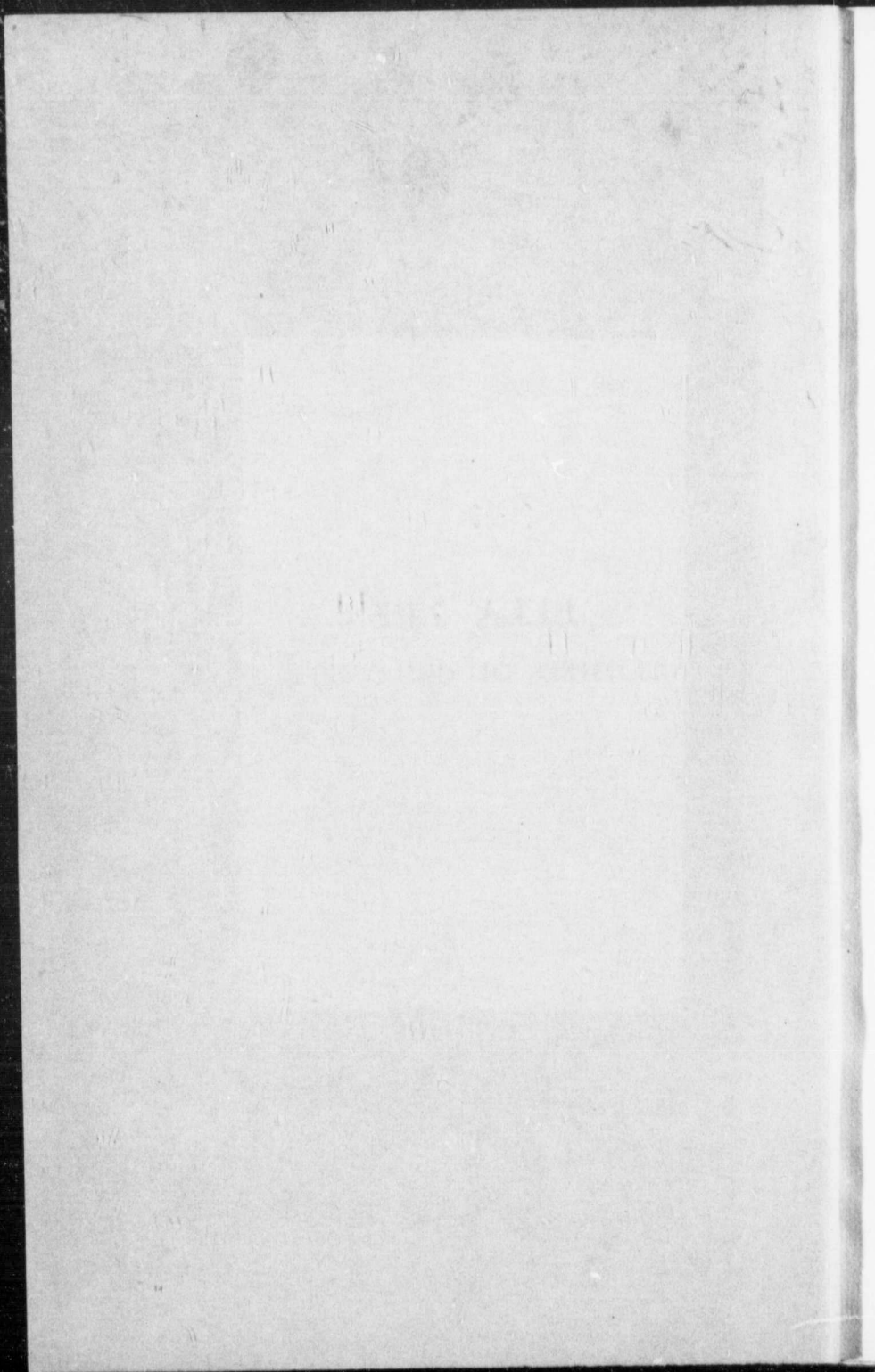


ELLA LEE

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CHARLES E. MOYSE



ELLA LEE

GLIMPSES OF CHILD LIFE





ELLA LEE.

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GLIMPSES OF CHILD LIFE

BY
CHARLES E. MOYSE

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
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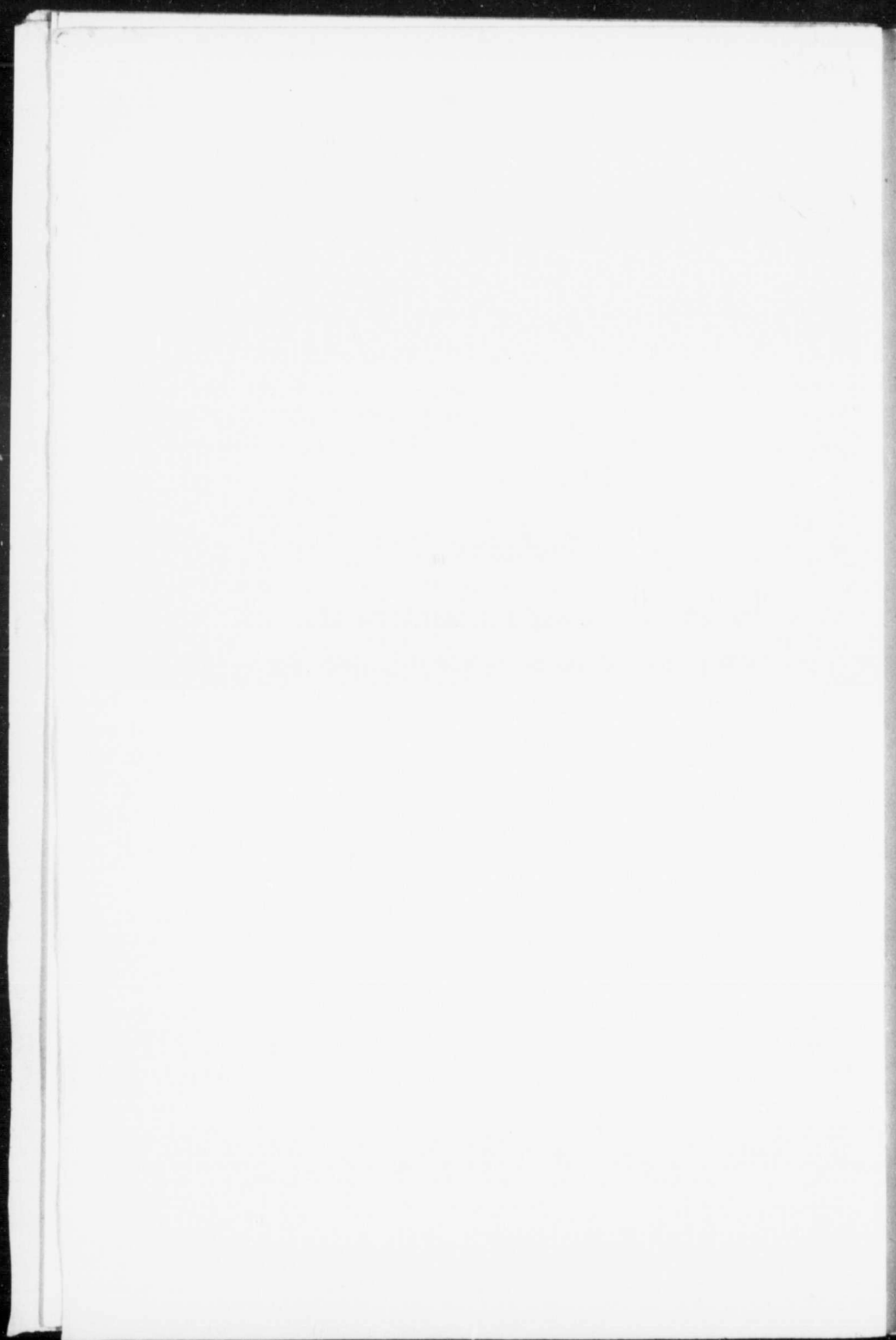
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Prefatory

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.

