

Classic Poetry Series

Norman Rowland Gale
- poems -

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Norman Rowland Gale(1862-1942)

Norman Rowland Gale (4 March 1862 – 7 October 1942) was a poet, story-teller and reviewer, who published many books over a period of nearly fifty years.

His best-known poem is probably *The Country Faith*, which is in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*.

A Dead Friend

IT hardly seems that he is dead,
So strange it is that we are here
Beneath this great blue shell of sky
With apple-bloom and pear:
It scarce seems true that we can note
The bursting rosebud's edge of flame,
Or watch the blackbird's swelling throat
While he is but a name.

No more the chaffinch at his step
Pipes suddenly her shrill surprise,
For in an ecstasy of sleep
Unconsciously he lies,
Not knowing that the sweet brown lark
From off her bosom's feathery lace
Shakes down the dewdrop in her flight
To fall upon his face.

Norman Rowland Gale

A Prayer

Tend me my birds, and bring again
The brotherhood of woodland life,
So shall I wear the seasons round
A friend to need, a foe to strife;

Keep me my heritage of lawn,
And grant me, Father, till I die
The fine sincerity of light
And luxury of open sky.

So, learning always, may I find
My heaven around me everywhere,
And go in hope from this to Thee,
The pupil of Thy country air.

Norman Rowland Gale

A Priest

NATURE and he went ever hand in hand
Across the hills and down the lonely lane;
They captured starry shells upon the strand
And lay enchanted by the musing main.
So She, who loved him for his love of her,
Made him the heir to traceries and signs
On tiny children nigh too small to stir
In great green plains of hazel leaf or vines.
She taught the trouble of the nightingale;
Revealed the velvet secret of the rose;
She breathed divinity into his heart,
That rare divinity of watching those
Slow growths that make a nettle learn to dart
The puny poison of its little throes.

Her miracles motion, butterflies,
Rubies and sapphires skimming lily-crests,
Carved on a yellow petal with their eye
Tranced by the beauty of their powdered breasts,
Seen in the mirror of a drop of dew,
He loved as friends and as a friend he knew.
The dust of gold and scarlet underwings
More precious was to him than nuggets torn
From all invaded treasure-crypts of time,
And every floating, painted, silver beam
Drew him to roses where it stayed to dream,
Or down sweet avenues of scented lime.

And Nature trained him tenderly to know
The rain of melodies in coverts heard.
Let him but catch the cadences that flow
From hollybush or lilac, elm or sloe,
And he would mate the music with the bird.
The faintest song a redstart ever sang
Was redstart's piping, and the whitethroat knew
No cunning trill, no mazy shake that rang
Doubtful on ears unaided by the view.

But in his glory, as a young pure priest

In that great temple, only roofed by stars,
An angel hastened from the sacred East
To reap the wisest and to leave the least.
And as he moaned upon the couch of death,
Breathing away his little share of breath,
All suddenly he sprang upright in bed!
Life, like a ray, poured fresh into his face,
Flooding the hollow cheeks with passing grace.
He listened long, then pointed up above;
Laughed a low laugh of boundless joy and love—
That was a plover called he softly said,
And on his wife's breast fell, serenely dead!

Norman Rowland Gale

An Orchard Dance

All work is over at the farm
And men and maids are ripe for glee;
Love slips among them sly and warm
Or calls them to the chestnut-tree.
As Colin looks askance at Jane
He draws his hand across his mouth;
She understands the rustic pain,
And something of the tender south
About her milkmaid beauty flits.
Her dress of lilac print for guide
Draws shepherd Colin where she sits,
Who, faring to her lovely side
To snatch his evening pension tries,
But skimming like a bird from clutch
The maid escapes his Cupid touch,
And speeding down a passage flies
Not fast enough to cheat his eyes.
Ah, sweet-lip ways and sweet-lip days,
And sweetheart captures of the waist,
How swiftly still the virgin runs
She's sure at last to be embraced!
Now Colin fires at kiss delayed,
And faster flits the red stone floor
Till Fortune yields the tricky maid
A captive at the pantry door!

The farmer with his fifty years
Is not too old to join the fun;
He pulls the milkmaids' pinky ears
And bids a likely stripling run
To find the fiddlers for a dance:
And in the cherry orchard there
A tune shall mingle with romance,
And love be brave in open air.

The village wakens to the bliss,
The crones and gaffers crawl to see
The country game of step and kiss
Beneath the laden cherry-tree.

