

Classic Poetry Series

Louise Imogen Guiney
- poems -

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Louise Imogen Guiney(1861 - 1920)

Born on January 7, 1861, in Roxbury (now part of Boston), Massachusetts, Louise Guiney was educated at Elmhurst, a convent school in Providence, Rhode Island.

To help support her family she began contributing to various newspapers and magazines. Her poems, collected in *Songs at the Start* (1884) and *The White Sail and Other Poems* (1887), and her essays, collected in *Goose Quill Papers* (1885), soon attracted the attention of the Boston literary establishment, and the verse in *A Roadside Harp* (1893) and the essays in *Monsieur Henri* (1892), *A Little English Gallery* (1894), and *Patrins* (1897) brought her to the center of aesthetic life in Boston.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Thomas W. Higginson, and Edmund Clarence Stedman were among her friends and patrons, and on visits to England in the 1890s she met Edmund Gosse, W.B. Yeats, and others. A walking tour of England with her friend Alice Brown in 1895 led to their collaboration on *Robert Louis Stevenson--A Study* (1895). Her own models in literature were chiefly William Hazlitt and Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

When, toward the end of the 1890s, her health and her muse both deserted her, Guiney turned to scholarship, concentrating mainly on the Cavalier poets (a group of mid-17th century English gentlemen poets). From 1901 she lived happily in England. Her later books included *England and Yesterday* (1898), *Martyr's Idyll and Shorter Poems* (1899), *Hurrell Froude* (1904), *Robert Emmet--His Rebellion and His Romance* (1904), *The Blessed Edmund Campion* (1908), and *Happy Ending* (1909, revised 1927), her collected verse.

She died at her home in Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, England, on November 2, 1920. Her unfinished anthology of Catholic poets from Sir Thomas More to Alexander Pope, prepared in collaboration with Geoffrey Bliss, was published as *Recusant Poets* in 1939.

A Footnote To A Famous Lyric

TRUE love's own talisman, which here
Shakespeare and Sidney failed to teach,
A steel-and-velvet Cavalier
Gave to our Saxon speech:

Chief miracle of theme and touch
That upstart enviers adore:
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more.

No critic born since Charles was king
But sighed in smiling, as he read:
"Here 's theft of the supremest thing
A poet might have said!"

Young knight and wit and beau, who won,
Mid war's adventure, ladies' praise,
Was 't well of you, ere you had done,
To blight our modern bays?

O yet to you, whose random hand
Struck from the dark whole gems like these,
Archaic beauty, never planned
Nor reared by wan degrees,

Which leaves an artist poor, and art
An earldom richer all her years;
To you, dead on your shield apart,
Be "Ave!" passed in tears.

How shall this singing era spurn
Her master, and in lauds be loath?
Your worth, your work, bid us discern
Light exquisite in both.

'T was virtue's breath inflamed your lyre,
Heroic from the heart it ran;
Nor for the shedding of such fire
Lives since a manlier man.

And till your strophe sweet and bold
So lovely aye, so lonely long,
Love's self outdo, dear Lovelace! hold
The pinnacles of song.

Louise Imogen Guiney

A Friend's Song For Simoisius

The breath of dew, and twilight's grace,
Be on the lonely battle-place;
And to so young, so kind a face,
The long, protecting grasses cling!
(Alas, alas,
The one inexorable thing!)

In rocky hollows cool and deep,
The bees our boyhood hunted sleep;
The early moon from Ida's steep
Comes to the empty wrestling-ring.
(Alas, alas,
The one inexorable thing!)

Upon the widowed wind recede
No echoes of the shepherd's reed,
And children without laughter lead
The war-horse to the watering.
(Alas, alas,
The one inexorable thing!)

Thou stranger Ajax Telamon!
What to the loveliest hast thou done,
That ne'er with him a maid may run
Across the marigolds in spring?
(Alas, alas,
The one inexorable thing!)

With footstep separate and slow
The father and the mother go,
Not now upon an urn they know
To mingle tears for comforting.
(Alas, alas,
The one inexorable thing!)

The world to me has nothing dear
Beyond the namesake river here:
O Simois is wild and clear!
And to his brink my heart I bring;

(Alas, alas,
The one inexorable thing!)