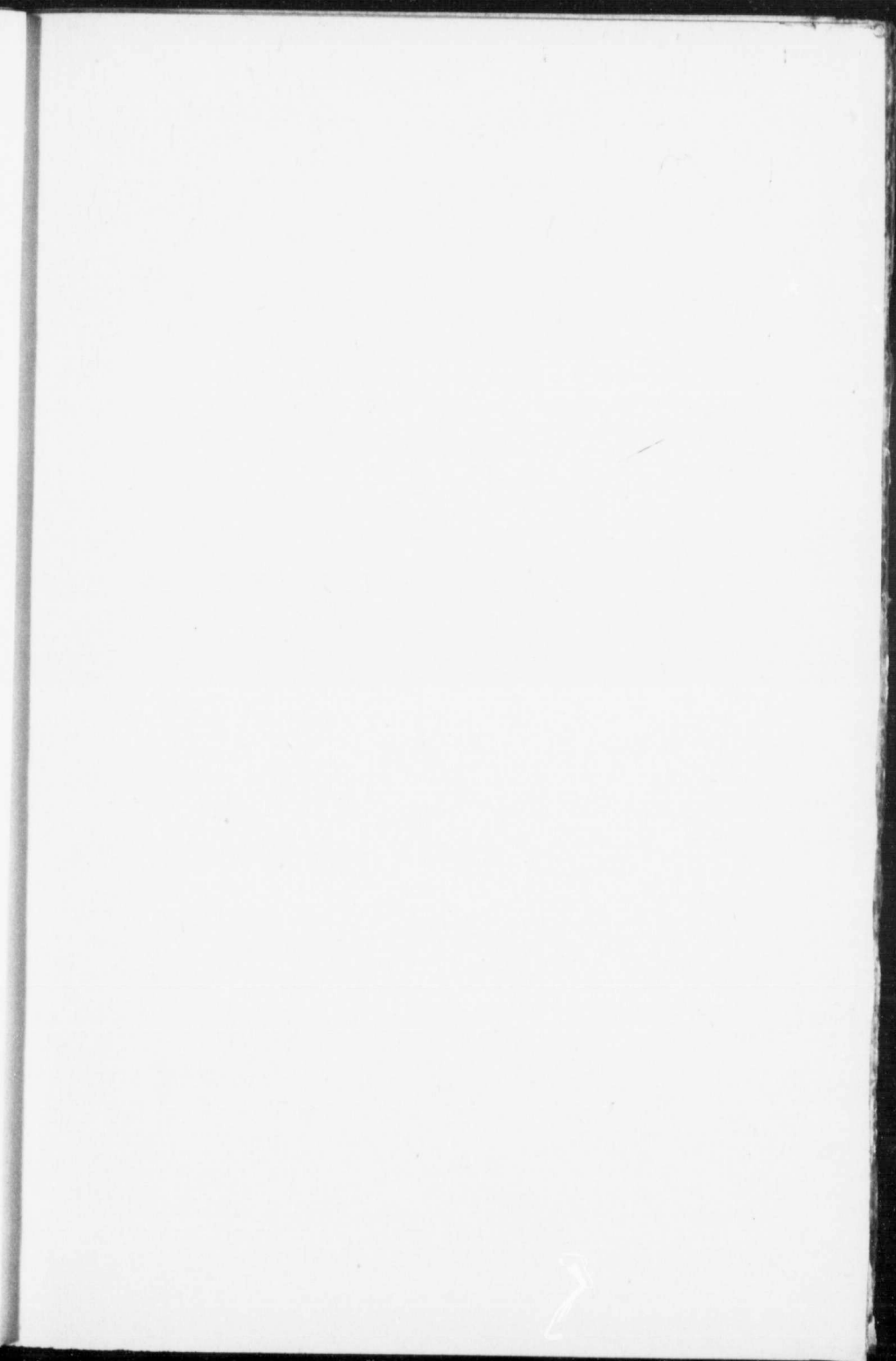
ELLA LEE

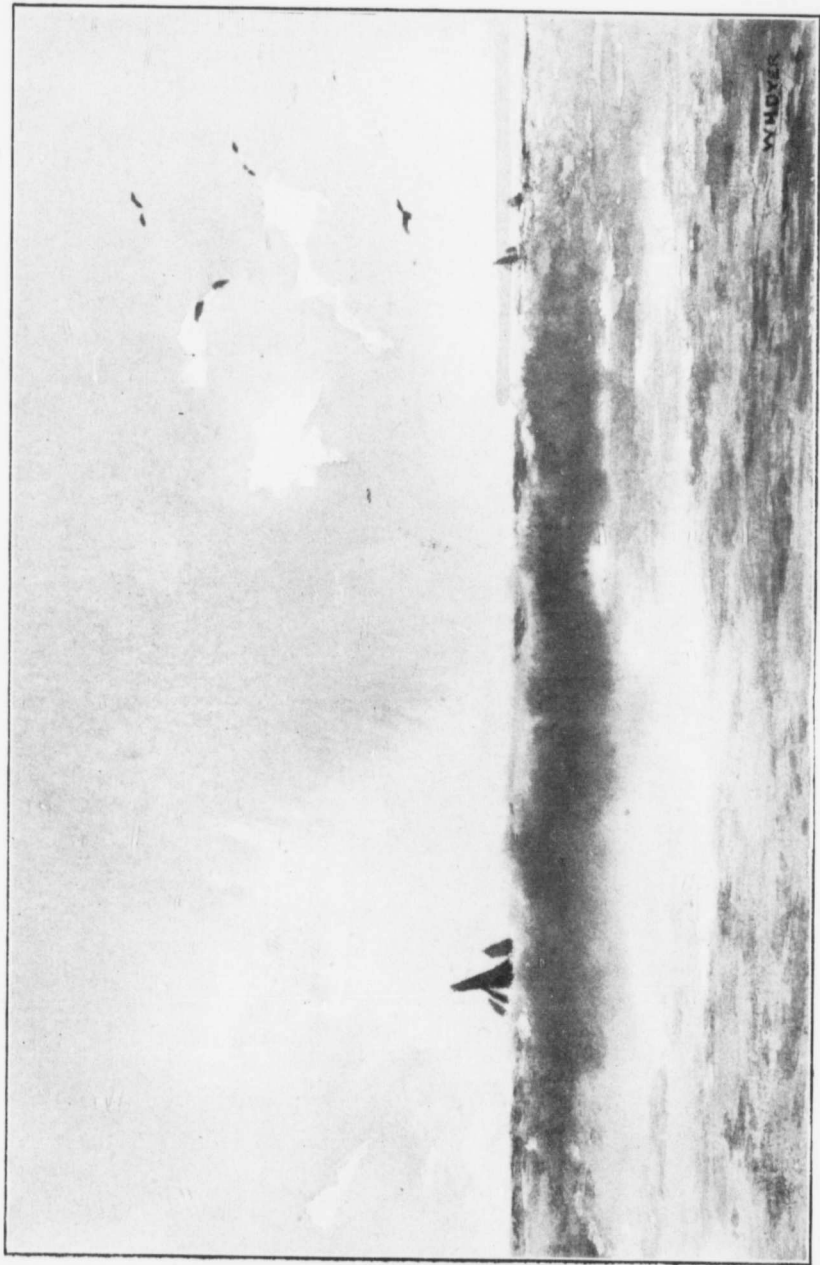
And a child's twinkling eye,
Looking up, arch and sly,
And two dimply hands laid
On the prop of a spade,
Was our only reply.

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!

