

Classic Poetry Series

Katharine Tynan
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Katharine Tynan(23 January 1861 - 2 April 1931)

Katharine Tynan was an Irish-born writer, known mainly for her novels and poetry. After her marriage in 1898 to the writer and barrister Henry Albert Hinkson (1865–1919) she usually wrote under the name Katharine Tynan Hinkson (or Katharine Tynan-Hinkson or Katharine Hinkson-Tynan). Of their three children, Pamela Hinkson (1900–1982) was also known as a writer.

Biography

Tynan was born into a large farming family in Clondalkin, County Dublin, and educated at a convent school in Drogheda. Her poems were first published in 1878. She met and became friendly with the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1886. Tynan went on to play a major part in Dublin literary circles, until she married and moved to England; later she lived at Claremorris, County Mayo when her husband was a magistrate there from 1914 until 1919.

For a while, Tynan was a close associate of [William Butler Yeats](http://www.poemhunter.com/william-butler-yeats) (who may have proposed marriage and been rejected, around 1885), and later a correspondent of Francis Ledwidge. She is said to have written over 100 novels; there were some unsurprising comments about a lack of self-criticism in her output. Her *Collected Poems* appeared in 1930; she also wrote five autobiographical volumes.

A Birth-Night Song

The Child is rocked on Mary's knee,
Cold in the stall this bitter night,
And 'Lullalay-loo,' soft singeth she,
'My little Boy and Heaven's Delight!'
When singing stars went up the sky
The Prince of Peace oped a sweet eye.

His Highness now how small He lies!
He to be God and Very God!
A Jacob's ladder spans the skies
Whereof each rung is angel-trod,
And all their carols are of Peace,
Though the sick world hath little ease.

Come in, poor war-worn folk, and rest;
Kneel where the sinless creatures kneel;
The Babe snugged warm in Mother's breast,
He is your Wound-Wort, your All-Heal
Balsam for hurts that throb and smart,
Small Rose of Love on Mary's heart.

Shut close within His hand so small
The sick heart's medicine; not a sword.
Come in, come in, sad people all,
Here is your ancient peace restored!
'Lullalay-loo,' sings Mary mild,
Kissing her God, her Lamb, her Child.

Katharine Tynan

A Colloquy: (For M. W.)

'When you get to Heaven, seek and find my boy.
Mother him!' 'Until you come?' 'I shall never come.
Earth was good enough for me who had all my joy
In my Love, my Light of home.

'But to him be given, in overflowing measure,
All the joys your Heaven can give if your God be just!
He, my boy slain in his youth to serve some mad king's pleasure
And his dreams and hopes in dust.'

'How shall I know him where so many boys are?
Multitudes and multitudes ever they increase.'
'Oh, my boy is young and tall, with bird-russet hair
And quiet eyes of peace.

'He who was killed in a quarrel not his own!
All his days he had good-will to his fellow-men.
Oh, your God is kind and just, shall He not atone
And the dark ways be made plain?

'Seek my son and find him, so he shall not miss
Me, his mother-comrade, through his length of days.'
'Oh, but he would turn from a strange woman's kiss
And ask where his mother delays.

'So be up and going for the way's not long!
God who kissed His Mother dear, a Babe in Nazareth,
Knows how they need mother-love, the dear and precious young,
In the new Life where is no Death.'

Katharine Tynan

A Connaught Man (For Hugh Maguire)

Lord, when he shall come home from war,
Give him no pastures green,
But a wet wind and a soft wind
With reek of turf between.

Nor let Thy light shine overmuch
Lest that his soul should fret
For the grey mist and silver mist
That he will not forget.

Build him no pearl-white palaces
Nor gardens fair and fine,
Lest for his bare, far-stretching bogs
His home-sick heart should pine.

Not groves, nor any vermeil walks,
Nor flowery pastures pied,
But the great sweep of sky and land
And the hills at eventide.

Lord, when the men come from the war,
Give each man his desire!
Give him the soft wind and the rain
And the reek of the turf fire.

Katharine Tynan

A Gardener-Sage

Here in the garden-bed,
Hoeing the celery,
Wonders the Lord has made
Pass ever before me.

I see the young birds build,
And swallows come and go,
And summer grow and gild,
And winter die in snow.

Many a thing I note,
And store it in my mind,
For all my ragged coat
That scarce will stop the wind.
I light my pipe and draw,
And, leaning on my spade,
I marvel with much awe
O'er all the Lord hath made.

Now, here's a curious thing:
Upon the first of March
The crow goes house-building
In the elm and in the larch.
And be it shine or snow,
Though many winds carouse,
That day the artful crow
Begins to build his house.

But then-the wonder's big !
If Sunday fell that day,
Nor straw, nor screw, nor twig,
Till Monday would he lay.
His black wings to his side,
He'd drone upon his perch,
Subdued and holy-eyed
As though he were in church.

The crow's a gentleman
Not greatly to my mind,
He'll steal what seeds he can,

And all you hide he'll find.
Yet though he's bully and sneak,
To small birds, bird of prey,
He counts the days of the week,
And keeps the Sabbath Day.

Katharine Tynan

A Girl's Song

The Meuse and Marne have little waves;
The slender poplars o'er them lean.
One day they will forget the graves
That give the grass its living green.

Some brown French girl the rose will wear
That springs above his comely head;
Will twine it in her russet hair,
Nor wonder why it is so red.

His blood is in the rose's veins,
His hair is in the yellow corn.
My grief is in the weeping rains
And in the keening wind forlorn.

Flow softly, softly, Marne and Meuse;
Tread lightly all ye browsing sheep;
Fall tenderly, O silver dews,
For here my dear Love lies asleep.

The earth is on his sealèd eyes,
The beauty marred that was my pride;
Would I were lying where he lies,
And sleeping sweetly by his side!

The Spring will come by Meuse and Marne,
The birds be blithesome in the tree.
I heap the stones to make his cairn
Where many sleep as sound as he.

Katharine Tynan

A Hero

He was so foolish, the poor lad,
He made superior people smile
Who knew not of the wings he had
Budding and growing all the while;
Nor that the laurel wreath was made
Already for his curly head.

Silly and childish in his ways;
They said: 'His future comes to naught.'
His future! In the dreadful days
When in a toil his feet were caught
He hacked his way to glory bright
Before his day went down in night.

He fretted wiser folk--small blame!
Such futile, feeble brains were his.
Now we doff hats to hear his name,
Ask pardon where his spirit is,
Because we never guessed him for
A hero in the disguise he wore.

It matters little how we live
So long as we may greatly die.
Fashioned for great things, O forgive
Our dullness in the days gone by!
Now glory wraps you like a cloak
From us, and all such common folk.

Katharine Tynan

A Holy Week Song, 1918

Now when Christ died for man his sake
A myriad men must die;
His Via Crucis they must take
And share His Calvary.
God keep ye, gallant gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Who share Lord Jesus Christ His pain
Upon this Good Friday!

Now some shall turn and meet His gaze
And say, 'Remember me
When Thou art come to Thine own place
Where ransomed sinners be!
God rest ye, gallant gentlemen,
For ye are bought with price,
This day there wends a shining train
The way to Paradise.

The day our Lord Christ lay in grave
The dead are piled so high
The field slow-moving like a wave
Sends up a mortal cry.
God love ye, gallant gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For life is born and Death is slain
Upon the Easter Day.

Katharine Tynan

A Lament

CLOUDS is under clouds and rain
For there will not come again
Two, the beloved sire and son
Whom all gifts were rained upon.

Kindness is all done, alas,
Courtesy and grace must pass,
Beauty, wit and charm lie dead,
Love no more may wreath the head.

Now the branch that waved so high
No wind tosses to the sky;
There's no flowering time to come,
No sweet leafage and no bloom.

Percy, golden-hearted boy,
In the heyday of his joy
Left his new-made bride and chose
The steep way that Honour goes.

Took for his the deathless song
Of the love that knows no wrong:
Could I love thee, dear, so true
Were not Honour more than you?

(Oh, forgive, dear Lovelace, laid
In this mean Procrustean bed!)
Dear, I love thee best of all
When I go, at England's call.

In our magnificent sky aglow
How shall we this Percy know
Where he shines among the suns

And the planets and the moons?

Percy died for England, why,
Here's a sign to know him by!
There's one dear and fixed star,
There's a youngling never far.

Percy and his father keep
The old loved companionship,
And shine downward in one ray
Where at Clouds they wait for day.

Katharine Tynan

A Prayer { For Those Who Shall Return }

LORD, when they come back again
From the dreadful battlefield
To the common ways of men,
Be Thy mercy, Lord, revealed!
Make them to forget the dread
Fields of dying and the dead!

Let them go unhaunted, Lord,
By the sights that they have seen:
Guard their dreams from shell and sword;
Lead them by the pastures green,
That they wander all night long
In the fields where they were young.

Grant no charnel horrors slip
'Twixt them and their child's soft face.
Breast to breast and lip to lip,
Let the lovers meet, embrace!
Be they innocent of all
Memories that affright, appal.

Let their ears love music still,
And their eyes rejoice to see
Glory on the sea and hill,
Beauty in the flower and tree.
Drop a veil that none may raise
Over dreadful nights and days.

Katharine Tynan

A Song For The New Year {1915}

THE Year of the Sorrows went out with great wind:
Lift up, lift up, O broken hearts, your Lord is kind,
And He shall call His flock home where no storms be
Into a sheltered haven out of sound of the sea.

There shall be bright sands there and a milken hill,
They shall lie in the sun there and drink their fill,
They shall have dew and shade there and grass to the knee,
Safe in a sheltered haven out of sound of the sea.

He shall bind their wounds up and their tears shall cease:
They shall have sweetest pillows and a bed of ease.
Come up, come up and hither, O little flock, saith He,
Ye shall have sheltered havens out of sound of the sea.

The first day of New Year strewed the sea with dead.
Lift up, lift up, O broken heart and hanging head!
The Lord walks on the waters and a Shepherd is He
They shall have sheltered havens out of sound of the sea.

Katharine Tynan

A Song Of Going

I would not like to live to be very old,
To be stripped cold and bare
Of all my leafage that was green and gold
In the delicious air.

I would not choose to live to be left alone,
The children gone away,
And the true love that I have leant upon
No more my staff and stay.

I would not live to stretch my shrivelled hands
To an old fire died low,
Minding me of the long-lost happy lands
And children long ago.

Let me be gone while I am leafy yet
And while my birds still sing,
Lest leafless, birdless, my dull heart forget
That ever it had Spring.

Katharine Tynan

A Song Of Spring

The Spring comes slowly up this way,
Slowly, slowly,
Under a snood of hodden grey.

The black and white for her array,
Slowly, slowly,
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

Where is her green that was so gay?
Slowly, slowly,
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

Unto a world too sick for May,
Slowly, slowly,
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

Where are the lads that used to play?
Slowly, slowly,
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

She has no heart for holiday,
Slowly, slowly,
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

The trees are out in Heaven they say.
Slowly, slowly,
The Spring comes slowly up our way.

Katharine Tynan

A Woman Commends Her Little Son

To the aid of my little son
I call all the magnalities --
Archangel, Dominion,
Powers and Principalities.

Mary without a stain,
Joseph that was her spouse,
All God's women and men,
Out of His glorious House.

The Twelve Apostles by him:
Matthew and Mark and John,
Luke, the Evangelists nigh him,
So he fight not alone.

Patrick, Columcille, Bride --
The Saints of the Irish nation;
Keiran, Kevin beside,
In the death and the desolation.

Listen, ye soldier saints,
Sebastian, Ignatius, Joan,
Be by his side; if he faints,
Strengthen my little son.

In the Side of Christ I lay him,
In the Wound that the spear made;
In the pierced Hands I stay him,
So I am not afraid.

On the knees of the Blessed Mary
And in the fold of her arm,
Refuge and sanctuary
Where he shall take no harm.

To the Wound in the Heart of Christ,
To the Trinity Three in One,
To the Blood spilled out, unpriced,
For love of my little son.

Katharine Tynan

Adveniat Regnum Tuum

Thy kingdom come ! Yea, bid it come!
But when Thy kingdom first began
On earth, Thy kingdom was a home,
A child, a woman, and a man.

The child was in the midst thereof,
O, blessed Jesus, holiest One!
The centre and the fount of love
Mary and Joseph's little Son.

Wherever on the earth shall be
A child, a woman, and a man,
Imaging that sweet trinity
Wherewith Thy kingdom first began,

Establish there Thy kingdom! Yea,
And o'er that trinity of love
Send down, as in Thy appointed day,
The brooding spirit of Thy Dove!

Katharine Tynan

After Ascension

Those twelve years from Ascension
Until the day of meeting broke,
She was not so much all alone
As it might seem to common folk,
Because no day passed without bliss:
He gives Himself back to her kiss.

He comes no more in human guise,
Yet He is in their midst again.
His wounds are there in all men's eyes,
So doubting Thomas sees them plain;
They pour the Wine and break the Bread,
And the heart's hunger's comforted.

The Apostle takes the Cup of Wine,
The white Bread on the paten bright,
O Food of angels dear, divine!
The Lord of Life comes down in light,
And sweeter than the honeycomb
Rests in the heart that was His home.

Give place! His Mother's claim is first;
Her arms embrace her Son once more:
On the kind breast where He was nurst
He hath sweet ease as oft before.
Morn after morn, through the twelve years,
His love makes rapture of her tears.

She guards the youngling Church as once
She kept her small Son while He grew,
Safe sheltered from the winds and suns,
Comforted with soft rain and dew;
Till it's full-grown and she is free
For the long bliss that is to be.

Katharine Tynan

Alienation

For the first time since he was born
Her son, her rose without a thorn,
They are at variance, they who were
Always such closest friends and dear.
Another face is in his dreams
Under the sunbeams and moonbeams.

In his changed glances she discovers
Something, some chill between two lovers --
Something of fear, and oh, it hurts!
But shall not Love have its deserts
And win forgiveness, though she still
Sets her poor will against his will?

For all day long the battle calls,
And in the quiet evenfalls,
And in the night which else is dumb,
He hears the bugle and the drum.
And the wild longing in him stirs
For the fierce battle. He's not hers,

But she her hidden way will keep,
Striving against him even in sleep,
Praying against him loud and low,
'Pity me, so he may not go!'
Calling on Heaven that it conspire
Against him and his heart's desire.

God pity mothers when their sons
Grow cold, that were their little ones!

Katharine Tynan

All Souls

THERE'S traffic in the worlds immortal,
For many souls are flying home,
Striving and pushing at the portal
For sight of glorious things to come.

What rout of wings against the sunset?
What rosy plumes the dawning bar?
Heaven's stormed with gay and happy onset
Of youngling things home from the War.

Against the inverted cup of azure,
Against the evening, peach and green,
The frolicsome young souls take their pleasure,
Darting the silver stars between.

Though the old nests be sad, forsaken,
The cotes of Heaven are yet unfilled:
In trees of Heaven as yet untaken
The immortal Loves lift hearts and build.

Katharine Tynan

Any Mother

'What's the news? Now tell it me.'
'Allenby again advances.'
'No, it is not Allenby
But my boy, straight as a lance is.

'Oh, my boy it is that runs,
Hurls his young and slender body
On the dread death-dealing guns.
Oh, he's down! his head is bloody!'

'Haig's offensive has begun.'
'Say not Haig's nor any other,
Since it is my one sweet son
In the gases' risk and smother.

'He is taken by the throat,
In the bursting flame will quiver,
He the billet for all shot,
He the shell's objective ever.'

So not Allenby nor Haig,
But her darling goes to battle.
All the world's red mist and vague
Shattered by the scream and rattle.

Just one slender shape she sees,
One bright head tossed hither, thither;
Oh, if he goes down the seas
Whelm her and the world together!

Katharine Tynan

Any Woman

I am the pillars of the house;
The keystone of the arch am I.
Take me away, and roof and wall
Would fall to ruin me utterly.

I am the fire upon the hearth,
I am the light of the good sun,
I am the heat that warms the earth,
Which else were colder than a stone.

At me the children warm their hands;
I am their light of love alive.
Without me cold the hearthstone stands,
Nor could the precious children thrive.

I am the twist that holds together
The children in its sacred ring,
Their knot of love, from whose close tether
No lost child goes a-wandering.

I am the house from floor to roof,
I deck the walls, the board I spread;
I spin the curtains, warp and woof,
And shake the down to be their bed.

I am their wall against all danger,
Their door against the wind and snow,
Thou Whom a woman laid in a manger,
Take me not till the children grow!

Katharine Tynan

Autumnal

THE Autumn leaves are dying quietly,
Scarlet and orange, underfoot they lie;
They had their youth and prime
And now's the dying time;
Alas, alas, the young, the beloved, must die!

They are dying like the leaves of Autumn fast,
Scattered and broken, blown on every blast:
The darling young, the brave,
Love had no power to save.
Poor Love-lies-bleeding, Love's in ruins, downcast.

Alas, alas, the Autumn leaves are flying!
They had their Summer and 'tis time for dying.
But these had barely Spring.
Love trails a broken wing,
Walks through deserted woods, moaning and sighing.

Katharine Tynan

Blessings

God bless the little orchard brown
Where the sap stirs these quickening days.
Soon in a white and rosy gown
The trees will give great praise.

