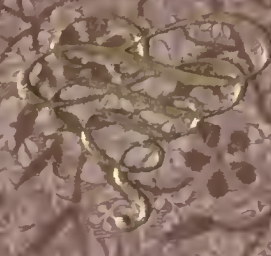


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THE
GARDEN OF
THE WILLOW OF
PARADISE
FRAGMENT





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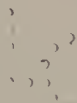
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LEGEND OF THE WEAVER OF PARADISE

By

AGNES COCHRAN BRAMBLETT



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TO
MY HUSBAND

Foreword



The purpose of this book is to maintain a reasonable balance between the ultra-modernist and the older school of conservatives. Sophistication and over--emphasis upon the technical points of modern writers of verse have a tendency to place the ban on pleasurable reading by the masses of poetry lovers.

Realizing the radical change in the school of poetry, one begins questioning if the pendulum has not swung sufficiently far, or if the new era shall outlive the old.

I have attempted to treat naturally the familiar themes which have been chosen for this book, with the hope that there may be found within its covers a song to satisfy the sense of everyone into whose hands it may fall.

THE AUTHOR.

LEGEND OF THE WEAVER OF PARADISE

PART I

You forgot his age, if old or young,
His shoulders stooped, but his voice, when he sung
Low snatches of strange, fantastic airs,
Was like young wind in the flowering pears
When white-winged petals seek the grass,
Like the water's coo in the ice broken pass
That ribbons the hill where the Spring's deep cup
Oozes crystal nectar. Should you interrupt
His diligent and watchful weaving,
As he lifted his brow, he found you believing
He had known Life since Time began,
Strangely-patient, mysterious man!
Indomitable Spirit of Eternal years,
Brother to Sorrow's scalding tears,
Brother to Joy, Brother to Pain,
Toiler with drab reward of gain!
Weaving an endless length of gray
That with miser-care he hoarded away
From the eyes of the curious that went
To look, amazed at his quiet content.
There was somewhat of charm in his manner and
face,

A vagabond's ease, a prince's grace.
Accomplice of Silence, weaving gray thread,
Pausing when the sun flamed red
Laving the world in a flood of light
That merged into gold, into blue, then night
With its hush and mystery manifold.
He lifted his face to be washed in the gold
Of the moon, he called stars by name,
Was part of the night, part of the flame
Of the dawn, held the rising sun to his heart,
Watched the work-a-day world start,
Understood artist and amateur,
Scorned the slattern, loved the doer.
Patient weaver of mystery!
Like the calm that follows catastrophe,
Or the atmosphere of a holy place
Was the look he wore upon his face.

PART II

I passed his house in the midnight gloom
And heard him talking to his loom.
"Despise not the heap of drab, gray thread
Resembling the winding robes of the dead
In a dismal heap on a funeral pyre.
Learn, Good Friend, that heart's desire
May for all time be denied.
The fates heed not if you laughed or cried.
Rejoice that the sun falls into this room,
That star-dust and moon-gold gladden the gloom,

That fragrance wafts thro the open door,
 That footprints of autumn fall before
 The winter's wailing, icy breath,
 Heed me—naught is sure but death!
 No time or place in the speeding years,
 For a debauchee of needless tears.
 Go on weaving these threads of gray,
 Nor pine for the colorful summer's day,
 The crimson rose, the grace of a maid,
 The glimpse of heaven thro filtering shade.
 Beautiful patterns may be denied,
 Dreams and hopes be crucified,
 But if the pattern turns out strong
 There is beauty in strength. If your unskilled song
 Be crude keep your vision, hold fast your dream,
 Time—Time it takes to finesse the theme.
 Glory waits at the end of the road
 With arms out-stretched to receive the load
 Of well-borne burdens—Friend, be glad
 Of strength for the year's toil you have had,
 Toils are recompensed one day.”
 Then silence—and I went my way.

PART III

Years sped. The shabby coat he wore
 Fell in a heap of rags on the floor.
 The roof that sheltered him from the sky
 Crumpled and sagged. His calm eye
 Seemed unheeding of Time's decay

As he sat there weaving the years away.
His garments grew thin, his feet were bare,
An aureole shone about his hair.
When morning or eventides fell on his door,
When the storms rode the earth with demoniac
 roar,
When the winds danced lightly the fields of grain,
When earth was pricked with needles of rain,
As you looked at him you felt him to be
Intimate friend of Destiny.

PART IV

I passed his house in the early dawn.
The door was closed—the curtains drawn.
I knocked—I called. Not a sound.
I opened the door. There I found
The weaver dead at the ancient loom.
The dawn walked with me into the room,
Bringing the sunshine in her wake.
I crossed him for Love and Pity's sake.
Then turned to find a winding sheet
For burial. Lo, what should meet
The quest of my troubled, startled eyes
Than a tapestry labelled— "Paradise."
Oh, its marvelous beauty awed and hurt,
I stood amazed, helpless, inert,
Overwhelmed! I could not speak
Or call aloud to others, or seek
From finite minds to understand

The finished fabric of the hand
 That wove his dreams in Paradise.
 There was miracle of earth and skies
 As he saw them moving to and fro—
 Silent weaver, could you know
 The heritage you leave behind,
 That others following will find
 No drab reward for your toiling years!
 I drained the fountain of my tears.
 Then, in reverence and love
 I looked upon the cloth he wove,
 Heaped up higher than the ceiling,
 I had the strange uncanny feeling
 Of sleep-walking. There was no gray,
 But stored carefully away
 Richest colors, patterns rare,
 Summer sunshine without glare,
 Moonlight, stardust, dawn and dew,
 Royal purple, azure blue.
 Colors heaped like clouds that tower
 Like mountains at the sunset's hour.

L'Envoi

He had said: "Keep your vision, hold fast to your
 dream.
 Time—Time will finesse the theme.
 Glory waits at the end of the road
 With out-stretched arms for the toiler's load."

POEMS OF NATURE

EARTH SONG

Who can walk the glad earth and not sing
Is an inanimate and soulless thing.

Earth's beauty and rejoicing God has given
To familiarize the songs of heaven.

When at last we shall achieve that goal
Toward which we looked with yearning eyes, the
soul

Will not like a wistful stranger be,
Having once claimed friendship with a tree,

A summer cloud, a song bird or a flower,
Will come to realize in that curtained hour

That folk discuss with human dread and fear,
Familiar beauty cumulated there.

The catclysmic radiance of His face
Would overwhelm if in some other place

We had not once intimately known
The hills He walked, the fields His hand had sown.

RESURRECTION

Young switches are green on the willows,
Tassels are half-grown on the alder bushes,
There is a chirping, a calling, a flashing of wings
in the pale sunshine;

Upon the hills the daffodils shine like a host of
morning stars.

Down in the marshes myriad small voices
Are piping a message—a message of promise,
“It is the season of life—life—life!”

Why do the young green willow switches tremble?
Why do alder blooms shake when no wind is blowing?

Why gaiety on last year’s flower bed and the ruddier hue of the robin’s breast?

How poverty-stricken and ignorant who holds not
in his finite mind

This sweet knowledge! An infinite power
Moves them, they thrill with the beauty of its
being!

The bird swift of wing, rapturous with song,
Makes glad the wooded solitudes, pouring
Out its gratitude that some unseen hand has stript
the bare brown earth
Of sleet and snow. The daffodil lifts her loving
cup of gold, rejoicing
That a sunbeam sought her in the gloom, lingered
In her quiet heart so long, when he laid her on
the earth's full-throbbing heart.
Pale-faced children laugh and dance with joy,
Singing, "Sunshine, sunshine on the hills again!"

O greening little willow switches,
Alder bushes flowering in the marsh,
Winged miracles of song, throb-throbbing joy,
Gay bits of Joseph's coat about the earth,
Reminders that there is no thing like death!
After seasons of travail and toil,
That which we call a common resting place
Becomes transfigured by Omnipotence,
Loosed the coil that binds the fettered clay,
There is a stir, the thrill of life, a light,
The glory of the resurrection!

TO A LAKE

For centuries you have looked up at the sky,
Partaker of her variating mood,
Low moaning winds and wild bird's startled cry
Disturb the silence of your solitude.

The willows standing on your marshy brink,
Lean slenderly to see their mirrored grace,
Stealthy-footed wild things come to drink
The limpid water from your placid face.

Night's mirror, where the burning stars reflected
Iridescent scimiters of light,
Migrating birds instinctively directed
Seek you, a haven on their homeless flight.

SPRING SONG

A cold dark day a robin was swinging on a limb;
He seemed to sense by some strange quirk that I
was watching him.

