

Classic Poetry Series

Katharine Lee Bates
- poems -

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Katharine Lee Bates(1859-1929)

A Mountain Storm

OUR blue sierras shone serene, sublime,
When ghostly shapes came crowding up the air,
Shadowing the landscape with some vast despair;
And all was changed as in weird pantomime,
Transfigured into vague, fantastic form
By that tremendous carnival of storm.
Pilgrim processions of bowed trees that climb
To sacred summits, in the clashing hail
Shuddered like flagellants beneath the flail.
Most gracious hills, in that tempestuous time,
Went wild as angered bulls, with bellowing cry
And goring horns that strove to charge the sky.
Masses of rock, long gnawed by stealthy rime,
With sudden roar that made our bravest blanch,
Came volleying down in fatal avalanche.
All nature seemed convulsed in some fierce crime,
And then a rainbow, and behold! the sun
Went comforting the harebells one by one;
And all was still save for the vesper chime
From far, faint belfry bathed in creamy light,
And the soft footfalls of the coming night.

Katharine Lee Bates

A Song Of Riches

What will you give to a barefoot lass,
Morning with breath like wine?
Wade, bare feet! In my wide morass
Starry marigolds shine.
Alms, sweet Noon, for a barefoot lass,
With her laughing looks aglow!
Run, bare feet! In my fragrant grass
Golden buttercups blow.

Gift, a gift for a barefoot lass,
O twilight hour of dreams!
Rest, bare feet, by my lake of glass,
Where the mirrored sunset gleams.

Homeward the weary merchants pass,
With the gold bedimmed by care.
Little they wise that the barefoot lass
Is the only millionaire.

Katharine Lee Bates

Above The Battle

Honor and pity for the smitten field,
The valorous ranks mown down like precious corn,
Whose want must famish love morn after morn,
Till Death, the good physician, shall have healed
The craving and the tearspent eyelids sealed.
Proud be the homes that for each cannon-torn,
Encrimsoned rampart have been left forlorn;
Holy the knells o'er fallen patriots pealed.

But they, above the battle, throng a space
Of starry silences and silver rest.
Commingled ghosts, they press like brothers through
White, dove-winged portals, where one Father's face
Atones their passion, as the ethereal blue
Serenes the fiery glows of east and west.

Katharine Lee Bates

America The Beautiful

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine!

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

Katharine Lee Bates

America To England

1899

Who would trust England, let him lift his eyes
To Nelson, columned o'er Trafalgar Square,
Her hieroglyph of duty, written where
The roar of traffic hushes to the skies;
Or mark, while Paul's vast shadow softly lies
On Gordon's statted sleep, how praise and prayer
Flush through the frank young faces clustering there
To con that kindred rune of sacrifice.
O England, no bland cloud-ship in the blue,
But rough oak plunging on o'er perilous jars
Of reef and ice, our faith will follow you
The more for tempest roar that strains your spars
And splits your canvas, be your helm but true,
Your courses shapen by the eternal stars.

1900

The nightmare melts at last, and London wakes
To her old habit of victorious ease.
More men, and more, and more for over-seas,
More guns until the giant hammer breaks
That patriot folk whom even God forsakes.
Shall not Great England work her will on these,
The foolish little nations, and appease
An angry shame that in her memory aches?
But far beyond the fierce-contested flood,
The cannon-planted pass, the shell-torn town,
The last wild carnival of fire and blood,
Beware, beware that dim and awful Shade,
Armored with Milton's sword and Cromwell's frown,
Affronted Freedom, of her own betrayed!

Katharine Lee Bates

Anniversary Hymn

[sung to tune: "All Saints New"]

Our fathers, in the years grown dim, reared slowly, wall by wall
A holy dwelling-place for Him, that filleth all in all.
They wrought His house of faith and prayer, the rainbow round the Throne,
A precious temple builded fair on Christ the Cornerstone.

The Angel of the Golden Reed hath found the measure strait'
He hears the Great Foundation plead for ampler wall and gate.
The living pillars of the Truth grown on from morn to morn,
And still the heresy of youth is age's creed outworn.

But steadfast is their inner shrine wrought of the heart's fine gold,
Its hunger and its thirst divine, with jewels manifold,
Red sard of pain, hope's emerald gleam, white peace, no glory missed
Of righteous life and saintly dream, Jasper to amethyst.

Spirit of Truth, forbid that we who now God's temple are
And keep the faith with minds more free, our father's fabric mar.
Better than thoughts the stars that search is self still sacrificed,
For only Love can build the church whose corner-stone is Christ.

Katharine Lee Bates

Apollo Laughs

'APOLLO laughs,' the proverb tells,
Far echo of old oracles,
A Delphic waif, —'Once in the year,
Apollo laughs.' O laughter clear
As sunshine, blithe as golden bells!
What mortal folly parallels
Olympian jest and so impels
To mirth till Heaven's bright charioteer,
Apollo, laughs?
'Tis when the annual critic knells
The death of poetry, while swells
Some faint, fresh wood-note, pioneer
Of music earth shall thrill to hear.
Then at Apollo's infidels
Apollo laughs.

Katharine Lee Bates

April In September

WHAT song is in the sap of this brave oak-tree
That to the north-star faces,
Ravened each June by caterpillar masses
Till all its leaves are laces,
Poor shreds whose very shadow grieves the grasses?
I leave it then, but roses and the smoke-tree
Look from the lawn below it
And watch for that gold witch, Midsummer Weather,
With magic breath to blow it
Free of its foes, whose wings make mirth together.
Vital as Idrasil, immortal folk-tree,
When I return, its losses
Are all restored, its fresh, soft foliage gleaming
With peach and citron glosses,
A Druid that is never done with dreaming.

Katharine Lee Bates

Around The Sun

THE weazen planet Mercury,
Whose song is done,
— Rash heart that drew too near
His dazzling lord the Sun!—
Forgets that life was dear,
So shriveled now and sere
The goblin planet Mercury.
But Venus, thou mysterious, Enveiled one,
Fairest of lights that fleet
Around the radiant Sun,
Do not thy pulses beat
To music blithe and sweet,
O Venus, veiled, mysterious?
And Earth, our shadow-haunted Earth,
Hast thou, too, won
The graces of a star
From the glory of the Sun?
Do poets dream afar
That here all lusters are,
Upon our blind, bewildered Earth?
We dream that mighty forms on Mars,
With wisdom spun
From subtler brain than man's,
Are hoarding snow and sun,
Wringing a few more spans
Of life, fierce artisans,
From their deep-grooved, worn planet Mars.
But thou, colossal Jupiter,
World just begun,
Wild globe of golden steam,
Chief nursling of the Sun,
Transcendest human dream,
That faints before the gleam
Of thy vast splendor, Jupiter.
And for what rare delight,
Or woes to shun,
Of races increate,
New lovers of the Sun,
Was Saturn ringed with great

Rivers illuminate,
Ethereal jewel of delight?
Far from his fellows, Uranus
Doth lonely run
In his appointed ways
Around the sovereign Sun, —
Wide journeys that amaze
Our weak and toiling gaze,
Searching the path of Uranus.
But on the awful verge
Of voids that stun
The spirit, Neptune keeps
The frontier of the Sun.
Over the deeps on deeps
He glows, a torch that sweeps
The circle of that shuddering verge.
On each bright planet waits
Oblivion,
Who casts beneath her feet
Ashes of star and sun,
But when all ruby heat.
Is frost, a Heart shall beat,
Where God, within the darkness, waits.

Katharine Lee Bates

At Stonehenge

Grim stones whose gray lips keep your secret well,
Our hands that touch you touch an ancient terror,
An ancient woe, colossal citadel
Of some fierce faith, some heaven-affronting error.
Rude-built, as if young Titans on this wold
Once played with ponderous blocks a striding giant
Had brought from oversea, till child more bold
Tumbled their temple down with foot defiant.
Upon your fatal altar Redbreast combs
A fluttering plume, and flocks of eager swallows
Dip fearlessly to choose their April homes
Amid your crevices and storm-beat hollows.
Even so in elemental mysteries,
Portentous, vast, august, uncomprehended,
Do we dispose our little lives for ease,
By their unconscious courtesies befriended.

Katharine Lee Bates

Babushka

THOU whose sunny heart outglows
Arctic snows;
Russia's hearth-fire, cherishing
Courage almost perishing;
Torch that beacons oversea
Till a world is at thy knee;
Babushka the Belovèd,
What Czar can exile thee?
Sweet, serene, unswerving soul,
To thy goal
Pressing on such mighty pinions
Tyrants quake for their dominions
And devise yet heavier key,
Deeper cell to prison thee,
Babushka the Belovèd,
Thyself art Liberty.
Though thy martyr body, old,
Chains may hold,
Clearer still thy voice goes ringing
Over steppe and mountain, bringing,
Holy mother of the free,
Millions more thy sons to be.
Babushka the Belovèd,
What death can silence thee?

Katharine Lee Bates

Beyond

COLOSSAL orb of space,
Sparkling with diamond
Of countless star on star,
All whirling with wild grace
In their enwoven dance
Illimitably far,
What lies beyond
Your vasty hollow girdled by that bright
River of stellar spray
We call the Milky Way?
Immeasurable ball,
Compassed and clasped in light,
Can you be all,
A flock of fireflies circling in the night,
A maze of jewels that the toss of Chance
Let fall,
Sun, planet, asteroid,
One globe of glories in the utter void?
What lies beyond?
Does the sheer Dark immerse
Infinity, drowning the last faint gold
Of fleeting comets, lost and vagabond?
Or is this astral universe,
All that our utmost vision may behold,
But one amidst a host of star-strewn spheres,
Each zoned with its own stream
Of softer gleam,
Perchance each dowered with wonder, love and tears?
What lies beyond?
The puny human heart still stirs
Against those flaming barriers,
That proud, impenetrable dome
Of fire and ether, seeking for a home,
A Soul that shall respond
To all its questions, longings and despairs.
Is space but raiment that the Spirit wears,
A gem-embroidered mantle to conceal
And yet reveal
In splendors of surprise

Beauty ineffable,
Immanuel?
Or shall we rise,
Higher than dream of Dante ever trod,
From star to star, from empyrean on
To empyrean, till the sun that shone
Over our vexed mortality be wan,
Through life on life, eternal range
From form to form, from change to change,
To find the Unknown God?

Katharine Lee Bates

Blood Road

The Old Year groaned as he trudged away,
His guilty shadow black on the snow,
And the heart of the glad New Year turned grey
At the road Time bade him go.

"O Gaffer Time, is it blood-road still?
Is the noontide dark as the stormy morn?
Is man's will yet as a wild beast's will?
When shall the Christ be born?"

He laughed as he answered, grim Gaffer Time,
Whose laugh is sadder than all men's moan.
"That name rides high on our wrath and crime,
For the Light in darkness shone.

"And thou, fair youngling, wilt mend the tale?"
The New Year stared on the misty word,
Where at foot of a cross all lustrous pale
Men raged for their gods of gold.

"Come back, Old Year, with thy burden bent.
Come back and settle thine own dark debt."
"Nay, let me haste where the years repent,
For I've seen what I would forget."

"And I, the first of a stately train,
The tramp of a century heard behind,
Must I be fouled with thy murder-stain?
Is there no pure path to find?"

The Old Year sneered as he limped away
To the place of his penance dim and far.
The New Year stood in the gates of day,
Crowned with the morning star.

Katharine Lee Bates

Children Of The War

SHRUNKEN little bodies, pallid baby faces,
Eyes of staring terror, innocence defiled,
Tiny bones that strew the sand of silent places,
— This upon our own star where Jesus was a child.
Broken buds of April, is there any garden
Where they yet may blossom, comforted of sun,
While their sad Creator bows to ask their pardon
For the life He gave them, life and death in one?
Spared by steel and hunger, still shall horror blazon
Those white and tender spirits with anguish unforgot;
Half a century hence the haggard look shall gaze on
The outrage of a mother, shall see a grandsire shot.
Man who wings the azure, lassoes the hoof sparkling,
Fire-maned steeds of glory and binds them to his car,
Cannot man whose searchlight leaves no horizon darkling
Safeguard little children upon our golden star?

Katharine Lee Bates

Don'T You See?

The day was hotter than words can tell,
So hot the jelly-fish wouldn't jell.
The halibut went all to butter,
And the catfish had only force to utter
A faint sea-mew - aye, though some have doubted,
The carp he capered and the horn-pout pouted.

