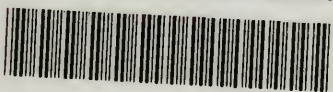


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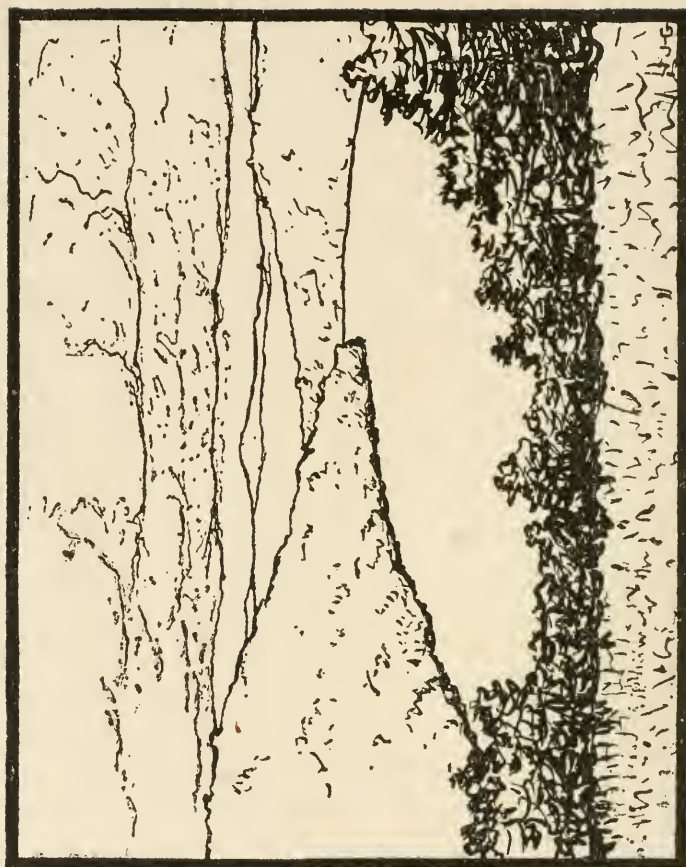
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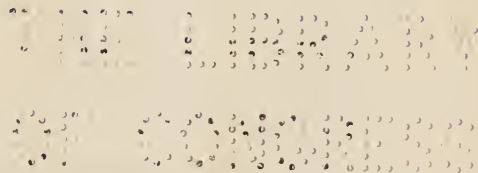


THE OLD HEMLOCK AND OTHER SYMBOLS

A
BOOK
OF
VERSE



BY
WILLIAM
NORMAN
GUTHRIE



CINCINNATI
THE ROBERT CLARKE COMPANY
1902

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THE ROBERT CLARKE COMPANY



Dedicatory Foreword



The rhythmist in verse has no system of noting pauses that do not chance to coincide with syntactical sentence-divisions; no legitimate method of indicating peculiar stress, but the capital letter. Therefore, in printing this little book the old classic use is had recourse to; that is to say, the capital is restricted to its prose function of working a fresh start in the flow of words, a vocative noun or pronoun, a personification, a burst of feeling. Again, the alination in the first five pieces indicates always a slight pause, not a drop of the voice.

This solicitousness for a right reading is a verse-maker's plain duty. The first five pieces are wrought out in rhythms apparently lawless, in truth most subtly bound by a technique which needs no setting forth in a foreword as the trained ear is the final judge, provided only the living voice, not the superficial eye, be the interpretater for the ear. Only by reading aloud will the characteristic theme adopted in each piece be identified, and pleasure taken in the departures therefrom and unforeseen returns thereto thro' mazy variation. That these symbol-poems are specimens of a new poetic genre is not true. Leopardi's noble "Ginestra" allowed the poet, however, long digressions from the chosen subject (the broom-plant flourishing on volcanic debris) for direct comment on man's destiny. In these symbol-poems every descriptive touch doing more or less double duty, such

Dedicatory Foreword

extensive digressions would amount to tautology. The genre was discovered not by critical literary study, but by a series of experiments—gropings after a form descriptive, dramatic and lyric at one and the same time. Yet how much unconscious influence was exerted by Leopardi, Heine and Goethe, I could not say. Let the reader take this collection as a test of imaginative life in the writer, and as a token of respect for him—the fact, namely, that the writer has ventured to do his best even at the mortal risk of so-called “obscurity.”

In conclusion, the reader's thanks for whatever in the book's appearance may delight his eye is due the sympathetic quick pen and modest taste of Mr. J. H. Gest, and the writer may claim his ancient, honorable privilege of inscribing the name of some particular reader—that in this case, of

MRS. MARY MUHLENBERG EMERY,

as an expression of esteem and regard, with very best holiday wishes.

W. N. GUTHRIE.

Fern Bank, O.



Table of Contents



Symbolic Odes

The Old Hemlock - - - - -	7
The Rime of the Tarn - - - - -	13
The Defiled Mountain Torrent - - - - -	26
The Mule - - - - -	39
Afterword - - - - -	42

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

The Beeches of Fern Bank - - - - -	43
Palmistry - - - - -	44
Dirge - - - - -	45
Ode in Sapphics - - - - -	46
To a Latterday Prophet - - - - -	47
To Souls Among the Stars - - - - -	48
After Tears - - - - -	49
A Respite - - - - -	50
Sympathetic Music - - - - -	50
A February Day in Tennessee - - - - -	52
The Firefly - - - - -	53
The Hawk - - - - -	54
Dream and Waking - - - - -	57
Nocturne - - - - -	62
Autumn Sadness - - - - -	63
Frost-Work - - - - -	64
Impromptu - - - - -	65





The Old Hemlock



STOUT-HEARTED, great Hemlock, wast Thou
foolhardy to plant thee on crags thus,
waterworn, naked—

tusks of some monstrous
jaw from the deep tarn jutting;—
no soil save mould
of thine own shed spines,
amassed in the snaky
folds of thy huge
roots that, steadfast to clamp thee,
the splintering rock
enwrap. So soon as I saw, uncouth
black Giant, I loved thee; and oft
couched me solitary
dream-whispers to overhear
of thy stalwart soul—but in vain.
Dragon-flies quick, emerald-glinting,
through swarms iridescent of dance-whirled gnats,
darted; or, sparkles of turkis fire,
settled gauze-winged on the moist stone a moment
in a fleck of sunny
sheen. From the dense

Symbolic Odes

laurel-thicket the titmouse
furtively flitted, seeking the green
gloom of thy shade, perched him to pipe
twitter and trill tenderly soft
songs of thy praise, meant for no ear
but thine! Or, perchance, as I waited
unseen, the fox-squirrels
inquisitive, mischievous, sprightly,
peered from their holes, cheeped, chirruped,
fretted, flurried, whisked-up their tails,
flirted from bough-end to bough-end,
scampering, scolding, scurrying,
in a dare-devil game of catch. But ever,
though affably tolerant, nay
gracious, Thou stoodest, thy spirit
methinks abode far
alone, aloof, aloft,
rapt in the beauty stern
inexorable, everlasting, true
of the positive world; thy bliss
too real, intense for frivolous
dance, frolic and song, or worship devout
in irreverent foolish words.