My heart no more, if that might be
Would stay his waters from the sea,
To cover Troy, to cover me,
To save us from the perishing.

(Alas, alas,
The one inexorable thing!)

Louise Imogen Guiney

A Salutation

High-hearted Surrey! I do love your ways,
Venturous, frank, romantic, vehement,
All with inviolate honor sealed and blent,
To the axe-edge that cleft your soldier-bays:
I love your youth, your friendships, whims, and frays;
Your strict, sweet verse, with its imperious bent,
Heard as in dreams from some old harper's tent,
And stirring in the listener's brain for days.
Good father-poet! if to-night there be
At Framlingham none save the north-wind's sighs,
No guard but moonlight's crossed and trailing spears,
Smile yet upon the pilgrim named like me,
Close at your gates, whose fond and weary eyes
Sought not one other down three hundred years!

Louise Imogen Guiney

A Seventeenth-Century Song

She alone of Shepherdesses
With her blue disdayning eyes,
Wo'd not hark a Kyng that dresses
All his lute in sighes:
Yet to winne
Katheryn,
I elect for mine Emprise.

None is like her, none above her,
Who so lifts my youth in me,
That a littel more to love her
Were to leave her free!
But to winne
Katheryn,
Is mine utmost love's degree.

Distauce, cold, delay, and danger,
Build the four walles of her bower;
She's noe Sweete for any stranger,
She's noe valley flower:
And to winne
Katheryn,
To her height my heart can Tower!

Uppe to Beautie's promontory
I will climb, not loudlie call
Perfect and escaping glory
Folly, if I fall:
Well to winne
Katheryn!
To be worth her is my all.

Louise Imogen Guiney

A Song Of The Lilac

Above the wall that's broken,
And from the coppice thinned,
So sacred and so sweet
The lilac in the wind!
And when by night the May wind blows
The lilac-blooms apart,
The memory of his first love
Is shaken on his heart.

In tears it long was buried,
And trances wrapt it round;
O how they wake it now,
The fragrance and the sound!
For when by night the May wind blows
The lilac-blooms apart,
The memory of his first love
Is shaken on his heart.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Among The Flags

In Doric Hall, Massachusetts State House

Dear witnesses, all-luminous, eloquent,
Stacked thickly on the tessellated floor!
The soldier-blood stirs in me, as of yore
In sire and grandsire who to battle went:
I seem to know the shaded valley tent,
The armed and bearded men, the thrill of war,
Horses that prance to hear the cannon roar,
Shrill bugle-calls, and camp-fire merriment.

And as fair symbols of heroic things,
Not void of tears mine eyes must e'en behold
These banners lovelier as the deeper marred:
A panegyric never writ for kings
On every tarnished staff and tattered fold;
And by them, tranquil spirits standing guard.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Borderlands

Through all the evening,
All the virginal long evening,
Down the blossomed aisle of April it is dread to walk alone;
For there the intangible is nigh, the lost is ever-during;
And who would suffer again beneath a too divine alluring,
Keen as the ancient drift of sleep on dying faces blown?

Yet in the valley,
At a turn of the orchard alley,
When a wild aroma touched me in the moist and moveless air,
Like breath indeed from out Thee, or as airy vesture round
Thee,
Then was it I went faintly, for fear I had nearly found Thee,
O Hidden, O Perfect, O Desired! O first and final Fair!

Louise Imogen Guiney

Brook Farm

Down the long road, bent and brown,
Youth, that dearly loves a vision,
Ventures to the gate Elysian,
As a pilgrim from the town.

Coming not so late, so far,
Rocks and birches! for your story;
Not to prate on vanished glory
Where of old was quenched a star;

Where of old, in lapse of toil,
Time but mocked a prayer pathetic;
Where the flower of good prophetic
Starved in our New England soil.

