

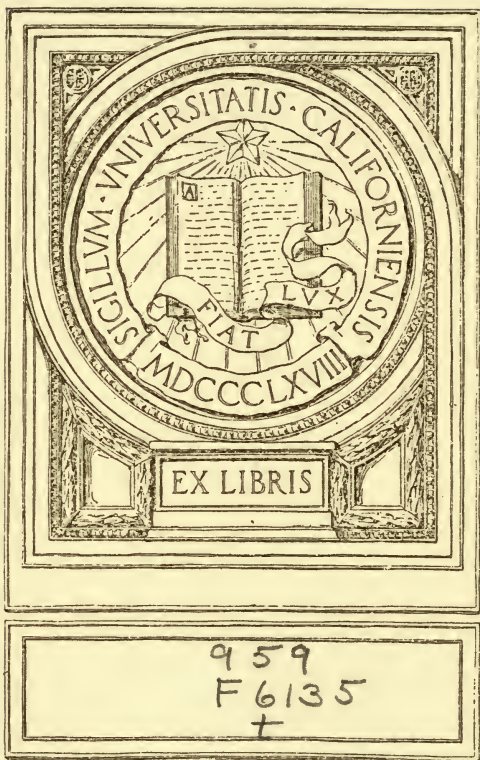
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THE TREE OF LIFE

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THE TREE OF LIFE



THE TREE OF LIFE

BY

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

“And the tree of life was in the midst of the garden”

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS

1918

To Replace
396661

NO. 1000
ANNALS

To
MY WIFE

520172



CONTENTS

	PAGE
PRELUDES	9
BOOK I. THE ASTER FLOWER	13
—MEMORY: THE WALK ON THE BEACH	14
—THE WALK IN THE GARDEN	16
THE ASTER FLOWER	18
AUTUMNAL CLOUDS	19
NIGHT SONG	21
NIGHT SONG	22
THREE NIGHTS	23
—THE DAHLIAS	25
THE CONFLICT	26
THE ORDEAL	27
THE VISION	28
THE CONQUEST	29
FAITH	30
THE SILENCE	31
AFTER PARTING	32
REUNION	33
BOOK II. FRUIT OF FLAME	35
THE VOYAGE	36
—ON THE BEACH	38
THE SECOND WALK IN THE GARDEN	40
IN THE OPEN AIR	44
IN THE HOUSE	46
ON THE VERANDAH	47
THE PARTING	49
AFTER	52
IN THE GARDEN OF DREAMS	53
THE EMPTY HOUSE	55
THE OFFERING	56
THE RETURN TO LIFE	58

	PAGE
BOOK III. FROM EMPTY DAYS	59
PART I. THE TREE OF LIFE	60
PART II. ALONE IN THE GARDEN	64
PART III. LOVE AND DEATH	68
PART IV. THE EMPTY DAYS	72
PART V. THE LAST BATTLE	77
BOOK IV. DREAMS IN THE NIGHT	83
THE COMING OF NIGHT	84
THE NEW LIFE	87
THE SKY-GARDEN	88
THE ONSET	89
THE CRISIS	91
FAILURE	92
DISUNION	93
THE NIGHT OF RENUNCIATION	95
IN MEMORY OF A NIGHT	98
EPILOGUE	101
BOOK V. TOWARDS THE DARKNESS	103
FALLING LEAVES	104
AUTUMN SUNSET	105
EBB-TIDE	106
THE WALK IN THE CITY	108
THE EVERLASTING FLOWER	110
SONG OF PARTING	111
SECOND SONG OF PARTING	112
NOVEMBER DAYS	113
THREE NIGHTS	115
THE LAST COALS	118
TIME'S HARVEST	119
THE FINAL DOUBT	120
REUNION	121
POSTLUDES	123
EPILOGUE	125

MLI

PRELUDES

PRELUDES

STROPHE

THE night wind stirred uneasily in the black
boughs ;
And as I listened to it,
I knew all the sorrows of the world
Were creeping into my heart.
Seven great sorrows :
Sorrow of hunger,
Sorrow of seeking,
Sorrow of parting,
Sorrow of remembering,
Sorrow of old age,
Sorrow of darkness.
And as each came I saw the old years grinning at me ;
So I clenched my fists,
And ground my teeth,
And waited
Till they had all entered.
Then I shut my heart on them ;
And I laughed,
Laughed,
For I knew there was no more sorrow for me in the
world.

ANTISTROPHE

The rain beat steadily in the street, midnight had
long since passed,
And as I walked along,
Weary and wishing for sleep,
I heard seven great joys
Suddenly laugh tumultuously in the cavernous night :

Joy of being,
Joy of achieving,
Joy of loving desperately,
Joy of giving oneself utterly to the last ;
Joy of knowing fully one must face a final struggle,
Joy of completion,
Joy of death.
But when I tried to run away from these terrible joys,
I was taken
And was burned in the braziers of love that the night
might be less dark.
Yet all the while I danced and sang,
Because my sorrows were dead and because joy
filled my heart.

EPODE

The clouds and the winds of the night fled silently
away before dawn
That uprose
Clear and confidently smiling, upon her forehead a
star.
She came to be for ever and ever
Sorrow and joy to me and to all other men
Sorrow and joy.
Joy in the day and sorrow in the night,
Joy in the dusk and sorrow in the dawn,
Joy of love and battle,
Sorrow of weariness and desire ;
A shadow at noon and a red torch in the twilight,
For ever and for ever sorrow and joy.
Joy took the hands of sorrow : sorrow kissed the brow
of joy :

Joy taught old sorrow laughter : sorrow wiped joy's
tears away :

Joy died to make sorrow happy : out of sorrow was
born new joy.

I watched them for ever and ever for life and death
were now past,

For life and death were grown one to me, and that
one was sorrow and joy.

My sorrow and joy were united : and out of them
all love took flight.

BOOK I

THE ASTER FLOWER

MEMORY : THE WALK ON THE BEACH

THE evening, blue, voluptuous, of June
Settled slowly on the beach with pulsating
wings,

Like a sea-gull come to rest : far, far-off twinkled
Gold lights from the towers of a city and a passing
ship.

The dark sea rolled its body at the end of the beach,
The warm soft beach which it was too tired to climb,
And we two walked together there
Arm in arm, having nothing in our souls but love.

Your face shaded by the hat looked up at me ;
Your pale face framed in the dark gold of your hair,
Your face with its dumb unforgettable look in the
eyes,

A look I have only once seen, that I shall see never
again.

Our steps were lost on the long vast carpet of sand,
Our souls were lost in the sky where the stars came
out ;

Our bodies clung together : time was not.
Love came and passed : our lives were cleaned and
changed.

The winter will spill upon us soon its dark cruse
laden with rain,

Time has broken our moorings ; we have drifted
apart ; love is done.

I can only dream in the long still nights that we rest
heart to heart,

I can only wake to the knowledge that my love is lost
and won.

We were as two weak swallows, together to south-
ward set,
Blown apart, vainly crying to each other while at
strife with the seas.
We go out in the darkness ; we speak but in
memories ;
But I have never forgotten and I shall never forget.

THE WALK IN THE GARDEN

STILL and windless was the day,
The great green trees dreamed and gloomed
And drooped over each alleyway
Silent cascades of weary leaves ;
They yellowed slowly,
Some of them blazed like orange suns.
The asters, violet and melancholy,
Would have dropt their petals had breezes come.

Aloft in the sky
Drowsily rode
Toppling peaks, autumnal cloud ;
Cream-coloured snow dissolving
Into chill chasms of blue.
On through the sky
We watched them go,
How we wished we could climb their glistening sides
And rest on their summits together !

Hand in hand
We went all day,
For us was every flower a love-token ;
Every tree a shower of jewels for you,
Every cloud a column of hope for me,
Every shadow a kiss,
Every sunbeam a joy,
And the sunlight flowed over and through us
Like a sea of golden dust washing two rocks
The sun threw over us
Carelessly his beauty.

You were I and I was you ;
We were one together :
Wherever we went there was love for us,
Flowers and sunlight.
Yet there were spies and bonds on our love,
To snatch kisses from our hands,
To steal our joy,
In the melancholy splendour
Of the autumnal garden
Under the distant trees.

Still and windless was the day,
The great dark trees stood waiting ;
Drooping their heavy-barked shoulders
Beneath the burden of yellow leaves.
In the afternoon a vast cloud rose,
And brandished his lightning-whip once over us :—
A flash and a clang,
While the rain's song hummed through the air.
The shower passed,
The west blazed as if it had received the kiss of
darkness.

Then all too soon it grew to dusk ;
Time was not—time and life were a dream—
A dream of the light that woke in your eyes,
A dream of the joy that sang in my heart ;
A dream of the autumnal garden.
When the dusk came, our two souls flitted
Outwards for ever and ever together :
We did not heed the chill blue darkness,
For the night had no more power over us.

THE ASTER FLOWER

PALE on its stalk, the aster flower
Exhales its beauty to the night ;
The dry leaves scatter on the grass,
Brown flecks on bits of jade.
The haze of autumn hides the trees,
To-night shall be turned the hour-glass of my life ;
Now all my thoughts going homewards
In the distance are singing songs of you.

Purple and gold, the aster flower
Is an image of my autumnal love :
Its golden centre is like a torch
To kindle joy in the long still night,
A torch of love with violet rays,
Grief at its enigmatic heart :
Frail clustered flower of my dreams,
You shall bloom to-night, you shall bloom to-night !

The city is like an aster flower,
Out of the city I come to you,
Out of the purple heart of the night,
Swifter than song, lighter than light.
Purple and gold, my aster flower,
I am the wind of the autumn night :
I look in your eyes, you breathe my breath,
We rest together till dawn has come.

AUTUMNAL CLOUDS

AUTUMNAL clouds,
Giant sheers of sunlight !
In the evening poise your vaporous pinnacles
Above the low horizon of October plains
And wait there until morning.
Then leap forward, O hollow-flanked hounds of the
sky,
Upon your prey, and bite it in red joy !

Long have I searched for you, O clouds of change,
Tiger-striped clouds that in the sunset
Open your scarlet mouths and clash your teeth of
flame !
Long have I expected you, O clouds, to spit your
rain
Upon the trees bored with too long a blossoming,
Sending showers of sodden leaves reeling upon the
grass,
To lie there like fallen kisses.

