

POEMS OF THE  
LAND ARMY

AN ANTHOLOGY OF VERSE  
BY MEMBERS OF THE  
WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

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Very grateful thanks are recorded to Miss Sackville-West, who has not only written a Foreword to this Anthology, but has also selected the poems and verses to be included.

Many of the contributions were first printed in the LAND GIRL, the magazine of the Women's Land Army, and a few in *Meet the Members*, published by the Women's Timber Corps.

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## FOREWORD

IT is to a land-girl, Miss Joyce Oehring, that we owe the idea of making this anthology,—a debt which we very gratefully acknowledge. Readers of *The Land Girl* magazine will have noticed that verse by members of the W.L.A. was often included; verse sometimes humorous, as was to be expected as the outcome of the tribulations of a land-girl's life; but sometimes also of a higher order, and those who are interested in such matters may further have observed that poems by land-girls appeared also in other publications, such as *Country Life*, *Outposts*, and the *Poetry Review*. It was in this Review, indeed, that Frances Heneage Burkitt very nearly succeeded in carrying off the coveted Greenwood Prize, as top runner-up with the poem called *Resurrection*, herein reprinted. All this amounts to saying that the talent concealed within the green jersey has sometimes been a talent revealed, and that it has not failed to find the appreciation it deserved.

. . . . .

It is interesting to analyse the subject-matter. One might have expected it to fall roughly into two categories: Humour and Nature. Both are there, but not exclusively. There is a wider range. War comes into it, of course, and so does love,—the former topical, the latter eternal,—but a more general philosophic spirit also appears. Frances Heneage Burkitt provides the outstanding example of this; but Alice Coats "impartially hearkening" and wondering if her gains outweigh her losses; Audrey Hewlett seeing "Christ's great Cross

trampled in the dust"; Hebe Jerrold in what is, perhaps, the best single poem in the whole book, *Possession*; Joyce Oehring with her curiously pantheistic sense in the first half of that strange prose-poem, *Town and Country Planning*; and again in her *Milker*; and M. M. Browne in her *Seven Mystical Stars*;—all these reveal a thoughtfulness which is quite beyond a mere superficial though perhaps charming and sincere description of Nature in the experience of a young woman flung suddenly out of a shop or an office into an intimate and exacting acquaintance with the demands of the land.

Another note sounds here and there: the note of their own liberation into a more congenial life. How often one has heard a land-girl say that nothing would induce her to return to "a cooped-up existence"; so here among the poets one naturally looks for the expression of this feeling and, explicit or implicit, one finds it:

"War, which has brought to others fear,  
Pain, sorrow, slavery, and death,  
To me has brought what I held dear  
And longed for but could not possess . . ."

That is a very clear statement from Hebe Jerrold. A. I. C. Hancock can write:

"The chattering streams are mine, and I am happy,  
For, having nothing, I have everything."

Reading these lines one is inclined to wonder whether the author was referring to the somewhat destitute condition in which the Government has decided that volunteers shall emerge from the W.L.A., a suspicion which seems to be confirmed by Miss Oehring:

"Green are my days, and blue and gold,  
Companioned by the ever-changing sky,  
I absorb with greed my heritage, content  
That I lived this hour. Be this my gratuity."

The Government, whether Coalition or Labour, are fortunate indeed if land-girls really take this point of view.

Pursuing my analysis of the subject matter, I was struck by several other considerations, for instance the total lack of sentimentality displayed by this youthful and feminine band of poets. There was nothing about calves, lambs, kittens, puppies, chicks, ducklings, or any of the more obviously attractive creatures to be found on any farm. I gave a sigh of surprised relief, but at the same time I did wonder why we had been spared such reasonably-to-be-expected outpourings. Girlhood, I thought, must have changed very much; it must have become much more severe. The pretty-pretty appealed no longer to poets who were also practical labourers. Yet this sense of realism had not blunted their appreciation of the true richness of a life led in constant communion with Nature.

Conversely—a point which may be worth noting—although they so blessedly lacked what is supposed to be the feminine characteristic of sentimentality, they betrayed no interest whatsoever in the mechanical adjuncts of their profession. We know that girls have driven and serviced their tractors, worked the big excavators, used combine-harvesters, travelled from farm to farm with the threshing-machines, yet not one poem in the whole collection refers in any scientific spirit to these monsters of ingenuity under their command. A poem such as Audrey Hewlett's *Threshing Morn* is purely descriptive; the machine itself is introduced only subjectively for its effect upon the workers. I cannot help feeling that a parallel group of young men, poets as well as workers on the land, would have reacted differently to the power, proficiency, and intricacy of modern agricultural gear, and even to the peculiar beauty of a creation so strictly adapted to its purpose. This is said in no spirit of criticism but rather as a note on a probable difference of approach.

It will be agreed, I think, that the poems in this collection reach a commendably high standard. For the most part, too, they are simple and straightforward

enough to escape the usual charge of "obscurity" so often brought against present-day verse. Yet they are not mere naif burblings of the I-do-but-sing-because-I-must type, which usually means that the singer cannot sing at all. Some of these young women know very well what they are about, and their technical skill is not the least impressive aspect of their contributions. Without wishing to be invidious, I should like to draw the reader's attention to the almost metaphysical "intermingling" in the second verse of Alice Coats' *Neglected Garden*, with its obvious relationship to Marvell and Cowley; and likewise to the delicate fantasy of June Benians. Fantasy is a dangerous thing to play about with; it all too easily degenerates into the whimsical, unless supported by some sudden stroke of actuality, revelation, or observation. It is in safe hands with Miss Benians, who is so nicely aware of the perils of poetical vagueness. Thus she can write:

"High are the stars and bright,"

which is a typically indefinite poetical statement, but instantly she corrects herself with the accurately observed:

"Faint in the moonlight show  
Lawns where the robin's feet  
Pucker the snow."

The word "pucker" could not be better chosen; her starlit moonlit landscape abruptly acquires reality without any loss of magic. And it takes a skilful writer to do that sort of thing.

. . . . .

This foreword, however, was not intended to turn into a detailed review, but only to present this collection of poems to the kind consideration of the reading public. They have been arranged in the alphabetical order of their authors, and the compilers have not refrained from including a few samples of the more frivolous verse sub-

mitted to their judgment. This decision may have had the effect of impairing some homogeneity in the collection, but has had the advantage of making it more representative, and surely no reader will be so solemn as to deplore the inclusion of the young lady of Gloucester; of Miss Barton's speculations on whether Nature knows best after all; of Miss Coats' *Monstrous Regiment*; of Mrs. Jenkins' sympathetic estimate of the milky way; or of Miss Moncrieff's really witty dispersion of the ten little land-girls.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST.

