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THE BLIND MAN AT THE
WINDOW AND OTHER POEMS

THE BLIND MAN AT THE WINDOW

AND OTHER POEMS

By
STARK YOUNG

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THE GRAFTON PRESS
NEW YORK MCMVI

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To
DAVID HORACE BISHOP

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THE BLIND MAN AT THE WINDOW

SONG

The birds troop black across the sky,
Their wings are many, the sky is one,
The little lamps come twinkling out
After the lordly sun.

The yellow lights lie on the hill,
The lights are gone, the hill doth bide,
O love, the fancies in my heart
Go roaming far and wide,

And golden dreams come gleaming by,
The dreams are many, my heart is one,
The hill is dark, but love brings light
After the day is done.

SPRING SONG

Come every lad and lass to sing
Upon my right, upon my left,
It bloweth now the early spring,
The distant skyline it is cleft
With tender green, come sing, oh, sing!

Blue, blue the waters that do part
The banks that wind so secretly,
Where Cardinal with burning heart
Will mourn him for Anemone.

O Cardinal, wilt thou not know
 She waited long and since is dead,
 Waited long for thee and said,
 "He cometh not and Spring doth go."

But life from us doth also pass,
 Come sing with me, come, oh, heigho,
 Come every lad and every lass,
 The year goes fast, the year goes slow,
 And winter follows flowering.
 And up and down and to and fro,
 Come sing with me the lusty spring!

II

Blue is the sky and white clouds drift,
 And violet-caps from leaves upstart,
 The peach blossoms they blow, sweetheart,
 The petals faint and fall and sift
 Upon the wind and everywhere.
 But on thy cheek blows yet more fair
 The season's rose, thy lashes lift
 From eyes of blue, but no cloud there,
 And Spring it sitteth on thy hair.

Ah, love, a morrow and they go,
 For rose from petals it doth die,
 But where the wind that e'er will blow
 Such blossoms back into the sky?
 Then wilt thou not my true love be
 While spring is yet with thee and me?

SONG

There is a garden in my heart,
 My soul hath part, and thou hast part,
 My soul and thou and I.
 And marigold and columbine

Grow plenteous and intertwine
 With rosemary and hollyhocks,
 And heart's-ease, rue, and scarlet phlox,
 And all the old-time flowers blow
 Within this garden, and I know
 Each violet and every rose,
 Finding therein a sweet repose,
 My soul and thou and I.

SONG

White rain and green fields bring
 Lost words and memories,
 Many a half-forgotten thing.
 And heart for heart a-hungered cries,
 And the old loves come again
 Back with the spring.

The winter chills and damps depart,
 And warm the tender winds caress,
 And stir within the thoughtless heart
 Reminders of old tenderness,
 And ties long broken bind again.

Oh, sweet to watch the garden blow,
 And orchards cloud the upland places,
 Soft the young days come and go,
 And the long line of bygone faces
 Draws from the void of absence again.

Oh, sweet and sad the days will pass,
 And barren winter claim his own,
 Our lives are shadows on the grass,
 O friend, O love, where thou art gone,
 Speak to me from the void again,
 In the sad spring.

WHIPPOORWILL

Lo, again there in the wood
 And shadows of leaves he sings,
 And out of his secret covert
 The night air softly brings
 His long wail, under the hill,
 "Whippoorwill!"

The stream it runneth by
 And murmurs, sing whippoorwill!
 And from the dusk of the grass
 It flashes and glitters, and still
 The golden song and the stream
 Echoing as in a dream, —
 Whippoorwill.

And risen above the hill
 To travel the wide heaven
 The fair round moon, and again
 The bird, and haply even
 The queen moon hearkens his singing
 To her silver plain upwinging.
 Whippoorwill, whippoorwill,
 Under the hill.

Methinketh where
 Thou leanest on thy ledge
 Haply the moon looketh fair
 From this same heaven and shineth
 On the braids of thy pale hair.
 Ah, lady, from thy heaven,
 Takest no thought of me
 Who lift my song up here?
 But time and the stream do flee,
 And never long wilt hear the song
 Under the summer hill,
 Whippoorwill, whippoorwill.

THE LITTLE GARDEN

If you were here with me I think
In this old-fashioned place,
They all would say that here for us
There were not ample space.

But here I trow is all we need,
This little garden old,
With hollyhocks and trumpet vine,
And many a story told

Of knights that loved, and ghosts that walked
Within this high wall's close,
And shades of many a dim romance
And many a faded rose.

I see the twilight settling down,
The smells grow faint, night-sounds upstart,
I have the peace your presence gives,
I have your singing in my heart.

The spring lags here and waits for you,
Come, and who knows how long,
How many a summer we may have,
How many an evening song?

How many a spring may come and go?
But ere this spring hath blown
Come be my love while we may have
This garden all our own.

SONG

Blue sky and golden tree
And birds all singing merrily,
Blue sky and laughing wind,
Old winter lags behind.

My lady with her yellow robe
 Goes with her bright hair flying,
 And follow I with my good lute
 And sing the season's dying.

Gray sky and naked tree,
 And shadows dim on snowy lea,
 Black sky and icy wood,
 Sweet autumn's in her shroud.
 My lady with her yellow hair
 Is in her dark grave lying,
 And I'll go weep and tune my lute
 To the winter wind's drear crying.

REAPER'S SONG

The sunlight breaks across the waste,
 And lights the purple-shadowed fen,
 Oho, my reapers, reapers, wake,
 And swing the scythe with me again!

What though to merchants be the gain,
 And labour starve to fatten trade,
 To richen us the golden sheaves
 And music of the clanging blade.

What though the money make the man,
 And conscience knuckle in to wrong,
 To us the majesty of toil,
 And God within the sunrise song.

So up, my reapers, with the sun,
 And follow me across the fen,
 Oho, my reapers, reapers wake,
 And swing the scythe with me again!

SUNSET SONG

The woodlands wide in darkling purples lie,
 The sun's last splendours faint across the sky,
 And fallows in the vesper mists are lying,
 And from the brooding world the swallows flying
 Far out beyond the outer dark are crying.
 The tinkle of the sheep-bells gathers blown
 Up from the listening lowlands overgrown
 With ancient yellow sedge; above,
 A silence and the strange half-hearted birth
 Of stars; below, the mystery of Earth,
 And the loneliness of this time-weary world —
 What dost thou seek? Nay, turn thee back,
 Once a soul died for lack
 Of understanding and of love.

ORPHEUS

At evening he came, Orpheus, pale with grief,
 Into the fields, and saw the fading hills
 On one hand, and on one saw Hesperus,
 Sweet star of home, slope to the wine-hued sea.
 Once had he sung such godlike harmonies
 As set each stone and every tree and herb
 To leave their rooted spots for rhythmic bliss,
 And made the air all jocund with his mirth.
 But late his song hath changed since thou wert dead,
 Since thou wert dead and lost, Eurydice!
 Now from the brakes the nightingale took up
 Her tragic plaint of passionate mischance,
 And in the dusk the never-resting tide
 Sobbed on the shore. Likewise young Orpheus
 Made his moan, and sang to his sad heart.
 And as he sang his voice, among the strings
 Wandering, wed with the notes, as when some bird
 Mingles his carol with a fountain's fall.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, oh, piercing sweet!
 The night bird left her chaunt, and the virgin air
 Yielded her all unto such ravishment.
 The timid deer halted and stood, wide-eyed,
 At the wood's edge, tiger and ounce,
 And mountain pards came beautiful and swift
 To hear him singing in the starry night.
 Nor had the wood deaf ears unto his notes.
 Poppies awaked and frail anemone
 For trembling shook her petals all adown.
 And crocus buds, as may have maidens' hearts,
 Burst ere their time for ecstasy of woe.
 Young bays and laurels shed their dew, trees sighed,
 And, answering, the wind among the pines
 Shuddered and moaned. Far-off, sea-voices called,
 And from the waves the shadowy seafolk rose
 Beating their breasts that grief should be so sweet.
 So roamed he about Tænarus, nigh the place
 Whereby the dead depart the light of sun.
 Within he heard, muffled as through wool,
 Noise of despair, smiting of hands and cries,
 And knew that love and loss brought him to death.
 The entrance darkened to his mortal sight.
 Ah, never yet, alas, hath man from there
 Brought word of what might fall, what terrors^{oo} wait
 To shatter our undying element!
 "The Olympian Might doth send this sorrow on us,
 And breaks us even as a mountain reed,
 Crushed by a rock shook idly from the summit!"
 So broke his song as one that hath his heart
 Gripping his throat; and he cried, "Hearken, O Gods!
 Darkness and calling sea surround me here!
 Look on me brought to death and hell by love!
 Oh, soften to some pity! I know not where
 I go, nor what may come. Shuddering dreams,
 Dim shapes and phantasms horrible! I do
 Forget mine ancient fears and mortuary dread,

Seeing my soul is seared to flame with love.
 Whether I die or live I care not. Life
 Without her is death, and by her death were life.
 Eurydice, thou all of my dead life!
 I will go down into the regions of the dead,
 And seek if haply I may find her shade
 Amid the pallid throng. Yet will I try
 What charms belong to love and harmony
 Even in the cold ear of death. So struck
 And sang, and entered hell, passed where
 Lay Cerberus, curlike, whining at the strains,
 By Acheron with its clamorous banks, by Chaos
 And Phlegethon, Cocytus, and the Stygian Marsh,
 Heard shrieks of the damned in Tartarus, the lash
 Of whips, curses and cries, and underneath,
 The hoarse rivers of hell rumbling in gloom.
 And far beyond he saw the fields of death,
 And in the purple light the blessed seats,
 With forms there walking amid asphodels,
 And flowers pale as lilies at the dawn,
 Along the gentle river of forgetfulness.
 Whereon he came before the throne of Dis.
 There by her dusky spouse and garbed alike,
 In sable robe and burning anadem,
 Persephone, the Queen of Hades, sat,
 Like a fair flower blown into some darksome pit.
 Then Plutus spake, huge thunder tones
 Like mutterings underground of hidden force:
 "O man, who art thou, say, thus enterèd,
 That letst not light pass through thee as the rest,
 But castest shadow as thou living wert?"
 At this the damned left off their wail and neared,
 The happy souls came with their white-bound brows,
 Seeking the wherefore of his coming.
 Whether driven by wandering over seas,
 Or some god's word, or bitter fortunings,
 That he should come unto the sunless realm.

