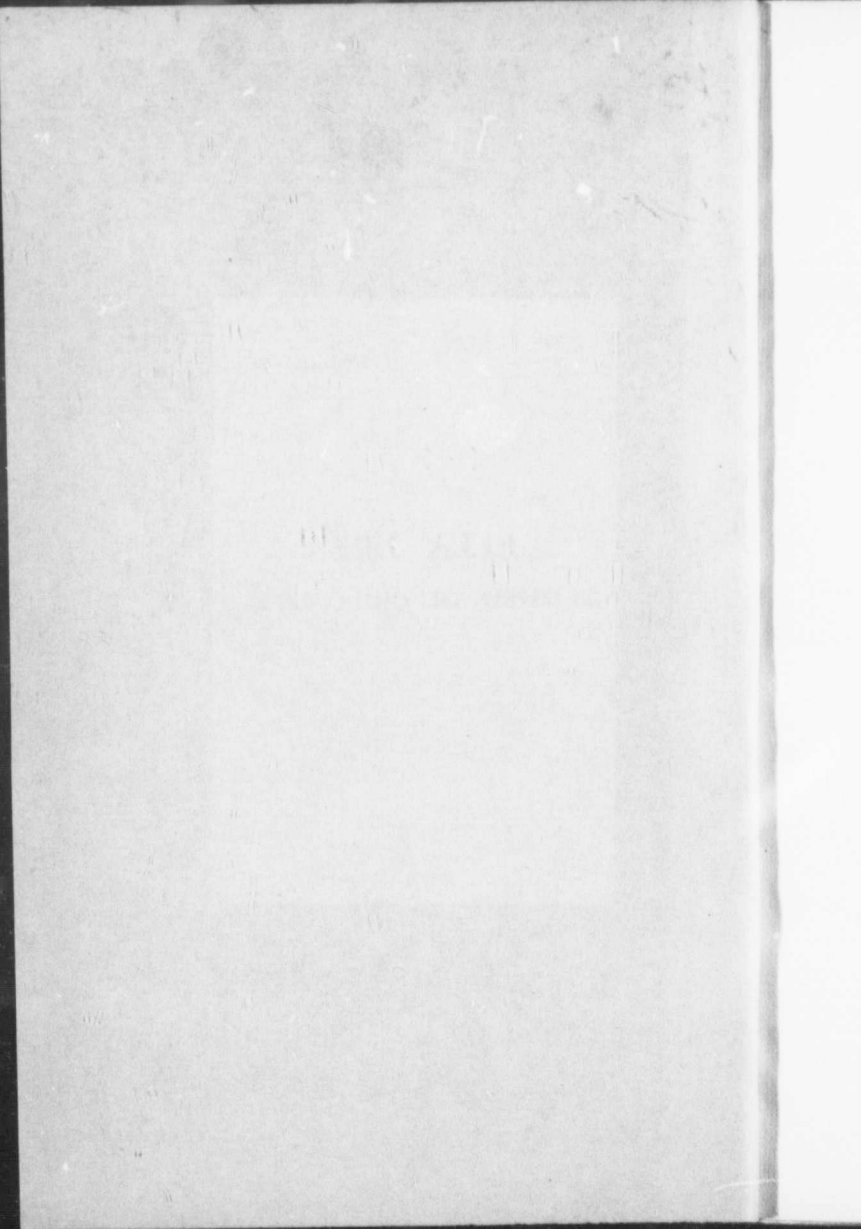


# ELLA LEE

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CHARLES E. MOYSE



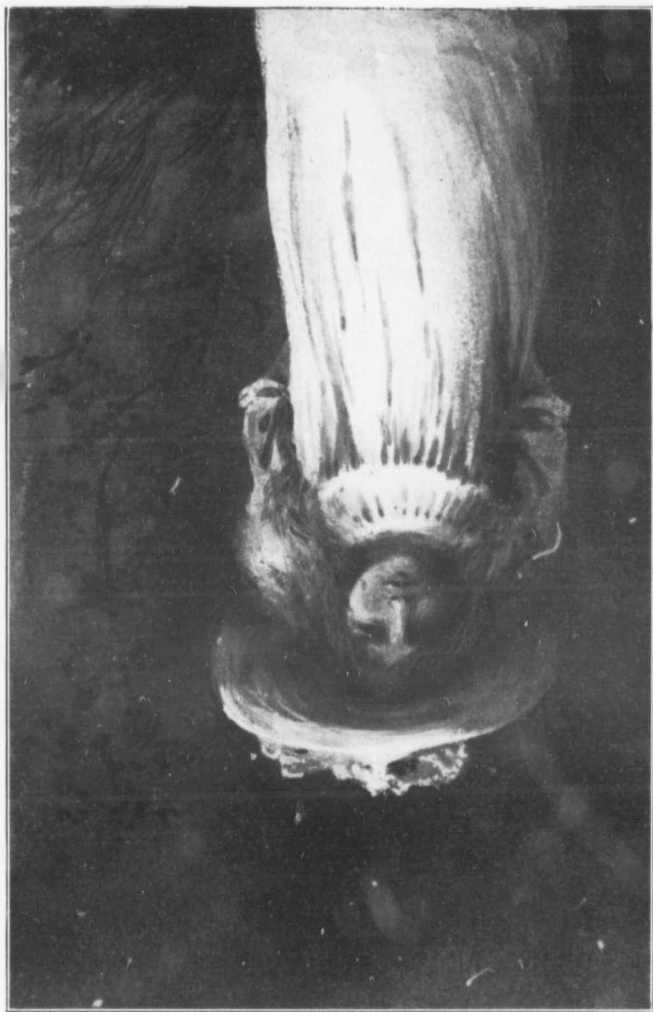
ELLA LEE

GLIMPSES OF CHILD LIFE





ELTA LEE.



