



DAWN WIND

By Louis S. Child-Walker



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DAWN WIND

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BY
ROBERT LOUIS SMITH-WALKER

WITH A FOREWORD BY
H. H. CURTEIS
AND AN INTRODUCTION BY
MARIE MAPLES PRESTON

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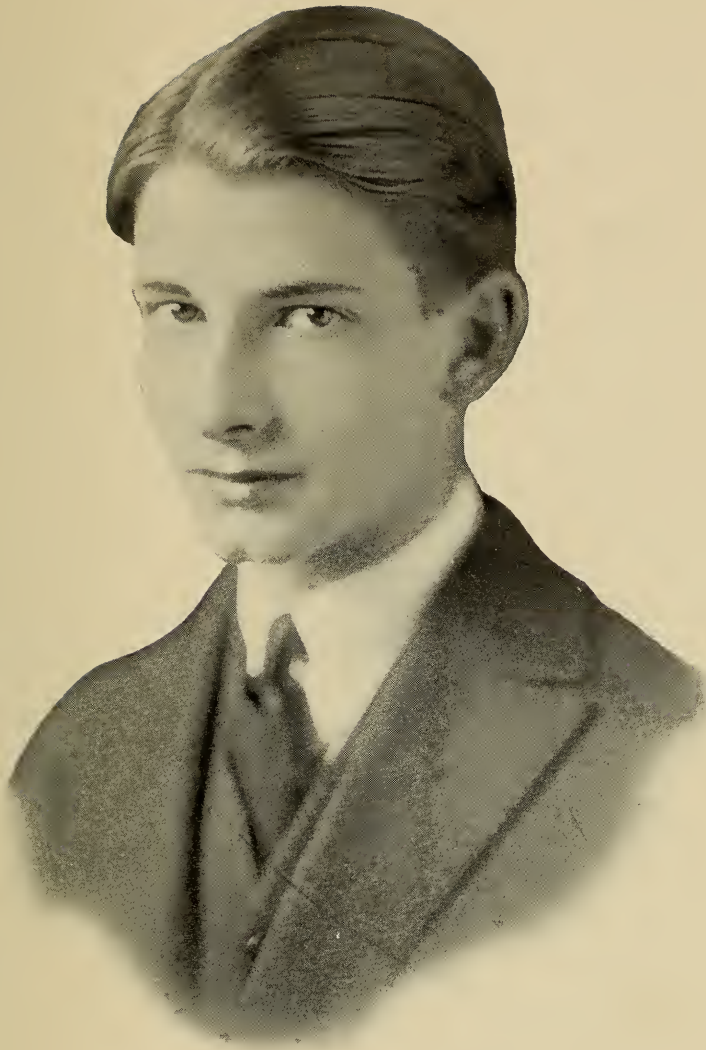
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ROBERT LOUIS SMITH-WALKER
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Robert Louis Smith-Walker

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FOREWORD

THE poems contained in this little volume are the first literary expression of his thoughts, in verse, by a boy of unusual depth of mind, philosophic outlook, and individuality of character. Written almost entirely during his eighteenth year, they give evidence of real promise for a future time of maturer development.

"Dawn Wind" occurred to him on the occasion of an Easter camping trip in 1920, at First Water, beneath the precipitous heights of Superstition mountain in Arizona. One sleeps lightly in that balmy spring air, under the brilliant stars of the clear, dry, desert atmosphere; and it was seldom that when aroused by the innumerable sounds of the night: the barking cry of a distant coyote, the movements of our horses, the rustling of the nocturnal life of bird, beast, and insect, I did not find him awake and watching the great mountain in moonlight and black shadow. Thus he became aware of the dawn wind, flowing cool and crystalline from the upper strata above the mountain.