The sardonic sardine had his sly heart's wish
When the angelfish fought with the paradise fish.
'T was a sight gave the bluefish the blues to see,
But the seal concealed a wicked glee-

The day it went from bad to worse,
Till the pickerel picked the purse-crab's purse.

And the crab felt crabedder yet no doubt,
Because the oyster would n't shell out.
The sculpin would sculp, but had n't a model,
And the coddlefish begged for something to coddle.

But to both the dolphin refused its doll,
Till the whale was obliged to whale them all.

Katharine Lee Bates

Eavesdropping

THOUGH the winds but stir on their hoary thrones
Of hemlock and pungent pine,
All the whispering woodland tones
Gossip of things divine, —
Why God is gray in the granite rock,
And green in the lichen flake,
And swift in the darting swallow-flock,
And slow in the lapping lake;
Why God is sweet in the hermit-thrush,
And hoarse in the frog; and why
His touch on the bee is golden plush,
And gauze on the stinging fly;
Why God is life in the mushroom there,
And death in the toadstool here;
Mirth in the dancing maidenhair;
In its hidden adder, fear.
Oh, if this berry that stains my lip
Could teach me the woodland chat,
Science would bow to my scholarship,
And Theology doff the hat.

Katharine Lee Bates

England To America

And what of thee, O Lincoln's Land? What gloom
Is darkening above the Sunset Sea?
Vowed Champion of Liberty, deplume
Thy war-crest, bow thy knee,
Before God answer thee.

What talk is thine of rebels? Didst thou turn,
My very child, thy vaunted sword on me,
To scoff to-day at patriot fires that burn
In hearts unbound to thee,
Flames of the Sunset Sea?

Katharine Lee Bates

Fodder For Cannon

Bodies glad, erect,
Beautiful with youth,
Life's elect,
Nature's truth,
Marching host on host,
Those bright, unblemished ones,
Manhood's boast,
Feed them to the guns.

Hearts and brains that teem
With blessing for the race,
Thought and dream,
Vision, grace,
Oh, love's best and most,
Bridegrooms, brothers, sons,
Host on host
Feed them to the guns.

Katharine Lee Bates

Freedom's Battle-Song

RED, white, blue, the flag that leads us on,
Stripes as red as blood well shed by many a hero gone.
Now 'tis ours to storm the towers of tyranny and wrong,
Freedom's sons who front the guns with Freedom's battle-song.
Fly the flag from dome and steeple,
Fly the flag from home and school,
Flag of Freedom's birth,
While we battle that the rule
Of the people
By the people
For the people
Shall prevail o'er all the earth.
Red, white, blue, the flag that leads us on,
White as peace for whose release our fighting gear we don;
Peace enchained, crushed, profaned, shall yet in beauty stand,
Yet shall bless with fruitfulness her desolated land.
Fly the flag from dome and steeple,
Fly the flag from home and school,
Flag of Freedom's birth
While we battle that the rule
Of the people
By the people
For the people
Shall prevail o'er all the earth.
Red, white, blue, the flag that leads us on,
Blue as skies whose starry eyes shall see our victory won.
Freedom's sons and champions, to her our hearts are true,
We who fight for Human Right, and the Red,
White, Blue.
Fly the flag from dome and steeple,
Fly, the flag from home and school,
Flag of Freedom's birth,
While we battle that the rule
Of the people
By the people
For the people
Shall prevail o'er all the earth.

George Macdonald

I HEARD him preach in Oxford years ago,
A snowy-haired and tender-faced apostle.
I watched the beech against the window blow,
And listened to the throstle.
And still a waving branch to memory brings
Those deepset eyes and drooping lids as pressed
Upon too much by earthly visionings
And wistful for their rest.
Still in the flutings of a thrush will sound
Words that upon us then but lightly fell,
Because they were as simple and profound
As some brief parable
Told by the Master to the hungry folk,
While the disciples murmured, but the foam
Wrote it again on Patmos, and it spoke
Above the rage of Rome.

Katharine Lee Bates

Glory

At the crowded gangway they kissed good-bye.
He had half a mind to scold her.
An officer's mother and not keep dry
The epaulet on his shoulder.

He had forgotten mother and fame,
His mind in a blood-mist floated,
But when reeling back from carnage they came,
One told him: "You are promoted!"

His friend smiled up from the wet red sand,
The look was afar, eternal,
But he tried to salute with his shattered hand:
"Room now for another colonel!"

Again he raged in that lurid hell
Where the country he loved had thrown him.
"You are promoted!" shrieked a shell.
His mother would not have known him.

Katharine Lee Bates

Graves At Christiania

WE bore them their own wild heather
And ash-boughs jeweled red,
There where they sleep together,
Greatest of Norway's dead.
More than the hush of churches
Is the hush where Ibsen lies,
Columned by poplars and birches,
Vaulted by glorious skies.
Over that heart undaunted
Soars a shaft of labrador,
Black yet beauty-haunted,
Marked with the hammer of Thor.
But what memorial lifted
To Björnson, loved of the folk?
We sought till our quest had drifted
Where tender voices spoke,
Where never a rail encloses
That resting-place of fame,
A little plot of roses,
Nameless nor needing name.

Katharine Lee Bates

Great Twin Brethren, The

The battle will not cease
Till once again on those white steeds ye ride,
O heaven-descended Twins,
Before humanity's bewildered host.
Our javelins
Fly wide,
And idle is our cannon's boast.
Lead us, triumphant Brethren, Love and Peace.
A fairer Golden Fleece
Our more adventurous Argo fain would seek,
But save, O Sons of Jove,
Your blended light go with us, vain employ
It were to rove
This bleak,
Blind waste. To unimagined joy
Guide us, immortal Brethren, Love and Peace.

Katharine Lee Bates

His Bit

GALLANTLY swung the old carpenter up to his door,
Drums and fifes in his tread,
But softly he crossed the braided mats on the floor,
Gently he stroked her head.
'More folks were there at the station than ever I knew,
Bidding the lad good-by.
Here's a daisy he picked at the platform's edge for you,
Kissing it on the sly.
'He'll do his part, our boy, on the fighting line';
— She caught the flower to her lips—
'And you with your knitting, and I have signed up for mine,
Work on the wooden ships.
'Oh, but it's hard to be old when the bugles call,
Yet I hav'n't lost my chance.
I'll be in the shipyard the day the first trees fall,
Before the boy's in France.'

Katharine Lee Bates

How Long?

How long, O Prince of Peace, how long? We sicken of the shame
Of this wild war that wraps the world, a roaring dragon-flame
Fed on earth's glorious youth, high hearts all passionate to cope
—O Chivalry of Hope!—

With the cloudy host of the infidel and the Holy Earth reclaim.
For each dear land is Holy Land to her own fervent sons
Who fling in loyal sacrifice their lives before the guns,
But when they meet their foes above the battlesmoke, they laugh,
And all together quaff

The cup of welcome Honor pouts for her slain champions.

Oh, if a thousandth part of all this treasure, purpose, skill,
Were poured into the crucible transforming wrong and ill,
By the white magic of a wise and generous brotherhood,
To righteousness and good,

The world would be divine again, with eery war-cry still.

Poor world so worn with wickedness, bedimmed with rage and fear,
Sad world that sprang forth singing from God's hand, a golden sphere,
O yet may Love's creative breath renew thee, fashioned twice
A shining Paradise,

Unsullied in the astral choir, with Joy for charioteer.

How long shall bomb and bullet think for human brains? How long
Shall folk of the burned villages in starving, staggering throng
Flee from the armies that, in turn, are mangled, maddened, slain,
Till earth is all one stain

Of horror, and the soaring larks are slaughtered in their song?

Oh, may this war, this blasphemy that blots the globe with blood,
Slay war forever, cleanse the earth in its own mighty flood

Of tears, tears unassuageable, that will not cease to fall

Till Time has covered all

Our guilty century with sleep, and the new eras bud!

How long? The angels of the stars entreat the clouded Throne
In anguish for their brother Earth, who stands, like Cain, alone,
And hides the mark upon his brow, the while their harps implore
The Silence to restore

Peace to this wayward Son of God, whose music is a moan.

Come swiftly, Peace! Oh, swiftly come, with healing in thy feet;

Bring back to tortured battlefields the waving of the wheat;

Bring back to broken hearths, whereby the wistful ghosts will walk,

Blithe hum of household talk,

Till childhood dare to sport again and maiden hood be sweet,
Though thou must come by crimson road, with grief and mercy come,
Not with the insolence of strength, the boast of fife and drum;
Come with adventure in thine eyes for the splendid tasks that wait,
To weld these desolate
Crushed lands into the fellowship of thy millennium.
O Peace, to rear thy temple that no strife may overawe!
O Purity, to fashion thee a palace without flaw! Galilee,
To build the state on thee,
And shape the deeds of nations by thy yet untested law!

Katharine Lee Bates

If You Could Come

My love, my love, if you could come once more
From your high place,
I would not question you for heavenly lore,
But, silent, take the comfort of your face.

I would not ask you if those golden spheres
In love rejoice,
If only our stained star hath sin and tears,
But fill my famished hearing with your voice.

One touch of you were worth a thousand creeds.
My wound is numb
Through toil-pressed, but all night long it bleeds
In aching dreams, and still you cannot come.

Katharine Lee Bates

In A Northern Wood

FRAGRANT are the cedar-boughs stretching green and level,
Feasting-halls where waxwings flit at their spicy revel,
But O the pine, the questing pine, that flings its arms on high
To search the secret of the sun and escalate the sky!
Rueful hemlocks, gaunt and old, with boughs a-droop, despairing,
Clutch for touch of mother-earth; the while the pine is daring
To rock the stars amid its cones and lull them with its croon,
And snare the silver eagle that is nested in the moon.

Katharine Lee Bates

In August

BESIDE the country road with truant grace
Wild carrot lifts its circles of white lace.
From vines whose interwoven branches drape
The old stone walls, come pungent scents of grape.
The sumach torches burn; the hardhack glows;
From off the pines a healing fragrance blows;
The pallid Indian pipe of ghostly kin
Listens in vain for stealthy moccasin.
In pensive mood a faded robin sings;
A butterfly with dusky, gold-flecked wings
Holds court for plummy dandelion seed
And thistledown, on throne of fireweed.
The road goes loitering on, till it hath missed
Its way in goldenrod, to keep a tryst,
Beyond the mosses and the ferns that veil
The last faint lines of its forgotten trail,
With Lonely Lake, so crystal clear that one
May see its bottom sparkling in the sun
With many-colored stones. The only stir
On its green banks is of the kingfisher
Dipping for prey, but oft, these haunted nights,
That mirror shivers into dazzling lights,
Cleft by a falling star, a messenger
From some bright battle lost, Excalibur.

Katharine Lee Bates

In The Oak

THE leaves and tassels of the oak
Were golden-green with May,
Pavilion whence forever broke
Some angel roundelay.
A carol like a glory came
From topmost twig astir,
Enkindled by a flying flame,
The scarlet tanager.
The tree was glad as Paradise
When, eager soul on soul,
The saints flock home. There glistened twice
A wild-throat oriole;
And once the grosbeak's rosy breast
Poured its enchanted hymn;
While sunny wing and jewel crest
Lit many a blissful limb.
The whole wide world was in my oak
Whose catkins danced for mirth,
— Plumes gray as curling city smoke,
Plumes brown as fresh-plowed earth;
Even heaven had graced our festival,
For oft the loving eye
Would find, coaxed by a wistful call,
The bluebird's fleck of sky.

Katharine Lee Bates

Jerusalem

AT last, at last the Crescent
Falls back before the Cross.
Great spirits, incandescent
With longing and with loss,
Gleam from the clouds, crusaders
Who knew no requiem
While Saladin's invaders
Possessed Jerusalem.
King David harps for Zion
A glad, celestial psalm;
The face of the young lion
Is toward the sacred palm;
New Europe's noblest nation
Has won the diadem
Of him who brings salvation
To thee, Jerusalem.
Isaiah, Hosea, Amos,
Who cried against thy sin,
Whose vision saw thy famous
Bright bulwarks beaten in
And made a cup of trembling,
God's house a broken gem,
On all the winds assembling
Comfort Jerusalem.
The Christ, Messiah proven,
Whose Gentile armies free
Thy walls, not battle-cloven,
But won with jubilee;
As when thy people, pressing,
Would touch His garment's hem,
Enters with love and blessing
Thy gates, Jerusalem.
Arise and shine, O City,
The joy of all the earth!
Show poverty God's pity;
Teach misery God's mirth.
Be thou to all the nations
A light, ay, even to them
Who wrought thy tribulations,

Holy Jerusalem!

