



TO SIGURD

By Katharine Lee Bates

Nor one blithe leap of welcome?

Can you lie
Under this woodland mould,
More still
Than broken daffodil,
When I,
Home from too long a roving,
Come up the silent hill?
Dear, wistful eyes,
White ruff and windy gold
Of collie coat so oft caressed,
Not one quick thrill
In snowy breast,
One spring of jubilant surprise,
One ecstasy of loving?

Are all our frolics ended? Never
more

Those royal romps of old,
When one,
Playfellow of the sun,
Would pour
Adventures and romances
Into a morning run;
Off and away,
A flying glint of gold,
Startling to wing a husky choir
Of crows whose dun
Shadows would tire
Even that wild speed? Unscared to-
day
They hold their weird seances.

Ever you dreamed, legs twitching,
you would catch

A crow, O leaper bold,
Next time,
Or chase to branch sublime
That batch
Of squirrels daring capture

In saucy pantomime;
Till one spring dawn,
Resting amid the gold
Of crocuses, Death stole on you
From that far clime
Where dreams come true,
And left upon the starry lawn
Your form without your rapture.

And was Death's whistle then so
wondrous sweet
Across the glimmering wold
That you
Would trustfully pursue
Strange feet?
When I was gone, each morrow
You sought our old haunts through,
Slower to play,
Drooping in faded gold;
Now it is mine to grieve and miss
My comrade true
Who used to kiss
With eager tongue such tears away,
Coaxing a smile from sorrow.

I know not what life is, nor what is
death,
Nor how vast Heaven may hold
All this
Earth-beauty and earth-bliss.
Christ saith
That not a sparrow falleth
—O songs of sparrow faith!—
But God is there.
May not a leap of gold
Yet greet me on some gladder hill,
A shining wraith,
Rejoicing still,
As in those hours we found so fair,
To follow where love calleth?

THE CONSCRIPT MOTHER

By Robert Herrick

ILLUSTRATION BY THORNTON OAKLEY

I



WHEN I met the signora at the tram station that May morning she was evidently troubled by something which was only partly explained by her murmured excuse, "a sleepless night." We were to cross the Campagna to one of the little towns in the Albanian hills where young Maironi was temporarily stationed with his regiment. If we had good luck and happened upon an indulgent officer, the mother might get sight of her boy for a few minutes. All the way over the flowering Campagna, with the blue hills swimming on the horizon before us, the signora was unusually taciturn, seemingly indifferent to the beauty of the day, to the wonderful charm of the Italian spring, to which she was always so lyrically responsive on our excursions. When a great dirigible rose into the blue air above our heads, like a huge silver fish, my companion gave a slight start, and I divined what was in her mind—the imminence of that war which had been threatening to engulf Italy for many months. It was that fear which had destroyed her customary gaiety, the indomitable cheerfulness of the true Latin mother that she was.

"It is coming!" she sighed, glancing up at the dirigible. "It will not be long now before we shall know—only a few days."

And to the ignorant optimism of my protest she smiled sadly, with the fatalism that women acquire in countries of conscription. It was futile to combat with mere theory and logic this conviction of a mother's heart. Probably the signora had overheard some significant word which to her sensitive intelligence was more real, more positive than all the subtle reasonings at the Consulta! The sphinxlike silence of ministers and diplomats had not been broken: there was nothing new in

the "situation." The newspapers were as wordily empty of fact as ever. And yet this morning for the first time Signora Maironi seemed convinced against her will that war was inevitable.

These last days there had been a similar change in the mood of the Italian public, not to be fully explained by any of the rumors flying about Rome, by the sudden exodus of Germans and Austrians, by anything other than that mysterious sixth sense which enables humanity like wild animals to apprehend unknown dangers. Those whose lives and happiness are at stake seem to divine before the blow falls what is about to happen! . . . For the first time I began to believe that Italy might really plunge into the deep gulf at which her people had so long gazed in fascinated suspense. There are secret signs in a country like Italy, where much is hidden from the stranger. Signora Maironi knew. She pointed to some soldiers waiting at a station and observed: "They have their marching-kit, and they are going north!"

We talked of other things while the tram crept far up above the Campagna and slowly circled the green hillsides, until we got down at the dirty little gray town of Genzano, where Enrico Maironi's regiment had been sent. There were no barracks. The soldiers were quartered here and there in old stone buildings. We could see their boyish faces at the windows and the gray uniform of the *granatieri* in the courtyards. It seemed a hopeless task to find the signora's boy, until a young lieutenant to whom the mother appealed offered to accompany us in our search. He explained that the soldiers had to be kept shut up in their quarters because they were stoned by the inhabitants when they appeared on the streets. They were a tough lot up here in the hills, he said, and they were against the war. That was why, I gathered, the grenadiers