

**POEMS**

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Poems by Meredith Nicholson

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UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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TO JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

**Y**OU came when song itself was tame,  
Though many strove with idle aim  
Like moths about the sacred flame  
On ignorant wing;  
You scorned, in beaten trails of fame,  
To walk and sing.

You borrowed not Apollo's sign,  
Affixed to many a lifeless line;  
You sought not the dim shadowy Nine  
Obscure, remote:  
You wove the human and divine  
In one clear note!

You would not strive with them that deign  
To seek on chaff-strewn floors for grain,  
And even for trampled husks are fain,  
But, in the field,  
You strove with infinite care to gain  
Life's golden yield.

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*You sought no high and strenuous key  
To mark your new blithe minstrelsy,  
Invoked no shrine on bended knee,  
In Greece or Rome,  
But, all ungyved, your spirit free  
Sang most of home!*

*In the lone farm-house you laid bare  
The drama of its toil and care,  
But making love triumphant there  
Rise strong and sweet,  
Like herbs that scent the summer air,  
Bruised 'neath our feet.*

*'Twas your voice sang the yet unsung  
Faith of a people brave and young  
To whose rude speech a wild tang clung,  
Of clean earth born,—  
The variant Saxon of our tongue  
You did not scorn!*

*You heard, in dewy haunts of spring,  
The treble note of childhood ring,—  
The homing stroke you taught its wing  
That you, again,  
Might woo that vagrant note and sing  
Once more its strain.*

*Not mine the right to sing your praise  
Nor twine for you the deathless bays,  
But mine to walk in lighted ways  
Lured by your rhyme,  
Glad for the faith through faithless days  
You shield from Time.*

*And you still hold, as at the start,  
That which God set for you apart—  
Faith, Love and Trust, that in your heart  
Keep its song pure,  
And the magician gift of art,  
And these endure!*