortune of 60 000 pounds. The fortune did not last very long. Consequently, Evans was raised and educated by his mother Mary Ann (née Owen), who was one of the Bowens of Llwynwair, an old Welsh family. Mary Ann was an educated woman, fluent in both Latin and Greek. The family lived in Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire where Evans attended Haverfordwest Grammar School and then the St. James Collegiate School of Jersey.

Evans was partly deaf and although he was an excellent athlete, his tutors thought him 'dull'. Unfortunately his hearing impediment prevented him going into the armed forces.

In 1881, when Evans was 17, the siblings J.B.O. (John Bowen Owen), Blanche Gough and Beatrice emigrated to Queensland, Australia, travelling first class on a journey around the Cape of Good Hope that lasted sixty-five days. Upon arrival in Queensland, the brothers bought some land in the Darling Downs with the intention of farming. Evans, however, was badly injured in a horse riding accident, when he was thrown against a tree, and was unable to do any physical work. He was able to take part in athletic pursuits, competing in wrestling, running, swimming, and football (in which he represented Queensland).

Evans suffered from increasing deafness as he grew older, and this may be the reason why he was thought to be a secretive, quiet man. Initially he earned a living by working as a teacher at a private school, but eventually became an Agricultural Editor of *The Queenslander*. Essex Evans also wrote travel books for the Government Tourist and Intelligence Bureau. He entered the public service in 1888 and eventually became District Registrar of births, deaths and marriages first for Gympie and then later for Toowoomba.

In 1899, Evans married Blanche Hopkins, the young widow of E. B. Hopkins of

Goondiwindi, the daughter of the late Rev. William Eglinton and sister of former Native Police Officer, Second-Class Sub-Inspector Ernest Eglinton. The wedding was described as a very secret affair. A letter from Evans to Dr. Black, whom he sought to perform the service, asks for a quiet ceremony with little fuss in Drayton. They were married on 6 November 1899.

Evans and Blanche had two sons, the younger one, Owen Meylett Eglinton Essex Evans died at five and a half years of Ileo Colitis Acuta (a form of diarrhoea). As a result of his marriage, Evans also had two step daughters Misses Lorna and Beryl Hopkins.

They built their home they called "Glenbar" on the Tollbar Road on the eastern slope of the Toowoomba range and Evans's sister continued to live with him.

Evans founded the Austral Society in Toowoomba in 1903 to promote music, art, literature, science and industry.

Evans was described as a reserved man, and at times rather moody and impulsive. However, he was also described as a kind person and loyal friend. He had a strong sense of honour and self respect; traits which made him a model husband and father.

Evans was described as having a tremendous memory, particularly for poetic verse of which he was able to recite a prodigious amount. Few of his contemporaries were able to match his breadth of knowledge of English, American and Australian poetry.

Works

Evans's works were highly regarded during his career and for a time following his death. He was publicly praised by many acknowledged critics and political figures including William Archer, Sir Samuel Griffith, Alfred Deakin and Sir Henry Parkes.

His first volume of poetry, *The Repentance of Magdalene Despar*, was published in 1891. Between 1892 and 1897 Evans was associated with John Tighe Ryan in the production of the periodical, *The Antipodean* which appeared three times. In 1898 another collection of poetry, *Lorraine and other Verses*, was published and in 1901 Evans won a prize of fifty guineas for his "Ode for Commonwealth Day". Although this ode was praised by the then Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, it was criticised by his peers as trite.

The *Secret Key and other Verses* which included part of the *Lorraine* volume, was

published in 1906. He won a reputation in his own state of Queensland as the author of patriotic verse, as in "Cymru", and his bush ballads, such as "The Women of the West," were popular.

His work was also noticed by the Queensland State Government and following the success of The Garden of Queensland, Evans was promoted to the Chief Secretary's department to advertise and "sell" Queensland at the Franco-British Exhibition in Paris in May 1908.

Evans also wrote and produced some theatrical works for the Brisbane Theatre including Robinson Crusoe a pantomime and Musical Whist. During the last two years of his life he wrote prolifically about the resources of his state for the Queensland government.

Evans has over 200 published poems attributed to his name. His work frequently appeared in Australian newspapers and he wrote in many other literary forms including short stories, essays, various humorous works and a novella.

Death

Essex Evans was a great advocate for the construction of a new road northward across the Australia and after falling ill in 1909 he became the first passenger to be transported over it when taken to hospital. The men working on the road were so overcome with sorrow for the poet who had worked hard to bring about the new road that they relieved the ambulance men of their duty.

Evans died from complications arising from gall bladder surgery in 1909 at forty-six years of age and the news of his death was first delivered on the stage of the Austral Hall during the largest Austral Festival celebrations ever held. Evans's death prompted an emergency meeting of the Austral Association Committee who, knowing that of all the titles Evans held he was most proud of 'Founder of the Austral Association,' decided that the festival must continue. A series of emotional tributes to his impact on advancing the cause of Australian Music, Art and Literature followed.

His funeral was held on 11 November 1909 at the St. James Church and he was eulogized by Alfred Deakin with whom he shared a long correspondence in Federal Parliament as 'Australia's Poet.'

In a speech that was wired to the poet's widow after his death, Australian Prime Minister Deakin shared his sentiments stating that he was "Deeply grieved at sudden and unexpected death of your greatly-gifted husband. Australia will

mourn the loss of her national poet whose patriotic songs stirred her people profoundly in the arduous campaign for union."

A memorial of Essex Evans was raised in Webb Park, Toowoomba. Inscribed on the statue are several verses from his poems, including the following excerpt from his poem 'Toowoomba'

*Dark purple, chased with sudden gloom and glory,
Like waves in wild unrest.
Low-wooded billows and steep summits hoary,
Ridge, slope and mountain crest,
Cease at her feet with faces turned to greet her,
Enthroned, apart, serene,
Above her vassal hills whose voices greet her
The Mountain Queen.*

Legacy

An edition of his Collected Verse was published in 1928. An annual pilgrimage to his memorial site has been carried out by the Toowoomba Ladies Literary Society since 1929 and a collection of Essex Evans's artefacts and archives can be found at the Toowoomba City Library. The Toowoomba Ladies Literary Society have also established a plaque at the site of Essex Evans's home to commemorate his memory. The Fryer Library at The University of Queensland also holds his papers.

A Commonplace Song

Ebbs and flows the restless river
In the city street
Where the great nerve centres quiver,
Where the pulses beat.
Where the human waves are driving
Drifts a woman's face,
White and worn by ceaseless striving
With the commonplace.
Want has written strange inscriptions
On the brow and cheek;
Pain could weave some weird descriptions
If the lips would speak;
Toil has touched the lines of beauty
And, the curves of grace.
Comeliness is good, but duty
Rules the commonplace.

Thick-soled shoes and shabby bonnet,
Dingy cotton gloves,
Old turned dress with darns upon it
(Not what woman loves),
Gaunt umbrella, green with weather—
One must self efface
To keep home and bairns together
In the commonplace.

Late and early, never shirking
Tub and scrub and broom,
Late at night with needle working
In the dwelling-room;
Yet when week's receipts are thinner
Grocers' bills to face—
Tenpence means three children's dinner
In the commonplace!

Poets sing their wild Iambics—
Love and War and Gods—
Let us sing of humble women
Fighting fearful odds,

Not where steel and bullets rattle
And the squadrons race,
But the grim unending battle
With the commonplace.

Now they shriek the creeds are dying!
Faith is of the air!
Wailfully their lyres are sighing
Sonnets of despair!
All the scheme of things evolving
Somehow out of Space!
Darken then, instead of solving,
This grim commonplace!

Rogues may win success and glory,
Beauty pride of fame,
Statesmen make a nation's story,
Poets deathless name.
But the patient woman Toiler
What is hers to win?
On the one hand—Want, the Spoiler,
On the other—Sin!

Ye who swear and strut and bluster,
So-called manly pride,
When you answer at the muster
On the other side,
Will the courage you have vaunted
Stand you in such grace
As weak hands that fought undaunted
With the commonplace?

Noblest worth works ever humbly,
Oftest is unseen,
Half the world is toiling dumbly
In the gray routine.
Sing, O Poet of the Morrow!
Cheer the weary face
Where brave women moil and sorrow
In the commonplace!

A Drought Idyll

It was the middle of the drought; the ground was hot and bare,
You might search for grass with a microscope, but nary grass was there;
The hay was done, the cornstalks gone, the trees were dying fast,
The sun o'erhead was a curse in read and the wind was a furnace blast;
The waterholes were sun-baked mud, the drays stood thick as bees
Around the well, a mile away, amid the ringbarked trees.

McGinty left his pumpkin-pie and gazed upon the scene:
His cows stood propped 'gainst tree and fence wherever they could lean;
The horse he'd fixed with sapling forks had fallen down once more;
The fleas were hopping joyfully on stockyard, path, and floor;
The flies in thousands buzzed about before his waving hand;
The hungry pigs squealed as he said, 'Me own, me native land!'

'Queensland, me Mother! Ain't yer well?' he asked. 'Come tell me how's -'
'Dry up! Dry up!' yelled Mrs Mac, 'Go out and feed the cows.'
'But where's the feed?' McGinty cried, 'The sugarcane's all done -
It wasn't worth the bally freight we paid for it per ton.
I'll get me little axe and go with Possum and the mare
For 'arf a ton of apple-tree or a load of prickly-pear.'

'The prickly-pear'll kill the cows unless yer bile it right,'
Cried Mrs Mac, 'and I don't mean to bile it all the night.
They tell me fer a bob a bag the brewery will sell
Their refuse stuff, like Simpson 'ad - his cows is doin' well.
Yer get the loan of Bampston's dray and borrer Freeny's nags,
And fetch along a decent load, McGinty - thirty bags.

McGinty borrowed Bampston's dray and hitched up Freeney's nags
And drove like blazes into town and fetched back thirty bags.
The stuff was mellow, soft, and brown; and if you came too near
It shed around a lovely scent till the air seemed full of beer,
McGinty fetched each feedbox out and filled it to the brim,
Then lit his pipe and fell asleep. That was the style of him.

The cows, they lurched off fence and tree and staggered in to feed,
The horses tottered after them - old, feeble, and knock-kneed.
But when they smelt that sacred stuff in boxes on the ground
They smiled and neighed and lowed and twirled their hungry tails around.

You would have walked a hundred miles or more to see and hear
They way McGinty's stock attacked that stuff that smelt like beer...

'Wake up! Wake up! McGinty man! Wake up!' yelled Mrs Mac.
She held a broom and every word was followed by a whack.
McGinty had been dreaming hard that it was Judgement Day
And he was drafted with the goats and being driven away;
The Devil with a toasting fork was jabbing at his jaw,
He rose and yelled and fled outside - and this is what he saw:

The brindle cow, with spotted tail, was trying to climb a tree;
The spotted cow, with brindled tail, to imitate a flea;
Old Bally who had lost one horn engaged in combat stout
With the Lincoln ram whose only eye McGinty had knocked out;
With tails entwined, among the trees, went Bessie and Basilk,
Singing, 'Goodbye, McGinty, we will come back with the milk,'

McGinty, trembling, viewed the scene in wonderment and funk,
Then lifted up his voice and roared, 'Mother, the cows is drunk!
Look at that bloomin' heifer with 'er 'ead 'ung down the sty,
Telling the sow she loves 'er but she some'ow can't tell why.
Three of 'em snoring on their backs, the rest all on the loose -
Ain't there no police in these parts when cows gets on the boose?'

McGinty viewed the orgy with a jealousy profound -
Cows in various states of drunk were scattered all around;
But most his rage was heightened by the conduct of the horse
That stood and laughed, and laughed, and laughed - and laughed without
remorse -
That horse so oft he'd lifted up and propped with logs and boughs
Now leant against a tree and mocked McGinty and his cows.

'Bring soda-water, Mother,' cried McGinty, 'Bring a tub'
(Forgetting that he lived about a league from any pu .
'I swear by soda-water when the drink illumes my brow,
And if it fixes up a man it ought to fix a cow.'
But as he spoke a boozy steer approached with speed intense
And helped McGinty over to the safe side of the fence.

Regret and hate and envy held McGinty where he sat.
'To think,' he said, 'these purple cows should have a time like that!
For months I couldn't raise a drink - it wasn't up to me;

Yet every bally head of stock I've got is on the spree.
This comes when you forget to keep a bottle on the shelf.'
Inspired, he rose and smote his brow and fetched a spoon and delf -
'My word!' he said. 'It's up to me to feed on this meself!'

George Essex Evans

A Federal Song

IN the greyness of the dawning we have seen the pilot-star,
In the whisper of the morning we have heard the years afar.
Shall we sleep and let them be
When they call to you and me?
Can we break the land asunder God has girdled with the Sea?
For the Flag is floating o'er us,
And the track is clear before us,
From the desert to the ocean, let us lift the mighty chorus
For the days that are to be.
We have flung the challenge forward: "Brothers, stand or fall as One!"
She is coming out to meet us in the splendour of the Sun.
From the graves beneath the sky
Where Her nameless heroes lie,
From the forelands of the Future they are waiting our reply!
We can face the roughest weather
If we only hold together,
Marching forward to the Future, marching shoulder-firm together,
For the Nation yet to be.

All the greyness of the dawning, all the mists are over-past,
In the glory of the morning we shall see Her face at last.
He who sang, "She yet will be,"
He shall hail her, crowned and free!
Could we break the land asunder God has girdled with the Sea?
For the Flag is floating o'er us,
And the star of Hope before us,
From the desert to the ocean, brothers, lift the mighty chorus
For Australian Unity.

George Essex Evans

A Grave By The Sea

No white cloud sails the lonely sky,
Thro' the gaunt trees no breezes sigh,
Thro' the lush grass no fall of feet;
No song of bird in all the land,
But, floating faintly, dreamily,
The distant dirge of waves that beat
In discontent upon the sand.
Here, where all Nature seems aswoon,
Time, languid as a summer stream,
Drifts down the sweet soft afternoon;
And Death, discrowned of terror, brings
Surcease to souls that wake not soon,
And casts above Life's fevered dream
Cool shadows of Immortal Wings.

Here, by the old graves overgrown,
A bare mound, without wreath or stone,
Marks where he sleeps 'mid grasses long,
Who sought not things that others seek,
Who fought in silence and alone,
Who in his weakness was so strong
And in his strength so weak.

The shining years shall glide and go,
The human tides shall ebb and flow,
And Love make sweet the days to be,
And Death make smooth the brow of pain,
But no such heart again shall glow,
And no such friend shall come to me
Thro' all the cycles that remain.

Some pass and perish with their breath;
He liveth yet and quickeneth,
As scent of roses on the wind
Recalls the bygone summer's day;
He leaves this side the seas of Death,
The fragrance of a noble mind:
He dies, but passes not away.

A Pastoral

Nature feels the touch of noon;
 Not a rustle stirs the grass;
Not a shadow flecks the sky,
Save the brown hawk hovering nigh;
 Not a ripple dims the glass
 Of the wide lagoon.

Darkly, like an armed host
 Seen afar against the blue,
Rise the hills, and yellow-grey
Sleeps the plain in cove and bay,
 Like a shining sea that dreams
 Round a silent coast.

From the heart of these blue hills,
 Like the joy that flows from peace,
Creeps the river far below
Fringed with willow, sinuous, slow.
 Surely here there seems surcease
 From the care that kills.

Surely here might radiant Love
 Fill with happiness his cup,
Where the purple lucerne-bloom
Floods the air with sweet perfume,
 Nature's incense floating up
 To the Gods above.

'Neath the gnarled-boughed apple trees
 Motionless the cattle stand;
Chequered cornfield, homestead white,
Sleeping in the streaming light,
 For deep trance is o'er the land,
 And the wings of peace.

Here, O Power that moves the heart,
 Thou art in the quiet air;
Here, unvexed of code or creed,
Man may breathe his bitter need;

A Vision Of Christ

There fell on me a dream when days were gray,
And Hope had left me there to grope alone
Amid the silence of an unknown way
Vaulted with night and paved with barren stone,
Wherein such awful stillness held the air,
'Twere comfort but to breathe one's own despair.
Till in my terror called I Him, who bore
The whole world's sin upon His sinless soul,
Saying:—"O mighty Heart, whose Godhead wore,
E'en as a garment, all our pain and dole,
Touch Thou my soul with fire; and let there be
Some meed of Godhead even unto me!"

Then from the purple dark I saw arise,
Silent, the pale form of the Nazarene,
With deathless light of message in His eyes,
And that vast human pity in His mien,
Purer than purest depths of summer skies,
Not less unfathomed and not less serene.

"Brother," He answered, "Wilt thou call to Me
As to a God and worship where I tread?
Cold were the splendour of My victory
If, dowered with Godhead, I for man had bled,
Who fell, a warrior battling in the van,
To prove to men what man can do for man."

