

THE BOOK OF THE ROSE



CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS



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THE BOOK OF THE ROSE

Works of

Charles G. D. Roberts

The Kindred of the Wild

The Heart of the Ancient Wood

Barbara Ladd

The Forge in the Forest

A Sister to Evangeline

Earth's Enigmas

The Marshes of Minas

A History of Canada

The Book of the Rose

Poems

New York Nocturnes

The Book of the Native

In Divers Tones (*out of print*)

Songs of the Common Day (*out of print*)

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By
Charles G. D. Roberts

Author of "*The Kindred of the Wild*," "*The Heart of
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"*Poems*," etc.



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PART I.
THE BOOK OF THE ROSE

ON THE UPPER DECK.

*As the will of last year's wind,
As the drift of the morrow's rain,
As the goal of the falling star;
As the treason sinned in vain,
As the bow that shines and is gone,
As the night cry heard no more
Is the way of the woman's meaning
Beyond man's eldest lore.*

HE.

This hour to me is like a rose just open,
The wonder of its golden heart not yet
Fully revealed. So long I've waited for it,
Prefigured it in dream, and scourged my hope
With fear lest jealous fortune should deny,
That now I hardly dare Am I awake?
Can it be true I have you here beside me?
Can it be true I have you here alone
Most wonderfully alone among these strangers
Who seem to me like senseless shapes of air?
The throb of the great engines, the obscure
Hiss of the water past our speeding hull
Seem to enfold and press you closer to me.
No, do not move! Alone although we be,
I dare not touch your hand; your gown's dear hem
I will not touch lest I should break my dream
And just an empty deck-chair mock my longing.
But (for the beggar may in dreams be king),
Oh, let your eyes but touch me, let my spirit
But drink, but drain, but bathe in their deep light,
And slake its cherished anguish. Look at me!

SHE.

Look how the water's waiting holds the sky!
I think I never saw the Sound so still.
That wash of beryl green, that melting violet,
That fine rose-amber veiling deeps of glory
Our eyes could not endure how each is doubled,
Lest we should miss some marvel of strange tone,
And be forever poor. Such beauty seems
To cry like violins—Hush—and you'll hear it

TO TRY AND FIGHT. THEN, AND YOU KNOW IT.
Don't look at me when God is at his miracles.

HE.

He topped all miracle in making you.
Your mouth, your throat, your eyes, your hands, your hair
To look at these is harps within my soul,
The music of the stars at Time's first morning.
How can I see the wide, familiar world
When all my being drowns in your deep eyes?
What is the maddest sunset to your eyes?
Let us not talk of sunsets.

SHE.

Soon this rose
Of incommunicable light will fade,
Its ultimate petals sinking in the sea.
Be still, and watch the vaster bloom unfold
Whose pollen is the dust of stars, whose petals
The tissue of strange tears, desire and sleep.

HE.

We talk of roses, meaning all things fair
And rare and enigmatic; but the rose
Transcending all, the Rose of Life, is you!

*O Rose, blossom of wonder, dark blossom of ancient dream,
Wan tides of the Wandering Sorrow through your deep slumber stream;
Warm winds of the Wavering Passion are lost in your crimson fold,
And memory and foreboding at the hush of your heart lie cold.*

*O Rose, blossom of mystery, holding within your deeps
The hurt of a thousand vigils, the heal of a thousand sleeps,
There breathes upon your petals a power from the ends of earth.
Your beauty is heavy with knowledge of life and death and birth.*

*O Rose, blossom of longing the faint suspense, and the fire,
The wistfulness of time, and the unassuaged desire,
The pity of tears on the pillow, the pang of tears unshed
With these your spirit is weary, with these your beauty is fed.*

SHE.

Woman or rose, your verses do her credit,
Barring some small confusion in the figure.

HE.

'Tis fusion, not confusion. So the rose
Be beautiful enough, and strange enough,
Love in his haste may take its sweet for you;
And sun and rain, wise gardeners, seeing you
With face uplift, will know the rose you are.

