

POEMS NEW COMPLETE
EDITION

BY CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

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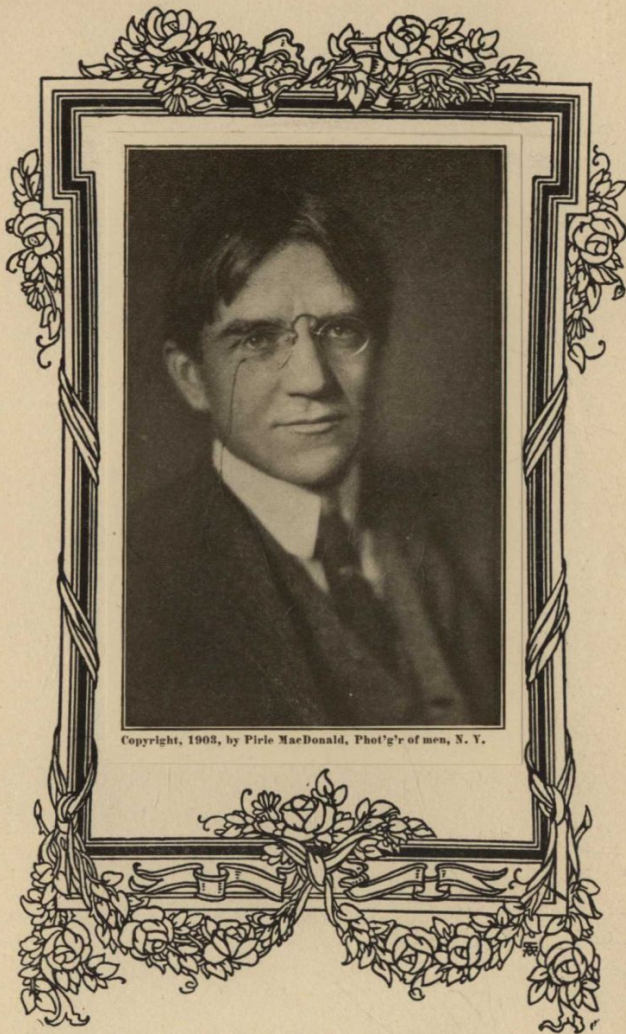
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Poems

By

Charles G. D. Roberts

Author of "The Haunters of the Silences,"
"The Kindred of the Wild," "Red Fox,"
"The Heart of the Ancient Wood,"
"The Forge in the Forest,"
"The Heart That
Knows," etc.

New Complete Edition

Including for the first time the poems
hitherto published separately in
"The Book of the Rose"



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To
G. E. A. R.

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J

Ave!

An Ode for the Shelley Centenary (1892)

Ave!

An Ode for the Centenary of Shelley's Birth

I

O tranquil meadows, grassy Tantramar,
Wide marshes ever washed in clearest air,
Whether beneath the sole and spectral star
The dear severity of dawn you wear,
Or whether in the joy of ample day
And speechless ecstasy of growing June
You lie and dream the long blue hours away
Till nightfall comes too soon,
Or whether, naked to the unstarred night,
You strike with wondering awe my inward sight,—

II

You know how I have loved you, how my dreams
Go forth to you with longing, though the years
That turn not back like your returning streams
And fain would mist the memory with tears,
Though the inexorable years deny
My feet the fellowship of your deep grass,
O'er which, as o'er another, tenderer sky,
Cloud phantoms drift and pass,—
You know my confident love, since first, a child,
Amid your wastes of green I wandered wild.

III

Inconstant, eager, curious, I roamed;
And ever your long reaches lured me on;
And ever o'er my feet your grasses foamed,
And in my eyes your far horizons shone.
But sometimes would you (as a stillness fell
And on my pulse you laid a soothing palm)
Instruct my ears in your most secret spell:

And sometimes in the calm
Initiate my young and wondering eyes
Until my spirit grew more still and wise.

IV

Purged with high thoughts and infinite desire
I entered fearless the most holy place,
Received between my lips the secret fire,
The breath of inspiration on my face.
But not for long these rare illumined hours,
The deep surprise and rapture not for long.
Again I saw the common, kindly flowers,
Again I heard the song
Of the glad bobolink, whose lyric throat
Pealed like a tangle of small bells afloat.

V

The pounce of mottled marsh-hawk on his prey;
The flicker of sand-pipers in from sea
In gusty flocks that puffed and fled; the play
Of field-mice in the vetches,—these to me
Were memorable events. But most availed
Your strange unquiet waters to engage
My kindred heart's companionship; nor failed
To grant this heritage,—
That in my veins forever must abide
The urge and fluctuation of the tide.

VI

The mystic river whence you take your name,
River of hubbub, raucous Tantramar,
Untamable and changeable as flame,
It called me and compelled me from afar,
Shaping my soul with its impetuous stress.
When in its gaping channel deep withdrawn
Its waves ran crying of the wilderness
And winds and stars and dawn,
How I companioned them in speed sublime,

Led out a vagrant on the hills of Time!

VII

And when the orange flood came roaring in
From Fundy's tumbling troughs and tide-worn caves.
While red Minudie's flats were drowned with din
And rough Chignecto's front oppugned the waves,
How blithely with the refluent foam I raced
Inland along the radiant chasm, exploring
The green solemnity with boisterous haste;
My pulse of joy outpouring
To visit all the creeks that twist and shine
From Beauséjour to utmost Tormentine.

VIII

And after, when the tide was full, and stilled
A little while the seething and the hiss,
And every tributary channel filled
To the brim with rosy streams that swelled to kiss
The grass-roots all awash and goose-tongue wild
And salt-sap rosemary,—then how well content
I was to rest me like a breathless child
With play-time rapture spent,—
To lapse and loiter till the change should come
And the great floods turn seaward, roaring home.

IX

And now, O tranquil marshes, in your vast
Serenity of vision and of dream,
Wherethrough by every intricate vein have passed
With joy impetuous and pain supreme
The sharp, fierce tides that chafe the shores of earth
In endless and controlless ebb and flow,
Strangely akin you seem to him whose birth
One hundred years ago
With fiery succour to the ranks of song
Defied the ancient gates of wrath and wrong.

Like yours, O marshes, his compassionate breast,
Wherein abode all dreams of love and peace,
Was tortured with perpetual unrest.
Now loud with flood, now languid with release,
Now poignant with the lonely ebb, the strife
Of tides from the salt sea of human pain
That hiss along the perilous coasts of life
Beat in his eager brain;
But all about the tumult of his heart
Stretched the great calm of his celestial art.

XI

Therefore with no far flight, from Tantramar
And my still world of ecstasy, to thee,
Shelley, to thee I turn, the avatar
Of Song, Love, Dream, Desire, and Liberty;
To thee I turn with reverent hands of prayer
And lips that fain would ease my heart of praise,
Whom chief of all whose brows prophetic wear
The pure and sacred bays
I worship, and have worshiped since the hour
When first I felt thy bright and chainless power.

XII

About thy sheltered cradle, in the green
Untroubled groves of Sussex, brooded forms
That to the mother's eye remained unseen,—
Terrors and ardours, passionate hopes, and storms
Of fierce retributive fury, such as jarred
Ancient and sceptred creeds, and cast down kings,
And oft the holy cause of Freedom marred
With lust of meaner things,
With guiltless blood, and many a frenzied crime
Dared in the face of unforgetful Time.

XIII

The star that burns on revolution smote
Wild heats and change on thine ascendant sphere

Whose influence thereafter seemed to float
Through many a strange eclipse of wrath and fear,
Dimming awhile the radiance of thy love.
But still supreme in thy nativity,
All dark, invidious aspects far above,
Beamed one clear orb for thee,—
The star whose ministrations just and strong
Controlled the tireless flight of Dante's song.

XIV

With how august contrition, and what tears
Of penitential, unavailing shame,
Thy venerable foster-mother hears
The sons of song impeach her ancient name,
Because in one rash hour of anger blind
She thrust thee forth in exile, and thy feet
Too soon to earth's wild outer ways consigned,—
Far from her well-loved seat,
Far from her studious halls and storied towers
And weedy Isis winding through his flowers.

XV

And thou, thenceforth the breathless child of change,
Thine own Alastor, on an endless quest
Of unimagined loveliness didst range,
Urged ever by the soul's divine unrest.
Of that high quest and that unrest divine
Thy first immortal music thou didst make,
Inwrought with fairy Alp, and Reuss, and Rhine,
And phantom seas that break
In soundless foam along the shores of Time,
Prisoned in thine imperishable rhyme.

XVI

Thyself the lark melodious in mid-heaven;
Thyself the Protean shape of chainless cloud,
Pregnant with elemental fire, and driven
Through deeps of quivering light, and darkness loud

With tempest, yet beneficent as prayer;
Thyself the wild west wind, relentless strewing
The withered leaves of custom on the air,
And through the wreck pursuing
O'er lovelier Arnos, more imperial Romes,
Thy radiant visions to their viewless homes.

XVII

And when thy mightiest creation thou
Wert fain to body forth,—the dauntless form,
The all-enduring, all-forgiving brow
Of the great Titan, flinchless in the storm
Of pangs unspeakable and nameless hates,
Yet rent by all the wrongs and woes of men,
And triumphing in his pain, that so their fates
Might be assuaged,—oh then
Out of that vast compassionate heart of thine
Thou wert constrained to shape the dream benign.

XVIII

—O Baths of Caracalla, arches clad
In such transcendent rhapsodies of green
That one might guess the sprites of spring were glad
For your majestic ruin, yours the scene,
The illuminating air of sense and thought;
And yours the enchanted light, O skies of Rome,
Where the giant vision into form was wrought;
Beneath your blazing dome
The intensest song our language ever knew
Beat up exhaustless to the blinding blue!—

XIX

The domes of Pisa and her towers superb,
The myrtles and the ilexes that sigh
O'er San Giuliano, where no jars disturb
The lonely aziola's evening cry,
The Serchio's sun-kissed waters,—these conspired
With Plato's theme occult, with Dante's calm
Rapture of mystic love. and so inspired

Thy soul's espousal psalm,
A strain of such elect and pure intent
It breathes of a diviner element.

XX

Thou on whose lips the word of Love became
A rapt evangel to assuage all wrong,
Not Love alone, but the austerer name
Of Death engaged the splendours of thy song.
The luminous grief, the spacious consolation
Of thy supreme lament, that mourned for him
Too early haled to that still habitation
Beneath the grass-roots dim,—
Where his faint limbs and pain-o'erwearied heart
Of all earth's loveliness became a part,

XXI

But where, thou sayest, himself would not abide,—
Thy solemn incommunicable joy
Announcing Adonais has not died,
Attesting death to free but not destroy,
All this was as thy swan-song mystical.
Even while the note serene was on thy tongue
Thin grew the veil of the Invisible,
The white sword nearer swung,—
And in the sudden wisdom of thy rest
Thou knewest all thou hadst but dimly guessed.

XXII

Lament, Lericì, mourn for the world's loss!
Mourn that pure light of song extinct at noon!
Ye waves of Spezzia that shine and toss
Repent that sacred flame you quenched too soon!
Mourn, Mediterranean waters, mourn
In affluent purple down your golden shore!
Such strains as his, whose voice you stilled in scorn,
Our ears may greet no more,
Unless at last to that far sphere we climb

Where he completes the wonder of his rhyme!

XXIII

How like a cloud she fled, thy fateful bark,
From eyes that watched to hearts that waited, till
Up from the ocean roared the tempest dark—
And the wild heart Love waited for was still!
Hither and thither in the slow, soft tide,
Rolled seaward, shoreward, sands and wandering shells
And shifting weeds thy fellows, thou didst hide
Remote from all farewells,
Nor felt the sun, nor heard the fleeting rain,
Nor heeded Casa Magni's quenchless pain.

XXIV

Thou heededst not? Nay, for it was not thou,
That blind, mute clay relinquished by the waves
Reluctantly at last, and slumbering now
In one of kind earth's most compassionate graves!
Not thou, not thou,—for thou wert in the light
Of the Unspeakable, where time is not.
Thou sawest those tears; but in thy perfect sight
And thy eternal thought
Were they not even now all wiped away
In the reunion of the infinite day!

XXV

There face to face thou sawest the living God
And worshipedst, beholding Him the same
Adored on earth as Love, the same whose rod
Thou hadst endured as Life, whose secret name
Thou now didst learn, the healing name of Death.
In that unroutable profound of peace,
Beyond experience of pulse and breath,
Beyond the last release
Of longing, rose to greet thee all the lords
Of Thought, with consummation in their words:

XXVI

He of the seven cities claimed, whose eyes,
 Though blind, saw gods and heroes, and the fall
Of Ilium, and many alien skies,
 And Circe's Isle; and he whom mortals call
The Thunderous, who sang the Titan bound
 As thou the Titan victor; the benign
Spirit of Plato; Job; and Judah's crowned
 Singer and seer divine;
Omar; the Tuscan; Milton, vast and strong;
And Shakespeare, captain of the host of Song.

XXVII

Back from the underworld of whelming change
 To the wide-glittering beach thy body came;
And thou didst contemplate with wonder strange
 And curious regard thy kindred flame,
Fed sweet with frankincense and wine and salt,
 With fierce purgation search thee, soon resolving
Thee to the elements of the airy vault
 And the far spheres revolving,
The common waters, the familiar woods,
And the great hills' inviolate solitudes.

XXVIII

Thy close companions there officiated
 With solemn mourning and with mindful tears,—
The pained, imperious wanderer unmated
 Who voiced the wrath of those rebellious years;
Trelawney, lion limbed and high of heart;
 And he, that gentlest sage and friend most true,
Whom Adonais loved. With these bore part
 One grieving ghost, that flew
Hither and thither through the smoke unstirred
In wailing semblance of a wild white bird.

XXIX

O heart of fire, that fire might not consume,
 Forever glad the world because of thee:

Forever glad the world because of thee,
Because of thee forever eyes illumine
A more enchanted earth, a lovelier sea!
O poignant voice of the desire of life,
Piercing our lethargy, because thy call
Aroused our spirits to a nobler strife
Where base and sordid fall,
Forever past the conflict and the pain
More clearly beams the goal we shall attain!

XXX

And now once more, O marshes, back to you
From whatsoever wanderings, near or far,
To you I turn with joy forever new,
To you, O sovereign vasts of Tantramar!
Your tides are at the full. Your wizard flood,
With every tribute stream and brimming creek,
Ponders, possessor of the utmost good,
With no more left to seek,—
But the hour wanes and passes; and once more
Resounds the ebb with destiny in its roar.

XXXI

So might some lord of men, whom force and fate
And his great heart's unvanquishable power
Have thrust with storm to his supreme estate,
Ascend by night his solitary tower
High o'er the city's lights and cries uplift.
Silent he ponders the scrolled heaven to read
And the keen stars' conflicting message sift,
Till the slow signs recede,
And ominously scarlet dawns afar
The day he leads his legions forth to war.

The Book of the Native

To G. B. R.

How merry sings the aftermath,
 With crickets fifying in the dew!
The home-sweet sounds, the scene, the hour,
 I consecrate to you.

All this you knew and loved with me;
 All this in our delight had part;
And now—though us earth sees no more
 As comrades, heart to heart—

This kindly strength of open fields,
 This faith of eve, this calm of air,
They lift my spirit close to you
 In memory and prayer.

Autochthon

I

I am the spirit astir
 To swell the grain
When fruitful suns confer
 With labouring rain;
I am the life that thrills
 In branch and bloom;
I am the patience of abiding hills,
 The promise masked in doom.

II

When the sombre lands are wrung,
 And storms are out,
And giant woods give tongue,
 I am the shout;
And when the earth would sleep,
 Wrapped in her snows,
I am the infinite gleam of eyes that keep
 The post of her repose.

III

I am the hush of calm,
 I am the speed,
The flood-tide's triumphing psalm,
 The marsh-pool's heed;
I work in the rocking roar
 Where cataracts fall;
I flash in the prismatic fire that dances o'er
 The dew's ephemeral ball.

IV

I am the voice of wind
 And wave and tree,
Of stern desires and blind

Of stern desires and aims,
Of strength to be;
I am the cry by night
At point of dawn,
The summoning bugle from the unseen height,
In cloud and doubt withdrawn.

V

I am the strife that shapes
The stature of a man,
The pang no hero escapes,
The blessing, the ban;
I am the hammer that moulds
The iron of our race,
The omen of God in our blood that a people beholds,
The foreknowledge veiled in our face.

Kinship

Back to the bewildering vision
And the borderland of birth;
Back into the looming wonder,
The companionship of earth;

Back unto the simple kindred—
Childlike fingers, childlike eyes,
Working, waiting, comprehending,
Now in patience, now surprise;

Back unto the faithful healing
And the candour of the sod—
Scent of mould and moisture stirring
At the secret touch of God;

Back into the ancient stillness
Where the wise enchanter weaves,
To the twine of questing tree-root,
The expectancy of leaves;

Back to hear the hushed consulting
Over bud and blade and germ,
As the Mother's mood apportions
Each its pattern, each its term;

Back into the grave beginnings
Where all wonder-tales are true,
Strong enchantments, strange successions,
Mysteries of old and new;

Back to knowledge and renewal,
Faith to fashion and reveal,
Take me, Mother,—in compassion
All thy hurt ones fain to heal.

Back to wisdom take me, Mother;
Comfort me with kindred hands;

Tell me tales the world's forgetting,
Till my spirit understands.

Tell me how some sightless impulse,
Working out a hidden plan,
God for kin and clay for fellow,
Wakes to find itself a man.

Tell me how the life of mortal,
Wavering from breath to breath,
Like a web of scarlet pattern
Hurtles from the loom of death.

How the caged bright bird, desire,
Which the hands of God deliver,
Beats aloft to drop unheeded
At the confines of forever:

Faints unheeded for a season,
Then outwings the farthest star,
To the wisdom and the stillness
Where thy consummations are.

Origins

Out of the dreams that heap
The hollow hand of sleep,—
Out of the dark sublime,
The echoing deeps of time,—
From the averted Face
Beyond the bournes of space,
Into the sudden sun
We journey, one by one.
Out of the hidden shade
Wherein desire is made,—
Out of the pregnant stir
Where death and life confer,—
The dark and mystic heat
Where soul and matter meet,—
The enigmatic Will,—
We start, and then are still.

Inexorably decreed
By the ancestral deed,
The puppets of our sires,
We work out blind desires,
And for our sons ordain
The blessing or the bane.
In ignorance we stand
With fate on either hand,
And question stars and earth
Of life, and death, and birth.
With wonder in our eyes
We scan the kindred skies,
While through the common grass
Our atoms mix and pass.
We feel the sap go free
When spring comes to the tree;
And in our blood is stirred
What warms the brooding bird.
The vital fire we breathe
That bud and blade bequeath,

And strength of native clay
In our full veins hath sway.

But in the urge intense
And fellowship of sense,
Suddenly comes a word
In other ages heard.
On a great wind our souls
Are borne to unknown goals,
And past the bournes of space
To the unaverted Face.

“O Thou who Bidd’st”

O Thou who bidd’st a million germs decay
That one white bloom may soar into the day,
Mine eyes unseal to see their souls in death
Borne back to Thee upon the lily’s breath.

An April Adoration

Sang the sunrise on an amber morn—
“Earth, be glad! An April day is born.

“Winter’s done, and April’s in the skies.
Earth, look up with laughter in your eyes!”

Putting off her dumb dismay of snow,
Earth bade all her unseen children grow.

Then the sound of growing in the air
Rose to God a liturgy of prayer;

And the thronged succession of the days
Uttered up to God a psalm of praise.

Laughed the running sap in every vein,
Laughed the running flurries of warm rain,

Laughed the life in every wandering root,
Laughed the tingling cells of bud and shoot.

God in all the concord of their mirth
Heard the adoration-song of Earth.

An Oblation

Behind the fateful gleams
Of Life's foretelling streams
 Sat the Artificer
Of souls and deeds and dreams.

Before him April came;
And on her mouth his name
 Breathed like a flower
And lightened like a flame.

She offered him a world
With showers of joy empearled;
 And a spring wind
With iris wings unfurled.

She offered him a flight
Of birds that fare by night,
 Voyaging northward
By the ancestral sight.

She offered him a star
From the blue fields afar,
 Where unforgotten
The ghosts of gladness are.

And every root and seed
Blind stirring in the mead
 Her hands held up,—
And still he gave no heed.

Then from a secret nook
Beside a pasture brook,—
 A place of leaves,—
A pink-lipped bloom she took.

Softly before his feet,
Oblation small and sweet,

She laid the arbutus,
And found the offering meet.

Over the shadowy tide,
Where Birth and Death abide,
 He stretched his palm,
And strewed the petals wide;

And o'er the ebbing years,
Dark with the drift of tears,
 A sunbeam broke,
And summer filled the spheres.

The Jonquil

Through its brown and withered bulb
How the white germ felt the sun
In the dark mould gently stirring
His spring children one by one!

Thrilled with heat, it split the husk,
Shot a green blade up to light,
And unfurled its orange petals
In the old enchanter's sight.

One step more and it had floated
On the palpitating noon
Winged and free, a butterfly
Soaring from the rent cocoon.

But it could not leave its earth,
And the May-dew's tender tears,—
So it wavers there forever
'Twixt the green and azure spheres.

Resurrection

Daffodil, lily, and crocus,
They stir, they break from the sod,
They are glad of the sun, and they open
Their golden hearts to God.

They, and the wilding families,—
Windflower, violet, may,—
They rise from the long, long dark
To the ecstasy of day.

We, scattering troops and kindreds,
From out of the stars wind-blown
To this wayside corner of space,
This world that we call our own,—

We, of the hedgerows of Time,
We, too, shall divide the sod,
Emerge to the light, and blossom,
With our hearts held up to God.

Afoot

Comes the lure of green things growing,
Comes the call of waters flowing,—
 And the wayfarer Desire
Moves and wakes and would be going.

Hark the migrant hosts of June
Marching nearer noon by noon!
 Hark the gossip of the grasses
Bivouacked beneath the moon!

Hark the leaves their mirth averring;
Hark the buds to blossom stirring;
 Hark the hushed, exultant haste
Of the wind and world conferring!

Hark the sharp, insistent cry
Where the hawk patrols the sky!
 Hark the flapping, as of banners,
Where the heron triumphs by!

Empire in the coasts of bloom
Humming cohorts now resume,—
 And desire is forth to follow
Many a vagabond perfume.

Long the quest and far the ending
Where my wayfarer is wending,—
 When Desire is once afoot,
Doom behind and dream attending!

Shuttle-cock of indecision,
Sport of chance's blind derision,
 Yet he may not fail nor tire
Till his eyes shall win the Vision

In his ears the phantom chime
Of incommunicable rhyme,

He shall chase the fleeting camp-fires
Of the Bedouins of Time.

Farer by uncharted ways,
Dumb as Death to plaint or praise,
 Unreturning he shall journey,
Fellow to the nights and days:

Till upon the outer bar
Stilled the moaning currents are,
 Till the flame achieves the zenith,
Till the moth attains the star,

Till, through laughter and through tears,
Fair the final peace appears,
 And about the watered pastures
Sink to sleep the nomad years!

The Quest of the Arbutus

For days the drench of noiseless rains,
Then sunshine on the vacant plains,
And April with her blind desire
A vagrant in my veins!

Because the tardy gods grew kind,
Unrest and care were cast behind;
I took a day, and found the world
Was fashioned to my mind.

The swelling sap that thrilled the wood
Was cousin to my eager blood;
I caught the stir of waking roots
And knew that life was good.

But something in the odors fleet,
And in the sap's suggestion sweet,
Was lacking,—one thing everywhere
To make the spring complete.

At length within a leafy nest,
Where spring's persuasions pleaded best,
I found a pale, reluctant flower,
The purpose of my quest.

And then the world's expectancy
Grew clear: I knew its need to be
Not this dear flower, but one dear hand
To pluck the flower with me.

The Pipes of Pan

Ringed with the flocking of hills, within shepherding watch of Olympus,
Tempe, vale of the gods, lies in green quiet withdrawn;
Tempe, vale of the gods, deep-couched amid woodland and woodland,
Threaded with amber of brooks, mirrored in azure of pools,
All day drowsed with the sun, charm-drunken with moonlight at midnight,
Walled from the world forever under a vapor of dreams,—
Hid by the shadows of dreams, not found by the curious footstep,
Sacred and secret forever, Tempe, vale of the gods.

How, through the cleft of its bosom, goes sweetly the water Penëus!
How by Penëus the sward breaks into saffron and blue!
How the long slope-floored beech-glades mount to the wind-wakened
uplands,
Where, through flame-berried ash, troop the hooped Centaurs at morn!
Nowhere greens a copse but the eye-beams of Artemis pierce it.
Breathes no laurel her balm but Phœbus' fingers caress.
Springs no bed of wild blossom but limbs of dryad have pressed it.
Sparkle the nymphs, and the brooks chime with shy laughter and calls.

Here is a nook. Two rivulets fall to mix with Penëus,
Loiter a space, and sleep, checked and choked by the reeds.
Long grass waves in the windless water, strown with the lote-leaf.
Twist thro' dripping soil great alder roots; and the air
Glooms with the dripping tangle of leaf-thick branches, and stillness
Keeps in the strange-coiled stems, ferns, and wet-loving weeds.
Hither comes Pan, to this pregnant earthy spot, when his piping
Flags; and his pipes outworn breaking and casting away,
Fits new reeds to his mouth with the weird earth-melody in them,
Piercing, alive with a life able to mix with the god's.
Then, as he blows, and the searching sequence delights him, the goat-feet
Furtive withdraw; and a bird stirs and flutes in the gloom
Answering. Float with the stream the outworn pipes, with a whisper,—
“What the god breathes on, the god never can wholly evade!”
God-breath lurks in each fragment forever. Dispersed by Penëus
Wandering, caught in the ripples, wind-blown hither and there,
Over the whole green earth and globe of sea they are scattered,
Coming to secret spots, where in a visible form

Comes not the god, though he come declared in his workings. And mortals
Straying in cool of morn, or bodeful hasting at eve,
Or in the depths of noonday plunged to shadiest coverts,
Spy them, and set to their lips; blow, and fling them away!

Ay, they fling them away,—but never wholly! Thereafter
Creeps strange fire in their veins, murmur strange tongues in their brain,
Sweetly evasive; a secret madness takes them,—a charm-struck
Passion for woods and wild life, the solitude of the hills.
Therefore they fly the heedless throngs and traffic of cities,
Haunt mossed caverns, and wells bubbling ice-cool; and their souls
Gather a magical gleam of the secret of life, and the god's voice
Calls to them, not from afar, teaching them wonderful things.

In the Orchard

O apple leaves, so cool and green
Against the summer sky,
You stir, although the wind is still
And not a bird goes by.
You start,
And softly move apart
In hushed expectancy.
Who is the gracious visitor
Whose form I cannot see?

O apple leaves, the mystic light
All down your dim arcade!
Why do your shadows tremble so,
Half glad and half afraid?
The air
Is an unspoken prayer;
Your eyes look all one way.
Who is the secret visitor
Your tremors would betray?

The Heal-All

Dear blossom of the wayside kin,
Whose homely, wholesome name
Tells of a potency within
To win thee country fame!

The sterile hillocks are thy home,
Beside the windy path;
The sky, a pale and lonely dome,
Is all thy vision hath.

Thy unobtrusive purple face
Amid the meagre grass
Greets me with long-remembered grace,
And cheers me as I pass.

And I, outworn by petty care,
And vexed with trivial wrong,
I heed thy brave and joyous air
Until my heart grows strong.

A lesson from the Power I crave
That moves in me and thee,
That makes thee modest, calm, and brave,
Me restless as the sea.

Thy simple wisdom I would gain,—
To heal the hurt Life brings,
With kindly cheer, and faith in pain,
And joy of common things.

A Song of Growth

In the heart of a man
Is a thought upfurled,
Reached its full span
It shakes the world,
And to one high thought
Is a whole race wrought.

Not with vain noise
The great work grows,
Nor with foolish voice,
But in repose,—
Not in the rush
But in the hush.

From the cogent lash
Of the cloud-herd wind
The low clouds dash,
Blown headlong, blind;
But beyond, the great blue
Looks moveless through.