Ah! to Youth with radiant eyes,
For whom grief is not, nor daunting,
Lost glad voices still are chanting
'Neath those unresembling skies,

Still the dreams of fellowship
Beat their wings of aspiration;
And a smile of soft elation
Trembles from its haughty lip

If another dare deride
Hopes heroic snapped and parted,
Disillusion so high-hearted
All success is mean beside.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Friendship Broken

I

We chose the faint chill morning, friend and friend,
Pacing the twilight out beneath an oak,
Soul calling soul to judgement; and we spoke
Strange things and deep as any poet penned,
Such truth as never truth again can mend,
Whatever arts we win, what gods invoke;
It was not wrath, it made nor strife nor smoke:
Be what it may, it had a solemn end.
Farewell, in peace. We of the selfsame throne
Are foeman vassals; pale astrologers,
Each a wise sceptic of the other's star.
Silently, as we went our ways alone,
The steadfast sun, whom no poor prayer deters.
Drew high between us his majestic bar.

II

Mine was the mood that shows the dearest face
Thro' a long avenue, and voices kind
Idle, and indeterminate, and blind

As rumors from a very distant place;
Yet, even so, it gathered the first chase
Of the first swallows where the lane's inclined,
An ebb of wavy wings to serve my mind
For round Spring's vision. Ah, some equal grace
(The calm sense of seen beauty without sight)
Befell thee, honorable heart! no less
In patient stupor walking from the dawn;
Albeit thou too wert loser of life's light,
Like fallen Adam in the wilderness,
Aware of naught but of the thing withdrawn.

Louise Imogen Guiney

In The Reading-Room Of The British Museum

Praised be the moon of books! that doth above
A world of men, the fallen Past behold,
And fill the spaces else so void and cold
To make a very heaven again thereof;
As when the sun is set behind a grove,
And faintly unto nether ether rolled,
All night his whiter image and his mould
Grows beautiful with looking on her love.

Thou therefore, moon of so divine a ray,
Lend to our steps both fortitude and light!
Feebly along a venerable way
They climb the infinite, or perish quite;
Nothing are days and deeds to such as they,
While in this liberal house thy face is bright.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Irish Peasant Song

I try to knead and spin, but my life is low the while.
Oh, I long to be alone, and walk abroad a mile;
Yet if I walk alone, and think of naught at all,
Why from me that's young should the wild tears fall?

The shower-sodden earth, the earth-colored streams,
They breathe on me awake, and moan to me in dreams,
And yonder ivy fondling the broke castle-wall,
It pulls upon my heart till the wild tears fall.

The cabin-door looks down a furze-lighted hill,
And far as Leighlin Cross the fields are green and still;
But once I hear the blackbird in Leighlin hedges call,
The foolishness is on me, and the wild tears fall!

Louise Imogen Guiney

Martyr's Memorial

SUCH natural debts of love our Oxford knows,
So many ancient dues undesecrate,
I marvel how the landmark of a hate
For witness unto future time she chose;
How out of her corroborate ranks arose
The three, in great denial only great,
For Art's enshrining!... Thus, averted straight,
My soul to seek a holier captain goes:
That sweet adventurer whom Truth befell
When as the synagogues were watching not;
Whose crystal name on royal Oriel
Hangs like a shield; who, to an outland spot
Led hence, beholds his Star, and counts it well
Of all his dear domain to live forgot.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Nocturne

The sun that hurt his lovers from on high
Is fallen; she more merciful is nigh,
The blessèd one whose beauty's even glow
Gave never wound to any shepherd's eye.
Above our pausing boat in shallows drifted,
Alone her plaintive form ascends the sky.

O sing! the water-golds are deepening now,
A hush is come upon the beechen bough;
She shines the while on thee, as saint to saint
Sweet interchanged adorings may allow:
Sing, dearest, with that lily throat uplifted;
They are so like, the holy Moon and thou!

Louise Imogen Guiney

Ode For A Master Mariner Ashore

THERE in his room, whene'er the moon looks in,
And silvers now a shell, and now a fin,
And o'er his chart glides like an argosy,
Quiet and old sits he.
Danger! he hath grown homesick for thy smile.
Where hidest thou the while, heart's boast,
Strange face of beauty sought and lost,
Star-face that lured him out from boyhood's isle?

Blown clear from dull indoors, his dreams behold
Night-water smoke and sparkle as of old,
The taffrail lurch, the sheets triumphant toss
Their phosphor-flowers across.
Towards ocean's either rim the long-exiled
Wears on, till stunted cedars throw
A lace-like shadow over snow,
Or tropic fountains wash their agates wild.