"For thro' all Ages, on untrodden ways,
Heart-sick and weary in the desperate fight,
Earth shall bring forth the harvest of her days—
Her strong deliverers leading to the light.
And all who follow Truth and who have trod
Her bitter pathways are the Sons of God!"

George Essex Evans

Ad Astra

Weary was I of Earth. My body lay,
Its fires turned down and slaked to faintest heat.
My soul went out into the night away
Where wing hath never beat.
The green earth like a marble 'neath me spun;
The shoreless ether and the island-stars
Rose up before, and sun and mightier sun
Flamed on their chariot bars,

Cleaving the blue abysmal without sound,
Pressed on my soul I felt the awful seals
Of that vast Cosmos without depth or bound,
Blazing with golden wheels.

I marked Orion's armour glitter cold,
Where o'er dark bars the milk-white river runs;
I marked great Sirius flood the heavens with gold,
The sovran of the suns.

All stars grew dim, all suns turned sullen red,
Waned, and went out in that victorious light—
Heaven's mightiest star swung on a viewless thread
His mightiest satellite.

And like some storm-tossed pilgrim of the sea,
Who sights the loom of unknown shores afar,
I felt the challenge and the mystery
Of that majestic star.

The giant planet in the golden stream
Turned all her massy bulk against the glow,
I watched her storm-blue mountain-turrets gleam
Crowned with unconquered snow;

And all her table-lands and wooded leas,
And emerald plains through which clear rivers run,
And all the foam crests of her plunging seas
That shout unto the sun;

And all her marble cities and her towers
That climb the hill or shine through deepest brakes,
And all her velvet valleys, rich with flowers,
And all her silver lakes;

And, lastly, with a strange new majesty,
The face of man did pass before me there,
King of the Earth, and Victor of the Sea,
And Lord of all the Air;

Whose fleets have lit the caverns of the deep,
Whose wings have breasted all the winds that blow,
And flashed his signal from his airy keep
To worlds above, below.

On the faint limit of the air to north,
On utmost marge of that gigantic girth,
The grey-haired Warden of the sky looked forth
And called: "What news of earth?"

"Ah, woe is me!" I said, "that I should bring
To this fair orb the shadow of my pain;
The earth is full of toil and suffering,
And the fierce lust of gain.

"The earth is full of travail and unrest,
And hearts grown old and weary ere their time,
And shameful yokes upon men's necks are prest
That some may ride sublime.

"They love the foot that spurns them. Let them be
Slaves to a conquering name or flattering breath.
Heroes have sought to teach them to be free,
And their reward was death.

"The salt of earth—the blood that loved them best,
Out of the ground it cries that all may hear,
From the dark cross on sullen Calvary's crest
To Bruno's flaming bier.

"They gave to Socrates the poisoned bowl,
They closed Hypatia's noble eyes with fire,

They drove proud Dante forth, an exiled soul,
Reft of his heart's desire;

"The Spaniard laid an Empire at their feet
And died despised. In chains Italia's sage,
Great Galileo, at their judgment seat
Knelt in his hoary age.

"The cell, the cross, the gibbet, and the chain—
Thus have ye crowned, O World, your mighty sons!
The Earth is drunken with the blood and pain
Of all her noblest ones."

Then answered he, and o'er his face there shone
A sudden rapture, as the lightning breath
Of some strong thought that quickens and is gone,
Yet bids us smile on death.

"By what strange guidance of the Central Powers
Thy soul draws near I know not, but I know
All that has crowned with joy this world of ours
Was won through bitter woe.

"Out of the hearts' blood of the hero few,
Out of the lonely strength that scorned to flee,
Out of the sorrow of the souls that knew,
We made the world you see.

"We, too, have swung the mighty orbit round,
Chained by the toils that hold ye bound to-day,
When all men's eyes were fixed upon the ground,
And no man saw the way.

"Yet was the germ within us, and the power
Of that great Unseen Truth to which we draw,
That from the seed may come the perfect flower
To crown the perfect law.

"The white suns sail the waveless seas of Space,
Where once their bulk was but a starry flow,
Down the long curves each System keeps its place
Around some mightier glow.

“From less to greater, through the scale of change,
All things ascend in their appointed time.
Who shall adjudge to Man the utmost range
His thoughts may climb!”

George Essex Evans

Adrift: A Brisbane River Reverie

An amphitheatre of purple hills
And emerald slopes where nestling villas gleam,
Flooded with golden light that crowns and fills
Height, vale, and stream.

The clouds float motionless like isles of snow
Set in the sapphire of the summer sky,
The river, like a ribbon, far below
Winds rippling by;

As, like a creeping snake, with curve and sweep
The languid current steals past mead and scar,
To the dark mangrove fringing on the deep
Abreast the bar.

Slow drifts the boat past homestead, town, and lea;
The waters laugh and sob against the side
As down the murmuring river to the sea,
Dreaming, I glide.

Past meadowy marshland and gray limestone bluff,
Low mangrove fens and waste lantana heights,
Long reaches where the tides and winds are rough,
And sheltered bights.

Now wider spread the waters to the eyes;
Now sparser grow the homesteads, scarcely seen,
Save where some roof or gaunt gray trunk may rise
Against the green.

And salter on the cheek the breezes blow;
And in a deeper key the river sings;
And from the viewless sea move to and fro
Swift snow-like wings.

These are the harbingers from voyaged seas
Who knows what seas of thought man yet may sail
As science slowly sifts Life's mysteries—
And lifts the veil?

Altiora Peto

O for a vision of the perfect light
To shame the splendour of the morning star!
O for a breath from out the Infinite
Where the great heart of Being throbs afar!
O for that sound, too fine for mortal ears,
The music of the silence of the spheres!
The Masters fathomed not that song sublime,
Tho' oft on straining ear and brain o'erwrought,
And heart grown faint at heights too sheer to climb,
The roll of some immortal wave of thought
Swept by and left, adown its troubled verge,
The lingering echoes of its mighty surge.

To each there came the passion and the fire,
The breadth of vision and the sudden light,
And for a moment on an earthly lyre
Quivered a tremor of the Infinite;
Yet to each poet of that deep-browed throng
'Twas but the shadow of Immortal Song.

'Twas but the presage of th' Omniscient Soul
That moves and throbs thro' all this wondrous plan,
Unseen, unheard, unknown: that is the Whole,
Yet stirs in atoms and the heart of Man;
That thro' all phase of change, and form, and name
Remains and works eternally the same.

That seems to whisper us:—"All life is one,
Reborn in death it blossoms from decay,
The same when first the fury of the sun
Belched forth his satellites of fiery spray,
The same when he and all his planet train
Shall plough the Ether, cold—to glow again!

"Whither, O whither? Still th' eternal cry,
That from the ages rolled and yet shall roll!
Who shall declare to man his destiny—
A unit in the Cosmos of the Soul—
A spirit-germ, storm-tossed in doubt and strife,

That feebly dreams of larger light and life?"

Systems and stars their courses onward sweep,
And creeds and nations flower and fade away.
Still Nature worketh out her purpose deep—
New life, new thought for that of yesterday.
Unto the utmost confines of her range
One law abideth of unchanging change.

Around us dwells the secret no man reads!
About us swells the music none can hear!
Behind us lie the ruins of the creeds!
Before us loom the mystery and the fear!
To Love and Hope our souls are clinging fast,
What giveth these, perchance gives Truth at last!

George Essex Evans

 These forests lone,
These mangrove shores, these shimmering seas,
 This summer zone --
Shall they inspire no nobler strain
Than songs of bitterness and pain?
Strike her wild harp with firmer hand,
And send her music thro' the land,
 With loftier tone!

Her song is silence; unto her
 Its mystery clings.
Silence is the interpreter
 Of deeper things.
O for sonorous voice and strong
To change that silence into song,
To give that melody release
Which sleeps in the deep heart of peace
 With folded wings!

George Essex Evans

At The Base Hospital

The willows sweep the water, and the rushes lean a-down,
And I see the river shining far away,
With a snowy cloud above it, floating softly, like a crown,
And the water-hen and wildfowl at their play.
Are the magpies still at battle in the crooked appletrees?
Is the ripple flow still singing at the bar,
By the long-grassed sandstone pocket where the cattle lie at ease?
And the sun is on the river at Glenbar.
They are bringing in the dying, they are bearing out the dead,
And I watch the nurses moving to and fro,
In the long, low, white-washed wardroom, I lie dreaming on my bed,
And it may be that I, too, shall have to go.
But we faced the Mauser bullets when they whistled down the wind,
And we felt the fight we fought was worth a scar,
For we battled for the Empire and the land we left behind
And I battled for the honour of Glenbar.

Half-dead upon the barren veldt I heard the stockwhips crack
('Twas the rattle of the Maxim's deadly rain),
I was riding old Campaspe, as we wheeled the leaders back,
And brought them down the ridges to the plain.
I saw the slip-rails gleaming, and I heard the river flow—
Then Brenda's face came shining like a star,
And we watched the water-finches, as they fluttered to and fro,
And the lilies on the river at Glenbar.

I've seen an army moving out a hundred thousand strong,
I've felt the thrill of battle and the smart,
But I'd barter all the glory for a day at Dandenong,
With the cool hand of the Bush upon my heart,
They say we drove their rifles back like chaff before the wind,
They say our name and fame have travelled far—
But my heart is full of hunger for the girl I left behind,
And the old folk by the river at Glenbar.

George Essex Evans

Auri Sacra Fames

Now that the gods are dead—where shall we find us a god?
Myths of the Greek Olympus have sunk in the surge of Time;
And Jehovah, the God of Wrath, who stayed the sun at His nod;
And Jesus, the Nazarene, preaching a dream sublime.
Worship and form may live, practice and faith have fled.
Where shall we find us a god—now that the gods are dead?
What of the Old exists but feels the touch of the New?
Thousands of voices shout: where is the voice that leads?
Thro' the wreathing mists of night will the grey of dawn be true,
In the age of vague unrest, strivings, and shattered creeds?
Where the children turn with scorn from the paths their fathers trod,
Now that the gods are dead, where shall we find us a god?

Gone are the mists of old in the light of the larger day!
Gone is the foolish hope, the trust in a Power above!
Science has swept the heavens and brushed religion away!
What need we hope or fear? Warfare is clothed like Love!
Priestcraft is but a trade—souls can be bought and sold!
Why should we seek for a god—now that our god is Gold?

Great were the gods of old—a greater than all is near!
Noblest of all the powers which ruled o'er the soul of man!
Centuries paved the way, now the ideal is here
Product of all the aeons that rolled since the world began!
Millions have toiled for this with sufferings manifold.
This is the triumph of time—the god of the world is Gold!

Worship before his feet and kneel in his holy place,
For his altar is on the hearth and the rolling world is his throne!
With the throb of a votary's pulse beats the heart of the human race,
From the lips of the child at play sounds the creed we have called our own.
Gather, O sons of men, but not like the men of old:
Savages worshipped honour—we have no god but Gold.

Gather, O sons of men! let us kneel at the sacred shrine.
Beauty was won by deeds—now it is bought and sold!
Justice was deemed of God—now it is scarce divine!
Honour dearer than life—what is honour to Gold?
O daughters, sisters, and wives! beauty was meant to sell!

Let us call the blessing of Heaven on the marriages made in Hell!

Over the marriage chime, and over the requiem's sigh,
Into the peace of home enters the roar of the mart.
Barter whilst day be day, ere night, when no man may buy!
Nothing too high or low in a world of culture and art!
This is the crowning age, born of the centuries fled
Age of "Sweetness and Light"—now that the gods are dead!

Souls of the mighty dead who lived and died for the right,
Genius inspired of heaven to battle for human need—
These are the days of the dawn, the dawn of diviner light,
When the child at its mother's breast is lisping the modern creed—
If haply thine eyes may gaze on the paths which thy feet have trod,
Behold, in a godless age, we have sought and found us a god!

Deep from a million throats rises the strain sublime—
"Justice is for the rich, patience is for the poor ;
Wealth is the only good, want is the only crime;
Beauty is for the old if but the price be sure."
Deep in the whole world's heart festers the cursèd creed.
Yea, though the gods be dead, we have found us a god indeed!

Better the clash of steel and the flag of battle unfurled!
Better the roar of guns and death for the future's sake!
Than that the curse of Gold should canker the heart of the world.
Where is the voice of the leader? When will the people wake?
Nay! let us fold our hands! Madman, what fool would blight
The star of an age whose Christ is Moloch, the Ammonite?

Nay! for the day draws near when all shall not worship Gold!
Honour shall not be bought, wealth shall not make the man.
All have not turned away from the truths which were loved of old!
All have not toiled in vain since the toil of the world began!
All have not laid their souls at the feet of the idol red.
Some have remembered God—now that the gods are dead

George Essex Evans

Australia

Earth's mightiest isle. She stands alone.
The wide seas wash around Her throne,
Crowned by the red sun as his own.
This is the last of all the lands
Where Freedom's fray-torn banner stands,
Not wrested yet from freemen's hands.

The world's gray page lies bare to-day—
The rise of nations—the decay.
Will She, too, rise—and fall as they?

She called men to Her, and they came,
Whose deaths have given the Desert name.
Their fame is written with Her fame.

We toil and strive. We have our hour.
But She shall grow from power to power,
To wear the splendour of her dower.

The trust is ours—to us alone.
We are the strong foundation-stone,
The seed from which the flower is grown.

And whilst a realm in fee we hold,
To guard the New against the Old,
Nor take the glitter for the gold,

What shall it profit Her if we
Make gold our God, and strength our plea,
And call wild license Liberty?

If, in our scorn of creed and king,
All reverence to the winds we fling,
And fall before a baser thing?

Though in Her coming hour of pride
Her millions throng the Desert wide,
Her cities stud the water side?

What though Her sword unconquered be,
Her armoured navies sweep the sea,
If still Her people are not free?

To be the wave of thought indeed
From New World vaunt and Old World need,
To manlier day and mightier deed?

To be a people proved and strong—
True freemen of the Poet's song
For whom the world has waited long?

George Essex Evans

Brunton Stephens

The gentle heart that hated wrong,
The courage that all ills withstood,
The seeing eye, the mighty song
That stirred us into Nationhood,
Have passed. What garlands can be spread?
The Prince of Courtesy is dead.
The power that touched all human chords
With wit that lightened thro' the years
Without a sting, whose tender words
Unsealed the fountain of our tears—
Ah! bow the heart and bend the head—
The Prince of Courtesy is dead.

Great Singer of the South, who set
Thy face to Duty as a star,
Though, in hushed skies of violet,
Thy throne of kingship gleamed afar,
Shall not the toil of common days
Add nobler lustre to thy bays!

O Mighty Voice, whose words shall stand—
When all our songs have ceased to be—
Steadfast, the watchwords of our land,
The guide and torch of Liberty!
The Master-Poet called afar,
And thou at last hast found thy star!

George Essex Evans

By The Sea

Bright skies of summer o'er the deep,
And soft salt air along the land,
The blue wave, lipping in its sleep,
Sinks gently on the yellow sand;
And gray-winged seagulls slowly sweep
O'er scattered bush and white-limbed tree
Where the red cliffs like bastions stand
To front the salvos of the sea,
Now lulled by its own melody.
Yonder the rising waters ride,
O'er ironstone masses, celled and worn;
There, gnarled and bent by wind and tide,
A single mangrove stands forlorn,
Alone in melancholy pride
A symbol of the soul of man
In Life's wild surges tossed and torn,
That yearns amid the battle's van
For the vast good it may not scan.

Along this silent shining sand
Come, brother of my heart, with me,
Tho' I have never felt thine hand
And tho' thine eyes I ne'er may see,
Yet somewhere or by sea or land
Thine heart and mine keep equal beat,
And in Life's strange eternity
Responsive souls perchance may meet,
And know each other ere they greet.

Begone regret and carking care
That to the murky world belong
The chimes of earth and sea and air
Ring softened here to elfin song.
Come, friend of solitude, to where
The low dark jetty meets the blaze
Of sky and waters slumbering long,
Here let us dream while ocean plays
The mystic chants of golden days.

