

THIS WAS MY MOTHER

HOW small a thing
Will bring

To life, a memory.

A round and homely pot for tea,
Polished, and catching light
And dim reflections, throwing bright
And tender, sweet remembrance

On my heart. Memory's Wing
Brushes my cheek. Thoughts, like birds disturbed,
Fly up and hover round,
And every other sound is drowned
By the whirring of their Wings,
Disturbing my sleeping memories,
Which, drugged with present living
And the cares of every day,
Leap, like a flame, to life again.

Once more the ache and pain
Of happy days is with me, giving
For a moment, honey steeped in gall.
Ah! sweet then to recall,
The hours - those happy hours
When all the world seemed full
Of loveliness and flowers,
And she and I drank tea from that same pot
And chatted lightly in those morning hours
Before I left for school.

A carefree lot
Was mine. I drank sweet wisdom
And companionship.
Each word from those dear lips
Fell golden on my heart. I longed
To reach the highest summit
For her sake. Full-songed
My thoughts and heart were equally disposed
To washing dishes or admiring the rose
That bloomed for her, or with care
Dusting the room, the pictures, or her chair -
Where all the hours of the day she sat
So patient, ever smiling, welcoming a chat
With friends who came; not a word
Of bitterness or pity for herself, -
Just thought for others occupied her mind,

So kind

To animals, to the least who in distress
Turned to her. No melancholy plaint
Fell from her, smiling at life
Even when it blest her not.
She loved, - not strife,
But harmony and peace.
How small a thing
Will put sweet memory on wing
Disturbing
All my heart.

TO EDITH JONES

SHE rests now in the valley.
 Where wild roses soon will grow,
 And birds will sing forever
 And fresh mountain winds will blow.
 And the shouts of children playing
 Will be carried to her there,
 Sounds she loved will greet her
 On the clear and sunlit air.

Ah! her spirit lives forever,
 The atmosphere is filled
 With the sweetness of her living,
 Like a fragrant essence spilled.
 Her ever-loving-kindness,
 Her deeds of golden worth
 Will flower like a garden
 In our hearts, as seeds in earth.

Not a soul who lives in Woodstock,
 But has known the soft brown eyes,
 The winning smile, the sympathy,
 Felt sudden, sweet surprise
 When flashed her wit and humour,
 And her quiet laughter fell
 Like dew upon the spirit,
 Holding us beneath its spell.

Her footsteps blest the weary,
 Her kindness blest the ill
 In heart or mind or body.
 None living on this hill
 But knew the kindly spirit,
 The indefatigable zest
 With which she helped the helpless.
 Ah! gently let her rest!

Be lovely round about her
 O flowers of the vale,
 And birds, flute songs of triumph;
 And children, never fail
 To shout with joy and gladness,
 That as your voices swing
 Down into the valley, there,
 She may feel that angels sing,

Gladdening every moment
 Of the long school year.
 And then when comes the winter
 And the leaves are brown and sere,
 The echoes still will linger
 In an angel's listening ear.

Woodstock - a High School in the Himalayan Mountains.

TO LOVE

KNEE-DEEP in flowers
 Let me walk with Love,
 The maryandrum scents the air,
 The sky is blue above.

Everlastings wilder.
 Milk-white upon the hill;
 Wrapt, enchanted, gazing,
 Love and I, stand still.

We watch the cloudlets scatter,
 Across the Southern plain.
 We watch the mists unveiling
 The distant snow-clad chain.

We need no word between us,
 Our thoughts are ever one,
 We love the mountain wildness,
 We love the golden sun.

Wind and cloud and shower,
 Hair whipping in our eyes, .
 Trees, wild blown and bending,
 The eagle as it flies.

The little things, the big things,
 None escapes our gaze,
 Worship fills our inmost heart
 We lift our thoughts ill praise.

Our thoughts keep sweet. Like music
 They softly rise and fall
 And harmonise, - for Love
 Is the glory over all.