O'er the loud world sweep
The scourge and the rod;
But in deep beyond deep
Is the stillness of God,—
At the Fountains of Life
No cry, no strife.

Butterflies

Once in a garden, when the thrush's song,
 Pealing at morn, made holy all the air,
Till earth was healed of many an ancient wrong,
 And life appeared another name for prayer,

Rose suddenly a swarm of butterflies,
 On wings of white and gold and azure fire;
And one said, "These are flowers that seek the skies
 Loosed by the spell of their supreme desire."

Recompense

To Beauty and to Truth I heaped
My sacrificial fires.
I fed them hot with selfish thoughts
And many proud desires.

I stripped my days of dear delights
To cast them in the flame,
Till life seemed naked as a rock,
And pleasure but a name.

And still I sorrowed patiently,
And waited day and night,
Expecting Truth from very far
And Beauty from her height.

Then laughter ran among the stars;
And this I heard them tell:
“Beside his threshold is the shrine
Where Truth and Beauty dwell!”

An Epitaph for a Husbandman

He who would start and rise
 Before the crowing cocks.—
No more he lifts his eyes,
 Whoever knocks.

He who before the stars
 Would call the cattle home,—
They wait about the bars
 For him to come.

Him at whose hearty calls
 The farmstead woke again
The horses in their stalls
 Expect in vain.

Busy, and blithe, and bold,
 He laboured for the morrow,—
The plough his hands would hold
 Rusts in the furrow.

His fields he had to leave,
 His orchards cool and dim;
The clods he used to cleave
 Now cover him.

But the green, growing things
 Lean kindly to his sleep,—
White roots and wandering strings,
 Closer they creep.

Because he loved them long
 And with them bore his part,
Tenderly now they throng
 About his heart.

Epitaph for a Sailor Buried Ashore

He who but yesterday would roam
Careless as clouds and currents range,
In homeless wandering most at home,
Inhabiter of change;

Who wooed the west to win the east,
And named the stars of North and South,
And felt the zest of Freedom's feast
Familiar in his mouth;

Who found a faith in stranger-speech,
And fellowship in foreign hands,
And had within his eager reach
The relish of all lands—

How circumscribed a plot of earth
Keeps now his restless footsteps still,
Whose wish was wide as ocean's girth,
Whose will the water's will!

The Little Field of Peace

By the long wash of his ancestral sea
He sleeps how quietly!
How quiet the unlifting eyelids lie
Under this tranquil sky!
The little busy hands and restless feet
Here find that rest is sweet;
For sweetly, from the hands grown tired of play,
The child-world slips away,
With its confusion of forgotten toys
And kind, familiar noise.
Not lonely does he lie in his last bed,
For love o'erbroods his head.
Kindly to him the comrade grasses lean
Their fellowship of green.
The wilding meadow companies give heed,—
Brave tansy, and the weed
That on the dyke-top lifts its dauntless stalk,—
Around his couch they talk.
The shadows of his oak-tree flit and play
Above his dreams all day.
The wind, that was his playmate on the hills,
His sleep with music fills.

Here in this tender acre by the tide
His vanished kin abide.
Ah! what compassionate care for him they keep,
Too soon returned to sleep!
They watch him in this little field of peace
Where they have found release.
Not as a stranger or alone he went
Unto his long content;
But kissed to sleep and comforted lies he
By his ancestral sea.

At Tide Water

The red and yellow of the Autumn salt-grass,
The grey flats, and the yellow-grey full tide,
The lonely stacks, the grave expanse of marshes,—
O Land wherein my memories abide,
I have come back that you may make me tranquil,
Resting a little at your heart of peace,
Remembering much amid your serious leisure,
Forgetting more amid your large release.
For yours the wisdom of the night and morning,
The word of the inevitable years,
The open Heaven's unobscured communion,
And the dim whisper of the wheeling spheres.
The great things and the terrible I bring you,
To be illumined in your spacious breath,—
Love, and the ashes of desire, and anguish,
Strange laughter, and the unhealing wound of death.
These in the world, all these, have come upon me,
Leaving me mute and shaken with surprise.
Oh, turn them in your measureless contemplation,
And in their mastery teach me to be wise.

Renewal

Comrade of the whirling planets,
Mother of the leaves and rain,
Make me joyous as thy birds are,
Let me be thy child again.

Show me all the troops of heaven
Tethered in a sphere of dew,—
All the dear familiar marvels
Old, child-hearted singers knew.

Let me laugh with children's laughter,
Breathe with herb and blade and tree,
Learn again forgotten lessons
Of thy grave simplicity.

Take me back to dream and vision
From the prison-house of pain,
Back to fellowship with wonder—
Mother, take me home again!

A Breathing Time

Here is a breathing time, and rest for a little season.
Here have I drained deep draughts out of the springs of life.
Here, as of old, while still unacquainted with toil and faintness,
Stretched are my veins with strength, fearless my heart and at peace.
I have come back from the crowd, the blinding strife and the tumult,
Pain, and the shadow of pain, sorrow in silence endured;
Fighting, at last I have fallen, and sought the breast of the Mother,—
Quite cast down I have crept close to the broad sweet earth.
Lo, out of failure triumph! Renewed the wavering courage,
Tense the unstrung nerves, steadfast the faltering knees!
Weary no more, nor faint, nor grieved at heart, nor despairing,
Hushed in the earth's green lap, lulled to slumber and dreams!

The Unsleeping

I soothe to unimagined sleep
The sunless bases of the deep.
And then I stir the aching tide
That gropes in its reluctant side.

I heave aloft the smoking hill;
To silent peace its throes I still.
But ever at its heart of fire
I lurk, an unassuaged desire.

I wrap me in the sightless germ
An instant or an endless term;
And still its atoms are my care,
Dispersed in ashes or in air.

I hush the comets one by one
To sleep for ages in the sun;
The sun resumes before my face
His circuit of the shores of space.

The mount, the star, the germ, the deep,
They all shall wake, they all shall sleep.
Time, like a flurry of wild rain,
Shall drift across the darkened pane.

Space, in the dim predestined hour,
Shall crumble like a ruined tower.
I only, with unfaltering eye,
Shall watch the dreams of God go by.

Recessional

Now along the solemn heights
Fade the Autumn's altar-lights;
 Down the great earth's glimmering chancel
Glide the days and nights.

Little kindred of the grass,
Like a shadow in a glass
 Falls the dark and falls the stillness;
We must rise and pass.

We must rise and follow, wending
Where the nights and days have ending,—
 Pass in order pale and slow
Unto sleep extending.

Little brothers of the clod,
Soul of fire and seed of sod,
 We must fare into the silence
At the knees of God.

Little comrades of the sky
Wing to wing we wander by,
 Going, going, going, going,
Softly as a sigh.

Hark, the moving shapes confer,
Globe of dew and gossamer,
 Fading and ephemeral spirits
In the dusk astir.

Moth and blossom, blade and bee,
Worlds must go as well as we,
 In the long procession joining
Mount, and star, and sea.

Toward the shadowy brink we climb
Where the round year rolls sublime,

Rolls, and drops, and falls forever
In the vast of time;

Like a plummet plunging deep
Past the utmost reach of sleep,
Till remembrance has no longer
Care to laugh or weep.

Earth's Complies

Before the feet of the dew
There came a call I knew,
 Luring me into the garden
Where the tall white lilies grew.

I stood in the dusk between
The companies of green,
 O'er whose aerial ranks
The lilies rose serene.

And the breathing air was stirred
By an unremembered word,
 Soft, incommunicable—
And wings not of a bird.

I heard the spent blooms sighing,
The expectant buds replying;
 I felt the life of the leaves,
Ephemeral, yet undying.

The spirits of earth were there,
Thronging the shadowed air,
 Serving among the lilies,
In an ecstasy of prayer.

Their speech I could not tell;
But the sap in each green cell,
 And the pure initiate petals,
They knew that language well.

I felt the soul of the trees—
Of the white, eternal seas—
 Of the flickering bats and night-moths
And my own soul kin to these.

And a spell came out of space
From the light of its starry place,
 And I saw in the deep of my heart
The image of God's face.

The Solitary Woodsman

When the grey lake-water rushes
Past the dripping alder-bushes,
 And the bodeful autumn wind
In the fir-tree weeps and hushes,—

When the air is sharply damp
Round the solitary camp,
 And the moose-bush in the thicket
Glimmers like a scarlet lamp,—

When the birches twinkle yellow,
And the cornel bunches mellow,
 And the owl across the twilight
Trumpets to his downy fellow,—

When the nut-fed chipmunks romp
Through the maples' crimson pomp,
 And the slim viburnum flushes
In the darkness of the swamp,—

When the blueberries are dead,
When the rowan clusters red,
 And the shy bear, summer-sleekened,
In the bracken makes his bed,—

On a day there comes once more
To the latched and lonely door,
 Down the wood-road striding silent,
One who has been here before.

Green spruce branches for his head,
Here he makes his simple bed,
 Crouching with the sun, and rising
When the dawn is frosty red.

All day long he wanders wide
With the grey moss for his guide,

And his lonely axe-stroke startles
The expectant forest-side.

Toward the quiet close of day
Back to camp he takes his way,
And about his sober footsteps
Unafraid the squirrels play.

On his roof the red leaf falls,
At his door the bluejay calls,
And he hears the wood-mice hurry
Up and down his rough log walls;

Hears the laughter of the loon
Thrill the dying afternoon,—
Hears the calling of the moose
Echo to the early moon.

And he hears the partridge drumming,
The belated hornet humming,—
All the faint, prophetic sounds
That foretell the winter's coming.

And the wind about his eaves
Through the chilly night-wet grieves,
And the earth's dumb patience fills him,
Fellow to the falling leaves.

The Frosted Pane

One night came Winter noiselessly, and leaned
 Against my window-pane.
In the deep stillness of his heart convened
 The ghosts of all his slain.

Leaves, and ephemera, and stars of earth,
 And fugitives of grass,—
White spirits loosed from bonds of mortal birth,
 He drew them on the glass.

The Skater

My glad feet shod with the glittering steel
I was the god of the winged heel.

The hills in the far white sky were lost;
The world lay still in the wide white frost;

And the woods hung hushed in their long white dream
By the ghostly, glimmering, ice-blue stream.

Here was a pathway, smooth like glass,
Where I and the wandering wind might pass

To the far-off palaces, drifted deep,
Where Winter's retinue rests in sleep.

I followed the lure, I fled like a bird,
Till the startled hollows awoke and heard

A spinning whisper, a sibilant twang,
As the stroke of the steel on the tense ice rang;

And the wandering wind was left behind
As faster, faster I followed my mind;

Till the blood sang high in my eager brain,
And the joy of my flight was almost pain.

Then I stayed the rush of my eager speed
And silently went as a drifting seed,—

Slowly, furtively, till my eyes
Grew big with the awe of a dim surmise,

And the hair of my neck began to creep
At hearing the wilderness talk in sleep.

Shapes in the fir-gloom drifted near.
In the deep of my heart I heard my fear;

And I turned and fled, like a soul pursued,
From the white, inviolate solitude.

Two Spheres

While eager angels watched in awe,
God fashioned with his hands
Two shining spheres to work his law,
And carry his commands.

With patient art he shaped them true,
With calm, untiring care;
And none of those bright watchers knew
Which one to call most fair.

He dropped one lightly down to earth
Amid the morning's blue—
And on a gossamer had birth
A bead of blinding dew.

It flamed across the hollow field,
On tiptoe to depart,
Outvied Arcturus, and revealed
All heaven in its heart.

He tossed the other into space
(As children toss a ball)
To swing forever in its place
With equal rise and fall;

To flame through the ethereal dark,
Among its brother spheres,
An orbit too immense to mark
The little tide of years.

Immanence

Not only in the cataract and the thunder,
Or in the deeps of man's uncharted soul,
But in the dew-star dwells alike the wonder,
And in the whirling dust-mote the Control.

Ascription

O Thou who hast beneath Thy hand
The dark foundations of the land,—
The motion of whose ordered thought
An instant universe hath wrought,—

Who hast within Thine equal heed
The rolling sun, the ripening seed,
The azure of the speedwell's eye,
The vast solemnities of sky,—

Who hear'st no less the feeble note
Of one small bird's awakening throat,
Than that unnamed, tremendous chord
Arcturus sounds before his Lord,—

More sweet to Thee than all acclaim
Of storm and ocean, stars and flame,
In favour more before Thy face
Than pageantry of time and space,

The worship and the service be
Of him Thou madest most like Thee,—
Who in his nostrils hath Thy breath,
Whose spirit is the lord of death!

A Child's Prayer at Evening

(Domine, cui sunt Pleiades curae)

Father, who keepest
The stars in Thy care,
Me, too, Thy little one,
Childish in prayer,
Keep, as Thou keepest
The soft night through,
Thy long, white lilies
Asleep in Thy dew.

III

Songs of the Common Day:

A Sonnet Sequence

Across the fog the moon lies fair.
Transfused with ghostly amethyst,
O white Night, charm to wonderment
The cattle in the mist!

Thy touch, O grave Mysteriarch,
Makes dull, familiar things divine.
O grant of thy revealing gift
Be some small portion mine!

Make thou my vision sane and clear,
That I may see what beauty clings
In common forms, and find the soul
Of unregarded things!

The Furrow

How sombre slope these acres to the sea
And to the breaking sun! The sun-rise deeps
Of rose and crocus, whence the far dawn leaps,
Gild but with scorn their grey monotony.
The glebe rests patient for its joy to be.
Past the salt field-foot many a dim wing sweeps;
And down the field a first slow furrow creeps,
Pledge of near harvests to the unverdured lea.

With clank of harness tramps the serious team.
The sea air thrills their nostrils. Some wise crows
Feed confidently behind the ploughman's feet.
In the early chill the clods fresh cloven steam,
And down its griding path the keen share goes.
So, from a scar, best flowers the future's sweet.

The Sower

A brown, sad-coloured hillside, where the soil
 Fresh from the frequent harrow, deep and fine,
 Lies bare; no break in the remote sky-line,
Save where a flock of pigeons streams aloft,
Startled from feed in some low-lying croft,
 Or far-off spires with yellow of sunset shine;
 And here the Sower, unwittingly divine,
Exerts the silent forethought of his toil.

Alone he treads the glebe, his measured stride
 Dumb in the yielding soil; and though small joy
 Dwell in his heavy face, as spreads the blind
Pale grain from his dispensing palm aside,
 This plodding churl grows great in his employ;—
 Godlike, he makes provision for mankind.

The Waking Earth

With shy bright clamour the live brooks sparkle and run.

Freed flocks confer about the farmstead ways.

The air's a wine of dreams and shining haze,

Beaded with bird-notes thin,—for Spring's begun!

The sap flies upward. Death is over and done.

The glad earth wakes; the glad light breaks; the days

Grow round, grow radiant. Praise for the new life! Praise

For bliss of breath and blood beneath the sun!

With potent wizardry the wise earth wields,

To conjure with a perfume! From bare fields

The sense drinks in a breath of furrow and sod.

And lo, the bound of days and distance yields;

And fetterless the soul is flown abroad,

Lord of desire and beauty, like a God!

To Fredericton in May-Time

This morning, full of breezes and perfume,
 Brimful of promise of midsummer weather,
 When bees and birds and I are glad together,
Breathes of the full-leaved season, when soft gloom
Chequers thy streets, and thy close elms assume
 Round roof and spire the semblance of green billows;
 Yet now thy glory is the yellow willows,
The yellow willows, full of bees and bloom.

Under their dusty blossoms blackbirds meet,
 And robins pipe amid the cedars nigher;
Thro' the still elms I hear the ferry's beat;
 The swallows chirp about the towering spire;
The whole air pulses with its weight of sweet;
 Yet not quite satisfied is my desire!

The Cow Pasture

I see the harsh, wind-ridden, eastward hill,
 By the red cattle pastured, blanched with dew;
 The small, mossed hillocks where the clay gets through:
The grey webs woven on milkweed tops at will.
The sparse, pale grasses flicker, and are still.
 The empty flats yearn seaward. All the view
 Is naked to the horizon's utmost blue;
And the bleak spaces stir me with strange thrill.

Not in perfection dwells the subtler power
 To pierce our mean content, but rather works
 Through incompleteness, and the need that irks,—
Not in the flower, but effort toward the flower.
 When the want stirs, when the soul's cravings urge,
 The strong earth strengthens, and the clean heavens purge.

When Milking-Time is Done

When milking-time is done, and over all
This quiet Canadian inland forest home
And wide rough pasture-lots the shadows come,
And dews, with peace and twilight voices, fall,
From moss-cooled watering-trough to foddered stall
The tired plough-horses turn,—the barnyard loam
Soft to their feet,—and in the sky's pale dome
Like resonant chords the swooping night-jars call.

The frogs, cool-fluting ministers of dream,
Make shrill the slow brook's borders; pasture bars
Down clatter, and the cattle wander through,—
Vague shapes amid the thickets; gleam by gleam
Above the wet grey wilds emerge the stars,
And through the dusk the farmstead fades from view.

Frogs

Here in the red heart of the sunset lying,
My rest an islet of brown weeds blown dry,
I watch the wide bright heavens, hovering nigh,
My plain and pools in lucent splendour dyeing.
My view dreams over the rosy wastes, descrying
The reed-tops fret the solitary sky;
And all the air is tremulous to the cry
Of myriad frogs on mellow pipes replying.

For the unrest of passion here is peace,
And eve's cool drench for midday soil and taint.
To tired ears how sweetly brings release
This limpid babble from life's unstilled complaint;
While under tired eyelids lapse and faint
The noon's derisive visions—fade and cease.

The Herring Weir

Back to the green deeps of the outer bay
The red and amber currents glide and cringe,
Diminishing behind a luminous fringe
Of cream-white surf and wandering wraiths of spray.
Stealthily, in the old reluctant way,
The red flats are uncovered, mile on mile,
To glitter in the sun a golden while.
Far down the flats, a phantom sharply grey,

The herring weir emerges, quick with spoil.
Slowly the tide forsakes it. Then draws near,
Descending from the farm-house on the height,
A cart, with gaping tubs. The oxen toil
Sombrely o'er the level to the weir,
And drag a long black trail across the light.

The Salt Flats

Here clove the keels of centuries ago
Where now unvisited the flats lie bare.
Here seethed the sweep of journeying waters, where
No more the tumbling floods of Fundy flow,
And only in the samphire pipes creep slow
The salty currents of the sap. The air
Hums desolately with wings that seaward fare,
Over the lonely reaches beating low.

The wastes of hard and meagre weeds are thronged
With murmurs of a past that time has wronged;
And ghosts of many an ancient memory
Dwell by the brackish pools and ditches blind,
In these low-lying pastures of the wind,
These marshes pale and meadows by the sea.

The Fir Woods

The wash of endless waves is in their tops,
 Endlessly swaying, and the long winds stream
 Athwart them from the far-off shores of dream.
Through the stirred branches filtering, faintly drops
Mystic dream-dust of isle, and palm, and cave,
 Coral and sapphire, realms of rose, that seem
 More radiant than ever earthly gleam
Revealed of fairy mead or haunted wave.

A cloud of gold, a cleft of blue profound,—
 These are my gates of wonder, surged about
 By tumult of tossed bough and rocking crest:
The vision lures. The spirit spurns her bound,
 Spreads her unprisoned wing, and drifts from out
 This green and humming gloom that wraps my rest.

The Pea-Fields

These are the fields of light, and laughing air,
And yellow butterflies, and foraging bees,
And whitish, wayward blossoms winged as these,
And pale green tangles like a seamaid's hair.
Pale, pale the blue, but pure beyond compare.
And pale the sparkle of the far-off seas,
A-shimmer like these fluttering slopes of peas,
And pale the open landscape everywhere.

From fence to fence a perfumed breath exhales
O'er the bright pallor of the well-loved fields,—
My fields of Tantramar in summer-time;
And, scorning the poor feed their pasture yields,
Up from the bushy lots the cattle climb,
To gaze with longing through the grey, mossed rails.

The Mowing

This is the voice of high midsummer's heat.

 The rasping vibrant clamour soars and shrills
 O'er all the meadowy range of shadeless hills,
As if a host of giant cicadas beat
The cymbals of their wings with tireless feet,
 Or brazen grasshoppers with triumphing note
 From the long swath proclaimed the fate that smote
The clover and timothy-tops and meadowsweet.

The crying knives glide on; the green swath lies.

 And all noon long the sun, with chemic ray,
 Seals up each cordial essence in its cell,
That in the dusky stalls, some winter's day,
 The spirit of June, here prisoned by his spell,
 May cheer the herds with pasture memories.

Where the Cattle Come to Drink

At evening, where the cattle come to drink,
Cool are the long marsh-grasses, dewy cool
The alder thickets, and the shallow pool,
And the brown clay about the trodden brink.
The pensive afterthoughts of sundown sink
Over the patient acres given to peace;
The homely cries and farmstead noises cease,
And the worn day relaxes, link by link.

A lesson that the open heart may read
Breathes in this mild benignity of air,
These dear, familiar savours of the soil,—
A lesson of the calm of humble creed,
The simple dignity of common toil,
And the plain wisdom of unspoken prayer.

Burnt Lands

On other fields and other scenes the morn
Laughs from her blue,—but not such fields are these,
Where comes no cheer of summer leaves and bees,
And no shade mitigates the day's white scorn.
These serious acres vast no groves adorn;
But giant trunks, bleak shapes that once were trees,
Tower naked, unassuaged of rain or breeze,
Their stern grey isolation grimly borne.

The months roll over them, and mark no change.
But when spring stirs, or autumn stills, the year,
Perchance some phantom leafage rustles faint
Through their parched dreams,—some old-time notes ring strange,
When in his slender treble, far and clear,
Reiterates the rain-bird his complaint.

The Clearing

Stumps, and harsh rocks, and prostrate trunks all charred,
And gnarled roots naked to the sun and rain,—
They seem in their grim stillness to complain,
And by their plaint the evening peace is jarred.
These ragged acres fire and the axe have scarred,
And many summers not assuaged their pain.
In vain the pink and saffron light, in vain
The pale dew on the hillocks stripped and marred!

But here and there the waste is touched with cheer
Where spreads the fire-weed like a crimson flood
And venturous plumes of goldenrod appear;
And round the blackened fence the great boughs lean
With comfort; and across the solitude
The hermit's holy transport peals serene.

The Summer Pool

This is a wonder-cup in Summer's hand.

Sombre, impenetrable, round its rim

The fir-trees bend and brood. The noons o'erbrim

The windless hollow of its iris'd strand

With mote-thick sun and water-breathings bland.

Under a veil of lilies lurk and swim

Strange shapes of presage in a twilight dim,

Unwitting heirs of light and life's command.

Blind in their bondage, of no change they dream,

But the trees watch in grave expectancy.

The spell fulfils,—and swarms of radiant flame,

Live jewels, above the crystal dart and gleam,

Nor guess the sheen beneath their wings to be

The dark and narrow regions whence they came.

Buckwheat

This smell of home and honey on the breeze,
 This shimmer of sunshine woven in white and pink
 That comes a dream from memory's visioned brink,
Sweet, sweet and strange across the ancient trees,—
It is the buckwheat, boon of the later bees,
 Its breadths of heavy-headed bloom appearing
 Amid the blackened stumps of this high clearing,
Freighted with cheer of comforting auguries.

But when the blunt, brown grain and red-ripe sheaves,
Brimming the low log barn beyond the eaves,
 Crisped by the first frost, feel the thresher's flail,
Then flock the blue wild-pigeons in shy haste
 All silently down Autumn's amber trail,
To glean at dawn the chill and whitening waste.

The Cicada in the Firs

Charm of the vibrant, white September sun—
How tower the firs to take it, tranced and still!
Their scant ranks crown the pale, round pasture-hill,
And watch, far down, the austere waters run
Their circuit thro' the serious marshes dun.
No bird-call stirs the blue; but strangely thrill
The blunt-faced, brown cicada's wing-notes shrill,
A web of silver o'er the silence spun.

O zithern-winged musician, whence it came
I wonder, this insistent song of thine!
Did once the highest string of Summer's lyre,
Snapt on some tense chord slender as a flame,
Take form again in these vibrations fine
That o'er the tranquil spheres of noon aspire?

In September

This windy, bright September afternoon
My heart is wide awake, yet full of dreams.
The air, alive with hushed confusion, teems
With scent of grain-fields, and a mystic rune,
Foreboding of the fall of Summer soon,
Keeps swelling and subsiding; till there seems
O'er all the world of valleys, hills, and streams,
Only the wind's inexplicable tune.

My heart is full of dreams, yet wide awake.
I lie and watch the topmost tossing boughs
Of tall elms, pale against the vaulted blue;
But even now some yellowing branches shake,
Some hue of death the living green endows:—
If beauty flies, fain would I vanish too.

A Vesper Sonnet

This violet eve is like a waveless stream
 Celestial, from the rapt horizon's brink,
 Assuaging day with the diviner drink
Of temperate ecstasy, and dews, and dream.
The wine-warm dusks, that brim the valley, gleam
 With here and there a lonely casement. Cease
 The impetuous purples from the sky of peace,
Like God's mood in tranquillity supreme.

The encircling uplands east and west lie clear
 In thin aërial amber, threaded fine,—
Where bush-fires gnaw the bramble-thickets sere,—
 With furtive scarlet. Through the hush benign
One white-throat voices, till the stars appear,
 The benediction of the Thought Divine.

The Potato Harvest

A high bare field, brown from the plough, and borne
Aslant from sunset; amber wastes of sky
Washing the ridge; a clamour of crows that fly
In from the wide flats where the spent tides mourn
To yon their rocking roosts in pines wind-torn;
A line of grey snake-fence, that zigzags by
A pond, and cattle; from the homestead nigh
The long deep summonings of the supper horn.

Black on the ridge, against that lonely flush,
A cart, and stoop-necked oxen; ranged beside
Some barrels; and the day-worn harvest-folk,
Here emptying their baskets, jar the hush
With hollow thunders. Down the dusk hillside
Lumbers the wain; and day fades out like smoke.

The Oat-Threshing

A little brown old homestead, bowered in trees
That o'er the autumn landscape shine afar,
Burning with amber and with cinnabar.
A yellow hillside washed in airy seas
Of azure, where the swallow drops and flees.
Midway the slope, clear in the beaming day,
A barn by many seasons beaten grey,
Big with the gain of prospering husbandries.

In billows round the wide red welcoming doors
High piles the golden straw; while from within,
Where plods the team amid the chaffy din,
The loud pulsation of the thresher soars,
Persistent as if earth could not let cease
This happy proclamation of her peace.

The Autumn Thistles

The morning sky is white with mist, the earth
White with the inspiration of the dew.
The harvest light is on the hills anew,
And cheer in the grave acres' fruitful girth.
Only in this high pasture is there dearth,
Where the grey thistles crowd in ranks austere,
As if the sod, close-cropt for many a year,
Brought only bane and bitterness to birth.

But in the crisp air's amethystine wave
How the harsh stalks are washed with radiance now,
How gleams the harsh turf where the crickets lie
Dew-freshened in their burnished armour brave!
Since earth could not endure nor heaven allow
Aught of unlovely in the morn's clear eye.

Indian Summer

What touch hath set the breathing hills afire
With amethyst, to quench them with a tear
Of ecstasy? These common fields appear
The consecrated home of hopes past number.
So many visions, so entranced a slumber,
Such dreams possess the noonday's luminous sphere,
That earth, content with knowing heaven so near,
Hath done with aspiration and desire.

In these unlooked-for hours of Truth's clear reign
Unjarring fitness hath surprised our strife.
This radiance, that might seem to cheat the view
With loveliness too perfect to be true,
But shows this vexed and self-delusive life
Ideals whereto our Real must attain.

The Pumpkins in the Corn

Amber and blue, the smoke behind the hill,
Where in the glow fades out the morning star,
Curtains the autumn cornfield, sloped afar,
And strikes an acrid savour on the chill.
The hilltop fence shines saffron o'er the still
Unbending ranks of bunched and bleaching corn,
And every pallid stalk is crisp with morn,
Crisp with the silver autumn morns distil.

Purple the narrowing alleys stretched between
The spectral shocks, a purple harsh and cold,
But spotted, where the gadding pumpkins run,
With bursts of blaze that startle the serene
Like sudden voices,—globes of orange bold,
Elate to mimic the unrisen sun.

