

**John Steven
McGroarty
Selected Poems**



John Steven McGroarty

August 20, 1862 [Foster Township, Pennsylvania] –

August 7, 1944 [Los Angeles, California]

[McGroarty was designated poet laureate of California by the state legislature in 1933. He served in the 74th Congress from January 3, 1935, to January 3, 1937, where he played a significant role in introducing the Townsend Bill to the legislature. McGroarty was reelected to the 75th Congress from January 3, 1937, to January 3, 1939. In 1937, he introduced a successful bill that enabled the federal government to purchase a large timber holding from the Yosemite Lumber Company, bringing the land within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. In 1938 McGroarty left his seat to run for California Secretary of State; he was defeated in the Democratic primary by incumbent Republican Frank C. Jordan. After his brief stint in politics, McGroarty resumed the profession of journalism in Tujunga, California. McGroarty died in St. Vincent's Hospital in Los Angeles, California on August 7, 1944, at the age of 81, and was interred at Calvary Cemetery.]

Just California and Songs Along the Way. Los Angeles: The Times-Mirror Company, 1903.

Wander Songs. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Company, 1908.

Just California

[When I come here to California I am not in the West; I am west of the West. It is just California. From the speech delivered at Ventura, May 9, 1903, by Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States.]

Twixt the seas and the deserts,
Twixt the wastes and the waves,
Between the sands of buried lands
And ocean's coral caves,
It lies not East nor West,
But like a scroll unfurled,
Where the hand of God hath hung it,
Down the middle of the world.

It lies where God hath spread it,
In the gladness of his eyes,
Like a flame of jeweled tapestry
Beneath His shining skies;
With the green of woven meadows,
And the hills in golden chains,
The light of leaping rivers,
And the flash of poppied plains.

Days rise that gleam in glory,
Days die with sunset's breeze,
While from Cathay that was of old
Sail countless argosies;
Morns break again in splendor
O'er the giant, new-born West,
But of all the lands God fashioned,
Tis this land is the best.

Sun and dews that kiss it,
Balmy winds that blow,
The stars in clustered diadems
Upon its peaks of snow;
The mighty mountains o'er it,

Below, the white seas swirled
Just California stretching down
The middle of the world.

“El Camino Real”

(The King’s Highway)

All in the golden weather, forth let us ride today,
You and I together on the King’s Highway,
The blue skies above us, and below the shining sea;
There’s many a road to travel, but it’s this road for me.

It’s a long road and sunny, and the fairest in the world
There are peaks that rise above it in their snowy mantles curled,
And it leads from the mountains through a hedge of chaparral,
Down to the waters where the sea gulls call.

It’s a long road and sunny, it’s a long road and old,
And the brown padres made it for the flocks of the fold;
They made it for the sandals of the sinner-folk that trod
From the fields in the open to the shelter-house of God.

They made it for the sandals of the sinner-folk of old;
Now the flocks they are scattered and death keeps the fold;
But you and I together we will take the road today,
With the breath in our nostrils, on the King’s Highway.

We will take the road together through the morning’s golden glow,
And we’ll dream of those who trod it in the mellowed long ago;
We will stop at the Missions where the sleeping padres lay,
And we’ll bend a knee above them for their soul’s sake to pray.

We’ll ride through the valleys where the blossom’s on the tree,
Through the orchards and the meadows with the bird and the bee,
And we’ll take the rising hills where the manzanitas grow,
Past the gray tails of waterfalls where blue violets blow.

Old Conquistadores, O brown priests, and all,
Give us your ghosts for company when night begins to fall;
There’s many a road to travel, but it’s this road today,
With the breath of God about us on the King’s Highway.

In Monterey

(A Memory of Robert Louis Stevenson)

When long ago he wandered here,
Heart-hungered, sick and poor,
No roof was bent to shelter him,
No welcome at the door.

In all the streets of Monterey,
With sun and shine aflame,
No word was passed that they might know
The Prince of Dreamers came.