God knows I have it in my mind,
The white house with the golden eaves.
God knows since it is left behind
That something grieves and grieves.

God keep the small house in his care,
The garden bordered all in box,
Where primulas and wallflowers are
And crocuses in flocks.

God keep the little rooms that ope
One to another, swathed in green,
Where honeysuckle lifts her cup
With jessamine between.

God bless the quiet old grey head
That dreams beside the fire of me,
And makes home there for me indeed
Over the Irish Sea.

Katharine Tynan

Christmas In The Year Of The War

NEVERTHELESS this Year of Grief
The Tree of God's in leaf.

The stem, the branch quickeneth
With sap, this year of Death.

For in the time of the flowering thorn
The Babe, the Babe, is born!

Christ's folk, look up, be not dismayed,
The Lord's in the cattle shed.

He comes, a little trembling One,
To a world else lost, undone.

With His poor folk He wills to stay
In this their difficult day.

Poor war-worn world, you shall have ease!
He signs your lasting peace.

He hath given His people rest from wars,
By the cold light of stars.

The charter of their peace shall stand
Writ by His hour-old hand.

The Tree of Paradise quickeneth.
Be still,--there is no death!

Colours

Blues and greens are my delight
Set in garlands of the white.

When God made the violet
He made nothing better yet.

Lilac and the lavender
Fit for queens of Heaven to wear.

Many russets and the rose,
God be praised for these and those!

For the silvers and the greys
Likewise ye shall give Him praise.

Scarlet is a King's colour
That the King of Kings once wore.

Yet when everything is said,
Bring me neither rose nor red.

Give me blue and green below,
Apple bloom and cherry snow.

Blue forget-me-nots beneath
Pear and plum-bloom in a wreath.

Or wild hyacinths in a glade --
Nothing better God has made.

Blues and greens and a white bough
Turn the earth to Heaven now.

Katharine Tynan

Comfort

Now she need dread no more to grow
Too old for him, she need not know
The bitterness when he who was
All hers turns to some younger face,
And she his mother stands aside,
Bidding her heart be satisfied.

She need not to her own heart say,
'Fool, to be jealous! Now give way.
The young are for the young, and all
The new things are but natural.
Cast no least shadow on his feast;
Be glad just to be second best.'

She need not to her chill heart tell
She's loved a different way, but well.
And like that bird who leans her heart
Upon a thorn to ease its smart
Turn to the child who's taken his love
So that her darling son approve.

Now she's no longer dispossessed --
For second best's but second best --
He's hers for all Eternity
And she his one felicity.
Her little son, as when he lay
Small in her arms one heavenly day.

Katharine Tynan

Dead- A Prisoner

He died the loneliest death of all,
Amid his foes he died.
But Someone's leaped the outer wall
And Someone's come inside,
And he has gotten a golden key
To set the lonesome prisoner free.

It was not Peter with the keys,
The heavenly janitor,
Who has passed them like a rushing breeze,
The gaolers at the door,
And to His bosom as a bed
Has taken the unmothered head.

A great light in the prison shone
That made the people blind:
Rise up, rise up, new-ransomed one,
And taste the sun and wind:
For I have gotten a golden key
To set all lonesome prisoners free.

Yea they shall soar, shall spring aloft;
Their gyves shall not be rough,
But just the links of love, so soft
That they shall not cast off.
Rise up, my dear, and come away.'
And they went out to the great day.

Katharine Tynan

Distraction

When swarms of small distractions harry
Devotion like the gnats that fly
Till prayers are cold and customary,
Not such as please Thee, Heaven-high.

When I forget for all my striving
Thy presence holy and august,
Be Thou not angry, but forgiving
To her Thou madest from the dust.

Say to Thyself: This mortal being,
So deaf, so blind, so prone to sin,
Has glimpses of Me without seeing
The places where the nails went in.

Say: Through the crusts of earth, My creature
Perceives Me, hails Me Lord above;
Rumours of the lost innocence reach her,
With full assurance of My love.

Say: Of all marvels I have fashioned
Is none more wonderful and new
As that this thing should go impassioned
For heights beyond her mortal view.

What though her mind should play and ponder
On small things meet for such as she!
O love! O loyalty! O wonder!
That in the darkness gropes for Me.

Katharine Tynan

Easter

Bring flowers to strew His way,
Yea, sing, make holiday;
Bid young lambs leap,
And earth laugh after sleep.

For now He cometh forth
Winter flies to the north,
Folds wings and cries
Amid the bergs and ice.

Yea, Death, great Death is dead,
And Life reigns in his stead;
Cometh the Athlete
New from dead Death's defeat.

Cometh the Wrestler,
But Death he makes no stir,
Utterly spent and done,
And all his kingdom gone.

Katharine Tynan

Emptiness

Where there is nothing God comes in:
The Very God has room enough
In the poor heart that's stripped so clean
Of earth and all the joys thereof.

I looked for shadow and the night
When Death had taken her Love away,
But for the darkness there was light,
And for the night clear floods of day.

Great light that filled it to the brim
And overflowed and spilt around,
Flowing from Him, pulsing from Him,
And all the heart was holy ground.

The earth, the heavens, cannot contain
Our God, nor any starry place;
But He who takes delight with men
Bounds Him within a narrow space.

And where her poor heart bleeds and breaks
Because her dearest Love is dead,
The Lord of Life comes in and takes
Warm to His arms the piteous head.

Katharine Tynan

Epiphany: (For Dora, 1918)

She carried frankincense and gold
When the Star guided her,
And in her folded hands so cold
She carried myrrh.

Frankincense for the praise she owed,
Gold for her gift was meet,
But myrrh because so oft her road
Was bitter-sweet.

Lay her tired body in that earth
Was holy to her mind!
But the bird-soul flies in high mirth,
Borne on the wind.

It tosses in the Irish skies
Awhile, so small and white,
Ere it is gone -- swiftly it flies
Into the light.

She has gone in with the Three Kings,
In silk and miniver;
The gold, the frankincense she brings,
The sharp-sweet myrrh.

Katharine Tynan

Farewell

Not soon shall I forget--a sheet
Of golden water, cold and sweet,
The young moon with her head in veils
Of silver, and the nightingales.

A wain of hay came up the lane--
O fields I shall not walk again,
And trees I shall not see, so still
Against a sky of daffodil!

Fields where my happy heart had rest,
And where my heart was heaviest,
I shall remember them at peace
Drenched in moon-silver like a fleece.

The golden water sweet and cold,
The moon of silver and of gold,
The dew upon the gray grass-spears,
I shall remember them with tears.

Katharine Tynan

Flower O' The Year

The laggard year is now at prime
And primrose-time is daffodil-time;
Where do the boys delay? What tether
Hinders them from the heavenly weather,
From violet-time and cowslip-time?

Why do they keep the house so late?
The sweet o' the year is at the gate,
And hear the cuckoo calling, saying:
Up, slug-a-bed! 'Tis time for Maying!
The cuckoo calling early and late.

They have stolen away before the dawn,
No print in the May-dew on the lawn
Betrays the way their light feet taking
Set not the quaking grass to shaking,
Running so light-foot in the dawn.

The primrose and the daffodil weather
Is here, and cowslips troop together;
The lambs frolic in pastures gold,
But since they come not it is cold.
Cold the primrose and daffodil weather.

Katharine Tynan

Flower Of Youth

LEST Heaven be thronged with grey-beards hoary,
God, who made boys for His delight,
Stoops in a day of grief and glory
And calls them in, in from the night.
When they come trooping from the war
Our skies have many a new gold star.

Heaven's thronged with gay and careless faces,
New-waked from dreams of dreadful things,
They walk in green and pleasant places
And by the crystal water-springs
Who dreamt of dying and the slain,
And the fierce thirst and the strong pain.

Dear boys! They shall be young for ever.
The Son of God was once a boy.
They run and leap by a clear river
And of their youth they have great joy.
God, who made boys so clean and good,
Smiles with the eyes of fatherhood.

Now Heaven is by the young invaded;
Their laughter's in the House of God.
Stainless and simple as He made it
God keeps the heart o' the boy unflawed.
The old wise Saints look on and smile,
They are so young and without guile.

Oh! if the sonless mothers, weeping,
And widowed girls could look inside
The glory that hath them in keeping
Who went to the Great War, and died,
They would rise and put their mourning off,
And say: 'Thank God, he has enough!'

Katharine Tynan

For The Airmen

THOU who guidest the swallow and wren,
Keep the paths of the flying men!

Over the mountains, over the seas
Thou hast given the bird-folk compasses.

Thou guidest them, yea, Thou leadest them home
By the trackless ways and the venturesome.

Look Thou then on these bird-men, far
More than the sparrows and swallows are.

When they fly in the wintry weather
Be their compass and chart together.

Keep them riding the wind. Uphold
Their passion of flight lest it grow cold.

Thy right hand be under the wing,
Thy left hand for their steadying.

The Wings of the birds of Heaven be nigh
Lest their wings fail them and they die.

Make Thou their flying as deft and fleet
As the flight of the linnet or the blue-tit.

Thy hand over them, shall they fear
The spears of lightning or any spear?

Thy hand under them, what shall appal?
Not the fierce foe nor the sudden fall.

Show them Thy moon at night: Thy stars
Bid stand as sentinels in their wars.

Yea, make their lone tracks pleasant as
A soft meandering path in grass.

Thou that launchest the wren, the swallow
Guard our flying loves when they follow.

Katharine Tynan

Good Friday, A.D. 33

Mother, why are people crowding now and staring?
Child, it is a malefactor goes to His doom,
To the high hill of Calvary He's faring,
And the people pressing and pushing to make room
Lest they miss the sight to come.

Oh, the poor malefactor, heavy is His load!
Now He falls beneath it and they goad Him on.
Sure the road to Calvary's a steep up-hill road --
Is there none to help Him with His Cross -- not one?
Must He bear it all alone?

Here is a country boy with business in the city,
Smelling of the cattle's breath and the sweet hay;
Now they bid him lift the Cross, so they have some pity:
Child, they fear the malefactor dies on the way
And robs them of their play.

Has He no friends then, no father nor mother,
None to wipe the sweat away nor pity His fate?
There's a woman weeping and there's none to soothe her:
Child, it is well the seducer expiate
His crimes that are so great.

Mother, did I dream He once bent above me,
This poor seducer with the thorn-crowned head,
His hands on my hair and His eyes seemed to love me?
Suffer little children to come to Me, He said --
His hair, his brows drip red.

Hurrying through Jerusalem on business or pleasure
People hardly pause to see Him go to His death
Whom they held five days ago more than a King's treasure,
Shouting Hosannas, flinging many a wreath
For this Jesus of Nazareth.

Katharine Tynan

Haymaking

Aye, sure, it does always be rainin'
An' the hay lyin' out in the wet,
But what's the good o' complainin'?
It never made things better yet!
There'll be musty hay in the manger,
The cow's goin' dry, be mischance,
And the boy that went for a Ranger
Is lost on us -- somewhere in France!

The father of him, it's heart-breakin' --
Wid a watery glint o' the sun,
It's out wid him, turnin' an' shakin' --
Then all the labour's undone.
There won't be much savin' in Connaught,
The winter'll be hungry and black,
But I wouldn't waste sorrow upon it
If only the boy could come back!

There's a terrible cloud over Nephin,
An' the rain rushin' up from the say,
Och, what if the hay is past savin'?
I wouldn't be mindin' the hay.
'Tis the loss of the boy's bent me double,
An' the poor ould man is as bad;
I'm starvin' for him, an' the trouble,
The trouble's heavy and sad.

God's good and He'll send better weather,
The sun'll be shinin' again,
If Pat and me was together
I wouldn't be mindin' the rain.
No matter what weather was in it
I wouldn't care if he'd come.
But the heart o' me's cryin' this minit,
For the boy that'll never come home!

Katharine Tynan

Herbal

Love-lies-bleeding now is found
Grown in every common ground.
Love-lies-bleeding thrives apace
With the dear forget-me-not:
Nor is boy's love out of place
Now in any garden plot.

Love-in-a-mist, bewildered
With the many tears Love shed,
Seeks for herb-o'-grace to bind
Up her wounds, and fever-few
To give ease to a hurt mind;
Wound-wort is not wanting too.

Now the love-lies-bleeding grows
More than lily or the rose;
Love-in-idleness has gone
Out of fashion; here are flowers
Heartsease for to rest upon
With remembrance of sweet hours.

Ladders-to-heaven may be found
Now in any common ground.

Katharine Tynan

High Summer

Pinks and syringa in the garden closes
And the sweet privet hedge and golden roses.
The pines hot in the sun, the drone of the bee;
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

The long sunny days and the still weather,
The cuckoo and the blackbird shouting together,
The lambs calling their mothers out on the lea;
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

The doors and windows open: South wind blowing
Warm through the clean sweet rooms, on tip-toe going,
Where many sanctities, dear and delightful be --
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

Daisies leaping in foam on the green grasses,
The dappled sky and the stream that sings as it passes --
These are bought with a price, a bitter fee --
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

Katharine Tynan

His Footstep

To Lady Wemyss

The boy will come no more
Although I listen and long;
The sound of his foot on the floor
Was like an old song.

His foot had the music in it,
And now the music's dumb --
Like the song of the lark or linnet
Glad that Spring's come.

There's nothing stirring at all, --
'Tis quiet all by yourself, --
But a wee mouse in the wall,
The clock ticks on the shelf.

Like the song of the lark or linnet,
That's singing early and soon,
His foot had the music in it
Like an old tune.

Katharine Tynan

Immortality

So I have sunk my roots in earth
Since that my pretty boys had birth;
And fear no more the grave and gloom,
I, with the centuries to come.

As the tree blossoms so bloom I,
Flinging wild branches to the sky;
Renew each year my leafy suit,
Strike with the years a deeper root.

Shelter a thousand birds to be,
A thousand herds give praise to me;
And in my kind and grateful shade
How many a weary head be laid.

I clothe myself without a stain.
In me a child is born again,
A child that looks with innocent eyes
On a new world with glad surprise.

The old mistakes are all undone,
All the old sins are purged and gone.
Old wounds and scars have left no trace,
There are no lines in this young face.

To hear the cuckoo the first time,
And 'mid new roses in the prime
To read the poets newly. This,
Year after year, shall be my bliss.

Of me shall love be born anew;
I shall be loved and lover too;
Years after this poor body has died
Shall be the bridegroom and the bride.

Of me shall mothers spring to know
The mother's bliss, the mother's woe;
And children's children yet to be
Shall learn their prayers about my knee.

And many million lights of home
Shall light for me the time to come.
Unto me much shall be forgiven,
I that make many souls for heaven.

Katharine Tynan

Indian Summer

This is the sign!

This flooding splendour, golden and hyaline,
This sun a golden sea on hill and plain, --
That God forgets not, that He walks with men.
His smile is on the mountain and the pool
And all the fairy lakes are beautiful.

This is the word!

That makes a thing of flame the water-bird.
This mercy of His fulfilled in the magical
Clear glow of skies from dawn to evenfall,
Telling His Hand is over us, that we
Are not delivered to the insatiable sea.

This is the pledge!

The promise writ in gold to the water's edge:
His bow's in Heaven and the great floods are over.
Oh, broken hearts, lift up! The Immortal Lover
Embraces, comforts with the enlivening sun,
The sun He bids stand still till the day is won.

Katharine Tynan

Joining The Colours

THERE they go marching all in step so gay!
Smooth-cheeked and golden, food for shells and guns.
Blithely they go as to a wedding day,
The mothers' sons.

The drab street stares to see them row on row
On the high tram-tops, singing like the lark.
Too careless-gay for courage, singing they go
Into the dark.

With tin whistles, mouth-organs, any noise,
They pipe the way to glory and the grave;
Foolish and young, the gay and golden boys
Love cannot save.

High heart! High courage! The poor girls they kissed
Run with them : they shall kiss no more, alas!
Out of the mist they stepped-into the mist
Singing they pass.

Katharine Tynan

Lambs

He sleeps as a lamb sleeps,
Beside his mother.
Somewhere in yon blue deeps
His tender brother
Sleeps like a lamb and leaps.

He feeds as a lamb might,
Beside his mother.
Somewhere in fields of light
A lamb, his brother,
Feeds, and is clothed in white.

Katharine Tynan

Lament

To the Immortal Tenth (Irish) Division

Suvla, name of bitterness,
Myrrh and aloes in the mouth,
Salt as Dead Sea water is!
All that splendour, all that youth,
All that nobleness! Oh, waste
Of the dearest, loveliest!

Sands of Suvla, scarlet-dyed,
Where the Cross is down in shame
And the Crescent flaunts its pride!
Was it for this they went aflame,
The young shining sons we nursed,
For the fire and the fierce thirst?

Suvla, that is holy ground
Sown so thick with martyr's seed:
There's no Christ now, but Mahound,
Now the Prophet and his breed
Hold the hill, their glorious grave,
Where they died but could not save.

Savage sun and brassy sky,
Rocks from which no waters sprung,
Was it for this we gave to die
All our beautiful, our young
Dear dead darlings sacrificed?
Thou, -- wilt Thou repay, Lord Christ?

Katharine Tynan

Lenton Communion

Rest in a friend's house, Dear, I pray:
The way is long to Good Friday,
And very chill and grey the way.