Katharine Lee Bates

Lydd

For the Reunion of the Bates Family at Quincy, August 3, 1916

FAR away on the sunny levels

Where Kent lies drowsing beside the sea,

Where over the foxglove as over the foam

The gray gull sails, is our ancient home.

Wide though we wander, something follows,

The cradle-call from a village hid

Under the cloud of rooks and swallows

That love its thatches and orchards, Lydd.

Here they sported in rustic revels,

Our sturdy forbears, while ale flowed free,

Richard and Susan and Sybil and John,

All their jollity hushed and gone;

Our grandsires proud of their scraps of Latin,

Our grandams, 'notable huswifs' all;

We may touch the very settles they sat in,

But they, like their shadows upon the wall,

Have slipped from their sweet, accustomed places,

Stephen, Samuel, Ellen, Anne.

The pewter flagons they valued so

Stand, though battered, in shining row,

But the hands that scoured them, long since folded,

Lips that smacked over them, long since dust,

Are known no more in the town they molded

To civic honor and neighbor trust.

Ah, for their quaint, forgotten graces,

Flushing raptures of maid and man,

James and Alice, Thomas and Joan,

Blood of our blood and bone of our bone!

Only the trampled slabs and brasses

That floor the aisles of the old church tell

Their dates and virtues to him who passes,

How long they labored in Lydd, how well.

Their Catholic sins have all been shriven,

And their Puritan righteousness pardoned, too.

Lax and merry, or holy and harsh,

They have flown to Heaven from Romney Marsh,

Lydia, David, Joshua, Zealous,

'Katharine Spinster,' yet still on earth

Their wraiths abide in our being, jealous
For the brief, blunt name and its modest worth.
For each of us is phantom-driven,
A haunted house where a glimmering crew
Of dear and queer ancestral ghosts
Quarrel and match their family boasts,
Color our half and fashion our noses,
Shape the deed and govern the mood;
In every rose are a thousand roses;
Every man is a multitude.
A patchwork we are of antique vagaries;
Primitive passions trouble our pulse.
'Margery, relict of Andrew Bate,'
Clement, Rachel and William hate
And adore in us. No vain sunriser
In all our clan, but he owes the praise
To some progenital dew-surpriser
Who knelt to the dawn in pagan days.
Sailors that steered for the misty Canaries,
Fishers whose feet loved the feel of the dulse,
Agnes, Simon, Julian, George,
Faithful in kitchen, hayfield and forge,
Give us our dreams, our sea-love, the voices
That speak in our conscience, rebuke and forbid.
Hark! In our festal laughter rejoices
A quavering note from the graves of Lydd.

Katharine Lee Bates

Man Overboard

YOUNG, the naked stoker who went
Mad with the fires and leapt to the sea,
Boyhood still in the voice that sent
One shrill cry back from eternity.
Perchance from the phosphorescent gleams
That shot through our wake of swirling foam,
On his delirious brain flashed dreams
Of a waiting mother, an English home.
The ocean clad him in cool, soft robe;
The ship fled on, as the guilty flee;
And the sun, a crimson-belted globe,
Slipped down to comfort him under the sea.

Katharine Lee Bates

Marching Feet

THESE August nights, hushed but for drowsy peep
Of fledglings, tremble with a strange vibration,
A sound too far for hearing, sullen, dire,
Shaking the earth.
Even within the swaying veils of sleep
We are haunted by a horror, a mistrust,
A muffled perturbation,
Vaguely aware
Of prodigies in birth,
Of brooding thunders unbelievable,
Fierce forces that conspire
Against mankind.
We start awake;
The purple glooms, all sweet
With dewy fragrance, bear
Our eyelids down, but still we feel the beat,
Dull, doomful, irretrievable,
Of Europe's marching feet,
Enchanted, blind,
By wizard music led
Over crushed blossoms, through the mocking dust,
To baths of blood and fire.
Beyond the seas, in these hushed hills we dread
That hollow, rhythmic tread
Of nation against nation,
That ancient, bitter thrust
Of war against a world that might be fair
As any golden star that rides the air.
We cannot rest for marching feet that must
Harvest and home forsake,
Inexorably called to take
The road of desolation,
Trampling on hearts that break.

Katharine Lee Bates

Matthew Arnold On Hearing Him Read His Poems In Boston

A stranger, schooled to gentle arts,
He stepped before the curious throng;
His path into our waiting hearts
Already paved by song.

Full well we knew his choristers,
Whose plaintive voices haunt our rest,
Those sable-vested harbingers
Of melancholy guest.

We smiled on him for love of these,
With eyes that swift grew dim to scan
Beneath the veil of courteous ease
The faith-forsaken man.

To his wan gaze the weary shows
And fashions of our vain estate,
Our shallow pain and false repose,
Our barren love and hate,

Are shadows in a land of graves,
Where creeds, the bubbles of a dream,
Flash each and fade, like melting waves
Upon a moonlight stream.

Yet loyal to his own despair,
Erect beneath a darkened sky,
He deems the austerest truth more fair
Than any gracious lie;

And stands, heroic, patient, sage,
With hopeless hands that bind the sheaf,
Claiming God's work with His wage,
The bard of unbelief.

Katharine Lee Bates

Mist

ON the mountain side they fashion,
Those rifting shreds of storm,
A figure of strange passion,
A winged and sworded form.
Majestic, wild, colossal,
With angry arm thrown high;
Those swaying shoulders jostle
The glory from the sky.
Then flows the happy hour.
That tyrant of the mist
Turns to a wavering tower
And melts in amethyst,
Foretelling thus the cycle
— O speed it, Holy Dove!—
When the Archangel Michael
Shall vanish into Love.

Katharine Lee Bates

Mother

'MOTHER! Mother!' he called as he fell
In the horror there
Of a bursting shell
That strewed red flesh on the air.
Far away over sea and land:
The knitting dropt
From an old white hand,
And a heart for an instant stopt.
But it was Death, dark mother and wise,
All-tenderest,
Who kissed his eyes
And gathered him to her breast.

Katharine Lee Bates

My Lady Of Whims

(A medieval Spanish legend slanderously setting forth the utter unreason of woman.)

ROMAQUIA sat and wept her
Lace mantilla full of tears.
King Abit laid by his scepter,
Left the Council of the Peers.
'Now what sorrow makes thee cry, mate?
Queen of Seville, sobbing so?'
"Tis your Andalusian climate.
Oh, I want to see the snow.'
'Speak thy wish and it is granted;
Thine to bid and mine to please.'
All the hills and plains he planted
With a myriad almond trees.
When the suns of February
Made them white with blossoming,
Romaquia was so merry
That she kissed the happy king.
'Every ill has its panacea,'
Wrote the learned King Abit,
Smiling on his Romaquia,
While he wondered at his wit.
Romaquia sat and wept her
Dainty fan into a dud.
King Abit threw by his scepter
With an unmajestic thud.
'What's the trouble, top of treasures?'
'See those women by the flood
Kneading bricks, but I've no pleasures.
I can't dabble in the mud.'
Loud he called his master mason
And in bower of eglantine
Built a jade and jasper basin,
Filled with rose-water and wine.
Then for mud he poured in spices,
Ginger, mace and cinnamon,
Sugar, honey, syrups, ices,
That the Queen might have her fun.
'Every ill has its panacea,'

Wrote the learned King Abit
Wondering if his Romaquia
Recognized her husband's wit.
Romaquia in her garden
Watered all the trees with salt
Till they faded, and the warden
Was beheaded for the fault
Of his lachrymose sultana.
Oleander, citron, balm,
Orange, lemon and banana,
The pomegranate, myrtle, palm,
All were drooping for distresses
That the Queen poured out in tears,
Pouting at the King's caresses
Till he longed to box her ears.
'Let me be!' she snapped. "You squeeze me,
Clumsy thing! You never try
In the very least to please me,
So of course I have to cry.'
'Every ill has its panacea,'
Wrote the rueful King Abit,
'Every ill but Romaquia.
Wives' caprices wear out wit.'

Katharine Lee Bates

New Roads

FAR road for words that rush,
Arrowing space,
Swifter than meteors flush
Star-road in race.
Wireless! Tireless, leaping the wave!
Roger Bacon laughs in his grave.
One road, o'er-steep to climb
Since world began,
Winged in our wonder-time,
Sun-road for man.
Air-ship! Fair ship, soaring the blue!
Galileo had burned for you.
Dread road for Freedom's sons,
Sworn to release
Life from the threat of guns,
Red road to peace.
New knights! true knights! gleam of God's blade!
Lincoln leads in the Last Crusade.

Katharine Lee Bates

New Year

WHITE year, white year,
Muffled soft in snow,
A diamond spray whose gems are gone
Before their grace we know,
A crystal-coated spray whose hours
Melt when looked upon,
Hoarfrost stars and hoarfrost flowers,
White year!

Green year, green year,
Sweet with sun and showers,
A windblown spray whose blossoms bright
Are the seven-colored hours,
A dancing spray whose leaves are days,
A spray whose leaves delight
In azure gleam and silver haze,
Green year!

New Year, new year
From rosy leaf to gold,
A shining spray on the Tree of Time
Where myriad sprays unfold,
A spray so fair that God may see
And gather it, bloom and rime,
To deck the doors of Eternity,
New Year!

Katharine Lee Bates

Night And Morning

THE night was loud with tumult; trees were torn
Sheer from their roots by the delirious wind;
In some waste dreamland wandered all forlorn
A smitten soul, bewildered, broken, blind.
The mists had lifted; evanescent gleams
Of tender emerald lighted every leaf,
While from a casement smiled, escaped from dreams,
A quiet face made exquisite by grief.

Katharine Lee Bates

Northward

THESE palms weave shadows of delight,
But the truant heart flies forth
To birch-boles glistening more than white
In the forests of the North.

Katharine Lee Bates

Not Yet

NOT yet hath Nature, lovely colorist,
Bestirred her from creative dream to fling
Soft flame upon the woods, —nay, not to dip
One pleading maple-tip
In carmine; all the waiting world is whist,
Alert to hear the first faint flutes of spring.
Not yet the tingling flood of blue and gold
Is poured through heaven, but o'er the misty pond,
Quiet as patterned silk, flushed saplings lean;
And the auspicious green
Through the deep woods and on the unpathed wold
Brightens in patient moss and wistful frond.
Not yet cascades of melody invoke
The holy dawn, but all the air perceives,
By some fine thrill, the rushing northward flight
Of myriad wings, despite
The nonchalances of this crookback oak,
Still clinging to its russet shreds of leaves.
Not yet the laughing hid-folk of the earth
Thrust Up white helm and golden coronet,
Sweet elfin host armored in gossamer,
But gentle tremors stir
The conscious mold; new beauty comes to birth
Under the snow's fast-melting coverlet.
Not yet, not yet the yearly miracle
Is wrought, but ecstasy is on the wing,
And her divine, irrevocable flight
Is swift as all delight.
The heart is hushed as for the sacring-bell,
Awe-smitten by expectancy of spring.

Katharine Lee Bates

Only Mules

'The submarine was quite within its rights in sinking the cargo of the Armenian,—1,422 mules valued at \$191,400.'

No matter; we are only mules
And slow to understand
We drown according to the rules
Of war, we contraband
War reckons us as shot and shell,
As so much metal lost.
And mourns the dollars gone to swell
The monstrous bill of cost.
Would that we had been wrought of steel
And not of quivering flesh!
Of iron, not of nerves that feel,
And maddened limbs that thresh
The sucking seas in stubborn strife
For that dim right of ours
To what no factory fashions, life,
No Edison endowers.
Our last wild screams are choked; you know
It does not matter, for
We're only mules that suffered so,
And contraband of war.

Katharine Lee Bates

Our Crown Of Praise

A PRAISE beyond all other praise of ours
This nation holds in jealous trust for him
Who may approve himself, even in these dim,
Swift days of destiny, the soul that towers
Above the turmoil of contending powers,
A beacon firm, while seas of fury brim
The world's long-labored fields and vineyards trim,
Remembering forests and unconscious flowers.
Our nation longs for such a living light,
Kindred to stars and their eternal dreams,
A steadfast glow whatever breakers roll,
Cleaving confusions of the stormy night
With gracious lusters and revealing gleams,
—Longs for the shining of a Lincoln soul.

