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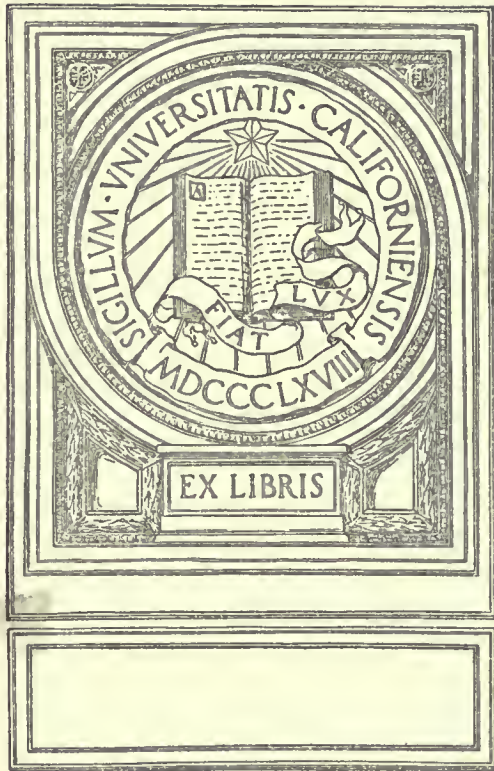
FLORA

BY

PAMELA BIANCO

With Verses by

WALTER DE LA MARE



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THE FLOWERY MEADOW

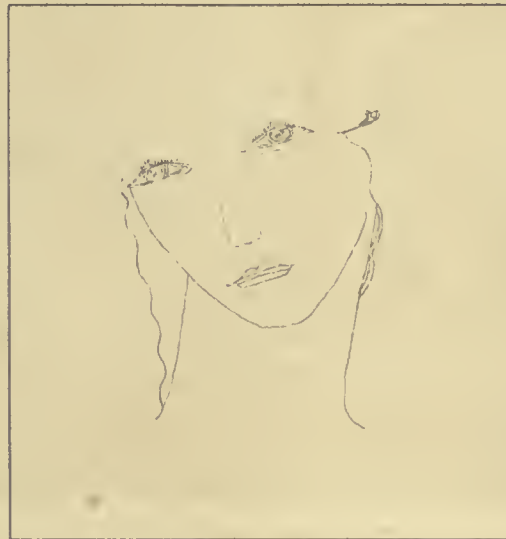
FLORA

A
BOOK OF DRAWINGS

by
Pamela Bianco

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE POEMS

by
Walter de la Mare



London: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

[1919]

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ABSTRACT

NOTE.

This volume grew out of an exhibition of the pictures of Pamela Bianco—a child of 12 years old—which was held in the Leicester Galleries, London, during the spring of 1919. Her remarkable talent for decorative invention, and her poetic imagery drew crowds to the exhibition, and obtained the enthusiastic praise of the entire press. A selection of the drawings there shown are here reproduced. They are accompanied by the exquisite poems that Walter de la Mare was inspired by them to write.



SPRING.



MISERICORDIA.

Misericordia !
Weep with me.
Waneth the dusk light ;
Strange the tree ;
In regions barbarous
Lost are we.

I, Glycera,
And Silas here,
Who hath hid in sleep
His eyes from fear ;
Wan-wide are mine
With a tear.

Misericordia !
Was I born
Only to pluck
Disaster's thorn ?
Only to stray
Forlorn ?

MORNING TOILET.

'Tis sure eleven by the sun,
And now, her morning toilet done,
Perfumed and powdered fair,
My Madame Dives, smooth and bland—
The richest lady in the land—
Reclines upon her chair.

Languidly hangs her idle wrist
In those great beads of amethyst ;
Steadily her head
Turns its two eyes, as if to say,
Well, well, and here's another day
To fatten and be fed.

Honeycomb, cream and dainty fruit
Have plumped her cheek, and silked her throat
And ringleted that wig.
And only princes' minions know
Where blooms like these are made to blow—
A thousand crowns a sprig.



MORNING TOILET.



BABES IN THE WOOD.



LISTEN !

Quiet your faces ; be crossed every thumb ;
Fix on me deep your eyes . . .
Out of my mind a story shall come,
Old, and lovely, and wise.

Old as the pebbles that fringe the cold seas ;
Lovely as apples in rain ;
Wise as the King who learned of the bees,
Then learned of the emmets again.