The chairs and benches now are set,
Old John is wheedled from his pet,
The cider cup with beady eyes
Responds to winkings of the skies.
The farmer, burly in his chair,
Now claps for ev'ry fond and fair
To foot it on the grassy patch
While rustic violinists snatch
From out those varnished birds of wood
A tune to jink it in the blood.
Now Jane and Colin in a trice
Float sweetly round not less than thrice
Before their motion draws a pair
To revel with the dancing air.
The thrush, that on his velvet wipes
His juicy bill, protesting pipes,
And, somewhat as a piccolo,
Doth race the concord of the bow.
A virgin yonder by the tree
Rejects a mate who saucily
Would press, if she might only start,
Her modest homespun to his heart.
Ah, sweet-lip ways and sweet-lip days,
And sweetheart captures of the waist,
Though like a finch the maiden flies
She's sure at last to be embraced.

The orchard now is in full bloom
With rosy cheek and snowdrop throat;
The stars invade the growing gloom,
And rarelier sounds the blackbird's note.
But in this dewy little park
Love burns the brighter for the dark,
And till he use a stricter rule
Dear Cicely's cheek shall never cool!
The fiddlers storm a tomboy tune,
The shepherds closer clasp the girls
While skirts the more desert the shoon,
And rebel leap the loely curls.
The farmer glows within his chair
And muses on the dancing time
When he and she--a matchless pair--

Were warm and nimble in their prime.
God bless the man who, duller grown,
Can feel the younger heaven anew
By granting to his maids and men
A romp by starlight in the dew!
Ah, greenwood ways and greenwood days,
And soft pursuings of the waist,
The cheek must yellow out of praise,
And bent be those who once embraced!

And now they pant against the trees,
And, using darkness for their plan,
Girls loose the garters at their knees
And mend the clumsiness of man.
One virgin, thankful for the dance,
About the music shyly trips--
Her Love's a fiddler, and her love
Pops fruit in Paganini's lips;
Or finding on the starlit tree
The wife and husband cherry there,
She hangs the couple at his cheek
And hides the stalk with tufts of hair.
The girls are at the cider-cup,
And shepherds tilt the yellow base
Until a giddy amber flood
Runs, kissing, over Cicely's face,
And Dora's upper lip doth shine
With winking beads of apple-wine.
The fiddlers scrape a farewell tune,
The dancers dwindle in the dusk
While summer puffs of easy wind
Bring hints of cottage garden musk.

And thus the revel dearly ends
With milkmaid's palm in shepherd's hand,
And lovers grow from only friends
Where plum and pear and apple stand.
Ah, sweet-lip ways and sweet-lip days,
And sweetheart captures of the waist,
How fast so-e'er the virgin flies
She's sure at last to be embraced!

Bartholomew

Bartholomew is very sweet,
From sandy hair to rosy feet.

Bartholomew is six months old,
And dearer far than pearls or gold.

Bartholomew has deep blue eyes,
Round pieces dropped from out the skies.

Bartholomew is hugged and kissed:
He loves a flower in either fist.

Bartholomew's my saucy son:
No mother has a sweeter one!

Norman Rowland Gale

Bees

You voluble,
Velvety
Vehement fellows
That play on your
Flying and
Musical cellos,
All goldenly
Girdled you
Senerade clover,
Each artist in
Bass but a
Bibulous rover!

You passionate,
Powdery
Pastoral bandits,
Who gave you your
Roaming and
Rollicking mandates?
Come out of my
Foxglove; come
Out of my roses
You bees with the
Plushy and
Plausible noses!

Norman Rowland Gale

Cicely Bathing

The brook told the dove
And the dove told me
That Cicely's bathing at the pool
With other virgins three.

The brook told the dove
And the dove told me
That Cicely floating on the wave
Woke music in the tree.

The brook told the dove
And the dove told me
That Cicely's drying in the sun,
A snowy sight to see.

Norman Rowland Gale

Content

THOUGH singing but the shy and sweet
Untrod by multitudes of feet,
Songs bounded by the brook and wheat,
I have not failed in this,
The only lure my woodland note,
To win all England's whitest throat!
O bards in gold and fire who wrote,
Be yours all other bliss!

