

THE COMPLETE

POEMS

of

Jessie Shropshire Key



To Patrick Calder  
From Great Grandmother Key  
1975



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JESSIE SHROPSHIRE KEY

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*The order of the poems in this book is based on the previous volume of Mrs. Key's work. In this present printing all the poems dated through 1943 have been reprinted in the same order as in the original book. The remaining poems follow in a sequence that is roughly chronological. In some cases the time of writing is ignored in order to group poems of the same content together, just as Mrs. Key grouped the earlier pieces in her first book.*

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THE CHRIST CHILD—1919

Once a little Baby slumbered  
In a manger and we hear  
How the shepherds came to worship  
And the shepherds then drew near.

How the angels sang His glory,  
Songs of peace, good will to men  
And I like to think His mother  
Held Him close, so closely then.

Still we worship Him, Our Saviour,  
Gift of God, His Chosen One,  
And I find this thought to treasure,  
He was Mary's little Son.

MOTHER—1919

On Mother's Day, my mother,  
My thoughts go forth to you,  
Across the miles between us  
To bear this message true:

To say how much I love you.  
And every day I find,  
Though your're far away, how closely  
Your life is touching mine.

The years I've had you near me,  
Your faithful tenderness,  
The many things you taught me,  
How even yet they bless.

So, dear, I want to tell you,  
How much you mean to me;  
How I find through your example,  
Love and truth and purity.



TO MY PARENTS—1920

For days you watched my toddling steps,  
For nights you watched beside my bed,  
For hours and hours you've toiled for me,  
For every loving word you said.

For patient care and tenderness,  
For truth and purity you taught  
By counsel sweet and even more  
The lives you've lived, the good you've wrought.

For all your love my heart is glad,  
Dear Ones, I feel it 'round me still  
And never shall it cease to find  
Within my heart a place to fill.

LOVE—FOR D. P.—1929

Love came to us and all the world was fair,  
Those dreams fulfilled they thrill me even yet.  
In memory oft I live them o'er again,  
Sweet, happy days we never shall forget.

One day love made our little home come true.  
Could life for us be richer, more complete?  
The right to journey ever side by side,  
The world aglow seemed lying at our feet.

When little children came into our home  
I learned, at last, how perfect love could be,  
Those precious souls God gave into our care.  
Life's sweetest blessing granted you and me.

Your love has filled my heart with sweet content,  
I've known its strength in pain and sorrow, too,  
Its light shall bless our journey to the end,  
My Best Beloved, if I may walk with you.

TO BABY, WILMA—1916

What is it worth, a baby's smile,  
The love in those blue eyes,  
The clinging touch of little hands?  
No gold this blessing buys.

A sacred trust is given us,  
To watch the budding soul,  
To guard, to guide with tender care  
And see the flower unfold.

Within my heart I pray this prayer,  
"Oh, make me wise and good  
That I may wear more worthily  
The crown of motherhood."

TO MY LITTLE GIRL, VERNIE—1922

My little Heartsease,  
I call her so.  
Her step is light  
And her voice is low.

When I need her most  
She is always near  
With a kiss of love  
Or a word of cheer.

She makes home happy,  
Well I know.  
Little Heartsease,  
We love you so.

TO MY SON, DAVID—1928

Today I watched my baby go,  
With sprightly step and heart so light,  
To school, that magic place of dreams,  
So long to him a vision bright.

Dear little son, these few short years  
I've sheltered him with loving care.  
Oh, that my arms might only reach,  
And hold him safe from every snare.

Yet would I have it always so?  
I cannot truly answer "Yes."  
For he must learn to stand alone  
And live for what he proves the best.

To lift his load and onward go  
And everywhere to lend a hand,  
Be strong for every cause that's right  
And stand before the world, a man.

WHAT IS LOVE?—1929

Love is the light in a mother's eyes  
That glows from the heart within  
When she holds in her arms her wee firstborn  
And prays and plans and dreams for him.

Love is the right to walk beside  
Our best beloved through joy or pain  
And when the path is growing dim,  
In memories sweet to live again.

Love is the touch of baby hands,  
Drawing us ever in their need  
Toward higher goals of usefulness  
That they may follow where we lead.

Love is the faith of one staunch friend,  
Who ne'er would doubt, though you stood alone.  
Let the rest of the world just pass you by,  
His hand would reach to clasp your own.