No crocus with its shining cup,
Nor the gold daffodil is up, --
Nothing is here save the snowdrop.

Sit down with me and taste good cheer:
Too soon, too soon, Thy Passion's here;
The wind is keen and the skies drear.

Sit by my fire and break my bread.
Yea, from Thy dish may I be fed,
And under Thy feet my hair spread!

Lord, in the quiet, chill and sweet,
Let me pour water for Thy feet,
While the crowd goes by in the Street.

Why wouldst Thou dream of spear or sword,
Or of the ingrate rabble, Lord?
There is no sound save the song of a bird.

Let us sit down and talk at ease
About Thy Father's business.
(What shouts were those borne on the breeze?)

Nay, Lord, it cannot be for Thee
They raise the tallest cross of the three
On yon dark Mount of Calvary!

So soon, so soon, the hour's flown!
The glory's dying: Thou art gone
Out on Thy lonely way, alone.

Katharine Tynan

Mater Dei

She looked to east, she looked to west,
Her eyes, unfathomable, mild,
That saw both worlds, came home to rest,-
Home to her own sweet child.
God's golden head was at her breast.

What need to look o'er land and sea?
What could the winged ships bring to her?
What gold or gems of price might be,
Ivory or miniver,
Since God Himself lay on her knee?

What could th' intense blue heaven keep
To draw her eyes and thoughts so high?
All heaven was where her Boy did leap,
Where her foot quietly
Went rocking the dear God asleep.

The angel folk fared up and down
A Jacob's Ladder hung between
Her quiet chamber and God's Town.
She saw unawed, serene;
Since God Himself played by her gown.

Katharine Tynan

Mediation

If Thou, Lord God, willest to judge
This, Thy very piteous clay
Which to save Christ did not grudge
His last dying, I shall say:
Lord, I interpose Christ's death
'Twixt these children and Thy wrath.

Then if Thou shouldst say: Their shame
Is as scarlet in Mine eyes--
I shall ask : Who took their blame?
Look, Lord, on this Sacrifice!
Is Thy Son's blood not more bright
Which hath washed their scarlet white?

Then, if Thou Thy wrath should'st keep
And Thy gaze should'st still avert
From Thy Son's most piteous sheep,
I shall ask : Who bare the hurt?
I Present Christ's death and Pain
'Twixt Thine anger and these men.

Lord, they die by millions
And they look to Thee--take thought!--
This dear flock, that is Thy Son's,
By the richest ransom bought.
See, Thy dead Son lies between,
Thee, the High judge, and their sin.

Katharine Tynan

Meetings

As up and down I fare by road and street
The mothers of our men-at-arms I meet
Who die for mine and me,
That we go safe and free,
Sit in the sun, sleep soft and find life sweet.

I have two sons too young to fight, too young,
God grant if my hour comes I may be strong,
And caught in such a strait
May praise God and be great,
Giving my sons to save some woman from wrong!
Oh, mothers of dead heroes, ye I know,
My heart sends you a greeting, soft and low;
Blessed are ye whose sons
Amid the ransomed ones
Throng to the banners of Heaven as white as snow.

Somehow, by some secret and certain sign,
The mothers of the beloved I divine
Who died in my sons' place.
My heart kneels and gives grace.
Gives thanks for you, for you, proud sisters of mine!

Katharine Tynan

Menace

Oh, when the land is white as milk
With bloom that lets no leaf between,
When trees are clad in grass-green silk
And thrushes sing in a gold screen:
What is it ails Dark Rosaleen?

Why is the banshee in the night
Crying for all the young men gone?
Now when the world with bloom is white,
When the good sun's warm on the stone,
Why does the Woman of Death make moan?

As one who is not comforted,
I heard in every lonely glen
Dark Rosaleen cry for her dead
And for her dying race of men.
Dark Rosaleen, take heart again!

For, oh, there's God in His high place
And Patrick seated by His side
To judge with Him the Irish race;
And Columcille, Kieran and Bride
Shall not forget before God's Face.

There's Mary of the Seven Swords,
Queen of the Gael -- oh, many a saint,
With Oliver Plunkett to look towards
The Mercy Seat, with praise and plaint,
For Rosaleen, ever the Lord's.

Oh, weep no more, Dark Rosaleen!
Menace and terror pass you by.
Oh, loved beyond the sceptred queen,
Dark Rosaleen for whom men die!
And loved till death, Dark Rosaleen.

Katharine Tynan

Mid The Piteous Heaps Of Dead

'MID the piteous heaps of dead
Goes one weary golden head
Tossing ever to and fro,
Calling loud and calling low.

Mother, mother, step so light,
Mother, lay your fingers white
On my forehead like a dew !
Mother, mother, where are you?

Still so loud he makes his cry
That the dying cannot die;
All the writhing field's one groan
While he lies and cries alone.

But his mother's far away;
Cannot hear him cry and say:
Mother, I am dying, come!
Mother, I am lost from home!

Mary, Mother of all men,
Come and comfort him in pain.
Take his young head to the breast
Where your Child and God had rest.

Mary, Mary, step so light.
Mary, lay your fingers white
On his forehead! He shall dream
That his mother comforts him.

Mary, Mother, croon him o'er
Lullabies you sang before!
Mary, ease him, crooning low,

In the way that mothers know!

Katharine Tynan

Missing

To Leucha Mary Warner

He is 'Missing,' and forlorn
Drag her days in grief and pain.
Every morn a hope is born,
Only to be lost again.

'Missing!' Almost better 'Killed.'
The long anguish breaks her heart
That's a dead thing, numbed and chilled
Till the live fear bids it start.

Now a knocking at the door,
Now a shouting in the street,
Makes her poor heart run before,
The most bitter news to meet.

'Missing!' It may be he dies
'Mid his foes and comfortless.
When sleep shuts her heavy eyes,
Still she seeks him in distress.

Dear, he is not missing, not lost.
Rest your heart as on a bed.
For the One who loves him most
Knows where he has laid his head.

He accounted of all worth,
This beloved bought with a price,
Watchers look East, South, and North
From the heights of Paradise

Lest that he take any ill.
Still the Mighty Lover goes,
Seeks the beloved o'er many a hill.
Be at rest, dear child! He knows!

Katharine Tynan

New Heaven

Paradise now has many a Knight,
Many a lordkin, many lords,
Glimmer of armor, dinted and bright,
The young Knights have put on new swords.

Some have barely down on the lip,
Smiling yet from the new-won spurs,
Their wounds are rubies, glowing and deep,
Their scars amethyst-glorious scars.

Michael's army hath many new men,
Gravest Knights that may sit in stall
Kings and Captains, a shining train,
But the little young Knights are dearest of all.

Paradise now is the soldiers land
Their own country its shining sod,
Comrades all in a merry band;
And the young Knights' Laughter pleaseth God.

Katharine Tynan

No Man's Land

Not to an angel but a friend
He turned at the day's bitter end.
It was so comforting to feel
Some one was near, to see him kneel
By the deep shell-hole's edge: to know
He was not left to the fierce foe.

This soldier who had eased his head
And staunched the flow where it had bled,
Who made a pillow of his breast
Where the poor tossing head might rest,
Wore a young face he used to know
Yesterday, some time, long ago.

The night's cold it was bitter enough,
But who shall keep the fierce Day off?
And must he lie, be burnt and baked
In the hot sands, with lips unslaked? --
Will no one give him dews and rain?
Lord, send the frozen night again!

But here's the one who comforted!
No angel, but a boy instead,
Slender and young, above him leans:
The sands are changed to tender greens;
He hears the wind in the sycamore
Sing a low song by his mother's door.

Such tender touches to his wound,
Such loving arms to clasp him round,
Until they find him the third day!
The stretcher-bearers heard him say,
Don't leave me, Denis! I am here.'
Denis? But Denis died last year!

He will maintain that Denis was
Beside him in his bitter case,
Denis more beautiful and gay
Than in the dear, remembered day:

God sent no angel, but a friend
To save him at the bitter end.

Katharine Tynan

Noel

I sang a song upon Christmas day
And the feet of many going one way,
The word the golden voice did say:
Gloria in Excelsis!

The air was filled with snowflakes white,
And the singing stars danced in their flight,
Sweet the song they sang in the night,
Et in terra pax!

Good singing folk, where is there peace,
And for the broken heart heartsease?
They chant: Come hither upon your knees,
Venite ad Bethlehem!

For now the Prince of Peace is born;
For the full heart and the heart forlorn
He signs His Peace upon Christmas Morn:
Adeste Fidelis!

Katharine Tynan

Nymphs

Where are ye now, O beautiful girls of the mountain,
Oreads all ?
Nothing at all stirs here save the drip of the fountain;
Answers our call
Only the heart-glad thrush, in the Vale of Thrushes;
Stirs in the brake
But the dew-bright ear of the hare in his couch of rushes
Listening, awake.

Katharine Tynan

Of An Orchard

Good is an Orchard, the Saint saith,
To meditate on life and death,
With a cool well, a hive of bees,
A hermit's grot below the trees.

Good is an Orchard: very good,
Though one should wear no monkish hood.
Right good, when Spring awakes her flute,
And good in yellowing time of fruit.

Very good in the grass to lie
And see the network 'gainst the sky,
A living lace of blue and green,
And boughs that let the gold between.

The bees are types of souls that dwell
With honey in a quiet cell;
The ripe fruit figures goldenly
The soul's perfection in God's eye.

Prayer and praise in a country home,
Honey and fruit: a man might come,
Fed on such meats, to walk abroad,
And in his Orchard talk with God.

Katharine Tynan

Of St. Francis And The Ass

Our father, ere he went
Out with his brother, Death,
Smiling and well-content
As a bridegroom goeth,
Sweetly forgiveness prayed
From man or beast whom he
Had ever injured
Or burdened needlessly.

'Verily,' then said he,
'I crave before I pass
Forgiveness full and free
Of my little brother, the ass.
Many a time and oft,
When winds and ways were hot,
He hath borne me cool and soft
And service grudged me not.

'And once did it betide
There was, unseen of me,
A gall upon his side
That suffered grievously.
And once his manger was
Empty and bare, and brown.
(Praise God for sweet, dry grass
That Bethlehem folk shook down!)

'Consider, brethren,' said he,
'Our little brother; how mild,
How patient, he will be,
Though men are fierce and wild.
His coat is gray and fine,
His eyes are kind with love;
This little brother of mine
Is gentle as the dove.

'Consider how such an one
Beheld our Saviour born,
And carried him, full-grown,

Through Eastern streets one morn.
For this the Cross is laid
Upon him for a sign.
Greatly is honourèd
This little brother of mine.'

And even while he spake,
Down in his stable stall
His little ass 'gan shake
And turned its face to the wall.
Down fell the heavy tear;
Its gaze so mournful was,
Fra Leo, standing near,
Pitied the little ass.

That night our father died,
All night the kine did low:
The ass went heavy-eyed,
With patient tears and slow.
The very birds on wings
Made mournful cries in the air.
Amen! all living things
Our father's brethern were.

Katharine Tynan

Old Song Re-Sung

I saw three ships a-sailing,
A-sailing on the sea,
The first her masts were silver,
Her hull was ivory.
The snows came drifting softly,
And lined her white as wool;
Oh, Jesus, Son of Mary,
Thy Cradle beautiful!

I saw three ships a-sailing,
The next was red as blood,
Her decks shone like a ruby,
Encrimsoned all her wood.
Her main-mast stood up lonely,
A lonely Cross and stark.
Oh, Jesus, Son of Mary,
Bring all men to that ark!

I saw three ships a-sailing.
The third for cargo bore
The souls of men redeemed,
That shall be slaves no more.
The lost beloved faces,
I saw them glad and free.
Oh, Jesus, Son of Mary,
When wilt thou come for me?

Katharine Tynan

Palestine: 1917

How strange if it should fall to you,
To me, our boys should do the deed
The great Crusaders failed to do!
To win Christ's Sepulchre: to bleed,
So the immortal dream come true.

What ghosts now throng the Holy Ground,
With rusted armour, dented sword,
Listening? The earth shakes with the sound;
The wind brings hither a fierce word:
To arms, to arms, Sons of Mahound!

In many a quiet cloister grey
Cross-legged Crusaders, men of stone,
Quiver and stir the Eastward way,
As they would spring up and be gone
To the Great Day, to the Great Day.

Godfrey and Lion-Heart and all
The splendours of the faithful years
Watch our young sons from the Knights' stall,
Ready to clap hands to their spears
If ill befall, if ill befall.

They say: It is the Child's Crusade
Was talked of in our early Spring.
St. George, St. Denis, to their aid!
That was a boy's voice challenging,
Shrill like a bugle, unafraid!

Most wonderful, if your son, my son,
Should win the Holy Thing at last!
The might of Heathenesse be undone,
The strong towers down, the gate unfast,
Lord Christ come to His own, His own.

Katharine Tynan

Pilgrims To The East

This Christmas-time my son will come,
God willing, to the Holy Place
And by the manger's little room
Will bend his knee and bow his face,
Eager, with shepherds and with kings,
For to behold the Holy Things.

The very child I made will see,
God willing, little Bethlehem,
The Garden of the Agony,
Olivet and Jerusalem
And climb to Calvary's sacred hill --
Ah, but the world is Calvary still!

My own son's feet the dust shall press,
God willing, where the Holy Feet
Passed on His Father's business:
And some high room above the street
Shall stir a memory of that Feast
Where He himself was Eucharist.

Yea, by the Gate called Beautiful
My son, my little son, shall go
And bathe in Siloam's healing pool.
Yet if God will not have it so
At least my son, in His high Name,
Has travelled towards Jerusalem.

Katharine Tynan

Prayer At Night

Lord, for the one who dies alone
This night without companion,
I cannot rest, I cannot sleep.
O shepherd of the piteous sheep
Run with Thy crook, and lift in haste
The poor head to Thy loving breast.

Oh slake his deadly thirst from streams
Of Paradise, and give him dreams
Of the mild weather, the green sward.
Bind up his bitter wounds, O Lord,
And give him comfort. Let him know
His Shepherd 'tis that loves him so.

Thou countest Thy flock: not one is lost
But Thou goest seeking, for Thou knowest
The poor things creep away to die
Where none shall find save Thou art nigh.
Thou tak'st them to Thy arms, Thy knees,
And Thy sick lambs have sweetest ease.

Now I shall close my eyes in sleep,
Nor fret since they are Thine to keep,
Oh, happy sheep, to have such care,
The poorest, Love's own prisoner,
Who comforts as his mother might,
Rocking him into sleep at night.

Katharine Tynan

Quiet Eyes

The boys come home, come home from war,
With quiet eyes for quiet things --
A child, a lamb, a flower, a star,
A bird that softly sings.

Young faces war-worn and deep-lined,
The satin smoothness past recall;
Yet out of sight is out of mind
For the worst wrong of all.

As nightmare dreams that pass with sleep,
The horror and grief intolerable.
The unremembering young eyes keep
Their innocence. All is well!

The worldling's eyes are dusty dim,
The eyes of sin are weary and cold,
The fighting boy brings home with him
The unsullied eyes of old.

The war has furrowed the young face.
Oh, there's no all-heal, no wound-wort!
The soul looks from its hidden place
Unharméd, unflawed, unhurt.

Katharine Tynan

Recompense: (For Lord Kilhacken)

That which I saved I lost
And that I lost I found,
And you are mine, oh tender little ghost,
Whose grave is holy ground.

That which I kept is flown,
So fast the children grow,
The only child I keep to be my own
I lost long years ago.

The little ones that stayed
Slip from me while I cry:
Oh, not so fast, so fast, you golden-head.
Swift as the wind they fly.

Not two days are the same.
To-morrow will not see
To-day's young children, crested like a flame,
Gathered about my knee.

One day a day will dawn
Will see me dispossessed --
An empty nest whence singing-birds have flown.
Who shall refill the nest?

The years run out like sand
To strip me of my pride;
Then in my hand will steal a clinging hand.
I keep the child who died.

God gives and does not lend
This one lamb of the fold;
And he will need his mother to the end
And never will grow old.

Katharine Tynan

Resurrection

Now the golden daffodil
Lifts from earth his shining head
That was lately frozen still
In the gardens of the dead.

Sing to the Lord a new song!
Roundelays and virelays,
Who hath slain Death and is young
Master of your holidays.

Now from places underground
Gold and purple folk will go
Haled by the shrill trumpet sound
From their wormy beds below.

Now the stone is from the tomb!
Now 'tis Easter and the morn!
Christ the Lord of Life is come,
Hath slain Death, and Life is born.

Christ the Lord of Life new-risen,
Calls the sleepers that they rise--
From the unnumbered graves, break prison,
Follow Him to Paradise.

Who be then these shining ones
Dancing with a heavenly mirth,
The King's daughters, the King's sons,
Fairer than the folk of earth?

Graves are busier than a hive
The wind blows, the sun is warm;
Now the dead are come alive--

Loosed is many a golden swarm.

Sing to the Lord a new song!
The Sun's risen in our East;
Christ the Lord of Life is young.
And the young sit to the feast.

Katharine Tynan

Riding Home

Who are these that go to the high peaks and the snow?
Side by side do they ride, their steady eyes aglow.
Gallant gentlemen, they go spurring o'er the plain;
Home from the war again.