Autumnal clouds,
Giant gods of sunset !
See, beneath you, gardens full of hollow voices
Of passion crying wearily for each other ;
See, beneath you, lakes like blue eyes where in mist
The somnolent trees cover hidden whispers of love ;
See, beneath you, white swans diving and flashing
Like dreams of hands that meet and clasp and part
from each other.
Come shake the woods and fill its trees with voices
Menacing and full of evil ;

You shall not destroy this one immortal heart
Which I pour out to you, autumnal clouds,
To you and to the winter that shall be.

Soon shall I see you now, magnificent clouds,
Move rank on rank in armour of pearl and gold
Across the noisy earth shaken with tempest !
Soon shall your batteries break upon my heart,
Where it waits calm, wrapt in a dream of peace,
Amid the city hurling its towers at the sky.
Soon shall I hear your feet upon the roof-tops ;
Soon shall I see your hands beat at the windows ;
Soon shall your great arms clasp me ; I shall die ;
Die in a dream which cannot be of the earth.

Autumnal clouds,
Look ! far there in the sunlight !
The glory floods you now, I see you plainly :
You are no more clouds to me, you are a woman,
White and rosy and gold and blue and beautiful.
You move across the sky, the dusk is at your feet,
The night is in your arms, the moon is on your
breast,
The stars are in your eyes, the dawn is on your hair.
Drench me, drown me, darken me, make me drunken
with deep red torrents of joy,
Till I forget all things in the world but this,
The glory of God everlasting, the fire of passion and
death.

NIGHT SONG

ASK me no more but love,
—See, the west is all roses!—
Darkness comes down from above;
No more—the hour closes;

Ask me no more but love,
I have no other might.
Sun of my dusk, dream of my dawn, I come to you
Sure as the stars to-night!

NIGHT SONG

THE white stars over the city ride,
And in this plunging 'bus I too
Ride on with them—I wish that you
Were sitting here, here at my side.

The houses hunched about the street
Leap back, make way for this red horse
That snorting, puffs along his course ;
—To-morrow, we again may meet.

There is a magic jolt and hiss :
Strange beings enter, sit, and stare.
I scarcely know that they are there.
—To you and to the stars, this kiss !

THREE NIGHTS

I

DEAR Love, I can only stretch out useless arms
Desiring you,
I can only writhe and toss in sleeplessness
While you are far away.
I can only cry to you in the long, long night ;
You are not there.
I can only dream that we are walking together,
I waken soon from that dream.
Dear one, dear marvellous woman of pale gold,
I cannot give you aught :
And yet I feel your dauntless love about me
Filling my night.
Dear one, come rock my tired brain to sleep,
Let me not think
Of the cruelty, the bitterness, the scorn
Which are all that I have given you to-night ;
Of the shame, the suffering, and the dearth of love,
Which I some day must give and you must take.

II

O, you are too strong for me, you shame me quite,
Whatever I have done has been overpaid
By you : love halts and is dismayed
Before your love's triumphant force and right.

I am blinded, I am weak, sad, hurt, afraid,
O love, keep back some little love for me,
For I come, yes I come, though fearfully,
Groping and halting ; stumbling and dismayed.

My love, now let your hair like a great sun
Blaze on my heart—now let us rest as one,
Heeding not the chill night, nor its mystery,
Nor what has been, nor is, nor what may be.

III

I cannot struggle with you now,
Nor with myself,
For we are one.

I am yours utterly,
You are mine :
We lie together
In God's hand.

You can only give me
All of yourself, even to death ;
I can only give you
All of my soul, my strength, my love ;
We can only give each other,
Give and take love to the last.

THE DAHLIAS

SCARLET and green, the dahlias
Topple over in their beds ;
The rains of autumn pound their heads.

I am the rain that falls
Regardless,
Wishing to perish
In you.

And you are a scarlet dahlia
Holding your crushed and bleeding mouth
Up to the rain
That laughs at your pain.

THE CONFLICT

I HAVE fled away into deserts,
I have hidden myself from you,
Lo, you always at my side !
I cannot shake myself free.
In the evening stillness
With your cold eyes you sit watching,
Longing, hungering still for me ;
I will open my heart and give you
All my blood, at last.

THE ORDEAL

I HAVE humbled my proud soul into the dust
for your sake,
Give me my soul again !
In torment and in suffering I have pressed from me
my soul,
Give me my soul again !
My travail and my anguish have not been as the
travail of women,
But a self-consuming annihilation :
Give me my soul again.
Ah, now you give me my soul again,
You give, you give utterly,
My soul transformed, exalted, made more perfect ;
Filled with the love that is greater to-day than the
love of yesterday.

THE VISION

TWO lovers sit together,
About them crackles, flames, and rushes a
glory of deathless light,
Attracting all men's eyes to them ;
Sending everyone away with a new joy at his heart.
They do not heed it, they rest arm in arm, they are
content :
One in thought, one in being, one in impulse.
Although death should tear them apart, or hatred,
they are immortal :
Between them is created dawn and darkness.

THE CONQUEST

ALL things have I put away from me but love ;
Life, death, honour, fortune, day and night ;
Flames of fire,
Dying day.
The song that I sing is not mine now, the song of art.
It is the echo of the everlasting song
That is silent in my heart.
All things have I put away from me but love,
Love that comes and is forgotten, that is born and
that dies anew :
Love that perfectly expresses itself,
Love that is nothing and that is all things to me.
All things have I put away from me but love,
Love comes unbidden and gives me everything :
Life and the dream of life that still can conquer
death.

FAITH

THE dark clouds gather around my path, they
bar me in every way,
Every way but westward, where is the great sun's
death ;
But I do not fear those great dark clouds, nor the
tragic death of a day,
My heart beats fully and steadily, faith is new-born
with each breath ;
Faith in that part of me which was not mine, which
was given to me to use,
Which shall live on though all the suns fall dead into
the night ;
Faith in a love which rules all things : for though I
fall and lose,
I shall live on for ever, for I have held with the light.

THE SILENCE

THE silence that I hear is more than words ;
The silence that I breathe is more than
thought ;

The silence that I know is more than life ;

It is a silence of all silences.

For ever and ever, to eternity

It goes, and I go with it, well content.

AFTER PARTING

WERE the last kiss not bitter,
The first would have been less sweet ;
Were the last word not broken,
The first would not have been glad.
Had love not taken us apart,
He never would have brought us together ;
Had there been no sorrow,
There would have been less joy.

There is nothing on earth beyond the power of
Love,
He is the greatest of Gods for ever and ever,
A beacon troubling the hearts of audacious seamen,
A shadow falling on souls of those scorched with the
noonday.
And though he has taken us apart for an endless
season,
Never forget that we have loved and suffered,
Never forget I shall always be the same.

REUNION

NIGHT after night I always come to you,
Darkness and distance do not ever divide us ;
Nor the rainstorms nor bleak hills nor seas nor
lightnings :

We lie together always until dawn,
Cheerfully, joyously, taking love from each other,
Naked as truth are our souls,
Our bodies are naked and pure.

I enter into your house without knocking,
With a smile you always greet me :
I know well you are all the world to me,
You know well I am all the world to you.
We know well we are together,
Love made us one—hate cannot ever change us.

We have not parted and we shall not part.

Night after night I always come to you,
For I have given to you my soul to cherish ;
It is lost in you like a ship in the immense ocean.
You are the star to which my course is pointed,
You are the port to which my prow is lifted,
You are the beacon of my nights, the sun of my lone
dayspring,
For my soul is safe with you unto eternity,
You will look after it—you will not let it stray aside.

Only to come and take of my soul from your lips,
That is all I need—and I come surely ;
I shall be with you night on night for always :
You too will always see your soul in my own eyes.

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You will run towards me on glad feet, smiling,
I know you are coming with the lamp, my darling ;
Night after night I shall visit you for always :
And in this knowledge I can rest content.

BOOK II

FRUIT OF FLAME

THE VOYAGE

WE have no longer will to be
Evil or good, kind or unkind ;
Love grips and binds us terribly,
To be together, of one mind :
Till all the red-gold summer long,
Drifts by in one wild crash of song ;
Till autumn's brown and purple coast,
Finds us with mastheads broken, lost.

Here is no sea unguessed by us,
No cool horizon unattained ;
Through the troughed breakers, glorious,
Our course is bent, our sails are strained.
Noon clasps the morning drowsily ;
Proud afternoon, light-footed, gay,
Dances to evening ere we see
How brief, how vain has been our day.

What shoals, what sunless gulfs beneath
May lie, we know not. Till the breath
Of God that blows us to our port
Is slacked, we go on. 'Tis our sport
And 'tis our toil. Love never fails.
And as the breeze kisses the sails,
So do I kiss you till at last
We dare forget all dangers past.

We have no longer will to be
Too full of hope, too high of heart ;
We crowd to each convulsively
Till broken, stunned, we fall apart.

Yet sometimes lightning flicks and flares,
And sometimes storms break over our rest,
And sometimes suddenly from each breast,
Peep forth unbidden, old despairs.

Yet I have known the best of you ;
And you have known the best of me :
What matter, then, if this old sea
Cast us together with no clue ?
What matter, then, if some grey sun
Find me alone, no white sail blent
With my horizon ? I have known
What 'tis to live, I am content.

ON THE BEACH

WE lay together on the beach,
About us wavered and drifted the glittering
stream of life :

The furious energy of childhood,
The mad assaults of lovers,
The tedious cares and worries of middle age,
The shock, and the final darkness.
And the sea rose and fell all about us,
Grey water upon grey water,
Darkly punctuating our utterance
With its bleak menace of death.

I am a ship departing ;
Long farewells on the horizon :—
A tall dark ship
Feeling in its inmost fibres the wash of the sea.
And you are a weed on the beaches,
Or a strange beautiful sea-creature,
Pink and blue, dying
Because I am so far away.

The haze drifts about on the sea ;
And the islands that rose in the morning,
Headland beyond white headland,
Are swallowed up in the afternoon.
Yet there seems floating near me
Something blue in the vast grey stillness ;
And a lace handkerchief of white foam
Held close in a pale still hand.

With the blue glint of a diamond
The sun strikes upon the water ;

Enkindling me, summoning me
To happiness and to despair ;
To strange calm sorrows,
And to joys passing away with wet eyes.
Rings and dapples of foam
Seem washing over my heart,
And on my lips are the salt lips of the sea.

THE SECOND WALK IN THE GARDEN

WHEN we entered into the eastern gate,
Like a wall of flame
Pink peach-blossoms ran to the gate to welcome us,
With the bright blue speedwell underneath.
Like white doves clustered,
Great flowers dreamed in the grass ;
And daffodils shook out yellow bells
All over the lawns for me.

