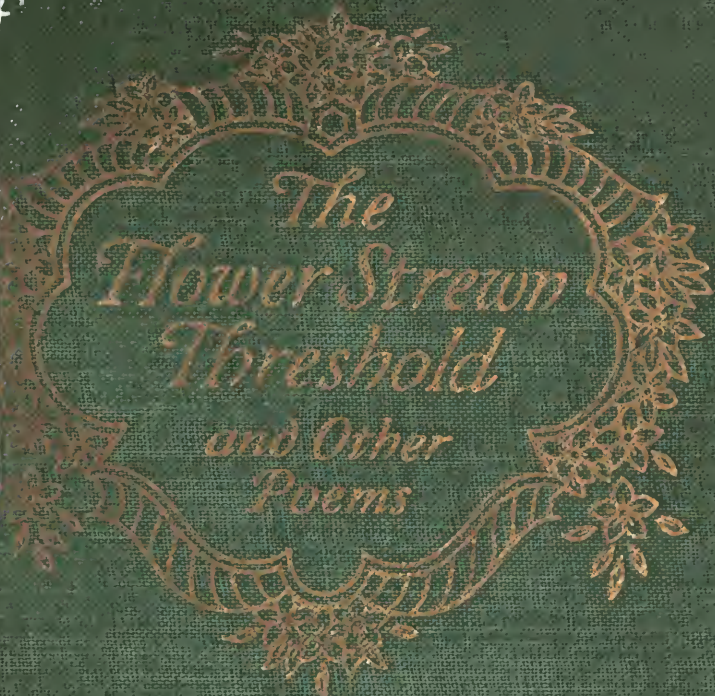


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*The
Flower Strewn
Threshold
and Other
Poems*

*By
Cecil Fanning*

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THE
FLOWER-STREWN
THRESHOLD
AND OTHER POEMS

Dedicated to
Mr & Mrs H. B. TURPIN

THE
FLOWER-STREWN
THRESHOLD
AND OTHER POEMS

By
CECIL FANNING

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PROEM

From out a mass of tangled dreams
I made a nook of whimsied beams :
The chinks I filled with unloved love,
And o'er the entrance placed a dove
With feet as crimson as a flow'r
Sun-shot at day's declining hour.

Upon the hinge I hung my heart
To make a door, but wide apart
It swung, so, with a kiss unkisst
I carved a bolt of amethyst,
And barred it fast, lest some one come
To crush my whimsies one by one.

A thought unthought I deftly spread
For pillow underneath my head,
And with a song unsung I spun
A coverlid of dew and sun,
And thought to swoon in sweet content
Till time and tide their course had spent.

But thro' my heart, which was the door,
You entered at the very core,
To give lips to the kiss unkisst,
And break the bolt of amethyst;

To give voice to the song unsung,
And to the thought unthought a tongue.

The dove with little crimson feet,
That o'er the entrance cooed so sweet,
You mounted, and away you flew,
Taking my unloved love with you!
Then all my nook of whimsied beams
Became a mass of tangled dreams.

THE EDGE OF EVENING

Drink of yon mirage-stream and chase

The tinkling of the camel-bell!

The Kasidah, III, xxxiii.

The edge of Evening met the edge of Day,
And Day fell vanquished 'neath the stronger
blade.

Then Night came forth and seized the Even-
ing's sword,
And carved an entrance in the gloaming hills
That I might wander thro' stalactite rooms
To find the mystic strip of mirage-veil
To bind my burning eyes from the bold
world.

Deep in a fog-hung room I found a niche
Where lay the woven veil of misty lights—
Its threads were rays of colours caught from
day:

The purple glow of early afternoon;
The amber flush of half-awakened dawn;
The white of morning, and noon's brilliant
blue.

Swiftly I seized the veil and bound my eyes,
And straight I heard the far-off Bells of Hope
Chime o'er the rolling Desert of Desire,

And there, like an horizon pushed away,
I saw the sparkling well of Love Sufficed,
And as it gleamed and glimmered in the sun,
Within its rainbow spray, I saw your smile.

My heart was thirsty for the sight of you,
So to the trail I leapt,—lightly I ran
On thro' the flush of half-awakened dawn,
Thro' snowy morning and thro' glowing noon.
But, ah! the noontide sun burnt up my
strength—

Wilder and fiercer fell love's thirst on me;
Farther and fainter grew your rainbow smile,
And, of a sudden, disappointment's tears
Burnt 'gainst my eyelids, falling on my
cheeks!

The mirage-veil turned grey, and from my
eyes

Crumbled away, like ashes in the wind,
For only joy can keep its texture whole.

The afternoon is waning, night is near;
I cannot find the trail, and I am tired,
And nothing brings your image back to me—
Yet, always in my heart, I seem to hear
The silvery tinkle of the Bells of Hope.

THE PIPES OF PAN

By the Fount of Youth,
With a spirit young,
Calls the piping Pan
In an alien tongue.

His pipes are ever calling—
They call to you and me,
From tree-grown hill and hollow,
From reed-grown stream and sea.
They lure us forth to follow,
To follow while we can,
To soar like grey-winged swallow
Above the ways of man,
To leave life's cares and follow
The merry pipes of Pan.

Like dainty dawn-dew dripping
Into a red, red rose,
Or like a bee flower-dipping,
The music softly flows.
Insistent is its calling,
Resist it if you can,
So come with me and follow
The merry pipes of Pan.

When the moon burns white
On the heart of spring,
And the flowers sweet scents
From the branches fling:

Pan's pipes are loudest calling—
They call to you and me,
From tree-grown hill and hollow,
From reed-grown stream and sea.
They lure us forth to follow,
To follow while we can,
To soar like grey-winged swallow
Above the ways of man,
To leave life's cares and follow
The merry pipes of Pan.

II

They tell me that the great god Pan,
(That mirth-mad faun of Arcady,)
Sat one day by a forest pool,
And piped a smile-strung melody;
When to him came a shepherd boy,
Who said: "The Saviour, Christ, is born,
For in the East a wondrous star
Out shone the sun at hush of morn."

“ I’ve practised many a note,” cried Pan,
“ And now my merriest song I’ll play
In homage to the God of Peace!
Long have I waited for this day!”
Then from his syrinx wildly ran
The maddest, merriest song of Pan.

They tell me tears in Arcady
Were all unknown, till one sad day,
When at the feet of piping Pan
A shepherd boy in sorrow lay.
He sobbed: “ Upon a rough-hewn tree,
In far away Jerusalem,
Mankind hath slain the King of Love,
The star-born God of Bethlehem! ”
Pan dropped his pipes with trembling hands,
And staggered to his cloven feet:
“ Alas! ” he cried, “ I am grown old,—
The taste of youth is no more sweet—
Since Peace hath thus been crucified,
Mirth cannot be! ” And thus Pan died.

III

When great Pan died the Dryads came
Forth from the woods of Arcady,
And called, with wailings of lament,

The trembling sprites of Naiady.
Even the Maenads ceased to dance,
And leaving Bacchus, wearily,
Summoned the stricken Nereids,
Those lovely maidens of the sea.