Stark gnarly branches
spotted with lichen hoar, and shag-
bearded, already thy spirelike
symmetry mar; but old age,
fondly of the past reminiscent,
dotingly garrulous, yet
for many a year
will not touch thy spirit; then Oh,
of friendship wilt not Thou

Symbolic Odes

tell one who loveth thee,
whether, when at first from a cleft
in thy rock (than the cool
mosses that slipper thy feet, scarce
bolder of growth) thou didst peep
curiously skyward; and after,
when the froward chokeberry bushes
that jostled and pressed thee
proudly thou couldst
overpeer at length and outreach;
Whether, dear Tree,
in the drowsy noon-sun thou never,
didst day-dream, foolishly day-dream
of stretching, a benison mute,
thy hundred long-sleeved
arms patriarchal, solemn,
over the tarn as now—
warden august of its peace?
For, irresistibly hither
happy day-dreamers are drawn
(lovers, and indolent youths robust,)
to sit them down and muse,
in fancied fellowship close with thee,
of possible things that will not,
of things impossible
that must come surely to pass.

Howbeit,—taciturn Sage,
noble, austere,—
the subtle fragrance inspiring
of thy forest-breath sweet,
do not deep impulses stir in us
strangely, disrupting the arid

Symbolic Odes

crust of our work-a-day self? resolutions
spontaneously well up, abundant and pure,
to refresh it and deck it with verdure
of hope? and trust (like thine own,
sublime)—in the universe, soar
overhead—a vast sky? our life-love,
ardent, out of darkness and cold
burst ablaze—
sunlike its azure
ascending? and our baser desires shoot
upward till, scintillant points,
they dartle on our dark
hours of bewilderment
spiritual rays
heavenly impersonal, starry remote? For lo!
a Symbol, a Glyph of a lore
Thou art, which our spirit
unwittingly spells:—how Might
Self-lordship, Soul-greatness,
are got of a wilful stand,
reckless, unshaken,
in hard barren places; are got
of savage war waged—
brute man with stubborn things
and forces undying and tireless—overcome
to renew, fierce, treacherous,
cruel, the strife; are got
of uprearing sore-battered
a crest, defiant to blast
and bolt,—no fate dreaded
but shame of cowering, doubt
of the glory, and cavil
at the absolute right of the Order

Symbolic Odes

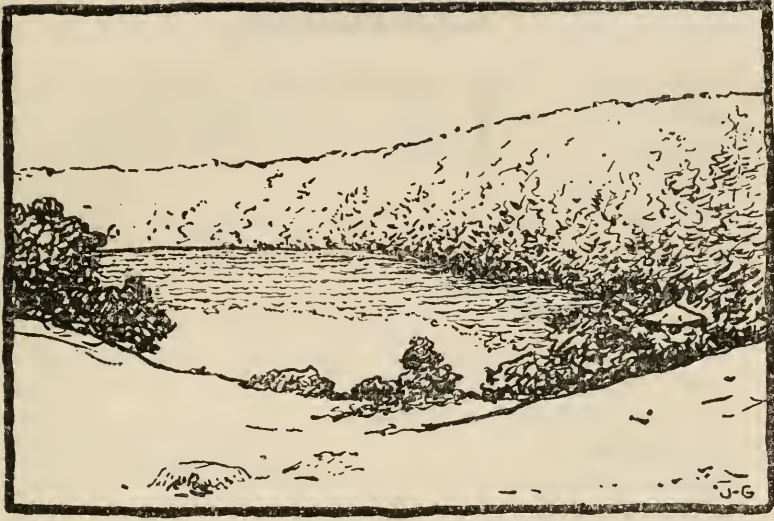
eternal ; are got of outspreading
magnanimous arms abroad
to shelter, benign,
all that is guileless and true
lovely and glad ; are got,
O venerable Tree,
of fixedly viewing as thou, undaunted
though awed, yon infinite
expanse (terrific to puny
folk centered in self, and vain)
which floateth ever forever
unconscious, calm, beautiful, holy,
a myriad, myriad suns ! Which, beholding
long, thou hast meted
justly thy height—found it naught
yet much ;—and, foreknowing thy natural
doom, art complacent ; too honest to feign
craven and false comforts ; nor minded
having taken to withhold, out of pride
eager to give and forgive !

Wherefore in vision prophetic
Thou viewest (storm-felled,
or thy grasp on the rock
age-loosened) fallen,—idly afloat—
root-moored or wind drifted—Thyself :
fostering, feeding
with thy hardily-wrought fibre of life
mosses and ferns, orchids and grass,
parnassia with cups white and green
quaint-carven of five petals ; yea, chokeberry shrubs,
thy earliest foes ; honey-flowering
azaleas, glossy-leaved laurels, rhododendrons

Symbolic Odes

tortuous-wooded, pompous-blooming ;
impartially kind to whate'er
faith sowed or wind's whim
to sprout, shoot, bud and fruit,
on Thee, their rich Isle of the Blessed ;
with forbearance high-hearted, abiding
patient the day, when,
water-soaked wholly
in the long years, slow
down thou wilt sink—
blissfully down—
to delicious oblivion
at last ;
deep in the cool depths of the tarn,
which all thy life through
thou didst love,
heroic, godlike Tree !





The Rime of the Tarn



DARLING little Tarn, with the dark woods girt,
high up the steep old mount,
solitary, kithless, yet winsome, waggish, pert—
for thy bonny tricky air
where's the moralist would dare
to account?
Since thou never didst an act
that was truly altruistic,
and thy nature ne'er was rackt
with regrets, or passions mystic,
unworried by the woes
of the world,
lying cuddled-up and curl'd

Symbolic Odes

blithe jocose,
without faith or fealty, quite
unaware of wrong and right;
Oh, so frivolous and gay
as to dance all day,
yea,
and the whole night thro'
too;
and whoso will may hark,
and envying hear thee mark
with lapping lightsome laughters
thy mad time,
ignorant of bygones, incurious of hereafters,
in thy wily happy innocence sublime!

Darling little Tarn in the forested wilds
assuredly thy heart is a child's, a child's—
irresponsible and vital,—
giving when it gives
without reck of requital;
taking while it lives
what it wants;
free as the breeze's
its favors and its taunts:
it teases
whom it pleases,
whom it likes, heart-whole,
must caress and cajole;
having never dreamed nor heard
of Conscience and of Soul,
deems cures for sin absurd;
by no fetters ever bound,
it refuses to be freed;

Symbolic Odes

not lost at any time, prefers not being found;
for when hath it behaved
in thought, in word,
in deed
(though all theories were waived
of morals bad and good)
otherwise—
than as a tarn under deep blue skies
midmost in a dense old wood
should?

Is thy virtue unpretentious,
be thy principles less strict,
because thou never wast licentious
or by tempter's logic trickt?
And, therefore, thou seest no merit, Eh,
in reasonless austerity?
Yet if any have good right
to preach and proselyte,
if any might convert
bad sinners and worse saints
from wicked ways they're us'd to,
it is thou, little Tarn, brisk, nimble, and alert,
who requiring no restraints,
might'st commend them sans suspicion,
shouldst thou choose to.
But thou dost not, wilt not heed,
thy 'serious call' and mission,
nor the world's bewildering need
of some brand-new creed:
thou art, dear Tarn, thou art,
and lo, it sufficeth thee;
let Such as have been moralize,
or Such as are yet to be!