# ELLA LEE

GLIMPSES OF CHILD LIFE

☆

BY

CHARLES E. MOYSE

*WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY*

W. H. DYER

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

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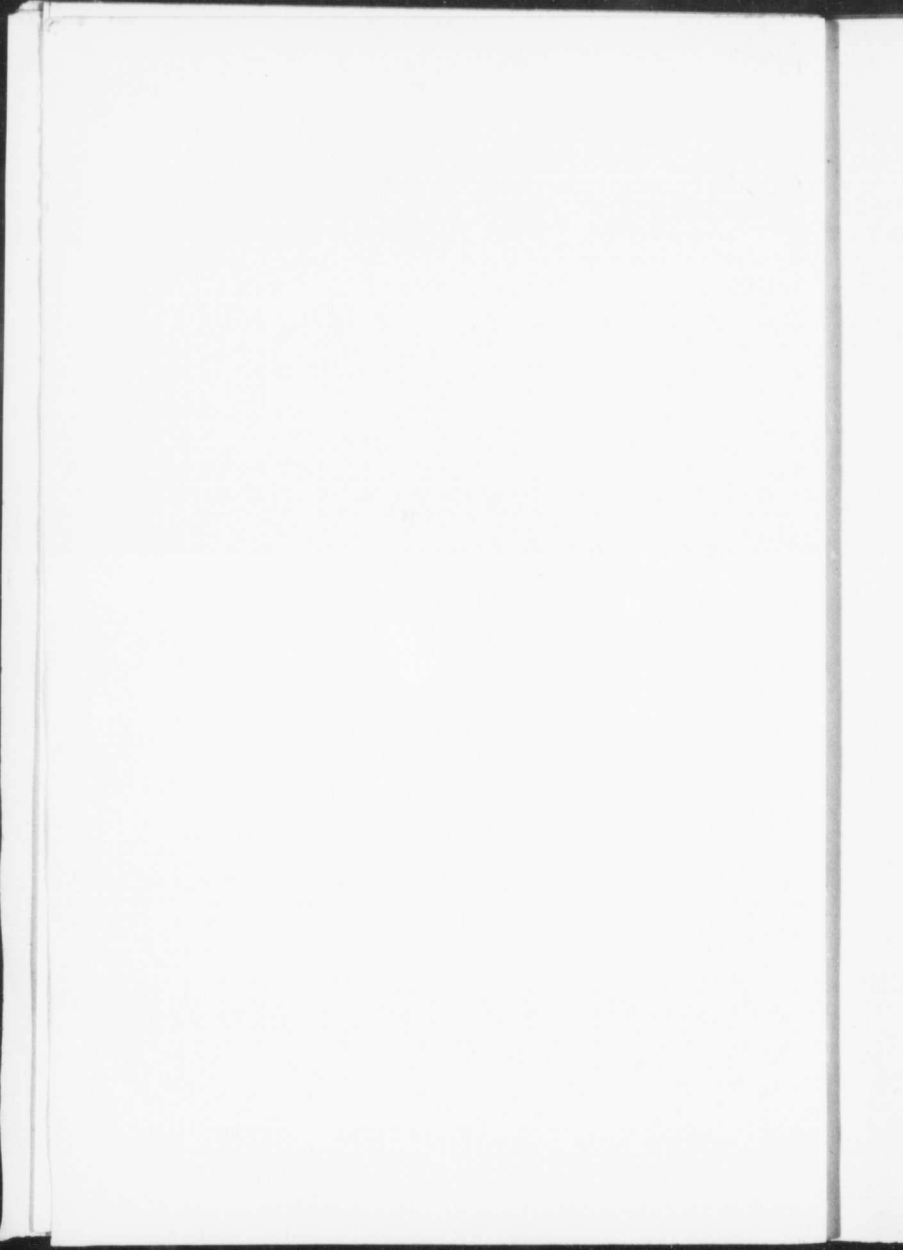
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## Prefatory

WHEN over-wrought I muse on life,  
What now it gives, what now receives,  
I open childhood's earliest book,  
And con, refreshed, its simple leaves.







CORBYN'S HEAD, TORQUAY.

ELLA LEE

## The Beach

O THE days when the sea  
Came up laughing and free,  
And we threw it back—splash!  
With a swoop and a dash,  
Of our spades, Ella Lee!

We were little things then,  
Hating big sailor men  
Who kept trailing long ropes  
O'er our own pebbly slopes,  
Each one shouting like ten!

How we scattered the pools!  
Like a couple of fools,  
So some poking sage said  
With naught else in his head  
Save the lore of the schools.

ELLA LEE

And a child's twinkling eye,  
Looking up, arch and sly,  
And two dimply hands laid  
On the prop of a spade,  
Was our only reply.

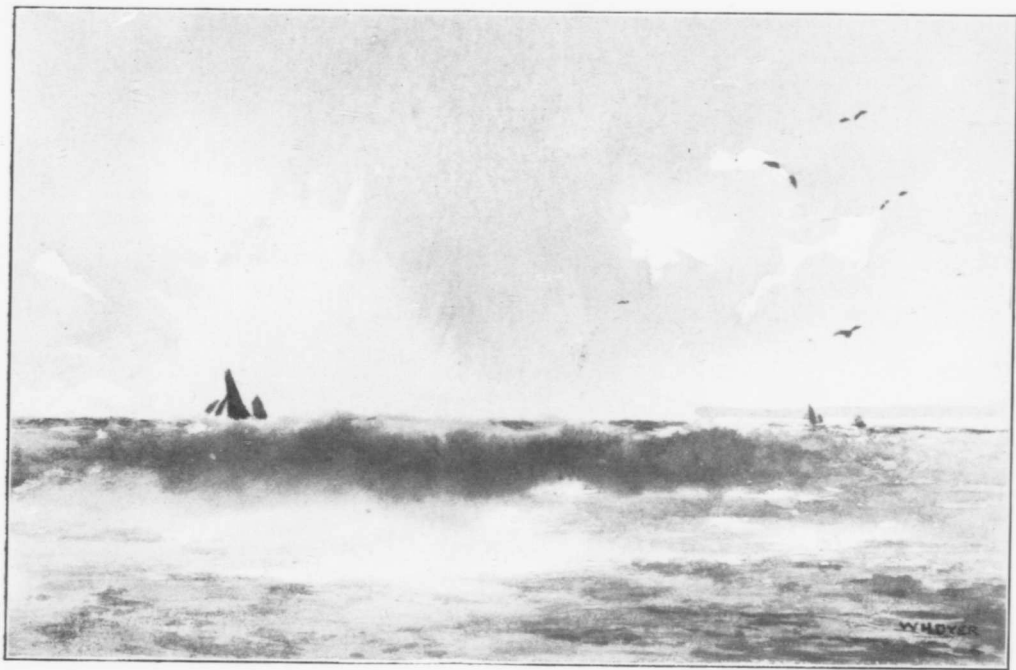
I can't tell half we did,  
But the golden hours slid,  
As the prawns and the shrimps,  
And the crabs and the imps  
Darted off and lay hid.

I can never forget  
The green glossy ledge wet,  
Where you soiled your new frock  
'Gainst the sandstone and rock,  
You remember it yet,

And the cave to explore,  
Round the point on the shore.  
How we pictured its sand  
With things sprawling and grand,  
That we drew by the score.







“ . . . . . when the sea  
Came up laughing and free.”

ELLA LEE

Then its windings all dark,  
Where we stand still and hark  
And pretend to be brave  
As the boom of the wave  
Smote its walls, damp and stark.

When the incoming tide  
At its mouth we descried,  
Off we'd scramble away  
Round the cape and the spray  
And now tumble and slide.

Ah, the last lingering charm  
We zigzagged arm in arm  
(We were little things then,  
Hating big sailor men)  
From the beach to your farm.

O the days when the sea  
Came up laughing and free,  
And we threw it back—splash!  
With a swoop and a dash  
Of our spades, Ella Lee!

" . . . when the sea  
Came up laughing and free."

ELLA LEE

## The Sand Castle

IS it Fortune's decree  
That once more we should see  
The wide far-stretching strand  
And walk over its sand,  
Velvet sand, Ella Lee?

That with most proper gait  
We should time steps sedate,  
Asking who still survives,  
Who are husbands and wives,  
Who has met common fate?

Musing children at play,  
And if we were as they;  
Marvelling what has beguiled  
The heart so of a child—  
In our elderly way?





THE SAND CASTLE.

ELLA LEE

Ella Lee, Ella Lee,  
As they are so were we,  
In the days when we two,  
Playing there, I and you,  
Forgot all in our glee.

When we'd lie in a nook  
With the thumb'd picture-book  
Opened wide on the floor,  
Our heads propped, as we pore,  
On our arms bent a-crook.

Spelling out lettered dates  
Of the funny black plates,  
Laughing, shaking, at sights  
Of the lobster-joint knights,  
With their heads inside grates.

But the view we most liked  
Was the towering and diked  
Castle, ancient and grim,  
(Double page to the rim)  
With its warders all piked.

ELLA LEE

Closing then the old tome,  
In hand shovels, we'd roam  
Down the long wooded glade  
And across the parade  
To the sand and the foam.

There upon the smooth sweep  
Of the beach our grey keep  
Would rise slowly, four square,  
With a real Norman air,  
By the edge of the deep.

What if now, Ella Lee,  
Miles a thousand times three,  
And a lifetime, divide  
Me from then, from the tide  
Of the pure Devon sea?

I mark standing as clear  
As if now they were here,  
The four walls high and stout,  
Where the long dents without  
Notched for windows appear.



ELLA LEE

All around the main pile  
(In our picture-book's style)  
Would we furrow the trace  
Of the great ditch's place,  
Then stand resting awhile.