It was at "The Little House at Avalon" that he had, as he said, one of the happiest periods of his life; he refers

FOREWORD

to it often in letter and poem. Here in a lovely situation on the hillside, with wide windows embowered in flaming bougainvillea, commanding glorious views of sea, mountain, and valley, he was free to think, to observe, to expand, and to develop his own personality. He felt in better health and spirits than usual, and most of the conditions were ideal for him: sunshine and warmth, beauty of scenery, vivid coloring, ever-changing lights on hill and vale, the matutinal music of birds in the eucalyptus grove beneath our window, time for study and thought, a small library at hand, and withal, plenty of exercise,—daily tennis and frequent climbing of the hills. This was his great delight, and I can see him standing at the summit of the little col at the head of the valley, looking at the blue Pacific far below, with the western breeze playing through his hair, immersed in the long thoughts of youth.

A wide and omnivorous reader, possessing an unusually retentive memory, he was a delightful companion and a most charming correspondent, with a fluency of pen, a maturity of style, and a wealth of interest in his letters that is rare in these days and altogether exceptional for one of his age. He had an intense, even passionate appreciation of everything artistic, whether of form, color, music, or rhythm, and a singularly decided opinion and mature judgment.

FOREWORD

All who knew this remarkable boy and appreciated the many-sided interests of his individuality will sorrow at his untimely death. Those to whom he gave his full friendship and confidence, to whom he revealed the depth and richness of his mind and heart, and the charm of his personality, will feel a more real and enduring grief and will know that the world is indeed poorer to them.

Quorum pars sum.

H. H. CURTEIS

*Valetta, Malta
December, 1921*

INTRODUCTION

ROBERT LOUIS SMITH-WALKER was a highly gifted boy with a fine mentality and an intense artistic appreciation. His intimate friends predicted for him a brilliant future, but so varied were his aptitudes that it was impossible to foresee which art would finally prevail.

“Oh, where? By what strange portal shall I enter in
To all my rich inheritance, my wealth of worlds,
My wisdom of the spheres?”

Artistic in all things; interested in pageantry and the drama, in color effects and costuming; an ardent interpretive dancer,

“The doors are many; shall I choose
This one or that?”

The only child of his parents, he was born in Decatur, Illinois, where he passed his early years. From childhood he traveled extensively throughout this country and Canada; and attended school in Florida, Arizona and California. Thus his naturally observant mind was enriched and stimulated by a succession of new scenes, always a delight to him.

INTRODUCTION

The poems show a keen love of life and joyousness in living. He is exhilarated by a new friend, a lovely view, a beautiful picture, a singer's voice.

"Your love was like a wind that filled my sails
And sent me skimming through the foam and spray."

The boy on a camping trip is filled with ecstasy as

"The moon has cleared the ridge
And leaped into the sky.
Some one stirs. 'Exquisite!
I feel detached. I floated on thin air.'"

He thrills and rejoices with all living things at the carnival of spring.

"I want to exult with that little fish-hawk
Riding the cold, wet wind, still redolent of March.
I want to splash and dive with the wild ducks
Among the dead rushes and the blackened lily-pads.
I want to scream and dance; I thrill
To the swift urge and magic of the bursting buds."

The poems show his love of beauty in its varied phases. What colorist will not see his own radiant hues reflected in such lines as

"The pool lies: gold and sapphire sheen
Flecked with silver and striped with green."

INTRODUCTION

"The pool then pales to amethyst
With softened pink and a silver mist."

What lover of music and the dance is not moved at

"The strange thud of barbaric drums"

in Ballet Russe?

"The cymbals' clash . . . disturbing . . . elemental . . .
In glowing, fiery colors the dancers leap like flames."

And is not beauty of line and form vividly suggested in
the oriental pictures of "Incense" and the striking images
of "Eidolon"?

"The clouds have built fantastic palaces
And battlements on battlement rise through the blue."

Like Rupert Brooke, he too was beautiful to look upon. Like Rupert Brooke, he was a great lover, a lover of beauty, of life, of the dear familiar things, of all things lovely: words, books, flowers, music, the dance. He loved poetry and enjoyed reading it aloud. Among his deep enthusiasms were Kipling, Keats, Alan Seeger, Rupert Brooke, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. Listening to the sympathetic tones of his voice and watching the play of his sensitive features, as he entered so intensely into the beauty of thought, word, and rhythm, one could not help believing that this rarely gifted youth, though

INTRODUCTION

scarcely more than a child in years, had already a place in that high company.

