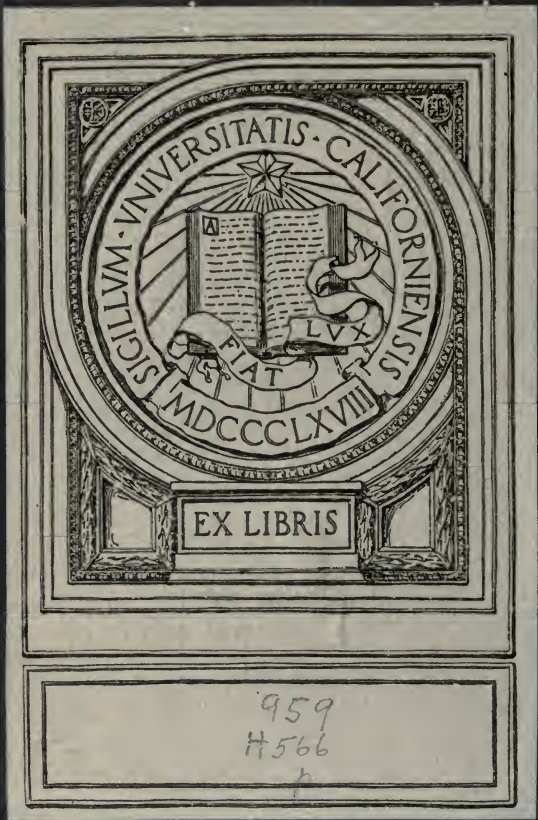


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Portraits and Sketches
by E. Herrick



LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, W.

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PORTRAITS AND SKETCHES

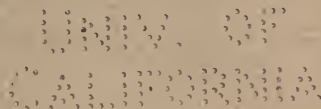
By the same Writer

VERSE PICTURES

and Edition.

PORTRAITS AND SKETCHES

BY
E. HERRICK




LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
1910

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MAN

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Portraits

I

You are a wholesome air that flows, a tide
Of fragrance through an overheated room.
You are a sun that tints the mountain snows
And gilds the sea-swept sands with golden bloom ;

A melody whose vibrant wings are spread
Beyond the tonal walls that cross its flight ;
A cedar pink with April blossomings,
A singing butterfly, a stainless knight,

A staff, nor weight nor hurtling strife may bend,
A fairyland whose skies are always blue ;
You are the high lights of a painted life,
You are my friend, my friend, thank God for you.

II

Thou art a crazy breeze that runs at morn
 Across the sea, its footsteps marked with white :
 A lilt of laughter, playing through the corn
 Till it too flows in waves of golden light.
 Capricious silver from thy flight is thrown
 Athwart the sluggish green of pool and brook,
 The lawless, sun-bright clouds are all thine own,
 A fairy breath that haunts the inglenook,
 Thou fann'st to showered sparks the slumbering log ;
 A wholesome wind that clears the air of fog,
 Thou wak'st the echoes from their sullen rest
 By tuning all their chords to merry song and jest.

III

There is a garden live with mountain air
 Though centred in a city's dust and din ;
 No breath of fog may soil the sunshine there.
 He who for one short hour has entered in,
 Feels the wide walls as from the fear of death
 Encompass him. The alleys blaze with bloom,
 Stern oak trees storm unshaken boughs beneath,
 For, in and out, where flowers may find room,
 Twining from branch to branch, from slope to slope,
 Roses and clematis are blossoming.
 Then all the echoes wake at once and sing :
 "These pearl-white stars were sown as seeds of hope,
 And the bright roses are called sympathy."
 A light wind stirs and shakes the petals down
 About his head : snow and a crimson crown.
 Friend of the Christ, strong in His charity,
 Glory to God who made such souls as thee.

IV

Thy friendship is as a well-ordered home
 Whose doors are open to me day and night
 What time so-ever I may hap to come.
 Through the wide windows stream the air and light :
 The wholesome outer air, the light of truth.
 The merry hearth leaps loud with flaming glee,
 One room is papered with the years of youth,
 And carpeted with dreams of the "to be."
 The hall is painted with a changing frieze
 Of olive branches, shot from green to grey.
 Perchance are other chambers too than these,
 Fast locked, which saw not yet the light of day—
 They shall be opened to us one by one.
 Over each door is set the imaged face
 Of Christ, to look in kindness on the place,
 And beam a blessing on each day begun.

PORTRAITS

V

A strolling player passed along the street
And paused to throw a song across the space
Dividing us. The music loud and sweet
Breathed all of life that hurries on apace
Through aisles of southern bloom, and lured the feet
To follow through its maze of rhythmic grace,
Lighting the spirit with a fierce content
Born of the radiant air and swaying palms.
The wind caught up his voice high on its arms,
He sang his song, then on his way he went.
I heard the notes, but heeded not the rhyme.
You, friend, I call the dance of melody ;
Welcome. A little talk to pass the time,
A little laughter shared, and then, goodbye.

VI

There is a country of fierce mountain heights
 That blaze against the sun like heaven's doors ;
 Of quiet pastures with the shades and lights
 And jewelled glories of their flowered floors.
 A soul of ice, unpierced by noon's keen dart,
 A soul of song, hidden in leaping streams,
 A pleasant slope whose shoulders cleave and part
 In endless vistas of unending dreams :
 A land where, hand in hand, walk life and death,
 Roses a pathway, and the snow a shroud,
 Where föhn-winds heavy with the fevered breath
 Of southern oceans, dash the sky with cloud.
 A land of valleys and of eagles' flight,
 Of fir trees stark and still against the blue,
 Of pealing storms on wings of golden light—
 I know that country, friend of mine, as I know you.