The Winter Fields

Winds here, and sleet, and frost that bites like steel.

The low bleak hill rounds under the low sky.

Naked of flock and fold the fallows lie,

Thin streaked with meagre drift. The gusts reveal

By fits the dim grey snakes of fence, that steal

Through the white dusk. The hill-foot poplars sigh,

While storm and death with winter trample by,

And the iron fields ring sharp, and blind lights reel.

Yet in the lonely ridges, wrenched with pain,

Harsh solitary hillocks, bound and dumb,

Grave glebes close-lipped beneath the scourge and chain,

Lurks hid the germ of ecstasy—the sum

Of life that waits on summer, till the rain

Whisper in April and the crocus come.

In an Old Barn

Tons upon tons the brown-green fragrant hay
 O'erbrims the mows beyond the time-warped eaves,
 Up to the rafters where the spider weaves,
Though few flies wander his secluded way.
Through a high chink one lonely golden ray,
 Wherein the dust is dancing, slants unstirred.
 In the dry hush some rustlings light are heard,
Of winter-hidden mice at furtive play.

Far down, the cattle in their shadowed stalls,
 Nose-deep in clover fodder's meadowy scent,
 Forget the snows that whelm their pasture streams,
The frost that bites the world beyond their walls.
 Warm housed, they dream of summer, well content
 In day-long contemplation of their dreams.

The Stillness of the Frost

Out of the frost-white wood comes winnowing through
 No wing; no homely call or cry is heard.
 Even the hope of life seems far deferred.
The hard hills ache beneath their spectral hue.
A dove-grey cloud, tender as tears or dew,
 From one lone hearth exhaling, hangs unstirred,
 Like the poised ghost of some unnamed great bird
In the ineffable pallor of the blue.

Such, I must think, even at the dawn of Time,
 Was thy white hush, O world, when thou lay'st cold,
 Unwaked to love, new from the Maker's word,
And the spheres, watching, stilled their high accord,
 To marvel at perfection in thy mould,
 The grace of thine austerity sublime!

Midwinter Thaw

How shrink the snows upon this upland field,
 Under the dove-grey dome of brooding noon!
 They shrink with soft reluctant shocks, and soon
In sad brown ranks the furrows lie revealed.
From radiant cisterns of the frost unsealed
 Now wakes through all the air a watery rune—
 The babble of a million brooks atune,
In fairy conduits of blue ice concealed.

Noisy with crows, the wind-break on the hill
 Counts o'er its buds for summer. In the air
Some shy foreteller prophesies with skill—
 Some voyaging ghost of bird, some effluence rare;
And the stall-wearied cattle dream their fill
 Of deep June pastures where the pools are fair.

The Flight of the Geese

I hear the low wind wash the softening snow,
The low tide loiter down the shore. The night,
Full filled with April forecast, hath no light.
The salt wave on the sedge-flat pulses slow.
Through the hid furrows lisp in murmurous flow
The thaw's shy ministers; and hark! The height
Of heaven grows weird and loud with unseen flight
Of strong hosts prophesying as they go!

High through the drenched and hollow night their wings
Beat northward hard on winter's trail. The sound
Of their confused and solemn voices, borne
Athwart the dark to their long Arctic morn,
Comes with a sanction and an awe profound,
A boding of unknown, foreshadowed things.

IV

Miscellaneous Sonnets

Collect for Dominion Day

Father of nations! Help of the feeble hand!
Strength of the strong! to whom the nations kneel!
Stay and destroyer, at whose just command
Earth's kingdoms tremble and her empires reel!
Who dost the low uplift, the small make great,
And dost abase the ignorantly proud,
Of our scant people mould a mighty state,
To the strong, stern,—to Thee in meekness bowed
Father of unity, make this people one!
Weld, interfuse them in the patriot's flame,—
Whose forging on thine anvil was begun
In blood late shed to purge the common shame;
That so our hearts, the fever of faction done,
Banish old feud in our young nation's name.

The Slave Woman

Shedding cool drops upon the sun-baked clay,
The dripping jar, brimful, she rests a space
On the well's dry white brink, and leans her face,
Heavy with tears and many a heartsick day,
Down to the water's lip, whence slips away
A rivulet thro' the hot, bright square apace,
And lo! her brow casts off each servile trace—
The wave's cool breath hath won her thoughts astray.

Ah desolate heart! Thy fate thou hast forgot
One moment; the dull pain hath left those eyes
Whose yearning pierces time, and space, and tears.
Thou seest what was once, but now is not,—
By Niger thy bright home, thy Paradise,
Unscathed of flame, and foe, and hostile spears.

The Train among the Hills

Vast, unrevealed, in silence and the night
 Brooding, the ancient hills commune with sleep.
 Inviolate the solemn valleys keep
Their contemplation. Soon from height to height
Steals a red finger of mysterious light,
 And lion-footed through the forests creep
 Strange mutterings; till suddenly, with sweep
And shattering thunder of resistless flight
And crash of routed echoes, roars to view,
 Down the long mountain gorge the Night Express
 Freighted with fears and tears and happiness.
The dread form passes; silence falls anew.
 And lo! I have beheld the thronged, blind world
 To goals unseen from God's hand onward hurled.

Rain

Sharp drives the rain, sharp drives the endless rain.

The rain-winds wake and wander, lift and blow.

The slow smoke-wreaths of vapour to and fro
Wave, and unweave, and gather and build again.

Over the far grey reaches of the plain,—

Grey miles on miles my passionate thought must go,—

I strain my sight, grown dim with gazing so,
Pressing my face against the streaming pane.

How the rain beats! Ah God, if love had power

To voice its utmost yearning, even tho'

Thro' time and bitter distance, not in vain,

Surely Her heart would hear me at this hour,

Look thro' the years, and see! But would She know

The white face pressed against the streaming pane?

Mist

Its hand compassionate guards our restless sight
 Against how many a harshness, many an ill!
 Tender as sleep, its shadowy palms distil
Strange vapours that ensnare our eyes with light.
Rash eyes, kept ignorant in their own despite,
 It lets not see the unsightliness they will,
 But paints each scanty fairness fairer still,
And still deludes us to our own delight.

It fades, regathers, never quite dissolves.
 And ah that life, ah that the heart and brain
 Might keep their mist and glamour, not to know
So soon the disenchantment and the pain!
 But one by one our dear illusions go,
 Stript and cast forth as time's slow wheel revolves.

Tides

Through the still dusk how sighs the ebb-tide out,
Reluctant for the reed-beds! Down the sands
It washes. Hark! Beyond the wan grey strand's
Low limits how the winding channels grieve,
Aware the evasive waters soon will leave
Them void amid the waste of desolate lands,
Where shadowless to the sky the marsh expands,
And the noon-heats must scar them, and the drought.

Yet soon for them the solacing tide returns
To quench their thirst of longing. Ah, not so
Works the stern law our tides of life obey!
Ebbing in the night-watches swift away,
Scarce known ere fled forever is the flow;
And in parched channel still the shrunk stream mourns.

Dark

Now, for the night is hushed and blind with rain,
My soul desires communion, Dear, with thee.
But hour by hour my spirit gets not free,—
Hour by still hour my longing strives in vain.
The thick dark hems me, ev'n to the restless brain.
The wind's confusion vague encumbers me.
Ev'n passionate memory, grown too faint to see
Thy features, stirs not in her straitening chain.

And thou, dost thou too feel this strange divorce
Of will from power? The spell of night and wind,
Baffling desire and dream, dost thou too find?
Not distance parts us, Dear; but this dim force,
Intangible, holds us helpless, hushed with pain.
Dumb with the dark, blind with the gusts of rain!

Moonlight

The lifers of these amethystine fields,
Whose far fine sound the night makes musical,
Now while thou wak'st and longing would'st recall
Joys that no rapture of remembrance yields,
Voice to thy soul, lone-sitting deep within
The still recesses of thine ecstasy,
My love and my desire, that fain would fly
With this far-silvering moon and fold thee in.

But not for us the touch, the clasp, the kiss,
And for our restlessness no rest. In vain
These aching lips, these hungering hearts that strain
Toward the denied fruition of our bliss,
Had love not learned of longing to devise
Out of desire and dream our paradise.

The Deserted City

There lies a little city leagues away
 Its wharves the green sea washes all day long.
 Its busy, sun-bright wharves with sailors' song
And clamour of trade ring loud the livelong day.
Into the happy harbour hastening, gay
 With press of snowy canvas, tall ships throng.
 The peopled streets to blithe-eyed Peace belong,
Glad housed beneath these crowding roofs of grey.

'T was long ago this city prospered so,
 For yesterday a woman died therein.
Since when the wharves are idle fallen, I know,
 And in the streets is hushed the pleasant din;
 The thronging ships have been, the songs have been,—
Since yesterday it is so long ago.

Khartoum

Set in the fierce red desert for a sword,
 Drawn and deep-driven implacably! The tide
 Of scorching sand that chafes thy landward side
Storming thy palms; and past thy front outpoured
The Nile's vast dread and wonder! Late there roared
 (While far off paused the long war, long defied)
 Mad tumult thro' thy streets; and Gordon died,
Slaughtered amid the yelling rebel horde!

Yet, spite of shame and wrathful tears, Khartoum,
 We owe thee certain thanks, for thou hast shown
 How still the one a thousand crowds outweighs,—
Still one man's moods sways millions,—one man's doom
 Smites nations;—and our burning spirits own
 Not sordid these nor unheroic days!

Blomidon

This is that black rock bastion, based in surge,
 Pregnant with agate and with amethyst,
Whose foot the tides of storied Minas scourge,
 Whose top austere withdraws into its mist.
This is that ancient cape of tears and storm,
 Whose towering front inviolable frowns
O'er vales Evangeline and love keep warm—
 Whose fame thy song, O tender singer, crowns.
Yonder, across these reeling fields of foam,
 Came the sad threat of the avenging ships.
What profit now to know if just the doom,
 Though harsh! The streaming eyes, the praying lips,
The shadow of inextinguishable pain,
The poet's deathless music—these remain!

The Night Sky

O deep of Heaven, 'tis thou alone art boundless,
 'Tis thou alone our balance shall not weigh,
'Tis thou alone our fathom-line finds soundless,—
 Whose infinite our finite must obey!
Through thy blue realms and down thy starry reaches
 Thought voyages forth beyond the furthest fire,
And, homing from no sighted shoreline, teaches
 Thee measureless as is the soul's desire.
O deep of Heaven, no beam of Pleiad ranging
 Eternity may bridge thy gulf of spheres!
The ceaseless hum that fills thy sleep unchanging
 Is rain of the innumerable years.
Our worlds, our suns, our ages, these but stream
Through thine abiding like a dateless dream.

In the Wide Awe and Wisdom of the Night

In the wide awe and wisdom of the night
I saw the round world rolling on its way,
Beyond significance of depth or height,
Beyond the interchange of dark and day.
I marked the march to which is set no pause,
And that stupendous orbit, round whose rim
The great sphere sweeps, obedient unto laws
That utter the eternal thought of Him.
I compassed time, outstripped the starry speed,
And in my still Soul apprehended space,
Till weighing laws which these but blindly heed,
At last I came before Him face to face,—
And knew the Universe of no such span
As the august infinitude of man.

O Solitary of the Austere Sky

O Solitary of the austere sky,
Pale presence of the unextinguished star,
That from thy station where the spheres wheel by,
And quietudes of infinite patience are,
Watchest this wet, grey-visaged world emerge,—
Cold pinnacle on pinnacle, and deep
On deep of ancient wood and wandering surge,—
Out of the silence and the mists of sleep;
How small am I in thine august regard!
Invisible,—and yet I know my worth!
When comes the hour to break this prisoning shard,
And reunite with Him that breathed me forth,
Then shall this atom of the Eternal Soul
Encompass thee in its benign control!

D

Ballads

The Laughing Sally

A wind blew up from Pernambuco.
 (Yeo heave ho! the *Laughing Sally*! Hi yeo, heave away!)
A wind blew out of the east-sou'-east
 And boomed at the break of day.

The *Laughing Sally* sped for her life,
 And a speedy craft was she.
The black flag flew at her top to tell
 How she took toll of the sea.

The wind blew up from Pernambuco;
 And in the breast of the blast
Came the King's black ship, like a hound let slip
 On the trail of the *Sally* at last.

For a day and a night, a night and a day;
 Over the blue, blue round,
Went on the chase of the pirate quarry,
 The hunt of the tireless hound.

“Land on the port bow!” came the cry;
 And the *Sally* raced for shore,
Till she reached the bar at the river-mouth
 Where the shallow breakers roar.

She passed the bar by a secret channel
 With clear tide under her keel,—
For he knew the shoals like an open book,
 The captain at the wheel.

She passed the bar, she sped like a ghost,
 Till her sails were hid from view
By the tall, liana'd, unsunned boughs
 O'erbrooding the dark bayou.

At moonrise up to the river-mouth
 Came the King's black ship of war.

The red cross flapped in wrath at her peak,
But she could not cross the bar.

And while she lay in the run of the seas,
By the grimmest whim of chance
Out of the bay to the north came forth
Two battle-ships of France.

On the English ship the twain bore down
Like wolves that range by night;
And the breakers' roar was heard no more
In the thunder of the fight.

The crash of the broadsides rolled and stormed
To the "Sally," hid from view
Under the tall, liana'd boughs
Of the moonless, dark bayou.

A boat ran out for news of the fight,
And this was the word she brought—
"The King's ship fights the ships of France
As the King's ships all have fought!"

Then muttered the mate, "I'm a man of Devon!"
And the captain thundered then—
"There's English rope that bides for our necks,
But we all be English men!"

The *Sally* glided out of the gloom
And down the moon-white river.
She stole like a grey shark over the bar
Where the long surf seethes forever.

She hove to under a high French hull,
And the red cross rose to her peak.
The French were looking for fight that night,
And they hadn't far to seek.

Blood and fire on the streaming decks,
And fire and blood below;
The heat of hell, and the reek of hell,

And the dead men laid a-row!

And when the stars paled out of heaven
And the red dawn-rays uprushed,
The oaths of battle, the crash of timbers,
The roar of the guns were hushed.

With one foe beaten under his bow,
The other afar in flight,
The English captain turned to look
For his fellow in the fight.

The English captain turned, and stared;—
For where the “Sally” had been
Was a single spar upthrust from the sea
With the red-cross flag serene!

A wind blew up from Pernambuco,—
(Yeo heave ho! the *Laughing Sally*! Hi yeo, heave away!)
And boomed for the doom of the *Laughing Sally*,
Gone down at the break of day.

The Succour of Gluskâp

(A Melicite Legend)

The happy valley laughed with sun,
The corn grew firm in stalk,
The lodges clustered safe where run
The streams of Peniawk.

The washing-pools and shallows rang
With shout of lads at play;
At corn-hoeing the women sang;
The warriors were away.

The splashed white pebbles on the beach,
The idling paddles, gleamed;
Before the lodge doors, spare of speech,
The old men basked and dreamed.

And when the windless noon grew hot,
And the white sun beat like steel,
In shade about the simmering pot
They gathered to their meal.

Then from the hills, on flying feet,
A desperate runner came,
With cry that smote the peaceful street,
And slew the peace with shame.

“Trapped in the night, and snared in sleep,
Our warriors wake no more!
Up from Wahloos the Mohawks creep—
Their feet are at the door!”

The grey old sachems rose and mocked
The ruin that drew near;
And down the beach the children flocked,
And women wild with fear.

Launched were the red canoes; when, lo!
Beside them Gluskâp stood,
Appearing with his giant bow
From out his mystic wood.

With quiet voice he called them back,
And comforted their fears;
He swore the lodges should not lack,
He dried the children's tears;

Till sorrowing mothers almost deemed
The desperate runner lied,
And the tired children slept, and dreamed
Their fathers had not died.

That night behind the mystic wood
The Mohawk warriors crept;
A spell went through the solitude
And stilled them, and they slept.

And when the round moon, rising late,
The Hills of Kawlm had crossed,
She saw the camp of Mohawk hate
Swathed in a great white frost.

At morn, behind the mystic wood
Came Gluskâp, bow in hand,
And marked the ice-bound solitude,
And that unwaking band.

But as he gazed his lips grew mild,
For, safe among the dead,
There played a ruddy, laughing child
By a captive mother's head;

And child and mother, nestling warm,
Scarce knew their foes had died,
As past their sleep the noiseless storm
Of strange death turned aside.

The Vengeance of Gluskâp

(A Melicite Legend)

Gluskâp, the friend and father of his race,
With help in need went journeying three days' space.

His village slept, and took no thought of harm,
Secure beneath the shadow of his arm.

But wandering wizards watched his outward path,
And marked his fenceless dwelling for their wrath.

They came upon the tempest's midnight wings,
With shock of thunder and the lightning's slings,
And flame, and hail, and all disastrous things.

When home at length the hero turned again,
His huts were ashes and his servants slain;
And o'er the ruin wept a slow, great rain.

He wept not; but he cried a mighty word
Across the wandering sea, and the sea heard.

Then came great whales, obedient to his hand,
And bare him to the demon-haunted land,

Where, in malign morass and ghostly wood
And grim cliff-cavern, lurked the evil brood.

And scarce the avenger's foot had touched their coast
Ere horror seized on all the wizard host,
And in their hiding-places hushed the boast.

He grew and gloomed before them like a cloud,
And his eye drew them till they cried aloud,

And withering like spent flame before his frown
They ran forth in a madness and fell down.

Rank upon rank they lay without a moan,—
His finger touched them, and their hearts grew stone.

All round the coasts he heaped their stiffened clay;
And the sea-mews wail o'er them to this day.

How the Mohawks Set out for Medoctec

[When the invading Mohawks captured the outlying Melicite village of Madawaska, they spared two squaws to guide them down-stream to the main Melicite town of Medoctec, below Grand Falls. The squaws steered themselves and their captors over the Falls.]

I

Grows the great deed, though none
Shout to behold it done!
To the brave deed done by night
Heaven testifies in the light.

Stealthy and swift as a dream,
Crowding the breast of the stream,
In their paint and plumes of war
And their war-canoes four score,

They are threading the Oolastook,
Where his cradling hills o'erlook.
The branchy thickets hide them;
The unstartled waters guide them.

II

Comes night to the quiet hills
Where the Madawaska spills,—
To his slumbering huts no warning,
Nor mirth of another morning!

No more shall the children wake
As the dawns through the hut-door break;
But the dogs, a trembling pack,
With wistful eyes steal back.

And, to pilot the noiseless foe
Through the perilous passes, go
Two women who could not die—
Whom the knife in the dark passed by.

III

Where the shoaling waters froth,
Churned thick like devils' broth,—
Where the rocky shark-jaw waits,
Never a bark that grates.

And the tearless captives' skill
Contents them. Onward still!
And the low-voiced captives tell
The tidings that cheer them well:

How a clear stream leads them down
Well-nigh to Medoctec town,
Ere to the great Falls' thunder
The long wall yawns asunder.

IV

The clear stream glimmers before them
The faint night falters o'er them;
Lashed lightly bark to bark,
They glide the windless dark.

Late grows the night. No fear
While the skilful captives steer!
Sleeps the tired warrior, sleeps
The chief; and the river creeps.

V

In the town of the Melicite
The unjarred peace is sweet,
Green grows the corn and great,
And the hunt is fortunate.

This many a heedless year
The Mohawks come not near.
The lodge-gate stands unbarred;
Scarce even a dog keeps guard.

No mother shrieks from a dream
Of blood on the threshold stream,—
But the thought of those mute guides
Is where the sleeper bides!

VI

Gets forth those caverned walls
No roar from the giant Falls,
Whose mountainous foam treads under
The abyss of awful thunder.

But the river's sudden speed!
How the ghost-grey shores recede!
And the tearless pilots hear
A muttering voice creep near.

A tremor! The blanched waves leap.
The warriors start from sleep.
Faints in the sudden blare
The cry of their swift despair,

And the captives' death-chant shrills.
But afar, remote from ills,
Quiet under the quiet skies
The Melicite village lies.

The Ballad of Crossing the Brook

Oh, it was a dainty maid that went a-Maying in the morn,
A dainty, dainty maiden of degree.
The ways she took were merry and the ways she missed forlorn,
And the laughing water tinkled to the sea.

The little leaves above her loved the dainty, dainty maid;
The little winds they kissed her, every one;
At the nearing of her little feet the flowers were not afraid;
And the water lay a-whimpling in the sun.

Oh, the dainty, dainty maid to the borders of the brook
Lingered down as lightly as the breeze;
And the shy water-spiders quit their scurrying to look;
And the happy water whispered to the trees.

She was fain to cross the brook, was the dainty, dainty maid;
But first she lifted up her elfin eyes
To see if there were cavalier or clown a-near to aid,—
And the water-bubbles blinked in surprise.

The brook bared its pebbles to persuade her dainty feet,
But the dainty, dainty maid was not content.
She had spied a simple country lad (for dainty maid unmeet),
And the shy water twinkled as it went.

As the simple lad drew nigh, then this dainty, dainty maid,
(O maidens, well you know how it was done!)
Stood a-gazing at her feet until he saw she was afraid
Of the water there a-whimpling in the sun.

Now that simple lad had in him all the makings of a man;
And he stammered, "I had better lift you over!"
Said the dainty, dainty maid—"Do you really think you can?"
And the water hid its laughter in the clover.

So he carried her across, with his eyes cast down,
And his foolish heart a-quaking with delight.

And the maid she looked him over with her elfin eyes of brown;
And the impish water giggled at his plight.

He reached the other side, he set down the dainty maid;
But he trembled so he couldn't speak a word.
Then the dainty, dainty maid—"Thank you, Sir! Good-day!" she said.
And the water-bubbles chuckled as they heard.

Oh, she tripped away so lightly, a-Maying in the morn,
That dainty, dainty maiden of degree.
She left the simple country lad a-sighing and forlorn
Where the mocking water twinkled to the sea.

The Wood Frolic

The morning star was bitter bright, the morning sky was grey;
And we hitched our teams and started for the woods at break of day.
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

Along the white and winding road the sled-bells jangled keen
Between the buried fences, the billowy drifts between.
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

So crisp sang the runners, and so swift the horses sped,
That the woods ere all about us were the sky grew red.
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

The bark hung ragged on the birch, the lichen on the fir,
The lungwort fringed the maple, and grey moss the juniper.
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

So still the air and chill the air the branches seemed asleep,
But we broke their ancient visions as the axe bit deep.
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

With the shouts of the choppers and the barking of their blades
How rang the startled valleys and the rabbit-haunted glades!
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

The hard wood and the soft wood, we felled them for our use;
And chiefly, for its scented gum, we loved the scaly spruce;
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

And here and there, with solemn roar, some hoary tree came down,
And we heard the rolling of the years in the thunder of its crown.
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

So, many a sled was loaded up above the stake-tops soon;
And many a load was at the farm before the horn of noon;
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

And ere we saw the sundown all yellow through the trees,

The farmyard stood as thick with wood as a buckwheat patch with bees;
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

And with the last-returning teams, and axes burnished bright,
We left the woods to slumber in the frosty shadowed night.
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

And then the wide, warm kitchen, with beams across the ceiling,
Thick hung with red-skinned onions, and homely herbs of healing!
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

The dishes on the dresser-shelves were shining blue and white,
And o'er the loaded table the lamps beamed bright.
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

Then, how the ham and turkey and the apple-sauce did fly,
The heights of boiled potatoes and the flats of pumpkin-pie!
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

With bread-and-cheese and doughnuts fit to feed a farm a year!
And we washed them down with tides of tea and oceans of spruce beer.
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

At last the pipes were lighted and the chairs pushed back,
And Bill struck up a sea-song on a rather risky tack;
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

And the girls all thought it funny—but they never knew 'twas worse,
For we gagged him with a doughnut at the famous second verse.
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

Then someone fetched a fiddle, and we shoved away the table,
And 'twas jig and reel and polka just as long as we were able,
Oh, merry swing the axes, and the bright chips fly!

Till at last the girls grew sleepy, and we got our coats to go.
We started off with racing-teams and moonlight on the snow;
Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

And soon again the winter world was voiceless as of old,
Alone with all the wheeling stars, and the great white cold.

Oh, the frost is on the forest, and the snow piles high!

The Tide on Tantramar

I

Tantramar! Tantramar!
I see thy cool green plains afar.
Thy dykes where grey sea-grasses are,
 Mine eyes behold them yet.

But not the gladness breathed of old
Thy bordering, blue hill-hollows hold;
Thy wind-blown leagues of green unrolled,
 Thy flats the red floods fret,

Thy steady-streaming winds—no more
These work the rapture wrought of yore,
When all thy wide bright strength outbore
 My soul from fleshly bar.

A darkness as of drifted rain
Is over tide, and dyke, and plain.
The shadow-pall of human pain
 Is fallen on Tantramar.

II

A little garden gay with phlox,
Blue corn-flowers, yellow hollyhocks,
Red poppies, pink and purple stocks,
 Looks over Tantramar.

Pale yellow drops the road before
The hospitable cottage-door,—
A yellow, upland road, and o'er
The green marsh seeks the low red shore
 And winding dykes afar.

Beyond the marsh, and miles away,
The great tides of the tumbling bay

Swing glittering in the golden day,
Swing foaming to and fro;

And nearer, in a nest of green,
A little turbid port is seen,
Where pitch-black fishing-boats careen,
Left when the tide runs low.

The little port is safe and fit.
About its wharf the plover flit,
The grey net-reels loom over it,
With grass about their feet.

In wave and storm it hath no part,
This harbour in the marshes' heart;
Behind its dykes, at peace, apart
It hears the surges beat.

The garden hollyhocks are tall;
They tower above the garden wall,
And see, far down, the port, and all
The creeks, and marshes wide;

But Margery, Margery,
'Tis something further thou wouldst see!
Bid all thy blooms keep watch with thee
Across the outmost tide.

Bid them keep wide their starry eyes
To warn thee should a white sail rise,
Slow climbing up, from alien skies,
The azure round of sea.

He sails beneath a stormy star;
The waves are wild, the Isles afar;
Summer is ripe on Tantramar,
And yet returns not he.

Long, long thine eyes have watched in vain,
Waited in fear, and wept again.
Is it no more than lovers' pain

That makes thy heart so wild?

At dreams within the cottage door
The old man's eyes are lingering o'er
The little port,—the far-off shore,—
His dear and only child.

And at her spinning-wheel within
The mother's hands forget to spin.
With loving voice she calls thee in,—
Her dear and only child.

To leave the home-dear hearts to ache
Was not for thee, though thine should break.
For their dear sake, for their dear sake,
Thou wouldst not go with him.

But always wise, and strong, and free,
Is given to which of us to be?
A gathering shadow, Margery,
Makes all thy daylight dim!

Yet surely soon will break the day
For which thine anxious waitings pray,—
His sails, athwart the yellow bay,
Shall cleave the sky's blue rim.

III

To-night the wind roars in from sea;
The crow clings in the straining tree;
Curlew and crane and bittern flee
The dykes of Tantramar.

To-night athwart an inky sky
A narrowing sun dropped angrily,
Scoring the gloom with dreadful dye,
A bitter and flaming scar.

But ere night falls, across the tide
A close-reefed barque has been descried,
And word goes round the country side

And word goes round the country-side—

“The *Belle* is in the bay!”

And ere the loud night closes down
Upon that light's terrific frown,
Along the dyke, with blowing gown,
She takes her eager way.

Just where his boat will haste to land,
On the open wharf she takes her stand.
Her pale hair blows from out its band.
She does not heed the storm.

Her blinding joy of heart they know
Who so have fared, and waited so.
She heeds not what the winds that blow.
She does not feel the storm.

But fiercer roars the gale. The night
With cloud grows black, with foam gleams white.
The creek boils to its utmost height.
The port is seething full.

The gale shouts in the outer waves
Amid a world of gaping graves;
Against the dyke each great surge raves,
Blind battering like a bull.

The dyke! The dyke! The brute sea shakes
The sheltering wall. It breaks,—it breaks!
The sharp salt whips her face, and wakes
The dreamer from her dream.

The great flood lifts. It thunders in.
The broad marsh foams, and sinks. The din
Of waves is where her world has been;—
Is this—is this the dream?