As they pass without a sound, there is many a red wound.
Oh, pale they are and faint they are, these warriors renowned!
Yet smiling all together in the calm sweet weather,
As they ride home together.

Where the white bed is spread and the feast is set afar
And the welcome awaits and the door stands ajar,
Those who droop to the saddle-bow they shall have rest enow,
Quiet and rest enow.

Like leaves of a wood vast their numbers as they passed,
Like winds in the pines their horses speeding fast;
And spent with victory their haggard faces be,
As they ride fast and free.

Some will meet and greet them as they leap to the ground
With soft cries, wet eyes, and fond arms around;
Lead them in to begin New Life, to which all loves
Home like a flock of doves.

Katharine Tynan

Salutation

To you and you and you who have given
Two sons for England's sake,--what word?
Oh, there is weeping heard in Heaven
And Mary's heart has the Eighth Sword.

Henceforth as you go through the town
The folk who see you go and come
Will doff their hats to your renown,
With: Salvete flores Martyrum!

O chosen from all women and men
For that high lonely destiny!
Now that we look at you, 'tis plain
God set a mark to know you by.

Your cross was growing in the tree
Before the golden world was made;
Your martyr's palms began to be
Before 'Let there be Light' was said.

And still where'er you come and go
The world's the lighter for your load.
Who thinks on common things and low
When your high sorrow takes the road?

O predestined and pre-elect
'Tis you must bear the glorious scars.
Stand up, dear Saints, white and erect,
The wounded in the heavenly wars.

Beloved, afflicted, marked for grace.
God's folk who watch you go and come,
Call, leaning from their Paradise place,

Salvete flores Martyrum!

Katharine Tynan

Shamrock Song

O, the red rose may be fair,
And the lily statelier;
But my shamrock, one in three,
Takes the very heart of me!

Many a lover hath the rose
When June's musk-wind breathes and blows:
And in many a bower is heard
Her sweet praise from bee and bird.

Through the gold hours dreameth she,
In her warm heart passionately,
Her fair face hung languid-wise:
O, her breath of honey and spice!

Like a fair saint virginal
Stands your lily, silver and tall;
Over all the flowers that be
Is my shamrock dear to me.

Shines the lily like the sun,
Crystal-pure, a cold, sweet nun;
With her austere lip she sings
To her heart of heavenly things.

Gazeth through a night of June
To her sister-saint, the moon;
With the stars communeth long
Of the angels and their song.

But when summer died last year
Rose and lily died with her;
Shamrock stayeth every day,
Be the winds or gold or grey.

Irish hills, as grey as the dove,
Know the little plant I love;
Warm and fair it mantles them
Stretching down from throat to hem.

And it laughs o'er many a vale,
Sheltered safe from storm and gale;
Sky and sun and stars thereof
Love the gentle plant I love.

Soft it clothes the ruined floor
Of many an abbey, grey and hoar,
And the still home of the dead
With its green is carpeted.

Roses for an hour of love,
With the joy and pain thereof:
Stand my lilies white to see
All for prayer and purity.

These are white as the harvest moon,
Roses flush like the heart of June;
But my shamrock, brave and gay,
Glads the tired eyes every day.

O, the red rose shineth rare,
And the lily saintly fair;
But my shamrock, one in three,
Takes the inmost heart of me!

Katharine Tynan

Sheep And Lambs

All in the April evening,
April airs were abroad;
The sheep with their little lambs
Passed me by on the road.

The sheep with their little lambs
Passed me by on the road;
All in the April evening
I thought on the Lamb of God.

The lambs were weary and crying
With a weak, human cry.
I thought on the Lamb of God
Going meekly to die.

Up in the blue, blue mountains
Dewy pastures are sweet;
Rest for the little bodies,
Rest for the little feet.

But for the Lamb of God,
Up on the hill-top green,
Only a Cross of shame
Two stark crosses between.

All in the April evening,
April airs were abroad;
I saw the sheep with their lambs,
And thought on the Lamb of God.

Katharine Tynan

Slow Spring

O year, grow slowly. Exquisite, holy,
The days go on
With almonds showing the pink stars blowing
And birds in the dawn.

Grow slowly, year, like a child that is dear,
Or a lamb that is mild,
By little steps, and by little skips,
Like a lamb or a child.

Katharine Tynan

Song Of Going

I would not like to live to be very old,
To be stripped cold and bare
Of all my leafage that was green and gold
In the delicious air.

I would not choose to live to be left alone,
The children gone away,
And the true love that I have leant upon
No more my staff and stay.

I would not live to stretch my shrivelled hands
To an old fire died low,
Minding me of the long-lost happy lands
And children long ago.

Let me be gone while I am leafy yet
And while my birds still sing,
Lest leafless, birdless, my dull heart forget
That ever it had Spring.

Katharine Tynan

Speeding

To Ivo Alan Charteris, October 17th, 1915

Requiescat is not my bidding,
That is the weary man's right speeding;
You, O Child, full of life and laughter,
Joy to you now and long days hereafter!

Light of foot, ever running and leaping,
Who would tether your feet to sleeping?
Who would stretch you on a sad bed?
A flying light was your golden head.

Many a game and a goal be given
To you in the playing-fields of Heaven;
Be as you were, a light shape of joy,
Glad in the strength and the grace of a boy.

Dear and young, here's the prayer I pray for you;
Heaven be full of new life and play for you!
Swift as an arrow, light as a swallow,
So may we find you, boy, when we follow.

Katharine Tynan

St. Francis And The Birds

Little sisters, the birds:
We must praise God, you and I-
You, with songs that fill the sky,
I, with halting words.

All things tell His praise,
Woods and waters thereof sing,
Summer, Winter, Autumn, Spring,
And the night and days.

Yea, and cold and heat,
And the sun and stars and moon,
Sea with her monotonous tune,
Rain and hail and sleet,

And the winds of heaven,
And the solemn hills of blue,
And the brown earth and the dew,
And the thunder even,

And the flowers' sweet breath.
All things make one glorious voice;
Life with fleeting pains and joys,
And our brother, Death.

Little flowers of air,
With your feathers soft and sleek,
And your bright brown eyes and meek,
He hath made you fair.

He hath taught to you
Skill to weave in tree and thatch
Nests where happy mothers hatch
Speckled eggs of blue.

And hath children given:
When the soft heads overbrim
The brown nests, then thank ye Him
In the clouds of heaven.

Also in your lives
Live His laws Who loveth you.
Husbands, be ye kind and true;
Be home-keeping, wives:

Love not gossiping;
Stay at home and keep the nest;
Fly not here and there in quest
Of the newest thing.

Live as brethren live:
Love be in each heart and mouth;
Be not envious, be not wrath,
Be not slow to give.

When ye build the nest,
Quarrel not o'er straw or wool;
He who hath be bountiful
To the neediest.

Be not puffed nor vain
Of your beauty or your worth,
Of your children or your birth,
Or the praise ye gain.

Eat not greedily:
Sometimes for sweet mercy's sake,
Worm or insect spare to take;
Let it crawl or fly.

See ye sing not near
To our church on holy day,
Lest the human-folk should stray
From their prayers to hear.

Now depart in peace:
In God's name I bless each one;
May your days be long i' the sun
And your joys increase.

And remember me,

Your poor brother Francis, who
Loves you and gives thanks to you
For this courtesy.

Sometimes when ye sing,
Name my name, that He may take
Pity for the dear song's sake
On my shortcoming.

Katharine Tynan

Starling

The starling in the ivy now,
For to amuse his dear,
Mimics the dog, the cat, the cow,
Blackbird and Chanticleer.

The starling's an accomplished mime:
Between his love-making
He solaces her brooding-time
By many a madcap thing.

He is the saw, the spade, the scythe,
He rings the dinner bell;
Chuckles of laughter, small and blithe,
Of self-laudations tell.

Now by the battle-field he mocks
As though 'twere but a game,
Thunder with which the belfry rocks
And the great bursts of flame.

Till when the merriment will pall
He turns to love again,
Calling his love-sick gurgling call
Above the dying men.

Who knows what dream the starling weaves
Of boyhood, soft and clean?
A small room under golden eaves
To which the sun looks in.

The starling's talking in the thatch,
Bidding the boy arise;
And the door's opening on the latch
To show -- his mother's eyes.

Katharine Tynan

Telling The Bees: (For Edward Tennant)

Tell it to the bees, lest they
Umbrage take and fly away,
That the dearest boy is dead,
Who went singing, blithe and dear,
By the golden hives last year.
Curly-head, ah, curly-head!

Tell them that the summer's over,
Over mignonette and clover;
Oh, speak low and very low!
Say that he was blithe and bonny,
Good as gold and sweet as honey,
All too late the roses blow!

Say he will not come again,
Not in any sun or rain,
Heart's delight, ah, heart's delight!
Tell them that the boy they knew
Sleeps out under rain and dew
In the night, ah, in the night!

Katharine Tynan

The Aerodrome

So now the aerodrome goes up
Upon my father's fields,
And gone is all the golden crop
And all the pleasant yields.

They tear the trees up, branch and root,
They kill the hedges green,
As though some force, malign and brute,
Ravaged the peace serene.

There where he used to sit and gaze
With blue and quiet eyes,
Watching his comely cattle graze,
The walls begin to rise.

What place for robin or for wren,
For thrush and blackbird's call?
Now there shall be but flying men
Nor any bird at all.

'Twas well he did not stay to know,
Defaced and all defiled
The quiet fields of long ago,
Dear to him as a child.

But when the tale was told to me
I felt such piercing pain,
They tore my heart up with the tree
That will not leaf again.

Katharine Tynan

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They tore my heart up with the tree
That will not leaf again.

Katharine Tynan

The Bird's Bargain

'O spare my cherries in the net,'
Brother Benignus prayed; 'and I
Summer and winter, shine and wet,
Will pile the blackbirds' table high.'

'O spare my youngling peas,' he prayed,
'That for the Abbot's table be;
And every blackbird shall be fed;
Yea, they shall have their fill,' said he.

His prayer, his vow, the blackbirds heard,
And spared his shining garden-plot.
In abstinence went every bird,
All the old thieving ways forgot.

He kept his promise to his friends,
And daily set them finest fare
Of corn and meal and manchet-ends,
With marrowy bones for winter bare.

Brother Benignus died in grace:
The brethren keep his trust, and feed
The blackbirds in this pleasant place,
Purged, as dear heaven, from strife and greed.

The blackbirds sing the whole year long,
Here where they keep their promise given,
And do the mellowing fruit no wrong.
Brother Benignus smiles in heaven.

Katharine Tynan

The Boys Of The House: For Valentine And Hubert Blake

Young martyrs of the war,
Who with your bright eyes star
The shadows grey;
Who steal at dawn and gloam
In each beloved room
So pale, so gay.

Boys who will not grow old,
Peach cheek and hair of gold,
Smile and are flown;
You will come back again,
In the darkness and the rain,
In the dusk, in the dawn.

Remember, oh, dear Two,
Two who came after you
Who love, as you loved,
The grey house and the woods,
All the sweet solitudes
You loved, approved.

Dear martyrs of the war,
Remember, where you are,
Boys who have still
To do, to bear, to attain
To your glory and your gain --
By what steep hill?

Katharine Tynan

The Bride

WEAVE me no wreath of orange blossom,
No bridal white shall me adorn;
I wear a red rose in my bosom;
To-morrow I shall wear the thorn.

Bring me no gauds to deck my beauty,
Put by the jewels and the lace;
My love to honour and to duty
Was plighted ere he saw my face.

I hear his impatient charger neighing,
I hear the trumpets blow afar!
His comrades ride, as to a Maying,
Jesting and splendid to the war.

Why is my lady-mother weeping?
Why is my father grievèd sore?
Oh, love, God have you in His keeping,
The day you leave your true-love's door.

Gay is the golden harvest spreading,
The orchard's all in rose and gold;
Who said it was a mournful wedding?
My hand in yours, Love, is not cold.

Go glad and gay to meet the foeman,
I love you to my latest breath;
Oh, love, there is no happier woman.
See, I am smiling! Love-till death!

Katharine Tynan

The Broken Soldier

The broken soldier sings and whistles day to dark;
He's but the remnant of a man, maimed and half-blind,
But the soul they could not harm goes singing like the lark,
Like the incarnate Joy that will not be confined.

The Lady at the Hall has given him a light task,
He works in the gardens as busy as a bee;
One hand is but a stump and his face a pitted mask;
The gay soul goes singing like a bird set free.

Whistling and singing like a linnet on wings;
The others stop to listen, leaning on the spade,
Whole men and comely, they fret at little things.
The soul of him's singing like a thrush in a glade.

Hither and thither, hopping, like Robin on the grass,
The soul in the broken man is beautiful and brave;
And while he weeds the pansies and the bright hours pass
The bird caught in the cage whistles its joyous stave.

Katharine Tynan

The Brothers (For Arnold And Donald Fletcher)

One called from Salonika and his call
Rang to his brother;
Forded wide rivers, climbed the mountain wall,
Seeking the other.

Are you asleep, Arnold, or do you wake?
Our way's together!
The day's before us and the path we take
Over the heather.

As oft before, breasting the Wicklow hills,
Light-foot and leaping
Over the bog-pools and the singing rills,
Side by side keeping.

We have known all the best that life can give,
Tasted the sweetest;
Shall we grow old, lag heavy-foot and grieve,
We, who were fleetest?

Let us be gone while yet it is the morn
Dewy before us,
Light on the mountains and the springing corn
And the lark o'er us!

The voice from Salonika found the way
Easy of passage,
And to French Flanders on the second day
Carried the message.

Arnold has gone the way that Donald went,
Donald's o'ertaken;
Up to the highest peaks they climb unspent,
Footing the bracken.

Katharine Tynan

The Call

I hear an Army!

Millions of men coming up from the edge of the world,
The ring of unnumbered feet ever louder and louder
Comes on and on like a mighty untameable tide,
Steady, implacable, out of the North and the South,
Out of the East, and the West, they answer the call
Of her who stands, her eyes towards God and the stars,
Liberty, daughter of God, calling her men.

What manner of men are these? Like the desert sands
Uncounted, many as locusts, darkening the sky?
White men, black men, men of the tawny gold,
Golden-eyed like the lion, sons of the sun,
Men from the snow, their eyes like frost or a sword:
They have but one heart, one desire, they run one way.
Hurrying, hurrying to the shrill trumpet call.

Men from the ice-floes, men from the jungles come;
This from the arms of his bride, that from his dead.
Men from the plough, the mart, the mill and the street
They run: they are heroes: the fire fuses them all.
Head uplifted and proud, like heroes they step,
Singing their battle song in the troubled dawn
Of the day of Liberty, flaming torch of the world.
I hear an Army!

Katharine Tynan

The Children Of Lir

Out upon the sand-dunes thrive the coarse long grasses;
Hérons standing knee-deep in the brackish pool;
Overhead the sunset fire and flame amasses
And the moon to eastward rises pale and cool.
Rose and green around her, silver-gray and pearly,
Chequered with the black rooks flying home to bed;
For, to wake at daybreak, birds must couch them early:
And the day's a long one since the dawn was red.

On the chilly lakelet, in that pleasant gloaming,
See the sad swans sailing: they shall have no rest:
Never a voice to greet them save the bittern's booming
Where the ghostly sallows sway against the West.
'Sister,' saith the gray swan, 'Sister, I am weary,'
Turning to the white swan wet, despairing eyes;
'O' she saith, 'my young one! O' she saith, 'my dearie !'
Casts her wings about him with a storm of cries.

Woe for Lir's sweet children whom their vile stepmother
Glamoured with her witch-spells for a thousand years;
Died their father raving, on his throne another,
Blind before the end came from the burning tears.
Long the swans have wandered over lake and river;
Gone is all the glory of the race of Lir:
Gone and long forgotten like a dream of fever:
But the swans remember the sweet days that were.

Hugh, the black and white swan with the beauteous feathers,
Fiachra, the black swan with the emerald breast,
Conn, the youngest, dearest, sheltered in all weathers,
Him his snow-white sister loves the tenderest.
These her mother gave her as she lay a-dying;
To her faithful keeping; faithful hath she been,
With her wings spread o'er them when the tempest's crying,
And her songs so hopeful when the sky's serene.

Other swans have nests made 'mid the reeds and rushes,
Lined with downy feathers where the cygnets sleep
Dreaming, if a bird dreams, till the daylight blushes,

Then they sail out swiftly on the current deep.
With the proud swan-father, tall, and strong, and stately,
And the mild swan-mother, grave with household cares,
All well-born and comely, all rejoicing greatly:
Full of honest pleasure is a life like theirs.

But alas ! for my swans with the human nature,
Sick with human longings, starved for human ties,
With their hearts all human cramped to a bird's stature.
And the human weeping in the bird's soft eyes.
Never shall my swans build nests in some green river,
Never fly to Southward in the autumn gray,
Rear no tender children, love no mates for ever;
Robbed alike of bird's joys and of man's are they.

Babbles Conn the youngest, 'Sister, I remember
At my father's palace how I went in silk,
Ate the juicy deer-flesh roasted from the ember,
Drank from golden goblets my child's draught of milk.
Once I rode a-hunting, laughed to see the hurry,
Shouted at the ball-play, on the lake did row;
You had for your beauty gauds that shone so rarely.'
'Peace' saith Fionnuala, 'that was long ago.'