Katharine Lee Bates

Our First Families

SWEET are the manners of the wood,
Our only old society,
Where all the folk are glad and good
In unrebuked variety.
Within this gentle commonweal
No envy falls with fairy gold
On jewel-weed and Solomon's seal,
Moth mullein and marsh marigold.
No rubied vines despise the lot
Of ragged neighbors; whether moss
Be flat or tufted matters not,
Pale peat or glittering feather-moss.
The common milkwort holds estates
And wears his purple royalty;
The bluets keep their ancient traits
With quiet Quaker loyalty.
These families of long descent,
Our tutors in amenities,
Have pedigrees of such extent
They well may share serenities.
Ere first the hollow Catacombs
Thrilled to a Christian litany
There bloomed beside the redmen's homes
Spicebush and fragrant dittany.
This rock's huge shadow rested on
Gentian and nodding trillium
Before the rise of Babylon,
Before the fall of Ilium.

Katharine Lee Bates

Our First War-Christmas

HARD to wait for the postman's tramp
Up the snowy walk, for the hand that gropes
Deep in his pack, while the children tease
For the rainbow-ribboned packages,
And women wax faint with their fearful hopes
For those tattered, grimy envelopes
With the foreign stamp,
— Word, dear word from overseas,
From the fleet, the trench, the camp.
Oh, not jewels nor curious toys
Of art and fashion, no gift most rare
Can gladden those eyes that weep in the hush
Of lonely nights, can bring the flush
To faces white with their silent prayer,
Like the letters, precious beyond compare,
From our soldier-boys,
Letters to laugh over, cry over, crush
To the lips, our Christmas joys.

Katharine Lee Bates

Our President

GOD help him! Ay, and let us help him, too,
Help him with our one hundred million minds
Molded to loyalty, so that he finds
The faith of the Republic pulsing through
All clashes of opinion, faith still true
To its divine young vision of mankind's
Freedom and brotherhood. May all the winds,
North, south, east, west, waft him our honor due!
For he is one who, when the tempest breaks
In shattering fury, wild with thunder-jars
And javelins of lightning that transform
All the familiar scene to horror, makes
A hush about him in the heart of storm,
Remembering the quiet of the stars.

Katharine Lee Bates

Out Of Siberia

SHAKERAGS, cripples, gaunt and dazed,
Prison-broken hosts on hosts,
Torture-scarred and dungeon-crazed,
Down the convict road they pour,
More and more and myriads more,
Terrible as ghosts.

Shuffling feet that miss the chain,
Shoulders welted, faces hoar,
Sightless eyes that stare in vain,
Writen limbs and idiot tongue—
They are old who were so young
When they passed before.

Grimy from the mines, a stain
And a horror on the white
Sweep of the Siberian plain,
These, grotesque and piteous, these
Fill the earth with jubilees,
Flood the skies with light.

While each squalid tatter spins
At the sport of wind and snow,
Russia hails her paladins,
And with cheer or sob proclaims
Long unspoken hero names,
Names they hardly know.

They unto themselves are vague,
Even as they tear the bread
That their famished fingers beg;
They themselves are specters, who
Melt into their retinue
Of unnumbered dead.

From the shackles, from the whips,
Over frozen steppes they stream,
Quavering songs on ghastly lips,
Haggard, holy caravan,
Saviours of the soul of man,
Martyrs of a dream;
Martyrs of a dream fulfilled,
Givers who have paid the price,
Homing now to hearths long chilled,

Guests exalted over all
At glad Freedom's festival,
Saints of sacrifice.

Katharine Lee Bates

Pigeon Post

White wing, white wing,
Lily of the air,
What word dost bring,
On whose errand fare?

Red word, red word,
Snowy plumes abhor.
I, Christ's own bird,
Do the work of war.

Katharine Lee Bates

Pity Of It, The

I. In South Africa

Over the lonesome African plain
The stars look down, like eyes of the slain.

A bumping ride across gullies and ruts,
Now a grumble and now a jest,
A bit of profanity jolted out,
--Whist!
Into a hornet's nest!
Curse on the scout!
Long-bearded Boers rising out of the rocks,
Rocks that already are crimson-splashed,
Ping-ping of bullets, stabbings and cuts,
As if hell hurtled and hissed,
--Then, muffling the shocks,
A sting in the breast,
A mist,
A woman's face down the darkness flashed,
Rest.

All as before, save for still forms spread
Under the boulders dripping red.

Over the lonesome African plain
The stars look down, like eyes of the slain.

II. In the Philippines

Silvery rice-fields whisper wide
How for home and freedom their owners died.

We've set the torch to their bamboo town,
And out they come in a scampering rush,
Little brown men with spears.
Shoot!

Down they go in a crush,
Sickening smears,
Hideous writhing huddles and heaps
Under the palms and the mango-trees.
More, still more! Shoot 'em down
Like brown jack-rabbits that scoot
With comical leaps
Out of the brush.
No loot?
No prisoners, then. As for these --
Hush!

The flag that dreamed of delivering
Shudders and droops like a broken wing.

Silvery rice-felds whisper wide
How for home and freedom their owners died.

Katharine Lee Bates

Playmates

SUMMER fervors slacken;
Sumac torches dim;
There's bronze upon the bracken;
September has a whim
For carmine, pearl and amber
Touches on her green;
Busy squirrels clamber;
Restless birds convene.
Where Indian pipe still blanches,
Where hoary lichen flakes
Forest trunks and branches,
The golden foxglove makes
A mimic wood that tosses
Warning to the trees,
Then droops upon the mosses,
Heavy with bloom and bees.
What rumbelow of revel
Deep in those honey-jars!
A saffron moth, with level
And languid motion, stars
The air until he settles
At the last pink-clover inn,
Ignoring prouder petals
That would his favor win.
Among those wildwood vagrants
I strolled, alone no more.
Was it the sweet-fern fragrance
That stirred a long-sealed door
Of Time's enchanted tower?
A little maid ran free
And for one sunny hour
My childhood played with me.

Katharine Lee Bates

Robin's Secret

'T IS the blithest, bonniest weather for a bird to flirt a feather,
For a bird to trill and warble, all his wee red breast a-swell.
I 've a secret. You may listen till your blue eyes dance and glisten,
Little maiden, but I 'll never, never, never, never tell.

You 'll find no more wary piper, till the strawberries wax riper
In December than in June—aha! all up and down the dell,
Where my nest is set, for certain, with a pink and snowy curtain,
East or west, but which I 'll never, never, never, never tell.

You may prick me with a thistle, if you ever hear me whistle
How my brooding mate, whose weariness my carols sweet dispel,
All between the clouds and clover, apple-blossoms drooping over,
Titters low that I must never, never, never, never tell.

Oh, I swear no closer fellow stains his bill in cherries mellow.
Tra la la! and tirra lirra! I 'm the jauntiest sentinel,
Perched beside my jewel-casket, where lie hidden—don't you ask it,
For of those three eggs I 'll never, never, never, never tell.

Chirp! chirp! chirp! alack! for pity! Who hath marred my merry ditty?
Who hath stirred the scented petals, peeping in where robins dwell?
Oh, my mate! May Heaven defend her! Little maidens' hearts are tender,
And I never, never, never, never, never meant to tell.

Katharine Lee Bates

Russia

WHAT sudden voice peals to the Caucasus,
To Finland and the bitter Caspian,
To those Siberian prisons whither man
Shall seek as to a shrine, that mutinous,
Divine word Liberty? Impetuous
She rises, Holy Russia, shakes the ban
From her stooped shoulders of colossal span,
A youth in diamond mail, miraculous.
Is this the foretaste of a harvest worth
All agony of its encrimsoned sod?
Are dreams come true? Does this wild roar of wars,
That wellnigh breaks the shuddering heart of earth,
Sound in the hearing of the far-off stars
A golden voice of Freedom, voice of God?

Katharine Lee Bates

Santa Claus' Riddle

Of all the happy and holy times
That fill the steeples with merry chimes
And warm our hearts in the coldest climes,
'Twas Christmas eve, as I live by rhymes.

One by one had the drowsy oaks
Wrapt about them their snow-flake cloaks,
And snugly fastened, with diamond pins,
Fleecy nightcaps beneath their chins.

The stars had kissed the hills good-night,
But lingered yet, with a taper light,
Till the chattering lips of the little streams
Were sealed with frost for their winter dreams.

And the silver moonbeams softly fell
On cots as white as the lily-bell,
Where the nested children sweetly slept,
While watch above them their angels kept.

Eyes of gray and of hazel hue,
Roguish black eyes and bonny blue,
All with their satin curtains drawn,
Peeped not once till the shining dawn.

But still through the silent eventide
Brown eyes twain were opened wide,
Where, bolt upright in his pillows, sate
A wise little wean called Curly Pate.

Now yet the lore of schools and books
Had troubled the peace of his childish looks,
But through the valleys of Fairyland
He had walked with Wisdom, hand in hand.

Once midsummer eves he would hear, perchance,
The shrill, sweet pipes of the elfin dance,
And their dewy prints in the dawning trace
On tremulous carpets of cobweb lace.

He had caught the clink of the hammers fine,
Where the goblins delve in their darksome mine,
In green cocked hats of a queer design,
With crystal tears in their ruby eyne.

He had seen where the golden basket swings
At the tip of the rainbow's dazzling wings,
Full of the silver spoons that fall
Into the mouths of babies small.

He had met Jack Frost in tippet and furs,
Pricking his thumbs on the chestnut burrs,
And this learned laddie could tell, no doubt,
Why nuts fall down and friends fall out.

And now, while the dusky night waxed late,
All nid-nodding sat Curly Pate,
Scaring the dreams, whose wings of gauze
Would veil his vision from Santa Claus.

And ever he raised, by a resolute frown,
The heavy lids that came stealing down
To rest their silken fringes brown
On the rosiest cheek in Baby-Town.

Till at last, — so the legend tells, —
He heard the tinkle of silver bells;
Tinkle! tinkle! a jocund tune
Between the snow and the sinking moon.

O, then, how the heart of our hero beat!
How it throbbed in time to the music sweet,
While gaily rung on the frosted roofs
The frolicsome tramp of reindeer hoofs!

And down the chimney by swift degrees
Came worsted stockings and velvet knees,
Till from furry cap unto booted feet
Dear Saint Nicholas stood complete.

Blessings upon him! and how he shook

His plumb little sides with a mirthful look,
As he crammed, his bright, blue eyes a-twinkle,
The bairnie's sock in its every wrinkle.

May he live forever — the blithe old soul,
With cheeks so ruddy and shape so droll,
Throned on a Yule-log, crowned with holly,
The king of kindness, the friend of folly!

His task was done, and he brushed the snow
From his crispy beard, as he turned to go;
From his crispy beard and his tresses hoar,
As he tiptoed over the moonlight floor.

But the sparkling flakes to delicious crumbs
Of frosted cakes and to sugar-plums
Changed as they fell, whereas near by
A bubble of laughter proved the spy.

Back from the chimney flashed the Saint,
And stamped his feet in a rage so quaint
That from scores of pockets the dolls in flee
Popped up their curious heads to see.

'Oho!' in a terrible voice he spake,
'By the Mistletoe Bough! a boy awake!
Now freeze my whiskers! but in my pack
I'll stow him away for a jumping-jack.

'Wise as an owlet? Quick! the proof!
My reindeer stamp on the snowy roof.
So read my riddle, if sage you be,
Or up the chimney you go with me.

'Name me the tree of the deepest roots,
Whose boughs are laden with sweetest fruits,
In bleakest weather which blooms aright,
And buds and bears in a single night.'

Did Curly Pate tremble? Never a whit.
Below the curls was the mother-wit;
And well I ween that his two eyes brown

Spied the dimple beneath the frown.

So shaking shyly, with childish grace,
The ringlets soft from his winsome face,
He peeped through his lashes and answered true,
As I trow that a brave little man should do:

'Please thy Saintship, no eyes have seen
Thy wondrous orchards of evergreen;
But where is the wean who doth no long
The whole year through for thy harvest song?

'The Christmas Tree hath struck deep roots
In human hearts: its wintry fruits
Are sweet with love, And the bairns believe
It buddeth and beareth on Holy Eve.'

A stir in the chimney, a crackle of frost,
A tinkle of bells on the midnight lost;
And in mirth and music the riddling guest
Had smiled and vanished, as saints know best.

But low on his pillow the laddie dear
Sank and slumbered, till chanticleer,
Crowing apace, bade children wake
To bless the dawn for the Christ-child's sake.