Red of breast, feathers brown, swift and light of
wing,
His eyes were stars he'd stolen; I longed to hear
him sing.

A few raindrops had pattered down and damped
his plumage gay,
He preened himself and cocked his head, defiant
of the day.
He twitteringly tried his voice to see if it were
strong,
Then stirred the air to rapture and to wonder with
his song.

The while he trilled his fluted song the sun came
smiling out,
Apple blossom fragrance and green leaves were
all about.

I heard a whir, a flutter of a dainty little wing,
The bird had flown, the cold was gone,
And everywhere was Spring!

PEACH BLOSSOM TIME

Beneath my warm coat brown and still
I feel a flutter and a thrill.
I hear small voices calling me
“Release—release us, Mother Tree.
Already we have slept too long,
We hear the murmur of the song
The rills are singing to the sea;
Cowslips bloom abundantly.

“We feel the kiss of warming sun
That tells us winter’s course is run.”
From the shelter of my heart
Like dainty butterflies they dart.
Into the saffron glow and glare
Of early spring my children fare.
I am rejoiced to watch them go,
They transform the hillside so!

DAFFODILS

I thought I saw the sunshine a-dancing on the hills,
The grass was green and tender, all the little rills
Were singing, rushing onward to join the charging
 main,
Silver-ribboning their way across the spreading
 plain.

I thought I saw gold sunshine a-dancing to and fro,
I thought I heard the Pipes o' Pan a-calling me to
 go.
I hastened to the woods, the plains, and up the
 greening hills,
To find what I thought sunshine was golden daf-
 fodils!

AUTUMN MIST

Softly it comes floating down
Like a lady in a soft gray gown,
Who folds to her patient heart a past
Of romances that did not last.
Draping herself in a mantle of gray
Saying farewell to summer's sweet day.

O, there is joy in her ease and grace
As she folds me in her close embrace.
I love her wet kiss on my lips,
The soothing touch of her finger tips,
Like the fragrance of rose from the long ago.
I match my step to hers—grown slow.

I love the calm of the atmosphere
That she creates when the night is near.
On the branches drooping, wet,
A spray of leaves in silhouette
Against the lady's filmy gown,
A phantom wind sends them swirling down.
She gathers her garments close about
And floats away—and the stars are out!

WOOD'S CHILD

I was a wood's child,
Halcyon days were mine.
From Mother Earth's kind breast
I drained sustaining wine.
My shelter was a gray moss-covered tree
That whispered of the four winds' minstrelsy.

I lived undisturbed
'Til one warm day
Someone picked me, and
I heard a glad voice say,
"O see, the first wild violet we've seen!
How beautiful the blue against the green!"

Then I heard a strange sound,
"Beat-beat-beat!"
And a great voice said,
"O sweet—my sweet!"
Tho crushed and bruised I felt so strangely glad,
Prest close between two hearts—'twas love I had.

My woodland heart
Rejoiced that it was so,
Being a timid wood's child,
Strange that I should know!

SPRING'S CHALLENGE

I call you, you earth-bound, nature-loved children,
Lift up your heads, your sweet heads from the
fold

Of the garments of gray earth so kindly protective
From frost, storm and sleet and the winter's
dark cold.

It was kind, it was nature-wise, motherly-loving,
When fell the first frost that lowered your head,
The same stroke that felled you painted a cover
Of autumnal beauty to place on your bed.

Came winter when only the wind and the sunbeam,
Starlight and moonshine and raindrop and dew
Knew of your sheltered place under the soft earth,
And carried a message of comfort to you.

Burst, you brown buds, and you, red of the maple,
Make feast for the vision of tired passerby,
Hang out your blossoms, you peach, pear and
apple,
Make a gay rainbow to span the blue sky.

All of you meek little folk of the woodland,
Where rustles the wing of the thrush and the
lark,
Shake off the fetters of winter that bound you,
Lift up your beautiful selves from the dark.

The woodland and hillside are clothed in glad
raiment,
The breeze rocks the branches where birds nest
and sing,
Glad earth is wearing an airy green garment
That sways to the song and the whir of light
wing!

THE SURPRISE

Hush, my child, be quiet and still,
What is the faint sound 'over the hill?
Is it the rustle of breezes that blow,
Is it the waving to and fro
Of the young green corn
In the early morn?
What is the sound I hear?

Is it the brooklet murmuring low,
Or timid foot-falls, stealthy and slow,
Stirring about, mysterious, creeping,
Fearful of waking the woodfolk sleeping?
Hist, my child, be quiet and still,
Let's peep o'er the hill,
O, what is the sound I hear?

Hold fast my hand, now—let's peep together—
Why mercy upon me! It is the weather
Quietly changing behind the hill!
O, my child be very still -
I hope he will wear
The sun in his hair
As he comes from over the hill!

MIRACLE

Behold, again the mystery
Of bursting bud and greening tree!
Where lately woods were brown and gray
The jasmine has festooned gay
Gold labyrinths of delight,
The dogwood with her pearly white
Petaled flowers invites the eye,
Challenging the passer-by
To loiter long, to rest, to dream
Beside yon crystal woodland stream.
The lily lifts its fragile bloom
From out its tenement of gloom
Into the sunshine's kindly glow.
O miracle, that flowers know
The hour they are called to be
Witnesses for eternity!

RIVER SONG

Sing on to the sea, O River,
Sing on to the hungry sea.
Your offering shall satisfy never,
Throughout eternity.
Ever she crawls with grasping hands,
Taking her toll of the potent lands.

What does she yield you, O River,
That feed her from year to year?
Relentless winds that shiver
You thro, and sometimes a tear.
She gathers the calm of you to her breast
And makes you accomplice of her unrest.

On, on to the sea, singing water,
To your mecca—the billow and foam.
Run like an errant daughter
Estranged from mother and home.
Rocked on her breast you become a part
Of the troubled song of her sobbing heart.

WINTER HAS COME

Winter has come—Summer is gone.
The wild goose has flown
Where hibiscus and rose
Are safe from the snows.

Scarlet and gold of tapestried hill
Flutter gaily, a-thrill;
The artist, wild rover,
Snatches the cover

From their slender limbs and tapering arms,
Exposing the beauty of exquisite charms,
As they sway to and fro
With the wild winds that blow

On their frost silvered harps. “Endurance is
mine!”

Sigh the stript tree and vine,
“I am the product, yea, gladly a part
Of earth’s throbbing heart.

“Tho naked my body, clothed shall it be,
Behold me, child of Infinity!
In the springtime I shall wear
Sunshine and green leaves to garland my hair!”

HOW SHALL I WAIT?

How shall I wait to see again
Lilac bloom in silver rain,
Blue hyacinth and daffodil,
Borders of violet, thrift and squill?
How shall I wait so long to see
The iris and anemone,
The earth changing her shabby dress
To one of filmy loveliness?

It shall be long—another year
Before my eager ears shall hear
Spring singing like a happy boy
With upturned face—Spirit of Joy,
Of Promise, Hope! With his young hand
Flinging beauty 'cross the land.
Another year—it shall be long
To wait, to hear again his song,
To feel the music in his voice
That makes the earth throb and rejoice,
And offer of the hoarded treasure
Of her heart—for his sweet pleasure.

MOONS

THE FIVE O'CLOCK AFTERNOON MOON

Winter's day was gray and cold,
Over tree-tops rose the gold,
Glorious, full, round moon,
At five o'clock in the afternoon!
From the clearing western sky
Colored cloud-ships sailing by
Swung pendant in the icy air,
Mauve and pink, they clustered there
Like some colorful bouquet
Gathered on a sweet June day.
Winter's wistful days were turned
To a memory deep-burned,
Ribbioned streams and green pathways,
Other moons and yesterdays!

EIGHT O'CLOCK MOON

Harbinger of sleep and rest,
Placing on the earth's warm breast
Diadems a queen might wear,
Haloing her tangled hair.
Robing her in gold and lace,
Softening her wrinkled face.

DAWN MOON

You watch the holy mystery of earth,
Blade, leaf and opening bud given birth
By that strange unfathomable power
Of transition, that still and magic hour
When the old gray-clothed quiet night
Merges into dawn's effulgent light.
O glowing jewel, pendant in the skies,
Too soon the marvel of your beauty flies
Before the herald of the new-born day,
In mists of rose and gold you slip away!

LULLABY

Fly home, Little Bird, for the night shades fall,
And the bat is on the wing,
The little house in the shadows calls,
And the lark has ceased to sing,
The lamp is lit near the window sill,
And flickers to the breeze;
Everything is quiet and still,
As the wind stirs in the trees.

