

STOKIN'

AND ❁ ❁ ❁
OTHER VERSES



Lawson, Will, 1876-1957.
Stokin' and other verses / by Will
Lawson.

WILL LAWSON



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STOKIN'

AND

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BY

WILL LAWSON

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WELLINGTON, N.Z.

1908

GORDON & GOTCH

AUCKLAND, CHRISTCHURCH, DUNEDIN, MELBOURNE,
SYDNEY, BRISBANE, PERTH,
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WILL LAWSON.

Wellington, N.Z.

1908.

STOKIN

OTHER THREE

WILLIAMSON

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STOKIN'

AND OTHER STORIES

TO MY WIFE.

All for a woman's sake,
The strong men are so strong—
Yet there are hearts that break
When the night is dark and long.

In every dream you dream,
May the laughter all come true,
After the sunset's gleam,
I'll light white stars for you.

WILL LAWSON.

STOKIN'

AND OTHER VERSES

STOKIN'.

STOWED deep below her load-line—ten feet to twenty-five—

We face the glarin' dazzle and make good steam to drive.

Keepin' the gauges steady at near two hundred pound,
With scorchin' heat before us, and scorchin' steel all round.

And when an air-shaft's loafin' instead of suckin' air,
We sneak on deck to fix it, then sling in coal and swear,

To the scrape, scrape, scrape of the shovels,

And the snarlin', rollin' rattle of the coal.

God has made some men to starve ashore in hovels,

And us to sweat our lives out in this hole.

You praise your gallant skipper, and skilful engineers;
The A.B. is a hero who squints one eye and steers;
The ladies like the moonlight and officers to chaff;
They haven't any tickets on us, the stoke-'ole staff,
Who keep the boilers hummin' and funnel-flues a-roar,
With blisterin' steel above us, and on a blisterin' floor.
They're laughin' on the main-deck, but I would like to know

If they are ever thinkin' of men who toil below,

God makes some men's lives easy, and others are but slaves;

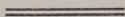
The first gets rich by thinkin', the last on what they saves.

And berthed above her Plimsoll—ten feet, and mostly more—

The men who live by thinkin' are dreamin' of the shore,
Or laughin' in their deck-chairs—they seem to be too proud

To look on us as brothers—the dirty stoke-'ole crowd
Who feed the hungry boilers, that drive the piston-heads,
Settin' the screws a-tearin' the ocean into shreds,

*To the scrape, scrape, scrape, and the bangin'
Of the swelterin', heavy, rattlin' furnace-doors;
Which IS best? to loaf and starve or die by hangin',
Or sweat and swear a-toilin' on these floors?*



*To the clank, clank, clank, and the bangin'
 And the rattle of the heavy furnace-doors.
 Which is best: to loaf and starve or die by hangin',
 Or waste your life a-toilin' on these floors?*

The steamers from La Plata take staggerin' cattle 'Ome;
 The liner leaves 'em standin' with splutterin' screws a-
 foam;
 The wool-ships from Port Jackson, Melbourne, and More-
 ton Bay,
 The meat-boats from New Zealand are smashin' clouds
 of spray;
 And down below their load-lines—ten feet to twenty-five—
 We curse their graspin' owners, and give 'em steam to
 drive.

It's double whacks of win's'ls when cattle feels it hot,
 But who cares two dead Chinkies if we are grilled or not?

*And it's thirst, thirst, thirst, so dry and burnin';
 We want no grub, we only long for drink;
 And till we see the pub-lights fade, returnin',
 We never think to pause or pause to think.*

There's men of every natur', and every sort of breed,
 Sent down to make the vapour—the steam that makes the
 speed;

A canny Tyne-side Dogger is workin' right o' me,
 And, may my eyes be jiggered! my left's a Portugee!
 With blunderin' swing she's rollin', there's ugly swells
 abeam;

The draught is singin' noisy and makin' tons of steam;
 Our forehead-veins are bulgin', our neck and arm-veins
 swell.

I wonder what they're burnin' if it's hotter down in hell?

*They must graft, graft, graft, as we are graftin'—
 Ten times as hard and twice as hard again;
 But they'll miss the kick and rumble of the shaftin',
 Which tells us that we labour not in vain.*

Then sudden the great green Hunter
Was racing with gleaming fangs
Under the vessel's counter,
Where the smooth stern overhangs—
Racing with reckless violence,
Panting with grim intent,
But she fled with the speed of terror,
And the Hunter fell back, spent.
While all the other pursuers,
Thinking to see her fall,
Lifted their heads in the darkness
In one long hunting call.

One leaped with a howl on her transom
And snapped her rail away;
Another sprang at her life-boat,
And tossed it over in play.
Then the angry, green-lipped Hunter,
Shouting to stand aside,
Tore in her solid bulwarks
A great hole, gaping wide,
Sending her forward faster
Yet following faster too
Where the blaze of high Pencarrow
Brighter and brighter grew.

The stars looked down through the storm-wrack
And cried to the rushing wind,
"Blow hard, blow hard! The harbor
To the little ships is kind.
Drive her so that the Hunters
Are left in her wake out-paced."
And the swift wind howled in its hurry
And the little schooner raced.
But the mighty Hunter summoned
His eager pack to his aid
And they raced along with the schooner,
Just raced—and she was afraid.

THE HUNTERS.

THEY had stowed the clattering tops'ls,
And sent the topgear down,
For the sea rolled green and sickly,
With foam at each roller's crown,
When faintly down to the south'ard,
Where the clouds hung red and low,
The cry of the night-waves echoed,
And a wind began to blow.

It bore down on the schooner,
And buried her white lee-rail,
But she spun to her heavy rudder,
And flew from the angry gale;
While, nearer, a fearful wolf-cry,
The van of the Hunters came—
Thundering waves of the darkness
Their tossing crests aflame—
Leaping high in their clamor,
Bellowing as they raced.
And one green galloping Hunter
The best of the pack outpaced.

The little ship was their quarry.
As the speedy leverets do,
She prayed that her heels would save her
From the jaws of the ravenous crew.
So over the tumbling water
She staggered and leaped and swung,
Tossing her prow to the heavens
When they would have seized and clung—
Swerving over to starboard,
Shuddering over to port,
To distance the cruel Hunters
Who harried her for their sport.

*As they stow the clattering tops'ls
And send the topgear down,
When the seas roll green and glassy,
The shouted orders drown
In a long-drawn, terrible wolf-cry
And the boldest there is dumb,
When, the galloping waves of the darkness,
The harrying Hunters come.*

Until, when the blazing beacon
Threw light on the seas and spars,
The great green Hunter lifted
His head to the trembling stars.
And howled; and the smallest Hunter
Howled too in the lust for blood.
They raged till the decks of the schooner
Were all afoam and aflood.
Round and about they tossed her,
Snapping her tangled gear.
They tugged at her heavy rudder
Till scarcely her crew could steer.

The stars laughed now, for the harbor
Was close ahead o'er the bar;
Then wept, for the big green Hunter
Dragged over her side a spar.
But the waves that stand at the entrance—
Guards of the inner seas—
Charged down on the fierce pursuers
That sprang at the schooner's trees;
The pack called loud defiance—
"The quarry is ours," they cried,
And led by the galloping Hunter
They thrashed at the schooner's side.

Then the Watchmen fell upon them,
While the vessel flew beyond
In where the quiet waters
Lay like a glassy pond.
The chase fell back from the Watchmen,
Fighting in foam and spray—
All save the great green Hunter,
Who thrust them out of his way;
Blown and scarred with battle,
He leaped through their serried ranks;
But the Watchmen bore him under
As he charged at the schooner's flanks.

They call so clear in the darkness,
When the clock-bells wake and cry :
" We saw an Hour creep westward ;
In terror we made it fly."
Ah ! the bells of the ships at anchor
Are braver than all the rest,
For the ocean gave them courage
When she fondled them on her breast.

Dong! Ding-dong!

Where the moonbeams
Break and scatter and fly ;

Ding! Dong-ding!

At midnight

*A great black Hour went by
In silver harness with sable cloak :
It sang in its marching, and you awoke.*

O, bells of the ships at anchor,
A mile from the busy town,
That chime when the dawn comes rosy
And toll when the sun goes down !
There's the beat of the sea in your music,
And your lonely ringing tells
That the Hours you sturdily challenge
Bring nothing for you, oh, bells !

Dong! Ding-dong!

They answer

When the great clocks crash on high—

Ding! Dong-ding!

At daybreak

*A maiden Hour tripped by.
In cloth of gold, with eyes of blue,
Did a ripple of laughter waken you?*

THE BELLS OF THE SHIPS AT ANCHOR.

THE hours march steadily onward,
And the town clocks, half-awake,
Thunder a clamorous warning
Till the solid clock-towers shake.
“We saw an Hour slink westward,
We shouted, and it slipped by,”
And the bells of the ships at anchor
Quaver a sweet reply :
 Dong! Ding-dong!
 Where the moonbeams
 Scatter before the wind—
 Ding! Dong-ding!
 At their moorings,
 With shells and seaweed twined.
*We saw the Hour march bravely through—
Did the clash of its harness waken you?*

When the steamers swing from their moorings,
Thrilling with life within,
And swagger out to the ocean
To battle and storm and din,
Their bells may ring in the passing,
And, full of a longing keen,
The bells of the ships at anchor
Chime for Hours that have been :
 Dong! Ding-dong!
 There is yearning
 And wistfulness in their tones.
 Ding! Dong-ding!
 How the anchors
 Quiver among the stones!
*Here's good luck! May you all win through!
The Hours are racing astern of you.*

But as we thump and lift the spray,
I'll tell you true and clearly,
That I have been on deck all day—
(Three spells for tucker merely)
So, if you feel secure, sleep on;
And if you don't, I'm sorry;
Perhaps by morn we'll all be gone
To work a deep-sea quarry.

*But I am here to pull you through,
And find the shoals by bumping;
So, if I shake, you blame the screw—
The darn thing's always jumping.
The granite cliffs are hard, I throw,
And slimy swirls the kelp below,
Oh, few will miss us if we go,
With broken bows a-slumping!*

The tally-clerk will soon be quite
The veriest of fables;
He'll come and haunt us in the night,
A-rapping on the tables.
The bales swing high; the winches scream;
From dawn to dark they're toiling;
I'd rather sweat and make the steam,
Or risk my neck-bone oiling,
Than tally on the wharf all day—
(She only pays one purser).
It's "Cram her full to make her pay!"
And starve the bridge-hands—curse her!
But gilded cap and buttons mar
The deepness of my sorrow—
(God only knows just where we are—
I'll work it out to-morrow).

*The deep-sea skipper is a king
(A half-a-point more easting!)
Who sleeps the sleep good dinners bring—
(Oh! slumber after feasting!).*

COASTING.

THE first-salooners pause to hear
 The rolling cranks a-thudding,
 And ask the watching engineer
 How fast their hooker's scudding.
 They argue on the latest makes
 Of piston-valves and boilers,
 What length of watch a stoker takes,
 And how we pay our oilers.
 But up aloft there stands a chap
 (Above their notice plainly)
 With braid and flags upon his cap,
 Who steers his ship profanely.
 A steamer likes to roll and swing,
 A-slewing round and veering,
 But she is not a living thing,
 And takes a bit of steering.

*And I am here to see it done—
 (Port—Port a bit and meet her!)
 Oh! mate-a-coasting isn't fun;
 The deep-sea work is sweeter.
 We travel up, we travel down,
 With dirty decks and funnel brown;
 Six ports from here to Auckland Town—
 (Oh, Starbo'd, hard, and beat her!)*

The look-out on the fo'c's'le-head,
 Whose form the sea-lights soften,
 Has had a decent spell in bed,
 And gets it pretty often.
 His chanting cry, "Eight bells, all's well,
 Lights burning clear and brightly!"
 Cheers trav'lers more than tongue can tell,
 And does so wrong or rightly.

But they had rest in port to-day,
And I was here—on duty.
So, if you feel secure, sleep well;
If not, I'm full of sorrow;
(The channel's dredged from here to hell—
We might be there to-morrow).
But while she's coaled by sweaty gnomes,
I'll do my best to beckon
The hand of Death from landsmen's homes,
And from my own, I reckon.

*For I am here to get you there;
(Port—Port a bit and meet her!)
And if my singing makes you swear,
The angels sing much sweeter.
We travel on with funnel brown,
And sleepy lashes drooping down,
Six ports from here to Auckland town—
(Port, HARD, my lad, and beat her!)*

*The deep-sea mate has lots of room
In which to swing and roll and boom;
The coast it is the sailor's tomb,
With white wave-plumes a-yeasting.*

The coaster's mate becomes a wreck;
For, if you ever lose him,
You'll always find him up on deck
With something to amuse him.
It's winches and the freight by day,
And in the dark the starlight
Seems sweeter to him than the play
Of tongues around the bar-light.
But some dark night his brain will go,
And you'll go too, careering
Through fog and shoal, and never know
You've got a madman steering!
You're snoring snugly all a-bed;
He'll get a snooze on Sunday;
So—"What's her speed?" and "How's her
head?"
And let's see—this is Monday.

*The man-of-war she takes no freight;
I guess I'll join the Navy,
And have a red marine to wait
Upon me like a slavey.
A draught of wine I'd like to take,
And go to sleep and never wake
Until the hand of Jones I shake—
His Christian name is Davy.*

The song the engines roar is clear,
And seems to tell of battle,
With horse to horse, and spear to spear,
And harness-greaves a-rattle.
And all night long they'll slam away,
A-drip with oil, and sooty—

Oh ! slowly across the water,
Afraid of the Night, yet proud
With courage the Day has taught her,
Dawn comes ; and the corsair crowd
Slink back where the Night still lingers,
And, mocking them as they flee,
The music of fairy fingers
Floats up from the Eastern sea ;
While, laughing their guileless laughter,
With hurrying, joyful feet,
The Waves of the Dawn come after,
To jeer at their slow retreat.

