

**BRIDGES**  
**ROBERT**

BRAMBLE

BRAE

**Robert Bridges**  
**Bramble Brae**

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*Bramble Brae:*

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# Robert Bridges

## Bramble Brae

### To my Father

You called the old farm Bramble Brae,  
And loved it till your hair was gray  
And footsteps faltered while you trod  
The sloping upland bright with sod.  
It blossomed in your quiet life  
With gowans from the Neuk of Fife;  
And while you walked the waving wheat  
You dreamed of heather and the peat.  
You've gane awa! My spirit yearns  
To hear you read the songs of Burns;  
The melody I've faintly caught  
Is just the lesson that you taught.  
If any hear your gentle voice  
In verse of mine, then I'll rejoice  
And sing along my stumbling way,  
"He's home again in Bramble Brae!"

# BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

*On the dark decline of the unilluminated  
verge between the two worlds.*

*George Meredith.*

# THE UNILLUMINED VERGE

## TO A FRIEND DYING

They tell you that Death's at the turn of the road,  
That under the shade of a cypress you'll find him,  
And, struggling on wearily, lashed by the goad  
Of pain, you will enter the black mist behind him.

I can walk with you up to the ridge of the hill,  
And we'll talk of the way we have come through the valley;  
Down below there a bird breaks into a trill,  
And a groaning slave bends to the oar of his galley.

You are up on the heights now, you pity the slave—  
“Poor soul, how fate lashes him on at his rowing!  
Yet it's joyful to live, and it's hard to be brave  
When you watch the sun sink and the daylight is going.”

We are almost there—our last walk on this height—  
I must bid you good-by at that cross on the mountain.  
See the sun glowing red, and the pulsating light  
Fill the valley, and rise like the flood in a fountain!

And it shines in your face and illumines your soul;

We are comrades as ever, right here at your going;  
You may rest if you will within sight of the goal,  
While I must return to my oar and the rowing.

We must part now? Well, here is the hand of a friend;  
I will keep you in sight till the road makes its turning  
Just over the ridge within reach of the end  
Of your arduous toil—the beginning of learning.

You will call to me once from the mist, on the verge,  
“Au revoir!” and “good night!” while the twilight is creeping  
Up luminous peaks, and the pale stars emerge?  
Yes, I hear your faint voice: “This is rest, and like sleeping!”

# FROM ONE LONG DEAD

What! *You* here in the moonlight and thinking of me?  
Is it you, O my comrade, who laughed at my jest?  
But you wept when I told you I longed to be free,  
And you mourned for a while when they laid me at rest.

I've been dead all these years! and to-night in your heart  
There's a stir of emotion, a vision that slips—  
It's *my* face in the moonlight that gives you a start,  
It's my name that in joy rushes up to your lips!

Yes, I'm young, oh, so young, and so little I know!  
A mere child that is learning to walk and to run;  
While I grasp at the shadows that wave to and fro  
I am dazzled a bit by the light of the Sun.

I am learning the lesson, I try to grow wise,  
But at night I am baffled and worn by the strife;  
I am humbled, and then there's an impulse to rise,  
And a voice whispers, "Onward and win! This is Life!"

And the Force that is drawing me up to the Height,  
That inspires me and thrills me,—each day a new birth,—  
Is the Force that to Chaos said, "Let there be Light!"  
And it gave us sweet glimpses of Heaven on Earth.

It is Love! and you know it and feel it, my Soul!  
For you love me in spite of the grave and its bars.  
And it moves the whole Universe on to its goal,  
And it draws frail Humanity up to the stars!

# FATHER TO MOTHER

This is our child, Dear—flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone;

Here is the end of our youth, and now we begin to atone.

Now we do feel what their love was—those who have reared us and taught;

Now do we know of the treasures that neither are sold nor bought.

Here is the joy of the Race—joy that must grow out of pain;

Here is the last of our Self—now we are links in the chain.

Body of yours and mine no more is the measure of grief—

All that *he* suffers is ours—and increased while we cry for relief;

Yea, for our boy, our Beloved, we'll yearn through the beckoning years—

Toil for him, laugh with him, struggle, and pour out the fountain of tears!

# THE CHILD TO THE FATHER

Father, it's your love that safely guides me,  
Always it's around me, night and day;  
It shelters me, and soothes, but never chides me:  
Yet, father, there's a shadow in my way.

All the day, my father, I am playing  
Under trees where sunbeams dance and dart—  
But often just at night when I am praying  
I feel this awful hunger in my heart.

Father, there is something—it has missed me;  
I've felt it through my little days and years;  
And even when you petted me and kissed me  
I've cried myself to sleep with burning tears.

To-day I saw a child and mother walking;  
I caught a gentle shining in her eye,  
And music in her voice when she was talking—  
Oh, father, is it *that* that makes me cry?

Oh, never can I put my arms around her,  
Or never cuddle closer in the night;  
Mother, oh, my mother! I've not found her—  
I look for her and cry from dark to light!

# A PRAYER OF OLD AGE

O Lord, I am so used to all the byways  
Throughout Thy devious world,  
The little hill-paths, yea, and the great highways  
Where saints are safely whirled!  
And there are crooked ways, forbidden pleasures,  
That lured me with their spell;  
But there I lingered not, and found no treasures—  
Though in the mire I fell.

