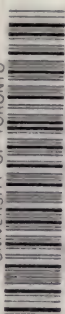


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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A COUNTRY MUSE

*First Edition of 1000 copies
published by DAVID NUTT,
in the Strand, December 1892*

*This Edition contains fifteen
Poems which did not appear
in the above.*

A COUNTRY MUSE

BY

NORMAN GALE

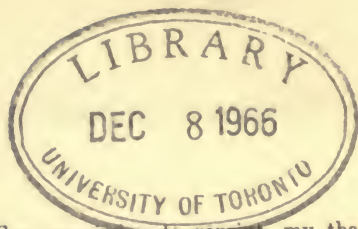
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THE APOLOGY

CHIDE not if here you haply find
The rough romance of country love ;
I sing as well the brook and wind,
The green below, the blue above.

Here shall you read of spreading cress,
The velvet of the sparrow's neck ;
Sometimes shall glance the glowing tress,
And Laura's snow without a speck ;

The crab that sets the mouth awry,
The chestnut with its domes of pink ;
The splendid palace of the sky,
The pool where drowsy cattle drink ;

A COUNTRY MUSE

The stack where Colin hides to catch
The milkmaid with her beaded load ;
The singing lark, a poet's match,
That travels up the great blue road ;

The cherry whence the blackbird bold
Steals ruby mouthfuls at his ease ;
The glory of laburnum gold,
The valiant piping of the breeze ;—

All, all are here. The rustic Muse
Shall sing the pansy and the thrush ;
Ah, chide not if she sometimes choose
The country love, the country blush !

A COUNTRY MUSE

ONLY ROSES

ONLY roses—only bring
Roses for that truest Spring
When I pass the final fret,
Skies and birds and loves forget.

Very weary are my feet
Walking up the deathward street :
Uncomplainingly I wend
Till I find the quiet Friend.

In that starlit mound shall rest
Weary head and wearier breast ;
Brother of the mole and mouse
I shall sleep in Nature's house.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Only roses—if you must
Scatter blossoms on my dust—
Only dying roses strew
Wet with gentle tears, for dew.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A CHILD OF LONELINESS

THE pith of faith is gone. And as there lie
Along the desert shanks of lions slain,
So in this world whose weeds are grown so high,
Half-hid, half-seen, Faith moulders on the plain !
Tenderly take the priceless, wondrous bones,
And wend away from all that plucks thy dress,
And with a few chance boughs or scattered stones
Build up thine altar, Child of loneliness.

The Master is not only in the court
Where doves are sold and money-changers cry ;
Nor will He leave the country-side untaught
If ears be open as he passes by :

A COUNTRY MUSE

In secret paths that thread the forest-land
He waits to heal thee and divinely bless ;
While from the hill with voice and waving hand
The Shepherd calls thee, Child of loneliness.

He pours in oil and wine to soothe thy wound,
He fills thy heart with secret sympathies ;
Nowhere so barren is thy patch of ground,
Nowhere so fruitless are thy cherry trees,
But He will leave the lustre of a shrine,
But He will hasten at thy cry of stress,
And make thy burden His, His comfort thine,
His face to smile, thou Child of loneliness.

But be thou faithful to thine altar set
Within the temple of the stilly glade,
For Christ is there, nor will His heart forget
The striving of thy soul. Be not afraid !

A COUNTRY MUSE

O priest and people mingled into one,
Within thy green cathedral-aisles no less
He stands above thee when, thy prayer begun,
Thou callest Him, O Child of loneliness.

'Tis sweet where every downy throat's a well
Of song itself to worship in the grass,
Thine altar's base fast-founded on a swell
Anear a glade where elms and beeches mass :
There is a space for breath, and there, content,
If aught should be forgiven, kneel, confess ;
Over thy head the boundless firmament,
God's love, God's wisdom, Child of loneliness.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A GIPSY FUNERAL

It was a woodland Warwick lane
Where blackthorn housed the finch's stave ;
There came a Gipsy group that bore
An infant to the grave.

In front of all the father strode,
The little case beneath his arm ;
Fast down his sun-tann'd cheeks there rolled
The teardrops salt and warm.

His neck a scarlet kerchief bound,
His chieftain's head was duly bare ;
His heart was in the box of deal
With baby lips and hair.

A COUNTRY MUSE

The mother went with tearless eyes,
One hand upon the coffin-lid ;
The other clutched the breast that poured
Sweet help when baby bid.

A yellowhammer flew before
In golden jaunts, securely fleet ;
None watched the living topaz fly
Along the leafy street.

O that those times had come again
When man, possessing more of worth,
Had God for closer neighbour here,
And prophets on the earth !

Alas, that none could stretch himself
Upon the perished Gipsy child !
No helper watch the father smile
As once the Widow smiled !

A COUNTRY MUSE

Death pushes to the bed of kings,
And stands betwixt the couch and lamp;
He stays the Maid of Honour's heart,
He shakes the Gipsies' camp!

A COUNTRY MUSE

MY COUNTRY LOVE

If you passed her in your city
You would call her badly dressed,
But the faded homespun covers
Such a heart in such a breast !
True, her rosy face is freckled
By the sun's abundant flame,
But she's mine with all her failings,
And I love her just the same.

If her hands are red they grapple
To my hands with splendid strength,
For she's mine, all mine's the beauty
Of her straight and lovely length !

A COUNTRY MUSE

True, her hose be thick and homely
And her speech is homely, too ;
But she's mine ! her rarest charm is
She's for me, and not for you !

A COUNTRY MUSE

THE INVITATION

COME, thrushes, blackcaps, redpolls, all

To eat my Laura's bounty !

There's not a sweetheart treats you so

In all this leafy County :

Yes, sparrows too ! for God forbid

That here in bloom and grasses

My Love and I should rank you birds

In low and upper classes !

Both large and little, russet, bright,

I call at Laura's asking ;

And we shall watch you at your feast

Upon the greensward basking :

A COUNTRY MUSE

But this must first be understood
By stronger beaks most fully—
All sweet content ! and, blackbird, Sir,
Remember not to bully !

Look down these lovely cherry-aisles
At fruit by bills unfretted,
A million globes of red and white
The gardener closely netted ;
For, pirates of the air, your troops
To storm the orchard muster,
And woe betide the ripest fruit,
And woe the scarlet cluster !

