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The Moth and The Star

BY

UNA MARSON

With an Introduction by

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INTRODUCTION.

THE strength of Anteus lay in his mother the earth, and some of the finest poems in this collection deal with the lowly folk who till the soil and follow an obscure Destiny. Turn to the poem "My Philosophy" and see how completely Miss Marson has captured the spirit of the people, how clear has been her vision and how simple her utterance:

"You can tan up talk wid him,
If you an him is companion
Me an him is no companion."

and the reply

"Me and him is companion, yes,
Me and him is companion.
Me and all de wide world is companion
For dere is nobody better dan me
And I is not better dan nobody."

There is the same freshness and direction of approach, the same economy of words, in "Gettin' de Spirit":

"Join de chorus,
We feel it flowin' o'er us—
You is no chile of Satan
So get de spirit."

Many of the other poems in dialect have these qualities. In the "Stone Breakers" we find added both protest and acquiescence:

"But wha' fe do—we mus brok de stone
Dough me han' dem hat me . . .
Well, de good Lord knows
All about we sorrows "

while "Brown Baby Blues" and "Canefield Blues" have something in them aching and poignant. It has

been remarked that the Blues of American Negro literature have in them "a primitive kinship with the old ballads" and Miss Marson has made good use of the opportunities for effective repetition and for simple quick description. She has written blues which seem spontaneous rather than artificial, and that in itself is an achievement. The Blues as well as the other dialect pieces are "divinations and reports" of what passes in the minds of our people.

A number of the poems in this section deal with the facts of race and colour. We often adopt a false attitude, and pretend that no such difference exists. The only intelligent and honest method is to realise that the differences of race and colour do exist, to realise that we sometimes quite wrongly suffer injustices and insults on account of them, to see to it "that there is no wall of partition", to put away our apings and imitations and to seek to develop quite deliberately a West Indian Culture, the product of a people who have learnt that there is no such thing as superiority or inferiority of race. The whole question should be one which we can discuss and accept quite frankly, without any feeling of bitterness or shame.

In some of these poems like "Black Burden", there is a bitter protest against the injustices that the Negro sometimes suffers. Since this feeling is naturally intensified in a strange land among people of another race, we find it recurring again and again in the "Poems written in England", especially in such poems as "Little Brown Girl", or in the more ironic "He called us Brethren".

In some of these poems it seems to me that the racial sense is at times "hectic and forced" rather

*"I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,
The desire of the moth for the star
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?"*

SHELLEY.

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By the same Author:

POEMS **Tropic Reveries**
 Heights and Depths

PLAYS **Burnt Wings**
 London Calling

Introduction.

than normal, but in others there is a most important and valuable development which may be best indicated by a quotation from Alain Locke in his essay on "The Negro in American Culture". He says, "As with the greater group pride and assurance of the present day Negro, race becomes more of an accepted fact, his racial feelings are less constrained—nothing is more of a spiritual gain in the life of the Negro than the quieter assumption of his group identity and heritage—the current acceptance of race is quiet with deep spiritual identification, and supported by an undercurrent of faith rather than a surface of challenging pride".

Now in some of Miss Marson's poems we find this new note which is so characteristic of the work of some of the great Negro poets of to-day. In "Kinky Hair Blues" we have

"I like me black face
And me kinky hair"

Very similar in feeling to Gwendoline Bennett's

"I love you for your brownness"

or Countee Cullen's beautiful

"My love is dark as yours is fair
Yet lovelier I hold her—

or in Lewis Alexander's dramatic

"Lo I am black, but I am comely too,
Black as the night, black as the deep dark caves".

It is very significant that we should find this note of quiet assumption in Miss Marson's poetry, and here she makes a definite contribution to West Indian literature.

It has been possible here simply to point out some of the tendencies that may be seen in the poems in this volume. All of the poems are not of the same value. I feel that in one or two there is more of sen-

Introduction.

timentality than of sentiment—as in “Winged Ants” where a disproportion seems to exist between the experience and the feeling it aroused. I say this in all sincerity because I know that Miss Marson will appreciate sincerity just as I know that she would rightly reject any attempt at being patronising. She has written her poems in sincerity and she claims our sympathy, but does not desire indulgence. It would be stupid to say what we so often do say: “They cannot be good because they are Jamaican” and it would be just as stupid to say: “They must be excellent because they are Jamaican”. The poems deserve to be judged on their merits.

It is easy to see how strong is Miss Marson’s love of her homeland and its people. Even the casual reader will feel the homeloving in the poems written in England, and observe the delight in tropic sights and sounds, in the blue sky and the blue sea, in flaming hibiscus, and the cool May rains.

But this natural beauty is the background for human life. Covered by the sky, encircled by the sea, man laughs and weeps, enduring his sorrow for a season. This sorrow, the needless and tragic cruelty of man to man, bring a cry of protest from Miss Marson. Now she protests against unemployment in Kingston:

“And so through all the night
I see the weary and hungry
Crowds—marching—

and at another time she rebels against the race in armaments or against Italian brutality in Abyssinia:

“God, I know
That these thine own
And thousands more
Cut down in youth
And beauty
Are not dead.”

Introduction.

These poems are more mature than those in "Heights and Depths". They should open our eyes to the beauty that lies about us, both in our land and in our people. I am very grateful to Miss Marson for the honour she has done me in asking me to write an Introduction for her book of poems, and I very heartily commend them to a wide public.

PHILIP M. SHERLOCK.

Wolmer's
Kingston,
Jamaica, B.W.I.,
Sept. 10, 1937.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

I DESIRE to express my sincere thanks to those who have assisted me in the arduous, yet delightful task of producing a third volume of new poems.

I am deeply indebted to my friends in whose homes I have so often found peace and inspiration in the lovely quiet places of my homeland; to those whose love and encouragement to me in my work has meant so much; to Dr. W. E. McCulloch for his help in reading proofs; to Mr. R. C. Sommerville for readily sponsoring this edition, and to my ever patient and wise poet-friend, Clare McFarlane, whose assistance has again been invaluable.

I have no wish to forget those friends overseas but for whose kindness my stay abroad would have lost much of its richness.

To those of the Jamaica public who have never failed to support my literary productions I remain a perpetual debtor.

UNA MARSON.

Rosebank,
17 Halfway Tree Road,
St. Andrew,
Jamaica,
Sept. 1937.

IN V O C A T I O N

GOD of the Daisied Meadows
Who has opened my eyes
To see the beauty in a blade of grass,
The tenderness of little wayside flowers,
The sweetness of the dew upon the rose,
The loveliness of childhood and innocence,
The majesty of the ocean,
The grandeur of the mountains,
The laughter of running brooks,
The simple modesty of trees,
The rapture of birdsongs,
The wonder of an ear of corn,
The glory of sunrise and sunset,
The softness of twilight and dawn,
The silence of the hills and valleys,
The freshness of the cooling raindrops
And all the lovely things of earth :

God of the Dasied Meadows
Save my soul from sinning against man,
Open my eyes that I may see
The beauty in each living soul,
Give me the faith to see
That in their supreme creation
Thou hast placed beauty that is thine own.
O let me see the Beauty of Thee
That lies behind the hard face,
The stony eyes, the frigid smile,
The poisoned thrust, the traitor's kiss,
The proud silent features.

God of the dainty Butterflies
Let me see Thy beauty in Thy children,
Save me from bitterness, from distrust,
From loving things more and people less,
Save me from conceit, from the thought
That those who seem unkind
And swamped in life's dull mart
Feel not the thirst for beauty
And the need to praise Thy works.

God of the dainty Primrose
Teach me humility, let me see
That it matters not what part we play
So that we play it well and unto Thee,
Teach me to be patient, to wait on Thee,
To find a confidence and sweet repose
In Thee the God of all things beautiful.

God of the Twilight and Dawn
Teach me true tenderness and gentleness,
Save me from hurting others;
Keep my lips from saying aught
That might wound a friend or damn an enemy,
Make me tender and loving as a Mother
To her new born babe,
Let me not forget that all mankind
Is heir to tears and griefs and heartache.

God of the mighty Ocean
Fill me full of courage,
Of power to do the right
When the wrong is so easy,
Fill me full of the purpose of life,
Let me not live and die
Without having done some work
That might bring thy heaven
Nearer earth.

God of all Beauty and Loveliness
Stamp thine own image
Upon my heart and on the hearts
Of all Thy children
So that their beauty may be
Both seen and loved by all,
Shed abroad Thy great love
In the hearts of all men
And all Nations,
That hate and envy
And jealousy and spite
May cease forever, and Thy reign
Of love and peace and brotherhood
Be upon Thy glorious earth.

SPRING IN ENGLAND

TREES with trunks turned black
With London's soot and grime
Have robed themselves anew
In daintiest shades of green
That ever eye could see;
And like little black children
In flimsy summer frocks
Dance on the green and laugh and shout.
Trees of all ages and sizes
Bask in the warm Spring sunshine
And their robes are blown about
By the gentle breezes that whisper,
Ever whisper of Spring.

The Pear and the Plum and the Apple
Cherry, Almond and Peach,
Have donned their Spring dresses,
And what weaver of fabrics rare,
What lady with fingers dainty
And threads of every hue, and silks
And satins and laces fine
Could fashion a robe for mortals to wear
Akin to the robes that these lovely trees
Have chosen to wear in honour of Spring?
What maiden divine with eyes like the stars
And lips that would rival the cherry
Could stand 'neath these trees and detract
From their beauty, or even compare
With the freshness and grace
And, the charm, the delicate blending
Of pink and white? Or what nymph
Could dance with so graceful a step
As the happy petals that dance
In the breeze over the carpeted
Daisied fields?

Who would attempt to rival the songs
That throb from the throats of the birds—
The little birds that live in the trees,

In the trees that grow in the heart
Of London—the merry birds that hop about
On the fresh green grass and look at you
As though they would ask why you seem sad?
“Join in my song, join in my song,
Aren't you happy? Aren't you happy?
Spring is here, Spring is here,” they sing.
Who could praise with song so beautiful
That it would rival the praise
That the birds sing in chorus
To welcome the Spring?