One moment in that surging hell
The old wharf shook, then cringed and fell.
Then came a lonely hulk, the *Belle*,
And drove athwart the waste

And drove onward the waste.

.....

They know no light, nor any star,
Those ruined plains of Tantramar.
And where the maid and lover are
They know nor fear nor haste.

IV

After the flood on Tantramar
The fisher-folk flocked in from far.
They stopped the breach; they healed the scar.
Once more the marsh grew green.

But at the marsh's inmost edge,
Where a tall fringe of flag and sedge
Catches a climbing hawthorn hedge,
A lonely hulk is seen.

It lies forgotten of all tides.
The grass grows round its bleaching sides.
An endless inland peace abides
About its mouldering age.

But in the cot-door on the height
An old man sits with fading sight,
And memories of one cruel night
Are all his heritage.

And at her spinning-wheel within
The mother's hands forget to spin,—
So weary all her days have been
Since Margery went away.

Tantramar! Tantramar!
Until that sorrow fades afar,
Thy plains where birds and blossoms are
Laugh not their ancient way!

Whitewaters

Beside the wharf at Whitewaters
The loitering ebb with noon confers;
And o'er the amber flats there seems
A sleep to brood of sun and dreams.

The white and clustering cottages,
Thick shadowed by their windless trees,
Inhabit such a calm, that change
Goes by and lets her face grow strange.

And not far off, on tiptoe seen,
The brown dyke and the sky between,
A shifting field that heaves and slides,—
The blue breast of the Minas tides.

A-through the little harbour go
The currents of the scant Pereaue,
Drawn slowly, drawn from springs unseen
Amid the marsh's vasts of green.

Up from the wharf at Whitewaters,
Where scarce a slim sandpiper stirs,
A yellow roadway climbs, that feels
Few footsteps and infrequent wheels.

It climbs to meet the westering sun
Upon the heights of Blomidon,—
Bulwark of peace, whose bastioned form
Out-bars the serried hosts of storm.

Down to the wharf at Whitewaters,
The children of the villagers
One drowsy, windless hour of noon
Deep in the green mid-heart of June,

Like swallows to a sunset pool
Came chattering, just let loose from school;
And with them one small lad of four,
Picked up as they flocked past his door.

His sea-blue, merry eyes, his hair
Curling and like the corn-silk fair,
His red, sweet mouth, made Hally Clive
Comely as any lad alive.

His father, master of *The Foam*,
Drave his tight craft afar from home.
His mother—peaceful life was hers
With Hally, safe in Whitewaters.

And in his sun-brown arms the boy
Carried his last, most cherished toy;
A small white kitten, free from fleck,
With a blue ribbon round its neck.

In the old timbers lapping cool,
About the wharf the tide hung full;
And at the wharf-side, just afloat,
Swung lazily an old grey boat.

About the froth-white water's edge,
The weedy planks, the washing sedge,
And in and out the rocking craft,
The children clambered, splashed, and laughed,

Till presently, grown tired of play,
Up the bright road they raced away;
But in the boat, a drowsy heap,
Curled boy and kitten, sound asleep.

Warm in the sunny boat they slept.
Soon to its ebb the slow tide crept.
By stealthy fingers, soft as dream,
The boat was lured into the stream.

Out from the wharf it slipped and swung—
On the old rope one moment hung—
Then snapped its tether and away
For the storm-beaten outer bay.

In Whitewaters, in Whitewaters,
No watcher heeds, no rescuer stirs.
Out from the port the currents sweep
With Hally, smiling in his sleep.

An hour they drifted, till the boat
From the low shore one scarce might note.
The kitten climbed the prow, and mewed
Against the watery solitude.

Then Hally woke, and stared with eyes
Grown round and dark with grieved surprise.
Where were the children gone? And where
The grey old wharf, the weedy stair?

Bewildered, and but half awake,
He sobbed as if his heart would break;
Then, as his lonely terror grew,
Down in the boat himself he threw,

And passionately for comfort pressed
The kind white kitten to his breast.
Through the thin plank his hand could feel
The little eddies clutch the keel.

Lost and alone, lost and alone,
He heard the long wave hiss and moan,
He heard the wild ebb seethe and mourn
Along the outer shoals forlorn.

And now a wind that chafed the flood
Blew down from Noel's haunted wood;
And now in the dread tides that run
Past the grim front of Blomidon,

Over the rolling troughs, between

The purple gulfs, the slopes of green,
With sickening glide and sullen rest
The old boat climbed from crest to crest.

That day in his good ship, *The Foam*,
Shipmaster Clive was speeding home;
His heart was light, his eyes elate;
His voyage had been fortunate.

“If the wind holds,” said he, “to-night
We’ll anchor under Kingsport Light;—
I’ll change the fogs of Fundy wild
For Whitewaters and wife and child.”

He marked the drifting boat, and laughed,
“What clumsy lubber’s lost his craft?”
“What’s that that walks the gunwale?” cried
A sailor leaning o’er the side.

The captain raised his glass. Said he:
“A kitten! Some one’s pet, maybe!
We’ll give it passage in *The Foam*”—
Soft is the heart that’s bound for home!

“Stop for a kitten?” growled the mate:
“Look to the sun; we’re getting late!
If we lose this tack we’ll lie to-night
A long ways off o’ Kingsport Light.”

The captain paused irresolute
“To leave the helpless little brute
To the wrecked seaman’s death accurst,
The slow, fierce hunger, the mad thirst.—

“I wish not my worst enemy
Such death as that! Lay to!” said he.
The ship came up into the wind;
The slackening canvas flapped and dinned;

And the ship's boat with scant delay
Was swung and lowered and away,—
The captain at the helm, and four
Stout men of Avon at the oar.

They neared the drifting craft; and when
They bumped against her gunwale, then
Hally upraised his tumbled head!
“My God! My boy!” the captain said.

And now with bellying sails *The Foam*
Up the tossed flood went straining home;
The wind blew fair; she lay that night
At anchor under Kingsport Light.

And late that night in gladness deep,
Sank father, mother, child, to sleep,—
Where no storm breaks, nor terror stirs
The peace of God in Whitewaters.

The Forest Fire

The night was grim and still with dread;
No star shone down from heaven's dome;
The ancient forest closed around
The settler's lonely home.

There came a glare that lit the north;
There came a wind that roused the night;
But child and father slumbered on,
Nor felt the growing light.

There came a noise of flying feet,
With many a strange and dreadful cry;
And sharp flames crept and leapt along
The red verge of the sky.

There came a deep and gathering roar.
The father raised his anxious head;
He saw the light, like a dawn of blood,
That streamed across his bed.

It lit the old clock on the wall,
It lit the room with splendour wild,
It lit the fair and tumbled hair
Of the still sleeping child;

And zigzag fence, and rude log barn,
And chip-strewn yard, and cabin grey,
Glowed crimson in the shuddering glare
Of that untimely day.

The boy was hurried from his sleep;
The horse was hurried from his stall;
Up from the pasture clearing came
The cattle's frightened call.

The boy was snatched to the saddle-bow.
Wildly, wildly, the father rode.

Behind them swooped the hordes of flame
And harried their abode.

The scorching heat was at their heels;
The huge roar hounded them in their flight;
Red smoke and many a flying brand
Flew o'er them through the night.

And past them fled the wildwood forms—
Far-striding moose, and leaping deer,
And bounding panther, and coursing wolf,
Terrible-eyed with fear.

And closer drew the fiery death;
Madly, madly, the father rode;
The horse began to heave and fail
Beneath the double load.

The father's mouth was white and stern,
But his eyes grew tender with long farewell.
He said: "Hold fast to your seat, Sweetheart,
And ride Old Jerry well!

"I must go back. Ride on to the river.
Over the ford and the long marsh ride,
Straight on to the town. And I'll meet you, Sweetheart,
Somewhere on the other side."

He slipped from the saddle. The boy rode on.
His hand clung fast in the horse's mane;
His hair blew over the horse's neck;
His small throat sobbed with pain.

"Father! Father!" he cried aloud.
The howl of the fire-wind answered him
With the hiss of soaring flames, and crash
Of shattering limb on limb.

But still the good horse galloped on,
With sinew braced and strength renewed.
The boy came safe to the river ford,

And out of the deadly wood.

And now with his kinsfolk, fenced from fear,
At play in the heart of the city's hum,
He stops in his play to wonder why
His father does not come!

Marjory

Spring, summer, autumn, winter,
Over the wild world rolls the year.
Comes June to the rose-red tamarack buds,
But Marjory comes not here.

The pastures miss her; the house without her
Grows forgotten, and grey and old;
The wind, and the lonely light of the sun
Are heavy with tears untold.

Spring, summer, autumn, winter,
Morning, evening, over and o'er!
The swallow returns to the nested rafter,
But Marjory comes no more.

The grey barn-doors in the long wind rattle
Hour by hour of the long white day.
The horses fret by the well-filled manger
Since Marjory went away.

The sheep she fed at the bars await her.
The milch cows low for her down the lane.
They long for her light, light hand at the milking,—
They long for her hand in vain.

Spring, summer, autumn, winter,
Morning and evening, over and o'er!
The bees come back with the willow catkins,
But Marjory comes no more.

The voice of the far-off city called to her.
Was it long years or an hour ago?
She went away, with dear eyes weeping,
To a world she did not know.

The berried pastures they could not keep her,
The brook, nor the buttercup-golden hill,

Nor even the long, long love familiar,—
The strange voice called her still.

She would not stay for the old home garden;—
The scarlet poppy, the mignonette,
The fox-glove bell, and the kind-eyed pansy,
Their hearts will not forget.

Oh, that her feet had not forgotten
The woodland country, the homeward way!
Oh, to look out of the sad, bright window
And see her come back, some day!

Spring, summer, autumn, winter,
Over the wild world rolls the year.
Comes joy to the bird on the nested rafter;
But Marjory comes not here.

The Keepers of the Pass

[When the Iroquois were moving in overwhelming force to obliterate the infant town of Montreal, Adam Daulac and a small band of comrades, binding themselves by oath not to return alive, went forth to meet the enemy in a distant pass between the Ottawa River and the hills. There they died to a man, but not till they had slain so many of the savages that the invading force was shattered and compelled to withdraw.]

Now heap the branchy barriers up.
No more for us shall burn
The pine-logs on the happy hearth,
For we shall not return.

We've come to our last camping-ground.
Set axe to fir and tamarack.
The foe is here, the end is near,
And we shall not turn back.

In vain for us the town shall wait,
The home-dear faces yearn,
The watchers in the steeple watch,—
For we shall not return.

For them we're come to these hard straits,
To save from flame and wrack
The little city built far off;
And we shall not turn back.

Now beat the yelling butchers down.
Let musket blaze, and axe-edge burn.
Set hand to hand, lay brand to brand,
But we shall not return.

For every man of us that falls
Their hordes a score shall lack.
Close in about the Lily Flag!
No man of us goes back.

For us no morrow's dawn shall break.
Our sons and wives shall learn

Some day from lips of flying scout
Why we might not return.

A dream of children's laughter comes
Across the battle's slack,
A vision of familiar streets,—
But we shall not go back.

Up roars the painted storm once more.
Long rest we soon shall earn.
Henceforth the city safe may sleep,
But we shall not return.

And when our last has fallen in blood
Between these waters black,
Their tribe shall no more lust for war,—
For we shall not turn back.

In vain for us the town shall wait,
The home-dear faces yearn,
The watchers in the steeple watch,
For we shall not return.

A Ballad of Manila Bay

Your threats how vain, Corregidor;
Your rampired batteries, feared no more;
Your frowning guard at Manila gate,—
 When our Captain went before!

Lights out. Into the unknown gloom
From the windy, glimmering, wide sea-room.
Challenging fate in that dark strait
 We dared the hidden doom.

But the death in the deep awoke not then;
Mine and torpedo they spoke not then;
From the heights that loomed on our passing line
 The thunders broke not then.

Safe through the perilous dark we sped,
Quiet each ship as the quiet dead,
Till the guns of El Fraile roared—too late,
 And the steel prows forged ahead.

Mute each ship as the mute-mouth grave,
A ghost leviathan cleaving the wave;
But deep in its heart the great fires throb,
 The travailing engines rave,

The ponderous pistons urge like fate,
The red-throat furnaces roar elate,
And the sweating stokers stagger and swoon
 In a heat more fierce than hate.

So through the dark we stole our way
Past the grim warders and into the bay,
Past Kalibuyo, and past Salinas,—
 And came at the break of day.

Where strong Cavité stood to oppose,—
Where, from a sheen of silver and rose,

A thronging of masts, a soaring of towers,
The beautiful city arose.

How fine and fair! But the shining air
With a thousand shattering thunders there
Flapped and reeled. For the fighting foe—
We had caught him in his lair.

Surprised, unready, his proud ships lay
Idly at anchor in Bakor Bay;—
Unready, surprised, but proudly bold,
Which was ever the Spaniard's way.

Then soon on his pride the dread doom fell,
Red doom,—for the ruin of shot and shell
Lit every vomiting, bursting hulk
With a crimson reek of hell.

But to the brave though beaten, hail!
All hail to them that dare and fail!
To the dauntless boat that charged our fleet
And sank in the iron hail!

Manila Bay! Manila Bay!
How proud the song on our lips to-day.
A brave old song of the true and strong
And the will that has its way;

Of the blood that told in the days of Drake
When the fight was good for the fighting's sake!
For the blood that fathered Farragut
Is the blood that fathered Blake;

And the pride of the blood will not be undone
While war's in the world and a fight to be won.
For the master now, as the master of old,
Is "the man behind the gun."

The dominant blood that daunts the foe,
That laughs at odds, and leaps to the blow,—
It is Dewey's glory to-day, as Nelson's
A hundred years ago!

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New York Nocturnes

‘Ω Θεοί, τίς ἄρα Κύπρις ἢ τίς ἴμερος, τοῦδε ξυνήψατο;

The Ideal

To Her, when life was little worth,
When hope, a tide run low,
Between dim shores of emptiness
Almost forgot to flow,—

Faint with the city's fume and stress
I came at night to Her.
Her cool white fingers on my face—
How wonderful they were!

More dear they were to fevered lids
Than lilies cooled in dew.
They touched my lips with tenderness,
Till life was born anew.

The city's clamour died in calm;
And once again I heard
The moon-white woodland stillnesses
Enchanted by a bird;

The wash of far, remembered waves;
The sigh of lapsing streams;
And one old garden's lilac leaves
Conferring in their dreams.

A breath from childhood daisy fields
Came back to me again,
Here in the city's weary miles
Of city-wearied men.

In the Crowd

I walk the city square with thee.

 The night is loud; the pavements roar.
Their eddying mirth and misery
Encircle thee and me.

The street is full of lights and cries.

 The crowd but brings thee close to me.
I only hear thy low replies;
I only see thine eyes.

Night in a Down-town Street

Not in the eyed, expectant gloom,
Where soaring peaks repose
And incommunicable space
Companions with the snows;

Not in the glimmering dusk that crawls
Upon the clouded sea,
Where bourneless wave on bourneless wave
Complains continually;

Not in the palpable dark of woods
Where groping hands clutch fear,
Does Night her deeps of solitude
Reveal unveiled as here.

The street is a grim cañon carved
In the eternal stone,
That knows no more the rushing stream
It anciently has known.

The emptying tide of life has drained
The iron channel dry.
Strange winds from the forgotten day
Draw down, and dream, and sigh.

The narrow heaven, the desolate moon
Made wan with endless years,
Seem less immeasurably remote
Than laughter, love, or tears.

At the Railway Station

Here the night is fierce with light,
Here the great wheels come and go,
Here are partings, waitings, meetings,
Mysteries of joy and woe.

Here is endless haste and change,
Here the ache of streaming eyes,
Radiance of expectant faces,
Breathless askings, brief replies.

Here the jarred, tumultuous air
Throbs and pauses like a bell,
Gladdens with delight of greeting,
Sighs and sorrows with farewell.

Here, ah, here with hungry eyes
I explore the passing throng.
Restless I await your coming
Whose least absence is so long.

Faces, faces pass me by,
Meaningless, and blank, and dumb,
Till my heart grows faint and sickens
Lest at last you should not come.

Then—I see you. And the blood
Surges back to heart and brain.
Eyes meet mine,—and Heaven opens.
You are at my side again.

Nocturnes of the Honeysuckle

I

Forever shed your sweetness on the night,
Dear honeysuckle, flower of our delight!

Forever breathe the mystery of that hour
When her hand touched me, lightlier than a flower,—

And life became forever strange and sweet,
A gift to lay with worship at her feet.

II

Oh, flower of the honeysuckle,
Tell me how often the long night through
She turns in her dream to the open window,
She turns in her dream to you.

Oh, flower of the honeysuckle,
Tell me how tenderly out of the dew
You breathe her a dream of that night of wonder
When life was fashioned anew.

Oh, flower of the honeysuckle,
Tell me how long ere, the sweet night through,
She will turn not to you but to me in the darkness
And dream and desire come true.

My Garden

I have a garden in the city's grime
Where secretly my heart keeps summer-time;

Where blow such airs of rapture on my eyes
As those blest dreamers know in Paradise,

Who after lives of longing come at last
Where anguish of vain love is overpast.

When the broad noon lies shadeless on the street,
And traffic roars, and toilers faint with heat,

Where men forget that ever woods were green,
The wonders of my garden are not seen.

Only at night the magic doors disclose
Its labyrinths of lavender and rose;

And honeysuckle, white beneath its moon,
Whispers me softly thou art coming soon;

And led by Love's white hand upon my wrist
Beside its glimmering fountains I keep tryst.

O Love, this moving fragrance on my hair,—
Is it thy breath, or some enchanted air

From far, uncharted realms of mystery
Which I have dreamed of but shall never see?

O Love, this low, wild music in my ears,
Is it the heart-beat of thy hopes and fears,

Or the faint cadence of some fairy song
On winds of boyhood memory blown along?

O Love, what poignant ecstasy is this
Upon my lips and eyes? Thy touch,—thy kiss.

Presence

Dawn like a lily lies upon the land
Since I have known the whiteness of your hand.
Dusk is more soft and more mysterious where
Breathes on my eyes the perfume of your hair.
Waves at your coming break in livelier blue;
And solemn woods are glad because of you.
Brooks of your laughter learn their liquid notes.
Birds to your voice attune their pleading throats.
Fields to your feet grow smoother and more green;
And happy blossoms tell where you have been.

Twilight on Sixth Avenue

Over the tops of the houses
Twilight and sunset meet.
The green, diaphanous dusk
Sinks to the eager street.

Astray in the tangle of roofs
Wanders a wind of June.
The dial shines in the clock-tower
Like the face of a strange-scrawled moon.

The narrowing lines of the houses
Palely begin to gleam,
And the hurrying crowds fade softly
Like an army in a dream.

Above the vanishing faces
A phantom train flares on
With a voice that shakes the shadows,—
Diminishes, and is gone.

And I walk with the journeying throng
In such a solitude
As where a lonely ocean
Washes a lonely wood.

The Street Lamps

Eyes of the city,
Keeping your sleepless watch from sun to sun,
Is it for pity
You tremble, seeing innocence undone;
Or do you laugh, to think men thus should set
Spies on the folly day would fain forget?

In Darkness

I have faced life with courage,—but not now!
O Infinite, in this darkness draw thou near.
Wisdom alone I asked of thee, but thou
Hast crushed me with the awful gift of fear.

In the Solitude of the City

Night; and the sound of voices in the street.
Night; and the happy laughter where they meet,
 The glad boy lover and the trysting girl.
But thou—but thou—I cannot find thee, Sweet!

Night; and far off the lighted pavements roar.
Night; and the dark of sorrow keeps my door.
 I reach my hand out trembling in the dark.
Thy hand comes not with comfort any more.

O Silent, Unresponding! If these fears
Lie not, nor other wisdom come with years,
 No day shall dawn for me without regret,
No night go unaccompanied by my tears.

A Nocturne of Exile

Out of this night of lonely noise,
The city's crowded cries,
Home of my heart, to thee, to thee
I turn my longing eyes.

Years, years, how many years I went
In exile wearily,
Before I lifted up my face
And saw my home in thee.

I had come home to thee at last.
I saw thy warm lights gleam.
I entered thine abiding joy,—
Oh, was it but a dream?

Ere I could reckon with my heart
The sum of our delight,
I was an exile once again
Here in the hasting night.

Thy doors were shut; thy lights were gone
From my remembering eyes.
Only the city's endless throng!
Only the crowded cries!

A Street Vigil

Here is the street
Made holy by the passing of her feet,—
 The little, tender feet, more sweet than myrrh,
 Which I have washed with tears for love of her.

Here she has gone
Until the very stones have taken on
 A glory from her passing, and the place
 Is tremulous with memory of her face.

Here is the room
That holds the light to lighten my life's gloom.
 Beyond that blank white window she is sleeping
 Who hath my hope, my health, my fame in keeping.

A little peace
Here for a little, ere my vigil cease
 And I turn homeward, shaken with the strife
 Of hope that struggles hopeless, sick for life.

Surely the power
That lifted me from darkness that one hour
 To a dear heaven whereof no word can tell
 Not wantonly will thrust me back to hell.

New Life

Since I have felt upon my face thy tears
I have been consecrated, Dear, to thee.
Cleansed from the stain of hot and frivolous years
By thy white passion, I have bowed the knee,
Worshipping thee as sovereign and as saint,
While with desire all human thou wert leaning
To my long kiss, thy lips and eyes grown faint,
Thy spirit eloquent with love's new meaning.

Since I have seen within thy heart my heaven,
Life has been changed and earth has grown divine.
Hope, health, and wisdom, these thy love hath given,
And if my song have any worth, 'tis thine.
Thy hands are benediction, Dear. Thy feet
Are flowers upon the altar of my soul,
Whereat my holiest aspirations meet,
Humble and wondering in thy rapt control.

A Nocturne of Trysting

Broods the hid glory in its sheath of gloom
Till strikes the destined hour, and bursts the bloom,
A rapture of white passion and perfume.

So the long day is like a bud
That aches with coming bliss,
Till flowers in light the wondrous night
That brings me to thy kiss.

Then, with a thousand sorrows forgotten in one hour,
In thy pure eyes and at thy feet I find at last my goal;
And life and hope and joy seem but a faint prevision
Of the flower that is thy body and the flame that is thy soul.

A Nocturne of Spiritual Love

Sleep, sleep, imperious heart! Sleep, fair and undefiled!
Sleep and be free.
Come in your dreams at last, comrade and queen and child,
At last to me.

Come, for the honeysuckle calls you out of the night.
Come, for the air
Calls with a tyrannous remembrance of delight,
Passion, and prayer.

Sleep, sovereign heart! and now,—for dream and memory
Endure no door,—
My spirit undenied goes where my feet, to thee,
Have gone before.

A moonbeam or a breath, above thine eyes I bow,
Silent, unseen,—
But not, ah, not unknown! thy spirit knows me now
Where I have been.

Surely my long desire upon thy soul hath power.
Surely for this
Thy sleep shall breathe thee forth, soul of the lily flower,
Under my kiss.

Sleep, body wonderful. Wake, spirit wise and wild,
White and divine.
Here is our heaven of dream, O dear and undefiled,
All thine, all mine.

In a City Room

O city night of noises and alarms,
Your lights may flare, your cables clang and rush,
But in the sanctuary of my love's arms
Your blinding tumult dies into a hush.

My doors are surged about with your unrest;
Your plangent cares assail my realm of peace;
But when I come unto her quiet breast
How suddenly your jar and clamour cease!

Then even remembrance of your strifes and pains
Diminishes to a ghost of sorrows gone,
Remoter than a dream of last year's rains
Gusty against my window in the dawn.

On the Elevated Railroad at 110th Street

Above the hollow deep where lies
The city's slumbering face,
Out, out across the night we swing,
A meteor launched in space.

The dark above is sown with stars.
The humming dark below
With sparkle of ten thousand lamps
In endless row on row.

Tall shadow towers with glimmering lights
Stand sinister and grim
Where upper deep and lower deep
Come darkly rim to rim.

Our souls have known the midnight awe
Of mount, and plain, and sea;
But here the city's night enfolds
A vaster mystery.

At thy Voice my Heart

At thy voice my heart
Wakes as a bird
Wakes in the night
With sudden rapture stirred.

At thy look my soul
Soars as a flame
Soars from the dark
Toward heaven, whence it came.

At thy love my life
Lifts from the clod
As a lily lifts
From its dark sleep toward God.

A Street Song at Night

Here mid the hasting and eddying faces,
Here in the whirl of the crowd,
Where the car lights flame and the windows glare
And the night is white and loud,

Here we two are together, we two
Unheeded, content, unknown.
Not in the wilderness could we be
More wonderfully alone.

No face of them all is a face we know.
No too familiar eye
Will peer from the throng to vex our joy
As we two wander by.

Yon towering walls with the lights that soar
Are gnome-land palaces.
Yon airy train is a dragon rushing
To carry us overseas.

I press you close to my side, secure
In the solitude of the throng.
And the laughter of children comes to our lips
For we know that love is long.

A Nocturne of Consecration

I talked about you, Dear, the other night,
Having myself alone with my delight.
Alone with dreams and memories of you,
All the divine-houred summer stillness through
I talked of life, of love the always new,
Of tears, and joy,—yet only talked of you.

To the sweet air
That breathed upon my face
The spirit of lilies in a leafy place,
Your breath's caress, the lingering of your hair,
I said—"In all your wandering through the dusk,
Your waitings on the marriages of flowers
Through the long, intimate hours
When soul and sense, desire and love confer,
You must have known the best that God has made.
What do you know of her?"

Said the sweet air—
"Since I have touched her lips,
Bringing the consecration of her kiss,
Half passion and half prayer,
And all for you,
My various lore has suffered an eclipse.
I have forgot all else of sweet I knew."

To the wise earth,
Kind, and companionable, and dewy cool,
Fair beyond words to tell, as you are fair,
And cunning past compare
To leash all heaven in a windless pool,
I said—"The mysteries of death and birth
Are in your care.
You love, and sleep; you drain life to the lees;
And wonderful things you know.
Angels have visited you, and at your knees
Learned what I learn forever at her eyes,

The pain that still enhances Paradise.
You in your breast felt her first pulses stir;
And you have thrilled to the light touch of her feet,
Blindingly sweet.
Now make me wise with some new word of her.”

Said the wise earth—
“She is not all my child.
But the wild spirit that rules her heart-beats wild
Is of diviner birth
And kin to the unknown light beyond my ken.
All I can give to her have I not given?
Strength to be glad, to suffer, and to know;
The sorcery that subdues the souls of men;
The beauty that is as the shadow of heaven;
The hunger of love
And unspeakable joy thereof.
And these are dear to her because of you.
You need no word of mine to make you wise
Who worship at her eyes
And find there life and love forever new!”

To the white stars,
Eternal and all-seeing,
In their wide home beyond the wells of being,
I said—“There is a little cloud that mars
The mystical perfection of her kiss.
Mine, mine, she is,
As far as lip to lip, and heart to heart,
And spirit to spirit when lips and hands must part,
Can make her mine. But there is more than this,—
More, more of her to know.
For still her soul escapes me unaware,
To dwell in secret where I may not go.
Take, and uplift me. Make me wholly hers.”

Said the white stars, the heavenly ministers,—
“This life is brief, but it is only one.
Before to-morrow’s sun
For one or both of you it may be done.
This love of yours is only just begun.

Will all the ecstasy that may be won
Before this life its little course has run
At all suffice
The love that agonises in your eyes?
Therefore be wise.
Content you with the wonder of love that lies
Between her lips and underneath her eyes.
If more you should surprise,
What would be left to hope from Paradise?
In other worlds expect another joy
Of her, which blundering fate shall not annoy,
Nor time nor change destroy.”

So, Dear, I talked the long, divine night through,
And felt you in the chrismal balms of dew.
The thing then learned
Has ever since within my bosom burned—
One life is not enough for love of you.

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Miscellaneous Poems

Kinsmen Strong

This is the song
Of kinsmen strong
Standing at guard
In the gates of earth:—

“Side by side
Our flags flung wide
Proclaim the pride
Of our kindred birth.

“All ye of the brood
Of an alien blood
Take count of our folk
No longer twain.
Not twain, but one,
By the tides that run
With new warmth won
In each kindred vein.