And lo ! as the pale, grey maiden
Steps fearfully through the dark,
A cloud, with the Sun's light laden,
Burns gold, and the Waves cry " Hark !
He cometh ! " The Dawn-Maid blushes
To know that her love is near.
Then out of the sea there rushes
The Sun, and the Day is here,
To redden with hot caresses
The lips of the maid, so white,
Who, whispering soft, confesses
Her terrors of frowning Night.

*As laughing Day bends to hold her,
To ride at his saddle-bow,
In long ranks, shoulder to shoulder,
Retreating the Night-Waves go.
They march to the dull West's distance,
Well knowing that all in vain
Are mutterings and resistance—
To-night, they will charge again.*

DAWN.

*ALL night in the ports and offing
The hosts of the Night-Waves tramp
To thunderous music, scoffing
At every harbor-lamp;
So fierce that no star dares brighten
The coast and the stormy gloom,
And only the Night-Waves whiten
The cliffs, as they charge and boom.*

All night have the stars been hiding,
But now to the East afar
The squadrons of seas are riding
A-tilt at the Morning Star,
That lights with a mellow lustre
The road that the Dawn will take;
And see how they march and muster!
And see how they swing and break,
And strive with their shields and sabres
To darken the Star's clear light—
A-sweat with their frantic labors,
The foam on their steel flecks white!

And as, in their blind wrath leaping,
They threaten the fearless Star,
The stars of the night are peeping—
Pale-faced, as they always are—
To see on the East's horizon,
As though by the mist-folk drawn,
The glow of the morning skies on
Her tresses—the grey-eyed Dawn!
And swiftly the warlike clangor
Is stilled, and the waves, afraid,
Forget in their fear their anger,
And shrink from the pearl-robed maid.

Faint grew the Day and his weary hosts,
Fighting to reach the Dawn;
And Night held sway on the silent coasts—
On river, and hill, and lawn.
One by one Day's staunch braves died,
Till he marched West alone,
Dying, swaying from side to side,
'Mid foes who had hearts of stone.

Then burned a Star in the murky sky—
White as the Day it shone—
And the spent king lifted his crown on high,
And his sword with its brightness gone.
He spoke to the Star: "The hosts of Night
Are stronger than I; take these,
You will meet the Sun at the fringe of light
In the mists of the morning seas.

"Say to him that another Day
Has sent him a sword and crown,
For the hosts of the darkness held the way,
And my wounds have borne me down."
The brave Day died; and fast and far
The Star through the darkness whirled;
For it was the brilliant Morning Star,
That carries the light of the world.

* * * * *

A new Day called to his eager hosts
In glittering ranks up-drawn,
And marched away to the eastern coasts,
In the steps of his queen, the Dawn.
He carried the sword of the Day that died,
The soft clouds saw him pass;
Going to death they watched him ride
In armor of brittle glass.

THE END OF DAY.

THE bright Day gathered his lazy hosts
When he saw the hordes of Night
Mustering fast on the eastern coasts,
To threaten each beacon light.
Black and fierce was the Night's array,
While the Day's gay army seemed
Naught but laughter and bright display
In harness of glass that gleamed.

The white Day spoke to his careless men,
And they gathered on either side;
And there was a testing of sword blades then,
Till the keen steel sang and cried.
And dark and scowling the sullen Night
Came forward to meet his foe,
Never looking to left or right—
Sinister, evil and slow.

The brave Day laughed in the face of Night,
And smote with his sword swung high,
And every stroke was a beam of light
That dazzled the Night's reply.
And slowly, driving the swarthy ranks
Ever to right and left,
The Day host marched in a firm phalanx
Down a path by their good swords cleft.

The strong Day sang as he led them on,
Though his blood the red path dyed.
Quoth he: "March on till we reach the Sun,"
And they fought and bled at his side;
For the swords of the Night found many vents
In their armor of brittle glass,
Yet the blades of the Day made recompense,
And they had to let him pass.

She has no time to stagger,
Nor yet to lift or swing;
She gaily mocks the lagger
And hears her engines ring;
And far and thick behind her
Her inky smoke-train lies—
Though smashin' rollers blind her
She laughs and scorns to rise.
Proud in a speed that steadies,
Through sea and night she sails,
And where the tide-rip eddies
The spray will kiss her rails.

Her mast-head vane's a-quiver,
Her funnels blisterin' grey;
The big fish hear her comin'—
With mad propellers strummin'
A sea-song—up the bay;
And by the town-lit river,
“Well steamed, indeed!” they'll say.

There goes a bearin' gratin';
A journal's just a-squeal—
But every greaser's waitin',
And oil is good for steel
When seas are vainly tryin'
To teach her how to climb—
Or down with engines flyin'—
She nearly raced that time!
Again she lifts, and chokin',
Her screws are drivin' dull—
And now she races, smokin',
To test her strainin' hull.
Oh! hear the “Second” curse her!
(She seems to understand)
But he has got to nurse her—
Her throttle's in his hand.

FORCED DRAUGHT.

THE tailrods leap to lift her,
A-singin' as they rise,
And turnin' swift and swifter
The smooth, white shaftin' flies.
The great cranks sink to shove her,
And as they sink they vow
That though they drive they love her
From heel to chatterin' bow;
So set the fire-doors bangin'!
And, trimmers, give us coal
To keep our shovels clangin'
And shaftin' all a-roll!
By roar of flue and furnace
And throttle-valves a-gape
We'll shew the craft who'd turn us
What speed she'll have to shape.

*With air-shafts full and suckin',
And ventilators slammed,
With every crank-pin throwin'
A spray of oil, and glowin',
And doors shut tight and jambed,
We'll set the good screws buckin'
And stoke like sinners damned.*

“ More steam ! ” the “ Chief ” is callin',
For though she's movin' fine,
From “ eighteen full ” she's fallen
To “ seventeen point nine.”
More steam ! I bet she's divin'
Clean through the sloppy swells,
She's that dead set on drivin'
She thinks of nothin' else.

It's good to hear the thunder
And moanin' of the steel;
But oh! to toil down under—
It teaches men to feel.
There ain't no night-winds coolin'
Our burnin' lips and brows;
We hear no water foolin'
And playin' round her bows.
It's steamy heat and labor,
And sweaty, oily reek,
And cursin' with your neighbor,
And faintin' if you're weak.

*Yet though we fiercely cursed her,
Her god-like song was wild;
And as we toiled we loved her,
And every rod that shoved her
To fight the seas up-piled;
And, oh! the "Second" nursed her
As though she were his child!*

*He'll nurse her when she scatters
 The water in her track;
 He'll check her when she's divin'
 And liftin'—set her drivin'
 With thrust-blocks all a-rack;
 He damns her when she chatters,
 And hears her answer back.*

*The cranks roll fast and flashin',
 And mighty-thewed as gods,
 A-thunder all and crashin',
 Oh! hear the laborin' rods!
 And through the tunnel moanin'
 The gleamin' shaftin' spins,
 And every column's groanin'
 And reck'nin' up our sins.
 The gauges jump and twinkle—
 It's eighteen full she's done. . . .
 But hear the bridge-bell tinkle—
 "Half-speed?" We ain't begun!
 "Half-speed!" and feel her ridin'
 Across the river-bar,
 With tail-rods loose and slidin'
 And cross-head-guides a-jar.*

*And up the sleepin' river
 We'll go at easy steam,
 With big screws gently spoonin',
 And engines softly croonin'
 A sea-tune to the stream,
 That dreams with breast a-quiver
 A lover's peaceful dream.*

*Oh! when the mottled water
 Is boilin' angry aft,
 Where two wild screws have caught her
 A-swirl with extra draught,*

Down the river with swinging oars
Came boats by singers rowed—
Voices echoed along the shores;
Melody ebbed and flowed
As the great sea ebbs and flows with the tide
Scornful of Time and his hours—
Knowing only the world is wide
And those who seek, find flowers.

As the sea-stained ship came tramping in
The boats moved, skimming, near,
And like a virtue mourning sin,
A girl's voice sounded clear.—
Thump! Thump! Thump! The engines swung
As though to beat the time,—
Ah! sweet was the tune by the singer sung
To the words of a quaint old rhyme.

And then McMinn of the "Binnacle Lamp"
Spoke thus, "Shut off your steam."
"It isn't often a cargo tramp
Goes drifting on Lethe's stream."
Hissing softly, the engines ceased
Their dirge for the dead ships gone.
And like a toiling soul released,
The old ship drifted on.

The boats drew near; the steamer's crew,
Six weeks from the port of Perth,
Came to the rail for a closer view
Of the beauty that is of earth.
From the weary war of the ocean wide
Where Time is the passing of hours,
They heard, out there on the jewelled tide,
Music that sang of flowers.

Said Jock McMinn to his second, "Joe,
Dead slow ahead! Maybe
They'll sing a song we used to know
Before we went to sea."

THE HEARTS AT SEA.

FOR every liner safe in port
There are twenty tramps at sea
Of every size and every sort—
Of chiefly low degree.
The " Binnacle Lamp "
Was a deep-sea tramp
And a crazy ship was she.

Her engines broke down twice a day,
And when they chose to go
Each gland had a snowy, steamy spray
That blew as the bull-whales blow.
And every rod was pitted deep
With marks of her toilsome years.
At every stroke she'd sob and weep—
Her bilge held mostly tears.

She'd strip the rings of a piston-head
With an awful shriek of pain
And wallow for hours, a monster dead,
Till they fixed her up again
With a set of old rings, all thin and worn,
That clattered as they swung.
The " Binnacle Lamp " was a thing of scorn
On the cruel waters flung.

She made the river-mouth at night
When the moon through silver clouds
Flashed reconnoitring beams of light
On funnel and guys and shrouds.
Over the bar she lunged and rolled,
Her deep decks all a-swim—
The bell on her fo'c's'le harshly tolled
And her side-lights flickered dim.

A WOMAN'S SONG.

A POET sang one song,
And with its pulsing fire
Awoke my woman's passions strong,
And quickened my desire,
Till, like a moaning wire
That echoes music from a gong,
My soul replied to his, aflame
With love that will not die.
He kissed me—ah!—and spoke my name,
And then—he passed me by
(His eyes were on the sky).

A horseman rode out West
And left me all alone;
He sang the song my heart loved best,
But oh! my heart was cold as stone,
Fearing the dangers guessed and known,
So that I could not rest.
I dreamed, I dreamed he would return,
And, at the eventide,
When glowing embers smoke and burn,
Would tell me of his ride
(I listening close beside).

A sailor sailed away
Into the rising sun
To fight through storm and starry spray
A battle never lost nor won.
I prayed to God for one life—one;
I thought God's angels heard me pray,
That he would come to me again
And lift his eyes a-shine.
The ships are full of gallant men,
Yet there were none like mine.
(Ah, me! His eyes a-shine!)

The lighthouse flashed its welcome far;
The trees loomed darkly near.
And the rods, with scarce a jerk or jar,
Obeyed their engineer.

A mandolin in a girl's frail hands
Strummed tunefully awhile—
It seemed to tell of tropic lands
Where the blooms of summer smile.
And then in the hearts of the listening men
An old, old measure throbbed
"Ah, will ye no come back again?"
"We trusted you," it sobbed.

"We trusted you! We trusted you!"
Soft sang the dreaming throws.
Commingling with the music true,
Their beats were stabbing blows.
And tho' these men who work the ships
Oft love and sail away,
Perchance they dreamed of quivering lips
And hearts that wait and pray.

'Twas only a voice and a mandolin
In the shimmer of the moon,
And Jock McMinn was a man of sin
Without much ear for tune.
Yet his eyes were wet when he went below,
And he scarcely seemed to care
That the old glands blew as the bull-whales blow
And a valve was shrieking there.

For every heart at peace ashore
There are twenty sad at sea—
When the years that mattered have gone before
And there's naught in the years to be
Save thrashing a tramp
Like the "Binnacle Lamp"
Through God's implacable sea.

THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN.

I AWOKE to a sound that seemed
To have died away in the rain.
I told myself I had dreamed,
And had turned to slumber again,
When an engine-whistle blew,
Faint as an infant's cry,
And I waited, as sleepers do,
To hear the train rush by.

A moan as of wind in trees
Sullenly swathed the gloom
Merging by slow degrees
Into a hollow *Boom!*
As down the line she swept,
She sent a call through the dark;
And the drowsing echoes leapt
To life and shouted "*Hark!*"

Nearer she came a-roar,
Her headlight's wicked glare
Lighting the road before
With hard, insistent stare.
Our little cottage rocked
In the cataclysmic roll
Of harsh sounds interlocked
In one discordant whole.

Clatter! and *Clash!* and *Clang!*
Rolling and thudding blows,
Steel on iron rang
Like meeting of galloping foes.

My husband counts his gold
Amid the noise of streets.
His back is bent, his face is old;
Forgetting Life holds many sweets
He counts in cash Life's passion beats,
His hand in mine lies cold.
He speaks no soft love-words to me—
Words my heart pines for, whispered low;
And yet it matters not, you see,
Because my heart broke long ago—
(The song the poet sang, you know).

THE LAST POST.

THE tall guards paced with arms reversed,
Slow, to the strains of the March in "Saul";
It seemed that Death had done his worst,
That a heavier blow could never fall.
There was sorrow keen in the captain's tones
As he gave an order that bade them stand
With rifle muzzles dropped to the stones,
And wild grief wailed from the sobbing band.

The six gun-horses moved fretfully,
Their drivers' faces were set and grim,
The gun-wheels turned so quietly,
And a Union Jack lay over him;
With a muffled jingle of chains and pins
The gun drew up at the waiting grave,
And the chaplain prayed for a soldier's sins
As the earth took back the dust it gave.

Surely a woman was waiting then,
Somewhere—waiting for his true eyes
To come and laugh into hers again—
Death takes ever the richest prize.
Each man counted him good to know,
From captain down to the last recruit;
But Death came swift when the lights were low,
Before he'd ever a chance to shoot.

