

The Poetry of Jack London

Contents

A Heart	4
Abalone Song	6
And Some Night	8
Ballade of the False Lover	9
Cupid's Deal	10
Daybreak	12
Effusion	13
George Sterling	14
Gold	15
He Chortled With Glee	17
He Never Tried Again	18
His Trip to Hades (Triolet)	19
Homeland	20
Hors De Saison	21
If I Were God	23
In a Year	24
In and Out	25
Je Rls en Espoir	26
Memory	27

Moods	28
My Confession	29
My Little Palmist	30
Of Man of the Future	32
On the Face of the Earth You Are the One	33
Republican Rallying Song	34
Sonnet	35
The Gift of God	36
The Klondyker's Dream	38
The Lover's Liturgy	40
The Mammon Worshippers	42
Rainbows End	43
The Republican Battle-hymn	44
The Sea Sprite and the Shooting Star	46
The Socialist's Dream	48
The Song of the Flames	50
Tick! Tick! Tick!	51
Too Late	52
The Way of War	53
The Worker and the Tramp	55
When All the World Shouted My Name	56
Where the Rainbow Fell	58
Your Kiss	59

A Heart

(February 1899)

A lonely dwelling in a garden bowered,
Far from the world, the haunts of busy men,
It stood alone. No traveler yet had ventured
Down the shaded walk to where the door,
Scented with jessamine sweet and climbing rose,
Extended half a welcome, and again,
Half shyly turned away.
And cradled here,
A home of pretty fancies and strange dreams,
It had beheld, untroubled, the nesting birds,
And flowering lawns and budding trees, and seen,
With blinded eyes, the scheme of life unfold;
Often it had wondered how the river met the sea,
And stealing glimpses of the far highway,
Had watched the hurrying forms and tried to guess
The deeds of valor or the remote lands
Which called them on and on and would not let
Them lift their eyes or idle by the way.
The languid hours had crept by unawares,
And years slipped into years until at last
The door was all a-tremble, like a ripe
Rose petal, fluttering to the wind's soft kiss;
And now there was a spirit of unrest
Through all its halls and inmost recesses,
A pulse of richer life and consciousness
Of things to come, a hum of preparation
As for a guest, unsummoned, yet expected
Once, a young wayfarer turned aside,
Lured by the noonday peace and pleasant shades,
And sought some quiet, fern-wreathed spot where he
Might rest his weary limbs and cool his brow.
But lo a swift turn in the walk disclosed
The house. Doffed was his plumed cap in awe
And slow amazement; he half turned, as though
It were a trespass, then his hand, quick-raised,
Lifted the latch to enter.
Ah' the door
Was all but pressed ajar'
But comrades called,
And minded him of other quests. The world
Shrilled keenly through the trees, and trumpets blared;
The latch fell softly and the garden knew
No more his presence; his proud plume was lost
Among the many thronged upon the highway.
At last, all unannounced, the guest arrived;
Nor did he know whither the path did lead,
But with high pride, brushing aside the dew
And crushing under heel the scattered flowers,
He hastened toward the river's marge. A rose,
Swaying on dainty stem, essayed to bar

Abalone Song

Oh, some folks boast of quail on toast
Because they think it's toney,
But I'm content to owe my rent
And live on abalone.
Oh! Mission Point's a friendly joint,
Where ev'ry crab's a crony,
And true and kind you'll ever find
The clinging abalone.
He wanders free beside the sea,
Where'er the coast is stony;
He flaps his wings and madly sings —
The plaintive abalone.
By Carmel Bay, the people say,
We feed on lazzaroni
On Boston beans and fresh sardines,
A toothesome abalone.
Some live on hope, and some on dope
And some on alimony;
But my tom-cat, he lives on fat
And tender abalone.
Oh! some drink rain and some champagne,
Or brandy by the pony;
But I will try a little rye
With a dash of abalone.
Oh! some like jam, and some like ham,
And some like macaroni;
But bring me a pail of gin
A tub of abalone.
He hides in caves beneath the waves, —
His ancient patrimony;
And so 'tis shown that faith alone
Reveals the abalone.
The more we take the more they make
In deep-sea matrimony;
Race suicide cannot betide
The fertile abalone.
I telegraph my better half
By Morse or by Marconi;
But if the need arise for speed,
I send an abalone.

And Some Night

“And some night,
You will find me in your arms,
Pleading—
For the eventual white flame
of your lips!”