Such was our garden :
Our garden made perfect and new in the spring,
When the last cloud had vanished.
We entered into it the same yet altered,
With the knowledge of suffering dark in our hearts,
And with hands a little more weary.
We went into it together,
And saw the flowers and spoke no word
But turned reluctantly homewards ;
Yet it was as the promise of new life to us,
Or like the breath of a faint perfume
Stolen into the emptiness
Of the unclouded sky.

Beyond the eastern gate there was a fountain,
Casting its scarf of white spray up in the air
Amid the evergreen trees.
The wind struck it and it fell
Clashing
Hither and thither ;
And as it swayed, there came
A broad rainbow band of colour

Vibrating downwards :—
Crimson, our passion's waking ;
Orange, its autumn sunset ;
Golden, the new dawn that came for us ;
Green, the returning spring-tide ;
Blue, the fair dream of a rainy summer ;
Deep blue, an autumn sky at evening ;
Violet, a regal death.

And beyond the pool of the fountain
There was thick heavy rain of plum-blossom,
Like millions of red kisses scattered
On the grasses for you and for me.

Such was the garden of our dreams,
But there was another garden yet for us,
An inner garden we had never entered,
Held close in pale, crystalline walls :—
Whereto the sun piercing
Made a cool mellow reflection of itself,
Diffused as through dark blue water.
There was not either day or night for us,
But only afternoon in midsummer,
And there always blossomed
Trees holding torches of scarlet flame,
Whorls of crimson bloom
Emerging from glossy-green leaves ;
Vast evergreen boughs
That puffed out violet trumpets to us ;
And towers of verdure
Crackling with unreal white stars.
It was as the promise of new life to us
From some mountainous Eastern region
Which has been hidden for ever since the first of all
earth's dawns.

We went back to the eastern gate,
Through an avenue of live-oaks ;
Where here and there a far cedar jutted out against
the sky,
In dark blue remembrance
Of some impossible dream
Far in the past, and of gardens beyond our desire.
Then from the garden far away we journeyed,
Breaking our vision with clamour,
With the tedious jangle and tumult of another life :
Once more, and for love's sake only,
We bound ourselves in slavery
To the wearisome necessities of our day.
Yet did the vague garden remain in our souls,
Despite the too noisy high-roads
Whose dust we had to trample ;
Despite the fetid prisons
In which we bound ourselves day and night ;
Despite the great black silence
Of motionless boughs towards evening ;
Despite the pale stars glimmering
Far beyond our longing and our despair.
And it was as a promise of new life to us
When the darkness gathered over the roof-tops,
And the last glimmer of sunlight died far away in
the west.

For all the night long there were dreams,
Moon-gardens filled with great white flowers,
Moon-terraces swimming in still grey mist,
Whereon the stars sparkled in bare branches.
Millions of pallid fountains
Swirled and fell 'mid the cry of the nightingales ;
And out of the darkness rising,

Slowly stept forth some perfect tree
Offering marvellous silver and gold foliage to us :
Like the promise of a new life,
When we had slept and dreamed our last sad dream,
And all our kisses had fallen into darkness ;
A promise of new joy,
When the morning stars sang together from heaven's
golden battlements,
And all the desirable earth lay new made in the dawn.

IN THE OPEN AIR

IT is only in the open air
That our love can be given to us :
We must be free each instant,
And over our heads see the sky.
The roystering cry of the vagabond wind
Wakens the gipsy song in our hearts,
The sun on the black horizon
Is the camp-fire at which we may sleep.

I am the wind,
And you are the slender birch for me ;
Over the hilltops I shall seek you,
You will wait drooping at last.
You caress me with eager fingers,
I breathe into your entangled boughs :
In the sunlight we laugh together,
And breathe side by side in the night.

Golden clouds we have seen racing
Full-bellied up the blue waveless sky,
All of our hearts have soared on to them
Like skylarks striving in flight.
We have taken the old green earth
For our great lawless adventure,
And seen in the white-thorn blossoming
The pale smile of the Crucified.

It is only in the open air
That our love may be given to us ;
No house may for long time hold us,
Love does not dwell in houses.

Freely over the pathless earth
Rove our two hearts together :
Joy and song in the morning,
At nightfall kisses and sleep.

IN THE HOUSE

AT the windows the storm beats, hoarse,
In the grate there glows one flame ;
One flame of ours to mock the force
Of the wind's raging, bleak, insane.

The poor weak love from out our hearts
Leaps, like a red flame, into night ;
It yet shall make the earth alight
Ere death approaches, life departs.

'Spite shock and storm and the last blow,
In you I wake, in you I sleep ;
Our two hearts answer, deep to deep ;
From night to dawn at last we go.

ON THE VERANDAH

LARKSPUR; windy July ;
Trees riding up from the southward,
Green waves frozen before they fell,
Shattered with grey rifts of light :
Flickering in amber sunbeams,
Glinting with gold as the sunset passed,
We sat together and saw them change,
And in our hearts was peace.

In calm and opulent terraces
The sky unrolled ribbed cloud for us ;
Marble-veined azure, peacefully walled.
Two and two went the grave white angels
Smiling and sometimes speaking to us :
The lower ones brooding in shadow,
The upper ones romping in sunlight
Where like white ladders the light ran up
From the cellars to upper balconies,
Where with wind-blown daisies frail gardens bloomed
in mid-air.

We watched them from the verandah,
Sitting together, you holding my hand ;
The wind flapped the heavy bough-curtains,
And all our thoughts were at rest.
We were not troubled with anything,
We knew that this day was made for us,
We knew that new days would come in time,
The future and the past were now one.

Long we watched dark swallows hovering
Swift up the wind-waves of the sky,

Fluttering, soaring, and calling,
Wheeling like well-ordered oarsmen.
They passed through the sunpool washing the trees,
Rippling with warm heat over the world,
Caressing and changing the final faint-clouds,
Before they receded to rest.

Evening bells sounded hollow, forlorn,
Out of a valley wreathed in white mist ;
It was the time you must quit my side.
You went without pain or regret.
Such a perfect understanding ruled over our hearts,
That, parting, I felt that you still held my hand ;
For all of my life was known by you
In such serene comprehensive surrender,
That I slept every night with no false dreams to mar
my sleep.

THE PARTING

DARKNESS, and a multitude
Assembled in the darkness ;
Chaos of flickering torches
Melted down to one seething fire,
Tumult of hollow voices
Trailing down to one last wild cry ;
Strata of vast black clouds
Blotting out earth and its beings from sight ;
Hissing lashes of uncoiled rain,
Thunder leaping hot from the darkness.

We are parting, parting forever :—
We can never meet again, never, never, never ;
Through bloody struggle must our hearts, once
 joined, now sever :
We are parting, parting forever.

I questioned the wild white summit, “ Heard you
 her voice ? ”
All I got for my answer was the swallow’s wild cries
 descending
Into the foldings of the overshadowed hills :
I looked in the dust of the long road for print of
 her footstep,
But I only saw the shaking grass by the roadside,
And the tiny quivers of heat as the wind settled
 down into silence :
I dreamed in the wind-beaten inn of a perfume of
 summer,
But I woke to the presence of stale pipes reeking
 about me,

And the odours of greasy plates carelessly slipped off
to the kitchen :
I sought over the whole wide world for traces of
her presence,
And the whole world rejected me, its outlaw, its
castaway:

Sunlight and a terrible throng
Assembled in the sunlight :
Giants glittering in steel mail,
Peak upon peak quick-towering
Full-armed, around my horizon,
Watching me with lowering brows.
I looked on them all and I knew that death there
was waiting,
Chill helpless death with the wind whipping snow
in my face,
And I knew too I could not even say one good-bye
at the last,
For all that I had was shrouded in death's long white
hair.

We were parted, parted forever,
We could never meet again, never, never, never ;
Not one little instant could we kiss and then dis sever,
We were parted, parted forever:

Day and darkness, day and night,
I have sought for what I might never find ;
The sunlight tossed glints of gold just to mock me,
When I seized it, I found it was only dust.
The wind threw me furtive kisses,
Which soon turned bitter and salt on my lips.

The pine boughs wove a green house for me,
But the glow on its hearth was from wet rotted
leaves.

Now we are parted. Love forever
Has made us one. Death must our whole love sever.
In the dawn-glimmer, in the twilight, one for ever
Walks by my side—I see her not—no, never, never,
never.—

As the leaf that falls at midsummer,
As the flower that closes with sunset,
As the whisper of rain in the midnight,
As the candle that is put out before dawn,
So does your memory abide with me.
It is a feeble glimmer of light, known of no one, in a
dark chamber,
I watch it in agony growing ever dimmer and
fainter,
While the sound of your footsteps echoes down the
long corridors, dying to silence.

AFTER

I AM here at your grave,
At your grave I am here.
They have buried you, my dear,
Buried and hidden you away in the darkness.
At your grave I am here,
I have nothing left. Not a tear.
I have neither hope nor fear ;
Let the world slide away into darkness.

I am here at your grave,
At your grave I am here.
I have failed you, my dear,
The flowers I wanted to bring you are all broken.
There is nothing left to me now ;
Not a sob nor a tear.
Desolate I am here,
And the trembling chords of my heart are all broken.

I am here at your grave,
At your grave I am here.
You have not forgotten me, my dear,
Though you lie all hidden away in the darkness.
There is one flower left for me :
In the wet Spring it is blooming on your grave,
On your grave. It is here.
And the rest is long lost in the darkness.

IN THE GARDEN OF DREAMS

I WANDERED in the garden of my dreams :
Magnolias shook out waxen petals that burst
Against the glittering upthrust of strong green
leaves.

There were glassy glaucous pools of green-blue water,
And columned poplars broken in the sky ;
And in the midst a sarcophagus,
A rosy and golden sarcophagus,
A tomb of marble and bronze for us
To watch the swallows fly.

Heroes and warriors in armour
Guarded our solemn rest.
There we lay together safely,
Stone breast against stone breast ;
Griffins with clutching paws
Lifted their beaks on high ;
And in the midst a sarcophagus,
An impenetrable sarcophagus,
A tomb aloof, alone, for us
To watch the swallows fly.

I see sometimes sunlight flecking
The warm curves of your breast ;
But you never turn to me with a smile,
And say, " Dear one, how do you rest ?"
The magnolias drop cupped waxen petals
Against the breeze, with a sigh :
And in the midst is a sarcophagus,
A golden, cold sarcophagus,
A lofty forgotten tomb for us
To watch the swallows fly.