The tall guards lifted their rifles high,
And fired three volleys, while thin and shrill
The "Last Post" quavered its sweet reply
To the echoes that rolled from the wakened hill.
Higher and sweeter, each throbbing note
Full of yearning and sad farewell;
It took a message from each dumb throat
Into the land where the dead men dwell.

All the world seemed filled
By sound that silenced the rain—
Thunderous sounds that thrilled,
And, circling, crashed again.

A child awoke and sobbed,
In terror of the sound,
As the long train leaped and throbbed,
Shaking the solid ground.
Again the whistle blew,
Warning the world a-dream
The midnight train was due—
Goliath of steel and steam.

The tail-lights passed, and we heard
Tap-tap! on the distant rail;
Afar a lonely bird
Sent through the night a wail.
The weather outside was wild,
Heavy with wind and rain,
And the mother soothed her child,
“It was only the midnight train.”

The harsh bells thrill
Their warning shrill,
And the great rods grip the throws—
Grip them and send them blundering back,
Blundering back, thundering back,
With terrible Titan blows.
“Hard astern!”
The white suds churn,
And the rocks are under her nose.

She's moving back
To the deep, blue track,
From the Horror there in the gloom,
Where the grisly Kings of Death await,
With eager bated breath await
For a ship to come to her doom—
Oh! pray to God
That every rod
Is sound in her engine-room.

When you miss the white
Of Maria Light,
And the red on Columbia Shoal,
And the long, lean seas go tramping in,
Tramping in,
Stamping in,
To meet the White Patrol;
Put her about,
And take her out,
Lest the Three Kings take their toll.

THREE KINGS OF DEATH.

BEYOND the white
Of Maria Light
And the red on Columbia Shoal,
Where the long, clean seas come stamping in—
Stamping in,
Tramping in,
With slow resistless roll—
Leagues from land,
The Three Kings stand
And levy deep-sea toll.

There's naught to mark
Their three peaks stark—
There's never a sign to tell
That a strong tide's setting on to them;
And many a good ship's gone to them
For want of light or bell.
When the fog comes down
Their coastlines drown
Till there's only the lurching swell.

In the quivering gloom
Of the engine-room
Eyes stare at the telegraph—
“Dead slow ahead!” and she's sweeping in—
Sweeping in, creeping in,
Mist-dews on funnel and gaff.
From the first saloon
Comes a comic tune
And a woman's nervous laugh.

When He'd moulded it and shaped it,
Till it seemed a perfect thing,
He gave every man a label,
From the pauper to the king.
And I guess the lights were dimmer
When He sorted out a soul,
And put it in a trimmer,
And said, "You trim the coal."

For the stoker gets the down-draught,
And the greasers have the fan,
But the bunkers
(Steamer's bunkers)
Ain't no place to put a man.
There's the darkness that you see there,
And the darkness that you feel,
And the everlastin' grindin'
Of the coal beneath your heel.
Up on deck the men and women
Laugh to feel her easy roll—
They don't know the way we're trimmin'
At the cruel, slidin' coal.

When the peons coal at Rio,
They form lines and pass the coals
For the bunkers
(Steamer's bunkers)
Up in little wooden bowls.
They are dirty, lazy beggars,
And are worth a bob a day—
But we wheel our coal in barrows
When the bunker's far away.
And such bunkers, when we're trimmin'
With our sweatin' shoulders bare,
Ain't no place to sing a hymn in,
Or to offer up a prayer.

TRIMMIN' COAL.

WE are chaps whose lights are hidden
By the coal-dust and the gloom
Of the bunkers
(Steamer's bunkers)
Near the hummin' engine-room.
You can hear the stokers toilin'
And the greasers as they go
To the testin' and the oilin'
Of the rods that swing and throw ;
But few men e'er see the glimmer
In the blackness of the coal
Of the slush-light of the trimmer
As it gutters to her roll.

There's a thousand tons o' Westport
To be shifted to the fires
From the bunkers
(Steamer's bunkers),
And that's when a man perspires.
When the bulkhead plates are sweatin',
And the air is foul and thick,
And the engineers are callin'
Out for coal, " And bring it quick ! "
Makes you wish you were a-swimmin'
In the ice around the Pole,
'Stead of trimmin', trimmin', trimmin',
At the steamer's bunker coal.

When God made the world, I reckon,
He just mixed it in a pot,
Dark as bunkers
(Steamer's bunkers)
Also just about as hot.

SEARCH-LIGHTS.

WE guide the search-lights over the water,
Where the horses white
Spring into the light,
And spur away, with their long manes flying,
Into the night;
Wheeling and sweeping
The arc-lights blaze,
Crossing and creeping,
In devious ways;
Out past the Head and away to the south'ard,
And never a cruiser there--
Yet they're moving in with their lights all smothered,
And our watchword is "Beware!"

They are creeping in though we cannot see them--
They are coming in
With their screws a-spin,
And the search-lights strain every nerve to find them
Blazing broadly and pointing thin,
Gleaming and crossing,
They pry and feel,
Where the seas are tossing
They swing and wheel.
They pick up a coaster and stare and follow,
Silvering funnel and spar;
They flicker and pause, where the black-fish wallow,
And dazzle each blinded star.

Torpedo boats with their lights all darkened
Are lurking round,
Where the solid ground
Is scarce a fathom beneath the water.

I have pondered in a silence
That has lasted forty years,
Why the bunkers
(Steamer's bunkers)
Have such stuffy atmospheres.
There's the wind and sun from heaven
Wastin' by the blessed yard,
And we are in the bunkers
Of a steamer, breathin' hard.
Guess the molly-hawks a-skimmin'
Would be tickled if they knew
We were in the coal-dust trimmin'
When the skies are clear and blue.

When God made the world, I reckon
That He made it really well
'Cept the bunkers
(Steamer's bunkers),
And they were made in hell.
To the East and West He sent us
To a job He thought would fit.
Said He, "You will fail or prosper
Just according to your grit."
Yet the fate of none was grimmer
When He took a poet's soul
And put it in a trimmer,
And said, "You trim the coal!"

HALF-SPEED.

WE raced her past the Brothers,
And thrashed her through the Straits,
And where the wild rip smothers,
The high speed thrilled her plates;
But now the moon lifts blazing,
And East and far away
Some unseen hands are raising
Night's curtain, sombre grey.

The full moon's beams have made us
A dream-ship in a dream,
And in a sheen arrayed us—
So make the speed "Half steam!"
And with the tail-rods purring
A slow, soft, soothing tune,
We'll creep, for fear of blurring
These dream-seas of the moon.

Her prow will scarcely chatter,
So quietly we'll go—
For Time and Tide don't matter
When Memory's breezes blow.
And what is all the glory
Of two good screws hard-pressed,
When dream-tongues tell a story
That two hearts only guessed?

So rhythmical and measured
The booming cranks will swing,
Their strokes will all be treasured
Because of thoughts they bring.
*Oh! can this life be bitter,
And must a strong man die,
When God can light that glitter
That shivers sea and sky?*

Like well-trained hounds,
Destroyers are waiting
We know not where—
The lights, gyrating,
Glimmer and stare;
And nothing is seen but rolling water
And a fishing boat off-shore.
The lights leap far, and the lights blaze shorter,
And flicker and point and soar.

We send our search-light over the water
Where the horses white
Prance into the light
And spin away with the bit-foam flying
Into the night.
Wheeling and sweeping
The arc-lights blaze,
Crossing and sweeping
In silver ways.
Out past the light-house, away to the south'ard,
And never a cruiser there;
But they're lurking round with their lights all
smothered,
And our watchword is "Beware!"

They throb ! they labor quickly !
Now feel her leap to fight
South, where the storm-stars sickly
Gleam white through cloud-clad night !
And with the roll and rattle,
And lift and roar of steel,
There comes that love of battle
That all strong men should feel.

Yet, through the storm seas swinging,
Those dream-seas gold and grey
Are singing, always singing,
Old songs of far away,
Whose tunes are almost holy ;
And ah ! those rods that swing
So steadily and slowly,
What thoughts and dreams they bring !

From truck to ports a-flashing,
Its radiance limns in light
Old spars stained dark with thrashing
Through driving storms of night.
The mast-head light burns dimmer
In very shame, it seems,
To show so faint a glimmer
Beneath the great moon's beams.

Along her sides the water
Is kissing battle-scars,
And where her wake breaks shorter
It flashes myriad stars;
A fragrant sea-wind marches
To keep a trysting sweet,
Down where the heavens' arches
And God's fair ocean meet.

And soft the smoke floats drifting,
While, aft, the lazy screws
Are turning slow and lifting
Bright ripples as they muse—
Full, perfect, laughing ripples,
Their eyes with silver lined. . . .
And yet, some men are cripples,
And, God, some men are blind!

* * * * *

The cloud-haze spreads and thickens
To cloak the golden moon,
And now the south-wind quickens
Its pace, and roars a tune
Of night, and black seas pouring
On fo'c's'le-heads a-scream;
So set the good screws snoring,
Oh! ring them on "*Full steam.*"

Closed stubbornly.
They seemed to me
Like bloodhounds when the hand that grips
Their straining leashes slacks and slips;
When one mad hound his mates outstrips,
And they are racing, free.

I saw the King's tried troopers wheel
Without a sound—
They made no sound
Save that of horse-hoofs, shod with steel,
On soaking ground.
And in the rainy evening dim
I watched them go—
Relentless, slow.
So sinister they seemed, these grim,
Hard, lynx-eyed men of stalwart limb;
And all my pity was for him—
The man they hunted so.

TROOPERS.

I SAW the mounted troopers pass
Without a sound—
They made no sound
Save that of horse-hoofs on the grass
And sodden ground;
Or jingling bit-bars tossed to ring
In quick surprise.
Oh, God, their eyes !
As they rode tracking out this thing—
This man, whose capture wealth would bring.
(I heard the river sob and sing
A dirge to sullen skies.)

And as I watched, I saw one drop
Without a sound—
He made no sound—
And, signing, bid his comrades stop
As he bent, circling round,
To find the track—grass bent to some
Unmated stem.
I hated them
Because they rode like mutes, all dumb,
No jangling scabbards—tapping drum—
They rode that none might hear them come
Like harnessed men of Khem.

Each man there sat his horse right well
Without a sound—
They made no sound;
And each man's eyes blazed fires of hell
As they roved round;
Such eager eyes and hard-set lips

Wish the "chief" would tell 'em other
Yarns about the flamin' things—
Tell 'em what we got to hang to
When we're oilin' and she swings—
How it's lovely in the tunnel
When the shaftin' bends and springs.

Never mind! They're only women!
Very likely good 'uns too—
And they'll never rightly *savvy*
What us hot-house blossoms do—
Real good women—proper women—
Much too good for me and you.

* * * * *

"Yes, sir! Yes'm! them's the boilers—
Double-ended boilers, mum.
When we're goin'? Yes, it's sultry.
Yes, at times we *do* sweat some.
Have to stoop here—them's the bunkers;
Through here's where the trimmers come.

"No, miss! No! it never hurts us—
Easy sort of work for men.
(Seems to want to ask me questions)
Men get scalded? now and then.
Wouldn't do for you to try it—
Might feel faint-like, now'n' again."

Tired of lookin' at the boilers,
They stepped dainty through the door,
And I hear the shoes a-clickin'
On the soundin' iron floor,
And their patent packin' swishin'—
Only hope there ain't no more!

LADIES IN THE ENGINE-ROOM.

LET'S stand back here by the boilers—
Watch 'em through the open door
Trippin' round with shoe-heels tappin'
On the noisy, iron floor.
(Mine's the small 'un with the giggle,
Pointin' like a semyphore.)

See the "chief," all teeth and whiskers,
Showin' 'em the way she goes.
(What about that one that's solemn,
With the cunnin'-lookin' nose?)
Hear their packin' *swishin'!* *swishin'!*
What a blessed lot of clothes!

Shut up, Kid, yer breezy swearin'—
Where ye bin? Be like a tomb.
Stand in here between the boilers—
They can't see us in the gloom.
'Tisn't every day there's ladies
Strollin' round our engine-room.

Now, they're goin' down the tunnel.
(Mine's the little 'un as yet—
Makes good steamin', pretty motion;
Keeps her coal bill down, I bet.)
Ain't the chaperong a monster?
She'd drive through it—drippin' wet.

Now they've stopped, and Mac is tellin'
How the Yank was killed last year
When his pants caught in the shaftin',
Kind o' cloth that wouldn't tear.
Yankee Bill, he went to glory—
That was Yankee Bill's affair.

And down where the Chathams drowse,
In a sea of dazzling blue,
There's a ship with shattered bows
And stout ribs broken through.
Nobody saw her fly
Like a stag from the din of wars;
Nobody heard her sailors cry
As they strove to veer in the billows high;
Nobody saw them choke and die,
Save God—and the Forty-Fours.

And the racing clipper ships,
With canvas towering high,
Watch for the lick of the lips
That marks where the hard fangs lie
A cry from the fo'c's'le-head!
And a staggering sea that pours!
And what does it matter if hearts new-wed
Cry out for the women's tears unshed,
When the lights are sinking—the green and red—
Out on the Forty-Fours?

A wife in a Cornish town
Looks out on the deep-sea track,
Where the ships pass up and down,
For a ship that never comes back;
And down where the Chathams drowse,
In a sea of dazzling blue,
There's a ship with shattered bows
And stout ribs broken through.
Nobody saw her fly
Like a stag from the din of wars;
Nobody heard her sailors cry
As they strove to veer in the billows high;
Nobody saw them choke and die,
Save God—and the Forty-Fours.

THE FORTY-FOURS.

(There are forty-four submerged rocks off Chatham Islands, where the "Loch Long" went down.)