Katharine Lee Bates

Santa's Stocking

Dame Snow has been knitting all day
With needles of crystal and pearl
To make a big, beautiful stocking
For Santa, her merriest son;
And now in some wonderful way
She has hung it, by twist and by twirl,
On the tip of the moon, and sits rocking,
Old mother, her day's work done.

How long and how empty it flaps,
Like a new, white cloud in the sky!
The stars gleam above it for candles;
But who is to fill it and trim?
Dame Snow in her rocking-chair naps.
When Santa comes home by and by,
Will he find — O scandal of scandals! —
No Christmas at all for him?

Dear Saint of the reindeer sleigh,
At his tink-a-link-tinkle-a-link,
The evergreens blossom with tapers;
'Tis Christmas by all the clocks;
And wherever he calls, they say,
The most polished andirons wink,
The sulkiest chimney capers,
And Baby kicks off its socks.

His pack is bursting with toys;
The dollies cling round his neck;
And sleds come slithering after
As he takes the roofs at a run.
Blithe lover of girls and boys,
Bonbons he pours by the peck;
Holidays, revels and laughter,
Feasting and frolic and fun.

Who would dream that his kind heart aches
— Heart shaped like a candied pear,
Sweet heart of our housetop rover —

For the homes where no carols resound,
For the little child that wakes
To a hearth all cold and bare,
For Santa, his white world over,
Finds Christmas doesn't go round!

Dame Snow has been knitting all day
With needles of crystal and pearl
To make a big, beautiful stocking
For Santa, her busiest son;
And now in some wonderful way
She has hung it, by twist and by twirl,
On the tip of the moon, and sits rocking,
Old mother, her day's work done.

Let us bring the dear Saint from our store
Fair gifts wrapped softly in love;
Let all gentle children come flocking,
Glad children whose Christmas is sure;
Let us bring him more treasures and more,
While the star-candles glisten above,
For whatever we put in his stocking,
Santa Claus gives to the poor.

Katharine Lee Bates

Shakespeare's Festival

WHILE we keep our Poet's Tercentennial,
Every school and city with its emulous
Antic or solemnity, what tremulous
Laughter on the air! O Puck perennial!
Leave us clumsy mortals to our drolleries,
Strenuous gambols of Shakespearean gratitude,
And be off to find him in Beatitude,
Win his genial glance with elf cajoleries,
And then tell him of our sage frivolity
Till his golden laughter wake eternity,
And about him flock his old fraternity,
All his scapegrace fellows of the quality,
Greene not jealous, Heminge no more stammering,
Marlowe one white flame of passion glorious,
Rare Ben modest, vagabonds victorious,
All about the Master crowding, clamoring,
Talking all at once in odes and triolets,
Sonnets like the stars for prodigality,
While Will Shakespeare loafs with Immortality
On a stolen bank of Arden violets.

Katharine Lee Bates

Soldiers To Pacifists

NOT ours to clamor shame on you,
Nor fling a bitter blame on you,
Nor brand a cruel name on you,
That evil name of treason,
You who have heard the ivory flutes,
Who float white banners, brave recruits
Of Peace, seeking to pluck her fruits
In bud and blossom season.
A sterner bugle calls to us;
More direful duty falls to us;
God grants no garden-walls to us
Till the scarred waste be delivered
From dragon passions that destroy
All sanctitudes of faith and joy;
We, too, are on divine employ;
By sword shall sword be shivered.
Cherish your bud, star-eyed of bloom,
Dawn-flower of hope, belied of gloom,
While, surges of the tide of doom,
The gathering nations thunder
Against a red, colossal throne;
Cherish it, that the seed be sown
At last even where that monstrous stone
Crushes life's roots asunder.
Follow your flutes the fairy way;
Wing-sandaled, climb the airy way,
The wonderful, unwary way,
Too lovely for derision;
While we, your comrades at the goal,
Step to the drum-beat and unroll
The flag of Freedom, every soul
Obedient to its vision.

Katharine Lee Bates

Spain

Across New England snows
Flash visions from afar,
Lithe gipsies on their toes
Dancing to gay guitar;
With gesture fierce, bizarre,
They lilt some old refrain
In whose wild measures are
The witcheries of Spain.
The stinging north wind blows,
But with a ruddy jar
Poised on her proud head goes
A maiden like a star
While, biting his cigar,
Her lover, scorned again,
Loads on his ass-drawn car
The oranges of Spain.
As keen as cameos
Against yon gray cloud-bar
Shine out a tower of rose,
A spire like flaming spar,
Gold shrines whose candles char
The world to ashes, train
Of pilgrims, globular
Pomegranates flushed with Spain.
What freak of calendar,
What frostwork on the pane,
What angry sleet can mar
My picture-book of Spain?

Katharine Lee Bates

Starlight At Sea

OVER the murmurous choral of dim waves
The constellations glow against the soft
Ethereal dusk, —forever fair, aloft,
Serene, while man climbs painfully from caves
To cities, clamorous cities, life that raves
Like surf against the rocks. It is not oft
Our cities glimpse the stars, their luster scoffed
Away by low, hard glitter that outbraves
Night's blessing of the dark. But here upon
Mid-ocean, all whose muffled voices ring
A rapture lost to our vexed human wills,
We see the primal radiance that shone
On chaos, —see the young God shepherding
His gleaming flocks on the empurpled hills.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Conqueror

Not the Prussian, the forsworn,
By whose fury overborne,
Martyred Belgium, you lie
Bruised with all injury.
Through your peace red paths he clove,
Burning, slaying, making spoil
Of your shining treasure-trove,
Ancient wisdom, beauty, toil;
Drenching hearth and shrine and sod
With the blood that cries to God.
Futile all that savage force.
Time in his aeonian course
Still shall clarion your fame.
Yours the triumph; his the shame.
On your honor he made war,
But his guns have battered down
Only forts. Inheritor
Of unparalleled renown,
Belgium, your name shall be
Brighter than Thermopylæ.
None could scorn you, had you said:
'Hopeless are the odds, and dread
Will the fiery vengeance fall
On our homes. In vain we call
For help that still delays. We yield.'
But unflinching from your fate,
Up you flung your slender shield,
Bore the onset, held the gate
For the priceless hour, and saved
Liberty, yourself enslaved.
No; thrust down to serfdom, still
Your unmasterable will,
Your high fortitude and faith
Outwear exile, anguish, death.
On his strip of coast your king
Holds your glorious flag unfurled;
Your great priest, unfaltering,
Peals the truth across the world.
With your neck beneath the sword,

You are victor, you are lord.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Creed Of The Wood

A WHIFF of forest scent,
Balsam and fern,
Won from dreary mood
My heart's return,
From its discontent,
Joy's run-away,
To the sweet, wise wood
And the laughing day.
Simple as dew and gleam
Is the creed of the wood!
The Beautiful gave us life,
And life is good.
Be the world but a dream,
Let the world go shod
With peace, not strife,
For the Dreamer is God.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Death Of Olaf Tryggvison

I

BLUE as blossom of the myrtle
Smiled the steadfast eyes of Olaf
On the host of ships that harried
His enraged, gold-glittering Dragon,
Snared within that ring of sea-birds,
By their fierce beaks rent and bitten;
All men knew the crimson kirtle,
Rich-wrought helm and shield that dazzled
Back the whirling wrath of sword-edge,
But the king, while doom yet tarried,
Bleeding fast beneath his byrny,
Still throughout the savage hurtle
Of the ax-play and the spear-play,
Blinding storm of stones and arrows,
Shivering steel and shock of iron,
Stood erect above the slaughter,
An unblenching lord of battle,
Till about his knees were drifted
Heaps of slain, his last earl smitten.
From the poop then sprang King Olaf,
Faring on his farthest journey,
With his shield above him lifted,
Shield whose shimmer mocked the rattle
Of the missiles rained upon it,
Down into the deep sea-water.
Nevermore shall he thrust keel
Into billow, fain to feel
Pull of rudder 'neath his hand,
Swing of tide that bears his folk
On to spoil some startled strand,
Rick and homestead wrapt in smoke.
All the daring deeds are done
Of King Olaf Tryggvison.

II

As the red-stained waves ran o'er him,
Faithful to their friend, sea-rover,
Hid the flickering shield forever
From the fury of his foemen,

Hushed the war-din to his hearing,
Sweetened on his swooning senses
Even that wild roar of victory,
Through the dim green gloom appearing
Women's faces flashed before him.
Fair the first, but wan with vigil,
Mother-tender, mother-valiant,
Face of Astrid, she who bore him
On a couch of ferns and clover
In a little, lonely island,
Warded only by her fosterer,
Old Thorolf, who would not sever
His rude service from her sorrows;
She who flitted with her man-child
On from fen to forest, hunted
By the murderers of his father,
Every rustling branch an omen
Of the dangers darkening over
That rich seed of frail defenses;
She whose last look smiled him courage,
Rosy wean of three rude winters,
When the pirate crew had seized them,
Sold the gold-haired boy and mother
Into sundering thraldom, slaughtered
Old Thorolf as stiff and useless.
Then the face of Queen Allogia,
Like a sudden shield, white-shining,
Raised between the vengeful blood-wrath
And the lad whose earliest death-blow
Smote the slayer unforgotten
Of Thorolf. Soft gleamed another,
Younger face, white rose of passion,
Geira, to whose grace her lover
Bowed his boyhood's turbulences,
Gentled in that blissful bridal,
Till death stole upon their joyance,
Gathering her fragrant girlhood
Like a flower, and frenzy-driven
Forth King Olaf fared a-warring,
South-away to sack and harry
Every quiet shore that silvered
On his homeless, waste horizon.

Still amid the flying splinters
Of the swords, and famous morrows,
When the Norns did as it pleased them
With their secret shuttle, twining
In the pattern of his life-days
Strands of mirth and splendor only
For the rending, for the strewing
On the whirlwind, still the Viking
Was of women loved and hated.
Swift their faces glinted on a
Drowning sight, —the Irish Gyda,
Wise of heart to ken a hero,
Stepping by her silken suitors,
Choosing for her lord the towering,
Shag-cloaked Northman, rough and royal;
Then Queen Sigrid, called the Haughty,
With the blow his glove had given
Whitening on her lips, a striking
That became his scathe; young Gudrun,
Who, to her slain father loyal,
Would her bridegroom's breast have riven,
Glorious as he slept beside her,
With a stab too long belated,
With the steel he, waking, wrested
From that slender hand; and Thyri,
Clinging, coaxing, pouting, weeping,
Craving still the thing denied her,
With a sting in all her sweetness,
Yet to him a new Madonna
For the baby-boy who nestled
On her bosom, all bedrifted
With her yellow hair, their starry
Little son too dear for keeping,
Tender guest that might not tarry,
Though upon those tiny temples,
Crystal cold beneath the kisses,
Like midsummer storm came showering
Down the last wild tears of Olaf,
Ever longing, ever lonely.
Nevermore to him, who there
Chokes with brine, shall maidens bear
Honey-mead in well-carved cup,

While the harpers strike the strings,
And the songs and shouts go up
Till the hollow roof-tree rings.
All the wine of life is run
For King Olaf Tryggvison.

III

All had vanished from the vision
Of those blue eyes, blankly staring
Through that pall of purple waters,
Through that peace below all motion
Of intoning tides and billows,
Where sad palaces are peopled
By the gods he had forsaken.
Too divine for vain derision
And the empty sound of censure,
Wondered they upon the waster
Of their temples, their blasphemers,
As that drifting body rested
On the knees of Ran, the husher
Of all hearts beneath the ocean.
Many mariners, far-faring
By the swan-road, subtly taken
In her nets, have proved her pillows
Soft with slumber. Azure-vested
Clustering came her thrice-three daughters,
While her lord, the hoary Ægir,
From his castle coral-steepled
Wended slow, the seaweed woven
In his mantle. Comely Niörd,
Crowned with shells, and mystic Mimir,
Ay, and many another followed,
Musing on this altar-crusher,
On this sleeping king, awaker
In a realm not theirs, this taster
Of strange bread and wine, this dreamer
Of the new dream that had cloven
Even their dusk region hollowed
Out of chaos by All-Maker,
By the Power past peradventure.
Nevermore shall Olaf's rod
Smite a silent, oak-hewn god;
Nevermore shall Olaf's torch

Fire great Woden's house, or Thor's,
Where the stubborn heathen scorch,
Constant to their ancestors,
— Souls too steadfast to be won
By King Olaf Tryggvison.