The mountain breeze, the rippling stream,  
The sky of blue that bends above,  
The trees, the birds, the flowers that bloom,  
Proclaim to us that God is love.

## THE VIOLET—1914

In a rare and beautiful garden place  
Grew flowers many and fair;  
Somewhere a violet lifted its face,  
And its fragrance was sweet on the air.

'Twas a tiny thing amid statelier bloom  
But a mission it called its own,  
To send from some corner its sweet perfume  
And make its true worth known.

MY WESTERN HOME—1914

Dear old home of my girlhood days,  
For me the flowers bloom sweeter there  
And birds building nests in the nearby trees  
With sweeter music fill the air.

Over the green of the hillside,  
Down into the valley I love;  
Clear, and in tune with the springtime,  
Comes the quail call and "coo" of the dove.

And golden sunshine and shadow  
Play over the blue mountain side,  
'Til sunset tints touch them with glory  
And they darken at eventide.

In sunlight or 'neath the moonbeams  
The charm is around it still,  
My little home where the valley is green  
And flowers grow over the hill.



## THOUGHTS BY NIGHT

Oh wondrous beauty of night!  
The star-gemmed sky above,  
And the silent earth 'neath the  
    soft moonbeams,  
Are speaking of peace and love.

And rest, and times of thought  
    and dreams  
And memories bringing joy and  
    pain,  
We draw but nearer to our God,  
And, trusting say, "We praise  
    Thy name."

SPRINGTIME—1924

There is joy in the song of the  
    blithesome birds,  
There is beauty in radiant bloom  
Of flowers that welcome the coming  
    of spring,  
Banishing gray winter's gloom.

The rhythm of streams that go  
    purring along,  
The trees, waving banners of green,  
The sunshine and shadow on blue  
    mountain sides,  
The verdure of valleys between.

For the skies that are blue and the  
    glory of earth,  
Let us be merry and sing,  
Our hearts, in tune with the warbling  
    birds,  
Gladly proclaiming the spring.

WINTER NIGHT—1919

The snow gleamed white across the fields,  
On valleys, hills and mountain crest;  
The moonlight sheen was on the slopes,  
I watched the land I love at rest.

Soft shadows wrapped the canyon depths,  
A stillness hovered over all;  
The stars, the blue of wintry skies  
Shone high above the mountain wall.

My heart thrilled to this loveliness,  
In purity all nature slept  
And One, Creator of all,  
Seemed near, my little world He kept.

TRUST—1917

What if sometimes the path of duty leads  
Where sorrows or where suffering clouds  
the day?

Dear Lord, I know that Thou art near  
to me,  
To lift me up, should I faint by the way.

'Tis by Thy strength I find it not too  
hard  
To do those things that Thou wouldst  
have me do;  
Thy love and promises of peace I find  
The light beyond the shadows, shining  
through.

IN MEMORY OF MY LITTLE SISTER,  
MARGUERITE—1916

Her little soul has gone once more  
To rest in Jesus' love;  
His tender care enfolds her there  
Within our home above.

Although we long to keep her here,  
Our hearts this thought shall hold,  
No sin or sorrow follows her  
Into the Shepherd's fold.

And so we bow beneath His will,  
Trusting our Father's care  
To guide our feet until we meet  
Our little loved one there.

MY MOTHER—1932

Mother of mine, I love you so,  
Each silver thread in your shining hair,  
Each line in your face so sweet and pure;  
I lovingly trace your life's work there.

They mean a labor of love for me,  
Your watchful care in my baby days,  
Your counsel sweet in later years,  
Your thoughts, your prayers, your help  
always.

Dear Heart, my words can ne'er express  
The beauty in your life I see.  
But may its glory ever shine  
To light the path ahead for me.

TO MY LITTLE GRANDSON, B.—1937

Last summer out among the flowers,  
Each morning when the sun would shine,  
I walked along the garden path  
And held him close, this boy of mine.

A tiny blue-eyed baby then  
And yet he learned to love the flowers,  
His little face pressed close to mine,  
Such sweet companionship was ours.

Those tiny little hands of his  
That touched the leaves as we passed by,  
The little face so fair and sweet,  
Out there beneath the summer sky.