## POEMS OF THE LAND ARMY

ANON,

*East Sussex.*

### EARLY HARVEST

The corn is carted.  
The full wains swayed and down the rutted road  
There came at evening the last heavy load.  
The wagoner, light-hearted,  
Called it a day.  
The corn was carted.

The corn is carted.  
A sickle moon upon the stubble gleamed,  
Up to the flying clouds a searchlight streamed.  
A wailing siren started  
For not too soon  
The corn was carted.

The corn is carted.  
The bombers came, tired workers at the farm  
Not for the first time heard the shrill alarm.  
Now, not a man downhearted  
Saw creeping flame.  
The corn was carted.

The corn is carted.  
We said good-bye when it was springing green,  
But death has ploughed a furrow in between  
Us, since the day we parted,  
And where you lie  
The corn is carted.

The corn is carted.  
The feeble seed which broke the heavy clod  
At length was ripened by the hand of God.  
Young, strong, and eager-hearted,  
For England's need.  
The corn was carted.

ANON,

*Scottish Women's Timber Corps.*

THE ROBIN

In the wintry forest  
Alone wandering  
On a bare bough  
I heard a bird sing—  
Oh sweet, sweet delight!  
Never on blossomy trees  
Shall Spring's thousand birds sing  
Notes sweet as these.

ENID BARRAUD, 9,600,

*Cambridgeshire.*

HARVEST HOME

You are my harvest home, the last rich sheaf  
My tired arms shall gather to my heart.  
Long are the days from snowy winter seed time  
When we ploughed, harrowed and drilled the dormant  
grain.

Long are the days through biting winds of March,  
And April's laughing showers and May's sweet green,  
And June's long hours—the blazing days of summer  
With the heat shimmering from the sun-parched land  
And the silver hay piled high in scented loads.  
Oh long the days of dull July, the sullen  
Of weary August and her dragging toil,  
Till with a mighty shout came gay September  
And the sheaves ranged in their four-square shocks,  
And the carts creaking and the horses straining  
And our hearts spurring our arms to beat the sun.

The fields are quiet now, the corn is carted :  
The harvest moon dreams on the empty land.  
And I am free to cry "Te Deum!" with my hand in  
yours.

My tired arms may gather to my heart  
This last rich sheaf. You are my harvest home.

CHALLENGE

Let's take the joy our misery has earned,  
Snatching our kisses while life's back is turned.  
We'll be such splendid lovers, you and I,  
Tossing gay laughter to the summer sky.  
We'll halve Life's apple with a knife and share it,  
Savouring it on our lips,  
And hand Life back, upon a silver salver,  
The pips!



## YOU DO NOT LOVE ME . . . .

You do not love me—this is kindness.  
But since it lights a fire that will not die—  
The fire of love—a desolate thing am I  
Under God's sky .

You do not love me. It is kindness  
That lets me take your hand and kiss your mouth  
(O still, sweet mouth, so quiet beneath my kiss!)

You do not love me. This is kindness,  
And though the birds sing on down in the garden,  
My heart, its singing days are over, over.  
I, bewildered and alone, stand dazed and sick  
With joy and misery,  
For kindness is bitter-sweet to love.

## THE BLUE DOOR

A soft day, as the Irish say,  
A cobbled path and a blue door—  
A click of the latch,  
One's breath to catch—  
And—well, what are you waiting for?

Time stands, but the clock hands  
Race round till an hour's gone.  
We sit there in the square chair,  
And nothing said, and nothing done.

An hour at last : that hour past  
And—well, what are you waiting for?  
One's breath to catch,  
A click of the latch,  
And stumble away from the blue door.

## MONTH'S MIND

So—you are dead.  
And I, without heart, do mourn you.  
It could not last, that summer-lightning love.  
And now you are dead!  
And I?  
Without heart to mourn you!

It scarce seems credible that never more  
Shall I be shaken from my peaceful path  
By unforewarned smiling of your eyes;  
That nevermore, unheralded, your voice  
Shall toss my heart in tumult to my throat.  
But you are dead.  
And I?  
Forget to mourn you!

And if perchance one day I meet your ghost?  
I shall not look at it, I shall not speak.  
I shall not listen to it though it call,  
Lest it remind me that the dead live on.  
For you are dead,  
And I, without heart too, mourn you!

## PLAY ACTING

Is all this bitter-sweet regret  
Only a pose I choose to take?  
Am I inventing all this pain,  
Imagining this lonely ache?  
Were you indeed a lovely thing  
And will life never be the same  
Because I lost you? Or am I  
Playing my usual actor's game?  
I do not know how much I cheat :  
I only know that you were sweet  
And life is smaller now you're gone.

## DIES IRAE

If I survive to-day  
I can survive all time  
And face man's wrath and God's  
To the end of the mime.

The sun has lost its heat;  
My body hides  
From the warm breath of the winds  
And the sea's clean tides.

Music and silence cry  
Alike in my empty heart.  
In all the joy of life  
I have lost my part.

I dare not think or feel,  
Lie still or stand,  
Lest my heart dictate despair  
Beyond my will's command.

But . . . if I survive to-day  
I can survive all time  
And face man's wrath and God's  
At the end of the mime.

## MUSIC

Stravinsky's subtle shuttle  
Wove one thread of the silver magic of you  
Into the warped woof  
Of my disrupted life,  
And now in silver mail  
I go inviolate.

## FOG IN THE COUNTRY

I am alone  
Upon the hillside in the fog.  
I cry with desperate joy,  
I run from side to side.  
White wreaths of mist  
Blind mine eyes  
With the blindness of the seer.  
White wreaths of mist  
Bind my feet, but leave my spirit free.  
My heart is numb,  
I am thrown in upon myself.  
I am a lost soul,  
Part of the wilderness  
That is the spirit of God.  
I am alone upon the hillside  
In the white fog.

## GUILT

Under the open skies  
Of these tremendous days  
Shame on the craven heart  
That only kneels and prays.  
Not God to blame for war,  
Or thank for peace:  
Only man's voice shall say  
This crime must cease.

Man's hand must build again  
Where man destroyed,  
Labouring with heart and brain  
To bridge the void.  
Only man's will shall lift  
Fear from his ways  
Under the open skies  
Of these tremendous days.

### THE COW LODGE

Steel rods of rain beat on the deep roof thatch  
And the cows in their stalls stand patient as I pass by.  
Silver drops dance from the rusted latch  
But over the threshold within is snug and dry.