The Fugitive

I have met with thee face to face, on the feet of fear have I
fled ;

For a cold dread clutched my heart, and an old dream
raised his head

Where he slumbered among the dead.

I cried to him : "Take thy rest, and so win out of my
sight !"

For he holds the threads of the past and the vision of all
delight,

But he laughed and then stood upright.

He hath wakened a soundless song, that tells of a sun long
set ;

And the whirlwind answered his call in a soul that sought
to forget—

That vainly sought to forget.

THE FUGITIVE

The roses are flaunting their flames in the face of the sun-
drenched skies ;

Let me bathe my heart in their bloom, till its thought grows
steady and wise,

Unpierced by the light of thine eyes.

So I wandered in fragrant isles in the heat of the radiant
day

That kindled the poppies and pinks, as they marshalled
their brave array,

And the marigolds fierce and gay,

But the poppies were blown aside, where the blossoming
peas entwine,

And I felt the hands of thy soul through the flickering
shade and shine

Held out to lay hold on mine.

Heart of my heart, dear love ! soul of my soul, my king !

Did I fly to the depth of the world, some wandering wind
would sing

The words of thy beckoning.

Did I beat on enchanted sails or the mid earth's torrid line,
To the verge of the frozen south, I should feel through
the ice-bound brine

That thy spirit was holding mine.

Indifference

Our paths ran side by side through twice a score of sunlit
summer days,

In interchange of cheerful thought we learned to call
each other friend ;

Then came the falling of the leaf, then came the parting of
the ways ;

The hours were full, the world was wide, and Time's
white sickle made an end.

Ah, well ! the summer days were dear, and what must be,
must surely be,

And you were not the world and all, or more than all the
world to me.

I thought of you but yesterday in chancing on an open
book

Where any eye might scan its fluttered leaves. I read of
duty done,

Of gentleness and strength of heart, but then as I would
farther look,

A hand was stretched to close the page, nor marked I
how the end might run,

So little and so much ! The lines were live with fire, brave
to see.

I would you were the world and all, or more than all the
world to me.

INDIFFERENCE

I think of you when some good ship is beating towards the
northern Bay,

Her arms about her human freight to fold it from the
furious flood

In iron-bound security. Across the dark a broken ray
Is flashing forth a fitful threat: "Who sees my beauty,
sees his blood."

The screws laugh loud and kick the foam: "Not my blood,
Star of Brittany."

But you are not the world and all or more than all the world
to me.

If you should ever come again and lay a steady hand on
mine,

With kind, compelling touch should wake my soul from
sleep and hold it fast,

Would spring come dancing down the hill to grace with
green the larch-grown chine,

And teach the cuckoos' throats to sing the psalmody of
winter past?

I know but this: that now at least my heart beats loud at
liberty;

Now—you are not the world and all, or more than all the
world to me.

No News

I believe that if he were dead
I should read it writ in the sun :
If the course of his day were sped,
The light of mine own were done.
And how could the morning glow and shine
Through the starless night of the sun's decline?
Or how, from its chain of flesh set free,
Should his spirit not come to me ?

Lately I talked with one
Whose mind is a mine of gold,
Which ore, had I made mine own,
Ah me, it were wealth untold !
But all that he knew was hid from me,
For my speech, as a ship far out to sea,
Was beating in vain to make the light
Of the treasure he held so tight.

Lead me, Eternal Friend,
Through the maze, the mist and the night,
And I seek not to know the end,
For Thy will and Thy way are right.
But wilt Thou not send me back again,
Like the dove of old o'er the falling main,
One of my wordless prayers and dim,
In the guise of a word from—him ?

The Derelict

They open wide the windows, letting in
The early gold that paints the distant sweep
Of coast a very fairyland of peace.
The day breathes dew and cooling airs, unseared
By the hot glare and blinding flames of pain,
Yet strangely seen, as from another world,
Veiled by the trailing vapours of a night
Passed sleepless. Hark ! a sudden note of song :
A bird that flutters past, pipes high to tell
How the grey olives, outlined on a sky
Of morning blue, flash silver in the sun.
Myrtle and cypress, pine and rosemary,
The living hush, the sparkle of the air,
And over all the arch of such a sky
As seems the very pavement of God's court !—
Oh, for the perfume of these rock-hewn hills !
Oh, for the singing ecstasy they teach !
How if for once these fetters were to slip
And I might freely roam from slope to slope,

THE DERELICT

Intoxicated with the fragrant wealth
Held there in trust for whoso cares to take ?
Or, how if I could drop the last-lived years
Like a dark mantle thick with rain and mire,
And stretch my arms with unencumbered strength ?
A sick man's dream is as a captive bird
That beats and turns on pulse of fevered wings,
And beats its wings and turns and finds no rest.
Far from me, far from me, spell-weaving groves
Of deathless bloom and all-triumphant sun !
There is another land, with snow-white doors
Fog-wreathed, a land of heather and of frost :
Hark to this harmony of iron hoofs !
A rain-charged wind is singing at my ear,
A live exhilaration burns my blood,
And something higher too that throbs response
To that same music of the iron hoofs.
How fast a thought can fly a thousand miles !
And girdle half the world with spirit chains !
Hark, there are other steeds, unbroken steeds,
Playmates in freedom on a pathless waste,
Where change by very virtue of itself
Grows a consistency and never ends.