And now I'm old and worn, and, scarcely seeing  
The beauties of Thy work,  
I catch faint glimpses of the shadows fleeing  
Through valleys in the murk;  
Yet I can feel my way—my mem'ry guides me;  
I bear the yoke and smile.  
I'm used to life, and nothing wounds or chides me;  
Lord, let me live awhile!

And then, dear Lord, I still can feel the thrilling  
Of Nature in the Spring—  
The uplift of Thy hills, the song-birds trilling,  
The lyric joy they bring.  
I'm not too old to see the regal beauty  
Of moon and stars and sun;  
Nature can still reveal to me my duty

Till my long task is done.

O Lord, to me the pageant is entrancing—  
The march of States and Kings!  
I keenly watch the human race advancing  
And see Man master Things:  
From him who read the secret of the thunder  
And made the lightning kind,  
Down to this marvel—all the growing wonder  
Of force controlled by Mind.

And this dear land of ours, the freeman's Nation!  
Lord, let me live and see  
Fulfilment of our fathers' aspiration,  
When each man's really free!  
When all the strength and skill that move the mountains,  
And pile up riches great,  
Shall sweeten patriotism at its fountains  
And purify the State!

But there are closer ties than these that bind me  
And make me long to stay  
And linger in the dusk where Death may find me  
On Thine own chosen day;  
There's one who walks beside me in the gloaming  
And holds my faltering hand—  
Without her guidance I can make no homing  
In any distant land.

Some day when we are tired, like children playing,  
And wearied drop our toys—  
When all the work and burden of our staying  
Has mingled with our joys—  
With those we love around—our eyelids drooping,  
Too spent with toil to weep—  
Like some kind nurse o'er drowsy children stooping,  
Lord, take us home to sleep!

# THE RHONE GLACIER—SUNSET

Like the uncounted years of God it rolls  
From out the sky. The light of heaven shines  
Upon its wrinkled brow, that seems a part  
Of that stupendous dome of boundless blue  
Where, like a pebble in the ocean depths,  
This little world is lost. The sparkling sun  
Plays gently in the deep green, icy clefts  
Like moonlight in the tender eyes of one  
Who looks to heaven to find her lover's face.  
Silent, serene, implacable it stands—  
A mighty symbol of the Force that moved  
Across the surface of the youthful earth  
And scored the continents with valleys deep,  
As children write upon the yielding sand.  
Back to the dawn of things its lineage runs—  
Countless ages back to that bleak time  
When frightful monsters played upon the hills—  
Always the same, yet moving slowly onward,  
In heaven its head, its feet upon the world.  
The Rhone that trickles from the glacier's edge—  
Makes valleys smile with grain and flower and fruit  
And turns the wheels that forge the tools of trade—  
Is but the lash with which the giant plays  
And spins the tops that swarm with struggling men.  
“What is Man, that Thou art mindful of him?”—

This pleasure or this pain, this wealth or want,  
This tragic comedy we call our life!

Across the meadows as the evening falls  
A shepherd drives his sheep, and fondly bears  
Above the rocky stream the weakling lamb;  
The children hear the father's kindly voice  
And run to greet and cheer his late return,  
While from his humble cottage gleams a light.

The sheep are nestled in their sheltering fold—  
The door springs open to a welcome cry,  
And all at last are safe within the Home.

In cold and awful majesty it stands  
Against the darkening sky,—Force without warmth,  
Strength without passion.  
But at the touch  
Of homely human ways its terrors flee  
And Force is swallowed up in Life with Love.

# JAMES McCOSH

1811-1894

Young to the end through sympathy with youth,  
Gray man of learning—champion of truth!  
Direct in rugged speech, alert in mind,  
He felt his kinship with all humankind,  
And never feared to trace development  
Of high from low—assured and full content  
That man paid homage to the Mind above,  
Uplifted by the “Royal Law of Love.”

The laws of nature that he loved to trace  
Have worked, at last, to veil from us his face;  
The dear old elms and ivy-covered walls  
Will miss his presence, and the stately halls  
His trumpet-voice; while in their joys  
Sorrow will shadow those he called “my boys”!

# LE BONHEUR DE CE MONDE

(Copie d'un sonnet composé  
par Plantin au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle.)

Avoir une maifon commode, propre & belle,  
Un jardin tapiffé d'efpaliers odorans,  
Des fruits, d'excellent vin, peu de train, peu d'enfans,  
Poffeder feul, fans bruit, une fe mme fidèle.  
N'avoir dettes, amour, ni procès, ni querelle,  
Ni de partage à faire avecque fes parens,  
Se contenter de peu, n'efpérer rien des Grands,  
Régler tous fes deffeins sur un jufte modèle.

Vivre avecque franchife & fans ambition,  
S'adonner fans fcrupule à la dévotion,  
Domter fes paffions, les rendre obéiffantes.  
Conferver l'efprit libre, & le jugement fort,  
Dire fon Chapelet en cultivant fes entes,  
C'eft attendre chez foi bien doucement la mort.

# THE HAPPINESS OF THIS WORLD

## FROM THE FRENCH OF PLANTIN

To have a home, convenient for thy life,  
With fragrant fruit-walls in a garden fine,  
Some children, some retainers, and rare wine;  
To live serenely with thy faithful wife;  
To have no debts, nor quarrels, nor legal strife,  
Nor separation from dear kin of thine;  
Expecting nothing from the Great, to shine  
With modest light and just, where greed is rife.

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