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UNDERTONES

By

Madison Cawein



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OATEN STOP SERIES

III



VNDERTONES

BY MADISON CAWEIN



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INSCRIBED TO THE PATHETIC
MEMORY OF THE POET
HENRY TIMROD

*Long are the days, and three times long the nights.
The weary hours are a heavy chain
Upon the feet of all Earth's dear delights,
Holding them ever prisoners to pain.
What shall beguile me to believe again
In hope, that faith within her parable writes
Of life, care reads with eyes whose tear-drops
stain?*

*Shall such assist me to subdue the heights?
Long is the night, and overlong the day.—
The burden of all being! — is it worse
Or better, lo! that they who toil and pray
May win not more than they who toil and curse?
A little sleep, a little love, ah me!
And the slow weight up the soul's Calvary!*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE DREAMER	1
QUIET	2
UNQUALIFIED	3
UNENCOURAGED ASPIRATION	3
THE WOOD	4
WOOD NOTES	5
SUCCESS	7
SONG	7
THE OLD SPRING	8
HILLS OF THE WEST	10
FLOWERS	11
SECOND SIGHT	12
DEAD SEA FRUIT	13
THE WOOD WITCH	14
AT SUNSET	16
MAY	17
THE WIND OF SPRING	18
INTERPRETED	19
THE WILLOW BOTTOM	20
THE OLD BARN	22
CLEARING	23
REQUIEM	25
AT LAST	26

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A DARK DAY	27
FALL	28
UNDERTONE	29
CONCLUSION	30
MONOCHROMES	32
DAYS AND DAYS	34
DROUTH IN AUTUMN	35
MID-WINTER	36
COLD	37
IN WINTER	38
ON THE FARM	39
PATHS	41
A SONG IN SEASON	43
APART	44
FAËRY MORRIS	45
THE WORLD'S DESIRE	46
THE UNATTAINABLE	47
REMEMBERED	51
THE SEA SPIRIT	52
A DREAM SHAPE	53
THE VAMPIRE	54
WILL-O'-THE-WISP	56
THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN	57
THE WERE-WOLF	59
THE TROGLODYTE	62
THE CITY OF DARKNESS	63
TRANSMUTATION	65

UNDERTONES



THE DREAMER

EVEN as a child he loved to thrid the
 bowers,
And mark the loafing sunlight's lazy laugh;
Or, on each season, spell the epitaph
Of its dead months repeated in their flowers;
Or list the music of the strolling showers,
Whose vagabond notes strummed through
 a twinkling staff;
Or read the day's delivered monograph
Through all the chapters of its dædal
 hours.
Still with the same child-faith and child-
 regard
He looks on Nature, hearing, at her heart,
The beautiful beat out the time and place,
Whereby no lesson of this life is hard,
No struggle vain of science or of art,
That dies with failure written on its face.

UNDERTONES

QUIET

A LOG-HUT in the solitude,
A clapboard roof to rest beneath!
This side, the shadow-haunted wood ;
That side, the sunlight-haunted heath.

At daybreak Morn shall come to me
In raiment of the white winds spun;
Slim in her rosy hand the key
That opes the gateway of the sun.

Her smile shall help my heart enough
With love to labor all the day,
And cheer the road, whose rocks are rough,
With her smooth footprints, each a ray.

At dusk a voice shall call afar,
A lone voice like the whippoorwill's;
And, on her shimmering brow one star,
Night shall descend the western hills.

She at my door till dawn shall stand,
With Gothic eyes, that, dark and deep,
Are mirrors of a mystic land,
Fantastic with the towns of sleep.

UNENCOURAGED ASPIRATION

UNQUALIFIED

NOT his the part to win the goal,
The flaming goal that flies before,
Into whose course the apples roll
Of self that stay his feet the more.

Beyond himself he shall not win
Whose flesh is as a driven dust,
That his own soul must wander in,
Seeing no farther than his lust.

UNENCOURAGED ASPIRATION

IS mine the part of no companion hand
Of help, except my shadow's silent self?
A moonlight traveller in Fancy's land
Of leering gnome and hollow-laughing elf;

Whose forests deepen and whose moon
goes down,
When Night's blind shadow shall usurp
my own;
And, mid the dust and wreck of some
old town,
The City of Dreams, I grope and fall alone.

UNDERTONES

THE WOOD

WITCH-HAZEL, dogwood, and the
maple here;
And there the oak and hickory;
Linn, poplar, and the beech-tree, far and
near
As the eased eye can see.

Wild-ginger; wahoo, with its wan balloons;
And brakes of briers of a twilight green;
And fox-grapes plumed with summer; and
strung moons
Of mandrake flowers between.

Deep gold-green ferns, and mosses red and
gray, —
Mats for what naked myth's white feet?—
And, cool and calm, a cascade far away
With even-falling beat.

Old logs, made sweet with death; rough
bits of bark;
And tangled twig and knotted root;
And sunshine splashes and great pools of
dark;
And many a wild-bird's flute.

WOOD NOTES

Here let me sit until the Indian, Dusk,
With copper-colored feet, comes down;
Sowing the wildwood with star-fire and
musk,
And shadows blue and brown.

Then side by side with some magician
dream,
To take the owlet-haunted lane,
Half-roofed with vines; led by a firefly
gleam,
That brings me home again.

WOOD NOTES

I.

THERE is a flute that follows me
From tree to tree:
A water flute a spirit sets
To silver lips in waterfalls,
And through the breath of violets
A sparkling music calls :
“Hither! halloo! Oh, follow!
Down leafy hill and hollow,
Where, through clear swirls,

UNDERTONES

With feet like pearls,
Wade up the blue-eyed country girls.
Hither! halloo! Oh, follow!"