Cymru

Dim in the mist of ages, seeking a resting-place,
Broke on the shores of Britain the wave of an Aryan race.
Clear thro' the mist of ages, ere ever the White Christ came,
Songs of the Cymric singers have chanted the Brython fame.
Dark with the fate of nations, and swift as a broadspear hurled,
The breath of the God of Battles swept o'er the western world.
Where are the old-time peoples, men of the war-like front,
From the surge of the wild Atlantic to the shores of the Hellespont?
Come and gone like the breezes, ebbled and flowed like the tide
Race and feature and language are lost in that vortex wide!
Rich is thy soil, O Cymru, drenched with thy heroes' blood,
Where 'mid the changeful æons changeless thy people stood!
Land of the birch and buckthorn, home of the hoary oak,
Where the songs of Llywarch linger, and the words that Merlin spoke!
Land of the tarn and torrent, where broods by the rock-bound springs
The spirit of stern Cunedda, the first of the Brython Kings!
Land of the mellow marshes, deep valley, and barren scar,
Sweet with the dreams of Cadoc, and the lore of Howel Dda!
Where upon dark Pymlimmon the snowy cloudwreaths rest!
Where wild Demetia's forelands spurn the billows from her breast!
Comes to the heart that loves thee, under the changeful skies,
Rich with a rhythmic measure the surge of the centuries—
Days when the Cymric armies, marching in thousands strong,
Followed the fierce Aneurin, chanting his battle-song—
Deeds of a desperate valour that turned thro' the wavering years
The thrust of the Roman pila, the rush of the Saxon spears,
The charge of the Norman barons, met by the stern reply
Of a land that had taught the Caesars whether her sons could die.

Men of the blood of Meuric, of Maelgwn, the leonine,
Who smile at the Saxon hierarchs, who laugh at the Norman line,
Who are sprung from the loins of hunters who followed the mighty Hu
Wherever the broad-spear glittered, wherever the battle grew—
Kin of the warrior-princes who sank in the bloody tide
That raged on the field at Hexham where brave Cadwallon died—
Forget not the land that bore you! Be true to the breath that fills
The heart of her singing valleys, the heights of her storm-crowned hills!
The soul of the nation stirreth yet as it did of old
When the helm of the great Pendragon flamed o'er his torque of gold!

The myths of the Greek and Roman dim in the Eastward grew,
And o'er the realms of Asia the banner of Islam blew—
High in the halls of honour, bright on the scroll of fame,
Deep in the hearts of heroes, is written great Arthur's name.
A star on the heights of morning, clear in the pearl of dawn,
It carried the White Christ's message wherever a sword was drawn;
It flashed on the heathen darkness, it nursed with its golden ray
The strength of the early Churches that grew under David's sway.
Ill shall the oak have blossomed and warped shall its branches be,
When Britain forgets to honour the dawn of her chivalry!

Wherever grows Britain's glory, wherever her power is felt,
'Tis won by the fire that flushes the blood of the restless Celt—
Scottish, or Welsh, or Irish, whatever the branches be,
The Gael and the Brython together are stems of the self-same tree—
In song, in battle, in council, by land or by stormy tide,
They move in the van of progress wherever her realms are wide.
The seed of the self-same people still dwell by the Cambrian shore;
The tramp of the Roman legions is heard on the hills no more.
Saxon and Dane and Norman, the spirit you could not quell,
Deem not it died in darkness when the last Llewelyn fell!

Hemmed and harried and fettered, ever it rose anew!
'Twas first 'neath the Cambrian Tudors the greatness of England grew!
Now, torque, and lance, and tarian, hang high in the castle hall:
The bay of the Cymric war-hound is mute 'neath the Roman wall,
The voice of the Seer is silent in dim vast forest aisles,
By grove and haunted streamlet no white procession files.
Past are the days of prowess, the fame of the strong right hand;
But the hearts of the Cambrian peasants still cleave to the motherland.
Still, with the stern persistence that kept them a race apart,
They live for a Nation's glory, they toil for a Nation's art.

True to a high ideal, never to falter nor swerve,
The fire of a strong endeavour glows thro' their calm reserve.
Still to the living Present the power of the Past can reach:
The spring of a Nation's culture wells thro' their pensive speech.
Burns, and rises, and surges, thro' class and order and sect,
The thirst for a wider knowledge, the passion of intellect—
From the fenlands of Tremadoc to where Severn's waters fall,
The many are one with the purpose, the purpose is one with all!

Far from the Cambrian mountains, far from the Tivyside,
Or Penmaenmawr uplifted above the foaming tide—
Where the stars above calm Gwynant watch while the waters sleep,
Or where Conwy darts its arrow by Degannwy's rocky steep—
Far from that gloomy chasm where the weirs with thundershake,
And the rocks of dark Llyn Idwal frown o'er the darker lake—
Far from the Mercian Marches, where the rivers keep their tryst,
Or where the corn is waving down the vale of sweet Llanrwst—
Wherever their fate may lead them, wherever their footsteps fare,
The soul of the Cambrian people is free as their mountain air.
However our days may darken, our dreams of that land shall be,
As the glint of a sunbeam shining at dawn on a wintry sea!

George Essex Evans

Eland's River

IT WAS on the fourth of August, as five hundred of us lay
In the camp at Eland's River, came a shell from De La Rey—
We were dreaming of home faces,
Of the old familiar places,
And the gum-trees and the sunny plains five thousand miles away—
But the challenge woke and found us
With four thousand rifles round us;
And Death stood laughing at us at the breaking of the day.

Hell belched upon our borders, and the battle had begun.
Our Maxims jammed: We faced them with one muzzle-loading gun.
East, south, and west, and nor'ward
Their shells came screaming forward
As we threw the sconces round us in the first light of the sun.
The thin air shook with thunder
As they raked us fore and under,
And the cordon closed around us, as they held us—eight to one.

We got the Maxims going, and the field-gun into place
(She stilled the growling of a Krupp upon our southern face);
Round the crimson ring of battle
Swiftly ran the deadly rattle
As our rifles searched their fore-lines with a desperate menace;
Who would wish himself away
Fighting in our ranks that day
For the glory of Australia and the honour of the race?

But our horse-lines soon were shambles, and our cattle lying dead
(When twelve guns rake two acres there is little room to tread),
All day long we heard the drumming
Of the Mauser bullets humming,
And at night their guns, day-sighted, rained fierce havoc overhead.
Twelve long days and nights together,
Through the cold and bitter weather,
We lay grim behind the sconces, and returned them lead for lead.

They called us to surrender, and they let their cannon lag;
They offered us our freedom for the striking of the flag—
Army stores were there in mounds,

Worth a hundred thousand pounds,
And we lay battered round them behind trench and scone and crag.
But we sent the answer in,
They could take what they could win—
We hadn't come five thousand miles to fly the coward's rag.

We saw the guns of Carrington come on and, fall away;
We saw the ranks of Kitchener across the kopje grey—
For the sun was shining then
Upon twenty thousand men—
And we laughed, because we knew, in spite of hell-fire and delay,
On Australia's page for ever
We had written Eland's River—
We had written it for ever and a day!

George Essex Evans

Failure

THE BOY went out from the ranges grim,
And the breath of the mountains went with him;
With a song in his heart and a smile on his face,
And a light in his eyes for a foremost place:
And the good green earth, and the salt sea spray,
And the soft blue skies, they were his that day;
And, like Eden, ringed with a golden fire—
Afar rose the Land of His Heart's Desire.
The boy went down to the city's strife,
And his face was lost in the surge of life;
But a Power that he did not understand
Had nerved his brain and his fighting hand.
And he strove and failed, and he rose and won—
And he failed again ere the fight was done;
But he battled on when the days were dire
To win to the Land of His Heart's Desire.

And there, in the heart of the stress and din,
'Mid want and labour and wealth and sin,
The strong man struggled with shining eyes,
And forced a passage, and grasped the prize.
And he cried to the Power who had lent the fire:
"Lo! Fame is the Land of My Heart's Desire!
Give the cup to me with a beaded brim."
And the Power that he knew not gave it him.

But the air is keen on the Cliffs of Fame,
And the shafts that fly have a deadly aim!
With a foothold scarce, and a sleepless dread
For the gulfs below and the heights o'erhead,
He cried to the Power who had steeled his hand:
"I am outcast yet from my Fairyland!
For Fame is a land where no strength may tire,
But Love is the Land of My Heart's Desire!"

Then there came to the man all his dream of Love,
With the brow of snow and the eyes of a dove,
With the glint of the sun on her wavy hair,
And her soul as pure as her face was fair.

Like a living lily to him she came,
Till his eyes were wet and his soul was flame,
And she called to him, with an outstretched hand,
And they entered into the Promised Land.

But there came a day when he asked his soul,
"Is this the land, and is this the goal?"
In his heart there lay what his lips denied—
The pang of a hunger unsatisfied.
"For Fame," he said, "and for Love I wrought;
They are not the things that I should have sought:
'Tis to boundless power that my dreams aspire—
And Wealth is the Land of My Heart's Desire!"

Then the Power that he did not understand
Gave him ships and houses and gold and land,
And the man's power grew with each passing year;
But his thoughts were vexed with a sleepless fear,
And his hair grew gray with the iron strain
Of the dread of loss and the lust of gain,
And he bowed his head on his hands and said.
"All things are mine, but my heart is dead!"

And he thought of the boy from the ranges grim
With the breath of the mountains over him,
With a song in his heart and a smile on his face,
And a light in his eyes for a foremost place,
And the good green earth and the salt sea spray,
And the soft blue skies that were his that day,
When, like Eden, ringed with a golden fire,
Afar rose the Land of His Heart's Desire.

Then clear on his startled ear there fell
A voice like the sound of a silver bell:
"To each is the work that he best can do,
But you turned from the work when it called to you.
And you sought instead for the vulgar praise,
For the lips of love, and for prosperous days.
And with all that the world can give you here,
You have lost the thing that you hold most dear.
For who hears the word that the Gods inspire—
In his work finds the Land of His Heart's Desire."

George Essex Evans

From Loraine

I have seen the plains lying baked and bare,
When drought and famine hold revel there,
And the cattle sink where the rotting shoals
Of the fish float dead in the waterholes.

I have seen the plains when the flood brings down
The leagues of its waters, sullen and brown,
When only the tops of the swaying trees
Mark the creek that wound thro' the level leas,
And all is a sea to the straining eyes
Save some lonely hut on a distant rise.

I have seen the plains in the mad delight
Of the racing flames in their crimson flight,
When the whip of the wind will not stay or spare,
And woe to the rider who lingers there!

But, O! the plains when their beauty burst
On our wondering eyes as we crossed them first!
When the sun shone bright and a soft wind blew,
And the sky was clear with a fairy hue,
And afar, like an isle in a sea of mist,
Rose a mountain cap, as of amethyst.
And the big-horned cattle, knee-deep in grass,
Wheeled scattered legions to watch us pass,
As we drifted onwards from group to group;
And swift as a bolt came the wild hawk's swoop,
When the brown quail whirled 'neath our horses' feet
Or the bronzewing broke from his ground retreat
And the lazy bustard on laggard wing
Out of easy gunshot was loitering;
And for miles around us, at daylight's close,
The little flock pigeons in coveys rose,
And the squadrons flew, with a gathering force,
Till an army darkened the watercourse.

Thus we crossed the plains to their utmost rim,
To the timbered belts round the mountains grim,
Chain upon chain, to the north and west,

Rose the swelling ridge and the purple crest,
And the gorges hid from the light of God
Where the foot of a white man had never trod.

George Essex Evans

In A Garden

Girl, with the soft grey eyes,
You to the flowers belong:
From the perfume of a rose
My heart shall weave you a song.
I will colour its words with light,
Like the sun on that straying tress.
The wind will lend me its harp
To set it in loveliness.

It shall fold you soft as the mist,
Yet stir your heart like the sea,
Till lips that never were kissed
Shall yeld their homage to me.

George Essex Evans

In Collins Street

I stood in the heart of the city street,
I felt the throb of her pulses beat,
The thunder of life on the sunny air,
The waves of the people everywhere,
Like the stirring lilt of a mighty song
Ran the fever of life in the moving throng,
With the hope and joy and the want and woe
Of a million souls in its ebb and flow.
Like a floating straw in an eddy caught
My soul was whirled in the city's thought—
The purse-born pride and the scheming brain,
The grinding need and the grasping gain;
The silent strength that is born to rule,
And the shallow laugh of the feckless fool,
The fresh young face where no shadow lies,
And the quenchless pain in the harlot's eyes.

I stood in the heart of the city street,
And I heard not the tread of the passing feet,
For the days were grey and the nights were long,
And my soul was vexed with a wild sad song,
And the world like a stream flowed thro' my brain,
And I saw her lands in a dream of pain,
And her power enthroned on the people's needs,
And her heroes dead for a hundred creeds.

And I saw thro' the pageant moving on
The same dark horrors of ages gone,
The dumb despair and the dire distress,
And man still mad in his littleness.
Who cares tho' Earth be a masterpiece,
If pain and sorrow shall never cease?
Does God endure in His vaulted skies
The hopeless pain in His creatures' eyes?

Then I saw, like a glory shining thro',
What man had conquered and yet shall do.
I saw the depths where he lay of old,
And the heights of a splendour yet untold.

And I knew, in a flash, since the world began
What man had suffered and done for man,
And I felt like a note that is borne along
On the upward swell of a battle song.

George Essex Evans

John Farrell

The pen falls from his nerveless hand,
The light is fading from his eyes,
The brain that nobly served his land
Darkens and dies.

No, never dies! From hour to hour
The burning thought is living still;
Onward it speeds with gath'ring power
To strengthen and fulfil.

Build him no mockery of stone,
Nor shame him with your idle praise;
He liveth in his work alone
Through all our days.

Sleep, heart of gold, 'twas not in vain
You loved the struggling and the poor
And taugt in sweet yet strenuous strain
To battle and endure.

The lust of wealth, the pride of place,
Were not a light to guide thy feet,
But larger hopes and wider space
For hearts to beat.

O, brother, dead! Thus, one by one,
Our broken swords remain to tell
The fight is o'er, the work is done,
Sleep! "It is well."

George Essex Evans

Kara

Chequered with sunshine and shade—the umbrage of white clouds in motion—
Rearing their summits to Heaven, broken like waves on their strands,
Northward and southward and seaward the mountains arise from the ocean—
Poised on a height above all, Kara, the beautiful, stands.

Kara, whose mountain the ranges lie under in turbulent surges—
Billows of purple and blue that stretch from her base to the sea—
Kara that knoweth the breath of the storm-wind, the sound of his dirges
Sweeping her gorges and clefts, or sighing to river and tree.

High as an eagle's nest, crowning a summit storm-beaten and hoary,
Framed in a setting of green which sombre tints deepen and tone,
Gleam all the station's white roofs, refracting the Summer-god's glory:
Ribbons of silvery light surmounting gray masses of stone.

Beauty is round it, and peace; and silence and sunlight enfold it,
Clothing with mystical charm summit and forest and scar,
Fair as a dream of delight it seemeth to eyes that behold it,
Roofed by the azure of heaven, with sheen of blue waters afar.

Dreamily drifteth the day in solitudes far from life's clamour;
Soundeth no murmur of tongues, echo of hurrying feet;
Soundeth no blast of the furnace, nor anvil that rings with the hammer,
Thunder of horses and wheels, traffic, and roar of the street.

Only a silence supreme, where Nature seems buried in slumbers,
Save for the bell-bird's clear note, or murmuring cadence of bees,
Or sough of the wind as it chanteth its paeon in musical numbers
Soft to the pine-crests aloft—monarchs of leaf-laden seas.

George Essex Evans

Lorraine

This is the story of one man's soul.
The paths are stony and passion is blind,
And feet must bleed ere the light we find.
The cypher is writ on Life's mighty scroll,
And the key is in each man's mind.
But who read aright, ye have won release,
Ye have touched the joy in the heart of Peace.

PART I

THERE'S a bend of the river on Glenbar run
Which the wild duck haunt at the set of sun,
And the song of the waters is softened so
That scarcely its current is heard to flow;
And the blackfish hide by the shady bank
'Neath the sunken logs where the reeds are rank,
And the halcyon's mail is an azure gleam
O'er the shifting shoals of the silver bream,
And the magpies chatter their idle whim,
And the wagtails flitter along the brim,
And tiny martins with breasts of snow
Keep fluttering restlessly to and fro,
And the weeping willows have framed the scene
With the trailing fall of their curtains green,
And the grass grows lush on the level leas
'Neath the low gnarled boughs of the apple trees,
Where the drowsy cattle dream away
The noon-tide hours of the summer day.
There's a shady nook by the old tree where
The track comes winding from Bendemeer.
So faint are the marks of the bridle track,
From the old slip-rails on the ridge's back,
That few can follow the lines I know—
But I ride with the shadows of long ago!
I am gaunt and gray, I am old and worn,
But my heart goes back to a radiant morn
When someone waited and watched for me
In the friendly shade of that grand old tree.
The winter of Memory brings again

The summer rapture of passionate pain,
And she comes to me with the morning grace
On her sun-gold hair and her lily face,
And her blue eyes soft with the dreamy light
She stole from the stars of the Southern night,
And her slender form like a springtide flower
That sprang from the earth in a magic hour,
With the trembling smile and the tender tone
And the welcome glance—that were mine alone.
And we sit once more as we sat of old
When the future lay in a haze of gold—
In the fairy days when the gods have lent
To our lips the silence of heart's content.
Ah! those were the days of youth's perfect spring,
When each wandering wind had a song to sing,
When the touch of care and the shade of woe
Were but empty words we could never know
As we rode 'neath the gum and the box trees high,
And our idle laughter went floating by,
As we rode o'er the leagues of the billowy plain
Where the grass grew green 'neath the summer rain,
And over the hills in the range's heart
To the fern-decked glen where the waters dart,
And we railed at time and the laggard year
Ere a bride would be mistress of Bendemeer.
Now the old-time feud that was first begun
When the Gordons settled on Glenbar run,
It had passed away, it was buried deep
In the quiet graves where our fathers sleep,
And sweet Mary Gordon was left alone
In the quaint old station of rough-hewn stone,
The maiden whom lovers sought near and far—
The stately lily of old Glenbar.
Our kinsfolk had hated, from year to year,
Since the first Loraine came to Bendemeer
They have passed where none can cavil and strive;
How could she and I keep the feud alive!
I, James Loraine, who were better dead
Than harm one hair of her gentle head!
So we made the bond that would bind, one day,
Glenbar and Bendemeer for aye.