Symbolic Odes

But oh, if mortals could but master
the mystery, little Tarn, of thy moods !
for the noblest,—in achievement
bereavement
disaster,
courageous—lose buoyance
of soul
self-control
at the daily-hatch'd brood
of annoyance ;
the fret
vexation,
irritation,
petty trifles beget.
And methinks,—as I see thee lie
rippling,
contentedly tipping
(as though a flood
sunkist
thy supply
to renew)
the dew
of the morning mist
on leaf-tip, spine, grass-spear, frond, berry and bud
condens'd,—thy complacence
comes of doing none obeisance,
beholden
unto none,
not even the golden
Sun !
For Thou asketh no brook
to come yodling and hooping
and cheer thee,

Symbolic Odes

or drooping
uprear thee ;
no rillet in ferny nook,
pretty lisper,
to whisper
soft names that endear thee,
go tickling
the mosses, run trickling
to clear thee ;
and when storm-racks rain-sagging
scowling, bullying, bragging
roar
o'er
the lowlands that flatten
on the weather god's favor to fatten,
thou flauntest thy blossomy rich array
near to the mountain's top
with a dainty insolent witchery
unwilling to beg thee a drop !
And why ? in the deeps of thee well-up
bubbly springs of perennial springs jollity
whereat on the sly thou quaffest,
winkest
saucily, thinkest
some naughty thought, blinkest
and then—
laughest and drinkest
again !
Howbeit, when in winter the summit
savage cloud-hordes envelope—
dost thou sing it, or hum it
thy tune of delight
in defiance

Symbolic Odes

of the Giants
and their ice-hearted might?
Nay! No swaggerer, churlish brawler,
thou'rt no blusterer, and bawler;
but seemlier far,
with the better part of valor—discretion—
meetest
and defeatest
oppression.
For so soon as ruffian winds come forth
of the north
wielding the sleet-lash to scar,
driving flurries
before them of snows—
(worries
and woes
to provoke thee
willy-nilly
and choke thee)
little Tarn, still stilly
a smoothe shiny sheet
that dost over thee draw
from sweet head to sweet feet:
and whilst rifled
of its leaves,
stifled
in drifts,
the from forest aches
heaves
grieves and uplifts
its arms with cruel icicles weighted
to the hated
demons for ruth;

Symbolic Odes

How the robins and I do wish us
with Thee in thine inviolate dream-Eden,
where the tree-of-life grows
for fancies do rest
and nest,
sing feed and breed in,
and the fount of youth
inexhaustible flows
in four rivers of crystalline cheer!
But lo! When the spring-sun breaks
thro' the welkin, and warm wind thaw
about thee the missiles malicious
of the storm and the gale,
my wise Tarn 'wakes
in good sooth;
and waters Thou hast to avail
for the year,
got without money or price
from thy jolly fool's-paradise.
Surely thy doctrine with tact is
taught by thy practice:
in days of dearth
self-supplied
Bride
of mirth—
in days of distress
hid away in the deep
blessed recesses of sleep!

No marvel the oaks, stout blast fighters, mail-clad
trunk limb bough in lichen; the stark black birches
waving delicate fresh volumes of greenery;
the chestnuts rough-barkt, bluff and burly

Symbolic Odes

up-thrusters
in yellow-green clusters
of burs; the hemlocks, late and early
on guard o'er the gracious scenery,
grim, glum, sullen, surly,—
yet kind
to the wintering birds, who find,
in their spiny dark, safe homes;
the service-trees scrubby and gaunt
that dangle,
begrudged, their few pitiful pomes
under foliage bluish, wizen and scant;
the rhododendrons whose firm gnarly wood,
aslant
in snaky tangle,
shows how arduous (tho' they rant
not, nor wrangle
as we)
even among tree-folk and shrub-folk the search is
for Light—
each with his bad
and his good,
his record of wrong and of right—
come marshall'd in deep ranks close-serried
to take solace in Thee, the Light-hearted
the Glad!
No marvel the jaunty-fronded rowan
bronze-berried
at first, then aflash
with sumptuous opulent carmine,
which, prodigal, he tosses
to the winds with a fling and a dash;
the hobble-bush lusty, a-strain to display

Symbolic Odes

his flame-color'd drupes
in rivalry futile; the slender
merry
wild-cherry
his spring-radiance departed,
retaining yet a tender
subtle grace of his own;
the marrish-maple, whose mere poise airy
unwary
there's charm in,
and comeliness, dancing alway
impatient to don frory
glory;
the highland-holly, that to waterward stoops
and a covert over-bow'rs
with lucent ruby fruit
bejewel'd; the laurel, wayward, rash
that leaps from his root
whilst in lieu of his long-shed waxen flow'rs,
every leaf of him agloss is
with sallies of sunshine; the modest azalea
unqueen'd for the season, to the sorrow of mid-June
having cast off too soon
her orange, white and rosy honeysuckle regalia;
the green-brier belated, and inquisitive to boot,
that in prickly-
tickly
festoon
o'er his fellows goes trembling pell-
mell;
No marvel at all if they throng
at thy marges,
each pressing his suit

Symbolic Odes

for the boon :
a first and a last sight of Thee
who art free,
gay
as they :
who grantest great largess,
yet makest no debtors
(since to all what is thine doth belong)
allowing no inferiors or betters,
preferring not these unto those
in thy childish millennial polity,
because ever a jest
sets the worst and the best
at one in the throes
of true jollity !

No marvel, dear Tarn, thou canst cause
the dead trees on thy surface afloat
to nourish
such wild-flowers as flourish
not elsewhere so fair or so dense :—
frolic mummers
in the summer's
lush pageant, to thy playful applause
enacted,—for note :
the neighborly masses
of bugle-weed shaking their knots
of silvery bloom-dots
on the least little breezy pretense ;
and the zephyrous tassled swamp-grasses
and fretted ferns in narrow room sheet
whom the rank rabbit-root, adept
in rudeness, with his new-got black berry astrut,

Symbolic Odes

tries to jostle ;
that droll tiny fellow
(dwarf St. John's wort yclept)
who, to honor his namesake apostle,
starrily decks
his crown with wee specks
golden-yellow ;
the greenwood archis with dare-devil air,
and the highborn parnassia of her style half-aware ;
Oh, how in thy waggish society
stern
Death,
dear Tarn, doth learn
to laugh at himself under breath
in a cantless, new, beautiful piety,
even gruesome, cross, scare-crow old Death !

No wonder if the sun from his high
sky-
mansion sends rays of his fire
white-hot, to drench,
them and quench
their thirst, with thy stored
hoard
of purity,
cool !
No wonder the moon should draw
mistily nigh,
wistfully nigher,
when scarce-fledged lovers feel
at thought of their blissful futurity
(sweet fool with sweet fool)
on thy bosom together, strange awe

Symbolic Odes

as Thou dancest thine elvish reel:
diamond sparkle,
quick glint, phosphorescent
quicker
flicker,
iridescent
opal shimmer,
quiescent
deliquescent
dim, dimmer
gleam and glimmer—
and darkle!
No wonder the stars as they peep
through the cirrous dome
from the deep
of infinite space,
their home,
fondle thy fresh still face
without wrinkle,
and mirror in Thee their heavenly twinkle;
No wonder the thunder-fiend perched on the peak
howling,
growling
to wreak
his pent might,
flings a steely white lightning to smite thee
and afright thee,
and roars out for boyish delight
at the blinding blaze
of thy swift indignant amaze,
his vicious ill-humor quite
gone.

Symbolic Odes

No wonder the dawn
(ere the least
first streak
in the East,
that betokens earth's yearning
broadens corruscates and flares
the path of the Sun-lord's returning
to strew with auroral
floral
splendors,) unfailingly spares
her first faint most orient hues
to enkindle the haze
of thy grays,
or thy satiny blues
to suffuse,
little Tarn in the mountainous wild,
that dost make thee such godlike mirth
of men's notions of fitness
and worth,
immortal sure Witness
to the truth
and the youth
of the Earth;
thy soul unafraid,
undefiled,—
forever a Maid
unfading, unflight—
forever and ay
at play,
an innocent Child,
and a Sprite!