At night the stars like great white swans
Swim lazily overhead ;
The guardians, weary of endless dawns,
Droop each a heavy head ;
The bat flits amid the cypresses,
But we sleep deep on high ;
And we are safe in our sarcophagus,
Our deep pale-grey sarcophagus,
Our tomb in the twilight made for us,
To watch, till the swallows fly.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

I HAVE come back like a thief, silently,
To my house which is locked and dumb.
Up the portico crawls the ivy,
There is no one at all at home.
Only the grating cry of a lock,
And the wind scurrying and sidling near,
Only the intimate eager oppression
Of some one wanting to speak to me.

I have looked out of the self-same windows,
But they seemed to be trying to be dull to my eyes ;
I have seen people passing up and down the long
streets,
But they seemed not to notice my house here at all.
Was this a dream-house ? Or was I the dream ?
Wind and the dancing sunlight gave no answer.
I only knew that I was abandoned,
Betrayed by these back-shrinking walls.

I have come back like a thief, silently,
To my home.
But I dare not go up the stairs just yet,
For fear that in some room
I will find someone stiff and ghastly
Under a sheet ;
I will sit at the stair-head and wait,
Till a ghost, in the twilight,
Looks out at me.

THE OFFERING

IT was when the autumn shook its heavy haze-
curtains about us,
(Dead leaves, dry leaves)
It was when the evenings were silent and their
shadows came quick and easy,
That we walked in the garden together.
The autumn breeze lifted the fringes of its temple-
brocades with a whisper ;
And summoned us in to its secret.
No leaf fell from the mournful and shadow-clogged
tree-tops,
No wild birds woke with a cry.

A cluster of sweet fresh violets
Gathered from cool spring valleys,
I lay on that autumn's grave.
Solitude and darkness
Have drawn over me deep curtains
And in their folds I can sleep.

It was in the evening—pent evening of passion and
sorrow—
(Dead leaves, dry leaves)
It was when the swollen rain-clouds waited upon
the horizon,
That we parted from each other at last.
I found myself alone in that garden,
Dull mist hid the blurred tree-tops ;
In the dim lake a heron slowly fluttered.
All my bitter secret forebodings
Rose and plucked me at the heart.

In dew-sprent sprays of heather
Wherein wild bees have murmured,
I gather you to my breast.
Beyond morose black headlands
I know grim seas are calling,
My time is up—I must go.

It was when the autumn drew its purple dream-
curtains together,
(Dead leaves, dry leaves)
It was when the year turned seaward, like a great
silent river proceeding,
That my memories returned to me.
Dark troops of memory,
Drear rain dashing against spent boughs,
It was in the autumn, in the evening,
That the clouds closed about my life.

A lonely violet aster
With heart of smouldering pollen
I press into your hand.
I have nothing more to offer but this,
This and the mad and secret
Love you have taken from me.

THE RETURN TO LIFE

WE lay on the beach again together,
We who had passed through so many sunless
hours

With clutched hands, impotently striving
For a happiness unattainable in this world ;
Having leapt from the white peaks of longing,
Having shot the green rapids of passion,
Having swept down the broad stream boiling and
curdling

About our bannered prows day after day,
Having come to the sluggish deltas of parting,
And from thence having found the open sea,
All land departed and the scream of the gulls in our
ears ;

We came at last to that lonely beach
And lay down on it, together, saying no word,
Having lost all desire but for sunlight,
And the clash of the breakers boiling up on the white
cliff above us.

BOOK III

FROM EMPTY DAYS

PART I. THE TREE OF LIFE

I

THE paper lies on my desk,
The ink invites me to write on it :
Only to write and rest,
That is all I require.

But in the night
Dreams will arise ;
The dark pool of my heart is not empty, for all I
have written,
It is still troubled with sighs.

No matter what I write,
What fugitive shapes I try to make firm and death-
less ;
What is my endless toil but dull syllables drumming
Down the blue walls of time which echo them not ?

No matter what I dream ;
What strange new visions rise unsought in me,
New love can never be the old love fallen,
Which yesterday, secretly, my grey thoughts bore
to the tomb.

II

Two loves lie buried
In one sepulchre.

The first was a man's fiery might of passion,
That flowed and soon was quenched in sorrow's
darkness.

The second was the trustfulness of a woman,
That glowed in steady beauty
Till the harsh feet of hatred trampled it in the dust.

Between them, united,
There sprouts a seed :
Symbol of life they never attained.

It grows a tree,
A strong yew-tree,
With changeless leaves.

In the winter
When all the other leaves have fallen,
The tree of life, with bitter fruit,
Like glowing drops of blood, marks love's forgotten
tomb.

III

When I burned the letters that had come to me from
far off,
There arose in the air orange flame and violet smoke ;
Like the passion that awoke in me of old and sang
and crackled,
Like the sorrow that strangled it and then ebbed
away to death.

A faint perfume stole out of the ashes,
An incense-scent from purple wax that bore your
dear hand's pressure,
A breath of hope from Eden stealing into the winter,
While the unwatched gates swung open and the
tireless flame-sword slept.

And then joy and agony were mingled in me in
tumult,
A great troop of memories rose, blue wraiths,
weeping and tearing their hair.
They fled away again to you, I had no strength to
follow,
I turned and was shut again in the old grey cage of
despair.

IV

White stars are shattered
Against the cold colonnades ;

There is a smell of spice that floats up from the
garden.

O desolate night,
That sees me here lonely and sorrowful,
Barren as a tree in midwinter,
Why do you mock me with fugitive hopes of love ?

I have suffered too much already,
Why should I suffer any longer ?
Let the bitter, windless darkness
Enter into my heart and take possession wholly,
With a grim unsatisfied hunger, gnawing the loose
cords of life.

Yet some day my soul will strain at its anchorage,
Some day the last cord will be loosened,
And I shall pass, silently,
Shaking my sails, to the mist-hidden depths of the sea.

Meanwhile, the night is very beautiful,
With its tragic jewels scattered
Beyond my frustrate ambition, above my broken
desires ;

Let me live constant,
Cold and still as a star and distant,
Knowing other lovers marvel at the bright immortal
glory
Which I have wrested from death.

White stars are shattered
Against the cold colonnades ;

Dark evergreen fronds in the garden
Stir the graves of my memories.

PART II. ALONE IN THE GARDEN

I

WHEN we are dead, and all our hopes are
forgotten,
Then we shall love again ;
We shall be as two trees growing together
In the sun and in the rain ;
You a magnolia, pale and beautiful with flowers,
But whose petals fade at a breath ;
And I a sombre and unchanging cypress
Whose shade is still as death.

Many lovers in the evening will walk under our
branches,
But me they shall pick the most ;
For the mangolia-buds are only beautiful when
living,
When dead they dry and rust ;
But the pressed cypress still is green and fragrant,
It withers not at all,
And it shall bring back to their minds the last
incredible instant
Of a love beyond recall.

Meanwhile we live apart, and so I send you
Day after day, my memories ;
Like the faint incense-breath that stirs and rustles
Through the fretted cypress leaves.
Into the tomb that is always cold and open
Your petals fell apart ;
And out of these my roots have drawn the fragrance
That wells from out my heart.

I can recall
 That as we walked
 That last sad day,
 Beneath the clouds
 That stood and drooped and wept for us,
 We came to where
 Cedars were gathered
 In a multitude,
 Black columns about our pathway.
 And as we stood amid them,
 "Look!" you cried, "this is the temple of love,
 And there is no fire on its altars!"
 I did not recall your words, nor know their meaning,
 Till we had long inevitably been parted,
 And I abode deathless in living death.

III

So glad would we be,
 Could we stand together
 Hand in hand
 Not speaking one word;
 The clouds rolled apart,
 Our lives united,
 Eternal rest
 Within our hearts :—

But as it is you are like a ghost to me,
 Whose presence troubles me, but whom I' cannot
 lose,
 Words, memories, warm caresses do not snare you,
 Why do you tempt me always, you grey dream?

So bitter are we,
Our prayers dissevered,
Long hours of toil
And no reward ;
That could we rest
No more apart,
The grave might take us,
And none complain.

IV

There is a song that has no beginning or ending
Or tune, or words ;
Echoes of it are heard
On a deserted shore when the sun is descending,
Or when upon some day of bluest midsummer
The crickets chirp in the long grass alone,
And men are all sleeping, then it goes like a burning
Wave of sound to the sun.

This song is like a fragment slipped from blue
mountains of marble,
Over which a sculptor long dreams :
Seeing strange perfect things disengage themselves
slowly,
And then drift back again.
Idly he lifts his chisel—should he break it ?
He stops and hesitates ;
For the dreams that were his are vanished, un-
completed,
He rests now, without fate.

So let no one think there is beginning or ending
Or change to this my book ;

It is all sunlight steadily and calmly reflected
On the surface of a dark pool ;
Everything in it has been said for so many millions
of ages
That it has no longer a past ;
All is what flamed in me ; to-morrow, doubtless,
From my dead heart to yours it will flame.

PART III. LOVE AND DEATH

I

WHEN the body is refreshed,
When the brain is rested,
When the scarlet and crimson dawn looks through
the silence
Of earth yet sleeping—then the world seems new.

And so it is I always come to you,
After sweet sleep has blown along its porches
Dark cloudy dreams and bubbles of dreams that
break.

You are the new-born love that is made for me,
And once again to you I spread my pinions,
And once again my aspirations break.

When the body is weary,
When the brain is empty,
When the rusty, dusty west receives the sunset,
Then all the earth welcomes enclosing night.

And so it is I always long for you,
And feel once more inseparably divided,
When the stars like teardrops hang on night's
cheeks, paling,
And the moon opens to me a new-dug grave.

When the body is dead,
When light is fallen,
When tears and memories are put away,
Like flowers one can no more keep :

Then, only then, I shall return to you,
A pale ghost whom you looked for very often ;
And you will first think of me as a stranger,
But after you will seek to touch my face.

II

On the breakwater where I stood last night,
Questioning the soft velvety greyness of the ocean,
I saw the new moon drop sadly into the darkness,
The first moon of the New Year.

Men wish when they see the new moon ;
But I had no wish in my heart,
I did not know what to desire for you.

Oh, I wish that you were dead ;
Peacefully and calmly sleeping
Where none of the crosses of my love could burden
you any more.

Then this my life would become
A violent flame downswirling,
And into hell at last it would break,
Because you could not abide.

Oh, better to wish you life,
Strength, courage to bear and suffer,
Wave upon wave, cold waters of separation,
Chill merciless drifts of death.

