

A SONG
OF LIFE
AND OTHER POEMS



By

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I am nae poet in a sense;
But just a rhymer like by chance,
And hae to learning nae pretence,
 Yet what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
 I jingle at her.

Some rhyme a neighbor's name to lash,
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needful cash,
Some rhyme to court the countra clash
 An' raise a din;
For me an aim I never fash;
 I rhyme for fun.

— Robert Burns

A SONG OF LIFE

Oh, I'm glad that I am fighting
In the great big battle of life;
I'm glad that my lot is no garden spot,
 For I love the turmoil and strife.

And oh I am glad to be striving
To see some big things done,
To help with my might in the constant fight
 That some great cause may be won.

For life is just what we make it,
We're as big as the things we do;
And the Master will say in the final day,
 "What work in the world did you"?

And, methinks, we will all be measured
By the things that we did, not said;
Did we help to make the world better?
Did we think of ourselves, instead?

Did we lend a hand to our fellow,
To help him along life's way?
Did we really try to be Christian?
Did we work as well as pray?

Did we give ourselves to the movements
That tend to uplift mankind?
Did we turn a deaf ear so we could not hear?
 Toward selfishness inclined.

Ah, the masks will be stripped from our faces,
And stripped from our hearts as well;
For the Master knows what our lives disclose
 Far better than we can tell.

And so I want to keep fighting
For the things that I think are right;
Though the way may be long I hope to be strong,
 For the Master will lead the fight.

(1916)

THE CITY BY THE WESTERN SEA

"Serene, indifferent of Fate,
Thou sittest at the Golden Gate."
— Bret Harte.

1

There's a city — have you seen her — seated by
the Western sea;
'Tis the city of St. Francis and she's very dear
to me;
I have left her far behind me but the mem'ry
lingers still,
And I love her, yes, I love her, even to the
steepest hill.

Refrain

Oh, I love you, San Francisco, love your
ocean, love your bay,
Love your fog and love your sunshine, love
them more and more each day;
Tho' there may be other cities that are very
fair to see,
There is just one San Francisco, it's the only
place for me.

2

There's something all about her that makes
you want to stay,
That fills you full of sadness when you have
to go away;
It's that gracious Western spirit, that dashing
carefree style,
And it grips you, yes, it grips you like the
Lotos-eaters' isle.

3

Oh, you're just the grandest city on this little
sphere called earth,
And you have the rarest beauty and the most
refreshing mirth;
May Dame Fortune smile upon you, may she
e'er be kind to thee,
Queenly city of St. Francis, seated by the
Western sea.

(1915)

YOSEMITE

There's a far famed valley in the mountains,
Where the high Sierras lift their snowy head,
Down whose granite walls fall magic crystal
fountains,

And through which there flows the cool and
clear Merced.

'Tis a valley that mere words can never picture,
With its sparkling streams and countless
waterfalls,

With its dogwood and its smiling verdant meadows,
With its fascinating charm that never palls.

Have you ever stood atop of mighty Glacier
And gazed down o'er the valley far below,
Then turned your gaze away to the eastward
And beheld the mountain peaks all crowned
with snow?

Have you ever seen the sun rise over Half Dome
From Mirror Lake upon an Easter morn,
Or beheld the full moon come up o'er the meadow
While in your soul a raptured awe was born?

There are Vernal and Nevada, Bridal Veil and
Illilouette,
And Yosemite, most wondrous falls of all;
There's the redbud in the springtime and the
witching dogwood, too,
And the brown and golden tree leaves in the
fall.

Oh, there's never end of grandeur in this vale of
Nature's dreams,

You will miss it though you travel far and
wide,

Its mem'ry e'er will haunt you, you'll be longing to
return

To this valley of all valleys, Nature's pride.

Yosemite the Beautiful, God's wonderland sublime,
Nature's rarest jewel in any land or clime,
There's a rapture in your grandeur that one ne'er
forgets with time,
Yosemite the Beautiful, God's wonderful sublime.

(1939)

TO M. F.

Teacher of mine wert thou, —
Yet more than teacher to me;
Visions of loftier things,
Thou didst make me to see.

I was a country lad,
Lacking ambition or aim;
Thought not of higher things —
That was before you came.

With kind encouragement,
Urged you me on;
Inspired confidence,
Where there was none.

Then there awoke in me
Ambition's fierce desire —
Dreams of success to come,
My soul did fire.

And tho I'm striving hard,
'Gainst odds that are not light;
Yet am I confident
I shall win through the fight.