Norman Rowland Gale

Cricket On The Hearth

When red-nosed Winter takes the road,
An icicle his walking-stick,
When frost is on the woodman's load,
And snow is falling fast and thick,
Come, lusty youth and sapless eld,
Let's make a circle round the blaze
And talk of stumps,
Of nasty bumps,
That flew and came in sunny days.
For Cricket is played again, again,
At freezing time in Hull or Bath;
When summer's done the game's not gone--
There's Cricket on the Hearth!

Here's Jones from Rugby, Eton Jack,
And Grandpapa who, long ago,
Loved hitting when the Field was slack,
And crumped the bowling, swift or slow!
No more he's nimble on the green,
But what a history he tells
Of Surrey men
And hits for ten,
And heaps of most tremendous Swells!
For Cricket is played again, again,
At freezing time in Hull or Bath;
When summer's done the game's not gone--
There's Cricket on the Hearth!

The girls may call to Hide-and-Seek,
And lovely lasses take the floor;
But we discuss the Lob and Sneak,
The Canvas, Umpire, Over, Score!
How great a game to fill July,
May, June, and August with delights,
Yet in the frost
Be never lost,
But stir the blood on nipping nights!
For Cricket is played again, again,
At freezing times in Hull or Bath;

When summer's done the game's not gone--
There's Cricket on the Hearth!

Norman Rowland Gale

Dawn And Dark

GOD with His million cares
Went to the left or right,
Leaving our world; and the day
 Grew night.

Back from a sphere He came
Over a starry lawn,
Looked at our world; and the dark
 Grew dawn.

Norman Rowland Gale

Golf Steals Our Youth

Have you seen the golfers airy
Prancing forth to their vagary,
Just as frisky in their gaiters
As a flock of Grecian Satyrs,
Looking everything heroic,
And magnificently stoic,
In a dress of such a pattern
As would fright the good God Saturn?

Have you heard them curse the sparrow
Fit to freeze your inmost marrow,
When the ball, that should be flitting,
On the grass remaineth sitting?
Have you watched their cheerful scrambles
In the soft and soothing brambles
While the foe, elate and sneering,
Passes gradually from hearing?

After blaming all the witches,
After rending holes in breeches,
After getting in a muddle
With each rivulet and puddle,
They return, a ll labour ended,
To record their prowess splendid,
And renew by dictionary
Their fatigued vocabulary.

Let these gentlemen ecstatic,
In their costumes so emphatic,
Crawl to find a rounded treasure
In the horse-pond at their pleasure.
What so good when time is sunny,
And the air as sweet as honey,
At the game of crease and wicket,
England's proper pastime--Cricket?

Norman Rowland Gale

Holy Ground

Shy maids have haunts of still delight,
The lover glades he never tells;
And one is mine where mass the bright
And odoured chimes of foxglove-bells.

A dewy, covert, silent place
Where surely long ago God walked
Close to His creature's blinded face,
And for his finer moulding talked.

There hawthorn glows as if, white-hot,
God present, it were sacred found
To preach a creed too oft forgot--
That all we tread is holy ground.

Ah, could we but remember this,
Our thoughts would spring as purely up
To labour for our fellows' bliss
As doth to heaven a snowdrop's cup!

Norman Rowland Gale

Most Anglers Are Very Humane

The kind-hearted angler was sadly pursuing
His calling unhallowed of choking the fishes;
He bitterly wept, for of course he was doing
An action most strongly opposed to his wishes!

His vertebra shook as he musingly planned
How kindly to threadle the worm he'd begun--it
Was plain had the reptile possessed a right hand
The penitent angler would gladly have wrung it!

He cast in his float filled with tearful emotion
And murmured "How fearful, how terrible this is!"
And just at that moment, amid some commotion,
He jerked out a panting and rather small piscis!

"Unfortunate fishlet, what dread impulse brought you
To meddle with bait which I carelessly threw in?
My dear little swimmer, I'm sorry I caught you,
So please don't blame me for contriving your ruin!"

"O barbel and salmon-trout, tench, dace and gudgeon,
O ev'ry fat jack and each eel (not a conger)
Why, why will you grieve me and stir up my dudgeon?
Go, die on his hooks who has eyes that are stronger!"

But, however, whilst moaning he pulled out a score,
And continued his wonderful luck till at last--it
Was plain that his soft heart could bear it no more,
Too deep were his groans, and--too full was his basket!

Norman Rowland Gale

My Country Love

If you passed her in your city
You would call her badly dressed,
But the faded homespun covers
Such a heart in such a breast!
True, her rosy face is freckled
By the sun's abundant flame,
But she's mine with all her failings,
And I love her just the same.