THE DERELICT

A hundred shadows and a hundred lights,
A hundred colours quiver in its breast,
A voiceless solitude, a pulsing life.
Sea, I have ridden thee as on a curb,
Have watched the great prow plunge and rise again
While the green water swept along the decks,
And every timber ground its teeth and groaned.
Yea, I have seen thee waveless, moonlit nights,
When the masts raised black fingers towards the stars,
And peace was wreathed about the windless bows.
Oh, how the whole world circles as of old,
Crammed full of treasure, like to burst with joy
Intense with life, and I—and I am here—
Here with my fast-bound feet and seething soul.
Well, be it weariness or smart of pain,
Or just the fevered fancy's ordering,
The voice is hushed awhile that cries thus loud
To use the limbs that God hath made so strong,
To revel in the fulness of their life,
To sport with danger, laughing, face to face.
There is a man, in stature like to me,
A man, no god, only a man, no more,
Who orders in the hollow of his hand

A miracle wrought out of wood and brass,
A singing spirit of the strings and pipes :
A gesture, and it soars to noble life,
A look, and throbbing still, it sinks to rest.
Some follow the enchantment where it leads
Through nameless lands of spiritual bloom
Towards the great Dawn, but many turn their heads
To stare, to greet a friend, to nod and smile,
Perchance to note the latest mode in hats ;
Then e'er the echoes quite have breathed their last,
Remark the hour is late and join a race
As who shall first be quit of the close hall.
What ! hath he spoken as with angel voice
Words from another world beyond the stars,
Hath he administered God's goodly gift,
That all the simple handle and enjoy,
And all the wisest own a mystery—
Whose essence still eludes the subtlest touch—
Whose deeper meanings mock analysis—
That still remains a language felt and loved,
Loved deeply, deeply felt, half understood—
This hath he brought so very near to you—
You who are free to claim it at your will,

THE DERELICT

And then ye haste to take your foolish leaves
And fall to laughter and to gossiping ?
Thus do ye value it, and I am here—
Here with my empty hours and burning brain.
Ah, what an earth these four white walls shut out !
What a capacity to drink its draughts
Of sweetness do they hold imprisoned here !
Yet if some day the best of all my dreams
Should crowd around : “ Look, we are true at last ! ”
That were existence’ height and flower, still
The man who feasts thus, feasts upon a world
That holds him yet in chains, the life indeed
Is his who reigns the sovereign of his soul,
And binds his wishes bondsmen at his feet.
He is no tenant of his happiness
To hold of circumstance as of a lord,
Paying the rent of an enslavéd will.
Soul-joy is not a petty, mob-crowned king
Who needs must wrap him in his regal robes,
Wear crown, grasp sceptre, be no monarch else ;
But let us say true spirit-gladness grows
An inborn majesty that shines through rags,
Turning their dinginess to ermine white.

THE DERELICT

Then since the pleasures of this world fly far,
Turn me a mocking face with : "Mark you well
How men your brothers find us passing sweet !"
Be my delight to watch them thus crowd past,
To own them with desire very good,
Then lay the lack of them before God's throne,
Bound there with fetters, forged by a will
Itself the blessed captive of His love.
Nay, who shall say, but kneeling thus so close
To Him Who probed the very heart of pain
But I may feel the sunshine of His eyes,
And read the radiant mystery of joy
As never those who wander easily
In placid paths of questionless content.
Not yet the perfect vision, for it flies
Fast from my soul, and dims along with it
The goodly dreams that vex my waking eyes ;
Soul-garnered wealth and physical delight
Of sinews braced to meet some noble end :
Instead the primal man leaps up and cries
And cries aloud and will not cease his cry,
For just one hour of savage, painful life
On that red field from whence they bore me here :

THE DERELICT

To hear again the dull, deep-throated roar
That wakes the world to breathless listening,
To taste again the hunger, the despair,
The danger, and the near approach of doom,
To drink the heady draught of victory,
And fall asleep beneath the shining stars,
To fight, to fight, to shed my blood and die !
Nay, but of all that slips beyond my grasp
This surely still remains : to draw the sword.
What is each moment but a battle cry,
A meeting of the foes that press me hard,
Teaching my wayward will to drag its chain,
Bidding my spirit own itself their thrall ?
This is the very inner soul of war,
Here I can look into her awful eyes
Mine own unveiled by any reek of guns.
The flags hang still, the bugle throats are dumb,
The glory all reserved for some far time
When God shall call an universal peace.
Hark, brother warriors, comrades of old days,
Who smite the enemy in open field,
Ye move but in the outer skirmishing,
Come where I stand and hear the cannon roar

THE DERELICT

Now—shall I ask for respite, thus preferred
Unworthy to the fore-front battle line?
Was ever yet a soldier, — (answer ye)
Who querulously cried, the fight was hot,
And craved a quiet station in the rear?
So may I wrestle till the night draws on,
Daring to die, aye, daring worse than death.
Listen as to a dying man's command,
Heed it as though it were : if at the last
The sword that should have rent my foes be turned
Against my soul instead, and if the shield
Grow heavy in my grasp and bear me down—
Dream not the failure in the armour's self,
Nor in His hands Who forged it strong and bright,
Mine is the fault, if any fault there be,
My fault, who drew the sword unskilfully,
Who parried thrusts with strokes untaught by Him,
Who grasped the blade and let the hilt swing free,
Who yielded but in part to that—dear Strength
Waiting to girdle me with arms of love,
And hold the foeman far, and fold me safe.
Yet if indeed there be no blame of mine,
Or broken will, but only feeble flesh

THE DERELICT

Eclipsing for a while the flesh-bound soul,
Then turns my seeming failure God's success,
Then shall I rise, this darkness overpast,
Strong as the sun that sets behind a cloud
But lives to wake the orient wave with flame.
Lead on the sunrise, Christ Thyself the Dawn!
Great Captain, through the night I look to Thee.