The Defiled Mountain Torrent



LLOUDILY wing'd, forest-man'd, side by side
o'er the green-and-yellow checker of tillage
alluvial, and the hummocky fallows copse-mottled, asprawl
in the sun and abask,—unwieldily
approximating their contorted ridg'd bulk,—
in the shelter of their scarp flanks
the Mountains
a seclusion inviolable create
for some blessed cool Glen to lurk in
from the rays of torrid noons fended
and the irruption of hurricanes
malign—some Rivulet, indubitably, in his infantile
innocence disporteth him, rollicking
from clear pool to clear pool; and gleesomely
loitering in his eddies,
chuckles to himself at the play
of the silver-sheeny trout, rosy-speckled. And, Oh,
'twixt these imminent declivities
with underbrush bristling, by the rank
lush verdure close-thatcht what abode

Symbolic Odes

for the bob-white dainty-stepping, and the grouse
bronze-rufft, with life and with drum,
to foregather and revel it in security
life-lusty; and here, too, timorous fugitive,
can the cotton-tail claim sanctuary,
and the hazards forgetting of existence one instant
frisk wantonly, or nibble at ease.
For with what bountiful supply
doth not hospitably the Glen her visitors entertain;
herbs aromatic, spicy-nutrient roots
and berries in succulent luscious plenty
divers-flavor'd, sweet and tart, to each taste!

On, on will I hasten, yet discretely
sure-footed, and circumspect, that, by the timidest
denizen undetected,
I may penetrate into the privacies
sacred erstwhile
to the horn'd and hooft goat-thighed God Pan;
and, (tho' it was rumor'd
that from earth He be departed,
to reside in the Olympos snow-cappt
of Mythology, scar'd by the scowl of lean-featur'd
Science) devoutly, his blithe choristers,
of manifold wild minstrelsy,
will I hope have outstayed him:—
first and foremost the wee wood-sprite, shy and saucy—
thro' the bracken aflight, or dartling
some mossy-carpeted log along—
the winsome winter-wren. O might I but surprise him
at his hyper-riotous up-bubble of mirth!
Or if not him, then eavesdropping,
the dusky-green vireo overhear,

Symbolic Odes

as solitary he setteth him to rebuke
with a vivacious virile vocalism the querulously
iterant soft plaint of the peewee,
perverse shadow-haunter in woodland mazes sun-proof;
or, (Oh, supreme unanticipated delight!)
transfixt with a thrill of surprise—
stand and harken (as if pain, age and death
concern'd us not ever) the hymn
of love's true-mated hermit—th' tiny thrush:
a peace superlumary archangelical divine
into melody molten, cool, diaphanous,
soul-uplifting to a jubilant content.

O pugnacious spiky locusts, cross brambles,
briers choleric and churlish, wicked virulent
nettles, coarse tight-tangling grasses,—
less obstreperously might ye I believe
withstand one that forward thro' your thickest
presseth with no malevolent intent;
for soonest exultingly my heart beats
when nigh me some relative of mine—queer, canny
fifth cousin, say, or sixth—unconstrain'd
in bush, brake, water, air,
I may watch at his frolicsome gambols,
or the serious avocations of his life. Never fancied I
glory could be gotten in the slaughter
of a terroriz'd brother, outwitted,
worsted in a conflict unscrupulously unequal. Come, come,
be ye civil to a friend who hath given you
the password, and we will let bygones be bygones,
my irascible stout fellows, as I slip me
quietly atiptoe thro' your belligerent
motley throng. For, I swear,

Symbolic Odes

O outposts over-zealous of the Glen,
unharm'd, nay unthreaten'd, shall they be
all my kindred, feathery, furry, or finn'd—
the lords hereditary of your fortified
recesses.

What? Hist! On the wind—
is it a cry? Nay, a brawl rather and a bellow,
a roar—a thunder-burst of waters! The Glen
I foreknew (from excessive sun-ardors by hemlocks
umbrageous, and adventuresome birches
leafily screen'd); ay, the Glen meandering
scathless and free among huge
crags by some cataclysmical upheaval of the earth
asunder-cloven, wrencht, shatter'd, jamm'd
in ages prehuman;—cliff-walls
whose least ledges cracks and crevices by rash ferns,
vertiginously aquiver, are tenanted,
or by shrubby gorgeous-blooming,
and by intricate viney entanglements
precipitately down-tumbling, that athwart
the chasm green arms wavy and hands,
amicable, extended to one another in impetuous
felicitations, at the faintest whiff of air
almost touch;—O the Glen
so bewilderingly beautiful, labyrinthine, sequester'd,
(strange, strange!) is not the happy
channel, as I imagin'd it of a brooklet splash-plashing
bubble-babble, sing-song in excess—
aspatter, and aspirtle—of delighted limpidity; but instead—
a rocky-barr'd keep, subterranean
kennel for some Leviathan terrific
dementedly pounding in self-annihilatory desperation,

Symbolic Odes

up-panting a convulsive dank blast
demoniacal, to set the vasty scar-fastnesses
ashudder from the bottom to the top!

Best-Lov'd, first-Begotten of the sky,
foster-Child of the mountains,
What is it with impunity doth afflict thee?
Thee, who the very hemlocks wouldst—enormous,
majestical,—deracinate in a trice
and voluminously overwhelm them,
resisted they thy thoroughfaring; O Thou
who the rugged adamantine granite grindest
with the pulses of thine onslaught spasmodic
and the unintermittent wash swift
of multitudinous swirling waters; O Thou,
tho' utterly thou scornest to be commiserated—
speak, speak! For, notwithstanding
thou tосsest yonder downfallen giant bole
sore-batter'd of a sycamore,
frivolously as a mere flocculent
scum-raglet, and at his antics uncouth
(when frantical, for some stay, clutching, he writhes,
lurches and lumbers down thy rapids) inebriate
with wrath, dost into laughter vindictive
break hideously;—Nevertheless yet
there abideth in the occult deeps of man
a spirit that insurgent, mightily to thee-ward
yearneth. Then, Oh, utter
I supplicate, nay adjure thee, thine innermost
rancor incommunicable! For wrong'd, wrong'd,
yea, wrong'd art Thou if aright
the tremulous overtone I interpret, and the mutterings—
unpremeditated, inadvertent, mysterious,

Symbolic Odes

abyssmical—that perturb
with a panic the hearer; those wails, sobs,
pitifully human, half-suppressed, yet thro' the din
audible in a ghostly suspiration, as thou rumblest
and from rocklevel to rocklevel
down precipice after precipice
crashest in cataracts horridous, suicidal,
lacerating thee to grisly froth-shreds,
and soul-seething, Thou hissest and up-spewest
haggard, awful,
an insensate contempt of Thyself.