Then all your life must be
A faint star reflecting itself,
Half-muffled by the dull grey bitterness
That grows over your soul !

Oh, I wish that we both could have new life ;
That there beyond the stars,
We still might come to be
All love designed us—one star at the full—
One night of moon and stars ;
One new-made night—the crescent of love above us,
Under our feet full tide that buries speech.

III

Love is an illusion of illusions :
A rainbow shape that is made
By happiness descending into dark shade ;
A reflection of the sun
For those who are safe from its rays ;
But when the light penetrates, triumphant,
Love is done.

Love is a harsh blazing torrent
Breaking upon the black rocks ;
In its agony and tumult of passion,
Fretting away every day.
Thousands of pilgrims go towards it,
But it has no drink for their lips,
At noon it is only a failing trickle,
And at evening a dry glaring bed.

Love is a sorrow of sorrows,
A grey frozen column of tears.
It melts not, year after year :
Inaccessible, carven in ice,
Towards it no one strives ;
But to those who see it in the distance, it is never
forgotten,
And for it they abandon their lives.

IV

Like a shadow that darts through the sunlight,
Like wind that arises and settles,
Waving and shaking green tapestries of leaves,
So death moves nonchalantly
Through the world, breaking the frail woof of love :
But soon all is made over,
All is resettled, all grows changeless,
Only a broken strand swings wide from the frame-
work's cross.

PART IV. THE EMPTY DAYS

I

A LONG the street
In the afternoon,
Dismally perched on a crazy cart
That creaks and wobbles dolefully,
With a starved white horse
Between the shafts,
Goes the giver of empty days.

The while he goes he blows his horn.
In the afternoon,
Golden and blue,
It bellows out
Over the world,
It swells unechoing,
Toneless and void.

But the people in the city scarcely stir to listen to it,
They know that he has nothing to offer them at all ;
They know that long ago, on some black-visaged
instant,
Their lives were crushed, their courage failed ;
They have not even tears to weep at his slow passing,
The towers of aspiring reach wearily beyond to
silence,
And between them and those towers there passes
very slowly
Only the image of another empty day.

Along the street
In the afternoon,
Passes his shadow gaunt as death ;

As he sits above
The shafts, and rocks
His crazy head;
But it is not death he sells but days,
Long days, unchanged ; grey, futile days.
So no one buys from him any more,
They would all rather have death instead.

To me he has given love that has failed and fallen
Into a soulless, cloudless depth of blue despair ;
To me he too has offered
A Dead-Sea husk of memory that burns and dries my
throat ;
The ashes of opportunity burnt out, of experience
shattered,
Drawn from the fires that once beat up and flared
about me,
Until my foot no longer kicked a blue glow from their
stillness,
Nor a single spark of warmth, nor a pang of misery.

Along the street
In the afternoon,
Blowing his futile horn that tears an ache from my
heart—
His trump of doom—
Jogging behind a sickly horse,
And grinning at me,
Goes the giver of empty days.

II

Lonely sea that stretches out millions of curled
tossing breakers,
To where my loved one waits ;

Sea untravelled, sea that awaits in silence,
Open to me your gates ;
Lend me your winds again that to the one I have
not forgotten
I may come and take a kiss ;
Sea over which the light and shade fall evenly,
Grant me this.

Love has bound us together with scarlet threads of
suffering,
Death only will make us twain.
Sea that has forgotten even the cause of its passion,
Tell me again
What white thing is that flitting out there in the
distance,
What broken white thing that seeks ?
Cold sea gleaming beneath your drifting shadows,
Why do you bare your teeth ?

Lonely sea, forgotten, sailless in the morning,
Under unblinking sky ;
Sea where the night has stalked weeping and raging
with passion,
Into your dawn I fly ;
Out over glittering cold inhuman distances,
To the gate where the east displays
Its immense beauty of violet-shrouded silence,
I go from my empty days.

III

The day when they brought the evil news to me,
Was one great turquoise over which the sun

Threw a strange network of golden threads that
glinted

On the horizon, held in the cup of the sea ;
And after the evil news was brought to me,
I went out to the beach where in the wet
The sun splashed coppery paints over the blue
Curled ruffles of the wave that beat beneath.

The horizon was hung in veils of violet haze ;
They enclosed me from the one I sought apart.
I should have stayed with her—ah, the crape smoke
Of my regrets that blew across the seas !

But I would come again—a failing wave
After the full-tide mark was left upon the shore !
I had no love, nor hope, nor joy, nor heart ;
I only knew, dully, that all was dead ;
I only knew, dully, that earth was fair ;
I only knew, dully, my toil was lost.

IV

Quite patiently,
Content to wait
Without complaint ;
I sit and watch the empty days.

I am as one that is blinded
By marching too long against the sun ;
Seeking too lofty cities
That are carven on its face.

Oh, sun of mine, enter my burnt-out heart ;
Kindle the altar-fires
Death-flaming in the stillness
Of those black, polished walls.

Quite patiently,
Content to dream,
Without a word
I sit and watch the day grow noon.

Out of the deep blue lake my memories rise ;
They follow me beyond the rocky crest
That swings up past the pines,
Where in an empty temple
Once long ago I stood with one
Whom I may never meet again.

Windflowers shatter in the quiet garden ;
The asters break their stalks,
The roses crumple, fall.

Quite patiently
Content with death ;
Knowing I failed,
I pass through afternoon which is a dream.

Dim memories of the morning
Stir and rustle in my heart ;—
Where is my day ?

A bit of wreckage floated about the seas,
For days on days ;
I moulder at last on some sand-pit, unnoted,
And about me settle thoughts, my pale-grey gulls.

Quite patiently,
Content to wait ;
I sit and watch the evening star
Slide, one white tear, into the night.

PART V. THE LAST BATTLE

I

MY heart is one shaken with wind and spray,
From battling with the storms of love that
rise in it,
And leap and rend their way
To the lighthouse, wrecked, unlit.

My heart is one mad gale,
With creamy frothing breakers
That vein irregular blue.

My heart is like high clouds
That sometimes lift far mountain pinnacles,
And sometimes sweep in one bleak smudgy tumult
Over the sea.

My heart is all one love ;
It rages, suffers, laughs, and dances,
It whirls back on itself,
And still it leaps the higher—
Seeking death.

II

Up the rude western sea,
Past the harsh mountain-crest,
The horsemen in the west
Go charging.

Down the worn-out sea,
Files of phantom cavalry,
Stumbling horse and broken spear,
Appear.

And the noise of the breakers is like the clamour of
muddy hoofs galloping,
As they go out to a battle without a name ;
The sky grows darker as they whistle and scurry
through it ;
Death or life it does not matter—they are the same.

III

My song is changing now ; its light is dying
As some drear winter dusk athwart the trees ;
Afar grey sleet across the sky is flying,
Now darkness sweeps the world of memories.

Alone, alone at last, by all forsaken,
Everywhere sorrow, darkness everywhere ;
I stand by the wind and the rain trampled and
shaken,
And lift to the empty sky my last despair.

I thank You, O my God, for love's creation ;
The flame that set my soul and flesh alight ;
The vaunt, the glory, and the exultation,
That whirled me into everlasting night.

I thank You, O my God, for all You gave me ;
For one strong arm stretched out in my control,
When I was lost and not one thing could save me
But love full-spent upon my worthless soul.

I thank You, O my God, for my betraying,
For that black stroke of death which brought me this,
And hurled me back from happiness unstaying
Into the last depths of the smeared abyss.

I thank You, O my God, for pains increasing,
Till from my heart broke strangling sobs of song ;
Which growing fainter, thinner, rapidly ceasing,
The silence now will break the last ere long.

Whelmed in my Hell with hope that wraps me,
purely,
I know in Hell that I must cry to You ;
I thank You, O my God, that I know surely
That nothing changes here, nor naught is new.

Beyond the dreary plain, the black horizon ;
It takes my sorrow as it takes my breath
In frozen changelessness, that never dies on
My life's aspiring—thanks to You for death !

I that have offered song to the world's laughter,
Have spent my strength—why, no one understands ;
Give pain and sin and all that followed after,
My love, my life, my hope, into Your Hands.

IV

I had nothing but my love
With which to face the world,
But for this I was defenceless,
A broken reed of song.
You came and gave your part
Of love to join with mine ;
My strength has been more great
Because you stood with me.

Fate, sorrow, suffering, chance,
Have drifted us far apart ;

Like a river of flame to seaward
The sunset steadily pours ;
Maybe you live and feel
The selfsame pain as I,
Maybe you sleep at last,
Safe as beyond the stars.

I have nothing but my love
With which to face the world ;
But for this I am defenceless,
And ended is my song.
But of all the love we held,
And of all the love we lost,
I have forgotten nothing,
And nothing I regret.

V

As each of these lines was written, I knew all the
while
That no one would understand them or trouble to
read them at all.
The one to whom they were written was taken from
me,
And the others would frown or yawn
Or turn back to their lives, unconscious of lost
delight.

Yet Love demanded
That I hang these withered garlands
In his abandoned temple ;
That all my memories should glow of you ;
Branches broken from gardens that are demolished,

Souvenirs from dusty attics,
Jewels from hands that are still.
The lovers of to-morrow will tear down all these
fragments,
And hang new glittering trophies
Before the changeless shrine.
But what I wrought will burn upon the altar,
And make Love's godhead seem more great, across
the cool blue smoke.

* * * * *

These are my dreams,
Silver and golden,
Kisses at twilight,
Chase in the noonday,
Smiling, stark-naked.
Now my dream-prison is broken,
I go out into silence.
You will remember the flame that beat back of these
words,
You will gather together the dreams that were lost
in the silence.



BOOK IV

DREAMS IN THE NIGHT

THE COMING OF NIGHT

THE night has come, and it has rolled over and
over upon me,
Blotting my old life out ;
Till sundered by walls of darkness, I stand detached
and I see it
Rise in dim shapes through the gloom.
It is so unutterably perfect and beyond me
That I am no longer part of it ;
It is a glory lived by some fresh passionate spirit
I once saw in my dreams.

The trees spread their motionless branches,
Covered from tip to tip with silent green growing
leaves ;
Over the lawns the moonlight
Walks like a woman pursuing her reluctant lover.
Black shadows and green flashes,
The loneliness of night and the large seas of blue
air ;
Until the dawn I shall not ever escape you,
Till the day breaks you must abide with me.

Silently and resistlessly I hear you creeping
Towards the moonlight that lies thick on the layers
of leaves ;
Silently your footstep
Brushes by like a wind coming suddenly out of the
darkness ;
Silently your eyes flash
Out of the silent depths of dark blue heavens ;

And the deep perfume of the grass and of the trees
growing in silence,
Is nothing to me but the breath of your hair out-
spread.