And I am grateful indeed —
Mere words can never tell
How much I owe to you,
Whose counsel has served me so well.

(1916)

TO G.L.M.

Should all my friends forsake me,
And travel far away
To foreign strands, — and stay;
E'en then might I so happy be,
Had I but thee.

Should every pleasure, every art,
Which has my fickle fancy pleased,
Be, of a sudden, from me seized; —
Yet with them all I'd gladly part,
For you, dear heart.

To gaze into those eyes of thine,
And note the rapturous sparkle there,
Is happiness beyond compare;
Ah love, it is my dream divine —
To call you mine!

(1916)

TO MY MOTHER ON HER BIRTHDAY

Ah! mother, thou hast been to me
An inspiration and a guide,
Companion, comrade, comforter. —
A friend in friendship true and tried.

How often hast thou cheered me on,
When all about seemed dark and drear!
How often hast thou calmed my doubts, —
Dispelled each foolish, groundless fear.

Unselfishly, unceasingly,
Hast thou toiled on; nor gavest a thought
To thine own comfort all the while
You happiness to others brought.

And O that I could e'er repay
Each loving act, each kindly word!
And O that I could worthy be
Of half the blessings you've conferred!

And may God bless you, mother mine,
On this, your glad birthday!
And may Time's hand rest light on you!
For this I hope and pray.

(1913)

A CHRISTMAS WISH

I would the spirit of the Christ
Each nation's conscience ruled;
I would that Peace, Good-will toward Men,
Each nation's acts impelled.

Ah, then this world would never see
Such cruel and deadly wars
As that which now with ruin dire
The whole world's visage mars.

I would the sorrow and the woe
Of that grim war would cease,
I would that this dear Christmas-time
Would bring the dawn of Peace.

I would the whole world really knew
The Man of Galilee;
Ah, then great joy would fill the world,
Ah, what a world 'twould be.'

(1939)

THANKSGIVING—1942

We thank Thee for a Christian land
Where truth and right go hand in hand,
Where we for God and country stand.
We thank Thee, Lord.

We thank Thee for a land that's free,
We thank Thee for democracy,
And for our nation's trust in Thee,
We thank Thee, Lord.

We thank Thee for our righteous might,
We thank Thee that our cause is right,
And that unselfishly we fight,
We thank Thee, Lord.

Our Pilgrim fathers sang Thy praise
For blessings sent in trying days;
So we our grateful voices raise,
We thank Thee, Lord.

YOUTH GOES TO WAR

With a bit of a smile he rode away,
To answer his country's call;
With only a hint of a tear in his eye, —
Just a trace, and that was all.

He was only a boy, just a lad in school,
And he seemed so young to go;
But he, like others, must play his part
In the struggle with Freedom's foe.

In this war with a wanton and wicked power,
This battle of right with wrong,
We must give our all for weal or woe,
Though the conflict be hard and long.

And we hope and pray that he may come back
When the peace of the world is won,
Though we know that many and many a lad
Will fall ere the fighting's done.

And though there be little to give us cheer
In the long, long afterwhile,
We'll think how he looked when he went away,
We'll think of that parting smile.

(1943)

THE HEROES OF BATAAN

I sing of deathless heroes,
 Who fought for Freedom's plan
In the rough and rugged mountains
 Of far away Bataan.

They did so much with little,
 For four months held at bay
The countless hordes of Nipponese,
 And won for us delay.

And when at last they yielded,
 When human strength gave way,
Theirs was the honor and glory,
 And so it will be for aye.

And each man who fell in that struggle,
 So bravely played his part,
He died with the glory of faith in his eyes,
 And the glory of love in his heart.

Love for the cause of Freedom,
 For which our fathers died,
Love for the rights of human kind,
 So long our country's pride.

So their mem'ry shall live forever
 In this glorious land of the free;
And their fame shall endure down the ages,
 Like the men of Thermopylae.

And we far across the ocean,
 May we honor our glorious dead
By ever increasing devotion
 To the cause for which they bled.

Our brave men will fight in the future
 In the way they have fought in the past,
And we know that the cause will yet triumph,
 And the fight will be won at the last.

I sing of deathless heroes
 Who fought for Freedom's plan
In the rough and rugged mountains
 Of far away Bataan.

(1942)

PROSPECT

Ah, in that not far distant day
When Freedom's fight is won,
When Hirohito's hordes are crushed,
And Hitler's race is run.

Ah, then will all the world rejoice,
And children laugh and shout,
And righteous might will rule the earth,
And brutal force be out.