There sped no song to meet him
From lute or lifted lyre,
When here the master singer passed
To seek his Heart's Desire.

No hand was raised to help him,
No lips with cheer to greet,
Till worn with fast and weariness
He fainted at their feet.

Then one there was who lifted up
The fever-tortured head,
And took him to his pitying heart,
And gave him drink and bread—

Gave him a shelter and a bed,
Nor asked his name to know,
And of all the men in Monterey
It is to him I'll go.

It is to this old, kindly man
That I will go today,
The thanks of all the grateful world
And my poor thanks to say.

Let from the shores the wild waves break
In mist and white sprays flung,
Let from the ancient Mission tower
The Angelus be rung,

Let all the tales they tell be told,
But just one tale for me,
And tis of him who sleeps afar
Beyond that sun-kissed sea;

Whose dreams I know, whose songs I sing,
Though dead he lies and still
“The sailor who is home from sea,
The hunter from the hill.”

La Fiesta De Las Flores

I. MORNING

Soul of the morning and balm of the sea,
Dawn in the fields of dew,
The breath of the west winds blowing free,
And the faithful skies of blue.

The silent mountains rising fair
From Aurora's golden flood,
While the roar of the city rends the air,
Where the old Pueblo stood.

The world's awake, and today is ours,
With spoils of the field and plain
Spread out for us in a feast of flowers,
As it was in the days of Spain.

So we'll seek a nook where the sunlight lies
Like a bright scrape's fold,
And the laugh of a señorita's eyes
Brings back the days of old.

II. NOON

O beggar who sat by the road with me,
In sighs and longings vain,
Lo, here is your ship at last from sea,
And your castles built in Spain.

Wreath and pennant and banners gay,
On the towers strung and gored,
And the long, gaunt streets of yesterday
Bright as the Cid's own sword.

The lips of Granada's women rave
As your champing steed in pride

Goes by with the caballeros brave,
Who glory with you to ride.

Mustard blossoms from fields of grass,
Roses and violets blue
Oh, kiss your hand, Señor, as you pass,
And they rain them down on you.

III. NIGHT

On the dream-kissed day the shadow falls,
Yet now in their splendor glows
A million lights on the castle walls
And the gilded porticos.

Flowers of the night that blossom, too,
As the gleam of a priceless gem,
And the laughter of glad hearts breaking through,
Where the feast is spread for them.

Music and song, and the tinkling tune
Of echoes that sound afar,
Like memories swept on the airs of June
From an old sweetheart's guitar.

But, what of tomorrow that brings no thrill.
With its old, sharp, waking cry?
Oh, the feast of flowers is waiting still,
Out under the wide, blue sky.

The Captive Coyotes

The gray thief's outcast brood,
Trapped in the haunts of men,
And far away the sheltered wood,
And far the desert's fen.

Far is the moonlit plain,
Where they would wandering be;
They like not, through the window pane,
The faces that they see.

No use to stretch a hand
Of kind and friendly care;
They would not know nor understand
The peace ye would declare.

The wild blood will not tame
With one day's passing grace,
For know ye not from whence they came?
That wild, marauding race?

For full a thousand years
They've borne the bane and ban,
The bold, unshriven buccaneers,
The gypsy's outlawed clan.

And so, when night stars pale,
And wakes the desert's breeze,
If you should hear a she-wolf wail,
It is for loss of these.

A Prayer For Rain

“And also I have withholden the rain from you.”

Lord, see'st Thou not, beside the way,
The drooping flowers
That, week by week and day by day,
Cry for Thy showers?

Hear'st Thou not the plaintive song
The wild birds sing,
That in the withered woodlands throng
With dusty wing?

The bare, brown hills, the blanching plains,
The silent vale,
They fade and sicken for thy rains,
In sore travail.

The wild folk of the forest keeps
Wail in the night,
And, neath the loam, the poppy sleeps,
Shut from the light.