Ballade of the False Lover

(November 1898)

He asked me there to be his bride,
O long and long ago;
He drew me close, my tears he dried,
His face was all aglow;
And I, poor me! how could I show
My love? What could I say?
I lay upon his breast—and lo,
He kissed and rode away.
He spoke me fair, and from my side,
He swore he would not go;
Said Heaven nor Hell could not divide
Us, for he loved me so.
Ah woe is me, I did not know,
I could not say him nay;
I lay upon his breast—and lo,
He kissed and rode away.
There lost I both my heart and pride,
And all I could bestow;
For when he looked and longed and sighed,
My tongue would not say no;
And when he whispered, soft and low,
That I was his for aye,
I lay upon his breast—and lo,
He kissed and rode away.
Envoi
Sister, 'twas thus: I did not know,
Nor dream that love would stray;
I lay upon his breast—and lo,
He kissed and rode away.

Cupid's Deal

(September 1898)

“Me tell your fortune? Nay’ “ she cried;
And then, in mood relenting,
And roughish air, was by my side—
“And mind, there’s no resenting.
The things I tell are true as true
As ever yet were told to you
By gifted seer or Gypsy crew—
Don’t think that I’m inventing.
“First make your wish, but don’t tell me,”
(Ah well she knew my yearning)
“For then I can’t tell true, you see;
Some things are past discerning.
But what is this? A lady fair,
Of sprightly mien and debonair—
Next Five of Clubs, which means beware!”
(Ah me, my ears are burning)
“And then yourself, the Knave of Hearts,
In dangerous conjunction
With Cupid’s ace, who aims his darts
At you without compunction.
Twixt you and her he bends his bow-
And my advice? ’Tis that you go
To Cupid’s Court, and bending low,
Pray him for an injunction.
“Your fortune’s told, I see no more;
The cards are counterpointing;
But hold’ What’s this? Within a Four?
Regarding an appointing?—
’Tis on its way, “Twill come to you,
A sweetly scented billet-doux,
A very charming Billet-doux,
And very disappointing.

“Your wish is blank; but for the rest,
Remember what’s foretold you,
Add—nay, you must not, shan’t protest,
And say that I’ve cajoled you.
Come sir, confess; you can’t deny
The truths which I have given—why
The cards say so.” And I reply,
“I’d like to know who told you.”

And this is how it all began,
And why she called me “Mister”;
For she was at the depot when
I’d gone to meet my sister.
Because she did not know her, she
Thought the very worst of me—
That is—I—Well I kissed her.

Daybreak

The blushing dawn the easy illumines,
The birds their merry matins sing,
The buds breath forth their sweet perfumes,
And butterflies are on the wing.
I pause beneath the window high,
The door is locked, the house is quiet;
'Tis there, abed, she sure must lie, —
To Wake her, — ah! I'll try it.
And pebbles hurtling through the air,
Strike full upon the window-pane,
Awakening her who slumbers there
With their insistent hurricane.
Ye gods! in my imagination,
The wondrous scene do I behold —
A nymph's bewildered consternation
At summons thus so fierce and bold.
A moment passes, then I see
The gauzy curtains drawn aside,
And sweet eyes beaming down on me,
And then a window upward glide.
Fair as the morn, with rosy light,
She blushes with a faint surprise,
Then thinking of the previous night,
In dulcet tones she softly cries:
"It should have been put out by Nan,
But I'll be down within a minute —
No, never mind, leave your own can,
And put two quarts, please, in it."

Effusion

Thou canst not weep;
Nor ask I for a year
To rid me of my woes
Or make my life more dear.

The mystic chains that bound
Thy all-fond heart to mine,
Alas! asundered are
For now and for all time.

In vain you strove to hide,
From vulgar gaze of man,
The burning glance of love
That none but Love can scan.

Go on thy starlit way
And leave me to my fate;
Our souls must needs unite —
But, God! 'twill be too late.

George Sterling

I saw a man open an iris petal.
He ran his finger underneath the edge,
unfolded it, and smoothed it out a little,
not as one guilty of a sacrilege —
because he knew flowers, and understood
that what he did would maybe help them grow—
though for a moment he was almost God.
Alone as we are, growing is so slow.
I think of one who tried like that to unfold
the margin of his life where it was curled,
to see into the shadows shot with gold
that lie in iris hues about the world.
Because he dared to touch the sacred rim,
does God resent this eagerness in him?