When the ditch we had dug,  
Raised its walls thick and snug,  
Made its barbican port  
Opening on to the court  
From the rocks, with a tug,

Plucking weed soft as moss,  
(After cleansing its dross)  
Would we bed it, pat, pat,  
Into this face and that,  
With its ivy-like gloss.

On the castle we knew,  
You remember, there grew  
O'er the gateway a screen  
Of dense climbing plants green,  
And it gave us our cue.

ELLA LEE

Next, the thin ocean reed,  
Of a plentiful breed,  
Coming we knew not whence,  
Pointed out for defence,  
Where there seemed to be need!

And the building quite done  
We'd sit watching the run  
Of the wave with a swirl,  
Sapping more at each curl;  
Till, the outworks all won,

We would eye it thrown back  
In a frontal attack  
On our grey keep, four square,  
With its real Norman air—  
For awhile without crack.

Ne'er a moral we'd draw  
About castles of straw  
Or of sand—we were young  
And our souls were unwrung—  
As we watched the walls thaw.

ELLA LEE

So our way home we'd wend  
Till the same mood should send  
Us to build up again  
Our sand castle amain  
'Gainst the wave to contend.

Is it Fortune's decree  
That once more we should see  
The wide far stretching strand  
And walk over its sand,  
Velvet sand, Ella Lee?

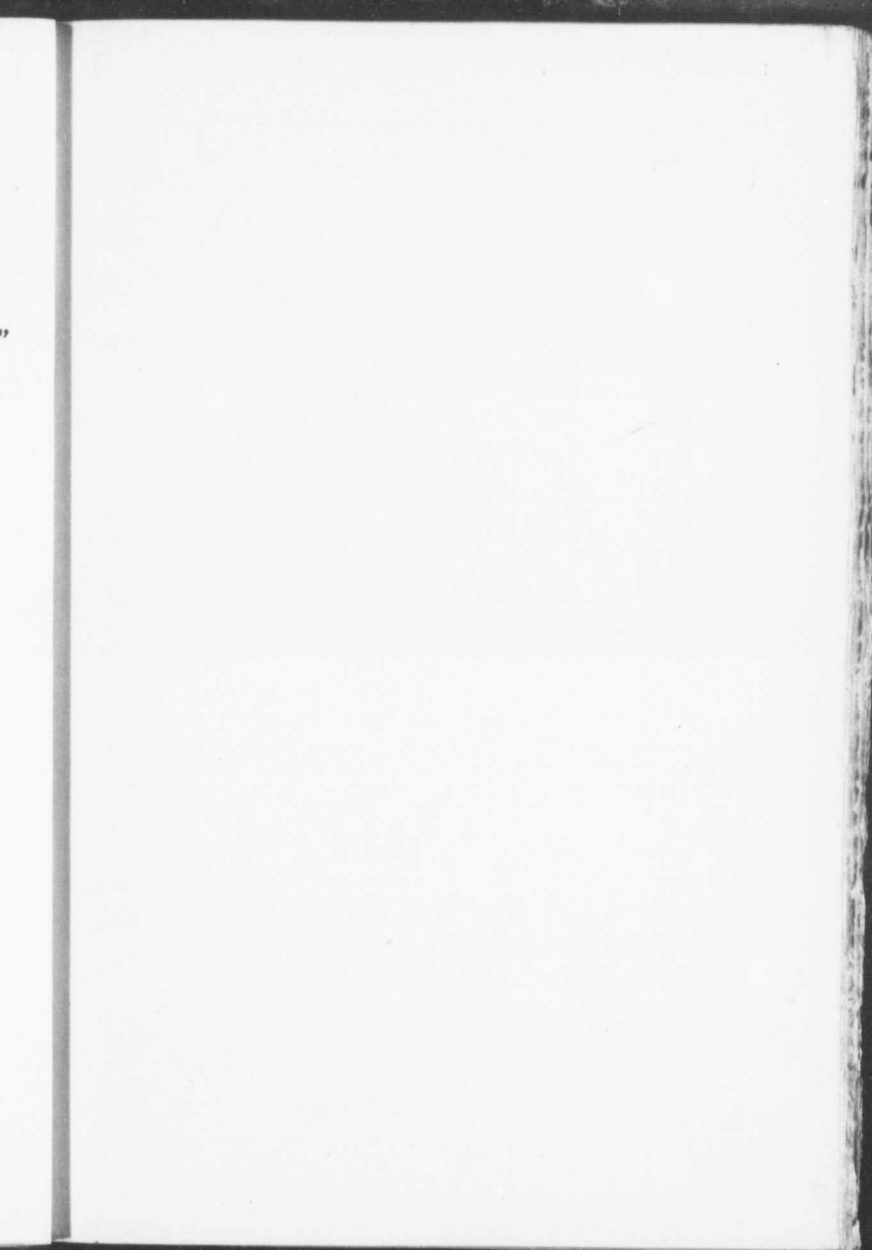
ELLA LEE

The Wild Plum Tree

“BUY my plums, fresh plums, fresh plums!”  
At the cry once more there comes,  
Ella Lee,  
To my sight an endless lane,  
Loved the most of strollers twain,  
You and me.

For you know we never found  
Where it went as on it wound  
Mile by mile,  
Climbing up and dipping down  
On and on, and from the town  
All the while.

Other lanes from end to end  
Every stretch and every bend,  
Every span  
Well we knew; to parts unknown  
Keeping single course alone  
Our lane ran.





THE WILD PLUM TREE.

ELLA LEE

From some crest we'd catch a view  
Of the moorland, purple-blue  
    'Gainst the skies ;  
Then we'd stop and try to trace  
Our land wriggling through the space,  
    Seeming-wise !

You recall our distant mark,  
Past the narrow slope and dark,  
    With the young  
Hazel-bushes' even screen,  
Shutting out all light between,  
    Over-hung.

Where—the straight and muddy slant  
Changing quick to level scant—  
    Spread a rill  
'Twixt two gates from hedge to hedge,  
Parting, with its watery wedge,  
    Hill and hill.

Ah the memory of the day,  
When we chanced so far to stray,  
    And espy,

ELLA LEE

In a field beside the slough  
A wild plum tree, waketh now  
    With the cry,

“Buy my plums, fresh plums, fresh plums!”  
On our fingers and our thumbs,  
    Whispering low,  
Branch by branch we told the prize,  
Peering round that other eyes  
    Might not know.

Then we danced as children dance,  
At some happy new found chance  
    By the tree;  
All its tiny fruits aflush,  
With the first faint purple blush,  
    Ella Lee.

Just to have, we picked a few,  
Of the darkest, I and you,  
    Not a score;  
And till autumn suns should make  
The rest ripe, we vowed to take,  
    Nothing more.



ELLA LEE

So it fell that now and then  
We would visit that far glen,  
    And we'd gaze  
At the dark and darker hue  
Of the plums no others knew,  
    In those ways.

When at last had come the time,  
For our spoils, at morning chime  
    Out we went,  
With a basket each on arm,  
(Mine from home, yours from the farm)  
    And we bent

Close beside the beach our way,  
Where the children were at play  
    By the main ;  
Yet we never turned our head  
As right onward fast we sped,  
    To the lane.

Not a moment's thought we gave  
To sand castle or to cave  
    Or to sea ;

ELLA LEE

For we pictured every bough  
With its plums beside the slough,  
Ella Lee.

And we sang some childish song,  
For the lane seemed very long  
Somehow, then ;  
Dipping down and mounting high,  
Twisting, straightening and awry  
Once again.

How two childish hearts beat fast,  
As we strode on down the last  
Sloping way,  
Leapt the brook's stones with a run,  
Slammed the gate close where our one  
Plum tree lay!

