

The
Selected
Poems of
MARJORIE
PICKTHALL

Edited and with an introduction by

LORNE PIERCE



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To my friend E. J. Pratt

DEDICATION

Lord, on this paper white,

*My soul would write
Tales that were heard of old
Of perilous things and bold;
Kings as young lions for pride;
Lost cities where they died
Last in the gate; the cry
That told some Eastern throng
A prophet was gone by;
The song of swords; the song
Of beautiful, fierce lords
Gone down among the swords;
The traffick and the breath
Of nations spilled in death;
The glory and the gleam
Of a whole age
Snared in a golden page,—
Such is my dream.*

*Yet thanks, if yet You give
The crumbs by which I live,—
Blown shreds of beauty, broken
Words half unspoken,
So faint, so faltering,
They may not truly show
The blue on a crow's wing,
The berry of a brier
Cupped in new snow
As though the snow lit fire...*

MARJORIE PICKTHALL

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Introduction

I shall say, Lord, "Is it music, is it morning,
Song that is fresh as sunrise, light that sings?"
When on some hill there breaks the immortal warning
Of half-forgotten springs.

The poem from which these lines are taken, "Resurgam," sums up, in a way, the strength and weakness of Marjorie Pickthall. On the one hand, there are grace and charm, restrained Christian mysticism, and unfailing cadence; on the other, preoccupation with the unearthly, with death and regret, with loneliness and grief, where the tendency is toward emotional interpretations of life, and rapture and intuition are substituted for the discipline of reason. Something of a pagan in the classical sense, as well as part Protestant and part Anglo-Catholic, she took beauty where she found it and believed that it held all of goodness and truth. Her faith could be summed up in a quotation from the Bible which she treasured: "Mine eyes shall see the King in His glory!" Her favourite saint was Francis of Assisi. Her poems very often seem to be private acts of devotion—reticent, wistful, and personal, a kind of oblation jewelled with symbolism, bright with imagery, and always softly cadenced as if joining in the age-old litany of the Mass. Passion, grief, feelings of injustice or outrage, were nearly always muted in her verse. Only in her novels and short stories did she ever try to come to grips with mankind, and even then she tended to submerge her intimate thoughts and feelings in romantic situations from which the tangible and the real too often escaped. In both prose and verse her humour remained more or less constant, a fundamental fact in both her art and life that partook of her blitheness and gaiety, sometimes a commentary upon life and sometimes a kind of anodyne to still the hurts of reality.

I

Marjorie Pickthall was born September 14, 1883, near Chiswick, England, the only child of Arthur C. Pickthall and Helen Mary Mallard. Her father was the son of a Church of England clergyman and her mother's father was an officer in the Royal Navy, part Irish and part Huguenot. After several moves the Pickthalls came to Canada in 1889 and settled in Toronto. Marjorie attended a Church of England School on Beverley Street, and later Bishop Strachan School. A delicate child she was often out of school, but always immersed in her drawing and painting, her diary and violin, and her own stories and verses. All the anniversaries of her year were marked by gifts of books. She sold her first story to the *Toronto Globe* in 1898, a poem to the *Mail and Empire* in the same year, and a prize poem, "O Keep the World Forever at the Dawn," to the *Mail and Empire* in 1900. She was at last launched upon a literary career and never turned back. In the next four or five years her poems appeared in the *National Monthly*, *Acta Victoriana*, *Century*, *The Atlantic*, *Westminster*, *McClures*, *Metropolitan*, *University Magazine*, *Scribners*, *Harpers*, and others, and in 1906 she launched the first of three juvenile thrillers illustrated by C. W. Jefferys. From her prize poem of 1900 to "Bega," "The Little Sister of the Prophet," and "The Bridegroom of Cana," all published in 1909, the distance was great and illustrates her progress from a beginner to the full maturity of her powers. When *Drift of Pinions*, her first book, appeared in 1913, she had already written much of her best poetry, and was to continue not only the repetition of her favourite attitudes and metaphors, but even the vocabulary that included such words as *gray*, *little*, *silver*, *rose*, *dreams*, *mist*, *dove*, and *moth*.

Marjorie Pickthall foraged far and wide, but she sought those experiences most congenial to her nature, many of them denied to her in the only world of reality she knew. In the beginning she devoured Henty, Kipling and Scott, Lytton, Stevenson and Conrad, and her earliest stories were reminiscent of them. Later she came upon John Maclean's *The Indians: Their Manners and Customs*, and all her materials were ready for three juvenile books of adventure. Soon, however, she was to discover Fiona Macleod, and enter into the Celtic realm of haunting dreams, preoccupation with loneliness and death, and longing for the unobtainable. Thereafter, every landscape held something of the "dim sweet

isles of the West." She also found Ingram's *Flora Symbolica*, and this invested with hidden meanings the flowers she had always loved to paint. Then she discovered Katherine Tynan, Alice Meynell, Louise Imogen Guiney, W. B. Yeats, and even Masfield, to whom, in his Celtic moods, she felt nearer than anyone. As if this were not enough she entered the Norse world through William Morris, loitered about legendary Brittany and the Holy Land, and explored the frontiers of the New World with its Indians, French missionaries, and *coureurs de bois*.

Then, in 1910, when she was twenty-seven, her dream house on an isle of dreams collapsed. The death of her mother was for her an overwhelming catastrophe, taking her whole world. She had no defences ready and her grief was tragic.

Life is too little for the way of Love,
A lifted wing, a flower too soon unfurled,
A green grave with one patient star above,
And that is all the world.

It was then that she found in several persons identified with Victoria College, Toronto, the counsel and consolation she so much needed. A position was secured for her in Victoria College Library, and after a considerable interval she returned to poetry again. The first poem written after the crisis, "Rain in the Nest," appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Miss Helena Coleman and Professor Pelham Edgar guided her reticent genius, and brought her strong friends, among them Sir Andrew Macphail, Editor of *The University Magazine*, who published her first book of poems, *Drift of Pinions*, dated at Victoria College.

Marjorie Pickthall sailed for England at Christmas time, 1912, and lived with an uncle at Hammersmith, London, where she received her author's copies of *Drift of Pinions*. The *Oxford Book of English Verse* appeared in 1913. Her own copy is heavily marked, and indicates her almost morbid concentration upon death: Præd's "Mater Desiderata"; Browning's "Prospice" (in which she corrects the editor's "Then a joy," restoring the proper "out of pain"); George MacDonald's "Sonnet" on death; Christina Rossetti's "Cold it is, my beloved, since your funeral bell was toll'd"; Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpine"; Francis Thompson's "An Ode after Easter"; "Weep not Today," by Robert Bridges; and others. She later moved with a friend to Bowerchalk, near Salisbury, and there wrote *Little Hearts* (1914), her first novel, set in Jacobean days, and less a story than a charming and quaint meditation on Mr. Sampson's philosophy of poverty. The First World War broke in upon her own world, and to help in the general call to service she worked for a time on the land, which proved much too heavy for her. Next she worked in the South Kensington Meteorological Office, and the close confinement threatened her eyesight. In between times she began a novel, *Fox Cover*, never completed, wrote *The Bridge* (1921), a novel located at Toronto, and published her second book of poems, *Lamp of Poor Souls* (1916), which contained most of *Drift of Pinions* together with many new poems. In 1920 she returned to Canada, and took up residence in Vancouver. In the same year her one-act play, *The Wood Carver's Wife*, was produced in Montreal, and she began what was to have been her greatest work in prose, *The Beaten Man*, a novel based upon contemporary life in the new world. She died suddenly, in 1922, and was buried beside her mother in St. James' Cemetery, Toronto, April 26. *The Wood Carver's Wife and Other Poems* appeared the same year in a memorial edition.*

* See *Marjorie Pickthall: a Book of Remembrance*, by Lorne Pierce. The Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1925.

II

With Marjorie Pickthall the old poetic tradition in Canada may be said to have come to its foreordained end. It came to its end at Victoria College. With a young student, E. J. Pratt, who borrowed books from the Library where Marjorie Pickthall was assistant, the new tradition began. She who helped move the books from the old stacks to the new building, and was not a little lost amid it all, was shortly to enter the chaos of the First World War, and would scarcely survive it. The new day demanded other gifts than hers. Like Bliss Carman, she found the firmament dissolving beneath her feet. What she had to say, and the lyric way she said it, were fast going out of style. She hoped to find herself in war work, with a body that scarcely sustained the demands of a cloistered life in times of peace. "Even if I fail, it will be a

satisfaction to know I've had a thorough good try at something useful." Her multiplying stories were full of perilous quests and hazardous journeys, of undertakings that required incredible resources to withstand fatigue, hunger, and despair. She wrote of men who could take the world in their strong hands and rebuild it alone according to their will, but she was no consort for these. Her vivid romanticism invested the incredible with the aura of reality, but whatever of reality her people and places ever possessed was the product of her soaring imagination.

In her poetry she carried the old tradition as far as it could reasonably be expected to go, and certainly as far as the transplanted Celtic motif was desirable in the new world. There seems to be no place now for the historic sorrows of Deirdre, dim and inconsolable, or for the luxurious grief of a Celtic Sappho regretting absent love. There is not a little of this in the poetry of Marjorie Pickthall, as well as her own variations on the theme of *The Song of Songs*, a blending of passion and reverence, always rather wistful, and very beautiful at its best. Her poems based upon the Mass reveal her imperfect understanding of both doctrine and symbol, and reflect, instead of a deep religious experience, her prevailing attitudes, sincere enough but emotional, toward death, love, and separation, a passionate longing for fulfilment and peace. Whatever theology she possessed was, like her understanding of people—both as individuals and in their social relationships—almost always intuitive and not derived from reason or profound personal experience.

III

During her lifetime she had sometimes been called "Pickthall the Obscure." She attributed this obscurity, if such it was, to the mystical quality of her work. When she sat down to write her last novel, *The Beaten Man*, she strove to become more objective, simpler, more direct and practical. She was led toward this resolve by her great good sense, by a passionate if detached interest in people, by an all-pervading humour, and by a sense of the grotesque. In her early work she dealt with humanity, but it was man out of the past, remote, idealized, and legendary. She faced away from own age. In her first novel, *Little Hearts*, she retreated to the Jacobean period, just as elsewhere she was intrigued by mediaeval Brittany or in love with the Cavaliers. Her difficulty, in both prose and poetry, was in not being able to see mankind as it really was. When she escaped from various war services to Bowerchalk, she was immersed in the world of romance. "Chalke Cottage" was within sight of the old Roman Road. "From Brading" reveals the wonder of it all for her, the marching legions, the pomp and circumstance, the arrogance and swagger of those vanished legions. Salisbury Plain, dominated by the cathedral, held under its barrows a long-forgotten civilization. And there was Stonehenge, the Druids with their rubric of the sun, Merlin and Vortigern, Lancelot and Guinivere. When she wrote, the spell, the imagery, the very rhythms of far-off times and ways, dominated the cadences of her lines. When she returned to Canada she resolved to put all this away and to take real people, place them over against a real background of the contemporary and recognizable world, and bring to life a vital Canadian tradition. She recalled Rupert Brooke's lament, that Canada was unpeopled by legendary figures. Her answer to that was: "The material is there, wherever there is longing, sacrifice, or the sense of fate.... Let no one, poet or no, think that the material from which such figures are builded can ever be wanting while man endures...". Thus she wrote in the tentative introduction to *The Beaten Man*, the title of which was borrowed from Masfield's "Pompey the Great":

And the beaten man becomes a story for ever.

