

SONGS OF THE STEEL AGE

BY

WILLIAM HURD HILLYER

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WILLIAM HURD HILLYER

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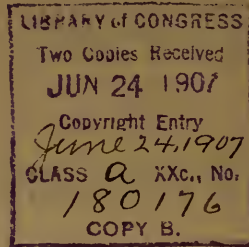
RICHARD G. BADGER

The Gorham Press

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DEDICATION OF A VOLUME OF POEMS

As one who dreams and, dreaming, fears
Lest of a sudden he should wake
To face the grim slant of the years
And once again life's burdens take,

So momentarily I wonder how
Real daytime so much heaven can hold—
So much of joy and peace as thou
Hast brought to me, dear heart of gold:

Wherefore, scarce knowing if this life
Be real or fancied that we live,
To thee, O steadfast Love, O Wife,
This web of dream and song I give.

SONGS OF THE STEEL AGE

THE FIVE TRAVELLERS

Whether they had but wakened from a long, en-
chanted sleep,
Or in some favored craft had crossed the unvoy-
ageable Deep,—
How they did come I cannot tell; yet this I surely
know,
That once upon a summer's day, not many months
ago,
Surrounded by the roaring streets, the tumult-
burdened air,
Five men of ancient garb and strange appeared in
Union Square.

Now one was a metal-worker
Of Ephesus, and one
A merchant, largely trading
From Tyre to Chalcedon;
A weaver of Panormus,
An armorer from Xanthus,—
The fifth, a master builder
From towered Babylon.

By different ways they came, and each had friendly
clasp for each;
A broad-roofed elm they found, and sat within its
shaded reach.
The metal-worker spake: "O friends, wise people
these, and bold;
Iron they carve as wood, and brass as yielding wax
they mould.
All night I saw, when from the mineson yester eve
returning,
Their Titan-builded furnaces like tall volcanoes
burning.

No dingy smithies mark the spot where rings the
 ruddy steel,
But huge halls, where, from dawn to dusk, the open
 doors reveal
Dim giants moving, bending, back and forth, amid
 the clamor
Of block and chain and thundering forge, and
 wheel, and viewless hammer.
Not craftsmen they, but sorcerers, with iron slaves
 that stand
Ready to make a million bolts or axles at command."

"True," said the merchant, "for the lords of
 trade employ no more
The tedious, dusty caravan and clumsy sail and oar.
The demon-driven train speeds past along the sing-
 ing rails,
And at the wharf great floating towns discharge
 their precious bales.
A marble palace, royal-wide, I passed by not long
 since;
I said, 'What king dwells yonder?' They replied,
 'A merchant-prince.'"

Then spake the weaver: "Large indeed this
 people's wealth and skill.
Their threads are spun by multitudes of whirring
 staves, that fill
The vast halls with a surf-like roar; by magic force
 propelled,
They spin full half a mile or more while our good
 wives of old
Would twist a cubit: stranger still those wide, mys-
 terious rooms

Where sounds till twilight the loud brool and
brabble of the looms.
In long batallions ranged, and scarce by human
touch attended,
All day with lightning speed they weave their
gorgeous webs and splendid;
For 'tis some unseen god, condemned by Fate to
toil below,
Who sits before each loom and flings the shuttle to
and fro."

Then said the armorer: " O friends, brave wonders
I have seen:
Men use no more the spear and axe, the sword and
rapier keen,
Armor they cannot wear; a shield that well with-
stands the jolt
Of javelins makes but weak defence when falls the
thunderbolt.
Small use are helmets of hard bronze and plates
and glittering greaves,
Before the shaft that at one stroke the rocky ram-
part cleaves.
But I have found a curious thing: this people's
God is Trade;
To him are countless altars reared and bloody
offerings made.
Forgetful of heroic war, they make a war of peace;
They gather with unending strife rich treasure, to
increase
The temple revenues of Trade; and, bent with
jarring toil,
Upon his thankless altar steps they cast their hard-
won spoil."

The master builder said: " More strange, more
marvellous than all,
Their temples, narrow, glass-bechecked, uncouth,
and cloudy-tall.
Here hurrying thousands come and go each day,
and late at night
Loom those gigantic piles, ablaze with countless
points of light.
From a high roof one moonless eve I watched the
huge town set
With flickering jewels, far below the windy parapet.
The gray smoke of enchantment veiled the dark
squares, interblent
With crimson: nothing more I saw; yet deep,
malevolent
I heard the tumult drifting in across the iron ledge
As when the distant sand storm sweeps beyond the
desert's edge.

"I thought I stood again on old Borsippa, looking
o'er
The first great capital of all the world, and watched
once more
Above the low Chaldean plains, through the far
night dissolving,
Arcturus and Aldebaran in their black zones re-
volving."

The metal worker said, " And yet I passed a street
where surged
A snarling multitude, by Fear and fleshless Famine
urged."

The merchant said, " I saw the old, sad farms and
homes acurst

On which the vampire usurer slakes his inhuman
thirst."

The weaver said, " I saw the wan mill-women,—
yes, and I
Saw the thin shrewd-faced children where the mad-
dening shuttles fly."

Then spake the armorer, " I saw the crowded jails,
the immense
Gray castles, which in vain oppose theft, murder,
violence."

" Yea," said the master builder, " I have seen, in
byways drear,
The dwellings of the poor up-piled to the blank
heavens, tier on tier.
And I have seen the sunless lair of Guilt and pale
Mistrust,
The warm bemirrored courts of Vice, the palaces of
Lust.
Let us go back, go back, to where, in endless round
and slow,
The shadow shapes of other days perform their
phantom show.
Some time, perchance, we may return, when by its
boasted art
The world hath found a way to cleanse its own
unrighteous heart."
Sadly they all agreed; and so, with travel-wearied
feet
They crossed the shaded square and reached the
coastline of the street,
Where the swift, many-voiced tide flowed past with
sullen din.

Around them like a gulping wave the listless crowd
closed in.

Now one was a metal-worker
From Ephesus, and one
A merchant, largely trading
From Tyre to Chalcedon;
A weaver of Panormus,
An armorer from Xanthus,—
The fifth, a master builder
From towered Babylon.

THE HOUSE OF THE LOOMS

Did you ask for the House of the Looms? 'Tis a
mile to the north,
It is hard by the place where the lake pours over
the falls.

You may know it from far by its chimney voiding
forth

Huge monsters of smoke, and its thousand-
windowed walls.

It is square towered, angular, vast, severe; from
within

All day and into the night may he heard the
sonorous

Hum of the spindles, mixed with a rhythmic din
As the chattering looms crash out their insistent
chorus.

O the dexterous looms! O the tireless, joyless
looms!

They labor wherever the thin white weft is
drawn,—

Where the coal trains rumble and creak on the
spur, and booms

The punctual, pitiless factory whistle at dawn:

Where the dingy dwellings are all of the same
design,

And a strong gate, barred and legended, blocks
us ahead,—

Where, dim through the morning dusk, in a voice-
less line,

The women and children go down to do battle
for bread.

THE NIGHT EXPRESS

There's a light at last in the sable mist, and it
hangs like a rising star

On the border line 'twixt earth and sky, where the
rails run straight and far:

And deeply sounds from hill to hill, in mighty
monotone,

A distant voice—a hoarse, wild note with savage
warning blown,

'Tis the night express, and well 'tis named, for
behold! from out of the night

It comes and darkly adown the rails it looms to the
startled sight—

Larger, nearer, nearer yet—till at last there's a
clang and a roar,

A wave of heat, and a gleam of red from a closing
furnace door;

Then the crash and shriek of the rushing train—
and our hearts beat fast and high

When sudden and swift through the shadowy mist
the night express goes by!

SONG OF THE CURRENT

Firstborn daughters of Chaos and Night were the
 Clouds, dim rolling
Under the dubious firmament, where with invisible
 pinion
Wheeled the disorderly winds; then arose the
 tempest-controlling
Spirit Electron—versatile, vast, and of boundless
 dominion.

'Round the mysterious core of the earth, with its
 fires volcanic,
Viewless tides are awhirl, and unknown pulses
 are thrilling—
Vibrant with plentiful power, and urged by the
 forces tyrannic
Holding the reins of the stars, and the visible uni-
 verse filling.
Long had this power gone forth: exhaustless, linked
 with the solar
Central reserves, cannonading athwart the gray
 whirlwind's commotion;
Silently ebbing and flowing in radiant ring circum-
 polar,—
Flaming at night from the masts and spars of ships
 in midocean,—

Ere yet man had discovered its hidden and mystical
 sources,
Caught it with dexterous webs or ensnared it
 in brazen coils;
Ere he had tried it and trained it and made its
 intractable forces

Grind at his mill, bear his burdens, and lighten his
multiform toils.

Now, from the countless wires that span the low
plains and the highlands,—
From the shrill motors, and singing arcs along
avenues splendid,—
Mixed with the murmur the cables bring in from
the farthest islands,
Rises the song of the Current, of manifold voices
blended:

I am he whom Egypt dreamed of, ever striving to
unfold
Mysteries of Nile and Nature, laboring with riddles
old,—
He whom Pharaoh's magicians tempted with their
rods of gold.

Guessed at by the Hindoo sages, watching for
strange avatars;
Sought by purple-robed Chaldeans under the low,
liquid stars;
Praised by Moslem storytellers in the Saracen
bazaars,—

Only yesterday men found me, touched my gar-
ment's outer hem;
And I turned and from my girdle plucked a single
sun-bright gem,—
As I passed I turned and, smiling, flung this talis-
man to them.

So they talk of ohms and voltage, and they prate of
what they owe me;

Learned charlatans in lectures seek to analyze and
show me:

I have wrought them a few wonders, and they fancy
that they know me.

Ye who dwell on wisdom's border—foreigners
at Truth's frontier,

Now retreating, now advancing half an ell or so a
year,—

Boast not, lest perchance some burgher from the
capital should hear!

Know ye how the simplest blossom perfume from
the dust distils?

How the germinal impulsion through the planted
furrow thrills?

Know ye aught of that Far Country over the sad
twilight hills?

Ere you brag of peace and plenty, and your for-
tunate bright age

Watch the sallow children working through the
night at pauper's wage.

See the vengeful under-people, glaring from their
hopeless cage.

Much you know of wheel and hammer: one thing
most of all you need—

Love that seeks and finds and blesses, tears that
fall and hearts that bleed;

Lest you bind the monster Famine but to nurse the
Titan Greed.

Better, yes, the times are better than in those dark
days of blood

When behind their fended doorways feudal knight
and bishop stood.
Those were times of storm and slaughter; these are
better, but not good.