The greatest desire of the thoughtful, contemplative boy was that of lofty accomplishment. He asked but the boon of a life worthily lived.

“Lachesis, at your web, hear me!
And weave my web
Firm, yet not tight, and let
The web be short but wide that men,
In speaking of me afterward, shall say:
‘He lived!’ ”

MARIE MAPLES PRESTON

Long Beach, California
March, 1922

DAWN WIND

The mountains sleep, their shadows furrowed black
Save where some jutting rock has caught the gleam
Of the fast fading moon.

The eerie cry of a lone wolf rings sharp;
A sudden hush that penetrates the soul,
And from the silence, shuddering, expectant,
The Dawn Wind calls:

The chill Dawn Wind that sweeps
The cold, hard cliffs, and moss-grown rocks;
That quivers through the tall, dead grass
With whispers as of ghosts that pass and call.
O, Siren song! O, lure!

DAWN WIND

O, Dawn Wind calling through the dawn!
Fain would I go; glad would I pass,
Dissolving in the thin gray mist,
That rises up to meet the sun.
My naked heart, swept clean, and purged,
By that swift rush of crystal air
Leaps! and with longing greater than tongue can tell
Follows the Dawn Wind, which has passed,
Vanished with murmurs, lost forever . . .
Like my hopes.

INVOCATION

I bring you incense, Muse:
The rare fragrance of saffron and musk;
I burn these at your altar.
For you I have brought these scarfs
Of deep-dyed Tyrian purple.
For you my golden sandals clash
The white-veined, onyx floor.

The incense smoke wreathes blue;
The scarfs drape sinuously;
And I dance in abandon . . .
But the Muse sleeps.

CHANTE D'AUTOMNE

Comes Autumn, gay with clustered wreaths
And leopard skins, and scarfs to twine.
In wild abandon, up and down,
Flashing and wayward, prodigal,
She dances; flings her arms to the wind
And laughs there, with the fauns at play.
Wild satyrs in the wood, and vine-crowned maids
Make autumn holiday.
Gold; gold and purple; red, and calm, cold blue;
The dancers! But among them all
Suddenly and without a cry
Autumn reels, falls, and lies covered by her own bronze
leaves.

MEMORIES

How keen the Dawn-air blowing chill
Recalls those drowsy woodland scents
When all the dreaming atmosphere
Was vibrant with its summer song.

But now the wind no petal stirs.
It whirls the leaves
And mingles autumn's gold with autumn's dust,
And deadens, with its piercing cold,
More happy memories.

WILLOW TWIGS

Willow twigs sketch designs like a Japanese print's
On the flushed sky, down by the river.
The little long-legged wading-birds, too,
Have all the qualities of a delicate wood-block.
But the scene is so dainty, so fragile,
That it is shattered into bits by any one
Who tramps with rough-shod feet
Among the carefully studied clumps of weed,
Or frightens the birds,
Or breaks the willows to make fishing poles.

EIDOLON

The clouds have built fantastic palaces
And battlements on battlement rise through the blue—
Strange melodies ring on forgotten shores
And glowing colors charge the air;
And with much stately pomp and pageantry
Barbaric figures move . . . a little while . . .
Before the sunset fades.

L'EPHEMERE

Gold, gold-and-silver in the moonlight, you, like a lily,
stood.

And I, poor moth with honey-thirst unslaked, felt
the swift light closing of your petals; knew
that they would never open for me again; knew that I
might never again drink your sweetness. . .

My frail and parchment-painted wings fluttered in the
cold light.

I sank, and the dews were cold beneath me.

But from my moss-bed I looked up, and saw you
white and waxen in the moonlight; gold-and-silver
like a lily. and I died.

TREASURES

Like to some idol of rich gold and gems
Fallen from his high-place, shattered on the ground
In glorious ruin,
So has another day fallen from snowy peaks
And scattered all its glittering jewels at our feet.

RECOLLECTION: NOCTURNE

There was a sky of lapis lazuli,
Pricked with the brilliance of the stars.
There were ghost mountains, diamond white,
In the pale blueness of the moon,
And glittering with the newest snows.
And there was music, faint and sweet
And plaintive through the night . . .
There were a hundred fountains
Plashing their scented waters soft
Into a pool as deep
As our love was to be.
But that was night and long ago,
Those sweet arpeggios on a harp . . .
And then a broken string.