My sweetheart pressed me yesterday
To give you of our plenty ;
She begged one glowing tree for you
From out this line of twenty ;

A COUNTRY MUSE

O birds, her cherry mouth more fair
Than ever painter figured,
Could make me prodigal of gold
Had I been born a niggard !

God gave me with a willing hand
A share of sky and mountain,
And time to idle in the grass
And dream beside the fountain :
He gave me angels for my house,
A wife, a rosy darling—
I pay my tithe to Him through you,
O linnet, finch and starling !

As statues in a town are draped
Before their great unveiling,
So did we net this cherry-tree
Before your bills' assailing :

A COUNTRY MUSE

And Laura's is the lovely hand
That frees her shining bounty ;
Fall to, O birds ! and praise her name
Through all this leafy County !

A COUNTRY MUSE

LONGING

THE maid I sing
Is human Spring!
My joy and rest
Are in her breast.

She comes and beams
On me in dreams ;
But never gives
The kiss that lives.

Yet God He knows
My longing grows,
As grey hairs come,
For babe and home.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A THIEF

THERE goes Love across the meadow,
And I know his errand sweet ;
Hark ! the God is softly singing
To the music of his feet ;
For he speeds to kiss Clarinda
As she milks the mottled kine ;
O the thief, to steal before me
To the mouth that's only mine !

A COUNTRY MUSE

THE COUNTRY FAITH

HERE in the country's heart
Where the grass is green
Life is the same sweet life
As it e'er hath been.

Trust in a God still lives,
And the bell at morn
Floats with a thought of God
O'er the rising corn.

God comes down in the rain,
And the crop grows tall—
This is the country faith,
And the best of all !

A COUNTRY MUSE

A DEAD FRIEND

It hardly seems that he is dead,
So strange it is that we are here
Beneath this great blue shell of sky
With apple-bloom and pear :
It scarce seems true that we can note
The bursting rosebud's edge of flame,
Or watch the blackbird's swelling throat
While he is but a name.

No more the chaffinch at his step
Pipes suddenly her shrill surprise,
For in an ecstasy of sleep
Unconsciously he lies,

A COUNTRY MUSE

Not knowing that the sweet brown lark
From off her bosom's feathery lace
Shakes down the dewdrop in her flight
To fall upon his face.

A COUNTRY MUSE

THE SHADED POOL

A LAUGHING knot of village maids
Goes gaily tripping to the brook,
For water-nymphs they mean to be,
And seek some still, secluded nook.
Here Laura goes, my own delight,
And Colin's love, the madcap Jane,
And half a score of goddesses
Trip over daisies in the plain :
Already now they loose their hair
And peep from out the tangled gold,
Or speed the flying foot to reach
The brook that's only summer-cold ;

A COUNTRY MUSE

The lovely locks stream out behind
The shepherdesses on the wing,
And Laura's is the wealth I love,
And Laura's is the gold I sing.

A-row upon the bank they pant,
And all unlace the country shoe ;
Their fingers tug the garter-knots
To loose the hose of varied hue.
The flashing knee at last appears,
The lower curves of youth and grace,
Whereat the maidens' eyes do scan
The mazy thickets of the place.
But who's to see beside the thrush
Upon the wild crab-apple tree ?
Within his branchy haunt he sits—
A very Peeping Tom is he !
Now music bubbles in his throat,

A COUNTRY MUSE

And now he pipes the scene in song—
The virgins slipping from their robes,
The cheated stockings lean and long,
The swift-descending petticoat,
The breasts that heaved because they ran,
The rounded arms, the brilliant limbs,
The pretty necklaces of tan.
Did ever amorous God in Greece,
In search of some young mouth to kiss,
By any river chance upon
A sylvan scene as bright as this?
But though each maid is pure and fair,
For one alone my heart I bring,
And Laura's is the shape I love,
And Laura's is the snow I sing.

And now upon the brook's green brink
A milk-white bevy, lo, they stand,

A COUNTRY MUSE

Half-shy, half-frightened, reaching back
The beauty of a poisoning hand !
How musical their little screams
When ripples kiss their shrinking feet !
And then the brook embraces all
Till gold and white and waters meet !
Within the streamlet's soft cool arms
Delight and love and gracefulness
Sport till a horde of tiny waves
Swamps all the beds of floating cress ;
And on his shining face are seen
Great yellow lilies drifting down
Beyond the ringing apple-tree,
Beyond the empty homespun gown.
Did ever Orpheus with his lute,
When making melody of old,
E'er find a stream in Attica
So ripely full of pink and gold ?

A COUNTRY MUSE

At last they climb the sloping bank
And shake upon the thirsty soil
A treasury of diamond-drops
Not gained by aught of grimy
toil.

Again the garters clasp the hose,
Again the polished knee is hid,
Again the breathless babble tells
What Colin said, what Colin did.
In grace upon the grass they lie
And spread their tresses to the sun,
And rival, musical as they,
The blackbirds' alto shake and run.
Did ever Love, on hunting bent,
Come idly humming through the
hay,
And, to his sudden joyfulness,
Find fairer game at close of day?

A COUNTRY MUSE

Though every maid's a lily-rose,
And meet to sway a sceptred king,
Yet Laura's is the face I love,
And Laura's are the lips I sing.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A BIRD IN THE HAND

Look at this ball of intractable fluff,
Panting and staring with piteous eyes!
What a rebellion of heart! what a ruff
Tickles my hand as the missel-thrush tries,
Pecking my hand with her termagant bill,
How to escape (and I love her, the sweet!)
Back where the clustering oaks on the hill
Climb to the blue with their branches, and
meet!

Nay, polished beak, you are pecking a friend!
Bird of the grassland, you bleed at the wing!
Stay with me, love; in captivity mend
Wrong that was wrought by the boy and his
sling.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Oh for a Priest of the Birds to arise,
Wonderful words on his lips that persuade
Reasoning creatures to leave to the skies
Song at its purest a-throb in the glade!

Bow, woodland heart, to the yoke for a while!
Soon shall the lyrics of wind in the trees
Stir you to pipe in the green forest-aisle,
God send me there with the grass to my
knees!