Awhile, play up and down the briny spar
Odors of Surinam and Zanzibar,
Till blithely thence he ploughs, in visions new,
The Labradorian blue;
All homeless hurricanes about him break;
The purples of spent day he sees
From Samos to the Hebrides,
And drowned men dancing darkly in his wake.

Where the small deadly foam-caps, well descried,
Top, tier on tier, the hundred-mountained tide,
Away, and far away, his pride is borne,
Riding the noisy morn,
Plunges, and preens her wings, and laughs to know
The helm and tightening halyards still
Follow the urging of his will,
And scoff at sullen earth a league below.

Mischance hath barred him from his heirdom high,
And shackled him with many an inland tie,
And of his only wisdom made a jibe

Amid an alien tribe:
No wave abroad but moans his fallen state.
The trade-wind ranges now, the trade-wind roars!
Why is it on a yellowing page he pores?
Ah, why this hawser fast to a garden gate?

Thou friend so long withdrawn, so deaf, so dim,
Familiar Danger, O forget not him!
Repeat of thine evangel yet the whole
Unto his subject soul,
Who suffers no such palsy of her drouth,
Nor hath so tamely worn her chain,
But she may know that voice again,
And shake the reefs with answer of her mouth.

O give him back, before his passion fail,
The singing cordage and the hollow sail,
And level with those aged eyes let be
The bright unsteady sea;
And move like any film from off his brain
The pasture wall, the boughs that run
Their evening arches to the sun,
The hamlet spire across the sown champaign;

And on the shut space and the trivial hour,
Turn the great floods! and to thy spousal bower,
With rapt arrest and solemn loitering,
Him whom thou lovedst bring:
That he, thy faithful one, with praising lip,
Not having, at the last, less grace
Of thee than had his roving race,
Sum up his strength to perish with a ship.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Of Joan's Youth

I would unto my fair restore
A simple thing:
The flushing cheek she had before!
Out-velveting
No more, no more,
On our sad shore,
The carmine grape, the moth's auroral wing.

Ah, say how winds in flooding grass
Unmoor the rose;
Or guileful ways the salmon pass
To sea, disclose;
For so, alas,
With Love, alas,
With fatal, fatal Love a girlhood goes.

Louise Imogen Guiney

On First Entering Westminster Abbey

Thabor of England! since my light is short
And faint, O rather by the sun anew
Of timeless passion set my dial true,
That with thy saints and thee I may consort,
And wafted in the calm Chaucerian port
Of poets, seem a little sail long due,
And be as one the call of memory drew
Unto the saddle void since Agincourt!

Not now for secular love's unquiet lease
Receive my soul, who rapt in thee erewhile
Hath broken tryst with transitory things;
But seal with her a marriage and a peace
Eternal, on thine Edward's holy isle,
Above the stormy sea of ending kings.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Open, Time

Open, Time, and let him pass
Shortly where his feet would be!
Like a leaf at Michaelmas
Swooning from the tree,

Ere its hour the manly mind
Trembles in a sure decrease,
Nor the body now can find
Any hold on peace.

Take him, weak and overworn;
Fold about his dying dream
Boyhood, and the April morn,
And the rolling stream:

Weather on a sunny ridge,
Showery weather, far from here;
Under some deep-ivied bridge,
Water rushing clear:

Water quick to cross and part,
(Golden light on silver sound),
Weather that was next his heart
All the world around!

Soon upon his vision break
These, in their remembered blue;

He shall toil no more, but wake
Young, in air he knew.

He has done with roofs and men.
Open, Time, and let him pass,
Vague and innocent again,
Into country grass.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Pax Paganica

GOOD oars, for Arnold's sake,
By Laleham lightly bound,
And near the bank, O soft,
Darling swan!
Let not the o'erweary wake
Anew from natal ground,
But where he slumbered oft,
Slumber on.

Be less than boat or bird,
The pensive stream along;
No murmur make, nor gleam,
At his side.
Where was it he had heard
Of warfare and of wrong?—
Not there, in any dream
Since he died.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Peter Rugg The Bostonian

I

The mare is pawing by the oak,
The chaise is cool and wide
For Peter Rugg the Bostonian
With his little son beside;
The women loiter at the wheels
In the pleasant summer-tide.