II.

There is a pipe that plays to me
From tree to tree :
A bramble pipe an elfin holds
To golden lips in berry brakes,
And, swinging o'er the elder wolds,
A flickering music makes :
"Come over! Come over
The new-mown clover!
Come over the new-mown hay!
Where, there by the berries,
With cheeks like cherries,
And locks with which the warm wind
merries,
Brown girls are hilling the hay,
All day!
Come over the fields and away!
Come over! Come over!"

SONG

SUCCESS

HOW some succeed who have least need,
In that they make no effort for!
And pluck, where others pluck a weed,
The burning blossom of a star,
Grown from no earthly seed.

For some shall reap that never sow;
And some shall toil and not attain, —
What boots it in ourselves to know
Such labor here is not in vain,
When we still see it so!

SONG

UNTO the portal of the House of Song,
Symbols of wrong and emblems of
unrest,
And mottoes of despair and envious jest,
And stony masks of scorn and hate belong.

Who enters here shall feel his soul denied
All welcome: lo! the chiselled form of Love,
That stares in marble on the shrine above
The tomb of Beauty, where he dreamed and
died!

UNDERTONES

Who enters here shall know no poppy flowers
Of Rest, or harp-tones of serene Content;
Only sad ghosts of music and of scent
Shall mock the mind with their remembered
powers.

Here must he wait till striving patience carves
His name upon the century-storied floor;
His heart's blood staining one dim pane the
more
In Fame's high casement while he sings and
starves.

THE OLD SPRING

I.

UNDER rocks whereon the rose,
Like a strip of morning, glows;
Where the azure-throated newt
Drowzes on the twisted root;
And the brown bees, humming homeward,
Stop to suck the honey-dew;
Fern and leaf-hid, gleaming gloamward,
Drips the wildwood spring I knew,
Drips the spring my boyhood knew.

THE OLD SPRING

II.

Myrrh and music everywhere
Haunt its cascades; — like the hair
That a naiad tosses cool,
Swimming strangely beautiful,
With white fragrance for her bosom,
For her mouth a breath of song; —
Under leaf and branch and blossom
Flows the woodland spring along,
Sparkling, singing, flows along.

III.

Still the wet wan morns may touch
Its gray rocks, perhaps; and such
Slender stars as dusk may have
Pierce the rose that roofs its wave;
Still the thrush may call at noontide,
And the whippoorwill at night;
Nevermore, by sun or moontide,
Shall I see it gliding white,
Falling, flowing, wild and white.

UNDERTONES

HILLS OF THE WEST

HILLS of the west, that gird
Forest and farm,
Home of the nestling bird,
Housing from harm,
When on your tops is heard
Storm:

Hills of the west, that bar
Belts of the gloam,
Under the twilight star,
Where the mists roam,
Take ye the wanderer
Home.

Hills of the west, that dream
Under the moon,
Making of wind and stream,
Late-heard and soon,
Parts of your lives that seem
Tune.

FLOWERS

Hills of the west, that take
Slumber to ye,
Be it for sorrow's sake
Or memory,
Part of such slumber make
Me.

FLOWERS

OH, why for us the blighted bloom!
The blossom that lies withering!
The Master of Life's changeless loom
Hath wrought for us no changeless thing.

Where grows the rose of fadeless Grace?
Wherethrough the Spirit manifests
The fact of an immortal race,
The dream on which religion rests.

Where buds the lily of our Faith?
That grows for us in unknown wise,
Out of the barren dust of death,
The pregnant bloom of Paradise.

In Heaven! so near that flowers know!
That flowers see how near! — and thus
Reflect the knowledge here below
Of love and life unknown to us.

UNDERTONES

SECOND SIGHT

THEY lean their faces to me through
Green windows of the woods;
Their white throats sweet with honey-dew
Beneath low leafy hoods —
No dream they dream but hath been true
Here in the solitudes.

Star trillium, in the underbrush,
In whom Spring bares her face;
Sun eglantine, that breathes the blush
Of Summer's quiet grace;
Moon mallow, in whom lives the hush
Of Autumn's tragic pace.

For one hath heard the dryad's sighs
Behind the covering bark;
And one hath felt the satyr's eyes
Gleam in the bosky dark;
And one hath seen the naiad rise
In waters all a-spark.

DEAD SEA FRUIT

I bend my soul unto them, stilled
In worship man hath lost;
The old-world myths that science killed
Are living things almost
To me through these whose forms are filled
With Beauty's pagan ghost.

And through new eyes I seem to see
The world these live within, —
A shuttered world of mystery,
Where unreal forms begin
The real of ideality
That has no unreal kin.

DEAD SEA FRUIT

ALL things have power to hold us back.
Our very hopes build up a wall
Of doubt, whose shadow stretches black
O'er all.

The dreams, that helped us once, become
Dread disappointments, that oppose
Dead eyes to ours, and lips made dumb
With woes.

UNDERTONES

The thoughts that opened doors before
Within the mind's house, hide away;
Discouragement hath locked each door
For aye.

Come, loss, more frequently than gain!
And failure than success! until
The spirit's struggle to attain
Is still!