Silently out of the night,
I lift my wings, I beat my wings :
I am all love which is deathless, above the tomb.
I am the leaf and the flower above the leaf ;
Again and again,
We meet, we part, we come together ;
You stand by a bench one instant
And I am holding your hand ;
Down there in the lake the water ripples and
tosses
And the banks run laughing to the water :
Now together in my study
Arm in arm we lean out to the night,
To the song of a bird in the fresh awakening
branches.
Now we are still,
For summer pours its heat cloud over us,
And in its folds we sleep.
Now when the autumn shakes her dry torch-
embers
Over the trees,
We part with many tears,
Bitter, black rain of sorrow eating into the earth.
But we have met again to-night.
The song is mine, the joy is mine ;
Lo, all the earth is weaving leaves for us ;
Leaves which are kisses and lives in one immortal
night.

O, I am weary, and I faint at last,
The web of song and dreams is broken ;
It spreads out over the world like a great sheet of
smooth water.

The moonlight has silvered its surface,
But below its surface it is all blue and deathless ;
A sea of love that stirs not, for it is infinite.

In its unutterable stillness

I know we sleep safe and calm to-night ;

While all the world along, our love goes seeking,
finding

New lovers to rejoice, new sorrows to awaken,

Until the dawn I shall not ever escape you ;

Till the day breaks you must abide with me.

THE NEW LIFE

TO-NIGHT on wings of the storm, old griefs
 assail me;
My blooms of desire are torn, they shatter and fall.
Rattling at my windows, roaring in black deafening
 torrents,
Without there is nothing but the night's tem-
 pestuous call.

But the winds of the spring, battling against the
 dry leaden sky, bring to me,
Flying afar from the storm,
Your words, letters of love to give me comfort,
To hold me to love's strength long gone.

I am all yours, and I will stretch myself out upon
 you,
Like the wind stretching itself out on the greening
 earth,
And out of the fierce dry sorrow of my longing
New life will come.

Fever has burnt out my heart—now its last sparks
 are blown out to you,
On the long winds leaping like greyhounds out of
 the seas.
I lie on earth's hot breast, exhausted, panting,
 exultant,
Breathing for ages those long dark torrents of rain
Which you pour out upon me, in which I can sink
 at the last.

THE SKY-GARDEN

WHILE the days are growing slowly to mid-
summers days of flame,
And the clouds like banks of pearl are blown into
the sky,
Sky of crystal, turquoise, glass ;
When the horse-chestnut lights a hundred candles
up against its pale green leaves,
And the sky is floating out to sunset with a thousand
clouds of flame,
Into the sky then freed from mortal weight I pass.

It is a garden full of lazy scents where peach-trees
all day long
Glow amid a turquoise stretch of hyacinths ashake,
Reflecting cloudless skies amid their woven green ;
And like a cloud they drift together ; through them
pours the sun,
Sprinkling its light upon them where they sleep,
serene.

And you are in that sky with me, a breeze-blown
shape of cloud,
By the side of dark blue lakes we stand and under the
flaming trees
We watch and wonder always that the earth is still
so fair ;
And we see the rivers winding out to sunset, golden-
prowed,
And your cool body is pressed to mine, and peace is
everywhere.

THE ONSET

THE trees droop their thin wiry tendril-like
boughs,
Printing upon the evening the serrated black of
their leaves ;
The trees are motionless.
Out over there the palaces of my dreams
Are masses of fuming purple against the glowing
banks of clouds
Dying to faint rose in the low monotonous west.
I know that I must wait—I know that you are
coming,
Winging your way, swifter, far swifter than light ;
A blue arrow threading
The cold grey depths of burnt out sky.

Now the trees seem waking ; one hears a low sifting
and rustling,
But yet the limbs do not stir ;
Not one leaf of the multitude displaces itself ;
They are printed blacker than ever against the
vaguer gloom.
My heart begins thumping and pounding,
For I fear you, yes, unutterably I fear you :
Love of the flesh is fearful ; how much more that of
the spirit
Which knocks at my door to-night !

Now a dim orange glow burns in my still palace of
dreams.
And the stars come out suddenly, and strive to hide
themselves

Amidst leaves which seem to fall and crash upon
 them

With a loud clang of metal upon the pavements of
 darkness.

Back over the roof from eastward something white
 must be rising,

For a greyish blue smoke from the terraces

Suddenly waves upward to meet it.

O, for the lightning blade that will suddenly thrust
 at my heart,

And for the flood of love that will follow upon it!

THE CRISIS

THE leaves are so close to the window,
That I cannot see the sky ;
I can feel the thick dry air between their outstretched
surfaces
Pressing upon my heart ;
I can feel the heavy boughs shooting upwards
through the darkness ;
Their weight almost stifles me,
If I strive to shift them.
Far downwards in the crumbled earth and the rocks
below,
Thin nerve-like roots
Writhe about reaching for water-drops and coolness.
I feel them pumping thin sap up to me,
Bitter sweet sap of hope ;
But far above where my eyes can never see them,
The last loose daring leaves
Wait for a wind of love that never comes.

FAILURE

YOU must be dead ; you do not come.
The night is cold and bleak and dumb,
Except for bells which solemnly
Glide down like boulders into the sea.
I can hear nothing more.
Night has no shore.

You must be dead ; you do not pass
Between the tree-tops and the grass ;
No glittering film from your wings has yet
Brushed against those walls of jet.
I can see nothing more.
Night has no shore.

You must be dead. Up from the ground
Warm velvet shadows rise : no sound.
The deep purple light of the sky is gone,
In all the world I am alone.
I feel my heart distant and low
Pounding out : tick, tick, tick. I know
I can feel no more.
Night has no shore.

DISUNION

I CAN see nothing. All around is darkness.
I am at last alone.
Night before last your face at the window
Cried to me farewell, and the next night
There was nothing but the grinding and the
pounding,
The roaring and soaring and rattling,
Of wheels carrying me back over deserts,
Out of which I came to dream of you.

Far behind me now are those green gardens
In which our words were fireflies glinting above the
grass :
Meeting and touching and parting,
Returning to the darkness.
Far away in the blue distance
Ragged and superb rise up the palaces of my dreams :
Their windows empty and eyeless,
Their furniture torn and broken,
Desecrated by the tramp of muddy boots and the
gaping of multitudes.
The golden chain you threw to me,
Out over seas, has snapped at last.
And I am now alone with the cold and silent night.

Within this morbid palace,
With lights and song and people regarding me
coldly,
I learn another dream :
A dream of the man who dared to dream such dreams
of joy and passion,

Who made of love an image and who worshipped it
at night.

And I see that man go stumbling

Madly once more out to-night,

Around his neck and loins the weight of a black
sorrow,

Living, eating in his flesh,

Never to fall away from his bitter heart in death.

I can see nothing. All around is darkness.

The darkness waits for me,

It is as lonely as I am :

All hope dissolved, abandoned,

My work of faith fallen into the seas that hid it.

I watch the cold expectant darkness,

Indifferently, not caring

If it holds death or life for me.

It is the same as it was a million years ago.

One life the more or less, one heart-break—what do
they matter ?

Without, in gold and orange lamps,

Goes dancing madly by the dry-lipped sleepless
night.

THE NIGHT OF RENUNCIATION

THE night has come on which all my dreams
are broken ;

The night is here and when its darkness fills me,
I shall be standing at the midway of my path and I
shall see about me

Upon one side the light, and on the other side
darkness.

The trees can go no higher,
Their topmost boughs have reached midsummer
glory :

Love is complete, and unless it alter itself and vanish,
There will be no flowers to spring next year from
the sheltering earth.

Night of renunciation—night on which my strange
dreams perish ;

Night when no longer we can come to each other ;
Night in which we have looked into the farthest
depths of our souls,

And have seen only silence and darkness ;

Night of completion—night on which the earth is
breathless,

While love sleeps on in dreamless sleep, helpless, his
arrows broken ;

Until the dawn I must watch patiently for you,
Till the day breaks you too must wait for me.

There is no wind in the silence ;

Only the white stars patiently, feebly,

Glimmering through the veil of heat that hides the
motionless earth.

There is no love now unaccomplished,

No sigh from any restless soul turning backward to
the darkness,
Only despair that divides and contentment full-
completed.
The sky burns up to a sheet of flame at sunset ;
Hangs blue and falls
As if all its force were finished.
I am waiting for the dawn with its torch of autumn,
To kindle the boughs and send racing the red drift
of leaves.

Night of renunciation—sleepless, motionless—
Night when all the world is a dead weight hanging
upon me,
Of which incessantly I must despoil myself, for it
grows with my darkness.
Night of silence—night in which I only dream of
silence—
Night beyond the last farewell—night in which we
lie together
But as two dead shapes lie in one tomb not stirring
to touch each other.
Night in which no syllable, look, or thought of love
can help us,
Night in which all-time becomes a great wheel
turning us captive :—
Until the dawn I must watch patiently for you,
Till the day breaks you too must wait for me.

Three times now, the torch of love
Kindled, has burnt to ashes ;
Three times has the coming autumn
Proclaimed itself, through the shaking midsummer
leaves.

At first it was my own heart breaking,
Out of which the flame departed :—
But the second torch, more beautiful,
Caught its light from the dying embers.
Then came that separation like your death,
Out of which the last torch furiously
Glowed and spluttered in the darkness ;
Now the summer full-awaking,
Lacking light, can only dream :
Dream of fires that have faded,
Till that dream itself is lost.

Night of renunciation—night of eternal darkness—
When shall we ever cross it, this great black river of
silence,
Which I feel rising and rising and enfolding close
about us ?
Something in me stirs very near to death,
But greater than death, greater even than love ;
Something beyond all hope, all joy, all passion, all
sorrow,
Something that silently moves me onward towards
a perfect darkness :
A force unknown, unnamed—the strong will of the
universe
That bears me helplessly forward to new life or to
death.
Until the dawn I must watch patiently for you,
Till the day breaks you too must wait for me.

IN MEMORY OF A NIGHT

IT was an hour before the dawn,
Barely a little hour before the dawn,
Long ago ;
The moon was a full-sailed frigate in the ashen bay
of the sky,
Swinging low,
The moon was slipping out with the cargo of my
dreams.
I knew not if I waked or dreamed, nor cared to live
or die.

Flicker and lurch of the train,
That tore me amain
Out of the steep dense-clustered trees
Into a valley walled with far light,
Breakers of night
Rising from buried seas.