They took Pan's flute of seven pipes,
Unbound the string to set it free,
Divided it, and homeward went :
The Nereids back to the sea,
The Maenads back to Bacchus' train,
Where grief consumed them utterly,
The Naiads to their reed-grown streams,
Each Dryad, weeping, to her tree.

But still the pipes are calling,
They call to you and me,
From tree-grown hill and hollow,
From reed-grown stream and sea.
They call us forth to follow,
To follow while we can,
To soar like grey-winged swallow
Above the ways of man,
To leave life's cares and follow
The merry pipes of Pan.

ALL SOULS' DAY

Why have the asters come so soon?
I did not note the flight of June,
Nor see the waxing harvest moon.

The night-bird with its azure lay
Has sung its hymn unto the rose,
And spreading quivering wings, away
Has flown, but where no mortal knows.

And now the asters round me swoon,
In the tall trees no night-birds tune
A requiem to the waning moon.

June flung her roses in Life's room,
Where Death weaves on the Earth's dark
loom
A winding-sheet spent loves assume.

And see, bound in the flowers so brave,
Lie cold and dead those hearts of ours.
Tread softly,—let us deck their grave
With asters, saddest of all flowers,

Nor fear to weep here in the gloom,
For when hearts die it is one's doom
To stand dry-eyed above Love's Tomb.

To H——.

Why must we bear this yoke of MUST?—
The Kasîdah, I, xiii.

I did not know your hair was grey,
You always seemed so youthful and fair,
Until I noticed, yesterday,
The light had faded out of your hair,
Leaving only dull embers there
Buried in ashes cheerless and grey.

As Time passed by I did not note
The changes wrought, the lines he wrote,
For I was always dreaming of
The moment I might speak my love.
How nebulous the light now seems
That lit the heaven of my dreams!

It is not that you are grown old,
For there's something sweet in ripened
 years
Waxed mellow in spite of the cold
Compress of Time's unrelenting tears.
'Tis that you've seemed to dread Life's
 fears,
And feeling their touch grew dazed and old.

The passing years on me have flung
An alchemy that turns me young:
If only I might tap my soul,
And drain its sap in some deep bowl,
Then, unknown, proffer it to you,
That you might drink and youth renew!

But I must let you go your way;
I may not speak lest you misconstrue—
I long to touch you—make you stay
To share my dreams,—they are lovely, too!
But my dreams mean nothing to you,
Tho' I shall dream them of you always.

LA PRINCESSE LOINTAINE

I

From Lands Remote, a frail Princess,
A maid of such strange loveliness,
Comes to me when the flush of spring
Sets branch and bough a-burgeoning.
But whence she comes, and where she dwells,
I never ask, she never tells.
I sometimes think 'tis Avallon,
And yet, perhaps, 'tis Carcassonne.

She's such a timid, listening maid,
To question her I am afraid;
And tho' she is so very shy
She can command me with her eye
To sing, or play a laughing part,
And give to her, for toy, my heart
To wind her silken skeins upon,
And carry back to Avallon.

Or at her glance I open wide
The gaping heart-wound in my side,
To let her see th' emotional show,
Like pictures moving to and fro.

I never let her see the pain
That rends my soul almost in twain,
But bid her clap her hands for fun,
As she runs back to Carcassonne.

Ah! once, but how, I do not know,
She came to me across the snow;
But muted was my glad surprise,
For tear-clouds lowered in her eyes.
I could not find the words to lay
As balm upon her heart that day,
And found no speech till she had gone
Uncomforted to Avallon.

So now she only comes when spring
Sets branch and bough a-burgeoning:
Each time more distant and remote,
With less of laughter in her throat.
She lingers 'round my tree-grown house,
And shakes the blooms from blossoming boughs,
Then thro' their shower, like frightened faun,
She startles back to Carcassonne.

The pale arbutus gently heaves
A sigh beneath the crusted leaves;
A robin sings with wooing stress,
But where is she, this frail Princess?

Perhaps she falters, tired, affright,
And I would seek her if I might,—
But where, alas! is Avallon,
And which way lieth Carcassonne?

II

She came to me at mid-of-night—
I looked for her by day,
And I had sobbed myself to sleep,
And did not feel her lay
Warm lips against the latchet-chink,
And for admission pray.

How could I know that she would come
So silently and shy?
I looked for her on wings of noon,
Flower-laden, singing high—
How could I guess at mid-of-night
She would come creeping by?

She must have stayed the small hours thro',
For 'neath the latch, I swear,
Her lips have left a deep round kiss,
And on the threshold bare
Her lovely little restless feet
Have laid their imprints there.

So now I wait at mid-of-night,
With Grief as company;
And watch the latchet's kiss-scarred
chink,
But only gloom I see,—
Except, sometimes, a weary star
Peers in and smiles at me.

HIDDEN WOUNDS

Now doesn't it seem both strange and queer,
That those whom we hold in life most dear
Wound us more often than we can tell?
But they do it thoughtlessly. Ah, well!

Sometimes it's the hand too lightly prest;
Sometimes the silence when words are best;
Sometimes a forgotten goodnight kiss;
Sometimes it's the goodbye word we miss;

Sometimes it's the laugh that comes in wrong;
Sometimes a frown when we need a song;
Sometimes a smile they forget to smile;
Sometimes a tear thro' a bitter trial.

No doubt we wound in the selfsame way,
And seem as thoughtless—well, who can say?
Life is so easy to misconstrue,
And shirk the things that we ought to do.

But we go on loving them the more,
And try to smile, tho' our hearts are sore.
Could they understand if we tried to tell
How they wound us thoughtlessly? Ah, well!

THE ISLE OF UNDERSTANDING

We pass thro' tribulation
To the Isle of Understanding,
But, oh! the turbulent waters
Before we make a landing!
Waves dash high o'er our fragile boats,
The currents eddy and break,
And surely death were simpler far
Than the other side to make.
But he who is brave and would be a man
Must strive for that little Isle,
Where our tears are dried by a kindly Hand
And our lips are taught to smile.

GRIEF

A haggard woman knocked at my heart's door
And offered me a cup of chastened gold:

“ Drink long and deep,” she cried in accents
bold,

“ For I am Grief, and from my heart I pour
This bitter beverage of pain. Before
Your soul the secret things of life be told
Your heart the fires of sorrow must withhold.
Come! Courage! Live! Give me your lips!
Drink more! ”

And as I drank Grief held my trembling hand;
She pressed my brow, and caught my falling
tears.

“ Behold! ” she said, “ at last you understand.
Go, sing your songs throughout the coming
years.”

And as I sing my songs, Grief, gaunt and lean,
Becomes the loveliest woman ever seen.

UNDERSTANDING

We know so little, tho' we thirst so much,
And grind our fuller years in Wisdom's mill,
Searching the fallen grist for knowledge till
Our wearied fingers lose all sense of touch,
And eyes, once bright, grow dull and dim with
such

A desperate void and longing naught can fill;
Hoping to find fresh impulse to our will
The empty husks in vain we often clutch.

Thus, as we grind and strive, Old-Age comes
on,
And slips its shackles on our groping hands,
Whispering: " Whence and Whither, no one
knows;
The Why and Wherefore, no one understands,
Until Life bends, surrendering, to Death,
And on tired eyes the Master breathes His
breath."