THE WOOD WITCH

THERE is a woodland witch who lies
With bloom-bright limbs and beam-
bright eyes,
Among the water-flags, that rank
The slow brook's heron-haunted bank:
The dragon-flies, in brass and blue,
Are signs she works her sorcery through;
Weird, wizard characters she weaves
Her spells by under forest leaves, —
These wait her word, like imps, upon
The gray flag-pods; their wings, of lawn
And gauze; their bodies gleamy green.
While o'er the wet sand, — left between

THE WOOD WITCH

The running water and the still, —
In pansy hues and daffodil,
The fancies that she meditates
Take on most sumptuous shapes, with traits
Like butterflies. 'T is she you hear,
Whose sleepy rune, hummed in the ear
Of silence, bees and beetles purr,
And the dry-droning locusts whirr;
Till, where the wood is very lone,
Vague monotone meets monotone,
And slumber is begot and born,
A faery child, beneath the thorn.
There is no mortal who may scorn
The witchery she spreads around
Her dim demesne, wherein is bound
The beauty of abandoned time,
As some sweet thought 'twixt rhyme and
rhyme.

And by her spell you shall behold
The blue turn gray, the gray turn gold
Of hollow heaven; and the brown
Of twilight vistas twinkled down
With fire-flies; and, in the gloom,
Feel the cool vowels of perfume
Slow-syllabled of weed and bloom.
But, in the night, at languid rest, —
When like a spirit's naked breast

UNDERTONES

The moon slips from a silver mist, —
With star-bound brow, and star-wreathed
wrist,
If you should see her rise and wave
You welcome, — ah! what thing shall save
You then? forevermore her slave!

AT SUNSET

INTO the sunset's turquoise marge
The moon dips, like a pearly barge
Enchantment sails through magic seas,
To fairyland Hesperides,
Over the hills and away.

Into the fields, in ghost-gray gown,
The young-eyed Dusk comes slowly down;
Her apron filled with stars she stands,
And one or two slip from her hands
Over the hills and away.

Above the wood's black caldron bends
The witch-faced Night and, muttering, blends
The dew and heat, whose bubbles make
The mist and musk that haunt the brake
Over the hills and away.

MAY

Oh, come with me, and let us go
Beyond the sunset lying low,
Beyond the twilight and the night,
Into Love's kingdom of long light,
Over the hills and away.

MAY

THE golden disks of the rattlesnake-weed,
That spangle the woods and dance —
No gleam of gold that the twilights hold
Is strong as their necromance :
For, under the oaks where the wood-paths
lead,
The golden disks of the rattlesnake-weed
Are the May's own utterance.

The azure stars of the bluet bloom
That sprinkle the woodland's trance —
No blink of blue that a cloud lets through
Is sweet as their countenance :
For, over the knolls that the woods perfume,
The azure stars of the bluet bloom
Are the light of the May's own glance.

UNDERTONES

With her wondering words and her looks
 she comes,
 In a sunbeam of a gown;
She needs but think and the blossoms wink,
 But look, and they shower down.
By orchard ways, where the wild-bee hums,
With her wondering words and her looks
 she comes,
 Like a little maid to town.

THE WIND OF SPRING

THE wind that breathes of columbines
And bleeding-hearts that crowd the
 rocks ;
That shakes the balsam of the pines
With music from his flashing locks,
Stops at my city door and knocks.

He calls me far a-forest; where
The twin-leaf and the blood-root bloom;
And, circled by the amber air,
Life sits with beauty and perfume
Weaving the new web of her loom.

INTERPRETED

He calls me where the waters run
Through fronding ferns where haunts the
 hern;
And, sparkling in the equal sun,
Song leans beside her brimming urn,
And dreams the dreams that love shall learn.

The wind has summoned, and I go, —
To con God's meaning in each line
The flowers write, and, walking slow,
God's purpose, of which song is sign, —
The wind's great, gusty hand in mine.

INTERPRETED

WHAT magic shall solve us the secret
Of beauty that 's born for an hour?
That gleams like the flight of an egret,
Or burns like the scent of a flower,
 With death for a dower?

What leaps in the bosk but a satyr?
 What pipes on the wind but a faun?
Or laughs in the waters that scatter,
 But limbs of a nymph who is gone,
 When we walk in the dawn?

UNDERTONES

What sings on the hills but a fairy ?
Or sighs in the fields but a sprite ?
What breathes through the leaves but the airy
Soft spirits of shadow and light,
When we walk in the night ?

Behold how the world-heart is eager
To draw us and hold us and claim !
Through truths of the dreams that beleaguer
Her soul she makes ours the same,
And death but a name.

THE WILLOW BOTTOM

LUSH green the grass that grows between
The willows of the bottom-land ;
Verged by the careless water, tall and green,
The brown-topped cat-tails stand.

The cows come gently here to browse,
Slow through the great-leafed sycamores ;
You hear a dog bark from a low-roofed house
With cedars round its doors.

THE WILLOW BOTTOM

Then all is quiet as the wings
Of the high buzzard floating there ;
Anon a woman's high-pitched voice that
 sings
An old camp-meeting air.

A flapping cock that crows ; and then —
Heard drowsy through the rustling corn —
A flutter, and the cackling of a hen
Within a hay-sweet barn.

How still again! no water stirs ;
No wind is heard ; although the weeds
Are waved a little ; and from silk-filled burrs
Drift by a few soft seeds.

So drugged with sleep and dreams, that you
Expect to see her gliding by, —
Hummed round of bees, through blossoms
 spilling dew, —
The Spirit of July.

UNDERTONES

THE OLD BARN

LOW, swallow-swept and gray,
Between the orchard and the spring,
All its wide windows overflowing hay,
And crannied doors a-swing,
The old barn stands to-day.

Deep in its hay the Leghorn hides
A round white nest ; and, humming soft
On roof and rafter, or its log-rude sides,
Black in the sun-shot loft,
The building hornet glides.

Along its corn-crib, cautiously
As thieving fingers, skulks the rat ;
Or, in warped stalls of fragrant timothy,
Gnaws at some loosened slat,
Or passes shadowy.