It was an hour before the dawn,
Barely a little hour before the dawn,
That we lay clasping each other and dreamed awake
at the last ;
Lip to eager lip and bodies pressing together,
One warm shuddering caress—but now all that is
past :—
It is the dawn and I cannot rest,
The night is a dry fire gnawing through my breast.

A taxicab crashing
Down long deserted streets :
Files of light racing together to hurl themselves
under the wheels ;

The whole immense city tearing itself from me,
Because in the distance I see
Something that not even the city, nor seeking, nor
my song reveals.

It is an hour before the dawn ;
One fleeting beautiful hour before the dawn—
When the noise of the city and the false acclamations
of men fall away from me ;
I stand on a cool wind-washed summit,
Below me the whole green earth enkindles with
ecstasy of light,
The sun throws a kiss over dark chasms packed with
sullen sleep-mists rolling together,
And I hear the noise of far rain beating clamorous
over the city,
And its sound is the falling of folded centuries
slowly unclosing and dropping away.

In the midst of the city I builded,
Amid soft lights and smiles and rich flowers
assembled,
My palace of dreams :—
There were feasts in my palace at evening and song
and full welcome of friends,
And new universes half hidden in the closing delights
of a kiss ;
But now is an end of all this,
It is vanished like an old song that no one ends.

Flicker and toss of the train,
That tore me amain
Back to cold darkness from the warm light ;
We who have laughed at the night,

Lip to eager lip and bodies pressing together,
Soft warm tremulous caresses of hand and of breast,
In the day's lurid pageant of gold and blue, we shall
seek, but shall not find, rest.

It was an hour before the dawn,
Barely a little hour before the dawn ;
Long ago.
Long ago the sunlight kissed me—now I go as blind.
Would that I could find
If it was an empty dream, or was it as it seems ?
The moon is rising high
Out of the last bay of the eastern sky,
With the cargo of my dreams.

EPILOGUE

YEARS have passed over me, whirling their
whiplashes of days, since last I have
written these lines.

Charioteers whooping, hallooing—their red wheels a
flash in the dust ;

The screaming and the neighing of horses biting
each other

I did not heed, nor the dull echoes grinding and
rumbling

Far down the pavements of eternity. All these
were nothing to me,

But a shaking of torches out on the shores of the
night ;

Hissing sparks falling into the water—wet hands
struggling, falling, and a low cry

Spreading out in great circles on stillness. Then
the night closed down with its silence,

While the years went on screaming and curling their
whips, on to their dark goal overhead.

There is no vision afloat in the boat of the night ;

No ear ever hears

Distant waves breaking sullenly upon some low
craggy shore,

Or tinkle of mandolines floating in harbours of
dreams.

Outwards the clouds stream

Stretching out their dark necks and galloping,
galloping forward,

While adrift

With the lamp long burnt out, and naught but the
creak of the ropes

To mark each slow moment that gropes,
Ebbing out faintly, like afterglow's glimmer long
held in the arms of the west,
We drift or we rest ;
Youth having passed away, age slowly passing, and
whither no soul of us knows :
But love never shows,
Through a rift in the west,
Dreams of some harbour whose red lamps repose
On the face of the waters, summoning our griefs
to its breast.

But when the Sons of the Morning shall blow their
great golden trumpets, rending the red mist
asunder,
And the trees with their flame-leaves of emerald
and scarlet shall leap out again at the sky,
All our dead passion and sorrow shall break into
flame in our hearts ;
And the ashes thereof shall be strewn 'neath the feet
of our God
Who shall walk out of the firmament, taking each
life to His breast ;
And our souls like two flames irresistibly kindled,
having burnt through the last walls of space,
Shall shine in a circle of fire about His all-glorious
Head,
Who has ordered to sorrows an ending, and that
Heaven and Earth be made new.

BOOK V

TOWARDS THE DARKNESS

FALLING LEAVES

SUMMER comes to an end
Swift, with a sudden gasp ;
Over the hills there are trees,
Pillars of cloudy fire.

Into the sky, the clouds
Southwards swing gold torches ;
Fever flits through my brain,
Dry winds and scurrying leaves.

Autumn stirs in my heart ;
Autumn—the wind has blown
Out of me memories,
Broken fragments of song.

In every leaf I can read
Knowledge I would not heed ;
Swirling leaves, yellow and red,
Why do you fall and fall ?
Time has gone by ; no recall ;
Fall, for my hope is quite dead.

AUTUMN SUNSET

MY poor sick brain is weary now and long
harassed with grieving,
Nothing at all has it now gained from love or hate
or praise ;
Its futile task it cannot find : it would be done with
grieving,
And so it goes down puddled roads towards the
empty days.

The days await it far out there, the sad days empty-
handed,
They huddle together 'gainst the storm, my days of
misery.
They are weary, weary ; and they gaze to where
my last hopes stranded,
And shivering wait the certain hour when they are
not to be.

My poor sick brain is spinning now dreams of unreal
aspiring,
Dreams of impossible summers, dance-dreams of
old delight.
Aloft the sullen stormy west with crimson glare
is firing,
The lowering clouds like jagged teeth close down,
and it is night.

EBB-TIDE

EBB-TIDE at ending of the sea,
Which wrecked our castles on the sands ;
We drift apart mysteriously,
With empty eyes, with open hands,
Knowing not what could make us so,
Not able to check the current's might ;
The force that set our hearts aglow,
Now dwindling down to endless night.

It is as if we never met :
Was't I who loved, and I who lost ?
Were yours the lips on which I set
That kiss which, lit with passion, cost
Half life, half reason ? Now, alas,
The vision fades, the glory's gone,
The image shatters with the glass,
The empty frame is all I own.

Ebb-tide, the dying of the sea ;
A weedy stretch of gloomy beach
Torn by the gale—and, mystery,
A wave that sparkles out of reach.
All we have left is rubbish now,
Mere wrecks of glory, lifeless, wet ;
The chalice spoilt, the broken vow,
Bury them together, let's forget !

The year is whirling withered leaves ;
The last one falls soon—when 'tis gone,
No matter who suffers or who grieves,
Time blows a truce, our love is done.

The dream of summer far-off stands ;
Its hours are spent beyond recall,
Only the dull and lifeless sands,
And darkness rising as we fall.

Ebb-tide, the waning of the light ;
I cannot hope, I cannot weep.
Only at middle of the night
Shall rise the dream that conquers sleep ;
And that, too, fails soon, like false light.
We could not keep love, 'twas too fair ;
Within each empty heart to-night
Only the ashes of despair !

Perhaps the tide will rise once more,
Perhaps ere death will call us in,
We'll hear again its fading roar,
But then too old, too cold to win.
The sparkling glimmering mystery
That swept us on, is gone from sight.
Ebb-tide at ending of the sea,
My love, my lost, good-night, good-night.

THE WALK IN THE CITY

GREY and haggard was the day ;
The trees stood black and bare and cold,
And on the tracery of their boughs
Hung drops half-frozen, colourless.
The walks were wet with sodden leaves ;
I woke and found the emptiness
That hung so long about my heart
Was dead, inert, as yesterday.

The sky was swathed in smudgy cloud ;
It seemed to me a pauper's sky ;
A mean plain canvas, flat and bare
As the grey streets on which it hung.
Loosely it flapped still to and fro ;
There seemed no sun nor joy behind
This dull wet rag that swayed and dripped,
Stained with the smoke of sordid streets.

And I was there alone :
There was no one
Who in this prison wanted to be my friend.
Dull, grubby faces without end
Stared stupidly at me, as if I were a stone.
For had I turned and said to anyone,
“ I am lonely because I have lost the sun,”
They straightway would have thought me mad.
Such things no one in all the city said.

And then I remembered long ago a day
There was when two souls walking together met :
And I was one—I could remember yet,
That in an instant I was borne away
And grew no more myself but free as air.

As for that other there,
She, too, was not herself—nor were we two.
We were but one for one mad instant. Yet we knew
Even then our love might finish in despair.

Chill and haggard was the day ;
The stiff black trees seemed trying
To pierce the ragged tent of sky
With their wet branches, seeking light.
But duller, soggier, it grew,
It flapped no more ; the wind was dead ;
And a fine spiritless drizzle began
To thicken the slime upon the streets.

Then slow as a dead-march faded the light,
Time went on—onward came the dark ;
The old, old night of heavy sleep,
The night I hated at the dawn.
When the dusk came I seemed to hear
Afar a dull heartbroken cry,
Heavy as the fall of earth that's rolled
Upon a coffin lid at dusk.
But I did not move, not speak, nor weep,
Nor did I care that it grew dark ;
Alone I sat with burning eyes,
And in my heart was nothingness.

THE EVERLASTING FLOWER

BROKEN from off its stalk, the everlasting
flower
In a corner of my trunk, displays its whiteness ;
It rests on letters which I never read.

Its stiff white petals, colourless, harsh, rustling,
Seem to be made of some thin snowy paper.
It is as brittle as if pressed from glass.

Like to a lotus bud 'tis shaped—the petals
Close tightly round a centre sealed, unopened,
Wherein are hidden grey and feathery seeds.

Snapped from its stalk, the everlasting flower
Tossed in the trunk-tray where repose your letters,
Is but a symbol of my dying heart,

Which without heat or light or joy, dreams only
Pale bloodless dreams above your faded writing,
Dried long ago and now grown meaningless.

So in the tray's shut narrow grey compartment,
The everlasting flower marks in silence
The tomb of two hearts which once loved as one.

SONG OF PARTING

OUT of the desert I came to you,
Long ago :
You were a palm-tree by the desert
Waiting for me.
With full hands you gave me happiness,
Cool water, rest and song.
All that you had you gave to me,
All I shall ever have.

Back to the desert I went for your sake
Long ago ;
For the wind was rising and blowing
Red sands over your spring ;
Perhaps I could face the storm and break it
Perhaps I would only fail.
It was because I loved you so well
That I went out alone.

Out of the desert I cried to you
Long ago ;
But there came back no cry to answer me,
No sound of the wind in your leaves ;
Only sand heaped and drifting,
Sand and a lost road and silence,
And the knowledge that our parting
Would never end, but endure.

SECOND SONG OF PARTING

I WHO am living, go to join the dead,
For my heart is dead already ; in the silence
I hear no beat from out its empty shell,
No stir, no sound, no motion ;
The dead arise in multitudes,
They encompass me on every side.
Each effort that I make to live
Is broken by the memory
Of something that is gone.

