

Living English Poets: Arthur Conan Doyle

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Dr. A. Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh in 1859. He went to school at Stonyhurst in Lancashire, then studied in Germany, and finally completed his medical education at the University of Edinburgh. He has been an extensive traveler, visiting Africa, the Arctic seas, and many parts of Europe. His first story was accepted when he was nineteen years old, and his first book, *A Study in Scarlet*, was sold outright for \$25. Then came *Micah Clarke*, *The Sign of the Four*, *The White Company* -- and so his reputation as one of the most popular English novelists was firmly established. It is said that Dr. Doyle's detective stories were what first brought him to the attention of Americans. That they rank with the best ever written is generally recognized. Although chiefly known as a story-teller, Dr. Doyle has been an occasional contributor of verse to the leading English and American magazines for years. A collection of verse was published in England several years ago and republished in this country, in 1898, by Doubleday, McClure & Co., under the title *Songs of Action*. Many of his poems have never appeared in book form. The vivid imagination, clearness of expression, and intense interest that distinguish his prose are marked characteristics of his verse. The selections reprinted here are chiefly from the American edition of *Songs of Action*.

MASTER.

Master went a-hunting,
 When the leaves were falling;
 We saw him on the bridle path,
 We heard him gaily calling.
 "Oh, master, master, come you back,
 For I have dreamed a dream so black!"
 A glint of steel from bit and heel,
 The chestnut cantered faster,
 A red flash seen amid the green,
 And so good-by to master.

Master came from hunting,
 Two silent comrades bore him;
 His eyes were dim, his face was white,
 The mare was led before him.
 "Oh, master, master, is it thus
 That you have come again to us?"
 I held my lady's ice-cold hand,
 They bore the hurdle past her;
 Why should they go so soft and slow?
 It matters not to master.

A HUNTING MORNING.

Put the saddle on the mare,
 For the wet winds blow;
 There's winter in the air,
 And autumn all below.
 For the red leaves are flying
 And the red bracken dying,
 And the red fox lying
 Where the oziers grow.

Put the bridle on the mare,
 For my blood runs chill;
 And my heart, it is there,
 On the heather-tufted hill,
 With the gray skies o'er us,
 And the long-drawn chorus
 Of running pack before us
 From the find to the kill.

Then lead round the mare,
 For it's time that we began,
 And away with thought and care,
 Save to live and be a man,
 While the keen air is blowing,
 And the huntsman halloing,
 And the black mare going
 As the black mare can.

THE BLIND ARCHER.

Little boy Love drew his bow at a chance,
 Shooting down at the ballroom floor;
 He hit an old chaperon watching the dance,
 And oh! but he wounded her sore.
 "Hey, Love, you couldn't mean that!
 Hi, Love, what would you be at?
 No word would he say,
 But he flew on his way,
 For the little boy's busy, and how could he stay?

Little boy Love drew a shaft for sport
 At the soberest club in Pall Mall;
 He winged an old veteran drinking his port,
 And down that old veteran fell.
 "Hey, Love, you mustn't do that!
 Hi, Love, what would you be at?
 This cannot be right!
 It's ludicrous quite!"
 But it's no use to argue, for Love's out of sight.

A sad-faced young clerk in a cell all apart
 Was planning a celibate vow;

But the boy's random arrow has sunk in his heart,
And the cell is an empty one now.

"Hey, Love, you mustn't do that!

Hi, Love, what would you be at?

He is not for you,

He has duties to do."

"But I am his duty," quoth Love as he flew.

The king sought a bride, and the nation had hoped
For a queen without rival or peer,
But the little boy shot, and the king has eloped
With Miss No-one on nothing a year.

"Hey, Love, you couldn't mean that!

Hi, Love, what would you be at?

What an impudent thing

To make game of a king!"

"But I'm a king also," cried Love on the wing.

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Little boy Love grew pettish one day;
"If you keep on complaining," he swore,
"I'll pack both my bow and my quiver away,
And so I shall plague you no more."