Then somewhat thus he spake, alas, all words
 Were faded pictures of that fabric rich:
 "One lost between the strands of life and death,
 Flesh as thou sayst, but dead in soul. Wouldst thou
 Back from the night give me Eurydice!
 A trembling runs through all my limbs
 To speak her name. Haply thou hearst me call,
 Eurydice, O Eurydice!
 But give her back to me, thou God, and there
 Is that divine in me will hymn thy fame
 And thee through all the worlds of time; for love
 Is concrete with the soul, and in it bides
 Even after death. Love richens earth's dull life,
 And even here doth make these souls though blest
 Long ever to return to the slow flesh.
 We are blurred imprints of some Deity,
 Dim patterns of a higher line and form,
 Some Spirit through the members of the world,
 That moves wide heaven, and earth, and the marble sea,
 And lends a fire unto the seed of things
 That they may perish not. And in our souls
 This fire ethereal is love of Man and Him.
 Eurydice, O Eurydice!
 Ay, many a day upon the hills I strove
 To sing thy soul back to its cerements!
 Once in a dream she came and touched my brow,
 Oh, act more sad and sweet than that lost kiss
 That Cypris unto dying Adonis gave.
 Haply my words are vain to thee, a God;
 Stern lookst thou, as to fail my sense. Ay, suns
 Know not the struggle of brief candle flames!
 I know not if they be, I only know
 That I am frail, and grief more sharp than death!
 Canst thou not hear me call among the dead?
 Eurydice, O Eurydice!"
 As if his matter were too large for human
 Utterance he ceased, and when he ceased

Persephone had risen. A tear fell down
 Upon her breast. "O Orpheus, thou knowest
 The secret of the world, the soul of Law,
 The power and the might, of Force the top
 And pinnacle." Thus spake the Queen of Dis,
 Hearing the moan he made. But Plutus sat,
 Seeming apart, and on his gloomy brow
 The cloud of the god's remoteness. Thus he spake:
 "How this may be I know not that thou sayest,
 Such matter were too weak for ears immortal.
 But I do own the sweetness of thy song,
 And she doth brood, my queen, Persephone.
 And through these wretched shades a flame is sent,
 Long fallen to ashes, of their earthly loves,
 As when my brother Zeus his lightning stirs
 Within the barren air. And at my feet
 The Fates forget to measure life and death.
 It may be that this love, as she hath said,
 Is of all Law the soul, of Force the top,
 I know it not. But I do feel a power
 I have not felt before. A Strength that moves
 The very bowels of hell unto its will,
 And I, a god, am rendered powerless.
 Go then, and she shall follow thee behind
 Unto thy hearth. But temper thy passion yet.
 The fruit of great love should be strength. Therefore
 Look thou not backward when she followeth,
 But keep thine eye fixed to thy purpose hence,
 Or else this love, this tower of thy strength,
 For all the wonders it hath worked in hell,
 Will fall by its own weight. For know thou well
 Even love hath bounds, and to the immortal gods
 The bounds of temperance are the seat of law."
 And Orpheus sang no more, but went. And as
 He went he heard her voice, Persephone,
 That called to him and said: "O Orpheus,
 So may the torch that burneth in thy soul

Find stuff within thy purpose' hold to light
 Thee till thou comest to the Eternal Sun."
 And in her voice were tears and loneliness
 For human lips there in her mother's land.
 He leading, with the passion of his strings,
 Eurydice amid the pangs of hell,
 They passed the cries and curses of the damned,
 So sped adown the corridors of death
 Through the white splendour of the ivory gates.
 But when they came to where the outer world
 Broke like a dawning on the inner gloom,
 And earth's keen air renewed earth's heat in him,
 Desire to look on her, or anguish lest
 She followed not, swept over him, like flame,
 Shot madness like an arrow through his brain.
 His harp crashed and fell from him, he raised
 His arms as one that leaps from his bed in fever,
 Shrieked, and turned, but in the gloom he saw
 Eurydice, where like a ghost of twilight
 Stealing from the darksome earth, she passed,
 And faded from his sight.

HAMLET

Drearily, drearily over the world
 Saileth the silver moon,
 Wearily, wearily waves uphurled
 Around the sallow dune
 Lap in the spaces where shadows flee
 Breaking the silences born of the sea.

A dreamer of dreams enhungered sate,
 And bared his soul like an olden harp,
 While steadily blew the winds of Fate,
 Blew unceasingly bleak and sharp
 Over the strings of his harp.

SLEEP

Ah, the long sweet rest
 When we shall lie down
 For a sleep — for a sleep
 Without dreams, without waking,
 When the chill of the earth will cool
 The heart's fever, the dark of the earth
 Give respite to eyes that are weary
 Of lights; when the sun nor the stars
 Shall mark passage of time,
 But in the dark stillness the minutes
 Run on into hours, the hours forget
 Themselves into eternity.
 When the lustiness of moon and the silence
 Of midnight are one, and the questions
 And mysteries, the answers and truths
 Join hands for an æon.
 When the shadows of the vast unforgotten
 Shall lean in and be blent
 With the gleam of the great forever,
 And we shall slip back from the thoughts
 Of men, lie down in the long, sweet rest,
 In the long, long sleep,
 Without dreams, without waking.

LAST LETTER

When I am dead I hope that you will come
 And look upon my face, haply then
 All the life-passions will be gone, and you
 May see more of my soul's self mirrored there.
 And if you come here you will find the women
 Whispering and gibbering about, scared out of their wits
 To see me, who but lately laughed and mocked
 With them, lying here dead. No lust
 Nor revels here to-night, till the master gets

Out of the house the cold clod that has served
 His purpose and helped swell his gains. I cursed
 You, and you went, for many told me how
 That you were false, naming the woman, still
 You swore not so, but I heard not. Whether
 You did wrong or right I know not yet,
 But rather choose to side with you than them,
 That you were true — that's my woman's pride
 That still is quick in me, though I die here
 Like a dog. I should have taken you
 Not for what you did but what you aimed
 To do. All your thoughts were large, and your soul
 Beat high, seeing the strife of flesh and spirit
 That God hath placed in us. There's the place
 I failed, and there's the trouble with us women
 In this world, there. For I had neither end
 Nor work nor aim save only you, and when
 I lost you then was I as wax in the hands
 Of every passer-by, and so am here.
 They will put flowers in my hand perhaps,
 One of the painted roses from the tawdry
 Mantelpiece, and maybe when this heat
 And heaviness is gone from my blood, I shall
 Have back some of the old fairness you used
 To prate about, if you will come. Goodnight.

SONNET

Let not us young men of this living world
 Sit still and hear a modest silence preached,
 Humility and self-distrust — grow curled
 With bowing deference and tread the pleached
 Walks of convention! Nay — let us once whirled
 Into the race, with reins for heights where reached
 The soul in golden intervals and hurled
 Its chariot on clouds, stand unimpeached
 In ruggedness of youth before the host

Of men and gods, like that deep man of Thrace,
 One Thamyris, who dared his harp to boast
 And song against the Nine, and scorned the loss
 That they might lay upon him, holding his face
 Uplifted to the hills of Tenedos.

LAST LEAVES

When I pass out
 Let me not be a broken leaf that dies
 And falls at night down through the inmost gloom,
 But catch the colour of the evening skies
 And drift out on the after-glow and bloom
 As I pass out.

ODE IN MISSISSIPPI'S TROUBLED HOUR

*Poem read before the Alumni Society of the University
 of Mississippi, June, 1904*

I heard a voice as from a burning plain,
 Up from the region of Lake Pontchartrain,
 Clear to the northward line with Tennessee,
 Cry, "Woe, ah, woe," and "Woe, ah, woe" again.
 The cotton lands are white with flower,
 The cornfields signal with their long
 Rich-laden arms, and now the hour
 Of plenty is at hand, and we are strong.
 God passeth not his people by.
 But ever comes the cry,
 In the sweet season of the summer rain,
 As though from lips of arid, sun-parched pain,
 Of "Woe, ah, woe!" and "Woe, ah, woe!" again.
 Again the season with her promise fair,
 And up from the palmlands and the southern mere,
 The birds with promise of the year's increase
 Go thronging northward through the golden air.
 But still the moaning of my people comes,
 The shadow grows, and ever growing looms

O'er all the fair length of our land, and near
 And nearer — as the moon's eclipse that slow
 Blots the white morning of her sphere.
 Rape is afoot, and reason it must go,
 Our women are not safe,
 Slow-footed Justice drags, and men's minds chafe,
 And mobs and violence and crime
 Increase and lessen not with passing time.

O God, that we have striven Thou dost know,
 And in our poverty have wrought to give them schools
 E'en as our children's, we have wrought, and lo,
 The outcome of it all must brand us fools!
 How has their freedom gifted them?
 How has religion lifted them?
 The answer cometh sure,
 But still must we endure,
 O God, and find no balsam for the loathsome sore!
 And still we work, and still it festers more and more.

It was the outside hand that stirred the strife,
 The tongue without that made race-passion rife,
 And if they were but silent we should feel
 Less hatred for the blacks. Some year in life
 For each of us hath memories to keep,
 Of some brown playmate good to laugh or weep,
 Some lullaby, some old black mammy who
 Has rocked the eyelids that we loved to sleep.

It is the outside hand that stirs the strife,
 The tongue without that makes race-passion rife,
 For some there be that stand without and cry,
 "Make them your equals, put injustice by!"
 Fools that from sorry books must take their creed,
 Nor yet have lived with us to strive and bleed!
 The two bloods are apart
 As white from black, as castle from the mart,

And is it wonderful to them that think?
 Nay, oil and water cannot mix I say,
 And if they should, what galling acrid drink
 To vex the throats that must drink, yea or nay.

Time was when sainted Pilgrim fathers made
 By selling blacks to us a move that paid,
 And presently their grandsons wept aloud,
 But kept the profits of their grandsires' trade.
 Raised slave to citizen and bowed
 Down citizen to slave, and lo,
 The sons of them that flung the burning brand
 Teach us who snatch it from this wretched land
 How we may not be burned — ah, no,
 Outsiders shall not dictate so!
 The problem is our own,
 On us, on us alone
 God brings the work to bear,
 And if we shirk it now, beware, beware!
 For Chickasaw and Natchez they are dead,
 And Choctaw and Biloxi whither fled?
 But still the rivers east and west do part,
 And still old Nanih Waiya lifts his wooded head.
 And Tallahatchie twines
 Round the willows and the vines,
 And the Waters'-Father flows
 With yellow tribute to the southern sea.
 And Yazoo or Chocchuma his red hand
 Hath played his part and is laid low.
 God's purpose changeth not, and we
 Must work His purpose or must go
 With Chata's children from this summer land.

What if He purpose that we now should bring
 Upward another race from travailing,
 To bear from body foul with old disease
 A new child, with the race's late, late spring?

Granted the spring be late,
 Yet surely it must come,
 Or God has stumbled in His path, His voice is dumb.
 But can the negro rise, one asks,
 And doubts his portion in the scheme of Fate.
 Such question makes him brute with human tasks,
 Such question treats of brute but not of man,
 Such question doubts the soundness of God's plan.
 Aliens know not aught and would dictate
 The solving of the riddle, and fools prate.
 We know that we know not, O God, and pray
 That Thou wilt give us answer if we wisely wait.

I hear new voices from the tropic sea,
 Winging their way across the boundary
 Where all the yesterdays to-morrows meet,
 Trooping abreast with bright-clad pinions free
 That all the white, wide air with song is sweet.
 And one cries: "Lift up your hearts, O People, lift
 Your voices and your hearts all up to God,
 Who out of travail hath the nations brought
 That watch the level of His guiding-rod.
 The negro must be raised as God sees fit,
 The evil must be cured as God sees best,
 And we must strive on yet to better it,
 Seeing therein some yet unknown behest."
 And one with sterner voice: "Ye may not know
 How much the fault is yours in all this woe,
 How much the fault is others' and how much
 The fault is God's, and is not so,
 But is the gradual long working-out
 Of some large purpose." Nay,
 The world shall not go wrong
 While God lives still.
 Be strong, be strong!
 We are His tools, and shame
 It were if we should break beneath His hand.

Shall Mississippi stand
 And shudder in the hall
 Before the court of her great task? The band
 Of feasters weave the garlands now,
 Ah, no, she shall not shrink! Her brow
 Is scarred with buffets but unbent,
 Still will she sweat and struggle on her way
 Till God give dawn to the victorious day!

She hath stood firm where other strengths would fail,
 For once our fathers followed that slim trail
 Where panther threaded with his lonely track
 The jungle thickness of the forest's pale;
 They heard no terror in strange winds nor read
 Danger on desert prairie, Spanish rack
 And Indian arrow left them unafraid.
 Then came the horror of the civil strife
 Defiling this fair land with kindred blood,
 Then the more brutal after-period
 Of carpet-bag, but Mississippi stood
 Immeasurably calm, and wrought from all
 Her own uplifting to a higher plane.
 So shall she now win glory out of pain
 And hear again the ancient trumpet-call.

Her calm deep reverence doth fill,
 With throats that will not silence, plain and hill,
 Hear all her rivers praising God, a throng
 Serving with slow, deep motion like her own,
 And every mist-hung morning lake,
 And rivulet in covert brake,
 Glows myriad ripples tinkling into song

Still has she vespers murmured in the pines,
 And taper-tressèd cypress for woe's shrines,
 And still her oaks bespeak the strength of man,
 Still falls the fruitful rain, the harvest floor

Is heaped, and still the great Gulf Mexican
Breaks ever northward on a scented shore.

And though the South must bear the Afric scourge,
The chastisement may leave her yet more fair,
The furnace of her agony may purge
Away the dross and leave the pure gold there.
She is God's chosen instrument to gain
His Purpose' end, great travail needs great pain,
But all shall yet be solved if God be God,
Nor all the circling scheme of years in vain.