THE FOOL HATH SAID

“ There is no God ! ” the Fool saith in his
heart,
And out upon the unknown seas doth start,
Without a compass and without a chart.

Each morn he stalks abroad clothed in his
pride;
Each night he lays him down unsatisfied.
Always he seeks for something which is not;
His daily meed is never what he sought.
For he who lets such words fall from his
mouth
Bringeth upon his desert heart such drouth,
That all the soil grows barren, sterile, sear,
And crumbles into dust year after year.

How can a harvest ripen without seed?
And without God who tends the spirit's
need?
And thus the Fool becomes a *fool* indeed.

TO M. K.

Thou in whose heart Immortal Melody
Doth sing her noblest songs and thee be-
queathes
The power to write a classic song that
breathes
Vibrant with life and trembling ecstasy,
Sounding in every phrase a prophecy
Of greatness, and a seat among the great
That passed before thee. Dost thou hesitate
To mount the dizzy path thus opened thee?

I, feeble toiler in a lesser art,
Will deem it just reward and only meet,
If by my singing I may reach man's heart,
And bring a wreath of laurel to thy feet,
And have thee gladly place it in thy hair
To wait the eternal wreath that will rest
there.

A SPRING SONG

“ I am Lord of all! ” cried the Northwind
bold,
“ East, South and West in my hands I hold! ”
And he twirled him round in a circle fast,
As the East and West winds flew from his
blast;
But the pale Southwind toward the North-
wind crept,
Nor turned to flee, but softly wept—
Great frozen tears from her sweet eyes fell,
Like pearls pink pale, or abaloni shell.

And shyly the tender Wind from the South
Kissed the Northwind full on his hoary
mouth.
Then straight he changed his frost-fraught
mien,
And fell on his knees as serf to queen,
And said, as he raised his eyes above:
“ ’Tis sweet to love, and sweet to be loved!
Oh, kiss me again, Wind from the South,
Kiss me again on my hoary mouth! ”
Then the Southwind smiled and ceased to
weep,
As she kissed the bold Northwind to sleep.

And down in the valley and high on the hill,
The green things stirred with a wak'ning
thrill;
While to the trees flew the birds to sing,
For, lo! with the Southwind's kiss came
Spring!

FULFILMENT?

Beyond the blue lake's furthest shore,
Where dawnlit waters swish and swing,
I heard a lark at breath of day
Call to his mate and sweetly sing.

She flew to him across the grove,
Then, side by side, they soared afar,
Above the dim horizon mists,
Toward the waning morning star.

Ah! Love, if you and I could soar
Above the mists of carking care,
Perhaps, beyond the morning star,
We'd find our dreams' fulfilment there.

ALWAYS?

Always, dearie? Let's talk sense!
Always sounds quite too intense,
And love's much too nice to be
Shoved into eternity.
Let us say a month or year;
Something tangible, my dear.

Always sounds so vague and thin,
Like a one-stringed violin,
Or a withered rose that fate
Dropped on some old Fashion-Plate.
Let us say a month or year;
Something tangible, my dear.

Love is never twice the same,
But *Love* always is its name,
And the joy of loving lies
In the ways of its surprise.
Let us love while love is here,
That is tangible, my dear.

THE FLOWER-STREWN THRESHOLD

A PHANTASY IN VERSE IN TWO SCENES

CHARACTERS:

THE MAN

THE WOMAN

A STRANGE WOMAN

A HARLEQUIN

A COLUMBINE (*a silent character*)

A WANTON (*a voice*)

DISTANT VOICES (*a choir*)

SCENE I—THE HUSH OF EVENING

SCENE II—THE HUSH OF MORNING

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it.—Gospel of St John.

SCENE I—THE HUSH OF EVENING.

The stage represents the interior of a peasant's rude hut, comprising one room, with a loft above, used for sleeping, which is reached by a crude ladder. The room is barely and roughly fur-

nished, though scrupulously neat and clean. There are two chairs, a table with charcoal brazier upon it, a spinning wheel, a small loom, and a wooden bench. On the right wall hang shelves with the pots and dishes upon them, and between door and left window hangs a crucifix. In the back, centre, is an open door with an open window on either side. Through these three openings can be seen a small garden of early spring flowers, the highway, and beyond, undulating fields of young green wheat. As the curtain rises the MAN and WOMAN are discovered standing near the open door, looking across the fields at the sunset,—the WOMAN listless, the MAN alert.

MAN :

The sun sets like a bleeding heart to-night,
Turning the fleecy clouds to clots of blood,
Gilding the unsuspecting west with blood,
And o'er the landscape spreads a purple haze
Like robes of mourning Orientals wear.

WOMAN :

A fitting sunset for this holy eve,
Giving glad promise that the Easter dawn
Shall shine more fair than any dawn hath shone

Throughout the orbit of the Christian year,
And rightly, for the Easter sun should shine
Its noblest greeting on the Risen Lord.

MAN :

See how the lilies in yon wheaten fields
Take on the colour of a lilac's bloom ;
Even the dew upon their chaliced sides
Glistens like freshly fallen tears of her
Who wept beside her Son, the Crucified.

WOMAN :

I think the lilies always smell most sweet
As twilight cools the ardour of the sun
With nectar blown from off the wings Night
lifts
As he upgirds himself to vanquish Day.

MAN :

Slowly the lamp within the Pascal moon
Turns up as Twilight spreads a misty veil.

WOMAN :

The white-faced Moon is but a crafty jade
Who steals the labours of the fruitful Sun
To woo the Night with trophies not her own.

MAN :

The Night is cunning and doth know the
Moon

Is woman-like and charms but to deceive;
Deceit, her greatest charm, lures him anew
Each time he stands victorious over Day,
But to his warrior breast he takes the Moon
With all her borrowed lights and changeful

ways,

For well he knows how empty seem his arms
When no smile greets him from the firma-
ment,

No thrill of welcome leaps from star to star
Throughout the times the Moon lights other
spheres.

WOMAN :

I do bethink me 'tis not all for love
The haughty Night doth woo the changeful
Moon!

The Night is man-like and doth pride him-
self

Upon his daily deed of chivalry;
He woos the Moon that she may light his
face

So Earth might look upon him and admire.

MAN :

Thy words fall from thy mouth like hollow
beads

That drop to break unheeded on the air,
No sense of meaning lies behind their flow—
'Tis but thy woman's love of argument
That makes thee ripe to combat all I say.

WOMAN :

Evening now lights its star—how white it
gleams,
Large and resplendent, like a lantern, shaped
Fantastically and deft by skilful hands
Of slender, slant-eyed little yellow men,
Who worship idols and who have no souls.

MAN :

True! Only Christians have a soul to save,
All others have been damned e'er they were
born.

WOMAN :

I think not many Christians will be saved,
So few observe the mandates of the Church.

MAN :

Our good priest scolds and threatens, yet,
alack,
Our neighbours seem intent on sinfulness ;
Brawling about in lusty merriment,
Seeking their body ease and worldly gain.
I wonder if when kneeling to be shrived
They do confess one tithe of all their sins ?

WOMAN :

I would that I might steal close to their sides
As to the priest they yield their sinful loads ;
I doubt not I could aid some with their lists
And put them to confusion, so the priest
Would hold his absolution from near all,
For well I know he would not pardon some
If he but even guessed their wickedness.