Oh, knee-deep in flowers
 Let me walk with Love.
 The maryandrum scents the air,
 The sky is blue above.

YOUTH

WHO says youth dies?
 A hint of fairyland lurks
 Even yet in her eyes.
 Her gay laughter works
 Like a spell on the heart.
 Age will never be hers
 In spite of the years,
 Youth will never depart.

Youth dies not, I say.
 She's only half human, I know;
 The other part's fay.
 She works with her fiddle and bow
 Like a spell on the heart.
 Age will never be hers
 In spite of the years,
 Youth will never depart.

TO A FRIEND WHO CAME NOT

THE moon polishes her silver shield,
 The sun, his golden spears,
 The flowers are growing in the field,
 The grey mist disappears.
 The kittens practice all their pranks,
 The mother sleeks their shining flanks.
 Rich with autumn are the banks,
 For one who comes not.

The sky is cloudless and as bright
 As blue forget-me-not,
 Blankets and the bedsheets white.
 Are bathed in sunshine hot.
 The old clock ticks in splendid time
 The window glasses gleam and shine,
 The atmosphere is like clear wine,
 For one who comes not.

I stand before the open door,
 A flower in my hair.
 The sunlight splashing on the floor
 Wears an expectant air, -
 So does the honeysuckle bloom,
 The cups, the plates, the little room
 God bless you! may you be here soon.
 I wait, - but still you come not.

MY SHADOW

[Addressed to Edith]

Did you hear me passing
 Last night before your door?
 Did you hear the tapping
 Of my shoes upon the floor?

No? And yet I opened
 Your door and gazed all round,
 The lamplight fell upon your face.
 Outside, the only sound

Was the roaring of the ocean.
 As the tide came swirling by, -
 The tide came swirling landward
 And muffled up my cry

As I tried to make you hear me,
 As I tried to make you see
 The shadow in the doorway,
 The shadow that was me.

I walked the whole house over,
 And whatever you may think
 I laid the breakfast table,
 And I scrubbed the kitchen sink.

I have waited here till morning.
 You must surely see me peep
 From out the blue green curtains
 As I watch you softly creep

Down into the kitchen,
To brew a cup of tea.
Alas! you're making just enough
For two instead of three.

So I know by that you do not
See me as I stand
So close that you could touch me
With a movement of your hand.

When you're back at Blagdon,
Through the woods I'll run,
Gathering the firewood
As I have often done.

I'll skip across the meadows,
I'll gaze across the lake,
But you'll only see a shadow
Dancing in your wake.

And when you're making music,
I'll be hovering at your side,
Perchance across the magic page
You'll see a shadow glide.

And I'll be full of laughter
At the close of day,
When on the lush green meadow
The bunnies frisk and play.

You may think the flutter,
Just a rustle of the leaves,
But 'twill be my shadow shaking
With laughter on the breeze.

And I'll be often with you,
Wandering close by.
Don't fear the lurking shadows, -
You'll know it's only I.

GUNA KUMAR

I TURN to wave goodbye, and oh! delight!
You look a picture standing there;
Your white **dupata** floating wide in light
Circling the darkness of your hair.

Around you, toss the bright, young boughs of Spring,
Flicks of dancing sunbeams spangle
Your snowy vest. I see your jewelled earring
Flash, and gleam your golden bangle.

Yourself like spring, lithe and erect you stand
Smiling, your dark eyes kind and bright.
In farewell now I see you raise your hand -
Sunlight enfolds you in its bright gold light.

Dupata - head scarf

TO A FRIEND

WHEN stars break out in beauty
 Piercing night's sky,
 And on the hill in solitude
 And quietness I lie,
 I'll think of you, I'll dream of you.
 And when winds softly sigh
 And touch the flowers round my feet,
 Blowing round me, fragrant, sweet,
 I'll remember you.