Gold

(May 1897)

Strange was the alchemy through which you passed,
Before, deep-sunk in earth and massive rock,
Thou layest concealed whilst centuries o'er thee passed;
Nor felt the rush of life, the toil, the shock
Of man above thee-torn with emotions wild—
Living, dying, existing but a space;
Enduring sorrows or with joys beguiled;
Crushing his fellows in that fierce onward race,
Where brute survived and true nobility was lost;
Where souls pursuing hot desire were passion tost.
In cosmos vague, mysterious, unknown,
'Mid elemental war pregnant with life,
Where valleys fell and mountains were upthrown,
Wert thou vanquished and banished from the strife. .
Crushed 'neath a weight of overwhelming earth,
The struggle o'er thee ceaselessly did wage;
But thou didst sleep and wait thy second birth,
When, with the strange, ungrateful genie's rage,
Who swore to slay the first that loosed him, gave him light,
Didst thou mankind with fierce, unholy avarice smite.
As in the fabled tales of ancient days,
Within a casket were imprisoned ills,
The lid of which Pandora fain did raise,
So wert thou guarded by the silent hills.
Till one, more brave or curious than the rest,
Cast wide your portals, let the light of day
Behold the future goal of envious quest—
The deadly drug to lure manhood away;
To steep in evanescent dreams the groping souls;
To cast them, 'wildered and forsaken, on treacherous shoals.
The hot, incestuous love, the rude desire
Of man for woman or of brute for brute,
Were icebergs floating in a sea of fire,
Contrasted with the agony acute,
Which seized on man with love impure and base,
When first beholding thee, he stood aghast.
And felt within him shrivel up the grace,
The joy of perfect love before thy blast
Of all-consuming heat—hotter than that which wells
From crater mouths, or leaps from fond imagined hells.
Yet wherein lies thy subtle, wondrous charm?
The meteor flashing athwart the sky;
The firefly in a summer evening's calm;
Or meek glow-worm; thy warmest light outvie.
Precious ? Art thou as rare, as true, as good,
As she who blushes with the first surprise
At conscious knowledge of her womanhood;
Who glorious, peerless, hears with downcast eyes
And heaving breast, a lover's tale of love unfold,
Nor who, in that sweet moment, can her own withhold?

He Chortled With Glee

He Chortled with glee
As he read me the letter —
And why shouldn't he?
He Chortled with glee,
'Twas a boy, you see,
And she was much better.
He Chortled with glee
As he read me the letter.

He Never Tried Again

(Spring 1897)

(With apologies to Henry of England)

He heard the wondrous tale and went
To Klondyke's golden shore;
A year of trial and toil he spent,
And found not gold galore.
And starved and frozen he returned,
Singing a sad refrain;
For nuggets he no longer yearned—
He never tried again.
The air rang loud with war's alarms,
And a soldier he became;
But Romance soon lost all her charms,
And life in camp was tame.
The drill was stiff, the grub was bad;
He slept out in the rain;
His captain was a beastly cad—
He never tried again.
He met a pretty Summer Girl,
Who stole his heart away;
She was a precious little pearl
And could not say him nay.
But when he asked her for her heart,
She searched and searched in vain;
For sad to say she had no heart—
He never tried again.
Three times he'd tried, three times he'd failed;
It could not last alway;
On Harlem Bridge he wept and wailed,
And leaped into the bay.
The water cold, he called for aid,
And struggled might and main;
He could not swim, so there he stayed—
He never tried again.

His Trip to Hades (Triolet)

(January 1899)

Trying to miss his trip to Hades,
Jack returned my umbrella;
Still you see I am afraid he's
Failed to miss his trip to Hades.
Mine? No, Some mistake he's made, he's
Borrowed from some other fellah,
Trying to miss his trip to Hades,
Jack returned my umbrella

Homeland

I.

Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
Deep in my heart dwells a love for Thee evermore;
To Thee returning, my heart Is yearning,
For Thy great mountains. Thy peaceful green vales.
In many foreign lands a wanderer I strolled,
Oft have their wonders and their beauties been extolled;
But none can compare with Thee, oh fairest on earth
And none shall I love as Thee, O land of my birth
Homeland Homeland

Refrain:

Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
Where hearts are loyal and friendship is ever true;
Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
Hope of all mankind that loves peace and freedom;
Embraced by oceans and God's sunny skies.

II.

Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
From pine to palm and from glacier to cottonfield;
Great rivers flowing, sweet breezes blowing
O'er Thy vast prairies, Thy forest clad hills.
Fair are those other lands that lure from o'er the sea,
Fair are their maidens who have often smiled on me;
But I shall be true to Thee, oh homeland of mine
And my heart shall evermore your dear earth enshrine.
Homeland Homeland

Repeat refrain.