*THEY lurk, awash in the swell,
 With cruel lips afoam,
 And never a swinging bell
 To steady the good ships home.
 No light-house winks in the gloom
 When the mad sou'-easter roars—
 You may drive her blind through the flying spume,
 With thunder of rods in the engine-room;
 And never an eye will mark your doom
 Out on the Forty-Fours!*

There where The Sisters stand,
 Seeming to say "Beware!"
 This black-browed wrecker band
 Crouches within its lair;
 And the racing clipper ships,
 With canvas towering high,
 Watch for the lick of the lips
 That marks where the hard fangs lie.
 A cry from the fo'c's'le-head!
 And a staggering sea that pours!
 And what does it matter if hearts new-wed
 Cry out for the women's tears unshed,
 When the lights are sinking—the green and red—
 Out on the Forty-Fours?

A wife in a Cornish town
 Looks out on the deep-sea track,
 Where the ships pass up and down,
 For a ship that never comes back;

*A-sweating up the Paikok
Or on the Crofton Hill,
A-fretting up the Paikok—
Come on and have your fill.
A-squinting at the gauges
And sanding when she rages,
With all her drivers humming
And us all standing still.*

The driver's eyes are searching
The track ahead for flies—
He likes to see them perching—
You'll see it in his eyes.
A most unholy riot
Is coming from her stack—
Big Thirteen's off her diet,
And spitting cinders back.
She says she don't like Brunner,
She wants some Coalbrookdale—
I only hope they run her
To-morrow, on the mail,
*And chase her up the Paikok
On a thirty-waggon train,
And race her up the Paikok
And thrash her down again,
And school her in her steaming
Until she's fairly screaming,
Then blow her up for tuppence
And chuck her in a drain.*

If I was up in Heaven,
And feeling pretty well,
I'd say, "Give me Eleven
To fire on for a spell."
If I'd a touch of liver
And needed exercise
I'd cross the flowing river
That flows by Paradise,

ON THE HILL.

THE steamer stoker curses
Because an air-shaft's wrong.
They fit him into verses,
And turn him into song.
The greaser reads a sermon
In every swinging throw.
The trimmers growl, a-squirmin'
In bunkers hot and low.
They're all for ever fretting,
Because they're treated ill.
I'd like to see 'em sweating—
A-firing on the hill—

*Stoking on the Paikok,
With thirty waggons on,
Choking in the Paikok,
When air and daylight's gone,
And hear the roaring funnel
A-thrashing in the tunnel,
A-firing on the Paikok,
With just your trousers on.*

The Tank can close her winders
And keep some smoke outside,
But she's as hot as cinders,
And so we are half-fried—
Five tunnels close together,
And with the wind behind,
Leave you in doubt's to whether
You're dead or only blind.
So all you steamer fellows
Who'd like to change your jobs,
Come where the Bull-Yank bellows
And where the Big Tank sobs,

THE WHITE PATROL.

THEIR white line marks the bar
From the headland to the spit,
And they bear the shock and jar,
Of waves that come from far
To batter and beat on it.
They keep the clamoring seas
Out of the quiet port,
Shouldering them with a careless ease,
Pleased with the giant sport.
And the restless, clattering channel-bell
Cries to the ships
With iron lips,
“Well, all’s well.”
Rung by the pulse of the watchmen white,
Who pace so warily all the night.

The harbor lies as still
And clear as a land-locked lake—
Scarcely a ripple athrill
Or a capful of wind to spill
And makes the ripples break.
Yet over the bar where the great seas march
There is battle, riot and rout,
There billows charge and topple and arch,
And the watchmen drive them out,
Stemming the rush of the ocean swell,
While the anchored ships
Hear raucous lips
Crying, “All’s well.”
In silver harness they tramp and roll—
The stalwart, swaggering White Patrol.

And I'd raise sweat instanter—
She's a narrow-gutted fire—
But I'd belt her to a canter
Up the hill, and then retire.

*I'd say, "We're on the Paikok,
You'd better get along.
Hurray! We're on the Paikok,
And I'm feeling fairly strong;
You're a pretty brass-bound daisy,
But you're too damn fat and lazy."
So I'd hunt her up the Paikok,
And then I'd say "So-long!"*

And yet if I went oiling,
Or trimming coal at sea,
I'd wish myself back toiling
On Twelve or Number Three;
I'd long to hear them blowing
Their mellow "double-chime"—
To see their funnels throwing
Volcanoes as they climb;
The general engine verses
Are generally wrong—
An engine never curses,
She only sings a song.

*A-stamping up the Paikok
With thirty waggons on;
A-tramping up the Paikok
When air and daylight's gone,
And just the roaring funnel
A-thrashing in the tunnel,
A-singing up the Paikok
With just your trousers on.*

THE SHUNTER.

*THE engine-bars are splashed and starr'd—
They've killed a shunter in the yard.*

“ He never seen how he was struck,
And he died sudden,” someone said.
The driver swore—“ That flamin' truck
Come on the slant and struck him dead.”
The fireman coughed and growled “ Hard luck ! ”
As he was carried to the shed.

The engine whistles short and low.
(His blood is on her “ catcher-bars ”)
We had to let his young wife know
His soul had passed beyond the stars,
Where he will hear no engines blow,
Nor listen for the coming cars.

She stared and stared—until he came,
On four men's shoulders, up the hill.
She sobbed and laughed and called his name,
And shivered when he lay so still—
She had no cruel words of blame—
She bore no one of us ill-will.

They've washed the rails and sprinkled sand.
(Oh ! hear the mail go roaring on !)
And he was just a railway hand—
A hidden star that never shone—
And no one seems to understand—
Her heart is broken ! He is gone !

*The engine-bars are cold and hard—
They've killed a shunter in the yard.*

They are the sea police—
 These waves of the harbor mouth.
Their vigils never cease—
Striving for order and peace
 With the lawless seas from the south.
Marching from beach to the headland's gloom—
 Giant policemen they,
Sending the seas to hammer and boom
 On cliffs that drip with spray;
With always their cheerful message to tell—
 From salt-white lips
 To the anxious ships,
“ Well, all's well.”
A stormy night and a nasty sea—
Patrolling the bar so constantly.

When there is peace on the deep
 And stars in the heaven's arch,
The White Patrol snatch sleep,
Leaving look-outs to keep
 A watch on their ceaseless march—
Scouts who will call at the smallest sign,
 “ Ho there, sleepers, awake ! ”
And the White Patrol is a steadfast line
 When the first long rollers break ;
Charging the clattering channel-bell,
 As it leaps and dips,
 To shout to the ships,
“ Well, all's well.”
And the captains, safe in the inner mole,
Hear the crashing march of the White Patrol.

She had fought where the fight was worst,
With decks all splashed and strewn,
When the shrill shells struck and burst
In the light of a chill half-moon.
The smoke rolled over the sea,
And oh! she moved so slow,
And oh! the moaning of agony
From the wounded men below.

Into the port she went—
We turned and watched her go,
With armor shattered and bent
And engines toiling slow.
Yet proud she looked, and grim,
As though she had fought her fight,
Out there on the morning's rim,
Back there in the awful night.

Never shall I forget
That sight in the early dawn,
As we lounged in the sea-mist wet,
Before the nets were drawn;
When the broken cruiser came
So slow that she raised no foam,
Tottering, weary, crushed, but *game*,
Groping her blind way home.

THE CRUISER.

SHE came at break of day,
Her hull against the dawn,
Blundering up the sleeping bay
Before the nets were drawn.
But little we cared for that.
The cruiser claimed our eyes—
Her funnels and spars lay flat
And the air was full of cries.

On her bridge the captain stood,
His eyes were staring wide,
Lost in a madman's mood,
Searching the rosy tide.
The smoke from the splintered stacks
Rolled over her decks in clouds.
In her armor were rents and cracks,
In the water dragged her shrouds.

We hailed, "Ahoy! ahoy!"
But her steersman never turned.
She scraped the channel buoy,
And his eyes with madness burned.
Her plates were shattered and bent,
One screw was shot away;
Broken and wounded she went—
Halt and lame, up the bay.

A wild face came to the rail,
Just aft of the broken guys;
He did not answer our hail,
But we saw the look in his eyes—
Terror and weariness,
And the look of a deafened man—
Ah, well! we could only guess
This ship has been in the van.

We're leanin' our arms on the weather-rail
As the nor'-east drives her through,
Watchin' the in-bound Sydney mail
And wishin' we're in-bound too.
They sang a hymn as we got the breeze,
And the parson said, " I know
You'll act like men on the angry seas,"
But—he didn't have to go.

Oh! the skipper he clung to his half-caste queen
(My Oath! what a queen she were),
And I thought of what is and what might have been
Last night on the mountain spur,
Where the cable cars came past a-whirl.
With their lamps a-blazin' bright;
But it came to be " last down car "—poor girl!
And it came to be " Just—good night."
She was neat and trim in her pretty gear
And her eyes were wistful. Oh!
We know what glitterin' course to steer,
But—none of us wants to go.

For the mate is gone on a lovely Dream,
But we reckon he'll wake up soon;
And the second mate and the cook, they seem
To be off in a ten-year swoon;
And each of us, caged for a four-months' spell,
Will think, at least for a while,
Of a rattlin' coup in a Chinkie hell,
Or else of a woman's smile.
" For those in Peril at Sea " they sang,
As we swung her away so slow;
But it isn't the peril that brings the pang;
It's—because we don't want to go.

*But the course is east by south and east,
And we've passed old Pencar-row;
The water boils at her bows like yeast,
And the skipper he's broodin' so;
But what we would like don't matter the least
Because—we have got to go.*

HEARTS ASTERN.

*WE'VE laid our course south-east by east,
Around old Pencar-row,
Where the surf boils up like the frothing yeast,
And the ocean breezes blow.
East away and south by east,
But—none of us wants to go.*

The skipper's in love with a half-caste girl.
(Oh! her lips are full and red!)
"It's lonely out where the currents swirl;
I'd rather stay here," he said.
We're singin', "We're off to the Rio Grande,"
And the capstan's movin' gay;
But we'd sooner be hearin' the German band
In Oriental Bay,
Where the women walk in their dainty gear,
And the moon comes risin' slow—
Ah! yes, we know what course to steer,
But—none of us wants to go.

The mate is gone on a black-eyed Dream
(She gave him her waist to squeeze),
And he would rather lie out in the gleam
Of the stars than face the seas.
We're givin' the home-bound songs a fling
To the roll of the lazy swell;
'Twill be many a night ere we hear the ring
Of the Kelburne tram-car bell,
As it takes its load to the moonlit hills
Where there ain't no lamps to show—
The fores'l shakes and the stays'l fills,
But—none of us wants to go.

The second mate and the cook are down
Below, for they've got d.t.'s,
And the height of ambition with them's to drown
Themselves in the cool, green seas.

The nearest cruiser's bugles cried !
Her engine-bells rang out !
A shell flew, ricochetting wide,
With hoarse and angry shout—
Then her machine-guns clattered shrill,
As she swung round to chase,
And there was wrath and curses till
She struck her racing pace.
And while she flew to strike her blow,
Her comrade tramped on sentry-go.

The fast destroyer slipped away—
The fog was lifting now—
Her seething wake was flogged with spray
Churned by her flying prow ;
And on her quarter, armed and swift,
The cruiser foamed along,
Cursing the fog that would not lift
To let her sing her song—
Her song of Death, that men might know
That she was doing sentry-go.

The mists rose, fragrant, as the sun
Burned angrily and red.
Loud roared the cruiser's barbette gun—
A fountain splashed ahead
Of the destroyer. She held on,
Replying not a word.
Her spinning shafting gleamed and shone—
Her engines, as they whirled,
Cursed their bad luck, deep-voiced and low,
In crossing that grim sentry-go.

As the sweet sunlight flashed the spray
On the destroyer's rail,
The cruiser shot her stacks away,
And poured an iron hail

SENTRY-GO.

THE cruisers tramped on sentry-go
All night; and at the dawn
The mists came creeping down so slow—
Grey curtains softly drawn.
No star was seen; the waking east
Was brighter than the west.
The sullen seas broke foam like yeast
From every heaving crest,
And back and forward, to and fro,
The cruisers tramped on sentry-go.

The lean destroyer raced all night
To get dispatches through;
She left a wake all grey and white;
She had a well-tried crew.
Her funnels showed no licking flame,
Her turbines sang and whirled;
And in the foggy dawn she came
A steed to madness spurred,
Where stealthily, so grim and slow,
The cruisers marched on sentry-go.

She saw them first, and veered to port,
To slip them in the gloom—
There was an order, crisp and short,
Down in the engine-room.
And every bolt and racing shaft
Sang in sheer ecstasy.
They gave her every scrap of draught,
For it meant life if she
Could pass those cruisers, drowsing so,
Upon their sleepy sentry-go.

THE MAILS.

THE tail-rods leap in their bearings—
They rise with a rush and ring;
They sink to the sound of laughter,
And hurried and short they sing—
We carry the Mails—
His Majesty's Mails—
Make way for the Mails of the King!

We've swung her head for the open bay,
And, spun by the prisoned steam,
The screws are drumming the miles away
Where the bright star-shadows dream.
She lifts and sways to the ocean swell—
The light-house glares on high,
And the fisher-lads in their boats will tell
How they saw the Mail go by;
A-thrill from keel to her quiv'ring spars—
With the screw-foam boiling white,
And black smoke dimming the watching stars
As she soared through the soundless night.
“ Full speed a-head ! ” shout the racing rods—
“ Full speed ! ” and spray on the rail !
We'll heed no order to stop save God's,
For we are the Ocean Mail.

The big fish shudder to hear the thud
And stamp of our engine-room,
As we thunder on, with our decks a-flood,
Through the blind, bewildering gloom.
A faint, hoarse hail, and a waving light—
The whirr of our steering-gear—
And we are staggering in our flight
With a fishing-boat just clear—

Into the plucky little craft,
Whose skilful engine-crew
Worked fiercely with the patent draught,
And drove her madly through
The heavy seas that thundered slow,
Upon their ceaseless sentry-go.