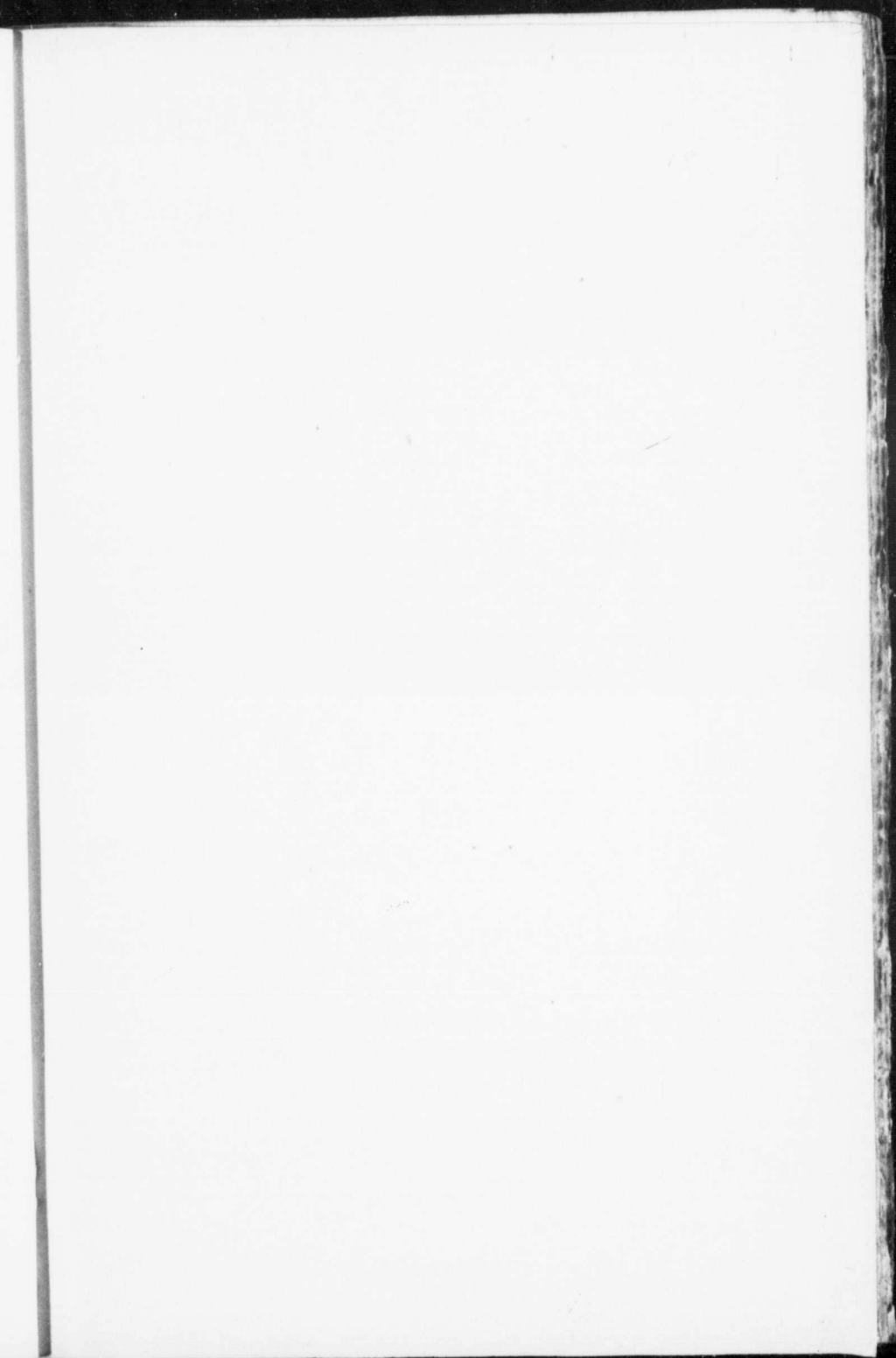
ELLA LEE

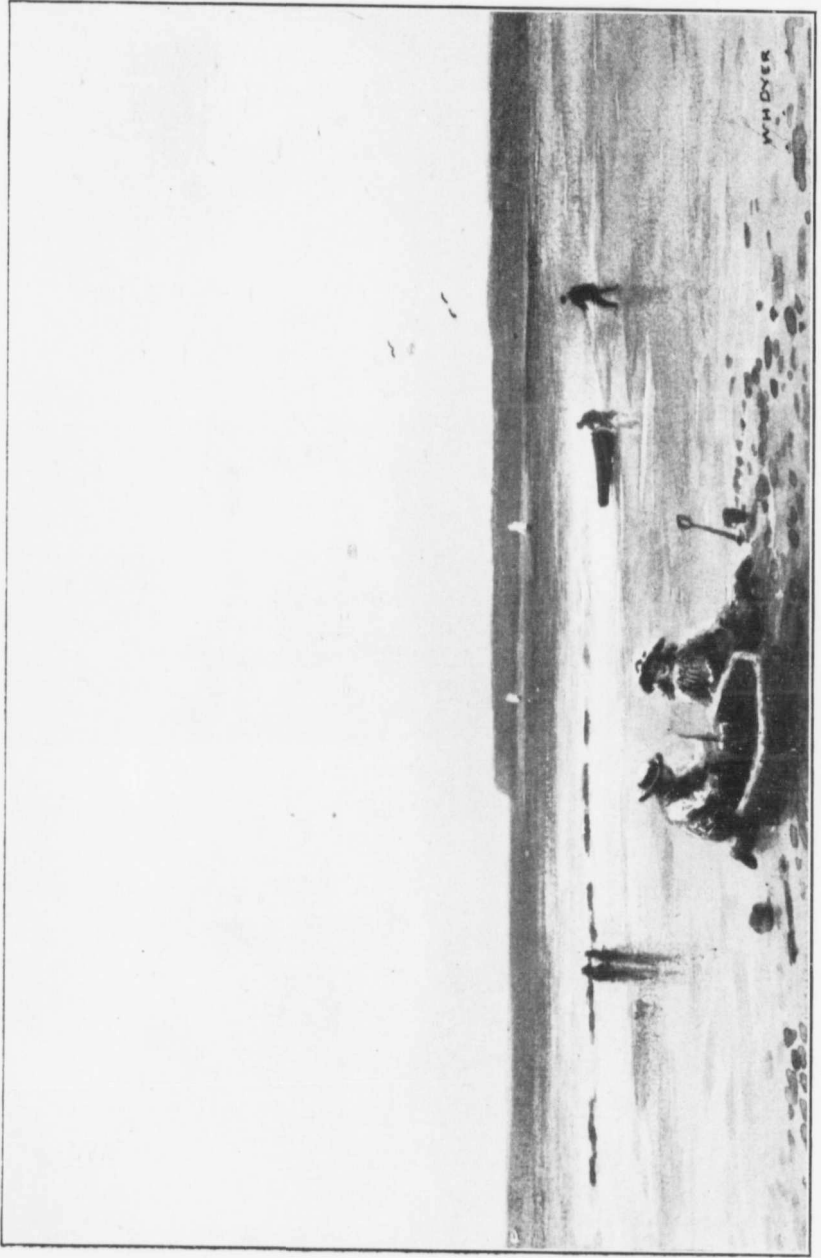
The Sand Castle

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?





W.H. DYER

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 wæd 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?