The Sermon of the Sepulchre

The eastern night was thick with stars, the sacred city slept
at peace,

When forth two women went their way to pay last homage
to their Dead,

An empty cross still marked the spot where the King's soul
had found release,

And still around its foot the dewy ground was dark with
drops of red.

The women's hearts were numb with loss, and heavy with a
new-found care :

“ A stone no strength of ours could move makes fast and
sure His resting-place.

Who shall take pity on us? Not the guard who keep the
death-watch there—

So shall our eyes be cheated of their last beholding of His
face.”

But even while they spoke, the guard, hard heroes in the
ways of war,

Lay prone before a light that shewed the mourners' anxious
question vain ;

THE SERMON OF THE SEPULCHRE

That shewed the rock rolled back to shape the threshold
of an open door,
And shone upon the victory that freed the world from
Satan's chain.

How if the broken sepulchre could preach to us across the
years?

“ My vaults grew vivid at the touch of Him Who clove the
bonds of death,
But scarcely yet His own believed Whose voice it was that
checked their tears,
And where were other hands than theirs to weave for him
a victor-wreath ? ”

In Rome great Cæsar's careless court made loud the city's
stately ways,
At Ephesus Diana's fane was thronged with eager
worshippers,
Far in the savage north that day passed but as half a score
of days,
When April lures the woods to bloom and loads with gold
the thorn-thick furze.

But not the hate of heathen hordes, terror of beast or flame
or sword,
Or barrier of ocean-tides that beat against a chalk-ridged
shore,

THE SERMON OF THE SEPULCHRE

No strength of Satan's conquered host could serve to still
the uttered Word,
Or stem the waves of truth that found their centre at my
open door.

Now shall we deem their onward flowing checked and foster
faithless fears?
Thus counting Christ among the dead, Whose Name is loud
in chanted praise;
Where smoke of Pagan sacrifice made black the sun of
bygone years,
And forest solitudes slept on through voiceless nights and
lifeless days.

The God whose angel rolled aside the stone that sealed the
rock-hewn grave
Of Jesus, shall make clear the road before the banners of
His Host,
Till all the earth shall own at last the love of Him Who
died to save,
With "Alleluia, Triune Glory, Father, Son and Holy
Ghost."

From Afar

Never in all the world shall word of thine
Fall on my ears ; never in danger's hour
Shall I stand still to watch thy flashing sword,
Or hold the hand of thy God-given power.

A soldier in the ranks may hear and heed
His captain's voice across the cannon's roar,
So I, thy spirit's music, clarion-clear,
But face to face, we talk not any more.

Nay, but one sight I had of such a soul
As Christ might bid men look upon and say :
" This is my creature, trace my imprinted touch
In every moulding of his mortal clay."

What says the sun, his oceans fierce with flame
And storm, of Kilauea's little sea ?
What reck his rays of the light clouds they pierce
And turn to gold ? What thinkest thou of me ?

That which I owe thee, God can pay, not I ;
My ineffective thought but owns the debt.
Well, I shall watch thee on thy shining way,
And thou wilt grow in power, and—forget.

Unanswered

This is to greet thee whom I shall not see ;
My lips call dumbly to thee day by day,
Needing thee near at hand and missing thee,
Or near or far, still thou art far away.

A hundred hopes are living in my heart :
Poor stunted children thy neglect has maimed,
A hundred questionings that stir and start :
Thine heritage that still remains unclaimed.

Somewhat there is—a veil, a spirit-wall
So subtly thin, time builded and so strong,
As though the busy months, the world and all,
Were set between our souls to do them wrong.

All through the years my heart has leaned on thine
Those were bright years—they will not come again
Summer will come, the sun will still give shine,
But I, I call on thee, and call in vain.

The Wisdom of Men

Yes, you have told me and your eyes flash flame
Seeing the world should harbour such a knave,
Here was a man who wrecked a woman's life,
Won her and wooed her : then e'er many moons
Had stilled the echo of their wedding bells,
Tempered his words of love with cold neglect,
Trampled the heart she gave him under foot.
Now she is dead. Say then, God rest her soul.
God save all women from such men as this,
But save them from the men of honour too.
See how your whole look kindles with surprise !
Listen, and I will tell you of three men ;
(Whether I knew of them or read of them
It matters not, the argument will serve.)
Each of the three was honest as the day,
Each gave his fancy rein in the full flush
And generous ardour of hot-headed youth.
Then blundering on his honourable way,
All good intentions and no after-thought,

Made havoc of the happiness of her
 For whose sweet sake he would have giv'n his life.
 Thus the first case : They met and love grew up
 Between them as the bluebells spring in May.
 He showed his mind, not in so many words,
 Clear cut and dried that made his meaning plain,
 But in the nameless, voiceless language, which
 A woman's instinct hears and understands.
 Then fell the touch that burst the bubble dream.
 How slight a touch it needs, full many know
 Who never know whose hand hath wrought the harm.
 It may have chanced in half a hundred ways.
 Perhaps a third, a well-intentioned friend
 Took him aside : "Have you not noticed it ?
 Your brother's partiality ? You've not ?
 Never ! Why, man, it shines as clear as day !"
 Perhaps his brother's self with glowing eyes
 Gave him his confidence : "She's all the world,
 Nay, how much more than all the world, to me !
 Help me. Show her some kindness for my sake."
 One or the other way—it matters not.
 What matters is just this : he did not say,
 Whose aid was asked to shatter his own life,—