POEM FOR A PICTURE: TEMPTATION

A pliant purple robe enfolds her,
Revealing with each supple movement
The slender, sensuous grace of her lithe limbs.
In her blonde hair are twined long ropes of pearls
Coupled with orchids, in whose dusky depths
The honeyed dew of death invites all men to sup.
But in her eyes . . .
The mystery of a thousand Sphinxes lies.

BEAUTY

O, Beauty, I have seen you pass
A thousand times; sometimes
I've seen you in the night
When moonlight steps the waving grain.
I've seen you in the deep blue pools;
I've heard you in the summer trees
And in the river's laughing call.
Sometimes at sunset I have seen you steal
And trail your purple robes about you
Down a hill.
You come with April's daffodils
And the white, showering petals from the bough.

BEAUTY

And in the long autumnal rain
I have seen you wraith-like
Drift among the trees.
But always you elude me
And my search
Ends in the dust. But there
Before me in the curve
Of the brown road, I see you
Laughing, mocking, ever.

HIATUS

Like a clear clarion call the colors of the Dawn sang.
All the earth seemed new. And all the old desires
Have faded with the stars . . .
And do you realize the change? And can you see
That we are different; we have parted?
One we were then, who now are two.
Between us such a gap
That all the arrows that Love shoots
Could never fly across it!

DEATH

All night the Red Horse grazed upon the hill. . .

And those who heard him feared,

And there were few who heard him not.

All night the village death bell tolled ;

And when dawn came, a thousand corpses

Row on row, lay whitening in the cold, grey light.

FUTURE

Every day in my walk
I pass an old lady, sitting at a window,
With her hands folded in her lap, waiting.
She is always sitting there patiently.
And I wonder, as I pass,
What there is so worth-while
That she waits there, sitting, patiently.

NOCTURNE

A new rose-moon has lit the glade,
A moon whose slender, searching rays
Incarnadine the lily's cup
And light the impassioned nightingale.
Oh! all this vale is filled with ecstasy and song.
But I stand lonely in the moonlight,
In my heart the very essence of despair.
And on the wings of silver moonbeams,
Light as bits of wind-blown thistledown,
Dreams of the night . . . and love . . . and you
Float by.

ATALANTA IN BROOKLYN

She hurries down the street,
Her slender ankles flashing, silken clad.
On the corner there is a flower-stand
Where a pale Armenian sells violets;
She stops—hesitates, bargains a moment;
Then a tiny boutonnière is hers.
She is rapturous; the wood-scent of the violets thrills her.
Her step is lighter.
She will be late to work, but she will have her violets.

GOLD

People say that dandelions are objectionable

And dig them out of their lawns

Leaving ugly holes in the turf.

Personally, I prefer golden discs scattered on the grass

Rather than holes.

Since gold does not grow in my purse,

It is welcome to grow on my lawn.

FOILED

'T is little enough I ask,

For why should I

Who have given nothing ask for much?

One favor, Clotho; Lachesis, one boon.

But, dread Atropos, I dare not ask you for anything.

BALLET RUSSE

The strange thud of barbaric drums.

The cymbals' clash—disturbing, elemental.

Crescendo! Crash!

In glowing, fiery colors the dancers leap like flames,

Quivering flames that throb

With the music's savagery.

JAPONESQUES

In the pool by the wall the willow-tree trails its tenuous
branches, which move with the movement of the
water.

Quietly the dead leaves fall into the dark water . . .
noiseless . . . circling . . . falling . . .

Quietly the willow's shadows melt and mingle in lacy
patterns with the pale blue stars . . .

And the melancholy cry of the whippoorwill, the song of
autumn, the death song of the year, floats to me
from the hill.

JAPONESQUES

The moon is like a great white lotus asleep in a dream-
blue pool.

The herons stand in the water, sharply etched against
the curve of the bridge.

The lanterns are red in the darkness; the coals of the
incense smoulder and glow . . .

I cannot see this beauty; I can only sit alone and wave
my fan of peacock's feathers.