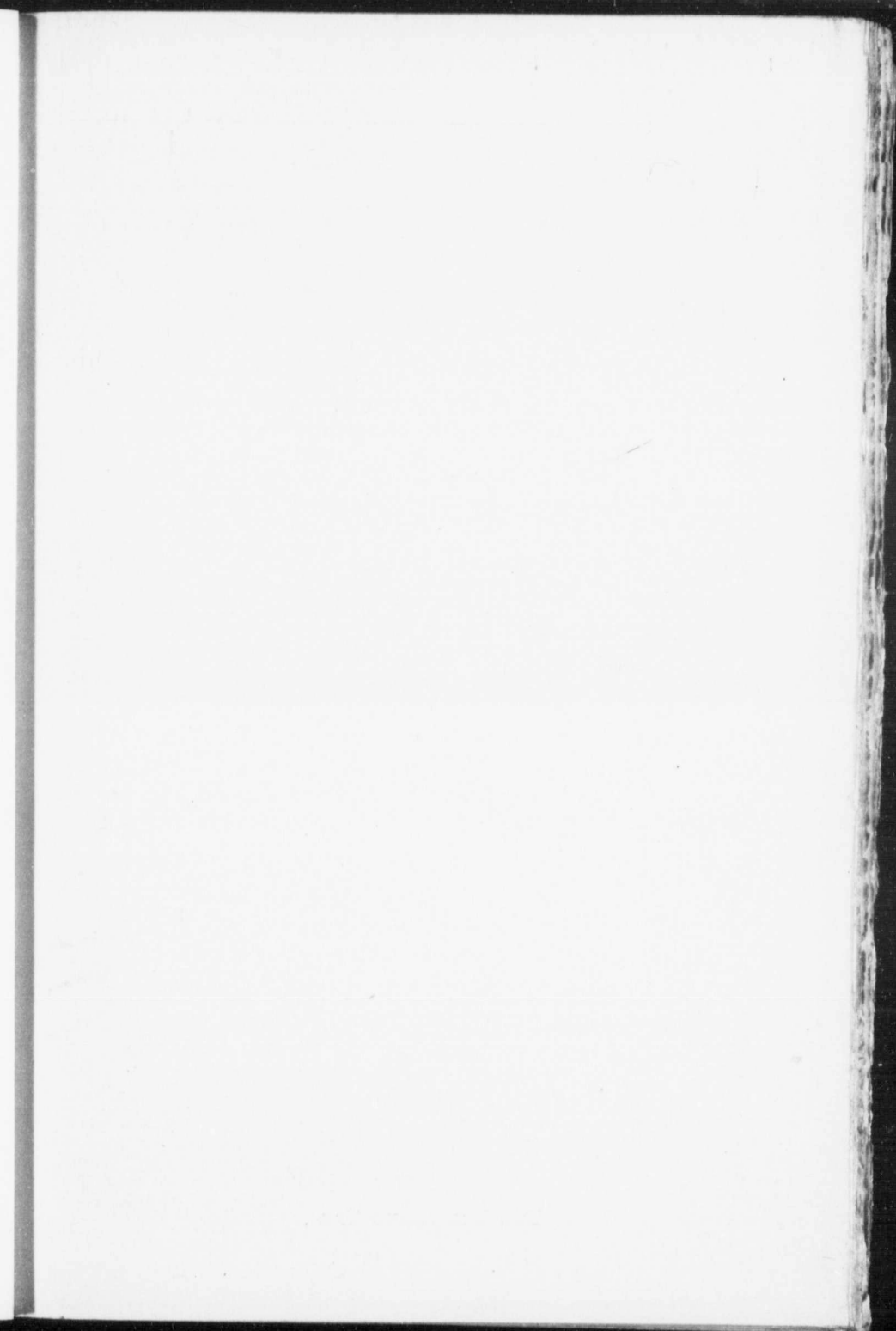
ELLA LEE

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, purply-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.