Ella Lee, O Ella Lee,  
Not a plum there could we see  
High or low,  
In the place of fruitage fair,  
All the branches rifled bare,  
Row by row.

ELLA LEE

Yet we neither raved nor cried,  
As we stood there side by side,  
    Ella Lee,  
For we had our world in view  
When together, I in you,  
    You in me.

So we turned, our hopes awreck,  
And encircled each a neck,  
    With an arm ;  
From the other down there hung,  
Just an empty basket, wrung  
    Of its charm.

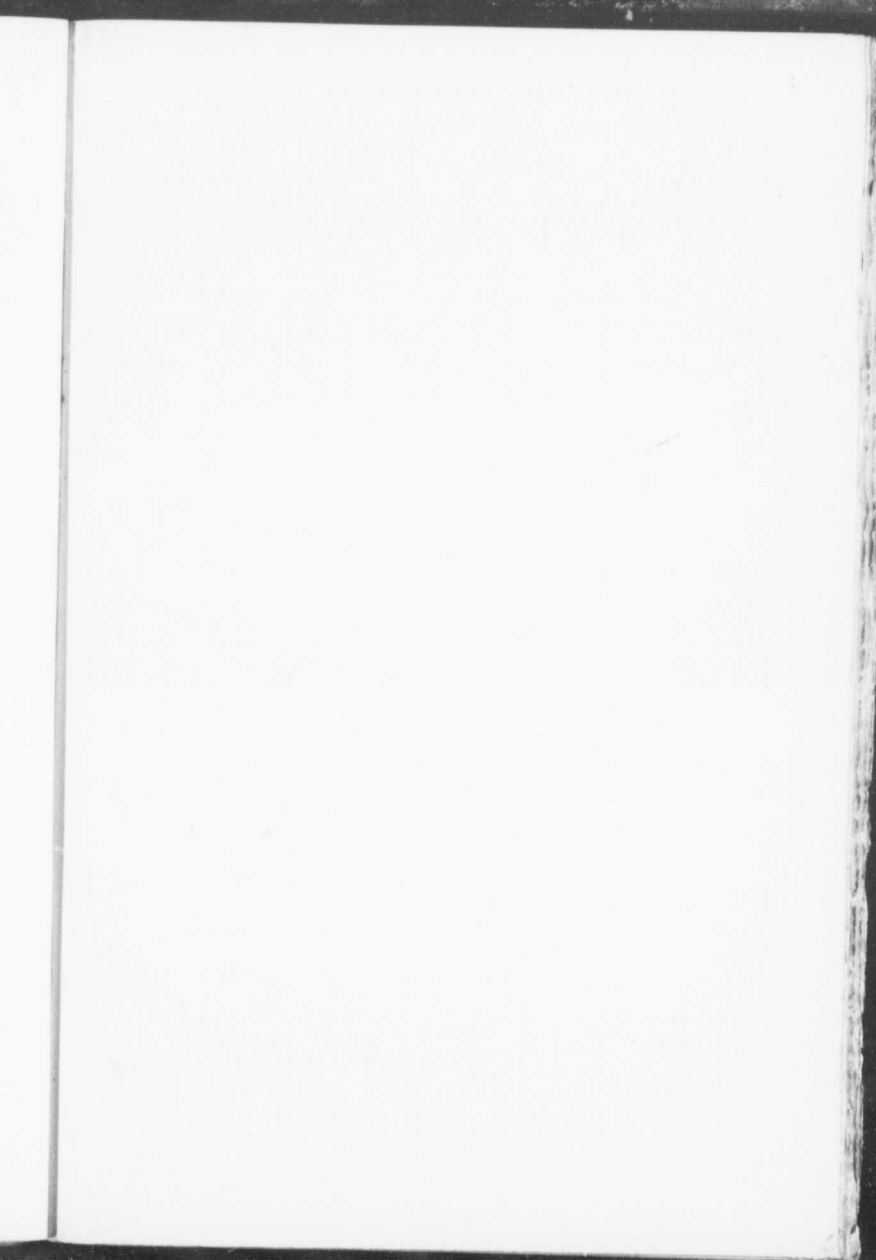
ELLA LEE

### The Lark's Grave

**B**ELOW, the chestnuts starred the wood  
With pink-white bloom in May,  
And beech-nuts brown came pattering down  
In Autumn's later day;  
Above, dwarf firs spread o'er the crest  
In stemmed and close array.

When most the wind swept cove and lea,  
We sought the wooded hill;  
Up paths a score the pathless floor  
Would draw our wandering will  
To where the cones and needles lay,  
And the ants were busy still.

So weird that grove, so lone it seemed,  
The loneliest grove we knew;  
Winds woke a strain like breath in pain  
Hard-fetched, whene'er they blew;  
Now soft, now loud, a note unchanged  
From the dark roof they drew.





"And up the road a man there came,  
With ready gun in hand."—*The Lark's Grave.*

ELLA LEE

No strips of sea or cape or town  
Fell on the circling eye ;  
Through vistas dim the shafted rim  
Seemed bolted in the sky ;  
Across the narrow rifts o'erhead  
The wandering clouds passed by.

One morning at its edge a shot  
Rang out—we paused to mark ;  
Soon came a whirr of wings, a stir  
Of branches, and a lark  
Fell wounded at our feet and died—  
Its breast, a blood-stain dark.

With sawdust quick we hid it quite,  
The hill's one sawpit near,  
Where all around on open ground  
Squared trunks lay piled in tier,  
Whence down the seaward slope there ran  
A cart road, winding clear.

And up the road a man there came,  
With ready gun in hand,  
Still on we played, yet felt afraid,

ELLA LEE

As tree and ground he scanned ;  
To questionings we shook our heads,  
We could not understand.

He left, nor could we bring our will  
The hidden bird to bare ;  
Our hearts were sore, for nevermore  
Its song would flood the air,  
Its eyes behold a widowed nest  
And the young ones waiting there.

Next morn we went and dug its grave  
And smoothed each ruffled plume,  
Where woodman's din was hushed, within  
The fir-grove's ample room ;  
And heavily the odorous air  
Breathed in the central gloom.

No sign we left to mark the spot,  
But bent our childish skill  
To make once more the pathless floor  
Unchanged, upon the hill,  
Where thick the cones and needles lay  
And the ants were busy still.







THE LARK'S GRAVE.

ELLA LEE

Gone is the wood, and lo, a net  
Of winding roads and fair,  
Shows pillared gate and trim estate  
And houses white that stare  
From out the green of garden lawn,  
And shrub and gay parterre.