“And what are daffodils, daffodils,
Daffodils that Wordsworth praised?”
I asked. “Wait for the Spring,
Wait for the Spring,” the birds replied.
I waited for Spring, and lo they came,
“A host of shining daffodils
Beside the lake beneath the trees”
They stood. What gift of Spring
Could equal this? Daffodils everywhere!
What season boasts such loveliness?
What time of year calls forth
Such stores of gold, such stars of earth?
O sweet singer, fond lover of Nature
Who praised the violet
The little daisies on the grass,
'Twas heaven's gift of poesy
Within thy soul that made thee
Mark the Daffodil, and tell
How she doth make the saddest heart
To dance with her in Spring. ✓

The scent of Lilac blossoms
Fills my room; for in old bowls
And vases they are set,
For April's here and lilac trees
In all the land have cast abroad
The Spell of Spring, and Spring is Lilac time.
What dainty perfumed breath from lady's bower
Can charm the heart and stir the blood
As that the Lilac breathes?

What perfume of Arabia
Fashioned by wise men skilled
In all the scents that maidens love
Can bind the fragrance as it leaves the flower
And store it fast?

Lady Laburnum has robed herself
In a golden dress, richly embroidered
And so modestly she wears her robe
That all admire her grace and charm and try
To weave a robe as fair as this she wears
At the great Carnival of Spring.
The perfume she has chosen is so mild
That you must kiss her gently
Ere you can sense her sweetness;
It is very rare and only those who can pass by
The filthy gold for which men die
And spend an hour at her shrine
Can know her charm, her grace
And the delicate beauty of her soul.

But who can sing of Spring
And praise her in one breath
For all she brings of beauty
To our souls, and name her several gifts?
'Twould be to name the stars that shine
In the high heaven, and lend to each
A special brightness, a peculiar charm.
This were an arduous task,
And so I name a few of Spring's delights
And cry again that we rejoice in her,
And praise her children who are clad
In loveliest robes to greet her.
For even lovers with their words of love
Are not to be comparéd unto her,
To the glory and loveliness of Spring!

VAGABOND CREED

I SAID by the stars you are wrong,
By the streams and the woods and the flowers,
By the birds that give freely their song
By the trees that are bathed by the showers,

It is futile to rush and to dash,
To toil every hour for gold,
It is idle to make a great "splash"
And earth's fleeting joys try to hold.

It is better to muse all alone
For hours in Nature's domain,
Than to sit on a bright gilded throne
Or dwell in unrest just for gain.

It is better to feel hunger's call
While the soul can mount up with wings,
Than to feast in a glorious hall
And gossip of mean petty things.

For the body is merely a cloak,
It's the spirit and soul that live on,
And I am a real happy bloke
For the whole world to me doth belong.

TO BE A POET

If I were a poet with gifts divine
And all the blessings of earth were mine
I'd sit all day 'neath a shady tree
And keep the Daisies' company;
I would watch the fleecy clouds as they pass
And tell the time by an hour glass,
I would join the song of the babbling brook
And read aloud from a poetry book,
I would drink from the brook if I were dry
And eat of the fruit that grew hard by,
I would talk to the shepherds about their flock
And sit with them in the sun on the rock,
I would learn from the peasants at eventide
The simple joys that forever abide,
I would learn from the fields and the woods around
The strength and beauty that there abound,
I would cheer the meek and the lowly of earth
And plead with the wealthy and high of birth,
I would play with the children and teach them to love
All beauty of earth and heaven above,
I would write a sonnet in praise of one
Who shall still live on though all else be gone,
I would fashion a lyric of delicate style
To the tree 'neath whose shade I the hours beguile,
I would write a poem addressed to all men
And grave it on houses with iron pen,
For it would be the message sublime
That Peace must reign in the world for all time,
I should send it by wireless over the world
That the banner of peace may be unfurled,
But mostly of love my poems would be,
For love to a glorious life is the key,
My verse would be sweet and simple and strong
Lyrics sublime that glide sweetly along;
If I were a poet I'd stir the world's heart
From beauty and love she would never depart,
But I'm just a fledgling too weak to alight,
God of the Poets, hasten my flight!

THE SECRET

Is it not a secret too sweet to be shared
Except with the Daisies and Bluebells?
They know; I had to tell someone
So I talked to the little Daisies
And told them all about you,
And they smiled and nodded their heads,
Clapped their hands and danced about.

I told them how gentle and kind you were,
How much you loved them too,
And how if you had time you would come
And sit with them and play on the green.
They looked surprised when I told them
You were not a little child;
But they were happy when they heard
That you too loved the things they loved,
The rain and the dew, the blue of the skies,
The softness, the smell of the grass,
The little breezes that whisper among them—
They know my secret and they have told the buttercups
Because they know I love them too.

So it's really no longer a secret
For the Daisies and Buttercups know,
And when I walk in the meadows again
All my other little flower loves will know.
You see, they are not jealous and mean,
They do not think wicked thoughts,
They know me well, and they know
That those whom I love will love them.
They are always eager to see me
For I play and sing to them
And tell them all my secrets,
The sad ones and the glad ones
And now they seem most happy to hear
That my heart loves you too.

It's a secret too great for humans,
It's too fine for the vulgar mind
To grasp its wonder and beauty,
But the little wild flowers
Whose hearts throb as wildly as mine,
Are fit to share my beautiful secret,
This secret of my love for you.

LITTLE BROWN GIRL

LITTLE brown girl
Why do you wander alone
About the streets
Of the great city
Of London?

Why do you start and wince
When white folk stare at you?
Don't you think they wonder
Why a little brown girl
Should roam about their city
Their white, white city?

Little brown girl
Why did you leave
Your little sunlit land
Where we sometimes go
To rest and get brown
So we may look healthy?

What are you seeking,
What would you have?
In London town
There are no laughing faces,
People frown if one really laughs,
Everyone is quiet,
That is respectable;
There's nothing picturesque
To be seen in the streets,
Nothing but people clad
In Coats, Coats, Coats,
Coats in autumn, winter and spring,
And often in the Summer—
A city of coated people
But little to charm the eye.

And the folks are all white—
White, white, white,
And they all seem the same
As they say that Negroes seem.
No pretty copper coloured skins,

No black and bronze and brown
No chocolate and high brown girls
Clad in smart colours
To blend with the complexion,
And wearing delicate
Dainty shoes on dainty feet
That one can admire.
No friendly country folk
Parading the city
With bare feet,
Bright attractive bandanas,
Black faces, pearly teeth
And flashing eyes.
No heavy laden donkeys
And weary laden women
Balancing huge baskets
So cleverly on their heads
While they greet each other
And tell of little things
That mean so much to them.

Little Brown girl
Do you like the shops
And all the lovely things
In the show windows?
Wouldn't you like a coat
With a fifty pound tag on it
Or one of those little hats
In Bond Street?

Little Brown girl
Why do you look so hard
At the Bobbies
And the book stalls
And the City Lights?
Why do you stop and look
At all the pictures
Outside the Theatres?
Do you like shows?
Have you theatres
In your country
And from whence are you
Little brown girl?

I guess Africa, or India,
Ah no, from some island
In the West Indies,
But isn't that India
All the same?

I heard you speak
To the Bobbie,
You speak good English
Little Brown girl,
How is it that you speak
English as though it belonged
To you?

Would you like to be white
Little brown girl?
I don't think you would
For you toss your head
As though you are proud
To be brown.

Little brown girl
Don't you feel very strange
To be so often alone
In a crowd of whites?
Do you remember you are brown
Or do you forget?
Or do people staring at you
Remind you of your colour?

Little brown girl
You are exotic
And you make me wonder
All sorts of things
When you stroll about London
Seeking, seeking, seeking.
What are you seeking
To discover in this dismal
City of ours?
From the look in your eyes
Little brown girl
I know it is something
That does not really exist.

M A Y D A Y S

O WHO would stay in a dreary house
On a lovely day in May,
When fruit trees bloom and song birds sing
And fields are green and gay?

O who would rest in a mansion fair
With the doors and windows fast,
When the sun's soft rays seem to whisper praise
And it seems too good to last?

O who would sit in an office bright
Be it cheerful and light as can be,
When the heavens smile and the open road
Is calling to you and to me?

'Tis May and Spring is in the air,
A-maying we would go,
For the heart is stirring with love that's new
And the loves of long ago.

HE CALLED US BRETHREN!

I READ it in the paper
Yesterday—strange reading.
It was the story of a service
Held annually for Coloured people
In London by their League.
It ran somewhat like this:
The preacher called them brethren
And who were they but coloured folk!
And who was the preacher but English!
He called us brethren and the Press
Was pleased to publish this strange news.

God, if thou didst make
Of one blood all mankind
To dwell upon the face of earth,
Christ, if Thou didst bleed upon the Cross
To bring the world to God
Let not Thy glorious travail be in vain,
For vain it is when Thy Servant
Commended is for owning us as brethren.

O England, England, heart of an Empire
That reaches to remotest parts of earth,
Beneath thy flag are men in every clime;
How slow thou art to comprehend the truth,
The universal truth that all must learn—
And thou the foremost for thou hast set
Great claim upon the holy words of God.
For greater than all battles
That are fought in freedom's name,
Mightier than ships and planes,
More valiant than the daring deeds
Of heroes, stronger than the bonds
That bind the peoples of one Race
Is that same blood that flows—
That flows alike through black and white
Making us one in Christ.

THE STRANGER

You liked talking to people like me
You said, with a wistful smile
That enchanted me, so the pause
That came before I spoke
Must have seemed strange to you,
And when I returned the compliment
So sweetly made, I still thought
Of the wistfulness of your smile.

So you like talking to people like me
Friend with the wistful smile,
To foreign girls who are brown of skin
And have black kinky hair
And strange black eyes.

You like to hear the tales I tell
Of a tropic Paradise,
Of sunkissed woods and mountains high
Of skies that are bluer than ever
Skies are blue in your nordic clime:
Of magic sunsets and marvellous seas,
Of waterfalls clattering down,
Stars so near, and the moon so large,
And fireflies, stars of the earth.

I like to listen to you,
Friend with the wistful smile,
It's not to hear of your great country
And tales of your marvellous land,
But to watch the wistful smile
That plays around your mouth,
The strange look in your eyes
And hear the calm sweet tone of your voice.

QUASHIE COMES TO LONDON

I GWINE tell you 'bout de English
And I aint gwine tell no lie,
'Cause I come quite here to Englan'
Fe see wid me own eye.

I tell you fuss 'bout London town,
Hi man, it big fe true,
If you get lass as you often will
Is de Corpie put you troo.

'An' talking 'bout de Bobbie dem,
Dem is nice as nice can be,
An' some o' dem is tall me boy
'Mos' like a coconut tree.

But dem neber fas' wid you me frien'
Dem eben pass a fight,
An' fe see dem guide de traffic,
Man, it is a pretty sight.

I tink I love dem bes' of all
De people in dis town,
For dem seem to hab some life in dem
An' you neber see dem frown.

