

Francis Ledwidge

# POEMS

*Edited by Peter Fallon*

*with Introductions by Lord Dunsany*



Gallery Books

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## *The Hills*

The hills are crying from the fields to me  
And calling me with music from a choir  
Of waters in their woods where I can see  
The bloom unfolded on the whins like fire.  
And, as the evening moon climbs ever higher  
And blots away the shadows from the slope,  
They cry to me like things devoid of hope.

Pigeons are home. Day droops. The fields are cold.  
Now a slow wind comes labouring up the sky  
With a small cloud long steeped in sunset gold,  
Like Jason with the precious fleece anigh  
The harbour of Iolcos. Day's bright eye  
Is filmed with the twilight, and the rill  
Shines like a scimitar upon the hill.

And moonbeams drooping through the coloured wood  
Are full of little people wingéd white.  
I'll wander through the moon-pale solitude  
That calls across the intervening night  
With river voices at their utmost height,  
Sweet as rainwater in the blackbird's flute  
That strikes the world in admiration mute.

## *In the Dusk*

Day hangs its light between two dusks, my heart,  
Always beyond the dark there is the blue.  
Sometime we'll leave the dark, myself and you,  
And revel in the light for evermore.  
But the deep pain of you is aching smart,  
And a long calling weighs upon you sore.

Day hangs its light between two dusks, and song  
Is there at the beginning and the end.  
You, in the singing dusk, how could you wend  
The songless way Contentment fleetly wings?  
But in the dark your beauty shall be strong  
Though only one should listen how it sings.

## *Skreen Crossroads*

Five roads meet on the hill of Skreen,  
Five fair ways to wander down.  
One road sings of the valleys green,  
Two of the sea, and one of the town.  
And one little road has never a song  
Though the world be fair and the day be long.

This is the song the south road sings:  
'I go where Love and Peace abide.  
I pass the world's seven wondrous things  
And cities fallen in their pride;  
Sunny are the miles through which I stray  
From the Southern Cross to the Milky Way.'

But for all its song is so sweet to hear  
It has no melody for my ear.

This is the song the sea roads sings:  
'When the moon is full the tide is high;  
And the little ships in the harbours swing  
When the seabirds tell that a storm is nigh,  
And "Heave" the sailor calls, and "Ho!"  
It is far to my love when the strong winds blow.'

Oh the lure of the roads that sing of the sea  
Make my heart beat fast till it brakes in me.

This is the song of the road to the town;  
'Row by row stand the silent lights,  
And the music of bells goes up and down  
The slopes of the wind, and high delights  
Lure in the folk from the valley farms.  
It pulls down the hills with its great grey arms.'

It sings its song so low and sweet  
That once or twice it has lured my feet.

But the dumb little road that winds to the north  
Is the dearest road in the world to me.  
I would give my soul — for what it is worth —  
To be there in its silent company,  
Telling it over my hopes and fears,  
With only its silence consoling my ears.

### *The Little Children*

Hunger points a bony finger  
To the workhouse on the hill,  
But the little children linger  
While there's flowers to gather still  
For my sunny window sill.

In my hands I take their faces,  
Smiling to my smiles they run.  
Would that I could take their places  
Where the murky byways shun  
The benedictions of the sun.

How they laugh and sing returning  
Lightly on their secret way.  
While I listen in my yearning  
Their laughter fills the windy day  
With gladness, youth and May.

### *Autumn*

Now leafy winds are blowing cold  
And South by West the sun goes down,  
A quiet huddles up the fold  
In sheltered corners of the brown.

Like scattered fire the wild fruit strews  
The ground beneath the blowing tree  
And there the busy squirrel hews  
His deep and secret granary.

And when the night comes starry clear  
The lonely quail complains beside  
The glistening waters on the mere  
Where widowed Beauties yet abide.

And I, too, make my own complaint  
Upon a reed I plucked in June  
And love to hear it echoed faint  
Upon another heart in tune.

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