Hors De Saison

(July 1897)

Nothing but comes too late with me,
No matter how I reason;
The fashions swiftly from me flee;
I'm always out of season.
My slim income with care I eke,
To gratify some passion;
But when I do it is antique,
Having gone out of fashion.
I struggle 'mid temptations great,
To take a brief vacation;
But upward climbs the railroad rate,
'Yond all anticipation,
When at the seaside I arrive,
The crowd is in the city;
No matter how I do contrive,
I miss them—more's the pity.
I never bought the latest hat,
Nor other 'bomination;
But that my friends said "Look at that,
It's older than creation."
And thus it is with all my clothes;
My neckties, trousers, waistcoats;
My cuffs, my studs, my shoes, my hose;
My summer suits and greatcoats.
I learned to waltz with hop and jump;
And then the dancers glided;
My friends thought me the biggest chump,
And all my 'tempts derided,
The cigarette I learned to smoke
With nausea most horrible;
But custom changed with one fell stroke
To briarwood pipes intolerable.
In. politics it is the same;
When tariff-struck, hilaric,
'Gainst free trade's evils I disclaim,
The crowd's gone bimetallic,
I never loved but that too late
I plead my adoration:
Another man had been there first,
To my great consternation.
At last one day, cursing my fate,
In dark despair to 'scape her,
'Twas told me on the brink, "Too late,
Suicide's no more the caper."
Nothing but comes too late with me,
No matter how I reason;
The fashions swiftly from me flee;
I'm always out of season.

If I Were God

If I were God one hour
And, gazing down from heaven's dizzy stair,
Should see you idling in the garden there;
If I were God one hour,
And saw you flirting with that grinning cad —
Yes, flirting, don't deny! — why, I'd get mad;
I'd loose the bolts of my mighty wrath
And turn the wretch to cinders in your path —
If I were God one hour.
If I were God one hour
And saw you in that garden, fair and tall,
I'm sure I'd fail to watch the sparrows fall;
If I were God one hour,
And haply you should raise your eyes to mine,
Right then and there I know that I'd resign
And fling away my scepter, dearest Nan,
Descend to earth and make myself a man —
If I were God one hour.

In a Year

In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe,
I shall stay no more away —
Then if you still are true, my love,
It will be our wedding day.
In a year, in a year, when my time is past —
Then I'll live in your love for aye.
Then if you still are true, my love,
It will be our wedding day.

In and Out

When he came in
Why, I was out;
To borrow some tin
Was why he came in,
And I had to grin,
For he went without;
So I was in
And he was out.

Je Rls en Espoir

(May 1897)

I live in hope from day to day,
Of a joyous consummation;
When all my friends in manner gay,
Give me congratulation.
I live in hope that quick the hour,
Still in the dim perspective,
Shall me all happiness endower,
And cease to be subjective.
I live in hope that bells shall ring
In peals magnificent,
And to me tidings haply bring
From fate omnipotent
I live in hope the day to see,
When with a thrill electric,
I'll merry hail with greatest glee,
A victory majestic.
My hope is this: that there may pass.
An uncle wisely provident,
From earth, who great wealth did amass.
And leave it me, an indigent.

Memory

(June 1899)

Grim prompter of forgotten lines
With wings of sable night,
Stealing the light of day,
Why have you come
In this, my perfect port,
O why?
O why?
In this, my perfect port,
Why have you come
Stealing the light of day
With wings of sable night,
Grim prompter of forgotten lines.

Moods

(October 1898)

Who has not laughed with the skylark,
And bid his heart rejoice?
Laughed till the mirth-loving heavens
Echoed his laughter back?
Joyed in the sheer joy of living,
And sung with gladsome voice,
Lays that were cheerful and merry,
And bid his heart rejoice?
Who has not frowned in the gloaming,
And felt the skies grow black;
While o'er him spread the dark mantle
Of sullen, solemn Gloom,
Whose mutterings broke the silence
Like echoes from the tomb—
Like echoes of lost endeavors—
Reproaches from the tomb?
Who has not cursed in his passion,
As Anger's stinging lash,
Biting and smarting and racking,
Fell on his naked back?
Felt in his veins feverish tumult,
The strife, the savage clash,
As when hot steel, leaped from the scabbard,
Meets steel with crash on crash?
Who has not wept in his sorrow,
And looked in vain for morn;
Waiting with hopeless yearning,
The sun from out the bourn?
Heard from the world the sad sobbing
Of Faith and Hope forlorn?
Known that the sun had forever
Gone down into the bourn?

My Confession

(May 1897)

I love to feel the wind's great power
On my silken sails on high;
As I upon my ivied, tower
My Dragon Kite do fly.
Each gusty breeze that stirs the trees
Strikes on my silken kite
Sending melodies like these
Down from the living light.
The silken string (a dainty thing,
And white and "bright and neat"),
I fasten to a phonograph
And make the breezes speak.
That's how I write my stories,
The wind upon the string
Makes clear the sun-sky glories
And tells me everything.

My Little Palmist

(November 1898)

The leaves stirred softly overhead,
While from my hand a tale was read,
By laughing lips of rosy red;
My little Palmist.