IV

From that pallid body parted,
Sped the proud, impetuous spirit
Forth to seek his throne of splendor,
Not the benches of Valhalla
In the ancient Grove of Glistening,
Palace wrought of spears, roofed over
With gold shields, the tiles of Woden,
Where brave warriors feast forever
On the boar's flesh, making merry
With the foaming mead, with minstrels
And the hero-sport of battle,
But that far more dazzling dwelling
Of the young God radiant-hearted,
Christ, whose loyal earl was Olaf.
Oh, what welcome would he merit,
He, the new faith's fierce defender,
Forcing thousands, as a drover
Urges wild, unwilling cattle,
To the font, their blond heads shrinking
From the sacred dew? Who would not
Be faith-changers, take the christening
At his gracious word, gainsayers
Of his will, had been the players
In grim shows,—maimed, torn asunder,
Stoned, slow-strangled with the swallowing
Of live snakes. So did he sever
Norway from her shrines, excelling
All Christ's folk in fealty. Should not
Horns blow up for him in Heaven,
Olaf Tryggvison, who even
Had the wizards well outwitted,
Bidding them to feast, and firing,
While they drowsed there, dull with drinking,
Hall and all; caught those who flitted,
Chained them fast on tide-swept skerry,
Sorcerers whose best spell-singing

Had not stayed the waves from following?
Are not saints and angels listening
For his rumored coming, choiring
Till their praises are as thunder
Of great minster-bells a-ringing?
Olaf stood imparadised
In the loneliness of Christ,
Of the White Lord Christ, Who said:
'Only precious stones of pity,
Holy pearls of peace may build
For each soul the Shining City.
When in thee is Heaven fulfilled,
I shall claim my champion,
Not King Olaf Tryggvison,
But my shepherd Mercy, fed
On Love the wine and Love the bread.'

Katharine Lee Bates

The End Of May

THE fragrant air is full of down,
Of floating, fleecy things
From some forgotten fairy town
Where all the folk wear wings.
Or else the snowflakes, soft arrayed
In dainty suits of lace,
Have ventured back in masquerade,
Spring's festival to grace.
Or these, perchance, are fleets of fluff,
Laden with rainbow seeds,
That count their cargo rich enough
Though all its wealth be weeds.
Or come they from the golden trees,
Where dancing blossoms were,
That now are drifting on the breeze,
Sweet ghosts of gossamer?

Katharine Lee Bates

The Falmouth Bell

Never was there lovelier town
Than our Falmouth by the sea.
Tender curves of sky look down
On her grace of knoll and lea.
Sweet her nestled Mayflower blows
Ere from prouder haunts the spring
Yet has brushed the lingering snows
With a violet-colored wing.
Bright the autumn gleams pervade
Cranberry marsh and bushy wold,
Till the children's mirth has made
Millionaires in leaves of gold;
And upon her pleasant ways,
Set with many a gardened home,
Flash through fret of drooping sprar
Visions far of ocean foam.
Happy bell of Paul Revere,
Sounding o'er such blest demesne
While a hundred times a year
Weaves the round from green to green.

Never were there friendlier folk
Than in Falmouth by the sea,
Neighbor-households that invoke
Pride of sailor-pedigree.
Here is princely interchange
Of the gifts of shore and field,
Starred with treasures rare and strange
That the liberal sea-chests yield.
Culture here burns breezy torch
Where gray captains, bronzed of neck
Tread their little length of porch
With a memory of the deck.
Ah, and here the tenderest hearts,
Here where sorrows sorest wring
And the widows shift their parts

Comforted and comforting.
Holy bell of Paul Revere
Calling such to prayer and praise.
While a hundred times the year
Herds her flock of faithful days!

Greetings to thee, ancient bell
Of our Falmouth by the sea!
Answered by the ocean swell,
Ring thy centuried Jubilee!
Like the white sails of the Sound,
Hast thou seen the years drift by,
From the dreamful, dim profound
To a goal beyond the eye.
Long thy maker lieth mute,
Hero of a faded strife;
Thou hast tolled from seed to fruit
Generations three of life.
Still thy mellow voice and clear
Floats o'er land and listening deep,
And we deem our fathers hear
From their shadowy hill of sleep.
Ring thy peals for centuries yet,
Living voice of Paul Revere!
Let the future not forget
That the past accounted dear!

Katharine Lee Bates

The First Bluebirds

THE poor earth was so winter-marred,
Harried by storm so long,
It seemed no spring could mend her,
No tardy sunshine render
Atonement for such wrong.
Snow after snow, and gale and hail,
Gaunt trees encased in icy mail,
The glittering drifts so hard
They took no trace
Of scared, wild feet,
No print of fox and hare
Driven by dearth
To forage for their meat
Even in dooryard bare
And frosty lawn
Under the peril of the human race;
And then one primrose dawn,
Sweet, sweet, O sweet,
And tender, tender,
The bluebirds woke the happy earth
With song.

Katharine Lee Bates

The German-American

HONOR to him whose very blood remembers
The old, enchanted dream-song of the Rhine,
Although his house of life. is fair with shine
Of fires new-kindled on the buried embers;
Whose heart is wistful for the flowers he tended
Beside his mother, for the caryen gnome
And climbing bear and cuckoo-clock of home,
For the whispering forest path two lovers wended;
Who none the less, still strange in speech and manner,
With our young Freedom keeps his plighted faith,
Sides with his children's hope against the wraith
Of his own childhood, hails the Starry Banner
As emblem of his country now, to-morrow;
A patriot by duty, not by birth.
The costliest loyalty has purest worth.
Honor to him who draws the sword in sorrow!

Katharine Lee Bates

The Horses

'Thus far 80,000 horses have been shipped from the United States to the European belligerents.'

WHAT was our share in the sinning,
That we must share the doom?
Sweet was our life's beginning
In the spicy meadow-bloom,
With children's hands to pet us
And kindly tones to call.
To-day the red spurs fret us
Against the bayonet wall.
What had we done, our masters,
That you sold us into hell?
Our terrors and disasters
Have filled your pockets well.
You feast on our starvation;
Your laughter is our groan.
Have horses then no nation,
No country of their own?
What are we, we your horses,
So loyal where we serve,
Fashioned of noble forces
All sensitive with nerve?
Torn, agonized, we wallow
On the blood-bemired sod;
And still the shiploads follow.
Have horses then no God?

Katharine Lee Bates

The Least Of These

THE wolf of want is howling
At doors no angel keeps.
Young Mary smiled on her Holy Child,
But many a mother weeps.
The Kings of the East brought treasures
Uncounted and unpriced.
Who bears a gift to arms that lift
A little famished Christ?

Katharine Lee Bates

The Lighthouse

IN seas far north, day after day
We leaned upon the rail, engrossed
In frolic fin and jewel spray
And crystal headlands of the coast.
Those beauties held so long in gaze
Have melted from my mind like snow,
But still I see through rifted haze
The wizard tower and portico
That flashed one instant, white and whist,
A grace too exquisite to keep,
A picture springing from the mist
As a dream comes shining out of sleep.
I do not know what name he wrote,
Our captain, in his good ship's log,
For that sea-wraith, —how men denote
Our fleeting phantom of the fog;
But yet across the world I thrill
With rapture of that ivory gleam,
That sudden shaft of glory, till
It wears the wonder of a dream.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Little Knight In Green

WHAT fragrant-footed comer
Is stepping o'er my head?
Behold, my queen! the Summer!
Who deems her warriors dead.
Now rise, ye knights of many fights,
From out your sleep profound!
Make sharp your spears, my gallant peers,
And prick the frozen ground.

Before the White Host harm her,
We 'll hurry to her aid;
We 'll don our elfin armor,
And every tiny blade
Shall bear atop a dewy drop,
The life-blood of the frost,
Till from their king the order ring:
"Fall back! the day is lost."

Now shame to knighthood, brothers!
Must Summer plead in vain?
And shall I wait till others
My crown of sunshine gain?
Alone this day I 'll dare the fray,
Alone the victory win;
In me my queen shall find, I ween,
A sturdy paladin.

To battle! Ho! King Winter
Hath rushed on me apace,—
My fragile blade doth splinter
Beneath his icy mace.
I stagger back. I yield—alack!
I fall. My senses pass.
Woe worth the chance for doughtiest lance
Of all the House of Grass!

Last hope my heart gives over.
But hark! a shout of cheer!
Don Daisy and Count Clover,

Sir Buttercup, are here!
Behold! behold! with shield of gold
Prince Dandelion comes.
Lord Bumble-Bee beats valiantly
His rolling battle-drums.

My brothers leave their slumbers
And lead the van of war;
Before our swelling numbers
The foes are driven far.
The day's our own; but, overthrown,
A little Knight in green,
I kiss her feet and deem it sweet
To perish for my queen.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Morning Paper

Carnage!
Humanity disgraced!
Time's dearest toil effaced!
Poison gases and flame
Putting Nero to shame!
Bayonet, bomb and shell!
Merry reading for hell!
The wickedness! the waste!
Courage!
To gain their fiery goal,
Some crumbling, blood-soaked knoll,
How fearlessly they fling
Their flesh to suffering,
Offer their ardent breath
To gasping, shuddering death!
O miracle of soul!

Katharine Lee Bates

The New Crusade

LIFE is a trifle;
Honor is all;
Shoulder the rifle;
Answer the call.
'A nation of traders'!
We'll show what we are,
Freedom's crusaders
Who war against war.
Battle is tragic;
Battle shall cease;
Ours is the magic
Mission of Peace.
'A nation of traders'!
We'll show what we are,
Freedom's crusaders
Who war against war.
Gladly we barter
Gold of our youth
For Liberty's charter
Blood-sealed in truth.
'A nation of traders'!
We'll show what we are,
Freedom's crusaders
Who war against war.
Sons of the granite,
Strong be our stroke,
Making this planet
Safe for the folk.
'A nation of traders'!
We'll show what we are,
Freedom's crusaders
Who war against war.
Life is but passion,
Sunshine on dew.
Forward to fashion
The old world anew!
'A nation of traders'!
We'll show what we are,
Freedom's crusaders

Who war against war.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Perfect Day

GOD made a day of blue and gold,
Sweet as a violet,
As merry as a marigold;
It may be shining yet
In some blest vale, some dreamy dell
Among the heavenly hills,
Where here and there the asphodel
Is flecked by daffodils
And gentians, flowers that twinkled on
The fields our childhood knew,
Too lovely for oblivion,
Fed with immortal dew.
That summer day, all murmurous
With laughters of old mirth,
How tenderly 'twould comfort us,
Still homesick for the earth;
With what dear touch 'twould fold us in,
As to a mother's knee,
From those strange spaces crystalline
Of vast eternity,
— A day God saw with smiling eyes,
The summer's coronet!
In His far cycles of surprise
It may be shining yet.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Pity Of It

I. In South Africa

Over the lonesome African plain
The stars look down, like eyes of the slain.

A bumping ride across gullies and ruts,
Now a grumble and now a jest,
A bit of profanity jolted out,
--Whist!
Into a hornet's nest!
Curse on the scout!
Long-bearded Boers rising out of the rocks,
Rocks that already are crimson-splashed,
Ping-ping of bullets, stabbings and cuts,
As if hell hurtled and hissed,
--Then, muffling the shocks,
A sting in the breast,
A mist,
A woman's face down the darkness flashed,
Rest.

All as before, save for still forms spread
Under the boulders dripping red.

Over the lonesome African plain
The stars look down, like eyes of the slain.

II. In the Philippines

Silvery rice-fields whisper wide
How for home and freedom their owners died.

We've set the torch to their bamboo town,
And out they come in a scampering rush,
Little brown men with spears.
Shoot!

Down they go in a crush,
Sickening smears,
Hideous writhing huddles and heaps
Under the palms and the mango-trees.
More, still more! Shoot 'em down
Like brown jack-rabbits that scoot
With comical leaps
Out of the brush.
No loot?
No prisoners, then. As for these --
Hush!

The flag that dreamed of delivering
Shudders and droops like a broken wing.

Silvery rice-felds whisper wide
How for home and freedom their owners died.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Presence Chamber

(Switzerland)

BEHOLD a temple builded not by hands.
Columns of mist, all shimmering with sun,
Stream heavenward from the deep-cut vales that run
Between the mountains, and the vault expands,
Splendor of turquoise, groined with opal bands.
Cloud tapestries, of pearl and amber spun,
Veil in that glorious pavilion,
Mosaic-paved with cities, lakes and lands.
But far withdrawn in utter light of light,
Holy of Holies, is the God to whom
Our souls, that make their own enshrouding night,
Lift piteous prayer: 'Deliver us from gloom,'
Yet shrink afrighted from the answering, white,
Unbearable Divine that would illumine.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Purple Thread

'The priests distributed various coloured silken threads to weave for the veil of the sanctuary; and it fell to Mary's lot to weave purple.'