SHE.

Let us not talk of roses. Don't you think
The engines' pulse throbs louder now the light
Has gone? The hiss of water past our hull
Is more mysterious, with a menace in it?
And that pale streak above the unseen land,
How ominous! A sword has just such pallor!
(Yes, you may put the scarf around my shoulders.)
Never has life shown me the face of beauty
But near it I have seen the fear of fear.

HE.

I knew not fear until I knew your beauty.

SHE.

Let us not talk of me. Look down, close in,
There where the night-black water breaks and seethes.
How its heart, torn and shuddering, burns to splendour!
What climbing lights! What rapture of white fire!
Clear souls of flame returning to the infinite!

HE.

If you should ever come to say "I love you,"
I think that even thus my life's dark tide
Would flame to sudden glory, and the gloom
Of long grief lift forever! Dear, your eyes,
Your great eyes, shine upon me, soft as with tears.
Your shoulder touches me. What does it mean?
I hold you to me. Is it love and life?

SHE.

Let us not talk of love! I know so little
Of love! I only know that life wears not
The face of beauty, but the face of fear.
The face of fear is gone. The face of beauty
Comes when you hold me so! Help me to live!
Help me to live, and hold me from the terror!

O LITTLE ROSE, O DARK
ROSE.

O little rose, O dark rose,
With smouldering petals curled,
I am the wind that comes for you
From the other side of the world.

O little rose, O dark rose,
With the hushed and golden heart,
I am your bee with burdened wings,
Too laden to depart.

O little rose, O dark rose,
Your soul a seed of fire,
I am the dew that dies in you,
In the flame of your desire.

O little rose, O dark rose,
The madness of your breath!
I am the moth to drain your sweet,
Even though the dregs be death.

O little rose, O dark rose,
When the garden day is done
I am the dusk that broods o'er you
Until the morrow's sun.

THE ROSE OF MY DESIRE.

O wild, dark flower of woman,
Deep rose of my desire,
An eastern wizard made you
Of earth and stars and fire.

When the orange moon swung low
Over the camphor-trees,
By the silver shaft of the fountain
He wrought his mysteries.

The hot, sweet mould of the garden
He took from a secret place
To become your glimmering body
And the lure of your strange face.

From the swoon of the tropic heaven
He drew down star on star,
And breathed them into your soul
That your soul might wander far

On earth forever homeless,
But intimate of the spheres,
A pang in your mystic laughter,
A portent in your tears.

From the night's heat, hushed, electric,
He summoned a shifting flame,
And cherished it, and blew on it
Till it burned into your name.

And he set the name in my heart
For an unextinguished fire,
O wild, dark flower of woman,
Deep rose of my desire.

HOW LITTLE I KNEW.

How little I knew, when I first saw you,
And your eyes for a moment questioned mine,
It amounted to this, that the dawn and the dew,
The midnight's dark, and the midnight's shine,
The awe of the silent, soaring peak,
The harebell's blue, and the cloud in the blue,
And all the beauty I sing and seek,
Would come to mean just you!

Yet I might have known; for that one deep look
Which you gave me from under your hat's low brim
Months afterward in my memory shook
And made my pulses swim.
It will burn in my heart the long years through;
And when this life of the flesh is done
I will open my heart and show it to you
In the world beyond the sun.

THE ROSE'S AVATAR.

There grew a rose more wonderful
Than ever Saadi sang.
Its loveliness occult and strange,
A rapture and a pang.
Its petals had the pulsing touch
That shakes the blood with fire.
Its warm deeps were the avatar
Of unassuaged desire.
Hid scents and hushed seraglio dreams
Were in its subtle breath,
The madness of the Mænad's joy,
The tenderness of death.
Its soul was all the mystic East,
Its heart was all the South,
Till love and tears transmuted it
To the dark rose of thy mouth.

THE COVERT.

Sharp drives the rain for me,
Bitter the long night's pain for me,
Bitter the dawn's disdain for me,
And breath so vain a prayer!