The beams are broad and wide and the cobwebs hang  
From the rafters and the mice scurry and squeak.  
The pail knocks at my knee with a muffled clang  
As I stroke the red cow's flank that is warm and sleek.

I hold your letter fast in my happy hand—  
Here have I seen our love's miraculous birth.  
Behold the sun shines out on a golden land.  
This is my kingdom I would not change for the whole  
of the earth.

### RYE, SUSSEX

Westward, facing  
The wind's embracing,  
The sea is in your eyes  
And certain grave surprise  
To find your gaze should yield  
For ocean a green field  
Whose only ships are trees.  
Yet when the western breeze  
Blows salt once in a while,  
You nod your head and smile.

Who builded you?  
Some land-trapped sailor,  
Feeling the earth his jailer?  
Did his dreams beget you,  
Plan you and set you  
Westward facing  
The wind's embracing?

### TAIL CORN

To the steady hum of the great drum  
The sheaves are torn for the rich corn.  
The tousled straw flows from the maw  
Up the endless track to the growing stack.  
The sharp chaff flies to ears and eyes  
But for golden gleam of the steady stream  
Look to the sack round at the back.  
Oh not for me head corn to be,  
Yet curb your scorn for tail corn!

### ALAND GIRL'S CAROL

O Bethlehem is far away,  
And peace on earth is far,  
But over an English cattle stall  
There shines the Christmas star.

The cattle there, the straw and all  
Beneath my lantern's light—  
The immemorial things remain  
As on that other night;

And shadows of a war may not,  
Try as they will, deny  
The simple things—the beasts, the star,  
And a Holy Babe's sweet cry.

Christmas, 1944.

BARBARA BARTON, 23,967, Yorkshire, East Riding.

I WONDER

I wonder if crows  
Get cramp in their toes  
As they suddenly land with a flop;  
And I wonder if worms  
Ever have any qualms  
As they hastily enter the crop.  
Perhaps the birds learn  
That even worms turn  
As they rapidly pass out of sight.  
Poor crows, do they suffer  
From those who are tougher?  
They mightn't—who knows—but they might.

I wonder if bees  
Ever happen to sneeze  
When the pollen gets into their noses?  
I wonder if ants  
Can enjoy a romance?  
They put work before love, one supposes.  
I wonder if moles  
Get bored in their holes  
And want to go gay like the rest?  
Do they train centipedes  
To guide them on leads?  
I wonder—*does* Nature know best?

JUNE BENIANS, 149,634, Cambridgeshire.

WINTER NIGHT

Calm are the woods to-night  
Mantled with plummy snow  
High trees no music make,  
Their boughs stoop low.

High are the stars and bright,  
Faint in the moonlight show  
Lawns where the robin's feet  
Pucker the snow.

DEER IN A GLADE

I have seen stags cropping in a glade,  
Deer with white coats and eyes like blue ice;  
As they moved, tossing their branching horns,  
I counted them and counted them twice;

For the beauty in that deer-filled glade  
The green tree shadows, and the soft gleam  
Of white deer hide, might not have been:  
It might have been something found in a dream.

HELEN

She feels no sorrow now, nor any shame,  
Winter is here: In the dark room alone  
She warms both hands over the drooping flame,  
Too tired to hope.  
And rain falls sharply on frost-splintered leaves,  
Wind plucks pale grass, but Helen, seeing again  
In dream the cloud-wreathed battlements of Troy,  
Forgets all pain.

## ORPHEUS

I heard the master of music  
In a wood on a late March day;  
Rabbit and stoat had gathered round  
To hear him play.

From a wilderness of pale leaves  
Wrens, finches and wood-pigeons flew,  
While he on the ground from his lute  
Soft music drew.

Wonderfully rich was its tone,  
Light his hands on his instruments sped,  
But his eyes were dull as a stone  
Unpolished.

He played 'neath the red-berried ash  
Till the wood by night was made dim;  
I heard the God of all music;  
Now I seek him.

## MAGIC

I went and stood beneath an open sky,  
On spacious ground, where crops stood round my feet;  
There sprouted bearded barley, oats and rye,  
And one rich field of stalwart yellow wheat,

And wheat not yellow, but a richer red;  
Further beyond, enclosed, green meadows lay,  
And over one, half-scared, a wild hare sped,  
As though he, scented mischief, dashed away;

Perhaps he did; magic was in the air  
All round, and hidden in the sky's quiet blue.  
And so he scampered; she can trap a hare:  
Some say that she bewitches humans, too.

## BRIGHT LEAVES FALL

Bright leaves fall  
On every side,  
All song in the wood  
Has died.

Bird dips through  
Unshaken air,  
The trees are iron-dark  
And bare.

Vole can hear  
In rainless night  
Stoat which runs on feet  
Flame light.

But no sound  
Is heard at all  
When snow-flakes  
In spirals fall.

## DEAD ORKNEY VOLE\*

Had you not built so well  
Your powder-frail cocoon,  
Death had not jealous been,  
Nor taken you so soon.

In his cool fields alone,  
With twinkling tooth and claw,  
He thought that you should plait  
Each flounce of wilted straw.

But look,—your pricking claws  
And whittling teeth are still;  
Death cannot wake you now,  
Do what he will.

\* A species of vole, native to the Orkney Islands, which builds a very frail nest.

MARJORY BROWNE, 104,035, *Women's Timber Corps.*

### SEVEN MYSTICAL STARS

There were searchlights pointing in one direction,  
There was Orion's Belt and a collection  
Of stars like a W. There was a darkness  
On the skyline and an icy sharpness  
In the night. There were guns growling in space,  
A cloud swept quickly over the white face  
Of the moon. "Dreaded carriers of Fate  
In the sky" he said "there is lust and hate  
Throughout the world. We fight a deadly foe.  
The fitful flickering lights are burning low  
And the living symbols are red and white.  
There's red for horror and white for right,  
There's red for sin and white for sacrifice,  
And white for purity and red for vice."  
They looked long at the lonely moon and then  
Seven great stars of the Plough one by one  
They counted. Seven mystical stars lighting  
The worlds' sorrow and terror and fighting.  
They were seven yellow candles burning  
In the dark. "God bless you" he said, turning  
To bid her good-night.

FRANCES HENEAGE BURKITT, 38,958, *West Kent.*

### RESURRECTION

Bearing a torch  
I come,  
Behold! the darkness breaks.  
I am Freedom,  
And my voice awakes  
Triumphant echoes in man's soul,  
And in the answering skies.