This summer he came back again,  
A chubby little boy is he;  
He wears a sun suit, not a dress,  
And walks along the path with me.

My little shadow, he's so close,  
I only need to reach a hand  
To touch a little sun-browned cheek,  
His bare feet standing in the sand.

He's romping on the cool green grass  
Or just behind the lilacs there  
Or sitting near the flower beds,  
In fact, he seems most everywhere.

Last year it seemed he'd never be  
So sweet and lovable as then,  
But even dearer than before  
I find this little boy again.

My little grandson brings to me  
Sweet memories of those other days,  
His mother, just a baby girl,  
With just such cunning little ways.

TO MY LITTLE GRANDSON, WAYNE—1938

We know him by his sunny smile,  
It seems to overflow with joy;  
He's such a happy little land,  
Our sweet and precious baby boy.

He lifts to me his chubby arms  
And love shines in his eyes,  
I hold him very close, the while  
Fond dreams are realized.

I called his mother my "Heartsease"  
It seems not long ago;  
Perhaps that's why she brings him here  
And likes to share him so.

A little rose grows near my door  
That's such a lot like him,  
The creamy pinkness of his cheeks,  
The softness of his skin.

And while I hold him in my arms,  
The past and future softly blend,  
My tiny grandson snuggles close;  
I dream and pray and plan again.



## THE LITTLE CHURCH JUST DOWN THE STREET

There's an humble little church house  
Just a few steps down the street,  
Where I like to go to worship,  
Where God's children love to meet.

Just a simple little service,  
Yet we know it pleases Him,  
For he told us how to serve Him,  
How to keep our souls from sin.

Peace that passeth understanding  
Seems to linger with us there.  
When we feel the Lord is near us  
In that little house of prayer.

Reaching out to those around us,  
Helping those we find in need,  
From the storehouse of our blessings,  
With a kindly word or deed.

Till the Father calls us homeward,  
Where all Christians we shall meet,  
May we worship there together,  
In the church just down the street.

## A LITTLE CHILD

A little child is given us,  
A life to love and call our own,  
A little soul to guard and guide,  
A light to shine within our home.

Oh baby hands that softly cling  
In trust that we may feel your need.  
Oh little body soft and warm,  
Our own to cherish, clothe and feed.

Oh little soul, so pure and clean,  
May our own lives from day to day  
Be such that you may walk with us  
And follow Jesus all the way.

## TREES AND BIRDS

I think God made the oak tree  
That little birds might rest  
Among its sheltering branches  
And build aloft their nests.

In dashing rain or wintry wind  
Its green leaves softly fold  
About their tiny little forms  
And shield them from the cold.

I'm glad the Father gives to us  
Rich blessings from above,  
Like big oak trees and little birds  
To prove to us His love.

MOTHER—1940 .

To cradle in her loving arms  
A little baby soft and warm,  
To guide the tiny faltering feet,  
With watchful care to keep from harm,  
God gave us mothers.

Through childhood hours of constant need,  
To work, to plan, her all to give  
That every sacrifice of hers  
Bring blessings to us while we live,  
God gave us mothers.

To find her greatest earthly joy  
In pleasures that shall come our way  
And when we wander from the right,  
To kneel beside her bed and pray,  
God gave us mothers.

Because of her enduring love  
Through days and nights of anxious care,  
We thank God for his precious gift,  
For tender words and every prayer,  
The faithfulness of mothers.

THROUGH ALL THE YEARS—1940  
*(Papa's and Mamma's 50th Wedding Anniversary)*

Just fifty years ago today  
We started on life's path together.  
We've traveled far 'neath sunny skies,  
And often times in stormy weather.

Wealth hasn't crowned the passing years  
And yet they brought a richer store,  
Our home, with all its precious ties  
And babies playing 'round the door.

And when they left the little nest  
To build for families of their own,  
They didn't take those memories  
That bless the hours while we're alone.

Our hair is silvered now with time,  
Our steps grow slow, our eyes grow dim,  
But love like ours shall never change  
For it is shining from within.

MY PRAYER—1941

Dear Father, when my step grows weary,  
Wilt thou lend Thy loving care?  
When my days are dark and dreary,  
Wilt thou hear my earnest prayer?

When my heart is full of sorrow,  
Seems near breaking with its load,  
Wilt thou grant a bright tomorrow,  
Sending light along the road?