A dream of drouth made audible
Before its door, hot, smooth, and shrill
All day the locust sings. . . . What other
spell
Shall hold it, lazier still
Than the long day's, now tell ? —

CLEARING

Dusk and the cricket and the strain
Of tree-toad and of frog ; and stars
That burn above the rich west's ribbéd stain ;
And dropping pasture bars,
And cow-bells up the lane.

Night and the moon and katydid,
And leaf-lisp of the wind-touched boughs ;
And mazy shadows that the fire-flies thrid ;
And sweet breath of the cows ;
And the lone owl here hid.

CLEARING

BEFORE the wind, with rain-drowned
stocks,
The pleated crimson hollyhocks
Are bending ;
And, smouldering in the breaking brown,
Above the hills that edge the town,
The day is ending.

The air is heavy with the damp ;
And, one by one, each cottage lamp
Is lighted ;
Infrequent passers of the street
Stroll on or stop to talk or greet,
Benighted.

UNDERTONES

I look beyond my city yard,
And watch the white moon struggling hard,
 Cloud-buried;
The wind is driving toward the east,
A wreck of pearl, all cracked and creased
 And serried.

At times the moon, erupting, streaks
Some long cloud ; like Andean peaks
 That double
Horizon-vast volcano chains,
The earthquake scars with lava veins
 That bubble.

The wind that blows from out the hills
Is like a woman's touch that stills
 A sorrow:
The moon sits high with many a star
In the deep calm: and fair and far
 Abides to-morrow.

REQUIEM

I.

NO more for him, where hills look down,
 Shall Morning crown
Her rainy brow with blossom bands! —
 Whose rosy hands
Drop wild flowers of the breaking skies
Upon the sod 'neath which he lies. —
 No more! no more!

II.

No more for him where waters sleep,
 Shall Evening heap
The long gold of the perfect days!
 Whose pale hand lays
Great poppies of the afterglow
Upon the turf he rests below. —
 No more! no more!

III.

No more for him, where woodlands loom,
 Shall Midnight bloom
The star-flow' red acres of the blue!
 Whose brown hands strew
Dead leaves of darkness, hushed and deep,
Upon the grave where he doth sleep. —
 No more! no more!

UNDERTONES

IV.

The hills that Morning's footsteps wake ;
The waves that take
A brightness from the Eve ; the woods
O'er which Night broods,
Their spirits have, whose parts are one
With his whose mortal part is done.
Whose part is done!

AT LAST

WHAT shall be said to him,
Now he is dead?
Now that his eyes are dim,
Low lies his head?
What shall be said to him,
Now he is dead?

One word to whisper of
Low in his ear ;
Sweet, but the one word "love"
Haply he'll hear.
One word to whisper of
Low in his ear.

A DARK DAY

What shall be given him,
Now he is dead ?
Now that his eyes are dim,
Low lies his head ?
What shall be given him,
Now he is dead ?

Hope, that life long denied
Here to his heart,
Sweet, lay it now beside,
Never to part.
Hope, that life long denied
Here to his heart.

A DARK DAY

THOUGH Summer walks the world to-
day

With corn-crowned hours for her guard,
Her thoughts have clad themselves in gray,
And wait in Autumn's weedy yard.

And where the larkspur and the phlox
Spread carpets wheresoe'er she pass,
She seems to stand with sombre locks
Bound bleak with fog-washed zinnias. —

UNDERTONES

Fall's terra-cotta-colored flowers,
Whose disks the trickling wet has tinged
With dingy lustre when the bower's
Thin, flame-flecked leaves the frost has
singed ;

Or with slow feet, 'mid gaunt gold blooms
Of marigolds her fingers twist,
She seems to pass with Fall's perfumes,
And dreams of sullen rain and mist.

FALL

SAD-HEARTED spirit of the solitudes,
Who comest through the ruin-wedded
woods !
Gray-gowned with fog, gold-girdled with
the gloom
Of tawny twilights ; burdened with perfume
Of rain-wet uplands, chilly with the mist ;
And all the beauty of the fire-kissed
Cold forests crimsoning thy indolent way,
Odorous of death and drowsy with decay.

UNDERTONE

I think of thee as seated 'mid the showers
Of languid leaves that cover up the flowers, —
The little flower-sisterhoods, whom June
Once gave wild sweetness to, as to a tune
A singer gives her soul's wild melody, —
Watching the squirrel store his granary.
Or, 'mid old orchards I have pictured thee :
Thy hair's profusion blown about thy back ;
One lovely shoulder bathed with gipsy black ;
Upon thy palm one nestling cheek, and sweet
The rosy russets tumbled at thy feet.
Was it a voice lamenting for the flowers ?
A heart-sick bird, that sang of happier hours ?
A cricket dirging days that soon must die ?
Or did the ghost of Summer wander by ?

UNDERTONE

AH me! too soon the Autumn comes
Among these purple-plaintive hills!
Too soon among the forest gums
Premonitory flame she spills,
Bleak, melancholy flame that kills.

UNDERTONES

Her white fogs veil the morn that rims
With wet the moonflow'r's elfin moons ;
And, like exhausted starlight, dims
The last slim lily-disk ; and swoons
With scents of hazy afternoons.

Her gray mists haunt the sunset skies,
And build the west's cadaverous fire,
Where Sorrow sits with lonely eyes,
And hands that wake her ancient lyre,
Beside the ghost of dead Desire.

CONCLUSION

THE songs Love sang to us are dead:
Yet shall he sing to us again,
When the dull days are wrapped in lead,
And the red woodland drips with rain.

The lily of our love is gone,
That touched our spring with golden scent ;
Now in the garden low upon
The wind-stripped way its stalk is bent.