You who cower in the holes of the earth,  
You with piteous eyes;  
You whom men have willed to die,  
I hear your cries.  
You who fall in the streets of famine,  
You behind iron bars,  
You in the room of torture,  
My voice has reached the stars!  
My feet are set in the martyred city,  
Where women weep and pray;  
In the ruined square  
Where the fountain splashed,  
And the children used to play.  
My breath blows through the desolate streets,  
And from the dust there springs a flower,  
Like hope, the hope which sees again  
The upright wall,  
The lofty tower.  
I breathe beside the broken door,  
And by the cold hearths of the poor,  
Re-kindling dreams  
Which cannot die.  
I bring before the faded eye  
A vision of all things made new—  
All things destroyed by hate, built up  
By love—

O you . . . and you . . .  
Who sit within the lonely room,  
Lift up your hearts!  
Beyond the gloom.

And beyond the reach of death  
Hover those banished things  
Whereby men live,  
And draw sweet breath—  
Love, peace and joy,  
Beauty and holiness.  
They shall return  
On dove-like wings  
Into the heart  
Which is their home;  
They shall return—  
O you . . . and you . . .  
Cast out your fear,  
Set wide the gate;  
Noiseless as angels  
They will pass through.

#### LET THERE BE LIGHT

(Written after reading an article on the Children of Occupied Europe).

And God said: "Let there be light.  
And let my children grow  
Like flowers before my face,  
And let their laughter flow  
Into my listening ear  
For my delight.  
And while their hearts are young,  
O let my children know  
My love is like the sun  
Which melts the winter snow,  
And like the rain  
Which fills the tiny cup  
Of every thirsting flower  
Whose face is lifted up."  
And God set wide the Gate  
And bid them go.  
And all creation sang for joy,  
And God, the Father, smiled  
And through his fingers  
Streamed the sunlight,  
Blessing every child.

But on the earth,  
The wicked rose, and cried:  
"Let there be darkness!  
And let the darkness hide  
The face of God,  
That we may prove our might.  
Armed with the weapons of death  
We shout at the skies,  
And stretch forth terrible hands  
To confound the weak,  
And banish the light from their eyes.  
For we have chosen our gods  
From the realms of darkness;  
They come with satanic power.  
And eyes of hate,  
And their swords shall slay  
The dove of peace  
Which hovers at heaven's gate."

. . . . .  
These things have been done.  
The iron fist  
Is raised against the sun.  
And darkness is upon the children;  
They stumble among the stones  
Of the beautiful, martyred cities,  
With hunger in their bones.  
They have no words  
For what has come upon them,  
They plead with hands and eyes,  
Seeking the light  
Which man's dark sin  
Has driven from their skies.

Yet there is light upon the hills,  
And birds awake to sing;  
The soft rains fall,  
The corn is green,  
And orchard boughs are blossoming.  
For earth is kind:

From her dark robe  
 She brings forth, silently,  
 Golden flowers, a butterfly,  
 Root and herb and tree.  
 Yet man denies her children all,  
 And when their blanched lips moan,  
 And their frail hands  
 Beseech for bread,  
 He gives a stone.  
 Who then, shall rise,  
 And tear this hideous darkness  
 From the skies?  
 Who, with the sword of Truth  
 Shall smite the powers  
 Of sin and death,  
 And lead these children forth  
 By quiet waters,  
 And through starry flowers?  
 Who, in the darkness of each heart  
 Shall sow the seeds of light,  
 That fear may cease?  
 O who, with rod and staff  
 Shall shepherd their lost souls  
 Into the way of peace?  
 Who, after famine, death and strife,  
 Shall feed them with the bread of life?  
 O who so pure in heart that he  
 May draw the shadow's from God's face?  
 Who will stand forth—O where is he  
 That hath a child's simplicity?

#### WHITHER?

##### I.

Seeing men divided  
 And in sorrow:  
 Seeing the shadow of Death  
 More quickly move  
 Over the waters,

Into the city,  
 From street to street,  
 And bereft hearts breaking  
 Or growing cold,  
 Holding no seed of light.  
 Seeing the dust receive  
 The passive limbs,  
 The innocent eyes,  
 I am compelled to cry out!  
 I am compelled  
 To search for an answer!  
 But whither shall I go,  
 And whose voice shall give answer?

##### II.

All day I am aware  
 Of cynical minds  
 Drawing down  
 Their painted blinds,  
 Having no answer.  
 In lighted rooms,  
 Town clubs and public houses  
 Are men in tombs  
 Sealed against light,  
 And aimlessly  
 Day and night  
 Their thoughts unwind  
 Among the paper roses  
 And the dead ends of the mind.

What refuge, what security  
 This year or any year  
 Have they who wander blind  
 From door to door,  
 Victims of fear,  
 Tapping the hollow stones,  
 Aware of nothing more  
 Than the autumn-touch of decay,  
 The gigantic question-mark  
 Encircling the day?



I WILL NOT ADD MY LAMENTATIONS

I will not add  
My lamentations to the raised voices,  
Or probe the wounds of the world  
Till they bleed afresh.  
I offer no plan  
For days when the agony is over,  
Neither will I discuss my neighbour's sins  
With any man.  
I have done waiting for some miraculous change  
In the human heart—  
Shall peace descend like a dove,  
And suddenly life be cleansed?  
I watched down the roads of time  
For a sign of its coming;  
I watched at the open door;  
I waited where there is silence, and men forget  
The anguish of war.  
I turned to the darkened city,  
To the terror over all;  
I heard the exhortations of the preacher,  
And read the writing  
On the broken wall.  
And I looked to my neighbour for a change of heart,  
I looked for his spirit to wake,  
As one in springtime looks to the almond tree,  
Before the pale buds break—  
But I looked not at myself,  
Having no wisdom to see  
That first the miracle must be wrought  
In me.

MOLLY CAPES, 12,548,

Yorkshire, North Riding.

SONG OF A SCARECROW

I've t'wold master's jacket  
And t'young master's hat  
And another fellow's breeches  
With a hole where he have sat  
And I stands among the barley heads  
So quiet as a cat  
A'frightening little birds,  
Cos I'm the Scarecrow.

I seen old seagull hover  
On his bended silver wing,  
I hear the peewit calling  
And the mounting skylark sing,  
But they dussn't come anigh me  
Cos they know that I'm a Thing  
Not a man nor a beast  
But the Scarecrow.

I seen the corn a sowing  
And I seen the corn away,  
The sky that was so high and blue  
Is low now and grey,  
And they've throwed me in a hedgeback  
And cosily I lay  
The kelter and the clutter  
And the Scarecrow.