But open your heart and let me in.
The deep of your soul, oh, set me in!
And sorrow of life shall forget me in
The hiding of your hair!

THE ROSE OF LIFE.

The Rose spoke in the garden:

“Why am I sad?

The vast of sky above me

Is blue and glad;

The hushed deep of my heart

Hath the sun’s gold;

The dew slumbers till noon

In my petals’ hold.

Beauty I have, and wisdom,

And love I know,

Yet cannot release my spirit

Of its strange woe.”

Then a Wind, older than Time,

Wiser than Sleep,

Answered: “The whole world’s sorrow

Is yours to keep.

Its dark descends upon you

At day’s high noon;

Its pallor is whitening about you

From every moon;

The cries of a thousand lovers,

A thousand slain,

The tears of all the forgotten

Who kissed in vain,

And the journeying years that have vanished

Have left on you

The witness, each, of its pain,

Ancient, yet new.

So many lives you have lived;

So many a star

Hath veered in the Signs to make you

The wonder you are!

And this is the price of your beauty:

Your wild soul is thronged

With the phantoms of joy unfulfilled

That beauty hath wronged,

With the pangs of all secret betrayals,

The ghosts of desire,

The bite of old flame, and the chill

Of the ashes of fire.”

THE FEAR OF LOVE.

Oh, take me into the still places of your heart,
And hide me under the night of your deep hair;
For the fear of love is upon me;
I am afraid lest God should discover the wonderfulness of our love.

Shall I find life but to lose it?
Shall I stretch out my hands at last to joy,
And take but the irremediable anguish?
For the cost of heaven is the fear of hell;
The terrible cost of love
Is the fear to be cast out therefrom.

Oh, touch me! Oh, look upon me!
Look upon my spirit with your eyes,
And touch me with the benediction of your hands!
Breathe upon me, breathe upon me,
And my soul shall live.
Kiss me with your mouth upon my mouth
And I shall be strong.

THE WISDOM OF LOVE.

My life she takes between her hands;
My spirit at her feet
Is taught the lore inscrutable,
The wisdom bitter sweet.

The world becomes a little thing;
Art, travel, music, men,
And all that these can ever give
Are in her brow's white ken.

I look into her eyes and learn
The mystery of tears;
The pang of doubt; the doom that haunts
The fleeting of the years;

And pale foreknowledge, hid from all
But those who fear to know;
And memory's treason, that betrays
Joy to the nameless woe;

Compassion, like the rain of spring;
And truth without a flaw;
And one great gladness, hushed and still
With love's initiate awe.

In her deep hair I hide my heart;
And in that scented shade
I sail sleep's immemorial sea,
Expectant, unafraid;

And take the enigmatic word
Of dream upon my breath,
And learn the secrecy of joy,
The long content of death.

Her sad mouth, scarlet, passionate,
Shows me the world's desire,
The mirth that is the mask of pain,
And that immortal fire

Drawn by the touch of kiss on kiss
From life's eternal core,
Frail, flickering, mordant, keen, unquenched

When time shall be no more.

Then worship, love's last wisdom, learned,
I bow my spirit there,
And let my soul in silence plead
The passion which is prayer.

AWAY, SAD VOICES.

Away, sad voices, telling
Of old, forgotten pain!
My heart, at grief rebelling,
To joy returns again.

My life, at tears protesting,
To long delight returns,
Where, close of all my questing,
Her dear eyes love discerns.

ATTAR.

The dark rose of your mouth
Is summer and the south to me;
The attar of desire and dream
Its tendernesses seem to me.

The clear deep of your eyes
A lure of wonder lies to me,
Whereto my longing soul descends
While love comes by and bends to me.

The hushed night of your hair
Breathes an enchanted air to me
Strange heats from many a mystic clime
And far-off, perished time to me.

The pulses of your throat,
What madness they denote to me,
Passion, and hunger, and despair,
And ecstasy, and prayer to me!