I know you wan' fe hear jus' now
What I tink of dese white girls,
Well I tell you straight, dem smile 'pon me,
But I prefer black pearls!

You see dem always coated up,
It's no good fe go to a show
Fe see a crowd of lovely dames
All sitting in a row,

'Cause dem always hab a cloak
Or someting fe kip dem warm,
So you can't admire dem in truth
And dat is jes' de harm.

An' dat takes me fe talk 'bout shows:
Now dem is someting gran'
An' if you neber see one here
You jes' can't understand.

Dem hab de shows fe fit all taste
De highbrow and de low,
An' 'cording to de mood I hab
I choose de one fe go.

If I is feeling full o' pep
I choose variety,
Dem call dem all de nonstop show
An' 'tis dere you want to be.

Some of de numbers ain't so fine,
But dat you mus' expec'
But boy, I tell you, some again
Is surely full o' pep.

You hear some fun an' see some sights
Dem frown upon out dere,
But dough dem say dese people col'
De hot stuff gets de cheer.

An' sometimes jes when I feel gran'
Dere sitting all alone,
Dem play some tune dat takes me home
In sweet and soulful tone.

An' de tears dem well up in me eyes
An' I try fe brush dem 'way,
But me heart gets full and dough I try
Dem simply come fe stay.

For de orchestra is really gran'
I mean de bes' one dem,
For hot stuff gie me Harry Roy,
For sweet, Geraldo's men.

Sometimes de jazz gets in me bones
Me feet dem can't keep still,
I wants fe get right up and dance
But I use me good strong will.

I see some ob me own folks dem
In dese here music hall,
An' if you hear Paul Robeson sing
You feel you wan' fe bawl.

De folks dem love him here fe true,
An' all de coloured stars,
Dem love de darkies' tunes me frien'
An' try fe play guitars.

Dem love we songs, and I wan' tell you
Dat dough dem tink dem great,
Wid no glad darkies in de worl'
'Twould be a sad sad fate.

Now de oder times I go to plays
When I feel fe someting more
An' I hear English as she is spoke
An' it please me heart fe sure.

I don't go much to de Movie show
For I see so much back home,
Dem all is nice büt jes' de same
Dem is but de ocean's foam.

But de organs dere delight me heart,
Dem stir me to me soul,
Dem tek me to dose pastures green
An' I hear Jordan roll.

An' dat minds me fe tell you now
'Bout de Parks dem in dis town,
Boy, if you wants something dat's fine
Jes' come along right down.

In Spring you feel you heart astir
When you hear de birdies sing,
An' de flowers bloom and de leaves come out
An' de kids dance in a ring.

As quick as de sun can show his light
An' de air is a little warm,
Out to de Parks dem everywhere
You wan' see people swarm.

Dem sit like flies in Mango time
Under de lovely trees,
But all de same dem wear a coat
As if dem gwine fe freeze.

Man, some of de Parks is really fine,
Dem hab little lakes dem mek,
An' if you know fe row a boat
A nice one you can get.

If you walk de Parks on a real hot day
You'd a swear dat all de folk
Ain't got a blooming ting fe do
But sit in de sun fe joke.

For London town hab people man,
Dem jes' like gingy fly,
Dem say it's 'bout eight million
But a figure dat dem lie.

I mos' feget fe tell you now
About de place fe eat,
Massy massa, dere's a ting,
Now here's one big treat.

One day me walk upon de Stran'
Me see one place mark LYONS,
Me say Now Quashie, here's some fun
You better hol' you irons.

Me grab me umbrella real tight,
Yes man, me carry dat,
I step right in fe see de brutes
I fraid fe lif me hat.

But guess me what I fin' in dere
Not eben a lion's tail,
But a jazz ban' playing like it mad
An' folks eating grub wholesale.

I fin' a table to meself
An' I smile and look quite calm,
A little gal in black and white
Come speak to me wid charm.

She says "What can I get you sir?"
I says "Some ripe breadfruit,
Some fresh ackee and saltfish too
An' dumplins hot will suit."

She look pon me like say she lass,
A say "Why what's de row?"
She say "Sorry, but we have none sir"
An' I feel fe laugh somehow.

She gie me Menu fe go read,
You know I's good at dat,
But I say "no tanks, jes' bring me den
Some red herring an' sprat.

"An' anyting you hab fe food
Because I wan' a feed,"
You should see de dainty ting she bring,
It look like pigeon feed!

It's den I miss me home sweet home
Me good ole rice an' peas
An' I say I is a fool fe come
To dis lan' of starve an' sneeze.

But dis missive is too mighty long,
I will write more news nex time,
Me love fe all de gay spree boys
An' dat buxom gal o' mine.

It not gwine be anoder year
Before you see me face,
Dere's plenty dat is really nice
But I sick fe see white face.

WHAT GOOD ?

WHAT is the good of living
If you don't hear the dear birds sing?
What is the good of being
If you don't see the flowers in Spring?
And what is the good of breathing
If you miss the sweetness they bring?
What is the good of seeming
When to earth's little pebbles you cling?
What is the good of dreaming
If your soul never goes on the wing?

HOME THOUGHTS

JUNE is drawing near
And in my sun-kissed isle
The Poinciana with its flaming blossom
Casts its spell o'er all the land.
These mighty trees in regal robes
Now call the land to worship,
And the bees, hungry for hidden honey,
Swarm among its blossoms and buzz and buzz,
And the blossoms laugh and yield
Shedding their sweet perfume;
They make a crown of golden dust
To beautify the honeybee.

There on the hillside, 'mid a tuft
Of dark green trees, towers the Poinciana
Stretching its branches eagerly
To watch the children passing by.
I see a tree I used to love
Whose red and golden glory
Has thrilled my soul with wonder;
O, I remember that glad June,
So long ago it seems,
'Twas Harvest in the Village Church
And the merry school children
Cut great branches of Poinciana
And made a radiant glory of the Church.

June comes again and Poinciana trees
Now blossom in my sunkissed isle
And I am here in London, and the flowers
Of dainty shades and delicate perfumes
Stir my heart and wake my love,
But it is to the flaming glory
Of Poinciana trees in fair Jamaica
That my lone heart is homing.
I might sing of fragrant Myrtle blossoms
Whiter than snow and sweeter than honey,
Of pink and white June roses,
Of Jessamines, Hibiscus, Begonias,
Of Bougainvillea and Cassia,
But the Flaming Poinciana
Calls to me across the distance
Calling, calling me home.

O pride and glory of our tropic Isle,
As thy red and golden petals
Drip blood drops on the sod
That thou mayst bring forth
Mighty pods of fertile seed,
So children of your tropic land
With broken hearts that bleed
In foreign lands afar
Strain every nerve to bring forth
Fruit that may enrich the race
And are anew inspired
With hope and loyal longing—
Hope that thy red and golden banners
Now unfurled through all the land
May call men's hearts
To bow at Beauty's shrine—
And loyal longing that awakes
And claims the best thy sons and daughters give.

O Fair Jamaica! my thoughts go home to you,
In love and loyalty I shall for aye be true.

L U L L A B Y

I SAT in the silent room
After you had gone
Enjoying the sweet harmony,
The delicate music
That your voice left
On my ears.

Sat there a long, long while
Just thinking of the restfulness
Of the depth in your voice.
I wished again to be a little child
So I could nestle in your arms
And fall asleep with the music
Of your beautiful words
For lullaby.

N O S T A L G I A

I WILL arise and go again to my fair Tropic Isle
And sit beneath the palm trees that there forever
smile,

I must leave this lovely country for one that's lovelier
far,
I would leave the land of glow-worms and seek again
the star.

The purple hills are calling and the orange is in bloom,
The dew is on the Myrtle and the violets fade so soon.

The lovely Lignum Vitae trees are basking in the sun,
They are whispering and wondering just when once
more I'll come

To lie beneath their shade and watch the colours of the
sea
And dream of all the by-gone days and days that are to
be.

My loving friends with eager eyes are waiting for the
day
When I'll come and hold their hands and ever with them
stay.

Oh, I'll arise and go again to my fair Tropic Isle
For I hear voices calling and I'm so sad meanwhile.

POEMS OF NATURE

CALL OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

I'm coming back to greet you love, back from the city's throng,
I'm leaving all its restlessness, for I to you belong,
What care I for a city where men barter all for gold?
I need your love and tenderness, your love that ne'er grows cold.

I'll find a refuge for my soul out where the billows roll,
Where a man may take a maiden for a quiet country stroll,
Where no cars and trucks go honking and hooting down the hill,
Where I may have the sea for a friend and the music of the rill.

Where glistening palms are swaying all along the sandy shore
Where rocks stand by immovable, foam kissed for evermore,
Where birds are singing gaily from the dawn to setting sun
And the heart can rest in quietness when day's hard toil is done.

I'll watch the sun rise from the sea and set behind the hill,
I'll see the stars' first sleepy eyes when all around is still,
And in the night I'll sit and trace the heaven's tell-tale face
Till sleep comes down to close my eyes and all my thoughts efface.

At dawn I'll mount my noble steed and ride to greet the day
With the song of the sea to guide us we'll go where the white foams spray.
O the thrill of a right good canter when we two are alone on the road,
By the mighty sea, at the foot of the hills the heart lays down its load.

So wait for me at dawning when the dew is on the grass,
Ere the sun steals up from her watery bed you will hear
 my footsteps pass,
I'll meet you by the sandy cove where we sport and dance
 with the sea,
Beloved I am coming and I know you'll welcome me.

HEARTBREAK COTTAGES

HERE on the fringe of our fair Southern Coast,
In an isle of whose beauty multitudes boast
 Is scenery divine that is ne'er told in rhyme
And a glory effaced not by time.

But Nature's exquisite landscape has blots ;
On the peasant's miniature housing plots
Are heartbreak cottages never designed
Where workers rest from a day's hard grind.

Some homes are of zinc and others of thatch,
Some that nothing on earth can match ;
They are patched and mended, unfit for the eyes
Of the poorest of poor living under the skies.

O you that live in homes that are grand—
How can you permit this disgrace in the land ?
Go teach your brothers the joys of a home,
Go help them to build where in darkness they roam.

Heartbreak cottages must go in the sand,
Pride of race sun cots must stand in our land.
O my people, of careless content beware ;
There's beauty oft found in poverty's care.

O my people, build hearts that are true to the core,
Remember your children who play round your door ;
Their innocence pity ; they all have a dream—
O save them from blindness, your honour redeem.