And a mouse sleeps in my pocket  
And a spider weaves my hood,  
And the hawthorn up above me  
Drops her berries bright as blood,  
And nobody nor nuthin'  
Don't remember where I stood,  
Excepting just me  
The old Scarecrow.

But though the wind be shrill and high  
And sun be low and red,  
Before I've dreamed a dream or two  
The winter will be sped  
And I'll be back a'workin'  
With a new hat on me head  
A'frightenin' little birds,  
Says the Scarecrow.

(MARY ANNE, AGED SEVEN, HAS A PAIR OF  
YELLOW CLOGS)

When Mary Anne  
Goes down the street,  
She goes on yellow  
Wooden feet,  
With four flamboyant  
Scarlet bows,  
Two on her ankles  
Two on her toes  
And such a clitter  
And such a clatter  
Everyone wonders  
What is the matter  
They fling up the windows,  
They open the doors  
Goodness me! what *can* be the cause  
And all the Old Ladies cry "oh dear  
A carriage is running away I fear."  
And all the Old Gentlemen say "Oh my!"  
It  
must  
be  
the MOUNTED CON-STAB-U-LAR-Y.

#### WINTER RAIN

Momently the hedge in leafless line  
Breaks with silver buds and crystal flowers,  
These are the tears of prisoned Proserpine  
That for an instant jewel Death's black bowers.

MAY—DECEMBER, 1944

From East to West unbroken lie  
The endless acres of the sky  
Where cloud on cloud in sullen sloth  
Trails its grey and matted growth.

Oh send the Sun with golden shares  
To split this field of tangled tares—  
Scatter the stars like silver seed  
To glitter through this waste of weed—  
The Moon's obsidian knife of wrath  
Sharpen, to strip her shining path—

Neither respite or reply  
Answers from the weary sky,  
Only leaden spears of rain  
Dint the puddled ground again.

#### THE GLASS SHIP

(*On the mantelpiece at my billet.*)

My ship is green  
As hawthorn buds  
When Spring is seen;  
And white as milk  
Her sails, and fine  
As spider silk;  
At her mast heads shiver  
Banners of silver.  
No grinning gun  
Weapons her sides  
But smooth as a nun  
She glides  
With infinite grace  
Over moon-white peace.

THE NEGLECTED GARDEN

A borrowed Eden I possess,  
A country garden-wilderness,  
Shut in a green seclusion, made  
Of hedges, apple-trees and shade;  
Whose dewy lawn is never free  
From slanting shadows of some tree;  
Whose dreaming air is hardly stirred  
By fall of leaf or call of bird.

The trees stand singing on their roots,  
Loaded with leaves and birds and fruits;  
And which is which I hardly know,  
They all so intermingled grow.  
The sweet sharp apple-song is heard,  
As from the branch I pluck a bird,  
And note the rich and heavy sound  
As ripened leaves thump to the ground.

The shining day reveals the trails  
Of wandering nocturnal snails,  
And drunken wasps in drowsy wrath,  
Attack the pears upon the path.  
The birds, the birds are everywhere,  
Thridding the runways of the air,  
Embroidering the patterned light,  
With transient strands of song and flight.

These are the owners—these, not I—  
By right of ancient tenancy.  
The garden-realm so long has known  
No other empire than their own.  
The house, half-buried, seems to be  
Appendaged to their property,  
And each intrusive footstep brings  
Commotion of resentful wings.

Another year, and you will find  
No room is left for humankind.  
The hedges, shutting out the sky,  
Grow ever thicker and more high.  
The apple-boughs, already low,  
Will bar the paths where now I go;  
What hidden beings may there be  
Behind their screen of secrecy!

The dandelions in the grass  
Grow up too tall for foot to pass;  
And islanded in ambient seas,  
All but submerged by flowers and trees,  
The small stone bird-bath on the lawn—  
Last relic of the world withdrawn—  
Will be engulfed, remote, unseen,  
Swamped in the jungle-flood of green.

OCTOBER, 1940

To-day I gather from the orchard grass  
Apples and shrapnel—windfalls shaken down  
When angry gusts tempestuously pass.

To-night, above the dark surrounding town,  
Shellbursts and stars will decorate the sky  
With dangerous beauty, devastation's crown.

A lunatic balloon, adrift on high,  
Trailing its shadow by a silver thong,  
Above the sailing leaves goes sailing by.

Sirens and robins share their Autumn song,  
As War and Peace alternately take wing,  
Chanting antiphonally all day long.

And I, impartially hearkening,  
Nevertheless continue, hour by hour  
Confident planting for a doubtful Spring

The cabbages that others may devour,  
The tulips I may never see in flower.

## SKY-CONSCIOUS

Now we are forced to contemplate the sky,  
So long before an unregarded roof—  
Now charged with such significance, the proof  
Of potencies whereby we live or die;

Frescoed with searchlights, shells and flares and stars,  
Trellised with trailing fumes of alien flight,  
Lit with false dawn of fires, and all the bright  
Ferocious constellations of our wars.

In these we read the portents of our end  
And turn in fear to scan the skies again,  
For dooms like those the gods were used to send  
Whose rule no longer sways their old domain—

Jove's superseded thunderbolts at rest,  
Aurora and Apollo dispossessed.

## HEDGE CUTTING

Birds build most freely in neglected hedges,  
Lichen grows richest on untended trees,  
In uncut grass the daisies blossom best,

And yet I cut my lawn, destroying daisies,  
And prune and spray the lichen from my trees,  
And trim the hawthorns where the thrushes nest.

Fruit from my trees, and shelter from my hedges,  
These I demand; and underlying these  
A smooth green turf on which the eye may rest.

Yet I regret the birdsong and the daisies  
And wonder if my gains outweigh my losses,  
Not trusting Nature to achieve the best.

## THE "MONSTROUS REGIMENT"

What hosts of women everywhere I see!  
I'm sick to death of them—and they of me.  
(The few remaining men are small and pale—  
War lends a spurious value to the male.)  
Mechanics are supplanted by their mothers;  
Aunts take the place of artisans and others;  
Wives sell the sago, daughters drive the van,  
Even the mansion is without a man!  
Females are farming who were frail before,  
Matrons attending meetings by the score,  
Maidens are minding multiple machines,  
And virgins vending station-magazines.  
Dames, hoydens, wenches, harridans and hussies  
Cram to congestion all the trams and buses;  
Misses and grandmas, mistresses and nieces,  
Infest bombed buildings, picking up the pieces.  
Girls from the South and lassies from the North,  
Sisters and sweethearts, bustle back and forth.  
The newsboy and the boy who drives the plough:  
Postman and milkman—all are ladies now.  
Doctors and engineers—yes, even these—  
Poets and politicians, all are shes.  
(The very beasts that in the meadows browse  
Are ewes and mares, heifers and hens and cows . . . )  
All, doubtless, worthy to a high degree;  
But oh, how boring! Yes, including me.

