

Classic Poetry Series

Roderic Quinn
- poems -

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Roderic Quinn(1867 - 1949)

Roderic Quinn (brother of Patrick Edward Quinn) was born in Sydney. His Irish parents had migrated, in 1853, to Australia. He received his education in Sydney together with his life long friends and . He studied law for a while, then worked as a country schoolteacher. When he returned to Sydney he took a position as a freelance journalist. He wrote short stories for the 'Bulletin', and made a modest living from his poetry from the 1890s to the mid 1920s. His work was extremely appreciated by his contemporaries. He was linked with Victor Daly as poets of the 'Celtic Twilight'.

A Grey Day

THE long still day is ending
In hollow and on height,
The lighthouse seaward sending
White rays of steady light;
A little cloud is leading
A great cloud west by north;
Woe waits on ships unheeding
That blindly venture forth.
All day the sea, dull-heaving,
Moaned low like one who ails,
While spectre hands were weaving
A veil o'er distant sails.
All day, with drooping feather
And wings devoid of gleam,
The sea-birds grouped together
Forebore to wheel and scream.
Salt-arms and river-reaches
Were glazed and leaden-hued,
And haunting sodden beaches
Went grey-haired Solitude.
The dead leaves in the forest
Sank earthward all aswoon;
The green marsh-frogs that chorused
Had ta'en a sadder tune.
Lost loves, and sins long hidden,
Through some unguarded gate
Entered the soul unbidden,
And made men desolate.
And fears beset the fearless,
And laughs were stayed to sigh,
And eyes long dry and tearless
Grew moist — and none knew why.
Gleamed red the covered ember
Beneath its ashen grey,
And some said, 'I remember,'
And some, ' 'Twas such a day!'
And all were lonely-hearted,
Sight inward-set and blurred;
At touch or tone they started

And groped for fitting word.
Down-cast in weeds went Nature,
Stilling man's mirth and song;
And mourning in each creature
A grave and ancient wrong . . .
Light fades on hill and hollow;
Night falls, and close behind
Storm-rage and Sea-wrath follow
With wild cries on the wind.

Roderic Quinn

A Song Of Keats

'TIS a tarnished book and old,
Edges frayed and covers green!
But, between the covers, gold —
Gold and jewels in between.
And this written (see, O see!
How old Time has made it dim)
'For one song Keats gave to me
I kneel down and worship him.'
He who wrote these lines is dust;
All of him is passed away;
Some hand closed his eyes, I trust,
Drew the blind to darken day.
Did lips kiss him at the end,
Love-lips tremulous yet brave?
Had he mistress, child, or friend
To sow green grass upon his grave?
Nay, we know not — it is long
Since he tired of Life's deceits,
Closed his ears to sigh and song,
Parted with this book, JOHN KEATS.
Year by year the Poet thrives;
Summer smiles and winter weeps;
La Belle Dame Sans Merci lives,
But a heart that loved her sleeps.
Who would woeful go to miss
Roses red in thorns arrayed,
When he might with surer bliss
Love a milkwhite Devon maid?
Beauty kindles man's desire,
Beauty dwindles, growing faint;
But the girls who never tire
Are the girls that poets paint.
When the moon has taken wings
And the twilight hour is come,
Grey the woods, and no bird sings:
Grey the world beyond, and dumb:
Neither light is there nor breeze,
Rose to redden, thorn to pain;
Till, look! look! Among the trees

A sudden bird! a scarlet stain!
So he tired of Fate's defeats,
Life's dead trees and woodlands grim,
Till sudden-sweet a song of Keats
One magic moment gave to him.

Roderic Quinn

A Song Of Winds

WOE to the weak when the sky is shrouded,
And the wind of the salt-way sobs as it dies!
Woe to the weak! for a great dejection
Droops their spirits and drowns their eyes.
Woe to the weak who tire of fetters,
Of grim life-fetters that gall and bind!
For the Sea tells stories of death made lovely,
And a siren sings in the nor'-east wind.
It wanders the coast like a tombless spectre,
And drips dank dew on the drooping leaf;
And the soul grows pensive with dim suggestions
Of grey old troubles and ancient grief.
'Tis grave and low, and with woeful plaining
Sighs death-notes under a sky of grey;
And who hath an ear may hear the voices
Of pale men dead on its streaked sea-way.
In fading twilights o'er sullen seascapes,
A lost, wan wind 'neath a dead grey sky,
It swoons to land like a weary swimmer,
Sobs and falters and turns to die.
Seeking a tomb in dark coast caverns
Where wet rust reddens the fretted stone,
The wandering sea-thing sinks to silence,
Sinks and dies with a last low moan . . .
A last low moan, and deadly stillness . . .
Then the sudden crash of a league-long sea,
And fresh from his den in the white ice region
The Wolf of the South is speeding free;
Cleaving the air with his chill grey shoulders,
Trampling the sea to foam beneath.
The Wolf of the South goes howling nor'ard,
A mastless hull in his long white teeth.
Black swans on high, a far faint phalanx,
Wing their way to a northern clime,
Sending feathers of sad sound downward,
Mournful notes of an evil time —
An evil time, for the black Night chases
And darkness swallows the trailing flock;
An evil season of wild white weather,

And foam and tumult on reef and rock;
Of yellow floods on the Northern rivers,
And fierce waves swaying from crest to trough,
Of creaking schooners wearing seaward,
And signals crying — Stand off! Stand off!
Of frothy flakes on the wild waste flying,
And anxious faces, and fateful news;
Of close-reefed topsails, and battened hatches,
And straining engines and racing screws;
Of pumice-stone and brown weeds riven,
Cast up and flung on the hissing sand;
Of squadroned waves and their mighty charging,
And the stern repulse of the frowning land;
Of whipped white faces faring stormward
With smothered words and wrecked replies,
Of trees blown down on the windy ridges,
And stormy shoutings, and tempest cries;
Of eyes that dance to the wild wind's music,
Of strange sweet thrills through the calm-sick form,
Of Storm throned king on the mad white ocean,
Of Storm the Monarch — all hail to Storm!

Roderic Quinn

A Wardrobe

I SAID 'The dark deed matters nought,
And this green gown becomes her well;
For phrase and rhyme oft hide the thought,
As pearls are hid 'twixt shell and shell.
'My Lady Lyric, go your way,
Dance daintily around the globe,
Nor mind what carping critics say,
Nor whence you got your shining robe.'
I have a wardrobe, quaintly hung
With brave brocade and gleaming silk,
Plumed hats, and collars richly strung,
With gems outgiving fire and milk.
No thief may raid its rare contents,
No years decay, nor moth devour;
It is not lavender that scents
The air, nor is it any flower.
Full fifty poets, day and night,
In mirth and pain and dark despair
Sat weaving for the world's delight
The wondrous fabrics shining there.
'My peasant maid shall seem a queen,'
I said, 'if she be rich-arrayed';
And in another's cloak of green
I dressed the shoulders of my maid.

Roderic Quinn

Acushla

I NAMED her twice, I named her thrice,
I named her ten times over;
The wind heard, and the singing bird,
And the bee in the creamy clover.

Acushla! Acushla!

The cushat dove is cooing;
It's little that a man may do,
Whose heart is hot with wooing.

I left the field, the harvest yield —
The grain was ripe to falling —
And ran, and ran, a crazy man,
And I the whole time calling

'Acushla! Acushla!

The cushat dove is cooing;
When Love is keeping holiday,
What work is worth the doing?'

Her feet were fleet, her pretty feet
Upon the hill and hollow;
She bade me stay, she cried me nay,
And still her eyes said 'Follow!'

Acushla! Acushla!

The cushat dove is cooing;
To capture her was sweet, indeed,
Yet sweeter the pursuing.

Roderic Quinn

After Cattle

WE lit a fire, and straightway camped,
And all night long
We heard the river sing its song.
Our horses fed, and neighed, and stamped;
But else, o'er all
A haunted silence seemed to fall.
The gum-trees raised their lofty crests
So high, it seemed
They mingled with the stars and dreamed.
As when a tired bird sinks and rests
At end of day,
Head couched on arm, full length we lay.
But Nature would not let us sleep;
She loved so well
To talk, and had such things to tell.
Her fire-fly lamps within the deep
Green gullies shone
One moment, and the next were gone.
The smooth white trunks of ancient trees
In stately pride
Marched up the rugged mountain side.
No leaf fell fluttering on the breeze;
But everywhere
A stillness charmed the midnight air.
And as we lay without a word,
In silence camped,
Our horses in the darkness stamped.
At first, it seemed a timid bird
Sang soft below,
And then . . . we listened, breathing low.
We heard, elusive, strange, and shy,
A song arise —
The river voicing many cries.
At first, it was a human cry
Of sad unrest,
Of one cast down and sore distressed.
And then, an elfin chant it raised,
As when men cry
'We've silks to sell; who'll buy, who'll buy?'

And goods were cried and wares were praised;
It seemed like some
Far market-place in Fairydom.
Yet ever through the chorus stole
The sore-distressed,
Faint human note of sad unrest.
We woke and saw the morning roll
In waves of gold
Upon the mountains green and bold;
Birds sang, flowers laughed, the grass was green;
The sky above
Bent over, arching earth with love;
And, riding through that woodland scene
Of rocks and rills,
We heard the cattle in the hills.

Roderic Quinn

After Drafting

NIGHT has fallen, night and darkness,
Night with star and planet splendid;
And the earth lies like a giant
Wrapt in sleep, with limbs extended.
Rest has stolen on the homestead,
On the long day's rush and riot,
And no sound of horse or rider
Breaks the soft and dewy quiet.
Yet, like heart-cries
After battle,
Comes the calling, ceaseless calling,
Of the dun and dappled cattle.
Sleep is sweet, and sweet is silence,
When the long day's work is over,
For the toiler and the moiler,
And the rider and the rover.
Not a breeze abroad at night-time
Sets the barley-grass aquiver,
And from dewfall on to sunrise
Sleeps the curlew by the river.
Yet no slumber
Anguish smothers;
Hark the calling, plaintive calling,
Of the robbed and stricken mothers!
Oh, how still are plain and river —
How all-sweet, how all-amazing!
By the stars' march night is numbered —
Rising, setting, zenith-blazing.
Peace has come upon the homestead;
Passed the long day's rush and riot;
Only from the drafted cattle
Comes a note of sad disquiet:
Dun and dappled,
Horned and poley —
They are lowing, lowly lowing,
With a helpless melancholy.

Roderic Quinn

All Of A Piece

ALL of a piece were the sunset light,
The rose in the tree, and the golden girl;
Beauty, the weaver, 'twas that wove them,
Weaving deftly, as Beauty can,
Just to capture the eyes of a man,
Just to make the heart of him love them,
Setting the blood in his veins a-swirl;
Ah, the rose, and the girl, its piece-mate!
Ah, the sunset of rose and pearl!
All of a piece are the faded light,
The rose in the mire and the girl grown old;
Beauty, the trickster, 'twas that wove them,
Weaving deftly, as Beauty can,
Just to capture the soul of a man,
Just to make the heart of him love them,
Then to sicken and grow grave-cold;
Fragile wear is the cloth of Beauty —
Rose and sunset and girl of gold!

Roderic Quinn

An Empty Room

'THIS is the room where Pinksie died';
So runs the writing there on the wall.
The world outside is a golden tide
Of light, but here the shadows fall.
And who was Pinksie — a babe or wife?
A girl, I think, in her laughing teens,
Who passed away from the feast of life
When boys and girls are kings and queens.
I like to think that she laughed at whites,
Her eyes alight with the imps of fun,
And knew no sorrow but such as smiles
The moment after the hurt is done.
They named her Pinksie, I have no doubt,
Because of the rich, soft blush she wore;
The roses paled ere they bore her out,
A slim child-figure, through yonder door.
She passed in the joy of her early bloom
To wide, dark realms where no planets roll.
And I write these lines in the empty room
Where Pinksie died. God rest her soul!

Roderic Quinn

Arnold Rode Behind

WE galloped down the sodden track
Close buttoned 'gainst the wind;
I took the lead with whip and spur,
And Arnold rode behind.

The skies were wild; a rending gale
Ran roaring through the trees;
It sounded now like shouting hosts,
And now like angry seas.

'Spur on! Spur on!' I turned and cried,
'The fatal moments fly!'
I cursed him then-his trembling hand-
I cursed his bloodshot eye.

I cursed him for the lust of drink
That held his will a slave;
For skill to tend and mend was his
To succour and to save.

I thought of her, the golden girl,
My life, my love, nigh spent,
Nigh death, with fever clutching her,
And what his coming meant.

Through driving rain and tossing trees
I saw her pale with pain ;
And if my eyes grew wet, perchance
'Twas not the wet of rain.

I turned on Arnold, and I vowed
To pay with coin of hate
His ten-mile ride, his boasted skill,
If he should prove too late;

I mixed my words with searing scorn,
And turned and told him plain,
Of how I found him stupid, drugged,
With dull and sluggish brain.

And how the wasted hours went by-
I waiting by his side-
Till he should wake, and be himself,
And mount his horse and ride.

And 'Arnold, if she die'-I said-
'Be yours the lot accurst-
In life to thirst, to thirst in death,
In Hell to thirst and thirst.'

And so with black and bitter words,
Close-buttoned 'gainst the wind,
With whip and spur I galloped on,
And Arnold rode behind.

No word he said, no answer gave,
No bitter curse flung back,
But, sagging in the saddle, sank
A shamed thing in my track.

The skies were lead, and leaden rain-
A screen of sullen lead.
A wind-blown screen, a blinding screen-
Fell down from overhead.

Though cattle die, and pastures fade,
With drought on hill and plain,
'Fore God, I pray I may not see
The like of that blind rain!

The torn leaves swirled about my head;
The gum-trees tall and stout
Waved limbs and tossed tormented crests
As in a forest rout.

The wind was now like hounds a-hunt,
And now like hounds that whined.
Yet ever on and on I rode,
And Arnold rode behind.

And soon there rose a mighty noise;

Above the wind it roared;
And, bursting through the screen of rain,
We came to Kelvin's Ford.

I reined my horse in mute amaze,
A stunned and stricken man;
For 'twixt me and my heart's own love
A thwarting river ran.

I looked upon its maddened waste;
I drew a broken breath;
I said, 'Tis hopeless-ended all-
To dare the Ford were death.'

The wind was like a pack of hounds
Upon a forest-hunt- . . .
And then I heard a splash of hoofs-
And Arnold rode in front,

His face was lit-I vow 'twas lit
Like glorious evening skies;
And, as he turned and smiled, flashed out
The manhood from his eyes.

And then I knew that through his soul
A dauntless purpose ran
As, shaking shame and sin aside,
He rose once more a Man.

He fought the river inch by inch,
Set will against its might,
Gave way with it, and came again,
And conquered in the fight.

And saved Her . . . conquered Death as well.
O Heart-so dull, so blind!-
Oft-times, denied his chance in life,
The hero rides behind.

Roderic Quinn

At Dawn

THE night-long clamour of winds grew still;
The forest rested, its foes withdrawn;
On sounding ocean and silent hill
There crept a sense of the coming dawn.
A bird awoke on a leaning limb
And fluttered its plumes a moment's space;
Dark purple lay on the sea's far rim:
The sky grew pale as a dying face.
Then all the trees and the rocks and heights
With wondering faces watched the East:
It seemed an altar hung with lights
And waiting for a vested priest.
And in that intimate first hour
When land and sea rejoiced as one,
And Nature, like an opening flower,
Gave incense, came the burning sun.
Yet, while the hour of gold went by,
I saw through all its pageantry
The vast indifference of the sky,
The heartless beauty of the sea.
For wet and wan, and cold and sped
Beyond the breakers' reach of pearl,
There lay a strong man drowned and dead,
And in his arms a drowned white girl.