INCENSE

Delicate arch of a lacquered red bridge . . .
And pale-blue herons to their knees
In deep-blue pools stand motionless.
A plaintive song of love . . . and from afar,
Wavering through the shadowy dimness,
The bronze notes of the temple bells . . .
Waxen magnolias . . . twisted dwarf pines . . .
Cherry blossoms . . . the slender Iris empress . . .
And a breath of dewy, flower-laden air . . .

PIERRETTE WEARS CREPE

I was flirting with Harlequin by the lilac hedge . . .

And Pierrot came . . . Oh, it was awful!

He stabbed Harlequin. And Harlequin,

Just before he died, pierced Pierrot with his rapier.

Now I am wondering who my next lover will be.

THE HERMIT

I live so far—far from the haunts of men
That I can only guess at what they do.
I smell their twilight wood-smoke hither blown
And glimpse their glowing fires through the trees.
Sometimes I hear their shouts and revelry,
The splashing of their bodies in the stream;
I wish—the heart within me burns—I wish
That I were like them, glad, sporting, and gay,
And free from care; then turn I to my woods
And find such pleasure and such treasure there,
Such quietness and peace that I disdain

THE HERMIT

To wish myself more like them, and I walk
Beneath my age-old trees, nor turn to look again.

I am a hermit and I shall not change.

TO A LITTLE HOUSE AT AVALON

The little walk, the flight of steps,
The plants on either side,
The shaded terrace where we hear
The whispering of the tide . . .

The scent of flowers and fragrant trees,
Birds singing in the vine,
Why ask for better orchestra
Than we have when we dine?

TO A LITTLE HOUSE AT AVALON

A book of verses on the steps.

We take our breakfast there,

And while we drink our coffee, drink

The flowery, sunny air.

O, little house at Avalon!

I STAND ALONE IN THE HALLS OF TIME

I stand alone in the halls of Time
Bewildered. Arch on arch the stately corridors
Stretch down dim vistas; to the end
Of all my eye can see, there is no end.
Oh, where? By what strange portal shall I enter in
To all my rich inheritance, my wealth of worlds,
My wisdom of the spheres?
The doors are many; shall I choose
This one or that? And having made my choice,
May I repent and turn again?
Guide Thou my feet, Omnipotent! And keep
My thoughts within the range of reason.

I STAND ALONE IN THE HALLS OF TIME

Give me love, for life sans love is death.

And give me strength to bear

The necessary sorrows of man's life.

And may I never,

In gazing backward over vanished years,

Say: "Here I should have done

Other than that I did."

MAROONED

Your love was like a wind that filled my sails
And sent me skimming through the foam and spray
Like a gull with silver wings outspread.
But now the wind has died; the sails hang empty;
And the waves beat with sickening force against the prow.
My barque is buffeted with no fair wind
To bear me onward; and I sit
Under the idle sail . . .
But there, over the purple, surging water,
Another boat cuts keenly through the waves;
Another's sails are billowed with the freshening gale.
The wind that drives the others on has passed me by.

THE LONG WAVE ARCHES

The long wave arches, crests, and churns to foam
On the surf-rounded rocks.

The poignant cry of a wheeling gull
Starts melancholy echoes in my lonely heart.

Nothing beyond: nothing but mist,
Uncertain, gray, deceptive.

I have waited long for a glimmer of light
Far on the mist-veiled water.

And still I sit alone on the rocks
Where the wave spray dashes and settles.

REALIZATION

When the high moon has sailed her utmost heaven,
And all the sky is faint and luminous,
Still pricked by shining points of stars,
Awakened by the thrill of slow-awakening earth, I lie
In hushed expectancy, tense silence,
Waiting the call of the Dawn Wind.
It comes! I hear it leaping from the crags
High on the mountain-top.
It comes! I hear it singing in the rustling weeds.
Suddenly it has seized me, filled me . . .
I float! I fly! following the wind,
And reckless hurl through vacuous space.

REALIZATION

The wind has passed, and like a blown, dead leaf I lie.

The dawning light has quickened.

In my soul I feel the infinite sadness

Of another day begun.