## LET ME A DAZZLING SURFACE SHOW

Let me a dazzling surface show,  
That none may see, that none may spy  
How underneath the busy swirl,  
I still enclose and soothe my woe—  
Hoping in silent secrecy  
My piercing grief to petrify;  
Transmute my pain into a pearl.

BLITZED GARDENS

The bitter wind blows from the starving East  
And stirs a million English daffodils—  
Waves over graves, peeps through the eyes of ruins,  
A transient picture in a broken frame.  
From public pavements everybody sees  
Gardens that once were guarded privacies;  
Their sooty greens and shivering daffodils,  
Arbours and larders, equally made plain.  
Destruction brings the vaunted Communism,  
The levelling that Cromwell sought before;—  
One heap of stones is very like another;  
The daffodils are anybody's now.

AUDREY HANCOCK, 2,558,

Warwickshire.

UNDOWERED

Mine is the moonlight-silvered winding river,  
Mine are the trees that grow, the birds that sing,  
Mine are the happy woods, the friendly wildflowers—  
For, having nothing, I have everything.

Mine is the splendid sun, my bridge the rainbow,  
Mine are the shining darts the rain-clouds fling,  
Mine are the winding lanes, the curving hillsides—  
For, having nothing, I have everything.

The boist'rous wind is my familiar playmate,  
The beauty that the dawns and sunsets bring,  
The chattering streams are mine, and I am happy—  
For, having nothing, I have everything.

OCTOBER, 1940

October, with the magic of her brush,  
 Has washed the landscape with a thousand hues;  
 The grasses in the bog are green and lush,  
 And rosy berries cheer the sombre yews.  
 Along the lane is found the beechnut husk,  
 Thrown there by boys who picked and had their fill,  
 Long ere the stars came shining through the dusk  
 And mist crept up to clothe the naked hill.  
 The sun gilds gently now the fallen leaves:  
 His passion sated, he is mellow, soft.  
 The rays that beat all day on rows of sheaves  
 Now shyly peep at apples in the loft.  
 How peaceful seems the world when evening comes,  
 The autumn smells like incense on the air,  
 And labourers go weary to their homes  
 With hearty appetites for simple fare.  
 The horses plodding slowly up the steep  
 Feel harness growing heavy on their backs,  
 And while in woods the birds prepare for sleep,  
 The mice begin to stir behind the sacks.  
 The dusk falls gently as a flake of snow,  
 And silently—until a fearful sound  
 With moanings fills the air that louder grow  
 And shatter all the peace above, around.  
 The wailing siren, with its message dread,  
 Is heralding the enemies of Right,  
 Whose monsters come to claim their living bread  
 And make a phantom of the quiet night.  
 And those who toil by day can find no rest,  
 For all the world is sick with greed and lust.  
 Men seek for truth, then leave the irksome quest,  
 And Christ's great Cross is trampled in the dust.

## SUNRISE ON THE DOWNS

The sky is sombre yet and pearly grey  
 Above the arches of the Plumpton hills.  
 A wish to see the dawn my spirit fills,  
 And from my shadowed room I steal away  
 To climb the path that leads me to the day.  
 Here ev'ry bird the misty silence thrills  
 With liquid melodies and cadenced trills,  
 Heart-stabbing harmonies and chirpings gay.  
 Soon through the hanging boughs I see the light:  
 It shines through ash and oak, through beech and thorn,  
 Bidding the shadows spread their wings for flight,  
 Telling them Day is waiting to be born.  
 For now the East is radiantly bright  
 With all the opalescent tints of morn.

## THE THRESHING MORN

The farm to-day is full of stirring life.  
 The wheat, that fell beneath the binder's knife  
 And stood in rows of sheaves on ground close shorn  
 Two weeks or more, now greets the threshing morn.  
 The threshers do not stay to break their fast,  
 But set to work, until a plain repast  
 Is brought in baskets to the scene of toil.  
 They care not if the food be grimed with oil  
 Or with the dust that covers hands and face,  
 But all sit down within a grassy space;  
 And, rising from the treetops while they eat,  
 The sun gives promise of the coming heat.  
 The great machine is started once again,  
 And soon a sack grows heavy with the grain,  
 The empty chaff comes pouring to the ground,  
 And all the air is filled with dust and sound.  
 While scorching rays beat down on back and head,  
 From hour to hour the monster must be fed;

The toilers dare not pause, but work apace,  
As sweat makes patterns on each dusty face,  
And throats are dry with thirst and eyes are sore,  
Yet still the hungry giant craves for more.  
The sun burns pitiless in cloudless sky,  
And, while the stack of straw is mounting high,  
The corn-rick slowly sheds its close-packed sheaves;  
And eyes stray longingly towards the leaves  
Which spread a cooling shade upon the grass  
That looks more tempting as the minutes pass.  
Then boys bring jugs of lemonade and tea  
And hand them up above the golden sea  
Of straw and corn; and as the workers drink,  
The knife and pitchfork cast aside, they think  
The nectar of the gods was no more rare  
Than these plain, earthly liquids that they share,  
Till everything is drained except the dregs.  
Then, once more rising on their weary legs,  
The slaves of the machine must play their parts,  
Exert their failing strength and steel their hearts,  
For from the stack the sheaves will soon be gone;  
And then—the peace that follows work well done!  
The dragon's hunger-pangs at last subside,  
And now the farmer, with a glow of pride,  
Surveys the sacks that bulge with goodly corn  
And covers them against the dewy morn.  
The labourers, with hot and aching feet  
Trudge slowly to the farm, to wash and eat,  
And everyone will early seek his bed,  
Worn out by working for the nation's bread;  
Soon every window is bereft of light:  
The farm sleeps soundly through a quiet night.

DAPHNE HUDSON, 33,803,

Essex.

## THE OLD LABOURER

You're a stacker now—  
Up there with my old fork in your hands.  
You've got a pair of hands that understands,  
Though last year that old fork still worked in mine.  
Worked fine,  
As it always did  
Back down that old stairway of time.  
This June ain't as any other June.  
You make the hay without me  
And, come harvest,  
You'll pitch the sheaves  
Easy as dropped leaves  
As I could once  
When the blood still ran true and free  
In the frame that was me.  
Now, the rain that fell  
Over four-score years and ten  
On fields and men  
Has gotten right in where the movement came  
And stopped the game,  
The game of living.  
Now I can only watch you  
Being me.  
So like—so like,  
I live again—  
Young and strong and free.