DARLINGFORD

BLAZING tropical sunshine
On a hard, white, dusty road
That curves round and round
Following the scraggy coastline;
Coconut trees fringing the coast,
Thousands and thousands
Of beautiful coconut trees,
Their green and brown arms
Reaching out in all directions—
Reaching up to high heaven
And sparkling in the sunshine.
Sea coast, rocky sea coast
Rocky palm fringed coastline;
Brown-black rocks,
White sea-foam spraying the rocks;
Waves, sparkling waves
Dancing merrily with the breeze;
The incessant song
Of the mighty sea.
A white sail—far out
Far, far out at sea
A tiny sailing boat—
White sails all glittering
Flirting with the bright rays
Of the soon setting sun,
Trying to escape their kisses,
In vain—and the jealous winds
Waft her on, on, out to sea
Till sunset, then weary
Of their battle with the sun
The tired winds
Fold themselves to sleep
And the noble craft
No longer idolised
By her two violent lovers
Drifts slowly into port
In the pale moonlight;
Gone are the violent caresses
Of the sun and restless winds—

She nestles in the cool embrace
Of quiet waves
And tender moonlight.
Southern silvery moonlight
Shining from a pale heaven
Upon a hard, white, dusty road
That curves round and round
Following the craggy coastline
Of Jamaica's southern shores.

I N T H E G L A D E

I WILL sit under the myrtle tree
And sigh my life away,
What else would you have me do
In the blinding heat of the day?

Scorching tropic summer's heat,
Burns into my soul,
I am worthless, limp and weak
I cannot reach the goal.

Curse me, I deserve your curses,
Pity me, merciless sun,
Parched is the land and warm the air,
I wish that the day were done.

I will go down to the river's side
And lay me down in the glade,
Till the sweet bird songs are heard no more
And lights forever fade.

B LUE skies
 White clouds
 Bluer seas
 White sea-foam
 Coconut Palms
 Blue Mountains
 And beyond
 More
 Blue mountains
 Soft shadows
 On the mountains
 Soft shadows -
 Moving gently

Cool breezes
 From the sea
 White roads
 Old women
 Breaking stones
 By the roadside
 A truck
 Heavy laden
 With bananas
 Rounding the curve
 Of the white road
 Leaving dust
 And noise—
 Then once more
 The everlasting song
 Of the sea.

B E A U T Y

I AM faint with all this beauty
That surrounds me,
Too much beauty brings a sadness
To my soul—
I can't capture it in pictures
Of rare rapture,
I can't sing a song that echoes
The sea's soul—
I grow faint with all this beauty
That surrounds me—
God, put some of this wonder
In my soul!

D A Y S I N T E R C H A N G E

AFTER the quiet dawn
With her fair roseate hues
The stir of wakening birds
The pearls of early dews
Comes the fierce noon
With maddening heat
With blinding light
And burning feet.

After the twilight hours
Twilight so gentle and calm
Caressing earth to rest
With her soft soothing balm
Comes on the night
Earth's ills to bind,
Too much of light
Would make men blind.

SEA DIRGE

COME weep with me my heart
I am grief stricken,
Let us sit by the sea
And mingle our salt tears
With her abundance.
She is melancholy too,
Hear how she sobs and moans,
Come weep with me my heart
Come, join the dirge of the sea.

THE STRIFE

ALL day long
And all night long
The salt waves dash
Against the rocks.

Don't they ever
Grow weary
Of dashing themselves
Against the rocks?

All day long
And all night long
My spirit strives
Against my flesh.

Spirit of mine
Don't you ever weary
Of mightily striving
Against adamant flesh?

M A Y R A I N S

I DID not know
There were so many ruts
On the hard tarred road
Until the rains came drizzling down
All through the long May day
And the motor cars dashed by
Making a yellow spray
Of water on the road.

I did not know
There were so many Buttercups
In the green meadows
Until the raindrops came
Kissing each gentle bud to life
Bidding them laugh and sing
And now the byways are gold fringed—
Golden glory that lingers in the heart.

I did not know
That leaves on the Sour Sop tree
Were shaped to treasure pearls
Until the quiet lingering rain
Left drops to sparkle there
Bringing the tenderness of tears
That come from out the swelling heart,
Tears that fill the eyes yet do not overflow.

THE COUNTRYSIDE

I CARE not for the city's roar,
The hum of busy marts,
Give me the quiet countryside
And simple human hearts.

I care not for the song and dance,
The gay lights and the laughter,
Give me the mountain's sweet romance
For deep peace follows after.

TO THE HIBISCUS

F AIR Hibiscus oft you linger
In the gardens of the poor
Bringing joy and cheer and brightness
To the peasant's lowly door.

There thy blossoms bloom in splendour
Telling all that pass you by
That earth's beauty and earth's gladness
To the poorest heart is nigh.

Fair Hibiscus, thou art frailer
Than the blooms of roses rare,
Picked and prisoned fast thou diest
Free, thou growest without care.

Fairest cup of reddest radiance
Joy thou bringest to my heart,
Teach me thine own joyful message
That I may such cheer impart.

W I N G E D A N T S

WINGED ant
The rains have come
And your house of wood
Is watersoaked and cold
So you and your friends
Have come to my house.
I am sorry you thought fit
To fly on my paper
To see what I had written
Because a sudden impulse,
An irresistible desire
Came over me, I had to find
How many wings you had
Folded into one
As you crawled about
On my white sheet of paper ;
I put my finger
On your frail gossamer wings
And suddenly you walked away
Leaving your precious wings
Under my fingertips.
Now I repent in grief
For, little creature
You will fly no more
And now I feel your woe ;
Has not life's hard caress
Forced from me glad wings
That bore me to the stars
When first I saw the wonder
And beauty of the world ?
Little winged ant,
Forgive my erring hands,
I should have known that wings
Are frail and delicate unearthly things.

POEMS OF LOVE

LOVE'S CALL

WHY should Love call to me again
To follow her o'er paths of pain?

Have I not followed her before
To see her close on me the door?

Have I not wept enough of tears
To satisfy the hungry years?

Why should Love call to me again
To follow her o'er paths of pain?

V O I C E S

“TAKE down thy harp from the willows
And sing.”

“Of what shall I sing?

To whom shall I sing?”

“I will tell thee,
I will show thee,
Trust me.”

“I trust not voices,
They deceive me.”

“Trust me, I am worthy;
He awaits your coming
And longs for you
To sing your songs
To him.”

“But will he answer make
Or shall I sing
To unresponsive ears?”

“He will not answer make,
But you will bless his soul
And warm your heart
With your sweet songs;
I prithee, sing.”

MY BELOVED

I WILL make thee my Beloved,
I will sing to thee
Songs that are sweet;
I will send to thee
Thoughts that are beautiful;
I will give to thee
Smiles that are tender;
I will smooth for thee
Paths that are rough;
I will paint for thee
Exquisite pictures;
I will play to thee
Music divine;
I will comfort thee
When thou art weary;
I will cheer thee
When thou art sad;
I will be near thee
When thou art lonely;
I will send to thee
Sweet dreams at night time;
I will make for thee
Days of delight.
And all—
And more than all
Thou askest,
I will do for thee—
I will make thee my Beloved.

LOVE'S POETRY

WILL you be the world's beloved
And I the world's lover?
Will you treasure for me
These my songs?
And when I have sung
My heart's full burden—
The love songs of all ages—
For you the world's beloved,
We shall send them
To the lovers who have been
And who shall be,
That they may know
Not just the way—
But the beauty and poetry of Love.

LOVE SONGS

I AM a woman
So I sing of Love,
I sing of Love
Because I am a woman;
Nay, more than this,
Because Love lingers not
But leaves me desolate
I sing of Love
To charm her back
To me.
But will she hear my songs?
Nay, that she will not,
She is deaf and blind,
She will not hear,
She will not see,
She will not come to me.
E'en so, let her pass on,
She knows I will no more
Suffer love's pain,
And yet,
I am a woman
So I sing of Love,
I sing of Love
Because I am a woman.

THE HEART'S CUNNING

HEART of mine, why do you beat so fast?
Why do you murmur so?
I will not listen,
I will not hear you,
I will not understand.
I am deaf to your pleadings,
The door is shut,
The door is locked,
The golden key
Lies somewhere beneath the sea.

Heart of mine, I cannot answer make,
I have no eyes to search the sands,
There is no other key will do,
I am wise, and you are foolish,
You would make a fool of me,
You bid me use my magic power
You cast a spell about me,
And remind me of this power.
Once—in days long past
You pleaded—you gave promise,
But now it is in vain,
In vain you plead.

For you would lead me on
And lose my soul
In sightless ecstasy;
I will have none of you.
Let me sleep in peace,
Let me not listless lie
Awake at nights
And count the hours.
Lead me not forth again
Up to the high mountains
Only to send me down
Into the dreary, dismal depths.

Time I have not, and wish no more
I do not desire your guidance,
I cannot trust you,

No more will I answer you,
Nor bow to you in awe.
Silence! speak not, stir not,
Murmur not, plead not—
I tell you it is vain.
If life can give some joy
It is enough—so I can live,
But with your charméd pain
I cannot breathe—Silence I pray
I am too young to die.

THE MADNESS OF LOVE

THERE is no madness
Like unto the madness of love
When it possesses your brain.

There is no fever
Like unto the fever of Love
When it possesses your body.

There is no fire
Like unto the fire of Love
When it consumes your soul.

There is no folly
Like unto the folly of Love
When it rules your impulse.

There is no sickness
Like unto the sickness of love
When it lays you low.

There is no hell,
Like unto that bottomless pit
Of unrequited love.

IS LOVE WISE? .

You said
It was good for me
That you should love me
No more.
I suppose
You meant it,
I do not know.

Maybe it is good
For the sun
To shine no more
On the earth.
Maybe it is best
For the rain
To nestle
In the embrace
Of the clouds
And never visit
The earth.

Maybe it is wise
For the river
To stop flowing
When rocks appear:
Maybe it is good
For the moon
To return no more
Nor the stars
To shine.

Maybe it is kind
Of the nightingale
To sing no more
Her sweet songs
In the night,
And the skylark
Need mount no more
Towards high heaven
In a mist of melody.

Maybe it is good
For the ship
That rides the ocean
To have no harbour,
Maybe it is good
For the world
To be shrouded
In blackest midnight.

Maybe—but why maybe?
You love me not.
There is no reason
Nor wisdom
Nor goodness
In Love that is not.

W I S H I N G

I wish my heart did not leap
At the sound of your voice;
I wish my blood did not race
At the touch of your hands;
I wish my reason did not fail
At the thought of you.
The fates defend me, I wish—
How I wish I could hate you!