Fly home, Little Bird, Little Bird, fly home,
You've sung in the meadows sweet,
And over the field with flowers afoam,
You've played with the breezes fleet.
There's a downy nest awaiting for you,
And a song that wants to be sung,
And a thousand stars are winking too,
Like fairy lanterns hung.

Fly home, fly home, for the black bat soars
In the air above your head.
A little boat with silver oars
Is waiting by your bed.
There is a field of poppy flowers
Which you may wander through,
And a man with sand has waited hours
For the home-coming of you.

“DUST UNTO DUST”

The sun will rouse the drowsy morn,
The winds will sweep thro fields of corn,
Naught will be changed when I am gone.

There will be passing seasons still,
Spring will hang garlands on the hill,
Winter's voice bid brooks be still.

I—resting in the heart of earth
Shall hear the quick, delightful mirth
Of blade and blossom given birth.

Curious roots will seek me there
And wrap their tendrils in my hair,
Their strange, sweet secrets with me share.

There will be messages of rain,
I shall be glad to feel again
These old friends in my still domain.

Dust of the earth! I shall rejoice
To feel her breathing, hear her voice,
To know the wisdom of her choice

Of plants to magnify and grow
To send into the sunshine's glow.
I shall be gone—but I shall know.

The sun will rouse the drowsy morn,
The wind will sweep thro fields of corn,
Naught will be changed—when I am gone.

WINTER TIME IN GEORGY

A tribute to FRANK L. STANTON

The South's sweet song is silent, strangely hushed
an' still,

Sadness comes a-creepin' like a shadder on the hill.
It's well it isn't June-time with roses all a-bloom,
Their red would be unfittin' in a world so full o'
gloom.

The bird's sweet song vibratin' would stir a mem-
ory,
An' come too near to breakin' the hearts that
mourn for thee.

It's winter-time in Georgy, it's winter, an' we're
glad

The trees are stript an' naked, because they feel
so sad.

It wouldn't do to hurt a rose or hush the song-
bird's trill,

Or check the silver-ribboned brook a-laughin'
down the hill.

If spring flowers were a-bloomin', or gentle sum-
mer rain

Was dancin' on these red ole hills, they couldn't
stan' the pain.

There's a sighin' in the pine trees an' the gray an'
stricken grass

Don't seem to take no comfort from the vagrant
winds that pass.

It's winter-time in Georgy, the silence seems to tell
'The sorrow o' the Southland for one she loved so
well.

When the snow has fallen an' cold an' rain are
over,

Who will sing o' drunken bees a-ravagin' the
clover?

Who will sing o' robins an' the flowerin' apple
tree,

O' sunshine, shade an' shadder an' the homey
things that be?

O' colored folk, an' white folk an' the simple
things o' life,

Songs o' love an' cheer an' peace, amid turmoil an'
strife?

It's winter-time in Georgy. The weather's cold
an' bad,

The South's a-wearin' mournin' for her heart is
broke an' sad.

POEMS
OF RELIGION

INFINITY

I see infinity imprest
 Upon the mountain side ;
Upon the earth's full flowing breast,
 And rivers deep and wide.

The voice of God is moving
 In winds that sweep the sea,
The cobalt heavens proving
 Power—immensity!

I find the imprint of His hand
 And hear His voice each hour,
Eternal spirit of the land
 Exprest in tree or flower.

Mirrored in youthful faces,
 Or in the peace of age
God—His diary traces
 On Time's illustrious page!

OFFERING

Perhaps it is not much
I have to give,
A little while to pray,
An hour in which to help my brother live.
All I have to lay at His dear feet
Seems trite and scarce worth noticing to me,
Yet I know that He will make complete
My gift, and beautify it thru eternity.
Tho within my childish heart it seems not much,
After having known His tender touch
It shall at last become a part of heaven—
Even this little offering I have given.

FAITH

To see in the sunset's splendor and glow,
 In the twilight gray and still,
In the star of evening hanging low,
 In the shadow on the hill:
The promise of Tomorrow,
 The glory of morning star,
Oblivion of sorrow
 And sordid things that are ;
Knowing when night hours are over,
 The new-born dawn will spill
A world-full of sunbeams about her
 As she sings enthroned on the hill.
To see in the snowflakes falling,
 The pageant beauty of spring,
To hear in the reapers' calling
 Heaven's echoing.

“RABONI!”

There is someone standing there
With a sunbeam on his hair,
Like a candle burning white,
In the darkness of the night—
There is beauty in his face
Permeating all the place.

* * * * *

Hail, fair stranger, cans't thou say
Who has borne my Lord away?
Weeping, I had watched Him die,
Heard His agonizing cry
“It is finished!” He was torn
With the bloodstained spear, the thorn
Deeply pierced His weary brow.
I have come with spices now
To place upon Him. He is gone,
Rolled away the heavy stone.
Stranger, radiantly white,
Did you watch here thro the night?

“Mary!” O my Master’s voice,
Breaking heart, rejoice—rejoice!
Fair and Radiant One, ’tis Thee,
Crucified on Calvary!
O Raboni, standing there
With a halo on Your hair,
Like a candle burning white
Thro the gloom and death of night,
With the glory on Your face
Transfiguring this holy place!

MARY, THE MOTHER—TO JESUS

My little son, Emmanuel, sleep sweetly on my
breast,
With haloed head against my heart in sacred
slumber prest.
O blessed day that gives you birth, and blessed
mother I—
Holding within my humble arms the Son of the
Most High!

I am most blest of human kind, Jehovah has made
me
The mother of a Royal King, Child of Divinity!
Sleep, pillowed on my joyous heart, O sweet
Emmanuel,
The rapture that Thy mother knows mortals can
never tell.

The velvet touch of Thy small hand, Thy cheek
against my face,
Curving pink limbs and dimpled arms—perfected
infant grace!
Sweet Son of Heaven, Peaceful Dove, Music and
Shining Light,
Wonderful Emmanuel—rest on my heart tonight!

IMPATIENCE

My little child came rushing in from play,
Calling me many times. I tried to say,
"I'm ready, child, and glad to do
Just anything that's reasonable for you."

But so intent upon his own sweet whim,
He never heard or heeded when I answered him.
He rushed thro the garden calling me,
Pausing at last. I spoke; he failed to hear or see.

A volley of hot words sprang from his heart,
"Mother not here—failing her part!"
Pent up passion and ungranted child-desire
Kindled in his breast a flaming fire.

Ah, how like children we rush to His feet;
We call, and every call He'd meet
With, "I am here, my child, eager to do
What seemeth best. Be calm; in time I'll answer
you."

Too impatient to await His sweet reply,
We hasten on—unheeding—wondering why
He failed us when we called upon His name;
Stubborn and rebellious, giving God the blame.

O HAIL SWEET DAY

O hail, sweet day of heavenly peace,
That gives to me the smile
And handclasp of those loved long since
And lost a little while.
Glad day of promises fulfilled
When fetters fall away,
When soars my spirit, heaven-thrilled.
O hail, celestial day!

O hail, my Savior, who has watched
And guided thro the years,
Whose hand has intimately touched
My wounds and dried my tears;
Whose argent presence laved my soul
With calm and heavenly light,
Shedding its lustre over me
When fell the hour of night.

No visualized earthly dream
That ever had been mine
Portrayed such scenes of rapturous joy
Such ecstasy divine—
The radiant heavenly chorus sings
A symphony that yearns
A welcome to my heaven-born soul—
“Behold, His own returns!”

HIS CARE

“Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more
value than many sparrows.”

On yonder hill a flowering tree
And a nesting bird are calling me.
I brush away the dew-drenched grass
And fragrant clover as I pass,
Eager to stand in the sweet scented shade,
To touch the nest the birds had made.

I hear the bird's disturbed cry
As I stand beneath the tree close by.
Hushed the sweet vibrating trill,
The fluttering of wings is still.
Hovered over the birds in the nest,
O, blessed sheltering mother breast!

Ah, He who knows the sparrow's fall,
Has heeded, sheltered as I call,
Enfolded me beneath His wing,
Made my heart rejoice and sing.
Whatever I am—wherever I be,
He comforteth and watcheth me.

THE DESERT GUIDE

Exhausted with the desert thirst and heat,
 Hopelessly lost I laid me down to die,
 Too parched my tongue to utter one lone cry,
The cruel desert chained my burning feet.

I lay tormented on the scorching sand,
 A fitful sleep possessed my blinded eyes,
 Dreams of oases—like a paradise,
Dreams of the cool touch of a healing hand.

A cup of water held to me to drink,
 Then withdrawn before it touched my lips;
 Or else I thought my burning finger tips
Just rested on a cool spring's mossy brink.