See, I am stroking my cheek with your breast,
Ah, how the bountiful velvet is fair!
Stay with me here for your healing and rest,
Stay, for I love you, delight of the air!

A COUNTRY MUSE

A SONG

Coward heart, to dream of yielding
When the fray is scarce begun !
'Tis not Spring alone that 's gladdened
By the shining of the sun ;
Late in Autumn's riper days
Love is born—and more, he stays !

What's a sea to Love if Hero
Wait upon the other side ?
Never came a rosebud's beauty
But the guarding thorn was tried !
'Tis when hope seems spent and past
Cupid comes this way at last.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A PRAYER

LET me live in quiet joy,
Simple-hearted as a boy,
Asking alms of vale and fountain,
Begging beauty from the mountain ;
 Quick to answer smiles of God
 Gold and gracious on the sod.

Let me learn your larger speech,
Oak of heaven, breathing beech !
Ye whose lips of foliage shout
Mighty ballads round about,
 While the doves, deserting song,
 In your bosoms listen long.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Wash me, rain, and lave me, dew !

Ah, to grow as pure as you !

Bending bravely to my labour,

God for guide and love for neighbour—

Just a child of star and stream,

Filled with sunshine, touched by dream.

A COUNTRY MUSE

IN THE GLADE

FROM bush to bush I followed her,
A bird that piped and flew beyond,
I saw the little branches stir,
I saw her shadow in the pond ;

And still she lured me to the wood
With cunning notes so round and ripe ;
I followed in a dreamy mood
This feathered Orpheus and her pipe.

We passed a slope where cowslips shook
Their yellow blossoms in the breeze ;
We passed the shallows of the brook,
And reached the temple of the trees :

A COUNTRY MUSE

And still her music onward went
Through hazel-alleys, beechen groves,
Where doves with lulling voices sent
Soft salutations to their loves.

So down these verdant colonnades
I still pursued the woodland note,
O'er lawny islands of the glades
That echoed to the blackbird's throat.

And as I neared one bright expanse
A cool oasis clothed with green,
A perfume, sweeter than romance—
Than love that only might have been

Came, with a stripling breeze for aid,
To stay a moment, stay and pass ;
Another step. I spied a maid,
Or goddess, sleeping in the grass.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Around her in an amber stream

There flowed the marvel of her hair,
The ransom for a world, the dream
To fill the morning with despair :

The pink of apple-bloom possessed

The virgin cheeks unkissed by man ;
And round her throat the sun had pressed
To clasp it with his ring of tan :

Her lips, half-opened, had the light

Of cherries bathed by drops of rain ;
Reproachless was the dome of white
Unblemished brow without a stain.

Then in my heart that love did cry

Which from my life shall never pass ;
And bitterly I longed to lie
Beside her beauty in the grass.

A COUNTRY MUSE

The doves in spires of elm and oak
Cooed softly in the afternoon,
And sometimes from a bush there broke
A whitethroat's tenderness of tune.

The air was full of nameless joy!
And, daring all, I threw me down
As innocently as a boy
Beside her scented film of gown.

Now if some secret charm in her
Across my aching heart did sweep,
Some magic in her bosom's stir,
I know not—but I fell asleep,

And when the day, a patient bride,
Was parting from her love, the sun,
The girl, or goddess, from my side
Had gently risen, and was gone!

A COUNTRY MUSE

REFUSAL

CLARINDA 's shy.

She 's mute, the rogue, and says me nay

Whate'er I ask.

Yet all I need is but to touch

The velvet of her hand, to hear

The rosebud call me *Shepherd dear*—

Clarinda 's shy.

Clarinda 's shy.

The rosebud pouts and bids me hence

Whate'er I ask.

Yet all I need is but to hold,

For she has never been embraced,

The living circle of her waist—

Clarinda 's shy.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Clarinda's shy.

Her pinky ears, those lovely shells,

Whene'er I speak

She floods apace with rain of gold.

Yet all I ask is only this,

To melt upon her snow a kiss—

Clarinda's shy.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A LOVE-SONG

O to think, O to think as I see her stand there
With the rose that I plucked in her glorious hair,
 In the robe that I love,
 So demure and so neat,
I am lord of her lips and her eyes and her feet !

O to think, O to think when the last hedge is
 leapt,
When the blood is awakened that dreamingly
 slept,
 I shall make her heart throb
 In its cradle of lace,
As the lord of her hair and her breast and her
 face !

A COUNTRY MUSE

O to think, O to think when our wedding-bells
ring,
When our love 's at the summer but life 's at the
spring,
I shall guard her asleep
As my hound guards her glove,
Being lord of her life and her heart and her
love!

A COUNTRY MUSE

LOVE'S SHARE

CUPID coming through the wood
Met me, and his eyes were bright,
So I knew the god had seen
Sweet Clarinda's red and white :

Love had nestled all day long
In a haunt of lace and bliss ;
Round his mouth the dimples came,
Thinking of Clarinda's kiss.

Welcome, Love ! Thine eyes may drink
What she has of shy and rare ;
Thou a captive lie content
In the tangles of her hair.

A COUNTRY MUSE

I will share her breast with thee ;
Then shall never sorrow come
When Clarinda's footstep makes
Music in my cottage home.

A COUNTRY MUSE

JUNE IN LONDON

(WITH PUPILS)

Books and heat, the dullard mind
Reeling under Cicero ;
London landscape, roof and blind
Blacker e'en than London snow :
Pupils coming all day long,
All my pause the thought that she,
She I love, my joy and song,
Dreams by day and night of me.
Ah, might I gather a rose with its dew
For her heart on this bright June morning !

A COUNTRY MUSE

Doric of the roughest mould
Planned to make a Master sour ;
Thirty lines of Virgil's gold
Slowly melting in an hour !
Ovid's ingots and the gems
Horace polished for our eyes
In a maze of roots and stems,
Hurdy-gurdies, cabmen's cries !
Ah, might I gather a rose in its dew
For her heart on this bright June morning !

Envious twigs in leafy nook
Catch my love's long tresses fair,
E'en as Grecian branches shook
Down Diana's crown of hair !
While on Cæsar's bridge I stand
Fancy brings (but could they speak !)