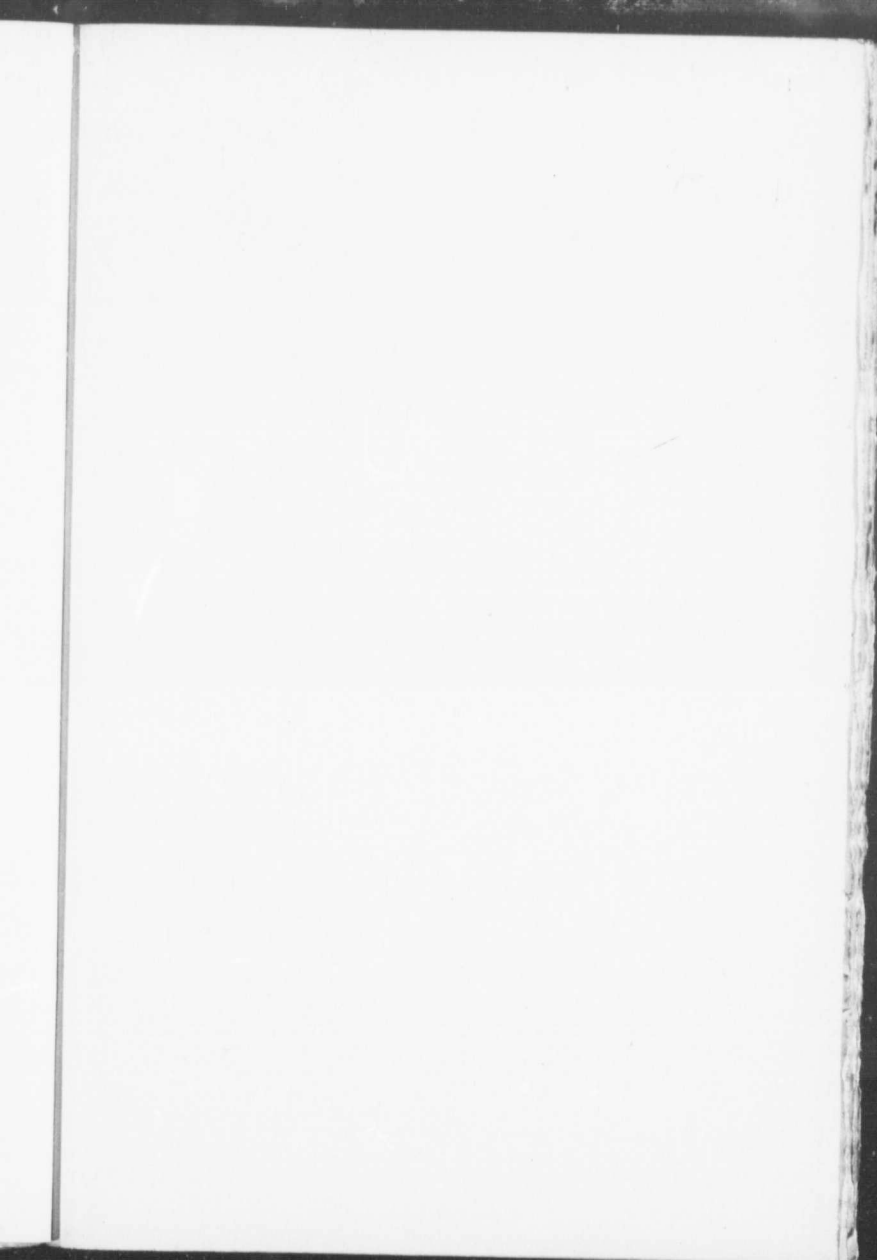
E'en now upon this distant lake  
A lark's song pure and free  
Is falling; ear a-poise once more  
The wooded hill I see,  
And by a lark's grave 'neath the firs  
Two mourners, Ella Lee!

ELLA LEE

The Abbey and its Mill

I N the hollow 'neath the hill  
    Stood a pool  
And, across the road, a mill,  
    Ever still ;  
    In the cool  
    Deep shade it lay  
Of the triple tree-lined way.

Like the mill to silence wed,  
    Smooth and green,  
With thick coat of wœd o'erspread  
    And kept dead  
    And unclean,  
    The stagnant pond  
Seemed to match the wheel beyond.





THE ABBEY AND THE ABBEY MILL.

ELLA LEE

Yet the mill in its retreat,  
    Long ago,  
Daily ground the grains of wheat,  
    Full and sweet,  
    For the low  
    Proud abbey near  
With its dull red front austere.

From it up the hill aslant,  
    Stretched the trees  
Which the monks, of boon not scant,  
    Used to plant  
    At their ease,  
    Dreaming they stood  
Till old age had rot the wood.

So they dreamed, and dreamed in vain,  
    Simple men!  
Might they view the scene again,  
    And the stain  
    On their glen  
    And abbey lands,  
They would curse our impious hands.

ELLA LEE

Strange the abbey's tale to tell,  
Ella Lee.  
When o'er land was cast the spell  
Of its bell,  
And o'er sea ;  
Then all day long,  
The abbey mill dripped its song.

Up and down, and up and down,  
Circling slow,  
Floats would cream, and floats would frown,  
As the brown  
Wheel would go,  
With ne'er a stay,  
By the triple tree-lined way.

Were we walking, Ella Lee,  
'Neath the limes,  
Often a quaint company  
Should we see,  
In those times,  
Ride on with state  
To the vaulted abbey gate



ELLA LEE

Knight and squire and archer knave,  
Clerk demure,  
Jester capped and abbot grave,  
Churl and slave,  
To procure  
Their inn and cheer  
At the bounteous abbey near.

Then the abbey bell would ring,  
(Silent long)  
To and fro in lusty swing,  
Welcoming  
A gay throng ;  
Now solemn toll  
The slow knell of parting soul.

And to men in twilight calm,  
O'er the mead,  
There would float the muffled psalm  
With a balm  
In its creed ;  
Then die away  
On the waters of the bay.

ELLA LEE

Hour of song no more or prayer,  
Or of vow,  
Doth the abbey bell declare ;  
In that air  
Only now  
The leaves on high  
Murmur vespers to the sky.

From the mill we know were borne,  
Legend said,  
Midnight sounds of spirits lorn,  
Grinding corn  
For the dead,  
With laugh and wail  
That echoed through the vale.

Though we never heard a sound  
From its wall,  
Yet we shunned the haunted ground  
Where it frowned  
In the pall  
Of shade that lay  
By the triple tree-lined way.

ELLA LEE

So we passed the waters pent  
    Green and still,  
And a furtive glance we bent  
    As we went  
    By the mill ;  
    Fearing to stay,  
Lest a ghost might watch our play.

It was ours the beach near by,  
    Ella Lee,  
Where the waves would spread and die  
    'Neath a sky  
    Bright and free,  
    Row after row,  
Just the same as long ago.