MAN :

Our priest hath holy knowledge and can
wring
By subtle questioning, from stoutest hearts,
Confessions of the sins they would withhold.
Our priest is doubly holy, for he hath
Made pilgrimage to Rome and kissed the toe
Of the great Pope, and had his blessing too.

WOMAN (*abruptly*):

Dost thou remember on the Sunday morn,
Within the octave of that bitterest day
We laid our first-born, only little one,
Deep in the frozen earth, upon yon hill?

MAN:

Hold, woman, stay the harrow of thy
grief!
Thy words but tear the scab from off my
heart,
And make my old wound bleed as though
'twere new,
Though such a wound time dare not heal
complete.

WOMAN:

But I must speak or I must suffocate!

MAN:

Then speak thy fill, though each word like a
spade
Digs fresh the grave that covers what we've
lost.

WOMAN :

Dost thou remember, as we sat in church,
The good priest spoke of much and divers
things,
With many gestures and with many words,
But I sat numb and deaf to sight and sound,
When suddenly my heart to fire was turned,
As torch ignites a weatherbeaten thatch,
For, words like flame fell from the good priest's
mouth?

MAN :

What words spake he? I cannot them recall!

WOMAN :

These were his words, he almost whispered
them :
“ Make clean thine house, and strew thy
threshold o'er
With scented flowers of purity and love,
That when the Saviour, wearied of the tomb,
Pauses in passing, and doth deem it fair,
May enter in to take up His abode.”

MAN :

And whyfore were these words as living flame,
The same things hath the priest said many
times?

WOMAN :

Yea, he hath said them many times, and yet,
Never till then seemed I to hear his words.

(Pause)

'Tis Holy Saturday, and night is nigh :
At dawn, the Saviour, wearied of the tomb,
Walks forth resplendent——

MAN :

That full well I know?

WOMAN :

Our hut is cleanly, though 'tis plain and bare :
With me wilt strew the open threshold o'er
With scented flow'rs of purity and love?
Who knows but that the Saviour, passing by,
Finding sweet flow'rs to cool his tirèd feet,
Will follow where they lead and enter in?

MAN :

'Tis but a foolish notion with no point.

WOMAN :

'Tis as the priest commanded, and his words
Do bear the blessing of th' Infallible.

MAN :

It seemeth childish, yet, I will assent,
And only half believing, gather blooms,
So that the open threshold be strewn o'er
With scented flow'rs of purity and love.

WOMAN :

Yonder grow lilies in the wheaten fields;
Wilt gather them, while I, beside the door,
Do pluck narcissi and white hyacinth?

MAN :

Ay, and those purple lilacs, too, I'll cull,
Those dark-hued violets and tulips red.

WOMAN (*impatiently*):

Thou'rt a fine Christian! Tulips red, indeed!
Those dark-hued violets and lilacs, too!
Dost call them flow'rs of purity and love?
The very odours of such flow'rs breathe lust!
Their colours signify man's sinfulness!
Nay! Only white flow'rs can be strewn for Him
Who cometh tired and weary from the tomb!

MAN :

I think the white ones He might deem more fair
If interspersed are blooms of divers hues.

WOMAN :

Begone! And but return with scented flow'rs;
White in their purity and sweet with love.

The MAN goes out back. WOMAN alone. She starts toward the door, but pauses, then sings quietly as she busies herself about the room.

WOMAN (*sings*):

The white rose hath closed with the dew in
its heart,

The sun hath found rest in the heart of the sea,
But Jesus is sleeping alone in the tomb.

Will nobody weep for the Saviour but me?

The ones that give much are the heroes of life,
And Jesus hath given His life cheerfully;
But who gives Him aught in return for His
gift?

Will nobody pity the Saviour but me?

At dawn will sweet Jesus come forth from the
tomb;

O'er death and its sting will He rise glad and
free

To seek for a refuge all comely and clean.

Will nobody welcome the Saviour but me?

The WOMAN falls upon her knees before the crucifix which hangs between the door and the window, buries her face in her hands, but does not weep, then speaks in a dry, quick voice, growing more and more passionate.

Sweet Jesus, give me back my little one;
I want no other babe, save only him!
It was not fair to snatch him thus from me;
He was so safe and warm against my heart.
My two arms ache for very emptiness;
The milk within my bosom bounds and burns,
But finds no mouth to feed, and doth turn
back

Cold and frustrated in my withering breasts.
Sweet Jesus, give my baby back to me!
My life is naught if he comes nevermore.
I will burn candles at Thy Mother's shrine,
And give to Her my chain of amber beads.
If Thou wilt give him back, each Easter morn
I'll have him mount yon hill on hands and
knees

And, fasting, pray throughout the day to
Thee.

I'll praise and honour Thee my whole life long,
And do whichever thing wilt please Thy
Grace.

O, Gentle Saviour, wearied of the tomb,
Pause Thou in passing, enter in my door,
For all the threshold will be strewn with
 flow'rs,
Let me but clasp Thy knees and kiss Thy
 feet—
Thou canst not then refuse my child to me!

*Buries her face in her hands once more, pauses
a moment, then goes through the door and
gathers the white flowers growing beside the
doorsill.*

MAN (*angrily, from without*):
Fool, with thy venom'd tongue, what know-
 est thou
Of flow'rs, or pray'rs, or Christianity?
Thy bloated, pleasure-seeking tongue runs
 slow,
And sluggishly lets loose th' incondite words
That but make bare thy spirit's poverty!
Gnarled knave, thy nugatory noisesomeness
Denudes the blackness of thy mottled soul!

WOMAN:
On whose head layest thou such nauseous
 speech?

MAN :

'Twas our near neighbour, rich in gold and sin,
Who, walking forth, descried me in the fields,
And did belittle gathering of flow'rs,
Saying 'twere better far to plant and grow,
And sell for gain, acquiring worldly ease;
That flow'rs and pray'rs were never meant
for man,
And man were sexless if he cared for such.

WOMAN :

Hell yawns its gapping mouth for such as he,
And kindles carefully its keenest flames.
But see, the sun hath swooned into the west—
Let us make haste to spread our fragrant load.
There where the highway fringes into green
We'll lay our scented lilies, lattice-wise,
Thence to the threshold, where, with hyacinth
And pale narcissi we will heap it high.

MAN :

(giving a portion of his burden of lilies to the woman. They strew the flowers on the highway, the garden path, and the doorsill).

Then of our evening meal we will partake,
And by the window seat ourselves in pray'r
To wait the passing of the risen Lord.

WOMAN :

Fasting is pleasant in the sight of God :
Did not the Hebrews in prophetic days
Assuage their Lord with fast and sacrifice?
Let us do like, and by the flow'r-strewn door
Draw up the bench and on it place with care
The bread and wine that should have been
our meal.

MAN :

But hunger's voice is growling in my sides!
Surely an half a loaf would be enough
To offer up in pleasing sacrifice?
The Saviour would not deign to drink our
wine,
Nor eat such coarse black bread as yonder
loaf.

WOMAN :

For shame! Thou hast a scurvy pagan's
heart!
Wouldst break a loaf to offer to thy Lord?
Give Him thine all, or give Him naught, say I!