When dawn creeps like a miracle
 To wake the slumbering hill,
 And fluttering eyelids open wide,
 I'll remember still.
 I'll think of you, I'll dream of you,
 And when pale sunbeams spill
 Their liquid gold on whispering grass
 Where dancing lights and shadows pass,
 I'll remember still.

When noontide passes and the eve
 Is full of birds' swift wings,
 I'll pause awhile to dwell upon
 Dear unforgotten things.
 I'll think of you, I'll dream of you,
 And when the blackbird sings
 In ecstasy, and night returns
 And bold Orion bravely burns,
 I'll remember you.

LINES TO MARY ON HER BIRTHDAY

WHY is the world so bright and gay?
 Why sing the flowers?
 Why have the plum blooms burst today?
 Why dance the hours?

Why sings the Custura to make one's heart leap,
 And the bulbuls and tits?

Why stir the bulbs we buried full deep?
 Why, patiently, sits

Young Spring on our doorstep awaiting her cue
 To transfigure the earth

With colour and glory? Ah! Mary, it's you!
 It's the date of your birth!

Yes, it's yours,-the Blessing that nothing surpasses,
 Of sunshine and sky,

Of all lovely things, - ferns, flowers and grasses.
 God be you nigh

And dwell with you shinningly, guarding and guiding.
 His Truth be your stay,

Yourself in Him centred, there ever abiding, -
 God bless you this day.

WHO PASSED BESIDE MY DOOR?

Did some angel pause
Beside my door
And find it closed?
I ask the plum
I ask the rose
The greening trees, -
But no one knows.

And yet how came the twig
Of blossom tender
Hung on my door?
Who was the sender?
I ask the petals
On the floor.
I ask the birds.

No! no one saw
The angel pass.

In trim disguise
An angel came.
How could the birds and flowers guess
That wingless, harpless,
Clothed in modern dress,
An angel hung
Her signet, - just that - no more
A sprig of pale peach bloom
Upon my door.

TO ONE WHO IS A PIPER

Pipe on, pipe on!
The valley heeds,
The water, burbling, rushes,
Wild orchids dance in sheer delight
The Himalayan maple, blushes.
The birds draw near
Your pipe to hear,
The very rocks grow charmed,
The high hills tower over all
In spring regalia armed.

Pipe on, pipe on!
You are engirt
By an atmosphere, pale golden,
Gossamer fairies shimmer past,
Before our eyes, though holden.
Pipe with cheer,
Your sweet notes clear
All the valley's listening.
The flowers nod, the treetops sway,
The shattered spray is glistening.

Pipe on, pipe on!
'Tis meet indeed
That you and Spring together,
Should lure wild roses yet unborn,
In this enchanted weather.
Oh ! orchids white
In spring delight,
Breathe holy thoughts about her.
Let Nature say all through each day
" God bless the winsome Piper !"

TO CHERRY

CHERRY! what a luscious name!
 Have you ever heard it?
 Sarah, Emmeline or Jane
 They nothing are beside it,
 Poor and tame
 Beside that ripe and lovely name.

Cherry dances. I must say,
 I don't know how she does it,
 As light as thistledown in May.
 As light as air she toes it.
 Brave and gay
 In her inimitable way.

Have you ever heard of Jerry?
 A fellow smart
 He protects our lovely Cherry.
 Quite breaks your heart,
 Bright and merry,
 The gay retriever and our Cherry.

MY DOGS

DOES the clock tower strike eight?
 Fingers be swift, pat that last curl
 in place.

A glance in the mirror,
 A flick at my face
 With the powder puff, - there!
 Down dogs!
 We're hopelessly tangled together.
 I'm almost thrown down
 Be sensible now!

Into the mist
 We'll soon sally out.
 Where's my bag?
 Now don't be a clown!
 Stop! don't curvet about.
 Linger! don't nip
 My poor heels nor my skirt.