'Sister,' saith Fiachra, 'well do I remember
How the flaming torches lit the banquet-hall,
And the fire leapt skyward in the mid-December,
And among the rushes slept our staghounds tall.
By our father's right hand you sat shyly gazing,
Smiling half and sighing, with your eyes a-glow,
As the bards sang loudly all your beauty praising. '
'Peace,' saith Fionnuala, 'that was long ago.'

'Sister,' then saith Hugh 'most do I remember
One I called my brother, one, earth's goodliest man,
Strong as forest oaks are where the wild vines clamber,
First at feast or hunting, in the battle's van.
Angus, you were handsome, wise, and true, and tender,
Loved by every comrade, feared by every foe:
Low, low, lies your beauty, all forgot your splendour.'
'Peace,' saith Fionnuala, 'that was long ago.'

Dews are in the clear air and the roselight paling;
Over sands and sedges shines the evening star;
And the moon's disc lonely high in heaven is sailing;
Silvered all the spear-heads of the rushes are.
Housed warm are all things as the night grows colder,
Water-fowl and sky-fowl dreamless in the nest;
But the swans go drifting, drooping wing and shoulder
Cleaving the still water where the fishes rest.

Katharine Tynan

The Choice

When skies are blue and days are bright
A kitchen-garden's my delight,
Set round with rows of decent box
And blowsy girls of hollyhocks.

Before the lark his Lauds hath done
And ere the corncrake's southward gone;
Before the thrush good-night hath said
And the young Summer's put to bed.

The currant-bushes' spicy smell,
Homely and honest, likes me well,
The while on strawberries I feast,
And raspberries the sun hath kissed.

Beans all a-blowing by a row.
Of hives that great with honey go,
With mignonette and heaths to yield
The plundering bee his honey-field.

Sweet herbs in plenty, blue borage
And the delicious mint and sage,
Rosemary, marjoram, and rue,
And thyme to scent the winter through.

Here are small apples growing round,
And apricots all golden-gowned,
And plums that presently will flush
And show their bush a Burning Bush.

Cherries in nets against the wall,
Where Master Thrush his madrigal
Sings, and makes oath a churl is he
Who grudges cherries for a fee.

Lavender, sweet-briar, orris. Here
Shall Beauty make her pomander,
Her sweet-balls for to lay in clothes
That wrap her as the leaves the rose.

Take roses red and lilies white,
A kitchen garden's my delight;
Its gillyflowers and phlox and cloves,
And its tall cote of irised doves.

Katharine Tynan

The Colonists

To men now of her blood and race
England's a little garden place,
Dear as a woman is, and she
The Queen of every loyalty.

To dwellers 'mid the ice and snows,
She is their secret garden rose
From which that bee, their heart, sucks off
For the cold Winter honey enough.

To toilers 'mid the sultry plains,
Sick for her tempered suns and rains,
She is the thought that wets their eyes
And hearts with dew of Paradise.

Most loved of those who never knew
Her green o' the silk and her soft blue,
Her mild inviolate fields that be
Hedged with the sweet-briar of the sea.

Sweet in their dreams her Summers are,
Her tranquil nights of moon and star,
The love-songs of her nightingales;
A water-spring that never fails.

Amid their unending distances
Her little crowded sweetness is
A dream of rest, a dream of prayer,
With homes and children everywhere.

Touch her -- and they are all on fire,
This little land of their desire
Seen in a mirage far away
With light upon her night and day.

Katharine Tynan

The Comrades

The angels walk with men in the red ruin and rain,
White and gold, as of old, without spot or stain.
Our warriors fought and died, the white lords by their side.
The angels walk with men.

God doth not forget in the battle, the retreat;
The heart of Love's above the dying and the slain.
There's a ladder to the skies and, armed from Paradise,
The angels walk with men.

Foot-soldiers, cavaliers, the flame on their spears,
They sweep fast in haste o'er the bloody plain.
What ill shall betide us with the winged knights beside us?
The angels walk with men.

Golden-mailed, lance in arm, they ride on the storm --
Michael and a poor soldier are comrades twain!
Oh, in the noise of battle, the red roar and the rattle,
The angels walk with men!

Katharine Tynan

The Convent Garden

The Convent garden lies so near
The road the people go,
If it was quiet you might hear
The nuns' talk, merry and low.

Black London trees have made their screen
From folk who pry and peer,
The sooty sparrows now begin
Their talk of country cheer.

And round and round by twos and threes
The nuns walk, praying still
For fighting men across the seas
Who die to save them ill.

From the dear prison of her choice
The young nun's thoughts are far;
She muses on the golden boys
At all the Fronts of War.

Now from her narrow Convent house
She sees where great ships be,
And plucks the robe of God, her Spouse,
To give the victory.

Under her robe her heart's a-beat,
Her maiden pulses stir,
At sound of marching in the street,
To think they die for her!

And now beneath the veil and hood
Her hidden eyes will glow,
The battle ardour's in her blood --
If she might strike one blow!

And when she sleeps at last perchance
Her soul hath slipped away
To fields of Serbia and of France
Until the dawn of day.

She wanders by the still moonbeam
By dying and by dead,
And many a broken man will dream
An angel lifts his head.

All day and night as a sweet smoke
Her prayer ascends the skies
That all her piteous fighting folk
May walk in Paradise.

And still her innocent pulses stir,
Her heart is proud and high,
To think that men should die for her --
And the marching feet go by.

Katharine Tynan

The Crown

She had twelve stars for diadem;
She had for footstool the full moon;
Her quiet eyes, outshining them,
Kept memories of the night and noon
And the still moms at Nazareth
When in her arms the Child drew breath.

So safe, so warm, He slept by her,
In her enfolding arms at peace,
Her milky babe, little and dear;
And yet the Tree that should be His
Grew in the forest, wide and high,
Whose branches should fill all the sky.

He made twelve stars into her crown
And set the moon below her feet.
He was King in Jerusalem Town,
With twelve spines for His Coronet
To pierce the brain and blood and bone,
Were made for Man's Redemption.

Oh, when she answered Gabriel
With 'Be it done!' could she foresee
The high pangs that she took as well?
With Bethlehem should be Calvary?
Or was that moment of high bliss
Born with sharp pangs, fierce agonies?

Hath she beneath her Crown of Stars
Remembrance of the thorns wherewith
Her people crowned her Son? What scars,
Redder than roses in a wreath,
Doth she wear in a coronal
Under the lights that rise and fall?

Katharine Tynan

The Dead Coach

At night when sick folk wakeful lie,
I heard the dead coach passing by,
And heard it passing wild and fleet,
And knew my time was come not yet.

Click-clack, click-clack, the hoofs went past,
Who takes the dead coach travels fast,
On and away through the wild night,
The dead must rest ere morning light.

If one might follow on its track
The coach and horses, midnight black,
Within should sit a shape of doom
That beckons one and all to come.

God pity them to-night who wait
To hear the dead coach at their gate,
And him who hears, though sense be dim,
The mournful dead coach stop for him.

He shall go down with a still face,
And mount the steps and take his place,
The door be shut, the order said!
How fast the pace is with the dead!

Click-clack, click-clack, the hour is chill,
The dead coach climbs the distant hill.
Now, God, the Father of us all,
Wipe Thou the widow's tears that fall!

Katharine Tynan

The Dear Brown Head

James Cecil Johnston. Suvla. August 9th, 1915

Only an hour ago we were fearful for you,
Knowing the death and the darkness behind and before you.
Years ago it might be since we were afraid.
Nothing can harm you now, O dear brown head!

You have come into port with a favouring wind;
We are tossing yet in the seas unkind.
All around you the light and glory are shed;
We are in darkness without you, dear brown head!

Heart and soul of a boy, simple and merry,
Never now to grow old, never be weary.
Light in the Land of the Young is your springing tread.
Long and heavy the road to you, dear brown head!

The House of God is full in the August days --
Full of the young coming home by the bitter ways.
Their beds are made near God, and the table spread,
And you lying down, sitting down with them, dear brown head!

Katharine Tynan

The Deserted

Thou Who wert kindest of the kind --
Since out of sight is out of mind --
There's none to do Thee kindnesses
In Thy last anguish and distress.
Thou art left all alone, alone.
Where are Thy faithful lovers flown?

Where is the multitude that fed,
With loaves and fishes comfortèd?
The blind Thou mad'st to see? the lame
That walked? the one leper who came
Of nine made clean? The dumb that spoke?
Where are they -- all Thy loving folk?

How is it they have naught to say?
Where's Lazarus risen from the clay?
Where is the widow of Nain? where
Jairus's daughter, small and fair?
Judas has sold Thee to Thy foes,
And Peter weeps while the cock crows.

Simon will help Thee on Thy road
Unwillingly -- ah, Lamb of God!
Thou bearest the world's weight up that hill,
And none to help Thee with good will;
Stumbling and falling, while Thy hurt
Makes for the rabble noble sport.

But yet there's balm in Gilead,
For here's His Mother, sweet and sad,
Here's Magdalen weeping, and with them
The women of Jerusalem;
They have run all the way since one
Brought them the news: He's not alone!

Veronica is nothing loth
To wipe His poor face with her cloth.
His Mother's by Him and St. John,
With many a starry legion;

Magdalen's hair is round His feet,
Her tears wash off the blood and sweat.

Thou Who wert kindest of the kind,
Though out of sight be out of mind --
Thou art not forgot: by land and sea
The broken hearts come home to Thee,
And bear Thine anguish and Thy grief
Till the Third Day shall bring relief.

Katharine Tynan

The Doves

The house where I was born,
Where I was young and gay,
Grows old amid its corn,
Amid its scented hay.

Moan of the cushat dove,
In silence rich and deep;
The old head I love
Nods to its quiet sleep.

Where once were nine and ten
Now two keep house together;
The doves moan and complain
All day in the still weather.

What wind, bitter and great,
Has swept the country's face,
Altered, made desolate
The heart-remembered place ?

What wind, bitter and wild,
Has swept the towering trees
Beneath whose shade a child
Long since gathered heartease ?

Under the golden eaves
The house is still and sad,
As though it grieves and grieves
For many a lass and lad.

The cushat doves complain
All day in the still weather;
Where once were nine or ten
But two keep house together.

Katharine Tynan

The Dream: (For My Father)

Over and over again I dream a dream,
I am coming home to you in the starlit gloam;
Long was the day from you and sweet 'twill seem
The day is over and I am coming home.

Then I shall find you as in days long past,
Sitting so quietly in the firelight glow;
'Love,' you will say to me, 'you are come at last.'
Your eyes be glad of me as long ago.

All I have won since then will slip my hold,
Dear love and children, the long years away;
I shall come home to you the girl of old,
Glad to come home to you -- oh, glad to stay!

Often and often I am dreaming yet
Of the firelit window when I've crossed the hill
And I coming home to you from night and wet:
Often and often I am dreaming still.

Over and over again I dream my dream.
Ah, why would it haunt me if it wasn't true?
I am travelling home to you by the last red gleam,
In the quiet evening I am finding you.

Katharine Tynan

The End Of The Day

The night darkens fast & the shadows darken,
Clouds & the rain gather about mine house,
Only the wood-dove moans, hearken, O hearken!
The moan of the wood-dove in the rain-wet boughs.

Loneliness & the night! The night is lonely
Star-covered the night takes to a tender breast
Wrapping them in her veil these dark hours only
The weary, the bereaved, the dispossessed.

When will it lighten? Once the night was kindly
Nor all her hours went by leaden & long.
Now in mine house the hours go groping blindly.
After the shiver of dawn, the first bird's song.

Sleep now! The night with wings of splendour swept
Hides heavy eyes from light that they may sleep
Soft & secure, under her gaze so tender
Lest they should wake to weep, should wake to weep.

Katharine Tynan

The Father

Captain Patrick Tobin, R.D.F. Suvla, August 15th, 1915

Ever his eyes are fixed on a glorious sight.
A boy is leading, calls his men to come on:
Light as a deer he leaps, slender and bright,
Up the hill, irresistible: it is won!

Ever he sees the boy against the sky,
A slender Victory, light on his golden head.
Hardly the down on his lip he hath leaped so high,
His name is writ among the undying Dead.

Captain at one-and-twenty! Much was to come,
Great things yet to be done, heights to be scaled;
Love and comradeship, all fruition of bloom.
He has attained to the highest. Not he who failed!

The mother weeps her boy who comes not again.
The Father sees him, splendid and laughing still,
Leaping like a young deer, calling his men.
The glory dazzles! The boy's keeping the hill!

Katharine Tynan

The Fields Of France

JESUS CHRIST they chased away
Comes again another day.
Could they do without Him then
His poor lost unhappy men?
He returns and is revealed
In the trenches and the field.

Where the dead lie thick He goes,
Where the brown earth's red as a rose,
He who walked the waters wide
Treads the wine-press, purple-dyed,
Stoops, and bids the piteous slain
That they rise with Him again.

To His breast and in his cloak
Bears the younglings of the flock:
Calls His poor sheep to come home
And His sheep rise up and come.
They shall rest by a clear pool
'Mid the pastures beautiful!

Jesus Christ they chased away
Has come back another day.

Katharine Tynan

The Foggy Dew

A splendid place is London, with golden store,
For them that have the heart and hope and youth galore;
But mournful are its streets to me, I tell you true,
For I'm longing sore for Ireland in the foggy dew.

The sun he shines all day here, so fierce and fine,
With never a wisp of mist at all to dim his shine;
The sun he shines all day here from skies of blue:
He hides his face in Ireland in the foggy dew.

The maids go out to milking in the pastures gray,
The sky is green and golden at dawn of the day;
And in the deep-drenched meadows the hay lies new,
And the corn is turning yellow in the foggy dew.

Mavrone ! if I might feel now the dew on my face,
And the wind from the mountains in that remembered place,
I'd give the wealth of London, if mine it were to do,
And I'd travel home to Ireland and the foggy dew.

Katharine Tynan

The Garden

I know a garden like a child,
Clean and new-washed and reconciled.
It grows its own sweet way, yet still
Has guidance of some tender will
That clips, confines, its wilder mood
And makes it happy, being good.

Around the lordly mountains stand,
For this is an enchanted land,
As though their splendours stood to grace
This little lovely garden place,
Looking with wise and keeping eyes
Upon the garden sanctities.

Box borders edge each little bed,
Paths narrow for a child to tread
Divide the kitchen garden, dear
And sweet with musk and lavender,
And water-mints and beans in bloom.
Be sure the honeybee's at home.

How should I tell in a sweet list
Of beauties, rose and amethyst;
The little water-garden cool
On sultry days, and beautiful
The wall-garden, the shade, the sun,
Since they are lovely, every one.

Hot honey of the pines is sweet,
And when the day's at three o'clock heat
A winding walk will you invite
To a new garden out of sight.
And a green seat is set so near
The sluggish, stealing backwater.

The Spirit of the garden plays
At hide-and-seek an hundred ways
And when you've captured her, she will
Elude you, calling backward still,

A silver echo -- a sweet child,
Demure and lovesome, gay and wild.

Katharine Tynan

The Gardener

For Violet

In the garden she hath found
Herb of grace and fever-few;
Woundwort there doth much abound,
Heartsease too.

Where she laid dead things away
In the chilly earth, what stir!
Whisper of Spring-time, green and gay,
Comes to her.

All Sweet-Nancies, daffodils,
Talking in their beds below
Of sweet vales and shining hills
Whither they go.

In the garden there's no grief;
God walks there and He is kind,
When the first dear crumpled leaf
Shakes in the wind.

There's no death now. Winter's done.
All's given back. The dead again
Walk with her in the wind and sun
And the sweet rain.

Heartsease in her garden plot,
Ladders-to-Heaven scale the skies;
While the dear forget-me-not
Brightens her eyes.

Katharine Tynan

The Golden Boy

IN times of peace, so clean and bright,
And with a new-washed morning face,
He walked Pall Mall, a goodly sight,
The finished flower of all the race.

Or through Bond Street and Piccadilly,
Went spick-and-span, without a soil,
As careless as the July lily
That spins not, neither does she toil.

He took his soldiering as sport,
And beauteous in his mufti stirred
Romance i' the simple female sort
That loves a guardsman or a lord.

And now, knee-deep in muddy water,
Unwashed, unshaven, see him go!
His garments stained with mud and slaughter
Would break the heart of Savile Row.

The danger's in his blood like wine,
The old heroic passion leaps;
The son of the mighty fighting line
Goes glad whatever woman weeps.

He plays the game, winning or losing,
As in the playing-fields at home;
This picnic's nothing of his choosing,
But since it's started, let it come!

He lives his hour with keenest zest,
And midst the flying death he spares
A laugh to the light-heart schoolboy jest,
Mingled with curses and with prayers.

Gay as at Eton or at Harrow,
Counts battles as by goals and runs
God keep him from Death's flying arrow
To give his England fighting sons.

Katharine Tynan

The Great Chance

NOW strikes the hour upon the clock
The black sheep may rebuild the years
May lift the father's pride he broke
And wipe away his mother's tears.

To him, the mark for thrifty scorn;
God hath another chance to give,
Sets in his heart a flame new-born
By which his muddied soul may live.

This is the day of the prodigal,
The decent people's shame and grief,
When he shall make amends for all.
The way to Glory's bloody and brief.