CONCLUSION

Our rose of dreams is passed away,
That lit our summer with sweet fire ;
The storm beats bare each thorny spray,
And its dead leaves are trod in mire.

The songs Love sang to us are dead ;
Yet shall he sing to us again,
When the dull days are wrapped in lead,
And the red woodland drips with rain.

The marigold of memory
Shall fill our autumn then with glow ;
Haply its bitterness will be
Sweeter than love of long ago.

The cypress of forgetfulness
Shall haunt our winter with its hue ;
The apathy to us not less
Dear than the dreams our summer knew.

UNDERTONES

MONOCHROMES

I.

THE last rose falls, wrecked of the wind
and rain ;
Where once it bloomed the thorns alone
remain:
Dead in the wet the slow rain strews the
rose.
The day was dim; now eve comes on again,
Grave as a life weighed down by many
woes, —
So is the joy dead, and alive the pain.

The brown leaf flutters where the green leaf
died;
Bare are the boughs, and bleak the forest side:
The wind is whirling with the last wild
leaf.
The eve was strange; now dusk comes weird
and wide,
Gaunt as a life that lives alone with grief, —
So doth the hope go and despair abide.

MONOCHROMES

An empty nest hangs where the wood-bird
pled ;
Along the west the dusk dies, stormy red :
The frost is subtle as a serpent's breath.
The dusk was sad ; now night is overhead,
Grim as a soul brought face to face with
death —
So life lives on when love, its life, lies dead.

II.

Go your own ways. Who shall persuade
me now
To seek with high face for a star of hope ?
Or up endeavor's unsubmissive slope
Advance a bosom of desire, and bow
A back of patience in a thankless task ?
Alone beside the grave of love I ask,
Shalt thou ? or thou ?

Leave go my hands. Fain would I walk
alone
The easy ways of silence and of sleep.
What though I go with eyes that cannot
weep,

UNDERTONES

And lips contracted with no uttered moan,
Through rocks and thorns, where every
footprint bleeds,
A dead-sea path of desert night that leads
To one white stone!

Though sands be black and bitter black the
sea,
Night lie before me and behind me night,
And God within far Heaven refuse to light
The consolation of the dawn for me, —
Between the shadowy bournes of Heaven
and Hell,
It is enough love leaves my soul to dwell
With memory.

DAYS AND DAYS

THE days that clothed white limbs with
heat,
And rocked the red rose on their breast,
Have passed with amber-sandalled feet
Into the ruby-gated west.

DROUTH IN AUTUMN

These were the days that filled the heart
With overflowing riches of
Life; in whose soul no dream shall start
But hath its origin in love.

Now come the days gray-huddled in
The haze; whose foggy footsteps drip;
Who pin beneath a gipsy chin
The frosty marigold and hip. —

The days, whose forms fall shadowy
Athwart the heart; whose misty breath
Shapes saddest sweets of memory
Out of the bitterness of death.

DROUTH IN AUTUMN

GNARLED acorn-oaks against a west
Of copper, cavernous with fire;
A wind of frost that gives no rest
To such lean leaves as haunt the brier,
And hide the cricket's vibrant wire.

UNDERTONES

Sear, shivering shocks, and stubble blurred
With bramble-blots of dull maroon ;
And creekless hills whereon no herd
Finds pasture, and whereo'er the loon
Flies, haggard as the rainless moon.

MID-WINTER

ALL day the clouds hung ashen with the
cold ;
And through the snow the muffled waters
fell ;
The day seemed drowned in grief too deep
to tell,
Like some old hermit whose last bead is told.
At eve the wind woke, and the snow-clouds
rolled
Aside to leave the fierce sky visible ;
Harsh as an iron landscape of wan hell
The dark hills hung framed in with gloomy
gold.
And then, towards night, the wind seemed
some one at
My window wailing : now a little child
Crying outside the door ; and now the long

COLD

Howl of some starved beast down the flue.
I sat
And knew 't was Winter with his madman
song
Of miseries, whereon he stared and smiled.

COLD

A MIST that froze beneath the moon
and shook
Minutest frosty fire in the air.
All night the wind was still as lonely Care
Who sighs before her shivering ingle-nook.
The face of Winter wore a crueller look
Than when he shakes the icicles from his
hair,
And, in the boisterous pauses, lets his stare
Freeze through the forest, fettering bough
and brook.
He is the despot now who sits and dreams
Of Desolation and Despair, and smiles
At Poverty, who hath no place to rest,
Who wanders o'er Life's snow-made path-
less miles,

UNDERTONES

And sees the Home-of-Comfort's window
gleams,
And hugs her rag-wrapped baby to her
breast.

IN WINTER

I.

WHEN black frosts pluck the acorns
down,
And in the lane the waters freeze ;
And 'thwart red skies the wild-fowl flies,
And death sits grimly 'mid the trees ;
When home-lights glitter in the brown
Of dusk like shaggy eyes, —
Before the door his feet, sweetheart,
And two white arms that greet, sweetheart,
And two white arms that greet.

II.

When ways are drifted with the leaves,
And winds make music in the thorns ;
And lone and lost above the frost
The new moon shows its silver horns ;

ON THE FARM

When underneath the lamp-lit eaves
The opened door is crossed, —
A happy heart and light, sweetheart,
And lips to kiss good-night, sweetheart,
And lips to kiss good-night.

ON THE FARM

I.

HE sang a song as he sowed the field,
Sowed the field at break of day :
“ When the pursed-up leaves are as lips that
yield
Balm and balsam, and Spring, — concealed
In the odorous green, — is so revealed,
Halloo and oh !
Hallo for the woods and the far away ! ”

II.