Roderic Quinn

At End Of A Holiday

'LEAVES and brambles from hill and hollow
Come and gather!' the children cried;
'The sun goes down, and the night will follow,
A moonless night on the dark hillside.'
All ways they wandered — the dry twigs snapping,
With laugh and prattle and song between;
Down on the rocks the waves were lapping,
The long swell swaying the seaweed green.
And she stood by in her white sun-bonnet,
All lace and snow on her tressy hair,
With a gold king-beetle dreaming on it
A lotus dream in the lustrous air.
Was it love, or a dove in the tall tree cooing?
Was it love, or a dove that loitered nigh?
The eventide is the hour for wooing —
But I was silent, and she was shy.
Then suddenly rose a far faint humming,
A growing noise in the evening hush,
And the prattle of children homeward coming,
Laden with spoil of the gold-brown bush.
'Leaves and brambles from hill and hollow!
The way was tangled, and tangles tire.
The sun goes down and the night will follow, —
Now down on your knees and make us a fire!'
The leaves were wet (how a storm may hinder!)
The brambles damp with a shower at noon;
She bent to help . . . and my heart of tinder,
Ah, why did it burst to flame so soon?
'Dry leaves, dry leaves from the twilight forest,
Or bark that is sheltered, or hidden ferns:
Dry leaves, dry leaves!' the children chorused,
'The drier the leaf the redder it burns!'
The fire leapt up with a sudden glancing,
The first flame flushing her hands of snow;
And round about went the children dancing,
Their faces lit by the rosy glow.
That fire has gone beyond all returning,
For wild winds scatter and chill rains drench:
All dust the leaves; but a fire is burning

That wind or water shall never quench.
Ah, leaves and brambles from hill and hollow!
And two together, and violet eyes . . .
The sun goes down, and love must follow,
A quenchless fire, and a flame that dies.

Roderic Quinn

At Her Door

OPEN! Open! Open!
I am here at your door outside;
The sea's blue tide flows speedily,
And ebbs a thin red tide.'
The woman rose from her warm white bed,
Threw back her hair and smiled;
The ears of scorn heard the words of love,
And the wind and the words were wild.
'Wake! Awake! Awake!
And hearken the woe outside;
The moon is hid in cloudiness;
Calleth and calleth the tide.'
The woman stood in the silence still
As a thing men carve from stone.
Her eyes burned largely in the dark,
And the smile, like a stain, stayed on.
'Listen! Listen! Listen!
Hear you the rain to-night?
A warm dark rain is falling too,
And I grow ghostly-white.'
The woman took three steps and bowed;
The smile waned from her lip;
She heard the dripping of the rain
And a soft thick other drip.
'Open! Open! Open!
I die in the dark alone.
My voice goes up in weariness
Against your heart of stone.'
The moon to a cloud-cleft stealing
Gazed down on the yearning tide;
The woman opened the streaming door
And stood in the rain outside.
Silence! Stillness! She whispers,
'Ah, Love, that death should be!'
He sighed, 'Your lips are loveliness!'
And she sobbed, 'Woe is me!'
The woman pressed his dead white face
With her face as deadly white:
The moon drew in behind a cloud,

And the tide moaned through the night.

Roderic Quinn

At The Tide's Will

WHEN the tide came surging in
To the beach it bore
Drift-wood and brown weeds —
These — and nothing more!
As the stranded weeds and wood
Borne by the sea,
Tossed at the wind's will,
Even so are we!
When the tide went out again
From the beach, it bore
Drift-wood and brown weeds —
These — and nothing more!
Little peace is ours indeed,
Little rest we know —
Weeds at the Tide's will
Tossed to and fro!

Roderic Quinn

Australia's Vision

ALL still! and, high above, the sun
In cloudless, golden reign —
A mirage in the quivering west —
A horseman on the plain!
Silent, with hand above his eyes,
With thoughts undreamed, unguessed,
Like some bronze shape immovable,
He gazes down the west.
High overhead an eagle soars
On proud, wide-spreading wings;
Crouching, they watch with stricken eyes —
The furred and feathered things.
No song, no sound! but arching skies
With not a cloud to mar;
O horseman, gazing down the west,
What seest thou afar?
Is you a mirage dream, indeed,
Heat-born, shape-thronged, sublime?
Or but a mirror of the things
That thou shalt know in time?
What comes and goes in yonder haze?
What moving things are these?
Are they the masts of battleships,
Or are they phantom trees?
Speak thou, whose eyes are eagle-keen,
Nor dimmed with old regrets;
Are yonder shapes but spectral reeds,
Or are they bayonets?
Look well into the Vision's heart,
O horseman on the plain!
Trust nought except thine own true eyes —
For thine the loss or gain.

Roderic Quinn

Bequeathal

THE night-birds cry in the bush outside,
And I write here, though the hour be late;
And what shall I write of the man who died?
'He gave his gold to the poor at his gate!'
The line is written. Was that his all,
And did that all exhaust his love?
'Nay, nay, write on, while the night-birds call:
'He gave his soul to his God above'!
Say on; for in so rich a vein
More gold lay waiting to be proved.
'T was so! Write this, and write it plain:
'He gave his heart to the wife he loved'!
What more? 'What more dost thou require?
What more was left to give or take?
Yet more there was. Write this in fire:
'He gave his life for his country's sake'!
'Last gift of all, with courage fine,
Though far from stars that watched his birth.
He fell. Write then this final line:
'He gave his clay to the aliens' earth'!

Roderic Quinn

By Momba Tracks

THE hearts of the everlasting-flowers
Shall steal the gold o' the sun
When the winter rains have done their work
And the winter days are done,
And the desert pea shall hue the rocks
By the tracks of Momba run.
The dew shall gleam on the silken webs
That the night-time spider weaves,
And scatter its gems on the saltbush plains
And drip from the homestead eaves,
And the quandong fruit take ruddy fire
In the green of the quandong leaves.
The bees shall saunter from bloom to bloom
And burthen their honey-sacs;
And the drovers ride in the sunset light
On the long, long winding tracks;
But never a man shall pause to pray
By the graves of the Barrier blacks.
Deep dug they lie in the mulga scrub,
These graves of a dwindling race,
Stone-piled and bare, where the windy noons
Swift lights and shadows trace!
And the lone, heaped mound is the only sign
Of a dead man's burial-place.
They passed away like a feeble flame
Before the white man's breath
(Wherever the white man sets his feet
The white man comes with death):
And they lie deep-celled in the moisty mould,
And the wind their requiem saith.

Roderic Quinn

By The Quay

I KNEW a ship in the magical time
Of painted toy and nursery rhyme
That quested the world with sails unfurled,
And fluttered her flag in every clime.
Now, once a year, when she came to port,
We quitted our lessons, forgot our sport,
Deserted schools with their tiresome rules,
And rushed to her side to pay her court.
We turned from the town with its ceaseless noise,
Its staring windows and gilded toys;
For she was a queen in her gold and green
And we were a group of Quayside boys.
We climbed her yards at the risk of our necks,
Or grouped wide-eyed on her snowy decks
While her sailors told — what time they rolled
The quid in their cheeks — of reefs and wrecks.
Great talk they made of the China Seas,
The cocoa-nut isles and the scented breeze
That came at night in the white moonlight
From cinnamon groves and camphor trees.
They yarned of dolphins and mermaids white
And Father Neptune abroad at night —
Or, short and tall, yet merry men all,
They danced a jig in the sunset light.
But, best of all, when the night came down
Were the songs they chorused of London Town —
Now loud, now low — with a Yo-heave-O,
And brave, blue eyes under brows of brown.
Now, kissing the foam when the good ship sped,
And poised at her fore with lips of red
And a robe of blue, was — what think you? —
Why, only a wooden figure-head.
Just that! no more; but its buoyant poise
Was such that it seemed a joy of joys,
And its gold-tressed head and its lips of red
Were loved, I think, by the Quayside Boys.
O! the vanished things are the things that most
We grieve about — and that Quayside host,
Would they sigh if told that their ship of old

Is a hulk for coals on the Spanish Coast?

Roderic Quinn

Doing Nothing

WITH the sorrow on me
Neighbours come and go —
Think me vain and foolish
Nursing up my woe.
With the grief-blade in me
Keen and chill as steel —
Can I laugh like others,
Feel the joy they feel?
Since he died and left me
Things don't matter much,
Life, that danced and capered,
Limps upon a crutch.
Night and day I ponder,
Drawing weary breath —
Since to love we're moulded,
Why should there be death?
Night and day I'm asking
Him Who dwells above —
Since to death we're going,
Why should there be love?
When he kissed and left me,
Oh, he looked so brave! —
God be with him sleeping
In his far-off grave!
What are dress and jewels,
What are meat and bread
To a lonely woman
Grieving for her dead?
Wan I am with weeping,
Tired of heart I sink —
Doing nothing . . . only
Trying not to think'

Roderic Quinn

Drovers Twain

WHERE was no shadow on the land,
No cloud in heaven's dome,
When, bearded man and beardless boy,
Our hearts alight with morning joy,
Across the hills of Duckmaloi
We drove the cattle home.
The sunrays danced a merry jig
On grass and bracken brown;
And right and left, and left and right,
The magpies piped in sheer delight,
As over creekside flat and height
We drove the cattle down.
With fiery eyes and tossing horns,
And swaying sides and hips,
They moved — red hides and hides of black —
And ever, as they left the track,
We wheeled, and held, and drove them back
With shouts and cracking whips.
There is no joy in all the world
Of such a bloom and blush
As that the charging rider feels
When at some frenzied scrubber's heels,
His stockwhip making curves and wheels,
He thunders through the bush.
Knees gripping hard, he dashes on,
The swift wind in his hair;
Whate'er befall, whate'er betide,
All thought of peril thrust aside,
He feels the glory and the pride
Of those who finely dare.
The moving mob was mountain-reared
And mountain-bred and born,
Their hides of brand and marking clear —
As shy as deer, as swift as deer
Who over heath and highland hear
The huntsman's early horn.
And yet with dog and spur and whip,
Our horses flaked with foam,
The magpies singing all the while,

Through hour and hour and mile and mile,
For all their speed of hoof and guile,
We brought the cattle home.
A score of years has passed away,
Slow filing on, since then;
And Time, who knows no sparing ruth,
And Wisdom, armed with bitter truth,
Have tamed the heart of reckless youth
And greyed the beards of men.
Yet evermore, when cattle low
Across the bracken brown,
I see again that man and boy
As when, alight with morning joy,
Across the hills of Duckmaloi
They drove the cattle down.

Roderic Quinn

Garden Street

LONG and drowsy and white and wide,
Villas and arbours on either side,
Pleasant under the cloudless skies,
Garden Street in the sunlight lies.
Twice a day — at the morning hour,
And again when the lights of sunset flower —
Its pavements ring to the footfall-noise
Of men and women, and girls and boys.
Townward, sprightly of foot, they go;
Home they come in the evening glow,
Labours over and questing done —
Some with money and some with none.
Most hours through, from morn to night,
It dreams and dreams in the drowsy light:
No call is there of the huckster-clan,
Of the bottle-oh and the rabbit-man.
Wafted odours of nameless flowers
Perfume the march of the golden hours;
Under the laurels, cooling the eye,
Pools of shade in the sunshine lie.
All day long, and night-long too,
Sunlight-sweetened or washed by dew,
Leaf and petal and fern and palm
Open their lungs, out-breathing balm.
Now the cooing of doves is heard,
Now the song of a single bird;
Beetles drone, and the murmuring bees
Make their round of the flowers and trees.
Echoes alone of the trouble and strife,
Stir and flurry and noise of life —
Hints alone of its fever and heat
Steal through the quiet of Garden Street.
Traffic and Trade with eyes awry
Seek the city, and pass it by;
Few daylong through its distance wend
With money to make or money to spend.
Yet yesterday, when the moon was sped,
Up and down, with a furtive tread,
Lounged a rogue with a wistful smile,

Whistling a jig on the wind the while.
Twice or thrice in the stirless trance
Stilling his feet, he paused to glance
Over the way to the vine-clad gate
Where the laurels droop and the poppies wait.
Rogue and robber and fool, I swear —
Love was the plunder that brought him there;
Love that laughed through a curtain of green,
Watching his tricks the while, I ween.
Rogue and robber, he went away
Sour and sick at the end of day,
Empty of hope and sad to see;
For bolt and bar on her heart had she.
She who lives in the Doric house,
Secret and shy as a little mouse,
Dainty and dear from head to feet —
Pansy. Princess of Garden Street!

Roderic Quinn

God's Answer

BANNISTER, who lived for gain,
Counting love and mateship weak,
Bannister of Coolah Creek
Once, and once alone, 'tis said,
Bent his knees and bowed his head,
Praying God to send him rain.
Sheep and cattle were to him
Pounds and pence in wool and hide —
That, and nothing more beside;
Gain, and gain alone, he sought —
Bought and sold, and sold and bought —
Bannister, the shrewd and grim!
Drought might slay his neighbour's sheep,
Leave his friends with stricken lands,
Starving stock and empty hands,
Driving them to ruin's brink;
Not by so much as a wink
Did it cause him loss of sleep.
Loving neither man nor maid,
Man and maid no pity showed
When the Drought, red-handed, strode
Through the land, and spared him not;
Then it was, by all forgot,
Bannister knelt down and prayed.
Hands entreatingly out-thrown,
Head and shoulders bowed with care,
Bannister sent up his prayer;
Did that prayer include a friend?
Nay; but selfish to the end
For himself he prayed alone.
Scarce a stone's-throw from his door
Coolah Creek, dry-bedded, lay
Day and night, and night and day
Staring skyward, stark and dumb;
In its single river-gum
Sang the shepherd-bird no more.
Praying long and low, there ran
Through his mind a vision sweet —
Waters singing at his feet;

And his words a torrent poured:
'Open Thou Thy floodgates, Lord,
Lest I be a ruined man!'
Then he rose and sought his bed,
Sighing as he sank to sleep,
While, without, his famished sheep
In the darkness moaned their woe,
And his cattle, lowing low,
Sagged with droop of eye and head.
Dreams were his with splendour lit,
Happy dreams of days to be:
While his prayer limped leadenly
Through cold spaces, drear and lone,
Till, at last, it reached God's throne,
And God, bending, answered it.
Hot and still the darkness was,
Hushed and hot the midnight air.
Drought and death were everywhere,
Thirst and hunger, pain and grief:
Stirless hung the wilted leaf,
Motionless the brittle grass.
Mercy, pity seemed aloof,
God remote and cold to man,
When a whispering began —
And the sleeper woke to hear,
Low at first, then loud and clear,
Raindrops drumming on his roof.
Little things began to stir,
Little voices filled the night —
Whispers, murmurings of delight,
Till the torrent drowned them all
In the thunder of its fall . . .
God had answered Bannister!
Thinking thus his troubles o'er,
Pleased with God, he slept again;
Bannister, unloved of men,
Loved of God most surely seemed.
Coolah Creek, awakened, streamed
Scarce a stone's-throw from his door.
Dreaming dreams of gain anew,
Bannister reposed at ease,
Hearing but sweet melodies,

Free of loss and free of pain.
Gorged and swollen by the rain,
Coolah Creek a giant grew.
Foam upon its torrent swept,
Leaf and limb went down its flood;
Like a beast athirst for blood
Through the dark it ramped and raged;
Like a lion long encaged,
Free at last, it roared and leapt;
Then it burst its banks, and broke
Bar and barrier in its path
Shouting, foaming in its wrath . . .
Dreaming dreams of golden gain,
Hides and tallow, wool and grain.
Bannister too late awoke.
Never more to speak and stir,
Never more to strive and hoard —
Self, and self alone, his lord —
Veins no more with life aglow,
Body washing to and fro —
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Roderic Quinn

Homeward Going

GRAY smoke in the green leaves,
Someone homeward going,
No sound in the lone hills . . .
Only cattle lowing.
Still trees and a hushed world,
Leaf and limb unshaken,
No wind in the tall grass,
Creeksides bird-forsaken.
Pale, pale and with mute lips
One in shadow lying —
Near gone from the green world,
Sorrow nigh him sighing.
Day's strife and a life's strife
Each in quiet ending;
Life's light and the dark of death
Softly interblending.
One star on a far ridge,
Home the Homeward going,
No sound on the lone hills . . .
Only cattle lowing.