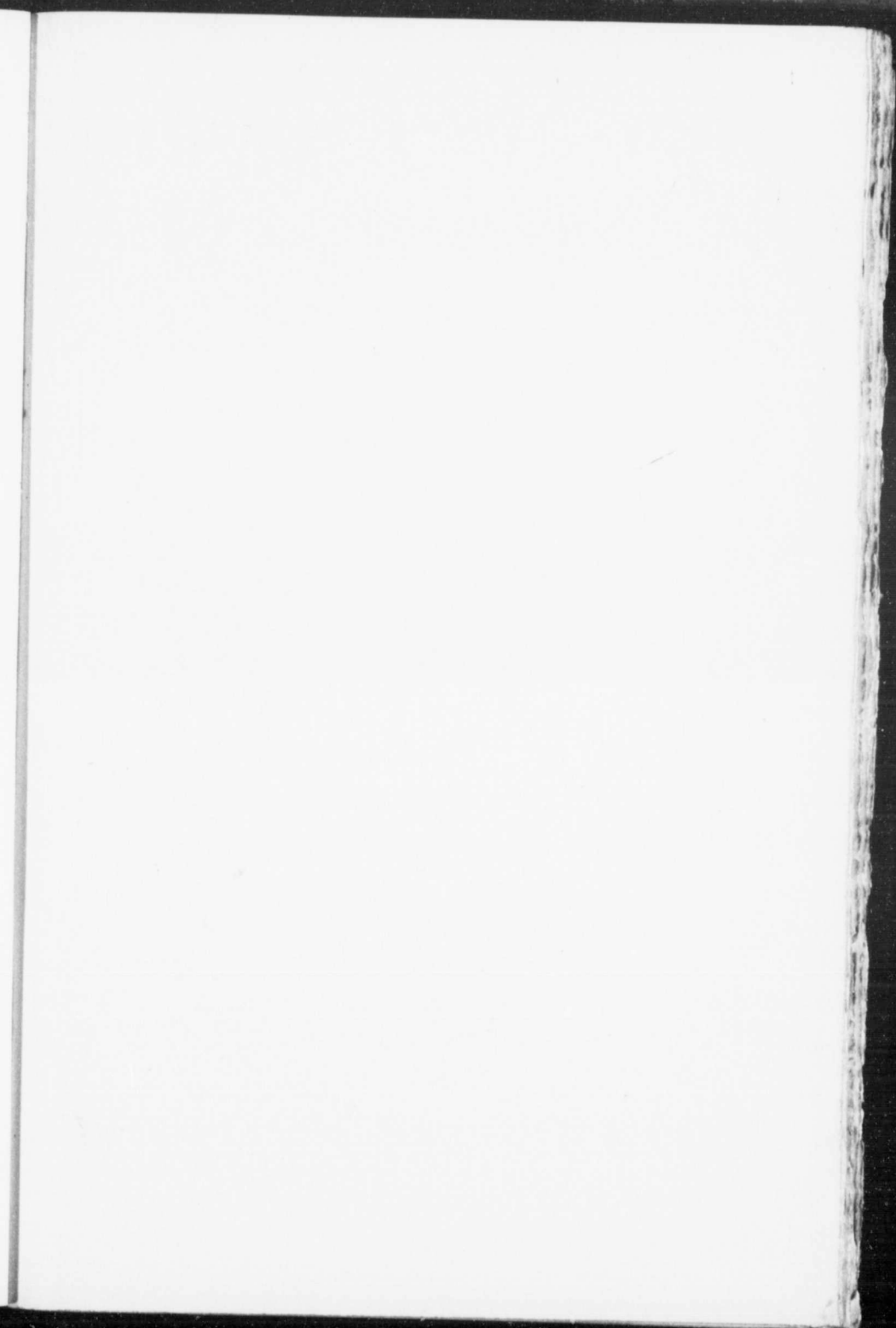
ELLA LEE

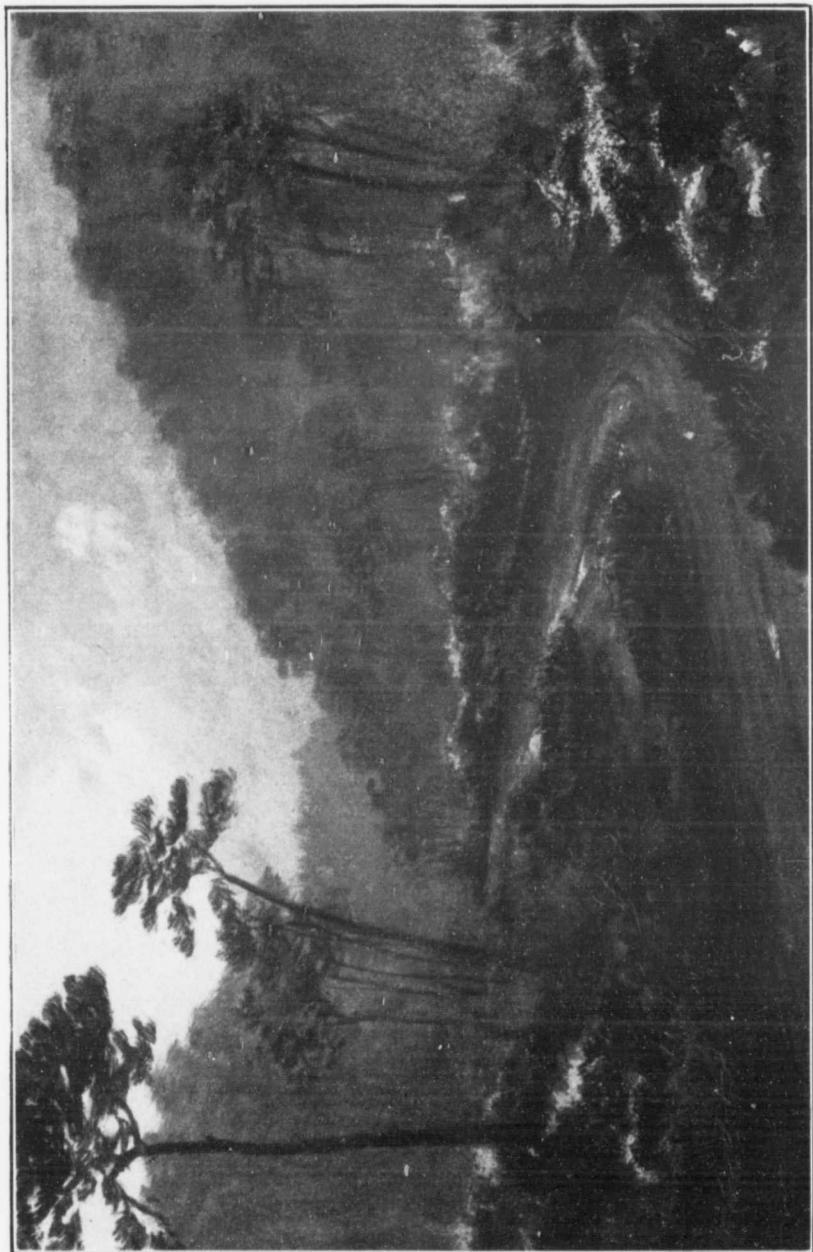
The Lark's Grave

BELOW, 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,

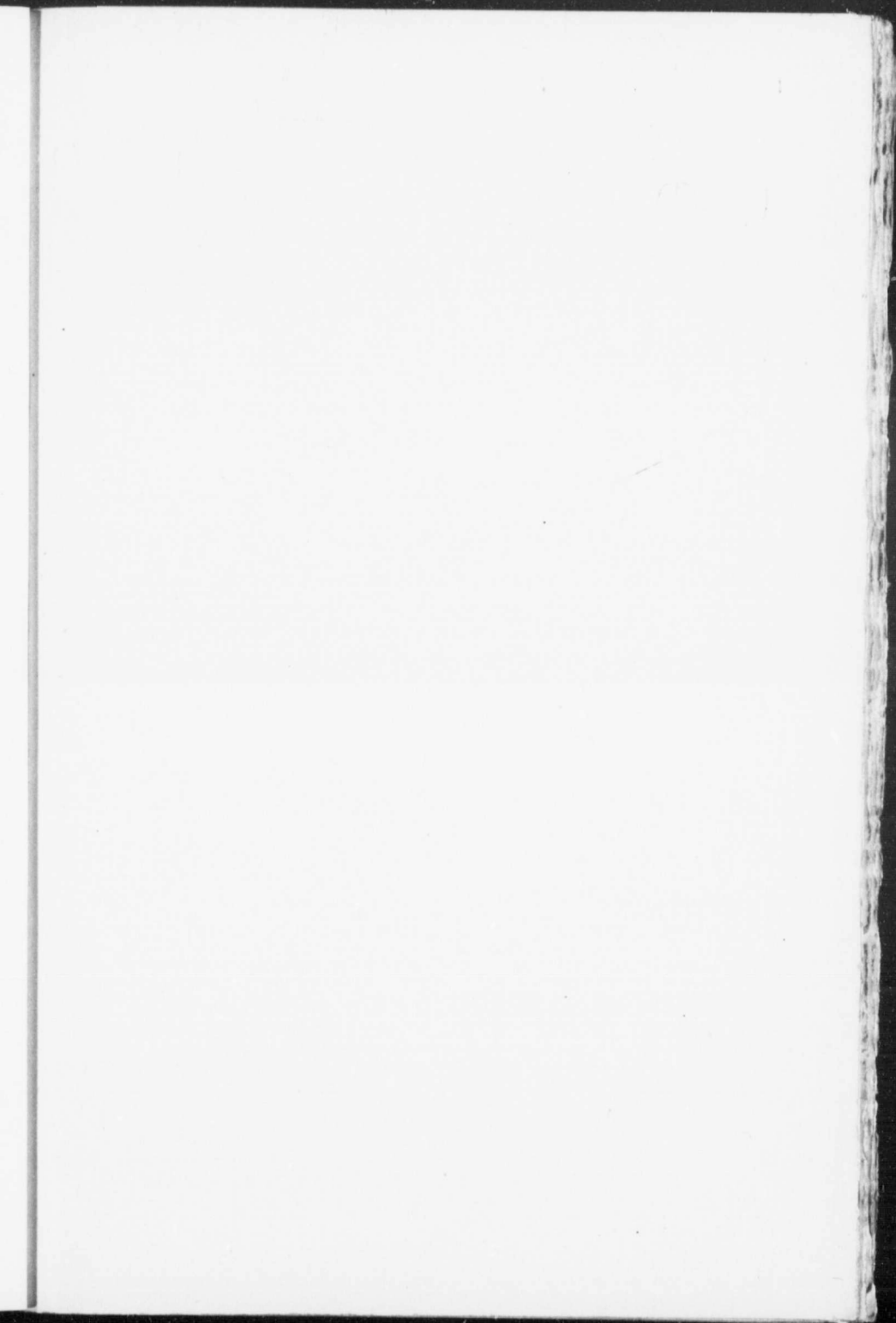
ELLA LEE

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.