For at last, though it left me with saddened face,
I was master of all in my father's place.
Of the gray old dwelling, rambling and wide,
With the homestead paddocks on either side,
And the deep verandahs and porches tall
Where the vine climbs high on the trellised wall,
Where the pine and cypress their dark crowns rear
O'er the garden—the glory of Bendemeer—
From whence you can dream o'er the tranquil scene
Of the scattered sheep on the lucerne green,
And the mighty plain in the sunlight spread,
With the brown hawk motionless overhead,
And the stockmen's cottages clustering still
On the gentle slope of the station hill,
And the woolshed gray on the swelling rise
Where the creek winds blue 'neath the bluer skies.

And here in the days when our hearts were light
We lived life joyously day and night.
For the friend of my soul, who was dear to me
As no friend hath been or again can be,
Was Oliver Douglas. In cloud or shine
My heart was his and his heart was mine,
And we lived like brothers from year to year,
And toiled for the honour of Bendemeer,
And my life moved on thro' a golden haze
The splendid glamour of fortunate days.
What more to a man can the high God send
Than the fairest maid and the firmest friend!
I have read in some poet how Friendship may
Stand strong as a tower in the darkest day,
When the lips of Love that were quick to vow
Have failed 'neath the frown upon Fortune's brow.
What a friend was he, without fear or guile,
With his careless ways and his ready smile,
With the voice to cheer, and the eye to praise,
And the heart to toil through the hardest days!
How he won all hearts, were they high or low,
By the easy charm that I envied so!

For they say in jest I am true to race—
The dark Loraines of the haughty face—

Awkward, and shy, and unbending when
I am full of love for my fellow-men.
But I caught at the sunshine he flung about—
The man to whom all my heart went out.
Ah! how oft at dusk 'neath the evening star
Have we reined our horses at old Glenbar,
And sat in the quaint familiar room
Made sweet with the scent of the jasmine bloom,
Where my soul first saw in her dreamy eyes
The lights of the gateways of Paradise!
How we lingered over our hopes and fears
As we planned the course of the coming years
Whilst Oliver chatted with easy flow
To Margaret Bruce with the hair of snow—
The proud old dame of a proud old race
Who lived for the child with her sister's face.

O the joyous days! O the morning air!
When the blood was young and the world was air!
When from Tara and Westmere and Boradaile,
And from Snowdon Hills and from Lilyvale,
And from Tallaran and the plains of Scar
All sent down their horses to old Glenbar.
From many a station for miles away
Came the happy faces on racing day,
Came the big bush buggies fast rolling in
With the four-in-hands and the merry din.
And if strife was keen in those days of old
'Twas for love of sport, not for lust of gold;
For then each man rode as a man should ride
With his honour at stake and the station's pride,
When every racehorse was sent to race
And each run had a crack for the steeplechase.
And I see the last timber loom big and bare
As we held the field with a length to spare,
And Douglas crashed past me on Charioteer,
The big gray gelding from Bendemeer.
But I rode the bay with the tiny star
That had carried the Lily of old Glenbar.
And I rode for all that I cared for most
And I collared the gray ere he passed the post.
Ah! how gaily and lightly our pulses beat

As the night went out to the trip of feet!
And though all men sought her with hope and praise
It was I she loved—with my awkward ways—
It was I she loved in the golden days!

The drought came down upon Bendemeer,
And the grass grew yellow, and scant, and sere,
And the lucerne paddocks were eaten brown,
And half the trees on the run cut down,
And we toiled all day 'midst the dying sheep,
The tottering frames that could scarcely creep,
And the dead by scores lay over the plain,
But God seemed deaf—for He sent no rain.
And whilst Hope stood sounding her funeral knells
Who had heart to talk about wedding bells?
And the drought held on for a three-year span,
And I woke one morning a ruined man.
Yet Fate smote harder—a deadlier blow—
For on old Glenbar there was word to go.
For the mortgage hung over Glenbar run,
And their stock were dead and their credit done,
And the bank foreclosed. We were cast aside
From the homes where our fathers had lived and died.

So we said good-bye—ah! the bitter end—
At the trysting place on the river bend.
But the ground lay sullen and bare below,
And most of the river had ceased to flow,
And the springs of Hope in our souls were dried,
And in silence we stood there side by side,
And a leaden fear held my brain and heart,
And we strove to go, but we could not part.
O sweet is the dawn of Love's perfect spring,
When the white arms clasp and the soft lips cling;
But fierce is the passion that fires the blood
When Love stands balked in its summer flood!

In her dark-ringed eyes shone the sad unrest
That spoke in the heave of her troubled breast,
And her face was white as the chiselled stone,
And her lips pressed madly against my own,
And her heart beat wildly against my heart,

And we strove to go, but we could not part.

But these were the words she said to me—
“Whatever the fate of the years may be,
Hope and my heart will wait for thee.”

PART II

’T WAS a long last look and a mute farewell
To the homes where our fathers had loved to dwell,
And our faces turned to the wild north-west,
And we rode away on a roving quest.
But our hearts were young and we cheered the way
With the golden dreams of a coming day,
When Fate should lead ’neath a happier star
Back to Bendemeer and to old Glenbar.
And a vision rose of one bearded and brown,
A wanderer hasting to Melbourne town,
To the faithful eyes now with sorrow dim
That had suffered and waited and watched for him.
For the new home lay midst the city’s roar
And the Station’s calm would be her’s no more;
And from Douglas’ lips came the story strange
Of the wondrous wealth in a northern range.
The weeks grew months and the months were spent,
As we overlanded a continent—
A thousand miles over scrub and plain
In the sun’s fierce glare and the tropic rain.
But we laughed at hardships to undergo
As we smoked in the ring of the campfire’s glow
And we pushed ahead till, in tracks grown blind,
The last station fence had been left behind;
And the land of the mighty runs spread wide,
Unfenced and virgin on every side,
Where you move—a ship that has lost the strand—
O’er the grassy ocean of one man’s land,
Where a score of beasts or a mile the less
Are of little count in the wilderness,
But men count their grass and cattle instead
By the hundred miles and the thousand head.
I have seen the plains lying baked and bare
When drought and famine hold revel there,

And the cattle sink where the rotting shoals
Of the fish float dead in the waterholes.

I have seen the plains when the flood brings down
The leagues of its waters, sullen and brown,
When only the tops of the swaying trees
Mark the creek that wound thro' the level leas,
And all is a sea to the straining eyes
Save some lonely hut on a distant rise.

I have seen the plains in the mad delight
Of the racing flames in their crimson flight,
When the whip of the wind will not stay or spare,
And woe to the rider who lingers there!

But, O! the plains when their beauty burst
On our wondering eyes as we crossed them first!
When the sun shone bright and a soft wind blew,
And the sky was clear with a fairy hue,
And afar, like an isle in a sea of mist,
Rose a mountain-cap, as of amethyst.
And the big-horned cattle, knee-deep in grass,
Wheeled scattered legions to watch us pass,
As we drifted onward from group to group,
And swift as a bolt came the wild hawk's swoop
When the brown quail whirled 'neath our horses' feet,
Or the bronzewing¹ broke from his ground retreat;
And the lazy bustard on laggard wing
Out of easy gunshot was loitering;
And for miles around us, at daylight's close,
The little flock pigeons in coveys rose,
And the squadrons flew, with a gathering force,
Till an army darkened the watercourse.

Thus we crossed the plains to their utmost rim,
To the timbered belts round the mountains grim,
Chain upon chain, to the north and west,
Rose the swelling ridge and the purple crest,
And the gorges hid from the light of God
Where the foot of a white man had never trod.

There's a tiny flat where the grass grows green,

Like a bay it lies two dark hills between.
And a stream comes down through a narrow cleft:
Here the camp was fixed and the horses left.
'Twas the last sweet grass, and no man could ride
O'er the beetling fastness on either side.
Thence into the heart of the hills we bore,
Rich with ironstone masses and copper ore,
And once or twice in the gorges old
We found a trace of the colour of gold.

In a deep ravine, walled by rugged heights,
Through the toiling days and the restless nights
I felt, 'neath the spell of that gloomy place,
That a change had come o'er my comrade's face;
Felt, rather than saw, as it seemed to me,
That all was not quite as it used to be;
The laughter and jest, and the glance and tone,
Were not of the man that I once had known,
And it seemed to me that he shunned to hear
Of Mary and Glenbar and Bendemeer.
And there rose a sense I could not define,
Like a widening stream 'twixt his soul and mine.
Then the light of the Past like a star shone out,
And I turned in scorn from my evil doubt.

But the passions that rule since the world began
Were working there in the heart of man,
And a breast that had guarded its secret well
Was burning then with the fires of hell.
'Tis the old, old tale of a woman's face
More strong than the shadow of foul disgrace.
The old mad lust for the mastery
To pluck the flower that is not for thee.
For the dreamy light of a woman's eyes
It can lead on to hell or to paradise.

Ah! little I dreamt in the days now done
That the eyes I loved were as dear to one
Whose heart had been eaten with jealous pride
Through the years of our brotherhood, side by side!
For once it chanced as I moved alone
That I stumbled and fell on the ironstone—

A stumble that might have been made in blood,
For a bullet hummed where my feet had stood.
And I turned and saw from my vantage place
The look that was written across his face.

“He had fired at a bird but too low by half,”
And he turned it off with an awkward laugh.
For as yet no shadow of what might be
The power 'neath the surface had come to me.
Yet a shadow crossed, and it left behind
A doubt that rankled within my mind;
And for weeks we played at the duel hard
Of an open candour but secret guard;
And the seeds of discord were subtly sown
When the fever seized me and struck me down;
And days there were when the blood coursed free,
To be followed by morrows of misery.

But the fever heightened, and day by day
I could feel the cords of my life give way.
And my strength went out like an ebbing sea,
Yet daily he tended and cared for me.
It may be some touch of the days of old
Made his hand draw back, made his heart cry “Hold.”
But I saw in his eyes, with all anguish dumb,
That he waited and hoped for the end to come.
Then I lost the power to move hand and head,
And at last I lay in a trance as dead,
Awake yet a-dream, for a day and night
Then I woke with a start—and the moon shone bright
But the tent and the tools and the guns were gone,
And all save the blanket I lay upon!
Not a sound came down from the mountains lone
Where the shadows huge by the moon were thrown.
In the gloomy gorge not a soul was near,
And I called his name with a bitter fear.
But no answer came to my feeble cry—
And I knew he had left me alone to die.

PART III

They speak the truth and they judge me well,
Who call me "the Man who has been in Hell."
Though the sky be clear and the sun shine bright,
Men have walked on earth through that awful night,
Whose ears have heard and whose eyes have seen
The infernal shades, like the Florentine,
When the veil is rent and we see unroll
The heights and depths of the human soul;
And with whitened locks and with pallid cheek
Have known and felt what we may not speak.
My life had gone out like a brief light's breath
Had no help come into that fight with death,
But the hands of Fate that are swift and strange
Brought a people down from the Western range,
Brought a wild black tribe down the gorges dark
Who had seen the prints of an unknown mark,
And quickly around me were clustering
Dark faces and spears in a bristling ring;
And I lay there still in a helpless shroud
With a silent prayer that the end be swift.
But a man spoke forth with a threatening spear
That I was the God of the mountains drear,
And accursed be he and his kin and wife,
Who should lay a hand on a sacred life!
So they succoured me. And I lay as a king
Who has dusky daughters to fetch and bring,
Boughs to shelter, and water and food,
And berries to temper the burning blood.
And they made me a shade from the tropic sun
Till the fire of the fever its course had run.
And at last new life, after weeks of pain,
Came stealing gently through every vein;
And I moved with the tribe, but I pondered long
Why Douglas had worked me this bitter wrong.
For as yet no word of the truth was told,
And I held that the motive was lust of gold.
We moved for the plain, and we passed between
The walls of the flat where the camp had been.
No sign of a horse in that grassy bay,
And Oliver Douglas was far away
Across the plains where the red sun dips,
A sin on his soul and a lie on his lips.

But, O! the joy when I found and knelt
By a full revolver and cartridge belt
Marked with his name, and a mark of the mind
In whose guilty haste they were left behind,
To be sacred things till the morn should rise
When men pay in full for their treacheries.
These gave me power and a stronger claim.
They called me, "The Lord of the Thunder and Flame."
But they watched me close with a sleepless care:
Three years in the mountains still found me there.
But I learnt by heart all the gorges old,
And I found the granite and found the gold:
Wealth beyond dreams—to a savage man
As wild as the myalls with whom he ran!
Ah, God! Could ever my lot have been
To have lived and loved in a different scene,
To have seen love shine like a splendid star
In the eyes of the Lily of old Glenbar?

Five years had passed, and another year,
Since we turned our horses from Bendemeer.
And a bushman, wrinkled, and aged, and brown,
Had worked his passage to Melbourne town.
Let it matter not through what evil stress
He had battled out of the wilderness,
For the joy that was thrilling him through and through
With a secret music that no man knew—
The last sweet words that she said to me:
"Whatever the fate of the years may be,
Hope and my heart will wait for thee!"

Why do you tremble, and sob, and stare,
Old Margaret Bruce with the snowy hair,
And chatter of ghosts of the past to me?
I am here to claim what you hold in fee.
Give me back my own! I have done no wrong.
For the eyes I love I have suffered long.
Now the toil is over—the fierce unrest,
And the lily shall lie on the broad leaf's breast.
And the heart that was faithful, and strong, and true,
Shall learn what the love of a man can do.
For the future calls both to her and me.

Thither Eden lies—and I hold the key.
Cease, woman, cease! I am waiting here
For a bride to be mistress of Bendemeer.
“Let be the past and this formless dread!
I am James Loraine who was long since dead.
Give me welcome now! Shall all things be vain
To the dead man come to his own again?
Have you naught of comfort for such as I?
The past is dead—let its memories die!
I am changed and worn, I am tired and old,
But I bring the secret of countless gold.
But a wish of hers, but a word of thine,
And Bendemeer and Glenbar are mine.
Bid her come to me that her eyes may see!
Bid her come to me! Bid her come to me!

Then Margaret faced me with words of lead:—
“Peace, peace, Loraine!—the poor child is dead.
Married and dead! You are parted far,
Dear friend, from the Lily of old Glenbar.
The Bendemeer and the Glenbar lands,
They have passed long since to the Douglas hands.
She had waited long, she had waited true,
She had knelt in her sorrow and wept for you.
When he came, at last, with a grave, sad face
To tell the tale of your resting place.
His were the hands—they were clasped in ours—
That had soothed and tended your dying hours;
That had dug the grave and had piled the stone
In the dim blue range where you slept alone.
And he spoke your word in his own sad pain,
‘Not to mourn for you—we should meet again
But whatever the fate of the years might send,
The friend of your soul—let him be her friend.’
But the starlight died in her eyes that day,
And with roses white on her cheeks she lay,
And the summer faded and came again
Ere her shadow rose from its bed of pain.
But he came and went with an anxious air
As one consecrated to watch and care,
And from oversea came the call of race
To title and wealth and an ancient place,

And when Bendemeer and Glenbar were sold,
They were his for the sake of the days of old.
And he pressed his claim till she came to see
That their lives could be lived to your memory.
She was wedded here. She lies buried far.
The ocean divides her from old Glenbar.”