Not yet! But the world-rim brightens, and the
coming years shall see
Labor with its own full fruitage, largess without
beggary;
And the prison-bolts are moving, for 'tis I who
holds the key.
Mine the planting and the reaping, mine the hard
toil of the field:
Yours to rightfully apportion and to measure out
the yield,—
Yours the liberty of kindness, yours the perfect life
revealed.

THE LINEMAN

Thin, scattered ranks of snow
Stampede along the street;
And sagging wires betray the slow
Chill mischief of the sleet.

In homely garb of toil,
With tools of quaint device,
The lineman comes, his shouldered coil
Gray with a rime of ice.

Upraised adventurer,
He climbs enchanted towers,
And mends the magic threads that stir
The world's remotest powers.

From heights wind-desolate
His torch flames cheerless blue.
(Red, red the hearth where loved ones wait
The winter twilight through.)

Lineman, what hindereth
That message I would hear?
Canst mend the web 'twixt Life and Death?
Canst gain responses clear?

I call, but still behold
No spark of answering fire.
O for some lineman true and bold
To mend that broken wire!

THE WIND IN THE WIRES

Tall sentinels in file across
Fields, valleys, prairie lands.
Where some great chief has posted them
To pass his large commands.

*Gaunt giants they, their names unknown,
Their constant strength unsung;
With rigid arms outstretched, whereon
The copper threads are strung.*

Across the level that moveless row
Leads out to the sunset fires.

No sound abides on the plain, save the 'ow
Sad hum of the wind in the wires.

Now back and forth (while Æolus
His measured changes rings)
Swift countless words go pulsing past
Along those vibrant strings:

Grave messages of love and hate;
Vast news from near and far
Of steam and sail, of life and death,
Of storm and flood and war.

While we have listened, fortune, fame,
Swift back and forth hath sped,
And men have won and men have lost
Along each slender thread.

*Yet upon them alights the brown, wayfaring bird
When of long winter winging she tires.
O'er the fenceless plain and not a sound is heard
Save the hum of the wind in the wires.*

LIGHTHOUSE AND BELL-BUOY

Before, the solid sea wall, and the wide
Blue background for a single sun-gilt sail:
Behind, the square gray lighthouse, on whose side
The day-glow lingers pale.

Huge Titan of the bronzèd coast, he stands
Summer and stormy winter; through the years,

Forever looking towards the orient lands
The Bell-buoy still he hears.

The waves have diadems of gold; the sun
Low in the cloudless west hangs round and dim.
It sinks; and for a moment rests upon
The sharp horizon-rim.

Soon at the world's edge fades the last red spark—
Clear-tolling bell, and salt surge, crashing high.
And lo! the great lamp, foeman to the dark,
Flames out against the sky.

Watch Hill, R. I., August 10, 1901.

THE SONG OF THE PRESS

When old Gutenberg, inventor of the printing
press, and mentor
Of the clumsy-fingered typos in a sleepy German
town
Used to spread the sheets of vellum on the form and
plainly tell 'em
That the art was then perfected, as he pressed the
platen down—
He had not the faintest notion of the rhythmical
commotion,
Of the brabble and the clamor and the unremitting
roar
Of the mighty triple decker, while the steel rods
flicker
And the papers ready folded fall in thousands to the
floor.

*“ They can beat me like the nation when the job’s for
recreation—*

*Say a fancy Christmas cover full of foolish filigree,—
But I tell you what, my honey, if you want to make
some money*

*On a run of half a million, then just pass it up to me.
You can watch the sheets a-snowing through my
folder when I’m going,*

*And I print them by the thousand while the happy
moments flit;*

*I can cut a pretty caper with a half a mile of paper
While the little poky fogies are a-hauling off to hit!”*

As the publication hour draweth nigh, a subtle
power

Seems to thrill through every sinew, and he hungers
for the fight.

And he hears the forms descending and with
strident voices blending

As the smell of molten metal rises hotly through
the night.

Now the last form, it is ready! and his giant
frame is steady,

And for one decisive moment he awaits the signal-
word.

“ All in!” Faster, faster, faster, with a tumult that
grows vaster

Moves the great press. On the sidewalk shrill the
newsboy’s cry is heard.

Like the deafening surge of ocean swells the rhyth-
mical commotion

And the brabble and the clamor and the unremit-
ting roar.

Of the mighty triple decker, while the steel rods
flicker

And the papers, ready folded, fall in thousands to
the floor.

“ Here I stand, the bounteous giver of the latest
word, forever
Am I listening for the whisper of the wire; near
and far,
Good and bad the news—no matter—in an instant
I will scatter
A most marvellous translation through the crowded
streets afar.
Banks may fail and bonds may falter, and on an-
cient hearth and altar
Strange new fires may burn unbidden,—creeds may
crumble, swords may rust,
All the rack and change of ages doth but number
me fresh pages
While the slow red tide of freedom humbleth
scepters to the dust.
I alone am tireless, deathless; day by day the
starved crowd, breathless,
Waits for me to feed and fill them, for new false-
hoods ravenous—
Hence with truth perforce I mingle harmless
fictions and the jingle
That the multitude call poems,—jest and fable
dolorous;—
Banal narrative and hollow cant of Pharisees they
swallow
Mixed with modicum of knowledge, here and there
a saving grain;—
Here and there a crystal holy; and Truth’s essences
are slowly
Conquering the world’s black blindness, driving
out the old blunt pain.”

THE GIANTS' HIGHWAY

A down the hollow valley,
And over the sheer ravine,
Along bleak salty barrens
And blissful miles of green,—
Under the boreal starlight,
And under tropic suns,
From ocean far to ocean
The Giants' Highway runs.

It spans the widest river;
It cleaves the jagged crown
Of the steep range: it flashes
Through the fierce, cloudy town;—
Through maize and bearded barley,
Past pines and poplars tall.
Its gleaming curve swings broadly
Beyond my garden wall.

The fast Freight, plunging southward
Beneath the faded moon;
The Vestibuled at sunrise,
The long Express at noon;
The Limited at twilight,
And the hoarse Northbound Mail:
I hear their huge wild voices—
The giants of the rail,—

Calling and ever calling
In tones that urge and thrill,
And I am fain to follow
Beyond the changeless hill;
For love or strife or sorrow,
For large or fruitless deeds,
I would that I knew whither
The Giants' Highway leads.

THE MIDNIGHT MAIL

Resonant, full and deep
Is the voice of the midnight mail:
It rolls through the shadowy realms of sleep
When the high moon gleams on the rail.
It startles the drowsing oak,
And the clustered pines reply,
And the gray batallions of goblin smoke
Hang moveless under the sky.

But oh, not the lordly notes
That waken the dreaming hill,
Nor the cloud-white plume that backward floats,
Nor the clamor that warns, "I kill!"—
Not the drifting smoke above,
Nor the transient furnace glare,
But the freightage of sorrow and joy and love
Which the Midnight Mail doth bear!

The great, swift wheels, the long
Yellow chain of squares agleam—
It is not for these that the poet's song
Is blent with the roar of steam.
Not the triumph of splendid arts,
Nor the prince of the passionless rail,
But the anxious eyes and the beating hearts
That wait for the Midnight Mail!

THE WAY FREIGHT

Red semaphores along the line displayed,
And broad black smoke against the sunset bars;
The Way Freight, noisy caravan of trade,
Impeded by a multitude of cars,
Comes toiling up the difficult long grade.

Engines and men—not all of us may lead
The Fast Mail or the meteor Express.
The plodding Mogul fills an urgent need
Where the swift Flyer would be powerless.
Ofttimes the greater strength hath lesser speed.

THE TUNNEL

Gray, rock-strewn plains, walled in with hueless
hills:

A blurred, tumultuous canyon; then the black
Jaws of the tunnel—instant night that chills
Through the closed windows. Down the ob-
scure track

Rushes the train with blind, monotonous
Clamor, the steam's huge intermittent roar
Grows fiercer. Has this darkness dolorous
No end?—and shall we see the sky no more?

But look! A sudden smoky dawn—a burst
Of sunshine, and the far, sweet blue! Behold
Another country, fairer than the first:
Meadows and misty woods and harvest-gold;
And a slow river, at whose flowered verge
The wet grass flourishes and calm trees bend.
And so, perhaps, we may at last emerge
From that dread tunnel whither all roads tend.

THE SONG OF THE ENGINEER

You may lounge on your velveteed cushions and
mark each mile with a thoughtless dream—
You may say there is nothing of weird romance in
the practical prose of steam:

But you never have sat in the dust and smoke, and
seen that the track was clear,
Nor held the reins of the steed that leaves the wind
in its wild career.

No soulless, dull machine I drive, for I feel her
passionate breath

When I ride her over the endless rails that run by the
brink of death!

My fireman, lit by the flame's red glare,
Myself, and our engine—o'er valley and height
We three are as one, and together we share
The marvellous triumph and glory of flight!

My will is hers, and her strength is mine: past the
sandhills gray and low,

Through the shimmering cornfields' long green line
and the sounding moods we go!

There is naught on the bridge that checks her speed,
and naught in the tunnel she fears;

For my slightest touch on the throttle she feels, and
my softest whisper she hears.

Only a touch and a whispered word, on the trestle
narrow and high;

When she trembles and shrinks on the dangerous
curve, or a freight train thunders by.

Loud is the shriek of the startled air—

Long is the stretch of the roadbed white:

We three are as one; and together we share

The marvellous triumph and glory of flight!

THE TERMINUS

The wide town swings to view; the train speeds past
Long roaring freights. Mysterious voices blend
With the shrill steam: then underneath the vast
Vault of the terminus, we find at last
Our journey's end.

Beyond the doors, a wintry wilderness,
The formidable streets lie strange and far.
But see, familiar faces wait to bless
Our coming. How informed with joyfulness
Their greetings are!

I wonder if, to when into the world's great
Sad terminus, I come unasked, unknown,
Will welcoming dear faces for me wait,
Or must I through the hollow-clanging gate
Pass out alone?

THE RUINED ENGINE

Behind the village, on the level meadow,
Prone to the boundless sweep of changing skies—
Through rain and snow, gay sun and wintry shadow
A fallen and forgotten giant lies.

Long since fallen and dead;
But the shifting seasons pass :
And his iron bones with rust are red,
And the dust of decay around him spread
Is food for the thrifty grass.