DOWN TO THE SHORE

COME with me, my beloved,
Let us go down to the shore
In the soft moonlight,
And let us sit on the rocks
And throw pebbles
Into the sea.

Let us sit there
For centuries
Just in quiet worship
Of the mighty ocean,
The waves and seafoam,
The shining coconut palms,
The pale Queen moon
Sailing across high heaven.

And when centuries have passed
And we weary of our vigil
Let us keep court
With Neptune
Under the sea—
Let us sport with
The beautiful mermaids
And dance and sing.

Come, my beloved—
Let us go down to the shore
In the soft moonlight
And dream.

M Y S T E R Y

THIS I do not understand:
My songs had faded
My laughter had died
My music was discord
My eyes were dull with pain,
My vision had vanished
My heart was still:
Then you came to me—
Without a word of love,
You bade me
Rise and sing
And without reasoning
I followed on;
The floodgates
Burst asunder
My pen lagged behind
The songs my heart
Would sing;
I who had wept
A farewell
To the Muse.
You—your magic
And your mystery,
The secret of your power—
This, I do not understand.

P E R F U M E

I DRINK too deep
Of this rich nectar
That is everywhere
I am drunk
With the perfume
Of Jessamine
Tulips
And Honeysuckle
I leave the garden
Where I find them
For to be alone
In a garden
Of Jessamine
Myrtle
Tulips
And Honeysuckle
Is not
To be happy.

I walk down
The country lane
And the fragrance
Of Logwood blossom
Greets me.
I return home
I sit on the porch
Again the perfume
Steals
Into my soul
And I think
What can I do
To win
My thoughts
From you?

For you
Are the perfume
Of Jessamine
Tulips
Myrtle
And Honeysuckle—

I must leave
This home,
This garden
This perfume—
Perhaps
In some
City den
I shall lose
The dream of you
Vain hope
Vain, vain
This hope.

You who are
So far away
So many million miles
Away
Must live forever
In my thoughts
My soul
My mind—
You who are fairer
Than wonders sung
By poets
You must haunt
My every hour
Until,
With my latest breath
I sigh for you
And go
To await
The perfume
That you are
Where
No longing
Is unsatisfied.

U N W I S E

It is not wise
Of you
To lie awake
Looking up at the stars
When you should be sleeping.

It is not wise
Of you
To lie awake
For fear that dreams
May play the truant
And forget to bring
Your waking dream lover
To slumberland.

It is not wise
Of you
To lie awake
Counting the hours,
They do not haste you
To your lover's side.
You have no lover
Save in your dreams,
So do not lie awake,
Go to sleep.

T W I L I G H T

HERE in the calm of the twilight
There is no murmur save the sigh
Of quiet waves as wearily
They whisper that night is nigh.

Here, in the depths of my heart
There is no murmur save a quiet tear.
Wishing so tenderly
That you were near.

R E M E M B E R I N G

THOUGHTS of you steal o'er me
At this twilight hour
When so tenderly the night
Descends from her tower.

Calm and sweet and peaceful
Is day's fading light
Time for dreams and whispers
Ere there cometh night.

Twilight shades and shadows
Find me so alone,
Still, I can remember
Once you were my own.

NIGHTFALL

How tender the heart grows
At the twilight hour,
More sweet seems the perfume
Of the sunless flower.

Come quickly, wings of night
The twilight hurts too deep,
Let darkness wrap the world around
My pain will go to sleep.

MY NEED

SPEAK to me—
For when you speak
I am strong and well and awake.

Smile on me—
For when you smile
I am thankful that I am alive.

Hold my hands—
For at your touch
The world becomes a magic land.

Be near to me—
For at your side
I find my best and truest self.

Live on forever
That I may live
And love that spirit which thou art;

But love me not
Lest naught be left
In life worth my desire.

I N E V I T A B L E

STRANGE that the fresh, sweet image of thy face
Should fondly linger in my memory,
Strange, that in all life's beauty I can trace
Thy presence, tender as a sigh, to me:
More strange that to my weary fevered soul
The thought of thee still warms my heart like wine,
More strange that in the mighty ocean's roll
I hear thy voice still calling unto mine:
And stranger far, and yet still stranger far
Is this deep ecstasy that thrills me so,
This sighing of the roses for the star,
This prison of thy spell I can't forego:
Yet strangest of all strange things would this be
Did my fond heart refrain from loving thee.

E N I G M A

IF I could see from whence these clouds arise
That float about the heaven's quiet blue
And make this moon-kissed festival but lies
Since earth's fair glamour is obscured to view:
If I could know why trails of clouded thought
Come stealing up from some remote abyss
To make the few glad days that joy had brought
A mockery and a shadow sought amiss:
If I could fathom this perplexing show,
This unrelenting struggle men call life,
And why the actors come and where they go
After a lesser or a greater strife:
Then might I yet the simple reason find
Why I must love and you be still unkind.

HEARTACHE

APIERCING pain oftimes the heart doth feel,
So sharp it cares not to outlive the ache
And when it seems that death has set his seal
Release has come and it must surely break
Fate laughs at us, to few death follows grief,
Alas, not soon and sudden comes the end,
We find pain lulled to sleep beyond belief
And we our grateful thanks to heaven send;
But fate deceives, and the well timéd sleep
Comes but to give a transitory pause
And dry the eyes that many rivers weep:
This respite lengthens life nor knows the cause
Why hearts live on in suffering and in tears
Upheld by hope all through the empty years.

THE IMPOSSIBLE

YOU ask me just to be a little wise,
To half subdue the ardour in my eyes,
To find some unseen power that can restrain
The heated blood that rushes to my brain.

Ask then the wild wind on its furious course
To half subdue its mighty unspent force,
And ask the troubled sea that she no more
Will dash her waves against the placid shore.

Ask of the fire that's blazing ever higher
Of its consuming appetite to tire,
And ask the sun that moves towards the west
To stay its course, subdue its heat and rest:

Ask on, your chiding is so sweet to me
I have no wish to seek for clemency.

F O R G I V E M E

FORGIVE me if I weary you,
Love knows no shame,
Forgive me if I linger near you,
Love knows no shame.

Forgive me if I dream too much
About your smile, your eyes, your touch,
To others love returns it seems,
I only have my dreams.

C O M P A R I S O N

LIKE the need of the parched earth
For cooling showers,
So is my need for thee.

Like the desire of the desert traveller
For the green oasis,
So is my desire for thee.

Like the longing of the weary exile
For his homeland,
So do I long for thee.

Like the sighing of the restless wind
'All through the night
So do I sigh for thee.

Like the fragrance of the logwood blossom
Or the jessamine,
So are my thoughts of thee.

But there is naught in all the world
That can compare
With this my love for thee.

REASONING

THERE is no love in your eyes
I would have seen it,
There is no love in your touch,
I would have felt it,
There is no love in your heart
I would have known it.

There is love in my eyes
You have seen it,
There is love in my touch
You have felt it,
There is love in my heart
You know it.

It is well that this should be:
I will love on
And you remain unmoved;
Your coldness will feed my fire
For love reciprocated burns away
And only the ashes
Of dead desire remain.

HUNTED

THE hunted hare seeks out some dark retreat
And hopes the pulsing pack will pass him by
His body quivers, fast his heart must beat
As oft he hears the heartless huntsmen's cry:
So hunted still by love's relentless might
With heart convulsing and with hasty tread
I seek some refuge, hidden from his sight
So he might pass whom I so darkly dread;
Pass on, and leave me there to die of grief
Or solaced back to life in Nature's arms
On her soft soothing breast to find relief
And half forget the sorrow of love's charms:
But lo! he comes with his own cruel dart
To find me out and wound for sport my heart.

THE SEA AND I

WHY are the wild waves sighing?
Why are they full of unrest?
Because they would be sleeping
Upon the fair moon's breast.

Why is my sad heart sighing?
Why am I full of unrest?
Because I would be sleeping
Upon my true love's breast.

FULFILMENT

STRANGE that this life
Should bring to me
Success and friends and laughter,
And yet withhold
The love I need,
Maybe that will come after.

Perhaps I need
To grow more strong,
Perhaps to grow more tender,
There are some ways
Of selfishness
That true souls must surrender.

So in some world
In some new life
When I have grown yet wiser
True love will come
My life to crown,
Fate won't be such a miser.

THE HEART'S STRENGTH

How much the heart can suffer and still live,
What depths of anguish, loss and longing know,
How much that's unforgivable forgive
What utmost needs and fairest dreams forego ;
How great the strength of human hearts must be
That still beat on when all earth's hopes are lost
When eyes with tears are all too dim to see
And every brave adventure has been crossed ;
How often do we see the tender smile
Rise from a heart that life itself has broken,
How often do the cheerful words beguile
The saddest words that still remain unspoken :
This mighty strength, this faith forever thine
Are fullest proof that man is half divine.

REPOSE

RETURN my heart from wandering afar
Where tempests toss thy unpretentious bark,
Rest thee content to muse upon the star,
'At dawn to hear the music of the lark.
Stay home and half forget the prisoned pain
That will not have thee rest in settled peace,
The simple joys of life thou canst retain
From storms of ocean thou wilt find release ;
Rest then my heart, thou knowest but too well
How strong and fierce relentless winds can blow ;
How frail thy bark when tempests round thee swell
How thou dost need the peace thou wouldst forego :
For hearts do not upon the wild rocks break ;
They only know deep hurt and ache on ache.

A T H O U G H T

JUST a little thought of you
Last thing at night;
Seems I'm silly over you
And that isn't right.

Sandman kind is on his way,
He brings dreams of you,
So until the break of day
Sweet dreams rest you too.

R E Q U I E M

GOODNIGHT
My beloved
Sweet dreams
Rest you
Heaven bless you
And still
Your softest
Sigh.

POEMS OF LIFE

CONFESS I O N

I REGRET nothing—
I have lived
I have loved
I have known laughter
And dance and song,
I have wept,
I have sighed
I have prayed,
I have soared
On fleecy clouds
To the gates
Of heaven,
I have sunk
Deep down
In the pit
Of hell.

I have heard
Laughter
Of little children
At dawn,
I have seen
Exquisite sunsets,
I have found
Comfort
With my friends
And grief
With my foes,
I have pressed
Little wild daisies
To my lips.

I know
The breath
Of the tulip
And jessamine,
I have seen
Daffodils in Spring
Roses in June
And the Poinciana
Dripping blood.