A COUNTRY MUSE

Laura's lips, and, faintly tanned,

Peachy glimpses of her cheek !

Ah, might I gather a rose in its dew

For her heart on this bright June morning !

A COUNTRY MUSE

TO SLEEP

ALAS! how far away it seems
Since in an Arcady of dream
Beside a shaded pool I met
My early, only love again!
Her face with little drops was wet
Like pansy petals after rain;
But when she saw me by the reeds
With love enough to feast her needs,
Her glowing mouth, that miracle
Of rose and sun, did blossom sweet,
And at her girdle-band in joy
Her traitor heart the swiftlier beat;

A COUNTRY MUSE

It stirred that tender sea to rise,
The waves of snow to surge and start ;
They ran unchecked a moment's space,
Then broke in beauty on my heart !

It was a dream, but, Love, how sweet !
Till Wakefulness on velvet feet
Cast shadows over all our bliss
And crept between the coming kiss.
But thou, O Sleep, bend down and give
My fevered frame apparent death ;
Receive my hands, caress my brow,
And send the incense of thy breath
About my temples while I weep,
Sleep, lest thou shouldst not hear me,
Sleep.

On aching balls that roam the room
Thus set thy seals as one who stirs

A COUNTRY MUSE

About the bedside of the dead
And weighs down rebel lids of eyes
That look beyond for Paradise
With silver circles from a purse :
And when thy spell is on me cast,
And thou from out my chamber passed,
If haply Wakefulness be near
Say not that I am sleeping, dear,
For oftentimes, methinks, her mood
Is wry, and not to do me good.
O God, 'twould better be if she
To wake me should delay too long,
And find with face all still and cold
Me unresponsive to her song !

The blind grows pale with dawn, and
hark !
It is the matin of the lark.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Though there be virtue in thy touch
I will not pray thee overmuch,
Lest I should weary thee, and be
Cast out of all thy love by thee ;
And, Sleep, I will not moan or weep
If thou wilt come to-morrow, Sleep.

A COUNTRY MUSE

TO THE WORLD

GIVE me my Love's enchanted eyes,
The right to lie where'er she lies,
 And muse on her in wonder ;
But never speak a single word
Shall harm us more than song of bird,
 Or rive our souls asunder.

A COUNTRY MUSE

CONTENT

THOUGH singing but the shy and sweet
Untrod by multitudes of feet,
Songs bounded by the brook and wheat,
 I have not failed in this,
The only lure my woodland note,
To win all England's whitest throat !
O bards in gold and fire who wrote,
 Be yours all other bliss !

A COUNTRY MUSE

MORNING IN THE ORCHARD

(TO AN INVALID)

THEY wake, they sing—both thrush and lass !
The blackbird 's in the orchard grass,
And sprinkles in his rapid quest
Great dewdrops on his jetty breast.

The fruity acre, veiled in white
Of buds and blossoms opened quite,
Grows warm with sun ; and soon is heard
That dear duet of bee and bird.

How Nature haunts the fragrant aisles
With musing skirts and happy smiles !
And how her windy whispers stir
The bridal boughs in praise of her !

A COUNTRY MUSE

The scent, the hush are priests of good
In such a spicy solitude !
O, where 's the town and where 's the mart
Can cleanse me thus my foolish heart ?

The comfort of the air is full,
The thrush's sermon is not dull.
What fine persuasion ! And how fair
His leafy altar in the pear !

The country is a poem writ
By God, and few decipher it ;
Come, hear the mellow thrush translate
The silence of his mother-mate !

He 's in the apple-blossom now
With golden chant on silver bough ;
His wants are little—so be mine !—
A worm for loaf and dew for wine.

A COUNTRY MUSE

O let my cellar be the hill
Whence flows the unpolluted rill,
That all my Cæcuban may be
Sweet Nature's, and her own the key!

Give me my daily home-made bread,
A wife's dear bosom for my head ;
A flagon bubbling from the well,
The wood for church, the finch for bell ;

A son to clasp my finger tight,
God's care to nest him through the night ;
His mother's hand to gentle me
When that my head is on her knee.

Here can I walk a lovely land,
And smooth the fledgling with my hand ;
Can track the runnel to its source
Past raspberry canes and lover's gorse.

A COUNTRY MUSE

But you, dear friend, upon your bed
Must dream activities instead,
While robbers bring the hedge's bliss
In haste for you to stroke and kiss.

Yet you may have approaches fine
To angel secrets and divine,
While we who stride the dewy sod
Be far less clearly taught of God.

Who knows? Within your mind may be
A perfect orchard fair to see,
And Fancy's fruit be sweeter far
Than all our pears and apples are.

A COUNTRY MUSE

THREE MAIDS

CHLORIS—

HERE 's Cupid sleeping on a bank !
Let 's steal his bow and break his arrows,
Or pinch him till he promises
To shoot them only at the sparrows !
Why, what a charming rogue it is,
And what a tempting mouth to kiss !

CLARINDA—

Shame fall on any plan to snatch
The rosy god's most sacred arrows !
While this my bosom 's loveless still,
Pray Cupid spare the world of sparrows !
I have a target soft and fair
That longs to feel his arrow there !

A COUNTRY MUSE

DORA—

Unless his dart he aim apace

Our skin will wear from pink to yellow,
And not a maid as wife will sleep

Beside some strapping shepherd-fellow !
Wherefore my lips the god shall buss
That he may wake and shoot at us !

A COUNTRY MUSE

LEAVING ALL

It is not well that I should move
For ever in Life's easy street.
How should my feet not bleed for Love?
Love's bled for me. And Love is sweet.

I follow though the brambles tear,
And though the mountain track is rough.
How should I moan a cross to bear?
Christ went this way. It is enough.

A COUNTRY MUSE

ON SEEING A TRAIN START FOR THE SEASIDE

O MIGHT I leave this grassy place
For spreading foam about my feet !
The splendid spray upon my face,
The flying brine itself were sweet
If I might hear on Cromer beach
The freedom of Old Neptune's speech !

Ah, never language like to this
For those whose ears can understand !
Sometimes the coming of a kiss
To mate the ocean with the strand ;

A COUNTRY MUSE

Sometimes the nameless oath is heard
The sea-god thunders through his
beard !