Behold, for a space farther forth
the ravine wide-yawns and admitteth
the sun to irradiate thee with diamantine
splashes of living splendor. Quick thither
am I wending through close-twisting masses
of blossomy laurel, over root-claspt rocks,
moist and slippery, about trunks of superb
hemlocks colossal, and there,
quieted for an instant, may thine ire
get articulate expression. What meaneth it?
Speak! Assuredly,—an ocular illusion? in the shine
thy swollen floods effervescent whirl
golden, and regurgitate bronze-umbery,
russet-shimmering in the distance? Too well
have I understood thee now, Thee
and thy dire speech—O Thou,
who hadst dedicated thy Self—
to maintain thee unpolluted the purity of thy origin,
and the rivers, whereunto thou shalt be tributary,
so much as in thee lieth with thy crystalline
onrush to clarify, and the ocean's

Symbolic Odes

frackish wallow and welter, if it were possible,
to sweeten with thy savor
of sky—O Thou, Thou
even, Thou also hast altogether forfeited
thy hyaline pellucidity, befoul'd—
turbid, yea, maculate! maculate!
And, as a nightmare again
horrifies, remember'd, Lo! the Mill—
that bestrode thee intercurrent between
slopes once thick-wooded—where it squats
before me, as when I quicken'd my pace
endeavoring not to see or hear aught:—
the loathsome canker-Monster omnivorously
ravening into the sacred dense evergreen gloom.
And mine ears, in despite of me, the shrill
shrieks of the steam-whistle affray; and the screech
and the howl of the rotatory saws terminating
in a raucous death-rattle and fierce
rasp; and the wheezy respiration of the engines
rust-pockt; and the clatter interminable
of shingles and plank. What scragg'd piles
of striipt tanbark beetle and totter akimbo! What mounds
funereal of saw-dust, wind-fretted, thy gorge
choke-up, and throttle thee to strangulation!
Obsess'd am I by the groans of timber-loaded
wanes, lashes of the whip-thongs, and the strain
intolerable of starv'd mutilated
brute flesh—blood, sweat, obscene jest
and profanity! O Brother
spare me thy reproach, for too keen
mine abhorrence of the desecration that hath been committed
by greed-craz'd human kinsfolk I disown—
no fellows they of mine—yea, yea I saw them—

Symbolic Odes

and still see them in memory,—those archways
gothic-pointed of laurel, demolisht by fiend-fires:
black skeletons that convulsive coil and crook them
in a drunken death-dance; and the soil, where
charr'd, lye-bitten to an aching waste,
ghastily it gapes sunward. And within me
my spirit groaneth, outrag'd
at the fatuous devastation of the Earth—
our long-suffering Mother—
humiliated, sacrilegiously defil'd
by the very children of her heaven-hallowed womb!

Woe, woe is me—not unseldom,
O Torrent of savage sorrow unassuagable,
was I madden'd with thy phrenzy ere this—
fanatical, at thought of the despoilers, the deflowerers,
the devastators! Nor thou only
hadst to suffer contamination, and of miscreants
the cynical unconcern. If it listeth thee,—inveigh,
and the turbulence of thy distress ease,
by imprecatory bursts of vehemence—
ineffectual, alas! Ejaculate, O ejaculate
in the paroxysms of delirium, thine anathemas;
and I will abase me, shamefast
in thy presence, to hearken:

“Man, Man”

thou criest-out with a voice of great grief
unsubduable yet chasten'd, transmuted
to rage prophetic: “Man, Man
whom for aeons on aeons
We of the ancients order elemental,
rapturously expectant, did adore;

Symbolic Odes

instantaneous his insight and unerring,
omnipotent the pressure,
unimaginable the dexterity of his miracle-working hands;
Man, Man, magnanimous (woe, woe!)
we had imagined him, lofty-tempered:
Mind, discerning of the Process creative
the implicate ends; supreme
Will, by glad godly indefatigable labors
fashioning, into a reality of unillusionary
loveliness, our vision long-worshippt
of the world; Man, Man . . .
and Oh, lo!—he hath appear'd—
and we have beholden him: no divinity
but a Demon—tempter, torturer, corrupter—
no law venerated that prohibiteth
a gratification instantaneous of his glutton wants,
craz'd desires;—Man, Man—
oppressor without scruple of the weaponless
and confiding; extirpator of the formidable
frank-hearted, noble-spirited, that stoop them not
to be yokt and made vile; sparing only
that thenceforward thy soul
may in orgic massacres delight itself; vandal-violator
of beauty, wrought solemnly thro' the centuries
and slow, for Thee, ingrate, to marvel at
and rejoice-in; O Man!—
forever must thy tyranny
be irresponsible to reason, right, ultimate
self-interest? Wilt thou persist,
in the ruin, maniacal ravager, of thy heritage—
the one star of thy birthright? Dost thou dread not
the degeneracy of thine imperial
breed, and at naught settest thou thy destiny

Symbolic Odes

of Godhood? No premonitory misgivings,
ere yet it be too late, wilt thou give ear to?
And wilt then dare in after ages,
(Fool! Fool!)
when self-doom'd thou art perishing,
at the mirth-twinkling heavens to vent thee
in maledictions preposterous, because
the old bosom forsooth, scarr'd, bruis'd,
gore-bedabbled, of thy Mother
will not foster more, and rear as of old,
thy pullulent generations—the Mother
(loving, responsive to her offspring
until cold at the last, stark, dead),
of Thee, slain—blind, ruthless, false Son!"

Sad misanthropist sublime,
comfort thee, comfort thee—for high
above thy final leap and lunge,
horrific, into the chasm,
forever vortically to engulf thee from sight
of thyself and the dizzy-swaying sun,—
Canst thou see not how a bare bough
intrepidly thy spray-cloud
overreaches and the arching prism-splendors
that environ and enaureole thy hoar stormy-lockt
head calamitous?—Behold (if but a moment
thou wilt allow thee to be distracted
from thine anguish) how a Bird
percheth him on the lichen-hair'd
tip-most twig—(what, dost thou recognize not
thy well-wisher?) brown-speckled, buff-breasted,
rufous-green—wing and tail! 'T is, O joy!
the swamp-angel, the diminutive Thrustle

Symbolic Odes

of the solitude—and to capture thy notice,
thro' the vibrating azure,
in quick loops aerial, he wingeth him,
and returneth undaunted again
his word of consolation to deliver—for see, see!—
he warbleth now some dythiramb unimpassionately
voluble—a paeon of victory 't is, spiritual,
for thy hearing; and the strains,
in the boom of thine uproar inaudible,
my heart echoeth:—

“Hark, Hark,
wert Thou still uncontaminate as erst
(O mountain Torrent,—harken, harken,
and take comfort!)—not so dazzling were
the whiteness of thy bubbly foam; Nor thy spray-mists,
wind-agitated, were fret elusively
with such palpitant sun-glories;
Nor overspun with vivid frostwork
so lacy were thy cataracts, evermore
spiriting sparkles, and outfraying into traceries
iridescent of spume; Nor so ferocious—
verily, verily—were
thy denunciations hurl'd at Evil, earthshaking,
hoarse-reverberant under hollowed-out
silvery-oozing and dribbling mosst scars;
Nor would gusts so irresistible set adance
the leafage on the tree-tops, in jubilation
that they hang beyond reach
utterly of all soilure; Nor were the flaming sun-flower,
and, fragrant, the raspberries with their wild-rose bloom,
purple, and the constellated aster
yellow-cor'd, lavender or milky-petall'd,

Symbolic Odes

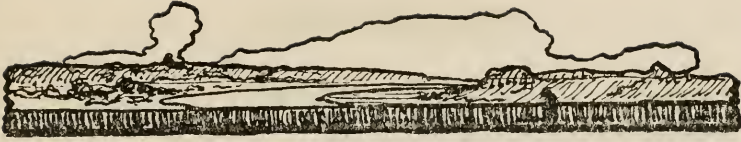
thus regally invested, transfigur'd
with such crystalline, rainbow-radiant array ;
Nor below, where forespent
thou tarriest a while gasping
for wrath-respite—and thy anarchical
yeasty turmoil out-smoothens
to an ominous glassy glare,—wouldst Thou spread
so burnished a mirror as now
(of thy very swarthinness clearer)
for sun, stars, luminous clouds and the ardent
firmamental still Blue!”