Through that great chest, where once, with mighty
breathing,
Roared the red-passionate flame in lusty song,—
Amid those arteries, where, pulsing, seething,
Surged the swift steam to sinews large and strong,
The low-voiced Autumn breeze flutes faint and
hollow.
Up to the headlight goes a blossoming vine;
Whither the tawny bee is blithe to follow,
Drinking from fragile cups their costly wine.
Yon white-haired man—who is he?
Why walks he out on the grass?
Hush! This was his engine once. But we
Want neither now; for the world swings free,
And the cruel seasons pass.

“THIS IS CÆSAR”

When with panoply and triumph, came the legions
from the fray,
And the gorgeous Roman eagles flashed along the
Appian Way,
High above them, robed in purple and with victor’s
laurel crowned,
Rode the emperor, while his minions bade the
brazen trumpet sound.
Sometimes it was fierce Tiberias, cruel, merciless,
unjust;
Sometimes it was bronze-beard Nero, mad with
monstrous crime and lust;
Yet to all alike the greeting from the servile Roman
crowd,
“Live the emperor! Long live Cæsar!” rose in
thunders clear and loud.

And his reign has never ended—he is tyrant, as of
old,
Leading still the captive millions at his chariot
wheels of gold,
“ Cæsar ” was the name they gave him when he
graced the conqueror’s car—
With the Germans he is “ Kaiser,” and the Russians
call him “ Czar.”

Once our fathers fought for freedom, and on many
a stubborn field
Gained the right of independence with their life-
blood signed and sealed—
At the ancient thrones of Europe hurled the gauntlet
of the free,
And the despot’s paid retainers drove they back
across the sea.
Through the decades that have followed it has been
our boast and pride
That no hated royal standard blazes where our
fathers died!
But that, in our blest republic, one and all may
freely share
Right of property and conscience, right of trial full
and fair.
Yet by crafty bribes the tyrant gained our closely
guarded gates;
Last night stealthily he entered—patiently he works
and waits.
Ye will have him—ye who glory in our conquered
lands afar—
Ye who with the homes of thousands feed the flames
of useless war.
Madman of Ahenobarbus, making vice and crime
an art—

Feeble Claudius, weak Domitian—demon's soul
and coward's heart—
This is Cæsar: he is despot where the fires of con-
quest burn;
We shall have him, fellow patriots, when the con-
querors return.

Out with those that talk of empire, bidding high for
cheap renown!
What is empire but the purple? What is conquest
but a crown?
This is Cæsar—he is waiting, waxing stronger day
by day;
Let us drive the lurking tyrant from our borders
while we may!

THE VANISHING WOODLAND

I

Insolent stranger, disturbing the ancient calm of the
forest,—
Slayer of old pines,—harsh-voiced prophet of civi-
lization—
Cease, thou savage Car, thy piercing damnable
discord;
Hearken to one who loveth alike the lane of the
woodland
And the long, smoke-veiled street, with its complex
clangor and tumult.
Excellent manifold blessings do follow the far re-
sounding
Axe of the pioneer, and the shrieking saw, and the
railway.

Manifold excellent blessings—wide roads, populous
cities,
Thunder of splendid trains, and whirl of a million
spindles,
Passes the quiet rule of the age dieties, holding
Festivals under the trees, and the piping birds in the
branches.
Comes, with its new-found magic, the reign of the
wheel and the hammer—
Cabled bridges, and strange lights, lit by the gnomes
of the current;
After the golden age swift follows the age of iron.

II

Towns there must be, and cities, and huge mills
noisily turning—
Mad, congested streets and sunless tenements—
byways,
Boulevards, lordly walls with starving souls behind
them:
Wherefore the tyrant Commerce exacts as an annual
tribute
Numberless massive trees from the unresisting
forest.

III

Is it the drifting smoke from a thousand factory
chimneys?
Somehow over the town hangs a somber mist, and a
longing
Large and unknowable: not as the sweet half-
heavenly sadness

Here in the shade of these oaks and minstrel pines;
but a doleful
Atmosphere, with some pure, vital element lacking.

IV

Cease for a while thy turbulent din, thou greedy
destroyer;
Thinkest that man can arise and possess the whole
face of the planet
After his friends, the trees, are slain, and their
former dominions
Barren and gray, obscured by the noxious fumes
of the furnace?
Leave us a few dim groves, to refresh the Wind as
he journeys,
Weary of crowded lanes and burdened with smoke,
to remind us
How betwixt man and tree is an ancient, wonderful
kinship;
How, since the daybreak of time, the Almighty has
given His larger
Messages only to those who sought the far dusk of
the woodland—
Those who fasted and prayed in the gloom of the
whispering branches.

THE ABANDONED FARM

Sunset slow-deepening to dusk, and chill
October dampness on the twilight road:
Familiar lanes, and old trees bare and still;
The quiet well, whence unbought blessings
flowed—
The vacant, voiceless farmhouse on the hill.

The orchard, where in former times each bough
Flamed red with fruitage, stands forlorn and
waste.

The rose-lit garden is a desert now.
Beyond, by crumbling stone walls veined and
traced,
Are gray fields, long unfurrowed by the plough.

From out yon gable window, years ago,
One watched the distant-wheeling planets rise;
And suddenly his young heart felt the glow
Of limitless unrest: before his eyes
Passed, in wild dreams, the great world's magic
show.

He turned his face to the huge misty town.
The kindly fields thenceforth knew him no more.
So went three sons, straight-limbed and ruddy
brown,
To mix with savage Trade's unceasing roar:
Then the two desolate white heads went down.

Thou City, stark devourer of the spoils
Of wide lands and ancestral homes—thou vast
Million-eyed monster, grasping countless coils
Of steel—strange and how strange that men
should cast
Themselves into thy perilous dim toils!

Some day the enchantment of the town will end.
Man will awake from his long dream, and learn
The peace that none but the kind leaves can lend.
Back to the steadfast country will he turn,
As to some loyal, oft-rejected friend.

Meanwhile the fields lie waste, with none to till.
The barn is empty, the broad meadow-lands
Merge in one sedgy wilderness, and still,
Half ruinous, mutely reproachful, stands
The silent-grieving farmhouse on the hill.

THE REVENGE OF THE FOREST

Ere ever the sound of the sinister axe rang out where
the wild birds dwell
Or ever the rodman's wand adverse had broken the
ancient spell,
The old gods ruled in the plotless woods, and the
song of each bearded pine
Was blent with the plash of a fountain that flowed
from an immemorial shrine.

They were splendid days, those ended days, when
the vast wind wheeled and whirled
To the violet verge where the cloudy surge broke
white at the edge of the world;
And the storm flames flickered to east and north,
and the host of the rain marched by:
And anon the red disk of the sun looked forth from
the land of the western sky.

Now what do you hear them saying;—
The oaks and the poplars tall?
Brother of leaves, when the twilight grieves
What say they all?
What whisper they when the dusk hangs gray
And the moonmotes fall?

They speak of the restless vandal tribes that harried
the silent grove,
Of the turbulent timber chiefs that hard for the
splendid pillage strove;
Of trees by the hundred million slain, through a
cycle of threescore years;
And of warnings sounded forth in vain by a few
unlauded seers.

But most of all do they moan and call when the
midmost dark sweeps low,
And noiselessly in the gnarled gloom the tree-
wraiths come and go;
They call and moan, with a pious fear of a deity
shadow-shrined,
And at length they tell of the vengeance drear that
the wood-gods wrought mankind.

Now what do you hear them saying,—
The oaks and the poplars tall?
Brother of pines, when the blurred moon shines,
What say they all?
When the thin mist rolls 'mid the somber boles
And the stark owls call?

They tell how the legioned clouds came out from
the camps of the storied hills,
And sought the fair populous plain with its fields,
its towns and dissonant mills,
Then the flood dropped down, gray sheet on sheet
from the melting firmament,
And river and sky in mid heaven high were as one
dread chaos blent;

And the long steel bridges writhed with pain and
at length with a shriek went down
And the people woke and cried in vain, from the
roofs of the fated town.
But beyond the pale of the desolate vale the world
no message heard,
And the throbbing fires on the broken wires died
out with a half-formed word.

Now ever we hear them sighing,—
The oaks and the poplars tall;
Brother of leaves, when the mad wind grieves.
What say they all?
On whom and where do the high gods swear
Must the next curse fall?

APPROACHING THE SEA ON THE VIRGINIA COAST

Labors the dusty train all day through dry,
Deserted, smoke-enshrouded fields. How long
Till we shall hear again the welcoming song
Of the wide surf, and feel its spray? A cry
Comes from our engine, as he plunges swift past
high
And isolated pines—a sober throng—
Old Neptune's melancholy sentries, 'twixt whose
strong,
Uncurving limbs, the traveler's eager eye
Soon fancies, as they dizzily swing past,
That it finds grateful glimpses here and there
Of distant emerald. Then comes a vast
And treeless lowland, reeking with the rare,
Faint breath of salty marshes; and at last
The first delicious burst of ocean air!

THE PASSING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

December 31, 1900

Misty and sad the stars, and the wind a requiem
sigheth:
To-night is the last of the year, and to-night the
Century dieth.
Century greatest of all—magician and ruler
sublime—
Grandest of all that have passed along the Appian
Way of Time;
Vast was his triumph, and splendid with silver and
gold and steel;
Proudly he rode, with the Thunderbolt chained to
his chariot wheel.
Dark and deserted the streets; but across in the
neighboring square
The windows are blazing with light where mingle
the brave and the fair.
They are dancing the old year out; there is music
and laughter within—
Cadence of mel'sonant flute and lilt of the wild violin.
But listen! the dolorous bell! At last it is striking
the hour:
Vibrant and full and clear it sounds from the gray
church tower.
And the song of the viol and flute dies out with a
sigh in the gloom,
And solemnly stroke after stroke peals forth the
Century's doom,
Twelve! and the bird called Midnight, that flies
at the edge of to-day,

Passes, formless and silent, swift on his westward
way:
And the East Wind, suddenly rising, blows fresh
from Atlantic deeps,
And over the continent wide the Twentieth Cen-
tury sweeps!
Many there are who tell us that man's best mo-
ments are o'er,
Saying, "The rose of his pride shall wither to bloom
no more."
Not so; for the day draws nigh, by the Hebrew seer
foretold,
When Peace shall interpret the Law, and love shall
be better than gold.
And though there be sickness and famine, and
wars and rumors of wars,
Yet still through the darkness the future shines
forth in the steadfast stars.
So hail, thou cycle of hope!—Remember, the
world is young!
There are victories yet unattained, there are songs
that are still unsung!

THE AFTERMEN

"So men shall rise to be Aftermen."