Either point blank, his rival face to face
 Or subtly challenged by another's mouth—
 "You love her? Well, dear brother, so do I;
 Then since both cannot win, let both start fair,
 Shake hands and wish the other each God-speed."
 Fraternal honour bound him with a chain,
 And a new passion kindled in his heart,
 A passion that will rule in noble souls,
 And in no others : love of sacrifice.
 He left her ; sought forgetfulness abroad ;
 There caught a fever, sickened and so died.
 Sweet are self-sacrifice and strength of soul,
 Thrice sweet, by very essence of themselves,
 But since he broke her heart along with his,
 Won it and laid it on another's shrine,
 May we not raise the question of his right?
 Might she not say : "Oh friend, so would—be wise,
 You judged that other was the mate for me,
 But I, had I no word then in the choice?
 You were too humble to believe the truth,—
 A vainer man had wrought me less distress."
 Ah well—the present soon becomes the past.
 A pale old spinster in a lonely home,

With silver hair and gentle, furrowed brow,
 Is not so rare as to excite remark,
 Or prey unduly on our sympathies.
 The second man was poor, his life was bare
 Of all the grace that riches may command :
 Wealth, a handmaiden, not a tyrant lord,
 Wealth, not a vain display, degrading flesh,
 But turned a means to elevate the soul,
 And touch the prose of life to poetry.
 Bravely he trod the uneventful path
 Of toil and drudgery, held want afar,
 Maintained his honour, scarcely cast a look
 At the bright lands beyond, and wore no wreath
 Or victor's bays, but in the angels' sight.
 His life, it seemed, was brimmed with a dull wine :
 Flavourless, colourless monotony,
 Yet not so full it was but love drew nigh,
 Entered and lit the secrets of his soul
 With the full radiance of one dear smile.
 If he had spoken in his simple mind
 Whose motions answered to a wordless law
 True as a compass, he had reasoned thus :
 " Not mine to offer her a beggar's home,

A lot, not of privation, very like,
 Yet shorn of all but bare necessities :
 Where grinding thrift and keen economy
 Would be her playmates and her household gods ;
 Nay, I will wait and if my heart speak true,
 She too will wait. If not, what must be, must.
 The better man shall win and I shall lose."
 So he spake not until the meed of toil
 Had built a home, meet for her gentle sway ;
 But half a score of years or more were gone
 To found his fortune and to light his hearth.
 Perhaps she was too happy at the last
 To seem to chide : " Beloved, nay, you erred :
 The waiting time itself had turned a joy,
 Had it so been we waited hand in hand.
 And there were sleepless nights and careful days,
 And subtler ills born of the year-long strain,
 You dream not of. The knowledge of your love
 Had changed the world that often looked so dark."
 Ah well, the longest night must meet the dawn,
 The day is bright and loud with songs of birds,
 And in our happiness we do not seek
 To quarrel with the past that led to it.

Now for the third, who also is the fourth,
 The fifth and the five hundredth, if you will,
 Who wears what dress the novelist may choose,
 And as acquaintance, friend or lover, fills
 The world's stage and is every one by turns.
 His folly is the folly of us all,
 At divers seasons, in our several ways.
 This is the man who trusted to his friend,
 And knowing well that friend's integrity
 Received his word, nor sought to probe its truth,
 But scenting not a possible mistake
 Graced him at once with judgment, error-proof,
 Omniscience and infallibility.
 There is a friend ! The gamma rays themselves
 Outshone in penetration, as it seems,
 For what is it to look through silver bars
 And wooden walls, though six-fold multiplied,
 Beside the piercing of that envelope,
 Fancy and fact and circumstance, that shrouds
 Disguising and disfiguring the soul ?
 "Always the same pole for your needle's point ?
 Iron-charged rock ! Hear my advice to you :
 She loves you not, I never played you false,

I have it from her lips, or let us say :
 Her words implied as much. You stand no chance ;
 Now shew you strong, and set your hopes elsewhere.”
 What does he say ? “ Good friend, I know your truth.
 You never played me false and never will ;
 Yet will I never stake my all on this,
 That everything is open to your eyes,
 Or that those eyes will always read aright
 All that they clearly see. She loves me not ?
 Then is my care that she should change in this.
 And it may chance my words will need to work
 No change at all, but just unbar a door
 That would not open to your clumsy knock.
 Think you her pride would let her secret thought
 Go walk abroad for who so wills, to read ?
 Still—all is said and done—you may be right.
 Then will I prove you right at her own lips,
 And even then I will regard her ‘ no ’
 Not as a star that knows no breath of change,
 But as a thorn that breaks at last in bloom
 Under the ardent touch of vernal suns.”
 More likely that he spake no word of this
 But let the counsel sink into his heart

And break it, then in silence went his way.
And she? There are a hundred lives for such
Whose love is turned to disillusionment.
Youth's flowers ceased to bloom about her path,
If the day shone, it was but warmth, not light ;
Then came old age, nor seemed to come amiss.
What matters ? Life is short, yet once again :
God save all women from the knaves and rogues
But save them from the men of honour too.

Slumber Song

One thought of thee, then to forget thee, friend,
For this short respite ; then to banish all
With iron hand that could thy face recall.
One thought of thee, my soul to pierce and rend
With the sharp longing of its voiceless cry,
As the wild lightning tears a death-dark sky,
One thought of thee, then come the needed rest.
Come Sleep, and help me sweep my spirit bare,
Then take its bolted portals neath thy care,
And till the day star pales, possess my breast.