From such mystical stories as "La Blanchisseuse Dorée," "The Worker in Sandalwood," and "The Bog-Wood Box," and her rousing stories of adventure, "Luck," "Cheap," "The Stove," and "The Men Who Climbed," Marjorie Pickthall moved gradually on to her poetic one-act play, *The Wood Carver's Wife*. She was ready at last for the great experiment, *The Beaten Man*. Far behind was the adolescent prayer, "O keep the world forever at the dawn." In verse she attained the maturity of "Palome," "Père Lalement," "Resurgam," "The Little Sister of the Prophet," "A Mother in Egypt," and "The Bridegroom of Cana." While the idiom of *The Song of Songs* remains, there was a growing wisdom of the heart and unmistakable ripeness.

Will he come from the byre
With his head all misty with dreams, and his eyes on fire,
Shaking us all with the weight of the words of his passion?

I will give him raisins instead of dates,
And wreath the young leaves on the little red plates.
I will put on my new head-tyre,
And braid my hair in a comelier fashion.
Will he note? Will he mind?
Will he touch my cheek as he used to, and laugh and be kind?

She lived for only a short time, and dwelt all her days in the realm of the spirit. In such a world there was no frontier. Within the same poem one might expect to meet Armored or Mary the Mother, Adonis or the Light of the World. Her poetry is saturated with religious sentiment and often reveals swift spiritual insights. Some have suggested that the apparent confusion of symbol and creed in her work anticipated the religious and intellectual fuzziness of our own time. Certainly she was not orthodox, either Protestant or Catholic, and her faith had no consistent theological or philosophical foundations. But it is also true that religion was the deepest thing in her experience, and she spoke about it as naturally as she did the weather. It was valid and real for her, and transcended the bewildering divisions of creeds in the only way she knew, that is, the way of the true artist, and as such provided a meeting ground for all.

For man is not a Solitary but a Kindly Soul. Kind kin he needs, and so hath been provisioned for in the comfortable Reason of God ... (Love) is the best Thing God gives, and perhaps the one Thing even He may not take away...

The gates of Heaven are made of pearl, and the redeemed go through them. In the considering justice of God, it is possible that the poor have the right of that way before all others, as a sign or recompense of the many gates that have been shut to them on earth; that even the cohorts of the archangels make room for the sons of Poverty. There are no back doors to Heaven. Come, we will look, if we may not enter in...". (*Little Hearts*)

I shall say, Lord, "We will laugh again tomorrow,
Now we'll be still a little, friend with friend.
Death was the gate and the long way was sorrow.
Love is the end." ("Resurgam")

LORNE PIERCE

The Selected Poems of
MARJORIE PICKTHALL

VISION

I have not walked on common ground,
Nor drunk of earthly streams;
A shining figure, mailed and crowned,
Moves softly through my dreams.

He makes the air so keen and strange,
The stars so fiercely bright;
The rocks of time, the tides of change,
Are nothing in his sight.

Death lays no shadow on his smile;
Life is a race fore-run;
Look in his face a little while,
And life and death are one.

PEGOWIS

Just where the ridgepole cleaves the blue
A star looks down on Pegowis,
And the star and the iris sky and the dew
And the kindly trees are his.

Nothing he does but lie in the sun
And dream of the deeds he used to do,
Of the raided herd and the buffalo run
And the thundering caribou.

Pegowis thinks no more on sorrow,
Pegowis neither is glad nor grieves.
His eyes are turned to the misty morrow,
His hands are like brown leaves.

Yet here comes one with a bowl of corn,
Here come two with a beaver skin.
Noon and evening, night and morn,
The folk go out and in.

None will tell where the wonder is,
But the children pause with a catch of the breath,
Murmuring, "It is Pegowis, Pegowis
The friend of Death."

Pegowis lies in a land withdrawn.
Blind is he to the bloodroot pale,
Deaf to the thrushes that sing at dawn
"Follow, follow!" along the trail.

Pegowis neither will know nor tell
What the little winds say as they touch his face,
But he hath the look of those that dwell
In a happy place.

TWO SOULS

A Letter from Père Jogues

Most reverend Father, I have borne all wrong,
Agonies, griefs, revengements. Yet not I,
But rather He Who knew and loved us long,
And came at last to die.
In my maimed hands ye see Him, in my face
His poor abiding place,

"Lo, they will hear My voice and understand;
Go, seek My wandering sheep," the Shepherd saith,
So, o'er the world I sought them, hand in hand
With that dark brother of our Order, Death.
Under the shadow of his bitterest
Behold, two souls for God!

Like the reed-feeding swans that cannot choose
But hear the voice of summer, in swift flight
Up from Three Rivers came the long canoes
Through calm of day and night,
I in the foremost, Coupil and Couture,
Whose fiery crowns are sure.

Sweet shines the summer over Normandy,
And bright on Aries among her blossoming vines,
But O, more sweet than any land or sea
The northern summer shines.
Each night a silvered dream to cast away,
Each golden dream a day—

So we went on, and our dark Hurons smiled,
Singing the child-songs of the woodpecker,
Through clear green glooms and amber bars enisled
Of tamarack and fir.
Till one cried, "Lo, a shadow and a dread
Steals from the isles ahead!"

Death laid a sudden silence on his lips.
In tumult of torn waters at the side.

Crashing, he fell, and all our little ships
Shook on that reddening tide.
Then the blue noon was torn with steel and flame,
And the Five Nations came.

PERE LALEMENT

I lift the Lord on high,
Under the murmuring hemlock boughs, and see
The small birds of the forest lingering by
And making melody.
These are mine acolytes and these my choir,
And this mine altar in the cool green shade,
Where the wild soft-eyed does draw nigh
Wondering, as in the byre
Of Bethlehem the oxen heard Thy cry
And saw Thee, unafraid.

My boatmen sit apart,
Wolf-eyed, wolf-sinewed, stiller than the trees.
Help me, O Lord, for very slow of heart
And hard of faith are these.
Cruel are they, yet Thy children. Foul are they,
Yet wert Thou born to save them utterly.
Then make me as I pray
Just to their hates, kind to their sorrows, wise
After their speech, and strong before their free
Indomitable eyes.

Do the French lilies reign
Over Mont Royal and Stadacona still?
Up the St. Lawrence comes the spring again,
Crowning each southward hill
And blossoming pool with beauty, while I roam
Far from the perilous folds that are my home,
There where we built St. Ignace for our needs,
Shaped the rough roof tree, turned the first sweet sod,
St. Ignace and St. Louis, little beads
On the rosary of God.

Pines shall Thy pillars be,
Fairer than those Sidonian cedars brought
By Hiram out of Tyre, and each birch-tree
Shines like a holy thought.
But come no worshippers; shall I confess,
St. Francis-like, the birds of the wilderness?
O, with Thy love my lonely head uphold.
A wandering shepherd I, who hath no sheep;
A wandering soul, who hath no scrip, nor gold,
Nor anywhere to sleep.

My hour of rest is done;
On the smooth ripple lifts the long canoe;
The hemlocks murmur sadly as the sun
Slants his dim arrows through.
Whither I go I know not, nor the way,
Dark with strange passions, vexed with heathen charms,
Holding I know not what of life or death;
Only be Thou beside me day by day,
Thy rod my guide and comfort, underneath
Thy everlasting arms.

WHEN WINTER COMES

Rain at Muchalat, rain at Sooke,
And rain, they say, from Yale to Skeena,
And the skid-roads blind, and never a look
Of the Coast Range blue over Malaspina,
And west winds keener
Than jack-knife blades,
And rocks grown greener
With the long drip-drip from the cedar shades
On the drenched deep soil where the footsteps suck,
And the camp half-closed and the pay-roll leaner,—
Say, little horse, shall we hunt our luck?

Yet... I don't know... there's an hour at night
When the clouds break and the stars are turning
A thousand points of diamond light
Through the old snags of the cedar-burning,
And the west wind's spurning
A hundred highlands,
And the frost-moon's learning
The white fog-ways of the outer islands,
And the shallows are dark with the sleeping duck,
And life's a wonder for our discerning,—
Say, little horse, shall we wait our luck?

SNOW IN APRIL

Over the boughs that the wind has shaken,
Over the sands that are rippled with rain,
Over the banks where the buds awaken
Cold cloud shadows are spreading again.

All the musical world is still,
When sharp and sudden, a sparrow calls,
And down on the grass where the violets shiver,
Through the spruce on the height of the hill,
Down on the breadths of the shining river
The faint snow falls.

Last weak word of a lord that passes—
Why should the burgeoning woods be mute?
Spring is abroad in the spring grasses
Life is awake in the robin's flute.
But high in the spruce a wind is wailing,
And the birds in silence arise and go.
Is it that winter is still too near
For the heart of the world to cast out fear,
When over the sky the rack comes sailing
And suddenly falls the snow?

THE GREEN MONTH

What of all the colours shall I bring you for your fairing,
Fit to lay your fingers on, fine enough for you?—
Yellow for the ripened rye, white for ladies' wearing,
Red for briar-roses, or the skies' own blue?

Nay, for spring has touched the elm, spring has found the willow,
Winds that call the swallow home sway the boughs apart;
Green shall all my curtains be, green shall be my pillow,
Green I'll wear within my hair, and green upon my heart.

ON AMARYLLIS

A Tortoise

My name was Amaryllis. I
From a harde Shell put forthe to fly;
No Bird, alas; with Beautie prim'd,
Hath Death th' inconstant Fowler lim'd.
No antick Moth on Blossoms set
Hath Judgement taken in a Net.
So dull, so slowe, so meeke I went
In my House-Roof that pay'd no Rent,
E'en my deare Mistresse guess'd no Spark
Could e'er enlight'n my dustie Dark.
Judge not, ye Proud. Each lowlie Thing
May lack the Voyce, not Heart, to sing.
The Worme that from the Moulde suspires

May be attun'd with heavenlie Quires,
And I, a-crawling in my Straw,
Was moved by Love, and made by Law.
So all ye wise, who 'neath your Clod
Go creeping onwards up to God,
Take Heart of me, who by His Grace,
Slough'd off my Pris'n and won my Race.

BEFORE A SHOWER

Between the marshes and the lake,
Upon the long dun dunes of sand,
All silvery two aspens shake,
And silver gleamings slant and break
And fade to gray, above the land.

Among the poplars, swaying tall,
Chill lake-born breezes moaning pass;
And elfin murmurs soft and small
Æolian sighings lift and fall,
And die to silence in the grass.

A ripple rocks the drifted weeds,
That, trembling, float and sink again,
And sudden shudders strike the reeds,
As downwards on the silent meads
Softly there falls the silver rain.

THE BREAKING OF THE DROUGHT

On the strained ear the hush bears heavily,
And heavily the threatening moments pass.
The cricket-choirs are mute within the grass
And clamorous bird cries once and then is still,
Answered by one more elfin-voiced than he
From the mist-hidden hill.

The small soft clouds drop down like drifted smoke,
And one by one haste earthward on the wind,
With tempest-torn battalions rolled behind,
Most merciful in wrath; and in the shade
Of those slow-heaving folds, the lightning's stroke
Shears like a golden blade.