Lord, in thy wide-flung, bending sky
Afar there broods
Where veiled and mist-swept oceans lie,
Thy cloud-pent floods;

Send Thou from thence the singing rain,
The laughing streams,
On this dear land of hill and plain
Thou mad'st of dreams

This land of dreams Thou mad'st so fair,
So fair and sweet,
Set like a jeweled footstool, there
To rest Thy feet.

The earth will blossom at thy word
Oh, speak it, then;
We ask it of Thy mercy, Lord,
In Thy dear Name. Amen.

The Marguerites Of Paul De Longpre

All in his fairy garden the myriad flowers grow,
The lilac and the buttercup, the stately Jacqueminot,
The fleur-de-lis, anemone, the pansy's changeful hue,
The yellow-robed acacia and violets of blue;
And, oh, the laughing daisies with eyes of welcome sweet—
The flower that he loves the best, the modest Marguerite.

Upon the walls of magic, within his fair roof-tree,
The flowers live and bloom again in shining panoply,
Plucked from stems that bore them, no more to fade and die,
With dews of morn upon them, and sheen of summer sky;
Yet there, like keys of minor that sigh upon a song,
The Marguerite's faint petals the splendid pictures throng.

Flowers of hill and valley, and all the dappled plains,
Glinted by the shimmered sun, kissed of singing rains,
Blossoms of the swaying tree, tender buds of spring,
Flaming banners of the vines that round dead towers cling—
They grow to make his kingdom of dream and color bright,
Limned by his fairy palette and pencils touched with light.

Every flowerer that blows he loves, yet one the best, of old,
The tender little daisy, with its sunny heart of gold,
With its heart of gold that cheered him when Fortune looked askance,
In his day of gloom and trouble neath the bending skies of France;
And now, with all the world and its laurels at his feet,
The soul of him cannot forget his first love—Marguerite.

Africanus Triumphans

[Read before the Afro-American Congress at Pasadena, Cal. August 19,
1903.]

When, out of the chaos, earth was hurled,
And God's great mandate spread;
When he made the races to fill the world—
Yellow and white and red—
There was one made black, and the other three
Seeing him, asked to know
Whence, from what darkness cometh he?
And whither does he go?

And the black man said God made us free,
White and black men all,
Yellow or red, whichever we be,
There shall be no bond or thrall;
But they said his lips had spoken lies,
For the brand was on his cheek,
And they dulled their ears to his children's cries,
And the word his tongue would speak.

So, through the centuries hath he borne,
With shoulders bowed to the wheel,
The whole world's burdens and its scorn—
Its bloodhounds at his heel.
Bound he stood in the palace hall,
He was chained in the galleyed ships,
Yet, with deathless courage he braved it all,
With the challenge upon his lips.

Out from the ages, stained and dim
With curse and wrong and hate,
He comes with the patient heart of him
Unbent of Time or Fate.
Lash and shackle and gyve and goad
He bore through grief and dole,

Yet stands at last, from the weary load,
Erect with dauntless soul.

There was never an hour of the countless years
When the Slavers white sail gleamed,
But through the rain of his blood and tears,
Of his birthright still he dreamed;
There was never a night of gloom and pain
But brought him its hope of morn,
With the vision of Liberty dawned again,
And the freedom he lost, new born.

He comes with his glory from wars of death
For the flag that made him free,
He comes from the cannon's thundrous breath
That he faced all fearlessly;
He comes with the songs his poets sing,
With the pictures his painters drew,
With the music the tongues of his pleaders ring,
And the things that his hands can do.

He comes, my brother, whoever you be
Yellow, or white, or red
In the fair, full light of his destiny,
With the word that, of old, he said.
Gentle and patient and brave and strong,
With the faith of his soul unworn,
And the time is past for shackle and thong,
And the time is past for scorn.

O olden race of the jungle and hill,
O olden race and strong,
Brave be your hearts with the challenge still,
And glad be your lips with song.
Look up to the glory that flames the skies,
The gloom of the night is done;
Oh, shout to the morning with victor cries,
For the long, hard fight is won.