“Take note all ye,
Of the alien knee,
Of the faith that fires
Our hearts and thews.
One in our creed
And one in our need,
In daring and deed
We shall win, not lose.

“Be counseled, each
Of the alien speech,
From polar barren,
To isle empearled:
This shout you hear
So near and clear
Is the marching cheer
Of the lords of the world.

“Stout heart by heart
We work our part
That light may broaden
And law command.
This is our place
By right of race,
By God’s good grace
And the strength of our hand.

“The strength of our hand
On every land
Till the master-work
Of the world be done:
For the slave’s release,
For the bond of peace,
That wars may cease
From under the sun.”

Jonathan and John

Should Jonathan and John fall out
The world would stagger from that bout.
With John and Jonathan at one
The world's great peace will have begun.

With Jonathan and John at war
The hour that havoc hungers for
Will strike, in ruin of blood and tears,—
The world set back a thousand years.

With John and Jonathan sworn to stand
Shoulder to shoulder, hand by hand,
Justice and peace shall build their throne
From tropic sea to frozen zone.

When Jonathan and John forget
The scar of an ancient wound to fret,
And smile to think of an ancient feud
Which the God of the nations turned to good;

When the bond of a common creed and speech
And kindred binds them each to each,
And each in the other's victories
The pride of his own achievement sees,—

How paltry a thing they both will know
That grudge of a hundred years ago,—
How small that blemish of wrath and blame
In the blazonry of their common fame!

Canada

O Child of Nations, giant-limbed,
Who stand'st among the nations now
Unheeded, unadored, unhymned,
With unanointed brow,—

How long the ignoble sloth, how long
The trust in greatness not thine own?
Surely the lion's brood is strong
To front the world alone!

How long the indolence, ere thou dare
Achieve thy destiny, seize thy fame,—
Ere our proud eyes behold thee bear
A nation's franchise, nation's name?

The Saxon force, the Celtic fire,
These are thy manhood's heritage!
Why rest with babes and slaves? Seek higher
The place of race and age.

I see to every wind unfurled
The flag that bears the Maple Wreath;
Thy swift keels furrow round the world
Its blood-red folds beneath;

Thy swift keels cleave the furthest seas;
Thy white sails swell with alien gales;
To stream on each remotest breeze
The black smoke of thy pipes exhales.

O Falterer, let thy past convince
Thy future,—all the growth, the gain,
The fame since Cartier knew thee, since
Thy shores beheld Champlain!

Montcalm and Wolfe! Wolfe and Montcalm!
Quebec, thy storied citadel

Attests in burning song and psalm
How here thy heroes fell!

O Thou that bor'st the battle's brunt
At Queenston, and at Lundy's Lane,—
On whose scant ranks but iron front
The battle broke in vain!—

Whose was the danger, whose the day,
From whose triumphant throats the cheers,
At Chrysler's Farm, at Chateaugay,
Storming like clarion-bursts our ears?

On soft Pacific slopes,—beside
Strange floods that northward rave and fall,—
Where chafes Acadia's chainless tide—
Thy sons await thy call.

They wait; but some in exile, some
With strangers housed, in stranger lands,—
And some Canadian lips are dumb
Beneath Egyptian sands.

O mystic Nile! Thy secret yields
Before us; thy most ancient dreams
Are mixed with far Canadian fields
And murmur of Canadian streams.

But thou, my country, dream not thou!
Wake, and behold how night is done,—
How on thy breast, and o'er thy brow,
Bursts the uprising sun!

An Ode for the Canadian Confederacy

Awake, my country, the hour is great with change!
Under this gloom which yet obscures the land,
From ice-blue strait and stern Laurentian range
To where giant peaks our western bounds command,
A deep voice stirs, vibrating in men's ears
As if their own hearts throbbed that thunder forth,
A sound wherein who hearkens wisely hears
The voice of the desire of this strong North,—
This North whose heart of fire
Yet knows not its desire
Clearly, but dreams, and murmurs in the dream.
The hour of dreams is done. Lo, on the hills the gleam!

Awake, my country, the hour of dreams is done!
Doubt not, nor dread the greatness of thy fate.
Tho' faint souls fear the keen confronting sun,
And fain would bid the morn of splendour wait;
Tho' dreamers, rapt in starry visions, cry
"Lo, yon thy future, yon thy faith, thy fame!"
And stretch vain hands to stars, thy fame is nigh,
Here in Canadian hearth, and home, and name,—
This name which yet shall grow
Till all the nations know
Us for a patriot people, heart and hand
Loyal to our native earth, our own Canadian land!

O strong hearts, guarding the birthright of our glory,
Worth your best blood this heritage that ye guard!
These mighty streams resplendent with our story,
These iron coasts by rage of seas unjarred,—
What fields of peace these bulwarks well secure!
What vales of plenty those calm floods supply!
Shall not our love this rough, sweet land make sure,
Her bounds preserve inviolate, though we die?
O strong hearts of the North,
Let flame your loyalty forth,
And put the craven and base to an open shame,
Till earth shall know the Child of Nations by her name!

Canadian Streams

O rivers rolling to the sea
From lands that bear the maple-tree,
 How swell your voices with the strain
Of loyalty and liberty!

A holy music, heard in vain
By coward heart and sordid brain,
 To whom this strenuous being seems
Naught but a greedy race for gain.

O unsung streams—not splendid themes
Ye lack to fire your patriot dreams!
 Annals of glory gild your waves,
Hope freights your tides, Canadian streams!

St. Lawrence, whose wide water laves
The shores that ne'er have nourished slaves!
 Swift Richelieu of lilies fame!
Niagara of glorious graves!

Thy rapids, Ottawa, proclaim
Where Daulac and his heroes came!
 Thy tides, St. John, declare La Tour,
And, later, many a loyal name!

Thou inland stream, whose vales, secure
From storm, Tecumseh's death made poor!
 And thou small water, red with war,
'Twi'xt Beaubassin and Beauséjour!

Dread Saguenay, where eagles soar,
What voice shall from the bastioned shore
 The tale of Roberval reveal,
Or his mysterious fate deplore?

Annapolis, do thy floods yet feel
Faint memories of Champlain's keel,

Thy pulses yet the deeds repeat
Of Poutrincourt and D'Iberville?

And thou far tide, whose plains now beat
With march of myriad westering feet,
Saskatchewan, whose virgin sod
So late Canadian blood made sweet?

Your bulwark hills, your valleys broad,
Streams where De Salaberry trod,
Where Wolfe achieved, where Brock was slain,—
Their voices are the voice of God!

O sacred waters! not in vain,
Across Canadian height and plain,
Ye sound us in triumphant tone
The summons of your high refrain.

A Song for April

List! list! The buds confer.
This noonday they've had news of her;
The south bank has had views of her;
The thorn shall exact his dues of her;
 The willows adream
 By the freshet stream
Shall ask what boon they choose of her.

Up! up! The world's astir;
The would-be green has word of her;
Root and germ have heard of her,
 Coming to break
 Their sleep and wake
Their hearts with every bird of her.

See! see! How swift concur
Sun, wind, and rain at the name of her,
A-wondering what became of her;
The fields flower at the flame of her;
 The glad air sings
 With dancing wings
And the silvery shrill acclaim of her.

The Flocks of Spring

When winter is done, and April's dawning
Shatters the dark of the year,
And the rain-fed rivulet under the bridge
Again runs clear,

And the shepherd sun comes over the hill
To let out the flocks of Spring,
With laughter and light in the pastures of air
The flocks take wing.

They scatter on every lingering wind,—
The perfume, and the bee,
And the whispers of the jostling grass,
Glad to be free,

The minstrelsy of the shining pools,
The dancing troops of the hours;
And over the sod in a sudden rapture
Flame the flowers.

O Clearest Pool

Clearest pool, my wondering joy
When a fancy-haunted boy,
From the troubled world of men
I've come back to thee again.

Loosed by my imperious star
I've come back from very far,
Dusty from the clash of years,
Worn with life and love and tears.

When I came to thee of old
Treasures rare my hands would hold,—
Wondrous blooms, or glass of dye
To transfigure earth and sky.

Now the best that I can bring
Seems a very little thing.
Let me cast it all away
To win back one boyhood's day.

O'er thy globe of crystal space,
Clearest pool, I lean my face.
What's the happy mask I see
Wisely smiling back on me?

Surely those glad eyes were mine
When the earth looked all divine!—
Knowing less, remembering more,
How enchanted was their lore!

Surely mine, this weary while
Agone, was that unshadowed smile!
Clearest pool, thou showest me
All my boyhood used to be.

Keep thy waters, clearest pool,
Always tranquil, pure and cool.
I, alas, must turn again
To the troubled world of men!

The Trout Brook

The airs that blew from the brink of day
Were fresh and wet with the breath of May.
I heard the babble of brown brooks falling
And golden-wings in the woodside calling.

Big drops hung from the sparkling eaves;
And through the screen of the thin young leaves
A glint of ripples, a whirl of foam,
Lured and beckoned me out from home.

My feet grew eager, my eyes grew wide,
And I was off by the brown brook's side.
Down in the swamp-bottom, cool and dim,
I cut me an alder sapling slim.

With nimble fingers I tied my line,
Clear as a sunbeam, strong and fine.
My fly was a tiny glittering thing,
With tinsel body and partridge wing.

With noiseless steps I threaded the wood,
Glad of the sun-pierced solitude.
Chattered the kingfisher, fierce and shy,
As like a shadow I drifted by.

Lurked in their watery lairs the trout,
But, silver and scarlet, I lured them out.
Wary were they, but warier still
My cunning wrist and my cast of skill.

I whipped the red pools under the beeches;
I whipped the yellow and dancing reaches.
The purple eddy, smooth like oil,
And the tail of the rapid yielded spoil.

So all day long, till the day was done,
I followed the stream, I followed the sun.
Then homeward over the ridge I went,
The wandering heart of me well content.

The Atlantic Cable

This giant nerve, at whose command
The world's great pulses throb or sleep,—
It threads the undiscerned repose
Of the dark bases of the deep.

Around it settle in the calm
Fine tissues that a breath might mar,
Nor dream what fiery tidings pass,
What messages of storm and war.

Far over it, where filtered gleams
Faintly illumine the mid-sea day,
Strange, pallid forms of fish or weed
In the obscure tide softly sway.

And higher, where the vagrant waves
Frequent the white, indifferent sun,
Where ride the smoke-blue hordes of rain
And the long vapours lift and run,

Passes perhaps some lonely ship
With exile hearts that homeward ache,—
While far beneath is flashed a word
That soon shall bid them bleed or break.

Brooklyn Bridge

No lifeless thing of iron and stone,
But sentient, as her children are,
Nature accepts you for her own,
Kin to the cataract and the star.

She marks your vast, sufficing plan,
Cable and girder, bolt and rod,
And takes you, from the hand of man,
As some new handiwork of God.

You thrill through all your chords of steel
Responsive to the living sun,
And quickening in your nerves you feel
Life with its conscious currents run.

Your anchorage upbears the march
Of time and the eternal powers.
The sky admits your perfect arch.
The rock respects your stable towers.

Out of Pompeii

Save what the night-wind woke of sweet
And solemn sound, I heard alone
The sleepless ocean's ceaseless beat,
The surge's monotone.

Low down the south a dreary gleam
Of white light smote the sullen swells,
Evasive as a blissful dream,
Or wind-borne notes of bells.

The water's lapping whispers stole
Into my brain, and there effaced
All human memories from my soul,—
An atom in a shifting waste.

Weird fingers, groping, strove to raise
Some numbing horror from my mind;
And ever, as it met my gaze,
The sharp truth struck me blind.

The keen-edged breath of the salt sea
Stung; but a faint, swift, sulphurous smell
Blew past, and I reeled dizzily
As from the brink of hell,

One moment; then the swan-necked prow
Sustained me, and once more I scanned
The unfenced flood, against my brow
Arching my lifted hand.

O'er all the unstable vague expanse
I towered the lord supreme, and smiled;
And marked the hard, white sparkles glance,
The dark vault wide and wild.

Again that faint wind swept my face—
With hideous menace swept my eyes.

I cowered back in my straitened place
And groped with dim surmise,

Not knowing yet. Not knowing why,
I turned, as one asleep might turn,
And noted with half curious eye
The figure crouched astern.

On heaped-up leopard skins she crouched,
Asleep, and soft skins covered her,
And scarlet stuffs where she was couched,
Sodden with sea-water,

Burned lurid with black stains, and smote
My thought with waking pangs; I saw
The white arm drooping from the boat,
Round-moulded, pure from flaw;

The yellow sandals even-thonged;
The fair face, wan with haunting pain,—
Then sudden, crowding memories thronged
Like unpent sudden rain.

Clear-stamped, as by white lightning when
The swift flame rends the night, wide-eyed
I saw dim streets, and fleeing men,
And walls from side to side

Reeling, and great rocks fallen; a pall
Above us, an encumbering shroud
About our feet, and over all
The awful Form that bowed

Our hearts, the fiery scourge that smote
The city,—the red Mount. Clear, clear
I saw it,—and this lonely boat,
And us two drifting here!

With one sharp cry I sprang and hid
My face among the skins beside
Her feet, and held her safe, and chid

The tumult till it died.

And crouched thus at her rescued feet,
Save her low breath, I heard alone
The sleepless ocean's ceaseless beat,
The surge's monotone.

Actæon

A Woman of Plataea Speaks

I have lived long, and watched out many days,
And seen the showers fall and the light shine down
Equally on the vile and righteous head.
I have lived long, and served the gods, and drawn
Small joy and liberal sorrow,—scorned the gods,
And drawn no less my little meed of good,
Suffered my ill in no more grievous measure.
I have been glad—alas, my foolish people,
I have been glad with you! And ye are glad,
Seeing the gods in all things, praising them
In yon their lucid heaven, this green world,
The moving inexorable sea, and wide
Delight of noonday,—till in ignorance
Ye err, your feet transgress, and the bolt falls!
Ay, have I sung, and dreamed that they would hear;
And worshiped, and made offerings,—it may be
They heard, and did perceive, and were well pleased,
A little music in their ears, perchance
A grain more savour to their nostrils, sweet
Tho' scarce accounted of. But when for me
The mists of Acheron have striven up,
And horror was shed round me; when my knees
Relaxed, my tongue clave speechless, they forgot.
And when my sharp cry cut the moveless night,
And days and nights my wailings clamoured up
And beat about their golden homes, perchance
They shut their ears. No happy music this,
Eddying through their nectar cups and calm!
Then I cried out against them,—and died not;
And rose, and set me to my daily tasks.
So all day long, with bare, uplift right arm,
Drew out the strong thread from the carded wool,
Or wrought strange figures, lotus-buds, and serpents,
In purple on the himation's saffron fold;
Nor uttered praise with the slim-wristed girls

to any god, nor uttered any prayer,
Nor poured out bowls of wine and smooth bright oil,
Nor brake and gave small cakes of beaten meal
And honey, as this time, or such a god
Required; nor offered apples summer-flushed,
Scarlet pomegranates, poppy-bells, or doves.
All this with scorn, and waiting all day long,
And night long with dim fear, afraid of sleep,—
Seeing I took no hurt of all these things,
And seeing mine eyes were dried of their tears
So that once more the light grew sweet for me,
Once more grew fair the fields and valley streams,
I thought with how small profit men take heed
To worship with bowed heads, and suppliant hands,
And sacrifice, the everlasting gods,
Who take small thought of them to curse or bless,
Girt with their purples of perpetual peace!
Thus blindly deemed I of them,—yet—and yet—
Have late well learned their hate is swift as fire,
Be one so wretched to encounter it;
Ay, have I seen a multitude of good deeds
Fly up in the pan like husks, like husks blown dry.
Hereafter let none question the high gods!
I questioned; but these watching eyes have seen
Actæon, thewed and sinewed like a god,
Godlike for sweet speech and great deeds, hurled down
To hideous death,—scarce suffered space to breathe
Ere the wild heart in his changed, quivering side
Burst with mad terror, and the stag's wide eyes
Stared one sick moment 'mid the dogs' hot jaws.

Cithæron, mother mount, set steadfastly
Deep in Bœotia, past the utmost roar
Of seas, beyond Corinthian waves withdrawn,
Girt with green vales awake with brooks or still,
Towers up mid lesser-browed Bœotian hills—
These couched like herds secure beneath its ken—
And watches earth's green corners. At mid-noon
We of Plataea mark the sun make pause

WE OF PLATAEA MARK THE SUN MAKE PAUSE
Right over it, and top its crest with pride.
Men of Eleusis look toward north at dawn
To see the long white fleeces upward roll,
Smitten aslant with saffron, fade like smoke,
And leave the grey-green dripping glens all bare,
The drenched slopes open sunward; slopes wherein
What gods, what godlike men to match with gods,
Have roamed, and grown up mighty, and waxed wise
Under the law of him whom gods and men
Reverence, and call Cheiron! He, made wise
With knowledge of all wisdom, had made wise
Actæon, till there moved none cunninger
To drive with might the javelin forth, or bend
The corded ebony, save Leto's son.

But him the Centaur shall behold no more
With long stride making down the beechy glade,
Clear-eyed, with firm lips laughing,—at his heels
The clamour of his fifty deep-tongued hounds.
Him the wise Centaur shall behold no more.

I have lived long, and watched out many days,
And am well sick of watching. Three days since,
I had gone out upon the slopes for herbs,
Snake-root, and subtle gums; and when the light
Fell slantwise through the upper glens, and missed
The sunk ravines, I came where all the hills
Circle the valley of Gargaphian streams.
Reach beyond reach all down the valley gleamed,—
Thick branches ringed them. Scarce a bowshot past
My platan, thro' the woven leaves low-hung,
Trembling in meshes of the woven sun,
A yellow-sanded pool, shallow and clear,
Lay sparkling, brown about the further bank
From scarlet-berried ash-trees hanging over.
But suddenly the shallows brake awake
With laughter and light voices, and I saw
Where Artemis, white goddess incorrupt.
Bane of swift beasts, and deadly for straight shaft
Unswerving, from a coppice not far off
Came to the pool from the hither bank to bathe

Came to the pool from the inland bank to bathe.
Amid her maiden company she moved,
Their cross-thonged yellow buskins scattered off,
Unloosed their knotted hair; and thus the pool
Received them stepping, shrinking, down to it.

Here they flocked white, and splashed the water-drops
On rounded breast and shoulder snowier
Than the washed clouds athwart the morning's blue,—
Fresher than river grasses which the herds
Pluck from the river in the burning noons.
Their tresses on the summer wind they flung;
And some a shining yellow fleece let fall
For the sun's envy; others with white hands
Lifted a glooming wealth of locks more dark
Than deepest wells, but purple in the sun.
And She, their mistress, of the heart unstormed,
Stood taller than they all, supreme, and still,
Perfectly fair like day, and crowned with hair
The colour of nipt beech-leaves: Ay, such hair
Was mine in years when I was such as these.
I let it fall to cover me, or coiled
Its soft, thick coils about my throat and arms;
Its colour like nipt beech-leaves, tawny brown,
But in the sun a fountain of live gold.

Even as thus they played, and some lithe maids
Upreached white arms to grasp the berried ash,
And, plucking the bright bunches, shed them wide
By red ripe handfuls, not far off I saw
With long stride making down the beechy glade,
Clear-eyed, with firm lips laughing,—at his heels
The clamour of his fifty deep-tongued hounds,
Actæon. I beheld him not far off,
But unto bath and bathers hid from view,
Being beyond that mighty rock whereon
His wont was to lie stretched at dip of eve,
When frogs are loud amid the tail-plumed sedge
In marshy spots about Asopus' bank,—
Deeming his life was very sweet, his day
A pleasant one, the peopled breadths of earth
Most fair, and fair the shining tracts of sea.

Most fair, and fair the shining waves of sea,
Green solitudes, and broad low-lying plains
Made brown with frequent labours of men's hands,
And salt, blue, fruitless waters. But this mount,
Cithæron, bosomed deep in soundless hills,
Its fountained vales, its nights of starry calm,
Its high chill dawns, its long-drawn golden days,—
Was dearest to him. Here he dreamed high dreams,
And felt within his sinews strength to strive
Where strife was sorest, and to overcome,
And in his heart the thought to do great deeds,
With power in all ways to accomplish them.
For had not he done well to men, and done
Well to the gods? Therefore he stood secure.

But him,—for him—Ah that these eyes should see!—
Approached a sudden stumbling in his ways!
Not yet, not yet he knew a god's fierce wrath,
Nor wist of that swift vengeance lying in wait.

And now he came upon a slope of sward
Against the pool. With startled cry the maids
Shrank clamouring round their mistress, or made flight
To covert in the hazel thickets. She
Stirred not; but pitiless anger paled her eyes,
Intent with deadly purpose. He, amazed,
Stood with his head thrust forward, while his curls,
Sun-lit, lay glorious on his mighty neck,—
Let fall his bow and clanging spear, and gazed
Dilate with ecstasy; nor marked the dogs
Hush their deep tongues, draw close, and ring him round,
And fix upon him strange, red, hungry eyes,
And crouch to spring. This for a moment. Then
It seemed his strong knees faltered, and he sank.
Then I cried out,—for straight a shuddering stag
Sprang one wild leap over the dogs; but they
Fastened upon his flanks with a long yell,
And reached his throat; and that proud head went down
Beneath their wet, red fangs and reeking jaws.

I have lived long, and watched out many days,
Yet have not seen that aught is sweet save life

Yet have not seen that ought to sweeten me,
Nor learned that life hath other end than death.
Thick horror like a cloud had veiled my sight,
That for a space I saw not, and my ears
Were shut from hearing; but when sense grew clear
Once more, I only saw the vacant pool
Unrippled,—only saw the dreadful sward,
Where dogs lay gorged, or moved in fretful search,
Questing uneasily; and some far up
The slope, and some at the low water's edge,
With snouts set high in air and straining throats
Uttered keen howls that smote the echoing hills.
They missed their master's form, nor understood
Where was the voice they loved, the hand that reared,—
And some lay watching by the spear and bow
Flung down.

And now upon the homeless pack
And paling stream arose a noiseless wind
Out of the yellow west awhile, and stirred
The branches down the valley; then blew off
To eastward toward the long grey straits, and died
Into the dark, beyond the utmost verge.

Marsyas

A little grey hill-glade, close-turfed, withdrawn.
Beyond resort or heed of trafficking feet,
Ringed round with slim trunks of the mountain ash.
Through the slim trunks and scarlet bunches flash—
Beneath the clear chill glitterings of the dawn—
Far off, the crests, where down the rosy shore
The Pontic surges beat.
The plains lie dim below. The thin airs wash
The circuit of the autumn-coloured hills,
And this high glade, whereon
The satyr pipes, who soon shall pipe no more.
He sits against the beech-tree's mighty bole,—
He leans, and with persuasive breathing fills
The happy shadows of the slant-set lawn.
The goat-feet fold beneath a gnarlèd root;
And sweet, and sweet the note that steals and thrills
From slender stops of that shy flute.
Then to the goat-feet comes the wide-eyed fawn
Harkening; the rabbits fringe the glade, and lay
Their long ears to the sound;
In the pale boughs the partridge gather round,
And quaint hern from the sea-green river reeds;
The wild ram halts upon a rocky horn
O'erhanging; and, unmindful of his prey,
The leopard steals with narrowed lids to lay
His spotted length along the ground.
The thin airs wash, the thin clouds wander by,
And those hushed listeners move not. All the morn
He pipes, soft-swaying, and with half-shut eye,
In rapt content of utterance,—

nor heeds

The young God standing in his branchy place,
The languor on his lips, and in his face,
Divinely inaccessible, the scorn.

In the Afternoon

Wind of the summer afternoon,
Hush, for my heart is out of tune!

Hush, for thou movest restlessly
The too light sleeper, memory!

Whate'er thou hast to tell me, yet
'Twere something sweeter to forget,—

Sweeter than all thy breath of balm
An hour of unremembering calm.

Blowing over the roofs, and down
The bright streets of this inland town,

These busy crowds, these rocking trees—
What strange note hast thou caught from these?

A note of waves and rushing tides,
Where past the dykes the red flood glides,

To brim the shining channels far
Up the green plains of Tantramar.

Once more I snuff the salt, I stand
On the long dykes of Westmoreland;

I watch the narrowing flats, the strip
Of red clay at the water's lip;

Far off the net-reels, brown and high,
And boat-masts slim against the sky;

Along the ridges of the dykes
Wind-beaten scant sea-grass, and spikes

Of last year's mullein; down the slopes

To landward, in the sun, thick ropes

Of blue vetch, and convolvulus,
And matted roses glorious.

The liberal blooms o'erbrim my hands;
I walk the level, wide marsh-lands;

Waist-deep in dusty-blossomed grass
I watch the swooping breezes pass

In sudden, long, pale lines, that flee
Up the deep breast of this green sea.

I listen to the bird that stirs
The purple tops, and grasshoppers

Whose summer din, before my feet
Subsiding, wakes on my retreat.

Again the droning bees hum by;
Still-winged, the grey hawk wheels on high;

I drink again the wild perfumes,
And roll, and crush the grassy blooms.

Blown back to olden days, I fain
Would quaff the olden joys again;

But all the olden sweetness not
The old unmindful peace hath brought.

Wind of this summer afternoon,
Thou hast recalled my childhood's June;

My heart—still is it satisfied
By all the golden summer-tide?

Hast thou one eager yearning filled,
Or any restless throbbing stilled,

Or hast thou any power to bear
Even a little of my care?—

Ever so little of this weight
Of weariness canst thou abate?

Ah, poor thy gift indeed, unless
Thou bring the old child-heartedness,—

And such a gift to bring is given,
Alas, to no wind under heaven!

Wind of the summer afternoon,
Be still; my heart is not in tune.

Sweet is thy voice; but yet, but yet—
Of all 'twere sweetest to forget!

On the Creek

Dear Heart, the noisy strife
And bitter carpings cease.
Here is the lap of life,
Here are the lips of peace.

Afar from stir of streets,
The city's dust and din,
What healing silence meets
And greets us gliding in!

Our light birch silent floats;
Soundless the paddle dips.
Yon sunbeam thick with motes
Athro' the leafage slips,

To light the iris wings
Of dragon-flies alit
On lily-leaves, and things
Of gauze that float and flit.

Above the water's brink
Hush'd winds make summer riot;
Our thirsty spirits drink
Deep, deep, the summer quiet.

We slip the world's grey husk,
Emerge, and spread new plumes;
In sunbeam-fretted dusk,
Thro' populous golden glooms,

Like thistledown we slide,
Two disembodied dreams,—
With spirits alert, wide-eyed,
Explore the perfume-streams.

For scents of various grass
Stream down the veering breeze;

Warm puffs of honey pass
From flowering linden-trees;

And fragrant gusts of gum,
Breath of the balm-tree buds,
With fern-brake odours, come
From intricate solitudes.

The elm-tops are astir
With flirt of idle wings.
Hark to the grackles' *chirr*
Whene'er an elm-bough swings!

From off yon ash-limb sere
Out-thrust amid green branches,
Keen like an azure spear
A kingfisher down launches.

Far up the creek his calls
And lessening laugh retreat.
Again the silence falls,
And soft the green hours fleet.

They fleet with drowsy hum
Of insects on the wing.
We sigh—the end must come!
We taste our pleasure's sting.

No more, then, need we try
The rapture to regain.
We feel our day slip by,
And cling to it in vain.

But, Dear, keep thou in mind
These moments swift and sweet!
Their memory thou shalt find
Illume the common street;

And thro' the dust and din,
Smiling, thy heart shall hear
Quiet waters lapsing thin,

And locusts shrilling clear.

Tantramar Revisited

Summers and summers have come, and gone with the flight of the swallow;
Sunshine and thunder have been, storm, and winter, and frost;
Many and many a sorrow has all but died from remembrance,
Many a dream of joy fall'n in the shadow of pain.

Hands of chance and change have marred, or moulded, or broken,
Busy with spirit or flesh, all I most have adored;

Even the bosom of Earth is strewn with heavier shadows,—

Only in these green hills, aslant to the sea, no change!

Here where the road that has climbed from the inland valleys and
woodlands,

Dips from the hill-tops down, straight to the base of the hills,—

Here, from my vantage-ground, I can see the scattering houses,

Stained with time, set warm in orchards, meadows, and wheat,

Dotting the broad bright slopes outspread to southward and eastward,

Wind-swept all day long, blown by the south-east wind.