Clean from his baptism, of blood,
New from the fire he springs again,
In shining raiment white and good,
Beyond the wise, home-keeping man.

Somewhere to-night-no tears be shed!-
With shaking hands they turn the sheet
To find his name among the dead,
Flower of the Army and the Fleet.

They tell, with proud and stricken face,
Of his white boyhood far away-
Who talked of trouble or disgrace?
'Our splendid son is dead!' they say.

Katharine Tynan

The Great May

Who said the Spring was dead?
She would not come again,
Dust on her starry head,
For a sad world in pain?
The thing they have said in vain,
She comes new garlanded:
Lovely on hill and plain
Her lights, her flowers are shed.

Never was such a May!
Mercy of God, to prove
Life springs from the clay
And every treasured love
Walks in a heavenly grove.
The Lord God's holiday
To the soft coo of the dove
With the young lambs at play.

Lo! yours, and yours, are there,
I see them leap and run
In a May-world past compare
Whereof our God is sun.
They rejoice, yea, every one
In the ambient light and air,
Their pleasures are not done
From morn till evening star.

Never was such a Spring!
Oh, you whose eyes are wet,
Listen, take comforting,
Our God does not forget.
Poor folk that fear and fret
Your hours are on the wing
To the loves that wait you yet,
Raised up and triumphing.

Katharine Tynan

The Great Mercy

Betwixt the saddle and the ground
Was mercy sought and mercy found.

Yea, in the twinkling of an eye,
He cried; and Thou hast heard his cry.

Between the bullet and its mark
Thy face made morning in his dark.

And while the shell sang on its path
Thou hast run, Thou hast run, preventing death.

Thou hast run before and reached the goal,
Gathered to Thee the unhoused soul.

Thou art not bound by Time or Space:
So fast Death runs : Thou hast won the race.

Thou hast said to beaten Death: Go tell
Of victories thou once hadst. All's well!

Death, here none die but thee and Sin
Now the great days of Life begin.

And to the Soul: This day I rise
And thee with Me to Paradise.

Betwixt the saddle and the ground
Was Mercy sought and Mercy found.

Katharine Tynan

The Great Sorrow

Voice of a great wind, of wild ocean surges,
Storming the gates of Heaven,
The people of God singing under the scourges
Wherewith they are healed and shriven.

This is no sound, no wail of lamentation
Such as of old was heard
When Rachael cried to Heaven her desolation
Until all Heaven was stirred.

The people sing, crushed in the wine-press ruddy,
Broken but not dismayed,
The triumph-song of the soul over the body
Heaven-lifted, angel-stayed.

The white sorrow homes to the heavenly portal.
This grief, this grief has wings --
Blood on her breast, but through the groves immortal
Her song of triumph rings.

Katharine Tynan

The Heart Of A Boy

To Mrs. Guy Wyndham

The heart of a boy is full of light,
Naked of self, quite pure and clean,
No shadows lurk in it: it is bright
Where God Himself hath been.

I looked in a boy's heart and saw
How its desire was white desire,
Burning upward, as winds might draw
The flame of a candle higher.

What was the heart's desire that burned
Like a white candle stirred in a breeze?
Power or glory or honour earned?
Love that is more than these?

The heart of a boy has but one goal.
The flying Danger smiles as she flies,
Makes her own of him, heart and soul,
With the lure of her lovely eyes.

The boy's heart now is set on a star,
A sword for the weak against the strong,
A young knight riding forth to the War
Who dies to right the wrong.

Katharine Tynan

The Heroes

By such strange and wonderful ways
God would save His world again.
All our days are holy days,
Starry heroes all our men.

There's naught common or unclean
In this splendid new-made earth:
Hearts uplifted, eyes serene,
Grief goes gayer now than mirth.

Quietly in the sacred night
Tears must fall, O noble tears!
That are shed in the Lords' sight
And are only for His ears.

Who would mourn aloud for sons
Gorgeous in our firmament,
Starry constellations
In the way their fathers went?

From the innumerable grave
There will spring a world new-born,
With the austerest eyes and brave
And its clear gaze towards the morn.

He who gave His Son to die
For man's purchase, gives once more
These, His beloved sons, to buy
Him a world worth dying for.

Katharine Tynan

The Image

When a wild grace I see,
A turn o' the neck, a curl, sweet hands, clear eyes,
Gentleness, courtesy, dignity;
In all these gifts Thee I surmise, surprise.

All beauty and delight.
Skin like a rose, a beauteous shape, an air
Free and enchanting, give my weary sight
Glimpses of Thee, Thou Beauty past compare.

Strength, courage also are Thine.
And joy of youth and wings that cleave the blue,
Low singing and soft voices, I divine
In these Thy beauty ancient yet ever new.

Oh, when my startled eye
Perceives this beauty league-long, sea and isle
And eagle-crested mountains wild and high,
I catch Thy Maker's thought -- I see Thy smile.

Some mirror out of range
Flashes reflex of Heaven on this sweet earth,
Brooding for ever, beautiful, without change,
The blue-bell sea, the thousand streams' soft mirth.

All beauty is of Thee.
Kindness and quietness, moon and stars and sun,
Gardens and woods, the bird in the new-fledged tree
And sleep, O Kindest One!

Katharine Tynan

The Last Parting

He is not dead. They do not know,
Who pity her, her secret ease,
How he is near her, how they go,
Her hand in his.

The last sad parting now is done.
She can look back as from afar
And pity her whose dearest one
Went to the War.

Now he is with her every day;
There is no salt dividing sea.
She leans on him in the old way,
Her staff is he.

The folk as they come in and out
Wonder at her pale joy: the while
She in the lightest fear or doubt
Turns to his smile.

Katharine Tynan

The Last Question: (For B. A. Bingham)

They lifted up his weary head,
Stained with a dark and bitter dew:
'How does the battle go?' he said.

Sir, it is victory,' -- when he heard
He smiled the darkening shadows through
And died as blithe as a singing bird.

On the stained grass as on a bed
Dying he lay and well content --
'Sir, it is victory,' they said.

So smiling, smiling all the way,
To the undying Dead he went
As to a heavenly holiday.

Katharine Tynan

The Legend Of St. Austin And The Child

St. Austin, going in thought
Along the sea-sands gray,
Into another world was caught,
And Carthage far away.

He saw the City of God
Hang in the saffron sky;
And this was holy ground he trod,
Where mortals come not nigh.

He saw pale spires aglow,
Houses of heavenly sheen;
All in a world of rose and snow,
A sea of gold and green.

There amid Paradise
The saint was rapt away
From unillumined sands and skies
And floor of muddy clay.

His soul took wings and flew,
Forgetting mortal stain,
Upon the track of that bright crew
That homed to heaven again.

Forgetting mortal dearth
It seized on heavenly things,
Till it was cast again to earth,
Because it had not wings.

Because the Three in One
He could not understand,
Baffled and beaten and undone,
He gazed o'er sea and land.

Then by a little pool
A lovely child he saw;
A harmless thing and beautiful,
And yet so full of awe,

That with a curved sea-shell,
Held in his rosy hand,
Had scooped himself a little well
Within the yielding sand.

And to and fro went he,
Between it and the wave,
Bearing his shell filled with the sea
To find a sandy grave.

'What is it that you do,
You lovely boy and bold?'
'I empty out the ocean blue,
You man so wise and old!

'See you how in this cup
I bind the great sea's girth !'
'Ah no, the gray sands suck it up
Your cup is little worth.

'Now put your play aside,
And let the ocean be.
Tell me your name, O violet-eyed,
That empty out the sea !

'What lineage high and fine
Is yours, O kingly boy,
That sure art sprung of royal line,
A people's hope and joy.'

'Austin, as you have said,
A crown my Sire doth wear,
My mother was a royal maid
And yet went cold and bare.'

He shook his golden curls,
A scornful laugh laughed he:
'The night that I was born, the churls,
They would not shelter me.

'Only the ox and ass,

The night that I was born,
Made me a cradle of the grass
And watched by me till morn.

'The night that I was born
The ass and ox alone,
Betwixt the midnight and the morn,
Knelt down upon the stone.

'The bitter night I came,
Each star sang in its sphere.
Now riddle, riddle me my name,
My Austin, tried and dear.'

Austin is on his face,
Before that vision bright.
'My Lord, what dost Thou in this place
With such a sinful wight?'

'I come not here in wrath,
But I come here in love,
My Austin, skilled in life and death,
Thy vanity to prove.

'Mortal, yet over-bold
To fly where th' eagle flies,
As soon this cup the sea will hold
As thou My Mysteries.

'Patience a little yet,
And thou shalt be with Me,
And in thy soul's small cup unmeet
Myself will pour the sea.'

When Austin raised his head
No child was there beside,
But in the cup the Child had made
There swelled the rising tide.

Katharine Tynan

The Little Flock

CHRIST, now keep the little flock
Which Thou bad'st not to fear:
Childing women and old folk
And the little children dear.

In this night of Hell revealed
Call them that they run with Thee,
And come out in a green field
Where they gather round Thy knee.

All poor women that give suck,
All that are with child, lead Thou,
By the margins of a brook
Where is daisied peace enow.

Christ, remember now the sick;
Feeble knees and hanging head.
When they cry on Thee, come quick,
And their sickness shall be stayed.

Where Thou temperest the wind,
Where the drenching rains leave off,
When they run with Thee, O Kind!
Dear, they shall be well enough!

Katharine Tynan

The Little Old Woman

There's a Little Old Woman walks in the night,
Singing her love song like a falling keen;
The Little Old Woman is the heart's delight,
With the gold crown under her hood to tell her queen.

The Little Old Woman's coming up this way,
Playing on her harp-strings a magic air;
There's this one and that one, they may not stay,
Stealing out in the night after the player.

The Little Old Woman is at the door,
Though 'tis a queen she is, in rags she goes,
Open the door to her, long-awaited for!
Oh, Love and Delight you are, the Dear Black Rose.

The Little Old Woman she is begging bread;
She shall never go hungry while the ages pass,
With the love of her lovers she shall be fed
And their hearts lie under her feet in the green grass.

They go from the lit board and the fire of peat
And the dreams and the longing stir in the blood.
Sweet to be poor with her, yea, death is sweet,
For the Dear Rose of Beauty in the beggar's hood.

Katharine Tynan

The Long Vacation

To Amy Wainwright

This is the time the boys come home from school,
Filling the house with gay and happy noise,
Never at rest from morn till evening cool --
All the roads of the world bring home the boys.

This is the time -- but still they are not come;
The mothers stand in the doorway listening long;
Long, long they shall wait ere the boys come home.
Where do they tarry, the dear, the light-heart throng?

Their feet are heavy as lead and deep their rest.
The mothers watch the road till set of sun;
But nevermore the birds fly back to the nest.
The roads of the world run Heavenward every one.

Katharine Tynan

The Lowlands Of Flanders

THE night that I was married
Our Captain came to me:
Rise up, rise up, new-married man
And come at once with me.

For the Lowlands of Flanders,
It's there that we must fight;
So look your last and buss your last,
For we shall sail to-night.

'Tis all for our Counterie
And for our King we go
To the Lowlands of Flanders
Against the German foe.

The girl that weds a soldier
Must never blench for fear;
I kissed my last and looked my last
Upon my lovely dear.

The Lowlands of Flanders,
Their rivers run so red.
But I must say Good-bye, my dear,
My only dear, I said.

For now I must go sailing
Upon the stormy main;
Good-bye, good-bye, my only Love,
Till I shall come again.

I put her white arms from me,
Her cheek was cold as clay.
The night that I was married
No longer I might stay.

Our bugles they are blowing,
And I must sail the sea,
For the Lowlands of Flanders
Betwixt my love and me.

Katharine Tynan

The Mother Of Three

Oh, to have a little farm,
A little hearth so warm and bright,
And three little boys all safe from harm
In from the winter night!

A little house with white-washed wall,
And thatched like any golden rick,
And the little boys within my call,
And they running so quick.

A garden and an apple tree,
And me so busy all the day,
And the little boys at home with me,
Merry out at their play.

There was a woman I've heard tell,
Whose three fine sons were killed. For sure
'Tis good to have them little and well
And just beyond your door.

This while back there is something wrong --
It may be that I miss the boys
Who filled the house the whole day long
With happy laughter and noise!

And often when I sit my lone
The sadness comes and lies on me
For the poor soul that has no son.
And me having the three!

And it's oh, to have the little farm
Under the golden thatch so bright,
And the little boys safe home from harm
Shut in with me at night!

Katharine Tynan

The New Recruit

The lads were once my comrades,
They stay at home content.
And now's the time of cricket,
They count the days well spent.

They walk with girls o' Sundays,
All in their Sunday clothes;
And of a Sunday evening
Go where good liquor flows.

Their way's no longer my way,
For I must follow now
The drum-tap and the bugle,
While they're for shop and plough.

Good-bye, good-bye, kind people,
And all I leave behind,
To girls that used to kiss me,
To one was never kind.

Good-bye, my girl unwilling,
I shall not vex you sore,
For I have taken the shilling
And I come home no more.

I heard the drums a-drumming,
And I ran out to see;
The soldiers and the fighting,
They mattered nought to me.

Good-bye, my girl that grieved me.
The bugles whistled, Come.
And I, -- stepped in the roadway
And marched beside the drum.

Lord, I was proud, uplifted.
I held my head so high;
And all the girls were doating
With love as we went by!

The boys who stood and jeered me
May live to three-score-ten,
While I'm cut down at morning
Among the fighting men.

But Lord, the people shouting!
The glory tasted sweet,
And the eyes of the girls all doating
As we marched down the street.

Katharine Tynan

The Nurse

Such innocent companionship
Is hers, whether she wake or sleep,
'Tis scarcely strange her face should wear
The young child's grave and innocent air.

All the night long she hath by her
The quiet breathing, the soft stir,
Nor knows how in that tender place
The children's angels veil the face.

She wakes at dawn with bird and child
To earth new-washed and reconciled,
The hour of silence and of dew,
When God hath made His world anew.

She sleeps at eve, about the hour
Of bedtime for the bird and flower,
When daisies, evening primroses,
Know that the hour of closing is.

Her daylight thoughts are all on toys
And games for darling girls and boys,
Lest they should fret, lest they should weep,
Strayed from their heavenly fellowship.

She is as pretty and as brown
As the wood's children far from town,
As bright-eyed, glancing, shy of men,
As any squirrel, any wren.

Tender she is to beast and bird,
As in her breast some memory stirred
Of days when those were kin of hers
Who go in feathers and in furs.

A child, yet is the children's law,
And rules by love and rules by awe.
And, stern at times, is kind withal
As a girl-baby with her doll.

Outside the nursery door there lies
The world with all its griefs and sighs,
Its needs, its sins, its stains of sense:
Within is only innocence.

Katharine Tynan

The Old Love

Out of my door I step into
The country, all her scent and dew,
Nor travel there by a hard road,
Dusty and far from my abode.

The country washes to my door
Green miles on miles in soft uproar,
The thunder of the woods, and then
The backwash of green surf again.

Beyond the feverfew and stocks,
The guelder-rose and hollyhocks;
Outside my trellised porch a tree
Of lilac frames a sky for me.

A stretch of primrose and pale green
To hold the tender Hesper in;
Hesper that by the moon makes pale
Her silver keel and silver sail.

The country silence wraps me quite,
Silence and song and pure delight;
The country beckons all the day
Smiling, and but a step away.

This is that country seen across
How many a league of love and loss,
Prayed for and longed for, and as far
As fountains in the desert are.

This is that country at my door,
Whose fragrant airs run on before,
And call me when the first birds stir
In the green wood to walk with her.

Katharine Tynan

The Old Soldier

Lest the young soldiers be strange in heaven,
God bids the old soldier they all adored
Come to Him and wait for them, clean, new-shriven,
A happy doorkeeper in the House of the Lord.

Lest it abash them, the strange new splendour,
Lest it affright them, the new robes clean;
Here's an old face, now, long-tried, and tender,
A word and a hand-clasp as they troop in.

'My boys,' he greets them: and heaven is homely,
He their great captain in days gone o'er;
Dear is the friend's face, honest and comely,
Waiting to welcome them by the strange door.

Katharine Tynan

The Only Child

Lest he miss other children, lo!
His angel is his playfellow.
A riotous angel two years old,
With wings of rose and curls of gold.

There on the nursery floor together
They play when it is rainy weather,
Building brick castles with much pain,
Only to knock them down again.

Two golden heads together look
An hour long o'er a picture-book,
Or, tired of being good and still,
They play at horses with good will.

And when the boy laughs you shall hear
Another laughter silver-clear,
Sweeter than music of the skies,
Or harps, or birds of Paradise.

Two golden heads one pillow press,
Two rosebuds shut for heaviness.
The wings of one are round the other
Lest chill befall his tender brother.

All day, with forethought mild and grave,
The little angel's quick to save.
And still outruns with tender haste
The adventurous feet that go too fast.

From draughts, from fire, from cold and stings
Wraps him within his gauzy wings;
And knows his father's pride, and shares
His happy mother's tears and prayers.

Katharine Tynan

The Only Son

His mother died last year and yet
She wearied Heaven with fear and fret,
Wanting the son she left behind,
And God was patient, being kind.

He was so beautiful, so young,
Slender as a tall tree, wind-swung;
Innocent, gay: she went in fear
Something might hurt him, lacking her.

