

A. M. F. Robinson (1857-1944)

3 *Sir Eldric*

Sir Eldric rode by field and fen  
To reach the haunts of heathen men.

About the dusk he came into  
A wood of birchen grey,  
And on the other side he knew 5  
The heathen country lay.

“Tis but a night (he sang) to ride,  
And Christ shall reach the other side!”

The moon came peering thro’ the trees  
And found him undismayed, 10  
For still he sang his litanies  
And as he rode he prayed.

He looked as young, as pure and glad  
As ever looked Sir Galahad.

About the middle of the night 15  
He came upon the brink,  
Of running waters cool and white  
And lighted there to drink.

And as he knelt a hidden foe  
Crept from behind and smote him so. 20

He turned; he felt his heart’s blood run;  
He sought his enemy:  
“And shall I leave my deeds undone,  
And die for such as thee?”

And since a Knight was either man, 25  
They wrestled till the dawn began.

Then in the dim and rustling place  
Amid the thyme and dew,  
Sir Eldric dealt the stroke of grace,  
And sank a-dying too, 30

And thought upon that other's plight  
Who was not sure of Heaven that night.

He dipped his fingers in his breast;  
He sought in vain to rise;  
He leaned across his foe at rest, 35  
And murmured, "I baptize!"

When lo! the sun broke overhead:  
There, at his side, *Himself* lay dead!

(From *The Collected Poems Lyrical and Narrative of A. Mary F. Robinson*. London, n.d.)