The dusk bloom of your flesh
Is as a magic mesh to me,
Wherein our spirits lie ensnared,
Your wild, wild beauty bared to me.

The white flower of your feet,
How sacred and how sweet to me!
From some close-hung and cloistered shrine
Borne to make life divine to me.

INVOCATION.

O Voice,

Whose sound is as the falling of the rain
On harp-strings strung in casements by the sea,
Low with all passion, poignant with all pain,
In dreams, out of thy distance, come to me.
I hear no music if I hear not thee.

O Hands,

Whose touch is like the balm of apple-bloom
Brushed by the winds of April from the bough,
Amid the passionate memories of this room
Flower out, sweet hands, a presence in the gloom,
And touch my longing mouth and cool my brow.

O Eyes,

Whose least look is a flame within my soul,
(Still burns that first long look, across the years!)
Lure of my life, and my desire's control,
Illume me and my darkness disappears.
Seeing you not, my eyes see naught for tears.

O Lips,

The rose's lovelier sisters, you whose breath
Seems the consummate spirit of the rose
Honey and fire, delirium and repose,
And that long dream of love that laughs at death
All these, all these your scarlet blooms enclose.

O Hair,

Whose shadows hold the mystery of a shrine
Heavy with vows and worship, where the pale
Priests who pour out their souls in incense pine
For dead loves unforgot be thou the veil
To my heart's altar, secret and divine.

O Voice, O Hands, O Eyes, O Lips, O Hair,
Of your strange beauty God Himself hath care,
So deep the riddle He hath wrought therein
Whether for love's delight, or love's despair.

THE HOUSE.

My heart is a house, deep-walled and warm,
To cover you from the night of storm.

O little wild feet, too softly white
To roam the world's tempestuous night,
The years like sleet on my windows beat,
Come in and be cherished, O little wild feet.
My heart is a house, deep-walled and warm,
To cover you from the night of storm.

In the hillside hollow each lonely flower
Is closed against the disastrous hour.
The wet crow rocks in the wind-blown tree;
The tern drives in from the lashing sea.
My heart is a house, deep-walled and warm,
To cover you from the night of storm.

Down from the naked heights of cloud
Care and despair cry low, cry loud.
The dark woods mutter with thronging fears;
The rocks are drenched with the rain of tears.
My heart is a house, deep-walled and warm,
To cover you from the night of storm.

O little dark head, too dear and fair
For the buffeting skies and the bitter air,
Time sweeps the world with his wings of dread,
Come in and be comforted, little dark head.
My heart is a house, deep-walled and warm,
To cover you from the night of storm.

PART II.
MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

THE STRANDED SHIP.

Far up the lonely strand the storm had lifted her.
And now along her keel the merry tides make stir
No more. The running waves that sparkled at her prow
Seethe to the chains and sing no more with laughter now.
No more the clean sea-furrow follows her. No more
To the hum of her gallant tackle the hale Nor'westers roar.
No more her bulwarks journey. For the only boon they crave
Is the guerdon of all good ships and true, the boon of a deep-sea grave.

*Take me out, sink me deep in the green profound,
To sway with the long weed, swing with the drowned,
Where the change of the soft tide makes no sound,
Far below the keels of the outward bound.*

No more she mounts the circles from Fundy to the Horn,
From Cuba to the Cape runs down the tropic morn,
Explores the Vast Uncharted where great bergs ride in ranks,
Nor shouts a broad "Ahoy" to the dories on the Banks.
No more she races freights to Zanzibar and back,
Nor creeps where the fog lies blind along the liners' track,
No more she dares the cyclone's disastrous core of calm
To greet across the dropping wave the amber isles of palm.

*Take me out, sink me deep in the green profound,
To sway with the long weed, swing with the drowned,
Where the change of the soft tide makes no sound,
Far below the keels of the outward bound.*

Amid her trafficking peers, the wind-wise, journeyed ships,
At the black wharves no more, nor at the weedy slips,
She comes to port with cargo from many a storied clime.
No more to the rough-throat chantey her windlass creaks in time.
No more she loads for London with spices from Ceylon,
With white spruce deals and wheat and apples from St. John.
No more from Pernambuco with cotton-bales, no more
With hides from Buenos Ayres she clears for Baltimore.