Skirting the sunbright uplands stretches a riband of meadow,

Shorn of the labouring grass, bulwarked well from the sea,

Fenced on its seaward border with long clay dykes from the turbid

Surge and flow of the tides vexing the Westmoreland shores.

Yonder, toward the left, lie broad the Westmoreland marshes,—

Miles on miles they extend, level, and grassy, and dim,

Clear from the long red sweep of flats to the sky in the distance,

Save for the outlying heights, green-rampired Cumberland Point;

Miles on miles outrolled, and the river-channels divide them,—

Miles on miles of green, barred by the hurtling gusts.

Miles on miles beyond the tawny bay is Minudie.

There are the low blue hills; villages gleam at their feet.

Nearer a white sail shines across the water, and nearer

Still are the slim, grey masts of fishing boats dry on the flats.

Ah, how well I remember those wide red flats, above tide-mark

Pale with scurf of the salt, seamed and baked in the sun!

Well I remember the piles of blocks and ropes, and the net-reels

Wound with the beaded nets, dripping and dark from the sea!

Now at this season the nets are unwound; they hang from the rafters

Over the fresh-stowed hay in upland barns, and the wind

Blows all day through the chinks, with the streaks of sunlight, and sways

them

Softly at will; or they lie heaped in the gloom of a loft.
Now at this season the reels are empty and idle; I see them
Over the lines of the dykes, over the gossiping grass.
Now at this season they swing in the long strong wind, thro' the lonesome
Golden afternoon, shunned by the foraging gulls.
Near about sunset the crane will journey homeward above them;
Round them, under the moon, all the calm night long,
Winnowing soft grey wings of marsh-owls wander and wander,
Now to the broad, lit marsh, now to the dusk of the dike.
Soon, thro' their dew-wet frames, in the live keen freshness of morning,
Out of the teeth of the dawn blows back the awakening wind.
Then, as the blue day mounts, and the low-shot shafts of the sunlight
Glance from the tide to the shore, gossamers jewelled with dew
Sparkle and wave, where late sea-spoiling fathoms of driftnet
Myriad-meshed, uploomed sombrely over the land.

Well I remember it all. The salt, raw scent of the margin;
While, with men at the windlass, groaned each reel, and the net,
Surging in ponderous lengths, uprose and coiled in its station;
Then each man to his home,—well I remember it all!

Yet, as I sit and watch, this present peace of the landscape,—
Stranded boats, these reels empty and idle, the hush,
One grey hawk slow-wheeling above yon cluster of haystacks,—
More than the old-time stir this stillness welcomes me home.
Ah, the old-time stir, how once it stung me with rapture,—
Old-time sweetness, the winds freighted with honey and salt!
Yet will I stay my steps and not go down to the marshland,—
Muse and recall far off, rather remember than see,—
Lest on too close sight I miss the darling illusion,
Spy at their task even here the hands of chance and change.

Salt

O breath of wind and sea,
Bitter and clear,
Now my faint soul springs free,
Blown clean from fear!

O hard sweet strife, O sting
Of buffeting salt!
Doubt and despair take wing,
Failure, and fault.

I dread not wrath or wrong,—
Smile, and am free;
Strong while the winds are strong,
The rocks, the sea.

Heart of my heart, tho' life
Front us with storm,
Love will outlast the strife,
More pure, more warm.

Severance

The tide falls, and the night falls,
And the wind blows in from the sea
And the bell on the bar it calls and calls,
And the wild hawk cries from his tree.

The late crane calls to his fellows gone
In long flight over the sea,
And my heart with the crane flies on and on,
Seeking its rest and thee.

O Love, the tide returns to the strand,
And the crane flies back oversea,
But he brings not my heart from his far-off land
For he brings not thee to me.

The Valley of the Winding Water

The valley of the winding water
Wears the same light it wore of old.
Still o'er the purple peaks the portals
Of distance and desire unfold.

Still break the fields of opening June
To emerald in their ancient way.
The sapphire of the summer heaven
Is infinite, as yesterday.

My eyes are on the greening earth,
The exultant bobolinks wild awing;
And yet, of all this kindly gladness,
My heart beholds not anything.

For in a still room far away,
With mourners round her silent head,
Blind to the quenchless tears, the anguish—
I see, to-day, a woman dead.

Ebb

The tide goes out, the tide goes out; once more
The empty day goes down the empty shore.

The tide goes out; the wharves deserted lie
Under the empty solitude of sky.

The tide goes out; the dwindling channels ache
With the old hunger, with the old heartbreak.

The tide goes out; the lonely wastes of sand
Implore the benediction of thy hand.

The tide goes out, goes out; the stranded ships
Desire the sea,—and I desire thy lips.

The tide goes out, the tide goes out; the sun
Relumes the hills of longing one by one.

The tide goes out, goes out; and goes my heart
On the long quest that ends but where thou art.

Trysting Song

Dear! Dear!
As the night draws nigh draw near.
The world's forgotten;
Work is done;
The hour for loving
Is begun.

Sweet! Sweet!
It is love-time when we meet.
The hush of desire
Falls with the dew,
And all the evening
Turns to you.

Child! Child!
With the warm heart wise and wild.
My spirit trembles
Under your hand;
You look in my eyes
And understand.

Mine! Mine!
Mistress of mood divine.
What lore of the ages
Bids you know
The heart of a man
Can love you so?

Love's Translator

When the white moon divides the mist,
My longing eyes believe
'Tis the white arm my lips have kissed
Flashing from thy sleeve.

And when the tall white lily sways
Upon her queenly stalk,
Thy white form fills my dreaming gaze
Down the garden walk.

When, rich with rose, a wandering air
Breathes up the leafy place,
It seems to me thy perfumed hair
Blown across my face.

And when the thrush's golden note
Across the gloom is heard,
I think 'tis thy impassioned throat
Uttering one sweet word.

And when the scarlet poppy-bud
Breaks, breathing of the south,
A sudden warmth awakes my blood
Thinking of thy mouth.

And when that dove's wing dips in flight
Above the dreaming land,
I see some dear, remembered, white
Gesture of thy hand.

Wonder and love upon me wait
In service fair, when I
Into thy sweetness thus translate
Earth and air and sky.

Grey Rocks and Greyer Sea

Grey rocks, and greyer sea,
And surf along the shore—
And in my heart a name
My lips shall speak no more.

The high and lonely hills
Endure the darkening year—
And in my heart endure
A memory and a tear.

Across the tide a sail
That tosses, and is gone—
And in my heart the kiss
That longing dreams upon.

Grey rocks, and greyer sea,
And surf along the shore—
And in my heart the face
That I shall see no more.

A Song of Cheer

The winds are up with wakening day
And tumult in the tree;
Across the cool and open sky
White clouds are streaming free;
The new light breaks o'er flood and field
Clear like an echoing horn,
While in loud flight the crows are blown
Athwart the sapphire morn.

What tho' the maple's scarlet flame
Declares the summer done,
Tho' finch and starling voyage south
To win a softer sun;
What tho' the withered leaf whirls by
To strew the purpling stream,—
Stretched are the world's glad veins with strength,
Despair is grown a dream!

The acres of the goldenrod
Are glorious on the hills.
Tho' storm and loss approach, the year's
High heart upleaps and thrills.
Dearest, the cheer, the brave delight,
Are given to shame regret,
That when the long frost falls, our hearts
Be glad, and not forget!

A Serenade

Love hath given the day for longing,
And for joy the night.
Dearest, to thy distant chamber
Wings my soul its flight.

Though unfathomed seas divide us,
And the lingering year,
'Tis the hour when absence parts not,—
Memory hath no tear.

O'er the charmed and silent river
Drifts my lonely boat;
From the haunted shores and islands
Tender murmurs float,

Tender breaths of glade and forest,
Breezes of perfume;—
Surely, surely thou canst hear me
In thy quiet room!

Unto shore, and sky, and silence,
Low I pour my song.
All the spell, the summer sweetness,—
These to thee belong.

Thou art love, the trance and rapture
Of the midnight clear!
Sweet, tho' world on world withhold thee,
I can clasp thee here.

Birch and Paddle

To Bliss Carman

Friend, those delights of ours
Under the sun and showers,—

Athrough the noonday blue
Sliding our light canoe,

Or floating, hushed, at eve,
Where the dim pine-tops grieve!

What tonic days were they
Where shy streams dart and play,—

Where rivers brown and strong
As caribou bound along,

Break into angry parle
Where wildcat rapids snarl,

Subside, and like a snake
Wind to the quiet lake!

We've paddled furtively,
Where giant boughs hide the sky,—

Have stolen, and held our breath,
Thro' coverts still as death,—

Have left with wing unstirred
The brooding phœbe-bird,

And hardly caused a care
In the water-spider's lair.

For love of his clear pipe
We've flushed the zigzag snipe,—

Have chased in wilful mood
The wood-duck's flapping brood,—

Have spied the antlered moose
Cropping the young green spruce,

And watched him till betrayed
By the kingfisher's sharp tirade.

Quitting the bodeful shades
We've run thro' sunnier glades,

And dropping craft and heed
Have bid our paddles speed.

Where the mad rapids chafe
We've shouted, steering safe,—

With sinew tense, nerve keen,
Shot thro' the roar, and seen,

With spirit wild as theirs,
The white waves leap like hares.

And then, with souls grown clear
In that sweet atmosphere,

With influences serene
Our blood and brain washed clean,

We've idled down the breast
Of broadening tides at rest,

And marked the winds, the birds,
The bees, the far-off herds,

Into a drowsy tone
Transmute the afternoon.

So, Friend, with ears and eyes
Which also divination

which shy divinites

Have opened with their kiss,
We need no balm but this,—

A little space for dreams
On care-unsullied streams,—

'Mid task and toil, a space
To dream on Nature's face!

July

I am for the open meadows,
Open meadows full of sun,
Where the hot bee hugs the clover,
The hot breezes drop and run.

I am for the uncut hayfields
Open to the cloudless blue,—
For the wide unshadowed acres
Where the summer's pomps renew;

Where the grass-tops gather purple,
Where the oxeye daisies thrive,
And the mendicants of summer
Laugh to feel themselves alive;

Where the hot scent steams and quivers,
Where the hot saps thrill and stir,
Where in leaf-cells' green pavilions
Quaint artificers confer;

Where the bobolinks are merry,
Where the beetles bask and gleam,
Where above the powdered blossoms
Powdered moth-wings poise and dream;

Where the bead-eyed mice adventure
In the grass-roots green and dun.
Life is good and love is eager
In the playground of the sun!

The Cricket

Oh, to be a cricket,
That's the thing!
To scurry in the grass
And to have one's fling!
And it's oh, to be a cricket
In the warm thistle-thicket,
Where the sun-winds pass,
Winds a-wing,
And the bumble-bees hang humming,
Hum and swing,
And the honey-drops are coming!

It's to be a summer rover,
That can see a sweet, and pick it
With the sting!
Never mind the sting!

And it's oh, to be a cricket
In the clover!
A gay summer rover
In the warm thistle-thicket,
Where the honey-drops are coming,
Where the bumble-bees hang humming—
That's the thing!

An August Wood Road

When the partridge coveys fly
In the birch-tops cool and high;

When the dry cicadas twang
Where the purpling fir-cones hang;

When the bunch-berries emboss—
Scarlet beads—the roadside moss;

Brown with shadows, bright with sun,
All day long till day is done

Sleeps in murmuring solitude
The worn old road that threads the wood.

In its deep cup—grassy, cool—
Sleeps the little roadside pool;

Sleeps the butterfly on the weed,
Sleeps the drifted thistle-seed.

Like a great and blazing gem,
Basks the beetle on the stem.

Up and down the shining rays
Dancing midges weave their maze.

High among the moveless boughs,
Drunk with day, the night-hawks drowse.

Far up, unfathomably blue,
August's heaven vibrates through.

The old road leads to all things good;
The year's at full, and time's at flood.

Apple Song

O the sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples;
And the apples, hanging mellow,
 Red and yellow,
All down the orchard seen
Make a glory in the green.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples;
And the hollow barrels wait
 By the gate.
The cider-presses drip
With nectar for the lip.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples;
And the yellow miles of grain
 Forget the rain.
The happy gardens yet
The winter's blight forget.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples;
O'er the marsh the cattle spread,
 White and red.
Thy sky is all as blue
As a gentian in the dew.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples;
And the maples are ablaze
 Through the haze.
The crickets in their mirth
Fife the fruiting song of earth.

The sun has kissed the apples,
 Kissed the apples;

Now with flocking call and stir
Birds confer,
As if their hearts were crost
By a fear of coming frost.

O the sun has kissed the apples,
Kissed the apples;
And the harvest air is sweet
On the wheat.
Delight is not for long,—
Give us laughter, give us song!

Before the Breath of Storm

Before the breath of storm,
While yet the long, bright afternoons are warm,
Under this stainless arch of azure sky
The air is filled with gathering wings for flight;
Yet with the shrill mirth and the loud delight
Comes the foreboding sorrow of this cry—
“Till the storm scatter and the gloom dispel,
Farewell! Farewell!
Farewell!”

Why will ye go so soon,
In these soft hours, this sweeter month than June?
The liquid air floats over field and tree
A veil of dreams;—where do ye find the sting?
A gold enchantment sleeps upon the sea
And purple hills;—why have ye taken wing?
But faint, far-heard, the answers fall and swell—
“Farewell! Farewell!
Farewell!”

The Falling Leaves

Lightly He blows, and at His breath they fall,
The perishing kindreds of the leaves; they drift,
Spent flames of scarlet, gold aërial,
Across the hollow year, noiseless and swift.
Lightly He blows, and countless as the falling
Of snow by night upon a solemn sea,
The ages circle down beyond recalling,
To strew the hollows of Eternity.
He sees them drifting through the spaces dim,
And leaves and ages are as one to Him.

Aylesford Lake

All night long the light is lying
Silvery on the birches sighing,
All night long the loons are crying
Sweetly over Aylesford Lake.

Berry-copse and brake encumber
Granite islands out of number;
All night long the islands slumber,
But my heart is wide awake.

Listening where the water teaches
Magic to the shining beaches,—
Watching where the waveless reaches
Hold communion with the sky,—

Soon my spirit grows serener,
Hearing saner, vision keener.
In the night's benign demeanour
Peace and Wisdom venture nigh.

Beside the Winter Sea

As one who sleeps, and hears across his dream
The cry of battles ended long ago,
Inland I hear the calling of the sea.
I hear its hollow voices, though between
My wind-worn dwelling and thy wave-worn strand
How many miles, how many mountains are!
And thou beside the winter sea alone
Art walking, with thy cloak about thy face.
Bleak, bleak the tide, and evening coming on;
And grey the pale, pale light that wans thy face.
Solemnly breaks the long wave at thy feet;
And sullenly in patches clings the snow
Upon the low, red rocks worn round with years.
I see thine eyes, I see their grave desire,
Unsatisfied and lonely as the sea's;—
Yet how unlike the wintry sea's despair!
For could my feet but follow thine, my hands
But reach for thy warm hands beneath thy cloak,
What summer joy would lighten in thy face,
What sunshine warm thine eyes, and thy sad mouth
Break to a dewy rose, and laugh on mine!

The Brook in February

A snowy path for squirrel and fox.
It winds between the wintry firs.
Snow-muffled are its iron rocks,
And o'er its stillness nothing stirs.

But low, bend low a listening ear!
Beneath the mask of moveless white
A babbling whisper you shall hear—
Of birds and blossoms, leaves and light.

Ice

When Winter scourged the meadow and the hill
And in the withered leafage worked his will,
The water shrank, and shuddered, and stood still,—
Then built himself a magic house of glass,
Irised with memories of flowers and grass,
Wherein to sit and watch the fury pass.

The Silver Thaw

There came a day of showers
 Upon the shrinking snow.
The south wind sighed of flowers,
 The softening skies hung low.
Midwinter for a space
Foreshadowing April's face,
The white world caught the fancy,
 And would not let it go.

In reawakened courses
 The brooks rejoiced the land.
We dreamed the Spring's shy forces
 Were gathering close at hand.
The dripping buds were stirred.
As if the sap had heard
The long-desired persuasion
 Of April's soft command.

But antic Time had cheated
 With hope's elusive gleam.
The phantom Spring, defeated,
 Fled down the ways of dream.
And in the night the reign
Of winter came again,
With frost upon the forest
 And stillness on the stream.

When morn in rose and crocus
 Came up the bitter sky,
Celestial beams awoke us
 To wondering ecstasy.
The wizard Winter's spell
Had wrought so passing well,
That earth was bathed in glory,
 As if God's smile were nigh.

The silvered saplings, bending,

Flashed in a rain of gems.
The statelier trees, attending,
Blazed in their diadems.
White fire and amethyst
All common things had kissed,
And chrysolites and sapphires
Adorned the bramble-stems.

In crystalline confusion
All beauty came to birth.
It was a kind illusion
To comfort waiting earth—
To bid the buds forget
The spring so distant yet,
And hearts no more remember
The iron season's dearth.

At the Drinking Fountain

He stops beside the crowded curb, and lifts
The chained cup to his lips. And now he hears
The water thinly tinkling thro' the roar
Of wheels and trade. Back, back his memory drifts.
To his tired eyes the pasture spring appears,
And the dear fields that he shall see no more.

The Lily of the Valley

Did Winter, letting fall in vain regret
A tear among the tender leaves of May,
Embalm the tribute, lest she might forget,
In this elect, imperishable way?

Or did the virgin Spring sweet vigil keep
In the white radiance of the midnight hour,
And whisper to the unwondering ear of sleep
Some shy desire that turned into a flower?

The Wild-Rose Thicket

Where humming flies frequent, and where
Pink petals open to the air,

The wild-rose thicket seems to be
The summer in epitome.

Amid its gold-green coverts meet
The late dew and the noonday heat;

Around it, to the sea-rim harsh,
The patient levels of the marsh;

And o'er it pale the heavens bent,
Half sufferance and half content.

The Hawkbit

How sweetly on the autumn scene,
When haws are red amid the green,
The hawkbit shines with face of cheer,
The favourite of the faltering year!

When days grow short and nights grow cold
How fairly gleams its eye of gold,
On pastured field and grassy hill,
Along the roadside and the rill!

It seems the spirit of a flower,
This offspring of the autumn hour,
Wandering back to earth to bring
Some kindly afterthought of spring.

A dandelion's ghost might so
Amid Elysian meadows blow,
Become more fragile and more fine
Breathing the atmosphere divine.

The Hermit Thrush

Over the tops of the trees,
And over the shallow stream,
The shepherd of sunset frees
The amber phantoms of dream
The time is the time of vision;
The hour is the hour of calm;
Hark! On the stillness Elysian
Breaks how divine a psalm!
*Oh, clear in the sphere of the air,
Clear, clear, tender and far,
Our aspiration of prayer
Unto eve's clear star!*

O singer serene, secure!
From thy throat of silver and dew
What transport lonely and pure,
Unchanging, endlessly new,—
An unremembrance of mirth,
And a contemplation of tears,
As if the musing of earth
Communed with the dreams of the years!
*Oh, clear in the sphere of the air,
Clear, clear, tender and far,
Our aspiration of prayer
Unto eve's clear star!*

O cloistral ecstatic! thy cell
In the cool green aisles of the leaves
Is the shrine of a power by whose spell
Whoso hears aspires and believes!
O hermit of evening! thine hour
Is the sacrament of desire,
When love hath a heavenlier flower,
And passion a holier fire!
*Oh, clear in the sphere of the air,
Clear, clear, tender and far,
Our aspiration of prayer
Unto eve's clear star!*

The Night-Hawk

When frogs make merry the pools of May,
 And sweet, oh, sweet,
 Through the twilight dim
 Is the vesper hymn
Their myriad mellow pipes repeat
 As the rose-dusk dies away,
 Then hark, the night-hawk!
 (For now is the elfin hour.)
 With melting skies o'er him,
 All summer before him,
 His wild brown mate to adore him,
 By the spell of his power
 He summons the apples in flower.

In the high pale heaven he flits and calls;
 Then swift, oh, swift,
 On sounding wing
 That hums like a string,
To the quiet glades where the gnat-clouds drift
 And the night-moths flicker, he falls.
 Then hark, the night-hawk!
 (For now is the elfin hour.)
 With melting skies o'er him,
 All summer before him,
 His wild brown mate to adore him,
 By the spell of his power
 He summons the apples in flower.

When the Clover Blooms Again

“When the clover blooms again,
And the rain-birds in the rain
 Make the sad-heart noon seem sweeter
 And the joy of June completer,
I shall see his face again!”

Of her lover over sea
So she whispered happily;
 And she prayed, while men were sleeping,
 “Mary, have him in thy keeping
As he sails the Stormy sea!”

White and silent lay his face
In a still, green-watered place,
 Where the long, grey weed scarce lifted,
 And the sand was lightly sifted
O’er his unremembering face.

The Bird's Song, The Sun, and the Wind

The bird's song, the sun, and the wind—

The wind that rushes, the sun that is still,
The song of the bird that sings alone,
And wide light washing the lonely hill!

The spring's coming, the buds and the brooks—

The brooks that clamour, the buds in the rain,
The coming of spring that comes unprayed for,
And eyes that welcome it not for pain!

Oh, Purple Hang the Pods!

Oh, purple hang the pods
On the green locust-tree,
And yellow turn the sods
On a grave that's dear to me!

And blue, softly blue,
The hollow autumn sky,
With its birds flying through
To where the sun-lands lie!

In the sun-lands they'll bide
While winter's on the tree;—
And oh, that I might hide
The grave that's dear to me!

An Evening Communion

The large first stars come out
Above the open hill,
And in the west the light
Is lingering still.

The wide and tranquil air
Of evening washes cool
On open hill, and vale,
And shining pool.

The calm of endless time
Is in the spacious hour,
Whose mystery unfolds
To perfect flower.

The silence and my heart
Expect a voice I know,—
A voice we have not heard
Since long ago.

Since long ago thy face,
Thy smile, I may not see,
True comrade, whom the veil
Divides from me.

But when earth's hidden word
I almost understand,
I dream that on my lips
I feel thy hand.

Thy presence is the light
Upon the open hill.
Thou walkest with me here,
True comrade still.

My pain and my unrest
Thou tak'st into thy care.
The world becomes a dream,
And life a prayer.

A Wake-up Song

Sun's up; wind's up! Wake up, dearies!

Leave your coverlets white and downy.

June's come into the world this morning.

Wake up, Golden Head! Wake up, Brownie!

Dew on the meadow-grass, waves on the water,

Robins in the rowan-tree wondering about you!

Don't keep the buttercups so long waiting.

Don't keep the bobolinks singing without you.

Wake up, Golden Head! Wake up, Brownie!

Cat-bird wants you in the garden soon.

You and I, butterflies, bobolinks, and clover,

We've a lot to do on the first of June.

Sleepy Man

When the Sleepy Man comes with the dust on his eyes
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
He shuts up the earth, and he opens the skies.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He smiles through his fingers, and shuts up the sun;
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
The stars that he loves he lets out one by one.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He comes from the castles of Drowsy-boy Town;
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
At the touch of his hand the tired eyelids fall down.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

He comes with a murmur of dream in his wings
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
And whispers of mermaids and wonderful things.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

Then the top is a burden, the bugle a bane
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
When one would be faring down Dream-a-way Lane,
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

When one would be wending in Lullaby Wherry
 (Oh, weary, my Dearie, so weary!)
To Sleepy Man's Castle by Comforting Ferry.
 (So hush-a-by, weary my Dearie!)

The Stack behind the Barn

September is here, with the ripened seeds,
And the homely smell of the autumn weeds.
My heart goes back to a vanished day,
And I am again a boy at play
 In the stack behind the barn.

Dear memory of the old home-farm,—
The hedge-rows fencing the crops from harm,
The cows, too heavy with milk for haste;
The barn-yard, yellow with harvest waste,
 And the stack behind the barn.

Dear, dear, dear the old garden-smell,
Sweet William and phlox that I loved so well,
And the seeding mint, and the sage turned grey,
But dearer the smell of the tumbled hay
 In the stack behind the barn.

In the side of the stack we made our nest,
And there was the play-house we loved the best.
A thicket of goldenrod, bending and bright,
Filled us with glory and hid us from sight
 In the stack behind the barn.

Then, when the stack, with the year, ran low,
And our frosty, morning cheeks were aglow,
When time had forgotten the dropping leaves,
What joy to drop from the barn's wide eaves
 To the stack behind the barn!

O childhood years! Your heedless feet
Have slipped away with how much that's sweet!
But dreams and memory master you,
Till the make-believe of Life is through
I still may play as the children do
 In the stack behind the barn.

The Farmer's Winter Morning

The wide, white world is bitter still,
 (Oh, the snow lies deep in the barn-yard.)
And the dawn bites hard on the naked hill;
And the kitchen smoke from the chimney curls
Unblown, and hangs with a hue of pearls.
 (Oh, the snow lies deep in the barn-yard.)

The polished well-iron burns like a brand.
 (Oh, the frost is white on the latch.)
The horses neigh for their master's hand;
In the dusky stable they paw the floor
As his steps come crunching up to the door.
 (Oh, the frost is white on the latch.)

In the high, dim barn the smell of the hay
 (Oh, the snow lies deep in the barn-yard.)
Breathes him the breath of a summer's day.
The cows in their stanchions heavily rise
And watch him with slow, expectant eyes.
 (Oh, the snow lies deep in the barn-yard.)

Into the mangers, into the stalls,
 (Oh, the frost is white on the latch.)
The fodder, cheerily rustling, falls.
And the sound of the feeding fills the air
As the sun looks in at the window-square.
 (Oh, the frost is white on the latch.)

With a rhythmic din in the echoing tins
 (Oh, the snow lies deep in the barn-yard.)
The noise of the milking soon begins.
With deepening murmur up to the brims
The foamy whiteness gathers and swims.
 (Oh, the snow lies deep in the barn-yard.)

When the ice is chopped at the great trough's brink,
 (Oh, the frost is white on the latch.)
The cattle come lazily out to drink;
And the fowls come out on the sun-lit straw,—
For the sun's got high, and the south eaves thaw,
 (And the frost is gone from the latch.)

In the Barn-yard's Southerly Corner

When the frost is white on the fodder-stack,
The haws in the thorn-bush withered and black,
When the near fields flash in a diamond mail
And the far hills glimmer opaline pale,
Oh, merrily shines the morning sun
 In the barn-yard's southerly corner.

When the ruts in the cart-road ring like steel
And the birds to the kitchen door come for their meal,
And the snow at the gate is lightly drifted
And over the wood-pile thinly sifted,
Oh, merrily shines the morning sun
 In the barn-yard's southerly corner.

When the brimming bucket steams at the well,
And the axe on the beech-knot sings like a bell,
When the pond is loud with the skaters' calls,
And the horses stamp in the littered stalls,
Oh, merrily shines the morning sun
 In the barn-yard's southerly corner.

When the hay lies loose on the wide barn-floor,
And a sharp smell puffs from the stable door,
When the pitchfork handle stings in the hand
And the stanchioned cows for the milking stand,
Oh, merrily shines the morning sun
 In the barn-yard's southerly corner.

And the steers, let out for a drink and a run
Seek the warm corner one by one,
And the huddling sheep, in their dusty white,
Nose at the straw in the pleasant light,
When merrily shines the morning sun
 In the barn-yard's southerly corner.

Bringing Home the Cows

When potatoes were in blossom,
When the new hay filled the mows,
Sweet the paths we trod together,
Bringing home the cows.

What a purple kissed the pasture,
Kissed and blessed the alder-boughs,
As we wandered slow at sundown,
Bringing home the cows!

How the far-off hills were gilded
With the light that dream allows,
As we built our hopes beyond them,
Bringing home the cows!

How our eyes were bright with visions,
What a meaning wreathed our brows,
As we watched the cranes, and lingered,
Bringing home the cows!

Past the years, and through the distance,
Throbs the memory of our vows.
Oh, that we again were children,
Bringing home the cows!

The Logs

In thronged procession gliding slow
The great logs sullenly seaward go.