Now every door I try is locked :
I am shut in by a wall of dead.
I am entombed in the long-dead past
As frozen in some great block of stone.
Why should I hope ? All hope is false ;
Why should I weep, when all I know
Is uselessness of further life,
And uselessness of more regret ?

NOVEMBER DAYS

STILL days of late November,
Days when no motionless twig of all the leafless
branches
Stirs underneath the even grey of sky ;
Days that are but a lifting up, a falling away of pale
light,
Indifferent, without sorrow,
Within my heart are dreams—vague dreams that
will not die.

Long, long ago,
Within a garden shade two souls met smiling,
Two souls in which love blazed and flared and broke
in waves of light,
Like autumn's dry gold flickering in the leaves.
Long, long ago, one heart
Burnt out and smouldering, turned away from love,
And lay long quenched beneath cold rains of sorrow,
Having gained naught from life but foolish dreams.

Brief days of late November,
You stifle now the rapture and the failure
Under your noonday, with thick folds of gloom.
You bury love, yet living,
Within a vault of darkness,
Where not a cry comes from the sealed-up tomb.

In after days
The spring will break and from its heart come blazing
Flowers of rose and crimson, glowing bright ;
But even these and the ripe fruits that shall follow,
The thick ripe fruits red-crowded, heavy, cloying,
Cannot recall the magic of old dreams.

Sad days of late November,
See now again love fails, in you there's parting,
The dying out of the calm steadfast fire.
Great seas of darkness roll between us, sundered,
And for awhile love's last spark seems extinguished.
Would that it never stirred again to life !

The spring returns,
And with the spring a white cross lifts itself,
The symbol of the resurrection dawn ;
A love awakes that is not of this world,
A love of hope, of patience, and of suffering :
Time's acid eats away our crumbling strength.

Dead days of late November,
In which the world goes slowly and reluctantly,
Out of a dream of summer, back to sleep ;
Return of that bleak presage of the future
When in a lonely world of endless winter
Sunless and loveless I shall strive and weep.

I hear the snow,
It whispers tonelessly,
As it sifts slowly down
Upon the frozen earth from the cold sky :
Slipping and whispering, dropping without effort,
It makes the long road where my feet have wandered
Over the plain, an unmarked drift of white.

THREE NIGHTS

I

WHEN the night comes, I do not care
How long its sleep may be ;
Let it but sweep this grey world of despair,
Away from me :—
The Dead-Sea coasts whose emptiness
Of grey-black soil
I roamed all day in bitterness
Of weary, fruitless toil.

Let me lie down nor heed the stars
Indifferent, cold,
Weaving gold threads beyond the bars
Of this prison dull and old.
Let neither song nor kiss nor speech here shake
My heavy rest ;
And let no dream, like a grey snake,
Crawl again to my breast.

Let me not wake and wish that it were day,
For to lie in the night unsleeping,
Dead as the dead love that I cannot hide away,
Makes me mad for weeping ;
But let all my life become a veil of sleep
Unbroken by thoughts out-streaming
Towards that day when love seemed fair to keep,
Though even this was only senseless dreaming.

II

Come not back to me to-night !
For you are only an empty dream :
And when you are gone,

Long time I lie
With open hands ;
Come not back to me to-night !
For the way is long,
And there is snow on the roads,
And the track is lost.

Love, even love, has left me now ;
Yesterday I buried him,
In a grey churchyard, under the frozen earth.
It is evening and the light is far spent,
And the black cedars above him,
Swept in the weary wind, create this song.

Come not back to me any more :
For the door
Of my heart is closed, it is so cold.
And within,
Motionless within,
I sit by an empty hearth ashiver, I who am very old.

III

I hear the witches on the wind,
Laughing at the fall of night ;
Their long howls make me start with fright.

The day has ebbed so rapidly
That it is dusk before I know :
My heart is like a leafless tree.

The wind whispers for the snow,
But the snow will never come.
Knock at my door, and you will see
That I am dumb.

Darkness and the tedious refrain
Of the wind and the rain.

This is all I have,
This as I crouch in pain
Beside love's empty grave.

THE LAST COALS

THE last coals are dying in the grate, autumn is
now far spent ;
Soon for me there will be winter, winter over the
entire earth.
I gather the coals together, I rake them down in the
grate,
So that no tiny morsel may rest which has not felt
the fire.

The flame flickers and tosses bluely, a moment longer
in pain,
Then it falls away to nothingness, grey ashes blur its
heart.
One dim red glow—I can go out sleepless with the
remembrance
Of the fire, our glorious warming blaze that has
burnt down to this in the night.

TIME'S HARVEST

TIME is the slow dropping of numberless tears,
It is the vain repetition of regrets that we
were born,
It is the sunset's fury painted each day on the
darkness,
It is the taking out to burial of our hopes, one after
one,
It is the calendar where each day mocks us again
With an utterly unimportant change—for all days
are now the same.

Time is a withered dotard gleaning a barren field
towards evening :
Ear after ear he takes the spoilt frost-blackened
grain.
What will he do with it when it is not fit for eating ?
We do not know—we have loved, we have lost, we
shall never love again.

THE FINAL DOUBT

BEFORE the dawn the sky-was covered with
clouds,
And when I rose the grey and even shrouds
Hooded the light, and made it weak and pale,
And all day long I sat like a thief in gaol :

Knowing no westward sunset would flare out,
Nor anything solve my impenitent final doubt ;
Love was not, and all life was a worthless lie,
Since God had broken two hearts, and let divine
love die.

REUNION

BEYOND the end of the world,
There is a grey plain—treeless, houseless,
barren—
Where the souls of those departed
Wait for the Judgment Day.

The sun never shines there :
All the day long the drizzling rain falls
From the clouds, chasing each other.
Only sometimes at sunset
Great red stormy gleams swirl upward,
Shadows before God's face.

And all day long the tired souls wander
Over the stony ridges, down the grassless valleys ;
But in the night, by the banks of dim rivers,
They crouch motionless, huddling their heads in
their graveclothes,
Soothing their souls with silent regret for life,
While the smoke-black storm-clouds, swinging their
wide banners headlong,
Let fall through them greenish gleams of watery
moonlight.

There every river is bank-full of tears :
Brackish, greyish water.
There all day and all night the wind carries up
through the air
Voices, crying emptily to each other.

The souls are weary of that place ;
They pray for life again with faint regret.

But until man's will is broken,
Until his desires fall like broken toys at his feet,
Until God's judgment on time is accomplished,
Until the stars are made new,
They must abide and wait.

Only sometimes through the dim night-season,
And most of all in the hour before dawn,
They see falling downwards through the air,
The newly dead who come to them.
Like whirling blue wisps of smoke
In the ash-grey dawn light,
The dead fall apart from the flying cloud-mass
And are cast to the centre at hazard.

This is the last place where we may meet ;
And should you come to me
Out of the cloud, and I see you falling
In the shape of one wrapt for burial,
With shut eyes and motionless lips,
Far from my weary feet ;
Perhaps for a little while I might desire to seek you,
But after I shall turn, and hide my face.

POSTLUDES:

STROPHE

THE winds of the night swept over the sky bare
of clouds,
And in the evening
There was nothing but the silence and the beating
of my heart.
I grew to hate this closing hour,
For every night I knew my heart grew cold and
bitter
As the last fragments of sunset held between the
wintry hills.
Still, and more still now everything grew about me ;
Long cries of sorrow falling, long dark thoughts
arising,
Immobility and silence.
Now all my sorrows which I thought were lost
Returned again, and found an empty hearthstone
At which I did not care whether they stayed or no.

ANTISTROPHE

At dawn I woke and waking longed for sleep again :
For endless sleep, and holding back of time ;
For far down the grey corridors of the future,
I saw a new life coming rapidly towards me,
Bringing with it seven terrible shapes, that had
neither joy nor sorrow
Nor good nor evil in them :
Denial of life, of God, of hope, of being ;
Wasted achievement ;

Hate and the lust that feeds it ;
Revenge on life, stupid and senseless vengeance ;
A struggle without a purpose ;
Boredom ; and final death.
All this was useless for me to escape,
Useless for me to do anything but bear it ;
For long ago, the chance of death passed over,
And I was now too broken, too lost, to care for death.

EPODE

Silence about, within, beneath, and over me,
Forever and ever silence.
Sunlight and dark clouds,
Days that have lost all meaning,
Stars that will have nothing to say to me,
Winds that will not answer,
Love and hate, joy and sorrow that died before they
 were born,
For no one could share them.
What does it matter whether I go on or not ?
It does not matter—nothing matters.
Silence, eternal silence,
Life that is living death ;
Death that is motionless waiting,
Love that is death.
All things that are silence,
All, that are death.

EPILOGUE :

MIDWINTER LOVE

I

THE city rested, white and still
As a range of marble mountains ;
The unstained snow on every roof
Was chequered with blue shadows ;
White smoke flashed upwards through the branches
Of the trees outlined in white ;
And slowly rolled to the hard gold ball
Of the sun in cloudless sky.

We did not see each other :
We scarcely looked ; we did not touch
One hand to hand throughout the day.
But there was that in your thoughts of me,
And there was something in the silences,
Which made us yet more closely one
Than the earth and the frozen snow.

II

We were as eagles, as eagles
Wheeling together over a peak ;
Rejoicing in the beat of our wings,
Straining to each other, grappling
Claw to claw to break our flight :
There was no thought of yielding,
Wing to wing we circled ever,
And beneath the stinging clash of our onset
Earth stood silent and looked on.

And ever as we sank and rose,
The sun poured down the sky on us ;
A wide smooth battleground, filled with light
Blue-white and icy and motionless ;
A space for wings to skim and tread,
For nostrils to breathe the unbreathed air,
For eyes to penetrate the depths,
And see below peak after peak
Fold over in ranges of snow-tipped waves ;
A world we won, a world made new.

III

The night closed down and all the day
Went singing forth into the night ;
And the wind rose and blew away
Day's banners in one crimson flight.
And then we were alone,
And knew this was the end.
So, silently, as friend to friend,
We clasped each other's hands an instant,
And parted, never looking back.

In the harsh north
Where the granite avalanche falls in the track
Of the mountain stream,
There you are alone ;
While towards the south I yet go on,
To some arid empty peak
Under the fire of the Southern Cross :
But we do not feel our loss,
We do not speak.
Whipped by the wind, stung by the rain,

Blinded by sacramental suns,
We wait and watch the days march past,
And the nights come forth and the crowded stars
Blaze cold and still and separate,
And perfect as our perfect dream.

THE END

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