"And when wilt thou be home, Father?"
"And when, good husband, say:
The cloud hangs heavy on the house
What time thou art away."
He answers straight, he answers short,
"At noon of the seventh day."

"Fail not to come, if God so will,
And the weather be kind and clear."
"Farewell, farewell! But who am I
A blockhead rain to fear?
God willing or God unwilling,
I have said it, I will be here."

He gathers up the sunburnt boy
And from the gate is sped;
He shakes the spark from the stones below,

The bloom from overhead,
Till the last roofs of his own town
Pass in the morning-red.

Upon a homely mission
North unto York he goes,
Through the long highway broidered thick
With elder-blow and rose;
And sleeps in sounds of breakers
At every twilight's close.

Intense upon his heedless head

Frowns Agamenticus,
Knowing of Heaven's challenger
The answer: even thus
The Patience that is hid on high
Doth stoop to master us.

II

Full light are all his parting dreams;
Desire is in his brain;
He tightens at the tavern-post
The fiery creature's rein:
"Now eat thine apple, six years' child!
We face for home again."

They had not gone a many mile
With nimble heart and tongue,
When the lone thrush grew silent
The walnut woods among;
And on the lulled horizon
A premonition hung.

The babes at Hampton schoolhouse,
The wife with lads at sea,
Search with a level-lifted hand
The distance bodingly;
And farmer folk bid pilgrims in
Under a safe roof-tree.

The mowers mark by Newbury
How low the swallows fly,
They glance across the southern roads
All white and fever-dry,
And the river, anxious at the bend,
Beneath a thinking sky.

But there is one abroad was born
To disbelieve and dare:
Along the highway furiously
He cuts the purple air.
The wind leaps on the startled world
As hounds upon a hare;

With brawl and glare and shudder ope
The sluices of the storm;
The woods break down, the sand upblows
In blinding volleys warm;
The yellow floods in frantic surge
Familiar fields deform.

From evening until morning
His skill will not avail,
And as he cheers his youngest born,
His cheek is spectre-pale;
For the bonnie mare from courses known
Has drifted like a sail!

III

On some wild crag he sees the dawn
Unsheathe her scimitar.
"Oh, if it be my mother-earth,
And not a foreign star,
Tell me the way to Boston,
And is it near or far?"

One watchman lifts his lamp and laughs:
"Ye've many a league to wend."
The next doth bless the sleeping boy
From his mad father's end;
A third upon a drawbridge growls:
"Bear ye to larboard, friend."

Forward and backward, like a stone
The tides have in their hold,
He dashes east, and then distraught
Darts west as he is told,
(Peter Rugg the Bostonian,
That knew the land of old!)

And journeying, and resting scarce
A melancholy space,
Turns to and fro, and round and round,
The frenzy in his face,

And ends alway in angrier mood,
And in a stranger place,

Lost! lost in bayberry thickets
Where Plymouth plovers run,
And where the masts of Salem
Look lordly in the sun;

Lost in the Concord vale, and lost
By rocky Wollaston!

Small thanks have they that guide him,
Awed and aware of blight;
To hear him shriek denial
It sickens them with fright:
"They lied to me a month ago
With thy same lie to-night!"

To-night, to-night, as nights succeed,
He swears at home to bide,
Until, pursued with laughter
Or fled as soon as spied,
The weather-drenchèd man is known
Over the country side!

IV

The seventh noon's a memory,
And autumn's closing in;
The quince is fragrant on the bough,
And barley chokes the bin.
"O Boston, Boston, Boston!
And O my kith and kin!"

The snow climbs o'er the pasture wall,
It crackles 'neath the moon;
And now the rustic sows the seed,
Damp in his heavy shoon;
And now the building jays are loud
In canopies of June.

For season after season

The three are whirled along,

Misled by every instinct
Of light, or scent, or song;
Yea, put them on the surest trail,
The trail is in the wrong.

Upon those wheels in any path
The rain will follow loud,
And he who meets that ghostly man
Will meet a thunder-cloud,
And whosoever speaks with him
May next bespeak his shroud.