A blind and blundering multitude
They jostle on the swollen flood,

Nor guess the inevitable fate
To greet them at the river-gate

When noiseless hours have lured them down
To the wide booms, the busy town,

The mills, the chains, the screaming jaws
Of the eviscerating saws.

Here in the murmur of the stream
Slow journeying, perchance they dream,

And hear once more their branches sigh
Far up the solitary sky,

Once more the rain-wind softly moan
Where sways the high green top alone,

Once more the inland eagle call
From the white crag that broods o'er all.

But if, beside some meadowy brink
Where flowering willows lean to drink,

Some open beach at the river bend
Where shallows in the sun extend,

They for a little would delay,
The huge tide hurries them away.

Up and Away in the Morning

Tide's at full; the waves break white
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)
Blue is the blown grass, red is the height;
Washed with the sun the sail shines white
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)

Wide is the world in the laughing sun
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)
Work's to be done and wealth's to be won
Ere a man turn home with the homing sun
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)

Long is the heart's hope, long as the day
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)
Heart has its will and hand has its way
Till the world rolls over and ends the day
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)

It's home that we toil for all day long
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)
Hand on the line and heart in the song,
The labour of love will not seem long
(Oh, up and away in the morning!)

Home, Home in the Evening

When the crows fly in from sea
 (Oh, home, home in the evening!)
My love in his boat comes back to me.
Over the tumbling leagues of sea
 (Oh, home, home in the evening!)

And when the sun drops over the hill
 (Oh, home, home in the evening!)
My happy eyes they take their fill
Of watching my love as he climbs the hill
 (Oh, home, home in the evening!)

And when the dew falls over the land
 (Oh, home, home in the evening!)
I hold in my hand his dearest hand,
The happiest woman in all the land
 (Oh, home, home in the evening!)

All day she sang by the cottage door.
 (Oh, home, home in the evening!)
At sundown came his boat to the shore—
But he to the hearthside comes no more
 Home, home in the evening.

Mothers

Mary, when the childing pain
 Made thy patient eyes grow dim,
Of that anguish wert thou fain,
 Wert thou glad because of Him?
How thou smiledst in thy woe
Every mother's heart doth know.

Mary, when the helpless Child
 Nursed and slumbered at thy breast,
In the rosy form and mild
 Didst thou see the Heavenly Guest?
Such a guest from Paradise
Gladdens every mother's eyes.

Brother Cuthbert

Cuthbert, open! Let me in!
Cease your praying for a minute!
Here the darkness seems to grin,
Holds a thousand horrors in it;
Down the stony corridor
Footsteps pace the stony floor.

Here they foot it, pacing slow,
Monk-like, one behind another!—
Don't you hear me? Don't you know
I'm a little nervous, Brother?
Won't you speak? Then, by your leave,
Here's a guest for Christmas Eve!

Shrive me, but I got a fright!
Monks of centuries ago
Wander back to see to-night
How the old place looks.—Hello!
This the kind of watch you keep!
Come to pray—and go to sleep!

Ah, this mortal flesh is weak!
Who is saintly there's no saying.
Here are tears upon his cheek,
And he sleeps that should be praying;—
Sleeps, and dreams, and murmurs. Nay,
I'll not wake you.—Sleep away!

Holy saints, the night is keen!
How the nipping wind does drive
Through yon tree-tops, bare and lean,
Till their shadow seems alive,—
Patters through the bars, and falls,
Shivering, on the floor and walls!

How yon patch of freezing sky
Echoes back their bell-ringings!

Down in the grey city, nigh
Severn, every steeple swings.
All the busy streets are bright.
Many folk are out to-night.

—What's that, Brother? Did you speak?—
Christ save them that talk in sleep!
Smile they howsoever meek,
Somewhat in their hearts they keep.
We, good souls, what shifts we make
To keep talking whilst awake!

Christ be praised, that fetched me in
Early, yet a youngling, while
All unlearned in life and sin,
Love and travail, grief and guile!
For your world of two-score years,
Cuthbert, all you have is tears.

Dreaming, still he hears the bells
As he heard them years ago,
Ere he sought our quiet cells
Iron-mouthed and wrenched with woe,
Out of what dread storms who knows—
Faithfulest of friends and foes!

Faithful was he aye, I ween,
Pitiful, and kind, and wise;
But in mindful moods I've seen
Flame enough in those sunk eyes!
Praised be Christ, whose timely hand
Plucked from out the fire this brand!

Now in dreams he's many miles
Hence, he's back in Ireland.
Ah, how tenderly he smiles,
Stretching a caressing hand!
Backward now his memory glides
To old, happy Christmas-tides.

Now once more a loving wife

Holds him; now he sees his boys,
Smiles at all their playful strife,
All their childish mirth and noise;
Softly now she strokes his hair.—
Ah, their world is very fair!

—Waking, all your loss shall be
Unforgotten evermore!
Sleep alone holds these for thee.
Sleep then, Brother!—To restore
All your heaven that has died
Heaven and Hell may be too wide!

Sleep, and dream, and be awhile
Happy, Cuthbert, once again!
Soon you'll wake, and cease to smile,
And your heart will sink with pain.
You will hear the merry town,—
And a weight will press you down.

Hungry-hearted you will see
Only the thin shadows fall
From yon bleak-topped poplar-tree,—
Icy fingers on the wall.
You will watch them come and go,
Telling o'er your count of woe.

—Nay, now, hear me, how I prate!
I, a foolish monk, and old,
Maundering o'er a life and fate
To me unknown, by you untold!
Yet I know you're like to weep
Soon, so, Brother, this night sleep.

The Departing of Gluskâp

It is so long ago; and men well-nigh
Forget what gladness was, and how the earth
Gave corn in plenty, and the rivers fish,
And the woods meat, before he went away.
His going was on this wise.

All the works

And words and ways of men and beasts became
Evil, and all their thoughts continually
Were but of evil. Then he made a feast.
Upon the shore that is beside the sea
That takes the setting sun, he ordered it,
And called the beasts thereto. Only the men
He called not, seeing them evil utterly.
He fed the panther's crafty brood, and filled
The lean wolf's hunger; from the hollow tree
His honey stayed the bear's terrific jaws;
And the brown rabbit couched at peace, within
The circling shadow of the eagle's wings.
And when the feast was done he told them all
That now, because their ways were evil grown,
On that same day he must depart from them,
And they should look upon his face no more.
Then all the beasts were very sorrowful.

It was near sunset, and the wind was still,
And down the yellow shore a thin wave washed
Slowly; and Gluskâp launched his birch canoe,
And spread his yellow sail, and moved from shore,
Though no wind followed, streaming in the sail,
Or roughening the clear waters after him.
And all the beasts stood by the shore, and watched.
Then to the west appeared a long red trail
Over the wave; and Gluskâp sailed and sang
Till the canoe grew little, like a bird,
And black, and vanished in the shining trail.
And when the beasts could see his form no more,

They still could hear him, singing as he sailed,
And still they listened, hanging down their heads
In long row, where the thin wave washed and fled.
But when the sound of singing died, and when
They lifted up their voices in their grief,
Lo! on the mouth of every beast a strange
New tongue! Then rose they all and fled apart,
Nor met again in council from that day.

The Lone Wharf

The long tides sweep
Around its sleep,
The long red tides of Tantramar.
Around its dream
They hiss and stream,
Sad for the ships that have sailed afar.

*How many lips
Have lost their bloom,
How many ships
Gone down to gloom,
Since keel and sail
Have fled out from me
Over the thunder and strain of the sea!*

Its kale-dark sides
Throb in the tides;
The long winds over it spin and hum;
Its timbers ache
For memory's sake,
And the throngs that never again will come.

*How many lips
Have lost their bloom,
How many ships
Gone down to gloom,
Since keel and sail
Have fled out from me
Over the thunder and strain of the sea!*

The Banquet

Though o'er the board the constellations shine,
Austere the feast for Time's retainers spread,—
Laughter the salt of life, and love the wine,
Sleep the sweet herbs, and work the bitter bread.

The Stirrup Cup

Life at my stirrup lifted wistful eyes,
And as she gave the parting cup to me,—
Death's pale companion for the silent sea,—
"I know," she said, "that land and where it lies.
A pledge between us now before you go,
That when you meet me there your soul may know!"

Life and Art

Said Life to Art—"I love thee best
Not when I find in thee
My very face and form, expressed
With dull fidelity,

"But when in thee my craving eyes
Behold continually
The mystery of my memories
And all I long to be."

Dream-Fellows

Behind the veil that men call sleep
I came upon a golden land.
A golden light was in the leaves
And on the amethystine strand.

Amber and gold and emerald
The unimaginable wood.
And in a joy I could not name
Beside the emerald stream I stood.

Down from a violet hill came one
Running to meet me on the shore.
I clasped his hand. He seemed to be
One I had long been waiting for.

All the sweet sounds I ever heard
In his low greeting seemed to blend.
His were the eyes of my true love.
His was the mouth of my true friend.

We spoke; and the transfigured words
Meant more than words had ever meant.
Our lips at last forgot to speak,
For silence was so eloquent.

We floated in the emerald stream;
We wandered in the wondrous wood.
His soul to me was clear as light.
My inmost thought he understood.

Only to be was to be glad.
Life, like a rainbow, filled our eyes.
In comprehending comradeship
Each moment seemed a Paradise.

And often, in the after years,
I and my dream-fellow were one

For hours together in that land
Behind the moon, beyond the sun.

At last, in the tumultuous dream
That men call life, I chanced to be
One day amid the city throng
Where the great piers oppose the sea.

A giant ship was swinging off
For other seas and other skies.
Amid the voyaging companies
I saw his face, I saw his eyes.

Oh, passionately through the crowd
I thrust, and then—our glances met!
Across the widening gulf we gazed,
With white, set lips, and eyes grown wet.

And all day long my heart was faint
With parting pangs and tears unwept;
Till night brought comfort, for he came
To meet me, smiling, when I slept.

Beyond the veil that men call sleep
We met, within that golden land.
He said—or I—“We grieved to-day.
But now, more wise, we understand!

“Communing in the common world,
The flesh, for us, would be a bar.
Strange would be our familiar speech;
And earth would seem no more a star.

“We’d know no more the golden leaves
Beside the amethystine deep;
We’d see no more each other’s thought
Behind the veil that men call sleep!”

The Hermit

Above the blindness of content,
The ignorance of ease,
Inhabiting within his soul
A shrine of memories,

Between the silences of sleep
Attentively he hears
The endless crawling sob and strain,
The spending of the years.

He sees the lapsing stream go by
His unperturbèd face,
Out of a dark, into a dark,
Across a lighted space.

He calls it Life, this lighted space
Upon the moving flood.
He sees the water white with tears,
He sees it red with blood.

And many specks upon the tide
He sees and marks by name,—
Motes of a day, and fools of Fate,
And challengers of fame;

With here a people, there a babe,
A blossom, or a crown,—
They whirl a little, gleam, and pass,
Or in the eddies drown.

He waits. He waits one day to see
The lapsing of the stream,
The eddying forms, the darknesses,
Dissolve into a dream.

The Wrestler

When God sends out His company to travel through the stars,
There is every kind of wonder in the show;
There is every kind of animal behind its prison bars;
With riders in a many-coloured row.
The master showman, Time, has a strange trick of rhyme,
And the clown's most ribald jest is a tear;
But the best drawing card is the Wrestler huge and hard,
Who can fill the tent at any time of year.

His eye is on the crowd, and he beckons with his hand,
With authoritative finger, and they come.
The rules of the game they do not understand,
But they go as in a dream, and are dumb.
They would fain say him nay, and they look the other way,
Till at last to the ropes they cling.
But he throws them one by one till the show for them is done,
In the blood-red dust of the ring.

There's none to shun his challenge—they must meet him soon or late,
And he knows a cunning trick for all heels.
The king's haughty crown drops in jeers from his pate
As the hold closes on him, and he reels.
The burly and the proud, the braggarts of the crowd,
Everyone of them he topples down in thunder.
His grip grows mild for the dotard and the child,
But alike they must all go under.

Oh, many a mighty foeman would try a fall with him;—
Persepolis, and Babylon, and Rome,
Assyria and Sardis, they see their fame grow dim
As he tumbles in the dust every dome.
At last will come an hour when the stars shall feel his power,
And he shall have his will upon the sun.
Ere we know what he's about the lights will be put out,
And the wonder of the show will be undone.

Beyond the Tops of Time

How long it was I did not know,
That I had waited, watched, and feared.
It seemed a thousand years ago
The last pale lights had disappeared.
I knew the place was a narrow room
Up, up beyond the reach of doom.

Then came a light more red than flame;—
No sun-dawn, but the soul laid bare
Of earth and sky and sea became
A presence burning everywhere;
And I was glad my narrow room
Was high above the reach of doom.

Windows there were in either wall,
Deep cleft, and set with radiant glass,
Wherethrough I watched the mountains fall,
The ages wither up and pass.
I knew their doom could never climb
My tower beyond the tops of Time.

A sea of faces then I saw,
Of men who had been, men long dead.
Figured with dreams of joy and awe,
The heavens unrolled in lambent red;
While far below the faces cried—
“Give us the dream for which we died!”

Ever the woven shapes rolled by
Above the faces hungering.
With quiet and incurious eye
I noted many a wondrous thing,—
Seas of clear glass, and singing streams,
In that high pageantry of dreams;

Cities of sard and chrysoprase
Where choired Hosannas never cease;

Valhallas of celestial frays,
And lotus-pools of endless peace;
But still the faces gaped and cried—
“Give us the dream for which we died!”

At length my quiet heart was stirred,
Hearing them cry so long in vain.
But while I listened for a word
That should translate them from their pain
I saw that here and there a face
Shone, and was lifted from its place,

And flashed into the moving dome
An ecstasy of prised fire.
And then said I, “A soul has come
To the deep zenith of desire!”
But still I wondered if it knew
The dream for which it died was true.

I wondered—who shall say how long?
(One heart-beat?—Thrice ten thousand years?)
Till suddenly there was no throng
Of faces to arraign the spheres,—
No more white faces there to cry
To those great pageants of the sky.

Then quietly I grew aware
Of one who came with eyes of bliss
And brow of calm and lips of prayer.
Said I, “How wonderful is this!
Where are the faces once that cried—
‘Give us the dream for which we died’?”

The answer fell as soft as sleep,—
“I am of those who, having cried
So long in that tumultuous deep,
Have won the dream for which we died.”
And then said I, “Which dream was true?
For many were revealed to you!”

He answered, “To the soul made wise

All true, all beautiful they seem.
But the white peace that fills our eyes
Outdoes desire, outreaches dream.
For we are come unto the place
Where always we behold God's face!"

υἱῆ

Poems written before 1880
(from "Orion and Other Poems")

‘Ω φίλε πάν, τε καὶ ἄλλοι ἄσοι τῆδε θεοί,
δοίητε μοὶ καλῶ γενέσθαι τᾶνδοθεν.

Dedication of "Orion and Other Poems"

To G. Goodridge Roberts

These first-fruits, gathered by distant ways,
In brief, sweet moments of toilsome days,
 When the weary brain was a thought less weary,
And the heart found strength for delight and praise,—

I bring them and proffer them to thee,
All blown and beaten by winds of the sea,
 Ripened beside the tide-vexed river,—
The broad, ship-laden Miramichi.

Even though on my lips no Theban bees
Alighted,—though harsh and ill-formed these,
 Of alien matters in distant regions
Wrought in the youth of the centuries,—

Yet of some worth in thine eyes be they,
For bare mine innermost heart they lay;
 And the old, firm love that I bring thee with them
Distance shall quench not, nor time bewray.

Fredericton, July, 1880.

To the Spirit of Song

White as fleeces blown across the hollow heaven
Fold on fold thy garment wraps thy shining limbs;
Deep thy gaze as morning's flamed thro' vapours riven,
Bright thine hair as day's that up the ether swims.
Surely I have seen the majesty and wonder,
Beauty, might and splendour of the soul of song;
Surely I have felt the spell that lifts asunder
Soul from body, when lips faint and thought is strong;
Surely I have heard
The ample silence stirred
By intensest music from no throat of bird:—
Smitten down before thy feet
From the paths of heaven sweet,
Lowly I await the song upon my lips conferred.

Orion

Two mighty arms of thunder-cloven rock
Stretched ever westward toward the setting sun,
And took into their ancient, scarred embrace
A laughing valley and a crooning bay.
The gods had stilled them in their primal throes,
And broken down their writhed extremities
Sheer to the open sea. And now pine-belts
And strayed fir-copses lined their shaggy sides;
And inland toward the island's quiet heart
White torrents cleft the screens and answered each
To other from the high cliffs closer drawn;
Kept ever brimming from eternal caves
In azure deeps of snow, and feeding full
A strong, swift river. And the river flowed
With tumult, till it caught the mighty speech
Rolled upward from the ocean, when it paused,
And hushed its rapid song in reverence,
And wound slow-footed through the summer vale,
And met its sovereign with majestic calm.
The sunset with its red and purple banners
Hung softly o'er the bay, whose rippled breast
Flushed crimson; and the froth-streaks round the beach
Were glowing pink. The sands burned ruddy gold
And foot-marks crossing them lay sharp and black.
A flood of purple glory swept the shores,
And spread upon the vineyards, and the groves
Of olives round the river-banks, and clothed
The further matted jungles; whence it climbed
The ragged scaurs and jagg'd ravines, until
It lay a splendour on the endless snow.

Where the slow swirls were swallowed in the tide,
Some stone-throws from the stream's mouth, there the sward
Stretched thick and starry from the ridge's foot
Down to the waves' wet limits, scattering off
Across the red sand-level stunted tufts
Of yellow beach-grass, whose brown panicles

Wore garlands of blown foam. Amidst the slope
Three sacred laurels drooped their dark-green boughs
About a high-piled altar. There the king,
Enopion, to whose sceptre bowed with awe
The people dwellers in the steep-shored Chios,
Stood praying westward; in his outstretched hand
The griding knife, well whetted, clothed with dread.
The royal priest's dark tresses, made aware
Of coming winter by some autumn snows,
Hung down his blue-dyed mantle, which he girt
Up seemly for the sacrifice; a beard,
Short, black, and silken, clothed his lips and chin;
Beneath deep brows his keen eyes lurked half hid,
And never rested. Now they drank the stream
Poured from the fiery sunset's sunken springs.
A supplication moved his silent lips,
Swift-winged to seek Apollo and beseech
Regard unto the rites e'en now begun.
Anon he dropped his arm; and straight the youths,
Chosen of Chios' fairest race, upbore
The victim to the pile,—a tawny wolf,
Blood-stained, fast bound in pliant withes, fed fat
On many a bleating spoil of careless folds,
His red tongue lolling from his fanged jaws,
His eyes, inflamed, shrinking with terror and hate,
His writhen sinews strained convulsively.

Meanwhile from out a neighbour gorge, which spake
Rough torrent-thunders through its cloak of pines,
Along the shore came one who seemed to wear
The grandeur of the mountains for a robe,
The torrent's strength for girdle, and for crown
The sea's calm, for dread fury capable,—
A Hunter laden with the spotted pride
Of kingly beasts before not dared of men,—
And stood without the laurel's sacred shade,
Which his large presence deepened. When the knife
Let blood well-pleasing to Apollo forth
The victim's gasping throat,—who yet cried not,
But glared still hate upon his murderers
And died uncraven,—then the Hunter bent

His godlike head with awe unto the gods,
And so kept bowed, the while the King drew forth
Wine from a full skin-bottle nigh, and poured
A beaded, dark libation. Then he raised
His head again,—like a tall pine that bends
Unto a sudden blast, and so keeps bent
Some moments, till the tempest passes by,—
And cast his burden down before the King,
And said,—

“With skins of lions, leopards, bears,
Lynxes and wolves, I come, O King, fulfilling
My pledge, and seeking the delayed fulfilling
Of some long hopes. For now the mountain lairs
Are empty, and the valley folds secure.
The inland jungles shall be vexed no more
With muffled roarings through the clouded night,
And heavy splashings in the misty pools.
The echo-peopled crags shall howl no more
With hungry yelpings ’mid the hoary firs.
The breeding ewe in the thicket shall not wake
With wolves’ teeth at her throat, nor drinking bull
Bellow in vain beneath the leopard’s paw.
Your maidens shall not fear to quit by night
Their cottages to meet their shepherd lads;
And these shall leave safe flocks, and have no need
Of blazing faggots. Nor without some toils
Are these things so. For mighty beasts did yield
Their ornament up most reluctantly;
And some did grievous battle. But the pledge
And surety of a blissful harbourage,
Whither through buffets rude I needs must fare,
Made heavy labours light. And if, hard pressed,
My knees perchance waxed faint, or mine eyes dim,
The strong earth stayed me, and the unbowed hills,
The wide air and the ever-joyous sun,
The free sea leaping up beneath the sun,—
All were to me for kindly ministrants,
And lent glad service to their last-born, man,
Whom, reverent, the gods, too, favoured well.
And if to me, sleepless, alone, by night
Came phantoms from polluted spots, and shades

Unfettered, wavering round my cliff-edged couch,
Fain to aghast me; them I heeded not,
As not worth heed. For there the deep-eyed Night
Looked down on me; unflagging voices called
From unpent waters falling; tireless wings
Of long winds bare me tongueless messages
From star-consulting, silent pinnacles;
And breadth, and depth, and stillness fathered me.
But now, O King, seeing I have at cost
Of no slight labour done thy rugged hest,
And seeing hard strife should win sweet favours, grant
The good long wrought for, that amid the groves
And sunny vineyards I may drink deep draughts
Of love's skilled mixing, and of sweet mouth's gift
Of maiden-lipped, snow-breasted Merope."

So sped the winged words. And thus the King,
Ænopion, to whose sceptre bowed with awe
The people, dwellers in the steep-shored Chios:
"Great honour hast thou won and shalt possess,
And I will pay thee to the uttermost.
Thy couch this night be softer, and more blest
Thy visions,"—but in subtlety he spake,
And went apart a little from the place,
And filled with sullen wine two cups, well wrought.
But one he tintured with a Colchian drug
And gave his guest to drink, with honeyed words,
But crooked, serpent-smooth,—“Drink this, in pledge
Of those deep draughts for which thou art athirst.
And now I go to bid the maid be glad
And make all ready. Rest thee here with these,
And I will come and fetch thee.” And he went
Up from the shore and in among the vines,
Until his mantle gleamed athwart the lanes
Of sunset through the far, grey olive-groves.
The Hunter turned and heeded not the men,
But went apart close by the sleepless sea
And sat him down, because his eyes were dim,
And his head heavy, and his sinews faint.

And now it was about the set of sun,

And the west sea-line with its quivering rim
Had hid the sun-god's curls. A sanguine mist
Crept up, and to the Hunter's heavy eyes
Became as if his eyes were filled with blood.
He guessed the traitorous cup, and his great heart
Was hot, his throat was hot; but heavier grew
His head, and he sank back upon the sand,
Nor saw the light go out across the sea,
Nor heard the eagle scream among the crags,
Nor stealthy laughter echo up the shore,
Nor the slow ripple break about his feet.

The deep-eyed Night drew down to comfort him,
And lifted her great lids and mourned for him,
Foreknowing all his woe, and herself weak
To bend for him the indomitable fates;
And heavier dews wet all the trees and fields;
And sighs cool-drawn from infinite wells of space
Breathed round him; and from forth the unbowed hills
Came strength, and from the ocean essences
And influences to commune with him,
But found his spirit blind, and dumb, and deaf,
Not eager and expectant, as of old,
At every portal of the sleepless mind.
But hark! what feet are these that stir the vines
Beneath the big, sweet-smelling grape-clusters?
What feet are these that leave the muffling grass
And crush the shingle sharply up the beach?
Out of the foamless sea a heavy fog
Steamed up, rolled in on all the island shores,
But heavier, denser, like a cloak, where lay
The Hunter; and the darkness gathered thick,
More thick the fog and darkness where he lay,—
Like as a mother folds more close her child
At night when sudden street-brawl jars her dreams.
But now the folding vapours veiled him not,
The ineffectual darkness hid him not,
For one came with the King and bare a torch,
And stood beside the Hunter where he lay;
And all the darkness shuddered and fled back
Sullenly into the grim-visaged crags,

Beneath their battered foreheads; and the fog
Crept up a chilly horror round the King,
Made huge the writhed and frowning mountain-brows,
Till cliff, and cloud, and chaos of thick night
Topped about the place, and each small sound
Of footstep or of stealthy whisper rang
Tortured and shrill within the cavernous hollows.
Before the King, before the torch-bearer,
Stood one beside the Hunter's head,—a slave
Beside the god-begotten,—and he bare
Back with one arm his cloak, and in his hand
He bare a cup—with suchlike juice in it
As slew Alcmena's son—above the face,
The strong, white godlike face, more deathly white
Even than death. Then into each close lid
He dropped the poison with a loathing hand,
While he whose light made manifest the deed
Wincd in his eyes and saw not, would not see,
Those eyes that knew not of their light gone out.
And heavy drops stood forth on all the rocks,
And ocean moaned unseen beneath the fog.
But the King laughed—not loud—and drew his cloak
Closer about him and went up the beach,
And they two with him.

Now the fog rolled back

And a low moon came out across the sea,
And o'er the sea flocked out the pasturing stars,
And still he lay upon the trodden sand,
And still the ripple brake about his feet.
So moved the burdened hours toward the dawn;
But suddenly their burden was forgot,
For music welled from out the throbbing waves,
And melody filled all the silver air.
And silver shoulders under wondrous gold
Of dripping tresses brake the shining waste
Whence came the maids beloved of Doris, fair
As stars and lovely for the stars to see,
And stood and mourned about the Hunter there,—
And cursed were his eyes that could not see.
And had he seen, as grievous were his case,
Blinded with love and stricken with delight.

So came they weeping, and their yellow hair
Fell round them, while they smote their lyres and sang:

“O god-begotten
And dear to all the gods!
For thee quick-dropping tears
Make heavy our eyes and hot.
Be he of gods forgotten
That smote thee, their gifts as rods
To scourge him all his years,
Sparing him not.

“For thee the long-heaving
Ocean, fruitful of foam,
Groaned in his depths and was sore
Troubled, grieving for thee.
Grew Clotho sick of her weaving,
And the fury of storms that come
Out of the wilderness hoar
Went pitying thee.

“For thee the all-bearing
Mother, the bountiful Earth,
Who hath borne no fairer son
In her kindly bosom and broad,
Will not be comforted, wearing
Thy pain like her labour of birth,
And hath veiled her in vapours as one
Stricken down, overawed.

“For thee the all-covering
Night, the comforting mother,
Wept round thee pitifully,
Nor withheld her compassionate hands;
And sleep from her wings low-hovering
Fell kindly and sweet to no other
Between the unharvested sky
And the harvested lands.

“We are all made heavy of heart, we weep with thee, sore with thy sorrow,—
The Sea to its uttermost part, the Night from the dusk to the morrow,

The unplumbed spaces of Air, the unharnessed might of the Wind,
The Sun that outshaketh his hair before his incoming, behind
His outgoing, and laughs, seeing all that is, or hath been, or shall be,
The unflagging waters that fall from their well-heads soon to the sea,
The high Rocks barren at even, at morning clothed with the rime,
The strong hills propping up heaven, made fast in their place for all time.
Withal the abiding Earth, the fruitful mother and kindly,
Who apportions plenty and dearth, nor withholdeth from the least thing
blindly,

With suchlike pity would hide thy reverent eyes indeed
Wherewith the twin Aoides fain she would hide at their need.
But they withstood not Apollo, they brake through to Hades, o'erthrown;
But thee the high gods follow with favour, kind to their own;
For of thee they have not lacked vows, nor yellow honey, nor oil,
Nor the first fruit red on the boughs, nor white meal sifted with toil,
Nor gladdening wine, nor savour of thighs with the fat burned pure,—
Therefore now of their favour this ill thing shall not endure.
It endures but a little, seeing the gods make ready their mercy,
Giving for thy well-being a skillfuller goddess than Circe,
For the putting away of thy trouble, the setting far off of thy pain,
And she shall repay thee double, making thy loss thy gain.
But come, for the night fulfils, the grey in the sky gives warning;—
Then get thee up to the hills and thou shalt behold the MORNING.”

