

## Selected Poetry

### O MATER DULCIS.

In Nazareth, I'd peep some day,  
To learn your rare unwonted way  
To watch you, with your boy at play,  
*Dulce ridentem.*

At eve I'd love to linger too,  
Hearing old mysteries made new,  
To learn true pondering from you  
*Dulce loquentem.*

And dare I ask that it might be  
My grace to feel awake in me  
That love, which held thee by the tree,  
*Dulce dolentem?*

—SISTER GRACE, R.S.U., in *America*.

### THERE IS A LADY SWEET AND KIND.

There is a lady sweet and kind.  
Was never face so pleased my mind;  
I did but see her passing by,  
And yet I love her till I die.

Her gesture, motion, and her smiles,  
Her wit, her voice my heart beguiles,  
Beguiles my heart, I know not why,  
And yet I love her till I die.

Cupid is winged and doth range,  
Her country so my love doth change;  
But change she earth, or change she sky,  
Yet will I love her till I die.  
—From Thomas Ford's *Musie of Sundry Kinds*, 1607.

### TO AN UNKNOWN ANCESTOR.

My gifts have come to me far down the  
years:  
I am the son of huntsmen of old time,  
The heir of timid virtue and of crime,  
Offspring of sluggards and of pioneers,  
Inheritor of juggled hopes and fears.  
Some gave me purity, some gave the grime  
Of damaged souls. Some of them helped  
my climb  
Toward God. From some came smiles, from  
others tears.

Oh, I am cluttered up with legacies  
Long lines of jumbled blood have handed  
down.  
Yet I thank God upon my hooded knees  
For him who, whether king or bawdy  
clown,  
By making sympathy his conscious art,  
Bequeathed the gift of kindness to my heart.  
—S. OMAR BARKER, in the *Stratford Monthly*

### PRAYERS.

God, Who created me  
Nimble and light of limb,  
In three elements free,  
To run, to ride, to swim:  
Not when the sense is dim,  
But now from the heart of joy,  
I would remember Him:  
Take the thanks of a boy.

Jesu, King and Lord,  
Whose are my foes to fight,  
Gird me with Thy sword,  
Swift and sharp and bright.  
Thee would I serve if I might,  
And conquer if I can;  
From day-dawn till night,  
Take the strength of a man.

Spirit of Love and Truth  
Breathing in grosser clay,  
The light and flame of youth,  
Delight of men in the fray,  
Wisdom in strength's decay;  
From pain, strife, wrong to be free,  
This best gift I pray,  
Take my spirit to Thee.  
—HENRY CHARLES BEECHING, in *An Anthology of Modern Verse*.

### MAGISTER LINGUISTICUS.

(Prize poem awarded by the Leache Memorial Association.)

His feet became too feeble for the stair  
And so they found him out a lower room  
Where academic clatter never came  
Along the musty academic hall  
And set up there his tall, discolored desk  
Beside the blackboard. There he sat and  
taught  
His group of meek, stoop-shouldered gradu-  
ates,  
Mouthing the accents of a dozen tongues  
And writing out their symbols on the board:  
"The Indo-European root stands thus" . . .  
Whence came the Sanskrit . . . so, the  
Latin . . . so;

And next by consonantal change we have  
It thus . . . the Old High German and the  
Norse;  
To-day a word or two sums up the tale  
In common talk. . . Slowly his palsied  
hands,  
Like twisted roots of dwarfed, storm-riven  
trees  
That clutched the blackened, prehistoric soil  
When once the Gothic hunter shook his spear  
And Attila lashed forth his Huns to war,  
Traced characters uncouth, dark roots of  
words,  
And from the fragments of forgotten speech  
Drew mystic laws of language, setting up  
His letters, like tin soldiers, in a row  
Invincible to ordinary minds.  
The continent had left its double mark  
Upon him, in a heavy knotted scarf  
And high, stiff collar, with the wings turned  
up.

(Style of old Leipzig and of Heidelberg)  
And in the faded wrinkle of a scar  
Along his chin, from student-duel days  
Before the classroom corner was his throne.  
He faced the sunset through his latter years  
As rugged as a cloistered Gothic tower  
Above some weather-grey monastic shrine  
The sepulchered old books of learned lore,  
Long treasured, till the archway crumbled in  
Where time crept under, gnawing at the  
stone.

—FRANCIS MASON, in the *Lyric*.

### PROMISE.

Be not so desolate  
Because thy dreams have flown,  
And the hall of the heart is empty  
And silent as stone,  
As age left by children  
Sad and alone.

Those delicate children,  
Thy dreams, still endure.  
All pure and lovely things  
Wend to the Pure.  
Sigh not. Unto the fold  
Their way was sure.

Thy gentlest dreams, thy frailest,  
Even those that were  
Born and lost in a heart beat,  
Shall meet thee there.  
They are become immortal  
In shining air.

The unattainable beauty,  
The thought of which was pain,  
That flickered in eyes and on lips  
And vanished again;  
That fugitive beauty  
Thou shalt attain.

Those lights innumerable  
That led thee on and on,  
The Masque of Time ended,  
Shall glow into one  
That shall be with thee for ever,  
Thy travel done.

—Æ, in the *Irish Statesman*.

### THE LOVERS.

Years passed like chinking organs in the  
street,  
Grinding for coppers their eternal dance;  
It seemed to him and her there was no  
chance  
That they might ever meet:

A few words long ago they had to say,  
A look—a flower pressed into a hand—  
And then, along the horizon of the land  
The light poured out and fiercely died the  
day.

Now, in the night, they sat, each one apart,  
While the years, trundling their organs,  
ground together  
A dreary riotous dance, that in grey weather  
Wakened the same old ache within each  
heart.

Under the touch of time, thin wrinkles fell  
And tightened round their eyes. Now they  
were old.  
Dark, bitter ashes in a cup of gold  
Was all the past. The present was slow  
hell.

Yet, ere they died, they were once more  
united  
As two stars rushing to destroy each other:  
The thickening crust of years no more could  
smother  
Their hearts—the horizon rose and was up-  
lighted—  
Grief faded out before their final bliss  
That rose to birth out of the lonely places,  
They had passed over an immense abyss  
And the pale light of the dawn smote on  
their faces.

—JOHN GOULD FLETCHER, in *The Lyric*.