SWALLOWS

O swallow, swallow in the dusk,
Who skimkest the glassy pond,
Circling and dipping with the rest
As if 'twere naught beyond,
Dipping thy wings in very joy
As if 'twere naught beyond,
Canst thou tell me what thou art,
Thou summer wings with summer heart?
Or how He made thee thus to fly,
And sent thee with a season?
Or haply thou scornest reason,
And makest no vain search
For whither and whence — nay, haply thou
Art happiest in thy flight,
Most joyous when thou singest,
No questioning thou bringest,
And only I in the coming night
Question God's world, and cry.
Thou canst not tell me what thou art,
Nor how He made thee thus to fly
And leave when thou wouldst the clod,
But — swallow, if thou couldst but so,
Small as thou art, then might I know
More of myself and more of God.

TO A MOUSE

Wee visitor, who steal
 Like a little puff of smoke
 Down the shadow-line,
 How your eyes shine!
 Why do you tremble, do you feel
 That one will hurt you? Who has spoke
 Harsh to your mother to 'member so long?
 Sure you are yet too young for wrong.

Busy nibbler, little mouse,
 Sleek and round and gray,
 What do you do all day
 In your twilight house?

And what do you do all night
 When men lie sleeping in their beds?
 Creep out when the starlight
 Comes by the window, or pale moon sheds
 A dim pathway upon the floor?
 Dost thou flit in other forms across
 Men's dreams forevermore?
 Where are the faces then that smile
 And fade from the dreams that mortals know,
 And tell me whose are the voices that call
 Long and sweet when sleep-winds blow.
 When dost thou sleep, what minute-while?
 Nay, what if thou art but a dream after all,
 Thou little traveller.

What sorrow dost thou know,
 Thou tiny reveller that dartest
 Like an arrow to and fro
 Through the troubled day, and partest
 When thou wouldst from the light.
 What hast thou heard of death?

Too still a thing for thee to learn!
 But who knows not that death will come,
 Spite of human hearts that yearn,
 And is man's last, long sleep.
 Ah, wherefore shouldst thou weep?
 Our life is real, all real,
 Bound are we to our destined home,
 And must go on from thought to thought,
 And ever word of joy or pain
 Comes thronging through the weary brain,
 And who hath found the end he sought?
 But thou mayst leave the toil and fret
 For where the din with peace is furled,
 Mayst always find the hush again
 Of thy shadow-world.

DEATH AND THE GHOST

To Ethel Pool

Southward the tempest sitteth dark
 And binds the lightning in his hair,
 "Good faith, old man, what make you?" Hark,
 The spirits ride upon the air.

"I must not stay," is what he saith,
 "I that am dead walk with my wraith
 On the moor to-night!" I looked beside
 And saw a thin and moonish light
 Playing between earth and the wide
 Of unneared heaven. What strange sight
 To see a wraith attend his ghost.

"I loved not the sweet earth that the sun
 Makes glad, nor the seasons and the sky,
 Nor the fair days slipping one by one,
 Like beads upon a rosary
 Through the frail fingers of a nun.

But on the road mine eyes were fixed,
 Beating the path unto success,
 And the happiness men glean from dreams,
 And the secret mysteries and dreams
 Men tell of, passed me by I guess.

“Therefore my soul for weariness
 Prisoned in the sluggish clay,
 Sometimes brake bonds and lived apart,
 Leaving me to my brutish way,
 For soul must live as well as flesh.
 I scarce did feel his absence then,
 But ever my vile bones quaked at death,
 As a dog will fight for the heat and breath
 That he calls life. Therefore when
 My body died and greedy hands
 Put me away from the place I had won,
 My soul-wraith died not but lived on,
 Not having had his meed of life.
 For cause nor strife, nor blame nor praise
 Was mine, nor strove I for good or evil,
 But only for myself always.
 Therefore, alack, my God hath said,
 Not having lived ye may not die, —
 I that to God cannot cry!

“Jesu there in Paradise,
 I may not enter those fair skies
 Lest I befoul your crystal courts
 With my life’s putrid story,
 And ’gainst me Hell’s gates are shut
 Lest by me even the damned take glory.
 O God, for the death I one time feared!
 And ever thou phantom goest with me,
 O starved soul, and thou mayst not die,
 Immortal and without mercy.”
 The wraith light it burned up and grew,

His spirit locks fell silverly,
His spirit fears fell too.

'Tis a long wail like cranes that cry
Southward their way in the bleak sky,
Oh, desolate flights, oh, weary wings,
O'er the endless marshes of the world!
'Tis a long wail and gibberings,
Hoarse cries and lifted, smiting hands,
And the whirlwind bears them over the sands.
The ghost he calleth as the tumult nears:
"Hail and alas, I come!
Woe, woe! dead naughts in the world's upward sum,
Woe — dead lives and living deaths!"
His anguish pierced the hoarse-dinned blast,
The dead hands smiting and the woes grew still
That grief more mad than their own should seem,
And he that cried swayed to the stream,
And to the fierce wind bent, and passed.

The log burns low and bluishly,
And shadows from the rafters' gloom
Into the corner crannies hie,
And haunt the open of my room.
The flickering heart-flames fall and leap,
Slow dropping round the eaves of sleep
The rain falls silently.
And through the thick of night and stoor
Wails the shrill song of the phantom wight,
And his wraith's mad yelling on the moor.
The dead keep wassail there to-night.

THE SEEKERS

It was a wreathèd morn where all the air
Seemed to tread softly o'er the mild white snow,
While the obscurèd sun blurred the gray East

With gold. Serene as the vision of the placid
 Slope, calm as my steps upon the noiseless
 Snow, serene and calm was all my mood
 As one that taketh farewell of unrest,
 And sets his face to a new peace beyond.
 But that time may not stay — hark! lo, 'tis gone!
 And now, alas, what sound disturbs the marble
 Silence of the morn, what hoarse and shrilly throats
 Are these, what clangour shatters the soft peace?
 The echoes of the wood are all of grief.
 And these that come, who may they be, that break
 Into the wood and trample the still snow,
 And smite together their extended palms,
 And from parched lips send up their raucous wailing?
 Wild are their locks and their round eyes are wild,
 Most like the sad rout at the gate of Hell.
 Old men and youths, old men and youths and women,
 With diverse raiment as of many lands,
 What sorrow goadeth them to such lament?
 Voices that call and searching eyes and curses,
 Multitudinous tumult as when breakers plunge
 O'er the long stretches of the whitening shore.
 Women in mute agony with empty
 Aching breasts for Him they may not find,
 Some in their hands clutch broken toys, and one
 Her child hath clasped — so passed they speechless by,
 As having not words to name their hurt, till that
 The babe wailed in infant pain, and all
 The women shrieked and loosed their crying hearts,
 Unbound by a child's voice. Mad youth and age
 Called to the elements to answer them,
 And shook the dull heaven with woful utterance
 Of prayers and wailing. So sped by, and gave
 Room to the press behind, nor seemed an end
 To them that came and went. And one there was
 That seemèd somewhat taller than the crowd,
 Uncouth his white beard fell upon his breast,

His hair was white, and on his outworn cloak
 Dust of all climes, and on his sandal shoon.
 And from his girdle hung a flagon wrought
 Most rarely out of alabaster stone,
 With figures carved of sage men, and their brows
 Crowned with bays, that ever filed past
 Climbing an endless stair, where underneath
 Was written KNOWLEDGE. In it a bright liquor
 Was, that through it glowed, and, ever anon
 He raised it to his lips and drank anew,
 But could not quench his thirst, for every draught
 Kindled a fresh longing, as some strong cup
 Doth vex the throat scorched with a bitter drought.
 But when he had drunk, the liquor in the cup
 Was no whit less, but fairer in its hue.
 Then with new draughts and new replenishment
 He madder grew, and smote with frenzied palm
 His brow, and in the dinned air lifted up
 His voice. Hoarse was his cry with o'erlong silence,
 Or shrill uplifting in immortal pain,
 And with it all the seekers paused, while that
 The twilight wood resounded with his woe.
 "Alas, alas! I sent armed force to march
 Against my city and destroy, because
 I knew not whence I came. Vain, all vain,
 The search began in wonder and doth end
 In wonder. The swift years pass, woe, woe to him
 That seeketh and may not find!" His speech left off,
 And then as one roused forth in the street at dark
 By a danger-bell stares at another whom
 He meets, so, when his grief was spent, the others
 Drew them near and stood with narrowed brows,
 And all the voices in the wood were mute.
 And I, "Wherefore, oh, wherefore must thou thus
 Wander forever in divine unrest,
 Whom dost thou seek? Whom with so great search
 That spies into the corners of the world?"

He hearkened as it were a distant call,
 And bent his eye on me even as an old tentmaker
 Peers at twilight for his needle's eye,
 And cried, "Oh, say if thou mayst, thou dreamer rapt,
 Whither he goeth whom I seek!" And I,
 "Friend, is it God thou seekest? He is here."
 His gaze burned with a cruel yearning, and
 He turned from me and set upon his search,
 Yet bent not humble brow, but seemed to hold
 His inner hell in grand disdain, and like
 To him that rather wins than loses. Passed,
 And the rest with him, that once again the wood
 Shook with the clamour of the starvèd breasts
 Of them that sought and knew not if they found.

TO CHOPIN. HIS PRELUDE IN C MINOR

(Life speaks)

Cover my shoulders with the golden tissue,
 Set about my hair the rope of pearl,
 Clasp the yellow slippers on my feet,
 And round the naked ivory of my arm
 The silver coil. Smother the flare of the sponce,
 And blow out the tremulous taper, none save the lamps
 Of heaven shall light his advent. Lo, he cometh!
 Cometh the bridegroom of fair life! Day wanes,
 See how the moon shakes out her silver raiment!
 Cometh the bridegroom of fair life! Gleam, gleam,
 My slippers underneath the violet hem!
 So let me stand beside my couch to meet
 Him. I shall meet this Cæsar, I
 Shall go with him, his bride. The heavy arm
 Of Charlemagne, the brawn of Eric, all
 The valour of the mighty dead that throng
 The world forever, all long since have passed
 Into his sinews, and upon his brow
 The beauty of dead times is gathered, culled

From gardens where the roses blow most sweet.
And she whose jewelled voice broke like a shower
Of spirit pearls upon a spirit harp
The starry silence of the dusky Nile
Hath rendered unto him his meed alike
With Thais, Helen and Semiramis,
With Guenevere and Isoude and the Maid
Of Astolat — so have they passed them all
Beneath his hand, and he hath garnered all
Their treasures to himself. The sapphire peace
Of the wide sea, the snow-rapt silentness
Of mountains, and the deep repose of lone,
World-weary pyramids hath residence
Within his eye, yea, how his glance doth mock
Them with its large eternity. He knoweth how
To give for trouble and despair low quietness,
The sense of full completion; he doth bring
A respite from long weariness and tears,
And unto whom remember and do sigh
He ministers that they do close their eyes
In dim forgetfulness and an untroubled
Sleep. So shall I sit 'beside him hearing
Answers to the questions that return
Like haunting spectres in the brain of man —
Time and eternity, the bounds of space,
And those innumerable mysteries
That fret men out of rest shall he make clear
To me, even as an open book in the sun.
Or perhaps to make the hour more sweet
He will distil upon the flower of my thoughts
The blessed dew of memory, and I
Shall kneel by Lethe, shedding in the gloom
And musical low ripple of the flowing
Dark the amber brilliance of my tears,
Remembering the fruited days of Earth.
Happiest this, for ever on the rose
That is most glad and fair doth linger dew.

He cometh, lo the bridegroom of fair life!
 See how the moon shakes down the bridal raiment!
 He hangeth as star above the gate of heaven,
 He smiteth his lyre upon the boundless air,
 The radiance of his flambeau, dazzling bright,
 Gleams through the windows of my spirit's eyes,
 And the shadow-laden, cool night-wind springs up.
 Shut to the casement of my soul — Death!