Roderic Quinn

In September

IN wood-hollows mate the swallows,
On the house-tops sparrows marry;
Where's the laggard that would tarry
When the Spring is up and doing,
And the doves of Love are cooing?
O the lovers she discovers
Heart and heart together linking!
'Tis of them, perchance, you're thinking;
In this moment's rich completeness
Tasting over bygone sweetness.
Nay, you gladden not, but sadden
At the sight of such surrender
To Love's impulse, warm and tender,
As yon couple, mingling kisses,
Show — nor dream that aught amiss is.
Who supposes summer roses —
When the bee no longer settles
On their satin-surfaced petals,
Young no more, nor sweet, nor tender, —
View with scorn their pirate's splendour!
I remember one September,
Light as thistledown or feather,
Long with love we strayed together,
Careless of wise word or censure,
On a quest of sweet adventure.
Why and wherefore blame them, therefore?
Puppets they — yon pretty couple —
He so strong and she so supple,
Dancing fast, and fast, and faster
At the will of Love, their master!
Little woman, Love is human,
Fickle too, and there's the pity;
Never yet was wench so witty,
King so strong, or knave so clever
As to make him theirs for ever.
Though September blows no ember
Into flame for you this season,
Yet 'tis neither rhyme nor reason
Thus to scoff, with chilly phrases,

At the flames that she upraises.

Roderic Quinn

Irony

ALL night a great wind blew across the land,
Come fresh from wild and salty seas,
With many voices loud and low
Appealing to the sympathies
Of those with whom long, long ago
It had been friends, but who
Had lost the way to know and understand
Its weird and tearless woe.
A sleeper, drawn from ancient fancies, stirred,
And strangely breathed in deep unrest
As though his heart were choked with grief;
The moon down-stealing in the west
Threw every move of limb and leaf
Upon his blind. Now this
Was he the wind sought wildly, had he heard —
Alas, the friend was deaf!
All time a great Thought wandered round the world
Naked and breathing loveliness,
Seeking in alien souls a home
And thwarted, yet a-seek no less
At every door, till forced to roam
A wonder unexpressed:
A sense of strangeness, as of wings unfurled,
Hovered at times o'er some.
He heard the knocking at the inner door;
He saw her face a light intense,
And stood amazed, irresolute.
'Now, thou who hast the poet-sense
In song serene and absolute
Proclaim my hidden worth!'
He sobbed; she drooped her wings . . . Woe evermore!
The chosen mind was mute.

Roderic Quinn

Just To Drift

DRIFTING down the Harbour,
Stars on high,
Lovers of the surface,
You and I,
Let us never pry and wonder
At the things that lie thereunder.
Underneath the surface
Silver-fair,
Let us never question
What lies there;
Lest we lose, like some robbed miser,
All our treasure, growing wiser.
Lo, it has the beauty
Of a flower!
Is it not sufficient
For the hour
Just to drift as mists are drifted,
Depths unplumbed and veils unlifted?
Where's the flawless jewel,
Stainless breast?
Where's the Love that answers
Every test?
Where's the past that's altogether
Cloudless as this radiant weather?
Drifting down the Harbour
On the tide,
Careless of all knowledge,
Let us glide,
Heedless of what Life discovers,
Save that you and I are lovers.

Roderic Quinn

Love Magical

IF you had been where I have been
(Grey, grey the skies above),
And you had seen what I have seen,
You would not laugh at love.
Seek, seek till you find a rose
Red all through to its petal-tips,
And you shall know the curve of her mouth,
The scent of her breath and the red of her lips.
If you had heard what I have heard
(Dull, dull the beat of the sea).
Your heart would leap like a singing bird
Troubled and thrilled by ecstasy.
Stars sing in the dark o' the night,
Birds sing in the gold o' the noon;
Melody reigned in her speech a queen,
The song of the stars and the birds' tune.
The rose is dead that was her mouth
(Pale, pale on the earth it lies),
And East and West and North and South
The world is full of weeping eyes.
A noon is dark, a star is gone,
A rose is dead, a bird is mute;
And love that made sounds magical
Is silent like a broken lute.

Roderic Quinn

Mid-Forest Fear

SHE is standing at the gate,
Tall and sweet,
And although the hour be late
She will greet
 Me, her lover,
 Smiling over
Absent mind and tardy feet.

'Rest,' I'll say to her, 'and more rest,'
As she wraps her love around me,
And I'll tell her of the forest,
Of the strange, fear-haunted forest
Where the fleshless beings found me.

For I trod a rock-strewn rude way
Thinking only of my lover,
When the moonlight on the woodway,
Made a weird-way of the woodway,
And a place where demons hover.

For the leaves that had been sleeping
On the sodden soil-bed lying,
Look a motion and 'gan creeping,
Like a thousand small feet creeping,
And there rose a distant sighing.

Why the trees did droop their tresses,
Weeping leaves for something under,
And what bode in dim recesses,
Feline-lurked in dim recesses,
Paled my cheeks and heart to ponder.

Had I feet I would have hurried,
But the moonlit forest chained me,
Soul and body grasped and worried,
With frost-fingers gripped and worried,
Till, half-stayed, my hurt heart pained me....

'Rest,' I'll say, 'my Love, and more rest;
Things unseen have life and motion
And they haunt the moonlit forest—
Soul-affronting haunt the forest,
And men meet them on the ocean.'

She will look so grave and kind,
Saying 'Rest—
Rest is here for heart and mind
On this breast—
Put aside all
Fancies idle,
I will shield you—Love is best.'

Roderic Quinn

Midnight And Moonlight

AS one singled out from his fellows,
Enchanted I roam
Through night with its music and moonlight,
And sea-sheen and foam.
'Twas Beauty herself that awoke me
And whispered 'Arise,
I have lit all the lamps of my palace
To gladden your eyes!'
I rose at her bidding, and surely
'Tis just as she said —
The moon, spilling splendour around me,
Brimfull overhead;
Rich perfumes from garden and garden
Rare blossoms outpour;
The sea, broad and bright to the skyline,
Sings low to the shore.
The beach, a brave riband of silver,
All radiant shines,
'Twixt the white of the surf on its sea edge
And the dark of the pines.
And the white of the surf on its sea-edge
A wonder-light gives,
And the dark of the pines is the darkness
Where mystery lives.
Can it be that this scene goes unwitnessed
Except by my eyes —
These splendours that start from the ocean
And rain from the skies?
Unaware of the light and the wonder,
In slumber sunk deep,
Young and old, they lie blind on their couches.
Eyes lidded in sleep.
Though pearl-tinted breakers be falling,
Unvisioned they fall —
Oh Sleep! art thou jealous of Beauty
To hold them in thrall?
How I long for a magical bugle,
Sweet-throated and clear,
To sound through their slumbers and wake them,

And summon them here!
Then old men and young men forth-coming
Would sigh their delight;
And maidens, white-throated, barefooted,
In garments of white;
And all would speak well of the bugle,
And praise its sweet sound
That made them the guest-folk of Beauty
In radiance gowned.
Spell-bound they would stand in her presence,
Souls steeped in amaze,
The thrill of her magic upon them —
Sea-sheen and moonrays —
Spell-bound with the mystic enchantment,
Till one in that throng,
With a rapture exceeding all raptures
Of passion and song,
Would beget of his musing a vision
As wondrous as she
Who was fashioned of dream-stuff and moonlight
And foam of the sea.

Roderic Quinn

Noon On The Barrier Ranges

THE saltbush steeped in drowsy stillness lies,
The mulga seems to swoon,
A hawk hangs poised within the burning skies,
And it is noon.
The river-gums, their leaf-pores closed, distil
No fresh and cooling breath;
I stand upon an old hard-bitten hill,
Wide plains beneath.
Here stood tall mountains when the world was young,
Their peaks uplifted high;
Here was the song of many waters sung
In days gone by.
The monarch Change, whose will no power withstands
Vast lord of might
At work by night and day, with tireless hands
Planed down their height.
With such to see, and seeing ponder on,
Such mighty ruin wrought,
Why should we wonder at proud Babylon
Brought down to nought?
Be not amazed, though princes be displaced
And kingdoms overcast;
Are empires more than mountains, basalt-based,
That they should last?
A sense of things unreal, seen in dream,
Is over plain and heights —
The time-worn rocks, the crumbled earth, the gleam
Of mirage lights;
The horseman riding with a slackened rein
Alone, a silent man;
The weird, dust-sprites that whirl across the plain
A little span;
The earth-hued lizard, on the sun-baked rock
Stretched out in stirless sleep;
The far-off drover and his dusty flock
Of travelling sheep;
The hidden birds that break the hush, and call,
And sink again to rest,
The dust-storm, hanging, like a crimson shawl,

Within the west;
The white quartz glittering on the umber track,
The claypans cracked and bare;
The poised hawk, hanging like a menace black
In middle air;
The wonder of the spacious plain and sky,
The splendour of it all;
The all that is not I — so wide, so high,
And I so small!
The sun swings on, and up the western verge
The great shawl-cloud spreads wide,
Till sky and plain in oneness meet and merge,
Fierce-lit, red-dyed.
A wind, hell-hot and surged with fury, whips
The trees upon its path,
And all is sudden turmoil and eclipse,
And cries of wrath.
A choking darkness draws across the sun
And clouds his splendour o'er,
And though but half his pilgrimage be done,
'Tis noon no more.

Roderic Quinn

On The Barrier

ON the Barrier Ranges,
Grim, and grey and old,
Spring, the Maid of Wonder,
Spreads her cloth-of-gold;
Every hill and hollow
Carpeting with flowers —
O for feet to follow
Through the shining hours!
Once I saw the damsel —
Watched her at her task,
Basking in her glamour
As the lizards bask:
And, if I remember
Aught of gleam and glow,
'Tis that sweet September
Twenty years ago.
Twenty golden springtides —
Much — and yet how slight
Measured with that region,
Hollow-land and height;
Biding through Earth's changes,
Steadfast to its shocks,
Oldest of the Ranges,
Ancientest of Rocks!
If with sweet recurrence
Youth renews the Earth,
Shall there come no glory —
Light and song and mirth —
Unto us who ponder
Much on banished joys?
Spring, thou Maid of Wonder.
Make us girls and boys!

Roderic Quinn

Perfection

THIS rose, to which each dawn anew
Come bees to fill their honey-sacks,
Though sweet in shape, and scent, and hue,
Perfection lacks.
To gain it were to crown one's toil
And set the very world astir:
Blow, Rose, make most of sap and soil,
Strive, Gardener!
Though Youth may dwell some honeyed years
In Arcady, most true is this —
There is no joy unmixed with tears,
No perfect bliss.
Though Love, on high adventure set,
Complete achievement may not know —
Reach out your white arms, Juliet!
Climb, Romeo!

Roderic Quinn

Romance In The Market Place

YOU stood beside the flowers,
Yourself a flower;
And on your face
The twilight stayed another hour,
It shone so pale;
And all around men talked as in a market-place.
I heard them talk, and felt
No interest stir
In what they said.
Lilies were nigh you, and around you were
The lights of love,
And all about the world moved on with nervous tread.
I heard it not; for down
And round about
My soul you drew
The veils that shut the loud earth out,
And I and you
Were there alone — no one beside but I and you!
What words were those we said?
Old ones, perchance,
Pale with the pain
Of all who've kissed, and talked romance,
And said farewell,
And mixed their tears and kissed, and sighed — and sighed in vain.
We stood a sainted while,
And then your hand
Sought to be free,
And you were gone; and all the land
Was under gloom,
And lamps were lit for other men, but none for me.
I stood and watched you go,
And suddenly
The loud world grew
Like some great-voiced, inseting sea;
And men went by,
Talking of trade and war and all but love and you.

Roderic Quinn

Shell-Music

YOU with the shell to your ear,
What do you hear,
Slim and so white
In the moonlight?

'Oh, I hear surging and shouting and singing,
The sea-folk at market — their little bells ringing,
The tall weeds about them, the green world above!
Oh, blithe are the pedlars of ribbons and laces,
Yet blither and sweeter upon the wide spaces
The footfalls of Love!'

You with the shell to your ear,
What do you hear,
Waves at your feet,
White and so sweet?

'Oh, I hear cooing and kissing and cooing,
The sound of sea-folk in their coral groves wooing,
The red branches round them, the green world above!
Oh, sweet are the songs of the witching sea-daughters,
But sweeter, far sweeter, upon the wide waters,
The footfalls of Love!'

You with the shell to your ear,
What do you hear,
Large eyes aglow,
Forehead of snow?

'Oh, I hear shouting and sobbing and sighing,
The sounds of the sea-folk in battle-rage vieing,
The torn weeds about them, the green world above!
The merman may shout as he stumbles and slaughters,
But, ever and ever, I hear on the waters
The footfalls of Love!'

You with the shell to your ear,
What do you hear,
As you stand there,
Pale and so fair?

'Oh, as frost on the seaways the foam-spaces glisten;
My heart is the shell, to its echoes I listen;
Red petals, rose petals around and above!
Oh sweeter, far sweeter, than little bells ringing
Or market-men shouting, or mermaidens singing,

The footfalls of Love!

Roderic Quinn

Spring Song

SING out and be happy!
The Spring is at hand,
The grass green, and sappy
The trees o' the land.
Sing! for the breeze is
Rustling and silky,
And toys with and teases
Long blossoms and milky.
The root in the juices
Unfrosted drinks deep;
The loving wave sluices
The weeds as they sleep.
Sing out! for the bees in
Their quest of wild honey
Are haunting the trees in
Green places and sunny.
Distant blue reaches
And green hills invite,
Green hills and long beaches
And roads red and white.
Locked waters are calling
With many gold voices,
Where tides gently falling
Make soft liquid noises.
Broad-spreading sun-glamour
Wraps blossom and stream,
Gold-tinting the armour
Of beetles that dream.
Full-sunned on lit ledges
The bronze lizard dozes,
And painting proud ridges
Grow tiny pink roses.
Sing out! and let trouble
Another pursue:
It will burst like a bubble
And vanish for you.
Out, out on old Sorrow,
Who skulks in her sable!
Laugh gaily, and borrow

Gay laughs while you're able.
If any care rankles —
Away! and behold
Pink feet and white ankles
On beaches of gold,
And surf that runs after
To kiss clinging dresses,
And white teeth and laughter,
And wild clinging tresses!