The bright blue water ripples clear
Where the destroyer died.
And deep below lie engineer
And gunner, side by side,
For this they raced that long black night—
To get dispatches through.
They would not yield while they could fight—
They were a gallant crew. . . .
Now back and forward, to and fro,
The cruisers march on sentry-go.

Yet never a sign or a sound we give—
No blast of horn or a hail—
For we must race that the world may live,
And we are the Ocean Mail.

*The good screws, laboring under,
Laugh loud as they lift and fling
The eddying foam behind them,
And muttering low they sing—
Make way for the Mail—
His Majesty's Mails—
We carry the Mails for the King!*

We carry the wealth of the world I trow,
And the power and fame of men—
The angry word, and the lover's vow,
All held in the turn of a pen.
And stars swing out in the skies a-thrill,
And the weary stars grow pale;
But night and day we are driving still,
For we are the Ocean Mail.

The sailing-craft and the clumsy tramps
Loom up and are lost astern,
And the stars of their bridge and mast-head lamps
Are the only stars that burn.
To the clash and ring of the whirling steel,
And the crash and swing of the seas,
We carry the grief that the mothers feel
As they sob and pray on their knees.
The cares and joys of the throbbing world
Are measured in piston-strokes,
When the bright prow-smother is split and hurled,
And the hot wake steams and smokes.
To the swinging blows of the heavy throws,
And the slide-valves' moaning wail,
We'll swing and soar with our flues a-roar,
For we are the Ocean Mail.

They watch for us at the harbor-mouth,
And wait for us on the quay,
Looking ever to east and south
For our head-light on the sea.
And onward, surging, we're racing fast
Where the shy mermaiden dwells,
And the crested kings of the deep ride past;
(Oh! the pomp of the rolling swells)
Lone lighthouse-men when they see our star
Lift clear of the starry maze,
Will watch us swagger across the bar
And swing to the channelled ways,

*And so we'll go a-crawlin',
By sickly light of morn,
With engine-bells a-callin',
And noisy winches haulin';
A-liftin' and a-fallin'—
A-rollin' to the Horn.*

*We brought her out a-roarin'
And now we'll take her back
With creamin' froth a-pourin'
And suckin' in her track.
We'll lift her east and south'ard,
And laugh to hear her plug
With seethin' hawse-pipes smother'd
And sobbin' screws a-chug.
But 'fore her whistle bellows
A giant's fierce good-bye,
We'll drink to all our fellows—
Twelve thousand miles is dry.*

*And so we'll go a glidin'—
A phantom in the dawn—
And when the sea-roads widen,
We'll hear the pistons chidin'
The screws that send us ridin'
And rollin' to the Horn.*

A-ROLLIN' TO THE HORN.

(A STOKIN' SONG.)

WE brought her out a-hummin',
 And we will take her Home
 With screws a-throb and drummin'
 And blazin' bows afoam.
 But 'fore the stern and bow-lines
 And strainin' springs are loosed,
 We'll grab at Pleasure's tow-lines
 And keep the girls amused.
 The sea-roads ain't too narrow,
 And we, to-morrow morn,
 Will slide around Pencarrow
 And shoulder to the Horn.

*With wake all grey and gleamin',
 We'll go at chilly morn;
 When landsmen lie a-dreamin'
 We'll cross the bar a-creamin',
 And swing her bluff bows streamin',
 And point 'em at the Horn.*

Oh! darlin' you are clingin'
 With arms and lips so soft,
 And, oh! the stars are singin'
 A lover's tune aloft.
 You'll think of me to-morrow,
 My bloomin' 'eart's desire,
 In sweatin' sin and sorrow—
 Twelve thousand miles of fire;
 In sorrow and in laughter,
 (Perhaps I ain't so cheap)
 God made me for a grafter
 To fight His deathless deep.

For the Ocean's Own were roamers—
By power of sail and steam
They swung in the long Cape combers,
Or droned up the Hoogli's stream.

The song that the surf is shouting
Is meant for their ears alone
Who went to their work undoubting,
And slaved at it blood and bone.
Oh! softly the Ocean swings them
To sleep on her heaving breast,
And the wind from the sweet north sings them
The songs that their hearts loved best.
Soft eyes are sad in their waking—
Eyes bright with the tears unshed—
And there's many a brave heart breaking;
But the Ocean's Own are dead.

OCEAN'S OWN.

THE song that the surf is brawling
Is meant for their ears alone,
Who followed the deep-sea calling
And slaved at it, blood and bone.
Oh ! softly the north wind sings them
A measure that bids them rest
Where Ocean, their mother, swings them
To sleep on her throbbing breast.
The moon lifts gold in the gloaming,
The sun in the west sinks red,
And birds of the sea pass roaming,
But the Ocean's Own lie dead.

Perchance as they lie they're dreaming
Of home and a childhood's tune
That rang through the storm-seas' screaming,
And sobbed in the warm monsoon ;
Or maybe again they're thrashing
With spray on the high bridge-rail,
And laboring engines clashing
A dirge to the men who fail.
The world passes on, forgetting,
But, off in ports, I know
There's many a brave heart fretting
For the good, brave hearts laid low.

Their ships swept out on the noon-tides,
And, lonely, their mast-head lights
Were quivering far, when the moon-tides
Swam glittering through the nights ;
And strong where the storm-stars flicker
They drove through the wash and roll,
And ever their screws spun quicker
When baulked of their distant goal.

The foot-soldiers, wearied by sortie and tramp,
Envy the cavalry,
Who clatter their scabbards and ride into camp—
Swaggering cavalry,
The King's own cavalry.

The clash of accoutrements deafens the ear,
The high walls echo and ring,
There's a jingle of harness and creaking of gear
As they pass with a clash and a swing.

Spurred chargers dancing,
Plunging and prancing—
Way for the cavalry !
The line and artillery
Are only auxiliary :
This is the cavalry—
Cheers for the cavalry !

There is no pomp on God's earth like the pride
And the pomp of the cavalry—
There is no death like the deaths men have died,
Swept by the cavalry—
The throat-cutting cavalry.
They are barbaric in bearing and glance,
Relics of Tartar and Moor,
Who met the fierce foe at the point of the lance—
Fighting that they might endure.

So, stand aside there,
The cavalry ride there—
Way for the cavalry !
The guns and the Tommies are
Useless as dummies are ;
God made the cavalry—
So say the cavalry.

Once 'twas a glorious way to meet Death—
To ride with the cavalry
Where great gods of battle blew smoke at each breath,
And yawned for the cavalry.

CAVALRY.

A CLATTER of hoofs and a jingle of steel—
Hear the King's cavalry!
Round the street corner they swagger and wheel—
See the King's cavalry—
The King's proud cavalry!
As waves of the sea are their quivering ranks—
Waves that have galloped and won;
Such glitter of breastplates, and shoulders, and flanks,
In the glow of the afternoon sun.

Great chargers plunging,
Reefing and lunging—
Way for the cavalry!
Grim troopers riding,
Like centaurs bestriding—
The horse of the cavalry—
The King's own cavalry!

Hot heads are tossing the flakes of white froth
Over the cavalry.
Troop sergeants ride like the great gods of wrath,
Watching the cavalry—
The King's proud cavalry!
Like breakers in leash that are fretting to fly,
See how the great horses prance!
Ah! to be there when the guns gallop by,
And trumpeters sound the advance.

Ho! stand aside there;
The cavalry ride there—
Way for the cavalry!
Pacing disdainfully,
Reefing so painfully,
The bottled-up cavalry—
The King's proud cavalry.

WHEN THE GUNS GO INTO BATTLE.

WITH Death on the off-side lead,
And Duty stern on the limber,
The men of the British breed
Strain sinews, steel and timber.
With jangling bar and trace,
And trail-eyes all a-rattle,
The guns rush thundering in the race,
Where "last gun in" is a sore disgrace:
For the drivers drive at a reckless pace
When the guns go into battle.

See them breasting the rise,
With trace a-sweat and straining
Till the white, hot lather flies,
And the axles roar complaining!
Clatter! Bump! Bang! They come
Galloping hard on the level—
Never a note of life and drum—
Only the whirr of wheels that hum.
(The fearless winds from the hills crouch dumb
When the guns crash on to the revel.)

The hard-drawn trace-chains twang
And the trace-hooks grip and rattle.
The hammering trail-eyes bang
When the guns go into battle.
The drivers urge their teams
With whip and spur and curses. . . .
A gun on the foot-hills glints and gleams—
A flashing roar! And a shot horse screams—
I have dreamed what I see, in horrid dreams
Which the morning light disperses.

Mad with sheer courage they'd gather and charge,
Horses would whinny and dance—
Ears would lie flat and the white eyes enlarge
When trumpeters blew the advance.

Then would be throb of hoofs—
Thunder and sob of hoofs
As the wild cavalry
Raced forward heel to heel,
Foes setting steel to steel—
Raced in like cavalry,
Tall, stalwart cavalry.

The limber goes; it's "Waggon Supply";
The brass-capped shell is handed
From waggon to trail; and the strong hands ply
To many a jest and quick reply,
While the shells rush past with a shriek or sigh,
And the earth lifts where they've landed.

Arms signal "Shot!" And the range?
"Eighteen hundred, with Fuse Seven!"
Ah! the men at the trails will change
As their bellowing guns shake Heaven;
For, steadily spitting hate,
The rifle bullets find them—
One moves too soon, and one too late,
When the tough spades lift the spent gun's weight.
Yet steady the fight, and grim the fate,
Though the grime and the sweat-streams blind
them.

With Death on the off-side lead,
And Duty stern on the near one,
The men of the fighting breed
Ride in where the hot shells sear one.
With jangling bar and trace,
And fast big-hearted cattle,
The guns go thundering in the race
Where "last gun in" is a sore disgrace;
Oh! the drivers drive at a madman's pace
When the guns go into battle.

They have loosed the shot horse out,
And left a gunner groaning.
They are off with never a doubt
Where the long death-song is moaning.
The limbers leap and sway
To the pole-bar's noisy banging—
One horse's breath is a crimson spray,
But he shakes his head and pegs away,
For he does not want his mates to say
They saw his short-trace hanging.

Oh ! hear the riotous beat
Of racing hoofs on the gravel—
You can judge from their flashing feet,
'Tis their utmost pace they travel.
The linch-pins clatter and ring—
The harness strains and shivers.
Each driver there is a battle-king ;
Each leaping gun a living thing,
And the war-god's song their stout hearts sing,
Tho' maybe a boy's lip quivers.

They're reining the right-flank team—
The centre driver is falling,
By his life-blood's pulsing stream
His last reveillé's calling.
But a comrade takes his place,
And so, with scarce a falter,
The gun is off again in the race,
Where " last gun in " is a sore disgrace.
Oh ! the British driver's rollicking pace,
Is a pace that nothing can alter.

To the firing-line they sweep !
Then—" Action Front ! "—and swiftly
The active gunners leap,
And the gun's unlimbered deftly,

And all the stars throb to the sagas they sing
As they leap at the lights
Of a barque.

The grey Sisters crouch as the leaders ride past
With rude pennant borne on a broken ship's mast—
Riding so fiercely and grimly and fast—
The stars guide the knights
From the Sisters in white,
For the maids fear the knights
And the dark.

South, when the Summer sets ocean agleam,
Come the warm seas
Of Noon,
Moving the Sisters who slumber and dream,
Lulled by the breeze
And its tune.

"Grey Sisters, waken!" they cry o'er the foam,
And the grey Sisters welcome their warriors home—
Brave golden knights who a-wooing have come.
And so on their knees—
They woo on their knees—
Bend the gay, sunny seas
Of the Noon.

There, when the blue about Chatham is deep,
Scattered and strewn
By the breeze,
The grey Sisters lie with their lovers, asleep,
Lulled by the croon
Of the seas.

Woosers come galloping in from the west,
Searching for princesses, jewelled and drest
As the glorious stars; but the Sisters know best.
And they dream to the tune—
To the slow, drowsy tune
That is sighed to the moon
By the seas.

THE SISTERS.

SOUTH, where the waves on the lone Chathams
gleam,

Scattered and strewn

By the breeze,

The grey Sisters drowse in the ocean and dream,

Lulled by the croon

Of the seas.

Wooers come galloping out of the west

Riding brave chargers with steel-studded crest

From the south and the east : but The Sisters know
best,

And they dream to the tune,

To the rhythmical tune

That is sung to the moon

By the seas.

Fame of The Sisters had travelled afar

Over the seas

To the west,

Stories that told of each one as a star

Lover might seize

To his breast.

And the knights mounted horses and spurred them
away,

All bit-less, with manes that were white as the spray,

To search for bright damsels. The Sisters were grey

And bent on their knees—

So low on their knees

They laughed at the seas

From the west.

Out of the south when the winter is king

Come the white knights

Of the dark,

THE NIGHT WE BEAT THE "WARRIMOO."

HER bugle called as she cleared the mole—
Ta-ra-a-a! Ta-ra-a-a!
And she swung away through the north-east roll
Beyond the light-house star.

We heard her driving with straining gear,
Trying to gain on her lead,
As we swung the "Rotomahana" clear,
A-thrill with the lust of speed.

Our schooner bows tossed quick and short,
Where the seas sweep broad and blue,
And we saw in glittering lamp and port
The lights of the "Warrimoo."

Our compound engines shook and sang,
Go on! Go on! Go on!
Her transom rattled and throbbed and rang,
The busy tail-rods shone—

And the "Rotomahana" laid her nose
Low down as the greyhounds do,
With never a care for the hard seas' blows,
And followed the "Warrimoo."

A bearing squealed, a greaser swore;
A steam-pump sobbed and growled.
Somebody laughed near the purser's door;
A dog in the lamp-room howled.