He trilled a song as he mowed the mead,
Mowed the mead as noon begun :
“ When the hills are gold with the ripened
seed,
As the sunset stairs that loom and lead

UNDERTONES

To the sky where Summer knows naught
of need,
 Halloo and oh !
Hallo for the hills and the harvest sun ! ”

III.

He hummed a song as he swung the flail,
 Swung the flail in the afternoon :
“ When the idle fields are a wrecker’s tale,
That the Autumn tells to the twilight pale,
As the Year turns seaward a crimson sail,
 Halloo and oh !
Hallo for the fields and the hunter’s-moon ! ”

IV.

He whistled a song as he shouldered his axe,
 Shouldered his axe in the evening storm :
“ When the snow of the road shows the
 rabbit’s tracks,
And the wind is a whip that the Winter
 cracks,
With a herdsman’s cry, o’er the clouds’
 black backs,
 Halloo and oh !
Hallo for home and a hearth to warm ! ”

PATHS

I.

WHAT words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well? —
The path that takes me, in the spring,
Past quinces where the blue-birds sing,
Where peonies are blossoming,
Unto a porch, wistaria-hung,
Around whose steps May-lilies blow,
A fair girl reaches down among,
Her arm more white than their sweet snow.

II.

What words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well? —
Another path that leads me, when
The summer-time is here again,
Past hollyhocks that shame the west
When the red sun has sunk to rest ;
To roses bowering a nest,
A lattice, 'neath which mignonette
And deep geraniums surge and sough,
Where, in the twilight, starless yet,
A fair girl's eyes are stars enough.

UNDERTONES

III.

What words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well? —
A path that takes me, when the days
Of autumn wrap themselves in haze,
Beneath the pippin-pelting tree,
'Mid flitting butterfly and bee ;
Unto a door where, fiery,
The creeper climbs ; and, garnet-hued,
The cock's-comb and the dahlia flare,
And in the door, where shades intrude,
Gleams out a fair girl's sunbeam hair.

IV.

What words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well? —
A path that brings me o'er the frost
Of winter, when the moon is tossed
In clouds ; beneath great cedars, weak
With shaggy snow ; past shrubs blown bleak
With shivering leaves ; to eaves that leak
The tattered ice, whereunder is
A fire-flickering window-space ;
And in the light, with lips to kiss,
A fair girl's welcome-giving face.

A SONG IN SEASON

I.

WHEN in the wind the vane turns round,
And round, and round ;
And in his kennel whines the hound ;
When all the gable eaves are bound
With icicles of ragged gray,
A glinting gray ;
There is little to do, and much to say,
And you hug your fire and pass the day
With a thought of the springtime, dearie.

II.

When late at night the owlet hoots,
And hoots, and hoots ;
And wild winds make of keyholes flutes ;
When to the door the goodman's boots
Stamp through the snow the light stains red,
The fire-light's red ;
There is nothing to do, and all is said,
And you quaff your cider and go to bed
With a dream of the summer, dearie.

III.

When, nearing dawn, the black cock crows,
And crows, and crows ;
And from the barn the milch-cow lows ;

UNDERTONES

And the milkmaid's cheeks have each a rose,
And the still skies show a star or two,
 Or one or two ;
There is little to say, and much to do,
And the heartier done the happier you,
 With a song of the winter, dearie.

APART

I.

WHILE sunset burns and stars are few,
 And roses scent the fading light,
And like a slim urn, dripping dew,
A spirit carries through the night,
 The pearl-pale moon hangs new, —
 I think of you, of you.

II.

While waters flow, and soft winds woo
The golden-hearted bud with sighs ;
And, like a flower an angel threw,
Out of the momentary skies
 A star falls burning blue, —
 I dream of you, of you.

FAËRY MORRIS

III.

While love believes, and hearts are true,
'So let me think, so let me dream ;
The thought and dream so wedded to
Your face, that, far apart, I seem
 To see each thing you do,
 And be with you, with you.

FAËRY MORRIS

I.

THE winds are whist ; and, hid in mist,
The moon hangs o'er the wooded
 height ;
The bushy bee, with unkempt head,
Hath made the sunflower's disk his bed,
 And sleeps half-hid from sight.
The owlet makes us melody —
Come dance with us in Faëry,
 Come dance with us to-night.

II.

The dew is damp ; the glow-worm's lamp
Blurs in the moss its tawny light ;
The great gray moth sinks, half-asleep,

UNDERTONES

Where, in an elfin-laundered heap,
The lily-gowns hang white.
The crickets make us minstrelsy —
Come dance with us in Faëry,
Come dance with us to night.

III.

With scents of heat, dew-chilled and sweet,
The new-cut hay smells by the bight ;
The ghost of some dead pansy bloom,
The butterfly dreams in the gloom,
Its pied wings folded tight.
The world is lost in fantasy, —
Come dance with us in Faëry,
Come dance with us to-night.

THE WORLD'S DESIRE

THE roses of voluptuousness
Wreath her dark locks and hide her
eyes ;
Her limbs are flower-like nakedness,
Wherethrough the fragrant blood doth press,
The blossom-blood of Paradise.

THE UNATTAINABLE

She stands with Lilith finger tips,
With Lilith hands ; and gathers up
The wild wine of all life ; and sips
With Lilith-laughter-lightened lips
The soul as from a crystal cup.

What though she cast the cup away !
The empty bowl that flashed with wine !
Her curled lips' kiss, that stained the clay,
Her fingers' touch — shall not these stay,
That made its nothingness divine ?

Through one again shall live the glow,
Immortalizing, of her touch ;
And through the other, sweet to know
How life swept flame once 'neath the snow
Of her mooned breasts, — and this is much !