She heard amid the starry mirth
Rumour of dreadful things on earth.
Of sweet youth slain and beauty marred
Beyond all balm and spikenard.

Oh, had she visions of his plight
Lying in the red rain at night
Amid the piteous heap of slain,
That she was wild with fear and pain?

God gives His angels. But she went
Uncomforted and discontent.
Because no angel ever knew
The way to love that mothers do.

And so she wearied Heaven with prayer,
Her knees for ever on God's stair,
Her troubled thoughts for ever abeat
Like wings about the Mercy-Seat.

At last God heard her. Swift as the wind
His messenger went forth to find
Her son and bring him to her breast
So that at last her heart might rest.

She died a year ago and still
Her cup of Heaven's untasted till
God's messenger returns to say:
'He fell in action yesterday.'

Katharine Tynan

The Open Road

THE roads of the Sea
Are thronged with merchantmen;
East and West, North and South
They go and come again.

All precious merchandise
They bear in their hold:
Lest the people be starving
In the night and cold.

Now tell me, good merchants,
How this thing can be
That the white ships are thronging
The roads of the sea?

For there's death in the skies
And there's death on the earth;
And men talked of famine
And a frozen hearth.

Yet the ships they go crowding
The roads of the sea;
They bring home their treasures
To you and to me.

O listen, good people,
And hearing, praise God,
That the watch-dogs are keeping
The ships on their road!

They sit watchful and steady
Where the North winds blow;
Sleepless they are keeping
The roads the ships go.

In the day, in the hour,
They will spring--until then,
Their eyes keep the courses
Of the merchantmen.

Forget not, good people,
When ye heap the white board,
When ye draw to the hearth-fire,
To praise the Lord,

That the watch-dogs unsleeping
Keep the roads of the Sea,
Up by the Northern Lights
Where the great ships be.

Katharine Tynan

The Perfect Playmate

Roger Charles Noel Bellingham. Before Ypres, March 4th, 1915

The Perfect Playmate, whither does he stray
That now no more his feet come up this way
That rang so blithe upon the nursery floor?
Wild games and laughter! Now the little son
Listens and longs, and his small world's undone.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more.

Who else made holidays of rainy days?
Who told such marvels by the firelight blaze?
King of misrule when Christmas frosts were hoar.
But now the black-gowned mother's tears will flow
Whether her little son be good or no.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more.

Who built the sands, dug deep, was never loth
Nor ever tired: was strong enough for both:
Home on his shoulders a small drowsy head bore;
Was ever smiling. The boy keeps apart
A gay young smiling father in his heart.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more!

No more, no more! Himself a boy he goes
Beyond the uttermost peaks, the eternal snows:
Light on his young brown head from an open door.
His youth unwithered, smiling all the way,
Into the land of youth, the Spring of Day.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more.

Katharine Tynan

The Predestined

Dear, we might have known you were
To die young--and were we blind
To the light on face and hair?
Dear, so simple and so kind.

You were clean as your own sword
And as straight too and steel true.
In the Army of the Lord
What promotion waits for you!

I can see you where you stand,
Knightly soul, so clean, so brave.
With a new sword in your hand
Where the lilled banners wave.

Flower of simple chivalry,
Marked for honour and for grace;
It was very plain to see
The clear shining of your face.

You are gone now: it's turned cold:
Very good you were and dear.
Wear the looks you wore of old
When we meet,--some other year.

Katharine Tynan

The Promise

To you and you it shall be given,
As unto Mary her lost Heaven;
Her Son and your son come
Alive out of the grave and gloom.

Like hers your bliss is pre-ordained
To see the wounds healed and unstained;
Yea, you shall kiss with her
Where the sharp blade hath left no scar.

They shall come in warm to your cold
Dropped arms that found naught to enfold,
And on your heart be laid
The young, the beloved, thorn-crowned head.

Sudden some dawning or some eve
Your dead son shall come in alive,
As once came Mary's Son;
The lost, the incredible Heaven be won.

Katharine Tynan

The Refreshment

If I could have foreseen this hour,
What terror and anguish I had seen!
And not this time of joy at flower,
Cool waters and a garden green.

All day the battle in the East
Thunders. Dear Angels, keep him well!
His mother sits as to a feast.
O heart of steel invulnerable!

All night I sleep the young child's sleep
And waken to the robin's song,
Blithe as the bird. Dear Angels, keep
My darling the sharp spears among.

Ah now, I know whose Arms enfold,
I rest on such a mighty Heart;
He hides my eyes lest they behold,
In a most heavenly place apart.

Lord, if this ease be but a lull
Ere the deep seas are over my head,
I shall have had, O Beautiful!
This hour joy-filled and comforted.

Katharine Tynan

The Refuge

I will lift mine eyes to the mountains,
To the mountains whence cometh my aid;
I shall drink of the Mercy's crystal fountains,
And shall not be afraid.

St. Patrick and St. Bride be with me,
And all the saints of the Gael;
The wings of Heaven above and beneath me,
The dead of Inisfail.

The caves of the mountains shall receive me,
I shall lie as at a mother's breast
The white food the King of Heaven shall give me,
And the wine of Heaven for feast.

Where the eagle screams over Nephin,
Where the Reek of Patrick looks on the isles,
li-orn the voices of the world that fret and deafen,
From the evil in her smiles,

I shall creep, and the mountains will hold me,
As a lamb that runs with the ewe,
The warmth of the mother shall enfold me,
I shall have milk and dew.

Katharine Tynan

The Riders

RHEIMS is down in fire and smoke,
The hour of God is at the stroke.

Round and round the ruined place,-
Jesu, Mary, give us grace!

There are two riders clad in mail,
Silver as the moon pale.

One is tall as a knight's spear,
The younger one is lowlier.

Small and slim and like a maid-
Steeds and riders cast no shade.

Who are then these cavaliers?
There was a sound as Heaven dropt tears.

Who are these that ride so light,
Soundless in the flaming light,

Where Rheims burns, that was given
By France to Mary, Queen of Heaven?

O our Rheims, our Rheims is down,
Naught is left of her renown.

Hist! what sound is in the breeze,
Like the sighing of forest trees?

Or a great wind, or an army,
Or the waves of the wild sea?

The tall knight rides fierce and fast
To the sound of a trumpet-blast.

The little knight in fire and flame,
Slender and soft as a dame,

Rides and is not far behind:
His long hair floats on the wind.

And ever the tramp of chivalry
Comes like the sound of the sea.

This is Michael rides abroad,
Prince of the army of God,

And this like a lily arrayed,
Is Joan, the blessed Maid.

Rheims is down in fire and smoke
And the hour of God's at the stroke.

Katharine Tynan

The Sad Spring

The Spring weeps, she is forlorn;
Well that she may weep, alas!
Now that many babes are born
Whose dear fathers lie in grass.

Snowdrops in the frozen earth
Faint and are not comforted;
Never was so sad a birth,
Never was so sad a bed.

She must bear her pangs alone.
Where is sorrow like to hers?
In an anguish cold as stone
Her dead soldier's child she bears.

Now her trembling arms will hold
Close the piteous downy thing
To a milky breast as cold
As the frozen water-spring.

Now she hopes and dreads to find
Likeness in the little son
To his father, brave and kind.
Like or not, her heart's undone.

Tender nurslings born in pain,
Mother's comfort, mother's grief,
When her tears run down like rain,
Lord, bring Thou a handkerchief.

Wipe the widow's tears away,
Father orphan boys and girls.
Lead them out where they may play,

With Thy hand upon their curls.

Katharine Tynan

The Secret Foe

When now to battle he shall ride,
The bravest of the brave,
Joan the Maid be by his side
And Michael, quick to save.

Not against man's most fell device
The shell, the gas, the mine;
These he shall meet with steady eyes
And courage half-divine.

Oh, not the gaping wounds and red
And not the tortured sense,
And not the dying and the dead
And his own impotence.

But when the joy of battle faints
And his hot blood grows chill,
Be near him, all ye soldier saints,
Lest Satan work him ill!

Lest in the hour of his great fight
This foe should him assail,
The enemy that creeps by night
Strike through his coat of mail.

Sebastian of the arrows, haste,
Michael and the White Maid,
Lest in his splendid hour, at last,
The soldier be afraid.

Katharine Tynan

The Summons

Straight to his death he went,
A smile on his lips,
All his life's joy unspent,
Into eclipse.

The song of the shell he heard
Cleaving the dark,
As though 'twere the song of a bird,
Linnet or lark.

Why would he go so fast
Out to the dead,
All in a heavenly haste
Not to be stayed?

What did he see afar
That drew him after?
Light from a merry star,
Singing and laughter?

Nay, but a face was his
Only in dreams,
Only in dreams of bliss
In the star-gleams.

Nay, but a face that watched
Long years to see
Who came by the door unlatched,
If it were he.

What was the voice before
That lured him on?
'Oh, thou long-hungered for,
My son, my son!'

Lo, he hath heard, hath seen,
He hath slipped over
Where the great days begin

For friend and lover.

Katharine Tynan

The Temple

WHAT of Louvain and of Rheims
Made for God by man? What then?
Here be temples more than man's
Wrought by God for His own men.

Scattered in the rain and frost,
Marred of beauty, there they be,
Temples of the Holy Ghost,
Broken, ruined piteously.

Bodies all so finely wrought,
Cunning deftness shaped them well;
These, God's ultimate, loving thought
For His Spirit's citadel.

Beautiful from head to foot,
Young, dear darlings all unflawed
For their mother's kiss. What brute
Dares deface the image of God?

Oh, the Temple's down! all marred
Gay and golden boys must lie:
Bitter-sweet as spikenard
Is the old name we called them by.

Hush! God's Temple in its fall
Breaks to set the spirit free
From the golden cage and thrall.
Into heaven-winged liberty.

From the cage the bird is flown,
Sings so high above our sphere.
Hush,--be never a sigh or moan:

The fledged bird flies without fear.

All our loves are gathered in,
Every gay and golden lad;
On new raiment, white and clean,
They behold God and are glad.

Katharine Tynan

The Test

Love has moods: and I am cold,
Very cold ofttimes to Thee;
Fain to slip from Thy dear hold
To my follies and be free.

Yet I love: Thou knowest all.
I am Thine in heat and chill;
Thou, Thou hast my heart in thrall,
All my life and all my will.

Thou, Immortal Lover, sure
Knowest the way that lovers have,
Now so cold, afraid, unsure,
Now afire with love and brave.

If I loved less it might be
That the way was smoother, less
Of the heavenly joys for me
And the cast-down bitterness.

I am cold -- be that Love's proof! --
And I burn -- the proof again! --
I would not be smooth but rough
Lest the smoother love should wane.

Give me earth or Heaven -- and yet
If it is Love's test to swing
'Twixt the earth and Heaven still set --
I -- I ask no other thing.

Katharine Tynan

The Truce Of God

After Suvla

Now to the stricken doe
And the wounded hind
There comes the Mercy of God
That is cool and kind.

To the hapless creature He made
He giveth rest.
All the woes of the world
Lie on His breast.

The tender Physician giveth
The drug of sleep,
Lest that His dove, His daughter,
Awake and weep.

Beyond all dreams of delight
Is the quiet peace,
He carries His lamb in His arms,
The blood on her fleece.

Katharine Tynan

The Trust

To you, O Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux,
Fresh as a morning rose in morning dew,
We give our men in keeping:
Watch them waking, watch them sleeping.
Lest our hearts should break, O keep trust and be true!

The old saints are beset with many prayers;
The knees of centuries have worn their stairs.
But you, O little nun,
Heaven's youngest, littlest one,
You are strong to lift our burdens and our cares.

Your childish hands have roses pink and pale
That climb the trellises of Heaven and trail.
Shake your roses down before them,
Your dear heart be sorry for them,
Keep them safe within the shadow of your veil.

You lift hands for France -- O lift them heaven-high,
For those who fight with France, who bleed and die.
Pluck the robe of Heaven, O Dear,
So the Heart of Heaven may hear,
That never yet was hardened to your cry!

Katharine Tynan

The Vestal

She goes unwedded all her days
Because some man she never knew,
Her destined mate, has won his bays,
Passed the low door of darkness through.

Sometimes she has a wild surmise
Of what dear name he used to have,
And what the colour of his eyes,
And was he gay, or was he grave.

Or if his hair was brown or gold,
Or if his voice was low and clear
To tell his love with, never told
To hers or any woman's ear.

His voice is lost upon the wind
And when the rain beats on her heart
His eyes elude her, warm and kind,
Where the dim shadows steal apart.

What of their children all unborn?
What of the house they should have built?
She wanders through her days forlorn,
The untasted cup of joy is spilt.

She lives unwedded, -- as for him
He sleeps too sound for any fret
At their lost kisses, or the dream
Of the poor girl he never met.

Katharine Tynan

The Vision

An average man was Private Flynn,
Good stuff for soldiering, no doubt;
Troublesome when the drink was in,
A quiet lad when it was out.

Too fond of gaming and the girls,
And given to 'language' that would fright
His mother dreaming of his curls
And his soft boyish ways at night.

He had forgotten how to pray
The way she taught him at her knees.
Her prayers ran like a river all day,
And while she slept gave little ease.

The Calvary, by Souchez, holds
Wide arms to clasp the new-made beds,
Where lie, nor toss their browns and golds,
The precious, the beloved heads.

Flynn's Captain, who had proved a friend
At times a friend is needed most,
Slept there, and comfort was at end
Because Flynn's faithful friend was lost.

'Gassed.' O'er that twisted grace and dumb,
Flynn swore a choking oath to give
No quarter when the day should come
And fed his hate to thrive and live.

Lest that his Captain feel forgot,
At night when all the trenches slept,
Flynn tended like a garden plot
The grave o'er which the night-dews wept.

He raised a little cross of sticks,
Pansies, forget-me-nots, amid;
Over him the gaunt Crucifix
Shed comfort -- or he thought it did.

Rank disobedience! No one knew
How Flynn, so devil-may-care and brave,
Courtied destruction just to do
A little gardening on a grave.

One night the shells lit all the dark,
Burst in a million splinters of flame;
At morn, before the singing lark,
Flynn to his tender office came.

He smoothed the clay where it was rough,
With his hard tender hand he drew
As 'twere a quilt of silken stuff
Between the sleeper and the dew.

All done, he stretched his six foot four,
And yawning, in the dawn's pale glow,
Bent to the Crucifix once more,
Saluted ere he turned to go.

Then here's the marvel -- the dead Christ
Opened His Eyes, the very Eyes
That Mary loved, which through a mist
The saved souls see in Paradise.

Flynn, like Elijah, caught to Heaven!
Plain Private Flynn -- saw God revealed!
Unto a simple soldier given
The secret heart of Heaven unsealed.

Could he go back to common joys
After the joys of Heaven were won?
The quietness was rent with noise,
The death sprang from the hidden gun.

They shot Flynn's eyes out. That was good.
Eyes that saw God are better blind.
Flynn muses on beatitude,
His empty eye-sockets behind.

In a bare London hospital ward

He smiles and prays the live-long day.
He who has seen the living Lord
Has Light upon the darkest way.

Katharine Tynan

The Vision: (Katia: Easter Sunday, 1916)

She had a vision in the dark
Ere the first lark from nest took flight;
She saw her own son from fierce strife
Win to new Life and new Delight.

The clouds were tattered round his head
As sore bested he fought his foe,
Where in the conflict he was ta'en
And slain -- she did not see it so.

She saw indeed his bitter case
In that sad place, parched, without shade,
And how her Christian Knight must fall
In Paynim thrall, should Heaven not aid.

But now what light burns in the cloud?
What voices loud against his ear?
St. Andrew and St. Patrick ride
Close by his side; St. George is near.

His banner floats upon the breeze,
Like a gold fleece it wraps him round --
So, cap-à-pie from head to knee,
His enemy he strikes to ground.

He's won the day, he's won the day!
See the light play upon his brow!
Brave in his armour and upright
The Christian Knight is riding now.

She had that vision of her son
When by the moon asleep she lay --
And woke to singing birds and dew,
And knew that it was Easter Day.

Katharine Tynan

The Wall Between

The wall between is grown so thin
That whoso peers may see
A flutter of rose, a living green
Like new leaves on a tree.

The wall's now gotten many a chink
Where whoso leans may hear
The feet of them who pass to drink
All at a well clear.

The people go, the people flow
T'other side o' the wall
With silken rustle and laughter low
As to a festival.

Come mother and wife and piteous bride,
The wall's nigh broken through;
And there be some the other side
That peep and pry for you.

So thin has grown, like a precious stone,
The wall no eye might pass,
You may have vision of your own
As through a crystal glass.

And if that sight should you delight
Your tears will all be dried,
For souls so bright that walk in white
Dear bliss on the other side.

Katharine Tynan

The Watchers

THE cottages all lie asleep;
The sheep and lambs are folded in
Winged sentinels the vale will keep
Until the hours of life begin.

The children with their prayers all said
Sleep until cockcrow shall awake
The gardens in their gold and red
And robins in the bush and brake.

The fields of harvest golden-white,
The fields of pasture rich and green,
Sleep on nor fear the kindly night,
The watching mountains set between.

The river sings its sleepy song,
Nought stirs the wakeful owl beside:
Our peace is builded sure and strong
No evil beast can creep inside.