Help me trust Thy guidance ever,  
Let me always thankful be  
For Thy love that faileth never,  
Father, while I lean on Thee.

TO DAVID—ON LEAVING FOR THE ARMY—1942

Today the Army calls my boy;  
I wonder if we mothers know  
Just when our boys from babyhood  
Through childhood years to manhood grow.

To me it seems so short a time  
Since he was playing 'round my knee,  
The boy I've loved and cherished so;  
The little son God gave to me.

He stands before the world today,  
So fine and clean, so strong and true;  
I know that he will give his best  
To every task that he must do.

Our God will guide and guard my boy  
And shelter us with loving care,  
Granting me the strength I need  
To lift the cross that I must bear.

MY FRIEND: TO MRS. SMITH—1943

When I was sick and the days were long,  
God gave a precious friend to me;  
I learned to know how much of life  
Her loving faithfulness could be.

When I am sad, her tender words  
Bring blessed comfort to my heart;  
No sorrow ever comes my way  
In which she does not have a part.

When joy is mine, she's glad with me;  
Because of her I smile through tears  
And thank God for a love like ours,  
That sweeter grows through passing years.



MY GIRLS—1942

They scatter sunshine where they go,  
These precious little girls of mine,  
The sick, the sad, the needy know  
The pleasure which they leave behind.

With voices sweet, they sing their songs  
To gladden those along the way  
And leave their smiles to cheer them on,  
To brighten many a dreary day.

They came to me in time of need,  
Sweet cheer and help and comfort brought;  
None but myself can ever know  
How great the happiness they wrought.

There is a tie which binds us close,  
For well I know they love each other.  
As I love them, so they love me  
Although I'm just their other mother.

A GRANDMOTHER—1948  
*(To My Grandchildren)*

It is great to be grandmother  
To my babies, large and small,  
Children of my children,  
Makes me mother of them all.

Good to feel their soft caresses,  
Good to share their work or fun;  
Know their simple, sweet confiding,  
Know the joy in things they've done.

Blessed as mother and grandmother,  
What a pleasure it can be,  
Just the sharing of these children  
Which my children gave to me.

## TO MY DAD

Dad, you will leave a heritage  
More valuable than gold;  
It's worth a kingly fortune  
But it can't be bought or sold.

You taught us how to labor,  
Finding joy in work well done.  
You never murmured or complained  
If you worked from sun to sun.

We measure now your love for us  
By just such kindly deeds.  
You worked so faithfully, we know,  
To meet your children's needs.

## HUMILITY

Dear Father, teach me that humility  
Which marked the Saviour's life  
    from day to day,  
When once He walked the sands  
    near Galilee  
Or sought the lonely hills so oft  
    to pray.

Let me forget small merit of my own  
In the greatness of thy goodness  
    unto me,  
And in my life Thy glory always  
    shine,  
Reflected, only, as I live for Thee.

Lest I should feel exalted, let me  
    pray,  
Ever with my loving Lord between,  
That not myself but he, whom I  
    would serve,  
Abide with me and only Christ  
    be seen.

IN MEMORY OF MYRTLE HURLEY—1953

She's gone a little while but over yonder  
She'll be waiting in that home so sweet and fair.  
Gathered with her loved ones, she will greet us  
When we, too, shall go to meet her over there.

If here on earth one's life can merit them,  
Her loving deeds and all her faithfulness  
Have earned for her a crown to wear in heaven,  
Marked with stars for every life she blessed.

Faithful in her busy Christian service,  
A friend to all she met who had a need;  
Few who touched her life but learned to love her  
Because of some unselfish, kindly deed.

The world is richer for her goodly living  
And brighter just because she passed this way.  
For those who loved her, heaven seems much sweeter  
Because we hope to meet her there some day.

TO LUTIE (BLACKWELL) YATES—WITH LOVE

Among my Christmas cards today,  
Dear Chum, I found the one from you.  
I quickly looked inside to find  
The little note you'd tucked in, too.

How sweet it is as each year ends  
To know our love has bridged the miles  
And kept us close through memories  
Of other days, our tears and smiles.

I hold your Christmas card and dream.  
It seems our hands are clasped once more;  
We're walking in the same old paths  
As we often did in days of yore.