Conscious—my heart's petition was for death,
 The fountain of my tears I had drained dry;
 I slept again—who was that standing by?
Did I feel on my face a cooling breath?

With super-strength I lifted from the sand
 (O strange that my blind eyes again could see.)
Written this inscription: "Follow me,"
By some concealed and unfamiliar hand.

As I looked I saw strange foot-prints lead
 Across the desert feared and hated so.
A still voice bade me "Follow where they go,
And you shall find at last your every need."

I arose and stumbled on. It was not far,
 The sound of flowing waters reached my ears;
 Again the calm voice bade me "Have no fears,"
A hand passed me a flowing water jar.

Morpheus kissed my tired eyes again,
 I saw in my enchanted vision there
 An argent presence—gloriously fair,
Obliviating acrid thirst and pain.

THE PILOT

My little craft lies waiting on the sands beside the
 sea,
Waiting for the rising tide slow-creeping in to me.
The sails are set and ready for the Pilot's sure
 command
To begin the evening journey to a coveted, far
 land.

I hear a sigh, the murmur of the waves far, far
 away,
I hear the sea birds calling as they skim and dip
 and play;
The twilight sounds are blended as the distant
 hum of bees,
Like the south wind laughing in the springtime in
 the trees.

Now the waves roll shoreward and my small craft
takes its place,
The tide is full, I lift my eyes to see the Pilot's
face.

“Yea, sails are set and ready, waiting, Master,
shall we go?”

Now we are bearing out to sea, the tide is full and
slow.

At last my craft is anchored in the harbor near the
shore,

The night was dark, the waves were wild, but
storm can harm no more.

Stand near me, gracious Pilot, let me kiss the nail-
scarred Hand

That steered me safe to anchor on the long-sought
heavenly strand.

GOD CALLED

Lovingly dedicated to my father,

The weight of burdens had worn you,
The day had been lonesome and long,
The heart that ever was patient and true
Had wearied of singing Life's song.
The candle that flamed with a golden glow,
Giving so gladly its light,
Had burned 'til the wick was charred and low,
And it was the hour of night.

He who knoweth the sparrow's fall
Then bade you cross the bay—
Unquestioning you answered the call
And silently sailed away.
We caught a glimpse on your peaceful face
As you left us here on the shore,
The look of the wanderer who'd found his place
And entered his own home door.

Calmly you waited the summons that came
At the end of your well-spent day;
Tho life to you was a gallant game
And you entered four-square in the play.
You lived—You loved—You gave so much
From the store of your patient heart,
The sympathetic human touch
Was ever your faithful part.

The simple, tho truly great things of life,
A Faith, Love and Charity creed
Made you the master of sordid strife
In your daily speech and deed.
You eagerly proffered the strength of your hand
When you saw your fellow-man downed,
Taking the time to understand,
Tho your life was a busy round.

Ah, my beloved, shall I count the loss
When I know you are weary no more,
When exchanged for a crown is the long-borne
cross?
Nay,—rest well on that shining shore.
I shall see you again with peace on your face,
With the smile that in parting you wore,
With the look of the wanderer, who, finding his
place,
Has entered his own home door!

POEMS OF
SENTIMENT AND
ASPIRATION

THERE'S A LIGHT IN YOUR EYE

There's a light in your eye, there's a rose on your
cheek,
That I have not seen there before.
There's a musical note in your voice when you
speak,
While your spirit is earth-bound no more.

The look in your eye is of the dreamer who's
found
Life's pageant of dreams coming true,
Who has soared as on wings, broken fetters that
bound
The song in the glad heart of you.

Sing with life! What of storms? Are not clouds
ever drifting
That sunshine and shadow the earth may re-
joice?
On Time's eternal shore, with the sands' ceaseless
shifting
Shines the light in your eyes, lilt your musical
voice.

THE TIRED STAR

I am weary of all the glitter and glare,
The song, the dance, the mechanical smile,
I long, God, I long to go somewhere
To live in peace for awhile!

Disgusted I am with things that men say
As they herd like swine at my dressing-room
door;
I want to curse them and drive them away,
To look in their faces no more.

I loathe the noise of this uncertain path,
The game that I loved I have found but a cheat;
I yearn in my soul for an aftermath,
A shelter, a home, a retreat.

The tinsel and glare will do for awhile,
When one bears the colorful banner of youth,
But plaster and paint will break with a smile,
And age is too candid with truth.

One cannot die because he is tired
Of playing a part in a great losing game,
But when with the years one becomes less admired,
Why, the stage ever loves a new name.

When broken at last and bowed in the dust
And the spirit of youth, like a ghost, haunts the
past,
One plays the harder to earn his crust
'Til they drop his name from the cast.

KEEPER OF THE PRISON

Keeper of the prison,
Waiting by the gate,
My singing soul has risen;
O I am satiate
Of lurid walls and dreary,
Weighty clay and dust.
Fettered, abject, weary
Of clanking chains that rust.

O keeper of the prison,
With walls forboding, bare,
A mutineer I've risen,
Thought you to bind me there?

ADVENTURE

I had an hour on the mountain
Where visions stir and thrill,
Where Adventure's voice called "Make your
choice,
Is it in your soul to stand still
When the world is throbbing with action
And brave men are daring to do?
I breathe my spirit in your veins,
I lay my hands on you.
Behold, I claim you my valiant son,
Go—spend your strength 'til the fight is won!"

By night she perched on my pillow,
By day she walked with me,
In the vibrant sound of her voice I found
Her challenged ecstasy.
'Til for her I would brave the tropical sun
Or the frozen Arctic Sea.
For Fame I would not give a shilling,
Wealth is a transient thing;
But to fight for a goal with an ardent soul,
To feel in accomplishing
Recompense for all danger
In the perilous deed you have won,
Symbolizing the spirit
That challenged and labelled you "Son."

BEHOLD THE DAWN!

As I slept a woman came to me,
Wearing in her face purposeful determination,
The tragedy of much suffering,
The light of universal motherhood.
Following in her wake were the children of men,
Their garments soiled and frayed.
They lifted yearning arms and tragic eyes,
Mutely bespeaking their sorrow and their need.

She spoke, "I am Womanhood-of-the-World;
Through agony, travail and death
Have these children, flesh of my flesh,
Blood of my blood, come to know life.
They cling to my garments and fret hungrily
For the nurture of my breast,
For the strength of my spirit,
For the healing touch of my hand.

"Behold them, aliens of Happiness,
Pity them, children of Ignorance,
Uplift them, victims of Circumstance.
I have given my strength and life for such!
They are mine, this weary multitude,
Wise with age in their infancy!
Arise from your dreams of indolent ease—
The Dawn sings in the glowing east!

“Behold the day—a day of glorious
And manifold opportunity,
A day in which you may serve, that generations
Following shall arise and call you ‘Blessed’—
The clarion challenge is to you.
What matters self if in some future time
The world be made safe for Democracy,
Safe for the God eternal in the heavens?

“Break the shackles that fetter the weak,
The ignorant, the ungodly;
Shake off the chains of slumber,
Hold high and higher still
That flaming torch that shall illumine
And uplift. Be strong of soul,
Be firm of faith, be fervent of prayer—
Woman—behold the Dawn!”

THE SONG OF THE QUAIN'T
LITTLE HAT

TO ANTIONETTE

There's a quaint little hat on the old hall tree
That has a way of mocking me.
It seems to call as I pass to and fro,
As on my busy rounds I go,
"Where, O where, has she gone away;
How long a time do you think she will stay?"

"I hang out here in the dust alone,
Feeling depressed; I sigh and moan
For the face I shaded from the glare,
For the sweet pillow of soft brown hair;
Brown eyes flashing beneath my brim,
The lithe young form so cunningly trim.

"I miss the song the red lips sung,
The laughter that from the glad heart sprung.
I want again the small white hand
To swing me by my rainbow band.
Few will believe such a thing to be true—
A quaint little hat—a-missing you!"

UNDERSTANDING

I fancy that some day
Beside life's flowing river where they play
Their harps of gold and sing their songs
Of Paradise, one finds where he belongs.
Then underneath some drooping willow tree
Writes, paints, or sings in ecstasy.
At last his craftsmanship has become fair!
Mingling with his kind, breathing the air
Enraptured, thrilled with eternal life,
His theme grows to perfection. There is no strife
Where God has called His own
To assemble and be glorified beside His throne.

From heaven one does not look
Back upon the pages of life's discarded book,
And realize how trite the things that seemed
worthwhile
Along the way. Heaven brightens at God's smile;
For well He understands who tried, and in what
mood,
Out of His Father-heart He proclaims their ef-
forts good.