LAND GIRL IN LOVE

What care I  
That across the sleeping vale,  
Comes midnight's distant warning sound,  
Or that questing moonbeams pale  
A resting place on us have found?

What care I  
That to-morrow I must rise  
Unwilling, heavy-eyed and slow  
Long before the reddened skies  
Over the sombre tree-tops show?

What care I  
That behind the thinning hedge,  
The breath of sleeping cows hangs white  
And at the muddy river's edge  
New ice reflects the cold moonlight?

What care I  
If twelve solemn strokes are rung,  
While silent, closely clasped are we?  
Time is old, but we are young  
For me this is—eternity.

WILTSHIRE HILLS

Up the swelling hills climbs the road,  
Between the hedges' tangled shade,  
Where brambles bear their reddening load  
On which the white road dust is laid.  
Into the distance stretch the downs  
Exultant to the burning sky;  
The earth, full breasted, lifting crowns  
Of sombre, clustering trees on high.  
The new thatched ricks reflect the glow  
From the blinding disc of the sun,  
And the pale lines of stubble show  
Harvest ended, the rich gold won.  
O hills of graceful, flowing line,  
You lift my soul from worldly care  
To realms where life seems still divine,  
New-born of sun and light and air.



INEZ M. JENKINS, Chief Administrative Officer,  
Women's Land Army.

### THE MILKY WAY

"I wonder," said the Land Girl,  
"I wonder," said the cow;  
"It can't be hard," the Land Girl said,  
"The only thing is *how*,  
And will she kick me if I try?"  
"I wonder," said the cow.

"Oh, bother!" cried the Land Girl,  
"Why bother?" cried the cow;  
"Why can't you let the matter drop?  
I just can't face it now.  
You'll dry me off. I know you will!  
Oh, *bother!*" cried the cow.

"It's not too bad," the Land Girl said,  
"It's bad," replied the cow;  
"Shove over there," the Land Girl said,  
"We needn't have a row.  
There now, we're doing nicely, see!"  
"Not bad," replied the cow.

"Nice milk," remarked the Land Girl.  
"Too kind!" remarked the cow.  
The Land Girl curtsied by her stool,  
The cow essayed a bow.  
Sweet harmony thus reigned between  
The Land Girl and the cow.

HEBE JERROLD, 1,157      Women's Timber Corps.

### WAR, WHICH HAS BROUGHT TO OTHERS FEAR

War, which has brought to others fear,  
Pain, sorrow, slavery and death;  
To me has brought what I held dear  
And longed for but could not possess.  
Has given me wide stretch of sky,  
The sailing clouds, the wind's sharp breath,  
A roof of leaves, the wild flower's eye,  
Bird song, all woodland loveliness,  
Health, vigour, deep content, and faith  
That at its source our stream runs clear.  
What have I done? I never meant  
To be a war-time profiteer!

### CANDLE AND LIGHTHOUSE

He found a flame to light his thoughts,  
He took it in his palm,  
He tended it and cherished it  
And guarded it from harm.  
With his curved hand protected it  
And sheltered it about—  
It paler grew and delicate  
And then it flickered out.

He found a flame to light his thoughts,  
He held aloft his light  
With mental facets circling it  
Like mirror burnished bright  
Increasing it, reflecting it;  
He gave from endless store  
To all who came he gave of it  
Yet kept it all, and more.

## RECOMPENSE

What matter arrow-flights of hail  
That with sharp points my back assail?  
I see a rock-strewn pasture, green,  
Sunlit and vivid, 'neath a wall  
Of bracken-rusty fell; between  
A wavering drifting misty screen  
Passes across, and over all  
A rainbow throws its magic arch  
From silver birch to lichened larch.

What matters it that silently  
The gentle rain envelopes me?  
Across field, wall and tree I gaze  
At four successive lines of hill  
Which pale grey, pale and paler, raise  
At last a smooth vague outline, dim as haze,  
Against a sky that is just paler still.  
And in between them and this coloured dale  
Two white cloud-serpents indolently trail.

What care I if eight inch of snow  
Makes walking wearisome and slow?  
Sepia are crags, and walls and windswept ground,  
Sepia the trees—all else is white. Snow-whiteness  
lies around  
Intense, unsullied, over slope and mound,  
My chain of footprints breaking it alone.  
And everywhere I turn my pleased eyes  
A living etching spread before me lies.

## HUMUS

*What happens to a thought  
When it dies  
Is forgot?  
Falling to some mental ground  
There it lies,  
There to rot,  
To become the food of thoughts yet unbegot.*

*Will the humus of bad minds  
Only feed  
Evil thought?  
If upon such soil there falls  
A good seed  
Is it aught?  
In a pine wood only thrive trees of one sort.*

But though other trees don't grow  
Beneath pines'  
Heavy gloom,  
Yet they in same soil may thrive  
In sunshine  
Where there's room.  
'Tis not dead but living thought, spells a thought's  
doom.

For an evil-living man  
And a good  
Are one clay.  
From the bones of each a briar  
Blossom would  
The same way.  
Death, which knows not bad nor good, makes of both  
hay.

## POSSESSION

What I have, I am. What I possess  
I do become, incorporate in me.  
Have I a friend, I am one; have I foe  
Straightway I do become an enemy.  
Do I enslave another, then am I  
More abjectly a slave even than he  
Being slave of my own making, but I am  
Free if all things I own have liberty.

*I will* not be imprisoned, chained, I'll own  
Only the lark on wing, the dove in tree.  
Alas—I own the world, and so am bound  
Until all quarters of the world are free.

## THE SPINNING WHEEL

O Time—how rapidly you spin!  
The day is but an hour  
And scarcely has the bud unfurled  
Ere fruit has followed flower.

So swift revolves your wheel, the year,  
Its twelve spokes are as one.  
Half my life's thread has been drawn out—  
Where is the weaving done?

JEAN MONCRIEFF, *Secretary, W.L.A. Benevolent Fund.*

## TEN LITTLE LAND GIRLS

Ten little Land Girls went to feed the swine,  
One said "Oh, what a boar!" and then there were nine.

Nine little Land Girls learned to incubate,  
One was no chicken, and then there were eight.

Eight little Land Girls milking down in Devon,  
One kicked the bucket, and then there were seven.

Seven little Land Girls piling up the ricks,  
One went hay-wire, and then there were six.

Six little Land Girls a tractor learned to drive,  
The farmer ploughed one, and then there were five.