*Take me out, sink me deep in the green profound,
To sway with the long weed, swing with the drowned,
Where the change of the soft tide makes no sound,
Far below the keels of the outward bound.*

Wan with the slow vicissitudes of wind and rain and sun
How grieves her deck for the sailors whose hearty brawls are done!
Only the wandering gull brings word of the open wave,
With shrill scream at her taffrail deriding her alien grave.

Around the keel that raced the dolphin and the shark
Only the sand-wren twitters from barren dawn till dark;
And all the long blank noon the blank sand chafes and mars
The prow once swift to follow the lure of the dancing stars.

*Take me out, sink me deep in the green profound,
To sway with the long weed, swing with the drowned,
Where the change of the soft tide makes no sound,
Far below the keels of the outward bound.*

And when the winds are low, and when the tides are still,
And the round moon rises inland over the naked hill,
And o'er her parching seams the dry cloud-shadows pass,
And dry along the land-rim lie the shadows of thin grass,
Then aches her soul with longing to launch and sink away
Where the fine silts lift and settle, the sea-things drift and stray,
To make the port of Last Desire, and slumber with her peers
In the tide-wash rocking softly through the unnumbered years.

*Take me out, sink me deep in the green profound,
To sway with the long weed, swing with the drowned,
Where the change of the soft tide makes no sound,
Far below the keels of the outward bound.*

THE PIPERS OF THE POOLS.

Pipers of the chilly pools
Pipe the April in.
Summon all the singing hosts,
All the wilding kin.

Through the cool and teeming damp
Of the twilight air
Call till all the April children
Answer everywhere.

From your cold and fluting throats
Pipe the world awake,
Pipe the mould to move again,
Pipe the sod to break.

Pipe the mating song of earth
And the fecund fire,
Love and laughter, pang and dream,
Desire, desire, desire.

Then a wonder shall appear,
Miracle of time:
Up through root and germ and sapwood
Life shall climb, and climb.

Then the hiding things shall hear you
And the sleeping stir,
And the far-off troops of exile
Gather to confer;

Then the rain shall kiss the bud
And the sun the bee,
Till they all, the painted children
Flower and wing get free;

And amid the shining grass
Ephemera arise,
And the windflowers in the hollow
Open starry eyes;

And delight comes in to whisper
“Soon, soon, soon
Earth shall be but one wild blossom
Breathing to the moon!”

THE FIRST PLOUGHING.

Calls the crow from the pine-tree top
When the April air is still.
He calls to the farmer hitching his team
In the farmyard under the hill.
“Come up,” he cries, “come out and come up,
For the high field’s ripe to till.
Don’t wait for word from the dandelion
Or leave from the daffodil.”

Cheeps the flycatcher “Here old earth
Warms up in the April sun;
And the first ephemera, wings yet wet,
From the mould creep one by one.
Under the fence where the flies frequent
Is the earliest gossamer spun.
Come up from the damp of the valley lands,
For here the winter’s done.”

Whistles the high-hole out of the grove
His summoning loud and clear:
“Chilly it may be down your way
But the high south field has cheer.
On the sunward side of the chestnut stump
The woodgrubs wake and appear.
Come out to your ploughing, come up to your ploughing,
The time for ploughing is here.”

Then dips the coulter and drives the share,
And the furrows faintly steam.
The crow drifts furtively down from the pine
To follow the clanking team.
The flycatcher tumbles, the high-hole darts
In the young noon’s yellow gleam;
And wholesome sweet the smell of the sod
Upturned from its winter’s dream.

THE NATIVE.

Rocks, I am one with you;
Sea, I am yours.
Your rages come and go.
Your strength endures.