Married, and dead! Is it all a dream,
To melt away on the morning beam?
Some passing horror of night whose power
Still haunts the brain in its waking hour?
Can these trembling lips and these stony eyes,
And this heart grown numb in its agonies,
Be a man indeed? Do I see and hear?
Or roam a shade through some realm of fear?
“And of him?” I cried. “Shall no vengeance find
These soft lying lips and this double mind?
There are human snakes who have lived too long!”
But she said: “Lorraine, let God judge the wrong.
For the man you seek—he is oversea
With ten thousand miles ‘twixt his face and thee.”

In the fevered night when the gas-lamps flare,
And the human river sweeps here and there,
By terrace and church, and long lines of street,
And by dim-lit parks where the shadows meet,
I am drifting down with the human flood:
The poison of madness is in my blood.
Are there hearts as bitter and dead as mine
Where the faces throng in the moving line—
Numb with the chill of a black despair
That no man guesses or wants to share?
Unto each man once shall the gage be thrown:
He must fight the fight with his soul alone,
When all ways are barred and he stands at bay
Face to face with truth in the naked day.
I have fought the fight with my soul alone.
I have won my laurel—a heart of stone.

O never again when the white stars shine
Shall the eyes I love look their love in mine!
And never again when the soft winds blow

Shall we ride by the river, or whisper low
By the shady nook 'neath the old tree where
The track comes winding from Bendemeer!
And no bridal bells for our joy shall ring
When Nature wakes to the voice of Spring.
And no tiny hands with a touch divine
Shall link for ever her soul and mine!
She is dead! My lily! My shy bush flower!
The summer has fled where she bloomed an hour.
Do her sweet eyes shine from some lonely star
O'er the bend of the river on old Glenbar?

Mine is selfish grief, mine is selfish pain;
But her sorrow is seared on my heart and brain.
What she heard, I hear; what she saw, I see;
What she felt is bare as a page to me
Shall such evil thrive? Shall she droop and die
And the man who loved her stand idly by?
Let God right the wrong! Will he give the dead
The sunshine and grace of the summers fled?
Has He solace here for the silent tears
Of the hopeless days, of the wasted years?
Let God right the wrong! He is deaf and blind
To the griefs and passions that shake mankind!
Who has eyes to see, let him use his sight:
Wrong is not righted, but might is right.
Then be might my right and my hate the rod,
And my hand in anger the hand of God
And the power is gold, which no power can bend—
I have learnt the means—I can see the end

To my mountains then: there to toil and wait.
I have lived for love: I can live for hate.
Till the power be mine, till the way be sure,
I can face the future and still endure.
With a wild fire flaming through all my blood
I have called to Evil "Be thou my Good!"
Love has patient been: love was strong and true;
But the heart of hate can be patient too
Can be strong to suffer and calm to wait,
But swift to strike in the hour of Fate—
To strike at the heart that has wrought her dole,

To strike at the man who has killed my soul!

PART IV

THE mountains swarm like a human hive,
The picks are swinging in many a drive,
The axe is ringing on many a tree,
And the blast of a charge thunders sullenly;
And the growing heaps of the dull gray stone
And the tents of men stud the hillside lone,
And the moan of the windlass comes again,
With an eerie sound like a soul in pain.
And across the plains, lying baked and brown,
Where the long teams creep till the sun goes down,
Comes the curse, and the whip like a pistol crack,
As the bullocks strain on the burning track.
Soon the battery's thunder will rend the sky
From the gorge where he left me alone to die.
They have felt the stir in the cities south,
And the "Comrade Field" is in every mouth,
And northward rushes the wave of greed,
For the whole world knows of "The Devil's Lead."
"Four jewelled walls—there are millions there!"
But one man's hand is on every share—
One who knows the mountains from crest to glen,
A hater of women and feared of men,
Who has heart for nothing save gold and gain.
A power to be reckoned with—James Loraine!
As a miser handles and counts his gold,
So I hoard my hate with a joy untold.
Let the weaklings sink 'neath their dumb despair!
Shall I spare the coward who did not spare
O, the joy of hate! O, the liquid fire!
When the strong soul throbs to one fierce desire!
So I thirst for life as a hound for blood,
And woe to the hunters who cross my mood!
To strike hard and home! Then to watch him die
And to soothe his death with my memory!
This were joy indeed, worth a few years' breath!
This were joy indeed, though the price were death!
Then what holds my heart, and what stays my hand,
Who can cross at will to the motherland?

'Tis a voice that floats through my dreams at night,
And a white hand ringed with a fairy light,
From the world unseen, that has drawn anear,
A tremulous whisper—"At Bendemeer."

I had planned the end in the mountains grim,
Where the dream of wealth would be lure to him.
Bound fast to a tree in some gloomy glen
Where no cry can reach to the ears of men,
And shot with the bullet he meant for me—
I have dug it out of the hardwood tree.
Then to loose his cords and to let him lie
With his false face turned to the smiling sky,
With his dying grip—in a death of shame—
On the pistol butt that still bears his name!

A fool I have been from my mother's breast,
A fool who acted and thought for the best,
Made way for others and stood aside
And saw knaves feasted and deified.
With an open heart I have striven to do
"To men as ye would they would do to you."

And what have I gained by the Christian rule?
A smile and a sneer at the trusting fool!
And the generous wish to be fair and just
Has been deemed but weakness and self-distrust.
Now these things are over. My soul is free.
I will deal with men as they deal with me.
For I care not whither my purpose tend,
Let Hell find the means so I gain the end
And no guile too subtle or dark shall prove;
I have done with scruple, and done with love.

The thud of the stampers all night and day
Is loud in the gorge where the campfire lay.
From the big hotel where the lights shine long
Comes the broken snatch of a drinking song.
For the roofs go up as the shafts go down
In the fever and rush of a mining town.

I sit in my office with busy pen,

The saddest and richest of mining men.
I have sat like a spider and spun and spun
Till I hold the mortgage on many a run.
I have land and houses and shares and gold,
My stock increase by the thousandfold.
I am feared and courted with flattering breath
And all that I live for is one man's death.
I have worked his ruin. I hold his fate.
I have woven a web round the man I hate.
I have crossed his schemes, I have won the fight,
For tools can be willing when gold is bright.
And the deeds of mortgage are in their hands
Over Bendemeer and the Glenbar lands.

As I sleep at last on my bed of care
Comes the white hand floating upon the air,
And a woman's whisper is in my ear,
"The man that you hate is at Bendemeer."

The last crimson streak in the West was dead,
And the white stars broke through the blue o'erhead,
And the hornèd moon like a sceptre pale
Cast its thin blue ray on the old sliprail,
As I crossed Glenbar by the big tree where
The track goes winding to Bendemeer.

All the plain lay silent and silver-gray
Like a shroud for a bride on her bridal day.
I could feel the menace and the hand of Fate
As I stood once more at the garden gate.
With a passionate heart for a while I stood,
For the past came back like a rushing flood,
Then I moved the latch and I crept within—
A thief in the silence who fears his sin.
Like funeral plumes for some giant king
Rise the dark pine-crowns, and their shadows cling
Purple and solemn to path and lawn,
Like the shadow of murder that waits the dawn.
And the morepork's call from the timbered knoll
Seems the hoot of fiends for a dead man's soul.

I am creeping slow down the well-known way,

All round me is ruin and slow decay,
By the weed-choked beds and the paths o'ergrown,
And rank grass seeding on lawns unmown,
And a low fence matted with running vine,
In the home of my fathers that once was mine.

The old rambling pile and verandahs wide,
Like an isle half lost in some dim gray tide,
Seems to welcome me, seems to feel and know
That a ghost is here from the Long Ago!
And my fingers close, whilst my blood is flame,
Round the pistol-butt that still bears his name.

Creep, creep to the west where the ground is bare,
For a dim light shines from a window there.
I have toiled for this thro' the gloomy past.
I have prayed for this—'tis my hour at last!
Hear, God of the Just, whilst I own Thy might
Who hast given this man to my hands this night!
Here I kneel and pray. Be my hand the rod,
Be my hand in anger the hand of God!

Where the fold of the curtain falls, half drawn,
By the windows, wide to the western lawn,
From the shadows vague of the outer gloom
I have slipped—a shadow—within the room.
In the shaded light, on the low white bed,
I can see his face . . . he is lying . . . dead
The hand of Time has not marred its grace,
Though the lines are deep on the well-known face.
And the brow is placid and white and chill
With the peace that comes when the heart is still.

And the lamplight falls on the golden hair
Of a weeping child who is kneeling there.

O human vengeance and human hate!
See, thine altars scattered and desolate!
Poor paltry things of a passing breath,
Ye are silent here in the halls of Death!

Be his soul at rest. Though his sin was deep,

Yet bitter the harvest he lived to reap.
He has suffered long, he has worn the chain
Of a life's remorse in his heart and brain.
He has known the terror of hidden sin
When the soul stands bare to the judge within.
Be his heart at rest in the peace divine!
Be Thy mercy, Lord, on his soul . . . and mine!

For the child looks up with her mother's face,
With the sun-gold hair and the lily's grace.
From the lashes wet with their pearly dew
Shine the dark-blue depths of the eyes I knew,
The sweet eyes soft with the dreamy light
And the mystic spell of the southern night.

They have left me this—'tis the bond of Fate—
The woman I love and the man I hate!
Through the windows wide blows the gentle breeze,
And the wind-harp sighs in the shadowy trees,
And I see the rise of a splendid star
O'er the bend of the river on old Glenbar!

George Essex Evans

Lux In Tenebris

When first the Gods, whose Empire is eternal,
In Time's deep chalice poured Life's sacred wine,
Flashed all the crystal cup with fire supernal;
Then said they: "Shall the mortal be divine?
Shall man usurp the ways the Gods have trod?
Who quaffs this cup, himself should be a God!"
So tempered they the measure of their giving,
And mingled germs of evil with the good;
So mixed they death with the fierce fire of living,
And anguish with the joy of motherhood;
And with the balm of peace a weird unrest,
And an unformed desire in every breast.

So set they discord in the sweetest singing,
And a sharp thorn about the fairest rose;
And doubt around the cross where faith was clinging,
And fear to haunt the regions of repose;
And dimmed men's eyes, so that they should not see,
Like Gods, the vistas of futurity.

They coloured failure with hope's rainbow splendour,
And tinged the hour of triumph with regret;
Made strength subservient to the weak and tender,
And wisdom, folly-caught in beauty's net;
Till unto man life's wine was bitter-sweet—
Betwixt the perfect and the incomplete.

Then said the Gods—the Gods who live for ever—
"Let us shower gifts upon the soul of man,
That he may catch a glimpse of our endeavour,
And yet not solve the Universal Plan.
For, though Life's deepest truths be near to find,
Man shall behold and see not, being blind!"

Thus, to the blessing of the Gods descending,
The universal curse and shadow clung;
The mystic evil with the glory blending
That mars the aeons since the world was young.
For upon all whom the High Gods had blest

There fell the quenchless fever of unrest.

Then rose a ferment and an exaltation,
And all men's souls were thrilled and stirred within.
There came a prophet unto every nation
To teach new doctrines of the source of sin;
And men arose as Gods, and creeds began
To preach th' Eternal Godhead one with man.

And ever, thro' all lands, with waves sonorous,
Rolled on from age to age the stream of song
Which made low valleys sweet with rhythmic chorus,
And shook the rock-bound hills with music strong,
And flushed and fired men's souls like fumes of wine—
Yet was but human! . . . not a song divine!

For, lo! thro' all that seemeth inspiration
Enters the curse that blurs created things;
Beyond the barriers of our limitation
Not ever yet a soul has spread its wings!
Nor has been yet, nor ever shall there be,
A perfect song—a perfect harmony!

O music of the wind and of the ocean!—
O Power that sways the glory of the spheres!
O aching hearts that vibrate with emotion!
O mystery of Life! O human tears!
What light shall lead us thro' the wilderness
From out the Egypt of our bitterness?

O Poets, round whose souls, since the beginning,
Strange echoes tremble and wild visions throng,
Ye all have heard the sweetness of the singing,
But no man knows the meaning of the song
That lifts our frail souls heavenwards with its strain—
Then flings us bleeding to the earth again!

Brothers, my soul has quickened with your gladness.
I, too, have sorrowed over human woe.
I, too, have felt the terror and the madness
That all who seek for truth and light must know.
My faint heart falters in the bitter strife—

The labyrinths of the mysteries of Life.

What hope—what comfort—in our desolation?
What ray to pierce the blackness of our night?
To weary hearts, what balm of consolation
That earth is finite, heaven is infinite?
What tho' the hand of Faith still points the way—
The voice of Reason ever brings delay.

Nay! tho' Life's secret be beyond our dreaming,
And all the creeds that sway the world untrue,
A radiance creeps aslant the shadows gleaming
Whose golden arrows pierce the darkness thro'.
If all our errors hold one germ of right,
The paths that lead to truth are infinite!

Throughout all nature and throughout creation
A Power Supreme its manual sign has writ.
In pain and stress, thro' aeons of gradation,
Shall the weak soul of man decipher it;
For, since the spirit is above the clay,
Man shall not know th' Eternal in a day.

Yet, tho' we know not their immortal places,
And tho' their footsteps are not heard of man,
And tho' with mystery they veil their faces
And bid us search the Universal Plan,
And tho' to all there cometh with Life's breath
Suffering, and doubt, and weariness, and death—

I sing Eternal Hope and Strong Endeavour,
Truth shining down a myriad aisles of thought;
I sing the deathless souls of men, for ever
By strange, wild paths to one vast triumph brought.
The God in Man—the hunger of the soul—
One with the Wisdom that inspires the Whole!

George Essex Evans

Morning Land

Around and beneath, the dull grey mist and the sullen roar of the sea,
Scant footing-place on the sheer cliffs face—with death for a penalty;
But afar and above there is rest and love, there is hope for brain and hand,
The valleys fair and the crystal air and the peaks of Morning Land.

Around and beneath are the mists of toil and the sullen roar of the world,
And the sneer of scorn for a foothold gone and a climber backward hurled;
But afar and above are the hopes of men with the heart and will to stand
On the thin rift's edge and the slippery ledge that lead to Morning Land.

They slip and fall from the sheer cliffs face; ah, God! they are falling still!
But another leaps for the vacant place, and another his place will fill.
'Tis little they fear the coward's sneer, or the scorn of a selfish band,
Whose eyes are set on the parapet and the heights of Morning Land.

Hark to the ring as their rock picks swing, and bite for a foothold there!
Grip by grip they are straining up that others may travel fair.
The world will follow them all some day, the men it has shunned and banned,
The gallant hearts that hewed the way that leads to Morning Land.

George Essex Evans

Ode To The Philistines

In an age of Mammon and Greed,
In an age of Humbug and Cant,
Where Speech is greater than Deed
In the reign of the sycophant,
Let us turn from the shameless lips that babble of things Divine,
And shout to the God we know not the Song of the Philistine!
All hail, as you gather and pass
From the mansion and counting-house,
Men with a front of brass;
Men with the soul of a mouse;
Men with the mark of the beast scored as deep on your brows unclean
As erst on the brows that quailed 'neath the scourge of the Nazarene.

Six days shalt thou swindle and lie!
On the seventh—tho' it soundeth odd—
In the odour of sanctity
Thou shalt offer the Lord, thy God,
A threepenny bit, a doze, a start, and an unctuous smile,
And a hurried prayer to prosper another six days of guile.

You have judged by the rich man's rule!
You have treated your thinkers as dust!
You have honoured the braggart and fool
Whilst Genius has starved on a crust!
For all that you ask to fit what you call "a man" for a place
Is a shallow heart, a noisy tongue, thick hide, and a brazen face.

You have sold your daughters for gold!
You have sold your honour for naught!
And your creed is easily told—
"All things can be offered and bought!"
And you thank the good Lord God in your pews, on your bended knees,
That you live in a cultured age—and do cultured things like these!

In an age too enlightened and good
To call any wrong by its name,
Millions are crying for food,
Millions are living in shame,
Millions of human hearts, as God knows if he sees and feels,

Lie bound by the System's chains 'neath the crunch of the System's wheels!

You are slaves to custom and vogue!

You are timid to speak or to move!

You have worshipped the monied rogue!

You are walled in your narrow groove!

And the men with the noblest hearts, who have aimed at the Highest Good,

You have trampled them under your feet—unheard and misunderstood!

For the spirit of old remains

That nailed the Christ to the tree;

That brought Galileo to chains

And Bruno to tragedy.

For the Philistine altereth not—unchanged since the world began

He has hindered the march of progress and murdered the thinking man.

Take heed in your sordid pride!

Take heed in your purse-born ease!

For far o'er the world and wide

Grows something greater than these,

And the throb of the vexed world's heart no system shall cramp in thrall,

Till the joy and sorrow of each be the joy and sorrow of all.