And then we'll build the world anew
Upon a higher plane;
We build for peace and justice, too,
Lest Hitlers rise again.

Lest other Hitlers plague mankind
In days that are ahead,
And trample down the rights of man,
And cause the world to dread.

And may we think of all the woe,
The blood and toil and pain;
To win the war but lose the peace
Would make our efforts vain.

For all the hopes of future years,
Of children yet to be,
Depend upon the peace we build,
Shall they be slave, or free?

Shall peoples have a right to live,
When this grim war shall cease,
In lands where Freedom is secure,
In holy bonds of peace?

God grant we may be firm and wise,
God guide our plans aright,
When human strength and wisdom fail,
God, help us with Thy might.

God pity man or nation
That strives for place or power,
God help us when we write the peace,
Nor fail us in that hour.

For all the blood our heroes shed,
May we render back the due,
Till the scales stand straight with an even weight,
And the world is a world made new.

(1943)

CHRISTMAS, NINETEEN FORTY-FOUR

'Tis Christmas, Nineteen Forty-four,
And our thoughts are far away
Upon a lad named Andy,
Born on this self-same day.

'Twas Christmas day in Twenty-four
That to our home he came,
And now on Europe's battlefront,
He flies through shot and flame.

A fair-haired youth with sunny smile,
Erect and tall was he,
Alert and eager, full of life,
And happy as could be.

Then came this cruel and deadly war,
This fight of right with wrong,
And he went like others to play his part
In the conflict hard and long.

And so he fights for Freedom's rights,
To help the world keep free;
He guides his Fortress through the night,
O'er land and over sea.

God keep him always brave and true,
Until the task is done,
God bring him safely home again
When Freedom's fight is won.

And as we sit around the fire
On this dear Christmas day,
We fondly yearn for his return, —
For this we hope and pray.

(1944)

WOODROW WILSON

(Written at the time of his death in 1924)

He saw a star, he dreamed a dream,
A dream that deadly war should cease,
Of nations bound in brotherhood
And in the holy bonds of peace.
He gave his strength, he gave his life,
He strove to make that dream come true,
He kept his eyes fixed on the star,
He prayed that men might see it too.
And though storms beat about his head,
Though many called him "dreamer," "fool,"
He clung steadfast unto his faith,
His faith that right, not might, should rule.
And though he failed, 'twas not in vain,
The fight he made will yet be won,
And nations joined in bonds of peace
Will find their places in the sun.
Farewell, brave heart and noble soul,
Fair History will record your fame,
And down the corridors of Time
With reverence men will speak your name.

REFLECTION

(On being defeated for District Attorney.)

I made the fight as I saw it,
And strove hard the vict'ry to gain;
I gave them the best that was in me,
And I know it has not been in vain.
What matter though I am defeated?
What matter though men say I lost?
I reckoned the fight when I made it, —
It was then that I counted the cost.
And still I shall fight in the future
In the way I have fought in the past,
And I know that the cause will yet triumph,
And the fight will be won at the last.
So pray let us be not discouraged
At the seeming defeat of a man, —
But let us go forward in earnest
To further the cause if we can.

(1914)

TO THE CLASS OF 1914, MERCED
UNION HIGH SCHOOL

Most learned, most wonderful Seniors,
Will ye list to the song I shall sing?
Will ye condescend for a moment,
To hark to the message I bring?

For I, myself, was a Senior,
And, it may be, a wise one, too;
Though, of course, in those days there were never
Such wonderful Seniors as you.

For your heads are just bursting with knowledge,
Your craniums crammed full of lore, —
And, methinks, it is doubtful if ever
Mere mortals have dared to know more.

Ye have delved into deep realms of Science,
Ye have pored over History's page,
Ye have waded through oceans of Classics, —
Gems of ancient and modern age.

Ye stand on the summit of Wisdom,
Yet I trust ye will never disdain
To speak to mere ignorant mortals,
Beneath your sublime mental plane.

Your work in the High is 'most finished,
Ah! ye leave a great record behind,
Which to equal will be far from easy,
As the class which succeeds you will find.

Yet be not too proud of your learning,
But strive to absorb even more;
Go forth now to new fields of conquest,
And add to your bountiful store.

Ye have youth — how I envy you, children! —
Ye have health, ye have Wisdom — and Fame,
And, methinks, with such odds in your favor,
Ye cannot but win in Life's game.

Most learned, most wonderful Seniors,
Here's wishing you all sorts of fun, —
May the Future cast bright smiles upon you,
May your River of Life smoothly run.