WRITTEN AT MY MOTHER'S GRAVE

It was in the early spring you fell asleep,
 For I brought violets to your dear hands
 Next day when they had laid you in the still
 Dark room. And now from travelling many lands,
 From many a stranger shore of level sands,
 Made musical with waves, I come to fill
 My weary eyes with my own native scene.
 And now once more the spring brings everywhere
 The warm southwind, these quiet trees are green,
 And all along the ancient graveyard wall,
 Amid the tangled sedge, the daisies bear
 Their crowding stars. So all the memories
 I have of you are green and fresh and pure,
 Of that sweet childhood season when the flower
 Blows fair, ere petals fall and the mature
 Flesh-fruit of manhood ripening to its hour
 Cumpers the plant. Listen! the dove's voice
 In the distant brake sounding her sad pain,
 Sadly I hear, and in her mournful note
 I catch the measure of my sorrow's strain.

Had I but had you longer, mother, then
 Haply my hours and deeds should miss you more,
 But then my heart should have you always near,
 Having your words and ways heaped up in store,
 Sweet company for many a weary year.

Such as I have are but the clambering
 Upon your patient knees to kiss your lips,
 Or look long in your blue eyes wondering,
 Or put the dark hair from your gentle brow,
 Feeling a wondrous sweetness steal somehow
 From out your hands through all my little frame.
 Once I remember, when my terrier died,
 Through all the long stretches of the night I cried,
 And when at last I slept, they say I fell
 Amoaning in my childish sleep, but you
 Closed not your eyes, but held me always well
 Pressed into your heart and kissed my face
 As a mother can. And then the swift years flew,
 Seating grim manhood in the innocent place,
 And many-mouthèd cares are knocking at the gate.
 Yet though I have no comforter so strong,
 I would not call you from your well-won peace,
 From the sweet silence of rich death. The wrong
 Men did upon your shoulders heavy sat,
 Your summer of goodness had too full increase
 And brought an early harvest of your life.

Would call? What mummery! Too well I know
 That those we love and those we hate must go,
 Down the dim avenues of death must pass
 Out to the fields of the great forever — lo,
 Are gone from us like shadows on the grass
 To the dark region of their last abode.

The Mississippi hills are blue and faint,
 The air grows stiller and the sounds more sweet,
 The gray shades cluster round each marble saint,
 And in the long box walks the shadows meet.
 And on your grave, rich-ripe with golden days,
 Nasturtium cups are lit with level rays
 From the low-sunk sun. Still would I be a child,
 And come with flowers here for your dear praise,

And with *Good morrow, Mother*, pause to tell
 The marvels of the day — nay, nay, I know,
 I only fancy, mother, ere I go
 To say *Farewell forever, and farewell.*

SONNET

I saw a blind man at his window sitting
 At dusk, and always his poor eager face
 Turned upward where the sweepers voiced the space
 And rustled all the dim air with their flitting.
 He could not see the wind move o'er the ground,
 Nor the faint yellow light upon the hill,
 But only leaned his poor hands on the sill
 To draw the lovely evening from the sound.
 Dear God, within this window to the sky,
 From shadowed chamber of our life we watch,
 Likewise eager and blind, and haply catch
 Now airy strain or angel wing brushed by,
 Or silence rich from the glory of thy day,
 And, sightless, only hear and feel and pray.

SONNET

My duller hours may feel the need of prayer,
 Asking of Him within me and beyond,
 Spurring my puny reason to burst bond
 And beat against the mystery round us here.
 To hold my soul up thus before mine eyes,
 With all its hunger that forever goads —
 But prayers and questions were now only loads,
 Cast forgotten as my spirit flies.
 I cannot see the helm nor yet the prow,
 But know the pulsing motion is a part
 Of what holds man and star in secret spell
 Unto their destined use. I know not how —
 This flight doth pass all prayer. And then my heart
 Leaps up to hear the watch cry, "All is well!"

THE BLIND MAN AT THE WINDOW

Morning-Joy

As when pale at the portal of her chamber
 Stood, waked right strangely by some dim portent,
 Mary, the Mother of God, and watched the Angel
 Dawn from the gloom of the trees, and he spake not,
 And dumb she saw the lilies in his hand,
 And read in his face the harvest of her years,
 Felt a new fulness close about her breast,
 And clasped her hands worshipping the child
 To be; so do I in my poor fashion prisoned
 Here, meet the Morning Angel when he dawns
 Each day from the dewy East, where the wide, white air
 Hovers on the dim land. And speechless I
 Conceive the beauty of God's world.
 I know the image of the world returns
 God's fingers as wax turneth to a seal.
 Then when I feel the Angel come and gone,
 And know the sky all rifted with rose light,
 And feel the vintage stirring in my veins,
 And the dear fruitage of my soul increase,
 "Joy unto God that He will enter here,
 His wine in this poor fleshly vessel!
 Joy unto God that He will enter here,
 His wine in this poor fleshly vessel!"
 Thus do I sing, lifting my bowed head,
 And then I hear the choiring of the birds
 Break forth amid the coming morn.

Evening-Contemplation

Meseems that now with every wind should come
 Some Ave Mary bell, and gentle answer
 Echoed from the corners of the land
 Close the sweet day. Now the soft air doth pause,
 And silent the long shadows eastward creep.

And in the wood-aisles, like a columned church
With many chapels, settles down the dusk,
And spider threads amidst form elfin bridges
For the yellow light to pass. The curving stream
Sings louder in the gloom, and overhead
The weary birds sail in a long line homeward.
And then the first sky star shoots glances
Mid the trees, and by the moving branches seems
To wing its way in heaven. All this I do
Remember from the time when I did see
As you, before my orbs of sight were veiled,
Before my heaven of vision held the cloud.
But now my light is gone, these fairest things,
Like noble guests shut in by closing gates,
Bide in the chambers of my soul and tend
The inner court, that haply I being blind
Yet see the evening as I saw it once,
But with a clearer vision, see it now
Glorified and purified past words.
Sometimes I have heard music that struck fire
In this same secret spiritual place,
For music is but painting in varied tones,
And listening to it is but sight by sound,
When in the charmèd caverns of the ear
Do pass the illumined image of men's souls
And their ideal vistas and spectacles.
And I do think there is a deeper vision
To which all senses are poor channels set
For the wide sea. An inner eye that holdeth
Hearing and sight, taste, touch and every sense,
As the crystal mantle of our earth, the air,
Holds sound and heat, perfume and light, and all
Their diverse hues and melodies and tender
Warmths. That pierceth the thin walls of men's flesh
Seeking the Flame, and mixed with our lives perceives
The sweetness and the gall, that thinketh on sky
And earth, seeing divine harmony

And beauty, all things from the pale light breaking
 The vaulted dark, to the softness in a friend's
 Glance. Whose birth is in eternity,
 Whose death is life, whose being beats a pulse
 From that God-Force, that Open Mystery
 Whereby the sun moves and the moon hath her nightly
 Voyage, and all things great and small
 Live and fulfil their destined usefulness.
 And inner power that kindles the dull stuff
 We are, and mocks the dreary loads and uses
 Of our old world, having had glimmerings
 Beyond this life, wherein we grope in sleep,
 Stumbling in dreams toward the Great Light.

ABNER THE NAZARENE, TO CÆSAR PLINIUS CÆCILIOUS
 SECUNDUS, PROPÆTOR OF PONTUS

(Shewing that the year without Christ is void)

'Tis now twelve moons, O Pliny, since I stood
 Handbound before thy lordly Roman tribunal,
 Since I foreswore Him, Christ. For my heart failed
 Amidst the lictors, guardsmen, and thick spears,
 And smothered torture from the lower dungeons.
 Thou knowest how the threat was on my life,
 And I foreswore Him and renounced His faith,
 And uttered imprecations 'gainst His name.
 And then thou gavest me wise Roman caution,
 Pointing the flaws, the foolery of things,
 Of miracles and wonder-working held
 By our religion, spake and bade me go —
 So much thou knowest, but thou knowest no more,
 Wherefore I write this letter unto thee.
 Out of thy door I went into the night,
 Into the wonder of the summer night,
 Went restless on beyond the city gates
 And outer camps, to where the flocks
 Wandered like slow clouds on the dim hills.

So all night long I walked beneath the stars,
Thinking of Him that thou hadst robbed me of.
And once a meteor shot down the sky,
And I thought, "Yea, my star hath fallen." — So passed
The summer and its weary heat, and brought
The autumn. And I saw the harvest field,
Rich-headed sheaves where once a few seed fell,
I saw and smiled at thy wise words, O Pliny,
That had denied all miracles and wonders
As foolish babble of a rabble sect.
Through all the sundry changes of the year
I roamed and could not rest. Empty and vain
Shewed autumn's fruitful fruitlessness. And when
The winter came and nights of cold, keen stars
And wailing wind, the heat within my veins
Seemed but a mockery of life, the heart
Being dead. I saw the moon through the bare boughs,
And watched and said, "Surely, without Him
The moon's is but an idle wandering."
I turned me unto Zion with my cry:
"Why standest Thou afar off, O my God?
Arise, O Lord, O God, lift up thine hand!
If Thou forgettest me, weigh down mine eyes
That I may sleep the sleep of death, and wake
Nearer to Thy likeness. Art Thou not
A portion of mine own inheritance?
O God, why hast Thou then forsaken me?
In the daytime I cry but Thou hearest not,
Nor am I silent in the long night season.
My fathers trusted Thee, O God, and Thou
Didst hear them cry. Oh, lift me up, my God!"
But unto me my fathers' God was mute,
Nor any sign from Him from out the depths.
So went I through the winter, the long days
Before the coming of the tender warmths;
But when at last the season shifted still
Felt I no thawing of my frozen soul.

Surely with spring, I said, I will escape
This thing, for then the light snow melts away,
And the young sun powders every orchard vale
With blossoming, and by the stream blue lilies
Shine and quiver. Then the hills put forth,
And courage wakens in the heart of man,
And in their beds the waterbrooks are full.
Yet still was I scorched with a drought
No water could allay, no drink could slack.
And in my heart the spirit was as dead.
Wherefore was it then I turned me back
Unto the fount of God, then felt my spirit grow
Back to its wonted strength — for in man's life
Our Christ is courage. No, I will not forget!
For he stood by my side at the cool dawn
As I had seen Him stand at the tomb
Of Lazarus, and called my dead soul forth
And loosed its cerements of doubt, and said:
"Thou wilt not leave me, brother, it is well.
I am thy life, the way unto thy feet,
And I am thee, and thou me." Is this
Likewise no miracle then that a long putrid
Heart should throb again to life? He was
The same. And only I shall change with the years,
And the world change, but He will change Him not.
Ay, I have seen Him and I know. Wherefore,
O Pliny, do thou let me stand again
Before thee and unsay what I have said
Touching this man. There will I speak
That the world shall hear from Syria to where
Sits lordly Rome beyond the subject sea.
Then let me die that I may live in Christ,
For I will rest me now beside the Fount
Of life, having had my little day of sweat,
And now upon me Death hath lost his sting,
And over me the grave his victory.