Comfort thee, comfort thee
implacable defil'd Torrent,
for thy Consoler
carolleth, still carolleth,
the transparency thou shall yet achieve thee
of thy purificatory fury
at pollution. Thine, thine
(so he singeth faith-exuberant)
shall a virgin Immaculacy
more miraculous than erst be ;
and brave-soul'd shalt thou bear it to the ocean
the vast, bitter and foul ocean that at least
by so little it may the sweeter,
the clearer be. Nor for naught
shall thine agoniz'd mad curses
to the welkin have forth-thunder'd.
For there cometh, Oh there cometh
(hear, hear him at his ultimate
fugue ecstatic!)
the Man of thy holy hope—He
the expected, the worshippt, the fulfiller—

Symbolic Odes

of his advent divine the foreordained
times shorten'd
with the cry
uninterrupted, savage, fearful, of thy desire,—
O defil'd mountain Torrent, inspir'd
Prophet of evil,—
by Thee!





The Mule: A Sunrise Whimsy



WHERE spann'd the road lies
by the massy iron bridge
above the power-house with its perpetual
wind-flutter'd steam banner,
I was sauntering ere fully yet day dawned,
listless, of protracted toil weary,
and despairing of sleep. The wicked steely
glints of the oil'd machinery
ponderous, at work under persistent
scrutiny of electric eyes,
spider-like depending from roof-rafters
uncannily, my mind haunted; till homeward
I turn'd, and yonder on the far side
of the lower road-cut, the quarried hill, gray,
perpendicular, stubborn, confronted me, crested
with a dusky hunch, gruesome, that at times
seem'd to waver as to outline, and stir
in lurches erratic on the uttermost sheer edge.
Still-standing, long fascinated,
I gaz'd, and at length
the dawn-gleams, uncertain, reveal'd
irreverently the patient hill's scalp
of rank weeds wiry tugging:—
a Mule! And I mused

Symbolic Odes

straightway of the People uncircumspect
ever feeding on the verge of a civic
abyss without light,
nor feeling of any—great lack,
for the tugging and the munching of the weeds!

Suddenly, as intent at the creature
I lookt,—that had ceas'd
in his dignity symbolic to suggest
aught vulgar, flippant, whimsical,—a burst
of bloody light volcanic
from some crater, so it seem'd,
close behind him deep-yawning, etch'd-out
lean legs, downcast head, ears protuberant,
ignominous tassel'd tail
the flush'd sky against, that enhaloed him;
wholly, however,
at the grotesque weird silhouetting of his form
the Mule was undismayed, and graz'd on—
for nowise the illumination, you conceive,
marr'd the pungeancy acrid
of the weeds! And a laugh, bitter, unawares
startled me (tho' my own) recalling
how we prate—eloquently—about reform,
progress, enlightenment (foolish
self-deceivers!) and the sure
holy common sense of arous'd
public Opinion! But lo,
from the body of the Mule, as I ponder'd
dejectedly man's future political and social—
swift rays to the zenith up-flew,
fanlike outspread; and at once
the steam-banner, on the power-house flaunted,

Symbolic Odes

caught fire; and scurrying flufft cloudlets
like a butterfly bevy of school-girls
white frockt, from class discipline releast,
through the sky rompt,—the fresh child's
glow joyous, of health, in their cheeks. Then the sun
red-golden up-bulg'd from eclipse
behind the tassel-tail'd, droop-ear'd
beast of burden, and behold!
at last—it was Day!

O People, is it truth, sober,—or a mere
sanguine self-delusion of minds
foolishly millennial, (mad theorists!)—O People
tugging, munching the weeds unconcernedly,—
the faith, that a Sun
by thy ill-shap'n bulk, awkward,
ridiculous, yet maskt is;—a Sun
that even now, up-struggling to shine,
shortly shall the whole heavens enkindle
to such blaze
of great glory, as hitherto seer saw not
in vision apocalyptic? Fool! Fool!
to ask questions of thee who art wont,
(not heeding star-gazers, nor prophets,)
to tug away still,
in the manner of thy hybrid folk
time out of mind,
industriously, at the scalp
wiry-weeded of the doom'd quarry-hill!



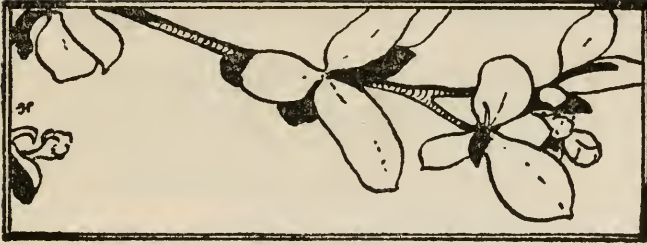
Symbolic Odes

Afterword



DOT have these Lines been lying
in Metre's Procrustean bed;
their rack-extended feet,
or truncated limbs adorn'd
with barbarous jewels of Rime.
Free be these Lines,
and their Rhythm:
only the motion—responsive to soul—
of sadness or madness or mirth
irresistible;
yielding the body in confidence
absolute unto the God who would speak,
through leap and whirl and pose
in breathless obedience to Him!





Lyrics and Occasional Verse



The Beeches of Fern Bank



BEECHES, dear Fern Bank beeches,
I greet you in haste as I pass.
How vast, still, and tender your reach is
over the wavy grass!

Your boughs (droop they moveless, or stir they,
soft-swaying in the summery air,)
are inviting me—all unworthy—
your fellowship true to share.

O beeches, dear Fern Bank beeches,
men may envy your vigor and grace:
for grown great in your brotherhood, each is
content with his ancient place;
not restive as We and ambitious,
with our fate perversely at strife.
What better, dear trees, can ye wish us
than with You—to live our life?

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

O beeches, dear Fern Bank beeches,
a consecrated grove ye are,
for Dantes and chaste Beatrices
in the glimmer of the twilight star;
for memories, ecstasical fancies
alone in the mid of the night;
not bann'd from your shadow romance is,
or Utopian devotion to right!

O beeches, dear Fern Bank beeches,
calm warders of river and road,
persuasive your whispered speech is,—
with You will I make mine abode;
and study as You to stand quiet
upreaching to heaven in prayer
for this beautiful Earth, so nigh it,
while fondling its undulant hair!



Palmistry

Little hand, let me look at its lines—
I can read it, I know to-day.
Let me hold it: too brightly it shines,
I must read it some other way.

Let me rivet it tightly to mine—
't is the same that last night I kisst.
Let them lie in your lap. I'll divine
palm to palm, thus, and wrist to wrist.

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

What I learn? I can't tell you. Your eyes
but repeat what the pulse just said:—
I have learn'd all I want, and am wise,—
and none shall know what I've read. ('90)



Dirge

Drift, drift away—
none knoweth whither bound.
Thy hand upon the river lay,
sweet Love, and stay its sound.
The water-lilies sleep,
the meadows dream,
the silver willows weep
beside the stream,
past, past the steeple in the twilight gray—
drift, drift away!

Flow, flow along,
thou deepening River go
in silent majesty, thy song
sung under breath and slow.
The shores fast widen, fade,
and leave Thee free;
into the night flow unafraid,
into the sea—
far, far to where the waves are long and strong—
flow, flow along! ('90)

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

Ode in Sapphics

Sung at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Cincinnati Literary Club.

Sing the good Old Days that are gone forever,
rich in friendship, love; and for sturdy virtue,
honest purpose, faith, and heroic action,
sweet to remember.

Half a hundred years of success and failure:
earth and sky and sea are the same, and little
change the ways of men; the beholder only
ages and passes.

Wherefore mourn, sweet friends, or despond or marvel?
Still the New Days come—for the Maker liveth—
young and fresh and bold, and the cry is ever
upward and onward!

Past and future meet in the vital present;
thankfulness and trust in a pure emotion,
making wise the young, and the old courageous,
singing together:—

Sweet the good Old Days to recall and cherish;
sweet the good New Days to forecast and welcome;
sweet the tried, the known; and the fresh surprises
also delightful!