MAN :

Cease speech, and have thy way, but well I
know,
When hunger, with its fangs of discontent,

Gnaws in one's sides, the peace of things is
gone,
And time lags back with sluggish, dragging
feet.

WOMAN :

*(having heaped the threshold high with flowers,
draws the bench to the door and on it places a
fiasco of wine and a loaf of black bread)*

The board is spread, the threshold strewn
with flow'rs;
The Saviour, passing, cannot fail to note
This hut of all the dwellings great and small
Doth bear the stamp of purity and love,
And, that within, a welcome waits for Him
More genuine than He may hope to find
Though He should search the utmost ends of
earth.

MAN :

Thou'rt right, for all our neighbours went
long since
Toward the town on merriment intent.
They think not of the teachings of the Church
But wildly bend their energies and minds
To all the follies that the world can bring.

WOMAN (*half frightened*):

What is that shadow lying on those flow'rs?
See, those that fleck the bosom of the road?

MAN:

'Tis but a shadow that a little cloud
Throws down upon the earth to taunt the
moon.

WOMAN:

It is no shadow fallen from a cloud,
But is a shadow of some human form,
Made ghostly 'twixt the sunlight and the moon,
And, oh, methought I heard a little cry——!

MAN (*coaxingly*):

Come, come! Is this the hour to summon grief?
Upon the road I see a woman stand,
Half hesitating, in her arms a child.

WOMAN (*turning away*):

Oh! I am weary of my weariness!

MAN (*calling*):

Woman, come forth! Speak out, what is thy
will?
The hour grows late, and on the open road
Lie those in wait to do thee aught but good.

WOMAN :

Advance, but on the lilies do not tread,
For they await one holier than thou.

A STRANGE WOMAN :

(advances close to the window. She is clothed in a dark mantle which completely drapes her form, overshadowing her face. In her arms nestles an infant.)

I seek for hearts made cleanly by good deeds;
I seek for hearts whose thresholds are strewn
o'er
With scented acts of purity and love!
My little One grows weary of the way,
And fain would pause in passing. May not I
Lay Him, all quiet, at thy flow'r-strewn door?

MAN :

Presumptuous beggar, get thee hence! Away!

WOMAN *(laughs harshly)* :

Wouldst with a changeling desecrate my door
Which, unpolluted, doth await the Lord?

MAN :

Begone! And look thee well unto thy steps!
Crush not the fresh-strewn flow'rs that deck
the road,
Nor thrust thy nameless brat on honest folk,
Who follow out the precepts of the Church.
Back to thy life of sin, thee and thy child!

*The STRANGE WOMAN goes out sorrowfully
(Pause.)*

WOMAN (*almost to herself*):

How strange doth seem the ways of God and
man!
Strange that God gives a child to such an one;
Strange that one lives and leads a life of sin,
And never feels the blighting hand of God!

MAN :

They say that God knows best.

WOMAN :

But does He know?
Wide is the Universe and great man's need!

MAN :

But faith is trusting, striving to believe.

WOMAN :

And I *have* faith, and yet I would I knew
The Why, the Wherefore, Whither, Whence
and So!

They seat themselves by the window, left. The moon becomes brighter, displacing the afterglow of the sun. Tinkling bells are heard, amid light-hearted laughter. During the following scene HARLEQUIN enters leading a white ass, on which COLUMBINE is seated. Two or three white trick dogs leap about HARLEQUIN. The little troupe is bound for the fête at the nearby town, which begins on the morrow.

HARLEQUIN (*singing without*):

Tread e'er so lightly Columbine,
For on the open road,
White lilies, scattered lattice-wise,
Fling up their scented load.
The moon no more is friend of thine,
If thou shouldst crush them, Columbine.

WOMAN :

'Tis some lewd creature journeying toward
the town,
Which he'll infest with his idolatrous thoughts.

HARLEQUIN (*drawing nearer*):

The moon could slay thee with a beam,
For she's a wiley minx—
It has been said by some, that she
Is sister to the Sphinx—
So tempt her not in wrath to shine—
(Tread e'er so lightly, Columbine!)

MAN (*bitterly*):

The whole world seems a place of merriment
Where no one thinks of Jesus in the tomb!

HARLEQUIN:

(*entering, takes up the lilies in his hands, offering them with mocking dignity to the smiling COLUMBINE.*)

In my two hands the flow'rs I take
To twine within thy hair—
See, in their midst a half-blown rose
Is caught and hidden there.
Thou'rt like the flow'rs—rare, sweet, divine!
(Tread e'er so lightly, Columbine!)

WOMAN (*angrily*):

Cursed be thy wanton souls!

MAN (*threateningly*):

Replace the flow'rs,
Or I will match thy features to a clown's!

(MAN and WOMAN *whisper hurriedly to one another.*)

HARLEQUIN:

(*continuing with his song, pays little or no heed to the angry couple. COLUMBINE smiles and caresses the lilies.*)

Thy body like a lily is;
Thy little hands and feet
Are like white lilies, but—
Thou art more fragrant and more sweet;
Thy heart's a rose, and it is mine!
(Tread e'er so lightly, Columbine!)

MAN:

(*starts toward the door menacingly.*)

Cursed thy licentious bodies and thy souls!
May blight descend upon thy sinful hearts!
I'll flay thee with my hands——!

(HARLEQUIN and COLUMBINE *fling down the lilies, retaining the rose, which she offers to HARLEQUIN to be kissed, then places it in her hair. They laugh and pass on, looking back at the angry MAN and WOMAN.*)

WOMAN :

My good man, peace!
Vile wretches, let them go their way of sin,
While we sit quietly and watch and pray.

*(MAN goes back to his seat by the window,
gloomy and quiet.)*

WOMAN :

Ah, me! The Easter dawn comes all too slow!
The hands of Night press strong against the
east,
And hold the Dawn in its cold prisonhouse,
For fear the Moon may cheat him of one kiss.

*(A shadow falls across the flow'r-strewn
threshold and the road, as yet unperceived by the
MAN and WOMAN.)*

MAN (*gloomily*):

How wilt thou know the Saviour should he
pass?

WOMAN (*dreamily and happily*):

I'll know Him by His piercèd hands and feet,
And by the light that streameth from His
wounds;
His eyes shall glimmer as twin morning stars;

His hair shall be like sunshine dripping myrrh,
And, oh, His breath shall be more sweet than
grass,
That weighted down with dew, sighs neath
the moon!

MAN (*incredulously*):

Wilt thou call to Him as He passes by?

WOMAN:

(*quietly, and with assurance.*)

Nay! He *must* enter, for our house is clean;
The open threshold hath been all strewn o'er
With scented flow'rs of purity and love—
He'll pause in passing, and will deem it fair,
And enter in to take up His abode.

(*The Curtain falls quietly.*)

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE II—THE HUSH OF MORNING.

(Same as Scene I. Before the curtain rises a clear high voice is heard singing in the distance. The song draws nearer and nearer. At the beginning of the last stanza the voice fades away in the opposite direction, and the curtain rises quietly. The WOMAN is discovered looking angrily in the direction of the singer, and the MAN drowsily turns in that direction also. The moon is shining clearly, with that peculiar pallor of the full moon, just before dawn. A shadow still lies upon the road, and the flower-strewn threshold.)