I

A crumbling stone, a bit of old brass, hid
Under the red shifting sand;
Traces of a forgotten pyramid,
A streak of rust,
A ring from a dead hand;
A heap of melancholy dust:

Here dwelt an ancient colony of Men.
Here lived they, fought and toiled and loved, and
then
Slept, as all living must.

II

I wonder . . . if he who wore
This ring—this curiously graven band
Of clouded gold—did ever pace the sand
On the long, windy shore,
And listen for old voices that drift
Through the wide open heaven from far
Planet and star;
For secrets of the tides that stir and lift
Ocean and world and soul:
Or haply where the fluent combers roll,
Did hearken for divine
Answers to hoary tangled doubts and curst
Riddles, in the reiterated hurst
And thunder of the solemn frenzied brine.

III

Strange, that with amiable fields and wide
Land-locked seas of grain,
And promise that the round of sun and rain
Should never cease;
With friendly hills, where flocks and clouds abide;
And every flowered lane
All white with multiform fair counsellings
Of peace;—
And the gray woods informed with whisperings
Of that mysterious, immortal Breath
That lingereth

Around prophetic groves and vocal springs;—
How strange that these Men valued most the things
Of war and death!

IV

Unfathomable race! that toiled and built
Year after year; that knew
The slow rewards of industry and strength;
And then at length
With causeless anger and colossal guilt,
Wantonly overthrew,—
That bartered day for night, blood for dry bones,
And gave
The sap of life for false lures of the grave,—
Mad tribes, that circled through the varied zones
In many a sombre wave,
Urged onward by unreasoning distress;
And traveled every trail and highroad save
The pathway to the house of Happiness.

V

Were they but brutes of loftier fashioning?
Or outlawed angels, banished from their sphere
And ever wandering
Through the half dusk of Heaven's frontier?
—Yet neither is our vision true nor clear,
Nor may we boast.
Bent by the same large, overlording will,
And by the same obscure impulsion stirred,
All, from the humblest sparrow to the most
High-plumed archangel of the host,
Are still
Imperfect echoes of the changeless Word.

ROSES OF IRAN

THE KINVAD BRIDGE

(*Persian*)

At the end of the pain that all men tread, at the end
of the road called Time,
Where the land slopes off to the cliffs of death, and
the dolorous vapors climb,
Over the cloudy gulf of hell, and the chasm of dim
despond,
The Kinvad Bridge swings frail and far to the
heavenly heights beyond.

Nine javelins wide is the Kinvad Bridge when
passeth a righteous soul;
Royally ample and safe it leads to the distant shin-
ing goal;
But when others come to the cliffs of death—ah,
yes, the bridge is there—
But oh, what a narrow thread that spans the gray
gorge of despair!

A SONG OF THE PERSIAN POET

Hafiz, poet of love and death in Iran, home of the
rose,
Stood in his garden of shadowy palms at the clear
day's close.
Silent, he gazed at the towers and domes of Shiraz
white and high,
Looming above the fronded trees and into the dusky
sky.

Stealthily came through the east gate the conjuror
Night from afar;
Over the towers of Shiraz he hung a beautiful star.
Suddenly through the twilight a passing cry was
heard:
Northward over the murky grove hurried a homing
bird.

Over the domes of the murmurous town she held
her tireless flight
Seemingly unto the star that hung in the hollow
blue; and the sight
Pierced the soul of Hafiz, poet of golden rhyme,
So that he gave to the wind this song, that has
crossed the desert of Time:

*“The bird of my heart is a sacred bird, whose nest
is at Allah’s throne;
Caged in this body it sighs to be free, and to soar
unto Heaven alone.
If ever it flieth above the world, it findeth rest no
more
Till it sees the light of the crystal towers, and enters
the palace door.”*

FLEURS DE LYS

THE BALLAD OF CHARLES MARTEL

Stands the old Austrasian castle white against the
hills afar,
Every spire and tapering turret pointing to some
splendid star;
On its battlements the moonlight breaks in many
a silver bar.

Tramp of horse, with jest and laughter, from the
oaken drawbridge sounds;
With his archers and companions, with his kingly
hawk and hounds,
Charles the Duke comes riding homeward from
his feudal hunting-grounds.

Clattering up the rocky roadway, rides with wild
and breathless speed
Straight to Charles's side a herald; there he checks
his foaming steed.
Silent now the merry courtiers, crowding near his
words to heed.

“Sire, the dreaded Moorish army presses on
through Aquitaine;
Eudo with his stout retainers strives to check their
course in vain.
All the south of France lies groaning 'neath the yoke
of Moslem Spain!”

As the Duke heard, looking upward at the tall gray
towers, by chance

Bright the horned moon beyond them rose within
his rapid glance;
And he cried, "'Tis right that ever, in the tranquil
skies of France,

" God's own crescent should be gleaming; but I
swear by all that's high,
While I live no other crescent shall be queen of
yonder sky!
France shall see, O paynim Calif, which is master,
you or I!"

Summer glided into autumn. Northward rolled
the Moslem tide.
Still the call to arms resounded; Christendom
with hope and pride
Heard the tramp of Charles's soldiers coming to
their chieftain's side.

Where the winding Loire rolls seaward with its song
of quaint romance,
There he met the Moslem army, there he staked
the fate of France—
Nay, the fate of Christian Europe—on a single
battle's chance.

Arab chief and Berber horseman mingled with the
swarthy Moor,
Sunburnt hordes from Libyan deserts—Sennar,
Kordofan, Darfur—
Stood the soldiers of the prophet on the rolling plain
of Tours;

Splendid with the spoils of conquest in a hundred
battles won—

Gems from Gothic monasteries, silks in far
Damascus spun;
Golden crescents on their turbans glittered in the
morning sun.

Six long days of fighting followed. On the seventh
day once more
Clashed the hostile arms at sunrise; and the
sudden battle-roar,
Opened then the final struggle, deadlier far than
e'er before.

“Courage!” cried the Christian chieftain. “Let
him die whose cheek shall pale!
Right is ours, and God will help us—if we fight we
cannot fail!”
And the sturdy Frankish warriors hewed their way
through Moslem mail.

Lo! the Ameer Abd-er-Rahman lies among his
thousands slain.
Swift the last charge of the Moslems surges forward,
and again
Breaks, as on some granite headland hoarsely
breaks the baffled main.

On that day the Frankish chieftain dealt his battle-
blows so well
That, beneath his stroke unerring, Moslems by the
hundred fell;
And they called him ever after “Carl the Hammer”
—Charles Martel.

Darkness closed the scene of carnage; but through
all that autumn night

Panic reigned among the conquered, and the morn-
ing, calm and bright,
Found the Moorish tents deserted, telling of their
southward flight.

And the shattered host retreated back to Spain, as
o'er the seas
Backward drift the cloudy legions broken by the
rising breeze.
Ne'er again a Moslem army crossed the frowning
Pyrenees.

THE LAST STAND AT HASTINGS

All day the crimson tide of war has surged o'er
Senla's plain;
All day the Norman knights have charged the
Saxon host in vain.
The red sun sinking to the west lights up the en-
chanted hill
Where England's royal banner gleams in golden
splendor still.

Around that standard gather all who love their land
and king:
Defending crown and fireside, true hearts and brave
they bring.
Sturdy and loyal men are they—soldiers of stele
and fire—
Stout Saxon earls from Sussex, mighty Danes from
Lincolnshire.

Once more the Norman duke himself, with large
and lofty glance,
Marshals against King Harold's flag the chivalry
of France.
Bright are their bucklers; loud and clear their
thrilling bugles blow;
The Chant of Roland on their lips, they ride to
meet the foe.

But he who fights for hearth and home fights with
a giant's arm:
Fruitless the charge,—the invading ranks roll back
in wild alarm.
The duke reins in his horse, and dark his brow
with anger grows;—
Down like the wind he rides to where the archers
bend their bows.
“Ye fools and blunderers,” he cries, “why waste
your darts in vain?
They pelt yon stubborn osier wall like harmless
summer rain:
Shoot upward!”—and he grasps a bow, and sends
an arrow high:
It curves, it falls within the walls a meteor from
the sky.
Dark as a cloud a thousand shafts mount heaven-
ward, and then
Pour down a hail of doom and death upon the Saxon
men.

The invading host, fierce as a wave that floods the
ocean's marge,
Sweeps upward; and, while loudest roar the thun-
ders of the charge,

An arrow, swifter than the fires that 'round lone
Ætna beat,
Drops near the royal standard—and its message is
defeat!

That eye which made Hardrada quail when Norse
ships lined the shore—
That steadfast kingly orb shall light the battlefield
no more!
Pierced by the fatal shaft he falls, last of the Saxon
kings;
Yet like a clarion's note his voice above the tumult
rings:
“ Fight on! yield never: not forget your holy battle
cry!
And if we may not conquer, yet we may like heroes
die!”

Stern are their strokes, these men of Kent, from
whom the Viking fled;
Their maces crash through Norman mail, their
dauntless swords are red.
Yet inch by inch and ell by ell the Norman vassals
gain—
Loud laugh the vultures in the sky to see the heaps
of slain.

So one by one the lithsmen fell where Harold's
banner shone,—
Now Vebba dies; now Leofwine;—and now Gurth
fights alone.
Alone, he braves the Norman host, his battle-axe
in air;
He builds a mound of Norman dead, and plants the
standard there.

Thus ancient Odin might have stood when Sig-
mund's foes he slew—
Tall Odin, with his glittering eye and hood of cloudy
blue.
“ *Per la resplendar De,*” the duke in rage and
wonder cries:
“ And can none take yon English flag? then mine
shall be the prize!”
Forward he rides; and face to face those fearless
warriors meet—
The Norman duke—the Saxon earl, unconquered
in defeat.
Fierce is the conflict; but at length, brave to his
latest breath,
Exhausted by a hundred wounds, the Saxon sinks
in death.

Now, o'er that silent field the night comes from the
purple east:
Where once King Harold's banner stood is spread
King William's feast.

Call him “ the Conquerer ” if you will—grudge not
his meed of praise;
But there were greater heroes still in those old
English days.
Lost is their cause—but they shall live, while
sounds the minstrel's song:
Harold, the noble Saxon king, and Gurth, the
brave and strong!

THE CHEVALIER

(*John B. Gordon, 1832-1904*)

Let the loud winter gale
The sorrow of the multitude repeat,
Timed by the slow tread of ten thousand feet
North, south, east, west:
And let the dark guns on the cloudy crest
Cry "Chieftain, hail!"

But let the kindly sun,
That even now breaks through the widening rift
Where the low, hueless vapors veer and shift,
In pure gold write
How he who clambered soon to Fame's far height
Men's hearts had won.