I have a sea of blue on high,
I have a sea of green beneath ;
For me sweet inland birds do cry
Until with joy I hold my breath ;
But Ocean's harp of wave and stone
Is bird and leaf and stream in one !

Upon my dancing apple-sprays
The blackbird whistles melodies ;
Half through a mellow run he stays
And flashes to a neighbour's trees :
He's rare, but rarer now would be
The strident pebbles of the sea.

A COUNTRY MUSE

And is it strange that round the shore
The lyric water should rejoice ?
Ah no ! for ever more and more
The happy dead are in its voice.
Majestic poet ! might I be
As full of song, as finely free !

A COUNTRY MUSE

THE HAPPY THRUSH

WHEN Spring with its sunshine and beauty of bud
Woke a love in his heart and desire in his voice

A comrade he found

Of a velvety round

Whom he courted and won as the bird of his
choice.

There's joy and there's pride in the house in the
hedge,

For the eggs of last night are a golden-throat
clan ;

Five children are born

In the thick of the thorn,

And the voluble thrush is a Family Man !

A COUNTRY MUSE

THE GIPSY KING'S SONG

MOTHS may flutter round a lamp,
Stars may haunt the skies ;
Bees may plunder roses' hearts—
Give me Laura's eyes !

Delve for gold, ye misers, delve
In the priceless west ;
Snatch the diamond from the dark—
Leave me Laura's breast !

Argonauts, upturn the gems,
Guard them home in ships,
Cast them in a silken lap—
Leave me Laura's lips !

A COUNTRY MUSE

Fortune, wreck a kingdom set

In the blue above ;

Play at bowls with hemispheres—

Leave me Laura's love !

A COUNTRY MUSE

MY CHERRY-TREES

O CHILDREN of the smoke and fog,
With faces pinched by early care,
Would God you might adventure forth
To breathe this country air !
Would God your ears might drink the song
Of grasses, birds, and singing trees !
Would God your eyes grew round to see
My wealth of cherry-trees !

A hundred thousand shining lamps
To light the glory of the green !
The rubies of my orchard hang
The sturdy leaves between ;

A COUNTRY MUSE

The blackbird pecks them at his will,
The brazen sparrow with his beak
Attacks some swaying globe of fruit
And stabs its ruddy cheek.

But in the Covent Garden roads
You see the sluttish cabbage-leaf
In air that steals away your strength,
God's bounty turned a thief !
How happy is my growing boy
That here in grass which pricks his knees
He roams his world so shy and clean
Beneath my cherry-trees !

I often lift him to a branch
That burns with cherries redly ripe ;
A startled thrush in flight displays
The shrillness of his pipe ;

A COUNTRY MUSE

And down to mother's upturned mouth
 His baby hand so plumply fair
He reaches full of fruit, or drops
 A cherry in her hair !

Apollo gave my rustic Muse
 Her artless shepherd-songs to sing ;
The sorrel charms her, and the gloss
 Upon the swallow's wing ;
But often dreaming in the wood,
 When comes the evening gift of dew,
Her soul flies forward to your souls,
 And, children, thinks of you.

Your naked feet within this grass
 Should learn some simple country dance ;
Upon your hearts should flash at last
 The colours of romance.

A COUNTRY MUSE

O empty purse of mine, alas
That such a happy vision flees!
That all these urchins may not romp
Beneath my cherry-trees!

A COUNTRY MUSE

LOVE'S AWAKENING

CHLORIS singing through the wood
Cupid spied a-sleeping ;
Long the troubled maiden stood
At the archer peeping :
On his pink and perfect cheeks,
From the branches shaken,
Sprinkled tiny drops of dew,
But he would not waken.

Chloris in her homespun gown
Shyly came a-creeping ;
And she bent her beauty down
O'er the god a-sleeping :

A COUNTRY MUSE

‘Softly, velvet kiss,’ she said—
 How her heart was shaken!—
‘Melt upon this ruby mouth
 That the Boy awaken!’

A COUNTRY MUSE

A FORTUNATE ISLAND

Across the hills, across the sea,
Across the land that lies beyond,
An islet slumbers in the waves
As languid as a liliated pond :
There roses keep a festival
Of breaking bud and scented breath ;
And on the hills and by the sea
There is no dream of death.

Festoons of princely purple hang,
And crimson creepers to and fro
Move to the whisper of the winds
That lull to linger, lift to go :

A COUNTRY MUSE

The golden birds on blooms of fire,
The lowlier larks on flaming heath,
Trill, for their happy hearts are sure
There is no dream of death.

Here are the summer sights and sounds
Of untempestuous summer seas ;
The strand that as a vast harp rings
To foamy fingers' melodies.
And all who find this quiet isle
Across the hills, across the sea,
Across the land that lies beyond,
Shall live eternally.

A COUNTRY MUSE

ALWAYS

I HAD a Love once, past compare :
Spirits who weave a maiden's hair
Wove none such colour, none so fair.

As Love who finds and Love who sips
Did kiss her cheeks and finger-tips
Roses fell from his rosy lips.

With joy she sought my aching side
To answer love so long had cried ;
At morn a maid, at evening bride.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Her neck was sweet as flowering pear,
So fair her eyes, her mouth so fair!
Soft was her heart. I rested there.

I had a love once, past my skill
To worship as becomes my will ;
The Love I had, I have her still.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A PASTORAL

ALONG the lane beside the mead
Where cowslip-gold is in the grass
I matched the milkmaid's easy speed,
A tall and springing country lass :
But though she had a merry plan
To shield her from my soft replies,
Love played at Catch-me-if-you-Can
In Mary's eyes.

A mile or twain from Varley bridge
I plucked a dock-leaf for a fan,
And drove away the constant midge,
And cooled her forehead's strip of tan.

A COUNTRY MUSE

But though the maiden would not spare
My hand her pretty finger-tips,
Love played at Kiss-me-if-you-Dare
On Mary's lips.

And now the village flashed in sight,
And closer came I to her side ;
A flush ran down into the white,
The impulse of a glowing tide :
And though her face was turned away,
How much her panting heart confessed
Love played at Find-me-if-you-May
In Mary's breast.