Then the fog came down. But the heavy miles
Still spun from the whirling screw.
Nobody wanted to speak or smile—
We watched for the "Warrimoo."

WINE AND ROSES.

THE wine is red
As my hot blood. A star
Glow in its heart as burns a star in mine;
And it is said
The God of Things That Are
Spins in their orbits all the stars that shine.
So let us rest!
While, sounding sweet and low,
Your crooning song my troubled thoughts composes;
And from the West
Soft breezes sweep, and blow
The heavy scent of red, red lover's roses.

Ah! melody
Of rose-scent and guitar!
Ah! voice and fingers that make song of all!
How sweet 'twould be
If God Who dwells afar
Would bear us, singing, to His Festival;
And in the West,
So rich in red and gold,
Bid us go free to gather dew-wet posies,
Where Love is blest
And none grow soured and old,
But dream and dream among the red, red roses.

Then we pointed in where the dark Heads loomed—
My word, how she throbbed and thrilled!
But she raced like a thorough-bred trained and groomed
In the hands of a rider skilled.

And just astern, her forefoot white
With the foam from our kicking screw,
Raced as she'd raced the live-long night,
The crack ship, "Warrimoo."

* * * * *

They tell this tale when the whistles call,
Fog, F-o-o-o-g!
And the groping coasters roll and crawl,
With scarce a ring of the log.

And they listen, down there off the Campbell Light,
Commending their souls to their gods,
For the wail of a horn through the murky night,
And the tumble of compound rods.

Perhaps they will see her with bows a-froth,
And maybe they'll only hear
The Company's greyhound racing north,
To the stamp of her straining gear.

And the tale goes round till it's hard to say
How much of it's false or true,
How the "Rotomahana" split the spray
Ahead of the "Warrimoo."



To the tune of the rolling rods below,
And the snarl of her seething wake,
We felt the Company's greyhound go
With the Company's honor at stake.

We heard the "Warrimoo" up the coast—
Her whistle-calls in the fog—
Moaning along like a deep-sea ghost,
Yet ringing the miles on her log.

When midnight struck on the clanging bell,
A light air cleared the sky,
And we sank our clean bows into the swell
To toss them, showering, high.

And never a turn did she slow that night,
For the course lay straight and true,
From Godley Head to Pencarrow Light,
And beat the "Warrimoo."

The engines quickened their jerky stride;
We'll win! We'll win! We'll win!
As the grey skies opened their portals wide,
And the dawn crept shyly in.

The rich light flooded the Kaikoura's snows
With the glow of a splendid day—
Gold and carmine, silver and rose,
Pursuing the fleeting grey.

Out seaward, the "Warrimoo" hummed along,
With black smoke soaring high;
But she moved like a good horse under the thong,
With the fear of the spur in his eye.

The north wind gave us a gusty hail,
"Hullo, old Win-or-die,"
And the spray of the Straits leaped over the rail
To pass in a white cloud by.

AVON RIVER.

AVON RIVER,
Sing a song to us !
 Bid your shoals and your sand-bars bring
Love's brave laughter and lays along to us.
 Peace like this is a passing thing—
Night sends soon to us
 Winds a-shiver—
Sing a tune to us,
 Avon River !

 Avon River,
Laugh and fling to us
 All the wealth of your golden hours ;
Bid the birds in the tall trees sing to us ;
 Let us gather your snowy flowers.
Night will come to us
 And deliver
Sorrow's sum to us,
 Avon River.

 Avon River,
Tell a tale to us
 As you pause in your pools of glass ;
Bid the nymphs in your lilies hail to us ;
 Tell the meadows two lovers pass.
Night holds tears for us—
 Lips a-quiver—
Lonely years for us,
 Avon River.

THE WOMEN.

I N every coastal town
They watch the sails come in,
And see the hulls fade down,
Because of a crust to win.
They know the build of the ships—
The rake of each steamer's stack.
And there is a prayer on their lips,
"God send me my sailor back."

The ships pass over the rim,
And the women turn to their work,
Counting it all for *him*,
Never a task they shirk.
And day by day it seems
There is nothing but sea and foam,
And waiting and labor and dreams,
Till his ship comes surging home.

So they watch and they wait
For men on the other side
Of a world of passion and hate—
Yet the men are prisoners, tied
By chains that are bright as stars
And soft as a woman's lips;
And the eyes that watch for the spars
Are stars to the homeward ships.

They are in every port—
Some of them tired and thin,
For their pleasures are few and short,
And they watch the ships come in,
And pray, "God send me back
My man."—Poor quivering lips!
*And the dead men strew the track
Of the lonely deep-sea ships.*

FIRING ON THE MAIL.

THERE and back, I've got to shift
Seven tons of coal—
Feel the throbbing pistons lift !
Let the beggar roll
Down the grades past Manakau,
Up by Kereru.
Moisture gathers on my brow
Like a morning dew,
As I clang the opened door
On the heat inside ;
Spilling cinders on the floor
When she staggers wide.
Fate has spoken ; from the pack
Fell the fatal cards—
Fifty-seven miles and back
Up to Longburn yards.

*So I lean my burnin' brow
Up against the gale,
'Way up north of Manakau
Firin' on the Mail.
Hear the drivers down below
Singin' on the rail—
Fifty-seven miles we go,
Firin' on the Mail.*

Once I used to milk a cow
Anchored to a bail,
Once I used to drive a plough
While I watched the Mail,
With her drivers all aglow,
Blowing clouds of steam.
Like all else on earth below,
Things ain't what they seem.

Avon River,
Give your strength to us ;
Love is sweet as your sunny stream.
Death and sorrow will come at length to us :
Let us lie on your breast and dream
Life brings gifts to us—
Tardy giver—
Laughter drifts to us,
Avon River.

Avon River,
Throw your wealth to us—
Wealth of beauty and sunlight brave.
Sad thoughts come in the night by stealth to us
Like a shark in a jewelled wave.
Night will bring to us
Winds a-shiver.
Sing, oh ! sing to us,
Avon River.

Lily hands a-waving white
Kissing me good-bye,
Down the metals straight and bright—
I believe I'd cry.

Clang the shovel on the coal,
Fling the fire-door wide!
Every man must pay the toll—
Work, or yield his pride.
Once I made the gauges buck,
Firin' on the hill,
And it's just a bit of luck
I'm not stewing still.
Just a shuffle of the cards
And the deal was plain—
"Take the Mail to Longburn yards;
Bring her back again.
Do it very well and true,
P'raps you'll win a prize."
There's a girl at Kereru
That has big brown eyes.

*So I lean my burnin' brow
Up against the gale,
'Way up north of Manakau
Firin' on the Mail.
Hear the drivers down below
Singin' on the rail—
Fifty-seven miles we go,
Firin' on the Mail.*

Yet we never stop to care
How the world is made,
When we split the screaming air
Down the ringing grade.
Up the rise, her roaring stack
Smears the summer's blue;
And you'll hear her talking back
Passing Kereru.

Feel her hit the giddy curve!
Hear her flanges cry!
See the swaying coaches swerve,
Showing speed is high!
Fill her tank and give her coal,
Clear her fires, and then
Let the big-wheeled Yankee roll
Down the grades again.
Hear her spinning drivers romp
Where the dipping grade
Lifts, past Makerua swamp,
And the thin rails fade
In the distance, o'er the rise,
Very straight and true—
There's a girl with big, brown eyes
Down in Kereru.

If we reaped as we have sown,
I'd have qualified
For an engine all my own,
And I'd take a ride,
In the sunshine of my years,
O'er the rocking rail
That I've wet with bitter tears,
Firin' on the Mail.
Oh! my word, I'd go in style,
Smoking fat cigars,
And a girl at every mile
Playing soft guitars,

So if they go and drop and die,
That isn't our affair.
The stokers sometimes feel that God
Is workin' wonders near,
A-strengthenin' a fractured rod
That's fightin' Death and Fear.
But hoistin' up the dead and maimed
And dodgin' every roll,
A man might doubt, nor be ashamed,
If he has got a soul.

*The sharks they fight a bit, and then
They swim a-grinnin' by—
Instead of beasts it might be men!
And oh! them sharks are sly.*

We ain't in Heaven's shippin'-notes,
And God don't surely know
That such dam' things as cattle-boats
Are tradin' to and fro—
A-plungin' till their stock is piled
In heaps, all blood and hair,
And men are killed, to put it mild,
For facin' Death too fair.
The coal-ships most are bound for where
Good coal is rulin' high;
The liner's dinner-bugles blare;
She swaggers stately by,
With passengers a-suckin' hard
At pipes and strong cigars:
They seem to know a cattle-yard—
It must be by our spars.

*Pass round that chain! Now, easy! Oh,
What cheerful tasks are these—
A-liftin' dead-'uns from below
And prayin' for a breeze.
God didn't mean that Hell should go
A-howlin' on His seas.*

THE CATTLE-BOATS.

*FOUR weeks from Monte Video,
And sights that few men sees—
A-prayin' that the clouds will blow
A healthy, spankin' breeze;
With glass a-showin', down below,
A hundred odd degrees.*

When God made out His shippin'-notes
And sent this world to sea,
He must have missed the cattle-boats
And cattle-men like me.
He meant all farms to be ashore,
Not sailin' full and by,
With chokin' bullocks sweatin' gore
And layin' down to die.
He didn't authorise that hells
Should wander on His seas,
A-liftin' to the swingin' swells—
Such reekin' hells as these,
That squatter out and tumble in
To be the shippers' gain,
With cattle-keepers spoutin' sin,
And cattle mad with pain.

*The sharks they slink around our flanks—
The sharks are very wise;
And oh! they love the cattle-tanks
And every beast that dies.*

We ships 'em at the River Plate,
And from the States they come,
With bleedin' horns and starin' hate—
Thank God, the brutes are dumb!
We rig up win's'ls so's to try
And purify the air;

Whizz! Wh-a-ang! Smoke-and-thunder!

We'll call some other day.

The earth flies up as the shell rips under,

But steadily, through the smoke and thunder,

We're bringing the guns away.

"Sit-up-cool-on-the-limber!"

Oh! hear those bullets say!

Smacking aloud on the steel and timber.

As scornfully—*Bump! Bump! Bump!* on the limber,

We're bringing the guns away.

Trot! with tightened traces.

We wish we could delay,

And give those beggars some dirt in their faces.

But sullenly—*Trot! Trot!—WATCH THOSE TRACES!*

We're bringing the guns away.

Trot! Trot! Jingle! Jingle!

The hoofs and the harness say—

Rhythmically they blend and mingle,

And steady and slow with our blood a-tingle—

Steadily—*Trot! Trot! Clank! Clank! Jingle!*

We're bringing the guns away.

BRINGING THE GUNS AWAY.

*T*ROT! Trot! Jingle! Jingle!
The things the bullets say
Make every heart here leap and tingle,
As steadily—Trot! Trot! Jingle! Jingle!
We're bringing the guns away.

Trot! Trot! Trot!—Jog-jogging!
They're shelling us bright and gay.
We came up here with drivers flogging,
But steadily—Trot! Trot! Trot! Jog-jogging!
We're bringing the guns away.

Clank! Clank! Clatter! Rattle!
The limbers roll and sway.
A "feint" and retreat are a part of battle,
So steadily—Clank! Clank! Rattle! Rattle!
We're bringing the guns away.

Trot! Trot! Jingle! Jingle!
They think we're scared to stay,
And it's easy to die when a fellow's single,
So sulkily—Trot! Trot! Jingle! Jingle!
We're bringing the guns away.

Click! Clock! Grumble! Grumble!
Who cares what the bullets say?
In column of route we roll and rumble,
And steadily—Click! Clock! Grumble! Grumble!
We're bringing the guns away.

The wide sea is his home,
And he knows its darkest place,
Down where no eddies foam
Nor laughing rollers race.
The long years come and go,
And the weaker creatures die;
Yet still does the big whale blow
His plume of vapor high.

He is a king in truth,
Rolling along at ease,
Ponderous, huge, uncouth,
Travelled in long degrees.
Northward he goes, by need
And his primal instincts drawn,
And he and his cows will feed
Near the lone Three Kings at dawn.

THE OLD BULL.

HE takes his way through the deep—
A grim iconoclast;
His great flukes thrash and sweep—
His breath is a whistling blast.
Swerving never—due north
He leads his trusting cows,
And his snout churns snowy froth
Like foam at a liner's bows.

He is a king indeed,
Rolling through azure seas,
Tried in valor and speed,
Travelled in long degrees.
By the headlands high he goes,
In the narrow strait he sounds,
And the plume of spray he blows
Is a "tally-ho!" to the hounds.

The long-drawn whaling call
Rings out as it rang of yore;
The long oars toss and fall,
But the whales have moved off shore—
Grown weary through direst need,
From the harbor they've withdrawn—
The bull and his cows will feed
By the lone Three Kings at dawn.

He knows the beat of the screws
And shuns the hurrying prow;
Such strange fish might amuse
Young and innocent cows;
But he is a whale who knows—
A guide and their Overlord,
So, wherever he goes,
They follow with one accord.

They march to the North and Westward,
And, shuddering to their blast,
The fisherman's wife clasps breastward
Her child, till their song has passed.
The crash of their music deadens
The cry of a mangled foe,
And ever a blood-trail reddens
The path where the Night-Waves go
To pillage and loot and ravage,
And scream at a harbor-light—
For cruel are they, and savage,
Yet beautiful in their might.

I saw a light to the Nor'ward—
Full white like the Star of Day,
But Waves of the Night leaped forward
And threatened the star away.
I heard a song to the South'ard—
But, lifting their grey manes old,
The Wolves of the Darkness smother'd
Its tune as their ranks patrolled
The seas in their search for plunder—
A murderous, ruthless crew;
They march with their shields a-thunder
And howl as the night-wolves do.