Lo, whoever shall stand and fight

With the tongue, or the brain, or the pen,

For a larger measure of Right

For the mass of his fellow men,

He is nearer the unknown God than the chiefs of a priestly line,

His life is a deeper prayer than the cant of the Philistine.

George Essex Evans

On The Plains

Half-lost in film of faintest lawn,
A single star in armour white
Upon the dreamy heights of dawn
Guards dim frontier of the night,
Till plumed ray
And golden spray
Have washed its trembling light away.

The sun has peeped above the blue;
His level lances as they pass
Have shot the dew-drops thro' and thro',
And dashed with rubies all the grass,
And silver sound
Of horse-bells round
Floats softly o'er the jewelled ground.

The sunbeam and the wanton wind,
Among the feathery tufts at play,
Sing to the earth: "The night is blind,
But we will kiss your tears away."
With broad'ning glow
And rippling flow
Adown the laughing leagues they go.

The vagrant lark on wayward winds
Is fluttering low, is floating high;
No Northern trill of rapture rings
Tho' the vast temple of the sky;
But not in vain
Thy southern strain,
Thou brown-winged angel of the plain!

Here, where the days are dull and grey,
And youth has stilled his joyous song,
In fancy yet I love to stray
By creek, and plain, and billabong,
To the curlew's call
And the noiseless fall
Of the unshod hoof 'neath the gum-trees tall.

I hear one more the plovers "peet:"
The grey hawk wheels in dizzy height,
And swift beneath my horse's feet
The brown quail rises in his fright,
And the galahs fly
With pink breasts high,
A rosy cloud in a cloudless sky.

Afar I mark the emu's run;
The bustard slow, in motley clad;
And, basking in his bath of sun,
The brown snake on the cattle-pad,
And the reddish black
Of a dingo's back
As he loit'ring slinks on my horse's track.

And now I watch, with slackened rein,
The scattered cattle, hundreds strong,
As slowly moving home again
The lazy vanguard feeds along
To the waters cool
Of the tree-fringed pool
In the distant creek when the noon is full.

Slip girth and let the old horse graze;
The noon grows heavy on the air.
Kindle the tiny camp-fire's blaze,
And neath the shade, as monarch there,
Take thou thine ease:
For hours like these
A king had bartered satrapies!

Here lie and watch, thro' smoke-wreaths cool,
By yon sunk log and floating wrack,
The emporer of the silent pool,
The stately heron, white and black,
Afar from heat,
Upon his beat,
Knee-deep in shallowy retreat.

O mellow air! O sunny light!

O hope and youth that pass away!
Inscribe in letters of delight
Upon each heart one golden day -
To be there set
When we forget
There is a joy in living yet!

George Essex Evans

Out Of The Silence

Here in the silence cometh unto me
A song that is not mine,
With wash of waves along the cold shore line,
And sob of wind, and rain upon the sea.
It is the song and message of the dead!
Around my soul to-night
I feel the kinship of the Infinite,
I hear the sound of voices that are fled.

And as beneath the viewless angel's wing
Bethesda's pool was stirred,
My heart is troubled by the mystic word
Of one who through my soul and lips would sing.

There is no note of wailing in the strain,
But resonant and deep,
Out of the vastness, doth the music sweep,
Into the silence dieth it again.

To breaking hearts it saith, "Be comforted.
With secret pain and tears
And night-long penance thro' the torturing years
Vex not the spirits of the mighty dead."

"Weep not thine error done, thy thought untold
Shall not their vision be
Subtler than ours, more delicate to see
All that the fulness of the heart can hold?"

"Make not by grief an evil of their good!
Where the Immortal look
Life's hidden secrets are an open book,
All thou hast felt is known and understood."

Out of the silence thro' my soul to thine,
From realms unknown,
A breath of tenderness from far lips blown
Floats, with the promise of a Peace Divine.

And soaring thro' the shadows where we grope
A mighty cadence rings,
A spirit moves with morning on its wings—
The Voice and Vision of Eternal Hope!

George Essex Evans

Riches

Friend, you have wealth and power,
Men go and come at your call,
Yours are the whims of the hour—
What have you done with it all?
I am only a poet
Fighting a bitter fight,
Fate will not even grant me
Leisure in which to write.

You said as your thin lips curled:
"Money is better than bays."
Battered and bruised by the world!
I still have my golden days.

You have lost the power to enjoy,
You tire of each plaything new,
Mine is the heart of a boy;
Friend, I am richer than you!

George Essex Evans

Seddon

When from his place a forest monarch falls,
A thunder shakes the leafy leagues across,
Reverberating to its utmost walls:
So through an Empire rings this sound of loss.
Still, as of old, the kingless forest-aisles
We see—but not the strength that was their fame:
So, at Death's voice, far from his kingless aisles
The last Great Tribune answers to his name.

Nature, that builds great minds for mighty tasks,
Sculptured his frame to match the soul within;
Taught him how wisdom wields the power it asks;
For each new conquest set him more to win.

Rough-hewn was he for power, a massive mould,
Broad-brained, far-sighted, honourable, free
From narrowing envy, with a heart of gold
As wide and deep and dominant as the sea.

He passes, but his memory is power.
Behind him lives the good that none may stay;
His name remains a beacon-light, a tower
By which all feebler hearts may guide their way.

Come, let us follow him with reverent feet,
With fern and rata twine the wattle fair;
Tread soft: a mighty heart has ceased to beat
And one of Nature's kings is sleeping there.

George Essex Evans

The Average Man

His hat looks worn, and his coat-sleeves shine,
As I see him step from his 'bus at nine;
His boots are pieced and his tie home-made,
And his trousers patched where the edge was frayed,
And his face is lined by the stress of life
Where a man must fight for his bairns an wife.
"Who's that?" I ask, as his face I scan.
And the answer comes—"O, an average man."
He has not got notes, he has not got gold,
But his homely lunch, in his handbag old;
And day by day, as the seasons go,
He follows his duty to and fro,
And shadows follow him everywhere—
Grim want, and worry, and dread are there,
For life is not on a gorgeous plan—
Far, far from it—to the average man.

The floods, the banks, and the curtailed screw,
The weekly bills, and the grasping Jew,
The servant's wage and the doctor's fee,
And the needful change by the breezy sea,
And the pent-up hours at the desk, which mean
A man's brain changed to a mere machine,
And a wife's tired eyes and the children wan,
All press like lead on the average man.

When the blood is up 'tis a simple thing
To charge where the bombs and the bullets sing.
But he is worthy a higher place
Who fronts his woes with a smiling face,
For the noblest strife in our life to-day
Is the humdrum fight in the humdrum way.
O, wealth and genius may lead the van,
But the hero is often an average man.

George Essex Evans

The Crown Of Empire

Free is the wind that lashes into foam
The fortress waves that gird the Sea-King's home
And free the war-worn Flag that is our fame
That fear, nor treason, nor the Storm-God's might,
Nor the leagued banners of the World can shame
When Britain arms for Honour and the Right.
And free the hearts that on this golden day
Bear willing witness to the Sea-King's sway:
From world-wide realms washed by the world-wide sea
They turn, O Throne of Freedom, unto Thee.
Homeward they turn from many a lonely place,
Maker of Nations, Mother of the Race,
Homeward to Thee, where, in this solemn hour
Of mightiest Empire, Thou hast called once more
A Royal Son to wield Imperial power
And wear the crown that Saxon Alfred wore—
Sceptre and orb that a great Queen laid down,
Lustrous with wisdom, foremost in renown,
Whilst o'er them shone, all glittering gems above,
The Star of Duty and the Pearl of Love.

Europe is here, and Asia: and the West
Lifts 'mid the throng its dauntless Eagle's crest.
Lo! They are gathered—prince and peer and lord,
And great ambassadors of mighty States,
And utmost Nations—not with naked sword,
But to do Britain honour in her gates.
The splendour of this large, historic hour,
This dazzling pageant of Imperial power,
Surrounds a King whose proudest boast shall be
The hearts that hail him Emperor of the Free.

O Sire August, within these Abbey walls
To thee the sacred dust of Britain calls
To rule the realm that shook the strength of Spain,
And struck th' accursèd fetter from the slave—
That tore from Europe's neck the Despot's chain,
And, for a pledge of Freedom, o'er the wave
Has set its Flag forever—not alone—

The fairest face that ever graced a throne,
Queen of our Hearts, is with Thee as we sing:—
“An Empire’s love is their’s: God Save the King!”

Unbar your ocean-guarded gates, make wide
Your streets, Imperial City of our Pride!
Hark, with the voice of millions, rolling deep,
The world salutes thee on this Royal morn.
Strong as thine island-rock when surges sweep
Thy throne stands steadfast; round it there is born
The silent vow that prince and peasant make
Ere they go down to death for Freedom’s sake,
And, dying, know sons of their sons will be
As swift to guard the Sceptre of the Sea.

O Pillars of an Empire dwarfing Rome,
From the four corners of the world you come.
The strong Sea-Lion calls around his throne
His ancient heirs, his war-worn younger sons.
Bring Heath and Vine from hills of Southern stone.
And Myrtle, where the twining rata runs,—
Wreaths from our Empire-Garden, where, between
The purple Thistle and the Shamrock green,
The snow-white Lotus by the Maple shows,
The yellow Wattle by the English Rose.

This is a Southern Song blown oversea
From mighty States now linked in unity,—
From that far island continent that lies
Gigantic on the waters, throned, apart,
Robed with the splendour of Australian skies—
First to draw sword, when, with a single heart,
From every frontier line of Empire rose
New Britains armed to meet Britannia’s foes,
Whose voices thunder, as the joy-bells ring
Loud from ten thousand spires: “God Save the King!”

George Essex Evans

The Dead Democrat

The roar and rush of life sweeps on;
Still shines the sun as once it shone:
Men reap and sow and live and toil
And plan for power and scheme for spoil.
What reeks the world in field or street?—
One heart has ceased to beat.
But She to whom in all the lands
The toilers stretch beseeching hands—
Democracy, the Soul of all,
Marks where her faithful servants fall.
They seek not things that others seek
Who battle for the weak.

Her yoke is heavy to be borne,
Her bitter paths are choked with thorn,
But glorious shines, through mist and haze,
The splendour of her coming days.
Our loftiest tribute shall be then,
"He served his fellow-men."

George Essex Evans

The Doves Of Venus

The dull earth swung in silence o'er,
A dreamless world, a dreary star,
Until the doves of Venus bore
To Thessaly her ivory car.
She whispered to the sea and air,
And lightly with her wand she smote
The solid earth, till everywhere
The birds gave forth a sweeter note.
Whereat the sun did brighter shine,
More richly did the roses blow,
And like deep peace, a joy divine
Did fill the souls of men below.
And still are showered her magic arts
On man and maiden hand in hand,
Who hear a music in their hearts
Which none but they can understand.
A sweeter perfume sheds the rose,
A deeper azure tints the sky,
And softly with the daylight's close
The doves of Venus hover nigh.
Thus oft, to earth doth she return
To strip the scales from mortal eyes,
And sends us Love, that we may learn
How Earth may yet be Paradise.

George Essex Evans

The Dream Star

Whisper, O wings of the wind! Sing me your song, O sea!
Grey is the weary world, and grey is the heart of me!
Into my shadowy heart pierce like the star of old,
Pearl of the tender dawn, kissed by the trembling gold!

Sing me the hope made sure, sing me the heart made strong!
Give me the battle-fire, give me the bugle-song

Onward ever and on, O swift, green bird of the sun;
Ever a vaster goal for the goal that thy wings have won.

Keen with a tireless beat is the rush of thy wings that soar;
But keener, swifter than thee is the vision that flies before.

What though we die forgot and sad for the song unsung!
Fresh from her thousand deaths ever the world is young.

For, ever the dream-world floats, a light on a misty bar,
And ever the grey earth follows the wake of that pilot star;

Follows a spirit ship that bears o'er a spirit sea
Shadows of thoughts unborn, phantoms of destiny.

Silver the giant sails loom through the amber haze,
And ever the helmsman Hope steers for the halcyon days;

And ever the voices call, out of the golden light,
Into the dreamer's heart, sad in the lonely night—

Call like the ring of steel and thrill as of bugles blown,
Splendours of days to be, flaming in skies unknown.

Deep in the eastern skies glimmers that phantom star;
Dim in the distance dies the surge of the world afar.

Ah, but like broken swords, scattered along the van,
Perish the outpost souls that fall in the march of Man!

Ah, but they die not so; out of their ashes then

Flowers of immortal Love spring in the hearts of men!

Wings of the swift green Earth, ever and ever young—
This is the whispered word the wind of the morning sung!

This is the rune I heard flung by the ocean old,
Pearl of the tender dawn, kissed by the trembling gold!

George Essex Evans

The Grey Road

A sun-flash on his mounting wing,
A wild note soaring high—
The lark is up, the minstrel king,
The poet of the sky.
To thrill, to sing of Youth and Spring
Those golden numbers flowed.
What message then
Has he for men
Who tread the long grey road?
Knee-deep in grass the cattle stand,
The river winds along,
And chants through sunny meadow land
A low mysterious song.
Ah! sunlit vale and lover's tale
Youth's day is quickly gone—
Past current-beat
And meadow-sweet
The grey road stretches on!

Grim bastions frowning down below—
And rising, tier on tier,
Sublime, and crowned with ageless snow
The awful peaks appear.
The heights belong unto the strong
Who scale, by crags untried,
The great cliffs face—
But at its base
The grey road turns aside!

No hope in Heaven, no minstrel strain,
No vales where summer shone
A leaden sky, a silent plain,
The grey road stretching on.
O Christ, who trod the thorny path,
And bore the bitter load,
Have mercy then
On weary men
Who tread the long grey road!

The Land Of The Dawning

Darkrose her shore in seas of amethyst
By tropic breezes kissed,
A summer land in watery wastes forlorn,
Her ranges floating in the snow-white mist
And gold of early morn.
The tides of Empire ebbed and flowed afar;
The thrones of nations in the dust were hurled,
Silent she slept beneath the morning star,
A virgin world.
Love, Birth, and Death, the stress of Age and Race,
Changed not her maiden face—
Unstocked her pastures and untilled her soil—
She who for labour builds a throne apace
Saw not her people toil;
Down the low valleys, up the stormy steeps,
Careless they roamed at will: the land was free
From desert stark to where the mangrove sleeps
Upon the sea.

There dropped no anchor at her river bars
Beneath the quiet stars;
No wandering sail her silent waters swept;
By waste and scrub, o'er plain and rocky scars
No alien footstep crept;
In feathery billows of her grassy seas
Some lonely mountain stretched its capes of blue;
Only the heavens above her and the breeze
Her secrets knew.

Where the wild grass grew rank on slopes forlorn
Rise fields of yellow corn,
And purple lucerne-bloom makes sweet the air;
The sullen mountain, lost in mists of morn,
Its golden heart lays bare.
Spoils of her pastures crowd full many a mart;
Her glittering treasure calls to many a land;
She has no secrets for the daring heart
And strong brown hand.

The smoke and thunder of her cities rise
To the same careless skies;
Her arteries thread the same wide sunlit leas,
Her fleets stretch forth their wings of enterprise
O'er the same summer seas.
She to the Nations cries: "No Past, no Fame,
No Memories quicken round my flag unfurled;
The mightier, therefore, shall I carve my name
Upon the World."

George Essex Evans

The Lion's Whelps

There is scarlet on his forehead,
There are scars across his face,
'Tis the bloody dew of battle dripping down, dripping down,
But the war-heart of the Lion
Turns to iron in its place
When he halts to face disaster, when he turns to meet disgrace,
Stung and keen and mettled with the life-blood of his own.
Let the hunters 'ware who flout him,
When he calls his whelps about him,
When he sets the goal before him and he settles to the pace.
Tricked and wounded! Are we beaten
Though they hold our strength at play?
We have faced these things aforetimes, long ago, long ago.
From sunlit Sydney Harbour
And ten thousand miles away,
From the far Canadian forests to the Sounds of Milford Bay,
They have answered, they have answered, and we know the answer now.
From the Britains such as these
Strewn across the world-wide seas
Comes the rally and the bugle-note that makes us one to-day.

Beaten! Let them come against us.
We can meet them one and all.
We have faced the World aforetimes, not in vain, not in vain.
Twice ten thousand hearths be widowed,
Twice ten thousand hearts may fall,
But a million voices answer: "We are ready for the call;
And the sword we draw for Justice shall not see its sheath again,
Nor our cannon cease to thunder
Till we break their strength asunder,
And the Lion's whelps are round him and the Old Flag over all."