I have seen
Bright stars
Leap adown heaven
At the call
Of some earth flower,
I have been close
To death
And watched him
At work.
I have heard music
That raised
My soul
To worlds unknown,
I have danced
With fairies
On moonswept lawns,
I have watched
With mermaids
Under the sea
At Neptune's Court.

I have been part
Of sea and air and sky,
Of all sorrows
That have been
And are to be,
All joys of earth,
All evil and all good.

I have tried
To bring joy
To sad hearts—
Maybe I have sent
Sorrow to some heart,
If that be so
In sorrow I repent,
That, I desired not.

But so God bless me,
I have no regrets—
And should death
Come close
Beside me now
And bid me follow,

Smiling still,
Would I go,
For though I leave
Some friends
On earth,
I go,
I know not where
To join those
My beloved ones
Who wait for me.
Why should I
Sorrowing go?
Have I not lived?

A S P I R I N G

I WOULD paint
A beautiful picture
Were I a painter—

I would sing
A melodious song
Were I a singer—

I would play
A soul stirring rhapsody
Were I a musician—

I would write
A delicate lyric
Were I a poet—

Alas, nor paint
Nor sing nor play
Nor write can I.

God, see my desire
And send a spark
To light' my soul's fire.

M O T H E R

My Mother
Come near to me
Back from your world—
I need your comfort
Your caress
Your consolation.

I know
That you watch
Over me, ever—
But now—to-night—
The sorrows that I feel
Only you
Can understand.

Come close, close to me
My Mother,
Let me nestle
Once again
In your tender arms—
Let me feel your comfort
And your strength.

I need
Your love
Your courage
Your sweetness,
Your patience
And calm—
Mother—come down
From your heaven
And comfort
Your child.

PILGRIMAGE

I WOULD join the band of poets
Bards who sang of love and joys,
Sang in lonely contemplation
Of the darkness that destroys.

How they suffered, God thou knowest
Yet how sweet have been their songs
Cast up from the heart's deep anguish
Of earth's never fading wrongs.

Like the dainty shells we gather
Tossed up by the troubled sea,
So the stormy hearts of poets
Strew rich pearls for you and me.

Hearts of poets past and present
I your anguish feel too well,
Fortify my failing spirit
Let me in your greatness dwell.

How your songs have blessed and cheered **me**
Teach me some melodious strain,
Help me now to turn my anguish
Into treasures that remain.

Humbly now I seek to join you
Here is love that overflows,
May your spirits hear my pleading
Set to music my dull prose.

THE BANJO BOY

BLACK boy,
How you play that banjo!
Gee—it goes right to my toes,
I could dance all night
And through the day again.
How your face beams,
Do you love it?
I'll say you do.

Where did you get that rhythm?
That swing and that motion,
That bubbling laughter
With which you punctuate
Your songs? I have it too,
I can feel it going through me,
But I can't express like you do.

You know it's good to be alive,
Don't you, as long as the sun shines
And the banjo is in your hands?
Maybe you are hungry,
Maybe your shirt is going
Maybe you are not worth a gill,
But what do you care?

There's your banjo, the boys come
And sing and hum and dance
Round you—they share in your joy,
They respond to your songs—
Those banjo songs that call me.

M E L O D Y O F L I F E

THERE'S a melody that lingers in my heart,
It lifts my soul above the busy mart,
It mounts higher, higher, higher,
Of its sweetness I ne'er tire,
This melody that lingers in my heart.

There's an ecstasy that thrills my very soul,
It takes me far beyond where billows roll,
It turns my tears to smiles,
It cheers life's weary miles,
This ecstasy that thrills my very soul.

There's a beauty that surrounds all earthly things,
It gives to heavy weary souls bright wings,
It's a glory that's divine
Shed along this path of mine,
This beauty that surrounds all earthly things.

There's a love that radiates through all of me,
With delight it colours everything I see,
It's a love that has its start
In the depths of God's own heart,
This love that radiates through all of me.

THE STONE BREAKERS

“L IZA me chile, I's really tired
Fe broke dem stone,
Me han' hat me,
Me back hat me,
Me foot hat me,
An' Lard, de sun a blin' me.”

“No so, Cousin Mary, an' den
De big backra car dem
A lik up de dus' in a we face.
Me Massa Jesus knows it,
I's weary of dis wol'—

“But whey fe do, Cousin Mary,
Me haf fe buy frack fe de pickney dem,
Ebry day dem hab fe feed.
Dem wotless pupa tan roun' de bar
A trow dice all de day—
De groun' is dat dry,
Not a ting will grow—
Massy Lard, dis life is hard.
An' so—dough de work is hard
I will has to work fe pittance
Till de good Lard call me.”

“Liza me chile, I's really tired
But wha fe do—we mus' brok de stone
Dough me han' dem hat me
Me back it hat me,
Me foot dem hat me
And de sun it blin' me—
Well—de good Lard knows
'All about we sorrows.”

MY PHILOSOPHY

(As expounded by a Market Woman).

(Market woman walking quickly ahead of her friend. She carries a huge basket on her head. She swings both hands violently as she addresses the friend close behind her without turning):

“You can tan up talk wid him,
If you and him is companion
Me and him is no companion.”

(Second market woman following quickly at her heels):

“Me and him is companion, yes,
Me and him is companion
Me and all de wide worl' is companion
For dere is nobody better dan me
And I is not better dan nobody.”

S L E E P

LIFT up your heart
In silent prayer
And give God thanks
For sleep.

Sweet sleep that comes
To soothe earth's cares
And comfort hearts
That weep.

THE GUEST

SORROW—thou hast come
To be my guest
I cannot rise
And bid thee go.
When joy comes
I welcome her
I am loathe
To let her go—
Now though uninvited
Thou hast come—
Thou art still
My guest.
I must receive thee,
I must bow to thee
I must converse with thee,
I must embrace thee—
And when thou goest
Mine eyes must follow thee
In gratitude
Though they be dim
With tears—
Sorrow—thou hast come
To be my guest,
I welcome thee,
But this I pray,
When thou goest
Leave me a blessing.

ISOLATION

THE heat and light
Of this mad tropic land
Burns into my soul.
The rum burns my throat
And blinds me—
I stagger where once
I stood firm.
The blood boils
In my body
I am driven
Out of my mind,
I grow restless
With the silence
Of this plantation
Station,
I must drink
Some flaming rum
To ease my exile.

I do not know myself—
The silence sickens me—
I must go out
Out of this bush house
To find some rum,
There is none here
I have drained the bottle—
I must find some company
Some men
With their coarse jokes
I shall enjoy them
And I will drink
Again and yet again
Until I grow numb
To the pain within me.

Now I am afraid
To return alone
To my bush house—
There is no woman there
To look with pity
Upon me,

I am afraid—
I must find a woman
On whose bosom
I can lay my head
And who will soothe
Me into sleep.

My head—
God, how it throbs and aches
This fire that burns and burns
Consumes my very being.
God save my soul
From being blasted
In the blazing heat
Of this mad tropic land.

H E A R T C R Y

God of the broken hearted
Dost Thou see
And dost Thou feel
The pain of Thy children?

If I, in one corner
See so much of sorrow
That is to-day
And will be to-morrow—

God of the broken hearted
Dost Thou see?
Or are Thine eyes
Too dimmed with tears?

“BLACK IS FANCY”

I AM very black,
I look in the mirror,
My eyes are bright,
And my teeth,
They are very white.

There is a picture in my room,
It is a picture
Of a beautiful white lady,
I used to think her sweet,
But now I think
She lacks something.

I used to feel
I was so ugly
Because I am black,
But now I am glad I am black,
There is something about me
That has a dash in it
Especially when I put on
My bandana.

Since Aunt Liza gave me
This nice looking glass
I begin to be real proud
Of my own self.
I think I will take down
This white lady's picture,
It used to make me ashamed,
And all black folk
Seemed ugly.

But I don't know,
This white lady is sweet,
But she is too white,
Besides, she is not my friend,
She is my mistress.
I think she is too white.
Maybe I will be more proud
Of my black skin, if I don't see her,
I will remove her picture.

My John told me I was sweet,
I did not believe him,
Thought he would go mooning around
Some whitewash girl,
But maybe he means it,
For I am not so dull,
Yes, I am sure he loves me
His black ivory girl,
And I love him
For he is young, and strong and black.

GETTIN' DE SPIRIT

Lord gie you chile de spirit
Let her shout
Lord gie you chile de power
An' let her pray—
Hallelujah—Amen—
Shout sister—shout—
God is sen' yóu His spirit
Shout—sister—shout.

Shout sister—shout—
Hallelujah—Amen.
Can't you feel de spirit
Shout sister—shout
Hallelujah—Amen.

Join de chorus,
We feel it flowing o'er us—
You is no chile of satan
So get de spirit
And shout—sister—shout—
Hallelujah—Amen—
Shout—Sister—Shout!

THE ORPHAN

A T I R E D little black girl
Weeping through the night
For her tender Mammie
Buried out of sight.

Darkness all around her,
Darkness in her heart,
Blackest ebony her skin,—
All her hopes depart.

No daddie to console her,
Don't know who he be;
Lord in pity dry her tears
For she came from Thee.

BITTERNESS

T H I S bitterness that fills my cup,
God, remove it from me,
I have no strength to drink it up,
God, remove it from me;
Why dost Thou hide from me Thy face?
God in heaven, send me grace.

This sorrow now that pains my heart,
God, remove it from me,
Must I still tread the thorny path?
God, remove it from me.
Why should Thou leave me in despair?
God in heaven, dry my tear.

L I F E

L I F E is a sea of human tears—
A sigh too deep for measuring—
A sob too full for sound—
An ache too poignant for feeling—
A grief too unbounded for speech.

L I T T L E B O Y S

W H Y should they tease me, Mother,
Because my skin is black?
I go to school with white boys
Some of them are gentle to me
But some of them are so rude
They try to hurt me when we play.

Why do they call me "nigger",
And laugh at me, Mother?
Does it matter that my skin is black
And theirs is white?
Your skin is black, Mother,
But you are beautiful,
And I love you.

Because they despise me, Mother,
I work so hard, so hard,
For I must be top of the class
So tho' they may not like my skin
They will see that I work hard
That I am honest and gentle and kind;
But tell me, Mother darling,
Didn't God make all little boys?

WINIFRED HOLTY

THEY do but err who tell me thou art dead
And that thy dwelling lies beyond the skies,
How can the Spring return if thou art fled
And speedwells bloom that mirror'd thy soft eyes?

Thy freshness was the envy of the Spring,
Thine was the joy of summer's radiant noon,
Of thy enchanting ways did song-birds sing
And can it be that thou art gone so soon?