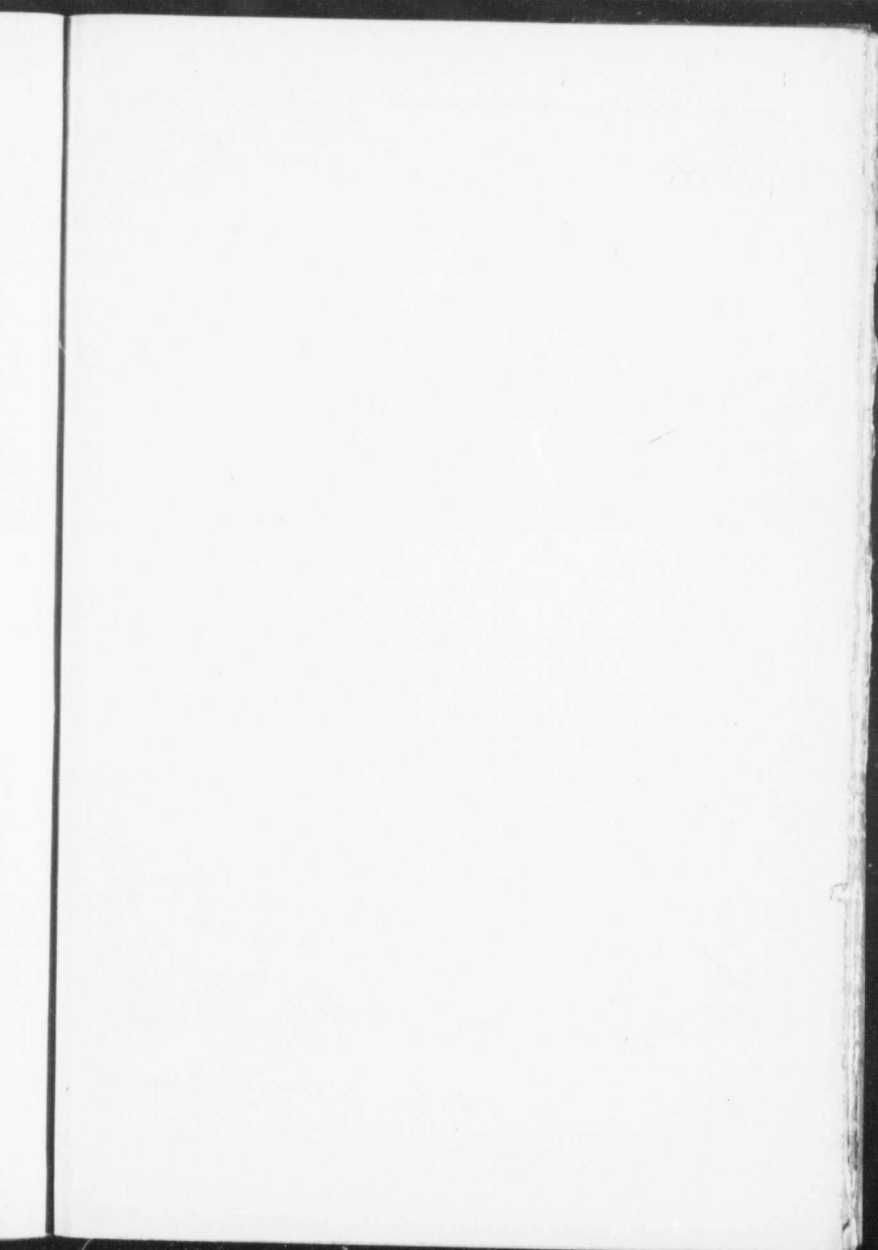
ELLA LEE

### Boat Sailing

PAST the mimic headlands sailing,  
Tiny capes of brown and green,  
Where, upon the water trailing,  
Seaweed fringed the friths between,  
Out our little craft would go,  
Started in a rival row.

Boats of various shapes and sizes,  
Some with one mast, some with two,  
Falsifying best surmises  
Of their makers, I and you,  
When we stooped and set them free,  
Down a ribbon of the sea.

Only bits of wood cut taper,  
Pointed, some, at stern and stem,  
Sails square fashioned out of paper,  
Knowing neither ring nor hem,  
Masts with sharpened foot to catch  
Tight within a slit to match.





BOAT SAILING.

ELLA LEE

Hull-less, void of any tackle,  
Bare of brace and shroud and stay,  
Without bowsprit, chains or shackle,  
Running full, they sped away ;  
Rudders—slips of wood or slate—  
Dipping down to keep them straight.

Sometimes in our fun we'd sprinkle  
On their decks a motley crew,  
Baby crab, louse, periwinkle,  
For we'd wonder what they'd do,  
When they felt their floating bed  
O'er the rocking wavelets sped.

Wading wide arms, slender leaping,  
We would follow to the main,  
Each of us to one side keeping  
Of the inlet's broadening lane,  
So if chance they ran ashore,  
We might point them out once more.

Some would sail on brave and steady,  
Holding true their course's aim,  
Others, caught in treacherous eddy,

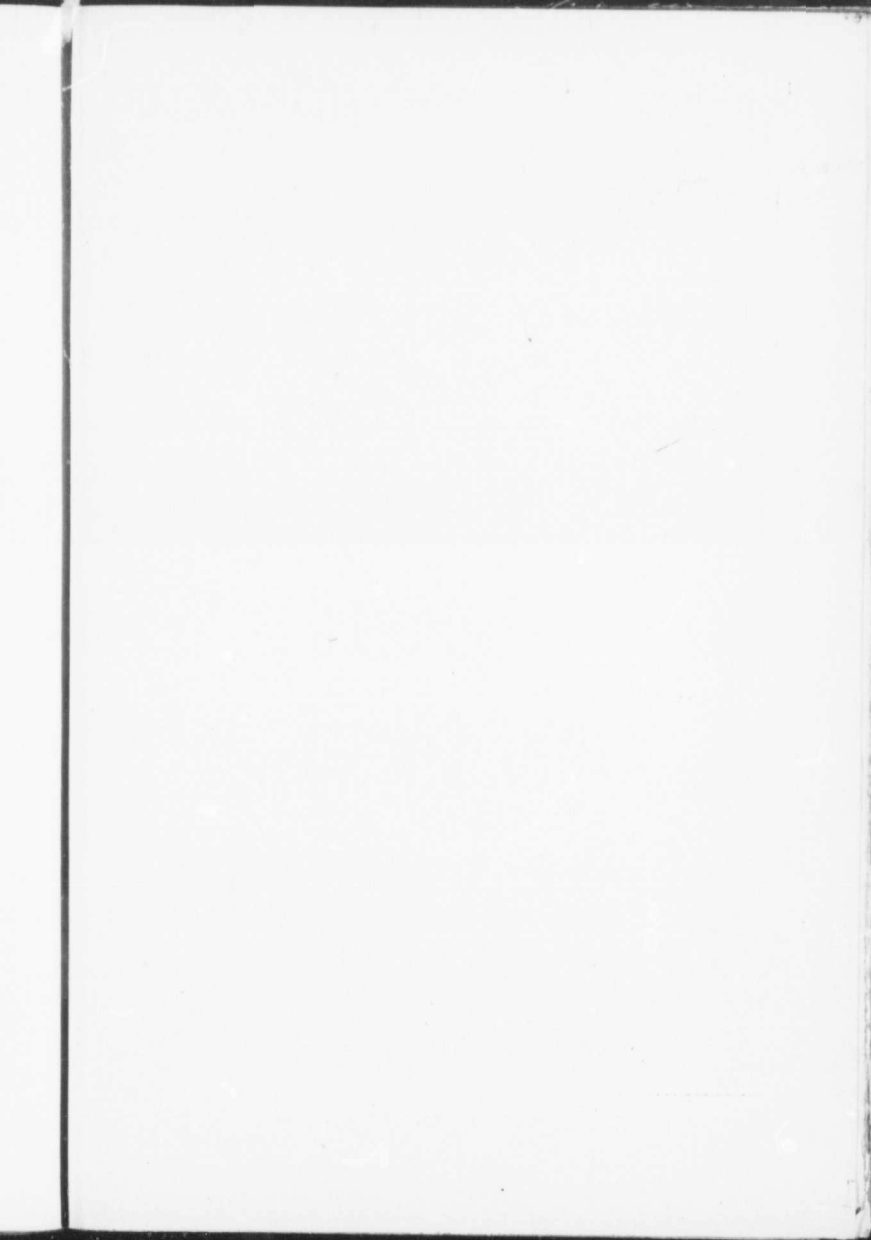
ELLA LEE

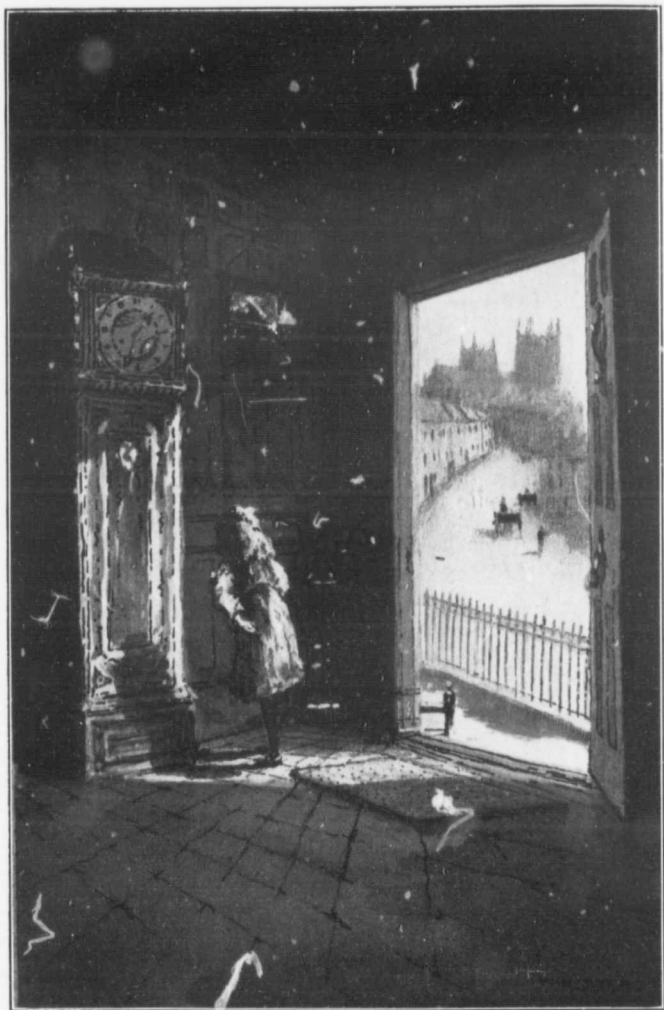
When a slanting puff there came  
Down the little gorges near,  
Would capsize in trying to veer.