If her hands are red they grapple
To my hands with splendid strength,
For she's mine, all mine's the beauty
Of her straight and lovely length!
True, her hose be think and homely
And her speech is homely, too;
But she's mine! her rarest charm is
She's for me, and not for you!

Norman Rowland Gale

Oiling

Excuse me, Sweetheart, if I smear,
With wisdom learnt from ancient teachers,
Now winter time once more is here,
This grease upon your lengthy features!
Behaving thus, your loyal friend
No whit encourages deception:
Believe me, Fairest, in the end
This oil will better your complexion.
Fairest, believe!

Did you imagine in the bag
To sleep the sleep of Rip Van Winkle,
Removed from sunshine's golden flag
And duller daylight's smallest twinkle?
Well have you earned your rest; but yet,
Although disturbance seem uncivil,
Unless your cheeks and chin be wet
With oil, your beauteousness will shrivel.
Rarest, believe!

Absorb, that, when for our delight
The May unpacks its lovely blossom,
With beaming face, with shoulders bright
You leave the bag's congenial bosom.
Then shall the Lover and his Lass
Walk out toward the pitch together,
And, glorying in the shaven grass,
Tackle, with mutual faith, the leather.
Dearest, absorb!

Norman Rowland Gale

Old Letters

Last night some yellow letters fell
From out a scrip I found by chance;
Among them was the silent ghost,
The spirit of my first romance:
And in a faint blue envelope
A withered rose long lost to dew
Bore witness to the dashing days
When love was large and wits were few.

Yet standing there all worn and grey
The teardrops quivered in my eyes
To think of Youth's unshaken front,
The forehead lifted to the skies;
How rough a hill my eager feet
Flung backward when upon its crest
I saw the flutter of the lace
The wind awoke on Helen's breast!

How thornless were the roses then
When fresh young eyes and lips were kind
When Cupid in our porches proved
How true the tale that Love is blind!
But Red-and-White and Poverty
Would only mate while shone the May;
Then came a Bag of Golden Crowns
And jingled Red-and-White away.

Grown old and niggard of romance
I wince not much at aught askew,
And often ask my favourite cat
What else had Red-and-White to do?
And here's the bud that rose and sank,
A crimson island on her breast--
Why should I burn it? Once again
Hide, rose, and dream. God send me rest.

Norman Rowland Gale

On Seeing A Train Start For The Seaside

O might I leave this grassy place
For spreading foam about my feet!
The splendid spray upon my face,
The flying brine itself were sweet
If I might hear on Cromer beach
The freedom of Old Neptune's speech!

Ah, never language like to this
For those whose ears can understand!
Sometimes the coming of a kiss
To mate the ocean with the strand;
Sometimes the nameless oath is heard
The sea-god thunders through his beard!

I have a sea of blue on high,
I have a sea of green beneath;
For me sweet inland birds do cry
Until with joy I hold my breath;
But Ocean's harp of wave and stone
Is bird and leaf and stream in one!

Upon my dancing apple-sprays
The blackbird whistles melodies;
Half through a mellow run he stays
And flashes to a neighbour's trees:
He's rare, but rarer now would be
The strident pebbles of the sea.

And is it strange that round the shore
The lyric water should rejoice?
Ah no! for ever more and more
The happy dead are in its voice.
Majestic poet! might I be
As full of song, as finely free!

Norman Rowland Gale

Song - Wait But A Little While

WAIT but a little while—
The bird will bring
A heart in tune for melodies
Unto the spring,
Till he who 's in the cedar there
Is moved to trill a song so rare,
And pipe her fair.

Wait but a little while—
The bud will break;
The inner rose will open and glow
For summer's sake;
Fond bees will lodge within her breast
Till she herself is plucked and prest
Where I would rest.

Wait but a little while—
The maid will grow
Gracious with lips and hands to thee,
With breast of snow.
To-day Love 's mute, but time hath sown
A soul in her to match thine own,
Though yet ungrown.

Norman Rowland Gale

The Amateur Photographer

Beware of those who slyly pilch
In many cunning ways;
Beware of little lyres that filch
From undisputed bays!
Beware the tumbler's beaded brim,
The ass in fiercer fur;
But most of all beware of him
Who makes my pen to stir--
The Insecure
And Amateur
Implacable Photographer!