See how the magic mist
That gathers o'er the flower-embattled place
Where his loved form now resteth for a space
Is luminous
With scenes of strife, and mountains glorious
By old suns kissed:

Lo! the cloud-enchanted summits that flung back
the tocsin's call
In a medley of long echoes, rolling from the granite
wall;—
And the soul of Gordon whispered, "'Tis a sound
that well I know—
Ere my life-dawn well I knew it,— calling, calling.
I will go."

Fierce and turbulent the spirits that from out the
hills he led,—
Forth they burst like some rude torrent swirling o'er
its stormy bed . . .
And the whole world still remembers how the blue
lines melted when
'Mid the bloody hail at Sharpsburg stood the
dauntless Gordon's men.

Open was the field as daylight—never fort nor
fended mound—
Only the wide sky, up-arching over the blank
rolling ground;
Blue to northward, dark batallions, like some bow
with tight-drawn string—
Blue to southward, the Potomac, fordless and un-
pitying.

Then the men of Gordon listened, and one trumpet
voice they heard,
With the ring of iron courage thrilling splendid in
each word:
“ Men, the general has told us we must be here till
the sun
Sinks behind the hazy thicket and the glorious day
is won.

“ Will you do it?” and as one man, hoarse they
made reply, “ We will!”
“ Steady, then,” he said, “ and meet them with
the flame that flames to kill.
Wait until you see the eagles gleaming on their
coats of blue;
Fire, then, nor cease your firing, till you pierce them
through and through.”

Now like sullen waves uprolling on the leaden
shingled shore.

With a sinister deep murmur swelling to a vasty
roar,

Come the blue ranks nearer—nearer; suddenly the
line of gray

Speaks; and back the blue wave surges, melting
in the awful spray.

Once again the dread surf rages, mighty and malev-
olent—

Once again its force is broken, and it backward
flows, bespent.

Four times is the charge repeated, full four times the
blue ranks fail,

As the beryl brine is broken on the high cliff's
clanging mail.

So they held their ground, those dauntless mountain
men, while slower

Sank the sun behind the thicket than the stars in
Leo stir.

Scarce more slowly, to their leader, watching that
red reeling sun

Moved the orb of Hebrew scripture o'er the sky
at Ajalon.

Bitter and more galling bitter grew the fire on
Gordon's men:

Still they stood; but five times wounded fell their
fearless leader then—

Blood from out his worn cap streaming, blood
adown his sleeve of gray.

Ah, 'twas dearly bought, the splendor and the glory
of that day!

Gettysburg—and all the forces of the fathomless
abyss,
Giant fiend with fiend contending, while the red
shells scream and hiss,—
'Round the rocky hill disastrous, through the fires
of Devil's Den,
Ever where the fight is fiercest, plunges Gordon and
his men.

Spottsylvania—there is magic in that blood-en-
graven name:
Spottsylvania—aye, and Gordon,—on the palimp-
sest of fame.
'Twas the twelfth of May, and gorgeous were the
woods with green and gold,
When beneath the pines at sunrise swift the surge
of battle rolled.

Comes the dread and doubtful moment when the
stalwart line of gray
Wavers, and in even balance hangs the issue of the
day.
Sweeping to the Bloody Angle, swirls the sheeted
leaden rain,
Dark as when the cyclone's vortex gathers in the
hurricane.

Is it victory or ruin? Suddenly the atmosphere
Shatters with the crash of conflict; it is Gordon!
• far and near
All the misty woods are vibrant; even to the tarn's
black marge
Riot the mad muttered echoes as he breaks the
Union charge!

Cedar Creek and Massanutten—fades the banner
of the bars—
But the matchless form of Gordon stands superb
with hard-earned scars;
Then the glamour of Fort Stedman;—Petersburg;—
the scenes grow dim;
Appomattox; sinks the red sun down beyond the
world's far rim.

He who now moveless lies
Out 'neath the heavens' quiet vaulted dome
Knew but three words: God, country, home—
To these was true.
The knightliest he was beneath the blue
Of southern skies.

THE CHATEAU GAILLARD

I

Where Northward widely curves the Seine
Far into Normandy,
Till, circling many a fruitful plain,
West by southwest it flows again
To find the luring sea;—
Rise the white chalk-cliffs, tier on tier,
White mirrored in the waters clear;
The highest drops ten fathom sheer:
And once there came—so runs the story—
King Richard to this promontory,
And there, upon its crowning scar
He builded the Chateau Gaillard.

II

Within twelve moons its high towers gleamed
Fair fashioned to his will.
Those towers impregnable he deemed:
So huge its bastions that they seemed
Part of the moveless hill.
The King rode up from the landward side:
“How beautiful thou art,” he cried;
Then Philip fierce its walls defied:
“Though they were iron would I take it!”
“Though butter, yet thou couldst not shake it!”
Answered, in tones that echoed far,
The lord of the Chateau Gaillard.

III

But soon—thus strange the thread of fate—
Rode Richard to Chalus;
Urged by gold—greed insatiate
He thundered at the city's gate
With never rest nor truce:
Till one day, as the charge he led
Swift from the port an arrow sped,
And stained his glittering mail with red.
Thus died the lion-hearted King,
His slayer grandly pardoning;
And one born under evil star
Came to be master of Gaillard.

IV

Craven he was and dark of soul—
Tyrant and perjurer—
Lackland, whose reign was England's dole:
Few names upon her record roll
So scorned and hated were.
The bloody stones at old Rouen
Cried out against him: Philip then
Hurled northward fifty thousand men;
Down swept they to the level grasses,
They crossed the Seine, they stormed the passes,
Besieging, by all craft of war,
The stronghold of Chateau Gaillard.

V

Fair were its walls, and firm as fair,
Builded with matchless art.
No vulnerable flaw was there;
Brave was its garrison—but where
Was he of lion heart?
Chill dust he lay, while all the might
Of France beat 'round those towers white.
The foe came swarming in one night—
At dawn the castle fell; that day
Fell half the English fiefs away.
One dauntless king were better far
Than many a Chateau Gaillard.

GOLDEN ARROWS

LA DÉsirÉE

I know not if her eyes be brown or blue—
Her hair as midnight or as sunlit gold:
I know that she is lovely to behold,
And that her glance is tender, kind, and true.

Her house I have not found. Perchance it stands
In yonder square; perchance amid the brown
Grass of the prairie; or in some quaint town
Whose towers overlook strange, foreign lands.

Soon as I see her will the mystic note—
Cadence that I have listened for so long—
Be sounded; and a passionate sweet song
From that glad hour through my soul will float.

I yet shall find her. It perhaps may be
To-morrow—or to-day—or on the slow
Dim river of the years—but this I know:
That I will wait for her, and she for me.

OLD-FASHIONED FLOWERS

'Twas an old-fashioned garden, bright
With blooms of former days;
With asters and with four-o'clocks,
Tall daffodils and hollyhocks,
And rosemary sprays.

We spoke the same tongue, she and I—
(And I remember well)

Clear was the summer sun; and yet
On marigold and violet
The dusk of dreamland fell.

Along the trim white walk, that led
Through files of stately flowers,
We passed the sun-dial, quaint and old,
Whose forward-creeping shadow told
How went the priceless hours.

Under a large benignant elm
That cast its kindly shade
Even beyond the garden's edge,
Together by the fragrant hedge
This faithful vow we made:

“ Our love shall last, and shall remain—
Unspoiled by Time or Fate—
The same that now so purely burns,
Till yonder shadow backward turns
Upon the dial plate.”

That was long since. She lives, but far
From me as east from west.
So be it. In the stars above
'Tis written; but somehow I love
Old-fashioned flowers the best.

WIND OF THE SOUTH

Wind of the South, take this message, and bear it
afar on thy pinions,
Over the old red hills and the land of the long-
leaf pine—
Northward hundreds of leagues to the Snow King's
wide dominions;
Bear unto her that I love, O Wind, this message
of mine.

Whisper it into her ear when the errant birds, re-
turning,
Flutter about her feet and tales of the springtime
tell;
Breathe her a word for me while the sunset's beacon
is burning,
When, in the gathering dusk, she waits for the
twilight bell.

Tell her of Austral isles and the palm trees' magical
glory;
Tell her of roses fair and of seas where the white
sails shine.
Speak in what words you will, but simply tell my
story;
Bear unto her, O Wind of the South, this message
of mine.

DEEP HONEST GRAY HER EYES

Deep honest gray her eyes: so purple-deep
That all the splendors of warm sea and sky,
Of quiet planets at the verge of sleep—
Of sun and cloud and star did in them lie.
And he who looked into those lucid spheres
Fain would have gazed therein a thousand years.

THE END OF THE WORLD

The end of the world will come, they say,
Some day;
The great blue globe will cease to revolve,
And the things of earth will as dreams dissolve,
Blank deep unto bottomless deep will call—
And out of the heavens the white stars all
Will fall.

And so she must pass from my sight, they say,
Some day;
But until that day there are springtime skies,
And until that hour in her dear eyes
Happiness, home, and love I see.
That hour the end of the world will be
For me!

CANELF

THE CASTLE OF CANELF

I

Beyond the seas where fancy takes the helm
From Reason—somewhere on the misty shores—
Of Wonder Land—that large, uncharted realm—
Enthroned upon a royal cliff where roars
The insurgent ocean 'round its base, the wide
Dim castle of Canelf confronts the tide.

II

Mysterious and enchanted is each stone
In every arch and wind-swept battlement;
With melancholy ivy overgrown
The venerable towers, gray and lone,
Stand like magicians on their charms intent;
And crowning all its wierd, majestic pile
Are multitudes of spires and turrets high—
A labyrinth for the errant sunbeams—while
Far overhead the great white clouds go by.

III

The massive gates, of iron-girded oak,
Are in a deep, low-browed embrasure set;
Built to resist the invader's sturdiest stroke
The flanking towers and lofty parapet.
Yet here and there along the creviced walls
Some bright and kindly blossom lifts its head;
And even where the fierce portcullis falls,
The morning-glory clammers unafraid.

IV

All day the rhythmic murmur of the waves,
That plunge and whiten on the rocks below,
Rises above the hollow-answering caves;
And through the castle doors its runic staves
Come drifting on the sea-breeze. In that flow
Of music, many a strange, wild song is held,
And magic notes from half-remembered eld.

V

In every vaulted, loud-resounding hall
That stretches, like a vista in a dream,
To dim, delicious vastness—rise and fall
The mad, melodious echoes that but seem
Oracular responses, large and free—
Prophetic voices of thoughts yet to be.