—The Book of the Bee, ch. XXXIV.

I

THE chosen maidens, Weavers of the Veil,
Kneeling in crescent, from the High Priest took
Their wisps of silk in slender hands that shook
Lifting the colors to their lips rose-pale
With holy passion, —colors like the frail
Spring flowers of Carmel, blue as that glad look
Of dancing iris, scarlet as a nook
Of wild anemones, or gold as sail
Seen from its summit 'neath the Syrian moon.
But Mary caught her breath in one swift sob
Of pain uncomprehended ere it fled,
Leaving her heart with some strange fear a-throb,
For the wise priest, as one conferring boon,
Had meted out to her a purple thread.

II

O mothers of the race, ye blessèd ones
Who weave with cherubim the veil before
The Holy Place of God, the mystic door
Of life, proud mothers of belovèd sons,
To-day you send them forth to front the guns,
Waving your boys farewell with smiles that pour
Strength into their young souls. Your prayers implore
The Mercy Seat; your love, an angel, runs
Before them with wild, shielding arms outspread.
O Weavers of the Veil, however varies
The silk assigned, exceeding great reward
Is yours, for you —O you, most sacred Maries,
To whom is given grief's royal, purple thread —
Make beautiful the temple of the Lord.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Red Cross Nurse

ONE summer day, gleaming in memory,
We drove, my Joy and I,
Through fragrant hawthorn lanes
Gold-fringed with wisps of rye
Brushed off the harvest wains,
From that old, gladsome town of Shrewsbury,
Throned on twin hills and girdled by a loop
Of the brown Severn, out to Battlefield.
Henry the Fourth with his usurping sword
Smote here the haughty Percies,
And after builded here, as due to Him
Who made rebellion stoop
And lesser traitors to chief traitor yield,
A church. Decayed, restored,
Its centuries afford.
To stranger eyes, enshadowed by the view
Of that ridged burial plain from which it grew,
No sight more sacred than a crude
Image of visage dim,
Hewn by some ancient tool from forest wood,
Our Lady of the Mercies.
Even so long ago amid the slaughter,
Hushed now beneath its coverlet of flowers,
Groped this imperfect dream
Of Pity, pure, divine.
Madonna, look to-day upon thy daughter
And know her by the crimson cross, the sign
Of love that shall at last, at last redeem
This war-torn world of ours

Katharine Lee Bates

The Submarine That Sank The

SPINDRIFT white shall her victims stand
On the ivory quay, untrod
By living feet, when she nears Ghoststrand,
To point her out to God.

The Babies Of The 'Lusitania'

THOSE rosy, dimpled darlings cast
So roughly to the sea,
Wondering their bathtub was so vast,
Reaching for breast and knee,
Too innocent to understand
What hate and murder are,
But puzzled that the dandling hand
Had let them drop so far,
Swallowing like milk the bitter foam,
Dismayed to miss their breath,
Our little guests from Heaven went home
In the great arms of Death.
O Land of Toys and Christmas Trees,
Dear Land of Fairy Tales,
How will your heart be panged for these
When war's red frenzy pales!
God pity Germany in all
The grieving years to be
When through her cradle-songs shall call
Drowned babies from the sea.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Sunset, Woven Of Soft Lights

THE sunset, woven of soft lights
And tender colors, lingers late,
As looking back on all day's dreary plights,
Compassionate;
— The foolish day of hopes so high,
Who counts her hours by blunders now,
Yet wears at last this jewel-crown of sky
Upon her brow.
Out to eternity she goes,
Not for her failure scorned, but see!
Our poor day flushed with beauty, one more rose
On God's rose-tree.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Thracian Stone

'The faeries gave him the propertie of the Thracian stone; for who toucheth it is exempted from grieve.'

The fairies to his cradle came to play their fairy part,
Their footsteps like the laughter of a leaf;
They touched him with the Thracian stone that setteth free the heart
—O dream-enchanted, singing heart!—forever free from grief.
The wind it could not blow a way that failed to please him well;
Beyond the rain he saw the March skies blue
With hope of April violets; he cast his fairy spell
Over our flawed and tarnished world, creating all things new.
He bore the burden of his day, the burden and the heat,
As blithely as a seagull breasts the gale,
Glorying that God should trust his strength. The color of ripe wheat
Was on his life when it was flung beneath pain's threshing-flail.
He fronted that grim challenge like some resplendent knight
Who rides against foul foes of fen and wood;
With ringing song of onset, his spirit, hero bright,
Went tilting with a sunbeam against the dragon brood.
Then dusky shapes stole on him, Queen of the Quaking Isle,
Queens of the Land of Longing and the Waste;
He bowed him to their bidding with a secret in his smile;
He quaffed their bitter cups that left ambrosia on the taste.
Last came the King of Terrors, and lo! his iron crown
Had twinkled to a silver fairy-cap;
Like two old friends they took the road to Love-and-Beauty town,
That's here and there and everywhere on all the starry map.

Katharine Lee Bates

The Titanic

As she sped from dawn to gloaming, a palace upon the sea,
Did the waves from her proud bows foaming whisper what port should be?
That her maiden voyage was tending to a haven hushed and deep,
Where after the shock and the rending she should moor at the wharf of sleep?
Oh, her name shall be tale and token to all the ships that sail,
How her mighty heart was broken by blow of a crystal flail,
How in majesty still peerless her helpless head she bowed
And in light and music, fearless, plunged to her purple shroud.
Did gleams and dreams half-heeded, while the days so lightly ran,
Awaken the glory seeded from God in the soul of man?
For touched with a shining chrism, with love's fine grace imbued,
Men turned them to heroism as it were but habitude.
O midnight strange and solemn, when the icebergs stood at gaze,
Death on one pallid column, to watch our human ways,
And saw throned Death defeated by a greater lord than he,
Immortal Life who greeted home-comers from the sea.

Katharine Lee Bates

The U-Boat Crew

ALAS, alas for those blond boys who stalk
Their prey in ambush of the shuddering seas,
Whiling the wait with merry, tender talk
Of some dear knot of flower-clad cottages
Beyond the Rhine! The merchantship draws on;
Their swift torpedo strikes its mark; the sea
Moans with the dying; for a victory won
They thank the pagan god of Germany.
Happier to die the hideous, smothering death,
Too deep for mercy, in their own snared trap,
Than live to learn how time interpreteth
The cause they served; the tragical mishap
Of pride that pledged The Day and brought The Night;
—Than live to loathe their Fatherland, a name
So high, so fallen, that betrayed their bright
Young loyalty to savageries of shame.

Katharine Lee Bates

This Tattered Catechism

THIS tattered catechism weaves a spell,
Invoking from the Long Ago a child
Who deemed her fledgling soul so sin-defiled
She practised with a candle-flame at hell,
Burning small fingers, that would still rebel
And flinch from fire. Forsooth not all beguiled
By hymn and sermon, when her mother smiled,
That smile was fashioning an infidel.
'If I'm in hell,' the baby logic ran,
'Mother will hear me cry and come for me.
If God says no —I don't believe He can
Say no to mother.' Then at that dear knee
She knelt demure, a little Puritan
Whose faith in love had wrecked theology.

Katharine Lee Bates

Three Steps

THREE steps there are our human life must climb.
The first is Force.
The savage struggled to it from the slime
And still it is our last, ashamed recourse.
Above that jagged stretch of red-veined stone
Is marble Law,
Carven with long endeavor, monotone
Of patient hammers, not yet free from flaw.
Three steps there are our human life must climb.
The last is Love,
Wrought from such starry element sublime
As touches the White Rose and Mystic Dove.
Poor world, that stumbles up with many a trip,
A child that clings
To the great Hand, whose lifting guardianship
Quickens in wayward feet the dream of wings!

Katharine Lee Bates

To Canada

OUR neighbor of the undefended bound,
Friend of the hundred years of peace, our kin,
Fellow adventurer on the enchanted ground
Of the New World, must not the pain within
Our hearts for this wide anguish of the war
Be keenest for your pain? Is not our grief,
That aches with all bereavement, tenderest for
The tragic crimson on your maple-leaf?
Bitter our lot, in this world-clash of faiths,
To stand aloof and bide our hour to serve;
The glorious dead are living; we are wraiths,
Dim watchers of the conflict's changing curve,
Yet proud for human valor, spirit true
In scorn of body, manhood on the crest
Of consecration, dearly proud for you,
Who sped to arms like knighthood to the Quest.
From quaint Quebec to stately Montreal,
Along the rich St. Lawrence, o'er the steep
Roofs of the Rockies rang the bugle-call,
And east and west, deep answering to deep,
Your sons surged forth, the simple, stooping folk
Of shop and wheatfield sprung to hero size
Swiftly as e'er your Northern Lights awoke
To streaming splendor quiet evening skies.
Seek not your lost beneath the tortured sod
Of France and Flanders, where in desperate strife
They battled greatly for the cause of God;
But when above the snow your heavens are rife
With those upleaping lusters, find them there,
Ardors of sacrifice, celestial sign,
Aureole your Angel shall forever wear,
Praising the irresistible Divine.

Katharine Lee Bates

To Heavy Hearts

HEAVY hearts, your jubilee
Droops about the Christmas Tree.
Sudden sighs cut off the laughter,
For a haunting pain comes after
All your gallant glee,
— Pain for your soldiers far away to-night,
(O cloud that darkens on the Christmas star!)
Sons, husbands, those who wreathed your world with light,
Far, far, so far.
Be comforted! They never were so near.
In life's deep center of self-sacrifice
You meet with vision clear.
There in love's purest paradise
The touch of soul on soul is close and dear.
Not to-night shall soft cheeks glow
Where the Druid mistletoe
Weaves its charm, while hollies twinkle;
For the lads in some grim wrinkle
Of the earth crouch low.
Hard is their Christmas in the aching trench,
Or in the listening darkness mounting guard,
Haggard with cold and sick with creeping stench,
— Hard, hard, so hard.
Be comforted! That hardness is their pride.
Salute the strength that can endure the stress
Of such a Christmastide.
Our earth made beautiful shall bless
Their stern young manhood nobly testified.
Silver chimes are on the air,
Sweet and blithe—too blithe to bear;
And what singing hearth rejoices,
Missing the belovèd voices
That were merriest there?
The booming cannon are their Christmas bells;
(O Holy Child, how many a homeless waif!)
Their carols are the hiss and crash of shells.
God keep them safe!
Be comforted! For safe they are within
His quiet hand, your soldiers who fulfil

In steadfast discipline,
Like those calm stars, His patient will
That is the peace beneath all battle-din.

Katharine Lee Bates

To Italy

BRIGHT valor, smitten by so shrewd a blow,
Drooping thy golden wing like wounded plover,
What great, grieved faces o'er the battle hover,
Patriot Mazzini; Fra Angelico,
Forsaking his own seraphs for thy woe;
Savonarola, still his country's lover
Despite the flames; longing for walls to cover
With such a fresco, Michael Angelo.
Pity in those sweet eyes of Raphael
For all Madonnas whose young sons lie slain;
Chagrin in Dante's, that his far-famed hell
Fades to a fantasy but weak and vain
By scenes no wildest dream could parallel,
Vast agony of thy Venetian plain.

Katharine Lee Bates

To My Country

O dear my Country, beautiful and dear,
Love cloth not darken sight.
God looketh through Love's eyes, whose vision clear
Beholds more flaws than keenest Hate hath known.
Nor is Love's judgment gentle, but austere;
The heart of Love must break ere it condone
One stain upon the white.

There comes an hour when on the parent turns
The challenge of the child;
The bridal passion for perfection burns;
Life gives her last allegiance to the best;
Each sweet idolatry the spirit spurns,
Once more enfranchised for its starry quest
Of beauty undefiled.

Love must be one with honor; yet to-day
Love liveth by a sign;
Allows no lasting compromise with clay,
But tends the mounting miracle of gold,
Content with service till the bud make way
To the rejoicing sunbeams that unfold
Its culminant divine.

There is a rumoring among the stars,
A trouble in the sun.
Freedom, most holy word, hath fallen at jars
With her own deeds; 'tis Mammon's jubilee;
Again the cross contends with scimitars;
The seraphim look down with dread to see
Earth's noblest hope undone.