Beware lest, thieving for your thirst,
An earwig's in the plum!
Beware of folly, gay at first,
That later makes you glum!
Beware of pits when stars are dim,
The tooth of vagrant cur;
But most of all beware of him
That makes my pen to stir--
The masterful
Disasterful
Implacable Photographer!

Beware of angling in a stream
Whose trout are not for you;
Beware of trusting in a dream
That's gone before the dew!
Beware of truckling to a whim;
Of folks that always purr;
But most of all beware of him
That makes my pen to stir--
The premature
And Amateur
Implacable Photographer!

Norman Rowland Gale

The Ballade Of The Glutton

I'm greedy by nature, and often in vain
Have lingered too long o'er the succulent hare,
Accepting the jelly, ignoring the pain,
Intent on receiving far more than my share.
I worship the plover's egg, tasty and rare,
And idolize fanciful French fricasses;
But what, darling dainties, with you can compare,
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas?

I ask for real turtle, again and again-
Observe the Lord Mayor's John Thomases stare!
For kitchen-recitals to Susan and Jane,
And powdered impertinence, what do I care?
I sit down to eat, and I vow and declare,
I'd honour a dish were it made of stewed bees,
Though loyal to you, should you chance to be there,
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas.

I cherish a chef, be he Grecian or Dane;
I even can relish a collop of bear;
I love ev'ry calf- if it boasts a fine brain-
And melt at a pullet, or even a pair.
Though gold's on the table and stately the fare,
I greet a grand entree with almost a sneeze
If you, dearest dainties, are sweet on the air-
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas.

L'envoi:

O Redcoats of England, who struggle and dare,
Your glory's a morsel no glutton can please;
My yearning is all for a soft-cushioned chair,
Soused salmon and lamb and young ducks and green peas.

Norman Rowland Gale

The Country Faith

HERE in the country's heart
Where the grass is green,
Life is the same sweet life
As it e'er hath been.

Trust in a God still lives,
And the bell at morn
Floats with a thought of God
O'er the rising corn.

God comes down in the rain,
And the crop grows tall—
This is the country faith,
And the best of all!

Norman Rowland Gale

The Decimal Point

When first sent to School (now the Station was Rugby)
I fancied my masters and took to the boys;
I thought to myself--here 'tis plain I shall snug be
Revolving at last in an orbit of joys:
The Alphabet Grecian I quickly could stammer,
Nor ran any risk of a jaw out of joint;
I waddled sedately through Fatherland Grammar,
But own I was floored by the Decimal Point!

Le Roi de Montagnes was my Gallic translation,
And soon I was praised by my master, who said:--
"I certainly deem that, with good education,
A Scholarship laurel should circle your head!"
I revelled in idioms; I thrilled at the phrases;
I knew how to render "avaunt" and "aroint,"
But own that I shed many tears on the daisies
Of Rugby when stumped by the Decimal Point!

I mastered the building proceedings of Balbus,
And rarely omitted a requisite cum;
I never remarked that an equa was albus,
And deftly supplied the subjunctive with quum!
No canis to me was a dog in the manger--
A classic by Fate I was clearly anoint!
I own, though, I ran into desperate danger
When fogged and be-fooled by the Decimal Point!

Norman Rowland Gale

The Fairy Book

In summer, when the grass is thick, if Mother has the time,
She shows me with her pencil how a poet makes a rhyme,
And often she is sweet enough to choose a leafy nook,
Where I cuddle up so closely when she reads the Fairy-book.

In winter when the corn's asleep, and birds are not in song.
And crocuses and violets have been away too long,
Dear Mother puts her thimble by in answer to my look,
And I cuddle up so closely when she reads the Fairy-book.

And Mother tells the servants that of course they must contrive
To manage all the household things from four till half-past five,
For we really cannot suffer interruption from the cook,
When we cuddle close together with the happy Fairy-book.

Norman Rowland Gale

The First Kiss

On Helen's heart the day were night!
But I may not adventure there:
Here breast is guarded by a right,
And she is true as fair.

And though in happy days her eyes
The glow within mine own could please,
She's purer than the babe who cries
For empire on her knees.

Her love is for her lord and child,
And unto them belongs her snow;
But none can rob me of her wild
Young kiss of long ago!