But swift and sweet a warmer breeze leaps forth,
Bearing the scent of clover drenched in rain
And as it sighs to silence once again,

The old Earth-Mother lifts her wearied eyes,
Beholding in those far-flung signs of wrath
A late salvation rise.

But all their wrath weeps down in silver drops,
And all those dark cloud-banners far unfurl'd
Droop down in kindlier mist to veil the world.
And, silver from the silver-shining sea,
There comes, soft-shrouding all the mountain tops,
The gray fog silently.

Wide on their sands the little streams have crept,
And all the leaves have whispered murmuringly
Of hope, and show'r and sunnier days to be.
But still no bird lifts up triumphant voice
And the old Earth is hushed as if she slept
Too weary to rejoice.

Not yet shall come the triumph and the strife!
Not yet, Earth-Mother, from some woodland bird
Shall the full-throated psalm of love be heard.
Not yet the dawns to war and labour call,
But o'er the re-created tides of life
Soft easeful languors fall.

This is the air of which our dreams are bred,
And softly-blown, sleep-singing winds are these.
With murmur and more tuneful silences
The drowsy waves beat on the drowsier shore,
And vaporous clouds, seen dimly overhead,
Wheel southward evermore.

Now o'er the fields serenely falls the night,
Moonless and still in soft gray hues of rest.
The rifted rain clears slowly from the west,
Where lingers one translucent amber bar,
And a small wandering shred of cloud, so bright
It seems a star.

RIDING

If I should live again,
Quick of sinew and vein
O God, let me be young,
With the honeycomb on my tongue,
All in a moment flung
With the dawn on a flowing plain,
Riding, riding, riding, riding
Between the sun and the rain.

If I, having been, must be,

O God, let it be so,
Swift and supple and free
With a long journey to go,
And the clink of the curb and the blow
Of hooves, and the wind at my knee,
Riding, riding, riding, riding
Between the hills and the sea.

DAWN

O keep the world forever at the dawn,
Ere yet the opals, cobweb-strung, have dried,
Ere yet too bounteous gifts have marred the morn
Or fading stars have died.
O, keep the eastern gold no wider than
An angel's finger-span,
And hush the increasing thunder of the sea
To murmuring melody
In those fair coves where tempests ne'er should be.

Hold back the line of shoreward-sweeping surge
And veil each deep sea-pool in pearlier mist,
Ere yet the silver ripples on the verge
Have turned to amethyst.
Fling back the chariot of encroaching day
And call the winds away
Ere yet they sigh, and let the hastening sun
Along his path in heaven no higher run,
But show through all the years his golden rim
With shadows lingering dim
Forever o'er the world awaiting him.

Hold every bird with still and drowsy wing,
That in the breathless hush no clamorous throat
Shall break the peace that hangs on everything
With shrill awakening note;
Keep fast the half-seen beauties of the rose
In undisturbed repose,
Check all the iris buds where they unfold
Impatient from their hold,
And close the cowslips' cups of honeyed gold.

Keep all things hushed, so hushed we seem to hear
The sounds of low-swung clouds that sweep the trees;
Let now no harsher music reach the ear,
No earthlier sounds than these,
When whispering shadows move within the grass,
And airy tremors pass
Through all the earth with life awakening thrilled,
And so forever stilled,
Too sweet in promise e'er to be fulfilled.

O keep the world forever at the dawn,
Yet, keeping so, let nothing lifeless seem,
But hushed, as if the miracle of morn
Were trembling in its dream.
Some shadowy moth may pass with drowsy flight
And fade before the sight,
While in the unlightened darkness of the wall
The chirping crickets call;
From forest pools where fragrant lilies are
A breath shall pass afar,
And o'er the crested pine shall hang one star.

SERENADE

Dark is the iris meadow,
Dark is the ivory tower,
And lightly the young moth's shadow
Sleeps on the passion-flower.

Gone are our day's red roses,
So lovely and lost and few,
But the first star uncloses
A silver bud in the blue.

Night, and a flame in the embers
Where the seal of the years was set,—
When the almond-bough remembers
How shall my heart forget?

BIRDS AT EVENING

When the rooks fly homeward and the gulls are following high,
And the grey feet of the silence with a silver dream are shod,
I mind me of the little wings abroad in every sky
Who seek their sleep of God.

When the dove is hidden and the dew is white on the corn,
And the dark bee in the heather, and the shepherd with the sheep,
I mind me of the little wings in the holm-oak and the thorn
Who take of Him their sleep.

When the brier closes and the iris-flower is furled,
And over the edge of the evening the martin knows her nest,
I mind me of the little hearts abroad in all the world
Who find in Him their rest.

THE SLEEP-SEEKERS

Lift thou the latch whereon the wild rose clings,
Touch the green door to which the briar has grown.
If you seek sleep, she dwells not with these things,—
The prisoned wood, the voiceless reed, the stone.
But where the day yields to one star alone,
Softly Sleep cometh on her brown owl-wings,
Sliding above the marshes silently
To the dim beach between the black pines and the sea.

There; or in one leaf-shaken loveliness
Of birchen light and shadow, deep she dwells,
Where the song-sparrow and the thrush are heard,
And once a wandering flute-voiced mocking-bird,
Where, when the year was young,
Grew sweet faint bloodroot, and the adder-tongue
Lifting aloft her spire of golden bells.

Here shall we lift our lodge against the rain,
Walling it deep
With tamarac branches and the balsam fir,
Sweet even as sleep,
And aspen boughs continually astir
To make a silver-gleaming,—
Here shall we lift our lodge and find again
A little space for dreaming.

EVENING

When the white iris folds the drowsing bee,
When the first cricket wakes
The fairy hosts of his enchanted brakes,
When the dark moth has sought the lilac tree,
And the young stars, like jasmine of the skies,
Are opening on the silence, Lord, there lies
Dew on Thy rose and dream upon mine eyes.

Lovely the day, when life is robed in splendour,
Walking the ways of God and strong with wine,
But the pale eve is wonderful and tender,
And night is more divine.
Fold my faint olives from their shimmering plain,
O Shadow of sweet darkness fringed with rain.
Give me to night again.

Give me to day no more. I have bethought me
Silence is more than laughter, sleep than tears.

Sleep like a lover faithfully hath sought me
Down the enduring years.
Where stray the first white fallings of the fold,
Where the Lent-lily droops her earlier gold
Sleep waits me as of old.

Grant me sweet sleep, for light is unavailing
When patient eyes grow weary of the day.
Young lambs creep close and tender wings are failing,
And I grow tired as they.
Light as the long wave leaves the lonely shore,
Our boughs have lost the bloom that morning bore.
Give me to day no more.

FROST SONG

Here where the bee slept and the orchis lifted
Her honeying pipes of pearl, her velvet lip,
Only the swart leaves of the oak lie drifted
In sombre fellowship.
Here where the flame-weed set the lands alight
Lies the black upland, webbed and crowned with white.

Build high the logs, O love, and in thine eyes
Let me believe the summer lingers late.
We shall not miss her passive pageantries,
We are not desolate,
When on the sill, across the window bars,
Kind winter flings her flowers and her stars.

THE SHEPHERD BOY

When the red moon hangs over the fold,
And the cypress shadow is rimmed with gold,
O, little sheep, I have laid me low,
My face against the old earth's face,
Where one by one the white moths go,
And the brown bee has his sleeping place.
And then I have whispered, Mother hear,
For the owls are awake and the night is near,
And whether I lay me near or far
No lips shall kiss me,
No eye shall miss me,
Saving the eye of a cold white star.

And the old brown woman answers mild,
Rest you safe on my heart, O child.

Many a shepherd, many a king,
I fold them safe from their sorrowing.
Gwenever's heart is bound with dust,
Tristram dreams of the dappled doe,
But the bugle moulders, the blade is rust;
Stilled are the trumpets of Jericho,
And the tired men sleep by the walls of Troy.
Little and lonely,
Knowing me only,
Shall I not comfort you, shepherd-boy?

When the wind wakes in the apple-trees,
And the shy hare feeds on the wild fern stem,
I say my prayers to the Trinity,—
The prayers that are three and the charms that are seven
To the angels guarding the towers of heaven,—
And I lay my hand on her raiment's hem,
Where the young grass darkens the strawberry star,
Where the iris buds and the bellworts are.

All night I hear her breath go by
Under the arch of the empty sky.
All night her heart beats under my head,
And I lie as still as the ancient dead,
Warm as the young lambs there with the sheep.
I and no other.
Close to my Mother,
Fold my hands in her hands, and sleep.

WILTSHIRE

I died o' cider and taters
When I wer a-turned four-score.
Us always were hearty aters,
My feyther he wer afore.

And the Laard dun't hold I a sinner,
The neighbourly angel said,
Because I wer set on my dinner,
For a man must goo full-fed.

But now I be done wi' feedin',
And a taaste at the market-town.
This all so idle as Eden
In the great grey lift o' the down.

Over the turf and the tillage
The angels gossip in pairs,
Most like to folk in the village
When the pigs was fat for the fairs.

Over the hill goos Master,
Wi' a tarrible flock o' sheep,
Peace is the chosen pastur',
The Laard He doth us keep.

Now I be laid in the grasses,
For I come a gaate of a way,
And I hear how the Master passes
The folk wi' the time o' day.

But I wun't be idle longer,
Laid here i' the bloom and the seed,
I'll goo to He when I'm stronger.
He'll give I lambs to lead.

I'll ask but six or seven,
And I'll lay, when the hurdling's done,
On the great green downs o' heaven,
And sleep in the livin' Sun.

THE TRAMPER'S GRAVE

Above his head the twilight sleeps,
And slowly drone the vagrant bees;
But he in narrow housing keeps
Between two stunted cypress trees.

No more the long road calls him on,
No more the wayside fountains sing
A pleasant tune, when day has gone,
To cheer him on his journeying.

The wind-blown sand, the sweeping surf,
Call him in vain: and yet he lies
In peace, with but the kindly turf
To bar him from familiar skies.

And he is one with leaf and blade,
As changing seasons dawn again:
Kith to the far-flung clouds that fade,
And brother to the silver rain.

Here, morn and eve, the blackbird sings,
The strong-winged swallows wheel and dip;
And here all great and little things
Go down the days in fellowship.

Perhaps his eyes in dream have seen

Those low twin-hills that rise afar,
With soft blue breadth of sea between
Reflecting one triumphant star.

And, waking, he has thought it fair,
With some diviner spirit blest
To quiet ends: nor known that there
He, at the journey's close, should rest.

DUNA

When I was a little lad
With folly on my lips,
Fain was I for journeying
All the seas in ships.
But now across the southern swell,
Every dawn I hear
The little streams of Duna
Running clear.

When I was a young man,
Before my beard was grey,
All to ships and sailormen
I gave my heart away.
But I'm weary of the sea-wind,
I'm weary of the foam,
And the little stars of Duna
Call me home.

PIETER MARINUS

Lord, I have known all fruits of this Thy world;
Like Solomon king, I have been fain of all,—
War, women and wine,—but mine was spirit of Nantes.
And now, O Lord, I'm old and fain for Thee.

But, Lord, my soul's so grimed and weather-worn,
So warped and wrung with all iniquities,
Piracies, brawls, and cheated revenues,
There's not a saint but would look twice at it.

So, when my time comes, send no angels down
With lutes and harps, and foreign instruments,
To pipe old Pieter's Spirit up to heaven
Past his tall namesake sturdy at his post.

