

Classic Poetry Series

Louise Mack
- poems -

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Louise Mack(1874 - 1935)

LOUISE MACK was born in Hobart, Tasmania, in 1874 to an Irish couple, the Reverend Hans Mack and Jemima James, from Downpatrick and Armagh, respectively. Louise was the first-born daughter, the seventh of thirteen children. She was a classmate of ETHEL TURNER at Sydney Girls' High School and like Ethel, edited a school magazine. They were in fact rival editors, Louise editing the 'Gazette' while her more famous classmate edited the 'Iris'. After finishing school she spent a short time as a governess but her real talent rested in writing, contributing poems to the 'Bulletin' at a very early age before taking on the latter's column 'Sydney Women's Letter' using a pseudonym, 'Gouli-Gouli'. 'The World is Round', her first novel, was published in London in 1896. By this time Ethel Turner had become one of her close friends, acting as a bridesmaid at her marriage to an Irish barrister, John Creed, in that same year.

The following year, Sydney publishers Angus and Robertson published Louise Mack's 'Teens: A Story of Australian Schoolgirls', illustrated by Frank Mahony. This book was published in answer to Ward, Lock's publication of Ethel Turner's 'Seven Little Australians' which had first appeared 3 years earlier, with much success. Both books were to a degree autobiographical, being based on their authors' experiences of family and school life. Louise journeyed to London in 1901 and authored 'An Australian Girl in London', following that up with several adult novels before moving to Florence, Italy. There she took on the editorship of the 'Italian Gazette' and eventually became the first female war correspondent for Lord Northcliffe's London papers, the 'Daily Mail' and 'Evening News'. By this time she was stationed in Antwerp, sending off on the spot accounts of the advancing German occupation, often living disguised as a housemaid. She was eventually forced into escaping to Holland and later told of her adventures in 'A Woman's Experiences in the Great War'.

Louise returned to Australia in 1916, using a lecture tour to raise money for the Red Cross. She had grown to enjoy travelling in foreign parts but eventually settled down in Sydney where she married Allen Leyland, in 1924. Following his early death eight years later, Louise resumed her travelling while maintaining a steady supply of contributions to newspapers and magazines throughout Australia and New Zealand. Two further books came from her pen - one adult novel and 'Teens Triumphant' - before she passed away in 1935.

Before Exile

HERE is my last good-bye,
This side the sea.
Good-bye! good-bye! good-bye!
Love me, remember me.

This is my last good-bye,
This side the sea.
I bless, I pledge, I cling,
Love me, remember me.

This is my last good-bye
To each dear tree,
To every silent plain,
Love me, remember me.

This is my last good-bye,
This side the sea.
O friends! O enemies!
Love me, remember me.

You will remain, but I
Must cross the sea.
My heart is faint with love,
O Land! remember me.

You will not even ask
What claim has she.
She loved us, she has gone...
'Tis all, remember me.

This is what you will say,
My Land across the sea,
She was of us, has gone...
And you'll remember me.

Here is my last good-bye
This side the sea.
Farewell! and when you can,
Love me, remember me.

Louise Mack

To Sydney

CITY, I never told you yet—
O little City, let me tell—
A secret woven of your wiles,
Dear City with the angel face,
And you will hear with frowning grace,
Or will you break in summer smiles?

This is the secret, little town,
Lying so lightly towards the sea;
City, my secret has no art,
Dear City with the golden door;
But oh, the whispers I would pour
Into your ears—into your heart!

You are my lover, little place,
Lying so sweetly all alone.
And yet I cannot, cannot tell
My secret, for the voice will break
That tries to tell of all the ache
Of this poor heart beneath your spell.

Dreaming, I tell you all my tale;
Tell how the tides that wash your feet
Sink through my heart and cut its cords.
Dreaming, I hold my arms, and drag
All, all into my heart—the flag
On the low hill turned harbourwards,

And all the curving little bays,
The hot, dust-ridden, narrow streets,
The languid turquoise of the sky,
The gardens flowing to the wave,
I drag them in. O City, save
The grave for me where I must lie.

Yet humbly I would try to build
Stone upon stone for this town's sake;
Humbly would try for you to aid
Those whose wise love for you will rear

White monuments far off and near,
White, but unsoiled, undesecrate.

Louise Mack