'There! let's zr-r-r up the zip
 Of my bulgy book bag.
 Now Windzer! don't flirt
 With our silky black cat.
 How you crazy dogs prance
 Ho ! see my Airdale
 Agd Pekenese dance!
 What exuberant joy!

Come umbrella! come raincoat !
 Come bag! now let's fly.
 The Peke's tail's afloat,
 And rolling his eye
 As he streaks down the path.
 Hurry, Windzer, we're late!
 But first let me bury my nose
 In the flaunting heart of the glorious rose
 Bursting red at the garden gate.

Oh! pleasant the road,
 And clean the fresh air.
 The white reindeer orchids
 Grow nimbly and fair.

No! come back you two,
 Drop the scent, let It go.
 Not up that hill!
 I tell you it's late!
 You've a few moments still. -

Lovely indeed is the world to-day,
 I love to watch my two dogs play.

Now come, take your chain.
 Let me give you a pat,
 Ah ! your tails hang dejected.
 Oh! Linger! You've sat
 Right down in that puddle,
 Just look at your coat.
 Now, don't look like that!
 How you tug at my heart strings, -
 I'm off! I'll be late -
 Now go home with Chumu.

Oh! feet wear swift wings,
 It's a terrible state when two dogs rule
 The heart of one who should be in school
 Not a minute later than 9 am. !
 However, you rascals when I'm back again
 I promise a good romp
 Be it sunshine or rain.

TO WINDZER, DEAR DOG

Windzer lad!
 It's good to see you round
 Chewing long bladed grass,
 Sniffing the ground,
 Shaking your shaggy coat,
 Raking up stones,
 Once again wolfing your food
 Gnawing at bones.

I missed you, dear lad,
 Prancing in liberty
 While I climbed up to School,
 Racing ahead of me.
 It hurt me to see you lie
 Quiet and still,
 Lonely and left behind
 While I climbed the hill.

But now lad, you're well again,
 Your tongue lolling out,
 In sunshine or monsoon rain
 Running about.
 Lolloping down the stairs
 Gaily you go,
 Barking at naught at all,
 Or chasing a crow.

Some day we'll hike again
 But not very far,
 For I must remember
 What an old man you are.
 Faithful eyes ringed with white,
 But God grant that you
 May long keep me company,
 Good lad and true,

TO MY PUSS

On whispering feet night crept
 Shod in pale moonbeams,
 Tapped on the windows as I slept,
 The windows of my dreams.

She enticed me from my warm bed,
 I slid slippers on;
 By the hand, me she led.
 What a moon shone
 Down on that winter's night!
 Lonely and wide,

Pale, alluring, silver light, -
 I gazed from inside,

Behind the clear window glass,
 The curtains wide pressed,
 Outside, I heard chill winds pass,
 As i rustling silk dressed,
 A shadowy group of trees
 Like a dark cloud,
 Scarce acknowledged the wintry wind,
 Aloof they, and proud.

Suddenly I saw a fay
 Creature stand still,
 Right in the silvery way
 That runs gently up-hill.
 It licked its paws, stretched itself,
 And gazed far and near;
 A solitary, fearless elf, -
 And then, - ah, my dear!

I find it's you, Pussykins,
 In .your overcoat grey,
 Stretching your shining limbs
 In your own graceful way.
 You gaze the world around,
 Just as I, here. -
 A little prince, moonbeam crowned
 My cat without peer.

Your coat, sleek plumbago grey,
 Dark lavender, your nose,
 You yawn in wide, feline way,
 Your tongue is bright rose.
 I can't see, but know
 Your immaculate attire;
 Your topaz eyes must be aglow
 With ancestral fire.

PROCLAMATION

KAI-PHUL PUKKA! Clear and loud
That joyful proclamation
Pouring from a bird-heart proud,
Fills our mountain station.

Kai-phul pukka! Hear me now!
Fruits are ripening fast,
Pull the heavy-laden bough
Gold apricots at last.

Kai-phul pukka! Hast thee, haste!
The sunny ground is spread
With fallen fruit for you to taste,
A fruit that's blushing red.