George Essex Evans

The Master

In sea and air, in leaf and stone,
Where'er Truth's magic words are writ,
Where thousands throng, or rapt and lone,
Life was his book. He pondered it.
Through page of earth and sun and star
He heard the swift sweep of the Song
Of Law and Motion, streaming far,
Which seemed to sing, "The world is wrong."
Men passed him by. They brushed aside
The dreamer in his dreams of law.
They laughed and left him, open-eyed,
Fixed on the point that no man saw.
"Life is to scheme, to love, to play.
Strike out for plunder in the fight
Our fathers did so," answered they,
"And they have said, 'The world is right.'"

Men took the baubles at the call,
Men rose to wealth and power and state,
But he—the mightiest of them all—
Remained, because his heart was great.
The fool cried: "Life is but a jest,"
The schemer: "Earth is for the strong,"
The thoughtless: "Why think for the rest?"
But he cried: "Nay. The world is wrong."

And friends declined, and fortune frowned,
And hope grew dim with health's decay,
The thorns of hardship hedged him round,
But still he toiled from day to day—
From clue to clue, from year to year,
From law to law, from light to light,
Till came the triumph flashing clear—
"The world is wrong and I am right!"

"The Laws of Life, eternal, true,
Swerve not by prayer for that or this.
A Power hath given the world to you
And ye have made it what it is.

Why see worth perish, what accrue
Why see greed flourish day by day?
A Power hath given the world to you,
And ye can make it what ye may."

No mourners wept beside his bier,
Scant homage to his grave was brought.
He left no wealth behind him here,
Only the splendour of his thought.
And as the brown earth, heaping slow,
Shut the rude coffin from the sight,
One who had known him long ago
Cried: "After all, the world was right!"

But Thought is king no clowns can bind,
And Genius, in its crowning hour,
Sows deep the seed that, for Mankind,
Springs, centuries hence, to splendid flower,
When, by that lonely stone of white,
With heads uncovered, men shall say:
"The world was wrong and he was right
Who died for what we reap to-day!"

George Essex Evans

The Nation Builders

A handful of workers seeking the star of a strong intent -
A handful of heroes scattered to conquer a continent -
Thirst, and fever, and famine, drought, and ruin, and flood,
And the bones that bleach on the sandhill, and the spears that redden with
blood;
And the pitiless might of the molten skies, at noon, on the sun-cracked plain,
And the walls of the northern jungles, shall front them ever in vain,
Till the land that lies like a giant asleep shall wake to the victory won,
And the hearts of the Nation Builders shall know that the work is done.

To North, on the seas of summer, where the pearl flotillas swim,
To East, where the axe is ringing in the heart of the ranges grim,
On the plains where the free wind bloweth by never a tree or shrub,
On the pine-topped slopes where the settler carves a home in the tropic scrub,
On fields where the miner sleeps unstirred by the ceaseless monotone
And crash of the stampers night and day at work on the milk-white stone,
'Tis war and stress, with never a pause to mourn for a stout heart gone,
Till the souls of the Nation Builders shall know that the work is done.

On the deck of the lonely light-ship, in the sand of the new-found West,
Where strong men fall and die like sheep in the thirst of the golden quest,
By the dry stock routes, by the burnt-up creeks, where the cattle sink and fail,
By the coral reefs, where the bêcheing boats swing on 'neath the sun-tanned sail,
In the wild ravine where the searcher's gold is bought with his own heart's blood,

In the dark of the drive where the miner's life goes out with the swirling flood,
'Tis war and stress, with never a pause to mourn for a stout heart gone,
Till the lives of the Nation Builders have paid for the victory won.

In the glare and steam of the cities, the thunder and chatter of wheel,
By the teeming wharves, where the liners lie at rest on an even keel,
In the strife of a swelling commerce, at the desk in the dull routine
Where the soul of a man is warped and sunk to the soul of a mere machine,
In the flash of the wire to west and north, in the hum of the restless street,
In the pulse of the toiling press that beats all night in a fever heat,
Where the weary brain and the pen plod on 'neath the white electric light -

Tho' we fail and fall still the fight goes on; and ever our sons shall fight,
Till the land that lies like a giant asleep shall wake to the victory won,
And the hearts of the Nation Builders shall know that the work is done.

We are but the hands of the Builder, who toileth and frameth afar;
System, and order, and sequence; sun, and planet, and star -
Faint sparks of a Mighty Genius, a breath of the Over Soul,
Who shapes the thought of the workers wherever his worlds may roll.
On! tho' we grope and blunder, the trend of our aim is true!
On! there is death in dalliance whilst yet there is work to do,
Till the land that lies like a giant asleep shall wake to the victory won,
And the eyes of the Master Worker shall see that the work is done.

George Essex Evans

The Plains

WIDE are the plains—the plains that stretch to the west
An ocean of trackless waste, untrodden and rude,
Where an Austral sun flings fire on earth's bare breast,
Brazen skies o'erhanging a treeless solitude.

Wild are the plains—the plains that shimmer and surge,
Leagues of billowy grass like an angry sea,
Bend 'neath the storm-wind, chanting its mystic dirge—
The wind that knows no Lord—Lord of ocean or lea.

Calm are the plains—when the moon's clear beams are shed
And the wilds lie hushed, all shrouded in silver-grey,
And Nature sinks to rest like one whose life has fled,
E'en as a bride lying dead in her bridal array.

Weird are the plains—the plains that wait for the dawn
When the shadowy darkness strives with the sickly light,
And the battle hangs in the balance, finely drawn,
Till the spears of morning pierce through the mail of night.

Who shall hear, O Nature, messages thou wouldst send
In thy desolate places, far from the moving throng?
Ah, but the soul that loveth thee best may comprehend,
The voice of the silence speaketh louder than song!

George Essex Evans

The Secret Key

There is a magic kingdom of strange powers,
Thought-hidden, lit by other stars than ours;
And, when a wanderer through its mazes brings
Word of things seen, men say: "A poet sings."
Its gates are guarded in a sterile land—
Mountain and deep morass, and shifting sand;
Storm-barred are they, and may not opened be
Save by the hand that finds the secret key.
That key, some say, lies in the sunset glow,
Or the white arc of dawn, or where the flow
Of some lone river stems the shoreward wave
In shuddering silver on its ocean grave.
Some say that when the wind wars with the sea,
In that stern music, one may find the key;
Or, in green glooms of forests, where the pine
Uplifts her spear amid great wreaths of vine;
Or, where the streaming mist's white rollers climb
The dark ravine and precipice sublime—
A filmy sea that twines and intertwines
Wreathes the low hills, and veils the mighty lines
Of sovran mountains, crimsoned and aglow
In crystal pomp, crested with jewelled snow;
But still, with souls afire, men seek that land,
And die in deep morass and shifting sand.
To those alone its iron gates are free,
Who find, within their hearts, the secret key;
For Earth, with all the colour of her day,
Is not their country—that lies far away.

George Essex Evans

The Song Of Gracia

SPRING

Across the street, across the grass,
Across my life I watch her pass.
No pure star on a dusky height
Hath eyes more bright,
No lily on her emerald bed
A statelier head,
No dewdrop on the beaded thorn
More radiantly doth glow apart!
O, she doth shine all these to scorn
Fair are they all—star, flower, and dew;
She is the green bud breaking thro'
The winter of my heart.
Two violets, seeking Paradise,
Have hid themselves within her eyes.
Her lips are roses. She doth wear
A sunbeam woven in her hair.
And of the foam-flake of the sea
Her cheek and neck and bosom be.
And like a reed the low wind sways
Her slender figure glides along,
Serenely tall and fairy sweet
In this, the springtide of her days.
And O, to make my life a song
And lay it at her feet!

SUMMER

And now the world recedes. Time, Space, are fleeting.
All things but thee, O Love, have ceased to be.
Here where thy heart against my heart is beating,
And like a charm thy white arms compass me;
And on thy blue-veined breasts my head is lying,
And all about my face is blown thy hair.
Here let Love speak his full heart in sweet sighing,
For speech were powerless now to voice his prayer.

Softly thy breath, like scent of violets blowing,
Steals o'er my cheek with slow, delicious pain.
Drink whilst thou canst the goblet crowned and flowing,
For hours like these will never come again.

AUTUMN

There is no bud of Spring about this forest,
And in our hearts, too, are the autumn leaves.
Where are the wings, O Love, on which thou soarest?
Meeter art thou to toil and bind the sheaves.
But there is mellower light upon our faces,
Thro' all our veins the steadier currents flow
The statelier charms remain and friendly graces,
Tho' dull and fitful wanes love's lava-glow.

WINTER

The slow bell tolls across the square:
She doth not hear its rise and swell.
The frosts of age have silvered there
The clusters of her sun-gold hair:
She sleepeth well.
Strange city echoes here are sent
Of reckless strife for prize and place,
Of hearts with warring passions rent,
But Death's ineffable content
Is on her face—

A touch, a joy, a something there
That for my sake hath never shone;
Too well I deem in my despair
Her fairest dream I may not share,
And she is gone

Beyond these days of care and ruth
To those fair stars which poets sing,
Where grows the tree of fadeless Truth
In gardens of Immortal Youth,

Eternal Spring.

George Essex Evans

The Song Of Life

Sing not of Rest
For heart, or brain, or the strong soul's emotion
Beneath the shadow of Eternal peace!
There is no rest in Nature or surcease
Of Law, and Labour, in unceasing motion.
Sing not of Rest!
Sing not of Peace
On earth, or in the realms beyond our dreaming!
Progress and Retrogression all things draw
Within the edict of Eternal Law.
Search for the Real which lies beneath the Seeming.
Sing not of Peace

Sing thou of Toil,
Of toil that moulds to-day the larger morrow!
Move with stout heart on Life's great battle-field
And wear the motto "Progress" on thy shield.
All that is best is won through toil and sorrow.
Sing thou of Toil!

Sing thou of Hope!
Of Hope that lights the world to strong endeavour!
Height beyond height but loftier summits show,
Depth beneath depth reveals a depth below.
Choose thou the best. There is no resting ever.
Sing thou of Hope!

Sing thou of Truth!
That which alone can stand when all is sifted;
That which Humanity in pain and tears
Has sought with patient toil through myriad years,
Till thou shalt see with radiant face uplifted
Eternal Truth.

George Essex Evans

The Spirit Of Poetry

All things are Hers. Concealed or manifest,
Found or unfound, Her Spirit lives in each—
Dumb till the Master-Soul its secret guessed
And gave its silence speech.

All things are Hers. She is the Crystal Queen
Of all men's vision, and the moving breath
Which through the greyness of the sordid scene
Gloweth and quickeneth.

She is the flower-maid of the dreaming noon,
The goddess of the temple of the night;
Where the berg-turrets gleam beneath the moon
She builds Her throne of white.

She knows the Battle-Hymn of mighty wars
When wind and ocean thunder on the strand.
She knows the song the lonely river-bars
Sing to the listening land.

Armoured and helmeted and spurred for fight
She fires men's hearts to right the bitter wrong;
Yet sits She weaving of a summer night
Flowers of a bridal song.

She gives the temper that has made men great
And fashioned heroes out of common clay,
And welded firm into a mighty State
The tribes of yesterday.

Youth's radiant vision, and the dreamy dawn
Of the soft lovelight in a maiden's eyes,
And holiest joys of motherhood, are drawn
By Her from Paradise.

She knows the Wheel-Song of the Stars that run
Their glittering courses through the blue abyss.
Ere the round earth fell flaming from the sun
Her spirit was, and is.

She is the Phoeix, ever making true
The dim tradition of the misty morn.
The crucible of science gives anew
Her fairy form re-born.

All things are Hers—but not with equal word
Dowers She the pilgrims of the sacred shrine.
Only the Great Interpreters have heard
Her melodies divine.

All things are Hers, and so to Her I bring
Songs of the dreams that haunt me on my way—
I who scarce hear the rustle of Her wing
Borne on the wind away!

George Essex Evans

The Splendour And The Curse Of Song

Methought the unknown God we seek in vain
Grew weary of the evil He had wrought—
The piteous litanies of human pain—
Till here and there some lonely souls He sought
To bear the message of Immortal Thought,
And sent them forth to wander 'midst the throng
Crowned with the splendour and the curse of Song.
But that which still was kindred to the stars
Fought with the flesh and moaned within its cell,
And beat its wings against its prison bars.
Thus, soaring oft to heights sublime, they fell,
Dragged by the flesh into the gulfs of hell;
Till all their days were as a tumult long
Between the splendour and the curse of Song.

Yet often 'mid the fever of distress
Some singer's lips would chant so sweet a strain
That storm-tossed souls forgot their weariness,
And comfort crept about the bed of pain,
And men took heart and dreamt of heaven again;
And to the weak came hope and courage strong
Born of the beauty and the balm of Song.

But Life was bitter to the lips that sung;
And heavier on those souls the curse did grow
Who strove to speak to men an unknown tongue,
And mournfully their hearts did weigh and know
The measure of the whole world's cruel woe,
And wearily they fared Time's path along
Vexed by the splendour and the curse of Song.

Theirs was the homeless hunger of the heart—
Immortal thought within a mortal breast,
Listless they wandered through the crowded mart,
Who to a careless world had given their best;
And when Death lulled them with his wings to rest
What reeked they where they slumbered calm and strong
Crowned with the splendour of Immortal Song?

The Sword Of Pain

The Lights burn dim and make weird shadow-play,
The white walls of the ward are changed to grey,
Down the long aisle of beds, with tender grace,
Sleep smoothes the lines on many a weary face;
Yet there are those for whom no midnight brings
Solace and strength to face the day again,
And, over all, with wide majestic wings,
There broods the awful mystery of Pain.
Night wears apace, and now the silence breaks
As here and there some fitful slumberer wakes;
And Pain triumphant—Pain with burning grip—
Wrings grudging tribute from the tortured lip:
A strong man's groan, a boy's short sobbing cry,
Pierces the stillness with a sudden breath,
Or the low moan of long-drawn agony,
Asking not respite but the boon of Death.

Here, in the halls of suffering, eye to eye,
Men measure Death, and mark if he pass by;
Here, in the halls of suffering, swings the strife
Wherein man's skill and Death contest for life;
Here woman moves in tenderest ministeries,
With gracious hands that calm the throbbing brain:
Skill and compassion facing fell disease,
And mercy watching by the bed of pain.

Ah! Night and day, in armour like the snow,
Patient and brave, the grey-robed nurses go,
With light swift steps, low voices, cheery smiles,
From bed to bed, adown those dolorous aisles—
Angels of Succour, girt with snowy mail,
As warriors donned of old their armour bright:
Serene, when danger bids the bravest quail,
Against the batteries of Death they fight.

Here, in the restless night, upon my bed,
Whilst bands of steel seem tight'ning round my head,
Strong tides are rushing through my heart and brain
The Goal of Life? The Mystery of Pain?

Now on the rising wind that roars without
Murmurs and discord mingle till it seems
The Voice of the World's Wounded, and about
Me seem to be the dreams that are not dreams.

"Wherefore, Great Architect, whose power august
Buildeth the universe of very dust,
And that imperial Palace of the Mind
More stately than the stars; who dost not bind
Thought that can conquer Nature, and above
The power of Mind hast set the power of Love—
O Thou, who weavest through this web of strife
Strands of great agony and bloody rue—
Must we still search this labyrinth of Life
To perish groping blindly for the clue?"

Even as I cried the grey walls fell away,
The long ward vanished in the glare of day,
The broad world spread before me, and I saw
Thousands lie stretched in the red swathes of War,
In rigid wreck, like fields of storm-crushed corn—
Grey faces twisted to a horrid smile,
And limbs and piteous bodies wrenched and torn,
Mangled unspeakably, strewn pile on pile.

I turned to Peace amid her olive trees:
Great cities rose before me, villages,
The spacious mansion and the lonely cot—
There was no door that Pain had entered not.
I heard like sobbings of an unseen tide
Its keen fire run through all things, and I said:
"Peace masks a secret war on every side.
There is no rest from travail: God is dead."

No more the solid earth my footsteps prest;
The wide sky caught me upward to its breast.
The living ether seemed a quick'ning sea,
Where thrilled unseen the germs of worlds to be.
At times I seemed to move upon the verge
Of some vast viewless current streaming far,
And my brain quivered, as, with mighty surge,
Strange thought-waves swept the gulfs from star to star.

In ordered majesty each System runs,
With mighty planets circling sovran suns,
And strange pale moons like ghosts that haunt the scene
Of their once living glory; and serene,
Slow dying stars, dreaming of days forgot,
Of silent worlds and ancient memories—
White mountain-crest, dense forest, secret grot,
Wide plains, wild shores, the crash of plunging seas.

Like a blown leaf, caught by the vagrant air
That still ascends, I mounted: Everywhere
Dead suns and satellites—a lightless train
In darkness rushing to be born again—
Hurled through the void, or, by fierce shock redeemed,
Blazed back to life, and flushed with splendour bright
Thronged spaces and dark rolling orbs that seemed
Millions of black motes in a sea of light.