Tho' nigh two hundred years have gone,
Doth Peter Rugg the more
A gentle answer and a true
Of living lips implore:
"Oh, show me to my own town,
And to my open door!"

Where shall he see his own town
Once dear unto his feet?
The psalms, the tankard to the King,
The beacon's cliffy seat,
The gabled neighborhood, the stocks
Set in the middle street?

How shall he know his own town
If now he clatters thro'?
Much men and cities change that have
Another love to woo;
And things occult, incredible,
They find to think and do.

With such new wonders since he went
A broader gossip copes,
Across the crowded triple hills,
And up the harbor slopes,
Tradition's self for him no more
Remembers, watches, hopes.

But ye, O unborn children!
(For many a race must thrive
And drip away like icicles
Ere Peter Rugg arrive,)
If of a sudden to your ears
His plaint is blown alive;

If nigh the city, folding in
A little lad that cries,
A wet and weary traveller
Shall fix you with his eyes,
And from the crazy carriage lean
To spend his heart in sighs:--

"That I may enter Boston,
Oh, help it to befall!
There would no fear encompass me,
No evil craft appall;
Ah, but to be in Boston,
GOD WILLING, after all!"--

Ye children, tremble not, but go
And lift his bridle brave
In the one Name, the dread Name,
That doth forgive and save,
And leads him home to Copp's Hill ground,
And to his father's grave.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Saint Florent-Le-Vieil

The spacious open vale, the vale of doom,
Is full of autumn sunset; blue and strong
The semicirque of water sweeps among
Her lofty acres, each a martyr's tomb;
And slowly, slowly, melt into the gloom
Two little idling clouds, that look for long
Like roseleaf bodies of two babes in song
Correggio left to flush a convent room.

Dear hill deflowered in the frantic war!
In my day, rather, have I seen thee blest
With pastoral roofs to break the darker crest
Of apple-woods by many-islèd Loire,
And fires that still suffuse the lower west,
Blanching the beauty of thine evening star.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Sanctuary

HIGH above hate I dwell:
O storms! farewell.
Though at my sill your daggered thunders play,
Lawless and loud to-morrow as to-day,
To me they sound more small
Than a young fay's footfall:
Soft and far-sunken, forty fathoms low
In Long Ago,
And winnowed into silence on that wind
Which takes wars like a dust, and leaves but love behind.

Higher Felicity
Doth climb to me,
And bank me in with turf and marjoram
Such as bees lip, or the new-weanëd lamb;
With golden barberry-wreath,
And bluets thick beneath;
One grosbeak, too, mid apple-buds a guest
With bud-red breast,
Is singing, singing! All the hells that rage
Float less than April fog below our hermitage.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Summum Bonum

Waiting on Him who knows us and our need,
Most need have we to dare not, nor desire,
But as He giveth, softly to suspire
Against His gift, with no inglorious greed,
For this is joy, tho' still our joys recede;
And, as in octaves of a noble lyre,
To move our minds with His, and clearer, higher,
Sound forth our fate; for this is strength indeed.

Thanks to His love let earth and man dispense
In smoke of worship when the heart is stillest,
A praying more than prayer: "Great good have I,
Till it be greater good to lay it by;
Nor can I lose peace, power, permanence,
For these smile on me from the thing Thou willest!"

Louise Imogen Guiney

Sunday Chimes In The City

Across the bridge, where in the morning blow
The wrinkled tide turns homeward, and is fain
Homeward to drag the balck sea-goer's chain,
And the long yards by Dowgate dipping low;
Across dispeopled ways, patient and slow,
Saint Magnus and Saint Dunstan call in vain:
>From Wren's forgotten belfries, in the rain,
Down the blank wharves the dropping octaves go.

Forbid not these! Tho' no man heed, they shower
A subtle beauty on the empty hour,
>From all their dark throats aching and outblown;
Aye in the prayerless places welcome most,
Like the last gull that up a naked coast
Deploys her white and steady wing, alone.