THE UNATTAINABLE

MARK thou ! a shadow crowned with
fire of hell.
Man holds her in his heart as night doth hold
The moonlight memories of day's dead gold ;
Or as a winter-withered asphodel
In its dead loveliness holds scents of old.
And looking on her, lo, he thinks 't is well.

UNDERTONES

Who would not follow her whose glory
sits,
Imperishably lovely on the air ?
Who, from the arms of Earth's desire,
flits
With eyes defiant and rebellious hair ? —
Hers is the beauty that no man shall share.

He who hath seen, what shall it profit him ?
He who doth love, what shall his passion
gain ?
When disappointment at her cup's bright
brim
Poisons the pleasure with the hemlock
pain ?
Hers is the passion that no man shall drain.

How long, how long since Life hath touched
her eyes,
Making their night clairvoyant ! And how
long
Since Love hath kissed her lips and made
them wise,
Binding her brow with prophecy and song !
Hope clad her nakedness in lovely lies,
Giving into her hands the right of wrong !

THE UNATTAINABLE

Lo! in her world she sets pale tents of
thought,
Unearthly bannered ; and her dreams'
wild bands
Besiege the heavens like a twilight fraught
With recollections of lost stars. She
stands
Radiant as Lilith given from God's hands.

The golden rose of patience at her throat
Drops fragrant petals — as a pensive tune
Drops its surrendered sweetness note by
note ; —
And from her hands the buds of hope are
strewn,
Moon-flowers, mothered of the barren moon.

So in her flowers man seats him at her
feet
In star-faced worship, knowing all of this ;
And now to him to die seems very sweet,
Fed with the fire of her look and kiss ;
While in his heart the blood's tumultuous
beat
Drowns, in her own, the drowsing serpent's
hiss.

UNDERTONES

He who hath dreamed but of her world shall
give
All of his soul unto her restlessly:
He who hath seen but her far face shall live
No more for things we name reality:
Such is the power of her tyranny.

He, whom she wins, hath nothing 'neath the
sun;
Forgetting all that she may not forget
He loves her, who still feeds his soul upon
Dreams and desires, and doubt and vain
regret, —
Life's bitter bread his heart's fierce tears
make wet.

What word of wisdom hast thou, Life, to
wake
Him now ! or song of magic now to dull
The dreams he lives in ! or what charm to
break
The spell that makes her evil beautiful !
What charm to show her beauty hides a
snake,
Whose basilisk eyes burn dark behind a skull.

REMEMBERED

HERE in the dusk I see her face again
As then I knew it, ere she fell asleep;
Renunciation glorifying pain
Of her soul's inmost deep.

I shall not see its like again! the brow
Of passive marble, purely aureoled, —
As some pale lily in the afterglow, —
With supernatural gold.

As if a rose should speak and, somehow
heard
By some strange sense, the unembodied
sound
Grow visible, her mouth was as a word
A sweet thought falters 'round.

So do I still remember eyes imbued
With far reflections — as the stars suggest
The silence, purity and solitude
Of infinite peace and rest.

She was my all. I loved her as men love
A high desire, religion, an ideal —
The meaning purpose in the loss whereof
God shall alone reveal.

UNDERTONES

THE SEA SPIRIT

AH me ! I shall not waken soon
From dreams of such divinity !
A spirit singing in the moon
To me.

White sea-spray driven of the storm
Were not so wildly white as she !
She beckoned with a foam-white arm
To me.

With eyes dark green, and golden-green
Loose locks that sparkled drippingly,
Out of the green wave she did lean
To me.

And sang ; till Earth and Heaven were
A far, forgotten memory ;
For more than Heaven seemed hid in her
To me : —

Sleep, sweeter than love's face or home ;
Love, more than immortality ;
And music of the dreamy foam
For me.

A DREAM SHAPE

Pass over her with all thy ships
With all thy stormy tides, O sea!
The memory of immortal lips
For me!

A DREAM SHAPE

WITH moon-white hearts that held a
gleam,
I gathered wild flowers in a dream,
And shaped a woman, whose sweet blood
Was odor of the wildwood bud.

From dew, the starlight arrowed through,
I wrought a woman's eyes of blue ;
The lids, that on her eyeballs lay,
Were rose-pale petals of the May.

I took the music of the breeze,
And water whispering in the trees,
And shaped the soul that breathed below
A woman's blossom breasts of snow.

Out of a rose-bud's veins I drew
The fragrant crimson beating through
The languid lips of her, whose kiss
Was as a poppy's drowsiness.

UNDERTONES

Out of the moonlight and the air
I wrought the glory of her hair,
That o'er her eyes' blue heaven lay
Like some gold cloud o'er dawn of day.

A shadow's shadow in the glass
Of sleep, my spirit saw her pass :
And, thinking of it now, meseems
We only live within our dreams.

For in that time she was to me
More real than our reality;
More real than Earth, more real than I —
The unreal things that pass and die.

THE VAMPIRE

A LILY in a twilight place ?
A moonflow'r in the lonely night ? —
Strange beauty of a woman's face
Of wildflow'r-white!

The rain that hangs a star's green ray
Slim on a leaf-point's restlessness,
Is not so glimmering green and gray
As was her dress.

THE VAMPIRE

I drew her dark hair from her eyes,
And in their deeps beheld a while
Such shadowy moonlight as the skies
Of Hell may smile.

She held her mouth up redly wan,
And burning cold, — I bent and kissed
Such rosy snow as some wild dawn
Makes of a mist.

God shall not take from me that hour,
When round my neck her white arms
clung!
When 'neath my lips, like some fierce
flower,
Her white throat swung!

Or words she murmured while she leaned!
Witch-words, she holds me softly by, —
The spell that binds me to a fiend
Until I die.

UNDERTONES

WILL-O'-THE-WISP

I.

