

Classic Poetry Series

Nettie Palmer
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Nettie Palmer(1876)

Nettie Palmer was born Janet Gertrude Higgins in Bendigo, Victoria and was schooled at the Prebyterian Ladies' College. After taking a BA and diploma in education from the University of Melbourne, she travelled to England and continued her studies in French and German. She returned to Melbourne and completed an MA in 1912. In 1914 she returned to England and married Vance Palmer, beginning one of Australia's most important literary partnerships.

The Mother

IN the sorrow and the terror of the nations,
In a world shaken through by lamentations,
Shall I dare know happiness
That I stitch a baby's dress?

So: for I shall be a mother with the mothers,
I shall know the mother's anguish like the others,
Present joy must surely start
For the life beneath my heart.

Gods and men, ye know a woman's glad unreason,
How she cannot bend and weep but in her season,
Let my hours with rapture glow
As the seams and stitches grow.

And I cannot hear the word of fire and slaughter;
Do men die? Then live, my child, my son, my daughter!
Into realms of pain I bring
You for joy's own offering.

Nettie Palmer

The Welcome,

DID you know, little child,
Ere you left the outer wild,
There were strong hands steady,
There were old songs ready,
There was love prepared to keep you with the hard earth reconciled?

Did you learn beyond the moon
All the happy sounds of noon?
A creek's voice will greet you,
A wattle bend to meet you,
There are visions, there are voices: you will know them soon and soon.

Yes, for you will surely go
Where the deepest gullies grow,
They will feel you and take you,
With birds to lure and wake you,
They will set your spirit dancing, they will tell you all they know.

There beneath the radiant dome
Unafraid your feet will roam,
With the soft creek lapping,
And the loose bark flapping,
While the waving tree-ferns whisper, 'Little girl, you've wandered home.'

Nettie Palmer

Unsung

WHEN shall I make a song for you, my love?
When you are nigh me?
Not so, for then the hours unnamed go by me,
Flocking like dove on dove.

When shall that song for you be found, my mate?
When I wait lonely?
Not so, for then am I a mourner only,
Begging without the gate.

Never in words that happy song will rise,
Yet you will feel it,—
Through days your love makes glad I shall reveal it,
Through years your love makes wise.

Nettie Palmer