O valiant woman, author, speaker, friend,
With sympathies as wide as they were true;
Thy heart was like a fount where all might bend
To drink, and find their faith in life anew:

Now well might time itself live but a day
Did radiant souls remain enthralled in clay.

TO "GRAN"

How like a summer has thy winter been,
Friend old in age yet but a youth at heart,
Such tenderness of years I had not seen
Till in your life I shared a little part.
A life so rich in worthy deed and thought,
A gentle perfume making rich the land,
Thou canst rejoice in what thy gifts have wrought
For many love thee in thy student band.
And I, alone, bewildered and forlorn
Found gentle comfort sitting at thy side;
Benumbed by winter's cold and dreaded morn,
Thy warmth was still my sunshine and my guide.
I've seen in thee how gentle time can be
With those who live in love's serenity.

T O C. K.

WHEN wandering lone in foreign lands afar,
In cities grim, relentless hard and cold,
We turn from all the ugly things that mar
To cherish those whose friendship we can hold,
And learn how rich a blessing it can be
To find a star or two in our dark sky,
That even thro' our tears we clearly see,
And so our souls with longing do not die.
So warm and kindly has thy friendship been,
And has remained though mighty seas divide;
I see again the scenes I once have seen
And long to try anew the world so wide.
I send thee greetings, friend across the sea,
And love and thanks for all thou art to me.

T O T H E I. A. W. S. E. C.

WOMEN of England who in freedom's name
Work with courageous women of all lands,
For women's rights, yet not for women's fame,
I greet you, and to you stretch friendly hands.
In your inspiring work I had my part
For you were more than passing kind to me,
In Istanbul they took me to their heart
Where women of far lands met glad and free.
What courage have fair England's women shown
In public life and in the quiet home,
What bitter struggles have their spirit known
So that just rights to womanhood should come:
For lands can only reach the greater good
When noble thoughts inspire sweet womanhood.

TO JOE AND BEN

(Brutally murdered in April 1937 at Addis Abbaba by
the Italians).

As David and Jonathan
So you seemed to me
In your love and devotion
One for the other.

They sent you forth
From "England's pleasant land",
Home of your fond adoption,
Of early boyhood's years—
They sent you forth
To the battle's front
To fight for a country
Yours, and yet not yours
By unfamiliarity.

I wept for you
As you two gallant sons
Went forth
From the brightness
Of an English summer
To die
On the mountain heights
Of Ethiopia.
I saw the tears
In your bright eyes
As you stood
Side by side
As ever you had stood—
I felt the swell of your throat
As bravely smiling
You bade farewell.

Forth you went
To your homeland
Gallant sons
Of Ethiopia
So young
And so beautiful
In your
Youthful splendour.

There were not enough
Of Ethiopia's youth
To dye her fields
Blood red
So you went forth ;
But Nature cherished you,
Her darlings,
Grown in another clime,
Nurtured in her tongue,
Bred in her customs ;
You were too young
And brave
And gentle
And so death
Passed you by.
Bombs rained
From hell's corsairs
Upon you
But you were still
Unscathed.
Conquered your land
But still
With the unconquered
Band of gallant warriors
You stood
Side by side,
In danger undivided.

One more gallant fask,
One desperate rush
To free the land
That gave you birth
From savagery's dark reign
And then—
Death met you,
Called you by name,
Not in the midst of battle,
Not hewn down
In heated blood
But after hellish tortures
You were murdered
In cold blood
As traitors
To the land
For which you died.

Jonathan and Benjamin
Two gallant sons
Of Ethiopia
Tender and young
And fair as women
Lay cold and dead
Side by side.
As they had lived
In love together
Even in death
They were undivided,
Even the death
Of traitors.

God, I know
That these thine own
And thousands more
Cut down in youth
And beauty
Are not dead,
They live forever
In our hearts
And their spirits
To earth will come
Again in other form
That they may live
For that high destiny
Which brought them
Earthwards.

God in heaven,
This hate and greed
That brings forth war—
When shall it cease?
Dost thou unmoved
Watch the destinies
Of man
Thy own creation?

BEAUTY BELIED

How beautiful thou art
If man may be called beautiful—
A living monument to prove
How Nature's grandest work
May be but profligate
When actions do belie
The outward semblance
And deeds matchless and dark
Come from her finest masterpiece—
A sight so startling
As though the fleecy clouds
That float on high
Should rain thickest mud
From heaven.

PLATONIC

So much have we been together
Faithful friend of mine
There has never been another
Love to equal thine.

We have wept and laughed and played
Travelled near and far
Into unknown paths we strayed
In lands without a star.

And still you give me your strong hand
And we go on with laughing eyes
Proud of a friendship that can stand
The troubles that arise.

Give me your hands still, friend of mine
And let's go down life's broad highway,
Friendship with time grows sweeter like wine,
And never can know decay.

AT THE PRISON GATES

THEY marched
To the prison walls and knocked at the gates,
And when he who was director came forth
They spoke and said unto him
"We are hungry, we need food for our bodies,
'We would join your band of prisoners
'And work, so be that we are fed.
We are men—we need work, we need food.
Our wives and sweethearts live in poverty,
We have nothing to take to them;
We are strong—we would work—but
No man will employ us."

And he the director spake unto them
Words that could not comfort,
Words that could not feed,
Words that could not give hope,
Yet they were kind words;
'And the sorrowful army
Of Kingston's unemployed marched on—
On with their empty stomachs,
Their empty pockets,
With no hope in their hearts,
With no comfort in their souls.

'And I looked,
And behold I saw numerous men,
'Wealthy, overfed, over-indulged—
'And when they heard this
Their hearts smote them
'And some of these men said,
"Are not these men our brothers?
'And others said—"Indeed they are not—
They are worthless creatures who will not work."
'And one said, "But in other lands,
There are unemployment funds."
'And some said, "Let us arise
And pool ten thousand pounds,
'And let us give these men land
'And money to assist them."
'And another said—"Nay, let us build us
Great factories and use our raw materials
So we can provide work for them,
For they are men."

And so they talked the while
Their conscience-smote them,
And they drank together and
Went away happy for they pledged no wealth
To be used so that no more
Weary and hungry marchers
Would walk to the prison gates
Of Kingston and desire to enter
So they might be fed.

And so all through the night and day
I see the weary and hungry
Crowds—marching—every day
More hungry—every day more sad;
And I hear a great stir of voices
Among those who rule the land
In politics and those who rule in gold;
But the tramp of the weary feet still sound.
They who are free men march on
To seek the bondage from which
Others died to free them—
That they might have food.
On they march—must they march on
Forever?

M A N G O T I M E A G A I N

Not gwine hungry any more
Mango start fe ripe,
Not gwine stay inside me door
Mango start fe ripe.
Not gwine sigh fe bread and fish,
Nor eben de most dandy dish,
Now dere's noting more I wish—
Mango start fe ripe.

CINEMA EYES

DON'T want you to go to the Cinema—
Yes, I know you are eighteen,
I know your friends go,
I know you want to go.

I used to go to the Cinema
To see beautiful white faces.
How I worshipped them!
How beautiful they seemed—
I grew up with a cinema mind.

My ideal man would be a Cinema type—
No kinky haired man for me,
No black face, no black children for me.
I would take care
Not to get sun burnt,
To care my half indian hair
To look like my cinema stars.

I saw no beauty in black faces,
The tender light and beauty
Of their eyes I did not see;
The smoothness of their skin,
The mellow music of their voice,
The stateliness of their walk,
The tenderness of their hearts
No, they were black
And therefore had no virtue.

A handsome youth came
To woo me at twenty;
I did not think him handsome then—
He was black and not my fancy.
I turned my back on him—
My instinct told me he was good and true,
My reason told me he was black
I turned my back on him.

Another came to woo me—
How fair he was! How like
My ideal built up in my heart—
I gave to him my heart,
My life, my soul, my all;

And how in hell he tortured me,
My dream lover—my husband—
Then you were born,
But I remained disconsolate.

He too saw no beauty in black faces,
You came dark like your grandmother;
He was peeved. I thought
You just a little like
My first handsome suitor
Who so long had gone away;—
He would have been more kind—
More tender—So I thought aloud
One day and he o'erheard me.

Soon this black god came from far
And called to greet me.
My husband, in fury and in drink,
Watched us as we talked—
And as he rose to go
Followed him calmly out,
And shot him, ere he reached the gate.
Another bullet sound,
And he too was gone;
And we were left alone.

I know that love
Laughs at barriers,
Of race and creed and colour.
But I know that black folk
Fed on movie lore
Lose pride of race.
I would not have you so.

Come, I will let you go
When black beauties
Are chosen for the screen;
That you may know
Your own sweet beauty
And not the white loveliness
Of others for envy.

GOING TO MARKET

OLD lady
You dig in the fields
All day long,
Are you not weary
Does your head not ache?

How hot are the sun's rays,
How strong is the glare,
How the heat comes up
From the parched land
And down from the high heavens.

I know it is Friday
And you are digging
To find food
To take to market.
Are you not afraid
To travel so far
On the long hot
And dreary roads?

I know you will find
A truck or a tram at last,
But by then, your poor naked feet
Will be sore and weary.
And then perhaps
The market is bad
And you cannot afford
The food and print
You meant to buy.

Old lady, life is hard for you
And yet you smile sweetly
When you speak to me,
And you talk gaily
With others.

Old Lady, I am sorry
The sun beats down
So relentlessly on you
As you journey.

Old lady, I love you
For the courage you bring
To life—for your goodness

Of heart and your hope
Of a heaven
Where there are no hot fields
And hotter highways—
Where the streets
Are paved with gold,
And even the Great God Himself
Will wipe all tears
From your eyes.

MELANCHOLY

Is there sweetness in melancholy
Some poets found it,
Maybe they were stronger than I,
Maybe they were wiser than I
Maybe they were older than I.
Maybe I will find their secret;
But now—this black melancholy
That eats into my soul
Is as the dregs of gall—
I cannot endure it,
I shudder and cringe,
I cry out for relief—
Alas—this much I know:
'Tis only time
Will bring me solace,
And so I must endure.
O, be strong, be strong
My heart.

KINKY HAIR BLUES

GWINE find a beauty shop
Cause I ain't a belle.
Gwine find a beauty shop.
Cause I aint a lovely belle.
The boys pass me by,
They say I's not so swell.

See oder young gals
So slick and smart.
See those oder young gals
So slick and smart.
I jes gwine die on de shelf
If I don't mek a start.

I hate dat ironed hair
And dat bleaching skin.
Hate dat ironed hair
And dat bleaching skin.
But I'll be all alone
If I don't fall in.