St Patrick and St Brigid hold
The vale its little houses all,
While men-at-arms in white and gold
Glide swiftly by the outer wall.

St Brendan and St Kevin pluck
The robes of God that He may hear-
And Colum: 'Keep the Irish flock
So that no shame or sin come near.'

What news of Belgian folk to-day?
How fare the village and the town?
O Belgium's all on fire they say,
And all her towers are toppling down.

What are her angels doing then,
And are the Belgian saints asleep,
That in this night of dule and pain
The Belgians mourn, the Belgians weep?

Katharine Tynan

The Weeping Babe

She kneels by the cradle
Where Jesus doth lie;
Singing, Lullaby, my Baby!
But why dost Thou cry?

The babes of the village
Smile sweetly in sleep;
And lullaby, my Baby,
That ever dost weep!

I've wrapped Thee in linen,
The gift of the Kings;
And wool, soft and fleecy,
The kind Shepherd brings.

Now smile, little Jesus,
Whom naught can defile;
All gifts will I give Thee
An thou wilt but smile.

But it's lullaby, my Baby!
And mournful am I,
Thou cherished little Jesus,
That still Thou wilt cry.

Katharine Tynan

The Widow

When she smiles her love draws nigh,
When she weeps he doth depart,
And returns to the Heavens high
With an unwounded heart.

God would suffer him no such wrong
As that he should see her tears
Lest his heart be sad among
His young joyous peers.

Therefore shall her tears be dried,
Therefore her poor lips will smile,
So her darling by her side
May sit down awhile.

So she bends her will to learn
Patience high and heavenly mirth,
That her soldier may return
To his own hearth.

Katharine Tynan

The Wild Geese

Wild geese fly overhead
In the wild Autumn weather.
Souls of the newly-dead
Crying and flying together.

Home from the last great fight,
The souls of the Irish farin'
With a wild heart in the night,
A grey eye turned to Erin.

High and high in the sky,
From the red fields of slaughter
Ever they fly and cry
For the brown bog, the grey water.

Wild geese in the wild even,
Steady and strong their flight,
Their beds are made in Heaven,
All of the down white.

They have forgone that bliss
Till they have seen once more
The little land of peace,
Green and bright as of yore.

High o'er the sheep and cattle,
The bogs and the mountains lone,
The souls new-home from the battle
Cry their love and are flown.

Katharine Tynan

The Wind That Shakes The Barley

There's music in my heart all day,
I hear it late and early,
It comes from fields are far away,
The wind that shakes the barley.

Above the uplands drenched with dew
The sky hangs soft and pearly,
An emerald world is listening to
The wind that shakes the barley.

Above the bluest mountain crest
The lark is singing rarely,
It rocks the singer into rest,
The wind that shakes the barley.

Oh, still through summers and through springs
It calls me late and early.
Come home, come home, come home, it sings,
The wind that shakes the barley.

Katharine Tynan

The Young Mother

In dreadful times of tears and war
She sails, a little fixed star,
Or like a little ship she glides
With gentle winds and favouring tides
Up to the harbour bar.

Wrapped in all mild tranquillities
She muses: inward gaze her eyes;
And lest she slip upon a stone
Gabriel or some shining one
Guards her high destinies.

No rumour reaches her at all,
Beyond her safe encompassing wall,
Of a mad world that slays and slays:
She sees a little one that plays
And sleeps at evenfall.

She is in the House of Life: and where
She goes the angels bend to her,
A little secret garden-close,
Sweet with the lily and the rose,
With frankincense and myrrh.

Katharine Tynan

The Young Soldier

Since you were so young, child, I shall
Not fear your noon or even-fall,
Nor dread you are taken unawares,
Nor weary Heaven with many prayers.

I shall not wake at night afraid
Of where your darling head is laid,
Nor say: 'He finds the wind too rough,
Dear God!' for now the wind's left off.

I shall have ease though lightnings leap,
Nor hear the thunder in my sleep,
Nor dread the crying of the seas,
Nor any mountain precipice.

God pity her who lies awake
Unquiet for some darling sake!
Soft sleeps my little son to-night,
Where many stars make candlelight!

His sword is laid beside his knees;
God knows my little son hath ease --
And I, his mother, may go sleep
And pray for them who wake and weep.

Katharine Tynan

They Who Return

To Mrs. Weigall

Into the stricken house who steals on quiet feet
And sudden brings the sunshine it used to wear?
Whose is the tender whisper that turns the bitter sweet?
Whose kiss is on your forehead, whose breath in your hair?

Who sits down beside you in the firelight glow?
Who leans on your shoulder like the boy of old?
Whose is the arm about you that you used to know,
Drawing the sting from your wound, your heart from cold?

Like the rustle of dead leaves in the autumn gloam
Running like little feet on a wind-swept road,
They are coming home so sweetly all the roads of home,
Very flesh of your flesh who belong to God.

The horse in the stable whinnies by the door,
The dog of a sudden is wild with delight.
Who is this he welcomes, long waited for?
Who smiles in the shadow, so dear, so bright?

Mercy of God, they are given, not taken away!
There's a face in the doorway, a foot on the floor.
They sit down beside us in the shadows grey,
Lay their heads on our breasts as oft before.

Katharine Tynan

To One In Grief

SIMON the Cyrenean bore
The Cross of Christ up Calvary Hill.
Blessed be Simon's lot before
Honour and ease and world's good-will
You,--you would choose his lot above
All gifts and glories, yea, all love!

Now when for your two glorious men
Your heart is broken, and your joy
On earth shall not be built again,--
Oh, what a lover, what a boy!--
Dear heart, look up! Who helps you on
The way that you must walk alone ?

For when the Cross that you must bear
Galls your poor shoulders till they bleed,
And when the thorns are on your hair,
And Love-lies-bleeding: then indeed
One will come stepping light and take
The tears the burden, the heart-break.

Happy is she who to Thine ears
Pours all her lamentations! Yea,
When Thou dost wipe away her tears
And healing words of comfort say.
Thou makest Thy Cross both sweet and light
For souls like hers that walk in white.

Katharine Tynan

To R A A

Was it not a great end?
Wrote your Philip, with a story
Of a great deed, a great death--
Not foreseeing his own glory
And his budding laurel-wreath--
In the last words he should send.

Philip's followed Alan's lead.
They are gone into the night
With the great heroes of old,
With the stars, the stars they are bright;
They are warm; they are not cold.
They live: they are not dead.

But the silence aches. O friend
In the darkness, cold and stricken,
For anodyne, antidote,
Tell your dead heart, that it quicken,
The last words that Philip wrote:
'Was it not a great end ?' A great end!

Katharine Tynan

To The Others

This was the gleam then that lured from far
Your son and my son to the Holy War:
Your son and my son for the accolade
With the banner of Christ over them, in steel arrayed.

All quiet roads of life ran on to this;
When they were little for their mother's kiss.
Little feet hastening, so soft, unworn,
To the vows and the vigil and the road of thorn.

Your son and my son, the downy things,
Sheltered in mother's breast, by mother's wings,
Should they be broken in the Lord's wars-Peace!
He Who has given them-are they not His?

Dream of knight's armour and the battle-shout,
Fighting and falling at the last redoubt,
Dream of long dying on the field of slain;
This was the dream that lured, nor lured in vain.

These were the Voices they heard from far;
Bugles and trumpets of the Holy War.
Your son and my son have heard the call,
Your son and my son have stormed the wall.

Your son and my son, clean as new swords;
Your man and my man and now the Lord's!
Your son and my son for the Great Crusade,
With the banner of Christ over them-our knights new-made.

Katharine Tynan

To Two Bereaved

Now in your days of worst distress,
The empty days that stretch before,
When all your sweet's turned bitterness;--
The Hand of the Lord is at your door.

And when at morn beside your bed
Grief waits to tell you it is true,
That both your darling boys are dead;
The Mercy of the Lord bends down to you.

When you are frozen and stripped bare
And over your joy is raised a stone,
The foot of the Lord is on your stair;
The Lord's mercy is never done.

More than the joys of common men,--
The gifts of the Lord are past desire--
They shall be given to you again,
They shall sit down beside your fire.

The young and laurelled heads shall shine,
Making a glory in your days
As a light burns in a secret shrine:
The Love of the Lord is passing praise.

The Lord recalls not gifts once given :
They shall sit down beside your hearth;
They shall come in, in white, new-shriven,
Make you new Heaven and a new earth.

The Will of the Lord is great and good,
The cup of your joy shall He brim o'er;
They shall come in with life renewed.

They shall go out from you no more.

Katharine Tynan

Turn O' The Year

This is the time when bit by bit
The days begin to lengthen sweet
And every minute gained is joy -
And love stirs in the heart of a boy.

This is the time the sun, of late
Content to lie abed till eight,
Lifts up betimes his sleepy head -
And love stirs in the heart of a maid.

This is the time we dock the night
Of a whole hour of candlelight;
When song of linnets and thrush is heard -
And love stirs in the heart of a bird.

This is the time when sword-blades green,
With gold and purple damascene,
Pierce the brown crocus-bed a-row -
And love stirs in a heart I know.

Katharine Tynan

Unfit

With younger men he takes his stand,
To the recruiting-sergeant nigh,
Sees others chosen: lifts a hand
In hopes to catch the unwilling eye,
While his mood turns to black despair
Heedless of those that grin and stare.

Careless of jibe and jeer he waits,
Thrusts himself where the eye must fall,
A voice, indifferent as Fate's,
Orders 'Stand back!' and that is all.
'Too old!' He steps down to make room
For younger men more slow to come.

Too old at fifty! But he feels
There's lots of fighting in him yet.
Some hint of glory lifts, reveals,
In the smirched days he would forget.
They might blot out the shameful past
If he fell fighting at the last.

If he could meet them, one poor rag
Of glory cast about his shame --
One rag of glory! England's flag
Wrapping in splendour his poor frame!
And all the people he once knew
Saying 'He died as white men do!'

Mirage! Such dreams as come with sleep!
And he is innocent and small,
Running through orchard grasses deep
To his dead mother's tender call;
Before he broke her heart and bowed
His father's comely head and proud.

There's nothing left to hope for more.
Poor fool, to think he might atone!
He sees in a mist a fast-shut door.
Shambling and blear-eyed and alone

He goes, and darkness covers him,
Who saw the glory and the gleam.

Katharine Tynan

Unhousel'D, Unanointed, Unanel'D

When these men must go alone
Sans an absolution,
When their sins are heavy as lead,
Thou Thyself will lift the head ;
Thou, High Priest, wilt whisper low,
Te Absolvo! ere they go.

When there is no sacrifice,
Bread and Wine for Thy disguise,
Come Thou in the Spirit then;
As at Agincourt our men
With desire a blade of grass
Served as Eucharist and Mass.

Lay Thyself the oil on lips,
Limbs and eyes, before the eclipse--
As once Magdalen did to Thee--
And so speed them, safe and free,
To lie down with Thee a while
And to waken to Thy smile.

They shall sit down at the Feast
Where Thou are Sacrament and Priest.

Katharine Tynan

Vigil

At night, when all the house is still,
Wide-waked the chairs and tables come
And yawn and stretch their limbs until
The maids appear with pan and broom.

Through the dim hours they creak and groan,
Their laughter plays with tyrant Man,
Shaken with stiff derision
For his pretensions and his span.

Where's then their willing servitude ?
Meek slaves for their creator's use.
They make a mock of flesh and blood
That passes with a morning's dews.

The heart that once leaped in the tree
Yet lives in the fantastic shapes
That foolish Man hath made to be --
But see how wide yon cupboard gapes!

With ' Yours' and 'Mine' they make great sport,
Who saw us come and see us go,
And will be when no least report
Of us but what a stone can show.

When ghosts and owlets flit abroad,
The furniture's awake, aware,
The floor complaining of its load,
And what a creaking of the stair.

Katharine Tynan

What She Said

She said: Would I might sleep
With the bulbs I plant so deep,
Forgetting all the long Winter
That I must awake and weep.

A dreamless sleepy-head,
Forgetting my Dear was dead;
Nothing caring nor knowing
While the dark season sped.

I am so young, so young,
And the years stretch out so long,
The weeks and the months so endless;
The long life does me wrong.

I would grow old and grey,
As though 'twere only a day,
Till his voice came calling, calling
To me under the clay.

Then I should spring to the sun,
Life done with, Life begun,
And run where he waited to lift me
Over the threshold stone.

She sighed in the Autumn weather: --
Would I and the bulbs together,
For Spring lay quietly waiting;
I and the bulbs together.

Katharine Tynan

What Turned The Germans Back

WHAT turned the German myriads back
From Paris whither they had won?
The sword dropped from their hold grown slack;
Children of Attila the Hun,
Like Attila, went backward driven
By a young shepherdess of Heaven.

A shepherdess is Genevieve,
And though her flock should wander light,
This shepherdess is quick to save
The black, the speckled and the white.
She takes her golden crook and goes
And deals destruction to its foes.

She who turned Attila back, so slim,
A shepherdess that keeps the flock,
Waited as once she did for him,
Slight as a reed or her own crook;
'Turn back in God's Name!' They went back.
The tide is stemmed for her sweet sake.

White Genevieve upon her hill
Prays, and the German hosts retreat.
She plucks the Robes of Heaven still
That Heaven give victory for defeat;
And keeps her motley flock in sight,
The black, the speckled and the white.

Katharine Tynan

When You Come Home

All will be right when you come home, dear lad,
But oh, 'tis long of coming that you are!
Everything's wrong with all the world and sad;
There are so many hurt in this long war,
So many missing, who will never come,
Lying out in the rain and in the cold.
I shall forget it all when you come home,
I shall forget the lonesome things they told.

There's something, something sad, that troubles me.
Beats like the rain upon my frightened heart;
A tale about a girl, the thing might be,
Whispered in corners, secret and apart
How he was killed and how she never knew
Because God put a small cloud on her mind,
And how she waited the black winters through
And the wet summers; surely God was kind!

I took a daisy from the garden-bed
And plucked the petals, one by one, to tell
When I and my true lover should be wed,
This year: Next year: Never: the petals fell
And stopped at Never. But it could not guess,
The foolish daisy, what true love I had.
I turned from daisies and I plucked heartsease
To rest my heart on and be safe and glad.

Everything's wrong, Love, since you went away,
Such a queer world when all the boys are gone,
And there is no one left but old and grey,
Women and children, frightened and alone.
Sometimes the tale is crying at my heart
Of that poor girl. Maybe 'twas but a dream.
When you come home the shadows will depart,
The lonesome dreams die off in morning gleam.

Katharine Tynan

Wild Geese

(A Lament for the Irish Jacobites.)

I have heard the curlew crying
On a lonely moor and mere;
And the sea-gull's shriek in the gloaming
Is a lonely sound in the ear:
And I've heard the brown thrush mourning
For her children stolen away;--
But it's O for the homeless Wild Geese
That sailed ere the dawn of day!

For the curlew out on the moorland
Hath five fine eggs in the nest;
And the thrush will get her a new love
And sing her song with the best.
As the swallow flies to the Summer
Will the gull return to the sea:
But never the wings of the Wild Geese
Will flash over seas to me.

And 'tis ill to be roaming, roaming
With homesick heart in the breast!
And how long I've looked for your coming,
And my heart is the empty nest!
O sore in the land of the stranger
They'll pine for the land far away!
But day of Aughrim, my sorrow,
It was you was the bitter day!

Katharine Tynan

Wings In The Night

Now in the soft spring midnight
There's rush of wings and whirr,
Birds flying softly, swiftly;
The night's a-flutter, a-stir.

Home by the bitter seas,
They have sped home together.
So glad to be coming home
To the grey hills, the grey weather.

Calling and calling softly
One lights by the window-pane:
The rook, weary with building,
Turns to his sleep again.

Ere ever the moor-hens wake
And the wild duck come in,
The birds are about the house
With a long call and thin.

They have wakened the wood-pigeon
To make her plaintive moan,
The wood-pigeon lamenting
For sorrows not her own.

Oh, they are never birds,
But souls of men on the wind,
Seeking the mother's breast,
The heart that is soft and kind.

Souls of the Irish dead,
Flown from the fields of slaughter,
Home to the mother's arms
Over the wild grey water.

Katharine Tynan

Winter Sunset

Roses in the sky,
Roses in the sea
Bowers of scarlet sky-roses
Take my heart and me.

God was good to make,
This December weather,
All this sky a rose-garden,
Rose and fire together.

To the East are burning
Roses in a garden,
Roses in a rosy field,
Hesper for their warden.

Yonder to the West
Roses all afire,
Mirror now some rare splendid
Rose of their desire.

Pulsing deeper, deeper,
Waves of fire throb on,
Never were such red roses
At sunset or dawn.

Roses on the hills,
Roses in the hollow,
Roses on the wet hedges,
In the shining fallow.

West wind, blow and blow!
That has blown ajar
Gates of God's great rose-garden,
Where His Angels are,

Gathering up the rose-leaves
For a shower of roses
On the night the Lord Babe
His sweet eye uncloses.

All the sky is scarlet
Flaming on the azure.
O, there's fire in Heaven
My heart aches with pleasure.

Leagues of rose and scarlet,
Roses red as blood:
All the world's a rose-garden.
God is good, is good.

Katharine Tynan