THE DEAD SHORE

We came at last unto a desert shore
 Where the dun water crept along the ooze,
 And murmured in the rushes foul and scant.
 Meseemèd there was neither light nor dark,
 But all gray twilight and a wintry fog,
 Formless and empty save for that dull sea.
 Then for the fear that shivered round my heart
 Closer I held my cloak, and turned to him
 That was my leader in the dreary place.
 "O Holy Bosom, with thy dusky wings,
 Tell him thou leadest on this weary way
 Whither we come, this desert shore, forlorn
 Of men, of sun and moon and the sweet stars?
 And wherefore comes no cloud or heaven's favour
 To this dead air?" And he that walked with me,
 Whose face was hooded from my timid sight,
 Waved his dark plumes and spake: "If thou seest naught
 It is the worldly film that blinds thy vision.
 Lean to the tide and wash thine eyelids there."
 And as a weary man makes of his hand
 A cup by some cool spring, so carried I
 The water to my eager eyes, and looked.
 Lo, there upon the ashen flood I saw
 A troop of thronging shadows that did seem
 Bound for some point beyond the farthest verge.
 Frail crafts and strong, galleys, and raftures, skiffs,
 Light shallops and slow-trailing barges, fraught
 With shapes, due set across the shadowed sea.
 And from the hills behind new crowds came down
 And joined with them upon the shore. And some
 Sailed one way, some another, in long lines
 Like flight of birds, until they faded. Some,
 Alone, went weary, but spurred on by hope,
 And kept their faces to the front with brows
 Unbent; some went alone, drawn by a will

Other than their own. One group there was
 Amid the galleys, sailing on forever
 Mild-eyed and listless, as if bound nowhere.
 One crowd went huddled down like sordid herds
 Driven to slaughter, stricken with fear and dread.
 But on one road the embarking host seemed light,
 And lifted up their songs of praise above
 The neighbouring woe. And many with tight grasp
 Held to their banners and their broken shows,
 Crosses and crescents, eagles and ivy wreaths,
 Relics and past symbols of their faiths,
 All mingled with the shapes and crowding sails
 I said, "Tell me, O leader, who these be,
 Wherefore embark they on so dun a tide,
 Why go some happy and some woebegone,
 And wherefore is their aim so various,
 So many sails unto the dim sealine,
 But all set hence and none that make return?"
 "Lean thou," he said, "and drink that thou mayst speak
 With them." And then a second time I made
 A cup of my bent hand, and drank that sea,
 And cried: "Who are ye that crowd thus this shore,
 And whither do ye go and whither press
 Across the desert of this ashen flood?"
 And one with unbent brow and weary eye
 Turned not but cried, "Whither? Whither? Yet will
 I seek, for in this search all loss is gain,
 And he that loseth rather hath he won."
 And one raised from a heap of shapes his form,
 And said, "Fool, fool, thou seest no light upon
 This sea, and still thou hopest for the sun.
 Think not the future can hold aught the past
 Held not." Then they upon the galleys spake,
 Mild-eyed and listless, unto him: "Wherefore,
 O wretched one, dost thou thus vex thy heart?
 Better like us lie on the perfumed seats,
 Idle as summer in a quiet vale,

Letting our sails drift with the wind and tide.
 We know not where we go, and if we knew
 We could not go or stay by our own will.
 Perhaps the land beyond is all of light,
 Then it were well, perhaps it is all dark,
 Perhaps there is no shore beyond this misty sea,
 But sail and sail until we come again
 Changed and remade unto another life."
 "Ye shall not sail a day," one cried, "before
 Ye sink to rise no more, leave off your gabble!"
 Meanwhile all the sodden rout that went
 One track lay in a stupour and made moan,
 Felled like brutes and knowing not the cause,
 But spake no word. And then the song arose
 Of them that bare the crosses and they cried:
 "Farewell, farewell, O land of sleep and death,
 The way was dark but now the road is fair.
 Brighter and brighter grows the trembling sea
 Onward to where it meets the sky. Where we
 Shall see Him face to face, for as in flesh
 We died, in Him we live again. Hail! Hail!"
 But one: "The earth hath made a veil out of the sea,
 And life hath made of death a deathless veil,
 I know not where I drift." And one: "Methought
 I saw a light but see it now no more,
 Yet must I forth, alas!" Thus sang the throng,
 A surging tumult on the ashen flood.
 But loudest rose the song of them that sang,
 "Farewell, O land of sleep and death!" Beneath
 Them like an idle summer chaunt, "Let our
 Sails drift with wind and tide, we know not where
 We go." And then I turned and said,
 "Tell me, O leader, hath the verge a light?
 Methinks I see a light, yet see it not.
 Whither do they sail and whither land
 That throng forever from this desert shore?"
 And he made answer that had froze my heart

But for the singing of the voyagers.
 "This water hath not seen a man embark
 That ever had experience of return.
 And what thou asketh of the mystic verge
 That no man knoweth till his going hence."

MOONRISE

It happened as I lay upon a hill,
 And looked to the heavens, at the hour when long
 And mellow lights fall slantingly and fill
 The gloaming and the dusk, and even-song
 Closeth the day, that suddenly I was ware
 Of the stars. One by one they came like sheep
 Flocking the sapphire mead — those lights so fair
 That hang forever in the endless deep
 And the wide fields of space, with fixedness
 That chafes us at our small imaginings
 And frets us out of rest — and then full soon
 Near skies, with twilight growing less and less,
 The clouds in the East spread upward their bright wings,
 And lo, the silver morning of the moon!

TO THE NIGHT-WIND

Thou summer wings strayed from some joyous breast
 Of scented garden dreaming in the moon,
 Within thy shadows nightingales entune
 Their dearest plaints, and 'tis at thy behest
 All loiterers to the realms of dreams address
 Break journey for a little hour and wait
 If thou mayst tell them of to-morrow's state,
 Or bringest promise of a morrow's rest.
 Within thine arms the twilight-hearted rose
 Droops, in thy locks the tempests knot their wrath,
 Stars make their secrets on thy lips to sit,
 And weigh thy breath with dreams, that while it blows
 Across the weary brow of man it hath
 Put out the fever flame the day hath lit.

NOCTURNE

Soft, one goes singing on his homeward trail,
 Under the evening star — first of the band
 That shyly now will pierce the gradual veil
 That brings the solemn night upon the land.
 Sweet and sad comes up the dove's lone call,
 And weary of all things, even of hope,
 I too would yield me to the night's embrace
 And the sad shadows on the slope.

Wilt thou not hush, thou bird, nor cease
 To laden the soft darkness with thy sorrow,
 When I who wish for naught save only peace
 Come like a tired child, and fain would borrow
 From the grim past what memory may be fair,
 And solace me with its sweet nearness,
 As he in a dark court with one small lamp
 Shades with his hand its trembling clearness.

Nature sows wide to reap her destined state,
 And to her purpose with the field man goes,
 Nor all our railing at the hidden fate
 May ever move her ominous repose.
 And when we think to wrap us in dear hope
 And climb by dreams unto the light,
 Lo, the poor web our eager fancy weaves
 Unwinds in the sorrowful night.

But what large accents on the inland wind?
 Hark! 'tis his voice, the herald of the sea:
 "Lift up thy head and thy bound feet unbind!
 God poised the morning-star in courses free
 Round the great shadow of the eternal dome,
 And gave the wind to voice the space,
 And from His hollowed palm poured out the flood
 To measure of his ocean place.

"Art thou not part of Him and of His mind,
 The garment of the cloud, the house of light?
 His mountains for thy range? Thy feet unbind,
 Lift up thy head! Thou seest through his sight,
 Thou art of God and God of thee. Arise
 And let His will within thee wake!
 The soul that faints and hath itself forsook,
 That soul alone doth God forsake."

Therefore no longer do I hear the bird
 In golden melody that makes his moan,
 But rather some old joyaunce long unheard.
 I sit no more a stranger at mine own,
 But roam my chamber of the spacious air.
 The prisoned moon hath found release,
 And the mysterious choir of the stars
 Sing as of old together, "Peace, Peace!"

RAIN AT NIGHT

The rain falls in the empty streets to-night
 Gray and fine, the street-lamps overhead
 Glimmer through the aspen trees and shed
 Upon the tremulous leaves a strange white light;
 The lower lamps weave on the cobble stones
 A magic mail, e'en such as fishes meet
 When love goes questing down a Venice street
 At dusk, and torch to purple water loans
 His tresses' splendour. Ah, what sails to scan
 Upon this looming sea, what caravan
 Of dreams doth pass on nights like this!
 Yet they were poor if wholly I did miss
 The city's roar and travail from the rain
 Whose witching presence haunts the chambered brain.

THE BROOKLYN FERRY

Ding, dong, dong, the bell
Cleaving the gray dusk,
The thick stamping and rattling
Of feet, the thud of the wharf-doors
Closing, passengers hurrying aboard!
Ding, dong, dong, the answering whistle,
The click of the iron-latticed gates!
The white steam puffs and rises
At the sides, the increasing splash
Of the heavy, rumbling wheels,
And we are off. Then after the passage
From the plashy wooden walls
A mellow brightening on an open sea.
Beneath the stern a gurgling
And stammering of the little waves,
And in the wake furrows of light
Following the huge rudder.
South, East, West, the gray sky
Is one with the waters,
Light-lurking gray where in a trice may burn
Some fire of passing barge,
Or signal sent, or faint
Reflection of an unseen blaze.
East, West, South, gray with glimmering
Lights that mark
The uncertain, distant shores.
But northward still the black shadow
Of the city looms, towers, roofs,
And spires, higher ever, dark,
As if the wing of man's ambition
Beat against the firmament.
And now a far-off ferry-boat
Glides through the space, all lights,
And seems to rain stream-fires
Into the waves, and passes and goes out

Again. Or a wet sail moves
 Like a ghost, reflecting the lurid, dim
 Lantern at the mast-top, with a loud
 Flapping in the wind. Or gulls
 Blow in from the Sound, and for a moment
 Gleam in the light-track of our boat.
 But ever the gray dusk, spreading,
 Cloaking round and above,
 Till suddenly the New York lights,
 As if a vast and wondrous
 Constellation rose, beautifully
 As a single sun, out
 Of the sea! And now
 The sister city's lamps, all springing
 Like a second galaxy
 Upon the sky. And lo,
 The long arch of lesser fires
 Bridging the spaces of the stars!

TO THE ELIZABETHANS

To-night I heard low music from a barge
 In travel down the river, and the strains,
 Tremulously swelling, broke the large,
 Dark silence on the waters and the plains.
 Till presently one drew up near the marge,
 And faintly rose above the hum of strings
 A ballad song of how with sword and targe
 A knight of eld did leave his revellings
 And bower to journey on a pilgrimage.
 And lo, this minstrelsy hath set awake
 My thoughts to leave this many-troublèd stage
 Of everyday, and in my closet make
 Myself a palmer to that Holy Land
 Where poesy hath sepulchre and band.

TO SPENSER

(Written where the Faerie Queene breaks off with an unfinished stanza)

When thou leftst off — ere with its ocean sweep
 Broke the sweet thunder of the final line
 Over the margin of the verse' confine, —
 And shadowy death did take thee in his keep —
 Meseemèd I was in a sort of sleep,
 Wherein no stirring of the flesh was mine,
 But soul wide-roving amid dreams divine,
 And my clear sight did down a vista leap.
 It was a faery corridor in space
 Strewn with dear pleasaunce and most rare delight,
 Confusèd sweets in dim and magic place,
 Where at the end burned ever a great light,
 Glorious and fair, though hidden was that Face,
 Being too radiant for our mortal sight.

THE CLASSIC SOUL

Last night I dreamed that through the present stress
 Of works and hours, where men must fret and grieve,
 Seek fingerprints of Deity, nor leave
 The things that count for neither more nor less,
 I saw in vales of sun and peacefulness
 A marble shrine, gold-chased and silver, rise,
 With brazen tripods scenting those near skies,
 Where men and maidens, gay but raptureless,
 With coronals and wreaths those pavements trod,
 For tears brought honey-cakes and fat of bull,
 'Twixt flesh and spirit keeping even mean,
 Festive, calm. And lo, the fair white god
 Upon his jasper throne sat beautiful
 And cold, high and immortally serene!

WRITTEN AFTER SEEING LOIE FULLER DANCE

Could he that once from Attic marble smote
 The Wingèd Victory but watch thy dress
 In gradual slipping on from note to note
 Of musical and plastic loveliness,
 Its undulant rhythms through the realms of light,
 Could see thy glamorous length, thy golden hair,
 And passionate, high breasts, then would he slight
 The Elysian regions, crying, "Lo, is there
 What I have yearned ever to express,
 Have touched but could not fix, finding too cold
 The stone for such deep passion's stress.
 But this is spiritual marble, or my old
 Soul-hunger, conjuring, hath here descried
 The genius of my art and deified."

THE BALLAD OF MY LADY JEHANNE

The owl-haunted gloom of even
 Lay yet unburied in the dark,
 Uncoffined the pale light of heaven. Didst hark
 How the vesper bell rang tolls,
 Sweet forgiveness for the souls
 Of the departed? Chaunt and prayer,
 Round her bier the tapers' glare.

Yellow was my love's long hair
 With the stringed pearls through it drawn,
 And tinted was her cheek more fair
 Than the damask rose at dawn,
 And the light within her eyes
 Did outshine the evening skies.