A WANTON (*singing*):

Fling off the sackcloth, Lent is past,
We've done with weeping, pray'rs and fast,
The penitential time is gone,
The Easter fête begins at dawn,
So hither lovers, not o'er bold,
And bring me gifts of wine and gold.

My lips are passion-shot with fire,
My limbs are crimson with desire,
My breasts are like an ivory flame,
And only love my will can tame,

So, lovers, come with wine and gold,
Let not my loveliness grow cold.

My hair is soft and sweet to smell,
And many are the tales I tell
To him who lies within my arms,
And sips the honey of my charms,
But half my witchery's untold
Till lovers bring me wine and gold.

So long with Penance did I rest
My being aches to be caressed;
My lips are weary to be kissed,
So long love's nectar have they missed,
And he my charms in fee may hold
Who brings me gifts of wine and gold.

(Curtain Rises.)

WOMAN :

What ails thee, man? Out, out upon the road
To stone the harlot on her way to town!
Her ribald song contaminates the air,
And casts a shadow on our flow'r-strewn door!
Wouldst let her, unrebuked, defile our home,
And crush our lilies with her lustful feet?

MAN (*drowsily*):

She's but a wanton lass with merry song,
Learned in a land where happiness is law.
Her voice was sweet and clear, light was her
tread;
Her girtle clasped a lithe and slender waist;
Her roguish eye held scarce a glint of sin,
In truth, she seemed most comely passing by.

WOMAN (*in wrath*):

Awake! Awake! Cast off thy drowsiness!
Thou ravest, dissolute one! Fall on thy knees
Before yon crucifix and seek Christ's grace
To grant thee pardon for thy words obscene!

MAN (*attempting to rouse himself.*)

Thy tongue runs on too steadily to suit
My sluggish blood, which sleep hath made
run slow,
And thou shouldst know that anger lurks be-
neath
Most pillows on which slumber rests its head.

WOMAN (*reproachfully*):

Even in mine own house am I alone!
Alone I wait, alone I watch and pray,
While thou seekst rest in slumber's tasselled arms!

MAN (*fully aroused*):

I am awake! Sleep hath not touched mine
eyes,
Though drowsiness seduced me more than
once.

WOMAN :

Nay, many a time thy head fell on thy breast,
While thy deep breathing told thou wert
asleep.

MAN :

But now I wake, and in the blushing east,
New Morning stirs within the womb of Day,
As Dawn flings up her long and slender arms;
The far horizon, like an amber comb,
Smooths out the tresses of the waking Sun,
And Night falls back against the paling Moon.

WOMAN (*shivering*):

And I am cold! The dew of morning falls
With icy fingers on my lonely heart!

MAN :

Thy ceaseless wailings like a poisonous vine
Lay irritating sores upon my soul,
That itch for temper's sharp and scratching
claws!

WOMAN :

Ah! It is plain thou lovest me no more!

MAN :

Thy speech grows flaccid with the waning
night.

WOMAN (*upbraiding*):

The shrieking harlot seized thee by the eye,
And robbed thee of the last remaining spark
Of pure affection thou hadst left for me!

MAN :

Thy vexing fancies choke all thoughts of love!

WOMAN :

My cup runs dry with joy, and bitterness
With acrid draught doth fill it to the brim.

MAN (*in a subdued tone*):

Dost think for thee alone the cup of life
Runs over with its bitter beverage?
Dost think the venting of thy selfish grief
Brings joy to me, or peace unto our home?
Once laughter reigned within these humble
walls,
And smiles, like sunshine, shone unceasingly;
Thy love sufficed for me as mine for thee—

WOMAN (*interrupting*):

That was before the wingéd Angel Death
Cast down his awful shadow at our door,
And with long, bony fingers, sharp and cold,
Crushed out the life of one whom I had
borne.

MAN :

(*restraining his own grief with effort.*)

Art thou the only mother on whose child
The Angel Death hath lain his withering
hand?

WOMAN :

Against me thou and all the universe
Art leagued to drive religion from my heart!
First wert thou loath to spread the threshold
o'er,
Saying it were a childish thing to do,
While like a churl thou grudgingly gavest up
Thy supper as an offering to the Lord——

MAN :

Have done thy categories of reproach.

WOMAN :

Then came the Stranger Woman with her
child
To desecrate the lilies at our door;

Then came those pestilential harbingers,
With mirthful cries and mocking merriment;
Then came the harlot with her wanton song,
And, singing, crushed the flow'rs with scarlet
feet—

Alas, the passing Saviour ne'er would pause
To deem as fair such crushed and trampled
flow'rs,

For, see, a shadow lays upon them now,—
Hath lain upon them all the bright night
through!

MAN :

Thy bitter tongue makes evil of my mood!
No more of it, I say, or from the door
I'll sweep those flow'rs that cause so much
distress!

WOMAN :

*(seizes his arm, and clinging to him falls upon
her knees.)*

Have patience just a little while! Oh, wait!
I have so longed to see the Saviour pass
Down through yon wheatfields to the open
road.

I have so hoped and prayed to see Him walk
Over the flow'r-strewn threshold and make
one

Within our hut, where welcome waits for
Him—
To give Him bread to eat and wine to drink—
To wash His tomb-tired feet with my salt
tears,
And when He had found rest, to take His hand
And lead Him up the hillside to the grave
That holds the substance of my heart's de-
sire—
The little one who suckled at my breast—
Then would I clasp His knees and kiss His
wounds,
And He would raise my baby from the dead!

MAN (*with deep wonder*):

Didst think the Saviour would bring back to
life
Our little one who sleeps within the grave?

WOMAN (*nods her head*):

Hath not the Saviour done more wondrous
things?
Did He not give the woman back her son?
And raise up Lazarus from the mouldering
tomb?
And Jairus daughter, too, He raised to life?

MAN :

But Jesus lives no more—He hath been dead
These many hundred years!

WOMAN (*in astonishment*):

But He will rise
At Easter dawn, for, so the good priest told!

MAN :

Nay, wife, Christ lives no more!

WOMAN (*weeping bitterly*):

Then woe is me,
And all my joy of living hath turned cold!

A STRANGE WOMAN :

(*appears suddenly and noiselessly in the doorway,
she crosses the flower-strewn threshold, and
speaks quietly.*)

Tears spring eternal from the heart of things,
Bursting the brittle crust of sorrow through,
Moistening the shrivelled roots of charity
Until it puts forth blooms of usefulness.

(TO WOMAN) Cast out all anger from thy
storm of grief,
For only quiet tears can ease thy hurt.

WOMAN :

The hand of grief hath torn my heart apart
And let flow out the marrow of my soul!

MAN :

Begone! Strange Woman!

STRANGE WOMAN :

Peace, Man!

WOMAN :

She shall stay,
For thou hast fairly rent my heart in twain;
Now shall a woman heed my woman's woe,
And bathe my wounds with sympathy's
sweet salve.

(MAN stalks angrily to extreme left, turning his back on the two women. He folds his arms in gloomy silence, but listens attentively to all that is said.)

STRANGE WOMAN :

(opens her arms, the WOMAN creeps into them and rests her head upon the STRANGE WOMAN'S breast.)

Come to me, daughter, in my arms find rest,
And on my bosom lay thy burdens down.