Passion may burn and fade;
Pain surge and cease.
My still soul rests unchanged
Through storm and peace.

Fir-tree, beaten by wind,
Sombre, austere,
Your sap is in my veins,
O kinsman dear.

Your fibres rude and true
My sinews feed
Sprung of the same bleak earth,
The same rough seed.

The tempest harries us.
It raves and dies;
And wild limbs rest again
Under wide skies.

Grass, that the salt hath scourged,
Dauntless and grey,
Though the harsh season chide
Your scant array,

Year by year you return
To conquer fate.
The clean life nourishing you
Makes me, too, great.

O rocks, O fir-tree brave,
O grass and sea!
Your strength is mine, and you
Endure with me.

COAL.

Deep in the hush of those unfathomed glooms
Whereunder steamed the wet and pregnant earth,
Pulsing thick sap and pungent, hot perfumes,
This providence of unguessed needs had birth.
From drench of the innumerable rain
And drowse of unrecorded noon on noon
It sucked the heat and plucked the light, to gain
For times unborn a boon.

NEW DEAD.

Where are the kind eyes gone
That watched me so?
Was it but now they wept,
Or long ago?

Why did they run with tears
And yearn to me?
What was it in my face
They feared to see?

Ah, world, when did I pass
Beyond your smile,
Forget you, for a long
Or little while?

Descending from the sun
Into this night,
Impenetrable dark
That chokes my sight,

Ah, now I know why stirs
No more my breath!
My mouth is stopt with dust,
My dream with death.

Where is this seed of self
I clutch to hold?
Will it dissolve with me
Into the mould?

It slips, ah, let me sleep,
Worn, worn, outworn!
So to be strong when I
Arise, new born!

CHILD OF THE INFINITE.

Sun, and Moon, and Wind, and Flame,
Dust, and Dew, and Day and Night,
Ye endure. Shall I endure not,
Though so fleeting in your sight?
Ye return. Shall I return not,
Flesh, or in the flesh's despite?
Ye are mighty. But I hold you
Compass'd in a vaster might.

Sun, before your flaming circuit
Smote upon the uncumber'd dark,
I, within the Thought Eternal
Palpitant, a quenchless spark,
Watched while God awoke and set you
For a measure and a mark.

Dove of Heaven, ere you brooded
Whitely o'er the shoreless waste,
And upon the driven waters
Your austere enchantment placed,
I was power in God's conception,
Without rest and without haste.

Breath of Time, before your whisper
Wandered o'er the naked world,
Ere your wrath from pole to tropic
Running Alps of ocean hurled,
I, the germ of storm in stillness,
At the heart of God lay furled.

Journeying Spirit, ere your tongues
Taught the perished to aspire,
Charged the clod, and called the mortal
Through the reinitiant fire,
I was of the fiery impulse
Urging the Divine Desire.

Seed of Earth, when down the void
You were scattered from His hand,
When the spinning clot contracted,
Globed and green'd at His command,
I, behind the sifting fingers,
Saw the scheme of beauty planned.

Phantom of the Many Waters,
When no more you fleet and fall,
When no more your round you follow,
Infinite, ephemeral,
At the feet of the Unsleeping
I shall toss you like a ball.

Rolling Masks of Life and Death,
When no more your ancient place
Knows you, when your light and darkness
Swing no longer over space,
My remembrance shall restore you
To the favour of His face.

A REMORSE.

I dreamed last night my love was dead.
The dreadful thing was this!
Not that my lips would feel no more
The kindness of her kiss;
Not that my feet the weary years
Would go uncomraded;
Not that of all my love for her
So much remained unsaid;
But, sickening, I remembered how
I had been false to her!
“O God!” I cried aloud “*She knows*
I have been false to her!”

THE CONSPIRATORS.

Come, Death, sit down with me,
Thou and Love, we three
In a sad conspiracy
Against life, our enemy.