Roderic Quinn

Stars In The Sea

I took a boat on a starry night
and went for a row on the water,
and she danced like a child on a wake of light
and bowed where the ripples caught her.

I vowed, as I rowed on the velvet blue
through the night and the starry splendour
to woo and sue a maiden I know
till she bent to my pleading tender.

My painted boat she was light and glad
and gladder my heart was wishing,
and I came in time to a little lad
who stood on the rocks a-fishing.

I said "Ahoy!" and he said "Ahoy!"
and I asked how the fish were biting;
And what are you trying to catch my boy,
Bream, silver and red - or Whiting?"

"Neither", he answered, "the seaweed mars
my line, and the sharp shells sunder;
I am trying my luck with those great big stars
down there in the round skies under".

"Goodbye!" from him and "Goodbye!" from me,
and never a laugh came after;
So many fishing for stars in the sea
that it's hardly a subject for laughter

Roderic Quinn

Sydney Cove, 1788

SHE sat on the rocks, her fireless eyes
Teased and tired with the thoughts of yore;
And paining her sense were alien skies,
An alien sea and an alien shore.
In gold-green dusks she glimpsed new flowers
And the glittering wings of gleaming birds —
But haunting her still were English bowers
And the clinging sweetness of old love-words.
A soft breeze murmured of unknown shores
And laughed as it touched her with fingers light,
But she mourned the more for the wind that roars
Down sullen coasts on a northern night.
Like topaz gems on a sable dome
The stranger stars stole shyly forth;
She saw no stars like the stars of home
That burned, white-fired, in the frosty north.
A restless sea was at her feet,
A restless sea of darkest blue;
The lights burned dimly on The Fleet,
And these were all the ships it knew.
She watched the dark tides rise and fall,
The lion-tides that, night and noon,
Range round the world, and moan and call
In sad sea-voices to the moon.
Thus while she watched they ebbed and flowed;
Till last with sudden splendour Day
Lit all the scene with gold, and showed
An arrow black on a garb of grey.

Roderic Quinn

The Allison

ROOF and rafter and window and door
Totter and tumble in slow decay;
The house by the creek is a house no more
For the Allison folk have gone away.
Kept back no more by the hands of men —
Though here and there bare tracts there be —
The bush has come to its own again,
Little by little and tree by tree.
Free-footed winds through the doorways pass,
Whispering much in a guarded tone;
Plovers call in the knee-deep grass
That grows right up to the threshold stone.
Silence, watching the years, has kept
Vigil here with a muted tongue,
Since over yon threshold-stone they stept,
Man and woman, and old and young.
Brown-armed women and bearded men,
Love and labour and grief and mirth —
Harvester Time has reaped since then
Crop after crop from the teeming earth!
Nights there were when these rafters rang,
Echoing song till the break of day,
Ceasing not till the dawnlights sprang,
Sudden and red, on the mists of grey.
Quick to answer to mateship's call,
Rovers, drovers and horsemen born;
Drinkers, fighters and lovers all,
Laughing the law at times to scorn.
Hot in anger and loyal in love —
That was ever the Allison way;
Kith of the hawk and kin of the dove,
Wild and handsome, and bold and gay.
Fronting ever with even face
Drought and danger and care and need;
Firm in the saddle and first in the race —
That was ever the Allison breed.
Known and named were the Allison girls,
Far and near through the country round;
Some with the noon-gold in their curls,

Some with the dark of midnight crowned,
Dashing riders and dancers all,
Bonnie of body and clean of mind,
Quick to answer at pity's call —
That was ever the Allison kind.
Tinged and softened with sweet romance,
Back in the past they rise again,
Allison girls at race and dance
Queening it over the hearts of men.
Slim and stalwart, and sweet and bold,
Mother and maid, and man and boy!
Shadows move where they moved of old,
Toiled, and sorrowed, and had their joy.
Part of the past is all their love,
All the light of their fires is dead!
Kith of the hawk and kin of the dove —
Dove and hawk in the dark have fled!
Here, where the winds blow brave and blithe,
Tossing and turning each sapling-top,
Harvester Time has swung his scythe,
Cleared his swath, and reaped his crop.

Roderic Quinn

The Artist

THE year has turned the corner,
Cold June is with the dead,
And Spring, the singing artist,
Is mixing gold and red.
The red is meant for roses,
Rich roses, brave and bold;
The gold is for the wattle —
'Tis delicate, pale gold.
The Sun, grown tired of exile,
Comes marching south again;
'Tis he that stays the west wind
That chills the hearts of men.
There shall be frond and feather,
Glad ways of greenery,
When Spring unveils her painting
For all the world to see.
Oh, red 'twill be and golden,
That canvas of the South:
* * * * *
The gold shall be a girl's hair,
The red shall be her mouth.

Roderic Quinn

The Black Hound

WHITE-TOOTHED is the Black Hound,
And ever, as he comes after,
There is no sweetness in wine,
Nor is there joyance in laughter.
Red-tongued is the Black Hound,
And ever, as he speeds baying,
There is no shaking him off,
Nor is there stopping or staying.
Keen-sensed in the thick dark
He follows for ever and ever;
Nought stays him in his pursuit —
Nor marsh, nor mountain, nor river.
Day-long through the broad light,
His tongue like a flame outleaping,
He hunts; and we fly before,
Wan-faced, foot-weary and weeping.
Night-through in the still hours
When stars in the sky assemble,
We hear his cry on the roads,
And startled, staring, we tremble.
White-toothed is the Black Hound,
And speed to his limbs is given;
God help and pity us all
Who fly for ever, hard-driven!
Time comes when the feet fail
Or drag on the ways, unwilling;
Then fast, froth-flakes on his jaws,
He speeds keen-fanged to the killing.
Then some, as they pass, say —
Few pausing, and weeping, fewer —
'Hound-work is this that we see,
Fang-work of him, the Pursuer!'
Black Care is the Black Hound,
And ever 'tis his to follow
Pale men from birth to that hour
When grave-mouths open and swallow.

Roderic Quinn

The Camp Within The West

O DID you see a troop go by
Way-weary and oppressed,
Dead kisses on the drooping lip
And a dead heart in the breast?

Yea, I have seen them one by one
Way-weary and oppressed,
And when I asked them, 'Whither speed?'
They answered, 'To the West!'

And were they pale as pale could be—
Death-pale with haunted eyes,
And did you see the hot white dust
Range round their feet and rise?

Oh, they were pale as pale could be,
And pale as an embered leaf;
The hot white dust had risen, but
They laid it with their grief.

Did no one say the way is long,
And crave a little rest?
Oh no, they said, 'The night is nigh,
Our camp is in the West!'

And did pain pierce their feet, as though
The way with thorns were set,
And were they visited by strange
Dark angels of regret?

Oh yea, and some were mute as death,
Though shot by many a dart,
With them the salt of inward tears
Went stinging through the heart.

And how are these wayfarers called,
And whither do they wend?
The Weary-Hearted—and their road
At sunset hath and end.

Shed tears for them...Nay, nay, no tears!
They yearn for endless rest;
Perhaps large stars will burn above
Their camp within the West.

Roderic Quinn

The Circling Hearths

MY Countrymen, though we are young as yet
With little history, nought to show
Of lives enleagued against a foreign foe,
Torn flags and triumph, glory or regret;
Still some things make our kinship sweet,
Some deeds inglorious but of royal worth,
As when with tireless arms and toiling feet
We felled the tree and tilled the earth.

'Tis no great way that we have travelled since
Our feet first shook the storied dust
Of England from them, when with love and trust
In one another, and large confidence
In God above, our ways were ta'en
'Neath alien skies—each keeping step in mind
And soul and purpose to one trumpet strain,
One urging music on the wind:

Yet tears of ours have wet the dust, have wooed
Some subtle green things from the ground—
Like violets—only violets never wound
Such tendrils round the heart: the solitude
Has seen young hearts with love entwine;
And many gentle friends gone down to death
Have mingled with the dust, and made divine
The very soil we tread beneath.

Thus we have learned to love our country, learned
To treasure every inch from foam
To foam; to title her with name of Home;
To light in her regard a flame that burned
No land in vain, that calls the eyes
Of men to glory heights and old renown;
That wild winds cannot quench, nor thunder-skies
Make dim, nor many waters drown.

Six hearths are circled round our shores, and round
The six hearths group a common race,
Though leagues divide, the one light on their face;

The same old songs and stories rise; the sound
Of kindred voices and the dear
Old English tongue make music; and men move
From hearth to hearth with little fear
Of aught save open arms and love.

To keep these hearth-fires red, to keep the door
Of each house wide—that is our part:
Surely 'tis noble! Surely heart to heart,
God's love upon us and one goal before,
Is something worth; something to win
Our hearts to effort; something it were good
To garner soon; and something 'twould be sin
To cast aside in wanton mood.

My Countrymen, hats off! with heart and will
Thank God that you are free, and then
Arise and don your nationhood like men,
And manlike face the world for good or ill.
Peace be to you, and in the tide
Of years great plenty till Time's course be run:
Six Ploughmen in the same field side by side,
But, if need be, six Swords as one.

Roderic Quinn

The Counsellors

AS I went a-walking
Through the Morning Land,
Up came Folly
And took me by the hand;
Garbed in velvet doublet,
Clad in silken hose —
Bells on his droll cap,
Bells on his clothes,
Bells on his shoulders,
Bells round his waist
Tinkled as he shouted:
'Haste, brother, haste;
Youth's a thing that never will be missed
Till it's gone, gone for ever, like the dew from the rose!'
Sparkled all the waters,
Sparkled everything —
Dew on the petal,
Dew on the wing,
Dew on the meadows,
Dew in the air,
Dew on the tall trees,
Dew everywhere,
Dew on the fine web,
Gemming each part;
Dew on the red mouth,
Dew in the heart;
Toil's a thing that never heart will crave
In the sweet, sweet morning and the dew-time rare.
Song and jest I gathered
Strolling up and down,
Talk o' the tavern
And gossip of the town;
Storing in my wallet,
Careless of the throng,
Coin of golden fancy,
Coin of silver song,
Gems of jovial friendship,
Keepsakes manifold,
Pearls that never gem-smith

Set in filmy gold.
Wealth's a witch that loses half her lure,
When the blood runs red, and the pulse beats strong.
As I went a-walking
Through the moonlit land,
Up came Prudence
And took me by the hand;
Solemn was her aspect,
Sober her clothes,
Cruel her questions,
Hinting chilly woes:
'Where be you a-going?
What have you to eat?
Where's your wood and water?
Where's your bread and meat?'
Youth's a thing that never will be missed
Till it's gone, gone for ever, like the dew from the rose!

Roderic Quinn

The Currency Lass

THEY marshalled her lovers four and four,
A drum at their heads, in the days of old:
O, none could have guessed their hearts were sore;
They marched with such gayness in scarlet and gold.
They came to the dance place on the hill
Where Death was the piper (he pipes full well);
They grounded their arms and stood stock-still;
And just why he sorrowed no one would tell.
O, some had been wed in distant lands,
And sweethearts had others — but let that pass;
She held them at ease in snow-white hands,
For Queen over all was the Currency Lass.
They ushered her forth in all her charms —
Her eyes were alight and as gold her hair;
She looked on the men and oped her arms —
What wonder if then they had wished them there?
She hearkened the Preacher, thin and pale;
His voice was as frost, yet his words were wise;
But sin on the soul is like wrought mail,
And only a scorn of him fired her eyes.
'O sorrow and pray, the hour draws nigh,
The Lord in His justice shall question thee!
The Preacher made prayer 'twixt sob and sigh,
And down dropped his soul on bended knee.
'He fashioned thee fair' — a sideways look —
'Red-lipped and right royal to look upon,
A joy of the Earth' — his thin hands shook,
And passionate lights in his deep eyes shone.
In scarlet and gold her lovers stood,
A host under famine with heads out-thrust;
Keen-flamed in the sun ran reddest blood,
And lips that were thirsty grew dry as dust.
They loved her for years — their tangled souls
Like silvery fish in her beauty-mesh
All breathless reposed . . . A dull drum rolls,
And Death is at hand for the Flower of Flesh.
She lifted her head for one love-word
(Afar was a clamour of new-come ships);
Her hair in a cloud the low wind stirred,

And silent they marvelled at her red lips.
'A lover was I from youth,' she said;
'And Love is my lord till I fill the grave' —
Then coyly she drooped her gold-haired head —
'Now, last of my lovers, a kiss I crave!'
The Preacher was whirled in passion's rout,
And dark was the stain on his soul's white snow;
Her lips were as life — his soul leapt out,
And sure there was laughter in Hell below.
'A singer was I these years,' she said,
'And so I must sing till my soul doth pass.'
Then forth from her sin-sweet lips there sped
The long-dead song of the Currency Lass.
The hands of the spoiler touch her throat;
The noon grows near and the last sands run:
(Still over the scene her wild words float)
The noose is ready, the song is done.
'A dancer I was from birth,' she said;
'A baby, I danced on my mother's knee;
Now whistle a jig, with swaying head,
And, lovers of mine, I will dance for ye!'
Stood each with a droop, a cheated man,
While Sorrow went weaving an ice-cold spell . . .
Good-bye to the world! The dance began
With Death for the piper — he piped full well!

Roderic Quinn

The Dread Beyond Death

WHY do you shudder and stare,
Grown cold in a moment and white?
The moon's at her full, and the air
Is flooded with wonderful light.
There is never a sound or a sign
Or a shadow of harm in the trees,
And the little leaves ripple and shine
At the kiss and caress of the breeze.
You tremble and shudder, my love,
As a hare at a hound's flashing fangs —
As a bird, when in azure above
A poising hawk motionless hangs.
Fear not, and the terror shall yield
To peace and to sweetness at length;
My love is a guard and a shield,
My arms are a fortress and strength.
'I fear not the hawk in the sky,
Or the hound, though his fangs flash anear;
A dread beyond death makes me sigh —
'Tis the end of our love that I fear.'

Roderic Quinn

The Drover Of The Stars

IT is little I care for earth's kings,
Its emperors, sultans and czars,
As I lie in the darkness and dream
All alone with my sheep and the stars.
For as dust of the moment are they,
Now a gleam and now still on earth's breast;
But the stars, spreading wide in the night,
Travel on, ever on to the west.
My sheep, snugly camped in the dark,
Misty-white with the pale grasses blend;
But where is the camp of the stars?
And whither, O Night, do they wend?
Through leagues of dry distance we came,
Where dust-wreaths, wind-woven, upcurled,
Since Dawn dropped the rails of the east
And let the Day into our world.
Slow-moving we travelled the plains,
Trudging on through the sun and the wind,
Till Day galloped out of the west,
And Night set the sliprails behind.
And now, by my camp-fire alone,
A tryst with pale Wonder I keep —
That mystical Lady of Dreams,
Whose hour is the sleep-of-the-sheep.
Foot-tired in the grasses they lie,
Mist-pale in the darkness, and dumb;
Yet who was it mustered the stars,
And whence and what leagues have they come?
Who keeps them from straying apart?
Who urges them straight on their route?
No answer — none tell me; and lo!
The Night, though it listen, is mute!
Watch 'neath the stars of the Cross,
Orion, and Venus and Mars;
I am but a drover of sheep —
But who is the Drover of Stars?