(1914)

LOS BANOS

Los Banos — of you I am thinking,
And happy the thoughts that are mine;
For the mem'ries of old I am drinking,
And those mem'ries of old are divine!

I think of the raptures of boyhood,
In the days when a carefree lad,
I wandered at will all about your confines,
And always my heart was glad.

I think of my boyhood playmates,
My partners in mischief, they;
What frolics we had in those dear old days!
What daredevil youngsters were we!

There were Cyrus and Dickie and Johnny and Joe,
And Skinny and Laurence and Grover;
A happier lot and a healthier lot
You might search for the country over.

I think of the Canal Farm orchard,
Which often "us kids" used to raid;
Ah! those grapes and those peaches, — their taste
lingers still;
Stolen fruit is the sweetest, indeed.

I think of that tumble-down bridge
On the old canal — not far from town,
Where often we angled for catfish and carp
From dawn till the sun went down.

I think of that narrow ditch, —
Along it tall blue-gums grew —
'Twas there we would swim with boyish delight,
As the warm summer days wore through;

'Twas there that we learned how to swim and to
float,
And how to "tread water," and dive;
'Twas there that we often played water-tag,
And in water-fights often did strive.

I think of the games that we played
In those dear old days that were:
Of marbles, of black-man, of one-o-cat,
And ever so many more.

I think of a hundred things
That filled those days with delight;
And, ah! it is sweet to call them to mind
As I sit here alone tonight.

For is there a greater rapture,
Or yet a more heavenly joy,
Than to turn back the pages of Memory's book
To the days when one was a boy?

Los Banos — of you I am thinking,
And happy the thoughts that are mine;
For the mem'ries of old I am drinking,
And those mem'ries of old are divine!

(1927)

A LEAP YEAR SONG

It's Leap Year, men, be on your guards, —
The damsels coy are watching;
And if we be unwary, sirs, —
Some fellows they'll be catching.

This is the year in every four,
That maidens have the asking
And soon no longer we may be
In Freedom's sunshine basking.

For, ah! these damsels have a way,
That's very, very charming;
And ere we even stop to think,
The danger is alarming.

But mark you well, you older ones,
Before you run away; —
Your chance may never come again
In many and many a day.

So if some damsel fair and coy
Should set a trap for you, —
Perhaps you'd better walk right in,
Or you may live to rue.

(1916)

TO THE CLASS OF NINETEEN TEN, HASTINGS COLLEGE OF THE LAW

Fellows, our college course is run,
Our Hastings days are ended; —
No more must we for daily class
Keep our poor selves extended;
No more the midnight oil we'll burn,
Nor ponder o'er examination;
No more the "roast" of prof we'll earn,
Nor hear the same with trepidation.

Upon a stormy legal sea
We all must set our barks afloat,
And oft, methinks, there'll come to be
Some very, very squally boating.
Full many times our barks may seem
In gravest danger of capsizing, —
But every single time, I ween,
We'll keep above by tact surprising.

And Hastings men will ne'er resort, —
No matter how the storm is raging, —
To tacks of a dishon'able sort,
The wrath of wind and wave assuaging.
To our ideals we'll still be true,
Our code of ethics we'll keep with us;
And thus we'll live the tempest through, —
Our consciences preserved within us.

Success too often in this age
Is measured by the dollars gained;
Too little do men seem to care
How wealth has been attained.
When'er to you temptations come:
Remember, wealth is not your goal;
Be quick to spurn the tempter's sum,
And keep the music of a soul.

For real success and true success, —
Success the only kind worth having,
The kind that leads to happiness,
The kind for which we all are striving, —
Is that which comes from honest ways
Of dealing with our fellow being,
An honest name, — thank God! — still pays, —
A truth the world is daily seeing.

And, fellows, let us each resolve,
As now we go out from this college:
That ne'er we'll make improper use
Of any portion of our knowledge;
That so we'll live and so we'll act,
That Hastings men may sometime say:
"Such men as these from here went forth, —
How nobly have they kept the way!"

O Hastings Class of Nineteen Ten,
Be worthy of your alma mater, —
For Hastings College e'er hath been
A foremost legal educator;
Armed with your sheepskin now go forth,
Priding yourself on its possession,
Be honest, upright, staunch and true,
A credit to your high profession.

(1910)

CITY-WEARINESS

Sometimes I wish to steal away
From all this hurrys-flurry,
And find myself at break of day,
Far from this scene of worry.