A Dream of the River

Sea-ward bound the slow stream, divides the fields of
golden wheat,

Where the pools are still and deep the willows droop in
dreamy gloom :

Woods and waving hay slopes are drowsing in the haze and
heat,

All the grasses nod their heads about the shallows bright
with bloom.

Timothy and cocksfoot and purple-powdered fescue grass,

Meadow-sweet and roses and the river running on and on.

Somewhere on a far sea, a southern sea as clear as glass,

Idle in the silver sun a ship is waiting all alone.

Half a hundred clouds, see, are borne along the singing
air ;

Merry horses, milk-white horses, racing on an azure turf,

Wakes the brook to mirth now, the birches shake their
shining hair,

Echoing with swelling sighs the murmur of the distant surf.

A DREAM OF THE RIVER

Somewhere in the trade winds, her pinions spread for
fullest flight,
Mizzen top to flying jib, the thirty ruffled plumes of her,
Steady in the bright breeze, a ship is beating day and night
Through the rollers flecked with foam to reach the land of
oak and fir.

Somewhere on the sea-shore, the little waves run up the
sand,
Catching at the tired stream, their snowy fingers wild with
play.
Some day, be it near or far, the town will wear on every
hand
Ivy wreaths and crimson flags and watch a ship sail up the
bay.
Hark, the streets are loud with song, the bells are pealing
far and wide,
Love, thy soul is singing too, my heart it hastens forth to
thee.
Dare I meet thine eyes again, or dare I turn mine own
aside?
All the years have sunk to rest as rests the river in the sea.

The Ballad of the Monmouth

The Monmouth and the Foudroyant
Were close in deadly battle grip,
And Arthur Gardiner swore loud :
“Thy snowy ensign shalt thou dip
And drench it in the blood-streaked brine,
And with it wipe away the stain
That soils my name along with Byng’s,
And let me sail at peace again.”

For words are sharp as bramble-thorns, and unearned blame
as black as night.

“So follow on with me!” he cried. “To-day shall set
this matter right.”

“What ship is that?” “Ye fools! though blind that ship
I still should see and know.

What breeze shall float me fleet enough to find mine old
familiar foe? ”

The Swiftsure and the Hampton Court
Made little headway in the chase,
For Gardiner’s soul was set beside
His straining sails, and made the pace.

THE BALLAD OF THE MONMOUTH

The dolphins danced before the prow,
They loved the Monmouth all and each.
And then she found the Foudroyant
And all her guns broke into speech.

“ And is it thou, mine enemy, thy fourscore mouths agape
with glee?

But thou shalt come to Gibraltar so sure as I have longed
for thee.

Well matched the sparrow with the hawk! Yea, I have
sought this hour long.”

The Monmouth eyed the Foudroyant, and all her guns
broke into song.

Their music shook the evening air,
Their light across the sea was thrown ;
Right well the Captain knew his ship,
Hard pressed, the Monmouth held her own.
For two to one is slender strength
To fight a man who fights the past,
The flower of King Louis' fleet
Was like to find her peer at last.

“ Thy ship, Du Quesne, is brave as thou, but thou and she
must surely part ;

The dying moon has cleared the way to break and blast
her to the heart.

But why is she so silent now? Why call we to her thus in
vain?"

Of all her eighty reeking ports not one gave answer back
again.

Then spake Du Quesne: "My honour bids
Me never strike to one alone;
The Swiftsure's guns shall press their claim
And make the midnight's issue known.
But when I yield me, rest assured
I render up my sword to none
Of all my gallant enemies
But him who led the Monmouth on."

And so they took the Foudroyant, battered, and wet with
blood and brine.

She was the pride of Louis' fleet: the Monmouth least of
all the line.

So Gardiner made clear his name of the false fog of
slander's breath;

The morning woke the world again, but Gardiner slept
sound in death.

The Little Sail

“ Whither away so fleet, so fast,
Fluttering sail, lonely sail ?
The angry feet of the storm make haste
In their march, in the wide of yonder waste
Thy brave white wings will be sport for the blast
And the toys of a lawless gale.”

“ Yea well have I heard a wandering sigh
Like a homeless voice of the sullen deep.
I am all alone with the dark of the clouds.
I have shortened sail, and with singing shrouds,
To the clanging call of the seabirds' cry
I go to awaken the winds from sleep.”

“ And hast thou no thought, oh thou little sail,
For the storm-roused wrath of the kingly sea ? ”
“ I shall beat my way to the hurricane's heart,
My planks will groan and my canvass smart
At the flail of the wind, and the sting of the hail
Alone, alone in mine agony.

THE LITTLE SAIL

But my Captain stands with his hand on the helm
And his steady eyes on the dipping prow ;
One of his men will man the sheet,
Two will keep watch, and the death were fleet
That should serve the vessel to overwhelm
That answers my Captain's hand, I trow.

At the last by the road of the cool north-west
The storm will pass to the dead and done,
The seas will sigh through their sobbing swell :
“ It is ended—for ever—Aye who can tell ”
My tattered cordage will hang at rest
And dry in the slant of the sun.

I shall anchor and ride at peace for a while.
“ It is over ” the weight of the sea birds cry
Will sink and lie like a world-worn ghost
On the weary waters and then be lost.
My Captain will look with a loving smile
On my storm-rent sails, and the night will fall.

The White Barque

Heavy hang the clouds above the sea birds, wailing,
Soaring, circling, sinking, round the rock-ribbed Start ;
Thence a snowy barque, dawn-kissed, is southward sailing
Bearing storm and sunshine in her laden heart.

Empty now the harbour where her anchor weighing,
Tore its sandy bed, and split the surface-calm,
From the wakened east, across the waters straying,
Caught her then the sunrise in a flaming arm.