The Hunter stirred, and all the long grey shore
Lay empty, and the ripple whispered not,
Awed by the wide-spread silence. Then he rose,
Groping, and strove to put aside the night
That clung beneath his eyelids,—till he knew,
And his whole heart sank, knowing. Then his voice
Brake thus from out his utter misery
(The while a sound went,—“Get thee up to the hills;
Thou shalt behold the morning”; but he heard not):
“Oh, black night, black forever! No light forever!
Oh, long, long night, just fallen to hang forever,
Never to break or lighten! Whose the heart
That dared it? Whose the hateful thought? What hand
Wrought me this curse, dealt me this ruin, this woe
Unutterable, pitiless, unmeasured,—
Put out my light, portioned me night forever?
Oh, ye that die not, ye that suffer not,

Gods that are mindful, seeing good and evil!
If ever unto you have risen a savour
Acceptable, of honey, and oil, and wine,
Me offering; and if a frequent smoke
Have circled up to heaven from me to you
Acceptable, of spotless hecatombs;
And if from vows fulfilled and reverence
Be favour in your sight,—then hear my prayer,
And soon be it accomplished: let the hand
Wither that wrought me this, the brain that planned
Rave and henceforth be mocked and plagued of devil.
Let every good be turned for him to gall,
And those his heart most cherishes become
A horror, till he flee from them as fiends.
But is this pain forever, this my night
Eternal? Thou that mad'st the day and night,
Make thou a day for me! O Earth, my mother,
All bountiful, all pitiful, take heed
Into what evil on thy breast hath fallen
Thy son! O sleepless sea, behold my woe!
O air all-folding, sky immovable,
With everlasting contemplation wise,
Know ye no remedy? Forests and fields,
Tempests untiring, streams, and steadfast hills,
Flame-riven caverns, hear me, for ye know me!
Tell me; I hearken.” And his bended head
Besought the rocks.

“Thou shalt behold the morning,”

Brake clearly on the ample-bosomed silence,
And straight begot as many widening waves
As doth a pebble on a resting lake.
The echoes hurtled inland, startling all
The olive-groves and vineyards, rippling up
The green foot-hills, and lapping faint and low
About the low fir-copses; then they reached
The upper gorges, dying in that region,—
Region of sounding pines and cataracts
Impregnable to silence. Then, again,
Even in the lifting of his head, and making
Thanksgiving with mute lips, clear, far, and fine,
Out of the vaporous raiment round their tops

Came comfort from the hills:

“Up to the hills!

Thou shalt behold the morning!”

Then he bowed

With godlike reverence, reverencing the gods
And ancient powers that watched him, and made quick
His sense to their communion.

Now a sound

Of hammers rose behind a jagged cape
Not many paces hence, with windy roar
Of new-awakened fire. With pain and toil,
Groping and staggering, hands, and knees, and feet
Bruised with the crags, and faint, he came where men
Wrought arms and forged the glowing bronze for war.
There one came forth to meet him; him he took
Upon his kingly shoulder, and him bade
Of courtesy to be to him for eyes,
To guide his feet that quickly he might fare
To the hill-crests, or ere the fiery flower
Of dawn bloomed fully.

So they two went thus

Up from the sombre, bitter-breathing sea,
Beside the river, o'er the slumbrous sward
Gossamer-spread, dew-drenched, and in among
The vineyards and the olives. The fresh earth
Heavy about his feet, the bursting wealth
Of big grape-bunches, and the cool, green coils
Of dripping vines breathed richly. Swift they moved
'Mid gnarled trunks and still, grey stretch of leaves,
Without a sound save of wet twigs snapped dully
Or flit of startled bird. And now their way
They kept with toil, fallen on toilsome ways,—
Up shattered slopes half-clothed with juniper,
Through ragged-floored ravines, whose blasted scars
Held mighty pines root-fast in their black depths,
Still climbing, till a keen wind met them full
From eastward breathed, free-scented from the brine.
His labouring feet stood still, and while his lips
Drank the clear wind, his guide, descending home,
Left him alone, facing the gates of dawn.

The cliff rose steep and through the stormy leaves

The cliffs are rent, and through the eternal chasm
A far-heard moan of many cataracts,
With nearer, ceaseless murmur of the pines,
Came with the east wind, whilst the herald gold
From cloven pinnacles on either hand
On gradual wings sank to that airy glen;
And many-echoed dash of many waves
Rose dimly from the cliff-base where they brake,
Far down, unseen; and the wide sea spread wan
In the pale dawn-tide, limitless, unportioned—
Aye sentinelled by these vast rocky brows
Defaced and stern with unforgotten fires.

But he, intent, leaned toward the gates of dawn
With suppliant face, unseeing, and the wind
Blew back from either brow his hair, and cooled
His eyes that burned with that so foul dishonour
Late wrought upon them, whispering many things
Into his inmost soul. Sudden the day
Broke full. The healing of its radiance fell
Upon his eyes, and straight his sightless eyes
Were opened. All the morning's majesty
And mystery of loveliness lay bare
Before him; all the limitless blue sea
Brightening with laughter many a league around,
Wind-wrinkled, keel-uncloven, far below;
And far above the bright sky-neighbouring peaks;
And all around the broken precipices,
Cleft-rooted pines swung over falling foam,
And silver vapours flushed with the wide flood
Of crimson slanted from the opening east
Well ranked, the vanguard of the day,—all these
Invited him, but these he heeded not.
For there beside him, veiled in a mist
Wherethrough the enfolded splendour issued forth,—
As delicate music unto one asleep
Through mist of dreams flows softly,—all her hair
A mist of gold flung down about her feet,
Her dewy, cool, pink fingers parting it
Till glowing lips, and half-seen snowy curves
Like Parian stone, unnerved him, waited SHE,—
Then Cino skillfully to put away

Than Circe skimmier to put away
His pain, to set his sorrow afar off,—
Eos, with warm heart warm for *him*. His toils
Endured in vain, his great deeds wrought in vain,
His bitter pain, Ænopion's house accurst,
And even his sweet revenge, he recked not of;
But gave his heart up straightway unto love.

Now Delos lay a great way off, and thither
They two rejoicing went across the sea.
And under their swift feet, which the wave kissed
But wet not,—for Poseidon willed it so,
Honouring his son,—and all along their way
Was spread a perfect calm. And every being
Of beauty or of mirth left his abode
Under the populous flood and journeyed with them.
Out of their deep green caves the Nereids came
Again to do him honour; shining limbs
And shining bosoms, cleaving, waked the main
All into sapphire ripples, eachwhere crowned
With yellow tresses streaming. Triton came
And all his goodly company, with shells
Pink-whorled and purple, many-formed, and made
Tumultuous music. Ocean's tawny floor
They all left vacant, empty every bower,
And solitary the remotest courts.
Following in the midst of the array
Their mistress, her white horses paced along
Over the unaccustomed element,
Submissive, with the wonted chariot
Pillowed in vapours silver, pink and gold,
Itself of pearl and fire. And so they reached
Delos, and went together hand in hand
Up from the water and their company,
And the green wood received them out of sight.

Ariadne

I

Hung like a rich pomegranate o'er the sea
The ripened moon; along the tranced sand
The feather-shadowed ferns drooped dreamfully;
The solitude's evading harmony
Mingled remotely over sea and land;
A light wind woke and whispered warily,
And myriad ripples tinkled on the strand.

II

She lay face downward on the sighing shore,
Her head upon her bended arm; her hair
Loose-spreading fell, a heart-entangling store;
Her shoulder swelling through it glimmered more
Divinely white than snows in morning air;
One tress, more wide astray, the ripples bore
Where her hand clenched the ooze in mute despair.

III

A wandering wind laughed over her, then slunk
Shamefast away, laden with her deep woe,
Smit with the consciousness that she had drunk
Grief's numbing chalice to the dregs, and sunk,
As deep as ever mortal soul could go,
To sleep's dim caves: while, like a wave-borne trunk,
Did her still body no life-promise show.

IV

Then stronger stirred her pulses; and a sound
Of her deep-drawn and slowly-measured breath,
Now shattered by a gasping sob, or drowned
By sudden rustlings of the leaves around,
Told of her spirit driven back from Death,
Whom it had sought with forehead duly bound

Whom it had sought with forehead duly bound

With fillets, where the hemlock wavereth.

V

A many-throated din came echoing

Over the startled trees confusedly,

From the inmost mountain folds hurled clamouring

Along the level shore to droop its wing;

She blindly rose, and o'er the moon-tracked sea

Towards Athens stretched her hands,—“With shouts they bring

Their conquering chieftain home. Ah me! ah me!”

VI

But clearer came the music, zephyr-borne,

And turned her yearnings from the over-seas,

Hurtled unmasked o'er glade and belted bourne,—

Of dinning cymbal, covert-rousing horn,

Soft waxen pipe, shrill-shouted EVOES.

Then sat she down unheeding and forlorn,

Half dreaming of old Cretan melodies.

VII

Like thought quick-frozen in the vivid brain

At need of sudden, vast emergency,

She sat there dazed and motionless; the main

Sobbed round and caught her longest tress again,

And clasped her shell-like foot, nor heeded she;

And nearer, and nearer, like thick gusts of rain,

The clamour swelled and burst upon the sea.

VIII

The thickets rocked; the ferns were trampled down;

The shells and pebbles splashed into the waves;

The white sands reeked with purple stains and brown,

With crushed grape-clusters and fig-bunches strown;

Hoof'd sylvans, fauns, satyrs from mossy caves,

Fur-clad Bacchantes, leapt around to drown

God Bacchus' voice, whose lip the crimson laves.

IX

His thyrsus, wreathed with many-veined vine
 That magically blossomed and bare fruit,
 He waved above the crowd with grace divine,
 And straightway by the silver waste of brine
 They laid them gently down with gesture mute;
 The while he twined his persuasions fine
 And meshed her grief-clipt spirit with his lute.

X

These sweet entanglements he closely wove,—
 “A god hath heard thy plainings piteous;
 A god’s deep heart thy shrill shriek shuddering clove;
 A god hath left his incense-teeming grove,
 And sought thee by the chill sea’s barrenness;
 A god’s strong spirit night-long vainly strove,
 And fell before thy mortal loveliness.

XI

“Forget the subtle-tongued Ionian’s love,
 His speech that flowed like honey, and his vows;
 Forget the deaf, black ship that fleetly drove,
 Leaving thee hopeless in this moaning cove;
 Forget the past’s dumb misery, and rouse
 Thy heart and lift thy spirit clear above
 Dead griefs, as fitteth godhead’s promised spouse.

XII

“And hearken, maiden! I will love thee well.
 Then rise and follow, rise and follow, rise
 And give a god thine hand, and come and dwell
 With gods, and drink the purpling œnomet,
 And slake desire with aught that lures thine eyes,
 From flowerful hermitage in some green dell
 To sphere-realms in the star-entangled skies.

XIII

“Rich largess of all crystalline delights,
With converse of the well-persuading lyre,
Shall satisfy thee of sweet sounds and sights,
And each compelling beauty that excites
A yearning shall fulfil its own desire;
And vintagers shall worship thee with rites
Of wine outpoured and vervain-nourished fire.

XIV

“And all these pleasures shall be sure for thee;
And woven through them like a golden thread
The certainty of one fixt love for thee,
And that a god’s, shall bind them fast for thee,—
So fast that by no finely-stinging dread,
Lest they should prove some dream-wrought mockery,
Shall thy heart’s joyance e’er be visited.”

XV

And so with silver-linked melodies
He wooed her till the moon lay pale and low;
And first she lifted up her dreaming eyes
And dreamed him her old love in fairer guise;
And then her soul drew outwards, and a glow
Woke in her blood of pleasure and surprise,
To think it was a god that loved her so.

XVI

And last she rose up happily, and gave
Her hand to him, by sudden love made bold,—
The while the sun got up refreshed and drave
Square-shouldered through the lucent mists, that clave
To the clear-echoed inland hills, and rolled
Along their peaks in many a pallid wave,
Or floated coldly o’er the molten gold,—

XVII

And went with him where honey-dew distils

Through swimming air in odorous mists and showers,
Where music the attentive stillness fills;
And every scent and colour drips and spills
From myriad quivering wings of orchid flowers;
And there they dwelt deep in the folded hills,
Blissfully hunting down the fleet-shod hours.

XVIII

And who shall say her love was incomplete?
For love fares hardly on ingratitude,
And love dies quickly nurtured on deceit,
And love turns hatred, captured by a cheat;
And love had died while in despair immewed;
And this god's love was surely very sweet,
For she was a forsaken maid he wooed.

Memnon

I

Weary, forsaken by fair, fickle sleep,
A traveller rose, and stood outside his tent,
That shrouded was in dusky shadows deep,
By palm-trees cast, that o'er it kindly leant.
A low moon lingered o'er a wide extent
Of lifeless, shifting sands; her pallid rays
Had kissed the scorched waste to sweet content;
And now her farewells whispering, still she stays,
As loth to leave the land to Phœbus' fiery blaze.

II

Slowly she sinks; and faint streaks quietly creep
Up from the East into the dusky sky;
Aurora's yellow hair, that up the steep
Streams to the rear of night full breezily,
Shaken from her flushed fingers that now dye
The under-heavens crimson; now she springs
Full-blown before the Day, and hastens by
With silver-footed speed and yearning wings,
To kiss a form of stone that at her coming sings.

III

Thrilled at the voice, the traveller starts aside,
And sees the image, prostrate, half enwound
With red, unstable sand-wreaths, and its wide
Forehead, and lips that moved not with their sound
Celestial, lined with many a furrowed wound,
Deep-graven by the gnawing desert blast:
Half-buried sphinxes strewed the waste around,
And human-headed bulls, now mouldering fast,—
Their impious shapes half gone, their greatness wholly past.

IV

Out of this desolation vast and dead,
Now glorified and clothed in red and gold,—
Brightness befitting Egypt's hero's bed,—
A matin to his goddess mother rolled
From dawn-kissed lips, that also kissed the mould
Of their decaying substance. The sweet psalm
Thrilled in the listener's ears, with manifold
Cool music mingled of the murmuring palm;
And accents large and sad deepened the lifeless calm.

V

“Sweet mother, stay; thy son requireth thee!
All day the sun, with massive, maddening glare,
Beats on my weary brow and tortures me.
All day the pitiless sand-blasts gnaw and wear
Deep furrows in my lidless eyes and bare.
All day the palms stand up and mock at me,
And drop cool shade over the dead bones there,
And voiceless stones, that crave no canopy:
O beautiful mother, stay; 'tis thy son prayeth thee.

VI

“O mother, stay; thy son's heart needeth thee!
The night is kind and fans me with her sighs,
But knoweth not nor feeleth sad for me.
Hyenas come and laugh into my eyes,
The weak bats fret me with their small shrill cries,
And toads and lizards crawl in slimy glee.
Thou comest—and my torturers dost surprise,
And fondlest me with fresh hands tearfully.
O dewy-lipped mother, stay; thy son desireth thee.

VII

“O mother, why so quickly wouldst thou flee?
Let Echo leave her mountain rocks and twine
My words with triple strength to cling to thee
And clog thy limbs from flight as with strong wine;
Let them recall sweet memories of thine,

Of how the long-shadowed towers of wind-swept Troy
Were dear to thee and near, whilst thou didst pine
For the god-faced Tithonus, and the joy
Thou drank'st when thou hadst gained the willing, kingly boy.

VIII

“O mother, how Scamander chided thee,
And swelled his tawny floods with grief for him,
And drowned his oozy rushes by the sea!
For often have I heard such tales from him,
Thou listening, whilst the purple night did swim
Reluctant past, and young Æmation hung
Upon thy wealthy bosom; music, dim
In ears not all divine, the nigh stars sung,
Of thine high origin Hyperion's courts among.

IX

“O mother, what forebodings visited thee
From the Laconian's ravish'd bridal bed;
What mists of future tears half blinded thee
When Ilion's god-built gates, wide-opened,
Let in the fatal Spartan woman wed
To Troy in flames, dogs gorged with Trojan slain,
And tears of thine, mother, for thy son dead.
Dead; would my soul were with the body slain,
Nor stony-fetter'd here upon this Theban plain!

X

“O mother, what glooms darkened down on thee,
And tearful fears made thy scared eyelids red,
When me thou sawest by some god's enmity
Madly to meet Pelides' fury led,
Sparing the aged Nestor's childless head
By me made childless. On the Phrygian plain
Between the bright-eyed Greeks and Trojans bred
Warriors, I met the Phthian ash in vain,
Which bade my breast's bright wine the trampled stubble stain.

XI

“Then, mother, weeping, thou to Jove didst flee,
And wring thy fingers, and, a suppliant,
Didst kneel before him, grasping his great knee
And awful beard, and clinging like a plant
Of ivy to an oak, till he should grant
Peculiar honours, not vouchsafed before,
To thy son’s obsequies; nor didst thou pant
And pray in vain, and kiss his beard all hoar,
And large ambrosial locks that veiled the sapphire floor.

XII

“For, mother, when the ruddy-bosomed sea
Had drunk its fill of fire, and, climbing high,
Smoke of my funeral pyre, with savoury
Odours of oil and honey, ’riched the sky,
Out of the seething flames a cloud did fly
Of shrill-voiced birds,—like swarms of swarthy bees
That move their household gods in young July,—
And, screaming, fought and perished, to appease
My manes and fulfil impelling Jove’s decrees.

XIII

“O mother, hath my song no charm for thee,
To hamper thee from flight? Thou then didst wait
Scarce till the lustral drops were dry for me,
And embers parch’d with dark wine satiate;
But wast away through the Hesperean gate
To mourn o’er waters Atlantean. Now
Thy loose locks trailèd are in golden state
Down the far side of yon keen peaks of snow;
The brazen sun hath come, and beareth on my brow.

XIV

“Soon will for me the many-spangled night
Rise, and reel round, and tremble toward the verge.
Soon will the sacred Ibis her weird flight
Wing from the fens where shore and river merge,
With her dusky plumes and her red and white wings

with long-drawn sobbings of the reed-choked surge.
The scant-voiced ghosts, in wavering revelry,
For Thebes' dead glory gibber a fitful dirge.
Would thou wert here, mother, to bid them flee!
O beautiful mother, hear; thy chained son calleth thee.”

Ode to Drowsihood

Breather of honeyed breath upon my face!
Teller of balmy tales! Weaver of dreams!
Sweet conjurer of palpitating gleams
And peopled shadows trooping into place
In purple streams
Between the drooped lid and the drowsy eye!
Moth-winged seducer, dusky-soft and brown,
Of bubble gifts and bodiless minstrelsy
Lavish enough! Of rest the restful crown!
At whose behest are closed the lips that sigh,
And weary heads lie down.

Thee, Nodding Spirit! Magic Comforter!
Thee, with faint mouth half speechless, I invoke,
And straight uplooms through the dead centuries' smoke
The aged Druid in his robe of fur,
Beneath the oak
Where hang uncut the paly mistletoes.
The mistletoe dissolves to Indian willow,
Glassing its red stems in the stream that flows
Through the broad interval. A lazy billow
Flung from my oar lifts the long grass that grows
To be the Naiad's pillow.

The startled meadow-hen floats off, to sink
Into remoter shades and ferny glooms;
The great bees drone about the thick pea-blooms;
The linkèd bubblings of the bobolink,
With warm perfumes
From the broad-flowered wild parsnip, drown my brain;
The grackles bicker in the alder-boughs;
The grasshoppers pipe out their thin refrain
That with intenser heat the noon endows.
Then thy weft weakens, and I wake again
Out of my dreamful drowse.

Ah! fetch thy poppy-baths, juices exprest

In fervid sunshine, where the Javan palm
Stirs, scarce awakened from its odorous calm
By the enervate wind, that sinks to rest
Amid the balm
And sultry silence, murmuring, half asleep,
Cool fragments of the ocean's foamy roar,
And of the surge's mighty throbs that keep
Forever yearning up the golden shore,
Mingled with song of Nereids that leap
Where the curled crests downpour.

Who sips thy wine may float in Baiæ's skies,
Or flushed Maggiore's ripples, mindless made
Of storming troubles hard to be allayed.
Who eats thy berries, for his ears and eyes
May vineyard shade
Melt with soft Tuscan, glow with arms and lips
Cream-white and crimson, making mock at reason.
Thy balm on brows by care uneaten drips;
I have thy favors but I fear thy treason.
Fain would I hold thee by the dusk wing-tips
Against a grievous season.

Ballade of the Poet's Thought

A poet was vexed with the fume of the street,
With tumult wearied, with din distraught;
And very few of the passing feet
Would stay to listen the truths he taught;
And he said,—“My labour is all for naught;
I will go, and at Nature's lips drink deep.”
For he knew not the wealth of the poet's thought,
Though sweet to win, was bitter to keep.

So he left the hurry, and dust, and heat
For the free, green forest where man was not;
And found in the wilderness' deep retreat
That favour with Nature which he sought.
She spake with him, nor denied him aught,
In waking vision or visioned sleep,
But little he guessed the wealth she brought,
Though sweet to win, was bitter to keep.

But now when his bosom, grown replete,
Would lighten itself in song of what
It had gathered in silence, he could meet
No answering thrill from his passion caught.
Then grieving he fled from that quiet spot,
To where men work, and are weary, and weep;
For he said,—“The wealth for which I wrought
Is sweet to win, but bitter to keep.”

ENVOI

Oh, poets, bewailing your hapless lot,
That ye may not in Nature your whole hearts steep,
Know that the wealth of the poet's thought
Is sweet to win, but bitter to keep.

Iterumne

Ah me! No wind from golden Thessaly
Blows in on me as in the olden days;
No morning music from its dew-sweet ways,
No pipings, such as came so clear to me
Out of green meadows by the sparkling sea;
No goddess any more, no Dryad strays,
And glorifies with song the laurel maze;
Or else I hear not and I cannot see.

For out of weary hands is fallen the lyre,
And sobs in falling; all the purple glow
From weary eyes is faded, which before
Saw bright Apollo and the blissful choir
In every mountain grove. Nor can I know
If I shall surely see them any more.

A Blue Blossom

A small blue flower with yellow eye
Hath mightier spell to move my soul
Than even the mightiest notes which roll
From man's most perfect minstrelsy.
A flash, a momentary gleam,
A glimpse of some celestial dream,
And tears alone are left to me.

Filled with a longing vague and dim,
I hold the flower in every light;
To purge my soul's redarkened sight
I grope till all my senses swim.
In vain; I feel the ecstasy
Only when suddenly I see
This pale star with the sapphire rim.

Nor hath the blossom such strange power
Because it saith "Forget me not"
For some heart-holden, distant spot,
Or silent tongue, or buried hour.
Methinks immortal memories
Of some past scene of Paradise
Speak to my spirit through the flower.

Forgotten is our ancient tongue;
Too dull our ears, our eyes too blind,
Even quite to catch its notes, or find
Its symbols written bright among
All shapes of beauty. But 'tis hard
When one *can* hear, to be debarred
From knowledge of the meaning sung.

The Maple

Oh, tenderly deepen the woodland glooms,
And merrily sway the beeches;
Breathe delicately the willow blooms,
And the pines rehearse new speeches;
The elms toss high till they reach the sky,
Pale catkins the yellow birch launches,
But the tree I love all the greenwood above
Is the maple of sunny branches.

Let who will sing of the hawthorn in spring,
Or the late-leaved linden in summer;
There's a word may be for the locust-tree,
That delicate, strange new-comer;
But the maple it glows with the tint of the rose
When pale are the spring-time regions,
And its towers of flame from afar proclaim
The advance of Winter's legions.

And a greener shade there never was made
Than its summer canopy sifted,
And many a day as beneath it I lay
Has my memory backward drifted
To a pleasant lane I may walk not again,
Leading over a fresh, green hill,
Where a maple stood just clear of the wood—
And oh! to be near it still!

Epistle to Bliss Carman

September, 1878

An azure splendour floats upon the world.
Around my feet the blades of grass, impearled
And diamonded, are changing radiantly.
At every step new wonders do I see
Of fleeting sapphire, gold and amethyst,—
Enchanting magic of the dew sun-kissed.
The felon jay mid golden-russet beeches
Ruffles his crest, and flies with startled screeches.
Ever before me the shy cricket whistles
From underneath the dry, brown, path-side thistles.
His gay note leads me, and I quickly follow
Where dips the path down through a little hollow
Of young fir-seedlings. Then I cross the brook
On two grey logs, whose well-worn barkless look
Tells of the many black-gown-shadowed feet
Which tread them daily, save when high June's heat
Scatters us wide, to roll in cool, salt billows
Of Fundy's make, or under hanging willows
Slide the light birch, and dream, and watch the grasses
Wave on the intervale as the light wind passes,
Puffing a gentle cloud of smoke to scare
The sand-flies, which are ravening everywhere.

Such our enjoyment, Bliss, few weeks ago;
And the remembrance warms me with a glow
Of pleasure, as I cross the track and climb
The rocky lane I've clambered many a time.
On either side, where birch and maples grow,
The young firs stand with eager hands below,
And catch the yellow dropping leaves, and hold
Them fast, as if they thought them dropping gold;
But fairy gold they'll find them on the morrow,
When their possessing joy shall turn to sorrow.

Now thro' the mottled trunks, beneath the boughs,
I see the terrace, and the lower rows

Of ferns and shrubs, and in the meadow's sin

Of windows drinking in the waking air;
While future Freshmen stand around and stare.

Last week the bell cut short my happy strain.
Now half in pleasure, half in a vague pain,
For you I undertake my rhyme again.
Last week in its first youth saw you begin
Your happy three-years' course with us, and win
The highest honours, half of which are due
To your own strength of brain, and half accrue
To that wise master from whose hands you came
Equipped to win, and win yourself a name.
But I,—I have but one quick-slipping year
To spend amid these rooms and faces dear,
And then must quit this fostering roof, these walls
Where from each door some bright-faced memory calls,
And halt outside in sore uncertainty,
Not knowing which way lies the path for me
Through the unlighted, difficult, misty world.
Ah, whither must I go? Thick smoke is curled
Close round my feet, but lifts a little space
Further ahead, and shows to me the face—
Distorted, dim, and glamorous—of Life;
With many ways, all cheerless ways, and rife
With bristling toils crowned with no fitting fruit,—
All songless ways, whose goals are bare and mute.
But *one* path leads out from my very feet,—
The only one which lures me, which is sweet.
Ah! might I follow it, methinketh then
My childhood's brightest dreams would come again.
Indeed, I know they dwell there, and I'd find
Them meeting me, or hastening up behind.
See where it windeth, always bright and clear,
Though over stony places here and there;
Up steep ascents, thro' bitter obstacles,
But interspersed with glorious secret dells;
And vocal with rich promise of delight,
And ever brightening with an inward light
That soothes and blesses all the ways that lie

That soothes and blesses all the ways that lie
In reach of its soft light and harmony.
And were this path made for my following,
Then would I work and sing, and work and sing;
And though the songs were cryings now and then
Of me thus singing in the midst of men,—
Where some are weary, some are weeping, some
Are hungering for joys that never come;
And some drive on before a bitter fate
That bends not to their prayers importunate;
Where some say God is deaf and hears not now,
And speaks not now, some that He *is* not now,
Nor ever was, and these in fancied power
See not the mighty workings of each hour,
Or, seeing, read them wrong. Though now and then
My songs were wailings from the midst of men,
Yet would I deem that it were ever best
To sing them out of weariness to rest;
Yet would I cheer them, sharing in their ills,
Weaving them dreams of waves, and skies, and hills;
Yet would I sing of Peace, and Hope, and Truth,
Till softly o'er my song should beam the youth,—
The morning of the world. Ah, yes, there hath
The goal been planted all along that path;
And as the swallow were my heart as free,
Might I but hope that path belonged to me.

I've prated so, I scarce know what I've said.
But you'll not think me to have lost the thread,
Seeing I had none. Do not say I've kept
My promises too amply, and o'erleapt
A letter's bounds; nor harshly criticise;
But miss the spots and blots with lenient eyes.
Scan not its outer, but its inner part;
'Twas not the head composed it, but the heart.

JX

The Book of the Rose (1898-1902)

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.
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!

What shimmering light! 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,
Illumine 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' trackt,
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 into 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
Compassed in a vaster might.

Sun, before your flaming circuit
Smote upon the uncumbered 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 greened 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 naught 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.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have not been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Poems* by Charles George Douglas Roberts, Sir]