Old as the fruits that in mistletoe shine ;
Lovely as amber, as snow ;
Wise as the fool who, when care made him pine,
Sang Hey, fol lol, lilly lo !

Old as the woods rhyming Thomas snuffed sweet,
When pillion he rid with the Queen ;
Lovely as elf-craft ; wise as the street,
Where the roofs of the humble are seen . . .

Hsst ! there's a stirring, there's wind in the bough ;
A whirring of birds on the wing :
Like a river of water my story shall flow,
Like runnels of water sing.





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THE MOTH

Isled in the midnight air,
Musked with the dark's faint bloom,
Out into glooming and secret haunts
The flame cries, " Come ! "

Lovely in dye and fan,
A-tremble in shimmering grace,
A moth from her winter swoon
Uplifts her face :

Stares from her glamorous eyes ;
Wafts her on plumes like mist ;
In ecstasy swirls and sways
To her strange tryst.



THE SINGING BIRD.



AS I DID ROVE

As I did rove in blinded night,
Raying the sward, in slender ring,
A cirque I saw whose crystal light
Tranced my despair with glittering.

Slender its gold. In hues of dream
Its jewels burned, smiting my eyes,
Like wings that flit about the stream
That waters Paradise.

Sorrow broke in my heart to see
A thing so lovely ; and I heard
Cry from its dark security
A 'wilderer bird.

I GO HOME

My mistress dreams—and me forgot ;
For parlour silks I cannot care ;
 Abroad she will not roam.
But birds invite to sandy grot ;
Good warren folk await me there ;
 So *I* go home.

Her human sprite's flown out of house ;
Her shoe scarce prints the painted mat ;
 She dreams of fay and gnome,
And such as in full moon carouse :
So, soft, tap this foot, softer that—
 And *I* go home.



I GO HOME.

THE PATH

Is it an abbey that I see
Hard-by that tapering poplar-tree,
Whereat that path hath end ?
'Tis wondrous still
That empty hill,
Yet calls me, friend.

Smooth is the turf, serene the sky,
The timeworn, crumbling roof awry ;
Within that turret slim
Hangs there a bell
Whose faint notes knell ?
Do colours dim

Burn in that angled window there,
Grass-green, and crimson, azure rare ?
Would, from that narrow door,
One, looking in,
See, gemlike, shine
On walls and floor

Candles whose aureole flames must seem—
So still they burn—to burn in dream ?
And do they cry, and say,
“ See, stranger ; come !
Here is thy home ;
No longer stray ! ”



THE PATH.



FORGIVENESS

“ O thy flamed cheek,
Those locks with weeping wet,
Eyes that, forlorn and meek,
On mine are set.

“ Poor hands, poor feeble wings,
Folded, a-droop, O sad !
See, 'tis my heart that sings
To make thee glad.

“ My mouth breathes love, thou dear !
All that I am and know
Is thine. My breast—draw near :
Be grieved not so ! ”



THE COQUETTE

Yearn thou may'st :
Thou shalt not see
My wasting love
For thee.

Lean thy tress ;
Fair, fair that fruit ;
Slim as warbling bird's
Thy throat.

Peep thou then :
Doubt not some swain
Will of thy still decoy
Be fain.

But I ? In sooth—
Nay, gaze thy fill !
Scorn thee I must,
And will.

DIVINE DELIGHT

Dark, dark this mind, if ever in vain it rove
The face of man in search of hope and love ;
Or, turning inward from earth's sun and moon,
Spin in cold solitude thought's mazed cocoon.
Fresh hang Time's branches. Hollow in space out-cry
The grave-toned trumpets of Eternity.
" World of divine delight " heart whispereth,
Though all its all lie but 'twixt birth and death.



DIVINE DELIGHT.



CHILDREN PICKING FLOWERS



ANGEL & CHILD.



BITTER WATERS

In a dense wood, a drear wood,
Dark water is flowing ;
Deep, deep, beyond sounding,
A flood ever flowing.

There harbours no wild bird,
No wanderer strays there ;
Wreathed in mist, sheds pale Ishtar
Her sorrowful rays there.

Take thy net ; cast thy line ;
Manna sweet be thy baiting ;
Time's desolate ages
Shall still find thee waiting

For quick fish to rise there,
Or butterfly wooing,
Or flower's honeyed beauty,
Or wood-pigeon cooing.