But let me lie awhile in these Thy seas.

Let the soft Gulf Stream and the long South Drift,
And the swift tides that rim the Labrador,
Beat on my soul and wash it clean again.

And when Thy waves have smoothed me of my sins,
White as the sea-mew or the wind-spun foam,
Clean as the clear-cut images of stars
That swing between the swells,—then, then, O Lord,
Lean out, lean out from heaven and call me thus,
"Come up, thou soul of Pieter Marinus,"
And I'll go home.

EBB TIDE

The Sailors Grave at Clo-oose, V.I.

Out of the winds' and the waves' riot,
Out of the loud foam,
He has put in to a great quiet
And a still home.

Here he may lie at ease and wonder
Why the old ship waits,
And hark for the surge and the strong thunder
Of the full Straits,

And look for the fishing fleet at morning,
Shadows like lost souls,
Slide through the fog where the seal's warning
Betrays the shoals,

And watch for the deep-sea liner climbing
Out of the bright West,
With a salmon-sky and her wake shining
Like a tern's breast,—

And never know he is done for ever
With the old sea's pride,
Borne from the fight and the full endeavour
On an ebb tide.

BEGA

From the clouded belfry calling,
Hear my soft ascending swells;
Hear my notes like swallows falling;
I am Bega, least of bells.
When great Turkeful rolls and rings

All the storm-touched turret swings,
Echoing battle, loud and long.
When great Tatwin wakening roars
To the far-off shining shores,
All the seamen know his song.
I am Bega, least of bells:
In my throat my message swells.
I with all the winds a-thrill,
Murmuring softly, murmuring still,
"God around me, God above me,
God to guard me, God to love me."

I am Bega, least of bells,
Weaving wonder, wind-born spells.
High above the morning mist,
Wreathed in rose and amethyst,
Still the dreams of music float
Silver from my silver throat,
Whispering beauty, whispering peace.
When great Tatwin's golden voice
Bids the listening land rejoice,
When great Turkeful rings and rolls
Thunder down to trembling souls,
Then my notes like curlews flying,
Lifting, falling, sinking, sighing,
Softly answer, softly cease.
I with all the airs at play
Murmuring sweetly, murmuring say,
"God around me, God above me,
God to guard me, God to love me."

ST. YVES' POOR

Jeffik was there, and Matthieu, and brown Bran,
Warped in old wars and babbling of the sword,
And Jenedik, a white rose pinched and paled
With the world's frosts, and many more beside,
Lamed, rheumed and palsied, aged, impotent
Of all but hunger and blind lifted hands.
I set the doors wide at the given hour,
Took the great baskets piled with bread, the fish
Yet silvered of the sea, the curds of milk,
And called them Brethren, brake and blest and gave.

For O, my Lord, the house dove knows her nest
Above my window builded from the rain;
In the brown mere the heron finds her rest,
But these shall seek in vain.
And O, my Lord, the thrush may fold her wing,
The curlew seek the long lift of the seas,
The wild swan sleep amid his journeying,—

There is no rest for these.
Thy dead and sheltered; housed and warmed they wait
Under the golden fern, the falling foam;
But these, Thy living, wander desolate
And have not any home.

I called them Brethren, brake and blest and gave.
Old Jeffik had her withered hand to show,
Young Jannedik had dreamed of death, and Bran
Would tell me wonders wrought on fields of war,
When Michael and his warriors rode the storm,
And all the heavens were thrilled with clanging spears;
Ah, God! my poor, my poor!—Till there came one
Wrapped in foul rags, who caught me by the robe,
And pleaded, "Bread, my father!"

In his hand

I laid the last loaf of the daily dole,
Saw on the palm a red wound like a star,
And bade him, "Let me bind it."

"These my wounds,"

He answered softly, "daily dost thou bind."
And I, "My son, I have not seen thy face.
But thy bruised feet have trodden on my heart.
I will get water for thee."

"These my hurts,"

Again he answered, "daily dost thou wash."
And I once more, "My son, I know thee not,
But the bleak wind blows bitter from the sea,
And even the gorse is perished. Rest thou here."
And he again, "My rest is in thy heart.
I take from thee as I have given to thee.
Dost thou not know Me, Breton?"

I,—"My Lord!"—

A scent of lilies on the cold sea-wind,
A thin white blaze of wings, a face of flame
Over the gateway, and the vision passed,
Over there were only Matthieu and brown Bran,
And the young girl, the foam-white Jannedik,
Wondering to see their father rapt from them,
And Jeffik weeping o'er her withered hand.

THE SINGING SHEPHERD

O saw you our beloved where the cedars darken over
The moon-white iris grown beside the stream?
Or did you meet him walking in the honey-breathing clover,
The first star flowered before him like a dream?

O far and very far away from all your quiet fountains,
From all your solemn valleys rich in sleep,
I only heard a shepherd singing on the mountains,
Singing as he folded in the sheep.

O found you our belovéd ere the winds of morning found him
In the thickets by still waters where love is?
Did you know him from his fellows by the thorny bents that crowned him
Among the lily-gardens that are his?
O far away and far away from all the hidden meadows,
From the gardens where the year goes shod in gold,
I only heard a shepherd singing in the shadows
As he carried home the younglings to the fold.

THE BRIDEGROOM OF CANA

*"There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee ... And both
Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage."*

Veil thine eyes, O belovéd, my spouse,
Turn them away,
Lest in their light my life withdrawn
Dies as a star, as a star in the day,
As a dream in the dawn.

Slenderly hang the olive leaves
Sighing apart;
The rose-and-silver doves in the eaves
With a murmur of music bind our house.
Honey and wine in thy words are stored,
Thy lips are bright as the edge of a sword
That hath found my heart,
That hath found my heart.

Sweet, I have waked from a dream of thee,—
And of Him:
He who came when the songs were done.
From the net of thy smiles my heart went free
And the golden lure of thy love grew dim.
I turned to them asking, "Who is He,
Royal and sad, who comes to the feast
And sits Him down in the place of the least?"
And they said, "He is Jesus, the carpenter's son."

Hear how my harp on a single string
Murmurs of love.
Down in the fields the thrushes sing
And the lark is lost in the light above,
Lost in the infinite, glowing whole,
As I in thy soul,
As I in thy soul.

Love, I am fain for thy glowing grace
As the pool for the star, as the rain for the rill.
Turn to me, trust to me, mirror me
As the star in the pool, as the cloud in the sea.
Love, I looked awhile in His face
And was still.

The shaft of the dawn strikes clear and sharp;
Hush, my harp.
Hush, my harp, for the day is begun,
And the lifting, shimmering flight of the swallow
Breaks in a curve on the brink of morn,
Over the sycamores, over the corn.
Cling to me, cleave to me, prison me
As the mote in the flame, as the shell in the sea,
For the winds of the dawn say, "Follow, follow
Jesus Bar-Joseph, the carpenter's son."

THE YOUNG BAPTIST

A sleeked mimosa hid him from the rain.
He saw the quickened valleys gleam and go
And the clouds break upon a hundred hills,
Till all the happy silence had a sound,
Voice upon voice, small as the voice of God
In Sinai, but the earth shook under them.
He saw the moonlit rafters of the world,
Hollowed in thunder, walled with exquisite air,
Most beautiful. The leaves were laced with showers.
And motionless beneath them couched the flies,
Bright as small seraphs lately loosed from heaven
Upon the river'd garden beautiful,
Beautiful they, and beautiful the bird
That flashed on him a sudden breast and fled.
Over a fire of twisted camel-thorn
He saw the vast recessional of day
And shivered against the dark, and knew no rest;
Yet even the dark was lovely. Only he
Was worn with hungering after righteousness,
Fouled with strange suffering, dim with many dreams.
The foxes barked against him all night long.

Dawn rose in silver, shepherding few stars.
He watched it, all one hunger, body and soul.
"There is a painted house in Nazareth,"
He said, "once held a little friend, clear-eyed.
There all day long the whining plane moves over
The curded length of olive wood, and light
Bright shavings make the footfall cedar-sweet.
A woman sits there in the shadow of leaves,
Watching her men at work, two carpenters,

While mirrored angels move in her still eyes.

Yea, is it time? Shall one lay down His tools
And turn away? To-night the fly shall sleep
In lily or white cyclamen, the bird
Shall find the shittim tree that held her brood.
Shall I be homeless? Lily of Israel, bloom.
O Tree of Life, make ready my soul's nest.
Yea, is He come?"

But only morning came,
Clear-footed from the frontiers of the world,
And beat his little fire out as with spears.
Beautiful on the mountains were her feet.

THE LITTLE SISTER OF THE PROPHET

"If there arise among you a prophet or dreamer..."

I have left a basket of dates
In the cool dark room that is under the vine,
Some curds set out in two little crimson plates
And a flask of the amber wine,
And cakes most cunningly beaten
Of savoury herbs, and spice, and the delicate wheaten
Flour that is best,
And all to lighten his spirit and sweeten his rest.

This morning he cried, "Awake,
And see what the wonderful grace of the Lord hath revealed!"
And we ran for his sake,
But 'twas only the dawn outspread o'er our father's field,
And the house of the potter white in the valley below.
But his hands were upraised to the east and he cried to us, "So
Ye may ponder and read
The strength and the beauty of God outrolled in a fiery screed!"

Then the little brown mother smiled,
As one does on the words of a well-loved child,
And, "Son," she replied, "have the oxen been watered and fed?
For work is to do, though the skies be never so red,
And already the first sweet hours of the day are spent."
And he sighed and went.

Will he come from the byre
With his head all misty with dreams, and his eyes on fire,
Shaking us all with the weight of the word of his passion?
I will give him raisins instead of dates,

And wreath the young leaves on the little red plates.
I will put on my new head-tyre,
And braid my hair in a comelier fashion.
Will he note? Will he mind?
Will he touch my cheek as he used to, and laugh and be kind?

A MOTHER IN EGYPT

"About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon the throne, even unto the firstborn of the maid-servant that is behind the mill."—Exodus xi: 4, 5.

Is the noise of grief in the palace over the river
For this silent one at my side?
There came a hush in the night, and he rose with his hands a-quiver
Like lotus petals adrift on the swing of the tide.
O small soft hands, the day groweth old for sleeping!
O small still feet, rise up, for the hour is late!
Rise up, my son, for I hear them mourning and weeping
In the temple down by the gate.

Hushed is the face that was wont to brighten with laughter
When I sang at the mill,
And silence unbroken shall greet the sorrowful dawns hereafter,
The house shall be still.
Voice after voice takes up the burden of wailing,—
Do you heed, do you hear?—in the high-priest's house by the wall;
But mine is the grief, and their sorrow is all unavailing.
Will he wake at their call?

Something I saw of the broad, dim wings half folding
The passionless brow.
Something I saw of the sword the shadowy hands were holding,—
What matters it now?
I held you close, dear face, as I knelt and harkened
To the wind that cried last night like a soul in sin,
When the broad, bright stars dropped down and the soft sky darkened,
And the Presence moved therein.

I have heard men speak in the market-place of the city,
Low voiced, in a breath,
Of a god who is stronger than ours, and who knows not changing nor pity,
Whose anger is death.
Nothing I know of the lords of the outland races,
But Amun is gentle and Hathor the Mother is mild,
And who would descend from the light of the peaceful places
To war on a child?