Roderic Quinn

The Fiddle And The Crowd

WHEN the day was at its middle,
Tired of limb and slow of pace,
Came a fiddler with his fiddle
To a crowded market place;
Lying, cheating, boasting, bragging,
Men and women walked together;
Heads were nodding, tongues were wagging,
Talk there was of trade and weather,
Talk there was of man's enslavement
To the tyrants, Toil and Worry;
Yet the fiddle on the pavement
Minding not the noise and hurry,
Singing low and singing loud —
Spoke its message to the crowd.
Said the fiddle —
'Pause and listen;
Can't you hear the waters running
Down the mossy mountain valleys?
Don't you see the lyre-bird sunning
Glossy plumes in fronded alleys?
Life is glory, life is glamour!'
Said the fiddle
In the middle
Of the tumult and the clamour.
Though unheeded seemed the fiddle,
Bidding each and all rejoice,
When the day was at its middle —
Yet beneath its magic voice,
Laughing, sobbing, teasing, fretting,
Men and women met together,
Smiled to find themselves forgetting
Troublous thoughts of trade and weather;
One bethought him of a cavern
Cool and sweet with running water,
And another of a tavern
And a tavern-keeper's daughter —
Ale to drink and lips to kiss —
'Twas the fiddle did all this!
Said the fiddle —

'Hush and hearken
To the song that I am singing,
For it is a song entrancing.
Telling now of gladness ringing,
Telling now of children dancing;
Life is music, life is glamour.'
Said the fiddle
In the middle
Of the tumult and the clamour.

Roderic Quinn

The Fisher

ALL night a noise of leaping fish
Went round the bay,
And up and down the shallow sands
Sang waters at their play.
The mangroves drooped on salty creeks,
And through the dark,
Making a pale patch in the deep,
Gleamed, as it swam, a shark.
In streaks and twists of sudden fire
Among the reeds
The bream went by, and where they passed
The bubbles shone like beads.
All night the full deep drinking-song
Of Nature stirred,
And nought beside, save leaping fish
And some forlorn night-bird.
No lost wind wandered down the hills
To tell of wide
Wild waterways; on velvet moved
The silky, sucking tide.
Deep down there sloped in shadowy mass
A giant hill;
And midway, mirrored in the tide,
The stars burned large and still.
The fisher, dreaming on the rocks,
Heard Nature say
Strange, secret things that none may hear
Upon the beaten way;
And whisperings and wonder stirred,
And hopes and fears,
And sadness touched his heart, and filled
His eyes with star-stained tears:
And so, thrilled through with joy and love
And sweet distress,
He stood entranced, enchained by her
Full-breasted loveliness.

Roderic Quinn

The Frontier-Land

YOU of the past, are you present?
Draw nearer! my heart is sore.
Was yours the fall of the foot in the hall?
Was yours the face at the door?
As I lifted my eyes I saw you;
You vanished, and all was still;
And only outside the white owl cried,
And the moon stared over the hill.
Wan-blue were your eyes, O Shadow,
And paler your aspect than seems
The mystical star, that glimmers afar
In a land of mysterious dreams.
O Shadow, the past is present,
And empty your coffin and tomb;
Draw near, draw near, chill child of fear,
From the frontier-land of Gloom!
Did you know that I loved you, Shadow?
Did you guess whence the violets came?
And the delicate heart with its Cupid dart,
All opal and ruby-flame?
Ah, once brown-gold were the lashes
That shadowed your dreaming eyes,
And your teeth were pearl 'neath the coral curl
Of twin portals of Paradise.
And warmer your cheeks were and softer
(Alas, they are pale and cold!)
Than the rose of the East, or the wine of the feast
Red-rimming its carven gold.
It was all so sad, O Shadow,
And you faded away so soon,
Like a note that flies, and fades, and dies
Ere it grows to a golden tune.
Gone! utterly gone, O Shadow;
No whisper, no word let fall;
No light is shed, and the moon is dead,
And a chill creeps up the hall.
I shall follow and follow you, Shadow,
Till the sun, remote and red,
Burns like a spark, and dim and dark

Rise up the hosts of the dead.

Roderic Quinn

The Gardener

WITHIN this garden space are set
Sweet mignonette and violet,
Sunk in rich mould; at dawn and night
Their leaves dew-wet.
Who set them in the kindly loam
Lies buried 'neath the clover-foam
Of alien meadows, far away
From his loved home.
If it be glory thus to pass
For Honour's sake, and 'neath the grass
Red-wounded lie, then he, in truth,
Great glory has.
Yet, blossoms that he loved and set! —
Sweet mignonette, sweet violet —
Not Honour's self, nor Glory's crown,
Can stay regret.
'Twixt bud of leaf and fall of leaf,
Why should Fate in an hour so brief
Wreck flower and flower, and nurse alone
The cypress — Grief?
He is not gone — not all of him;
For trees have memories; leaf and limb
Shall breathe his name, and grateful flowers
At twilight dim.
For like these blooms, he left behind
Some fragrance, subtle and refined —
A memoried sweetness that shall haunt
Tree, flower and wind.

Roderic Quinn

The Golden Yesterday

AFTER a spell of chill, grey weather,
(Green, O green, are the feet of Spring!)
The heaven is here of flower and feather,
Of wild red blossom and flashing wing.
Hither of old queer flotsam drifted,
Borne on the breast of an age-old stream —
Men and women, with hope uplifted,
Spurred and stirred by a splendid dream.
Hither they quested, the young and eager,
The social misfit, the aged, the banned;
Friends were lacking and fortune meagre,
And here was promise — the Promised Land.
Each had a goal, a star, a beacon —
A good-bye smile, or a soft love-trees —
To urge his feet lest his feet should weaken,
Drag and falter with weariness.
Love and honour, and mirth and pity —
The joy that brightens, the gloom that chills —
Dwelt at once in the tented city,
Set of old in these watching hills.
The birds aroused them with matin numbers;
The air was scented with waking flowers;
They woke renewed from their starlit slumbers,
They toiled, dream-warmed, through the sunlit hours.
They had their triumphs, their gains, their losses,
Their noons of laughter, their nights of care.
Back on the hills are some rough crosses —
A name . . . a date . . . and, perchance, a prayer.
It seems like a dream that flashed and flitted,
That reigned a moment and passed away,
And only the earth — its kind face pitted —
Tells the tale of that old, dead day.
They dug the clay, and they broke the boulders;
They turned the creek, and they washed the mould;
But vain as makers, and vain as moulders,
They lived and wrought in the age of Gold.
They worked and worried, their labour blotching
The land's green surface with scar and pit;
Yet, all around them the hills were watching

Flower-crowned, tree-crested and glory-lit.
Like time-worn sages the green hills waited —
Clouds round their foreheads, their hips in grass;
They knew that the man at their feet was fated,
That he and the work of his hands would pass.
A breeze comes down from the highlands, smoothing
The green young wheat, and a bird makes mirth,
And Spring is here, with her soft hands soothing
The ruined rocks and the wounded earth.
The diggers passed: and the last red embers
Of their night-fires they are ashen grey;
But, while hearts beat and the mind remembers,
They shall not fade as a dream away.

Roderic Quinn

The Greater Love

ONCE upon a time,
Little Golden-Head,
Steeple used to chime,
And their chiming said:
'Peace is in the land —
Joy on every hand.'
Glowing youths and men
Rose and went their ways,
Some to hill and glen,
Some to shining bays.
And they left behind
Ills of heart and mind.
Oh, but it was sweet
Underneath the trees,
Bare of throat and feet,
Bathed in golden ease,
Two and two to lie
While the hours went by!
Sweet indeed it was
Thus to lie and laze,
Couched upon the grass
Through the shining days —
Sweet to breathe the air,
Free of toil and care!
On the beaches then,
Sporting with the sea,
Gathered brown-limbed men
Graced like statuary
Chiselled by some bold
Master hand of old.
All were guests of Joy;
All his sportive clan —
Here a shouting boy,
There a jesting man,
While the breakers hymned,
Braving them, stout-limbed.
Listen, Golden-Head!
Came a Wondrous One
Unto each, and said:

'Look on me, my son!
Am I not above
All things else you love?'
Then that love began
Which is more than life —
More than love of man,
Love of maid or wife;
Love of queen or king,
Aught or anything.
Little Golden-Head,
Is it well to tell
How they wrought and bled,
How they fought and fell
In their glowing prime,
Once upon a time?
Nay, but it is writ
That such things must be;
Oh the shame of it,
Oh the tragedy!
Oh the days of rue,
Oh the glory, too!
Little Golden-Head,
By the skies above,
By our honoured dead,
You shall know that love —
Know, and hold the time
When 'twas born sublime!

Roderic Quinn

The Hidden Heart

AS I rode out of Lochinvar
About me all the scene was fair;
The skies, with not a cloud to mar,
Were filled with fresh and dewy air,
While making song, a merry throng,
The thrushes warbled everywhere.
As I rode out of Lochinvar
Through Fairydom I seemed to go,
For round about, and near and far,
Enchanted lights began to glow;
And where I went, on what intent,
And who I was I did not know!
For lo, I met a troubadour
As I rode out of Lochinvar;
His like on earth is seen no more,
With feathered hat and gay guitar;
And loud and clear, and sweet to hear,
He sang a song of love and war.
As I rode out of Lochinvar
He sang a song I somehow knew,
The while he touched his gay guitar;
And when I asked him, 'Who are you?'
'Yourself!' he said — and bowed his head,
And vanished like the morning dew.
Though I may see him nevermore,
This much in very truth I ken,
That one, at heart a troubadour,
May seem a sober citizen,
Who sets afar his gay guitar
To seem just like his fellow men.

Roderic Quinn

The Hidden Tide

WITHIN the world a second world
That circles ceaselessly:
Stars in the sky and sister stars—
Turn in your eyes and see!

Tides of the sea that rise and fall,
Aheave from Pole to Pole—
And kindred swayings, veiled but felt,
That noise along the soul.

Yon moon, noon-rich, high-throned, remote,
And pale with pride extreme,
Draws up the sea, but what white moon
Exalts the tide of Dream?

The Fisher-Folk who cast their nets
In Vision's golden tide
Oft bring to light misshapen shells,
And nothing worth beside.

And so their worn hands droop adown,
Their singing throats are dumb;
The Inner-Deep withholds its pearls
Till turn of tide be come.

But patience! wait—the good tide turns,
The waters inward set;
And lo, behold! aleap, alive
With glowing fish the net!

O Toilers of the Hidden Seas!
Ye have strange gain and loss,
Dragging the Deeps of Soul for pearls,
And oftentimes netting dross.

Flushed to the lips with golden light,
And dark with sable gloom;
Thrilled by a thousand melodies,
And silent like a tomb.

Fierce are the winds across your realm,
As though some Demon veiled
Had loosed the gales of Spirit-land
To ravage ways unsailed.

But still sweet hours befall at times,
Rich-lit and full of ease;
The afterglow is like the light
Of sunset on tired seas.

And worse, perhaps, may be the lot
Of those whose fate is sleep;
The sodden souls without a tide,
Dense as a rotten deep.

Pain paves the way for keener joy,
And wondrous thoughts uproll
When the large moon of Peace looks down
On high tide in the soul.

Roderic Quinn

The House Of The Commonwealth

We sent a word across the seas that said,
 "The house is finished and the doors are wide,
 Come, enter in.
A stately house it is, with tables spread,
 Where men in liberty and love abide
 With hearts akin.

"Behold, how high our hands have lifted it!
 The soil it stands upon is pure and sweet
 As are our skies.
Our title deeds in holy sweat are writ,
 Not red accusing blood -- and 'neath our feet
 No foeman lies."

And England, Mother England, leans her face
 Upon her hand and feels her blood burn young
 At what she sees:
The image here of that fair strength and grace
 That made her feared and loved and sought and sung
 Through centuries.

What chorus shall we lift, what song of joy,
What boom of seaward cannon, roll of drums?
The majesty of nationhood demands
A burst of royal sounds, as when a victor comes
From peril of a thousand foes;
An empire's honour saved from death
Brought home again; an added rose
Of victory upon its wreath.
In this wise men have greeted kings,
In name or fame,
But such acclaim
Were vain and emptiest of things
If love were silent, drawn apart,
And mute the People's mighty heart.

The love that ivy-like an ancient land doth cherish,
It grows not in a day, nor in a year doth perish.
 But, little leaf by leaf,

Nor wrought by hand and brain alone,
But formed and founded on the heart;
A People's House, A People's Home,
En-isled in foam and far apart;
A People's House, where all may roam
The many rooms and be at ease;
A People's House, with tower and dome;
And over all a People's Flag --
A Flag upon the breeze.

Roderic Quinn

The Lagoon

WE crept through reed-beds wet with dew,
The sun went down in gold;
Hoisting her round triumphantly,
The moon showed red and bold.
The unseen sea upon our right
In splendid turmoil broke;
The spindrift, driving ceaselessly,
Was vague as drifting smoke.
The grass-tree lances spiked our flesh,
The brushed ferns wet our knees;
The she-oaks, crooning steadily,
Stirred in the late salt breeze.
Thus, pushing on with velvet tread
Beneath the lavish moon,
We saw, spread wide, spread gloriously,
All gold, the still lagoon.
And on its breast (a picture this
Recalling old-time Dons
And Spanish galleons at sea)
A squadron of black swans.

Roderic Quinn

The Little House

WHEN my heart goes a-roving
'Tis the wide ways for me,
And the fields, and the hills,
And the big, blue sea.
Then 'tis far, far I wander,
And 'tis little that you care,
With your wiles, and your smiles,
And your eyes and hair.
But the dream of you follows,
Or it gleams at my side;
And I turn, turn about,
For the world seems wide.
There's a rose-mist about you
And 'tis sweet, sweet you are,
With your throat and your cheeks
And your face a star.
When my heart comes a-homing
'Tis the little house I see,
Where you sit all alone
With a stool for me.

Roderic Quinn

The Long, Lone Road

YOU that had the soft path
And the lights, brightly glowing,
Your laugh is very still, and your hands are very chill,
And where may you be going?
'Though the light of dawn be breaking,
And the birds of morning call —
All the flowers and trees awaking —
'Tis the long road I'm taking,
The long road, the lone road that has no end at all.'
You that have the red gold,
And the gift of money-making,
Since your journey has no end, sure you'll need a heap to spend,
And how much will you be taking?
'O there's little need for spending
When the grey shadows fall,
And the twilight lies unending
On the way I'll soon be wending —
The long road, the lone road that has no end at all.'
You that had the choice wines,
In the frail cups glowing —
Is there any need to ask if you'll take a golden flask
On the road you'll be going?
'When I walk, a spirit shrinking,
Where the grey shadows fall,
There'll be little need, I'm thinking,
For the rich delights of drinking
On the long road, the lone road that has no end at all!'
You that sought the rich man
And the ladies — jewelled, glowing —
Since the way is far to wend, sure you'll need a true-heart friend
On the road you'll be going?
'Nay! — and not an ear shall heed me
Though I call, call, call,
When the beckoning shadows lead me;
And no prayer of heart shall speed me
On the long road, the lone road that has no end at all!'
You that had the hard heart
And the selfish soul uncaring,
Is there any deed at all that shall let a comfort fall

On the road you'll be going?
'Hush! the lights of day have ended,
And the grey shadows fall,
And, by no sweet thought attended,
I must wander, unbefriended,
Down the long road, the lone road that has no end at all!