O that slight form so dainty-fair,
That pulsing breast, beyond compare,
That cadenced rise and fall of air!—
Of breaths the balm'est.

“This line, unbroken, deep and long,
Assurance gives of health most strong,
And truly 'twill thy days prolong;
The line Vitalis.

While this, so clear and firm and fine,
Say Cupid's toils about thee twine,
And happiest wedlock will be thine —
'Tis called Mensalis.

“And here, thy disposition gay,
Is quickly learned from lines which say,
That where you go or where you stay,
Your ways are jolly.

And yet again, these furrows blent,
One thing alone for thee is meant,
In Love's fond dalliance you've spent
Fair hours in folly.

“By this, and this, and this, is told,
Good friends about thee are enrolled,
While Love's delights, so manifold,
Thy life shall gladden.

Nor sudden sorrow, or swift pain,
Nor misery shall thee enchain;
Nor blighting curse, or dread murrain,
Thy heart shall sadden.

“Yet least among thy pleasures great,
There will a little maiden wait,
With love, as bird feels for its mate,
With love sincerest.”

Ere yet she ceased, I knelt, a thrall,
As to my heart her last words fall,—
“I’ve held naught back, so this is all,
For thee, my Dearest.”

O sweet that rippling flow of sound,
That fairy speech which wrapped me ‘roundl
Those magic meshes ‘bout me bound,
I would not sever.

O sweet those pure, pellucid eyes,
Whose slightest glance I fondly prize!—
Ah God! in this, my paradise,
I’d-stay forever.

It seems but yesterday that we,
With hand in hand, and knee to knee,
Spent one sweet hour in childish glee;
My little Palmist.

But yesterday,—Ah well-a-day!
And where is now my little fay,
Who scanned my hand and went away?
O sing thou Psalmist.

Of Man of the Future

Of man of the future! Who is able to describe him?
Perhaps he breaks our globe into fragments
In a time of warlike games.
Perhaps he hurls death through the firmament.
Man of the future! He is able to aim at the stars,
To harness the comets,
And to travel in space among the planets.

On the Face of the Earth You Are the One

I am your Adam, you are my Eve,
As in the days of old,
Just like Adam, he loved his Eve.
My love for you is bold.
My eyes are blinded by love that's true.
I see no one in this world but you,
Sweetheart divine,
Say you'll be mine,
I love you, you. you.

Chorus

On the face of the earth you are the one.
My one, only one, only one.
You are my love,
Like the sun up above,
Only one, only one, only one — dear,
Since the birth of the earth you are one,
My battle of love has begun,
I'll answer your calls,
Till life's curtain falls,
On the face of the earth you are one. one.
I strolled mongst flowers. I picked a rose.
That was my vision so true,
Among all those flowers,
One flower I chose, The rose. I chose, was you,
I longed for you since the world began.
I'll long for you till the end of man,
A vision of you,
Is my whole life's view,
I love you, you, you,
Chorus

Republican Rallying Song

(Air of “Marching through. Georgia”)

Gathered round our standards, boys, we face the fray again;
We have gathered in our might and here we will remain,
Till we win to victory and sweep the whole campaign,
While we are counting majorities.

(Chorus) Hurrah! Hurrah! Our platform’s here to stay!

Hurray! Hurray! O hear the donkeys bray!

Won’t they sing another song before we go away!

While we are counting majorities. To the next election, boys, ‘twill find us side by side;

To the Grand Old Party, boys, its men so true and tried:

Let the toast go round the board and drink it in all pride,

While we are counting majorities

(Chorus)

We’ve a candidate who’ll win, or else his name’s not GAGE;

He will put the “Little Giant” in a little cage —

Won’t he make them gnash their teeth and. kick themselves with rage,

While we are counting majorities.

(Chorus)

There is something coming, boys, we feel it in the air:

’Tis a tidal wave that’s made to mash them ‘yond repair —

Where will we be at? Oho! You bet we’ll all be there,

While we are counting majorities.

(Chorus)

When election day has come we’ll vote our ticket straight;

Then will they be out of it for all they feel so great —

We won’t do a thing to them but rub them off the slate,

While we are counting majorities.

(Chorus)

Sonnet

(1901)

A Trumpet call, a bursting of the sod,
And lo! I flung aside the clinging clay
Lifted my flight along the star-strewn way
Among the white-robed saints that fled to God.
And he that held the gate, with holy nod,
Did bid me enter that my feet might stray
Amid the flowers with those that God obey;
The just, the good, and pure on earth there trod.
Dear heart: I questioned him if thou wert there,
One of that bright-browed throng whos voices led
The heavenly hymn of praise, the wondrous strain
That kissed in ecstasy the trembling air?
But he that held the gate did shake his head,
Thou wast not there; I turned away again.