Weep out thy grief and pray for heaven's will
To show thee what is best and right to do.

WOMAN :

*(draws away, takes the STRANGE WOMAN's hand
and looks into her eyes.)*

Why dost thou show to me such sympathy,
For harshly spoke I to thee yestereve?

STRANGE WOMAN :

Why should one harbour ill? Thou needest me!

WOMAN :

In truth, I need thee, yet, thy sympathy
Plants shame within my soul, and layeth bare
The frugalness of aught I'd offer thee!
Where is thy babe? What hast thou done with
him?

STRANGE WOMAN :

He sleepeth calmly now, while I go forth
To do His bidding in this needy world.

WOMAN :

Art thou not hungry? May I give thee bread?

STRANGE WOMAN :

Yes, daughter, if thou wilt.

WOMAN (*in distress*):

Alas! Alas!

I've naught to give thee, naught, save that
one loaf,
There by the threshold, which awaits the
Lord!

STRANGE WOMAN:

The Lord? And doth some mighty prince
pass by,
Toward the town, whom thou must feed e'er
dawn?

WOMAN:

Nay, 'tis the Saviour Jesus who will pass
At Easter dawn, arisen from the tomb—
Behold the flow'r-strewn threshold and the
road
Await the Saviour as he passes by.

STRANGE WOMAN:

Who bade thee do this thing?

WOMAN:

Our priest, who said:
" Make clean thine house and spread thy
threshold o'er
With scented flow'rs of purity and love,

That when the Saviour, wearied of the tomb,
Pauses in passing and doth deem it fair,
May enter in and take up His abode.”
(With pride) My house is cleanly; on the door
and road,
Are scented flowers of purity and love!

*(The dawn has become brighter, and as the
WOMAN looks at the flowers she cries out in grief
and anger.)*
The flow'rs were pure and fragrant, but, be-
hold,
They're crushed and trampled, and a shadow
rests
Across the bosom of the lovely blooms!

STRANGE WOMAN *(kindly)*:
And is it not a shadow from thy heart?

WOMAN:
Nay! 'Tis a shadow cast by sinful feet,
And sinful hands of wantons passing by.

STRANGE WOMAN *(gently)*:
Traduce not others with calumnious words,
For such is merely self-aggrandisement.

WOMAN :

Thou wouldst agree with me couldst thou
have seen
These wicked people passing on their way
To fill the town with merriment and
song—
They sicken me and fill my soul with rage!

STRANGE WOMAN :

Who knows, at heart they may be true and
clean?

WOMAN :

Too well I know their hearts and minds are
steeped
In wickedness. Religion's naught to them!

STRANGE WOMAN :

Religion's not in symbols, nor in forms;
Its dwelling place is in the heart and mind,
And manifests itself in kindly acts.

WOMAN :

But they are always full of merriment!

STRANGE WOMAN :

Is it not better far to laugh than weep?
A smile begets a laugh—a sigh a tear;
And if thy brother choose a certain thing
That's right for him and gives offence to thee,
Go on thy way in silence, till thou find'st
That which is right for thee—thus will sweet
Peace
Dwell in the hearts and minds of each and all.

WOMAN :

But they have crushed my flow'rs which wait
the Lord!
The risen Saviour ne'er would deem them
fair!

STRANGE WOMAN :

Ah! unwise one, didst thou not comprehend
The good priest spoke to thee a parable?
Make clean thine house—thine heart—and at
its door
Let overflow thine acts of charity,
That when the Saviour, wearied of the tomb,
In which men cast Him in sheer wantonness,
Pauses in passing, and doth deem it fair,
May enter in to take up His abode.

WOMAN (*pauses, then suddenly speaks*):
My mind's illumined by a mighty flame!
Oh! tell me more that I may understand
How I may show the threshold of my heart
Unto the Saviour, wearied of the tomb!

STRANGE WOMAN:
Only thro' patience.

WOMAN:
How is patience gained?

STRANGE WOMAN:
Patience is gained thro' bitterness and tears;
Thro' sorrows borne in silence and alone;
Thro' uncomplaining nights of wakefulness;
Thro' days of toil beneath an irksome sun;
Thro' treading winding paths, with stum-
bling feet
Grown travel-worn while groping 'mid the
years,
Till finally appears a flickering beam,
Between the shrouded shadows fraught with
gloom,
Beyond the summit of the stony pass
Where light has riven the mountain peaks
apart.

Then, when at length exhausted, we have
 come
Near to the end, we wearily sink down
To seek a moment's respite, lo, sweet Peace
Casts its soft shadow on our wayworn hearts,
And Patience whispers: "I am thine at last!"

WOMAN :

Then shall I go at once into the town
And grovel 'neath the baseborn and the low,
And uncomplaining do their menial tasks?

STRANGE WOMAN :

But Patience is no longer patience when
Thou'rt forced to compromise thy self-
 respect.

WOMAN :

How shall I then find fragrant flow'rs to
 spread
Upon the threshold of my willing heart?

STRANGE WOMAN :

Within the secret chamber of the heart
Do we erect a cross, whereon we nail
Our ev'ry act and deed, both good and ill;

Unconsciously we hang them, one by one,
And go our way without a glance or thought,
Till overcome by grief, with tired eyes,
We dare to gaze upon this resume,
We find each act and deed has sprung to life,
A fragrant blossom or a cruel thorn.

WOMAN (*sadly*):

It seems my cross is hanged with only thorns,
So little of real good have I e'er done!
Where might I find the book wherein to
learn
The wisdom I so need by which to live?

STRANGE WOMAN:

Wisdom is far more wise when from the heart
It gushes forth spontaneously and free—
Wiser than wisdom one learns in a book,
Governed by forethought, issued rule by rule.

WOMAN:

Then what do I most need?

STRANGE WOMAN:

Real charity,
Which is the universal brotherhood,
That will amalgamate all earthly creeds,

Forging the world into one perfect heart
To offer up to God on the Last Day,
To justify His Son, Who died for men.

WOMAN :

And charity?

STRANGE WOMAN :

Is Love!

MAN (*comes to WOMAN and kisses her on the
brow*):

Thou speakest right.

Strange Woman, thou art wise, pray, tell us
then,

What is this Peace thou spokest of enow?

STRANGE WOMAN :

'Tis wisdom, patience, charity and love—
Each means the other—all combined mean
Peace!

WOMAN :

Life is a riddle difficult to solve!

STRANGE WOMAN :

Thou'rt not the first to find it so, and yet,
Solution cometh easy. If one waits
Quiet and trusting it will solve itself.

MAN :

Often in church, while kneeling all alone,
I've felt a certain calm I thought was peace,
But elsewhere have I never felt the same.
Is it because the church is God's own house,
And in it one draws nearer to His Grace?

STRANGE WOMAN :

If thou hadst all the things which bringeth
Peace,
Then wouldst thou never lose this holy calm,
For God would make thy *heart* His dwelling-
place.
“ God dwelleth not in temples made with
hands.”
Thus one hath said whose eyes looked on the
Lord—
But if there were no temples made with
hands,
With tapers, holy pictures, statues, books,
And many voices chanting hymns of praise,
To call to mind the sufferings of Christ,
And how to purge th' intemperate heart of sin,
How many, think you, in this whole wide
world,
Would have a thought to lift their hearts on
high?