Kai-phul pukka! Ope your ears
And heed while yet I shout,
You may regret in after years
Your refusal to come out.

KAI-PHUL PUKKA - the call of the Himalayan Cuckoo.

KAI-PHUL PUKKA

WHY! there he is! I hear him now
His four clear notes insistent
He stands, I know, on some topmost bough
That bird, with song persistent.

He comes with summer and he brings
A spell of warm days with him,
And every day he shouts and sings,
His clear, arresting rhythm.

CUCKOO

Do I hear the Cuckoo! Yea
His bell-like tones bestir the 'day,
And echo, chorus to his lay,
Breathes, " Cuckoo! Cuckoo !"

Obedient to the summons see
The sun rise up and splash the tree
Whereon the bold bird sits, while he
Cries, " Cuckoo! Cuckoo !"

THE LARK

UP, up, up, I watched it mount
 On quivering wings,
 And as from some exhaustless fount
 Of hidden springs,
 Enraptured music poured o'er all the earth.
 Within me joy and beauty sprang to birth.

Straight upward flight! Unbroken melody!
 My spirit heard
 The message, that you sang so steadily,
 O small brown bird!
 Like you, my thought shall ever upward tend,
 And to my triumph song shall be no end.

Rising on Love's radiant, glowing wings,
 My eyes will rest
 On earth, beholding all true, heavenly things
 Made manifest.
 My endless song, will be the voice of praise,
 Extolling God and all His gracious ways.

MYNAH BIRDS

I ALWAYS miss the mynahs,
 When they slip away
 Some chill night in December.
 I miss their chatter gay,
 The scoldings, cluckings, whistles,
 Their insistence on their rights,
 I even miss the squabbles,
 And the flying-feather fights.

In March they never fail
 To usher in the Spring.
 One morning I will hear them
 Criticising everything,
 The way Custuras whistle,
 The way each nest is built,
 The way the garden loiters,
 And burrowing rats heap silt.

The iris lilies brighten,
 The grasses press for room
 Mynahs stalk the footpaths
 To admonish each new bloom.
 I enjoy these busy bodies,
 Their garb of rusty grey,
 Yellow beaks and leggings,
 And their optimism gay.

TO A SPIDER

Poor spider! my heart is smitten
 As I view your mangled frame,
 My work-on the floor.
 I feel a secret shame
 Hurting my thoughts, that I
 Should thus impulsively
 Have sentenced you to die.
 But you dared invade my petticoats!
 That's rude you know.
 You looked so black and large;
 Nor flick nor blow
 Dislodged you, Yourself afraid,
 You clung tenaciously,
 And so, alas, it seems
 This had to be.

The other day, I found you
 On my towel,-let you go.
 To-day you sped like lightning up my chair -
 I saw you not, but you should know
 The garden is your true domain.
 What lack of foresight
 Made you test my nerves again?
 And thus, -
 Poor fellow! little friend!
 I here lament your sudden end.

Against you, I could never
 Launch a diatribe
 In spite of creeps and jitters
 When we see your innocent tribe.
 For how often in the sun
 Dew-pearled have I seen
 In fragile loveliness,
 A spider's web, a gleam.
 Such a perfect, delicate web
 I have watched a spider weave,
 And to crush a spinner thus!
 Small wonder that I grieve!

Once, on the wall close by
 My mirror, while I dressed,
 I saw a spider, strangely
 Large, legs nearer pressed
 Than usual to its body, -
 Very still. Curious, I gently blew
 Upon, it, then made cry,
 For like a spring released, it leapt
 Before my startled eye,
 Right out of its skin!
 One second, and two creatures seemed
 to live,
 Then, lifeless one,
 The other swift and free!

"A miracle "I I cried; "but if I erred
 Thus hustling you, - please pardon me
 I did not know that there
 Before my very face
 I'd see the awe and wonder
 Of a miracle take place! "