And when the summer dusk drew round,
 Her gentle fingers touched the string
 Of her lute, and waked a sound
 To meet the notes that she did sing,

Passing mock-bird's golden-throated
 Songs from moon-lit woodlands floated,
 While the lilies on her breast
 Rose and fell in love's unrest.

And so I wondered that her hair
 Should keep its lustre when had fled
 The roses from her cheeks so fair.
 Lying quiet on her bed,
 So young and pale and innocent,
 While all her people came and went,
 "God a mercy on her soul,"
 Said the people, making dole.
 Yet how should I know 'twas her kinsman — he —
 For none hath told my love and me,
 My sword and my love and me.
 And who hath not heard the people say,
 Coming and going the livelong day,
 "God a mercy on her soul,"
 Said the people, making dole.

SERENADE

Look out, my lady fair, and see
 The lustre of the night,
 The moon beneath her canopy
 Sails beauteous and bright,
 The hawthorn bough swings to and fro,
 The nightingale sings low, sings low,
 Look out, my lady fair.

Lean from thy window o'er the moat,
 That mirrors dark the castle walls,
 And let the ivory of thy throat
 Gleam white from where the darkness falls
 Of thy long tresses scented so
 No garden spices here that blow
 With them can half compare.

Oh, if my broken roundelay
 On such a night seem old and poor,
 Think of the kiss that yesterday
 Thou gav'st to me, thy troubadour,
 Think of the garden here below,
 And all the joys that love may know
 Ere youth hath met with care.

So hark, my lady fair, and hear
 The twitter of my lute that wings
 My heart to thee, my lover's-fear,
 And all the silent secret things
 That one awakened soul unto
 Another secret soul may show
 When love hath entered there.

*Look out, my lady fair, and see
 The lustre of the night,
 The moon beneath her canopy
 Sails beauteous and bright,
 The hawthorn bough swings to and fro,
 The nightingale sings low, sings low,
 Look out, my lady fair!*

BALLAD OF THE ROUND TABLE

Where is the glittering caravan
 With brazen trumpets all aflare,
 And all the glory dear to man
 Of steel's white edge and helmet's glare,
 And banners bright in summer air,
 True knights all whose only care
 Is whether ladies praise or not,
 Squires and falcons in the rear
 Riding down to Camelot?

Who knows the jests of Dinadan,
 Or marvels at Isoude the Fair?

How doth the Lord of Carnavan,
 And Tristram, Gawain, Bedivere?
 Ah, where is the sail on the alien mere,
 To Sarras with three to watch and ware?
 Where are the tempers lusty, hot,
 The flower of May, the favour to wear,
 Riding down to Camelot?

Nay, what are the fires now that ran
 Scorching the veins and streaking the hair,
 Where is the love of the son of Ban,
 That marred his search and clogged his prayer?
 The hundred knights upon the stair,
 The beauty and taint of Guenevere,
 The arm and passion of Launcelot,
 The silence, struggle, and despair,
 Riding down to Camelot?

Envoi

Arthur, king without a peer,
 Even thy sepulchre is forgot,
 Thy courts, thy joustings, where, oh, where,
 Riding down to Camelot?

THE BALLAD OF THE BELLS OF BOSCASTLE

The sky is vanished from the world,
 Nor even a shadow lingers more,
 But through the dark upon the wind
 I hear the waves upon the shore.

It was four hundred years agone,
 The bay it mirrored every star,
 And 'mid the stars the captain saw
 The lights upon the harbour bar.

The captain smote his brawny chest,
 'Tis I that brought, quoth he,

*The bells from Fraunce, nor asked for help
Christe's moder dear, Mari.*

The captain glared, the seamen stared,
The wind is on the waste,
The stars are dimmer one by one,
The pilot crosseth him in haste.

The fierce wind bringeth thicker night,
The black waves beat against the sky,
Ye cannot see the signal lights,
Ye cannot hear the sailors' cry.

The bells of Fraunce upon the prow
Will never in the belfry hang,
And now, they jangle as they toss
A mad, wild clang.

Upon the sands the seamen's bones
'Mid the white corals lie,
And in their midst the bells of Fraunce
Still ring them ceaselessly.

The lithe sea-maidens circle round,
And dance within their wake,
And strange sea-things abide to hear
The melodies they make.

And thus for sinful souls they pray
Christe's moder dear, Mari,
And sailors hear them far and near
Go ringing in the sea.

TO A LITTLE BLUE-FLOWER IN CORNWALL

Little blue-flower on the cliff,
Looking outward to Cardiff,
Can you hear me while the tide

Beats below such stress and stride?
 If not I can wait, you know,
 Till the tide is low.

Meseems that you have never died
 From King Arthur's day to this,
 Though each winter you must hide
 From the mistral's touch and kiss,
 But you come with spring again,
 And the clear, white rain,
 And the fair
 Young April air.

Once what cavalcades passed here,
 Martial music in your ear!
 Here the King's Round Table passed,
 And the damsels of the Queen,
 With the big herds following last,
 Tribute of the King's demesne.
 Here on her palfrey Guenevere
 Came all in green and gold arrayed,
 And strong and bright Sir Launcelot's spear
 In her service long assayed.
 Here went Sir Gareth and Sir Bors,
 Ygraine, Nimue, and Peleas,
 With shying steed at prickly gorse.
 La Beale Isoude did hither pass
 Riding with Tristram from the spies
 Of crafty Mark. And her eyes were blue,
 Blue and tender as the skies,
 Little flower, and so were you.
 That was many years ago,
 And you have watched them one by one,
 Fewer, fewer, come and go,
 Till their days were done.

Still from your thoughts, oh, treasure-trove,

You can people every cove,
 Till all the shore with fairies teems,
 Cast round each distant passing boat
 Some dim romance spun from your dreams.
 Can see the white gulls upward float
 As if foam-caps blown astray
 Drifted from the flocking spray.
 Still may you hear the night-wind go
 Whistling where the rushes move,
 Hear the surges swinging slow
 In a smooth, blue-watered cove,
 May fancy music in the air,
 Gauntlet clink on boss of targe,
 From some carven pageant-barge
 Anchored there.

And with your breath the air is laden,
 And the perfume of the heather,
 As when faery lady's maiden
 Mingles honey sweets together.
 Like the spirit of the savour,
 As the ancient legends tell,
 As a signal of his favour
 Jesu sent into the cell,
 Round Sir Launcelot's low bed,
 When the startled brothers crept
 There and found him lying dead
 As if he smiled and slept.

And you have memories to hold
 Of the morning of this land,
 Of fresh dew and that first gold
 That the morning brings to hand.
 And flowers that have seen, I trow,
 Mighty thoughts become great deeds,
 Find it easier to grow
 Tall 'mid common choking weeds.

They that have seen not count such love,
 Such feats, such strokes but bard's fancy,
 But you have seen, nor doubts can move
 That such things be.

Perhaps your purity now joins
 Our age to Arthur's purer one.
 Who knows but from his princely loins
 Some drop of blood our veins may run?

And I claim that each tide may bring
 Word of some lord once that bore
 Mind of child and heart of king,
 That some brave deed and hand of yore,
 Like a sweet, strong, rich incense,
 Still may rise to them that strive
 For a larger sky and live
 Lives in the old innocence.

LINES WRITTEN AT TINTAGEL IN KING ARTHUR'S
 COUNTRY

To Sarah and Frances Starks

Still beats the lusty, ever-changing tide
 About the shore, and from each hollow cave
 And secret cavern the reverberations
 Of the vexèd surge spread like the sound of wind
 Over the lone moors. And still the cry
 Of seabirds on the cliff, and the black rooks turning
 Their course landward at night, and the slow, white gulls
 Circling in dizziness above. Still
 The spring returneth with May sun that blows
 The flower in men's blood, and with the tender
 Herbage on the hills again, the soft
 Reviving of old tenderness in hearts
 Grown half-forgetful of old ties. And summer
 Comes, and the hard winter that doth build

Might and courage in the sinews. But
 Where the great king, the prowess and the strokes,
 The feasts, the chivalry, the royal state
 And splendour of his hall? The selfsame cliffs
 Are here, and the sea lashing at the crags,
 But of the castle keep three lone walls left,
 Toppling into ruins that mock man's work.

Here once met the brave valour of the world,
 And beauty culled from every part was here,
 Here shields heraldic once blazed back the sun,
 And like a forest massed the helmet plumes
 Where the fight thickened, and the tall spearheads
 Flickered, as they moved, like many flames.
 And here the coursers' and the war-steeds' trappings
 Hung, all heavy with golden gauds and bells,
 That when their mettled wearers plunged and sped
 Did crash and jingle sequences of chords
 Barbaric, fit for a Cyrus' ear. This plain
 Felt shock of tournaments, gay joustings waged,
 Fights to the death for honour or in judgment
 Ominous. And often in the night
 The sharp-striking steel feet of horses came galloping by,
 'Mid rattle of pebbles and wild flash of helmets and arms,
 And clatter and clanking of bridle and mail, growing
 dimmer
 And duller, then gone, while the silence that
 Returned found in the windows many a face,
 'Mid her long, loose hair, of maiden waked from dreams
 And set all wondering at the troop of brave
 Strange youths that rode so gallantly that way.
 But now dun shadows keep them round Tintagel
 And naught now passeth save the wind that seems
 To echo the mournful tides below. And now
 The swine have made their pens within the court.

Yet who knows but that tournaments do hurtle

In the moony air, that everlasting strife
 'Twixt good and evil, shaking the spirit world
 As ours. What spirit of the wind may bring
 His might to wrestle here with direr shapes?
 On what night may come hither Arthur the King,
 With his jewel-hilted brand Excalibur,
 Living the gone glories of his time?
 Or like a vision Guenevere the queen
 In mystic ceremonies of white samite clothed
 Goes trooping with her maidens through the fields
 Of sleep. Or Sir Gawain comes pallidly,
 All worn with his deathwound, and rests him here,
 While all the fair ladies that he championèd
 In this fierce world do minister to him
 With motions slow and tender, and do sing
 Strange songs, with garments strange, all glimmering
 In the dim glances of the haunted noon.

That was a time when men held purity
 Clear as a star above the earthly road,
 And when the fair ideals of souls athirst
 Were symbolized within the Sangreal.
 For that all eyes ached, and to that all hearts
 Did ever yearn, the emblem of the fierce
 Soul-hunger of mankind, comprised in
 The cup that bore the blessed blood of God.

That was a time when sage and common men
 Alike saw God as one, even intimate
 As a father leaning ear unto their cries,
 Yet distant and sublime as is the far
 Vault of heaven. And if despair and hate
 Or wild revenge, or the strong
 Sweet fleshly love 'twixt man and woman brought
 Blind vision and the fall to deadly sin,
 Humbly the strong man did repent and wept
 Even as a beaten child, and strove to lift

Himself again to the old high station.
 So that the river of men's lives ran clear,
 Flowed on unsullied to the eternal sea.
 But now men do not weep, but fall and mock
 The height they fell from, and the sluggish
 Current of our puny lives is muddied
 With questions that we fain would know. And now
 We live not by the great instinct for right
 God puts in us, but think, and try to live
 Our theories out. So that our thoughts are greater
 Than our lives. And those that cannot think
 Great thoughts must make what shift they can to live
 Well, seeing they have not great lives about,
 Have not those clear-souled, mighty-statured men
 To pattern on, as a wise child on his elders.
 Arthur the king his glory is not safe,
 Nor the large rumour of old fames, nor mystic
 Splendour of world-worn creeds. Now the glass
 And monuments of ancient faiths are hacked
 And battered. Men do seek to prove them all
 A myth. And the pseudo-learned go like swine
 To turn up ugliness and filth and snout
 At the foundation walls, making themselves
 Haply a little burrow or pigsty
 In the old courts of men's philosophies.