Eirin Slainte Gal Go Bragh

[Passage of the Irish Land Bill of 1903 in the British House of Commons.]

Lift up your head and dry your tears,
Sweet land of Innisfail,
Tis not today your lover hears
The banshee's lonely wail,
But, from the harp on Tara's walls,
So long in grief unstrung,
The lilting tune of gladness calls,
The song of joy is sung.

Tis not the day of Sarsfield's dream,
When ebb'd his heart's red tide,
Tis not the day on Shannon's stream
For which your Emmett died,
But tis a day of hope and life,
Of wrong made right again,
That heals the bloodstained scar of strife,
The gaping wound of pain.

I wonder if the dead that sleep
Beneath the shamrocks low,
Or far, where alien rivers sweep,
Will thrill again to know
That from the Norman's hand of steel
Is loosed the grasp of power,
And burst death's bonds the joy to feel
Of this long-prayed-for hour?

Unfurl the green flag to the breeze,
There's none to say it nay,
For e'en the Saxon from his seas
Salutes its folds today.
Beneath the mists of Erin's skies
May ne'er its luster pale;

Lift up your head and dry your

The Queen City

(Seattle, 1897)

The shelter-craving sea
Crept to her feet,
The west wind, strong and free,
In her face blew sweet.
And oft, as the breath of the main
Her bosom kissed,
She hid in her cloak of rain
And veils of mist.

The Sailor wandering far
The trackless deep,
Turned to the steadfast star
That watched her sleep.
And the dauntless Pioneer,
Through forests wide,
Blazed the bleak pathway clear
That reached her side.

They throned her on the hills
Of changeless green,
Mid the gleam of mountain rills
And lakes soft sheen;
They filled their souls with her name,
Her love and grace,
And the sons of the four winds came
To see her face.

Jewels and gems they brought,
And raiments gay,
Treasures the looms had wrought,
In far Cathay;
Gifts from the vales and plains
And marts of old,
And the north from its frozen veins

Poured out its gold.

Then her wild pulses stirred,
Her warm heart beat,
She sang that the whole world heard,
And the song was sweet.
The salt rains swept her lips,
Still, from the skies,
She laughed to the crowding

Nogi

Nippon gave him horse and man,
She gave him sword and gun,
Foot and dragoon and tribe and clan,
And banners of the Sun.

She gave them from her reckless soul,
With neither sigh nor ruth,
That he might deck his muster roll
With flower of her youth.

The bravest and the strongest all,
With eyes unwet nor dim,
She flung them at his bugle's call
And gave them up to him.

'Neath Fusiyama's peaks of flame,
Where Yeddo's green vales lie,
From lake and gawa forth they came
Strong and blithe to die.

Ready and glad to fight and fall
For gods that o'er them beamed,
When flashing to the trumpet's call
The sword of Nogi gleamed.

O'er bloody seas and land's red rood,
Where death and ruin steals,
So sped he with the tiger's brood
That followed at his heels.

Above them roared the cannon's wrath,
And from far ramparts fell,
Seething upon their desperate path,
The leaden rains of hell.

They saw the guns flash through the n

From slopes and quaking crests;
The bayonet of the Muscovite
By day was at their breasts.

Draga

Draga is dead, who was so fair,
Her dumb lips 'reft of their luring smile,
Her heart's red blood in her matted hair,
And splashed on her soft, white hands the while;
Her eyes of glory, that flamed and burned,
Have veiled their fires of love and hate,
And the bucklered hosts of the foes she spurned
Stand guard, tonight, at her palace gate.

Tomorrow they'll set the crown she wore,
With its flashing gems, on a rival's head,
And the realm is safe—they will say—once more,
It is safe, for Draga, the Queen, is dead.
She is dead, the Queen with the wanton eyes,
Who laughed to ruin the goodly State,
And low in the cloisters of doom she lies,
Strong-barred 'gainst envy and fear and hate.