O dear my Country, beautiful and dear,
Ultimate dream of Time,
By all thy millions longing to revere
A pure, august, authentic commonweal,
Climb to the light. Imperiled Pioneer
Of Brotherhood among the nations, seal
Our faith with thy sublime.

Katharine Lee Bates

To Our President

HOPE of the Nations, lift thy stricken heart.
Thyself art Sorrow, and to thee the cry
Of battle-anguish comes more piercingly
Than even in those months of sneer and smart,
When thou so steadfastly didst bear thy part,
True Champion of Peace. And now, when high
The war-storm rages, when home's darlings die
By mangled thousands, lift thy stricken heart
For a white shield of mercy, torch that throws
Its reconciling gleam across the seas.
O thou in love and grief pre-eminent,
Divine shall be thy comfort to appease
These bleeding Christian armies, sudden foes
That slaughter in a fierce astonishment.

Katharine Lee Bates

To Peace

THE cup, the ruby cup
Whence anguish drips,
At last is lifted up
Against our lips.
Though we, till seas run dry,
Your lovers are,
How can we put it by,
Red cup of war?
We champion your task;
Your wounds we bind;
Behind the battle mask
Our eyes are kind.
Upon this foaming edge
Of blood and flame,
With shuddering lips we pledge
Your name.

Katharine Lee Bates

Two Centuries

Two centuries' winter storms have lashed the changing sands of Falmouth's shore,
Deep-voiced, the winds, swift winged, wild, have echoed there the ocean's roar.
But though the north-east gale unleashed, rage-blind with power, relentless beat,

The sturdy light-house sheds its beam on waves churned white beneath the sleet.
And still when cold and fear are past, and fields are sweet with spring-time showers,
Mystic, the gray age-silent hills breathe out their souls in fair mayflowers.
And where the tawny saltmarsh lies beyond the sand dunes' farthest reach,
The undulous grass grown russet green, skirts the white crescent of the beach.

Above the tall elms' green-plumed tops, etched against low-hung, gray-hued skies,
Straight as the heaven-kissing pine, the home-bound mariner descries
The goodly spire of the old first church, reverend, serene, with old-time grace,
Symbol and sign of an inner life deep-sealed by time's slow carven trace.

Out of that church in days long gone went a stalwart, true-eyed sturdy band,
Sons of the mist and the flying foam, the blood and brawn of the Pilgrim land;
Down to the sea where the tall masts rose, where the green-mossed black hulls
rose and fell,
And the cables strained at the call of the tide, for they knew and heeded its
summons well.

Katharine Lee Bates

War Profits

THE horns of the moon are tipped
With pearl. Her lover, wooed
By charms and won, Endymion,
Inherits quietude.

White the gleam
Of the dream
On his eyes.

The horns of the sun are dipt
In ruddy flame that flings
Adventurous young Icarus
To earth on ruined wings.

But he flew,
But he knew
Winds and skies.

Lucifer's horns have a crust
Of gold and topaz gem
On points that thrust to yellow dust
The heart that covets them.

Heed! take heed!
For by greed
Glory dies.

Katharine Lee Bates

Waywise

THE darkest wood that the north-wind stings
Hath its balsamum and its silverlings,
Its violet interspace.
The bitterest sea that the wan moon knows
Hath its hushful archipelagoes,
Its coral populace.
And the wearlweariestest burden mortal bears
Hath, woven in with its somber cares,
Some broidery of grace.

Katharine Lee Bates

What Is Christ?

I

OH, what is Christ, that we should call on Him?
Wasted Armenia, in her utter woe,
Dies in the mocking desert, calling so.
Hyænas tear her children limb from limb.
The clouds, soft dimpled once with cherubim,
Now screen the flight of Lucifers that strow
Their fiery seed where clustered households know
'Twixt sleep and death one flaring interim
Of agony, brief as the broken prayer.
What prayer? What Christ? Himself He could not save.
From first to last, when hath He saved His own?
Stephen's young body, battered stone by stone,
Edith Cavell in her most holy grave,
For His helpless host of martyrs witness bear.

II

Thought casts the challenge. Faith must lift the glove.
Most true it is Christ doth not save the flesh.
God's dreamy Nazarene, caught in the mesh
Of ignorance and malice, whitest dove
Net ever snared, took little care thereof.
Not His to plead with Pilate, nor to thresh
Those priestly lies. He died, to live afresh
Spirit, not body; not the Jew, but Love.
Love, the one Light in which all lusters meet,
Ultimate miracle, far goal of Time!
Even to-day, when all seems lost, they feel,
Those nations that like hooded sorrows kneel,
Their prayer's deep answer, loathing war as crime,
Longing to gather at Love's wounded feet.

Katharine Lee Bates

When Cap'N Tom Comes Home

WHEN Cap'n Tom comes home, and his sea chest
Is opened, oh, the shells that rainbow foam
Tossed on far shores, by us to be possessed
When Cap'n Tom comes home!
Cocoanuts for which gray, chattering monkeys clomb;
Tamarinds, and dates, and luscious sweetmeats pressed
Into blue jars of quaint pagoda dome!
Canaries, corals, shimmering shawls and, best
Of all, keepsakes that on wild seas a-roam
He carved from whale's tooth for a village blest
When Cap'n Tom comes home!

Katharine Lee Bates

When The Millennium Comes

WHEN the Millennium comes
Only the kings will fight,
While the princes beat the drums,
And the queens in aprons white,
Arnica bottle in hand,
Watch their Majesties throw,
With a gesture vague and grand,
Their crowns at the dodging foe,
Poor old obsolete crowns
That Time hangs up in a row.
When the Millennium comes
And the proud steel navies meet,
While the furious boiler hums,
And the vengeful pistons beat,
The sailors will stay on shore
And cheer with a polyglot shout
The self-fed cannon that roar
Till metal has fought it out,
But the warm, glad bodies of boys
Are not for the waves to flout.
When the Millennium comes,
Love, the mother of life,
Will have worked out all the sums
Of our dim industrial strife,
And every man shall be lord
Of his deed and his dream, and the lore
Of war shall be abhorred
As a dragon-tale of yore,
Myth of the Iron Age,
A monster earth breeds no more.

Katharine Lee Bates

White Moments

THE best of life, what is it but white moments?
Those swift illuminations when we see
The flying shadows on the fragrant meadows
As God beholds them from eternity.
White moments, when the bliss of being worships,
And fear and shame are heretics that burn
In holy fire of exquisite desire
For love's surrender and for love's return.
White moments, when a Power above the artist
Catches his plodding chisel, sets it free,
And from each urgent stroke there springs emergent
The wayward grace that laughs at industry.
White moments, when the drowsing soul, sense-muffled,
Is stung awake by some keen arrow-flight
And rends the bestial, claiming its celestial
Succession in the lineage of light.
White moments, when the spirit, long confronted
By all the bitter formulæ of fate,
Inveterate romancer, finds its answer
In some mysterious faith inviolate.
White moments, when the silence steals on sorrow,
And in that hush the heart becomes aware
Of wings that brood it, visions that seclude it
Forevermore from folly, fear and care.
The best of life, what is it but white moments?
Freedoms that break the chain and fling the load,
Irradiations, ardors, consecrations,
— The starry shrines along our pilgrim road.

Katharine Lee Bates

Wild Europe

WILD Europe, red with Woden's dreadful dew,
On fire with Loki's hate, more savage than
Beasts that we shame by likening to man,
Was it toward this the toiling centuries grew?
Was it for this the Reign of Love began
In that young heretic, that gracious Jew,
Whose race His followers flout the ages through?
Is Time at last a mere comedian,
Mocking in cap and bells our pompous boast
Of progress? Nay, we will not bear it so.
A million hands launch ships to succor woe;
The stars that shudder o'er the slaughtering host

Rain blessing on the Red Cross groups that go
Careless of shrapnel, emulous for the post
Where foul diseases wreak their uttermost
Of horror. Saintship walks incognito
As scoffing Science, but Christ knows His, own
Sway as it may, the wargod's fell caprice,
The victories of Love shall still increase
Until at last, from all this wail and moan,
Rises the song of brotherhood to cease
No more, no more, —the song that shall atone
Even for this mad agony. The throne
That war is building is the throne of Peace.

Katharine Lee Bates

Wings

GRAY gulls that wheeled and dipped and rose
Where tossing crests like Alpine snows
Would shimmer and entice;
A stormy petrel, Judas soul,
Dark wanderer of the waste, whose goal
No mariner hath seen;
And flaming from the vanished sun
A wondrous wing vermilion,
A bird of Paradise,
A soaring wing that shone so far
The orient horizon bar
Flushed, and the sea between
Like an Arabian carpet glowed
With changeful hues where subtly flowed
Some magical device;
And one pale plume in heaven's dim dome
Above that fairy-colored foam,
The new moon's ghostly sheen.

Katharine Lee Bates

Yellow Clover

Must I, who walk alone,
Come on it still,
This Puck of plants
The wise would do away with,
The sunshine slants
To play with,
Our wee, gold-dusty flower, the yellow clover,
Which once in Parting for a time
That then seemed long,
Ere time for you was over,
We sealed our own?
Do you remember yet,
O Soul beyond the stars,
Beyond the uttermost dim bars
Of space,
Dear Soul, who found earth sweet,
Remember by love's grace,
In dreamy hushes of the heavenly song,
How suddenly we halted in our climb,
Lingering, reluctant, up that farthest hill,
Stooped for the blossoms closest to our feet,
And gave them as a token
Each to Each,
In lieu of speech,
In lieu of words too grievous to be spoken,
Those little, gypsy, wondering blossoms wet
With a strange dew of tears?

So it began,
This vagabond, unvalued yellow clover,
To be our tenderest language. All the years
It lent a new zest to the summer hours,
As each of us went scheming to surprise
The other with our homely, laureate flowers.
Sonnets and odes
Fringing our daily roads.
Can amaranth and asphodel
Bring merrier laughter to your eyes?

Oh, if the Blest, in their serene abodes,
Keep any wistful consciousness of earth,
Not grandeurs, but the childish ways of love,
Simplicities of mirth,
Must follow them above
With touches of vague homesickness that pass
Like shadows of swift birds across the grass.
Beneath some foreign arch of sky,
How many a time the rover
You or I,
For life oft sundered look from look,
And voice from voice, the transient dearth
Schooling my soul to brook
This distance that no messages may span,
Would chance
Upon our wilding by a lonely well,
Or drowsy watermill,
Or swaying to the chime of convent bell,
Or where the nightingales of old romance
With tragical contraltos fill
Dim solitudes of infinite desire;
And once I joyed to meet
Our peasant gadabout
A trespasser on trim, signiorial seat,
Twinkling a saucy eye
As potentates paced by.

Our golden cord! our soft, pursuing flame
From friendship's altar fire!
How proudly we would pluck and tame
The dimpling clusters, mutinously gay!
How swiftly they were sent
Far, far away
On journeys wide,
By sea and continent,
Green miles and blue leagues over,
From each of us to each,
That so our hearts might reach,
And touch within the yellow clover,
Love's letter to be glad about
Like sunshine when it came!

My sorrow asks no healing; it is love;
Let love then make me brave
To bear the keen hurts of
This careless summertime,
Ay, of our own poor flower,
Changed with our fatal hour,
For all its sunshine vanished when you died;
Only white clover blossoms on your grave.

Katharine Lee Bates

Yellow Warblers

The first faint dawn was flushing up the skies
When, dreamland still bewildering mine eyes,
I looked out to the oak that, winter-long,
-- a winter wild with war and woe and wrong --
Beyond my casement had been void of song.

And lo! with golden buds the twigs were set,
Live buds that warbled like a rivulet
Beneath a veil of willows. Then I knew
Those tiny voices, clear as drops of dew,
Those flying daffodils that fleck the blue,

Those sparkling visitants from myrtle isles,
Wee pilgrims of the sun, that measure miles
Innumerable over land and sea
With wings of shining inches. Flakes of glee,
They filled that dark old oak with jubilee,

Foretelling in delicious roundelays
Their dainty courtships on the dipping sprays,
How they should fashion nests, mate helping mate,
Of milkweed flax and fern-down delicate
To keep sky-tinted eggs inviolate.

Listening to those blithe notes, I slipped once more
From lyric dawn through dreamland's open door,
And there was God, Eternal Life that sings,
Eternal joy, brooding all mortal things,
A nest of stars, beneath untroubled wings.

Katharine Lee Bates