THERE in the calamus he stands
With frog-webbed feet and bat-winged
hands;
His glow-worm garb glints goblin-wise;
And elfishly, and elfishly,
Above the gleam of owlet eyes,
A death's-moth cap of downy dyes
Nods out at me, nods out at me.

II.

Now in the reeds his face looks white
As witch-down on a witches' night;
Now through the dark old haunted mill,
So eerily, so eerily,
He flits; and with a whippoorwill
Mouth calls, and seems to syllable,
"Come follow me! come follow me!"

III.

Now o'er the sluggish stream he wends,
A slim light at his finger-ends;

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

The spotted spawn, the toad hath clomb,
Slips oozily, slips oozily ;
His easy footsteps seem to come —
Like bubble-gaspings of the scum —
Now near to me, now near to me.

IV.

There by the stagnant pool he stands,
A fox-fire lamp in flickering hands;
The weeds are slimy to the tread,
And mockingly, and mockingly,
With slanted eyes and eldritch head
He leans above a face long dead, —
The face of me! the face of me!

THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

ON the black road through the wood
As I rode,
There the Headless Horseman stood;
By the wild pool in the wood,
As I rode.

UNDERTONES

From the shadow of an oak,
 As I rode,
Demon steed and rider broke;
By the thunder-shattered oak,
 As I rode.

On the waste road through the plain,
 As I rode,
At my back he whirled like rain;
On the tempest-blackened plain,
 As I rode.

Four fierce hoofs shod red with fire,
 As I rode,
Woke the wild rocks, dark and dire ;
Eyes and nostrils streamed with fire,
 As I rode.

On the deep road through the rocks,
 As I rode,
I could reach his horse's locks;
Through the echo-hurling rocks,
 As I rode.

THE WERE-WOLF

And again I looked behind,
 As I rode, —
Dark as night and swift as wind,
Towering, he rode behind,
 As I rode.

On the steep road down the dell,
 As I rode,
In the night I heard a bell,
In the village in the dell,
 As I rode.

And my soul called out in prayer,
 As I rode, —
Lo! the demon went in air,
Leaving me alone in prayer,
 As I rode.

THE WERE-WOLF

SHE.

NAY; still amort, my love? Why dost
 thou lag?

HE.

The strix-owl cried.

UNDERTONES

SHE.

Nay! yon wild
stream that leaps
Hoarse from the black pines of the Hakel
steeps,
A moon-tipped water, down a glittering
crag. —
Why so aghast, sweetheart? Why dost
thou stop?

HE.

The demon-huntsman passed with hooting
horn!

SHE.

Nay! 't was the blind wind sweeping through
the thorn
Around the ruins of the Dumburg's top.

HE.

My limbs are cold.

SHE.

Come! warm thee in
mine arms.

THE WERE-WOLF

HE.

Mine eyes are weary.

SHE.

Rest them, love, on
mine.

HE.

I am athirst.

SHE.

Quench on my lips thy thirst. —
O dear belovéd, how thy last kiss warms
My blood again!

HE.

Off! . . . How thy eye-
balls shine!
Thy face! . . . thy form! . . . So do I
die accursed!

UNDERTONES

THE TROGLODYTE

I N ages dead, a troglodyte,
At the hollow roots of a monster
height, —
That grew from the heart of the world to
light, —
I dwelt in caverns : over me
Were mountains older than the moon;
And forests vaster than the sea,
And gulfs, that the earthquake's hand had
hewn,
Hung under me. And late and soon
I heard the dæmon of change that sighed
A cosmic language of mystery;
While life sat silent, primeval-eyed,
With the infant spirit of prophecy.

Gaunt stars glared down on the Titan peaks;
And the gaunter glare of the cratered streaks
Of the sunset's ruin heard condor shrieks.
The roar of cataracts hurled in air,
And the hurricane laying his thunders bare,
And rush of battling beasts, — whose lair

THE CITY OF DARKNESS

Was the antechamber of nadir-gloom, —
Were my outworld joys. But who shall tell
The awe of the depths that heard the boom
Of the iron rivers that fashioned Hell!

THE CITY OF DARKNESS

WIDE-walled it stands in heathen lands
Beside a mystic sea,
With streets strange-trod of many a god,
And templed blasphemy.

Far in the night, a rose of light
It shines beside the sea;
But overhead an unknown dread
Impends eternally.

There is a sound above, around
Of music by the sea ;
And weird and wide the torches glide
Of pagan revelry.

There is a noise as of a voice
That calls beneath the sea ;
And all the deep grows pale with sleep
And vague expectancy.

UNDERTONES

Then slowly up — as from a cup
Seethes poison — lifts the sea;
Wild mass on mass, as in black glass,
The town glows fiery.

Red-lit it glowers like Hell's dark towers
Set in the iron sea;
And monster swarms with awful forms
Roll though it cloudily.

Still overhead the unknown dread,
Whose shadow dyes the sea,
At wrath-winged wait behind its gate
Till God shall set it free.

A taloned flash, an earthquake crash,
And, lo! upon the sea,
Black wall on wall, a giant pall,
Night settles hideously.

And where it burned, a rose inurned,
Red in the vasty sea,
The phantasm of the dread above
Sits in immensity.

TRANSMUTATION

TO me all beauty that I see
Is melody made visible:
An earth-translated state, may be,
Of music heard in Heaven or Hell.

Out of some love-impassioned strain
Of saints, the rose evolved its bloom;
And, dreaming of it here again,
Perhaps re-lives it as perfume.

Out of some chant that demons sing
Of hate and pain, the sunset grew;
And, haply, still remembering,
Re-lives it here as some wild hue.

THE END



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