Some whom we labelled "Failure" will be among
that throng
Beside the river. The things we had judged wrong
And foolish will then seem right and wise,
Because none will behold, save the kindly eyes
Of those who seek the beautiful and true,
Who look beneath the surface for things at which
you
And I had tried our childish skill;
At last we'll understand a heavenly will.

Then as we sing our songs enraptured grow—
And by the melody the heavenly hosts will know
That even on earth our lowly tasks were good,
But only God and heaven understood.
Who wept and thought they worked and prayed
in vain,
Will find fulfillment of their dreams, heaven's re-
frain
Will glorify the ones who tried to do
As best they could, the task that they believed
God meant them to.

THE SPINNER

The spider having spun seems satisfied
As pendulous he sits in silent pride,
Nor hails his fellow-spinner passing by
With boast of delicate pearl-ropes hung high
Against the splendor of the lordly sun.
He sits enshrined in jewelled gossamer spun
According to the nature of his dream,
Indifferent that beaded jewels gleam
A miracle of intricate design.
It must be, ah it must be, some divine
Spark was breathed into his heart the day he crept
From out the dismal shadows where he slept
'Til the Creator called him forth to be.
Oh, lowly Spinner, teach thine art to me!

Teach me to find content in hours of toiling,
Your vision share with me as I sit moiling
At life's steady-turning spinning wheel,
Teach me to dream of sunlight as I feel
My way thro gloom when it is hard to see
The share of spinning that is meant for me.
Perhaps because you do the allotted task
In diligence and faith, nor pause, nor ask
What happens to you after toil and night,
Knowing the dawn has never failed you light.

Did you know, spinner, that the crystal dew
Would, in the dark, play fairy prince to you,
Hanging these jewels in a mystic blaze?
I have the promise of eternal days,
Celestial heaven in a diademed sky
Yet you—you spin more perfectly than I.

MY CANDLE

Dedicated to MRS. LOULA SMITH WILLINGHAM

I have my candle lighted — at both ends softly
burning,
It cannot last through all the night—my heart is
praying, yearning
For multitudes that pass my door, each clamoring
for light
To guide them, give assurance through the long
and tedious night.

One end must needs keep burning for the loving
ones at home,
The other trimmed and glowing for the comfort-
less that roam,
Afraid of dark, afraid to try their fragile wings
so weak,
Afraid to lift their voices to the passing throng, to
speak.

And so, O little candle, my heart must pray and
yearn,
I dare not sleep too long, or well, lest you should
cease to burn.
Ah, should you flicker feebly, burn low and sputter
out,
I'd stretch my arms out into gloom and put them
close about

My children who are calling, with voices faint and
small.
Shine brightly, little candle, or do not shine at all;
My soul craves no half measure, burn while you
last, burn true,
I'm wearying, and watching, and yearning over
you.

When at last you flicker, fade to shine no more
From the wayside house that kept you a-lighted at
the door,
Those whom you guided through the night will
say through falling tears,
"The candle's white reflection shall illumine all my
years!"

POEMS IN DIALECT

SLEEPY SONG

Come here, Piccaninny, honey,
 Git into yo' mammy's lap.
Bless 'im, little black-eyed sonny,
 Pick 'im up an' tote 'im, Pap.
Mammy's got yo' little nightie,
 Fixed de covers on yo' bed,
Kase yo' sho looks lak a mighty
 Tired nigger, sleepy-head.

Put yo' arm aroun' my neck tight,
 Lay yo' head upon my breast.
Ef yo' done a thing whut ain't right,
 No need to go to bed to rest.
Better say yo' prayers, my honey,
 Mebbe angels bendin' down
Will take de prayer o' mammy's sonny
 To do Lord. Put on dis gown!

Does yo' hear de rain a-fallin'
 Pit-a-patter on de roof?
Dat's de sleepy-man a-callin',
 Sho, my honey, dat's de truf!
Does yo' hear sheep-bells a-ringin'?
 Is yo' counted all de sheep?
Lordee, I is tired a-singin',
 Pappy, dis here nigger's sleep.

AIN'T GWINE WORRY!

Ain't gwine worry myself to death,
 'Tain't no use.
Folks gwine always waste dey breath
 Heapin' up abuse.
May be me—or it may be you,
But I don't give hang whut you do,
 Folks gwine say dat somethin' is wrong.
 I ain't gwine worry!

Worked like a dawg to raise my crop,
 'Tain't no use.
Done made up my min' to stop
 An' I offers no excuse.
De wheat got de rust an' de weevil got de cotton,
All de taters in de hill took an' rotten;
 Folks kin talk an' say whut dey please,
 I ain't gwine worry!

Ole 'oman fuss kase I don't hurry,
 'Tain't no use,
Might as well make up her min' not to worry,
 Kase I done plumb refuse
To work myself to death no mo'
Kase yo' gwine do wrong—dat's one thing sho,
 An' yo' ain't gwine please nobody no-how—
 I ain't gwine worry!

POEMS OF
CHILDHOOD

THE WAY OF THE CHILD

“Won’t you take me in your lap?”
Said a tired little chap,
To a mother who was as busy as could be.
She had framed her lips to say,
“No, my darling, run away!”

Pausing—suddenly she found
Little grimy fingers wound
About her own. O why not leave the task?
There is always work to do.
“Yes, my darling, I’ll take you!”

Nestle closely, little chap,
In your tired mother’s lap,
A little while you’ll be too big to hold.
Just a little while you stay,
Then the world calls you away.

CHOICE GIFTS

I'd rather have a little head upon my breast at
close of day,
Than fairest, rarest of bouquets gleaned from the
choicest flowers of May.

Or closely wound about my neck a pair of little
dimpled arms
Than strands of amethyst or jade, brilliant of hue
and rich of charms.

I'd rather have two rosy hands to reach and softly
touch my face
Than hold the scepter of a queen or fill her royal
place.

I'd rather have red baby lips, a child's prayer for
me said
Than all the sermons I have heard, or long prayers
preachers prayed.

TENEMENT CHILDREN

They are lifting their pale young faces,
Their sorrowful eyes look at me
From the gloom of their joyless places,
Calling reproachfully,
“Can you not see we are dying
A death that is tortuous, slow?”
O, how will you be replying
As on your way you go?

“The sunshine is faded and dreary
That falls on the window sill,
We are listless and weary,
Drab and lifeless and still.
Our shoulders are stooped with the bearing
Of burdens we are too young to bear,
We have grown old with the caring
For things for which we should not care.

“We lift our thin arms to the heavens,
Tho we do not know how to pray,
So little care has been given
Our starved souls from day to day.
We pause at our old tasks crying,
(What good does it do us to cry?)
For the birds that are singing and flying,
For cloud-ships sailing by.

“For the grass waving green by the river,
Winds fretting soft and low.
Are we to go on weeping, never
These beautiful earth things to know?”
They are lifting their hopeless faces,
Their reproachful eyes haunting me,
Challenging from their dark places,
‘As ye did it unto Me!’ ”

POEMS
OF PORTRAITURE

THE INDIAN DANCER

If I only had a crimson shawl
 With a frieze and gold fringe on it,
I would not wish for clothes at all,
 For shoes or a tiresome bonnet.
A string of vari-colored beads
Would help to satisfy my needs.

I would like a bracelet wrought of gold,
Jade earrings, a jewelled old
Comb for my straight black hair,
The world for a stage. It is little I care
For the gorgeous robes of a royal queen,
I would ask instead a tambourine,

The sheltering arms of a swaying tree,
Star-dust and moonbeam the footlights to be,
The appraising voices of winds to blow
Wild tunes for me. It is little you know
Of what it takes to satisfy
The singing heart of such as I.

GYPSY LASS

By the highway I sit and watch them pass,
Hear them saying, "A gypsy lass
With slender limbs, feet brown and bare,
Heavy braids of shining hair,
A gay kerchief about her head,
Yellow basque and skirt of red.
She is *so* lovely, what a pity
She can't live as we, in a house, in the city!"

From the pear tree's shade I listen and smile
That they pity me. Could they for awhile
Walk the glad earth with winged feet,
Being one with the rain, the snow, the sleet,
Held in the masterful arms of the wind,
Feeling the earth, pulsating, kind,
One with the darkness of the night,
Mingled with dawn and morning-star light,
Dancing barefoot in the cool white sand,
One with the spirit of the land!

I smile to think they pity me
Who understands the heart of a tree,
The silence of lakes, the brook's small chatter,
The waterfall's thunder, its spray and spatter.
They would never be satisfied more
In a covered house with a heavy door,
Could they live for awhile under open skies,
With the living God before their eyes.