I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE KING

I have always wanted to be king.
Do you think that seems a pretty big thing
For a boy who is only five?
Sometimes when my mother 's out
And nurse has my sisters down on the beach,
I put away my blocks and toys,
For they 're too silly for a king;
I go to my father's library, and shut the door.
If it isn't too much trouble,
I take the brocaded cowl off the table
And put it around me, like a robe of state.
Then I sit in the high-backed chair:

I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE KING

It is my throne. I give judgment,
And I sentence criminals and send brave knights
To rescue lovely ladies shut in towers.
And I go to war, and fight;
Of course I always win the battles.
But I can play king only about once a week,
Because nurse makes me go with her . . . mostly.

AWAKENING

Far on the dim, dark steppes
That stretch forever eastward,
Where blows the everlasting wind,
Scarce lighted by the rising sun,
I stood.

I knew then all the secrets of the world.
The future, too, lay bare beneath my gaze;
And with that age-old wisdom shining in my eyes,
I turned and sought to rest.

But still the world pursued me.
Dread, distorted phantoms came
And mocked me over the plain,

AWAKENING

And tortured me
With horrors all unspeakable.
And then you came.
You laid your hand
Upon my burning eyes, and straight
The nightmare vanished, and I woke
To find the sun was shining on my face
And it was eight o'clock.

LITTLE SISTER

She is the terror of the house—

But we all love her.

When she frowns we quake in fear ;

And when she wails we bow in shame.

She *is* a tyrant—yes!—

But we all love her.

MORNING SONG

Poised on the world's sheer edge we stand
Alone in all the glorious gold of Dawn,
Just you and I.

Life is all before us, and it holds
Nothing but treasure, nothing but good.
Life and the world love us,
Just you and me.

PRAYER TO THE FATES

Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos,

Stern trinity.

It is not much I ask,

Grant it, I pray.

O Clotho! drawing from the mist

The thread of life,

I pray you, sweep not wide your arm

In drawing mine, but let

The thread be brief.

Lachesis, at your web, hear me!

And weave my web

Firm, yet not tight, and let

PRAYER TO THE FATES

The web be short but wide that men,
In speaking of me afterward, shall say:

“He lived!”

Atropos! Veiled divinity,

Fray not my web in cutting;

Cut it free, and straight.

Stern trinity, relentless three,

It is not much I ask,

Grant it, I pray.

DISCOVERY

April! tiny new leaves yellow-green

Filter the sunlight. Green moss;

White birch-branches; delicate twigs; new grass;

And white hawthorn blossoms.

April!

A little bronze butterfly on a yellow dandelion.

Spring is here!

THE MIRROR

Like a black opal, luminous
With glowing inner fire,
A little pool lies sheltered by a rock.
Often in spring when the capricious winds,
That sing and make harps of the twisted pines,
Have called me out,
I follow down the little ledge of stone
And on the rock, emerald with moss and fern,
I sit and watch the pool.
Here have I sat when amber Dawn,
Preluded by an awakening breeze,
Stirred golden ripples on the water.

THE MIRROR

Here have I seen the potent sun
Pour molten gold on to the rock
Yet leave the pool in dark blue mystery.
Often I've watched the carmine clouds
At sunset pale the dark pool to amethyst
And silver pink.
But the full sorcery of water lies
When all about's enfolded in the velvet cloak
Of darkness.
Only the pool
Is powdered with the dust of stars
That gleam and quiver in its depths.
Here I gaze, spellbound by beauty,
Till the Dawn has penetrated the night's dusky
labyrinth,
And the moon fades in growing light.

THE MIRROR

The pool knows all my secrets ;

All my moods have been reflected on its ripples.

MEMORY FILM

The last supplies. Final additions.

The wagon ready.

Then the packs set on the pack horse.

Careful balance.

Straps. Buckles. Tugging.

"Oh damn! Stand still, you fool!"

Boxes. Canvas. Rope wound in and out.

Harness then:

"The collar's upside down."

"Who's doing this?"

The saddles. Girths.

Bridle chains. A canteen hung to the horn.

MEMORY FILM

Slickers. Sweaters. Soap.