Thine, Death, the briefer score,
Though she hate thee evermore.
Hate of hers is less sore
Than her treasons honeyed o'er
With old, sweet lies and false, sweet lore.
Whom she hurts thou healest, Death.
That is what she hates thee for.

Thine, Love, the bitterer plaint.
She has kissed thee, fooled thee, shamed thee,
Clasped thee, and disclaimed thee,
Found thee white, child and saint,
Left thee with the world's taint,
Found thee strong, left thee faint,
Used thee, and defamed thee.

I, who love life, needs must live;
But, loving most, can least forgive.

Leave her, Love! Forsake her, Death!
So shall men come to curse their breath!

HEAT IN THE CITY.

Over the scorching roofs of iron
The red moon rises slow.
Uncomforted beneath its light
The pale crowds gasping go.

The heart-sick city, spent with day,
Cries out in vain for sleep.
The childless wife beside her dead
Is too outworn to weep.

The children in the upper rooms
Lie faint, with half-shut eyes.
In the thick-breathing, lighted ward
The stricken workman dies.

From breathless pit and sweltering loft
Dim shapes creep one by one
To throng the curb and crowd the stoops
And fear to-morrow's sun.

THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE WEAVERS.

The great and the little weavers,
They neither rest nor sleep.
They work in the height and the glory,
They toil in the dark and the deep.

The rainbow melts with the shower,
The white-thorn falls in the gust,
The cloud-rose dies into shadow,
The earth-rose dies into dust.

But they have not faded forever,
They have not flowered in vain,
For the great and the little weavers
Are weaving under the rain.

Recede the drums of the thunder
When the Titan chorus tires,
And the bird-song piercing the sunset
Faints with the sunset fires,

But the trump of the storm shall fail not,
Nor the flute-cry fail of the thrush,
For the great and the little weavers
Are weaving under the hush.

The comet flares into darkness,
The flame dissolves into death,
The power of the star and the dew
They grow and are gone like a breath,

But ere yet the old wonder is done
Is the new-old wonder begun,
For the great and the little weavers
Are weaving under the sun.

The domes of an empire crumble,
A child's hope dies in tears;
Time rolls them away forgotten
In the silt of the flooding years;

The creed for which men died smiling
Decays to a beldame's curse;

The love that made lips immortal
Drags by in a tattered hearse.

But not till the search of the moon
Sees the last white face uplift,
And over the bones of the kindreds
The bare sands dredge and drift,

Shall Love forget to return
And lift the unused latch,
(In his eyes the look of the traveller,
On his lips the foreign catch),

Nor the mad song leave men cold,
Nor the high dream summon in vain,
For the great and the little weavers
Are weaving in heart and brain.

LINES FOR AN OMAR
PUNCH-BOWL.

TO C. B.

Omar, dying, left his dust
To the rose and vine in trust.

“Through a thousand springs” said he,
“Mix your memories with me.

“Fire the sap that fills each bud
With an essence from my blood.

“When the garden glows with June
Use me through the scented noon,

“Till the heat’s alchemic art
Fashions me in every part.

“You, whose petals strew the grass
Round my lone, inverted glass,

“Each impassioned atom mould
To a red bloom with core of gold.

“You, whose tendrils, soft as tears,
Touch me with remembered years,

“When your globing clusters shine,
Slow distil my dreams to wine,

“Till by many a sweet rebirth
Love and joy transmute my earth,

“Changing me, on some far day,
To a more ecstatic clay,

“Whence the Potter’s craft sublime
Shall mould a shape to outlast Time.”

Omar's body, Omar's soul,
Breathe in beauty from this bowl,

At whose thronged, mysterious rim
Wan desires, enchantments dim,

Tears and laughter, life and death,
Fleeing love and fainting breath,

Seem to waver like a flame,
Dissolve, yet ever rest the same,

Fixed by your art, while art shall be,
In passionate immobility.

SHEPHERDESS FAIR.

O shepherdess fair, the flocks you keep
Are dreams and desires and tears and sleep.

O shepherdess brown, O shepherdess fair,
Where are my flocks you have in care?