Roderic Quinn

The Lotus-Flower

All the heights of the high shores gleam
Red and gold at the sunset hour:
There comes the spell of a magic dream,
And the Harbour seems a lotus-flower;

A blue flower tinted at dawn with gold,
A broad flower blazing with light at noon,
A flower forever with charms to hold
His heart, who sees it by sun or moon.

Its beauty burns like a ceaseless fire,
And tower looks over the top of tower;
For all mute things it would seem, aspire
To catch a glimpse of the lotus-flower.

Men meet its beauty with furrowed face,
And straight the furrows are smoothed away;
They buy and sell in the market-place,
And languor leadens their blood all day.

At night they look on the flower, and lo!
The City passes with all its cares:
They dream no more in its azure glow,
Of gold and silver and stocks and shares.

The Lotus dreams 'neath the dreaming skies,
Its beauty touching with spell divine
The grey old town, till the old town lies
Like one half-drunk with a magic wine.

Star-loved, it breathes at the midnight hour
A sense of peace from its velvet mouth.
Though flowers be fair - is there any flower
Like this blue flower of the radiant South?

Sun-loved and lit by the moon it yields
A challenge-glory or glow serene,
And men bethink them of jewelled shields,
A turquoise lighting a ground of green.

Fond lovers pacing beside it see
Not death and darkness, but life and light,
And dream no dream of the witchery
The Lotus sheds on the silent night.

Pale watchers weary of watching stars
That fall, and fall, and forever fall,
Tear-worn and troubled with many scars,
They seek the Lotus and end life's thrall.

The spirit spelled by the Lotus swoons,
Its beauty summons the artist mood;
And thus, perchance, in a thousand moons
Its spell shall work in our waiting blood.

Then souls shall shine with an old-time grace,
And sense be wrapped in a golden trance,
And art be crowned in the market-place
With Love and Beauty and fair Romance.

Roderic Quinn

The Lovers' Walk

BY the slowly flowing river
Lies the old, shadowed walk,
Where the lovers, two and two,
Ere the falling of the dew,
Of the sweetest thing on earth in the soft shadows talk.
For, though honey has a sweetness,
As the tasting palate knows,
Yet young love is sweeter, sure,
Than the honey, pale and pure,
That the brown bee gets from the heart of the rose.
Though there's music in the waters
And the singing of the birds,
Yet a richer music dwells
In the tale each couple tells
In that scene of green enchantment, as they put their hearts in words.
Though they have not throne or sceptre,
They are kings and queens, in truth;
And their realm is all their own,
And they rule in it alone,
For the wonder and the splendour of the world belong to youth.
Neither man nor maid may hasten,
Neither man nor maid may baulk
The river on its way,
As it murmurs, day by day,
By the singing, scented places of the old Lovers' Walk.
There the wattle has its season,
And the lily flames awhile,
And the pink boronia blooms,
And the orchid lights the glooms
Of the deep, green gully and the far forest aisle.
There the wattle fades and withers,
And the lily on its stalk;
But new couples, wreathed and crowned,
Through the seasons round and round
Dream their dreams, link their hands on the old Lovers' Walk.
There they tell the one tale over
And they plight again their troth,
And they bend above the stream
In the sunset's dying gleam;

It might seem the river cares not, yet the river mirrors both.
Oh, how many happy lovers
Has that gleaming river glassed!
Oh, what folk alight with joy,
Dancing girl, and glowing boy,
Youth and Beauty linked together in the dim, sweet past!
Now a frond goes down the current,
Now a flower the eddies turn,
But the lovers never sigh
As they watch them drifting by,
Nor bethink them of the moments that are like to flower and fern.
Yet a hungry sea is calling,
Though a distant sea it be;
And the lovers' golden hours
Are as drifting ferns and flowers,
And a river, not their river, takes them onward to the sea.
Oh, the splendour, and the raptures,
And the hours of rose and rhyme!
Oh, the passion-thirst that sips
At the fount of rosy lips!
Oh, the slowly-moving waters of the river like to Time!
As the fading of the wattle
Or the lily on its stalk,
Or the dewdrop from the grass,
So the glory goes, alas,
From the sweet dreams dreamt on the old Lovers' Walk.

Roderic Quinn

The Master-Man

O CAPTAIN of the Great Event,
Which yet shall dew with crimson dew
The green coasts of our continent,
I know not where to look for you!
I know when doom shall mass about
Our shores, and strike their music dumb,
A something in your blood shall shout:
'The hour is mine! Behold, I come!'
For, if one truth since time began
O'ertowers all other truths, it is:
There ever comes the Master-Man
To make the epic moment his.
In reeling ranks and riven steel,
On red-drenched fields and seas of blood,
The bruised and broken foe shall feel
A valour not to be withstood;
The crisis shall not lack its lord,
The noon its sun, the night its star;
Beneath your high, directing sword
The triumph-tide shall surge afar.
Till God make plain your path, and fill
Your soul with martial ecstasy,
Perchance you toil in mart or mill,
Unconscious of your destiny.
Perchance you wait the breathing hour
Unborn — undrawn from distant spheres —
For, though the clouds of menace lower,
They may not break for years and years.
Yet, be it soon or be it late,
Or be it when this voice is mute,
O guardian of our golden State,
The foe shall find you resolute.
O Captain of the Great Event,
Which yet shall dew with crimson dew
The green coasts of our continent,
A victor's laurels wait for you.

Roderic Quinn

The Red Mist

SHE thinks aloud as she sits alone,
And the magpies call in the evening grey —
Oh, sorrow to her with the heart of stone
Who stole my lover away, away!
There is no peace in the light of the moon,
And little enough in the shine of the sun;
And it's grieving and grieving that darkens the noon,
And troubles me sore till the salt tears run.
There's Joyce with the red cheeks says to me,
Herself as gay as a crowned young queen:
'It's pale you are, and it's sick, maybe;
And what is it ails your heart, Noreen?'
At that I say, with a laugh in my voice
(For grief is an ill, dark thing to show):
'It's you with your tricks and your capers, Joyce,
And the imp in your eyes that makes me so.'
There's one and another from near and far
Who come with their kind, sweet neighbour-speech;
'It's sick you look, and it's pale you are;
And what have you done with your bloom of the peach?'
I sit and listen, but may not tell;
As an actor plays, I play my part;
It's little they'd care (as my heart knows well),
If they but knew the hurt of my heart.
And even Joyce, who is kind as kind,
Would make a jest of my pain, perchance;
For a feather afloat on an idle wind
Means more to the world than a spoiled romance.
If I were a man I would do so much —
Be brave, make light of my weight of care,
Bring ease to my mind with a master-touch,
And find fit food for my heart elsewhere.
Yet soft and shy as a cooing dove
(For that he thought me, and thinks me yet)
I cannot rest for remembering love,
Nor dream of a time when I may forget.
I think of his kisses that warmed like wine
When the low night-winds in the pine trees played,
And the lilies, white in the white moonshine,

A startling light in the garden made.
I think of his voice in those honeyed hours,
And wonder if words are flowers sometimes,
All scent and colour — are chiming flowers
That thrill the blood with their magic chimes
And then, the thought of the Other comes,
Her wiles and wonder and luring lies,
And the blood in my ears is a throb of drums,
And a red mist glimmers before my eyes.
And I go to the place where the thing lies hid,
And its blade takes fire at my burning touch;
And I say to myself: 'If the world were rid
Of three lives more, would it matter much?
'Would it matter much in the big world's sight
If the sorry farce to the end were played.
And three ghosts trod through the Outer Night —
The Loved, the Lover, the Love Betrayed?
'If one that suffers and two that sing
Were made cold clay, were it well or ill?'
And I grasp the haft of the jewelled thing,
And stand in the lamplight pale and still.
And then I shudder, and sob and sink,
And lie, eyes hid, with the light turned low,
Like one who stands on an awful brink,
Wild-eyed, and trembling, and breathing slow;
And then comes Joyce with her joyous cries:
'Come out in the night, come dance with me!'
And I smooth my hair and I soothe my eyes —
But I know what the end of it all shall be.

Roderic Quinn

The Red-Tressed Maiden

RED she is in a robe of sable,
Rosy with pictures and tales to tell:
She is a fairy, and yet no fable,
Weaving the dreams that we love so well.
Out in the dark where the night-winds hurry
And dead leaves carpet the silent bush,
She has a charm for minds that worry,
For the worn white face a fresh young blush.
Tell her a story of some love laid in
The grave long since with a maiden white —
She will not taunt you, the Red-Tressed Maiden
Dressed in her mantle of starless night.
With fingers potent as rich wine chosen
From dusty cellars where years lie dead,
She melts the ice in the veins long frozen,
The blood runs chainless, and young and red.
Her ears have hearkened the joyous laughter,
Man-made, maid-lifted through years and years
To frescoed dome and to smoky rafter,
And tears and tears and ceaseless tears.
Old as the world, and some say older,
Is she, and yet she is young and sweet:
She heard the story the Cave-man told her,
When hearts were bolder and ruder their beat.
No tale so trifling but she will listen,
The long day ended, the day's toil done;
Then wheresoever her great eyes glisten
An ancient battle is fought and won.
She is ready to hearken to some chance roamer,
A lyre on his shoulder, a lilt on his tongue,
As she was of old to the blind-eyed Homer
Who sang high strains when the world was young.
On winter nights, when the roads are cheerless
And west winds under a frosty moon,
She paints us Summer in colours peerless
And the broad gold charm of a tropic noon.
On summer evenings, in sylvan places
(The picnic over and stars in the skies),
She heightens the blush on sun-kissed faces

And deepens the dream in dear young eyes.
And who is the Maiden? When Night is about you,
Pile high dry leaves and dead wood, and so
Make a light for the darkness within and without . . .
And now do you see her — and now do you know?

Roderic Quinn

The River And The Road

THE merrymaking's over
The riverside is still,
The Sun, a radiant rover,
Gone down behind the hill.
The red Road goes awinding
Along the riverside;
The River, no man minding,
Winds on to meet the tide.
O Naiad of green places!
I pray you pause and say
How many pretty faces
Looked down on you to-day?
The River runs in silence
(A fern-frond is her load);
Just here and just a mile hence
She curves to kiss the road.
And now the kiss is over,
And now the tryst is done,
By flats of fern and clover
The River ripples on.
Again the Road turns to her,
Red-winding through the green;
The Road would pause and woo her,
But gray rocks stand between.
And here he rounds a boulder
And hurries to her side:
The River turns her shoulder;
She will not be his bride.
O fickle River, straying
Through green lands on and on,
A fern-tree heard you saying
'The Road will come anon.'
Not so, but you will waken
To lonely days and sore.
The Road a vow has taken
To play Love's fool no more.
On high the sunset lingers
With one still star above,
And there the merry singers

Sing silverly of Love.
And now in distance dewy
They halt awhile, and so
Wave hands with 'Coo-ee, Coo-ee!'
Ho, laggard down below!
If she should cease to worry
And say, 'I love but you' —
'O hurry, hurry, hurry!'
And 'Adieu, Adieu, Adieu!'
This one last chance I give her
To lighten my heart's load,
And if she play the River
Then I shall prove the Road.
I caught her, heard her sighing,
And felt the moment's charm. . . .
'Tis sweet when day is dying
To walk so, arm in arm!

Roderic Quinn

The Scarlet Cloak

ONE may go a-many leagues a-questing yon and hither;
One may look on queens and kings, and think the vision bliss;
But he who has the wholesome heart, as lightsome as a feather,
Can find a joy in everything, no matter what it is.
Golden Miles to Burrawang, when the morn was tender! —
How your memory rises up, how it haunts and smiles!
Back again, and back it comes — all the early splendour —
All your length made beautiful, O you Golden Miles!
You that wore the scarlet cloak in the pearly morning,
When the sun came up the East, and through the heavens strode
Like a prince of great account, cloud and mist-wreath scorning —
What was in the heart of you, waiting by the road?
Birds of all the bush around were at their greeting matins,
Some with little twitterings, and some with loud acclaim;
Cloth-of-gold is fine wear, and fine are silks and satins —
Finer was the scarlet cloak that wrapped you like a flame.
You that wore the scarlet cloak in the early morning,
When the leaves were dancing all, and the dewdrops glowed,
Like a flower — a flower of flowers, the dewy way adorning —
Love was in the heart of you, waiting by the road!

Roderic Quinn

The Sea-Seekers

ALL four of us were inland born
And inland reared from birth were we,
And — though the tale be food for scorn —
We four had never seen the Sea.
We saw the sun by day; by night
The stars threw down their radiance keen;
These things were held a goodly sight,
But still the Sea remained unseen.
The sunlit plains about us spread
Mile after mile on every side;
But still, the sea-wise people said,
The blue salt waste was wondrous wide.
On lonely rides and desert tramps,
And when we searched in rain and dew
The breathing dark of cattle-camps,
A longing came and thrilled us through.
We dreamt of waters spreading far,
Of winding bay and shining reach,
Of shouting reef and growling bar
And breakers crashing down a beach.
The longing grew; we could not rest;
A vision beautiful and brave
Allured us to a mighty quest
Of rolling sea and crested wave.
All four of us were inland born
And inland reared from birth were we;
We mounted early in the morn,
And, riding gaily, sought the Sea.
We rode by day, and camped by night,
And night and day dreamed evermore
Of dawns that broke in rosy light
On curling wave and crescent shore;
The red sun sank upon our quest,
The shadows fell; and in the dark
There was no light in East or West,
Save where our camp-fire burned — a spark.
At times it seemed that we could hear
The sound of breakers in their fall —
We drew our reins, and, hand to ear,

We listened to the distant call.
A stillness reigned from East to West;
The trees and mountains seemed to swoon;
And weirdly paling in the West
Went down a late and lonely moon.
And, while the white moon slowly fell,
A scented breeze of morning blew —
Though inland-born we knew it well,
That odour keen and strange and new.
Then something seemed to burst its chains;
A wave of joy and wonder broke
Across our souls, and in our veins
An ancient Viking stirred and woke.
A sound of breakers came to stir
Our blood, and thrill us with delight;
And neck and neck with whip and spur
We galloped headlong through the night.
The moon had sunk; but in the sky
We saw the Dawn's first light of grey,
And straight as feathered arrows fly
We thundered on to meet the Day.
Afar we saw the shore-line loom;
Our horses, springing freely, strode;
And suddenly in purple gloom
The sea gave greeting as we rode.
We galloped on, nor ever ceased
Till gloriously in golden fire
The sun uprose, and in the East
We reached the goal of our desire.
We pushed our horses through the foam,
The breakers swirled about their knees;
And underneath the golden dome
We shouted to the Morning Seas.

Roderic Quinn

The Secret Pool

I KNOW a pool unknown to men,
Whose green and shadowed secrecy
I share alone with bird and tree,
And there, when I am sick at heart
And ill at ease, I draw apart
To bathe, and live, and love again.
All Summertide and all Spring through,
In its charmed neighbourhood, the thrush
And magpie, in the dying blush
Of sunset and the green of dawn —
Now nigh, and now in aisles withdrawn —
Make melody, each day anew.
And all night long the curious stars
Through peepholes in its dome of leaves
Peer down on it, while Silence weaves
A lovely spell, a magic calm
That soothes the soul like healing balm,
And breathes a peace that nothing mars.
Ah, sweet, indeed, it is to lave
And lose oneself within the cool,
Soft presence of that forest-pool,
Whose sacramental peace is such
That flesh and spirit, at its touch,
The sleep of little children have.