Personal kit rolled up and tied

And slung across the skirts.

Flies. A restive horse.

Remarks. Derision. Grins from those lined up

To watch the process.

“Hot daisy! What a trip!”

“I wouldn’t go with them

Into the desert for a million bucks!”

At length the start.

Grating of wagon wheels.

Monotonous clip-clop of horses’ hoofs.

Relief. “My, but it’s good to get away!”

“No worries now.”

Hot sun, intensely hot,

Reflected by the desert.

MEMORY FILM

Green, tall cactus by the road

And deadly cholla, white with thorns.

Pitiless heat. Unbuttoned flannel shirts.

Desert Wells. A drink.

Greedy horses gulping down their water.

A momentary rest. Relief of shade.

Finally on the way again.

Blue mountain ridges through the waves of heat.

Scrunch through the sand.

A rattle.

"My canteen. And Johnnie!

Did you bring the axe?"

Gaps. Noise of breaking.

Road bestrewed with pots and kettles.

"Damn you, Buttercup!"

Repairs. Frail rope.

MEMORY FILM

"There. That 'll hold!"

Jog. Silence. Jog.

Mountains. Eternity.

Crags loom nearer as sunset fades.

At length the twenty-first mile post.

Leaving the road. Finding the trail.

The greasewood olive green and dark,

In sunset's light.

Rattle. Louder.

"My soul! how can the wagon stand this trail?"

A scream of brakes. "Whoa!"

Mind the packs! The path 's so tippy."

Lashing up. Cracking down.

Click of hoofs against the rocks.

Brush of greasewood on the pack.

Smells: sage and torn weeds,

MEMORY FILM

Saddle blankets, horse.

Pulling up hills.

"Whoa! Easy now. Let's rest a bit."

A dismal hollow. Rocks. Cactus.

Ghostly shadows.

Winnowing of swift nocturnal wings.

Twilight fading. Weird cries.

Others far ahead. Sudden qualm.

Canter up behind.

"Hey, wait a minute!"

"Hurry up. It's only half a mile."

Interval.

First stars. Only a red cloud,

Low on the dark horizon,

Is left of all the glaring day;

And it is darkening.

MEMORY FILM

Gleam of dusky water

Glittering under scrubby trees,

And the low laugh of that rare stream.

"Here we are, back again.

"How nice the old place looks."

"Bob, we 'll unpack, while you get supper."

Dismounting. Saddles and harness off.

The pack unstrapped and dumped.

The wagon rolled to its appointed place.

Boxes removed. Store of supplies

Set by the rude stone fireplace.

A fire first.

Paper. Kindling. Brush.

Three attempts to strike a match.

Smoke. Smouldering. A blaze.

"All right, now. Where's the can opener?"

MEMORY FILM

"Good Lord! we've not forgotten it again?"

Commotion.

Horses watered. Slobber.

Sweat wiped off with torn-up weeds.

The grain poured out on saddle blankets.

Loud whinnies. Champing lips.

Pawings and squeals.

Browsing.

Appetites. Gleaming faces round the fire.

Food: beans, bacon, strawberry jam

Spread an inch thick on hunks of bread.

The camping zest lends relish.

"My soul! if you eat all the jam tonight

What will we do tomorrow?"

Greasy plates. Forks. Spoons.

Messy pans scattered about.

MEMORY FILM

“Ugh! leave them till morning.”

Laziness. Indolence.

Fire glow. Trees stand out

Brilliantly lit by darting flames,

Then fade into the shadowy darkness.

Sounds of night: the plashing ripple of the stream,

The bull frogs' chorus, furtive calls.

Each seems wrapped in his own thoughts.

Reverie. Fire dying.

Embers. Tiny blue licking flames.

From the gold aura over the dark blue ridge

The moon's first silver tip

Pushes up through the mountains.

Stars glitter in the water.

The soft light grows.

Against the silver disk the branches pattern

MEMORY FILM

Dark and slender, waving in the night breeze.
The spell of night is on us.
Each upturned face is pale with softened light.
Noises stop.
All watch the tremulous beauty of the moon.
A few hushed words. Another silence.
The moon has cleared the ridge
And leaped into the sky.
Some one stirs. "Exquisite!
I feel detached. I floated on thin air!"
The broken spell. Remembrance of the weary ride.
Stretchings. Yawns. Pulling off boots.
A muffled conversation.
Quiet. Thoughts. Final oblivion.
And the moon sails on.