A COUNTRY MUSE

BIRDLIP

IN the Cotswolds is a nest
 With a name so dear
That there's sorrow in my breast
 If I linger here :
 It is Birdlip, Birdlip,
 Cherry, apple, sloe !
And it's Ah to be at Birdlip
 For the healing of my woe !

In the Cotswolds is a nest
 Of a peace so deep,
Where it surely would be best
 To be kissed by sleep.

A COUNTRY MUSE

It is Birdlip, Birdlip,
Nightingales and dew !
And it's Ah to be at Birdlip,
Happy nightingales, with you !

In the Cotswolds is a nest
With a maid so sweet,
That there's sorrow in my breast
Till our bosoms meet.
She's at Birdlip, Birdlip,
Fragrance and delight !
And it's Ah to be at Birdlip
In your arms, my Love, to-night !

A COUNTRY MUSE

THE RIVULET

HERE I come and cast me down,
Shining rivulet, beside thee ;
And thy birds shall sing the frown
Off my brow the while I hide me
On thy sloping banks that fall
In a cataract of grasses,
Till the blades can softly call
Secrets to the leaf that passes.

Let the music of thy speed,
And the mist of sacrifices
Rising from the stilly mead
Sweet with wildwood blossom-spices

A COUNTRY MUSE

Teach that Nature's quiet priests
Here within her sacred spaces,
At the coming of her feasts
Cast all care from off their faces.

Me my mother ofttimes bore
Here, O rivulet, to view thee ;
Here I learned the song-bird's lore,
Here I loved and here I knew thee ;
What thou spakest to the cress
Found an echo in my spirit,
And I heard in happiness
Foxglove bells that tinkled near it.

Good it is to find thee still
Faithful to the distant river ;
Sweet to think the fruitful hill
Grant its help to thee for ever :

A COUNTRY MUSE

Constant height and constant stream,
Shall I find where last we parted,
Her I love, my hope, my dream,
Just as fair and gentle-hearted ?

Am I dreaming? She is dead.
Death in envy of her tresses
Stole her wealth of white and red,
All her bosom's lovelinesses ;
Then the skies of duller blue
And thy lessened music taught me,
Stream, the abundance and the hue
Of the harvest Time had brought me.

Loveless now I come apace,
Shining rivulet, revealing
To thy bright familiar face
What can find no truer healing :

A COUNTRY MUSE

Nature by her mother's skill,
Where the greensward's cool and slanting,
Soothes me with the wood and hill
And the slumber in thy chanting.

On thy breast I cast my love !
Let it float adown thy reaches
Past the fluting of the dove,
Thymy banks and silver beeches :
Chance may steer it to those isles
Where the tearless walk together
In a paradise of smiles,
Tenderness and golden weather.

A COUNTRY MUSE

SUNNY MARCH

THE hedge is full of houses
And the houses full of eggs,
For it's Spring!
So the yellowhammer tinkles
To the hawthorn green again,
On the wing.

The sparrow, he the gymnast,
Swings more boldly on his spray
In the sun,
And the mavis floods the orchard
With an air too fine for June,
Trill and run.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Now my milking-maid is waiting
By the haystack for a kiss,
In the dusk ;
So I clasp my Love in lilac,
Dearly sweet with double scent,
Milk and musk !

A COUNTRY MUSE

MARY VANCE

WHEN I was young, and had the skill
To take the tune of Cupid's making,
And teach my sweetheart from the hill
A pretty trick for dear escaping ;
When by the constant lavender,
Or gipsy rose she stayed to parley,
O, cheerly went my feet to her
Along the road to Varley.

Ah, Mary Vance, when you with me
Were keeping starlit company,
The mile of bliss,
The laugh and kiss
From Shepperton to Varley !

A COUNTRY MUSE

Not warm enough my lips to keep
 The lips of Death from cold caresses !
O weary head, to never sleep
 Upon her heart, amid her tresses !
No more to watch the foam of light
 Run lipping over seas of barley,
For Death the Harvester by night
 Went down the road to Varley !

Ah, Mary Vance, when you with me
Were keeping starlit company,
 The mile of sweet
 Between the wheat
From Shepperton to Varley !

A COUNTRY MUSE

LULLABY

SLEEP, my angels, side by side
Till the morrow's coming,
Till the rosebuds open wide
At the brown bees' humming ;
Clover-spice and butterfly,
Faithful in the meadows,
Stay where mottled cattle sigh
In the cooling shadows.
Angel rosebuds, dream and wait
Till the sun is peeping
At my maid and at her mate,
Rosebud angels, sleeping.

A COUNTRY MUSE

GONE INTO LONG FROCKS

SHE'S a woman !

The gracious girl's in longer dresses,
And desecrating hands have piled
In one bright crown her flying tresses ;
But yesterday she was a child,
And joined to mine her frank caresses,
Perched in a pretty pose upon my knee
To stroke my face or kiss it suddenly.

She's a woman !

O thievish time to steal my pleasure,
Her weight, her fingers in my hair !
No more she dangles at her leisure

A COUNTRY MUSE

A shapely limb from out the pear.
Still in a statelier way this treasure
Colours my life, and from the tomboy age
Saves me her eyes and voice for heritage.

A COUNTRY MUSE

SPRING

ALL the lanes are lyric,
All the bushes sing ;
You are at your kissing,
Spring !

Romping with your children
Do not fail to bring
Mary to the haystack,
Spring !

Froth upon her fingers,
Bosom for a king,
Speed her from the milking,
Spring !

A COUNTRY MUSE

TO A WHITETHROAT

IF thou but pipe I will a pilgrim be
 Along the outskirt bushes of the wood :
Fly forward, Whitethroat, searching still for me
 Some leafy shrine of utter quietude :
 There stay awhile and sing,
 Upon me fling
The ditties of the woodland that I love ;
 And mingling with thy song
 Sometimes may float along
The soft ejaculation of the dove.

For, Whitethroat, all the loved of Long Ago
 Have vanished sleepwards, far and far away,
And in the churchyard yonder do but grow
 To finer dust—God rest them—day by day !

A COUNTRY MUSE

So stay awhile and sing,
 Upon me fling
The ditties of the woodland that I love ;
 And call to join the song
 From out this beechen throng
The deep-toned consolation of the dove.