Some survived without disaster,  
Reef and shoal and baffling breeze,  
Standing, we'd then watch them master  
The bay's larger rolling seas,  
Voyaging far out, and on,  
Till they were a speck—and gone.

Flagless they left port ; their nation  
Ne'er on earth can charted be,  
Nameless, without federation,  
Lasting as humanity.  
'Tis the land without a throne,  
Merely little children own.







GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK.

Grandfather's Clock

JUST inside the door it stood,  
With its case of polished wood,  
Dark and old:  
And its dial of burnished brass,  
That doth shine no more, alas,  
Shone like gold.

Antique it was, and made  
By a master in the trade,  
So they said;  
Yet his name grave there in script,  
And the date adjoined, have slipt  
Memory's thread.

Of the legend on its face,  
Lingers but a word as trace,  
Unforgot:  
'Twas where he kept clocks and chimes,  
And would snuff, no doubt, betimes,  
Bergamot.

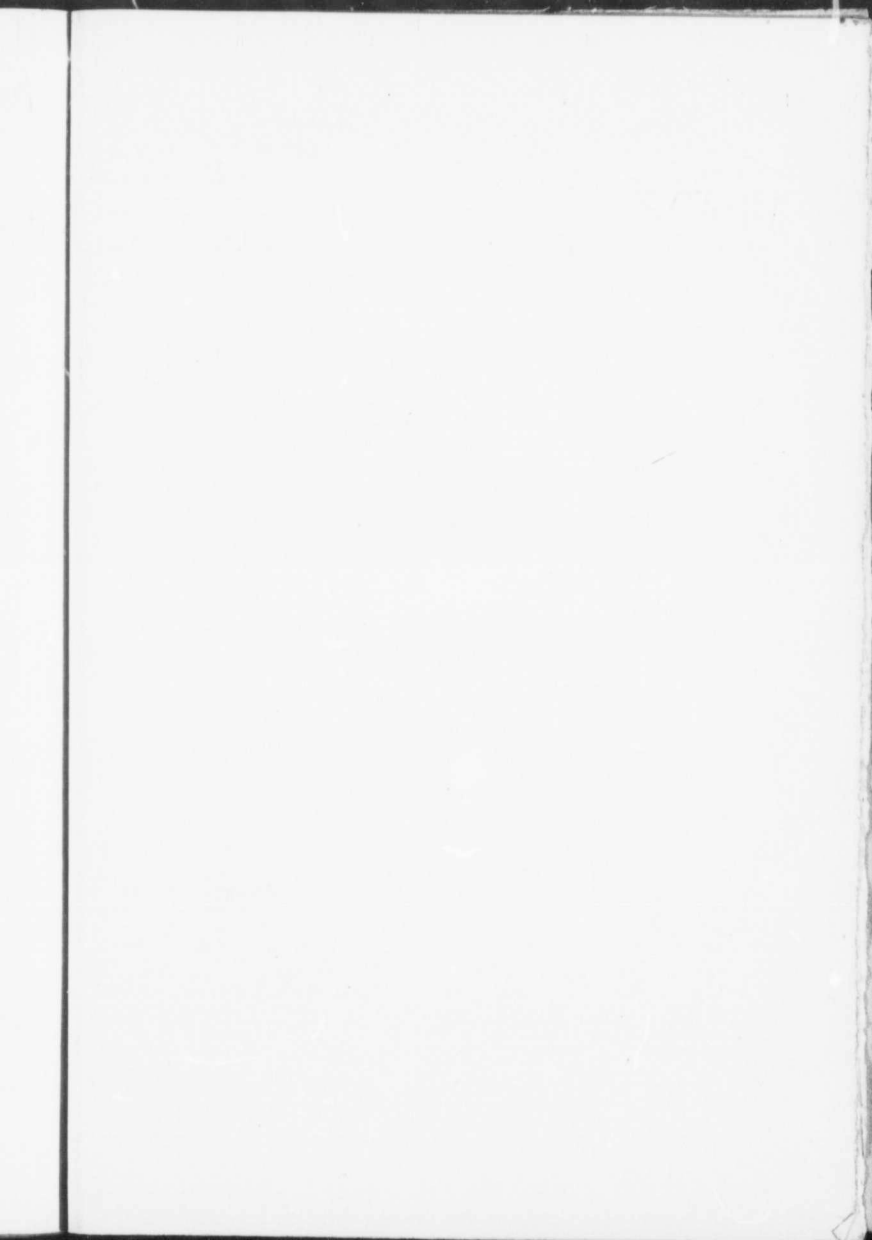
ELLA LEE

Where one summer holiday,  
We went guided up the way,  
    Ella Lee,  
Whose quaint house-tops packed a-row  
Watched the Exe in quiet bow,  
    Move to sea.

And we stood, with uplift eye,  
The cathedral towers close by,  
    Huge and twain :  
Yes, the glory of the hill,  
And those shapes gigantic still  
    Haunt the brain.

Then the minster clock we scanned,  
With a fleur-de-lis for hand,  
    On a sun :  
Saw the moon, a tiny mite,  
Show with orb of black-and-white,  
    How months run.

Not a sound fell on our ear  
As we looked at sun and sphere  
    On the wall :





H. DYER

EXETER CATHEDRAL.

ELLA LEE

Still expecting the tick-tock,  
Of our own familiar clock,  
    In the hall.

Quiet in the transept there,  
Hangs that curious face and bare,  
    Unenshrined :  
But around the face we knew,  
And beneath, carved shapes we'd view,  
    Intertwined.

Horns of plenty shedding flowers  
On the trellis work of bowers  
    Hanging fruit :  
While afar in woodland glade  
Dancing forms were seen that played  
    Pipe and lute.

Ah, those grinning faces wild  
Drew the glances of a child,  
    Tossing free :  
Made it marvel who they were  
With their flower-enwreathed hair,  
    Ella Lee.