VI

Ah, could I reach that undiscovered land,
Fair title to that broad estate I'd bring;
I'd rule as baron o'er its castle grand
By fief perpetual of my clement King:
And mariners, cruising near those misty shores,
I'd pilot thither; and no prince of old
E'er dazzled honest guest with endless stores
Of burning opal and engraven gold
More lavishly than I would then display
Thoughts new and strange as some far-distant day.

VII

Oh, I would reign as Homer reigns in Troy;
Or Milton, in unbounded realms of cloud,

Commanding men and angels. Grief and Joy
By turns, as unto Shakespeare's summons loud,
Would heed my bidding. Often I would climb
One of those tall, authoritative towers
To catch more clearly in the wondrous rhyme
Repeated by star-choruses sublime,
A vague foretelling of the future hours:
And there, perchance, out of the far Unknown
Some whispered message might to me be blown;
Through the rare atmosphere a word, a breath—
Secrets of Space and Time, of Life and Death.

THE WRESTLING OF THOR

Whilst the gods yet walked with men, and men were
yet heroes all,
King Utgard sat with his nobles one day in his
palace hall.
So long it was that the daylight streamed in from
the distant door
As the light from the rifted east on the level valley
floor;
So high that the blue smoke hanging beneath the
rafters seemed
Huge clouds, and the shields on the walls like mar-
vellous round moons gleamed.
“ Long life,” said the king, “ and *wes hal*, to our
honored stranger guest:
Refill the bejeweled horns; bring vintage and ven-
ison the best!

I have heard, O Thor, of thy valor, and how
through the North thou art
Well known as the strongest of arm and revered as
the stoutest of heart.
And now, ere the daylight dieth, full fain am I to
behold
Some feat of thy boasted prowess, some perilous
deed and bold.
—Canst wrestle right sturdily? That is thy
challenge? Well, first I well send
For my old nurse, white-haired Elli; with her thou
mayest contend.”
Now Thor, as you know, was the strongest of all
that godlike race
Whose dwelling was lofty Gladsheim. At this
there surged to his face
A tide of angry crimson; he turned to the muttering
crowd
With a bitter smile, and his laughter was mirthless,
long, and loud.
For an aged crone had entered, becowled in an
ashen hood;
With tottering step she advanced, till in front of the
king she stood.
“ ’Tis a good jest, by my hammer! a right good
jest!” cried Thor.
“ Now bring me your beefy giant, and give him a
taste of war!”
But he faced contemptuous glances, and mocking
scowls and sneers;
And the king leaned back on his throne, and said
with a smile, “ He fears.”
Then Thor cast off his mantle, and the house grew
deadly still;

Not a word he spake, but his eyes were of him who
hunts to kill.
And he met the gray crone, and they closed; and
it seemed that the prize was life:
And the voiceless crowd pressed near, as they
grappled in doubtful strife.
For the grasp of the witch was as iron, and her
breath was wintry cold,
And the strong man's back was bent in her ever-
tightening hold.
Her eyes burned hateful steady, red-lit with en-
chantment dire,—
Blood-red they burned as the embers of a midnight
funeral fire.
And his brow became glistening wet, and violet-
dark each vein,
And the throb of his knotted muscles was like to
the throb of pain.
Then his right foot slipped yet more, ever backward
and backward thrust,—
And loud was the taunting roar as he sank to his
knee in the dust.

“Weep not,” said the king, “thy defeat hath
naught of reproach or shame:
The bravest hath wrestled with Elli; the ending is
ever the same,
And only that man may boast who keepeth his foot-
ing the longest;
For the crone was Old Age, who at last overcometh
even the strongest.”

A LEGEND OF ERIC THE RED

*“Eric the Red, the first European to set foot on
American soil.”*

Long ago, in the shadowy ages
Where history fades into legend,
There lived on the coast of Norway two stalwart
brothers, 'tis said—
Taught by the song of the sea-winds,
Trained unto peril and danger—
One was called Olaf the Huntsman, the other was
Eric the Red.

One day as they played by the shore,
In their youth and their courage exulting,
The sharp eye of Olaf the Huntsman espied a
strange bird overhead:
Quick as thought was his lithe bow bended—
Quicker yet came the twang of his bow-string—
But alongside the arrow of Olaf went the arrow of
Eric the Red.

“It is mine!” cried Olaf in anger
When Eric disputed his quarry,
“For did I not see it before you, and am I not
eldest?” he said.
Not a word spake his brother in answer—
Not a word, as he plucked out the arrow
And held it above in triumph—'twas the arrow of
Eric the Red!

And he lifted his prize to his shoulder
And cried, “'Tis a bird of good omen!

They come from the Ends of the Ocean—the far
dim West, it is said.

Some day I will sail to that west-land—
Sail to that land undiscovered—
And a new world, strange and enchanted, shall be
conquered by Eric the Red!”

And the old Norse chronicles tell us
How at last, after years of adventure,
He found the far region of Greenland, through
voyages distant and dread:
And still in the fjords of Norway,
The white-haired, wandering minstrels
Repeat to the listening children the saga of Eric the
Red.

THE SANCTUS BELL

(A Christmas Legend)

(According to a local tradition, the pool of
Bomere, in Shropshire, England, covers at present
a spot once occupied by a flourishing village, which
was destroyed, so the legend states, as a divine
judgment on the people for their return to heathen
worship.)

Beside the stone cross in the market-place
She stood with arm upraised: the crowd pressed
near.

The expectant murmurings grew still apace
As her young voice rang out reedlike and clear:
“We want no dismal prayers nor mumbling priest,
Nor sombre creed and formidable rule.

If we must die, then while we live, at least
Let us enjoy the springtide and the feast,
The wassail and sweet anarchy of Yule."

She was the daughter of the Ealdorman:
Slender she was and fair; and as she spake
Through all the crowd an ominous whisper ran—
The weaving of a spell no prayers could break.
For in her eyes the storm and sunshine dwelt—
Dark as the equinox, and fathomless
As that dawn-haunted deep within which melt
The planets. No man looked at her but felt
The sting and terror of her loveliness.

"Brethren, beware! The wrath of God abides
On all them that forsake His holy word.
Jealous His law, resistless as the tides
His punishments. Fell rumors have I heard
Of mystic rite and pagan sacrifice
Wrought by this woman. Cast her forth, for she
Is an enchantress; whoso heeds her dies.
Beware those foam-white arms, those luring eyes,—
Beware her strange gods and her sorcery!"

So spake the priest, but they replied, "Not so:
Our fathers worshipped these same gods, ere yet
You bade us kneel to One who long ago
Was crucified, and all the rest forget.
Ours be strong gods, potent to strike and slay—
Divinities of conquest and renown.
No sour-visaged anchorites are they.
—Back, dotard, to thy chapel, fast and pray;—
Free-hearted Odin rules in Midmoor town!"

The harvest whitened; the abundant sheaves
Bestowed their largess on the threshing-floor;
And the wild, ruined multitudes of leaves
Proclaimed the triumph of the frost once more.
So the year's end drew nigh: five afternoons
The sun sank strangely red; from the far sea
The Southwest Wind came with his fierce platoons
Of cloud; then over the blurred, sandy dunes
The colorless long rain swept ceaselessly.

With reeling folly and mad merriment
The townsfolk gathered in their torch-lit hall.
The horns flowed high; the heathen minstrels lent
Their voices to the Yuletide festival.
A few devout souls sought the chapel lone,
Where the old, white-haired priest awaited them
With flickering candles 'round the altar-stone:
For on the same night of the year had shone
The great star over ancient Bethlehem.

“Brethren,” he said, “the hour of reckoning
Draws near; for in your perilous-brimmed lake
Almighty vengeance hath been gathering
These seven days. Soon will the huge flood
break

With swift submergence over the doomed town,—
This hold of idols and unmentioned shame,
Where oft in jest they called God's judgments down,
Railed at the cross of Christ, mocked at His crown
Of thorns, and made a by-word of His name.”

“And must we perish, being innocent?”
The old priest mused in silence for a space,
His head in holy meditation bent.
At length he said, “It may be that His grace

Will save us by some kindly miracle.

Yet somehow must the faithful share the woe
Of the unfaithful: and the Scriptures tell
How, when high Dagon's pillared temple fell,
Just Samson perished in its overthrow."

He paused; and no sound broke the stillness save
The rain that on the steep roof crashed and ran.
At last he turned, and in large voice and grave
The intoning of the midnight mass began.
And as they sang, there blended with that hymn
A tumult as of some vast organ rolling.
Then through the fenceless doorway stormed the
grim
Advance-guard;—yet from out the belfry dim
The Sanctus Bell ceased not its solemn tolling.

The flood surged through the aisle, and up the white
Slope of the altar-steps, quenched the faint spark
On the last candle: then blind, ruinous night;
And naught persisted save the dateless dark.

And still, around red inn-fires glowing clear,
The country-folk along those hillsides tell
How he who sails across the wind-swept mere
At midnight upon Christmas Eve may hear
The steady tolling of the Sanctus Bell.

THE LAST OF THE GIANTS

Over the road by Kenmare, that winds its tortuous
way
To where the towers of Bandon rise golden out of
the gray,

The bronzed campaigners ride through the sun-
cleft mist of the dawn;
And they speak of the valor of Cormac and the
kings of the days that are gone.

But who is he that cometh from over the purple
height,
Marvellous tall and mounted on a steed of radiant
white?

Full huge is his burnished buckler and helm, and
the length of his sword
Is twice the length of the weapon borne by Erin's
doughtiest lord.

"I come from afar," said the stranger; "Pray tell
me, by what road

May I reach the hall of the Fenian chiefs and the
place of the king's abode?

For none save puny pygmies have I found 'twixt
here and the sea.

Has death claimed Finn the Fearless and all of his
men but me?"

They replied, "We have heard the legend in ancient
song and rhyme

Of the hero Finn the Fearless, who ruled in the
olden time.

But naught of him can we tell; for twice an hundred
years

Have passed since to rest they laid him along with
the last of his peers.

"Ah, yes, we are told by the poets that Finn had a
son whose name,

If well we remember, was Oisín—a chieftain and
seer of fame;

But his eyes were cloudy with visions, and ever he
wandered in quest
Of the haunted blossom immortal, that grows in the
Valley of Rest.

“And one wild night, when the breakers raced in
with unholy glee,
He was lured by a fairy maiden to an island over
the sea—
The Isle of Youth they call it—the land of the
luminous shore;
And his friends grieved long, but Oisín was seen by
the world no more.”

“And I am he,” said the stranger, “who went to
the magical isle;
But at length I bethought me of Erin—and fain
for a little while
Would return to the land of my fathers—the high
invincible halls
Where the Red Branch heroes gather and feast till
the sky lark calls.