Inland wellsprings are sweet ;
But to lips, parched and dry,
Salt, salt is the savour
Of these ; faint their sigh :

Bitter Babylon's waters !
Zion, distant and fair !
We hanged up our harps
On the trees that are there.



A DRAPED FIGURE SEATED.



SUPPOSE

Suppose . . . and suppose that a wild little Horse of Magic
Came cantering out of the sky,
With bridle of silver, and into the saddle I mounted,
To fly—and to fly ;

And we stretched up into the air, fleeting on in the sunshine,
A speck in the gleam
On galloping hoofs, his mane in the wind out-flowing,
In a shadowy stream ;

And, oh, when, all lone, the gentle star of evening
Came crinkling into the blue,
A magical castle we saw in the air, like a cloud of moonlight,
As onward we flew ;

And across the green moat on the drawbridge we foamed and
And there was a beautiful Queen [we snorted,
Who smiled at me strangely ; and spoke to my wild little Horse,
A lovely and beautiful Queen ; [too—

And she cried with delight—and delight—to her delicate maidens,
“ Behold my daughter—my dear ! ”
And they crowned me with flowers, and then to their harps
Solemn and clear ; [sate playing,

And magical cakes and goblets were spread on the table ;
And at window the birds came in ;
Hopping along with bright eyes, pecking crumbs from the platters,
And sipped of the wine ;

And splashing up—up to the roof tossed fountains of crystal ;
And Princes in scarlet and green
Shot with their bows and arrows, and kneeled with their dishes
Of fruits for the Queen ;

And we walked in a magical garden with rivers and bowers,
And my bed was of ivory and gold ;
And the Queen breathed soft in my ear a song of enchantment—
And I never grew old . . .

And I never, never came back to the earth, oh, never and never ;
How mother would cry and cry !
There'd be snow on the fields then, and all these sweet flowers
Would wither, and die . . . [in the winter

Suppose . . . and suppose . . .



THE STRONG CHILD.



FIVE OF US

“ Five of us small merry ones,
And Simon in the grass.
Here’s an hour for delight,
Out of mortal thought and sight.
See, the sunshine ebbs away :
 We play and we play.

“ Five of us small merry ones,
And yonder there the stone,
Flat and heavy, dark and cold,
Where, beneath the churchyard mould,
Time has buried yesterday :
 We play and we play.

“ Five of us small merry ones,
We sang a dirge, did we.
Cloud was cold on foot and hair,
And a magpie from her lair
Spread her motley in the air ;
And we wept—our tears away :
 We play and we play.”

DEAR DELIGHT

Youngling fair, and dear delight,
'Tis Love hath thee in keeping ;
Green are the hills in morning light,
A long adieu to weeping !

The elfin-folk sing shrill a-ring ;
Children afield are straying ;
Dance, too, thou tiny, lovely thing,
For all the world's a-maying.

Droop will the shadows of the night ;
Quiet be thy sleeping.
Thou youngling fair, and dear delight,
'Tis Love hath thee in keeping.



DEAR DELIGHT.



MOTHER AND BABY.



FAIRY SPRING.

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GAZE, NOW

Gaze, now, thy fill, beguiling face,
Life which all light and hue bestows
Stealeth at last from youth its grace,
From cheek its firstling rose.

Dark are those tresses ; grave that brow ;
Drink, happy mouth, from Wisdom's well ;
Bid the strange world to sigh thee now
All beauty hath to tell.



THE COMB

My mother sate me at her glass ;
This necklet of bright flowers she wove ;
Crisscross her gentle hands did pass,
And wound in my hair her love.

Deep in the mirror our glances met,
And grieved, lest from her care I roam,
She kissed me through her tears, and set
On high this spangling comb.



THE BIRD SET FREE

“ No marvel, Sweet, you clap your wings
In hunger for the open sky ;
I see your pretty flutterings,
Will let you fly.

“ But O, when in some shady grot
You preen your breast in noonday's blue,
Be not your Susan quite forgot,
Who hungers too ! ”

MOURN'ST THOU NOW?

Long ago from radiant palace,
Dream-bemused, in flood of moon,
Stole the princess Seraphita
Into forest gloom.

Wail of hemlock ; cold the dew-drops ;
Danced the Dryads in the chace ;
Heavy hung ambrosial fragrance ;
Moonbeams blanched her ravished face.