Yet here he lies, with a scarlet pomegranate petal
Blown down on his cheek.
The slow sun sinks to the sand like a shield of some burnished metal,

But he does not speak.
I have called, I have sung, but he neither will hear nor waken;
So lightly, so whitely he lies in the curve of my arm,
Like a feather let fall from the bird that the arrow hath taken.
Who could see him, and harm?

"The swallow flies home to her sleep in the eaves of the altar,
And the crane to her nest,"—
So do we sing o'er the mill, and why, ah, why should I falter,
Since he goes to his rest?
Does he play in their flowers as he played among these with his mother?
Do the gods smile downward and love him and give him their care?
Guard him well, O ye gods, till I come; lest the wrath of that Other
Should reach to him there!

ECCLESIASTES

Under the fluent folds of needlework,
Where Balkis prick'd the histories of kings
Once great as he, that were as greatly loved,
Solomon stooped, and saw the dusk unfold
Over the apple orchards like a flower.
"O bloom of eve," he said, "diviner loss
Of all light gave us, dove of the whole world,
Bearing the branch of peace, the dark, sweet bough.—
Endure a little longer, ere full night
Comes stark from God and terrible with stars,
Eternal as He or love.

Now no one wakes,

But a lean gardener by my apricots,
Sweeping the withered leaves, the yellowing leaves
Down the wind's road. Perish our years with them,
Our griefs, our little hungers, our poor sins,
Leaves that the Lord hath scattered. He shall quench
The fierce, impetuous torches of the sun,—
Yea, from our dead dust He shall quicken kings,
Unleash new battles, sharpen spears unborn,
Shadow on shadow; but His stars remain
Immortal, and love immortal crowned with them."

Night came, and all the hosts thereof. He saw
Arcturus clear the doorways of the cloud,
And One that followed with his shining sons,
In the likeness of a gardener that strode
Over the windy hollows of the sky,
And with a great broom drave the stars in heaps,—
The yellow stars, the little withering stars,
Faint drifts along the darkness. New stars came,
Budded, and flowered, and fell. These too He swept,
And all the heavens were changed.

Then Solomon stood
Silent, nor ever turned to the Queen's kiss.

THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

I was happier up in the room
At the head of the long blue stair
Than here in the garden's gloom
With roses to wear.

When stars my window were riming
I would lean out over the snow
And hear him climbing, climbing
A long way below.

But I was happy and lonely
As the heart of a mountain pool,
With stars and shadows only
Made beautiful.

Then he came. He said, "How chill is
This height I have won!
I will love you among the lilies,
And ride ere the sun."

So I followed him into the night
A long way down.
I would I were back on the height,
With dawn for a crown.

TWO LYRICS

I

All in a rainy hazel wood
I watched the hyacinth break
Her lucent sheath, as if she could
Make summer for your sake.

And year by year the hyacinth-tide
Breaks in a foam of flowers
For other loves than we denied
And other griefs than ours.

Long wed, long dead, so I've been told,
But still when Spring's set free,
All in a drift of rainy gold
You walk the wood with me.

II

How looked she when she breathed good-bye?
Most like a bird, whose breast
Across a thousand wastes of sky
Is constant to her nest.

How looked she when she turned away?
Most as a spirit might,
Who shared our sorrow for a day
Yet kept her home in sight.

O, looked she sad or seemed she glad?
Most like a star, that knows
Only the loveliness it had,
The light to which it goes.

GOING HOME

Under the young moon's slender shield
With the wind's cool lips on mine,
I went home from the Rabitty Field
As the clocks were striking nine.

The yews were dark in the level light,
The thorn-trees dropped with gold,
And a partridge called where the dew was white
In the grass on the edge of the fold.

O, had your hand been in my hand
As the long chalk-road I trod,
The green hills of the lovely land
Had seemed the hills of God.

MARIAN'S EASTER

Jesus, Saviour, once a lad,
Mothered by a maid,
Take the bitter dreams we had
Ere the frosts were laid.
Wake, O wake the tenderer rose
Where the thorn has been...

Robin, Robin!

Spring is on the Forest and the beech growing green!

Mary, Mother, when He bore
Scourge and crown and cross,

All that hurt the world before
Lightened in your loss.
Now your Sorrow's high enthroned
Where the candles burn...
 Robin, Robin!
The dew along the bracken and the fawns in the fern!

Love that found His favour sweet—
Love that could not save—
Love that fled to kiss His feet
First beyond the grave,
Death of death, the living Flower
Rends the stones apart...
 Robin, Robin!
The moon above the hazels and your breath against my heart!

THE LOVERS OF MARCHAID

Dominic came riding down, sworded, straight and splendid,
Drave his hilt against her floor, flung a golden chain.
Said "I'll teach your lips a song sweet as his that's ended,
Ere the white rose call the bee, the almond flower again."

But he only saw her head bent within the gloom
Over heaps of bridal thread bright as apple-bloom,
Silver-silk like rain that spread across the driving loom.

Dreaming Fanch, the cobbler's son, took his tools and laces,
Wrought her shoes of scarlet dye, shoes as pale as snow;
"They shall lead her wildrose feet all the fairy paces
Danced along the road of love, the road such feet should go"——

But he only saw her eyes turning from his gift
Out toward the silver skies where the white clouds drift,
Where the wild gerfalcon flies, where the last sails lift.

Bran has built his homestead high where the hills may shield her,
Where the young bird waits the spring, where the dawns are fair,
Said: "I'll name my trees for her, since I may not yield her
Stars of morning for her feet, of evening for her hair."

But he did not see them ride, seven dim sail and more,
All along the harbour-side, white from shore to shore,
Nor heard the voices of the tide crying at her door.

Jean-Marie has touched his pipe down beside the river
When the young fox bends the fern, when the folds are still,
Said: "I send her all the gifts that my love may give her,——
Golden notes like golden birds to seek her at my will."

But he only found the waves, heard the sea-gull's cry,

In and out the ocean caves, underneath the sky,
All above the wind-washed graves where dead seamen lie.

PALOME'S BOOK*

* This poem was published in an abbreviated form in *The University Magazine*, February, 1920, under the title "Adagio."

Preface to this very private edition.

My dearest Daddy,

I am sending for you, and you only, to see, some of the little poems left by Palome, and found long after by Adam Laurent and Jenny Hurst, in the room painted with doves that had been hers at Paracuando.

Their place in the story I cannot yet show, but they will stand alone. And as in these times one does not quite know when or how any story will be told or any work finished, I am sending them to you, a little foretaste of "The Mountain."

I hope you will be pleased with them.

*Your very loving
Daughter.*

All days were night before this day's dear prime,
Dust in Time's hand or strewn about his feet,
Ashes of morning, suns and moons outworn.
Now we have back our heritage of Time.
Heaven rounds us like a shell, and very sweet
Sea-voices breathe, Belovéd, it is morn.

* * *

The little doves go up and down in showers,
Over the spice bud, underneath the bough,
Till I grow weary, counting little doves
Swift as our thoughts and feathered like our flowers.
Dearest of all, lean nearer, kiss me now.
God has no need of pity on their loves.

* * *

The loveliest ladies ever felt the wind
Blow on them from the doorsills of delight
Should stoop to me and give me sisterhood,—
She that was Star of Egypt out of mind,
And one world's rose, and one who led her knight
Weeping about the hollows of the wood.

* * *

There was an altar builded in the sun
By shipmen out of Argos, long ago,
Bound in bleak bronze and every stone engraven
With wings and faces, and each face was one,
Helen's. And there they fed a flame, to show
Poor mariners the sea-ways of the haven.

* * *

O Love, be very silent. Death will hear.
Helen was proud, she laughed her love and glory
When Paris leaned and kissed her on the lips.
She had another lover that was near.
He kissed her, and she changed into a story,
A half-heard song blown out to wandering ships.

* * *

I am Love's weakest, worthless, lost, unwise.
Cities were taken, kings uncrowned for her,
A thousand blades had blossom on her mouth,
A thousand spears were hid in her great eyes.
Over me too the little grasshopper
Shall chirr against the honey-breathing south.

* * *

Love, that has raised you higher, casts me down
From my proud places and remembered praise,
Though still a half-hushed worshipper you sit,
Though still you kneel as if I wore a crown;
O Love, I love you most for these great ways
Of worship, while I am unworthy it.

* * *

Yea, could I grieve you, could I make you weep,
I have crowned you, wronged you, cast aside
Most cruelly for your sake my griefs and fears?
If you leaned closer on the kiss of sleep
And saw that in some silence I had died
Dreaming of you, O would you give me tears?

* * *

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, come away,
My love, my dove, my sister, undefiled."
I rose, I followed, but my friend was fled,
Though once I saw him through the morning's gray
And the last starshine, where he turned and smiled,
With amaranth newly bound upon his head.

* * *

"Woman, behold thy child, for it is Grief,
Sword-slender grief, the world within her hold.

Give her thy heart, be true to one another."
The voice endured the dropping of a leaf.
Then for so long I heard as when a gold
Ripe apple falls, "O Grief, behold your mother."

* * *

O Love, forgive. They know not what they do,
Dealing their little coin of scorn or shame.
I have seen into heaven, and all the floor
White with our thoughts, as fields are white with dew,
Light as young linnets, in a laughing flame,
They beat forever round God's open door.

* * *

My Love, my Love, hast Thou forsaken me?
Hyssop I gave you not, nor scourge, nor scars,
While any rose was left of summer's loss,
While any sail flowered white along the sea.
Now the sea darkens, and the angry stars
Born of that bitter water, are a cross.

* * *

I thirst, I thirst, though many waters hide me
Drowning in depths where Love will never seek.
There were three waves that broke on me. The first
Was salt as tears, the second rose beside me
In foam of fire, the third against my cheek
Touched like a kiss. My heart aches, and I thirst.

* * *

Today we were with Love in Paradise
A little while, and for that while the shade
Stood waiting, and a-wing the swallow slept.
But angels came with anger of bright eyes
And thrust us from the garden where Love laid
His homeless head. He followed us, and wept.

* * *

Yea, it is finished, yea, it is enough.
Time hastens, and the tide is gone so far
The faint horizon scarcely gleams in foam.
The gate is narrow and the path is rough,
But through the cloud one silver shepherd-star
Lingers to lead us. Love, we will go home.

* * *

Into thy hands, immortal Love. Not ours
The noonday's triumph, the diviner close,
Or the full flood across Time's whispering sands.
We bring you withered sheaves and broken flowers,—

Rue and wild poppy, thorns, one fading rose.
Love, we are sorry. All is in thy hands.

THOUGHTS

I gave my thoughts a golden peach,
A silver citron tree;
They clustered dumbly out of reach
And would not sing for me.

I built my thoughts a roof of rush,
A little byre beside;
They left my music to the thrush
And flew at eveningtide.

I went my way and would not care
If they should come or go;
A thousand birds seemed up in air,
My thoughts were singing so.

THE CHOSEN

Called to a way too high for me, I lean
Out from my narrow window o'er the street,
And know the fields I cannot see are green,
And guess the songs I cannot hear are sweet.

Break up the vision round me, Lord, and thrust
Me from Thy side, unhoused without the bars,
For all my heart is hungry for the dust
And all my soul is weary of the stars.

I would seek out a little roof instead,
A little lamp to make my darkness brave.
"For though she heal a multitude," Love said,
"Herself she cannot save."