“But naught save puny pygmies have I found
'twixt here and the sea;
And of all the princes of Erin there are none who
remain but me.”
So he turned his horse to the west, where the mere
lay wan and wide
And the road by degrees sloped down to the distant
booming tide.

GIPSIES

Homeless tribes of the moor and highway,
Naught but the tent and the sky they know.
None can tell of these roving races
Whence they come or whither they go.

We who dwell in the town and village
Boast of our storied chronicles vast:
Yet if we go but a few years backward,
Lost is the chain in a barbarous past.

When did the Storm-Goth fashion his hammer?
Where did the earliest Aryans dwell?
Whence do we come? Does any one answer?
Whither we go, can any one tell?

Saxon and Celt and dark-eyed Tuscan,
Mongol, Nubian, Malay—
Out of the world's primeval twilight
Each came forth in his own strange way.

All of us are but Romany peoples—
Vagrant strangers, wandering far
Under the purple vault of the heavens,
Horned moon and flickering star.

THE ANGEL WITH THE FLAMING SWORD

Beyond a soundless vista, darkly walled
With cedar and with fragrant terebinth,—
Against a twilight-haunted background, stands
The angelic sentinel who keeps the way
To the lost Garden of the Lord. The gloom

Of sorrowing boughs and sad inwoven vines
Frames him with midnight, save that here and there
The fronded screen behind him half reveals
Far, dim-lit spaces, crossed and strangely shot
With glimpses of immortal dawn. His hand
Holds that great burning weapon whose long blade
Is luminous with danger; and its light
Shines upward on his bare breast, on his brow
Stamped with the signet of Omnipotence,
And even his majestic wings. His face
Is blent of iron war and golden love:
Pure as some solitary mountain lake;
Strong as the viewless power that hurls the tides
To landward; calm as that unchanging star
'Round which the quiet constellations wheel.

Comes, through the sober darkness, with the slow
Step of one wearied with long journeying,
A woman, who draws near that awful guard,
Pauses, then timidly advances; then
Crouches in terror as his bell-like voice
Flings out the challenge. For a while she kneels
Thus motionless; at length she lifts her head,
From which the hood has fallen, and released
Her hair in splendid deluge rippling down
About her shoulders. And she cries, "O thou
Who standest at the gate of Paradise,
Clothed in white raiment, hear me, pity me!
For I am burdened even unto death.
(Oh, the fierce, toilsome days!—the hollow dusk,—
The blank and aching nights!) And I would fain
Spend one short hour in that blessed place
I once called Home; and tread the old sweet paths,
And hear the benediction of the leaves."
As she thus pleaded, and it seemed as if

Her very soul were struggling forth, at length
His iron countenance relaxed, his face
Bent downward with a look of tenderness,
Like sudden sunlight on a scowling cliff.
Yet he replied not; silently he gazed
On the wan figure crouching in the path
This side of Paradise. When she had made
An end of her petition, still he spake
No word, but lifted up his eyes to heaven;
And all the woods were still, in reverence
For that strong sinless prayer. At last he said:
“Woman, there is no power given me
To pass within these portals one who bears
The smallest stain of disobedience.
Jehovah hath decreed it, and His word
Is changeless. Yet His ways are ever just:
Even outside of Paradise the land
Is fruitful to the touch of toil, and fair
To the clear eye of righteousness. Therefore
Weep not, but trust God’s wisdom, and depart
In peace.”

Yet she cried out once more,—“ ’Tis not
So much for mine own exile that I grieve,
As that my children evermore should dwell
In banishment. For it was promised me
That I should be the mother of a race
Like to the desert sands for multitude.”

Again that holy stillness, while again
With moving lips he looked beyond the stars.
And as he prayed, a torrent of clear light
Beat suddenly around them, so that even
The burning sword grew dim, and far adown
The erstwhile sombre cedared avenue
Dazzled the splendors of white noon. With arm

Upraised, and pointing to the rifted heaven,
The angel cried, " Behold the loving Word
Which God will speak to men." And Eve looked
up

And saw One as if risen from the dead:
The print of nails was on his outstretched hands,—
Yet was his face and raiment glorious
As the high morning sun; and at his feet
Thrones, and a myriad kingdoms. And she heard
A voice like the surge of many seas,
Crying, " The Prince of Righteousness shall come
At last the tabernacle of the Lord
Shall be with men; and He shall dwell with them;
And God shall wipe away all tears." And so,
Listening, she was comforted; and when
Slowly she lifted up her eyes, that soon
Had closed against that radiance, and saw
Only the dark trees, and the sentinel
Guarding the moveless gates, yet she arose,
And, strengthened by the vision, went her way

REVELATION

Three times unto a wandering world God spake;
At first through Moses, who from Sinai steep
Said, " God is great; He rules the mighty deep,
And guides the stars; He judgeth all who break
His dread commandments." Then did David
wake

His harp of gold, and with melodious sweep
Sang, ' God is good, rewarding all who keep
His righteous law." Yet still the world would
make

Complaint: " He is so great, we fear—so good,
We are ashamed; our mortal senses fail."

Then came the Christ: right royally He stood
As priest and Saviour, rending wide the veil;
And, in a voice like music to our ears,
Said, " God is Love; He wipes away all tears!"

ÆOLIAN

MERIDIES

Through the still groves in the valley walks the
quiet-voiced Noon,
Blue-eyed, smiling, yellow-mantled,—chanting low
a slumberous tune
Half of wild bee and of locust, half of crooning winds
and streams;—
Elder brother to the twilight,—almoner of cloud-
wrought dreams.

THE SOUTH WIND COMETH

Sweet is the power the South Wind holds,
With his pinions of sunshine and garments of air
That scatter from out of their weightless folds
The scent of magnolias, faint and rare.

When the south wind cometh the daisies awake
And nod at the great white clouds as they pass;
And out on the meadow the breeze-blown lake
Can scarce be told from the rippling grass

He sets the ripening corn atune,
Then sweeps it with his magic bow;
And listen! An enchanted rune—
A whispered lullaby, soft and low,

That tells of shimmering jungles deep,
Of warm blue skies and forests calm—
Of plains where buried cities sleep,
Of lemon-grass and ancient palm.

This is the South Wind. Mark him well—
This soft-spoken, blue-eyed enchanter, who
seems
To weave round the senses a delicate spell
Of bright, fragile clouds and of midsummer
dreams.

THE EQUINOX

Low hangs the sky on tropic shores, the dark drops
down at noon;
And on the sandy beach the surf rolls in with
troubled tune:
For fast along the curving coast that fronts the
southern main
Comes the dim cyclone's rebel host and the insur-
gent rain.

The ships ask, "Who are ye?"
The tumult and complaining of the sea
Is echoed by the ancient shelving rocks.
Whereat the winds make melancholy answer:
"*We are the legions of the House of Cancer—
The winds of the Autumnal Equinox!*"

Their breath is pungent with the spice of cloudy
Caribbees,
Their wailing minor chords are heard along the
coral keys.
They smite the coastwise villages; grim wrecks
they blow from far:
They strew the tragic beach for miles with broken
beam and spar.

Northward they sweep, till all the towns from
Largo to Cape Fear
Whisper, "It is the summer's end, the turning of
the year!"

My soul asks, "Who are ye?
Who break the spell of summer time for me?"
Awhile the storm her questioning but mocks.
At length those winds make melancholy answer:
"*We are the legions of the House of Cancer—
The winds of thine Autumnal Equinox!*"

NIMBUS

(*North Georgia*)

All through the slumb'rous afternoon the deft
Cloud builders of the west, beyond a weird
Sky-wall, involved with a many winding cleft,
Their huge white domes have reared.

The whole mid-heaven blends in one burning white
Like a vast hollow sun: the faint Wind sleeps.
When lo! across the world with noiseless flight
The first great shadow sweeps.

Now, rising midway betwixt north and west
Above strange leagues of sudden dusk, the wide
Black Nimbus, with its turbulent gray crest,
Hangs like a moonless tide.

Before it flies the gale with cool, wet wing:
From foothills of the far Blue Ridge it comes.
Already may be heard the muttering
Of its dull, stormy drums.

Flash after flash the long, keen lightnings rive
Its leaden walls; the torn trees bend with pain.
And now at last the windy rush and drive
Of the fierce tangled rain.

MIDWINTER IN GEORGIA

I

The wind has wheeled from north to east, where
fringed with stormy gray
Another night comes rolling in to overtake the day.
Now is it rain or dust I see that dims the sky-wall
so?
Or smoke, or hail? or can it be the vanguard of
the snow?

II

Last winter not a flake we had; the woods were
dismal brown
From red October until March: either the sun
looked down
Lukewarm and mournful, or beyond the sober-
crusted plain,
And over the unfrozen pond careered the mocking
rain.

III

So far the churlish year has bought no ermine of
large cost;
And he has clothed the world in naught but common
flimsy frost.
Ah, could the magic white once more conceal our
cheerless clay,
The countryside six counties o'er would have high
holiday!

IV

The children would escape from school, and young
and old would fare
To mingle in the gleeful strife around the court-
house square.

Why should it make the whole sweet town go mad?
I do not know.

Look! whirling, drifting, sifting down, here comes
the splendid snow!

THE HOMELESS MEN

(*Jacksonville, May 4, 1901*)

From the mouth of the pitiless, yawning sky
The scarlet meteors fall.

Swift the screaming tide of the fire draws nigh,
And its roar is mixed with the maniac's cry
And crash of roof and wall.

Labor of years and toil and tears—and all to be
utterly gone in an hour!

Despair and death in the dragon's breath, and none
but the homeless know his power.

You build your house in the Town of the World,
And its towers and domes are fair.

Full bright are the gonfalons unfurled,
And you think, as you enter the gates empearled,
To dwell in happiness there.

Labor of years and toil and tears—and all in the
moment of death goes down:

God pity then the homeless men who have built
in a doomed and ruined town!

ATLANTIS

THE ROUND OAK

Clear against the clouds in the dawn-light olden—
Primal hour of childhood, magic time for me—
Wonderful and wide with his leaves brown and
golden,
Fast friend and true stands a round oak tree.

Oft have I watched while above the branches
drifted
Nebulous large galleys, white-sailed against the
blue.

Oft have I marked how between the leafage rifted,
Silent, strange, and beautiful, the dreams came
through.

Fast friend of eld, though sad Time may us dis-
sever,
Strong as thou art strong would I have my soul
to be:
Shapely, broad, sincere, kind, and grave; contented
ever
Underneath the stars, like the round oak tree.