Five little Land Girls had never stripped before,  
One did a tease act, and then there were four.

Four little Land Girls tried to fell a tree,  
One fell for the forester, and then there were three.

Three little Land Girls to geese could not say "boo,"  
One went to Uganda, and then there were two.

Two little Land Girls thought thatching might be fun,  
One brought the house down, and then there was one.

One little Land Girl when her work was done,  
Turned up the "bridle" path, and then there was none.

JOYCE OEHRING, 114,358,

Surrey.

### BUSH CLEARING

We fire the living tree  
And sacrifice the garland of our year;  
We tear the ancient roots,  
As for our daily bread a path we clear.

No more the blossom's froth  
Shall sweeten the surrounding air in May  
With sun-brewed hawthorn scent.  
The decades' work is undone in a day.

Next spring in vain the birds  
Will seek the brittle nests that we have burned;  
No more the goats will feast,  
And brambles thus to good account be turned.

Black ash will soon depart  
The ground where heavy-booted feet now tread,  
And gold of corn appear.  
The crown of thorns becomes a loaf of bread.

### THE MILKER

Milking becomes the rhythm of my life  
And spaces evenly my days  
Unregimented, yet not free,  
I accept the even tenor of its ways;

Rise in the mists, with stars for light,  
Laved in the coolth of morning air.  
The cows file to the byre secure  
In faith that food awaits them there.

The white, sweet jet invades the pail  
I breathe its richness and the warmth of hay,  
Familiar smell of cow my nostril fills  
The while on Beauty's flank my head I lay.

The gentleness that war perhaps has taught  
To people still aghast at fire and flood and fear  
Abides within the deftness and the quiet  
The patience learned and manifested here.

Peace in the eyes of calves who early find  
Confidence is not misplaced in man  
If kinship with all creatures man admits  
As only he who will not hurt his fellows can.

Part of a pattern whose taut threads  
I slackly grasp, but dimly see,  
I am enmeshed in ritual outstripping all known time  
That was and is, and while the race persists, will be.

### TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

I expand in a field, in a country lane.  
This is mine; in this clay, clover, corn,  
In the dawn-fragrance, the rain-fragrance of earthy  
things I live and have my being.  
I am of the sea, the sky, the soil; the soil, the sky, the  
sea is of me.

The sunlight, filtering through trees or striking un-  
checked my bared head, communicates untold  
wealth, energy, radiance, to me, to this member of  
an abject species.

The worm, wriggling and known, is mine along with  
the defiant, seen-only-through-bars lion; the dim  
passion-washed wild rose gives itself to me, brazen,  
forced, hot-house plants I give to you.

Cows have a place in me, I run with the rabbit evacuat-  
ing the thinning corn, I rejoice with the kingfisher,  
with the mole I delve into silence and security.

The waves hurtling against the shore are the waves of  
my primeval tribe-memory flooding into the back-  
wash of my conscious thought; the sky is the  
measure of the fulness of my earth; the soil is the  
nourishment of my roots of everlastingness.

I contract in the city.

My vanity preyed upon, my hungers traded upon, my superficial need of amusement scintillatingly catered for, town life is the bar making me aware of imprisonment.

Grey and sordid, glinting and banal, the avaricious town is an extrovert whose unceasing chatter, clatter, pre-occupation with seen things, palls and sticks in the throat.

I eat well, I see a show, I ride in an all too public vehicle. I walk in a caged park, I visit, I eat. I dwindle.

In all the littleness of human enterprise, busyness, in the tiny big buildings, in the enormously small historic edifices recording human struggle, disaster, victory, there is no simplicity, there is a blind and crushing force contracting one to something less than the bricks, nuts, bolts of construction. All this can be irreparably damaged by lunatic projection of explosives into space.

Significantly, flowers spring up on bombed sites.

#### ANNIVERSARY

You, who with Jairus' daughter now behold the face  
Of him whose ghost the meanest heart informs;  
You, who smiling slept a tired life out  
And left us troubled that such waste might be,  
Flower for whose fruit the gardener kept a hidden place,  
What have you to say?

I ask you now because  
This month you would have cast off childish things  
(Could Paul have ever known a child?)  
And stood with me, adult in years at last,  
Upon the brave, grim threshold of an insane world;  
This month, in which we pause to recollect  
How once a king invaded his own territory,  
Since when all conscience has been civil war.

No, I hardly thought heaven was some super-fairyland  
Or Aladdin's cave of unimagined size.

Whose pearl-encrusted portals shine like Cockney queens,  
(Not while many go bread-hungry in this life; stars are  
sufficient jewels)

Nor did I wish to see you strangely garbed as for a  
Christmas tree.

— You always knew a harp to be an instrument  
A trifle too unwieldy for ethereal crowds?

Yet wings, are they not but thoughts that rise to him,  
The very ancient and the very young, about whom crea-  
tion's flux

Ever has and ever more shall move?

There are no terms in which we can describe  
Our heavens: God knows we paint our hells as vivid as  
we can,

Each vying with his neighbour for the worst  
— The rich most often winning for he best  
Affords the bricks with which to build.

Be my mouthpiece, and I'll be yours—you who fain  
Would have out-Sarah'd Bernhardt and I out-Shake-  
speared Shaw—

And tear apart for me the fleshly veil  
Forbidding me to peer before or yet beyond  
At my high destiny.

But no, I must not cheat:  
Don't try to whisper what I wish to learn  
Lest for this frail craft too deep the secret prove.  
What did I hear you say?

“ This one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now  
can see.”

That's enough.

DOREEN STRANGE, 26,538,

*West Sussex.*

BEECHWOODS

Outside the drowsy summer air  
Is shimmering in the noonday heat,  
The charlock glows among the wheat—  
A rival to the sunshine glare.

But here beneath the beeches' shade  
The filtered beams are green and cool  
And, slanting to the woodland pool,  
Gleam quietly through the silent glade.

PHYLLIS WHITE, 46,666,

*Warwickshire.*

IN CAMPERDOWN, VIC.

Straight lines of beauty catch me by the heart :  
Gnotuk's scarred side; the winter avenue :  
The poplars; and the yellow sunset bars  
Through pines on Rennie Hill. If I but knew

How make my thought's lines as direct as they,  
Then could I tell, in all simplicity,  
— Distilling from my unproductive years —  
The story that is lying dumb in me.

ANON.

THERE WAS A YOUNG LADY OF  
GLOUCESTER

There was a young lady of Gloucester,  
Who was driving a cow when she loucester,  
So she got a large bough  
And followed that cough  
And didn't she put it acroucester.

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