Surely pain and grief to the brave and noble
yield a pleasure, yield a reward of virtue:
faith in life, death, God, and in man, our brother,
ever, forever!

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

To a Latterday Prophet

(WHO CAME LATE, AND WENT FORTH TOO SOON)

He came to us with soul on fire,
he came to us from the East with light:
we heard, we saw; and God drew nigher,
and wrong was wrong, and right was right.

He went forth from among us then.
All soon would be as ere he came;
for men, we murmured, are but men,
and the world's ways for aye the same!

Ah, who that clomb the heights serene
in sleep, can after quite forego
the vision? gainsáy, that once hath seen,
its glory; and the known unknow?

For His sake life hath holier worth,
our faith made sure—whate'er we are—
that still our man-corrupted Earth
shines in God's firmanent—a star!



Lyrics and Occasional Verse

To Souls

Among the Stars

Tell us, tell us, we beseech you
do You love us still?
Earth's mad cry, speak, can it reach you
on heaven's shining hill?

O the Stars, lights of your city
burning in your streets,—
tell us, Friends, for old love's pity
if love's heart yet beats.

Far forever must we linger,
hopelessly alone?
Point our way with spirit-finger
to your Land unknown!

"Ye will follow—surely follow,"
hear their sweet reply!
A mere echo strange and hollow
to our 'wilder'd cry.

(90)



Lyrics and Occasional Verse

After Tears

When the rain-drops shiver in tree-tops high,
and glisten and twinkle now crimson, now gold;
and the green grass glows as a star-strown sky,
whose webs are heavy with wealth untold;

with a glad quick chirp, or a sweet long cheep,
when birds have begun to flutter and hop;
and the bright twigs, startled from day-dreams deep,
in panic sudden their treasures drop;

when at wayward intervals clear loud notes
go cleaving with gladness the hush of the air;
when, the rent clouds drifted away, earth floats
in sight of heaven—bid good-by to Care!

We will fling wide windows and doors—ask in
the breeze that is longing to visit us, Dear;
and the sweet-heart blossoms that fain would win
(your honeysuckles) a welcome here!

Let us lean close, Darling! Let cheek touch cheek,
let hand be in hand as though never to part.
Let us breathe life's fullness—and no word speak—
just feel Love knitting us heart to heart!

('90)



Lyrics and Occasional Verse

A Respite

Laughing I lay on a Summer's day,
bedded in blossoming grass ;
and little, little did I think of Her !
Love is not all of life—alas!
'would that it were,
'would that it were !

Oh ! that we could be but understood :
bees must their honey amass
when skies are blue and grasses lightly stir.
Love is not all of life—alas !
'would that it were,
'would that it were !

Selfish the soul that from love-dreams stole,
watching the gay breeze pass
o'er ferns and flowers, but Oh ! all things aver :
Love is not all of life—alas !
'would that it were,
'would that it were !

('87)



Sympathetic Music

Breath-seizing, irresistible delight !
O Singer, sweet and pure,
beneath the dartling stars thy magic might
who could for long endure ?

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

Those tensest strings to skill'd white fingers yield
their plaintive spirit-wails,
till half our sorest sorrowing is healed
wafted to Dreamland vales:

trippings of children's rosy feet, light, gay
down silver stairs of sound;
sobblings of love, unanswered, far away,
of yearning heavenward bound;

dark feelings for a music still more sweet,
with aching heart astrain;
delicious dyings at beloved feet—
intensest, dearest pain;

soft, soul-seducing harmonies that make
delirious fancies come,
and, ere their azure-winged flight they take,
with bliss the heart benumb;—

Oh! I have listen'd till the Past hath seem'd
chang'd in all bitter things;
till in the bitterness of bliss I dream'd
that love no sorrow brings.

Then notes fell thick in pearly rain, like tears,
and lay like gracious dew
Among the thirsting flow'rs—thought dead long years—
and lo! they bloom'd anew!

('89)



Lyrics and Occasional Verse

A February Day in Tennessee

I lie among the yellow grasses,
so tall and dry ;
and, as I lie a cloudlet passes
athwart the sky.

The day is warm, though it be early
in welcome spring ;
flowers are not yet, nor fall dews pearly
from midnight's wing.

'Tis Hope alone as yet who dallies
from dell to dell,
and through the leafless garden-alleys
bids the buds swell.

But, as yon cloudlet flieth further
evading view,
O where if ever, tell me, were there
such depths of blue !

Idly I snatch the wither'd grasses
by handful sheaves,
and twist them into arching masses
with shaggy eaves,

and, lo ! a gothic baptistery :
four arches keen
of sunny gold, and with the very
blue sky between !

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

And so, I fall a-dreaming sweetly
of One—God knows . . .
(how should I name her indiscretly—
my dewy rose?)

Here have we been betroth'd and married,
and fast we fly
on wings of skyey genii carried,—
glad She and I.

Whither? Who asks in such still weather
if East or West?
So, Darling, we but fare together
all ways be best!

What? but a day-dream? O dear grasses,—
alone, unwed?
I scan each cloudlet as it passes
high overhead . . .

bound for Love's mystical far Thule,
do they not seem?
O might I evermore—but truly
dream this one dream!

('88)



The Firefly

I wonder what flowers and grasses
can think of the firefly light,
as his circle of splendour passes
in and out thro' their tangle all night.

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

There, see how they quiver as they listen,
just startled from sad bright dreams!
how their eyes, that are dew-drops, glisten
and return to the firefly his beams!

They hide from his glory quickly
the griefs of their glad, sweet selves—
till their shadowlets faint lie thickly
all around as woven of elves.

On high on a throne of clover,
he rests him awhile and swings,
while the flowers tell him over and over
such a marvel of gossipy things!

Then kissing the crimson clover,
he opens his wings' light sweep,
and away is the starlike rover,
and the grasses and flowers go to sleep.

('90)



The Hawk

A BALLAD OF DAWN IN COLLOQUY

First voice—

The Morn hath tiptoe stolen near to Night
and cast her upon him in love's delight!

Second voice—

Their arms enlac'd, their warm close lips have met,
her hair all unknotted—'t is twilight yet!

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

First voice—

With her pale self she covers him. She seems
to lie like a snow-drift above his dreams.

Second voice—

White shines she, naked mid her golden hair,
and smiles as he dies—for the day is there!



Third voice—

A Pigeon flies. Lo, it darts! it rocks in air,
till the plumes of its wings meet behind—
till the foe is lost! But who can share
my joy? Who sing it forth? Oh! ne'er
to be gifted for utterance—doom unkind!



First voice—

Far up from the green of the field,
from the gold of the sunlit river,
from graves where mourners have kneel'd,
from boughs with their sparkle of beads ashiver—
up out of the chalice of dawn—
the eye of night in the lily of day,
out of his nest—is the Lark upgone
on his steep, sweet, song-pav'd way.

Up, into the sky hath he fled,
where the blue and the calm dwell ever,
where sounds of struggle are dead.

He hath vanquish'd its summit with wings' endeavour.
Then, shake out thy shower of notes!

The veins of silence with melody pulse.
Sing, little Lark, from thy throat of throats!
With thy joy heaven's heart convulse!

L. of C.



Lyrics and Occasional Verse

Second voice—

A shadow!—a Foe—a scream!
a shudder—grim claws—
fiend's beak—keen eyes that gleam!
a flash—a pause.

A pitiful scream to hear!
a rush to the sky—
the Foe beneath!—no fear—
a triumph-cry!

Both voices—

Shout, shout,
that the Fiend hath misst his prey!
Mad song, ring out
exhultantly!

Thrill! Thrill!
In the heaven's great deep-blue eye,
bask thee, and still
sing, sing, on high!