The Gift of God

(June 1899)

I

“Name me the gift of God!”

A man commanded.

His brow was furrowed

With thought.

He wished to know all things.

II

There was a clamor among the peoples;

Many strove to answer,

And many were silent.

Some did not care,

Yet none were too busy to listen.

At first,

They named all things,

In loud voices,

Till the weak were hushed.

III

Then the strong ones became as one:

“Life is the gift of God!” they cried,

In a mighty chant,

Which shook the heavens.

But in time,

They became tired,

And no longer outraged the sky

IV

Then a graybeard,
Doddering on the edge of his grave,
Raised a thin voice.
He had seen three generations
Come and go;
He knew all tricks;
He said. "Death is the gift of God."
He knew.
But the people were angry,
And in a great clamor,
Drowned his thin voice.

The Klondyker's Dream

(October 1898)

In slumbers of midnight the Klondyker lay;
The snow was fast falling, the cold was intense;
But weary and hungry, his cares flew away,
And visions of dinners were calling him hence.

He dreamed of his home, of the dining-room table,
And servants that waited his every behest;
He longed to eat, to eat all he was able,
For ah! of all dreams he had dreamed 'twas the best.

Then Fancy her marvelous miracles wrought,
And bade the thin starved one get out of his bed;
The Klondyke he left far behind him, he sought
The place where the hungered could always be fed.

He came in good season, the table was laid;
The rich, fragrant coffee was steaming and hot;
The pastries and puddings were there all arrayed;
The beefsteak was done, aye was done to a dot.

His fingers were trembling, so rich was the fare,
And when Grace was ended he murmured Amen!
And took, of all dishes, the beefsteak so rare;
Ah! he was the happiest man of all men.

The jaws of the sleeper are moving with joy;
Food quickens his palate, his hardships seem o'er;
A feeling of plenty steals over the boy —
"O God! thou hast fed me, I ask for no more."

Ah! whence is that form which now bursts on his eye?
Ah! what is that sound that now catches his ear?
"Tis the dog of the Klondyke thieving so sly!
"Tis a crunching of jaws, a crunching quite near!

He springs from the blankets, he seizes his gun;
Gaunt Famine confronts him with images dire;
But out of the tent goes the dog on the run,
For well he knows when it's time to retire.

The last piece of bacon is gone from the sack;
He weeps, O he weeps, for he knows what it means;
The last piece of bacon — 'twill never come back;
Henceforth his diet must be sour bread and beans.

O 'Klondyker, woe to thy dreams of good fare!
In waking they left thee, they left on the fly;
Where now is that beefsteak so juicy and rare;
The coffee, the pudding, the pastry and pie?

The Lover's Liturgy

Ah! my brothers, we are mortals,
Atoms on Time's ebb and flow,
Soon we pass the dreary portals,
Soon to dreamless sleep we go;
We are sparkles, evanescent,
Doomed to perish in the hour,
And our time is in the present,
Ours but a moment's power.
Love, my brothers, is the essence,
In the scheme of life and light;
Birth and death are fearful lessons —
Out of darkness into night, —
Thus we flash, a moment's living,
'Twixt the silent walls of death,
Flashing for a moment, giving
Song but for a moment's breath.
Then that moment do not sadden,
Prayers, nor beads, nor aves tell;
Then that moment do not madden
With mad dreams of heaven or hell;
Trust that he who cast you idly,
Asked of you nor aye nor nay,
Flung you idly, wildly, widely,
For his whim will not ask pay.
For a whim of bubble-blowing,
Perhaps to while an empty day,
For a whim of stubble-sowing,
For a game at godlike play,
Shall the bubbles in the drifting,
Pay the whim of Him who played?
Shall the seedlets in the shifting,
Of the sifter be afraid?
Shall the playthings of a master,
Falling idly from his hand,
Meet meritless disaster,
Meet with unearned reprimand?
Shall the children of fancy,
Born a certain race to run,
By an absurd necromancy,
Penance pay when it is done?
O, my brothers, go not questing 41
For some mystic grail in vain —
Why should ye a Master's jesting,
Strive to fathom or make plain?
Wake ye from your fevered dreaming,
Groping for forbidden toys,
All about you life is teeming,

The Mammon Worshipers

We worshipped at alien altars;
we bowed our heads in the dust;
Our law was might is the mightiest;
our creed was unholy lust;
Our Law and our Creed we followed —
strange is the tale to tell —
For our Law and our Creed
we followed into the pit of hell.

Rainbows End

Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I knew I would find a treasure of gold,
So I clambered over the fence pell mell,
Just over the way where the rainbow fell;
But I promised her I never would tell,
And I know if I tell you'll tell her I told.
Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I certainly found a treasure of gold.