THE SUICIDE'S SON

Little Steven sobbed, he did not cry,
I wished he would. His troubled eyes were dry.
Rocking his little body to and fro
He quaveringly voiced a long-drawn "O-oh!"
Expressive of his grief. With yearning heart I
wept,

Then sought to comfort him. The while I kept
My arm about his shoulder, young and small,
He heeded not my presence or the call
Of his name. He was so bewildered, upset
His universe. I never shall forget
The sorrow in his face, as plaintively he said,
To himself, "My Daddy-man is dead.
My Mother cries and doesn't notice me.
Everything is strange as it can be."

O, little boy, just past your six short years,
Too deeply hurt to shed relieving tears,
Your childish mind too young to grasp
The sympathetic word or kind hand-clasp;
Indifferent to proffered consolation,
Stunned by the sudden immolation
Of childhood's magnified ideal,
Groping with the sordid and unreal.

GRANNY

She sits there
With the lamplight falling on her hair,
Her old hands like white birds flying,
Silver knitting needles plying.

As she rocks to and fro,
Silently her pale lips moving go,
As though with friend or some relation
She held eager conversation.

There is grace—
A kind of benediction in her face.
She lifts her eyes, so patient and so mild,
And rests them on a chubby child

Playing there
About her, beautiful and fair.
He leans lovingly against her knee,
Inquiring, "Iss dese g'oves for me?"

With tender smile
She answers, "Yes, they are for my chile,
Granny loves that little rascal too."
Nestling close he answers, "Yes, 'n I lov's 'oo!"

THE RECKLESS DEACON

“I’m tired to death an’ sick o’ life,
An’ everything in it. The ghastly strife
O’ livin’ an’ tryin’ to half-way do
Your dooty is gettin’ on my nerves, I’m thro
With being respectable. I shall drink
An’ carouse an’ kick the dust from the brink
O’ the grave an’ bear the consequence. I’ll tell
The dog-gone world there’s a little o’ hell
In livin’ an’ strugglin’ right here,
The price o’ heaven is too dear!”

So raved the deacon of the church.
(Poor tired old man) it wasn’t much
He could do, being seventy-two years old;
But he, with vandal spirit, sold
His horse and buggy, bought a car,
Never was known to drive it far,
(“For fear o’ accident or bein’ killed.”)
He almost fainted when they spilled
A spoonful of gasoline on the tire;
He shouted, “Hell, man, a little fire
Would blow this thing ’s high as the sky!
Careful—careful—who wants to die?”

CONSOLATION?

Lou, Ella Jones, if I was you
I would find somethin' else to do
Besides weepin' night an' day
For Bascom Jones. That's no way
To help yourself. As I can see
You're sight better off! Listen to me,
I'm sorry for you—have always been,
I love you like my own blood kin,

But I know who it was made the livin',
Worked like a slave, always givin'
Bascom more than you could spare,
While he took life easy. He didn't care
What you had to wear or eat,
He would swagger down the street
Like a game cock in a barnyard fight.
Now you stop grievin'—it ain't right
For you to wear yourself out cryin'
An' moanin' for him that's lyin'
Out there in that graveyard dead.
Why, he didn't even provide bread
Enough for his children. He'd take the rent,
Money you saved cent by cent,
After you struggled night an' day,
Never did treat you right no-way.

Strange to me when a man dies
They always praise him to the skies.
“Kind husband—affectionate father!”
The Lord knows I would rather
Hear about the dead, the truth.
Why don’t they say, “From his youth
He was a devil, reckless, wild,
He swore an’ cussed an’ drank an’ piled
Up debts for his honest wife to pay?”
You put that mournin’ veil away,
Lou Ella Jones, if I was you
I’d find some kind o’ work to do!

MODERNISM

Indeed you are going to the dance!
Why shouldn't you?
You mope so—you disgust me thru
and thru.
What if you did send Allison
away?
He was intolerable—we couldn't
let him stay!
He had no diplomacy and was a
perfect bore,
Never took you any place, my dear, and
what is more
Gave you just a mere pittance
to spend
For pleasure and for clothes—you know
I've had to lend
You money time and time again.
I say "no,"
The world is full of better men.
Let him go!
Love him? Bah! The absurd
idea—love.
With all the real sport of life?
Heavens above,

One has to have one's pleasures,
and of course,
The incidentals. Why, my dear, to me
divorce
Is the apex of enlightened
civilization.
I should go insane were it not
for the realization
I could go to your father any time
and say,
"I have become bored living with you—
I wish to go away—
Out to Reno. Give me a few hundred
for the trip."
I would take the money, buy new
clothes, and skip!
In course of time I should return,
set a new pace
For the crowd. Don't look so distressed.
Your face
Is grayer than a cloudy winter
day.
Wear the gold and emerald dress—
Now run away
To Celeste. She will dress you for
the dance tonight,
You will recover from your love-madness
all right!

THE PRAYER OF MRS. J. WITHERSBY
ST GEORGE

Dear Lord, I am quite tired tonight,
I feel and look a perfect fright.
O, this has been a horrid day,
So many of my friends away
It's hard to find enough to do
Of interest the long day through.
My party was a failure flat,
I blame John and the kids for that,
They were so stupid and so slow,
Forgive them—they provoke me so!

I'm tired of bridge and everything,
I feel much better in the spring,
The summer always whips me down,
Especially if I'm in town.
So many things I would adore
To ask of Thee. Lord, I implore
You, help dear John make this new trade,
It will lay Jack Chester in the shade;
Adele Chester's such a cat,
Copied my new Parisian hat,
Bought a new fur coat like mine last fall,
And snubbed me at the annual ball.

I want to do my duty, Lord,
You understand me. Upon my word,
This is a trying life to live,
Everywhere I go it's "give"—
Give to that and give to this,
It seems, O Lord, they never miss
Telling all their ins and outs,
Really, Lord, I am in doubts
If anything I hear be true.
I am leaning hard on You,
I'm glad I have no grievous sin
To ask forgiveness of—Amen!

THE PRAYER OF WIDOW MAGREW

Dear Lord, I am too tired to say
A decent prayer at close o' day,
But knowin' how You understan',
I'm reachin' up to touch Your han'.
Don't think I'm aimin' to complain
O' bein' poor. Just give the main
Necessities o' life, mostly give
Me courage to go on, to try to live.
Lord, provide strength an' work to do,
Keep me dutiful an' true.

Help me to teach my orphaned brood
To be respectin', strong an' good.
I want to teach them if I may
To live their best from day to day.
I scrub an' sew to keep them clean
An' fair well fed. I don't mean
To dress them up an' have them fine,
But realizing they are mine,
My great responsibility
Keeps me a-askin' things o' Thee.

If Jim had lived I wouldn't ask
So much o' Thee. It ain't the task,
I don't mind work, but times when food
Is scarce, it's hard, Lord, to be good.
When the cold wind noses in an' growls,
An' the wolf stands at the door an' howls,
It's then I beg, O Lord, to see
An' feel You fatherin' my three.
I'm lookin' to You, Lord, my Frien',
You understan', I'm tired—Amen.

THE HEATHEN WOMAN TO HER GOD

(“Come over into Macedonia and help us.”

Acts 16:9)

Prostrate before thee in the dust my weary self I
lay,

Broken and anguished, my heart must find solace,
so I pray:

Immovable and honored god, I lift my prayer to
thee,

Behold me, ragged and unshod, my soul in jeop-
ardy!

Thy graven face is turned from me, yea ever, al-
ways turned

Out into space, impassively. An outcast am I—
spurned.

I weep and wail, tear my strong hair and grovel
on the ground,

Spending my strength in useless prayer, no peace
—no peace is found.

If fathoming my breaking heart thy power could
release,

I would give my living flesh, ransom for hope and
peace.

The tropic sun has seared my back and dulled my
aching brain—

Still comfortless, I take the track that leads to
home again.

Home? A thatched and empty hut to house thro
empty years

Old memories that lash and cut and scar with
scalding tears.

Prostrate before thee in the dust my weary self I
lay,

I beat upon my breast and weep the empty years
away.

THE PRODIGAL

My father understood me when I said,
"I'm sorry, Father, but I'd as soon be dead
As living out my young days in this place!"
I saw a little shadow cross his face,
But he looked me calmly in the eye,
Sighed and made a comforting reply:
"All right, my son, I'm sorry as can be,
But I wouldn't have you stay account of me.
If go you must I shall give to you
Part of the heritage which is your due,
That you may go with means on which to live."
He argued nor lectured, but did give
To me, as elder son, my part.
(God bless a father's understanding heart.)