"Hey, Love, you mustn't do that!

Hi, Love, what would you be at?

You may ruin our ease,

You may do what you please,

But we can't do without you, you sweet little tease!"

THE OLD HUNTSMAN.

There's a keen and grim old huntsman
On a horse as white as snow;
Sometimes he is very swift
And sometimes he is very slow.
But he never is at fault,
For he always hunts at view,
And he rides without a halt
After you.

The huntsman's name is Death,
His horse's name is Time;
He is coming, he is coming,
As I sit and write this rhyme;
He is coming, he is coming,
As you read this rhyme I write;
You can hear the hoofs' low drumming
Day and night.

You can hear the distant drumming
 As the clock goes tick-a-tack,
 And the chiming of the hours
 In the music of his pack.
 You may hardly note their growling
 Underneath the noonday sun,
 But at night you hear them howling
 As they run.

And they never check or falter
 For they never miss their kill;
 Seasons change and systems alter,
 But the hunt is running still.
 Hark! the evening chime is playing,
 O'er the long gray town in peals;
 Don't you hear the death-hound baying
 At your heels?

Where is there an earth or burrow?
 Where a cover left for you?
 A year, a week, perhaps to-morrow
 Brings the Huntsman's death halloo.
 Day by day he gains upon us,
 And the most that we can claim
 Is that when the hounds are on us
 We die game.

And somewhere dwells the Master,
 By whom it was decreed;
 He sent the savage huntsman,
 He bred the snow-white steed.
 These hounds which run forever,
 He set them on your track;
 He hears you scream, but never
 Calls them back.

He does not heed our suing,
 We never see his face;
 He hunts to our undoing,
 We thank him for the chase.
 We thank him and we flatter,
 We hope -- because we must --
 But have we cause? No matter!
 Let us trust!

PENNARBY MINE.

Pennarby shaft is dark and steep,
 Eight foot wide, eight hundred deep.
 Stout the bucket and tough the cord,
 Strong as the arm of Winchman Ford.

"Never look down!
 "Stick to the line!"
 That was the saying of Pennarby mine.

A stranger came to Pennarby shaft --
 Lord, to see how the miners laughed!
 White in the collar and stiff in the hat,
 With his patent boots and his silk cravat,
 Picking his way,
 Dainty and fine,
 Stepping on tiptoe to Pennarby mine.

Touring from London, so he said.
 Was it copper they dug for? or gold? or lead?
 Where did they find it? How did it come?
 If he tried with a shovel might he get some?
 Stooping so much
 Was bad for the spine;
 And wasn't it warmish in Pennarby mine?

'Twas like two worlds that met that day --
 The world of work and the world of play;
 And the grimy lads from the reeking shaft
 Nudged each other and grinned and chaffed
 "Got 'em all out!"
 "A cousin of mine!"
 So ran the banter at Pennarby mine.

And Carnbrae Bob, the Pennarby wit,
 Told him the facts about the pit;
 How they bored the shaft till the brimstone smell
 Warned them off from tapping -- well,
 He wouldn't say what,
 But they took it as sign
 To dig no deeper in Pennarby mine.

Then leaning over and peering in,
 He was pointing out what he said was tin
 In the ten-foot lode -- a crash! a jar!
 A grasping hand and a splintered bar.
 Gone in his strength,
 With the lips that laughed --
 Oh, the pale faces round Pennarby shaft!

Far down on a narrow ledge,
 They saw him cling to the crumbling edge.
 "Wait for the bucket! Hi, man! Stay!
 That rope ain't safe! It's worn away!
 He's taking his chance,
 Slack out the line!

Sweet Lord be with him!" cried Pennarby mine.

"He's got him! He has him! Pull with a will!
Thank God! He's over and breathing still.
And he -- Lord's sakes now! What's that? Well!
Blowed if it ain't our London swell.
Your heart is right
If your coat is fine:
Give us your hand!" cried Pennarby mine.