O world, O days of chivalry and men,
 O air that stung men's nostrils like a flame
 And fired their bloods, what ails us now that we
 Have this same air and memory of all
 Those men and deeds and are not greater? Though
 Our work is humble and less slow to end
 Than theirs, teach us 'tis not the work man doth
 But the spirit that he bringeth to the work
 That makes the greatness. Oh, stir our bloods
 To boast great thoughts and deeds, and take the issue
 Be it dungeon, bower, or the broad

White road of fortune, and let the new
 Ideals that the masters of this age
 Have helped to point shine clear for us as once
 The holy vessel of the Sangreal.
 And if we have not that great child-like faith
 Men once had, give to us the will to hold
 In us inviolate that simple faith
 That men owe unto God and to all men.

SONG

Thy heart to me is one fair rose
 Which at the earliest dawn doth wake,
 And when the wind of even blows
 Holds still its sweetness and doth shake
 An opiate into my sleep,
 That from my dream-thoughts I may take
 A sweet remembrancer to keep.

NIGHT AND LOVE

Dark were the hours of night,
 The sweet stars keeping
 Them hid in the mantle of clouds,
 The fair moon sleeping,
 And the drear wind astray without light.

And the sound of the wind was as moaning,
 And over the strip
 Of meadow the light-shadows pass,
 And the little leaves drip
 On the great limbs twisting and groaning.

But at last blew the rose in the East,
 And the sun upspringing,
 And night fled away from the hills,
 And rivulet-singing
 And blithe bird's-songs were released.

So in the years all my heart
 Was dark with a sighing
 And shadow, till from the rose fingers
 Of love came flying
 The arrow that drove night apart.

So on my heart's high closes
 Love secretly crept,
 Came like the perfume of morning,
 Fell on my face as I slept,
 Sweet as the petals of roses.

THE COMING OF LOVE

The wild grape blossoms spice the air,
 And fullest summer doth begin,
 But all my heart was winter bare,
 And only now my spring blows in.

And long had birds sung melodies,
 But not till now a song for me,
 A late lark in my spirit's skies,
 Came Love and sang out goldenly.

SONNET

I saw the summer ripen to attain
 Her gorgeous noontide, but to be enwrought
 With Autumn pageants decking to be slain
 By crackling frosts and icy torments brought
 In wintry blasts. But who beneath the plain
 Keep an unbroken sleep, they cannot know
 The year's aspects, Antonius, Charlemagne,
 Cedric, Roland, all. And thou wilt go,
 And I, where they have gone, and make an end.
 So now to heaven I make large offering
 Of thanks for the short sweet term that He doth send,
 And while the bier is making hear thee sing,

A registry whose content doth repeat
All witchery of night and music sweet.

LOVE AND SLEEP

A silent castle on a gloaming hill,
Dark cypresses against a sky that fades,
And drowsy homing birds that circling fill
The air with wings, from out the shades
Chirps and low flutterings and the stir of leaves,
The droning choir of flies above the moat,
Dull-dropping water and a pasture-bell,
Lone calling dove with sorrow-laden throat,
I thought on all but sleep wrought not her spell.
Then came a blank before mine eyes, a flight,
And lo! I saw a fairer land, the moon,
Watched o'er a pathless sky of summer night,
And one sang softly that the hills did swoon,
And drew her near and smiled and beckoned me —
And then I knew I slept and dreamed of thee.

LOVE AND AMBITION

Now in the season when bright youth would fain
In wind of every rushing world take breath,
My soul would range the palaces of Death
To solve the old world-mystery again.
I hear the waves beat on the eternal strand,
And from the great life-ocean sound each name
Made glorious with broad earth-ringing fame,
And there beneath, the humble lesser band
Runs a low murmur to the larger sound.
*Shall I be numbered with that troop, I cry,
Whose thoughts are music in men's ears? Around*
The thunder of the great sea booms — but high,
O love, and sweet thy voice comes o'er and o'er
That calls me backward to the human shore.

ON SENDING A COVERLID

Coverlid, go to her and thou shalt find
 Worthiest service. Soothe her sleep and shield,
 Cover her sweet young body as a warm south wind
 Gathers o'er some tender flowered field
 In the early spring. Tell her that rest and old,
 Still country peace are with thee — say but them!
 For to thee many secrets have I told,
 And in the seams and crannies of thy hem
 Have hid a hundred kisses, and did trace
 The thousand little crossings of the lines
 With kissing of my lips, and bade them stay
 To nestle close about the little face
 That like a pale rose-tulip softly shines
 Upon her pillow when she wakes at day.

SONNET

When the bright windows of my memory
 Do colour that long transept of my brain,
 And with the semblance of each separate stain,
 Sweet various lights fall down through slantingly
 Upon the flags, then all the glooms must flee
 Before the flooding of that rainbow rain.
 But richest windows without sun were vain,
 And these the light that lights them is from thee.
 Thou art my sun that comes with dawn and wide
 Fresh woodlands, morning fields and streams, to fill
 The noon, and bring the restful eventide,
 And when night cometh, beautifully still
 Dost light the moon of all my dreams, and then
 Moonset and waking and thy dawn again.

THE MOTHER

The sick mother sat at her window singing,
Rockaby, sing rockaby,

And the long day closed and the dark came bringing
Night and dun sky.

She bent her poor arms where he had lain
And fancied she saw him, and sang her song,
Sleep, little one, but never again
Her voice shall reach him, dead so long.

Lower and lower she bent her head,
Rockaby baby, when the winds blow,
Over her poor vacant arms, and said,
"Mother is with you," faint and low.

And the years went back without spot or stain,
All the long years since she lost her child,
And peace came after long grief and pain,
And her still lips smiled.

And when she was dead some little space,
They found her and wept, till the moonlight fell
Upon the glory of her face,
"Dear God," they said, "'tis well, 'tis well."

THE BAIRN

Befell that after Michelmas,
Poor Tess was delving on the brae,
The Elfland Queene came riding by,
"Come hider, fair Tess, come away, come away."

"I may not come wi' thee, fair queene,
I may not come alang."
"I'll take thee to the lily South,
The sweet love-bowers amang."

"Not in love-bowers I'll lay my head,
In the sweet South Land to be,

But where men die and women cry
In my North Countree."

"I'll gie thee a palace all o' red gold
An thou wilt come beside."

"I fain would go to the golden palace,
Where I may ever bide."

A merry laugh laughed the Elfland Queene,
She catcheth Tess by the waist,
"Oh why, fair Tess, dost come so slow,
And wherefore mak'st no haste?"

"Go thou thy way, thou Elfland Queene,
I maun na go wi' thee,
And go thy way, thou Elfland Queene,
'Tis my bairn acallin' me."

TRIOLET

(To my little Auntie)

She is so sweet
I love her well,
Demure, discreet,
She is so sweet
My verses' feet
Can only tell
She is so sweet
I love her well.

SONNET

Note thou thy mirror that with its clear truth
Doth catch unto itself thine outer mould,
Speaks what it seeth without pause or ruth,
And doth the tally of each feature hold
And all the sun and shadow that doth pass.
So am I mirror to thy secret grace,

For sooner than the object to the glass
 My inner light thy spirit's shape doth trace,
 And doth perceive the image of thy soul,
 The fair domain of its celestial hue,
 Where varied prospects of its uplands roll
 To the sweet vagueness of the distant blue.
 Beauty that passeth all that eye can guess,
 More rich than words, more fair than loveliness.

UNFAITHFULNESS

I

Ere I had learned you false, or once had let
 Doubt like a carping hag stand in my door,
 Then I, poor fool, had in my fancy set
 A vision born of days that are no more.
 'Twas once when you were sick I pictured it,
 A peaceful country spot, if you were well,
 Where I should till my field, and you should sit
 Beside the doorway listening for the bell
 That brought me home to you at evensong,
 To sit together on the hearth at night,
 Fresh 'mid our weariness, in our love strong,
 While time creeps by, till soon the soft moonlight
 Looks through the window on us nodding there —
 Oh, fool, knowst not her false that seemed so fair?

II

Think not that I will die as poets say,
 Nor starve mine eyes in exile from thy sight,
 For though the night hath slain the gentle day,
 I know the day returneth on the night.
 Men must live to work their destinies,
 While unto thee this love is all of life,
 And haply I shall find me larger skies
 In the brave struggle of the world's sharp strife.

Yet sometimes when I toss my wakeful bed,
 Life seemeth long, the chamber vacant seems,
 The slow years jostle as they do in dreams,
 Thinking on you, and what with you is dead.
 For from my heart young trust is gone with you,
 And left it wiser, yes, — and bitter too.

THE RETURN

To A. L. Bondurant

Sit here beside me, noble wife, O name
 More sweet than sound of waves on reedy shore,
 That rose and fell the night long in my ear,
 And said, "Penelope, Penelope,"
 There where the thousand towers of Ilion
 Hung glistening in the moon, afar, and made
 Lightning of the pale stars' glimmering.
 Through the wild battle shout and clang of arms,
 And through the mad slaughter when Simois stream
 His channel narrowed with the Trojan limbs,
 Warmed with the mixture of the gory death,
 And after, all the years I roamed the world,
 On windy plain and over the large sea,
 My thoughts were throngèd with thy images,
 But most I saw thee in the shadowed door
 Stand looking after me with thy sad eyes
 To bid me hail and pray the blest gods' help.
 Round the wild Egean further than man
 Hath been, we passed, ploughing the windy water
 With bold prow, and whitening the swirled waves
 With spume. Where out of it emerged wild faces
 Of Neureus' daughters marvelling at a sight
 So strange, and at that time our mortal eyes
 Saw the sea nymphs with their naked bodies rising
 Breast-high from the snowy wake. And back again
 By Colchis and the blue Symplegades,
 By Sicily and the wind god's gusty isles,

And round Ææa lapped in sorceries.
 Where is a garden, lo! I heard one singing,
 Who when she saw me nearing, left her song
 And took me to her hall to do me honour.
 A palace hung with tapestry and arms,
 And tripods, fountains, and heaped flowers, that all
 The chamber air laughed with the jocund odours.
 And then she sang again, and then meseemed
 She drew the very heart from harmony
 And sent a madness through my listening brain.
 My glutton comrades had she changed to swine,
 And when I drank her potion I had changed,
 Had not before me stood the shining god,
 Who gave me one white flower and spake thy name,
 Penelope. And once at dusk when first
 The stars shone on the marble of the flood,
 Unto mine ear from where the Sirens sang
 Came honied chaunts across the summer sea,
 Ah, sweet enough to melt the very bones
 Of the fixed purpose. But thy strong love
 With faithfulness had fortified up my heart
 More strong than Saturn seven-ringed with flame.
 And how I passed the whirlpool and the rock,
 And camped among the cattle of the sun,
 Bode on Calypso's isle, and how I heard
 The shriek and gibber of the wretched shades
 In the Cimmerian gloom, have I told thee,
 Of Nausicæa and King Alcinous,
 And that Phætian ship that brought me home
 On yesterday thou knowst likewise. Where I
 Found thee with thy faithful web, and all that courtly
 Evil dogging thy tracks, thy lustful suitors.
 Ay, often while the sailors slept, I came
 And stood upon the foamy prow, ere yet
 The slim moon sank, slow faded in the west.
 The dawning-wind heaped up the sloping waves,
 And from the threshold of the wandering sun

Morn walked upon the sea. And slowly first
 Under the gentle breeze the waves ran lightly,
 That in our track a plangour of laughter rose,
 But after more and more with the growing wind
 They grew, and swimming backward from the east
 Shone with the purple light. And ere they woke,
 My men who must not see me sad, I said:
 "Now she hath risen and the hearth is bright,
 And on her knees my son Telemachus
 Lips his sweet idle prattle, or clutches with
 His little hands her ears and kisses her.
 Methinks she sayeth 'Kiss me twice, child, once
 For thee, once for thy father who returneth not.'"

And often had I sent my hungry glance
 Where the line spreads on the unbroken sea,
 And felt my cheek grow pale lest thou be dead.
 But when at last my own loved Ithaca,
 My father's land, sloped to the misty sea,
 I could not think thee dead that always used
 To welcome me when I returned me home.
 Yet when I saw thee from afar, standing
 Again within thy shadowed door, I looked,
 And looked again, and could not check the mad
 Unconquerable surging in my heart,
 Nor yet believe mine eyes saw what they saw.
 But drawn more near heard thee speak with thy heart,
 And say, "Ulysses," and, "He cometh not."
 Nor e'er had known my name to have so sweet
 A sound as when I heard it syllabled
 By thee. Now have the blest gods heard thy prayer.
 And now to-night once more I see the moon,
 That with her monthly course hath measured long
 The journey of my absent years, trace there
 Upon the pavement court the grapeleaf's shadow.
 O home the temple of the true soul-gods,
 O home, and chastity, and love of woman
 That buoyed me and my ship upon the sea,

Nor yet will fail me in the supreme hour!