The moon swings high in her season,
To shine on a sea of pearls
That croons, with a summer breeze on
Its bosom, the songs of girls—
Songs sweet to the hearts that cherish
A passion that thralls and numbs—
Night goes, and the moon-songs perish,
Yet never a Night-Wave comes.
But when in the deep Pelorus,
The tides through the darkness surge,
They come with their moaning chorus—
A song that is half a dirge.

NIGHT WAVES.

*THE waves of the Dawn sweep creaming
Thrilled thro' with a golden song;
The waves of the Noon lie dreaming
The shimmering coasts along;
And swift in the black Pelorus
The tides thro' the rock-race flow:
But wild is the wailing chorus
That sounds where the Night-Waves go.*

The waves of the Dawn are lovers
A-kiss as they swing and roll;
But waves of the night are rovers
That come to our ports for toll—
Off-shore where the channel blackens
They tramp, and I watch them go,
And never their quickstep slackens,
And never a wave swings slow :
To Nor'ward their army reaches,
And under the Western stars
It foams on the silver beaches,
And staggers across the bars.

The bays that were darkly sleeping
Churn white when the Night-Waves pass
A-roar, with their vanguard leaping
And Death in their close-packed mass.
The tread of the burdened bearers—
The grief of the march in Saul—
Black robes and the pale-faced wearers—
A coffin—a dead-black pall—
I see, and hear, and I fear them—
These songs that the Ocean's Soul
Wails out, that the men who hear them
May know that the Night-Waves roll.

THE BIG BULL-YANK.

WHEN they take the Gov'ment engines off
At the end of the Gov'ment road,
You'll hear a Baldwin's wheezy cough
As they back her down to the load.
For this is the stretch where the mail-trains race
For fifty miles and more,
Making up time, which the tardy pace
On the hills has lost before.
They couple her on, with a time-worn jest,
Where the Longburn block-bells call,
And the big Bull-Yank will do her best
When they let the signal fall.

Now, hear the sound of her hard exhaust,
As her weight leans on the train,
There's a heavy roar when the bridge is crossed,
And she is free on the plain.
The long train thrills to her throbbing beat,
And sways to her gathering speed.
Ah, there is something in speed that's sweet
As a flagon of flowing mead.
The world seems kinder; no wind blows cold
'Neath the heaven's azure dome,
When the big Bull-Yank has taken hold,
And we are galloping home.

Where the flax-leaves gleam in the autumn sun
You can hear the great wheels romp.
She's breaking her heart for a record run
By Tokomaru swamp—
Straining and rolling, and throwing stars
To the call of her double chime.

*Red-lipped are the waves foretelling
The march of the ranks of Day;
And warm are the Noon-Waves swelling
To burst on the reefs in spray;
But fierce where the storm-wrack blackens,
The hosts of the Night-Waves go,
And never their quickstep slackens,
And never a wave swings slow.*

THE OFFICER'S WIFE.

HE was a man beloved of men,
She was a woman's queen.
And he rode away down the leafy glen
Where the sunlight threw a sheen
On scarlet tunic and gilded braid—
On polished steel and brass.
A gallant sight his company made
As she watched them march and pass.

He waved farewell as he rode away,
And she smiled, love in her eyes.
Every footbeat seemed to say
"Cry out! If he heard your cries
He would stay with you instead. Mayhap
You will never see him again."
Stern, to the kettledrum's rhythmic tap
Went he and his sturdy men.

Up the hill, past the little brook,
The soldiers swayed and swung.
He turned his eyes for a last long look,
And her eyes were a song unsung.
Her sister circled an arm in hers,
For her face grew ghastly white—
Over the hill went the flash of spurs
And bit-bars gleaming bright.

Like one lithe body the company went
Lifting at every stride;
And it took her heart with it caged and pent
In the man who rode at the side.

Ah! there is life in the rushing cars,
And the clamor of wheels is rhyme.
You'll never feel the check of a brake,
And many a tale is told
How stout curves shudder and bridges shake
When the big Bull-Yank takes hold.

Mile upon mile she will race and haul,
And the townships flitting by
Will hear the boast in her tuneful call
That tells that her speed is high.
You'll feel her galloping round the curves,
Rolling down on her springs,
And the cars will follow in giddy swerves,
Like hurrying, hunted things.
Her black smoke tells of a fire hard-coaled—
They're driving her all they know,
For I heard it whispered when she took hold
They had settled to let her go.

When they run the Gov'ment engines back
To their work on the Gov'ment road,
A Baldwin splutters along the track
To be coupled on to the load,
To the sound of a laugh and a careless jest
Where the Longburn block-bell calls,
And the big Bull-Yank will swell her chest
When the rigid signal falls.
And over the metals, hard and cold,
By Tokomaru swamp,
She'll sing a song that is never old
While her thundering drivers romp;
And you'll never feel a brake-shoe bite,
Or the gaping buffers jar,
When the big Bull-Yank has got you tight
At the end of her coupling-bar.

THE CABLE-SHIP.

SHE cleared the Customs at Singapore,
Her destination "Blank,"
With a dip of her flag to the man-o'-war,
And a mile of line in her tank.
Her goal was a spot in the Tasman Sea,
That only the sextants show,
And she shook her head like a horse set free
From tedious tasks, and slow.

Down where the fangs of the Barrier gleam
Snow-white 'neath the Queensland sun,
She hurried under a head of steam
On her long and urgent run.
The coastal steamers swinging past,
Scarcely a day from port,
Dipped the company's flag at the mast
To her brief request, "Report."

The Union liner from Sydney Town,
Heading for Cape Farewell,
Saw her lights as the fog came down,
And heard her clanging bell,
And the moan of her whistle for long enough,
As she groped in the bed of the sea,
Saying, in accents hoarse and gruff,
"Ahoy! Stand clear of me."

Three hundred fathoms below her keel
Was a break in the copper bands,
And she lay to wallow, and pry and feel
For the drawn and fractured strands,
With the slow, resistless, lunging swell
Baulking her good intent,
Down where the great sea monsters dwell
Her groping fingers went.

At every step her heart went too,
Over the hill and down—
Down to the water that lay so blue,
Where the troopship lay by the town.

Some of her friends said, "Oh, 'tis strange
How little she cares." Oh, fools!
How little the shadows shift and change
On the deep, dark, hidden pools!
Her whole soul went with his squad of men,
Following him away,
And they knew the strength of her goodness when
They looked in his eyes of grey.

He was a man beloved of men,
She is a woman's queen,
And there is a winding leafy glen,
And the lonely years between.
On that sunny day her heart went too
Over the hill and down—
Down where the water lies so blue
And the steamers lie by the town.

PENCARROW LIGHT.

(The Oldest Light on the New Zealand Coast.)

PALLISER flashes her double stars,
Campbell Light spins and spins;
The Brothers, with glittering scimitars,
Stab till the grim night grins.
Wairau Light glows in the dark, a gem
Of warmer and softer rays—
And Pencarrow Light is the King of them,
Set on a cliff to blaze.

Calling the ships from the angry south,
“Hither, come hither, and rest
Here, where I stand at the harbor's mouth”—
Calling them in from the west.
Steady and white I have seen it burn,
Many a mile at sea—
Never a flicker or flash or turn,
Steady as steady could be.

Rosy, at sunset, the tall tower stands
With lamps set, pallid, on high—
How many women, with trembling hands,
Have wept as that light slipped by?
And many a man, with aching throat,
Has seen Pencarrow blaze,
As he sailed away in the Sydney boat
To follow the wide world-ways.

Pencarrow Light! And we'll see our homes,
And the circling town-lights soon—
Follow the leading light on Somes',
Grown small in the light of the moon.

First she lifted the end from La Perouse,
Then the line from Cable Bay,
And gladdened her heart with belated news
'Ere she went on her lonely way—
East or west, or south or north,
Where the slender cables lie,
To a spot that is only a fleck of froth,
With nothing to know it by.

In the midst of hurrying seas that leap,
She toils with her decks a-flood,
Prying down in the waters deep
Where the cable lies in the mud,
And steamers veer from a rigid course,
When, loud and angrily,
Her whistle hails them in accents hoarse :
“ Ahoy ! Stand clear of me ! ”

THE NIGHT-RELIEF.

HAVE you never heard the Night-Relief
Marching along the lonely coasts—
Waves that mourn for mermaids' grief,
Their pathway crossed by pallid ghosts?
At every port, with a challenge deep,
They take and they leave a squadron white
To guard the bars while the steamers sleep,
To keep them safe from the waves of night.
At all the ports are the White Patrols,
And the Night-Relief must make the rounds,
Where the channel-bell on a sandbank tolls;
Where the hills drop sheer to the silent sounds,
Have you never heard the Night-Relief—
Its tramping march—its challenge brief?

'Neath the quiet moon the White Patrols
Have swaggered and swung along the bar
That lies between the wide-set moles,
Where the drowsy, crimson port lights are.
There is never a breeze since the sun went down.
Seaward away the sea is glass,
With only a ripple towards the town
Where the tugs that toil in the darkness pass;
No wavelets beat on the silver sand.
Ashore there is scarce a fluttering leaf,
Till a slow wind blows on the heated land,
Bringing the sound of the Night-Relief,
Marching in harness black and green,
To ask of the guards what they have seen.

The White Patrols that challenge them
Hear the countersign, and reply
"Never was such a diadem
On the brows of night as burns in the sky.

Pencarrow Light ! Set proud and lone,
Where the sea and the grim rocks meet—
Where the fierce sou'-easters thrash and moan,
And the steam propellers beat.

Beckoning ships from the north and east,
"Come and be safe near me !"
Showering light on the greatest and least,
Steady as steady can be.
Dazzling white to the craft inshore,
A star to the distant ships ;
And the hungry rollers and rocks that roar
Curse it with angry lips.

Palliser flashes her starry twins,
The Brothers reel recklessly round ;
Campbell Light sits in the dark and spins,
Wairau burns close to the ground.
Cook Strait Light !—Each one is a gem
To lighten the nights' black ways ;
And Pencarrow Light is the King of them,
Set on a cliff to blaze.

THE FLEET.

THEY swaggered over the heaving sea--
Grim battleships, lords of the ocean,
With halyards quivering listlessly
To the swing of their lazy motion.
Destroyers awaited their will, abeam—
Fast cruisers made reconnoitre,
But the battleships came under easy steam,
As stately elephants loiter.

A signal flew from the flagship's yard—
A cruiser hurried off nor'ard,
And another came homeward, racing hard,
With white foam boiling for'ard.
A signal gleamed from the flagship's mast,
She fumed and fretted and ordered,
And destroyers and cruisers, lean and fast,
Sped over the sea, white-bordered.

A destroyer came racing in from the east—
Funnels blistered and smoking—
Her seething wake was all a-yeast,
And her stokers almost choking.
“The enemy fourteen miles away!”
That was her urgent message,
And, heaving in the swell, she lay
Hot from her hasty passage.

Soon the enemy's thin smoke showed—
Then the spars and the funnels.
Maybe the engineers' hearts glowed
Down in the dark shaft-tunnels;
Maybe the stokers thought of home,
Or longed to stand forth midst the crashing.

Scarcely a sound have we heard since dusk,
Nor has aught stirred since long ago
When a black-fish blew with a scent of musk,
And a whistle, such as the steamers blow." . . .
The sentries change, and the new-set guard
Are warned to remember the thing they saw
As they marched along—a ship held hard
Struggling still, in the Night-Waves' maw;
Then the Night-Relief, with a last "good-night,"
Leaves the port to the watchmen white.

A gale has blown since the hour of noon,
And now that the cloak of night has come
In the streets of the quiet town, leaf-strewn,
Are only men who hurry home;
But out on the bar a dreadful fight
Is raging between Night-Waves that leap
And the cheery, sturdy watchmen white
Who drive them back with swinging sweep—
Parrying lunge and reckless charge
With valor born of their firm belief
That somewhere out on the ocean's marge
Is coming the welcome Night-Relief—
All black and green their strong ranks roll
To double the ranks of the White Patrol.

Have you never heard the Night-Relief
Marching along the silent coasts,
When there's scarce a breeze to stir a leaf
Of the creepers on the verandah-posts?
There's never a silver shoulder-strap,
Or a band of gold in their grim array;
No drums to clatter, and throb, and tap—
No bugles blown as they march away,
On their rounds to relieve the White Patrols.
Hear the challenge! The gruff reply!
The channel-bell at its moorings tolls,
Rocked in their wash as they swagger by,
Marching in harness black and green,
To ask of the guards what they have seen.

GREASIN'.

I CAN hear the stokers singin'
As they give the boilers coal,
And the big swell sets her swingin'
With a lazy, pitchin' roll.
There's a crazy steam-pump groanin'
'Cos the valves are cut and worn,
And a shaftin'-bearin' moanin'
In the tunnel all forlorn.
I can feel the shaftin' bucklin'
When she settles aft and roars,
And the sweatin' cranks are chucklin'
And a-racin' when she soars.
Every slow eccentric's winkin',
Makin' pleasure of its toil;
And, a-liftin' and a-sinkin',
Every darned thing's shoutin' "Oil!"

*And I'm oilin', oilin', oilin',
In a temp'rature like hell,
With the heated oil a-smokin'
Till you feel's if you are chokin'
And the knockin' guide-bars tell,
That I've got to keep on toilin'
Till God rings His knock-off bell.*

There's a cool wind on the water
(Or there was an hour ago),
And the moonlight made me sorter
Want to take life pretty slow;
And her funnel, it was swayin'
'Thwart the twinklin' stars aloft,
And I heard the water playin'
Round her transom, sweet and soft.

Then the restless rollers topped with foam
Glowed red in the sunlight flashing.

* * * * *

There had been more work for surgeon and priest
Had the range been something shorter ;
But the enemy edged away to the east
As night came down on the water.
Signals gleamed at the flagship's mast—
She fumed and fretted and ordered ;
And destroyers and cruisers, lean and fast,
Sped over the sea, star-bordered.