Roderic Quinn

The Seeker

GOOD People, by your fires to-night
Sit close and praise the red, red wood!
The wind is cold, the moon is white;
With me who wander 'tis not well; it is not well, but God is good.
'Fore birth I was foredoomed to roam,
To keep my soul and self apart,
An alien without hearth and home —
With me who wander 'tis not well; there is no warmth of fire or heart.
I mate with all the wandering winds
That roam across the wintry earth;
What time behind your close-drawn blinds
Your firelit faces smile and smile, I would that I might share their
mirth.
But if I entered I should sit
A wordless dreamer at your fire;
With heart unwarmed and eyes unlit,
I should be like a spectre there, shut off from you and your desire.
And yet, I would that I might warm
My heart and hands at your fire-glow;
But headlong seas and shouting storm
They thrill my blood, they fill my eyes, they call me forth, and I must
go.
Good People, maids and dames and sires,
Ye have your little woe and mirth;
Ye dream no dream; but there are spires
That point to stars, and still point on in spite of this dark, drawing
earth.
It is not well with me to-night,
And I by that strange shore would be
Where, 'twist day's last grey gleam and night,
A Wonder wanes that I alone of all the world must seek and see.
What cliffs they be, what sea rolls there,
I do not know; but, spirit-chained,
Lost visions fill me with despair,
And all the washed grey foreland speaks of some strange Wonder that
has waned.
Good People, bread and wine are good,
And all your visions goodly be.
But some may crave for other food,

And some are seekers from their birth, and dream of lights they shall
not see.

And there is he who fain would find

A Wonder by an alien shore:

Athwart the seas he speeds his mind,

But on the instant fades a light, and lo, the Wonder is no more.

Roderic Quinn

The Shadow-Third

THEY met in the old conventional way,
And married, and that was the end
Of a little matter that touched three hearts —
A girl, a man, and his friend.
You see, when he saw her great blue eyes
The love of his life began,
And — well — it was money the woman craved,
Not flesh and blood and a man.
She married, for money, her lover's friend —
And thus it came to be
That the man went out of life one night
As a wind goes out to sea.
She did not smile nor sorrow, they say;
She showed no sign of care,
But, ever since, 'twixt the wedded twain
There stands a vacant chair.
And when they stroll through the street at times,
Or pace some garden green,
They walk so spaced, it will seem to you
That a man might walk between.

Roderic Quinn

The Song

I SANG of the sun on the waters,
And then of the wind in the wood;
And the people hearkened my singing
And said that the song was good.
I sang of the sheep on the mountains,
And then of the thrush on the hill;
And the people hearkened my singing
And said it was better still.
I sang of the bliss of lovers,
And then of their hopes that fall;
And the people hearkened my singing
And said it was best of all.
For the song that is loved of the people,
And sought since the world began,
Is the sad and beautiful music
Of the loves and sorrows of Man.

Roderic Quinn

The Song Of The Cicadas

Yesterday there came to me
from a green and graceful tree
as I loitered listlessly
nothing doing, nothing caring,
light and warmth and fragrance sharing
with the butterfly and the bee,
while the sapling-tops a-glisten
danced and trembled, wild and willing
such a sudden sylvan shrilling
that I could not choose but listen
Green Cicadas, Black Cicadas,
happy in the gracious weather,
Floury-baker, Double-Drummer,
all as one and all together,
how they voiced the golden summer.

Stealing back there came to me
as I loitered listlessly
'neath the green and graceful tree,
nothing doing, nothing caring,
boyhood moments spent in sharing
with the butterfly and the bee
youth and freedom, warmth and glamour
while Cicadas round me shrilling,
set the sleepy noontide thrilling
with their keen insistent clamour.

Green Cicadas, Black cicadas,
happy in the gracious weather
Floury-bakers, double-drummers
all as one and all together---
how they voice the bygone summers!

Roderic Quinn

The Song Of The Violin

SHE stood in the curtains played over by light —
The tinted curtains — a tired, sweet girl,
With exquisite arms under laces of white
Like an ivory figure in mother-of-pearl.
I entered; she saw me, but made no move;
To some I nodded, to some replied;
(A violin somewhere was singing of love)
She blushed and paled, and I stood at her side.
I asked for a dance — she shook her head
And laughed like a petted, petulant queen;
She had promised them all to others, she said,
'And you are so late — and where have you been?'
They were talking low in the long, bright room,
And I answered her, moving the blind aside —
'Out there on the lawn in the velvet gloom,
Wooing a woman to make her my bride.'
She suddenly shook like a startled dove;
Ruffled and paled and hung her head
(A violin somewhere was singing of love,
And bitter-sweet were the things it said).
'This heat is stifling!' — she moved away.
'Out here,' I whispered, 'and hark to the tide!'
'The woman — where is she?' I heard her say;
'Now show me the woman you wooed for a bride.'
'Here on the land — and there on the sea,
Her feet among roses, her head in the skies;
And now do you see her?' She whispered 'I see,'
Her hand on my shoulder, a laugh in her eyes.
'Do you love her — this lady so mystical, fine?
I dwindle before her, a plain little miss;
She has stars in her hair — only roses in mine;
But the Night has no heart, and the Night cannot kiss.'
'Not now, if you please, sir!' — a moment she strove —
The curve of my arm softly circled her head . . .
A violin somewhere was singing of love,
And sweet beyond all were the things it said.

Roderic Quinn

The Soul Of The Anzac

THE form that was mine was brown and hard,
And thewed and muscled, and tall and straight;
And often it rode from the station yard,
And often it passed through the stockyard gate;
And often it paused on the grey skyline
'Twixt mulga and mallee or gum and pine.
There was never a task that it would not do;
There was never a labour it left undone;
But ever and always it battled through,
And took the rest that its toil had won,
And slept the sleep of the weary-limbed
Till the stars grew pale and the planets dimmed.
The form that was mine is mine no more,
For low it lies in a soldier's grave
By an alien sea on an alien shore;
And over its sleep no wattles wave,
And stars unseen on their journey creep;
But it wakes no more from its dreamless sleep.
O Mother of mine, what is is best!
And our graves are dug at the hour of birth;
And the form that slept on your shielding breast
Sleeps soundly here in the mothering earth.
And dust to dust! When our part is played,
Does it matter much where the change is made?
O Heart that was mine, you were brave and strong —
How strong, how brave, let another tell!
You loved the lilt of the bushman's song,
And loved the land that he loved so well,
And loved — ah, well! — as well she knew,
The sweet, white girl who was all to you.
O Heart of mine, though your love was great,
Yet a greater than Love is lord of man;
The rose-path wound to the garden gate,
And there the track to The Peaks began;
And though storm threatened and skies grew black,
You dared the menace and took the track.
O Heart, when the cliffs were hard to climb,
How sweet was home, and her eyes how sweet!
How sweet the moments when Love kept time,

And you and her heart gave beat for beat,
And the waters sang, and the sun-rays glanced,
And the flowers laughed out, and the saplings danced.
Yet better, O Heart, to do as you did
Than to lie on her breast, as your love-gift lies;
For how can Love prosper when Honour lies hid,
Ashamed to look Love fair and square in the eyes?
Though grave-mould be round you, grey grasses above,
You live, and shall live, evermore in her love!
O Man that I was, you were foe to Death;
For Life was fair to you — wonderful, rare;
You had your being and drew your breath
In ample spaces of earth and air;
While ever and always, by night and day,
Bright Promise pointed the Golden Way.
And yet 'twas your choice to be this thing —
A young man dead on an alien shore,
Where the immemorial surges sing
As once they sang in the days of yore,
When Greek and Trojan matched their might
And Troy shone down upon the fight.
O Man that I was, well done! Well done!
You chose the nobler, the better part;
Though a mother weep for her soldier son,
And a fair, sweet girl be sad at heart,
Yet the soul of your country glows with pride
At the deed you did and the death you died.

Roderic Quinn

The Surrender

HERE, in the new day's golden splendour —
Headlands pushing their foreheads forward —
Sweet is the surfer's glad surrender
To the will of the wave, as it rushes shoreward.
Nought in his ears but the breaker's thunder,
Arrowing on through the surf he flies,
Foam about him and clean sands under,
Over him arching the radiant skies.
Yielding himself as a toy to the ocean,
Locked and mute in its fierce embraces,
Thrilled and filled with the joy of motion,
Limbs outstretched, through the swirl he races.
Here, in the gold day's new-born splendour,
Sea winds sighing in tree and cave,
Sweet it is in a glad surrender
Thus to yield to the will of the wave.

Roderic Quinn

The Swamp

FOR one whole day and a long night through
We made our camp
In a she-oak grove by a coastal swamp.
Our tent gleamed white in the she-oak trees,
Whose falling hair
Made a soft, brown mist in the sweet blue air.
A sound subdued from their tresses rose —
A moan, a sigh
As of unseen seas, when the breeze went by.
'Twas wattle-time, and the scented bloom,
New lit and young,
In a mass of gold from the still trees hung.
There music dwelt, and a splendour moved
Through all the day
From the green of dawn to the twilight gray.
For careless ever, like one who goes
Where Joyance leads,
Sang the little reed-bird in the tall, green reeds.
Blue, swift and slender the dragonflies
A-hawking flew,
And a hawk hung poised in the burning blue.
A crane, slow-flapping its great wings, passed
Across the scene,
And a parrot jewelled the leafy screen.
In twos and threes from the hills around
The peewits came,
And the brush-flower burnt like a crimson flame.
On ti-tree trunk and on frond and log
The lizards slept,
While the sun moved west, and the shadows crept.
The sun moved west, and the tall hills sent
Broad shadows east,
And the reed-bird's song in the reed-beds ceased.
Then fell a hush, and within that hush
Rose, clear and shrill,
A cicada note on a distant hill.
A note of farewell, it seemed to us,
Its singing bore;
And the night came down, and it sang no more.

Night came with shadows and fitful gleams
And mist and damp,
And our fire burned red by the coastal swamp.
Then life not known of the daytime woke —
That life that preys
On the feathered things of the leafy ways.
We heard feet moving, and velvet wings
On swamp and height,
And a dingo howling across the night.
As, faces lit by the red camp-fire,
We mused enthralled.
Like a lone, lost spirit a curlew called;
Brown crickets sang in the moisty mould,
And every breeze
Drew a moaning note from the she-oak trees.
And all night long, as they swayed and moaned,
Strange fancies woke,
And we could not rest for the things they spoke.
Thus much and more through the hours we saw;
Thus much we heard
In that place of blossom and tree and bird.
Since then gold wattles have bloomed and bloomed,
And moons aloft
In the sky have wizened and waned full oft.
And yet, at times, when the night is still,
In dreams I tramp
Through the white sand-dunes to that coastal camp.

Roderic Quinn

The Three Knocks

WHEN the owl that scared the mouse
Fluffed his feathers and sat still,
And the night around was chill,
On the door of yonder house
Someone knocked,
And a hand the door unlocked.
While the owl, aloof and drear
Yellow-eyed his vigil kept,
Down the breeze a crying crept,
And it seemed to tell of fear —
Fear and care —
It was Life that entered there!
When the owl had greyer grown
By a score of years and more,
On the selfsame cedar door
Of yon house that stands alone,
Someone knocked,
And a hand the door unlocked.
Yet, though many gracious flowers
Wreathed the house from floor to roof,
In his shadowed haunt aloof
Staring sat he through the hours,
Unaware
It was Love that entered there!
When the owl had passed away,
And the mouse, no more afraid,
In the tree-glooms frisked and played,
On that door at end of day
Someone knocked,
And a hand the door unlocked.
Once and twice that knock had come,
Once for Life, and once for Love;
Towards the night the shadows move,
And the land lies still and dumb
Everywhere —
It is Death that enters there!

Roderic Quinn

The Threshold Stone

WHEN I went to live in the little house,
That stands on the hilltop alone,
What touched me most of all
Was neither roof nor wall,
But the smooth, worn face of its old threshold stone.
For when I entered that little house,
With its four rooms cool in the heat,
And its windows clean and bright,
There it lay, new-washed and white,
With its tale of the coming and the going of feet.
Then I lost count of time in that little house,
And the world and its things all about,
And I hearkened there, alone,
To the footfalls on that stone,
Of the young coming in and the old going out.
And the folk that had dwelt in that little house,
They were mute, spectre-mute, at my side —
The young man, strong and bold,
And the grey man, wise and old,
And the little, pinched woman and the new-made bride.
Oh, often in haste to that little house
Came love in the night-time alone,
And dallied there a while,
With a little, wistful smile,
And with feather-weight feet on the old threshold stone.
And men hurried home to that little house
When the round of the daytime was o'er
With its worry, heat and noise,
And kissed their girls and boys,
And the patient little mothers that waited at the door.
Though I dwell now no more in that little house
That stands on the hilltop alone,
Yet this I got from it —
This human story writ
On the smooth, worn face of its old threshold stone.
Though they take stone from stone in that little house,
Making litter of all it has been.
Yet they shall not destroy
All the grief, all the joy,

All the youth, all the love that its threshold has seen.

Roderic Quinn

The Turn Of The Road

WHERE confident, calm I strode,
I walk with hesitant feet;
For at yonder turn of the road
What shall I meet?
The youth of the day has gone,
And my shadow goes before;
I know that the road runs on —
I know no more.
I have travelled a goodly way,
As one at a glance may see,
Since the East and the break o' day
Called out to me.
Though the highway be hard to miss
With its signs and stones and such,
The worst of the road is this —
It turns too much.
For a part of its length it flows
(Too brief is that stretch, alas!)
'Twixt hedges of palm and rose,
O'er fern and grass.
The butterfly fancies flit
On their lit wings, gossamer-frail;
And a host of roysterers sit
At cakes and ale.
With the flight of their glory hour,
The Fancies flutter and die;
And the nectared heart of the flower
Grows sere and dry.
Though the cakes and ale are done,
And the roysterer's moment gone,
Yet under the slanting sun
The road winds on.
Good-bye to the flower and fern,
And the hedges at each grass-side! —
Maybe at the next road-turn
New pleasures hide.
New pleasures? 'Tis turned, and lo!
Hot miles and a driving dust
'Twixt trees that are grey as woe,

Gnarled limbs out-thrust!
Yet Hope is a bright allure,
A light in the hearts of men —
At the end of a league, for sure,
'Twill turn again.
Though the highway be hard to miss
With its signs and stones and such,
The best of the road is this —
It turns so much!
Towards the turn of the roadway you
I walk with hesitant feet;
When I come to the turn, anon —
What shall I meet?

Roderic Quinn

The Twenty-Fifth Of April

THIS day is Anzac Day!
Made sacred by the memory
Of those who fought and died, and fought and live,
And gave the best that men may give
For love of Land. It dawns once more,
And, though on alien sea and shore
The guns are silent all,
Yet we with pride recall
The deeds which gave it immortality.
Great deeds are deathless things!
The doer dies, but not the deed,
And, when upon that fateful April day
Our Anzacs, throwing all but love away,
Gave life and limb for Honour's sake,
With Freedom tremblingly at stake,
They lit a beacon-light
Imperishable, bright,
That evermore the Nation's soul shall heed.
Not Peace, not Peace alone
Can make a nation great and good
And bring it that full stature, strength, and grace
That fit it for an age-enduring place
In men's regard. Through storm and strife
It runs to sweet and noble life;
For through its veins there runs
The valour of great sons
Who died to give it stately nationhood.
This day is Anzac Day!
Made sacred by the thrilling thought
Of those who proved their souls, it reappears;
And thus 'twill dawn, and dawn through future years
Till Time our petty deeds efface,
And others, dwelling in our place,
Tell o'er, with tongue and pen,
The glorious tale again
Of how on beach and crag the Anzacs fought.