I think of friends we used to know,  
Our school, our girlhood days together,  
The hills where flowers grew in Spring,  
Or snow clad in the wintry weather.

Some folks would say we're growing old  
But who grows old with memories sweet  
That we may just unfold at will  
And find there treasures so complete?

TO MAY ROSS

Dearest of friends, so loving and  
so true,  
You've been so much of both  
throughout the years,  
Standing by when happiness or  
sorrow comes,  
So close to me in times of joy  
or tears.

A sweeter tie has come to bless  
our lives,  
Sisters in Christ as we sit side by  
side  
In the little church we've learned  
to love so much  
And worship God, our precious Lord  
and Guide.

Oh use us, Lord, in Thy sweet service  
here,  
Then lead us both to live with Thee  
up there.  
In Heaven may we sing the songs  
we love,  
Together, Father, is my earnest  
prayer.

TO MY OTHER MOTHER—CORNELIA KEY

I miss you, Dear, since you have gone  
away.

The sweetness of the hours that we  
have shared  
Still linger in my heart to keep you  
close;  
How glad I am that memory holds  
you there.

I seem again to see your loving face,  
As in those days when I stayed near  
your bed.

How patient and how kind you were  
to me;  
I treasure still the precious words  
you said.

Your need of me and my great need of  
you  
Bound us so closely, I cannot forget;  
I seem to feel your presence, hear  
your voice;  
Oh, Other Mother, how I love you yet.



IN MEMORY OF MY PRECIOUS MOTHER—1956

Mother, Dear, I call your name  
And seem to feel your loving touch,  
To see the smile upon your face  
And hear the voice I loved so much.

You seem so near, though far away;  
I feel your love so warm and true  
And seem again to clasp your hand  
And walk familiar paths with you.

I know you're happy where you are;  
You always taught me God is love.  
I'll hold the hand which led you through  
Until we meet in Heaven above.

IN MEMORY OF OUR DAD, ALF KEY—1956

How we miss the sound of his footsteps  
And there is only a vacant place  
Where so often he sat by the fire  
And we looked on his dear old face.

He was humble and uncomplaining  
Though his body was feeble and worn.  
He lived for the pleasure of others;  
He wouldn't want us to mourn.

We will cherish the memory forever  
Of his life so patient and sweet;  
It will help us to bear, with his courage,  
The trials we all must meet.

TO MY BEST BELOVED

Fifty years ago, one happy day,  
Hand in hand, we started life  
together.  
Side by side we've traveled all  
the way,  
'Neath sunny skies, sometimes in  
stormy weather.

Light on the clouds can blend a  
gorgeous sunset;  
So clouds must come to make our  
joys complete.  
'Tis sharing them that ever draws  
us closer  
And makes our sunset days so rich  
and sweet.

So for each golden day we've  
walked together,  
The joys, the trials that were  
ours to share  
That made our love throughout the  
years grow stronger,  
With gratitude to God, I breathe  
a prayer.

IN MY GARDEN WITH GOD—1967

Out in my garden with God,  
A gift of his wonderful love;  
The earth with its verdant beauty,  
Silver clouds and blue sky above.

He has touched the heart of each flower,  
Has hung every star in its place,  
Has sent the rain and the sunshine,  
Has marked each spot with His grace.

Because He has smiled upon them,  
Shrubs are bending with radiant bloom;  
Breezes whisper within the tree tops;  
For souls seeking Him there is room.

Yes, God is with me in my garden  
And my burdens are lifted there.  
As I feel the joy of His presence  
And His tender enfolding care.

"TELL ME THE STORY OF JESUS"

"Tell me the story of Jesus,"  
Did you hear your little one say?  
Were you so pressed with many cares  
That you sent him out to play?

To clothe and feed his little frame,  
You left his soul unfed;  
The little child which came to you  
And asked for sweeter bread.

The years with your many cares sped on.  
The story was never told;  
Without the warmth and food he craved,  
His soul grew starved and cold.

He heard it from others in later years  
But it had no charm for him then;  
He was warming himself at the fires of chance  
And feasting his soul with sin.

The body for which you so tenderly cared  
Some day shall moulder in dust.  
It was only a case for the little gem  
That you were to hold in trust.

That soul that must stand at the bar of God  
And be judged for eternity;  
Guilty or guiltless? The chance was yours—  
And what will the answer be?