Lord 'tis you did gie me
All dis kinky hair.
'Tis you did gie me
All dis kinky hair,
And I don't envy gals
What got dose locks so fair.

I like me black face
And me kinky hair.
I like me black face
And me kinky hair.
But nobody loves dem,
I jes don't tink it's fair.

Now I's gwine press me hair
And bleach me skin.
I's gwine press me hair
And bleach me skin.
What won't a gal do
Some kind a man to win.

TO A FRIEND

How alive thou art
A living fiery spirit
Housed in a superb body
Health, vigour, intellect—
Confidence, strength
Born of achievement—
Tireless even though tired,
Eager, quivering, aroused
Like an untried horse,
Sensitive, yet overpowering—
A man that cannot shame
His infinite Creator.
Because the Gods loved you
They gave you favours
That so meanly
They distribute
Unto others.
Surely thou art favoured,
Do not incur their anger
Tempt them not, lest
At a touch they take
The all that they have given.
They have from me
Praise for thy fashioning—
Thou hast strength, not beauty,
Goodness, not virtue—
I thank the Gods
For such a friend.

BLACK BURDEN

I AM black
And so I must be
More clever than white folk,
More wise than white folk,
More discreet than white folk,
More courageous than white folk.

I am black,
And I have got to travel
Even farther than white folk,
For time moves on—
I must not laugh too much,
They say black folk can only laugh,
I must not weep too much,
They say black folk weep always
I must not pray too much
They say black folk can only pray.

I am black,
What a burden lies
Upon my heart—
For I would see
All my race
Holding hands
In the world circle.

Black girl—what a burden—
But your shoulders
Are broad
Black girl—what a burden—
But your courage is strong—
Black girl your burden
Will fall from your shoulders
For there is love
In your soul
And a song
In your heart.

CANEFIELD BLUES

DOWN in de canefield
Wid my Mandy sweet.
Down in de canefield
Wid my Mandy sweet,
When she gives a groan
And tumble cross me feet.

Bury me Mandy,
By de garden gate,
Bury me Mandy
By de garden gate,
Now dere's noting lef' for me,
What a cruel fate.

Mandy was de bes' gal
In all de lan'.
Mandy was de bes' gal
In all de lan';
But de sun come tek her
Right out a me han'.

I don't neber will see
Anoder gal like she.
I don't neber will see
Anoder gal like she;
Because my Mandy
Was eber sweet to me.

Y O U T H

THE weight of the years has fallen upon me
I think of fair Byron at thirty and three,
Where are the flowers and fruit of the long years
Tears, a dull ache, and just thirty and three.

Where are the dreams and the longings of childhood?
Where are my playmates of those happy days?
Gone are the dreams and the visions I cherished
Gone are dear loved ones, asleep in dark graves.

Alas how the years are hastily speeding,
Taking with them all the joys that are sweet,
Taking the light and the glory and romance
Taking the joys that made childhood complete.

And what do you leave to us, years that are passing?
Only the sadness of what might have been,
A heart grown more tender, a world of rich beauty,
And pain at the heart of man saddening each scene.

O years press more gently upon our brief summers
And take not the wonder of our early days,
Take all, but leave us at twilight's soft hour
The eyes to see beauty, the lips to sing praise.

TO CONNIE

CONNIE gal, Connie gal,
Tell me where you been,
De way you treat a good man
It really is a sin.

See how Marty beat him gal
Gwine do dat to you,
You's a double crossing pal
Hat me heart fe true.

Connie gal, Connie gal,
Don't you raise me ire,
Go back to you Aunt Sal
If you mek me tire.

Can't you see I loves you
Connie, me sweetheart?
Don't you know I need you
Why you break me heart?

LONESOME BLUES

I GOT dose lonesome blues
O what can I do?
I got dose lonesome blues,
O what can I do?
I must just lay me down
And weep de whole night thro'.

Nobody cares
If I don't come home,
Nobody cares
If I don't come home,
What's de good o' dis life
Jes as well I roam.

It's kinda hard
Being a lonesome gal,
It's kinda hard
Being a lonesome gal,
But I bet it's worse
Wid a no good pal.

BROWN BABY BLUES

I got a brown baby
Sweet as she can be.
I got a brown baby
Sweet as she can be.
But she ain't got no papa,
Cause he's gone to sea.

I love me baby
But she don't got no name.
I love me baby
She don't got no name.
Well wha' fe do,
Dat is not her shame.

Maybe she'll ask me
Why I is so black,
Maybe she'll ask me
Why I is so black,
An' she's so brown;
Lord, send her papa back.

My sweet brown baby
Don't you cry.
My sweet brown baby
Don't you cry.
Your mamma does love you
And you colour is high.

TO SERVE

LORD I see not
Where Thou dost lead
But for Thy guidance
Now I plead.

I have no fear
For in the past
Thy love has kept me
To this last.

And now I know
Thy guiding hand
Will lead me still
In this fair land.

One prayer I make
Use all of me
To make Thy children
Doubly free.

To those who need
My all I give
O make me worthy
So to live.

FOREIGN

HE was just an old man
 In shabby shirt and shabbier trousers;
 I did not see him at first
 It was after I took off my shoes
 And went wading and splashing
 The waves up with my feet
 That I saw him stroll along
 And lie comfortably on the grass,
 His head supported by one arm.
 He looked at me, then conversed
 With two men who sat on the bench;
 They were ordinary men
 Much better dressed than he was.

When I grew tired of sporting
 With the restless waves
 And strutting about on the pebbles
 I returned and put on my shoes.
 I walked lightheartedly along the beach,
 Someone spoke to me,
 It was the shabby old man.
 I turned to hear him:
 "Missus, if you find some gold
 In de san' will you gie me some?"
 He said and smiled a smile
 That beamed all over his lined face.
 "Of course I will," I replied,
 And returned his pleasant smile.
 From that moment we were friends.

I strolled along and lay on a bench
 Hard by. It was late afternoon, the sun,
 Weary of its heat had gentle grown
 And so I lay beneath his kind caress.
 I closed my eyes, and opened them
 Again and once again to make full sure
 That I was not asleep and in a dream—
 The sea—the shadows on the mountain—
 The boat with sails outspread
 Wafted along the mighty seas—
 The palms swaying against
 The radiant skies—Then I would close
 Them fast when reassured and quite content.

The sound of children's voices
Roused me. I sat up, unable
To resist the sound of child laughter.
Alas, they had moved on. My old friend
Was sitting on the ground quite near
Weeding bunches of grass with both hands.
Near him stood his mule and cart,
"Here pretty fe true ma'am" he said
As his keen eyes scanned the horizon,
"But tings is bad, foreign better,
Things will never better here, never"—
And then finding me a ready listener
He told me many tales—the while
He drew the grass to make hay for his mule.

"I have been in foreign—I was wid
De Contingent dat go to Halifax ma'am—
Dere I get fross bitten—it was so cold.
Egypt and France and Italy I see—
In foreign dey say we speak too much
Of King, dat's why we so poor.
We must speak of President we chose ourself
An' if he don't suit we throw him out.
In foreign I never see people go like we—
Tear pants and soil shirt. In foreign
Dey not so poor as we—and talking
'Bout eating—in foreign wit de army
How we eat! Not like the starvation
Little food we eat here from day to day
Dat mek us weak and sick—
We eat plenty food—so if one day
Rations short and we have only biscuit,
We don't sick, for we strong on 'count
Of plenty food oder times.

"Did you know 'bout de goat in de Army?
It come from foreign you know—
Dat place where Marcus Garvey was going—
Africa—yes Africa—de goat up
At Camp—and de Colonel tek him—
Oh him wise more dan some man.
If de goat smell water and don't drink,
Don't you touch it—it poison.
Don't you touch anything dat goat refuse.

And to see him drill—him understand
Every command de Colonel give—Oh you
Can't tink ma'am how wonderful
Dat goat is.

“See dis mark in my elbow ma'am—
A bullet shot right through it
And kill a man behind me
And dat time I was not fraid—
Dose times we men not fraid—
Dey give us tings to drink dat
Give us spirit—but ma'am—
When we 'fraid is when de bombs
Explode—Lord help us, what a roar
And how it tear de earth and root
Up de biggest trees!
Tings tek long fe do here.
In foreign in de Army dem hab
Machine dat dig up a whole
Mountain and in few minutes
One powerful machine
Pick up earth and tree and rock and pitch dem 'way.

“Foreign is nice but here it hard—
Here dey pay servant three shillings a week—
Wha' dat' can buy? It can't
Pay rent—it can't buy frock
It can't buy shoes it can't buy stocking
It can't buy nothing—is what them to do?
Foreign better,—dem pay plenty more—
Even Cuba better dan us here.
Here if you talk you min' dem
Prison you. You know ma'am
Kaiser was good fighter and if
Englan' one did fight Kaiser, Kaiser
Would win—Kaiser wise him build
Under worl' town so when bomb
Drop—de earth tear, but in de
Undergroun' town all is safe—
I hear England doing dat now.

“You been foreign ma’am?
You tink here better dan
Foreign? All it hab is poverty
But noting more,
And you see how people fas’
Into one anoder business here ma’am—
Foreign you can’t do dat.
If you interfere, no quarrel, no talk,
You see like I sitting here ma’am
And I did fas’ wid a man,
I don’t hear no soun’, but from
Where him stan’ him just send
A bullet through me—not a sound
But a lay stiff dead. In foreign
Dem don’t play and quarrel, quarrel—
Dem talk wid bullet.”

At this point
Came a family and joined our
Group—My friend became silent
And continued his weeding—
I rose—the sun was very near setting
And the wind was a little cold.
I said good-bye to the kind old man
And he said he hoped he would
See me again. I too hoped so.
He was a grand old man.
He loved to tell his tales of “foreign”
And how I loved to hear them.

GOD AND ARMAMENTS

God, and must Thy children
Build and ever build
More deadly weapons
To destroy themselves?
God, and are Thine eyes dim
That Thou canst not see
Or are Thine ears deaf
That Thou canst not hear?

Thus answereth the Lord:
"O ye children of men
Return—return unto Me:
If My people will return
And acknowledge Me
All will be well.
The arms of the world
Are the hates of men.
Ye cannot sow tares
And reap full corn.
If My love encompass you
If it rule in your hearts
If it dwell with you,
If ye dwell not in evil
But in good, in love,
Not in hate—then
No more will arms
Pile to high heaven.

I have heard your cry
But My little children
Unless ye live in love
And brotherhood
I cannot save you."