Thus have we need of temples made with
hands,
They are the keys that open the hearts'
doors,
But have a care lest Truth be lost complete
Within their maze of symbols and of forms.

WOMAN (*almost tearfully*):

Will not the risen Saviour pass this way?
I have so longed to succour Him, and then
Lead Him to where my little one doth lie—

STRANGE WOMAN (*interrupting*):

And thou wouldst *lead* thy God! Alas, my
child,
Thro' very ignorance dost thou blaspheme!

WOMAN:

Woe's me! What can I do to shrive my soul?
I never paused to weigh the pray'rs I prayed.

STRANGE WOMAN:

A selfish pray'r will not ascend to heav'n,
But falls to earth e'er yet it leaves the lips.

WOMAN :

I have besought the Lord so earnestly
To give me back my darling from the grave.
If heav'n would grant this boon, then all my
 life
Would be one long, long pray'r of gratitude.

STRANGE WOMAN :

Do not dictate unto the Lord thy God
The ways and means that He shall guide thy
 feet,
But, praying, say: Thou knowest my de-
 sires,
Thou knowest my needs; my needs make my
 desires,
And mould me to Thy will—Thy will—not
 mine.
I may not always understand Thy ways,
But if thou cast the shadow of Thy wing,
To shade me from the ardour of Life's sun,
I'll trust in Thee, and wait all satisfied.

WOMAN (*suppressing her tears*):

But will the Saviour give me back my child,
Or must I see him on this earth no more?

STRANGE WOMAN :

Few things in life are ever as we plan,
But time is kind and softens our desires,
And dulls the fangs of disappointment's sting.
The world is ripe with promise—round thy
knees

I can see clustered many a bright-eyed child,
While on thy bosom rests thy youngest-born,
And each young life means more to thee
because

Thy first-born nestles in the arms of God.

(The STRANGE WOMAN staggers, as if about to faint, clutching the back of a chair for support.)

WOMAN (*seizes loaf of bread and fiasco of wine*):
Ah! thou art faint—see, here is bread and
wine—

'Twas for the Saviour, take it for thyself—
I give it in His name!

STRANGE WOMAN (*taking the bread*):

And by this bread,
Thou givest from the fullness of thy heart,
Thy threshold dost thou heap with fragrant
flow'rs.

(Breaks loaf and red rosebuds fall from it.)

WOMAN (*starts back in dismay*):
These are not flow'rs of purity and love,
For they are scarlet as the feet of sin!

STRANGE WOMAN:
Come, smell the perfume of these crimson
buds:
Is not their odour far more soft and sweet
Than the shrill lilies' at the open door?
Since man is frail, therefore, each man must
have
Compassion for, and knowledge of all sin—
But one need not be *sinful* to *know* sin—
Thus knowing sin one comes to comprehend
The broader and the fuller things of life,
And how to walk in purity and love,
Breathing the perfume which compassion
brings.

(MAN *and* WOMAN *fall upon their knees before*
the STRANGE WOMAN.)

WOMAN:
O, Strange and Holy Woman!

MAN:
Who art thou?

STRANGE WOMAN :

'Tis Easter! Jesus, wearied of the tomb,
Seeketh the flow'r-strewn thresholds of men's
 hearts—

Behold He cometh down the wheaten fields,
Over the roadway, thro' the open door,
For He hath seen thy hearts, and deeming
 fair,

Doth enter in to take up His abode.

(As the STRANGE WOMAN speaks she casts off her mantle, which is lined with flowers of many shades and hues, and stands clad in the robes of the Virgin Queen of Heaven. Down through the wheatfields and across the road, comes a Shining Light, as it moves across the road, up to the door, the strewn lilies rise as a hedge on either side. When the Light reaches the door there is a blinding and noiseless flash, after which the stage is flooded with a brilliant white light. The sun has risen above the horizon; the MAN and the WOMAN are kneeling alone, while all about them are heaped flowers of many colours. Distant voices are heard singing the " Regina Cæli " (the prayer that takes the place of the " Angelus " from Easter dawn to Trinity Eve), the MAN and the WOMAN join in the responses.)

DISTANT VOICES :

Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven!

MAN AND WOMAN :

Hallelujah!

DISTANT VOICES :

For He Whom thou didst merit to bear,

MAN AND WOMAN :

Hallelujah!

DISTANT VOICES :

Is risen again as He said.

MAN AND WOMAN :

Hallelujah!

DISTANT VOICES :

Pray for us to God.

MAN AND WOMAN :

Hallelujah!

DISTANT VOICES :

Be glad and rejoice, O, Virgin Mary,

MAN AND WOMAN :

Hallelujah!

DISTANT VOICES :

Because the Lord is risen indeed,

MAN AND WOMAN :

Hallelujah!

(The Curtain Falls Softly.)

DINIS ISLAND, KILLARNEY

The waters meet but to part,
Fulfilling their fate thereafter:
They meet with a rush of joy,
And part in a ripple of laughter.

Some to the lips of the shore,
Some to the arms of the air,
Destined to meet no more,
Bounded they know not where!

The waters meet but to part,
As we on our ways hereafter:
We met with a boundless joy,
But part in a sob-caught laughter.

THERE'S A BEND IN THE ROAD

There's a bend in the road by the Glen-
garriff Harbour,
Where the vine-covered trees form a natural
 arbour,
And soft on the breezes that waft thro' the
 glen
The doves are heard cooing again and again:
 " I love you! I love you! "
 They seem to be calling.
 " Oh! love me! Oh! love me! "
 The echoes come falling.

There's a low, broken wall on the road by the
 Harbour,
Where the sun softly sifts thro' the natural
 arbour,
And two might be learning the bird language
 when
The doves are heard cooing again and again:
 " I love you! I love you! "
 They seem to be calling
 " Oh! love me! Oh! love me! "
 The echoes come falling.

But it's no good at all when the doves set to
cooing,
And myself all alone, when I long to be
wooing.

'Tis more like a keening that sighs thro' the
glen,

When the doves are heard cooing again and
again:

“ I love you! I love you! ”

They seem to be calling.

“ Oh! love me! Oh! love me! ”

The echoes come falling.

I was dreaming last night, dear, that I was
a lone dove,

And you were the echo that dwelt in my own
grove,

And out of the stillness that lay on the glen
My voice was heard singing again and again:

“ I love you! I love you! ”

I seemed to be calling.

“ Oh! love me! Oh! love me! ”

Your dear voice came falling.

THE HILLS ABOUT KILLARNEY

The hills about Killarney are always hid in mist,
They rarely seem to care to doff their caps
 off to the sun,
But trail their cloaks of purple haze into the
 amber lakes,
And shake them out across the land wid “ by
 yor lave ” to none.

The hills about Killarney are bathèd by the
 flood
That sings an eerie banshee song, learnt
 from its sister sea,
Of how the farm lands wait the strong far
 off in the Northwest,
Where gold is cheap, and man is man, and
 love and life are free.

The hills about Killarney are always shedding
 tears .
For them that's gone, and them that's left,
 each hill a mourner stands,
For Ireland needs the strong at home, and
 each that goes away
Makes faster yet the cords that bind the
 ancient Mother's hands.

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