A moment I wished I had not spoken so,
But my word was given—I would go!
I had always longed to see what lay
Concealed in that great city 'cross the bay.
Always in my heart there was desire to see
The wonders of the earth. A dream with me
Was—I should go—O far away,
Make fame and fortune, then one day
Return triumphant. How proud would be my
father, glad
To call himself the sire of such a lad!

I went first to Jerusalem to see
Just what a city held in store for me.
Beauty and pleasure beckoned me to come,
They coaxed, they loved, with them I made my
home.

I drifted like a petal in a stream,
My father's house became a distant dream.
Wine, women, pleasure, sin untold
Enslaved me. Recklessly I sold
Myself to vice and crime.

Sprawling, wallowing in the ooze and slime
Of utmost degradation. A self-willed outcast,
lost

To erstwhile good instincts—and O the cost!
My goodly substance wasted, all I had
Was gone—no food, no home, and I so poorly
clad

No man would give me work to do. When I would
ask

Each time the same reply, "This task
Will take a steady and a trusty hand."
Was there on earth no one to understand
My need and shame? My sin-seared life was in
my face,

For such as I there seemed to be no place.

One day I hired to tend a herd of hateful swine.
In the open, under God's kind skies, the home
once mine

Kept haunting me. As my vision cleared,
Old associations became endeared
To my heart. How beautiful to me
Became the red sloped roof and the mimosa
tree—

I beat upon my sinful breast and prayed
Forgiveness for the ill-spent years I'd strayed
Away in sin. My heart cried, "Go, poor wander-
er, go

Back to thy father's house." And so
Repenting, I made the journey, I went home again
In deep humiliation. O the agonizing pain,
As conscience lashed and kept me bound
Like one demon-possessed; I groveled on the
ground.

While I was yet some distance from the home,
My father came to meet me, saying, "Come
My poor, tired child, I see you need me now!"
He lifted and embraced me, kissed my brow,
My cheek, and tremblingly wept.
As we walked into the gates of home he kept
His aging arm about me and to the curious serv-
ants said,
"Behold he has returned whom I thought dead!
Bid him welcome. Go, and to the neighbors say,
Come to my house, we make a feast today!"
I lifted up my heart—peace and forgiveness had
come
Like heaven, in my father's home—sweet home!

A VETERAN'S REVERIE

Dedicated to the U. D. C.
(Cabiness Chapter, Forsyth, Ga.)

I turned my gaze to the skies grown gray,
Where a lone star signaled the passing day.
Away in the distance the white smoke curled
Like a banner of peace in the air unfurled.
I heard a thrush call soft and low,
To the mate in the nest, on the plain below.
Children's voices I heard somewhere,
Ringing sweet and clear on the evening air.
Then I looked on the city of honored dead
Beneath the greening hillside spread.

As I dreamed there in the twilight deep
My soul was stirred. I could but weep
For those who sleep beneath that hill,
Through sun and dew and starlight still.
There, graves that bearing no man's name,
Are monuments to southern fame!
The place is sacred—hill and plain
Where sleep the South's heroic slain!
I seem to see in the fading day
The passing regiment of gray.

I seem to hear the thundering drum
As down the street the soldiers come.
The band plays "Dixie" once again,
The crowd grows drunk with the refrain!
House-holds flock into the street
And laugh and weep with those they meet.
How soft and bright and new and gray,
The coats of those who march away!
How brave their faces as they go,
Baptized in prayer, to meet the foe.

And when the last of them is gone,
The South is still and stript and shorn;
Women sit with bated breath,
Awaiting with the calm of death
For Victory, perhaps for Woe.
Ah, God, how slowly hours go!
How they toil, and how they pray
That God will guide their men each day,
And keep them brave and strong and true,
In all this hell they're living through.

Months pass and years. War is no more.
Red ruin stalks from shore to shore!
Who bright-eyed into battle went
Return forlorn and sorely spent.
Those who fared forth unafraid
Come home disconsolate, dismayed.
Gallant heroes! Brave of heart!
They square their shoulders, gain a start
And from the ruin, muck and mire
Build up a glorious empire!

These comrades sleeping on yon hill
Remind us of a duty still.
Hold high that holy burning brand,
Yea, pass it on from hand to hand,
So long as earth and time shall be
Keep reverently their memory!
They're filing past—these men in gray,
Soon they will all have gone away.
They leave their foot-prints red with gore
On the sands of Time's immortal shore.

POEMS OF PLACES

STILL HOUSE

I used to say I wanted a house that was quiet and
still,
With red geraniums blooming upon the window
sill,
A great gray cat purring on the rug before the fire,
A still house, a quiet house was my young heart's
desire.

I had no time for pleasure, I scarce had time to
pray,
The home cares kept me busy while the full years
slipt away.
I grew weary rushing at school-time, with de-
mands for a dress or a blouse
Impatient with the confusion and noise of my too-
small house.
Time passed and the children left home as all
young birds leave the nest,
To try their wings, to sing new songs in fields that
suit them best.
An atmosphere of quiet has crept in like a mouse
And I sit here and strain my ears for the sound of
a song in my house.

I hear them calling "Mother" across the empty
years,
I answer from my quiet house, "I'm lonely for
you, dears."
There is a red geranium a-bloom on the window
sill,
A pedigreed Angora, and a house that is still, O
still!

THE LONESOME HOUSE

There's a lonesome house by the side of the road,
 Silent and sad and still.
The breezes blow the flowers to and fro,
 And the birds in the green trees trill.
The sunshine and rain and heavenly dew
Seem trying to keep it fair for you.

The lonesome house does not seem the same
 Sweet place that I loved so well.
Its soul is gone—it looks forlorn,
 And gloomier than I can tell.
Every day I pass the place
And strain my eyes for your absent face.

O, the little house by the side of the road
 Is missing you I know,
Its spirit is true (the symbol of you,)
 It will call you wherever you go.
Strange it is that you could stay
From its friendly call from day to day.

THE WIDOW'S GARDEN

Have you ever seen the garden
Of some lonesome woman left
By her husband and her children
And her old time friends, bereft
Of all the intimate attention that an aging woman
needs?

I have just seen such a garden
And a woman tired and worn,
Her little house seemed desolate,
Her little garden shorn
Of its summer beauty, pathetic, frost-smitten,
slain.

The fallen garden fence was made
Of, O just everything,
The creaky rust-hinged gate was tied up
With a homespun string.
And every sprig of mignonette and lavender was
dead

Like youthful hopes that blossomed
In a happy long ago.
Mignonette and lavender
Are hearty things you know,
Yet they were lying drab and dead in brown heaps
on the ground.

The owner of the garden
Came smiling out to me,
With hospitable greeting—
I could plainly see
How pleased she was that I had brought some
work for her to do.

I sat down close beside her
And we talked in woman-wise,
About the homey things we loved,
Old gardens, April skies.
She said, "When spring comes I will plant a lot of
new things in my garden.

"I'm 'bliged to have petunias,
Spice pinks an' golden glow,
They seem kinder like the friends
An' loves o' long ago.
My garden's got a tired look as tho about to die."

And there it was—the listless prey
Of winter's frost and freeze.
I knew in the springtime
On stiff and aching knees
She would stir the soil and make her garden sweet
and beautiful.

Even now I seem to sense
The odor, vagrant, sweet,
Of spice pinks and petunias
Where the honey-bees would meet
And ravish roguishly the hearts of those old fash-
ioned flowers.

POEMS OF LOVE
AND FRIENDSHIP

BELOVED, THE SHADOWS OF EVENING
ARE FALLING

Beloved, the shadows of evening are falling,
The night folds the fast-fading day to her
breast.

Plaintive and sweetly the song birds are calling,
And winging them back to the shelter of nest.
The odor of flowers in the garden you tended
Is wafted like incense upon the still air,
Fragrance of roses and white lilies blended
As though your sweet presence were lingering
there,

That you'd bid me come in where your hearth fires
were burning
A welcome to those whom your shelter might
seek,

I was consumed with unfathomable yearning
To touch you, beloved, or to hear you speak.
Then I seek solace in thoughts of tomorrow,
When mortals return as dust unto dust,
When all separation and life's transient sorrow
Is left like an unneeded, discarded crust.

Why should we weep when the harp strings are
 broken,
 And silent the instrument touched by loved
 hands,
When echoes a melody, enduring token,
 Of music transmuted in some fairer lands?
Lift, sorrowful heart, child of dire desolation,
 Tomorrow will grant your lost treasure again,
Heaven reward you with sweet consolation,
 Manifold joy out of infinite pain.