Roderic Quinn

The Vigil

THE rain is falling on the roof,
And no sound else disturbs the wife,
Except the trees and winds at strife,
Now near at hand and now aloof;
But listening, leaning evermore,
She waits a knock upon the door.
Her hair is braided round her head;
Her eyes are large and fierce and bright;
Her shapely throat is soft and white;
And on her mouth there burns the red
Of that rich, storied gem that shone
Upon the breast of Prester John.
Upon the couch her husband lies.
How is it that he lies so still?
Why sleeps he there so pale and chill,
The lamplight on his lidded eyes?
Has she not fire, and more than fire
To thrill his flesh with hot desire?
Anon she lifts her rounded arms
As though to feel that she is free;
And her large eyes exultantly
Light up, as when the dawn-glow charms
With roseate lights that gleam and glance
Twin pools to sudden radiance.
The rain is falling on the roof;
Yet, though her ears are open wide,
There is no other sound outside —
No fall of foot, nor tramp of hoof.
And on his couch with lidded eyes
The husband, cold and pallid, lies.
The midnight sky is wild and black
And drenches earth with ceaseless tears;
And now it seems to her she hears
Hoof-strokes upon the sodden track;
And now she rises, sweet as sin,
To let the late night-strayer in.
The lamplight gleams upon his face,
And glistens on his reddened spur;
He stretches out his arms to her

And folds her in a rude embrace. . . .
How can it be the husband lies
So still, with heavy-lidded eyes?
Perchance he neither sees nor hears,
And sleeps unmoved by chance or change.
And yet. . . and yet, it seems so strange —
If he be dead there should be tears.
Not love nor smiles, nor midnight bliss,
Nor mouths that marry in a kiss.
The loud winds thrust upon the door,
The raindrops splash against the roof,
The trickles from a waterproof
Make little pools upon the floor;
No foe between, no more apart,
They stand, heart throbbing back to heart.
Anon she says: 'He died this morn.
He did not die a whit too soon;
Life's day, alas, makes towards its noon.
He should have died when love was born.
He should have died long since. And now
Kiss me again — my mouth, my brow!'

Roderic Quinn

The Voices Of The Rain

LAST night, when under troubled skies
The storm went marching o'er the plain,
An elfin music seemed to rise,
A singing in the rain.
At first it seemed a prattling child
That played alone in young delight,
And then it seemed a joy gone wild
That sang along the night.
The raindrops, with their steady beat
And burden musical and low,
Were like a thousand little feet
That hurried to and fro.
And where the runnels gushed and streamed
And soaked the grass-roots, dry and brown,
A busy band of fairies seemed
To patter up and down.
The air was full of whisperings,
And all the teeming dark was rife
With stir and call that told of things
That woke anew to life.
And then across the darkened waste
A sudden shouting wind was hurled;
It seemed a messenger in haste
With tidings for the world.
But, till across that streaming scene
The wind went rushing down the plain,
I did not guess what they might mean —
Those voices of the rain.
They said: 'Farewell to drought and dearth,
To Famine, hollow-eyed and nude!'
They said: 'We are the teeming Earth,
The gift of plenitude!'
They said, those voices of the rain:
'We are the flesh and blood and breath;
We are the meat, the fruit, the grain
That succour all from death!'
They said: 'Wherever we may pass
The hour of plenty comes to birth;
We spread the banquet of the grass

Around about the Earth!
'We call,' they said, 'and lo, the seed
Within its mother-soil is stirred;
The seasons round 'tis ours to feed
The fruit, the tree, the bird.
'By us the petal is unfurled,
The flower in purple splendour blooms;
We fill the markets of the world,
And feed its hungry looms.'
The moon sent forth one silver ray,
The fairy voices ceased to sing;
Yet far away, and far away,
I heard thanks echoing.
For cattle lowed throughout the night
In deep content across the plain;
And I, too, thanked, with meet delight,
The voices of the rain.

Roderic Quinn

The Voyagers

HOW was it with the Genoese,
What feeling filled his heaving breast,
When far across the morning seas
He saw the island of his quest?
Perchance beyond the forest crown
And shining sands of that new clime
He saw a light of long renown
That blazed across the Seas of Time.
Or maybe, in that hour grown wise,
He would have bartered there and then
His life for some sweet life that lies
In utter peace unnamed of men.
For what is Fame, however brave,
Beside the charms of endless peace —
The cool, sweet quiet of the grave,
To be, and having been, to cease?
We quest not like the Genoese;
But, after sailing under skies
That bend and brood o'er lonely seas,
We light at last on some surprise.
Our eyes grow large, we stand amazed,
The past is past, our youth is gone,
The fronting hope that boldly blazed
Before our eyes grows pale and wan.
For every man must come to this,
With aching heart and eyes unsealed
That he shall know the thing he is,
And wonder at himself revealed.

Roderic Quinn

The Year's End

THE voices of the wind and wave
They sigh the Old Year's requiem;
The dead are calling from the grave —
Good friends, a little space I crave
To turn aside and think of them.
They were as even you and I
When you and I were young as they;
And yet they knew the way to die —
Come, think with me, and tell me why
It should be thus with hearts so gay.
Ah, blessed be the gracious God
Who, moulding us from clay and dew,
From morning dew and clay untrod,
So breathed Himself into the sod
That we, at best, grow Godlike, too.
For, treading pleasure underneath,
These glory-souls, our country's flower,
Arose responsive to that breath
And looked into the face of Death,
And did not tremble at his power.
Should it not make us sure and tough
As tested steel, and unafraid,
To feel, though Fate ride robber-rough,
That we are fashioned of the stuff
Whereof these heroes, too, were made?
Though they are dead, and o'er them bends
A people's soul in mourning mood,
Proud Honour at their grave attends:
Henceforth we are a nation, friends,
By right of sacrificial blood.
The care-free days of youth are gone;
What once we were no more we are;
And dead are all the dreams that shone
Ere we were bruised and hammered on
The ringing anvils of red war.
The Spirit of Immortal Times,
With lights that dazzle and entice,
Is vitalizing all earth's climes;
Once more in golden tones it chimes

The anthem of High Sacrifice.
And yet, though Fame be very fair,
And great the yearning and desire
Of hero-hearts to do and dare,
Behold, there stands an empty chair
Beside a cold and ashen fire!
Because, as even you and I,
They loved and were beloved, my friends,
Not all the glory-stars on high,
The splendid things for which men die,
Can for their passing make amends.
There is a house that waits in vain
To give them entrance at its door,
When frost's afoot or chilly rain;
There is a track across the plain
That they, alas, shall ride no more.
A whip, a saddle, and a spur!
(Ah, love-lit rides! The moon above,
Sweet scents around, soft winds astir!)
God give him rest! And what of her?
Why ask? Is love not always love?
Dear eyes that pain has made divine,
Sad eyes that burn with tears unshed,
Within whose depths are griefs that pine
And pilgrim thoughts that seek the shrine,
The grave of their beloved dead;
Dear eyes, dear hearts, dear folk, tear-blind,
Who greet each morn with grief anew,
Pale cheeks grown cold, and foreheads lined, —
Since God is good and Heaven is kind,
There shall be recompense for you!
The Old Year dies; and o'er the waves,
Wind-borne, there comes a requiem
Deep-chanted by a sea that laves
The shores they loved. Oh, may their graves
Give goodly rest and peace to them!

Roderic Quinn

They Shall Come Home

ALTHOUGH they sleep in alien graves afar,
Where, restlessly, chill winds we know not roam,
When Peace has laid the cruel waves of war
They shall come home!
Their spirit cannot die, though they be dead,
The young, the brave, the noble, and the dear!
And we shall know by some sweet influence shed
That they are near.
Because of them we shall go unafraid
And front the Future, strong and valorous;
They shall come home, when most we need their aid,
And hearten us.
What soul we owned we knew not till they died;
Upon high nationhood they set the seal;
The crude ore taken from the mountainside
They wrought to steel.
What though they passed in all their pride and power
With steadfast tread adown the sunset-track
To Glory's gates? — in memory's hallowed hour
They shall come back.
And they shall give, in place of heart-distress,
To kith and kin, tear-worn and sorrowing sore,
A sense of reverence and of sacredness
Not known before.
What though they sleep in unfamiliar earth,
Where, restlessly, chill winds we know not roam,
To stir our blood to deeds of starry worth
They shall come home!

Roderic Quinn

Tidings

THE darkness gripped us, hot, intense;
The sea snored like some sleeping brute;
We stood alert, with every sense
Like some leashed hound, nerve-thrilled, acute.
About us clammy dew made wet
The thin, green leaves and sleeping flowers;
Strained eyes against the night we set;
Strained ears, like open doors, were ours.
No sight! save when across the black
Broad breast of night fierce lightning tore
A ragged gash, a serpent track,
And thunder answered the sea's snore.
One sighed, and one would no more stand
At easeless rest, but drooping walked;
Then, though none spoke, one raised his hand
As if to silence tongues that talked.
We heard it! On the granite ground
It sounded nigh, and on the beach
It grew remote; upon that sound
With seeking eyes each questioned each.
Grouped close, like men of carven stone —
Chilled stone — we stood with rooted feet.
'He comes! What news?' Not hoofs alone
In that tense moment swiftly beat.
Cried one: 'Joy rides at such a pace,
Joy swift of hoof, and light as air!'
Said one — eyes sunk, and pallid face —
'So too, at times, rides dread Despair!'
We waited, vexed by dumb surmise,
Eyes wide, lips wide, tense faces white;
Ears served till ears gave place to eyes,
Sound likewise yielding unto sight.
He came with headlong speed and dash,
Fierce lightning lighting land and sea,
And in that red, revealing flash
He rose and shouted 'Victory!'

Roderic Quinn

Twilight And Peace

O GREY and dewy Twilight,
Thou, who comest softly, bringing
Silence sweeter than all music,
Song of bird or mortal singing;
Thou, who walkest with thy shadows
Through the mountains and the meadows,
Hither come, hither come;
For the morn was dull and dreary,
And the noon was hot and weary,
And the hours that followed after
Were too full of care for laughter,
And too full of toil for many and too full of tears for some.
O grey and dewy Twilight,
There are those within the forest
Who are waiting for thy coming
And the potions that thou pourest,
Bringing balm to feathered bosom,
Wilted leaf and withered blossom —
Bid them sleep, bid them sleep;
For their morn was dull and dreary,
And their noon was hot and weary,
And the hours that followed brought them
Arid winds that evil wrought them,
For the crushing heat lay heavy on each little flower and breast.
O grey and dewy Twilight,
There are those in town and city
Who are ailing, ailing for thee;
For thou hast the balm of pity,
And the cooling calm that lingers
In a mother's gentle fingers —
Soothe them so, soothe them so;
For their morn was dull and dreary,
And their noon was hot and weary,
And the hours that followed after
Were too full of toil for laughter,
And too full of want for many, and for some too full of woe.
O grey and dewy Twilight,
There is one thou dost resemble;
And I feel that 'neath her footsteps

Even now the airs do tremble,
And the shadows fly before her,
And the silent stars bend o'er her
As she nears, as she nears —
Man and maid to joyance wooing,
Doves in concert with her cooing,
Round about her love and laughter,
Golden plenty speeding after,
And a magic in her presence to make sweet the salt of tears.

Roderic Quinn

Two Pictures

WE sat by an open window
And hearkened the sounds outside —
The call of a lonely night-bird,
And the croon of a making tide.
He was an island-trader,
And talked of his sunlit home,
Of the palms and the happy people,
And reef and beach and foam.
All that the trader told me
Was wine to my soul and balm;
And I longed for the moonlit beaches
And the coral and the palm.
He was browned with the sun and weather
(How changed in mood and mien
From the days when the dark-eyed woman
Was throned in his heart a queen!)
He talked of the merry-makers,
Of the flower-crowned native girls;
Their eyes with the lure of midnight,
And their teeth like island pearls.
No word of the dark-eyed woman —
But dance and song and dish,
The white of the branching coral,
The hues of the rainbow fish;
Gossip of sport and battle
For love and faith and truth,
But never a word of the woman
He loved in his careless youth.
The tide on the rocks was crooning
(Sole sound), the bird was still;
And the night lay hot and breathless
On rock and tree and hill.
Two pictures were limned in the darkness —
(And sad, O sad, was the tide!)
A home in a sunlit island,
A grave on a green hillside.

Roderic Quinn

Western Camps

THREE men stood with their glasses lifted,
Night was around them and flaring lamps:
'Here's to the tried and true and sifted;
Here's to the flotsam tossed and drifted;
Here's to the men in the Outcast-camps,
'Stars that fall are their lot for ever;
Lights that perish and stars that fall;
Fighting Fate with a brave heart ever —
Drifting leaves on a wayward river —
Men for ever in spite of all.
'Here's to the gallant souls defeated;
Here's to the strong souls under-trod,
Hope-abandoned and mirage-cheated —
And yet, by right of their failure, seated
Somewhere close to the feet of God.
'Here's to the heart that braves undaunted
Toil and trouble for home and wife;
Here's to the spirit mocked and taunted;
Here's to the memory, sorrow-haunted;
Here's to the soul grown sick of life.
'Drink to the man at the camp-fire sitting;
Drink to his mistress of long ago;
Well — 'twere well — and the time were fitting,
If, in the shades of the firelight flitting,
She should come with her eyes aglow.
'Drink to the purpose, iron, oaken,
Brought to nought by a wanton's guile;
Drink to men with an old love-token
Somewhere close to their brave hearts broken;
Drink to the martyred souls that smile.
'Drink to courage and all fine daring —
Spirit trampling the flesh beneath;
Drink to the reckless heart uncaring;
Drink to mates at the last pinch sharing
Their little all in the face of death.
'Last toast this . . . may their hearts discover,
On every track that the outcast tramps,
A friend in need, and at need a lover,
Green grass around them and kind stars over,

And dreams of peace in their Western Camps.'

Roderic Quinn

With The Quandongs

IF you happen to visit the Western Plains
When the summer is young and green,
You can see the green of the quandong leaves
With the quandong fruit between.
The fruit is the size of a plum, perhaps,
And red as your own blood's hue;
And it falls to the ground at the touch of the wind
Like a drop of crimson dew.
The wide plains lie with half-shut eyes
At peace in a golden swoon,
And the lizards drink their full of rest
Abask in the drowsy noon.
There is only the whir of a wing, perchance,
To startle the sleeping lands;
But the quandong trees, all green and red,
Are a-twinkle with little hands.
Oh, many a tress has turned to grey,
And many a song grown mute
Since Rita and Meg and Trixie and I
Went gathering quandong fruit.
And there we were on the plains alone
In the hush of a drowsy air —
Rita and Meg with roguish eyes
And Trixie with wayward hair.
A far mirage of mingled sun and dream
Was born of the noontide sleep,
And the rifled fruit of the quandongs lay
At our feet in a ruddy heap.
I know that the quandong's burning fruit
Still reddens the drowsy air;
That Trixie is grown and sometime wed,
And Rita is grave and fair.
I know that Meg of the roguish eyes,
Though ten long years be sped,
Still plucks the fruit of the quandong trees
When the quandong fruit is red.
I know — and I know to my loss, alas! —
That I stand where the winds blow cold,
And search, with others, another tree

For its scanty fruit of gold.

Roderic Quinn