There is a river whose imperial flow
Circles the mid-most heaven with broad'ning glow;
Its fiery waves are rays of suns supreme,
Crimson and gold its changing currents gleam,
And blue and purest white, and in its tide
Move worlds unnumbered and the starry dust
That builds new suns and powers that shall abide
To rule new regions with a sway august.

Within the airy isle its waters fold
Seven mighty suns circle in quiv'ring gold;
And, over all, uplift above the gire,
Shaped like a cross, a Sword of Living Fire!
Emerald and amber, opal, white and blue
Swift lights, keen tremors flash from point to hilt;
And now blood-red it throbs, as though it knew
The whole world's agony, the whole world's guilt.

It is The Cross, sublime, uplifted high;
Great flames break from it, floating down the sky;
As though the blood of Him who, undismayed,
Suffered our sins, dript from its burning blade—
As though the blood of all earth's noblest ones,

Dreamers and heroes, fell in fiery rain
To temper worlds new-born, and mightier suns—
The Sword of Victory! The Sword of Pain!

Trembling, I spake before that awful sword:
"Where is the golden city of the Lord,
With gates of pearl, and on its crystal sea
Peace and the solace of Eternity?"
Then, like a flash, I knew the air around
Was living ether, and I felt the gaze
Of myriad eyes unseen, and heard the sound
As of vast music known in far-off days.

There fell a star across the 'brow of Night,
And a voice answered, echoing from the height:
"The gods ye fashion perish one by one,
The Living God endures when all are gone.
Fool, canst thou know Th' Eternal in a day?
Can mortal judge The Immortal face to face,
Who of the star-dust buildeth as He may,
And takes for throne the regions of all Space?"

Eternal Spirit, immanent, apart,
Thou, in the living temple of the Heart,
Lightest thine altar-fires that souls may reign
O'er worlds not yet create, and makest pain
The discipline of Life, the seal of worth,
The test of courage, and the burning star
That leads through vales of darkness to re-birth,
To loftier life and victory afar!

Ah! Not in golden city nor crystal sea,
But in wide circles of Infinity,
Our work is set; and not from harps of gold,
But hearts of men, deep harmonies are rolled!
Vast powers stir around us, and our course may be
By other paths than those our fathers trod;
And Science, with her torch, unconsciously,
Through strange new realms may lead men back to God.

He knows not Life who hath not felt the breath
Nor gazed once in the mocking eyes of Death.

The purest springs, the waters without stain,
Well upward from the burning heart of Pain.
Behold I saw in purest air afar
A great light dawn and widen and increase,
With white flame crested like a perfect star,
Above the Sword of Pain—the Crown of Peace!

George Essex Evans

The Two Goblets

Bearing two crystal goblets in her hands
To a philosopher an Angel came:
One wine shone clear as water o'er white sands,
One red as flame.
"Choose!" said the Angel. "From life's wine-press flows
For all mankind the vintage which I bring.
The pale cup holds exemption from life's woes,
The red brings suffering."

"One wine is colourless," the dreamer said.
"Who suffer keenest nobler joys attain."
And to the dregs drained from the goblet red
The draught of pain.

Then spake the Angel: "Thou hast chosen well.
What seemeth loss to thee shall prove thy gain.
All that is pure, and sweet, and beautiful
Is born of pain."

George Essex Evans

The Wayfarers

Still the white stars burn overhead,
The green earth swings upon her way:
Where are the voices of the dead,
The hearts of Yesterday?
Drawn by what strange, mysterious power,
From what dream world and magic sky
Came they to laugh on earth an hour,
To weep, to toil, to die?

And whither gone? On what wild flight
By planet pale and sceptred star?
What realms of sorrow or delight
Now wander they afar?

Pale Wayfarers, whose noiseless tread
Is near me as I seem to see
The mighty generations dead,
And all that yet shall be!

Are Past and Future, then, a breath
That one vast Present makes its own?
The Angel, Birth, the Shadow, Death,
Each guards a world unknown.

Wayfarers all, we know not whence
We came, nor whitherwards we go.
Deep in our hearts a haunting sense
That somewhere we shall know.

Still the white stars burn overhead,
The green earth swings upon her way:
Where are the voices of the dead,
The hearts of yesterday?

George Essex Evans

The Wheels Of The System

Where is God, whilst all around us sounds the jarring of the wheels,
When the cry of human anguish starwards thro' His glory steals?
There is neither hope nor pity underneath the moving wheels.
Woe to him who slips or falters whilst the wheels are moving on!
Woe to him who stays to breathe him when the goal is nearly won!
There they lie—and lie for ever—over whom the wheels have gone!

O, my brothers! draw we nearer to the dream the poet sings?
War, red war, and rapine ruleth underneath the shows of things.
Underneath the mask of Mercy there are whips of many stings.

Here in silence, reft of slumber, with sad heart I dream and doubt;
Star by star the night is waning, star by star the night goes out:
But the bitter strife of all things ceases not within, without.

Beat by beat the cold light groweth, beat by beat the morn comes in
With his crimson robes about him like a royal Paladin:
But the bitter strife of all things ceases not without, within.

O'er the peaceful face of Nature smiles serene the gracious sun,
And men smile and hide their tactics when the battle has begun—
Tear the clumsy masks asunder and behold what things are done!

For the wheels go on for ever, crushing thro' the human hives,
And the goal the victor reaches rests upon a million lives,
And the motive shall not profit—it is only Power survives!

Where weak women starve and sicken, dying in the paths they trod,
Where strong men are bent and broken underneath the System's rod,
Will you smile and prate and tell me, "This is still the will of God?"

But I hear like distant thunder welling deep from out the sky,
Tortured with the grief of ages, an exceeding bitter cry:
"There is none can stay them ever, were he mightier than I."

Deeper laws than Love are hidden in the power that runs through this,
All the fiery wheels of Heaven through the seas of ether hiss,
Star, and sun, and planet rolling onward through the black abyss.

Wail no more, O fellow workers, for the aid He fails to lend.
Stricken with a deathless sorrow for the ills He cannot mend,
God, the Worker, fights in silence for the good He cannot send.

Not the Lord of Love, creator of all grief, and pain, and crime,
But a god-like soul ennobled, battling for a goal sublime,
Thro' the bloodshed of the aeons forward to the happier time.

Thine the world to mould and make it free for all from rim to rim,
Thine to fight and toil and triumph over every problem grim,
To create and cure, and conquer, working onwards, on with Him.

Face to face with iron systems, face to face with endless odds,
Where the wheels of Heaven forever race beneath His chariot-rods!
Soul of Man, whate'er thy sorrow, is thy burden more than God's?

George Essex Evans

The Women Of The West

They left the vine-wreathed cottage and the mansion on the hill,
The houses in the busy streets where life is never still,
The pleasures of the city, and the friends they cherished best:
For love they faced the wilderness -- the Women of the West.

The roar, and rush, and fever of the city died away,
And the old-time joys and faces -- they were gone for many a day;
In their place the lurching coach-wheel, or the creaking bullock chains,
O'er the everlasting sameness of the never-ending plains.

In the slab-built, zinc-roofed homestead of some lately taken run,
In the tent beside the bankment of a railway just begun,
In the huts on new selections, in the camps of man's unrest,
On the frontiers of the Nation, live the Women of the West.

The red sun robs their beauty, and, in weariness and pain,
The slow years steal the nameless grace that never comes again;
And there are hours men cannot soothe, and words men cannot say --
The nearest woman's face may be a hundred miles away.

The wide bush holds the secrets of their longing and desires,
When the white stars in reverence light their holy altar fires,
And silence, like the touch of God, sinks deep into the breast --
Perchance He hears and understands the Women of the West.

For them no trumpet sounds the call, no poet plies his arts --
They only hear the beating of their gallant, loving hearts.
But they have sung with silent lives the song all songs above --
The holiness of sacrifice, the dignity of love.

Well have we held our father's creed. No call has passed us by.
We faced and fought the wilderness, we sent our sons to die.
And we have hearts to do and dare, and yet, o'er all the rest,
The hearts that made the Nation were the Women of the West.

George Essex Evans

Thomas Joseph Byrnes

God gave him gifts: nor gave in vain
The great heart and the master-brain
To dream, to battle, to attain,
To storm the height.

The power that all men strive to gain
Was his by right.

O saddest Spring in all the land!
O Mystery, hard to understand—
When, at the stern unknown command,
With icy breath,
Fate placed within his fearless hand
The gift of Death!

Calm be his sleep who lived to dare.
Go, say a patriot slumbers there
Whose brows were never bent to wear
His loftiest fame,
Yet wrote on Queensland's page a rare—
A fadeless name!

He fought his fight: he won his goal.
His name is on the battle-scroll;
And, whilst beyond our weak control
The tears we shed
Well deep within a Nation's soul,
He is not dead.

George Essex Evans

To A Bigot

Here am I sent a wanderer like to thee,
And here a moment ere the night I stand.
The twin eternities—Has Been, Shall Be—
Gird me on either hand.
My joy or grief—the flicker of a wing
Of some brief insect in the blinding glow!
One moment down the wind my voice shall ring.
This, and no more, I know.

My soul went out amid the ways of men,
By land and sea, and to the stars o'erhead.
I deemed it lost when it came back again.
"Is there a God?" I said.

"Thou fool," it answered, "all are truly kin.
God is the Soul of all—no power apart.
God is the spark Divine that glows within
The Temple of the Heart."

George Essex Evans

To The Irish Dead

'TIS a green isle set in a silver water,
A fairy isle where the shamrock grows.
Land of Legend, the Dream-Queen's daughter—
Out of the Fairies' hands She rose.
They touched Her harp with a tender sighing,
A spirit-song from a world afar,
They touched Her heart with a fire undying
To fight and follow Her battle-star.
Too long, too long thro' the grey years growing
Feud and faction have swept between
The Thistledown and the red Rose blowing
And the three-fold leaf of the Shamrock green;
But the seal of blood, ye shall break it never:
With rifles grounded and bare of head
We drink to the dead who live forever
A silent toast—To the Irish dead!

'Tis an Irish cheer on the hillside ringing,
Where, checked and broken, the vanguards reel,
But on and upward and forward swinging,
The glittering line of the Irish steel!
Like points of light 'mid the boulders lying
Gleam and redden their bayonets keen.
On, thro' the hell of their dead and dying,
Forward, forward, the Shamrock green!

To Ireland, set in the silver water,
To the fighting blood that is proved and tried—
Our sharpest sword and our fairest daughter—
Who saved the Empire and turned the tide!
And Wisdom comes as the days grow older,
We are done with the faults of the past, I ween,
Standing together, shoulder to shoulder,
The Thistle, the Rose, and the Shamrock green!

George Essex Evans

To The Unknown God

O wilt Thou on the day when all is sifted,
All heights of Heaven, all depths of Hell laid bare,
When from the vexed world's heart thy veil is lifted,
And men shall see the dayspring hidden there,
O wilt Thou give to each whose course has drifted,
The thread, the clue by which his feet may fare,
To tread at last with sight supremely gifted
The path he missed in darkness and despair!
This is the hidden secret of the strife—
To find your life and live it—This is Life.

George Essex Evans

Toowoomba

Dark purple, chased with sudden gloom and glory,
Like waves in wild unrest,
Low-wooded billows and steep summits hoary,
Ridge, slope, and mountain crest,
Cease at her feet with faces turned to meet her,
Enthroned, apart, serene
Above her vassal hills whose voices greet her
The Mountain Queen.
Fair City, unto whom as to a lover
Our tender memories run—
Childhood and Springtide's careless hours are over,
And Summer days begun.
Behold, amid what wealth of vine and meadow
Thy maiden feet are set;
And on thy brow, undimmed of care or shadow,
Thy civic coronet!

There have been dreams for thee by men who slumber
Sound where no voice may reach,
Who, ere they joined the host that none may number,
Saw what they strove to teach—
The vision of a city, wide and splendid,
Crowning the Range's wall,
And o'er thy sweeping plateau, far extended,
Welcome for all!

George Essex Evans

Victoria

White Star of Womanhood, whose rays
Thro' years of peace and years of stress
Shed wide o'er all thy people's ways
The light of nobleness—
A memory in their hearts impearled
To nerve thy sons where'er they roam—
Empress and Queen o'er half a World,
Yet Angel of the Home.
Now, when the Shadow of Death has crost
The belt of Empire, sea by sea,
The wide world weeps that freedom lost
A friend like thee,
Who strove for righteousness, who wore
A hero's soul in woman's breast:
God fold thee, now thy work is o'er,
In robes of rest.

Death came not to thy fearless eyes
A King of Terrors, but a friend,
Whispering: "Long years of sacrifice
At last shall end.
Sleep, for the stress of Life is o'er,
And on thy heart is laid release;
Lay down the Crown of Empire for
The Crown of Peace."

George Essex Evans

Welcome

Prince of the race whose Empire is the Sea,
We welcome thee!
Thy ensign floats above our harbour-mouth.
A fairy's hand
Has decked the great Queen City of the South.
By arch and roof, in bannered street and stand,
The vast crowd waits.
The cannon thunder greeting from the strand.
But in our hearts a deeper note vibrates—
The loving welcome of a loyal land.
'Tis the same race that from the iron North
Went faring forth,
Flying the flag of England at the fore;
Nor saw again
The masted city, with its ceaseless roar,
The flower-flecked meadow and the leafy lane,
The steeped hill,
Or ivied ruin rising from the plain,
But for a sign that they remembered still,
Built Greater Britains over all the main.

For thee, and her who comes with thee to grace
Our land and race,
Five million hearts beat with a welcome leal,
North, South and West.
Not in a day was built this Commonweal!
Slow, with our lives, we built it; nor confes't
How stern our fears,
Thro' drought and flood, in fever and unrest.
Its tale: the courage of laborious years.
And for a seal: the life-blood of our best.

Is she not fair whose morning thrills the East?
Youngest, not least,
Of all those Britains that one isle has sown,
One faith impearled
In world-wide union. We can hold our own—
'Gainst us in vain all envious shafts are hurled
If still we be

The Sons of Freedom, 'neath one flag unfurled,
Co-heirs of Fame and Wardens of the Sea,
One tongue, one race, one heart before the world!

George Essex Evans

William Henry Groom Vale`

NOW is there rest for heart and brain
No mandate calls to him again.
The lips that voiced the People's will
Are powerless now, and very still.
The heart that loved the common cause,
The brain that wrought a Nation's laws—
These are no more. There only creeps
The shadow of a common grief.
We, who have reaped what he has sown,
Shall we not sorrow for our own,
Though now in silence and relief
The Tribune of the People sleeps!
Life hath its crowns in War and Art,
In Council Hall and busy Mart—
The noblest that a man may win
Is that his name shall linger in
The People's heart.

For never shall oblivion slight
The hearts that fight the People's fight.
Much less, when, thro' a life of stress,
One voice 'gainst countless odds has stood,
And won, in pain and bitterness,
The People's good.

He buildeth best who buildeth sure,
Who, year by year, lays stone on stone,
Broad-based and steadfast to endure,
Whose guerdon is his work alone—
There is no fame to rise above
The crowning honour of a People's love.

So leave him to his rest, who toiled for all,
Nor gave his life to pile ill-gotten gains.
He passes to obey the Master call:
His work remains.

George Essex Evans

Women Of The West

They left the vine-wreathed cottage and the mansion on the hill,
The houses in the busy streets where life is never still,
The pleasures of the city, and the friends they cherished best:
For love they faced the wilderness -the Women of the West.

The roar, and rush, and fever of the city died away,
And the old-time joys and faces-they were gone for many a day;
In their place the lurching coach-wheel, or the creaking bullock-chains,
O'er the everlasting sameness of the never-ending plains.

In the slab-built, zinc-roofed homestead of some lately taken run,
In the tent beside the bankment of a railway just begun,
In the huts on new selections, in the camps of man's unrest,
On the frontiers of the Nation, live the Women of the West.

The red sun robs their beauty and, in weariness and pain,
The slow years steal the nameless grace that never comes again;
And there are hours men cannot soothe, and words men cannot say
The nearest woman's face may be a hundred miles away.

The wide bush holds the secrets of their longing and desires,
When the white stars in reverence light their holy altar fires,
And silence, like the touch of God, sinks deep into the breast
Perchance He hears and understands the Women of the West.

For them no trumpet sounds the call, no poet plies his arts
They only hear the beating of their gallant, loving hearts.
But they have sung with silent lives the song all songs above?
The holiness of sacrifice, the dignity of love.

Well have we held our fathers creed. No call has passed us by.
We faced and fought the wilderness, we sent our sons to die.
And we have hearts to do and dare, and yet, o'er all the rest,
The hearts that made the Nation were the Women of the West.

George Essex Evans