Beloved, beloved, the white stars are gleaming,
 Already the hour of night is on wing.
Sweet be thy sleep—pleasant thy dreaming,
 Behold it is dawn! Hark the glad angels sing!

RETRIBUTION

Perhaps you shall come to me again
Sometime in the after-years,
When time has dimmed the hurt and pain
And scars of my scalding tears.

Sometime—sometime—but who shall say
Whenever the hour may be
That you will come to the end of your way
Seeking solace of me?

Do you presume that with passing years
I shall ever forgive
You who caused me bitter tears,
After you taught me to live?

I shall remember—tho centuries past,
All—all you have meant to me,
The bitter—the sweet, I shall hold fast
In my heart through eternity.

You will come to me, weary of roaming about,
But the door of my house I shall close;
You will believe I am dead or out,
(But the time—O nobody knows!)

I shall close the door of my broken house,
And pretend I am not at home,
You will tap-tap-tap—and be still as a mouse
While you patiently wait for my “Come!”

I shall laugh if you think I am dead,
And weep if you think I am gone.
You will come back begging bread,
And I—I shall give you a stone!

GOOD-BYE

Good-bye—good-bye—I have said it
Because you would have it so;
You fretted to break the fetters,
Though you knew I was loath to go.
Where—where shall my heart find solace,
A haven of peace and rest?
I feel the weight of its burden
Like a thing of steel in my breast.

Dulled and disillusioned,
Strangely dead and cold,
A broken cog in a worn machine
That before its time grew old.
You tell me that I must forget you,
Do you really wish me to?
Why, every crimson rose I see
Is a souvenir of you.

When I behold the glory
Of the clouds when the sun is set,
I'll be seeing again our "Castles in Spain";
Ah no, I shall never forget!
All beautiful things will bring memories
Of cherished hours with you,
Moonless nights in summer,
Perfumed and heavy with dew.

Every dawn with its promise,
Each errant breeze that blows,
The tedious hours of winter nights,
The whiteness and chill of snows.
Good-bye, my dear, I have said it,
And are you happier so?
I can live, somehow, without you,
But my heart will not let you go.

SEPARATION

There is a voice in the April dusk,
In the pungence of the rose and musk
And lilacs wet with early dew,
That speaks endearingly of you
Who shared with me sweet evening times
In enchanted Southern climes,
Who revelled in the fragrant air
With flower petals on your hair,
Who laughed and loved in the light of the moon
And complained that it went down too soon.

The beauty of those April nights
Was pregnant with the rare delights
Of perfumed vapors, apple bloom
Breathing gladness into gloom
Of shaded wood, greening trees
Fretted by the vagrant breeze;
Reminder of that glad springtime
Of lavender—and thrift and thyme
Heavy with the fallen dew,
Heavier my heart for you.

Shall I no more know you here,
Hold you intimate and dear
As in other April days
When we walked Life's great highways?
Empty years would roll from me,
I would smilingly face eternity,
If only, dear heart, I but knew
Through time and space you had been true,
That in the scented April dusk,
You thrill to lavender and musk.

GOOD-NIGHT

Good-night, my dear, the evening star is gleaming,
Soft shadows falling, flicker to and fro,
The still night calls to sleep and pleasant dream-
ing,

The homing birds sing sweetly, soft and low.
How short has been the day, yet you grew tired
Of sights and sounds that please the ready ear,
All of God's lovely things you so admired,
Treasured, and held infinitely dear.

Perhaps you spent your eager self in yearning
For beauty that was solace to your soul;
You were always hastening and turning
To add to Life's full over-flowing bowl.
In your hands you held the flowers of gladness,
Joyousness expressed itself in you—
But in an hour of unwonted sadness
The petals drooped and faded, falling thro.

Good-night, my dear, I'll see you in the morning,
A new star in the shining eastern skies,
A song, a rose that blossomed in the dawning,
Opening your sweetly sleeping eyes,
Beholding the gold glory of Tomorrow,
Where all things are perfected and made fair—
You—whom God has spared Life's every sorrow,
Will be outstanding in the radiance there.

Oh, intervening hours may be dreary,
Yet how kind the night that oft has stilled
And calmed the burdens of the countless weary
Multitudes, with full hearts, memory-filled,
And breaking with the burden of lost treasures,
That, hoarded for awhile, had slipped away
When weary grown of Life and transient pleasures,
Seeking the refuge of eternal day.
Good-night, my dear!

HOSPITALITY

Evenin', Stranger, howdy-do,
Somethin' I can do for you?
'Pears like you air broken down.
No, sir, you cain't git to town.
The road's a mud hole ever since
They scraped it. Drive up there longside the fence,
Guess there's plenty room to park.
You jes' come in, it's gittin' dark,
You couldn't git to town tonight,
I'll put you up an' give you a bite.
Why, you're as welcome as can be
To stay here an' break bread with me.

We're kinder po-folksy an' plain,
But after all, I guess the main
Thing in life is to give
The other feller a chance to live.
I wouldn't want a man to say
He broke down at dark an' couldn't stay
The night with me, an' git the best
I had to give—in food an' rest.
The ole place ain't so powerful fine,
But, by gad, stranger, it is mine,
I love it—You are welcome here,
Come right in, sir, have a chair.

Make yourself at home—light up an' smoke.
Say, 've you heard the latest joke
About the Ford? What is new in politics?
I can't ketch on to all the tricks
These shrewd guys practice now-a-days,
"Er ole dawg cain't be learnt new ways."
Comfortable? I'm powerful glad,
Kinder seems as tho I had
Been a-knowin' you before,
You look natchual in my door,
Kinder glad yer car broke down
An' you couldn't git to town.

Have a gourd o' good spring water?
I enjoy talkin', but guess I orter
Be a-showin' you to bed,
Quotin' what ole "Benjy" said,
"Early to bed an' early to rise
Makes a man healthy, wealthy an' wise."
After drivin' hard all day
Guess you're glad ter "hit the hay."
Down the hall there—to the right,
Stranger, God bless ye, good-night!

DEDICATORY
POEMS

TO THE LAD IN THE TRENCH

(Spring 1917)

O lad, brave lad, in the trench over there,
Facing the smoke and the shell,
Where are your thoughts when the night comes
 down?
Tell me, O dear lad, tell!

Back to the homeland away, far away,
A little gray mother at close of the day?
Or a cottage white across the sea,
A wife—a baby on her knee?
Or the girl you kissed on the parting day,
Who watched you through tears proudly march-
 ing away?

O lad, brave lad, whatever you do,
Wherever you're fighting today,
The hearts back home are following you—
Dear lad, brave lad, and they pray!

TO A FRIEND WHO SENT ME ROSES

These lovely roses in this yellow vase
Keep smiling at me like an old friend's face.
Messengers are they to make me glad,
Reminding me so sweetly that you had,
Above the turmoil of the crowded day,
Kind thoughts of me, that you had paused to say,
"Now I remember her, she does love so
Every lovely thing that God lets grow."

Yes, ah yes, my dear friend, it is true
They brought me untold joy, but you
With the loving kindness of your thought
More joy and beauty than the roses brought;
You were busy, but you took the time
To gather flowers for your friend. Sublime
Is thoughtfulness and sweeter far
Than fading blossoms in an antique jar!

TO THE UNKNOWN HERO

I bade him God-speed on the parting day,
When he squared his shoulders and marched away.
I knew his heart was about to break,
And his soul was sick at the life he would take.
From childhood he never could hurt anything,
He touched with awe the dainty wing
Of the butterfly. Violets sweet
Were safe in the grass where fell his feet.

He believed war a distorted wrong,
A reptile hideous, venomous, strong!
He wasn't a coward—never had been,
But he had such love for his fellow-men.
To him they were beings akin to God,
Ruler, laborer, vagabond, clod.
Tho he would honestly do his part,
I knew the fight would break his heart.

They tell how he faced the fire and shell,
How he stood like a god in the mouth of hell,
Swearing and fighting and choking with dust,
Let it cost him his life—he would die if he must!
The blood poured from his wounded side,
But he stood there fearless, the symbol of pride,
Turning the tide of the battle that day,
Then at twilight lay dying. His comrades say
His buddie had fallen and when they were found
My lad was trying to soothe the wound.

As he lifted up his comrade's head
To his own kind breast—he fell back dead!
His gallant soul had found release,
His dying lips prayed, "Father—Peace!"
As we honor the heroes who have died,
Who for a cause were crucified,
I picture a lad who held to his breast
A dying comrade—offering rest.
In the twilight's golden glow,
A bugle note falls soft and low,
Multitudes go passing by,
Praying "Peace to their ashes, wherever they lie."

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