SONG

Oh, all my heart is like the sea,
 With tides that ebb and flow,
 And thou art a fair sea-jewel
 That lieth deep below.

And deep below the changing waves
 The luminous sea-stone lies,
 The clear day cometh from the East
 And paleth from the skies,

Star-fires throng the glassy flood,
 And the gentle moon at even,
 The waters' lovely paramour,
 Wanders the field of heaven.

And moon and stars and sun all fill
 The sea-gloom round thy place,
 But though they fade still shines my sea
 With the jewel of thy face.

GORDIA

The nightbird crieth a long wail,
 'Tis a ghostly hour, the stars are pale,
 The hornèd moon drifts down the West,
 The spectre day hath stirred and soon
 The sea-mells chatter in the nest.
 Why goeth Prosper on the sands?
 Lo! phantom mists are on the plain,
 Cold the wind comes from off the main.

Out in the melancholy stars
 The ghosts of dear lost things must come,
 And many, many a weary day

Prosper hath his wont to roam.
 'Tis follow, follow, ah, welaway,
 Tarry, young Prosper, and go pray,
 Light thy taper and tell thy beads,
 Criste's moder hath ear for lovers' needs.

'Tis the hour I wis the fisherfolk say
 That Gordia comes from the sea to the rocks,
 And singeth her piteous lay,
 Weaving her garland of pale sea-stocks.
 Strange are her ballads the fishers tell,
 For mortal men not well, not well.
 Some say she is a sea-witch come
 To bind poor sailors to her will,
 Some speak her fair, a princess from
 The palace of the sea-king, still
 They fear, and sometimes in a ring
 The gossips gather whispering —
 It is a grisly crone that saith
 A haunted song on yesternight
 Hath waked her from a dream of death,
 And she saw through the moony fog the light
 Gleam on the robe of the sea-maiden,
 And how her song was sorrow-laden
 As any woman's that may weep. One cries
 "Nay, nay, 'twas never a song
 From a woman's heart, the song I heard,
 But a wild and ringing melodie
 Of all the kingdoms that belong
 In the sea-king's rich demesne,
 Of wreathèd pearls and gems that gird
 The brows of his maidens under the sea
 And their golden hair." 'Tis three have seen
 Her spread her mantle of fair sea-lace
 Bossed with lilies and sweet sea-dace,
 And long would she wave at a passing boat,
 Ah, sailor, sailor, didst not hear?

Alack, then hath she torn away
 The bright pearls from her swelling throat,
 And children later playing there
 Find strange sea-gems and a broken wreath,
 And all-affrighted hold their breath,
 "Thus Gordia," they say, "doth snare
 Poor boatmen to their death."

But late young Prosper cometh home,
 For when his good ship sank at sea
 Through many a citie did he roam
 And many a far countrie,
 Where men to wondrous ventures come.
 Yet plain and citie must he scorn,
 Knowing she waited, sad, lovelorn.
 But when he cometh to the bay,
 "'Tis seven year this Whitsuntide
 She waiteth not," the fishwives say,
 But no man knoweth where she died.

Prosper he is mad they say,
 He keepeth but his cot by day,
 By night the sands and the cold sea-air.
 The long waves moan unto his call,
 "Will no one tell me where's my love,
 Or who hath her in thrall?"
 "Prosper is mad," the fishwives tell,
 "The inlet sands he maun beware,
 For on a night will ring his knell
 When Gordia singeth there."

He waiteth not to hear them carp,
 The dunes their ghostly shadow throw,
 The moon's rim droppeth down the sky,
 He paceth ever to and fro.
 "Will no one tell?" The wind is sharp,
 And who will hear his cry?

Alack, what charm upon him fell?
 'Tis never mortal throat I trow
 Singeth so wildly well.
 Lo, from a rock 'mid scarce sea-kale
 A maiden watcheth yet the sea,
 And beautiful and pale.
 But on her cheeks the coral hue
 And coral on her full lips too,
 And hiding her shoulders everywhere,
 Half-hiding e'en her bosom's swell,
 And twisting seaweed-like it fell,
 The treasure of her golden hair.
 With it the bright sea-gold is spun,
 And up and down her fingers run
 Loosing the tangles there.

And at her waist her fair white flesh
 Glows with the lustre of her zone,
 Of amber and pearls in knotted mesh
 And unnamed sea-stones in it sewn.
 Where from it hangeth half-aslant
 All the long mantle fold on fold,
 Sinuous and undulant.
 Dim twilights in its tissues sleep,
 As some soft wave from out the deep
 Were woven in with threads of gold
 And broidered flowers of wide sea-wold.

Is it the coral and sea-tints there,
 The green of her mantle, the gold of her hair,
 The lines of her body flowing free,
 The swell of her breasts like waves at sea
 Rising ever rhythmically?
 Is it the song the maiden sings
 Bindeth Prosper motionless?
 Or what sea-magic is't that brings
 Into his eyes the blind distress?

Monotonous and swinging slow
 Is the burthen like a wave,
 But her voice is rich and low,
 And the murmur of it sweet
 As when distant surf sounds beat
 In hollows of a deep sea cave.

*“When the wind blows in across the bay,
 ’Tis follow, follow, ah, welaway!
 For her that waiteth on the stone,
 Sailor, make moan.*

*“When a lad hath sailed upon the main
 And never, never come home again,
 His lass must rue, the way is wild,
 Ah, Mary Mother, keep thy child
 Left all alone.*

*“There was one who sat beside the shore
 And watched the sea, and more and more,
 But no sail came. And by and by,
 When in the bay the tide was high,
 They came and found her not, and wept,
 But still the sea his secret kept,
 Sailor, make moan.”*

’Tis follow, follow, ah, weladay,
 The wind hath blown her voice away —
 Prosper listens in a spell,
 The chaunt hath broke and only the sound
 Of the muffled, distant buoy bell
 To show the tide is gaining ground.
 Ah, sweet the bell, some witch’s spell
 Hath surely sounded Prosper’s knell,
 For still he moveth never on.
 Nay, listen, listen, she lifteth yet
 Her voice above the bell’s far ringing,
 And Prosper standing like a stone

Hearkeneth her singing.

*“Red is the coral under the sea,
And round it the bright fishes swim,
My love he cometh not to me
And ever I must wait for him.
White coral grows the red among,
And pale sea-grasses floating long,
And will he never hear my song
And come away with me?”*

Meseems the last word hath not died,
Ere Prosper springeth to her side,
In her blue eyes he hath found
Sea-lights changing momentarily,
Her silken lashes fringing round
Like shadows on the sea.

“Dost know me not?” she saith, “ah, me,”
’Tis long I waited thee.”

“Nay, the first song showeth thou art thou
Thou that didst love me, even thou,
But I am wildered I know not how.
For thou singest burthens strange,
Strange are thy garments, all is strange,
Sure thou hast suffered some sea-change.”

“Thou camest not for evermore
To me on the lone shore.
I said, ‘If I call him loud he will hear
Ere the long day come and go,
Prospero, Prospero.
O round moon rising out of the dark
Bearest my love in thy yellow bark?’
The white-capped breakers have heard my moan,
The breakers whisper under their breath

'Death, Death!'

The sad sea-voices moaned and called.

'Twas down, down, straight down

To regions where the shifting air

Was liquid emerald.

I sat by the sea-king's windows all day

And saw the idle sea-folk pass,

And watched the haunted wrecks drift by,

But thine came not, alas.

It was an elvish light from heaven,

With a bright blur for the sun,

And the charmèd moon at even

Rising through the unfathomed green,

Seemed a far-off shadow-sheen.

In the sea-groves I called thee loud and low,

Prospero!

And the sea-king hath heard my cry, and saith

'I would not have thee sorrow so,

He shall have sea-life after death,

And come home to thee, never fear,

If thou waitest seven year.'"

Then who hath known him greater bliss,

Or dear delight to follow pain,

For heart hath never joy, I wis,

Like lovers met again.

The dawn is in the pallid skies,

She wreathes a circlet on his brow

Of pearls and sea-anemones,

She leaneth lower to him now,

And long she kisseth him, till lo!

The sea-lights come into his eyes.

The tide it crawleth gradually,

And down together will they go

To the green fields of the sea.

'Tis follow, follow, ah, welaway,

Who knoweth when 'tis true love's day?
 Out of the deeps come joy and pain,
 Into the deeps are ever fain,
 Who knoweth when they go again?

The fishers on the lone dun sand
 Will never see his figure looming,
 The moon it riseth, on the strand
 The great waves booming, booming!

It was an idle, weary day.
 Their dim-flared lanthorns with them bringing,
 Homeward they turn them one by one,
 "Jesu pity him," they say,
 "For this with her wild, witch's singing
 Gordia hath done."

TO MY SISTER

Pale as thou art in the long lonely East,
 O moon, beyond the dark violet field of sea,
 Across thy restless path light-arrows flee
 Like fire-flies from some faery stream released,
 And bring me thoughts of her with the white brow
 And deep, kind eyes. Haply she too to-night
 Looks up at thee as I. The flowers now
 Blow sweet, and she is sweet in thy fair light,
 While round her, in each walk and garden way,
 The shadows shorten as thou climbst more high.
 Or, tired with the sweet mercies of her day,
 Ere this did she up to her chamber creep,
 And now the fringes of her eyelids lie
 Closed in the visit of the angel Sleep.

TO THORNE

(Fourteen years)

My little boy with the woful Latin book,
 It's many a time I've thought of you o' late,
 Meseems your every gesture, every look,
 Your coming, going, glance, each way and trait
 Have come by night and day, not far apart,
 Come like sweet pilgrims knocking at the gate
 Where memory, a meadow round Time's brook,
 Spreads green before the castle of my Heart.
 Each pulse of the big engines toward the prow,
 The steerage men that sing and dance at night,
 Cranks, bells, wheels, all would be your keen delight.
 Ah, Sir All-Eyes, what work would I bestow
 To pour in measure of a lasting rhyme
 For you, the essence of your golden prime.

SONNETS

I

It is a solace of mine own, dear friend,
 That in thine absences I have thee still.
 No red sun sinks behind the wooded hill,
 No pale moon rises in the eastern bend,
 But I must look and question in the end
 If thou too lookest from thy window sill,
 And let'st that same old human hunger fill
 Thy heart. No low-sung evening songs but send
 Mine ear alistening for thy voice to ring.
 To all my journeys among books I bring
 Thy thoughts and words that I be not alone.
 So shall I have thee most when thou art gone,
 When speech nor glance nor motion break the free,
 Deep-moving converse that I hold with thee.

II

When I am grieved that you are gone away,
And I shall not see you for many a week,
Not look into your eyes nor hear you speak,
I bend my thoughts to our next meeting-day.
Friends to be friends must have their lives keep pace,
And both must move or both must sit them still,
Else comes a time when effort and forced will
Must strain to keep old ties and old friend's-place.
So shall we fight each one his separate fight,
And so shall meet new words, new thoughts to tell,
Shall feel a newer thrill of God when hand
To hand we clasp, and see our stature's height
Increased some cubits, and our nostrils swell,
Stirred with the keen air of a higher land.

III

In case I shall not see you once again
In the diverging courses of this world,
Where men, once met, forget, or straight are whirled
In widening circles far, to slack my pain
I have a vision of the life to come.
When they that have sought much, say failed, but sought,
Risked many fields and lost or won, but fought,
Shall leave their striving off and turn them home
To God, then all the mighty dead shall see
How we have striven well, shall watch us rise
Up through the realm of sleep and death that seemed
Once to be our life, and there shall we
Hold speech again, and find in those large skies
The heaven that the ancient prophet dreamed.

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