Norman Rowland Gale

The Golden Game

If ever there was a Golden Game
To brace the nerves, to cure repining,
To put the Dumps to flight and shame,
It's Cricket when the sun is shining!
Gentlemen, toss the foolscap by,
Gentlemen, change from books to leather!
Breathe your fill of the breeze from the hill,
Thanking Bliss for the great blue weather.

If ever there was a bag could beat
The box possessed by Miss Pandora,
'Tis that in which there cuddle neat
The tools to shape the flying Fourer.
Gentlemen, watch the purple ball!
Gentlemen, keep your wits in tether!
Take your joy with the heart of a boy
Under the dome of the big blue weather.

If ever I feel my veins abound
With zealous blood more fit for Twenty,
'Tis when upon the shaven ground
Fair Fortune gives me runs in plenty.
Gentlemen all, while sinews last,
Bat ye, bowl ye, friends together!
Play the play till the end of your day,
Mellowest mates in the big blue weather!

But ever the ancient tale is told,
And History (the jade!) repeated:
By Time, who's never over-bowled,
At last we find ourselves defeated.
Gentlemen all, though stiff we be,
Youth comes along in finest feather,
Just as keen as we all have been
Out on the turf in the great blue weather!

There's ever the deathless solace left-
To gaze at younger heroes smiting,
Of neither grit nor hope bereft,

Up to the end for victory fighting.
Gentlemen all, we taste delight,
Banished now from the stream and heather,
Calm and cool on an old camp-stool,
Watching the game in the big blue weather!

Norman Rowland Gale

The Great Beech

With heart disposed to memory, let me stand
Near this monarch and this minstrel of the land,
Now that Dian leans so lovely from her car.
Illusively brought near by seeming falsely far,
In yon illustrious summit sways the tangled evening star.

From trembling towers of greenery there heaves
In glorious curves a precipice of leaves.
Superbly rolls thy passionate voice along,
Withstander of the tempest, grim and strong,
When at the wind's imperative thou burstest into song.

Still must I love thy gentle music most,
Utterly innocent of challenge or of boast,
And playmate of the sun's adoring beam.
Close kindred to thy softer tremblings seem
The sighs of her I covet, when she kindles in a dream.

Oft at thy branching altar have I knelt,
Searched for the secret, and thy lesson spelt
Before the athletes of the night had done
Their starry toil and joyous beams had run
To melt the ancient silversmith who loves the set of sun.

When Spring was budding in my heart anew,
Thy prayer for foliage soared into the blue.
Within thy branches myriad children heard:
Pale were their lips and fingers as they stirred
And promised leafiness enough to tempt thy favourite bird.

Quick was the wonder to amaze my sight:
Where stood the leafless suppliant towered a knight
Green to the helm and touching lips with May!
Far on the hill the wheatstalks stopped from play
To call across the valley love to leaves more fine than they.

Then wert thou vocal, hospitable king!
Safe in thy heart the birds were glad to sing,
For dove and stormcock to thy breast had come;

And at the perfect hour a moony foam
And starlight fell upon the thrush that made thy bosom home.

As gentle gatherer of the weary wing,
Happy to quaff from the eternal spring
That damps the woodwren's feather-swollen breast,
Thou lendest to my heart a deeper rest,
Working with priceless balm a miracle for thy guest.

On thee, in green and sunshine greatly stoled,
Thy kindred of the undulating wold
Obeisance, as befits their stature, spend:
Sweet is the embassy, with wind for friend,
When lofty limes of Todenham Church their fragrant homage send.

Rightly they worship. Rightly comes the maid
To look for love beneath thy bounteous shade;
Rightly as these the village children haste,
And with their sunburned fingers interlaced
Fasten a living girdle round thy cool and stalwart waist.

For games and grief thou hast an equal heart,
Giving to all petitioners the needed part.
Often I ask the shape of him who fled
To drink of knowledge at the fountain-head:
He pulses in the shadow as a fugitive from the dead.

Old noble of the county, once we twain
Beneath thy roof discoursed of bliss and pain;
And, looking upward for the star Content,
Laughed deep at soul to watch the sunbeams sent
In coveys glittering all along the field of firmament.

If ever the travelled spirit can return
Where once in earthly bliss 'twas proud to burn
In hard-won triumph over resolute clay,
'Tis here my friend shall fold his wings and stay
To fill my unforgetting heart with tremulous holiday.

The tryst is here. Brother, I shall not fail
Whether in Summer's ripeness, Winter's hail.
Come most in Autumn's sympathetic charms,

When opal hazes touch the red-roofed farms,
And in the night the beech-tree holds the red moon in his arms.