THE OLD PICTURE BOOK

Yesterday, when from the corners of a quiet attic
room
Crept the captains of the twilight, marshaling their
hosts of gloom,
I discovered a quaint volume, stored away long
since amid
Worthless, half-remembered relics: from beneath
its patterned lid

Ancient, immemorial fancies issued forth in fairy
streams.

'Twas the picture book I played with in the days
when days were dreams.

Oh, the quaint old picture book!

In a dusty chest I found it.

Through it pass in pageant slow

Knights and ladies to and fro;

For some wizard, long ago

Wove a magic spell around it.

It was still a book enchanted, with its black text,
large and bold,

And its gorgeous colored pictures set in borderings
of gold.

I beheld the same white castles, and the goblin-
haunted springs—

All the dragons, dwarfs, magicians, giants, leg-
endary kings;

All the intricate initials that I loved to solve and
trace:—

And I hailed each line and letter as a dear, familiar
face.

As I turned its glowing pages, came a jinn of misty
blue,

Caught me like a whirlwind, bore me backward
the long vistas through;—

Backward through the halls forbidden, treading
not the year-marked floors—

Cast a sleep upon Time's warders, passed the closely
guarded doors.

And we stept forth in those regions where forgotten
flowers had birth,
And the populous dim heavens touched the rounded
hills of earth.
Over purple fields I wandered, past low lakes and
reedy fens;
Through the formidable forest and the fearsome,
tangled glens;—
Past enchanted towers, and gardens with broad
rivers crisping by—
Tall cliffs dropping off to nowhere, mountains
blending with the sky.
Best do I remember climbing up a toilsome steep
road
At my side a princely stranger in his glittering
armor strode.
Perilous with sudden loopings, in and out the road-
way wound
Up to the sharp, tawny summit of the topmost
ridge, where frowned
Some magician's castle, circle by huge bulwarks of
defence,
With the yellow sunset flaming out behind the
battlements.
Now at last we reached the scowling entrance, and
the black barred gate,
Flanked by terrible bronze griffins, looking out with
hideous hate.
Then the prince caught up the trumpet, blew a
blast so shrill and clear
That the wine-dark downs made answer from be-
yond the silvered mere.
Fades the vision: but I somehow felt the salt wind
of the deep—

Saw the high moon sailing, sailing, through the
soundless tides of sleep.

Oh, the quaint old picture book!
(See, the mystic shadows falling!)
In the vanished orchard lane
Milk-white blossoms bloom again:
On the western porch the rain;—
On the air lost voices calling.

NEVERMORELAND

Now the moon-white surf breaks slowly, and the
distant-shouldered waves
Melt in the long tide, returning to its undiscovered
caves.
Comes the land breeze, warm and listless, dropping
from the hills behind,
And the Dream Ship weighs its anchor and sails
out across the wind:
Out beyond the capes low-lying, and the purple-
pointed foreland,
Past the silver brim of ocean to the cliffs of Never-
moreland.

THE PHANTOM WORDS

Dawns an unholy day. Like sombre birds,
Careering ceaselessly across the sky,
Under the iron-tinted heavens fly
The phantom words.

Out of the Past they come, a sullen brood,—
Plumed with gray sorrow, panoplied with pain,
Sinister, hopeless, like the drops of rain
For multitude.

They linger where the twilight glooms and grieves.
They drift malevolent athwart the black
Gulf of the equinox, and the red wrack
Of autumn leaves.

Ah, I would snare them, slay them; or below
The feet of Atlas I would sink and bind
Those words I gave to the resurgent wind
So long ago!

ILLUSION

“Beware!” cried Age: “yon luring flowery way
Let not thy young feet press.
So once to me its false fair colors glowed.
'Tis all enchantment; farther out the road
Winds through a wilderness.”

Unheeding Youth passed on: magician Love
Looked down with a rare smile.
To him then Age cried out in tones of pain,
“Have pity! and deceive *me* once again,
Just for a little while!”

BEACH-GRASSES

They fringe the summits of the barren dunes,
And the wide spaces of wave-printed sand;
Despite the floodtide of a thousand moons.
They hold the border-marches of the land.

Mortal, they wither: but the blighting year
Holds promise of green myriads yet to be.
And all the day and all night long they hear.
The wordless whisper of the immortal sea.

OCEAN AND TIME

I watched the ceaseless warfare of the waves
The stubborn shore besieging; proud and vast
It seemed eternal—yet the great roaring caves
Showed how that tireless assault had cast
The shoreline slowly backward through the past.
“And thus,” I said, “the great destroyer, Time,
Assails the universe; and he at last
Shall conquer, 'till o'er every race and clime
Rolls a sad sea of ruin, boundless and sublime.”

Then far among the ancient hills I went,
And found that the huge sandstone ridges each
Were debris of some vanished continent,
Washed from the shore, strewn o'er the sea's
broad reach,
And then uplifted. “This,” I said, “doth teach
How Time and Ocean gather, as of yore,
From many a crumbling cliff and wave-worn
beach,
Material for rebuilding evermore
Coastlines, continents, mountains, grander than
before.”

THE MASTER'S FACE

No pictured likeness of my Lord have I;
He carved no record of his ministry
 On wood and stone.

He left no sculptured tomb nor parchment dim,
But trusted, for all memory of Him,
 Men's hearts alone.

Sometimes I long to see him as of old
Judea saw, and in my gaze to hold
 His face enshrined.

Often amid the world's tumultuous strife,
Some slight memorial of His earthly life
 I long to find.

Who sees the face sees but in part; who reads
The spirit which it hides sees all; he needs
 No more. Thy grace—
Thy life in my life, Lord, give Thou to me;
And then, in truth, I may forever see
 My Master's face!

AU DELA

Now what is abroad in the garden?
The wind with the moon has gone down—
Died out in the west, 'mid the steeples
And towers of the whispering town,
The whispering wakeful city,
That drowsily stirs and sighs
And blinks till the gray dawn covers
 Its thousand eyes.

Now what is abroad in the garden—
That garden, colorless, cold,
With its wall and its dusky dial,
Its odor of leafy mould?
No form have I glimpsed thro' the hedges,
No sound have I heard at the gate:
Yet surely 'tis more than my fancy
That wanders so late.

They are not the wraiths of the living,
They are not the ghosts of the dead;
The wall is unmarked by a shadow,
The turf is unspoiled by their tread:
Intangible, formless, and silent,
They haunt the low ebb of the hours—
Half bottomless pain, and half perfume
Of smothering flowers.

Back, back! they do come but to mock me;
From the graves of my soul they arise:
As if a lost folly had features,
Or an ancient sorrow had eyes.
And they murmur, "Behold thy begotten,
Loved, hated, and lost long ago!
Didst think we would lie thus forgotten
Forever? Not so."

Yet once I acclaimed them with gladness,
And heartily hailed them in turn
As my Princes of Pride, who would kindle
New ageless passions, to burn
With a sweet red flame on mine altar—
The altar that many upraise;
It is grounded in blindness, and builded
Of ignorant days. . . .

Ere long the warm East will discover
Her vast old magic again;
And bring to your city another
Blank round of unwisdom and pain.
For the merchant will go to his ledger,
The workman will shoulder his tools,
And the quack and the lawyer will gather
Their portion of fools.

The poor will rise first: a procession
Fast filing out through the gray.
Some few find delight in their labor,
The multitude works for the pay.
The Pay! 'Tis the word universal,
The deathless, omnipotent word;
It sways and it conquers wherever
Our language is heard.

The Pay! Whether banker or blacksmith,
Carpenter, newsboy, clerk,
Or shopgirl or blossom of fashion,
'Tis but for the Pay that they work.
One toils for gold, one for silver,
And one for a pittance of brass;
And one for a beggarly conquest
Of tinsel and glass;

And one—ah, shame!—for a spatter
Of type on a twopenny page;
But few for the joy of the doing—
The glorious maximum wage.
So they delve for a handful of pebbles—
Cold pebbles briny with tears;
And they murmur, "Ah, we shall be happy
In two or three years."

Well, they tread the same paths I have trodden,
They seek the same ends I have sought;—
Shall I blame them? Should folly judge folly?
Is sin worse in deed than in thought?
But I kenned, at the sheer brink of being;
A vision, a rapture, a smile;
And I knew that somewhere under heaven
Was something worth while:

And I craved it from twilight to twilight—
I sought it on land and on sea;
And I said, "In or woodland or ocean
Abideth this treasure for me."
Does it lurk in the throat of the lily?
Does it hide in the heart of the rose?
Does it dwell where the tide, outward turning,
Untraceably goes?

' Keen delights have I tasted, but never
The vintage of pleasure supreme.
As I plucked the ripe cluster called Knowledge
It withered like grapes in a dream;
And those other, those flame-colored berries
Exhaled an aroma divine.
But, crushed ere the morning, they yielded
A poisonous wine."

Nor yet have I found it; and weary
Am I of long searching in vain;—
But at last, in the cool of endeavor,
This much hath my struggle made plain;
That somewhere, betwixt that fair vineyard
Walled 'round with old fencings of lies,
And the low, gorgeous margins of Eros
Where manhood dies,

Runs a clean white path, like a bowstring
Straight stretched through the world; (but few
Can discover this highroad enchanted,
Or, finding, can follow it true)
At the end, like a star in the purple,
A gateway of crystal and fire.
And beyond is the Tree, with its fruitage
Of heart's desire.

Comes a dream as of dawn, overflashing
The slumbrous brow of the World;
And slow from yon factory chimney
The workday flag in unfurled.
Now what is abroad in the garden?—
What legions of imageless dread?
They are not the wraiths of the living,
Nor ghosts of the dead:

But shapes of old blindness, that linger
To mock the blue host of the light.
It is dawn: yet they still dim my vision,
They blot the straight road from my sight.
O King! take me now in Thy mercy—
Thy love or Thine infinite wrath!
Lo! the sun, the illumining Spirit:
Behold, now, the Path!

I am warned that the dangers are many,
The snares that would baffle and lure;
And I ken that those gates open never
Save only to hands that are pure:
But I follow with thirst and with hunger—
With thirst for the fruit of that tree
Whereby face to face Him who knoweth
I, knowing, may see.

Well I mind me of Nebo's high secret—
The Lawgiver's vision and shroud;
Nor crave I in this life a sudden
Wide rift in the merciful cloud:
For the wound of that joy would be mortal,
And the sting of that bliss would slay.
Yet for such bliss and joy, O my Father,
I venture to pray!

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Sept. 2009

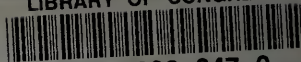
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