THE IMMORTAL

Beauty is still immortal in our eyes;

When sways no more of spirit-haunted reed,
When the wild grape shall build
No more her canopies,
When blows no more the moon-gray thistle seed,
When the last bell has lulled the white flocks home,
When the last eve has stilled
The wandering wing and touched the dying foam,
When the last moon burns low, and, spark by spark,
The little worlds die out along the dark,—

Beauty that rosed the moth-wing, touched the land
With clover-horns and delicate faint flowers,
Beauty that bade the showers
Beat on the violet's face,
Shall hold the eternal heavens within their place,
And hear new stars come singing from God's hand.

IMPERFECTION

Not the returning spell
Of summer on the thousand-blossomed tree
Lessons me half so well
What heaven may be
As the nipped bud along the Autumn croft,
Spent in a time too rare,
And far aloft
The late lark singing in the year's despair.

Not the full splendour-roll
Of music echoing where the saints have trod
Summons me, O my soul,
So quick to God,
As the weak voices with their psalm unspoken,
Lost vision, stammering prayer,
And hearts long broken
That lift from earth to heaven His mercy's stair.

COMFORT

When man, being yet a child,
Stumbled in dream-born anguish of the night,
He found, in some strange star above the wild,
Dim comfort, nameless light.

Now, being come full-grown
To a bleak vision, a mature despair,
He only knows he is not all alone.

Comfort and help are there.

Seek, seek through all the dark!
We are not fallen from the height we planned,
If in the cloud we see one beckoning spark,
Touch once the unseen Hand.

SALUTARIS HOSTIA

When the moon is last awake,
Silver-thin above the fields,
Crushed, like roses, for Thy sake,
All my soul its fragrance yields.
All my hungry heart is fed
Sundering sweetness like a sword,
O my Lord,
Hidden within Thy broken bread.

Hands of morning, take the cup
Whence the Life of Love is drained;
Hold it, raise it, lift it up
Till the lucent heavens be stained.
Joy and sorrow, lip to lip,
Lost in likeness at the end,
O my Friend,
Taste Thy wine of fellowship.

All life's splendour, all life's pride,
Dust are they. I lay them down.
They were thorns that when You died
Wove for You a wounding crown.
But the brier of death's in bud,
All its loveliness he knows,
Sharon's Rose,
That has shared Thy flesh and blood.

LOVE

I

Love said to the wind, Be still;
To Time, Be merciful;
To Life, Be sufficient.
But these answered,
Shall breath command breath,
Or the relentless the relentless,
Or the shadow the shadow?

II

Love, in whom all things are,
Shadow and light,
Make of my grief a star
Crowning his night.

Love, in whom all things nest,
Tired of the way,
Make of my pains a rest
Healing his day.

Love, in whom all things hide,
Far though they roam,
Make my life's loss the tide
Bearing him home.

MADE IN HIS IMAGE

Between the archangels and the old eclipse
Of glory on perfect glory, does He feel
A vision, thin as frost at midnight, steal
And lay a nameless shadow on His lips?
Does He, Who gave the power, endure the pain?—
Look down the hollow'd universe, and see
His works, His worlds, choring Him endlessly,—
His worlds, His works, all made, and made in vain?
Then does He bid all heaven beneath His hand,
In blossom of worship, flame on flame of praise,
And taste their thunders, and grow sick, and gaze
At some gray silence that He had not planned,
And shiver among His stars, and nurse each spark
That wards Him from the uncreated dark?

VITA BREVIS

I

Soul, if indeed the dead do not arise
Drink and lie down. There's nought required of thee.
If Shelley is but ash beside the sea,
And Homer bide forever with blind eyes,

If for tall Hector not a sea-breath sighs
On the gray plain, if Shakespeare's laugh be broken
In a little dust, and all his sweet words spoken,
If Beatrix look no more from Paradise,—

If this be so, O Soul, cast out thy fears,
Worship of women and high pride of men,
The sad, the brave, the pure, the sacrificed.
They are one with death and thee, not worth thy tears.
Yea, even thy grief is vain if Magdalen
Kisses no more the silver feet of Christ.

II

Once more our halcyon by the watercress
Flashes his sapphired sheathing, and once more
The partridge suns along the little shore;
Each silvered morning sees one rose the less,
One gold flake filch'd from out the poplar's dress,
All fall'n, all passing, making room for those,
Bird unbegotten and unbudded rose,
New wings, new leaves, new-risen loveliness.

All the earth gave, again the earth shall take:
Blessed is she. Life falls to her like snow.
Grave is she, grave and mother, slayer and spouse.
But suns were built in heaven for thy sake.
Thou also shalt go home; perhaps shalt know
Great laughters greet thee from thy Father's House.

MIRANDA'S TOMB

Miranda? She died soon, and sick for home.
And dark Ilario the Milanese
Carved her in garments 'scutcheoned to the knees,
Holding one orchard-spray as fresh as foam.
One heart broke, many grieved. Ilario said:
"The summer is gone after her. Who knows
If any season shall renew his rose?
But this rose lives till Beauty's self be dead."
So wrought he, days and years, and half aware
Of a small, striving, sorrowing quick thing,
Wrapped in a furred sea-cloak, and deft to bring
Tools to his hand or light to the dull air.
Ghost, spirit, flame, he knew not,—could but tell
It had loved her, and its name was Ariel.

TO TIMARION

Had I the thrush's throat, I could not sing you
Songs sweeter than his own. And I'm too poor
To lay the gifts that other lovers bring you
Low at your silver door.

Such as I have, I give. See, for your taking
Tired hands are here, and feet grown dark with dust.
Here's a lost hope, and here a heart whose aching
Grows greater than its trust.

Sleep on, you will not hear me. But tomorrow
You will remember in your fragrant ways,
Finding the voice of twilight and my sorrow
Lovelier than all men's praise.

PERSEPHONE RETURNING TO HADES

Last night I made my pillow of the leaves
Frostily sweet, and lay throughout the hours
Close to the woven roots of the earth; O earth,
Great mother, did the dread foreknowledge run
Through all thy veins and trouble thee in thy sleep?
No sleep was mine. Where my faint hands had fallen
Wide on thy grass, pale violets, ere the day,
Grew like to sorrow's self made visible,
Each with a tear at heart. I watched the stars
Wheeling athwart the heavens, and knew thy trees,
Olive and aspen, oak and sycamore,
And all the small dumb brethren of thy woods
Awake and sorrowing with me. And so staid
Until the shepherds' song awoke the morn.

Then I arose with tears. Yet, ere I turned
From these dim meadows to the doors of hell,
Gathered these sad untimely flowers, and found
Long beautiful berries ripening on the thorn,
With one wide rose that had forgot to die.
These I bore softly hence. But herewithin
This gathering-place of shadows where I wait
For the slow change, there cometh a sullen wind
Blown from the memoried fields of asphodel
Or Lethe's level stream; and these my flowers
Slip from my hands and are but shadows too.

Why should I grieve when grief is overpast?
Why should I sorrow when I may forget?
The shepherds' horns are crying about the folds,
The east is clear and yellow as daffodils,

Dread daffodils—

 The brightest flower o' the fields.
I gathered them in Enna, O, my lord.
Do the doors yawn and their dim warders wait?

What was this earth-born memory I would hold?
Almost I have forgotten. Lord, I see
Before, the vast gray suburbs of the dead;
Behind, the golden loneliness of the woods,
A stir of wandering birds, and in the brake
A small brown faun who follows me and weeps.

TO ALCITHOË

In your dim Greece of old, Alcithoë,
Death like a lover sought and crowned you young,
Between the olive orchards and the sea.

When they had twined your myrtle buds and hung
The stately cypress at your door, they said,
"Alcithoë is dead,
Before whose feet the flaming crocus sprung,
For whom the red rose opened ere the prime;
Those the gods love are taken before their time—"

Ah! why did no one, watching you alone,
Snare your dead beauty in undying stone,—
The gold hair bound beneath its golden band,
The milk-white poppies closed within your hand;
That the harsh world a little space might keep
The last, still, exquisite vision of your sleep?

IN AVILION

The trumpets rang for Arthur in Avilion
A piercing point of war.
But he was asleep in a green silk pavilion
Watched by the elf-queen's star.
Great ships thundered to death along the billows,
Cities were tumbled to the stones,
But his helm had fallen to dust among the pillows,
And his mail was dust on his bones.

Under the apple boughs the horns blew out to him
A merry point of chase.
But he was asleep with a strange cloak about him
And the dew was sweet on his face.

All through the brown broom the stag went running
To the wild Welsh border where he died,
But the tall king's spear had rusted in its cunning,
And his blade was rust at his side.

From the dust of the nunnery Guinever sighed up to him
A little song and faint,
As the ghost of a dancer might raise a gold cup to him,
As a prayer might climb to a saint.
"For a thousand years I have wearied of my sinning
In the houses of heaven and of hell.
Say, do you love me as once in the beginning?"
And he answered to her, "Love, sleep well."

HANNO

"And Hanno from the stately booth glittering with Punic wares."

Beyond the ivory altars changed and sold,
The silver lavers carved with vine and wheat,
The warps of silk made rough with Tyrian gold,
The desert lances and the hastening feet,
Down by the mean booths where they sell at whiles
Strange birds, and bracelets from the northern isles,
I saw half-buried, ruined and red with rust,
A great ship's anchor fallen in the dust.

Gods! I was blind a little while, nor knew
The amorous songs about the watering-places,
The emeralds and the soft Egyptian faces,
The white blood-horses and the gilded cars.
Gods! how the keel cut seaward through the blue
When the long galley raced the roving stars!

(Bel from his heaven hath touched thy conquering sword,
Ashtar hath lent thee favour, O my lord.
Taste the sweet wine and turn again and choose
This golden ewer, this delicate ivory dove,
This hunting knife, these little silken shoes,
Or jewels to hold a very light-of-love?)

Yes, I am old, and bent beneath my yoke,—
Dealer in spices, pearls, embroideries,
Pale linked amber, coral and chrysoprase,
Rubies to set the very world ablaze,—
Gods! how they call, the happy sailor-folk
Who swing asleep in those unfathomed seas!

KWANNON

Kwannon, the Japanese goddess of mercy, is represented with many hands, typifying generosity and kindness. In one of these hands she is supposed to hold an axe, wherewith she severs the threads of human lives.

I am the ancient one, the many-handed,
The merciful am I.
Here where the black pine bends above the sea
They bring their gifts to me—
Spoil of the foreshore where the corals lie,
Fishes of ivory, and amber stranded,
And carven beads
Green as the fretted fringes of the weeds.

Age after age, I watch the long sails pass.
Age after age, I see them come once more
Home, as the grey-winged pigeon to the grass,
The white crane to the shore.
Goddess am I of heaven and this small town
Above the beaches brown.
And here the children bring me cakes, and flowers,
And all the strange sea-treasures that they find,
For "She," they say, "the Merciful, is ours,
And She," they say, "is kind."

Camphor and wave-worn sandalwood for burning
They bring to me alone,
Shells that are veined like irises, and those
Curved like the clear bright petals of a rose.
Wherefore an hundredfold again returning
I render them their own—

Full-freighted nets that flash among the foam,
Laughter and love, and gentle eyes at home,
Cool of the night, and the soft air that swells
My silver temple bells.