ELLA LEE

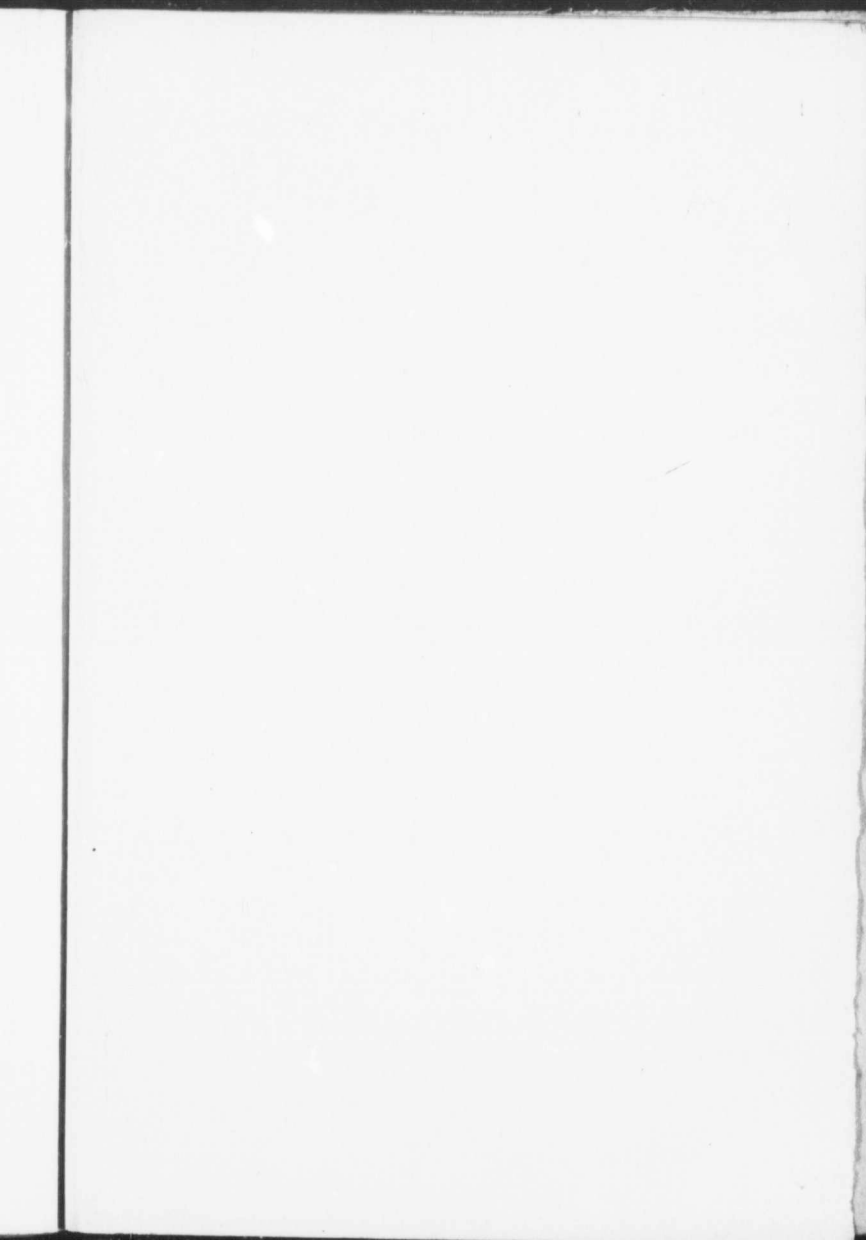
Naught we'd heard of faun and Pan,  
But of Crusoe and his man  
    All the tale,  
And of savages in dance,  
Heeding not their victim's glance,  
    Or his wail.

For a galleon's room of state,  
That was doomed to captive fate,  
    Were they wrought :  
When she towered in her pride,  
O'er the calm of Tagus' tide,  
    All unfought.

Then they sailed—'twas later spring—  
Those strange revellers carved in ring,  
    Northward bound :  
Saw the grandees brave and fine,  
Feast and pledge their toasts in wine,  
    Round on round.

Heard the Biscay tempest roar,  
When the helmsman steered for shore,  
    Pale and dumb :







HEYTOR ROCKS FROM THE TEIGN VALLEY.

ELLA LEE

And, at last, saw splinters fly,  
And men stagger, fall, and die,  
Overcome.

Then our case in all its pride,  
Came from panelled cabin's side,  
Stripped with glee :  
When o'er fleet that dared invade  
Fell to English gun and blade,  
Victory.

And I know not how or why,  
On the face a little sky,  
White and blue,  
Canopied a swinging ship,  
That would rise, and then would dip,  
Slow and true.

Her long pennant thin streamed there,  
With its waves in breathless air,  
Gently rocked :  
Castled poop and castled prow  
In a noiseless surge would plow—  
Ever mocked—

ELLA LEE

On a sea flecked o'er with foam,  
Never drawing nearer home,  
    Sun by sun,  
Though the watch-bells used to chime,  
Bidden by her watchman, Time,  
    One by one.

Oft when wild gusts smote the pane,  
And made ridges of the rain,  
    And we read  
Of coral islet lapped in calm,  
Where the long leaves crown the palm  
    Overhead :

That tick-tock seemed company,  
And the sky and shoreless sea,  
    Flecked with white,  
And the queer old moving ship,  
That would rise and then would dip,  
    Day and night.

But the clock rests now no more  
Just inside the entry door,  
    Ella Lee!

ELLA LEE

And its face of burnished brass  
Welcomes home, no more, alas,  
    You and me.

For a new strange house now stands  
In your sloping pasture lands :  
    And the wall  
Has vanished, clock and chime,  
Where the ship was rocked by Time,  
    In the hall.

## BALLADS AND LYRICS

### The Last Room

THERE, close the door !  
I shall not need these lodgings any more.  
Now that I go, dismantled wall and floor  
Reproach me and deplore.

'How well,' they say,  
'And silently we served you day by day,—  
Took every mood, as you were sad or gay  
In that strange mortal way.'

These patient walls  
Seem half to know what suffering befalls  
The steadfast soul whom destiny appalls  
And circumstance enthalls.

A solitude,  
Dim as an orchard, quiet as a wood ;  
My six mute friends who stolidly withstood  
Tempest and turmoil rude ;

One door, wherethrough  
Came human love in little gown and shoe ;  
One window, where great Nature robed in blue  
Smiled benediction too ;

And one hearthstone,  
The kind primeval fire-god made his own,—  
Bringing us back the wood life we had known,  
With lighted log and cone.

## THE LAST ROOM

Here life was spent  
To glorify one mortal tenement,  
Where freedom turned the key on discontent  
And bade the world relent.

Great friendship here  
Turned falsehood out of doors without a fear,  
And brought the golden age of dreamers near  
For one all too brief year.

Good friends, good-bye !  
The soul is but a child ; hear its poor cry,  
'Remember in what lovers' tenancy  
We lived here, she and I !'

Will you forget  
Spilt fragrances of rose and cigarette,  
And those faint odours more delirious yet,  
Marked in Time's margin, *Set?*

Will you not hold  
Some echo of bright laughter uncontrolled,  
As water bubbling out of jugs of gold,  
Until the world is old ?

With one farewell  
I leave you now, with not a word to tell  
Where comedy and moonshine used to dwell  
Within a brick-built cell.

In days to be  
Others shall laugh here, roister and make free,  
Be bold or gay,—but no such comedy  
As blessed this life for me.

## BALLADS AND LYRICS

In nights to come  
Others shall dream here, radiant or glum,  
Pondering the book God gives us each to thumb,—  
Our page to solve and sum,—

But nevermore  
Such moonshine as would tread this square of floor,  
And for love's sake illumine and explore  
The dark at sorrow's core.

'The sad Pierrot  
Lived here and loved,'—how will the story go?—  
'Caught rapture from the moment's zest or woe,  
One winter long ago.

'Here did Pierrette  
Throw dice with destiny to pay love's debt,  
Gay, kind, and fearless, without one regret  
When the last stake was set.'

Peace, peace, fair room,—  
My peace be with them still, through shine and gloom,  
Who here may sojourn, ere they too resume  
This search for house and home.

Now, to explore!  
The impatient wind is in the corridor;  
Fate lays a finger on my sleeve once more;  
And I must close this door.



## THE UNRETURNING

### The Unreturning

THE old eternal spring once more  
Comes back the sad eternal way,  
With tender rosy light before  
The going-out of day.

The great white moon across my door  
A shadow in the twilight stirs ;  
But now for ever comes no more  
That wondrous look of Hers.

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