The Republican Battle-hymn

O Fathers of the Nation,
We struggle in thy name;
Each man was at his station
Ere yet the summons came.
We felt our country calling,
And sprang into the fray —
O in thy might appalling,
Withhold not victory.

We ask that right be given,
And justice where 'tis due;
Reward for those who've striven
And did the best they knew.
But punish those, who lying,
Have wrought thee evil deeds;
And pardon those denying,
Who follow other creeds.

Our country is far dearer
Than closer bonds of blood;
For we would see far clearer,
The nation's common good.
Enlighten thou our labor;
Invest us with thy might;
So that we may not waver
While battling for the right.

We would our country flourish;
That all may at her breast,
Suckling as babes, be nourished,
Nor fail in fruitless quest;
That she, our mighty mother,
Will see the day come by,
When man calls man "O brother!"
And all shall know the tie.

O Fathers of the Nation,
We struggle in thy name;
Each man was at his station
Ere yet the summons came.
We felt our country calling,
And sprang into the fray —
O in thy might appalling,
Withhold not victory.

The Sea Sprite and the Shooting Star

(1899)

A little sea sprite,
on the sea one night,
Cried "Now is the time for me,"
And he looked above,
And he looked for his love;
For he was in love, you see.
But his love was a star
In the sky a-far,
And she knew not his love so true;
So he tried to think
Of a magic link
'Twixt the sea and the sky so blue.
Then out of the sky,
From the moon on high,
A silvery moonbeam fell;
And it fell on the brine,
With its wonderful shine,
On the brine where the sea sprites dwell.
Though the siren sing
Where the sea bells ring
And the sleepy poppies dream —
Though the sea sprite knew
Their songs untrue,
He knew not the false moonbeam.
For the way seemed clear
To his love so dear,
And he needn't have wings to fly;
Up its silvery stream
He would climb by the beam,
He would climb right into the sky.
Up the glittering step
He carefully crept,
While his heart beat a merry tune;
But O what a fright
To the poor little sprite,
When he came to the crescent moon.
Alas! and A-lack!
He couldn't get back,
For the moonbeams flew away;
And the stars in the sky
Knew not he was nigh,
Or that he had lost his way.
There he sat forlorn,
On the crescent horn,
And thought of his home in the sea
Of his brothers at play
All the livelong day
On the foam so fresh and free.
Then he saw his star,
In her golden car,

The Socialist's Dream

(May 1897)

The room was narrow and cold and grim;
He reigned supreme, a king of dirt;
Beneath a slouched hat's shadowed brim,
He viewed the kingdom about him girt:
But thoughts he held of fairer mold
Than filth and stench so manifold.
Vanished the press of misery,
The stamp of vice and poverty's face,
The scenes he was so used to see,
The things so low, so vile, so base:
For dreaming, did he a long behold,
Where truth was worshipped as of old.
A land of honesty and thrift,
Where labor had its due reward;
Where each applied his special gift;
Nor turned from plowshare unto sword
To rob his neighbor of his gold,
But worked him weal instead of wold.
He saw the soil enriched by men,
Who gloried in such honest life,
Ranking with those of greater ken
Whose pleasures were in mental strife;
But who, as comrades true and bold,
Were in man's brotherhood enrolled.
He heard the hum of joy arise
From merry hearts and housefires bright;
A joy, that climbing, scaled the skies,
And cried "Rejoice! There is no night!"
'Twas but a melody uprolled
Of souls secure within the fold.
Truth and honor were upraised,
And purity of thought and deed.
The multitudes, adoring, gazed,
And in their hearts received the seed;
And righteousness, with firmest hold,
Sweet truths and many to them told.
The vision fair, before him shone;
His heart in ecstasies was rapt;
He awoke—he was no more alone,
For some one had quite loudly tapped:
The door was op'ed and in there strolled
A woman of demeanor cold.
"Your rent is due," this female said.
" 'Tis due these many, many days:
Your lazy body I have fed —
Say! How much can you raise?
Nay, not in looks so fierce and bold,
But in bright silver or hard gold."
The socialist, in accents mild,
Told her a lie upon the spot,

The Song of the Flames

(March 1899)

We are motes of sunshine stolen
When the world was fair and young,
Stolen from our joytime golden,
Into earth's black bowels flung;
Kissed of light and born of passion,
Thrilling with the wine of life,
Ravished in most cruel fashion,
We were banished from the strife.

Pent in prisons dark and loathsome,
Cells of sorrow, 'reft of mirth,
In our rocky chamber, lonesome,
Slept we till our second birth,—
Slept we through the long, long ages,
Dreaming of the time to be,
Till God, turning many pages,
Deemed it fit to set us free.