My wonderful, white, wide-pasturing sheep
Of dream and desire and tears and sleep?

Many the flocks, but small the care
You give to their keeping, O shepherdess fair!

O shepherdess gay, your flocks have fed
By the iris pool, by the saffron bed,

Till now by noon they have wandered far,
And you have forgotten where they are!

O shepherdess fair, O shepherdess wild,
Full wise are your flocks, but you a child!

You shall not be chid if you let them stray.
In your own wild way, in your own child way,
You will call them all back at the close of day.

THE PIPER AND THE CHIMING PEAS.

There was a little piper man
As merry as you please,
Who heard one day the sweet-pea blossoms
Chiming in the breeze.

He murmured with a courtly grace
That set them quite at ease,
“I never knew that you had such
Accomplishments as these!

“If I should pipe until you’re ripe
I think that by degrees
You might become as wise as I
And chime in Wagnerese!”

“Oh, no, kind Sir! That could not be!”
Replied the modest peas.
“We only play such simple airs
As suit the bumble-bees.”

WHEN MARY THE MOTHER
KISSED THE CHILD.

When Mary the Mother kissed the Child
And night on the wintry hills grew mild,
And the strange star swung from the courts of air
To serve at a manger with kings in prayer,
Then did the day of the simple kin
And the unregarded folk begin.

When Mary the Mother forgot the pain,
In the stable of rock began love's reign.
When that new light on their grave eyes broke
The oxen were glad and forgot their yoke;
And the huddled sheep in the far hill fold
Stirred in their sleep and felt no cold.

When Mary the Mother gave of her breast
To the poor inn's latest and lowliest guest,
The God born out of the woman's side,
The Babe of Heaven by Earth denied,
Then did the hurt ones cease to moan,
And the long-supplanted came to their own.

When Mary the Mother felt faint hands
Beat at her bosom with life's demands,
And nought to her were the kneeling kings,
The serving star and the half-seen wings,
Then was the little of earth made great,
And the man came back to the God's estate.

AT THE WAYSIDE SHRINE.

(STE. ANNE DE BEAUPRÉ.)

So little and so kind a shrine!
So homely and serene a saint!
No violent sorrow can be thine,
Thou patient pensioner of constraint!

This gentle gloom that wraps thee in
Mistaking for a soul's despair,
Thou griev'st, perchance, for some small sin,
Too trivial for such fervent prayer.

Not sin hath wanned thy weary face,
Nor living woe made dark thine eyes,
Nor memory wrought this pleading grace,
But ignorance, and dumb surmise.

The bleeding feet of shameful pain
Have passed not up this tranquil way,
Nor late repentance, haply vain,
By these slim poplars knelt to pray.

Thine is the sadness of the breast
That has not known the human strife
Weighed down with shelter, worn with rest,
Athirst for the free storms of life.

Thine is the ache of lips that ache
For unknown pangs, unknown delight,
The emptiness of hearts that break
With dreaming through the empty night.

Thy woe thou canst not understand,
Poor soul and body incomplete!
Thou hungerest for a little hand
And touch of little unknown feet.

But now, because all sorrows cease
Assuaged by such sweet faith as thine,
The dear Saint Anne shall give thee peace
Here at her little, kindly shrine.

THE AIM.

O Thou who lovest not alone
The swift success, the instant goal,
But hast a lenient eye to mark
The failures of the inconstant soul,

Consider not my little worth,
The mean achievement, scamped in act,
The high resolve and low result,
The dream that durst not face the fact.

But count the reach of my desire.
Let this be something in thy sight:
I have not, in the slothful dark,
Forgot the Vision and the Height.

Neither my body nor my soul
To earth's low ease will yield consent.
I praise Thee for my will to strive.
I bless Thy goad of discontent.

Transcriber's Notes

Obvious printing errors have been silently corrected.

Inconsistencies in hyphenation, spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

[The end of *The Book of the Rose* by Charles George Douglas Roberts]