'Twas a far, mad journey, the way she came,
Up from the plebeian paths, alone,
Trailing her garments of sin and shame,
To flaunt them forth from the purpled throne;
But farther still is the journey now
That she takes in the dark, alone, again,
The cerecloth bound on her snowy brow
And Death's gaunt courtiers in her train.

Unshrived, in an outcast grave she sleeps,
Near the quiet lanes where, of old, she played;
And the long, dim shade of the spire creeps
Where in childhood's hours she sang and prayed.
And you, O Masters, who cast the stone,
As we speak the word you would have us say,
Will the same word serve at the great White Throne,
When she pleads for herself on the Judgment Day?

The Navajo

At morning, when the red sun leaps
On desert waste and buttes of sand,
Yonder where yet the cactus keeps
Its stubborn clutch with deathless hand,
The Navajo's wild song of praise
Rings out across his wind-blown hill
To thank his gods, in his own ways,
That he may walk his own land still.

Land of much sun and seldom rain,
Land of the silence and the light,
Land of the softened, shadowed plain,
Dim 'neath the starlit paths of night,
Land of great moons that come and go,
Of deep arroyos dead and dried —
Serene hath here the Navajo,
Since years forgotten, lived and died.

Here through the years with plenty filled,
Or lean with hunger, want and thirst,
Whate'er the gods he worshipped willed,
With much or little blessed or cursed,
Still to his own land hath he clung,
Still on its ancient trails he went,
His spells he wove, his songs he sung,
Glad in his soul and well content.

Where'er your land may be, or mine,
Lush with green fields and fertile vales,
Rich with its herds and fat with kine,
Fair with soft hills and meadowed dales;
Though towering dome and penciled spire
Up to the skies our hands have thrown,
Yet, in his Land of Heart's Desire,
The Navajo will seek his own.

Cods of the sun and singing rains,
Spirits of noon and dusky night
That brood above the desert plains,
Winged with the darkness or the light,
Your blessings to his scant fields bring;
Make full his springs to leap and flow;
Make glad the songs his lips shall sing, .
And peace be with the Navajo.

Stanley

Set his staff within the hall,
Lift his shallop to the shore—
Winds that wake the wander-call
Sing for him no more.

Sun and stars that blaze and pale
Over jungles dank and dim,
Ne'er again, through distant trail,
Shine and gleam for him.

Ships shall from far oceans meet
In stately harbors where he led,
While daisies fair and primrose sweet
Deck his dreamless bed.

Sails will sweep white inland seas
That brooded in the twilights long,
But in yon new world's destinies
His memories will throng.

And, while eager feet of men
Crowd Africa for gold and fame,
They'll think of this old wanderer then
And speak anon his name—

Him 'neath skies of England lain,
His staff long mouldered in the hall,
His shallop worn with wind and rain,
Deaf to the wander-call.

The Gray Day She Died

The gray day she died, oh, 'tis long to recall,
It is long to remember and long to forget—
The gray hill and glen and the white mists over all,
The dreary, dreary rain and the east winds wet.

It is long to remember, but I cannot forget;
Though many a pathway my feet have wandered wide,
There never comes a gray day but I can see them yet,
The hill and the valley and the place where she died.

They brought in the candles to light the solemn gloom —
Candles for her feet and candles for her head—
We sat with broken voices in the silent, aching room,
With the white mists weaving a shroud for the dead.

We saw the folded hands across the quiet breast,
Her fingers entwined with her rosary of prayer,
And the east wind sobbing —it would not sink to rest—
And the gray mists falling wet upon her hair.

It is long to remember, 'tis many a year since then,
But I mind you coming in as though 'twere yesterday,
Saying, God was good to us and well He loved us when
He came on a gray day to take her away.

'Tis you that were knowing, 'tis you that were strong,
When the white mists fell and the wet winds sighed—
Had a bird in the sun woke the lilt of his song
Our hearts ne'er had borne it the gray day she died.