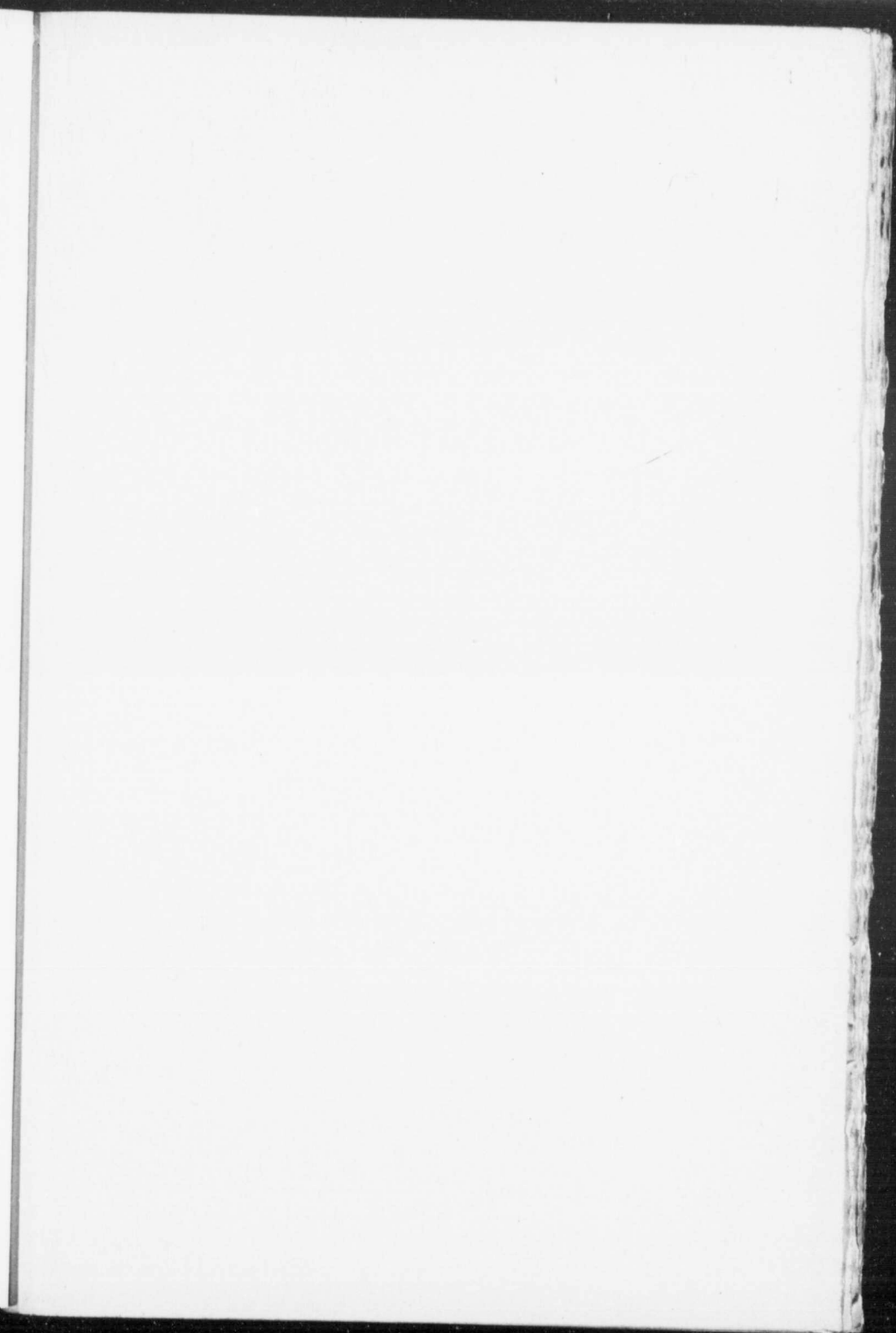
E'en now upon this distant lake
A lark's song pure and free
Is falling; ear a-poise once more
The wooded hill I see,
And by a lark's grave 'neath the firs
Two mourners, Ella Lee!

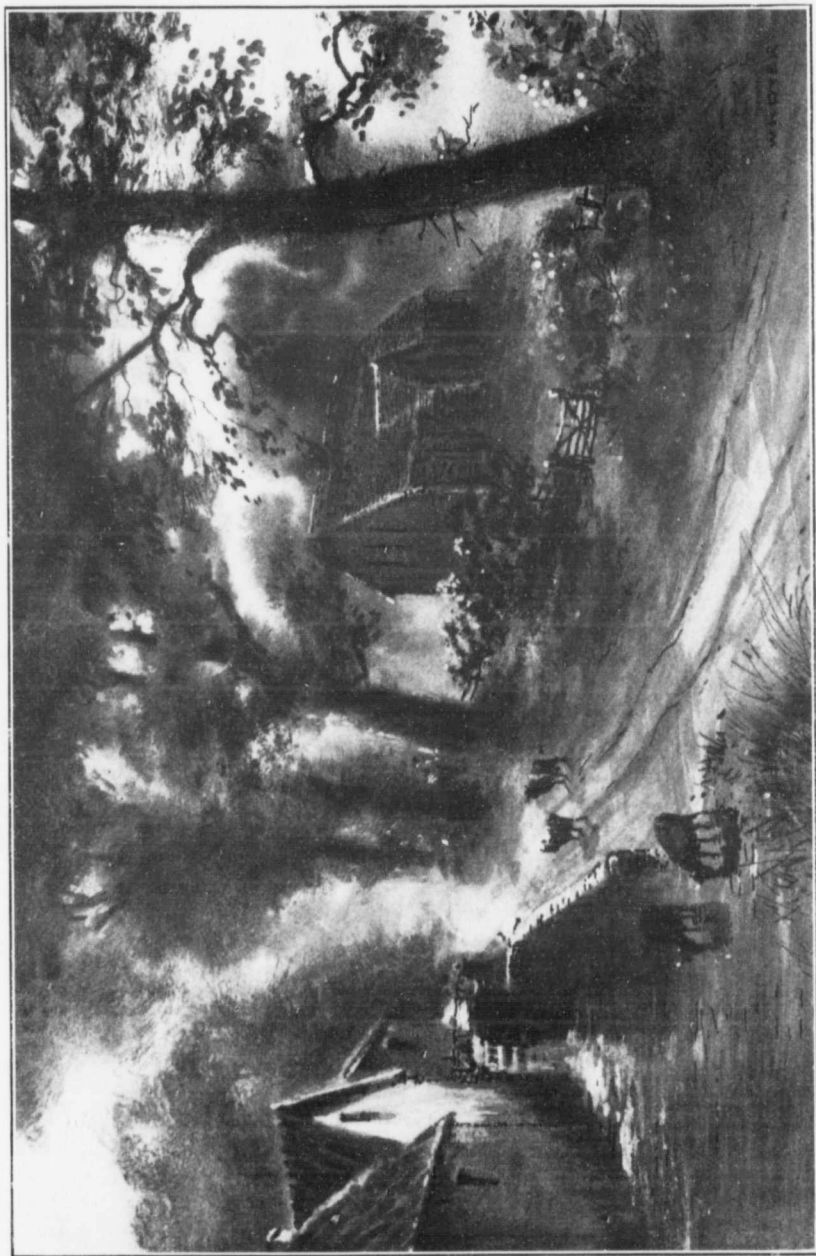
ELLA LEE

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 wæod 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.