Frail and clear the notes delusive ;
Mocking phantoms in a rout
Thridded the night-cloistered thickets,
Wove their sorceries in and out . . .

Mourn'st thou now ? Or do thine eyelids
Frame a vision dark, divine—
O'er this imp of star and wild-flower—
Of a god once thine ?



MOURN'ST THOU NOW ?



THE SNOWFLAKE

See, now, this filigree : 'tis snow,
Shaped, in the void, of heavenly dew ;
On winds of space like flower to blow
In a wilderness of blue.

Black are those pines. The utter cold
Hath frozen to silence the birds' green woods.
Rime hath enstealed the wormless mould,
A vacant quiet broods.

Lo, this entranced thing !—a breath
Of life that bids Man's heart to crave
Still for perfection : ere fall death,
And earth shut in his grave.



FIRST STEPS.



FLOTSAM

Screamed the far sea-mew. On the mirroring sands
Bell-shrill the oyster-catchers. Burned the sky.
Couching my cheeks upon my sun-scorched hands,
Down from bare rock I gazed. The sea swung by.

Dazzling dark blue and verdurous, quiet with snow,
Empty with loveliness, with music a-roar,
Her billowing summits heaving noon-aglow,
Crashed the Atlantic on the cliff-ringed shore.

Drowed in the tumult of that moving deep,
Sense into outer silence fainted, fled ;
And rising softly, from the fields of sleep,
Stole to my eyes a lover from the dead ;

Crying an incantation, learned where ? when ?--
White swirled the foam, a fount, a blinding gleam
Of ice-cold breast, cruel eyes, wild mouth—and then
A still dirge echoing on from dream to dream.

ALAS

One moment take thy rest.
Out of mere nought in space
Beauty moved human breast
To tell in this far face
A dream in noonday seen,
Never to fade or pass :
A breath-time's mute delight :
 A joy in flight :
The aught desire doth mean,
 Sighing, Alas !



CRAZED

I know a pool where nightshade preens
Her poisonous fruitage in the moon ;
Where the frail aspen her shadow leans
In midnight cold a-swoon.

I know a meadow flat with gold—
A million million burning flowers
In noon-sun's thirst their buds unfold
Beneath his blazing showers.

I saw a crazed face, did I,
Stare from the lattice of a mill,
While the lank sails clacked idly by
High on the windy hill.



to daddy



THULE

Green-cupped the acorn, ripened the pear,
Grass, lily, jonquil sweeten the air ;
Tendrilled convolvulus softly doth clamber ;
To his Dame steps Sir Coney, with balm for her chamber ;
Cry echoes cry—would my tongue could remember !

Away on his errand, in secret, runs Joy,
That wistful, naked, bud-ankleted boy.
Though never a feather in shade is seen,
Thin jargoning music wells out of the green.

On high in those branches bird-glancings espy
Foamed blue of ocean imbowled by the sky.
There the lustrous-locked sun in chair sits a-flame,
Illuming a region no sailor can name. . . .

Thule ? Atlantis ? Arcadia ?



MADONNA & ANGEL.



MASTER RABBIT

As I was walking,
Thyme sweet to my nose,
Green grasshoppers talking,
Rose rivalling rose :

And wing, like amber,
Dispread in light,
As from bush to bush
Linnet took flight :

Master Rabbit I saw
In the shadow-rimmed mouth
Of his sandy cavern
Looking out to the South.

'Twas dew-tide coming,
The turf was sweet
To nostril, curved tooth,
And wool-soft feet.

Sun was in West,
Crystal in beam
Of its golden shower
Did his round eye gleam.

Lank horror was I,
And a foe, poor soul—
Snowy flit of a scut,
He was into his hole :

And—stamp, stamp, stamp .
Through dim labyrinths clear—
The whole world darkened,
A Human near.

INNOCENCY

In this grave picture mortal Man may see
That all his knowledge ends in mystery.
From mother's womb he breaks. With tortured sighs
Her racked heart sweetens at his angry cries.
Teaching his feet to walk, his tongue to express
His infant love, she pours her tenderness.
Her milk and honey he doth taste and sip ;
Sleeps with her kiss of kindness on his lip.
But with the vigour mastering time doth yield
He exults in freedom ; ventures him afield ;
Down to the sea goes, and in ship sets sail,
Crazed with the raving of love's nightingale,
And trumps of war, and danger's luring horn,
And dark's faint summons into dreams forlorn.
Pride in earth's vanquished secrets fills his breast ;
Yet still he pines for foregone peace and rest,
And prays in untold sorrow at last to win
To a long-lost Paradise an entering-in.