The pomp of vast cathedrals cannot ease
 The grief within me that will not be still.
Help, natural magic of the forest trees !
 Help, green enchantment of the sloping hill !
 And thou, O Whitethroat, sing,
 Upon me fling
The ditties of the woodland that I love ;
 And may there speed along
 In union with thy song
The mellower reflection of the dove.

A COUNTRY MUSE

The Priest has spoken, and I am not healed.

The organ pleaded, and my heart was cold.

Where is God's widest blessing? In the weald,

Beside the sheepcotes and upon the wold.

Wherefore, O Whitethroat, sing,

Upon me fling

The ditties of the woodland that I love ;

And call from out this throng

Of trees to swell thy song

The gentle exclamation of the dove.

A COUNTRY MUSE

LOST LOVE

My life is hedged by bitter thorns,
And full of endless sorrows ;
Time sends my soul but hopeless morns,
And still more hopeless morrows.
Ah ! might there come that warmer part,
With all its dear repeating—
The lovely speech of Laura's heart
Upon my bosom beating !

But she is in a star at rest,
And treads some golden county,
Where roses sweeten in her breast,
And thrushes pipe their bounty.

A COUNTRY MUSE

For me no more that warmer part,
With all its dear repeating—
The lovely language of her heart
Upon my bosom beating!

A COUNTRY MUSE

A COURTSHIP

'Twas breakfast-time ; the noisy house
Constrained the antics of the mouse ;
The nursery window, opened wide,
Let in the scents of morning-tide.

The sun looked in with jolly face ;
He saw some youngsters saying grace ;
He turned the teapot to a gem,
He found the spoons and goldened them.

The under-nurse industrious sat,
And stitched the brim of Baby's hat ;
The sun grew fond about her head,
Her needle married shining thread.

A COUNTRY MUSE

Her gown, receptive of the sun,
Seemed wonder-wrought and fairy-spun.
O golden tailor! golden trade
So to befrock a rosebud maid

She worked ; a tiny sparkling globe
Fell on the bosom of her robe ;
The sun perceived the liquid fear,
And made a topaz from the tear.

And thus sweethearting with his mote,
He ringed the beauty of her throat,
And on her fruitful bodice prest
He boldly warmed her comely breast.

The winking buttons on her gown
Shone like the lamps of London Town,
And on her slippers, black and bright,
There fell the wooing lips of light.

A COUNTRY MUSE

At last the sun began to make
The old mistake, the old mistake !
And then the nurse, a modest maid,
Rose and departed to the shade !

A COUNTRY MUSE

MY CONTENT

WHAT'S my content ?

I love the bird, I love the blue

That deepens in the firmament,

The grass to mate them, and the hush

Before the warble of the thrush :

At morn and evening from the brake

All sweet-throat minstrels choicely make

A rare content.

How God is good !—

He lends the song, He lends the sky !

And O, my heart has understood

The spider's fragile line of lace,

A COUNTRY MUSE

The common weed, the woody space !
These miracles that bring me bliss,
And one sweet English girl to kiss,
Make my content.

A COUNTRY MUSE

REFLECTIVE LOVE

THE wiser few who snap a thumb
At youth when he is hot to tie,
Passed through the flame, not seldom come
On love mature that cannot die.

The helpmeet with her quiet tread—
That constant music, sweet, assured—
Moves round him till his need is fed
By love in use, by care outpoured.

Unshaken by the heats of youth,
The spikes of passion and their smart,
Man probes the soul of woman's truth
And hugs contentment to his heart.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A SONG

WHEN maids with easy lips consent
To feed us all on Cupid's pillage,
And daring eyes are fondly bent
On strangers even in the village,
'Twere well to pack, my masters, pack—
Forget the road, and ne'er come back !

But if our fate is not to miss
Some lovely slip among the brambles,
Who pouts away the proffered kiss
When resting from our woodland rambles,
Let others trudge, my masters, trudge—
Here's one wise fool who will not budge !

A COUNTRY MUSE

A SONG OF THANKS

LEANING from my window
In the fragrant air
Chantings morn and evening,
Melodies I hear ;
For the beak that 's yellow
Sings me without fear
Lyrics in the lilacs,
Lyrics in the pear.

In the roaring city
Sparrows' voices lend
Something of the country
To the hearts that spend

A COUNTRY MUSE

Season after season

There, and never hear
Blackbirds in the apple,
Blackbirds in the pear.

But my orchard yonder

Is an orchestra;
Birds and leaves and breezes
Make in concert there
Music of enchantment
Country folks may hear,
Lyrics in the plum-tree,
Lyrics in the pear.

A COUNTRY MUSE

A PICTURE

*No bell and steeple—let there be for me
The blackbird calling from his lilac-tree.*

Grandfather in his broadcloth goes
To hear the Parson's Sunday prose ;

He sleeps the sermon safely through,
Behind his pillar out of view ;

For never dangerous doctrine ran
From Parson Tom ; he knows his man,

And feeling his salvation sure
He points the morals with a snore,

A COUNTRY MUSE

Whereat with giggles all the girls
Do shake their rows of dancing curls.

Here is the flame of young romance
Oft nourished by a subtle glance,

And Cupid lifts beneath the nose
Of Dame Theology the rose

That quivers on Clarinda's heart
Responsive to the looks that dart

Whence Colin, tired of parables,
The herdsmen's quarrel at the wells,

Contents him with the lovely shape
That glances through Clarinda's cape.

Among the boys some bench is cut,
Or one essays the traitor nut

A COUNTRY MUSE

That pops, whereat with cheeks aflame
The kernel's fumbled in his shame,

And rolling underneath a pew
Is out of reach, but still in view.

And through the marble, nut and knife
Lot's wife, and yet again Lot's wife.

Outside his tale the blackbird spins,
The tributary thrush begins

To praise the blue audaciously
With daring turns of melody.

And now the Parson ends his prose,
The hymn is sung, grandfather goes

Serenely home, and quite assured
He profited and never snored,

A COUNTRY MUSE

And thumps the turfy path apace—
Says, sleep in Church is sheer disgrace.

Now Colin, free of circumstance,
Pursues Clarinda with romance.

Forgiving all the herdsmen's strife,
Lot's wife, and yet again Lot's wife.