And tell me, Brother, if the shining plan
Of resurrection chooses only man;
If every friend of plain and upland dies.
For I would have this turreted tree arise
To lord it over beeches in the forest of Paradise.

Fast in the ample chamber of his bole
There dwells, perchance, an unintelligible soul
Destined to tower in some celestial wold,
Where you and I, conversing as of old,
May watch the Alps of Heaven become as mountains made of gold.

Or bend to watch how cunningly the earth
Tangles our kin in webs of tears and mirth,
And soils them even as they fly the stain;
And, seeing this, may find that Heaven is vain
To keep earth-broken hearts from breaking in Heaven again

Till shines the hour when Home is truly Home,
With all the brave and dear familiars come:
Assembled ripely in the lustrous sheaf
Of Love, and radiant in divine relief
From Joy that used to spoil the earth by whispering to Grief.

Norman Rowland Gale

The Hidden Wealth

Adam and Eve together stood
Amid the crop they both were tending,
While far away the feathery wood
Of Eden in the wind was bending.

And Adam, feeling in his veins
The better for his splendid tussle,
Laughed at his body for its pains,
And showed to Eve his hardening muscle.

Fine was the bread his sweat had earned,
Despite the fields of rock and thistle,
While daily wounds and baulkings turned
His olden softness into gristle.

So, thinking deeply of the life
Of chartered idleness and blisses,
Suddenly he seized his comely wife
And took her mouth by storm with kisses.

"Dear heart!" he cried, "we fare the best
When earth and labour roughly grapple.
Who could have thought the only rest
Worth having, centred in an apple!"

Norman Rowland Gale

This Peach Is Pink With Such A Pink

This peach is pink with such a pink
As suits the peach divinely;
The cunning colour rarely spread
Fades to the yellow finely;
But where to spy the truest pink
Is in my Love's soft cheek, I think.

The snowdrop, child of windy March,
Doth glory in her whiteness;
Her golden neighbours, crocuses,
Unenvious praise her brightness!
But I do know where, out of sight,
My sweetheart keeps a warmer white.

Norman Rowland Gale

To My Brothers

O BROTHERS, who must ache and stoop
O'er wordy tasks in London town,
How scantily Laura trips for you—
A poem in a gown!
How rare if Grub-street grew a lawn!
How sweet if Nature's lap could spare
A dandelion for the Strand,
A cowslip for Mayfair!

But here, from immaterial lyres,
There rings in easy confidence
The blackbird's bright philosophy
On apple-spray or fence:
For ploughmen wending home from toil
Some patriot thrush outpours his lay,
And voices, wildly eloquent,
The diary of his day.

These living lyrics you may hear
Remembering the lane's romance,
All hung in wicker heels to chirp
Thin ghosts of utterance:
But where the gusts of liberty
Make Ragged Robin wisely bend,
They quicken hedgerows with their song,
Melodiously unpenned.

If souls of mighty singers leave
The vacant body to its hush,
Does Shelley linger in the lark,
Or Keats possess the thrush?
The end is undecaying doubt,
And in some blackbird's bosom still
Great Tennyson may sweeten eve
And whistle on the hill.

Come, brothers, to this clean delight,
And watch the velvet-headed tit.
Here 's honest sorrel in the grass

And sturdy cuckoo-spit:
What shepherds hear you shall not miss,
And at deliverance of dawn
Shall see a miracle of bloom
Across the sparkling lawn.

The forest musically begs
To fan you with its leafy love;
Oh, fall asleep upon this moss
Entreated by the dove!
Here shall that sweet Conservative,⁵
Dear Mother Nature, lend to you
Her lovely rural elements
Beneath the primal blue.

O brothers, who must ache and stoop
O'er wordy tasks in London town,
How scantily Laura trips for you—
A poem in a gown!
How good if Fleet-street grew a lawn!
How sweet if garden-plots could spare
A bed of cloves to scent the Strand,
A pansy for Mayfair!

Norman Rowland Gale

Wages

My lass, when God
to suffer sent me,
no gifts he gave,
but only lent me
for gold, my breath,
for silver, labour;
the sky as a friend,
the grass as neighbour.

The Vineyard called
for workers many;
at eve I took
God's punctual penny;
Because I bowed
content, I fancy,
He gave me you
for wages, Nancy!

Norman Rowland Gale