Where the slopes of Cintra feel the strong caressing
Of the steady trade winds, where the Tagus mouth
Spreads its level sand-banks, I can see her pressing
Eager o'er the threshold of the sun-blessed south.

But the harbour slumbers, wrapped by still December
In a pall of peace, fog-sodden, ashy grey ;
Scarce a ripple bids the lifeless pools remember
All the storm and sunshine that have passed away.

Widens for the barque a path of silver glory
All the lovely south lies spread before her prow.
High above the port the grass with rime is hoary
And the stately cliff wears cloud about its brow.

Onward

On through the darkness, the breathing darkness, the living
hush of the sleepless night.

Through the cloven calm of the voiceless ocean a track is
traced in the sight of the stars,

And whither it leads is undreamt of thee and of me.

On and on through the deep unknown, through the vast
unknown, through the soft delight

Of water that laps on the vessel's side, like souls that have
burst their prison bars

We are led and lured through the dark of the pathless sea.

Whither away? All the still stars know, it is hid in
Alrucabah's golden smile,

And the wide waves know as they clasp us close, and dandle
and fondle us on their breast,

But the end of it all is unseen of thee or of me.

The pulse of the ship's great heart beats low, throbs low,
sings low "Such a little while."

In the thrill of a ceaseless, tireless march, in the peace of
an all-encompassing rest.

Our souls shall talk with the mighty soul of the sea.

ONWARD

Is there never a breath from the bitter north, from the icy
north where the snows are born?
Or a fragrant sigh from fields where flowers heap store of
wealth 'neath a sun-blest sky?
Silence and night and the wide embrace of the sea.
What of the land, the enchanted land, through the cloudy
gates of the magic morn?
We shall hear the rush of the anchor chain, we shall bask in
the sunshine by and by.
But the harbour mouth is undreamt, of thee and of me.

A Dream of the South

I dreamt last night we walked 'neath summer skies
Where golden fruit flames bright against the blue.
I smelt the incense of the milk-white stocks,
I heard the soft waves lap along the rocks,
Then all at once my half-closed dreaming eyes
Looked past a blaze of blossom and saw you.

A DREAM OF THE SOUTH

Heart speaking heart in happy fellowship,
We climbed the hills together for a space,
Terrace to terrace with sleep-lightened tread ;
A golden-souled narcissus raised its head,
I saw the age-old olives bend and dip
As though to catch the sunshine of your face.

Then I awoke. The ground was hard with frost,
And, deadened in the fog-draped, northern sky,
A pallid sun looked coldly through the haze,
As though to mind me of the many days
Must go to bring again what I have lost :
The sight of you, the shining of your eyes.

Soon the dream echoes will be hushed and lulled,
When the harsh morning dims its herald star.
The road you travel mounts through radiant ways
To a king's palace and a crown of bays.
For me—the accents of the world are dulled
To monotones, you—and you are far.

Long Vacation

No voice the vaulted gateway hears,
The walls are hung with flaming wreaths
And all the cloistered silence breathes
The pleasure of the faded years ;
The stately courts are bright with bloom,
Unmarked the mornings' placid flight,
As through the windows' painted gloom
The noonday strikes in jewelled light.

But, from the muted organ pipes
That led thy soul in sacred chants,
To this one butterfly who flaunts
The glory of his crimson stripes—
The swallows floating overhead
On poise of never wearied wing,
All whisper : " They are far or dead
Whose footsteps made the echoes ring."

LONG VACATION

And was it only yester eve
Or half a hundred years or more
Since thou didst watch them from the shore
And wave thy hands in final leave?
How fares it with them? Thou shalt know
But this, that they are far away.
And was it half an age ago
Or was it only yesterday?

But be thou sure, from distant clime
Or from the soundless spirit lands
They hold thy soul with steady hands
Across the barriers of time.
The golden sunlight on the lawn
Slants low to where the shadows rise ;
Their ghosts shall walk abroad till dawn
And watch thee with untired eyes.

Frühlingsrauschen

The cuckoo takes the wakened earth for text
And preaches loud a sermon of the spring.
“ The frost has broken ; primroses come next,
Then the full joyaunce of the May’s white blossoming.

Soon will her vernal banners fly unfurled—
Watch ye and wait and see if I say true ! ”
All this he speaks to pleasure the whole world,
But to one quickened ear he preaches only—you.

“ Listen,” he sings, “ who listened once so well,
And, hearing, smiled ! What though your heart-strings
snap

I will not minish aught I have to tell
Of meadow gold, of sighs and whisperings mayhap

From purple clouds, ghost heralds of the storm,
That fold the fields in a fierce breathing hush
Of vivid peace ; for every changing form
That April wears, each melody of lark or brown-flecked
thrush,

Yea, all the crescent glory of the year
Is centred in the smile of one white spring,
That lives again in my returning cheer,
And flies with me at last on steady, south-set wing."

How if my dreams the past could recreate,
As though the cuckoo's note should bid the year
Turn back again and clothe her later state
With the bright daffodils that made her childhood dear?

The July sun sits puissant and august
On his clear throne. Blest is his light and heat.
Ah, but the close-cut grass is grey with dust,
May one not then remember that the spring was sweet?

The Call of the North

I have heard the call of the North and its note was loving
and long,

But it beat its way to my ear through the wail of an Eastern
song,

And the clang of a temple gong.

I have known the call of the North astir with strength in my
blood,

And the pipal trees felt it too through the prick of noon,
where they stood

Burnt dry to their core of wood,

For they fluttered their sun-scorched fans and beckoned
again and again,

And the call of the North ran fast as the dream of a fragrant
rain

Through the dust of the livid plain.