Tick! Tick! Tick!

And the clock went, tick, tick, tick,
While she'd rest her little head on his shoulder.
And they'd kiss so quick, quick, quick,
And oh, how tight he'd hold her.
T'was a lovely trick, trick, trick,
And they played it oh so slick.
When the clock, went tick, then his heart, went click.
And it ended in a quick, slick, tick, tick, tick.

Too Late

Too late' Even Is death too late'
Had it but come—silence' Put out
These sniffing fools that wait,
With hungry jowl and, slobbered snout,
My end—foregathered, at the feast
Like jackals when the lion is dead.
But you, who were among the least
Of all my friends, stay by my bed.

The Way of War

Man primeval hurled a rock,
Torn with angry passions, he;
To escape the which rude shock.
Foeman ducked behind a tree.
Man primeval made a spear,
Swift of death on battle field;
Foeman fashioned other gear,
Fought behind his hidebound shield.
Man mediaeval built a wall,
Said he didn't give a dam;
Foeman not put out at all,
Smashed it with a battering ram.
Man mediaeval, just for fun,
Made himself a coat of mail;
Foeman laughed and forged a gun,
Peppered him with iron hail.
Modern man bethought a change,
Cast most massive armor-plate;
Foeman just increased his range,
Tipped his ball to penetrate.
Modern man, with toil untold,
Deftly built torpedo boats;
Foeman launched "destroyer" bold,
Swept the sea of all that floats.
Future man — ah! who can say? —
May blow to smithereens our earth;
In the course of warrior play
Fling death across the heavens' girth.
Future man may hurl the stars,
Leash the comets, o'er-ride space,
Sear the universe with scars,
In the fight 'twixt race and race.
Yet foeman will be just as cute —
Amid the rain falling suns,
Leave the world by parachute,
And build ethereal forts and guns.
And when the skies begin to fall
The foeman still will new invent —
Into a star-proof world he'll crawl,
Heaven insured from accident.

The Worker and the Tramp

Heaven bless you, my friend —
You, the man who won't sweat;
Here's a quarter to spend.
If you did but mend,
My job you would get; —
Heaven bless you, my friend. —
On you I depend
For my work, don't forget; —
Here's a quarter to spend.
My hand I extend,
For I love you, you bet: —
Here's a quarter to spend.
Ah! you comprehend
That I owe a debt;
Heaven bless you, my friend,
Here's a quarter to spend.

When All the World Shouted My Name

When all the world shouted my name,
Did, I remember you, dear friend?
You, who “by closest “bonds could claim
My memory? Yes, in the end,
When all the world no longer cried
My name, but mocked my nakedness,
Spat In my face, and sneered, and lied,
And damned in very wantoness.
You—why it seems but yesterday,
We cradled, in the self-same nook,
And dreamed, as foolish childhood may,
Of Life’s great game, and undertook
Wild, youthful oaths—swore full and strong,
To share alike each joy and. pain,
To face the utmost, right the wrong,
Let nothing come between us twain.
And, then—our paths did twist apart.
You led your uneventful life
In quiet places, played your part
Softly, took to your breast a wife,
Whose soul was so attuned to yours,
That hand in hand—nor vain the guest—
You sought, you found the golden shores,
The Happy Islands of the Blest.
Not so with me: I trod the path
Of my own choosing—and alone.
Naught could obstruct my course—the wrath
Of men, tile hot curse, nor the moan
Of those who sank beneath my arm,
Could stay my arm, or ease the blow.
I grasped for greater things—the charm
Of life like yours I did not know.
A score of phantoms did I chase,
And when, in turn, each grasped, in hand,
I paused a moment from the race,
Panting, I could not understand—
They were but phantoms, nothing more;
The time had passed, I could not joy
In what I had so struggled for—

57

A bright bauble—a pretty toy.
Success did crown my every effort;
But herein lay the great mistake—
I, who from all things could extort
Subservience, did, not partake
Of the reward until too late;

Where the Rainbow Fell

(January 1899)

Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I knew I would find a treasure of gold,
So I clambered over the fence pell mell,
Just over the way where the rainbow fell;
But I promised her I never would tell,
And I know if I tell you'll tell her I told.
Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I certainly found a treasure of gold.

Your Kiss

Your kiss, "beloved, was to me
As if all flowers of Araby,
And every fresh and fragrant rose
That ever blew, shall blow, or blows
Had all her sweetness taken up
And poured into one perfect cup
For me to drain . . .
Kiss me again!

The Ted K Archive

A critique of his ideas & actions



The Poetry of Jack London

www.thetedkarchive.com