BACCHANALE

Spring's cup of wine is at our lips,
And ivy crowns our hair,
Satyr with white nymph dancing,
Rustle the vine-leaves there.

All in the spring's blue twilight glow
Flashing of leopard skins,
Laughter that ripples and echoes
Light, as the night begins.

With lilting music through the air
And starry blossoms white,
Softly and rustling in the shade,
We pass into the night.

APRIL DESIRE

How can I stay indoors today?

Out there, through the woods, over the creek and down

A little, hidden, unknown path,

A patch of violets is about to bloom.

I want to be there:

I want to kneel on the damp, spongy earth,

To search with my fingers in the mould

For violet buds.

The little leaves, tiny and new,

Outline with red the black, bare branches;

And against the sky

The willow twigs gleam white.

APRIL DESIRE

There 's something in the air today

That calls me out.

I want to exult with that little fish-hawk

Riding the cold, wet wind, still redolent of March.

I want to splash and dive with the wild ducks

Among the dead rushes and the blackened lily-pads.

I want to scream and dance; I thrill

To the swift urge and magic of the bursting buds.

Oh, what a world of promise is outside!

How can I stay indoors today?

I AM EIGHTEEN

There are seventeen doors behind me,
And I am about to shut the eighteenth
And open the nineteenth.

So there are eighteen rooms, one for each year.

Some of them have been dull; some tiresome to cross.

I cannot see how many doors are ahead of me,

Or how many rooms I must cross

Before, opening the last door, I shall pass

Into the dark closet that is death.

There are several people who have come through with me:

My mother, my father, and a few friends.

Every once in a while some one drops out

I AM EIGHTEEN

Or a new one joins us.

This progress through the rooms—Oh! how stupid—

Come, here 's the door marked "19". Let 's open it.

TO A NIGHT MOTH

Frail and ethereal spirit of the dusk,
Who rides on billows of the scented air
With wings more gorgeous than a parchment of old,
Beauty too subtle for a name,
Come, bringing me fantasies . . . dreams of the darkness.

LOGIC

First comes *Life*, and then comes *Love*,
But *Death* comes last of all
To bind and heal the cuts the others made
And kiss us into soft oblivion.

THE ANSWER

What is all this I have been so foolishly saying?

Why have I raved so long?

What will my words amount to when the world

Has crumbled into silence and decay?

The answer: Nothing.

All my passions shall vanish with the wind ;

And all my fires burn to ashes, cold and still,

Yet some day, some one, digging in the dust

And ruin of an ancient tomb,

May lift these tattered pages from the wreck ;

And look on them with puzzled brow

And take them to some tall museum,

THE ANSWER

And there place them under glass,
Where they'll be wondered at,
Just as I wonder now.

I HAVE A TRYST

I have a tryst with a deep blue pool,
Up in the rocks where the winds blow cool.
There at the base of a sheltering rock,
The pool lies: gold and sapphire sheen,
Flecked with silver and striped with green.

I watch by the pool when amber dawn
Mottles the water with gold, like a fawn;
And the Dawn Wind sings in the twisted trees,
And the potent sun, as he waxes bold,
Turns all the pool to molten gold.

I HAVE A TRYST

At evening when the sky is flushed
And all the day sounds are still and hushed
And the birds are silent in silent pines,
The pool then pales to amethyst
With softened pink and a silver mist.

FRAGMENT

Emerald pools with drowsy-floating lotus,

Hum of insects, perfumed air,

Soft winds, and rippling foliage.

But I am sick among the lilies, and my heart

No faster pulses at the calling of the birds.

I turn; my heart aches, and I laugh.

I turn, and laughing, weep.

PRAYER

As the soft tide down on Atlantis bore,
So let Death come to me with opal-jeweled feet
To wrap me in her rainbow mantle, drowsy-sweet,
And lay me where slow waves lap Lethe's shore.

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