*No bell and steeple—let there be for me
The blackbird calling from his lilac-tree.*

A COUNTRY MUSE

THE TRAVELLER'S SONG

WHILST Laura lingers by my side

With all her woman's help and graces,
Nor ever is the look denied

She pours upon our children's faces,
Equal to Fate my soul shall prove—
Sirs, take my pence, but not my love !

But if her whims and altered brow

Should stifle joy, and tart responses
Be fruit of faith and marriage vow,

Or blows bethump the youngsters' sconces,
Come, pleasant chance, to lure her hence—
Sirs, take my love, but not my pence !

A COUNTRY MUSE

EVE

A SCARLET bird upon her shoulder's snow
Was perched, and whistled to his happy fellows ;
A thousand tints of feathers lit the air,
Unnumbered shades of brilliant blues and yellows.

Primeval glories clustered in her form ;
Uncramped her curves ; she was the dawn of
 beauty ;
Fit mother for a group of stalwart sons
To roll along the universe of duty.

As innocently naked thus she stood
With lion-whelps and tiger-cubs around her,
Fast striding o'er the lawns with dazzled eyes
Came Adam, threading Paradise, and found her.

A COUNTRY MUSE

B E E S .

You voluble,
Velvety
Vehement fellows
That play on your
Flying and
Musical 'cellos,
All goldenly
Girdled you
Serenade clover,
Each artist in
Bass but a
Bibulous rover!

A COUNTRY MUSE

You passionate,
Powdery
Pastoral bandits,
Who gave you your
Roaming and
Rollicking mandates?
Come out of my
Foxglove; come
Out of my roses
You bees with the
Plushy and
Plausible noses!

A COUNTRY MUSE

A SONG

Love came to her for his resting,
 And dreamed at her side all night,
Down by her sad heart nesting,
 Warm in her bed so white.
Love came to her for his resting
 And dreamed at her side all night.

Love woke again from his sleeping,
 And found Love as she slept.
Eyes that were dark with weeping,
 He kissed, and kissing wept.
Love woke again from his sleeping,
 And found Love as she slept.

A COUNTRY MUSE

LEAFY WARWICKSHIRE

WHY will your mind for ever go
To meads in sunny Greece?
Our song-birds have as fine a flow,
Our sheep as fair a fleece;
Among our hills the honey-bee,
And in the leaning pear—
I tell you there is Arcady
In leafy Warwickshire.

Our maids can match Diana's shape,
And thread the woodland way;
They sing, and from the trees escape
Birds musical as they:

A COUNTRY MUSE

As Orpheus once Eurydice,
The thrush he draws my dear—
I tell you there is Arcady
In leafy Warwickshire.

Our English fountains are not mute,
And fancy's ear may catch
The mellow airs of pipe and flute
Where blushing maidens snatch
The hasty garb lest shepherds see
Their bosoms soft and clear—
I tell you there is Arcady
In leafy Warwickshire.

Apollo's in the winding lane !
And Cupid with his smile
Comes splendidly across the plain
To walk with us a mile :

A COUNTRY MUSE

The milkmaid's kiss, the country peace

Delight us living here,

Content to traffic all of Greece

For leafy Warwickshire !

A COUNTRY MUSE

LAST WORDS

OF you, dear friends, who come to tend
A dying man with final love,
I ask but this—that none may seek
Me purer than I was to prove.

Strive not with anxious pen to make
Some follies pose as good and sage ;
Nor with the knife of tenderness
Scratch out the blots upon my page.

Oh, as I lie and idly count
The paper roses on the wall,
Of all my eyes begin to see
This is the clearest sight of all—

A COUNTRY MUSE

That sometimes when my chance was come
 To speak a helpful word and kind,
My hasty tongue too often served
 The early promptings of my mind.

If ever word of dying man
 Can long direct the friends who stay,
Leave larger issues to your God,
 But trebly guard the instant day.

The cultivation of your souls
 May warp you as you sit apart !
March out into the light and heal
 (For all can heal) some broken heart.

Think of yourselves as those in whom
 The gift of miracles is set ;
For in his circle each can work
 These miracles. Do not forget !

A COUNTRY MUSE

So when you hide me in the earth,
And put aside my vacant chair,
Do not be prone to polish o'er
The faults I pray you not to spare.

But thinking clearly what I was,
Review the history of my days,
And if you smile on any deeds
I may be grateful for your praise.

Write :—*He had made a finer man
And left increased renown behind,
If he had only shut his books
To read the chapters of mankind !*

*For, prisoned 'mid his lexicons,
He paced along a narrow way,
His life contracting, till he grew
Less human-hearted day by day.*

A COUNTRY MUSE

*So when the chance of changing tears
To brilliant smiles was lent to him,
The mood was foreign from his mind,
The energy was strangely dim.*

*Wherefore upon his bed of death,
His eyes with boundless vision wide,
He ministered to other souls
With wisdom until then denied ;*

*Knowing the crown of penitence
Was not alone a vague regret,
But rather, the activity
Of teaching others to forget*

*(Since a late learner, growing mute,
May not remain to purge his heart)
The cluster of remembrances
That pander to the selfish part.*

A COUNTRY MUSE

Long was I careless of my path,
Till Faith descended broad and bright ;
And looking out across the world
I felt a spirit in the light,

And in a forest-temple found
The impulse of a great desire
To rear an altar, and to burn
My heart in sacrificial fire.

But this was only yesterday,
And ere you pluck my altered fruits
The axe in Death's unswerving hands
Is laid against my stronger roots !

Yet I, if I have done aright,
Though straying from the usual road,
May meet with willing love to ease
My shoulders of their heavy load,

A COUNTRY MUSE

Howe'er it be, I go in peace,
A man whose lips have been desired ;
A man who held his Love a space,
Then lost her. I am very tired.

A COUNTRY MUSE

L' ENVOI

*O mother, if the lyric god
Have touched my lips with country song,
Or if these simple airs are caught
From Music as she sings along
I care not, so their piping find
A comfort for your heart and mind.*

*O sweet for mothers growing old
To know their boys approach success !
And sweet for me if what I bring
Can flood your face with tenderness—
Can well-nigh make you hear again
Birds warbling in a Surrey lane.*



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