Winds of the spring, the little flowers that shine
Where the young barley slopes to meet the pine,
Gold of the charlock, guerdon of the rain,
I give to them again.

Yet though the fishing boats return full-laden
Out of the broad blue east,
Under the brown roofs pain is their hand-maiden,
And mourning is their feast.
Yea, though my many hands are raised to bless,
I am not strong to give them happiness.

Sorrow comes swiftly as the swallow flying,
O, little lives, that are so quickly done!
Peace is my raiment, mercy is my breath,
I am the gentle one.
When they are tired of sorrow and of sighing
I give them death.

MARCHING MEN

Under the level winter sky
I saw a thousand Christs go by.
They sang an idle song and free
As they went up to calvary.

Careless of eye and coarse of lip,
They marched in holiest fellowship.
That heaven might heal the world, they gave
Their earth-born dreams to deck the grave.

With souls unpurged and steadfast breath
They supped the sacrament of death.
And for each one, far off, apart,
Seven swords have rent a woman's heart.

WHEN IT IS FINISHED

When it is finished, Father, and we set
The war-stained buckler and the bright blade by,
Bid us remember then what bloody sweat,
What thorns, what agony
Purchased our wreaths of harvest and ripe ears,
Whose empty hands, whose empty hearts, whose tears
Ransomed the days to be.

We leave them to Thee, Father, we've no price,
No utmost treasure of the seas and lands,
No words, no deeds, to pay their sacrifice.
Only while England stands,
Their pearl, their pride, their altar, not their grave,
Bid us remember in what days they gave
All that mankind may give
That we might live.

A VIOLET LEAF FROM KEATS' GRAVE

Sent by H. C., 1914.

Out of the sharp salt kiss,
 Blossom and thorn of grief,
Time has no more than this,—
 A leaf.

Out of the battled years,
The glory and the wrong,
Time gives for all our tears
A song.

Is it of fragrance made,
Woven and rhymed of light,
The voice that from some shade
Silvers the night?

When the last shadows slope
And day's own rose is pale,—
O love, immortal hope,—
His nightingale.

A SAXON EPITAPH

*The earth builds on the earth
Castles and towers.
The earth saith of the earth:
All shall be ours.*

Yea, though they plant and reap
The rye and the corn,
Lo, they were bond to Sleep
Ere they were born.

Yea, though the blind earth sows
For the fruit and the sheaf,
They shall harvest the leaf of the rose
And the dust of the leaf.

Pride of the sword and power
Are theirs at their need,
Who shall rule but the root of the flower,
The fall of the seed.

They who follow the flesh
In splendour and tears,
They shall rest and clothe them afresh
In the fulness of years.

From the dream of the dust they came
As the dawn set free.
They shall pass as the flower of the flame
Or the foam of the sea.

*The earth builds on the earth
Cities and towers.
The earth saith of the earth:
All shall be ours.*

AN EPITAPH

Friend, pass softly. Here is one
Morning spent her gold upon;
Suns enriched her, and the beat
Of April's tide flowed at her feet.
With each blossom, lovelier she;
Lovelier she with every leaf.
Spring forgets her now, and we
Count her summers by our grief.

GIFTS

I would have given you other gifts than this—
Songs and clear days and little prayers fulfilled,—
But rest is His,
And rest is all He willed.

I would have reared you up with little joys,
Sheathed you with love as linnets from the sun,
But all my toys
Are poorer than His one.

I would have laid life's harvest in your arms,
Not these small windflowers silvering on the stem,
Their baby charms
Bidding you match with them.

I would have led you where the meadows waken,
Flung you the summer's treasure that they keep;—
But you have taken
God's early rose of sleep.

RESURGAM

I shall say, Lord, "Is it music, is it morning,
Song that is fresh as sunrise, light that sings?"
When on some hill there breaks the immortal warning
Of half-forgotten springs.

I shall say, Lord, "I have loved you, not another,
Heard in all quiet your footsteps on my road,
Felt your strong shoulder near me, O my brother,
Lightening the load."

I shall say, Lord, "I remembered, working, sleeping,
One face I looked for, one denied and dear.
Now that you come my eyes are blind with weeping,
But you will kiss them clear."

I shall say, Lord, "Touch my lips, and so unseal them;
I have learned silence since I lived and died."
I shall say, Lord, "Lift my hands, and so reveal them,
Full, satisfied."

I shall say, Lord, "We will laugh again tomorrow,
Now we'll be still a little, friend with friend.
Death was the gate and the long way was sorrow.
Love is the end."

THE WOOD CARVER'S WIFE

(A one-act play, abridged)

JEAN MARCHANT, the wood-carver.

DORETTE, his wife.

Louis DE LOTBINIERE, a cousin of the Intendant of New France.

SHAGONAS, an Indian lad.

The scene is a log-built room. There is a door; and a narrow window, both open. Outside can be seen fields of ripe corn, a palisade, and the corner of a loop-holed blockhouse; beyond is the forest; all is silent and deserted in the sun.

The walls of the room are hung with skins, and here and there with things Jean has carved,—masks, two crucifixes, pipes, a panel showing a faun dancing to the pipes of an Indian girl; there are guns also, rods and nets, a long French spade, and a shelf with a few books.

The bare floor is strewn with fine wood-shavings. Jean is carving a Pieta for the new church, in high relief on panels of red cedar wood. Opposite him, facing the door, is Dorette, in a rough chair covered with a fur rug; she is sitting to him for the face of the Madonna.

In the doorway sits Shagonas, mending a snare. As Jean carves the Pieta he sings:

*Hard in the frost and the snow,
The cedar must have known
In his red, deep fibred heart,
A hundred winters ago
I should love and carve you so...*

The song is heavy with unhappy foreboding. Jean and Dorette talk while he carves, and there develops a dark and ominous mood compounded of Dorette's grief and fear and Jean's bitter, taunting hate.

Lean but a little lower that fair head,

The head of Mary o'er her murdered Christ...

He heaps insult upon her; he would have her old, haggard, the very Mother of Sorrows, filled with "the grief that cannot weep."

Finally Jean kisses her, takes his sword and broad hat, and goes out, followed by Shagonas. They visit the shrine prepared for his Pieta, "between the candle flames." When they are out of sight Dorette kneels before the Pieta, her face hidden in her hands. As she prays there is a soft knocking at the door, but she remains motionless before the Virgin.

The door opens, Louis de Lotbiniere enters and shuts it behind him. Seeing Dorette, he uncovers, and kneels beside her. Presently she lifts her head and looks him in the face. Once again they passionately declare their love for each other; then Dorette, sensing the return of Jean and Shagonas, tearfully begs Louis to flee. He slips from the door, which he leaves open, and hides in the thicket that has thrown leaf shadows upon it through the afternoon. Dorette again kneels before the Pieta.

Dorette. Keep open door,
O Saviour, of your mercy. Blot him out
In soft leaf-shadows like a little death.
Shut thou his eyes with webs, his breath with buds,
Prison his hands with branches.
Strew Thou me
Dust on the wind to blind them so they see not,
Nor hear.....Ah!

Jean is heard singing as he approaches the house.

Jean. (singing) Three kings rode to Bethlehem
By the sand and the foam.
Three kings rode to Bethlehem,
Only two rode home.

O, he hath stayed to watch her face
And make his prayer thereto,
And to lay down for his soul's grace
The straw beneath her shoe.

O, he hath sold the golden rings
That linked his camel-reins,
And the low song a mother sings
Is all his sorrow gains.

Two rode home by the foam and the sand,
Between the night and the day,
But one has stayed in Holy Land
And cast his crown away.

As his song ends, Jean reaches the door and stands within it, gazing at Dorette, who remains before the Pieta. Presently he enters the room, his gaze still upon her.

Jean. Do you pray there to yourself?

Dorette. Rather to God.

Jean. Why, that's a better prayer.

You should not pray to yourself. You are too tender,
You irised bubble of the clay, to bear
The weight of worship. Prayer must not be made
To the weak dust the wind cards presently
About the world. Why, even your shadow, she,
Madonna of the reddening cedar wood,
Hath but a troubled momentary power,
A doubtful consolation, and a look
As though the wind would rend her and the fire
Eat to swift ash. No comfort there for sinners.
But you're no sinner, need no comforting
Other than mine,--as this, and this, and this.

Dorette. You hurt me.

Jean. I? What, hurt you with a kiss?
Shall I go kiss her so?

Dorette. It were a sin.

Jean. Here is too much of sin and sin and sin.
Go, get you to that chair.

Dorette. Why do you look
So strangely on me?

Jean. Is my look so strange?

Dorette. Yea, sure, as if you found me dead but now
And saw my face.

Jean. I see a kind of death there.
Go, sit you in your chair.

Dorette. Where is Shagonas?

Jean. Lingering to shoot at crows with his great bow
More fit for war. He has fledged an arrow thrice
In carrion hearts, until the feather dripped
Blood, blood, and blood again. You shrink?
By blood
Was the world saved, and what's as red as it
Only by blood is turned wool-white again.
What's that to you, white rose? Go, sit you there.
I would make you more Madonna.

Dorette. Jean, not now.
I am sick. I am weary.

Jean. Do you pray to me?
You should not. You're Our Lady. You will taste
The year-long incense and the holy heat
Of candles. They will hail you mystic rose,
The tower of ivory, the golden house,

Sea-star and vase of honour.
Sit you there.

Dorette. I cannot.

Jean. Go.

Dorette. You are very harsh with me.

Jean. 'Tis you are hard to please. I kiss; you tremble,
I speak; you are in tears.

Dorette. Where is Shagonas?

Jean. Without, without.

Dorette. I have an errand for him.

Jean. He will come soon ... Fie, what a withered look,
How your heart beats. You are fevered. Sit, Dorette.
Lift your face to the light,--a little forward,--
So, now,--and dream you hold across your knees
What's dearest of your world, and slain for you
That blood may wash out sin.

Dorette. O, Christ!

Jean. Of course.
Who else but Christ? That suits me.
Hold your peace.

While they were speaking, Dorette has seated herself again in the chair facing towards the door, upon which the lightly-stirred shadows of elder leaves come and go. Jean takes up his tools.

Jean. 'Tis a fine blade, this one. Do you remember?
I sold its fellow when we were in France
To buy you a ring.

Dorette. I had forgotten.

Jean. Turn
Your face this way. Look toward me, not the door.
What see you? There is only sun outside,
Harsh elder drops, ripe fields and ripening hours,
Soft birth of wings among the woven shadows,
And a Southward-crying thrush. Do you remember?
They built and sang what time we built this house.
I left the elder thicket for their sake,
Who also built for love.

Dorette. Shagonas ... where?

Jean. What do you say? Are you sick? You speak so low.

Dorette. O, sick of heart! Jean, Jean, I cannot bear it.

Jean. If you move more, I will bind you to the chair
As the Indians bind a prisoner to the stake
Lest they miss one shuddering nerve, one eyelid's droop
Before the lifting fires.... Your pardon, wife.
Was I so fierce? There's fire in me to-day.
Would close a burning grip on the whole earth
And break it into ash... Your face, your face.
That's beautiful. Why, almost here's the look
I crave to lend Our Lady, yet too quick
With life and dread. Will you not mend your eyes
That yet lay hold on Love, and teach your lips
Too eager for that cup, and school your heart
That yet strains after him the way he went
That he returns no more? O, two rode home,--

"Two rode home by the foam and the sand
Between the night and the day,
But one has stayed in Holy Land,--"

One always stays, one always stays behind
Where the heart made Holy Land.
This king of song
Was worshipful, just, and mighty,
His great place
Knew him no more. He cast it all away,--
The pity of it!--so he might serve till death
God's Mother. But she did not wear your face.