“ There’s a beam of gold on the loch where the clouds are
cloven apart,

And a silver flash in the pool where the bright trout stir and
start,

And the moor is aglow to the heart

THE CALL OF THE NORTH

“ A garnet? an amethyst warmed to life, or the purple of kings? ”

“ ‘ Come away, come away from the world,’ is the song that the sea-bird sings

High-poised on her tireless wings.

“ And the lilt of the leaping burn: ‘ Come away, come away, I have said

I will shew you the temple of peace where the hours are soft in their tread,

And the rocks when the rowans are red.’ ”

And its: Oh, for the kiss of the wind when rain-drenched August is sweet

With the breath of the heather-robed hills and the forests about their feet,

And the smell of the fresh-cut peat.

The mists roll up from the sea in a glory of grey and dun: Still are the pipals, so still, in the glare of the April sun,

And the heats have but just begun.

The Disguise

When the grey dawn crept cold through the tree-tops my
thoughts were of you.

Not a bird broke the stillness the death of the viols had
made,

But a flaming white rose through the darkness flared up
unafraid.

When the grey dawn crept cold through the tree-tops my
thoughts were of you.

“ I was joined in my walk by a 'prentice lad wearing a
cloak

Of brown fustian, he beckoned me on as he sauntered
along.

The strong hand that gripped mine had known labour, but
light was his song,

And the laughter of youth stirred and played in his eyes
when he spoke.”

First a bird wakes and calls to his mate: “ Far away,
very far,

In the gold of his clouds sits the sun like a prince in his
state,

THE DISGUISE

And he waits with his hand on the latch of the bright
palace gate
Of the morning, and talks with his herald, the silver-browed
star."

" But the 'prentice unbuckled his mantle and flung it
away,
And behold he was robed in the ermine and purple of
kings,
And his hand was a monarch's held firm on the centre of
things,
And his smile was a smile that might hold the whole world
in its sway."

What an ashy-white haze! What a silence! The roses
are few,
Very few, and they droop down their heads o'er the
dew-sodden grass.
All the big empty world holds its breath as the slow
moments pass.
When the dawn laid her hands on the tree-tops my thoughts
were of you.

A Song of Dumb Lips

Listen, heart of my heart, I will sing thee a song of the years,
A melody born of the storm and wild as a wind-torn sea,
For the trammels of day fall off from my soul, let it cry,
who hears ?

Not thou, though the darkness is live with the vivid vision
of thee.

Through the years we were side by side, and the pulse of
my life was thine,

But the glance of thine eyes was his, and it pointed a second
place

I might take or refuse, who cared ? but a change was
wrought in a space,

For he went on his way through the world, and the glance
of thine eyes was mine.

But the head of a man grows light in the blaze of a southern
noon ;

Sunshine and south thou wert, a cloudland of phantasies.

If I dreamed that thine heart was mine, what wonder ? I
woke full soon :

He was back from the ends of the earth, and the glance of
thine eyes was his.

A SONG OF DUMB LIPS

So I hewed me a mask of stone and wore it for all to see,
Till its chill struck back to the past and froze its fury and
heat.

I was wondrous brave in my words and loud in my self-
deceit,

But the love lived on in my heart in thunders that pealed
of thee.

I followed a wandering flame, and fevered strove to be free—
The Lion will shine till dawn, his meteors die in the sea.

Half the world have I set betwixt us and still thou art close
by my side,

For my love, as long as the ages, is wide as the world is wide.
And thou, didst thou never divine it? That mask that I
tied so tight!

But thou? Wilt thou read the truth in a lifeless visage of
stone?

Ah, surely at seasons my soul blazed forth with a reckless
light,

And burst its prison asunder, caught thee and claimed thee
its own!

Is it nothing to thee? Who dares it! A lie—and again,
'tis a lie!

As the tonal rise of the seventh thy love must answer to
mine.

A SONG OF DUMB LIPS

Shall I prove the truth of it now and shew myself strong?

In fine

Shall I stake my all on a word? I will wait. And the
years go by.

But I know it is I, not he. It is I at the end of it all—

I shall see the light of thy spirit, the shine of thy flickering
smile :

It is thou and I, oh, my love, till the heaven of heavens
shall fall.

I know it, and claim thee my own, but my lips are dumb
for a while.

The Ends of the Earth

The hills have looked on the soul of the night as she waits
 in the western sky,

Till her touch can tarnish the crimson crown of the day
 that is doomed to die.

One blood-red cloud like a film of flame flares high o'er a
 gentian sea,

And the cry flames high in my heart, "Oh, love, lost love,
 for the sight of thee!"

Could I fly and float in the sunset glow till it kindles about
 thy gate,

Then drop on thy path as a leaf might drop, and wait as
 my soul can wait,

Sing to thee out of a blackbird's throat, smile to thee out
 of a star—

Oh, love is as live as the live red sky, and the ends of the
 earth are far.

I have opened my heart to the song and smart and the
 mirth of the long-lost love,

To the darkness and day of a thousand days from the
 careless dawn of its birth,

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

But a crescent moon laughs clear through a cloud like the
wings of a golden dove :

“ Ah, the long-lost love, it is lost indeed, and as far as the
ends of the earth.”

Ashes of rest for the fading west, purple of sleep for the
deep ;

The stars look out through the doors of night when the
sunset banners are furled ;

The blessing of God for thee, the kiss of His dew for the
eyes that weep,

The gates of my heart are closed anew, and far are the
ends of the world.

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