Louise Imogen Guiney

The Atoning Yesterday

Ye daffodilian days, whose fallen towers
Shielded our paradisaal prime from ill,
Fair Past, fair motherhood! let come what will,
We, being yours, defy the anarch powers.
For us the happy tidings fell, in showers
Enjewelling the wind from every hill;
We drained the sun against the winter's chill;
Our ways were barricadoed in with flowers:

And if from skyey minsters now unhoused,
Earth's massy workings at the forge we hear,
The black roll of the congregated sea,
And war's live hoof: O yet, last year, last year
We were the lark-lulled shepherdlings, that drowsed
Grave-deep, at noon, in grass of Arcady!

Louise Imogen Guiney

The Kings

A man said unto his Angel:
"My spirits are fallen low,
And I cannot carry this battle:
O brother! where might I go?

"The terrible Kings are on me
With spears that are deadly bright;
Against me so from the cradle
Do fate and my fathers fight."

Then said to the man his Angel:
"Thou wavering, witless soul,
Back to the ranks! What matter
To win or to lose the whole,

"As judged by the little judges
Who hearken not well, nor see?
Not thus, by the outer issue,
The Wise shall interpret thee.

"Thy will is the sovereign measure
And only events of things:
The puniest heart, defying,
Were stronger than all these Kings.

"Though out of the past they gather,
Mind's Doubt, and Bodily Pain,
And pallid Thirst of the Spirit
That is kin to the other twain,

"And Grief, in a cloud of banners,
And ringletted Vain Desires,
And Vice, with the spoils upon him
Of thee and thy beaten sires, --

"While Kings of eternal evil
Yet darken the hills about,
Thy part is with broken sabre
To rise on the last redoubt;

"To fear not sensible failure,
Nor covet the game at all,
But fighting, fighting, fighting,
Die, driven against the wall."

Louise Imogen Guiney

The Lights Of London

The evenfall, so slow on hills, hath shot
Far down into the valley's cold extreme,
Untimely midnight; spire and roof and stream
Like fleeing spectres, shudder and are not.
The Hampstead hollies, from their sylvan plot
Yet cloudless, lean to watch as in a dream,
From chaos climb with many a sudden gleam,
London, one moment fallen and forgot.

Her booths begin to flare; and gases bright
Prick door and window; all her streets obscure
Sparkle and swarm with nothing true or sure,
Full as a marsh of mist and winking light;
Heaven thickens over, Heaven that cannot cure
Her tear by day, her fevered smile by night.

Louise Imogen Guiney

The Vigil-At-Arms

Keep holy watch with silence, prayer, and fasting
Till morning break, and all the bugles play;
Unto the One aware from everlasting
Dear are the winners: thou art more than they.

Forth from this peace on manhood's way thou goest,
Flushed with resolve, and radiant in mail;
Blessing supreme for men unborn thou sowest,
O knight elect! O soul ordained to fail!

Louise Imogen Guiney

The Wild Ride

I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses,
All day, on the road, the hoofs of invisible horses,
All night, from their stalls, the importunate pawing and neighing.

Let cowards and laggards fall back! But alert to the saddle
Weatherworn and abreast, go men of our galloping legion,
With a stirrup-cup each to the lily of women that loves him.

The trail is through dolor and dread, over crags and morasses;
There are shapes by the way, there are things that appal or entice us:
What odds? We are Knights of the Grail, we are vowed to the riding.

Thought's self is a vanishing wing, and joy is a cobweb,
And friendship a flower in the dust, and glory a sunbeam:
Not here is our prize, nor, alas! after these our pursuing.

A dipping of plumes, a tear, a shake of the bridle,
A passing salute to this world and her pitiful beauty;
We hurry with never a word in the track of our fathers.

I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses,
All day, on the road, the hoofs of invisible horses,
All night, from their stalls, the importunate pawing and neighing.

We spur to a land of no name, outracing the storm-wind;
We leap to the infinite dark like sparks from the anvil.
Thou leadest, O God! All's well with Thy troopers that follow.

Louise Imogen Guiney

Valse Jeune

ARE favoring ladies above thee?
Are there dowries and lands? Do they say
Seven others are fair? But I love thee:
Aultre n'auray!

All the sea is a lawn in our country;
All the morrow, our star of delay.
I am King: let me live on thy bounty!
Aulture n'auray!

To the fingers so light and so rosy
That have pinioned my heart,(welladay!)
Be a kiss, be a ring with this posy:
Aultre n'auray!

Louise Imogen Guiney