Dorette. This heat ... I am dying.

Jean. What is it you say?
If I should gash this sacred brow I smoothe
Would you break blood? If I should pierce your heart
Would she of the sevenfold sorrows leap and cry?
I cannot part you. O the grief of it,
That Mary should sit there with you, and you
Climb heaven with her. I am grown old with grief
In a short hour. To work, to work,--your face.

Dorette. Call, call Shagonas.

Jean. Has he the art to heal you?
What do you fear? I would not have you fear.
I would have you like poor Mary here, who passed
Beyond it, of a Friday.

Dorette. O my heart.

Jean. Broken like mine? And so you had a heart,
As well as those round limbs, those prosperous lips.
The bloom of bosom and hair? O, he hath stayed,--

"O, he hath stayed to watch her face
And make his prayer thereto,
And to lay down for her soul's grace
His life beneath her shoe,--"

Why, I have changed the song.
What's come to it?
An ill song for the Mother o' God to hear.
Well, well, your pardon. Keep your face to me.

Dorette. Pity, O Saviour.

Jean. I am saving you,
Your soul alive, a brand in a great burning
Here in my breast. I saw where you will sit
Years in the little forest-scented church,
And lives like peaceful waves will break in foam
Of praise before you. Then I turned me home.
I saw--I saw--O, God, the chisel slipt
And I have scarred you! I will heal the wound,
Thus, thus. Be still. I am saving you. Now, Shagonas.

Jean has crossed the room, caught her to her feet, and stands holding her and her face to the door. Suddenly the note of a drawn bowstring is heard outside, something flashes past, there is a silence. Then among the shaken shadows of elder leaves on the door is seen for one moment the shadow of a man, erect, with tossed arms, and pierced through with a long arrow.

Comes the sound of a fall, or broken branches. Then again silence, and the shadows of the leaves are still. Jean seats Dorette again in the chair, where she remains quite motionless; he returns to the Pieta and takes his tools.

Jean. Your face again. Why, now you are fulfilled.
You will make my Mary perfect yet, your eyes
Now, now the barren houses of despair,
Of the passion that is none, of dread that feels
No dread for ever, of love that has no love,
Of death in all but death. O beautiful,
Stretched, stamped and imaged in the mask of death,
The crown of such sweet life! Your looks, your ways,
Your touches, your slow smiles, your delicate mirth,
All leading up to this! And his, the high
Clear laughter on the threshold of renown,
Stilled! I could almost weep for him and you,
Weep all my wrong away. My queen, my rose
Rent with strange swords, my woman of light worth,
Behold, you have brought forth death.

Shagonas enters, carrying De Lotbiniere's sword, which, obeying a gesture of Jean's, he lays across the knees of Dorette. She looks down upon it as though blind.

Your only fruit
Destruction and the severing steel, the heat
Of tears unshed, the ache of day and day
Monotonous in want, inevitable,
The dry-rot of the soul. Have you no words?

Dorette. He said--he said there were flowers in the forest,
White flowers by a blue pool, Our Lady's colours.
May I go for them? All white, he said,
White as the Virgin's hands. But you have made her
Out of red wood with a light of fire upon it.
Perhaps the flowers turned red.

Shagonas. There is no fear
In the forest shadows now for the fair lady.

Jean. Fear's slain with that it fed on. To your wilds,
You wolf that watched the flock. I will wait here with her,--
Stay, hearing a certain crying from the ground,
The faint innumerable mouthing leaves,
The clamour of the grass, the expectant thunder
Of a berry's fall. Go you, go you. But first
Turn me her head a little to the shoulder
So the light takes the cheek, raise the calm hand
Clasping the sword, set the door wide, and go.
Now, now my Virgin's perfect.
Quick, my tools!
O Mater Dolorosa! O Dorette!

All is silent save for the tinkle of a little church bell ringing for vespers, and a faint sound of chanting.

Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae,
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Will the light hold until they come for me?

(Curtain)

THE SILENT SHEPHERDS

I met the shepherds going home
When all the earth was still,
They trod a pathway pale as foam,
That led by Ebbesbourne Hill.

They had no songs at end of day,
No laughter in their eyes,
Hushed as the cool hushed hills were they
And quiet as the skies.

A league, a league of brier in bloom,

A league of furze alight
From Ebbesbourne Wake to Marlycombe
Breathed noon across the night.

The pilgrim stars went down the dark,
Their silver roads were long,
And in the grass each nestled lark
Was but a sleeping song.

Like a gray leaf the windless sky,
About the flowering moon,
I thought the shepherds passed me by
Treading a silent tune.

THE NAIAD

Dawn have I known, and noon,
And the dear night with all her foam of stars,
Here in my hands I hold the hunter's moon
Nightlong beneath the moving water-grasses,
With wavering globes of pearl and amber bars.
And spring is mine, when wake the daffodils,
To the wind's bugle wound upon the hills,
And low across my roof the swallow passes.

Sad smoke of sacred fires along the lands,
The burdened vine, full gourd and goldening ears.
The labourer's song among his olive trees.—
What care have I for these?
Hath Cypris lovelier than these silver hands,
These meek immortal eyes untouched of tears?

Night hath no room for laughter, and by day
The faint flower dies unripened from the tree.
Heavy the lives of men, and heavily
The imperial gods go wearying, crowned in care,
And I am sick as they
Of a dim grief, an undesigned despair.

O, here the oleander leans, and deep
Lies the gray shell asleep,
The round bee drowns in the river-bud.
Here the wild cherry droops her chained fruits,
Here wind the ivory grasses, and the roots
Of roses, red as blood.
And sorrow, sorrow, sings the enchanted flood.

Break, ye sweet banks, and set my fountains free,
And I will lead my flocks
Of fleece-white waters singing down the rocks,
To lose immortal sadness in the sea,

Die in dim rains along the welcoming shore,
And know, ah, know no more.
Eve's loneliest star above the water-meadows,
Soft birth of wings among the woven shadows,
Where almond and the wild azalea throw,
Across my silver roof their crowns of wreathed snow.

SLEEPY-HOODS

There's an old man in the woods,
Swift as summer, tall as smoke.
When the last leaf's left the oak
And the north wind cries and searches
All among the shivering birches,—
Wraps him in a tattered cloak,
Goes a-selling of his goods
Up and down the long white woods,—
Selling little sleepy-hoods.

O, his hoods.
Laid with fur and lined with feather,
Very warm for winter weather,
Hoods for squirrels, hoods for bears,
Hoods for little lady-hares.
O, his hoods,
Sewn with down along the seams,
Bright with little beaded gleams,
Woven out of sleep and dreams.

Hear the old man calling, crying,
"Come a-trying, come a-buying.
Here's a little hood shall bring
To its wearer dreams of spring,
Woven all of brier dew
With a thrush-song running through.
Here's a hood shall send some crow
Smiling thoughts along the snow.
Here's a furry hood shall make
Summer for a rabbit's sake,
Warm with down of fronds unfurled
In the daytime of the world."

O, his hoods.
Search among his shining goods,
Quills of scarlet, golden gleams,
Find the hood that has no dreams.
Find the white hood, soft and deep,
Made of sleep,
Lined with petals of white roses
Fallen when the moon uncloses,
Flowerlike stars around her still,

O'er the hemlocks on some hill,
Some far hill we shall not find
Down the highways of the wind.

Hear the old man wandering, crying,
"Who's a-seeking? Who's a-buying?
Wear it, and you shall not fear
All the changes of the year—
Iris-moon and April night
Hold for you the same delight,
Cedar-scented rains and clear
Frost of stars alike be dear.
Safely, safely shall you lie,
Idle while the hunt goes by
Singing through the windy woods.
Soft as summer it shall hold you,
Sweet as silence it shall fold you,—
Sleepiest of sleepy-hoods."

"HOW LOOK'D SHE?"

How look'd she when she breathed goodbye?
Most like a dove, whose breast
Across a thousand wastes of sky
Is constant to her nest.

How look'd she when she turned away?
Most as a spirit might,
Who shared our sorrows for a day,
Yet kept her home in sight.

O, look'd she sad, or seem'd she glad?
Most like a star, that knows
Only the loveliness it had,
The light to which it goes.

JEREMY FROST

Here lies one, old Jeremy Frost.
Whose soul was saved though his legs was lost.
A man he was, if any be found,
Taut as a spar from his head to the ground.
But the Lord takes pleasure in no man's shape,
And He shorted 'm up wi' a round o' grape.
But Jeremy wouldn't be dowsed nor glum
When the wars was over and he come.
"Not lost," says Jeremy, "gone afore,

And awaiting for me on a better shore."
So when Death loosened his timber pegs,
Old Jeremy up'd and follered his legs.

SONGS

(From "Little Hearts")

When along the road of day,
Evening comes with stars and wings,
Bids her children put away,
Spades and armies, clowns and kings,
We remember once again,
Love, how lonely love hath lain.

Though the blind day build us in
With her sorrows and her spears,
Break for us the bread of sin,
Lift to us the cup of tears,
Yet our prison-house shall be
But the door to let love free.

MALACHI'S SONG

(From "Little Hearts")

Some has breeches and some has beer,
And a pipe for to fill their jaw, O.
But look about and you'll find us here,
A-sleeping in the straw, O.

Some has apples and some has cakes,
And ale for to sup if able,
But we'll lie hid till the mavish wakes
A-sleeping in the stable.

Some has fardens and some has pence,
And a shillin' to pay the law, O.
And some they hasn't a grain o' sense,
A-kissin' in the straw, O.

Some they takes their 'ysters cooked,
And some they takes them raw, O.
And I can't work for the way you looked,
A-smiling in the straw, O.

Some they're churched and some they're hung,
And some says grace at table,

And some they're nothing but fools and young,
A-kissing in the stable.

TINKER'S SONG

(From "Foxcover")

Did 'e ever hear tell of a pretty young keeper,
In a green velvet jacket and gaiters so gay?
He watched the night through in the dark hazel copses,
And went to his bed at the dawn of the day.

Then where have you been, O my pretty young keeper,
That you weep with your face in the bracken so brown?
I weep for the weasel I shot in the heather,
And for the wild hawk that my gun has brought down.

The hares are all safe, O my pretty young keeper,
The fat deer lie down in the heart o' the wood,
It must be the hares that have broke the green bushes,
It must be the deer that have splashed 'em with blood.

There's a stain on your breast, O my pretty young keeper,
And your noble green jackets all dirtied about,
There was two that went in to the dark hazel copses,
There was two that went in and but one that came out.

Then it's what is your grief, O my pretty young keeper,
Since the hares are not snared and the deer are not run?
It's O, that I lay in the dark hazel copses,
And my father 'd come home in the stead o' his son.

FINIS

Give me a few more hours to pass
With the mellow flower of the elm-bough falling,
And then no more than the lonely grass
And the birds calling.

Give me a few more days to keep
With a little love and a little sorrow,
And then the dawn in the skies of sleep
And a clear tomorrow.

Give me a few more years to fill
With a little work and a little lending,
And then the night on a starry hill
And the road's ending.

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