O yearning eyes that through earth's ages scan
The " glorious misery " 'tis to be a man ;
Secure in thy still arms our Saviour be,
Whose name is Innocency.



INNOCENCY.

MIRAGE

Strange fabled face ! From sterile shore to shore
O'er plunging seas, thick-sprent with glistening brine,
The voyagers of the World with sail and heavy oar,
Have sought thy shrine.
Beauty inexorable hath lured them on :
Remote unnamed stars enclustering gleam—
Burn in thy flowered locks, though creeping daybreak wan
Prove thee but dream.

Noonday to night the enigma of thine eyes
Frets with desire their travel-wearied brain,
Till in the vast of dark the ice-cold moon arise
And pour them peace again ;
And with malign mirage uprears an isle
Of fountain and palm, and courts of jasmine and rose,
Whence far decoy of siren throats their souls beguile,
And maddening fragrance flows.

Lo, in the milken light, in tissue of gold
Thine apparition gathers in the air—
Nay, but the seas are deep, and the round world old,
And thou art named, Despair.



MIRAGE.

SEPHINA

Black lacqueys at the wide-flung door
Stand mute as men of wood.
Gleams like a pool the ball-room floor—
A burnished solitude.
A hundred waxen tapers shine
From silver sconces ; softly pine
'Cello, fiddle, mandoline,
To music deftly wooed—
And dancers in cambric, satin, silk,
With glancing hair and cheeks like milk,
Wreathe, curtsey, intertwine.

The drowse of roses lulls the air
Wafted up the marble stair.
Like warbling water clucks the talk.
From room to room in splendour walk
Guests, smiling in the aery sheen ;
Carmine and azure, white and green,
They stoop and languish, pace and preen
Bare shoulder, painted fan,
Gemmed wrist and finger, neck of swan ;
And still the pluckt strings warble on ;
Still from the snow-bowered, link-lit street
The muffled hooves of horses beat ;
And harness rings ; and foam-fleckt bit
Clanks as the slim heads toss and stare
From deep, dark eyes. Smiling, at ease,
Mount to the porch the pumped grandees
In lonely state, by twos, and threes,
Exchanging languid courtesies,
While torches fume and flare.



And now the banquet calls. A blare
Of squalling trumpets clots the air.
And, flocking out, streams up the rout ;
And lilies nod to velvet's swish ;
And peacocks prim on gilded dish,
Vast pies thick-glazed, and gaping fish,
Towering confections crisp as ice,
Jellies aglare like cockatrice,
With thousand savours tongues entice.
Fruits of all hues barbaric gloom—
Pomegranate, quince and peach and plum,
Mandarine, grape, and cherry clear
Englobe each glassy chandelier,
Where nectarous flowers their sweets distil—
Jessamine, tuberose, chamomill,
Wild-eye narcissus, anemone,
Tendril of ivy and vinery.

Now odorous wines the goblets fill ;
Gold-cradled meats the menials bear
From gilded chair to gilded chair :
Now roars the talk like crashing seas.
Foams upward to the painted frieze,
Echoes and ebbs. Still surges in,
To yelp of hautboy and violin,
Plumed and bedazzling, rosed and rare,
Dance-bemused, with cheek aglow,
Stooping the green-twined portal through,
Sighing with laughter, debonair,
That concourse of the proud and fair—
And lo ! “ La, la !
Mamma . . . Mamma ! ”
Falls a small cry in the dark and calls—
“ I see you standing there ! ”

Fie, fie, Sephina ! not in bed !
Crouched on the staircase overhead,
Like ghost she gloats, her lean hand laid
On alabaster balustrade,
 And gazes on and on :
Down on that wondrous to and fro
Till finger and foot are cold as snow,
 And half the night is gone ;
And dazzled eyes are sore bestead ;
Nods drowsily the sleek-locked head ;
And, vague and far, spins, fading out,
That rainbow-coloured, reeling rout ;
And, with faint sighs, her spirit flies
 Into deep sleep

Come, Stranger, peep !
Was ever cheek so wan ?

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