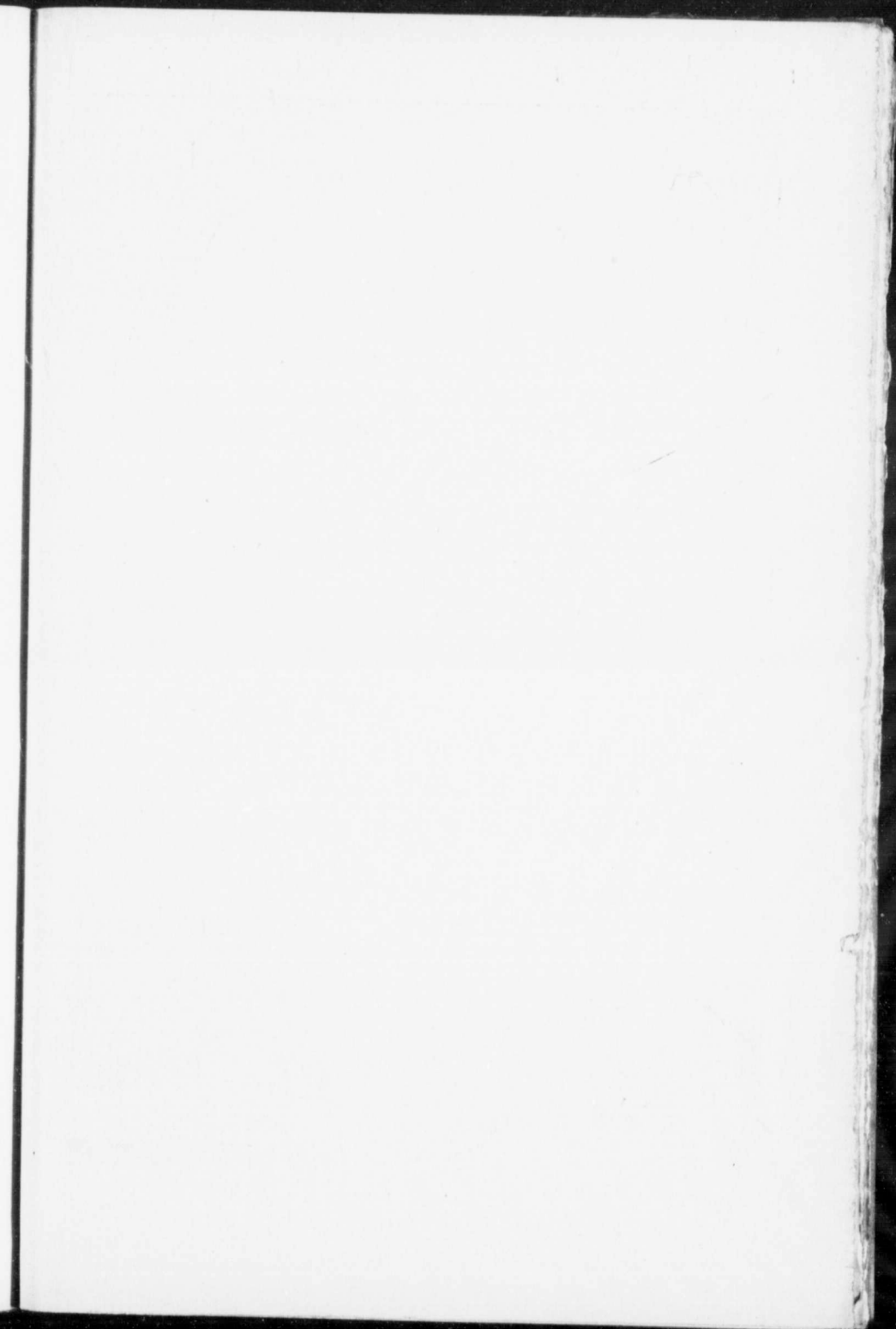
ELLA LEE

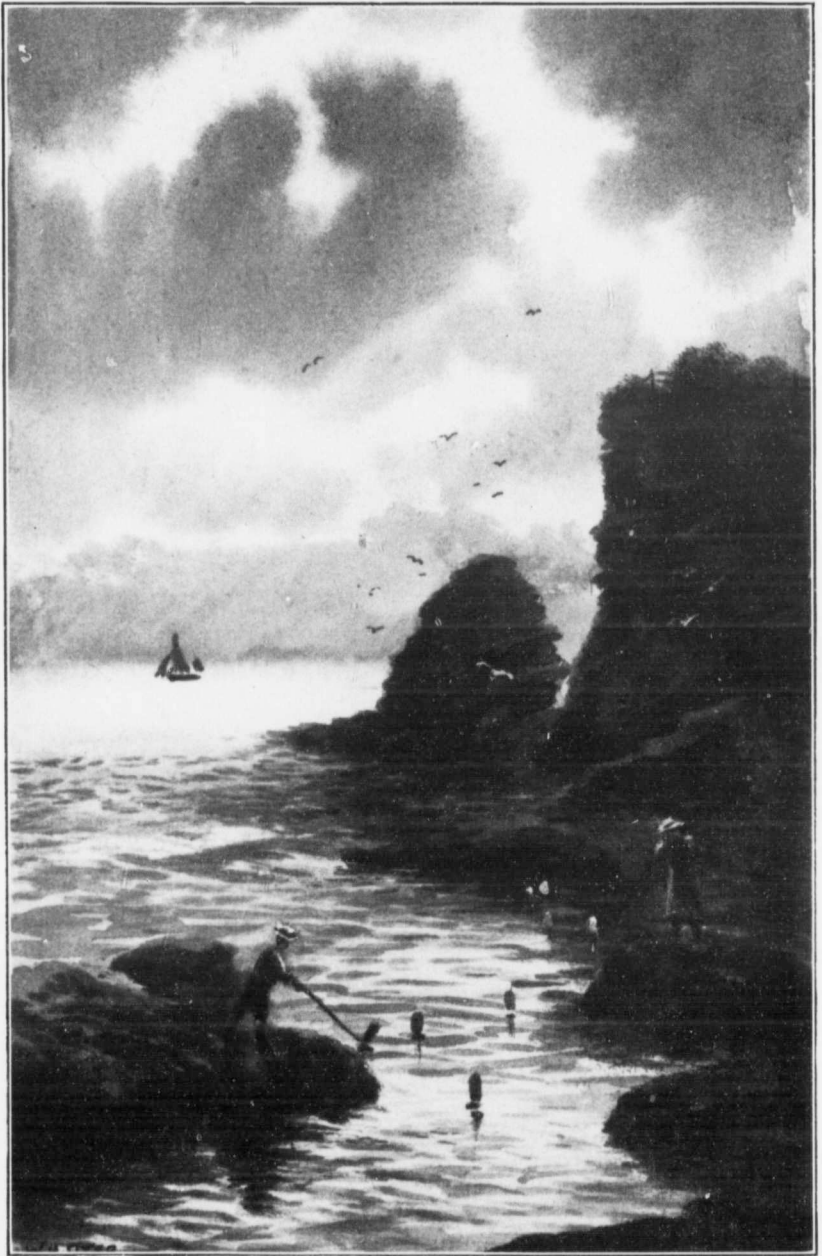
Boat Sailing

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.

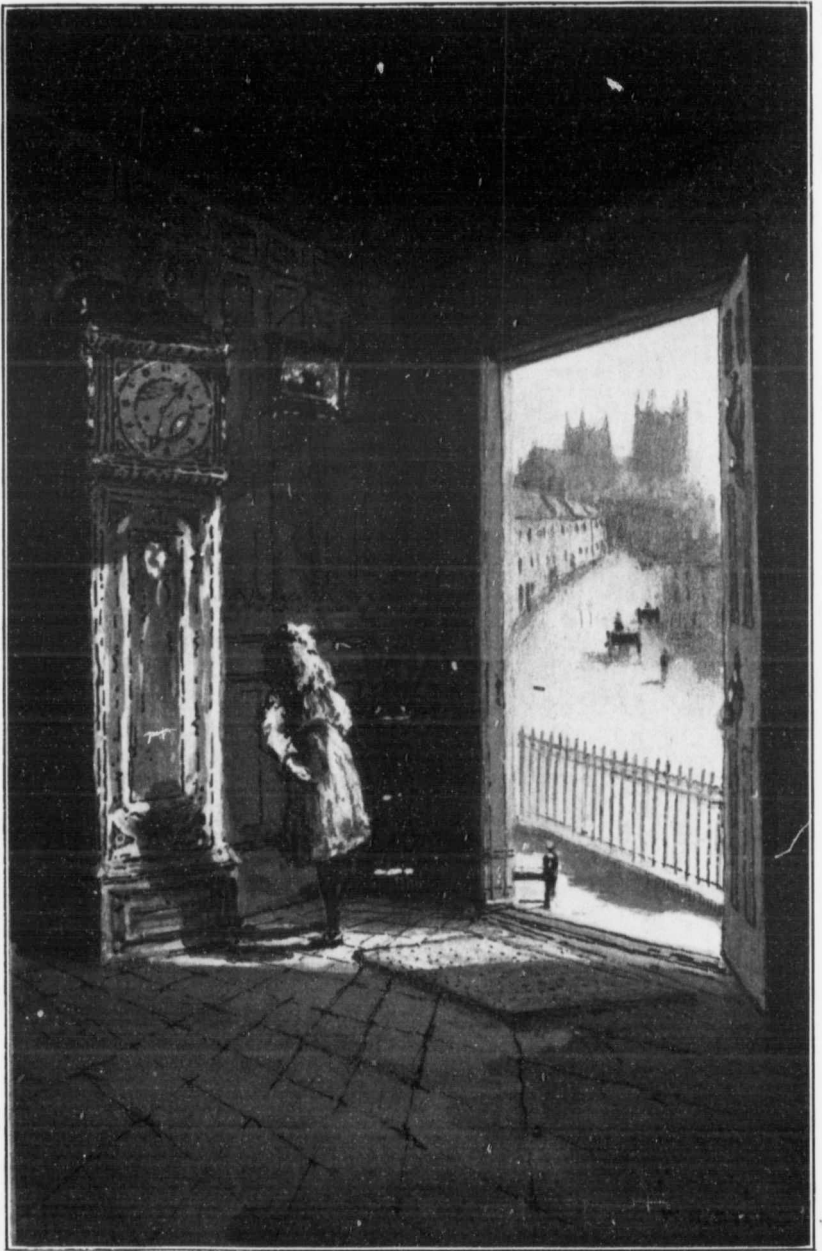
Some would sail on brave and steady,
Holding true their course's aim,
Others, caught in treacherous eddy,

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.