Third voice—

O Lark! my soul was rescued from its foe,
but it knew not thy voicing occult
that can utter glee, and heavenward throw
the blissful soul to God! I glow
with the fire of thy triumph. Exult! Exult!

All voices and echoes—

Exult!

(90)

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

Dream and Waking

A Bridal-Symphony in Seven Lyrics



Emptied of wine the cup of blinding blaze,
wherewith the Day, that died as die proud days,
Eve's dusk and starlight pledg'd ;
the daisy-suns have gather'd in their rays
snow-luminous, rosy-edg'd.

Eve held her mist-blue goblet full of rest,
gray sleep, and silver dreams, and wishes blest,
to challenge His, aloft :—
both cups clasht—shiver'd, inundating the West
with slumberous passion soft.

Into the sea of Night, Day's wine hath pour'd,
stain'd it a moment—then gloom-billows roar'd
and foam'd and blacken'd all.
O sea of Night, vague, vast and silent-shor'd,
death-torpid thy billows fall !



Frail boughs of precious sprays,
that twine and press sweet blossoms cheek to cheek,
why, when no wayward breath essays
to tangle itself in your bright maze,
be ye tremulous ? Speak, bright branches, speak.

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

“A nest lies hidden here—
an old year’s nest through winter safely kept ;
and happy boughs are we, for we’re
of all the bloomy boughs most near
to where innocent birds last summer slept !

Two wayfarers are flown
back to the nest of merry months gone-by ;
and nestle wing to wing, unknown
of all the world save us alone,
as they twitter in sleep, and dream they fly.”



A charm
lies closely over all ;
no harm
can any soul befall.
So dark,
so still, O lovely night . . .
But hark,
what heavenly-sweet affright ?

Burst, rise, irrepressible song !
To hearken—’t is to die,
to float away amid a wild-wing’d throng—
ecstatic notes—into the madden’d sky.

Rush waves, of impassion’d sound
till stars the dark abyss
enkindle ; till ye flood us forth, and, drown’d,
cast us on shores remote of heaven’s still bliss !



Lyrics and Occasional Verse

O boyish
Delight
why haunt me
to-night?

Forgotten
almost, . . .
yea, merely
a ghost—

a misty
moongleam,
a fancy,
a dream,

a vision that
with dawn
doth fade and
is gone!



No power hast Thou at all
on Her, my Bride.
Thou couldst enthrall '
the youth that long since died,
never the man Thou darest here to haunt,—
Wraith of the past, Spirit of ill, avaunt!

.
She dreams of me . . . She breathes
upon my breast . . .
my hand ensheathes
Her little hand . . . 'T were best
never to wake when dreams are over-dear,—
never to wake—ever to slumber here.

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Lyrics and Occasional Verse

What weird dream have I dream'd
hard to recall?
Ay! so meseem'd
I stood in some vast hall
lonely and sad, a disillusioned youth
loathing the lie—fearing the face of truth.

All the life since became
unreal; yea She
a myth, a name.
I yearn'd to bow the knee,
reverent to some strange Deity, my own
Creature-of-cloud, Witch-of-my-dreams unknown.

There mov'd unheard, but felt,
a shining Thing,
whose either wing
cover'd me as I knelt:—
“Vision of perfect being, holy, sweet,
let me remain—perish, but kiss thy feet!”



Face white
'neath infinite night,
eyes full of love and light,—
a mystic spell;
lips, rose
as dawn-lit snows,
quiver, then tightly close,
lest of their love too soon they tell;

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

soft gleams
of neck, dim dreams
of shoulders, arms, 'neath streams
of tumbling gloom:
Love's form,
divine! A storm
of passion shakes me. Warm
with thy warm self my ice-cold tomb!

Nay, Thou,
art even now
another's, for thy brow
my suit condemns;
and yet . . .
What snare is set—
shining and dewy-wet,
of grasses woven and daisy-stems?—

Ensnar'd?
Nay,—who hath dar'd
to bind Night's Queen dark-hair'd
with mesh on mesh?
to throw
webs, silken, aglow
with dew-pearls, o'er thy snow—
stars gather'd in heaven's garden fresh?

Why rend
from end to end
those Eastern curtains? Bend
o'er me, strange Queen!
Thy face
hath lost its grace?
Fly, Siren, fly this place—
some foe destroyeth thee unseen!

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

The sun!
The morn begun!
The stars blown out each one!
Day's diadems
flash bright.
The Witch-of-night,
the Siren moony-white
hath vanish'd in a flare of gems!



Awake are the birds,
awake is my heart,
forgotten the words
which made Night's magical spell but now;

and happier am I,
for near me Thou art:
so sweet and so shy,
my Bride! Truth sweeter than Dreams art Thou!



Nocturne

Evening hath come, mystery-fraught,
stilling the feverous pulses of thought.
Darling, I pray—often thou cheatest
Time of his minutes that silently fly—
sing me a song, sing me thy sweetest!
hearts will ache they know not why—
ache—I know not why.

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

Life is a void, lonely and black ;
lasts but a moment the meteor's track ;
all that we do, all that we suffer,
 lost in the gloom of a desolate sky !
But for thy songs seas had been rougher—
 sing then, darling, sing nor sigh
 seeing daylight die !

Visions of strength, visions of peace,
visions of love when our sorrow shall cease,
visions of faith, visions of splendor,
 all, indistinct, in the twilight flit by.
Give me thy hand—gentle and tender,
 Darling, sing ! . . . They all draw nigh—
 sing, and heaven is nigh !

('90)



Autumn Sadness

Sad deemest thou the glorious death of day,
 when the last beams, caught by horizon-mist,
 flare out in crimson, rose, gold, amethyst—
the prismatic secrets of the living ray ?
And sad the carnival of colors gay
 wherewith, at the year's set, the leaves insist
 they too are of the sunny Colorist
light-hearted children tho' the frost gainsay ?
Sad is the vast laugh of the wind-clear'd sky,
 the waste of shine on symmetries reveal'd
 in the stripp'd boughs ? Blasphemer, why proclaim
 with thine own mouth thy spirit's piteous shame ?
For still the brave, and the proud who dare not yield,
divine the joy of dying ere they die !

('00)

Lyrics and Occasional Verse

Frost-Work

'T was a chill, chill night, and my Love slept fast,
on her warm, soft couch asleep—
and a love-lorn glance at her bedside cast,
I did steal tip-toe to peep
thro' the moonlit window with woodbine hung,
which in spring blooms rich, but now
with its close-twin'd twigs, that their fretwork flung
on the panes, seem'd sad somehow.

It was still. Th' tree-tops in their ice-mail shone,
and the ground crispt hard and keen,
and the stars got cold as the hours crept on,
and the tired moon drows'd between
indistinct blue hills. So I pray'd friend Frost,
as my soul breath'd warm good-byes,
for my own sweet Love, who in sleep lay lost,
to record Love's hallowed sighs.

Then I stole forth sure that she soon must know
how I watcht all night anear—
nor disturb'd glad dreams as the moon set slow,
and the stars droop't 'reft of cheer.
Ere the day dawn'd fully a sunbeam sought
from her eyelids sleep to shame—
for the hoar panes glister'd where Frost's skill wrought
in a fern-frond wreath my name!

('90)



Impromptu

To common Seekers—nothing but a drop
of water, shaken on a clover's head
of purple bloom, near which the sparrows hop
in glee that they are feather'd well, and fed ;
to Roamers, there, at loving distance—stop !—
a tear of heaven, a star of holy dread—
And yet, the best is never seen, or said.

('92)



KOOLZFI-DIGOFI-H



WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE

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