As they raced away in foam and spray,
The battleships swaggered after,
Chaffing each other for deeds in the fray,
Laughing guttural laughter.
Waves flogged them ahead, astern and abeam—
Great billows lifting and arching ;
But they came through under easy steam
Like lordly, lounging elephants marching.

I can hear the firemen slangin'
Glarin' fires and singin' steam,
And the furnace-doors are bangin',
And I have no time to dream.
Like gods' arms the rods are grippin'
And a-heavin' in their pride,
And I hear the screw-blades rippin'
And a-thunderin' outside.
Oh ! the toll the owners levy
Is a heavy one indeed,
And the hand of God is heavy
When you've drifted from your creed.
Yet through all the engines' moanin',
Seems to me there comes a cry :
" Life would know less grief and groanin'
If the oil-cups wasn't dry."

*And I ponder as I'm greasin'
On the friction that there is—
Glad to-days and sad to-morrows,
Oh ! the grief of one man's sorrows,
And the joy of one man's bliss—
Life's machinery wants some oilin'—
Such as laughter and a kiss.*

It has made me think, and wonder
Why we've got to toil below
With this ceaseless, rollin' thunder,
Thumpin', thumpin', blow on blow.
If 'twas only for a season,
On and off, I wouldn't mind,
'Stead of everlastin' greasin'
To this everlastin' grind.

*But I'm oilin', oilin', oilin',
And I'll keep them good and fast.
For a man can't change his labor—
P'raps his job wont fit his neighbor—
And he cannot change his past.
And the world is meant to toil in,
And the Future's very vast.*

Oh! the skipper looks a daisy
In his tropic uniform,
And the officers get lazy
When the atmosphere gets warm;
And the trimmer's work is tryin'
And the firemen curse the glare;
But they ain't exactly fryin',
They *do* get a bit o' air.
The salooners *they* seem happy
With their music and their girls
That has eyes so bright and snappy,
And a smile all deep-sea pearls.
But I guess they ain't no bloomin'
Better off than us below,
Where the heavy cranks swing boomin'
Thunderous and dull and slow.

*Oh! we're greasin', greasin', greasin',
But there's hearts above I know,
That's as bitter and as burnin',
And as full of hopeless yearnin'
As the hearts that beat below;
And they know no rest or easin',
Like them tail-rods swingin' so.*

"What do you think?" you asked again,
Straightening up some curls.
I said, "I think that the pods are men,
And the peas are pretty girls.
The pods are only to shield the peas,
Lest the weather their beauty mar,"
And I brushed the ash that fell on your knees
From the end of your dad's cigar.

You were shelling the peas with a nimble thumb,
And I wanted to see your eyes,
But you turned them down and the smiles *would*
come,
As you said (you were pretty and wise):
"Yet each pea-pod shields several peas—
May a man love several maids?"
The rooster winked as he lounged at ease,
With his harem all colours and shades.

And then it seemed that we rode on a star,
Right into the eyes of the breeze.
A duck was chewing your dad's cigar,
And the harem was eating the peas.
"Do you think this is right?" you whispered,
and I
Made answer, your hair in my eyes,
"Whether it's right or wrong, till I die
I reckon I'll stick to my prize."

I wonder now did you care at all—
I didn't take long to forget—
Love blows for each man one clarion call,
And I've never heard mine yet;
But sometimes at night when the evening star
Gleams bright and full thro' the trees,
I sit on the steps with the door ajar,
Watching you shell the peas.

SHELLING PEAS.

WE sat on the steps with the door ajar—
A blue dish on your knees.
I was smoking your dad's cigar,
And you were shelling peas—
Shelling them out with a nimble thumb—
And glancing from downcast eyes.
And I felt clumsy, and big and dumb,
And you were little and wise.

You said, "When a man is married, I think,
They should give him a weekly fling."
And a rooster tipped me a knowing wink,
With a flap of his lordly wing.
You threw him some shells, and you raised your
eyes;
I fumbled to strike a light,
Because you were pretty and little and wise,
And your throat was dazzling white.

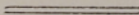
"What do you think?" you, laughing, said.
I answered, "Dashed if I know."
And the family rooster raised his head
And crowed a sceptical crow.
A patch of cigar-ash soiled your dress;
I brushed it, soft, from your knees,
For I was smoking in idleness,
And you were shelling peas.

And I watched your delicate fingers go
At their swift and measured stride;
The peas fell into the dish below,
And the pods were dropped outside.
The peas were little and round and good—
The pods were tarnished and bad,
And I started off in a thinking mood—
A stupid habit I had.

Through the sweeping seas she clove a track
Into the blinding gloom—
Stumpy-funnelled, sinister, black—
She was the Spirit of Doom.
And the keen spray hailed on her turtle-back,
To the throb of her engine-room.

* * * * *

Back to our forts the destroyer crept,
As the dawn rushed in aflame ;
Her stacks were blistered, her decks sea-swept,
But she licked her lips as she came ;
And she took her place, where her comrades slept,
Like a hound that had killed its game.



THE DESTROYER.

SHE raced away down the sunset track,
Beyond the mines and the boom;
The spray flashed red on her turtle-back
To the whirr of her engine-room.
Her funnels spouted their smoke-plumes black—
She looked the spirit of doom.

Along her sides the wavelets hissed.
As she opened out her speed,
They fell astern to snarl and twist,
And writhe in her wake and bleed.
Hers was a force no seas resist,
And she gave them little heed.

Away in the west the red sun sank
To drown in the heaving flood;
And fast—with never a noisy crank
Or piston-rod a-thud,
Her stern set low in the high wave-bank—
She swam on a sea of blood.

Into the night, when the sun had gone,
The fast destroyer flew,
And never a side-light gleamed or shone,
As the pale stars grew and grew.
What errand grim did she speed upon?
Only her captain knew.

When the leaves of the autumn are falling and
yellowing

We hear the wild song of the bullying, bellowing
Wind.

It leaps from its lair at a pace that is passionate,
And rends the soft clouds that have aided to fashion
it—

Thrashing them fiercely, as slaves who have
sinned,

With its many-lashed thong,

And yelling a song—

A song that is nothing but wind.

This is the song of the galloping, hurrying,
Gusty, and dusty, and whirling, and worrying
Wind.

Over the hills it comes laughing and rollicking,
Yelling, and swooping, and flying, and frolicking,
Shaking the fences so solidly pinned,

And shrieking a song

As it gallops along—

A terrible song that is wind.

A SONG OF WIND.

HARK to the song of the scattering, scurrying,
Blustering, bullying, bellowing, hurrying
Wind!

Over the hills it comes, laughing and rollicking,
Curling and whirling, flying and frolicking,
Spinning the clouds that are scattered and
thinned,
And shouting a song
As it gallops along—
A song that is nothing but wind.

Waking the willows that hang their leaves listlessly,
Bending the poplars it roars on resistlessly—
Wind!

In the long grass on the slopes, as it passes, it
Billows and waves and scatters and masses it,
Shaking the fences so solidly pinned,
And howling a song
That is noisy and strong—
A song that is nothing but wind.

Down the long roadway it sends the leaves
fluttering,
Turns the old folk about, angry and stuttering,
“W-w-wind!”

Clasping the laughing girls lightly and easily
It plays with the lifted skirt gaily and breezily,
Scorning all laws in man's ears ever dinned,
And whispers a song
That is risqué and wrong—
A song that is nothing but wind.

BEFORE WE GO.

OUT on her siding
Our engine stands,
With brake-pump sliding
And hissing glands.
We've forty waggons
To haul to-night—
So fill the flagons
All foaming white.
Ere tunnels smother
And hot fires glow,
We'll have another
Before we go.

Drink

To the clink

Of the glasses, oh!

(The Big Tank's grumbling out in the yard.)

Here's

To the dears

That we used to know.

Love is easy tho' Life be hard,

And the road to Wellington's cinder-starr'd.

We are the toilers
Who drive the loads—
Belting the boilers
On mountain roads.
Number Eleven's
A hog to fire—
A harp and heaven's
What we require—
And Four's the mother
Of all that's slow;
So have another
Before we go.

YANKEE BILL.

SHE was a-layin' a record down;
Her shafts was singin' a reckless air.
From Honolu' to Auckland town
She was leggin' it out like a frightened hare.

And Yankee Bill was loafin' round,
Oilin' here and greasin' there,
When we heard the starboard engine pound,
And stopped her quick with her valves a-blare.

Yankee Bill was lyin' down,
The thrust-grease stainin' his ginger hair,
And you could have bought him for half-a-crown—
He was dead as a man could be, I'll swear.

His trousers caught as the shaft flew round,
And they wasn't the sort of stuff to tear.
His head bumped twice with a funny sound—
It gave the "third" a bit of a scare;

For she was a-layin' a record down,
And there wasn't time for a big repair—
From Honolu' to Auckland town
She legged it out like a hunted hare.

There's other greasers loafin' round,
Oilin' here and greasin' there,
And when Bill's wanted he'll be found
Fathoms deep; *and Bill don't care!*

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Drink,
With a wink,
To the sea-side girls!
(We'll flare the furnace as we go by.)
Here's
To the dears
And their saucy curls—
Lip of scarlet and sea-blue eye
(And the road to Wellington's hot and dry).

We've forty waggons
To haul to-night,
So fill the flagons—
Wet and white.
The Bull-Yank's blowing
To say the load
Is ours for the towing
On the long hill road.
The Tank's her brother,
And not too slow—
We'll have another,
And then we'll go.
Now,
"Here's how!"
"May you never know,"
A greasy rail or a silly guard.
Drink
To the clink
Of the glasses, oh!
Then tramp to the engine out in the yard,
And the road to Wellington's cinder-starr'd.

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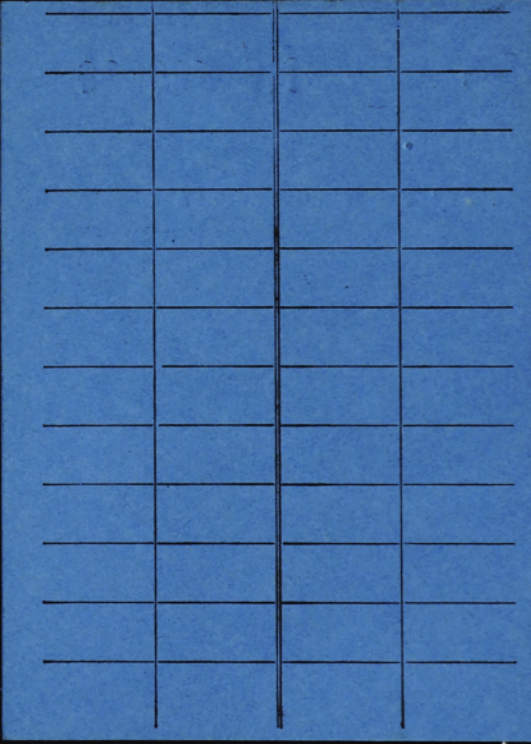
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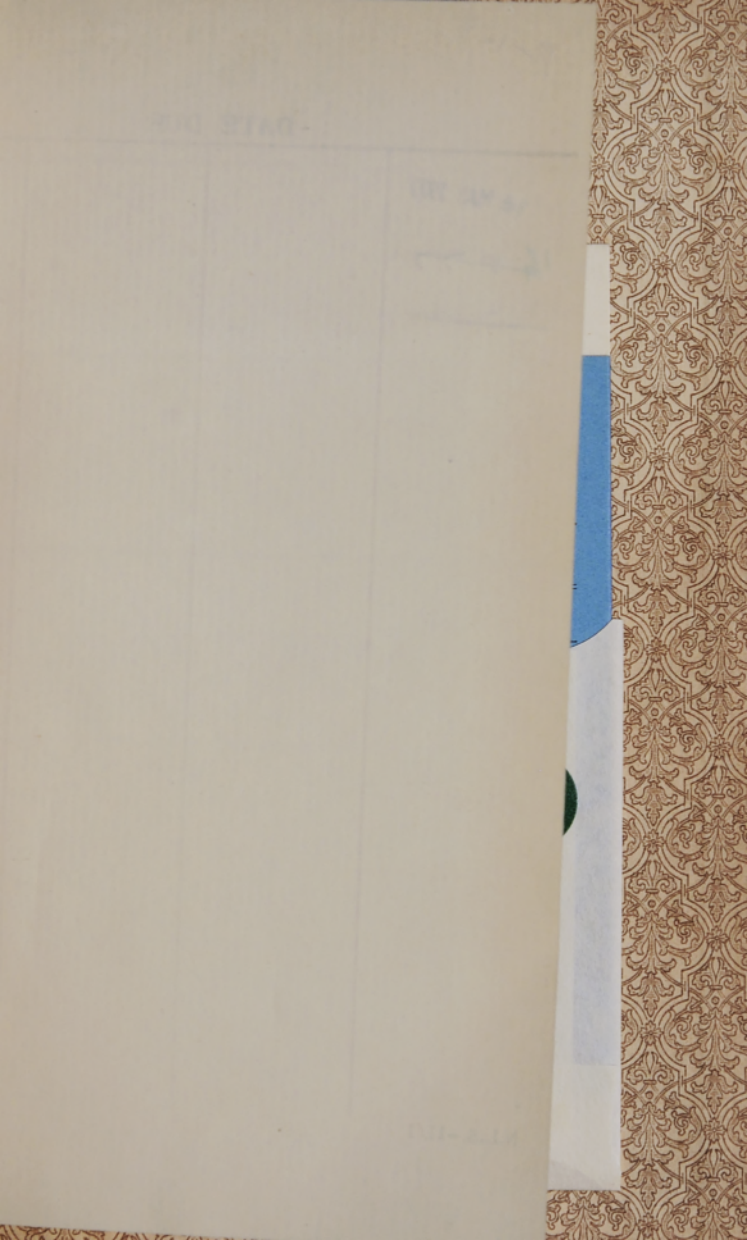
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