ELLA LEE

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.

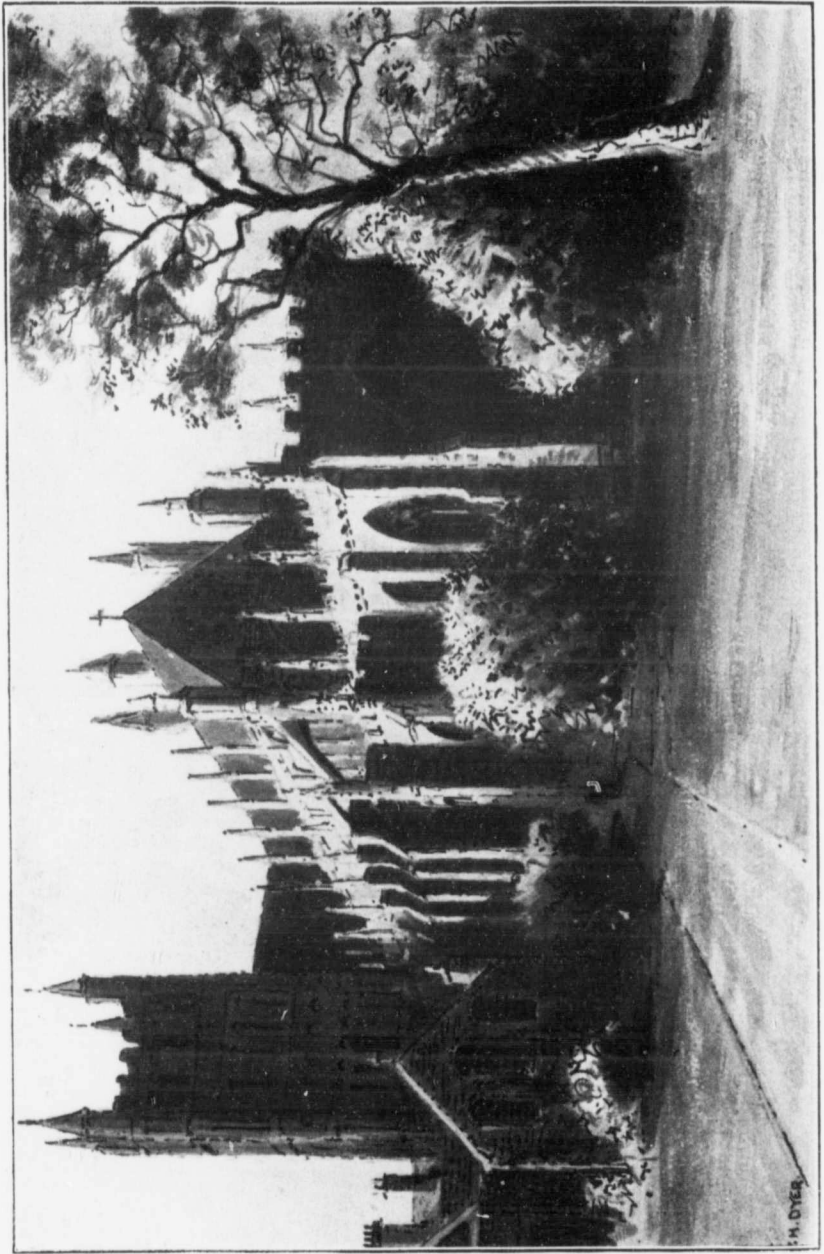
ELLA LEE

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 :



EXETER CATHEDRAL.

E. M. DYER.

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.

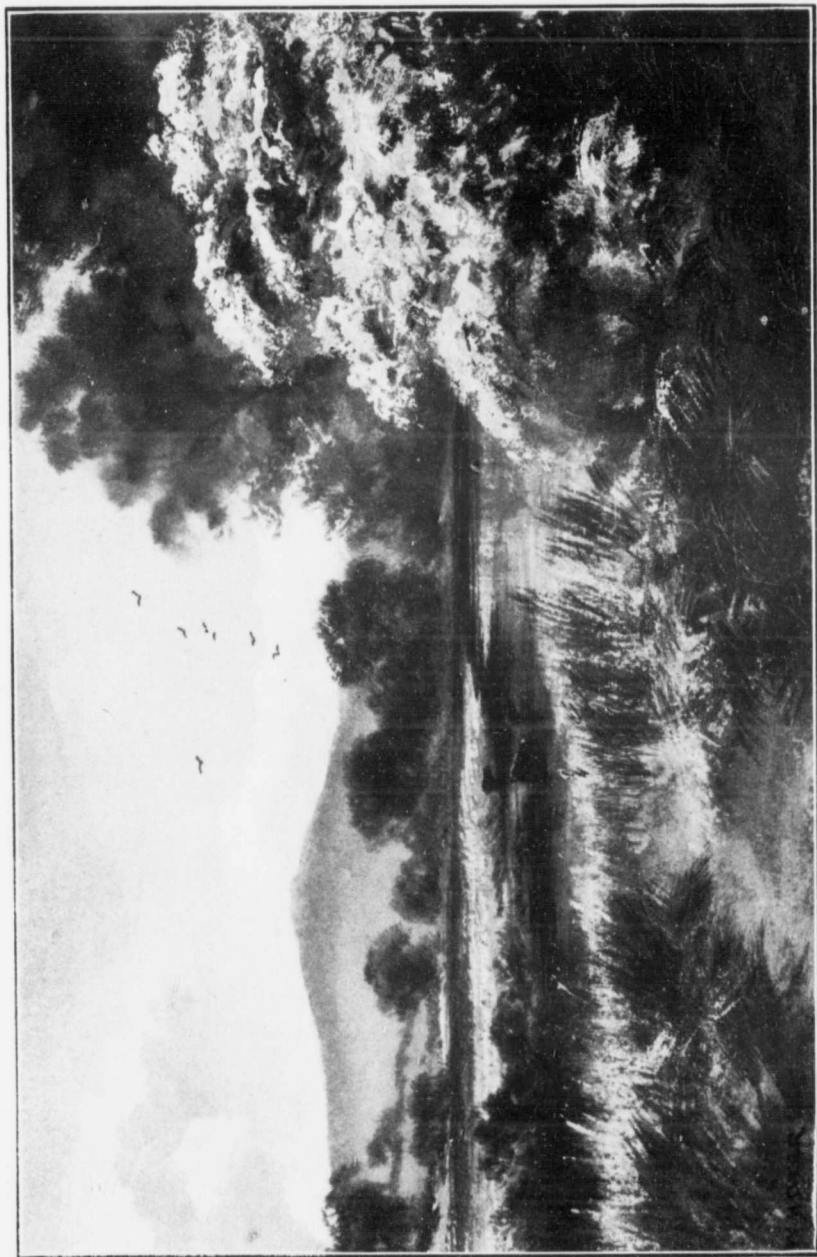
ELLA LEE

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.