To sit within some garden spot,
Where all is green about me, —
Wher song of bird sounds pure and sweet,
And leaves thrill e'er so gently.

There might I dwell in blest content,
With never a worry or sorrow, —
There might I rest my weary self,
With never a thought about the morrow.

(1913)

A WISH

- to be up among the hills above Los Banos
At this most happy season of the year!
- to behold the green grass and the wild flowers!
'Twould surely fill me full of rare good cheer.
- to gaze o'er a sea of golden poppies
With buttercups and blue-bells in between!
- to drink in that fragrant wildflower perfume!
While sun shines bright and sky is all serene.

(1912)

BARBARA'S TWO

So you're two years old today,
Little Barbara Janvier;
Nut brown hair and dark blue eyes,
Cute enough to win a prize.

Likes to play with sister Jean,
Likes to romp and run,
Likes her bunny oh so much,
Thinks he's lots of fun.

Happy birthday, little miss,
Oh so young and gay;
Here's a great big hug and kiss;
Now go run and play!

(1950)

TEACHERS' PENSIONS

(The California legislature has passed an act providing for Teachers' pensions.—News item.)

School-ma'ams elate
In this, our state, —
The cause I scarcely need mention;
Full well is it known
They've come into their own, —
For the dear things will now get a pension.
After thirty short years
Of laughter and tears
In instructing the youth of the nation; —
Retire they may
On half of their pay; —
O joyful anticipation!

(1911)

FAREWELL TO MARIPOSA

Goodbye, cozy red-roofed cottage,
Dear home in the mountains, farewell!
We'll think of you there 'mid the oak trees,
No matter where we may dwell.

In romantic old Mariposa,
At the end of the Mother Lode;
Rich in the lore of the Gold Rush,
The days when Fremont rode.

You seem so calm and so restful,
Nestling down between the hills;
Ah those happy nights by the fireside,
The mem'ry of them still thrills!

We'll remember the warm winter sunshine,
The song of the birds in the spring,
The wildflowers, the red-bud, the moon thru the
trees,
The Courthouse clock's hourly ring.

So goodbye to our red-roofed cottage,
To our neighbors so friendly and kind;
We know we shall miss as now we depart
The joys we are leaving behind.

(1955)

THE MARIPOSA COURTHOUSE

There's a little white Courthouse, I'm leaving it
soon,

And somehow it seems hard to go,
For this Courthouse has found a place in my heart,
I shall miss it always, I know.

For here I have studied and labored and dreamed,
And hoped for advancement, too,

But, oh, in my triumph I'm dreary just now,
Goodbye, little Courthouse, to you!

And though I may sit in a courtroom ornate,
With appointments so modern and fine;

Yet well do I know as now I depart

I shall miss that old courtroom of mine;
I'll think of its white boarded ceiling and walls,
The long bench and the clean, polished floor,

And I know that in fancy I'll often come back
To sit in that courtroom once more.

I look from my chambers up into the hills,

In the distance Mt. Bullion I see;
Through the warm winter sunshine so clear and so
bright,

It seems to beckon to me.

The hills seem so cheery and peaceful and green,

With a charm one can never forget,
It's the thrill and romance of the old Mother Lode,
Where the pioneer spirit lives yet.

How stately you stand there amid the green hills,

A last wistful look and I go,
A century long you've stood there in the sun

Above the fog in the valley below;
Your famous old clock is just striking twelve,

Its tall tower points toward the sky,

And the time has come for me to depart,
So, little white Courthouse, goodbye!

(1953)

TO MY GRANDCHILDREN

To Barbara and Jean and Tommy,
Adele and Stephen, too;
David, Diane and baby Dean,
And the ever lively Drew.

Sometime perhaps in years to come
This page will meet your gaze;
And memory will take you back
To those dear childhood days.

And then no doubt you will recall
The tales your Grandpa told
Of how he braved the jungle
And slew the lion bold.

Of Sally and the coyote,
And about the big brown bear
That helped Rosemary in the woods
When she was lost in there.

About the fearsome crocodile
That Grandpa fought so well;
All these and other bed-time tales
That Grandpa used to tell.

And perhaps you used to wonder
If all those tales were true;
Yet they seemed more thrilling than the tales
Your Grandpa read to you.

And maybe in the future,
Long after you are grown,
You'll tell the stories Grandpa told
To children of your own.

And somewhere from some distant shore
Grandpa will smile at you,
Rejoicing that you've kept the faith,
And that your lives ring true.

(1962)