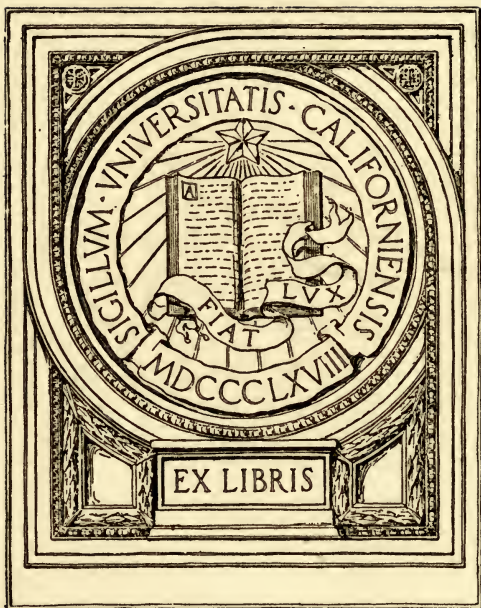


FLORENCE
ON A
CERTAIN
NIGHT

CONINGSBY
DAWSON



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By the Same Author

The Garden Without Walls

Net \$1.35

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
Publishers

FLORENCE ON A
CERTAIN NIGHT

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

CONINGSBY DAWSON

Author of "THE GARDEN WITHOUT WALLS"



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1914

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Published April, 1914



TO

John Keats

WHO, IN EXCUSE FOR A LIKE OCCASION,
WROTE

*“Were I dead, I should like a Book
dedicated to me.”*

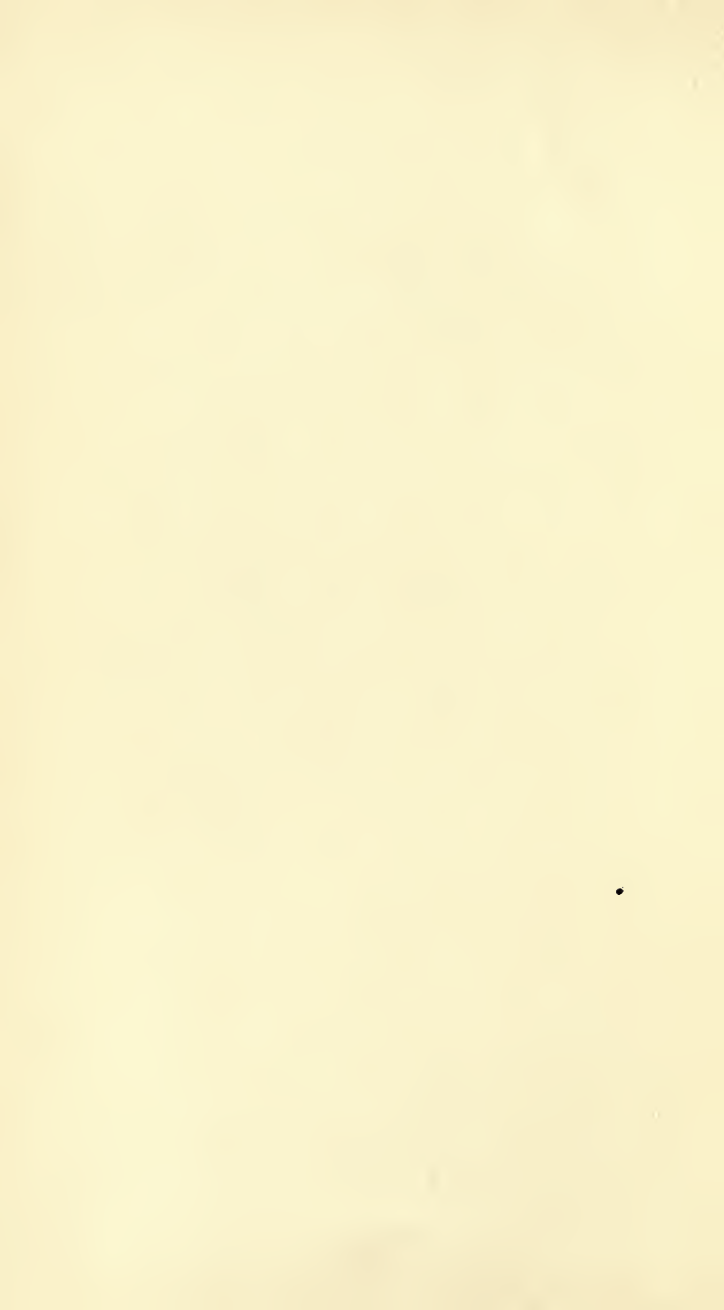
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A WARNING TO THE READER

Here thou shalt find grave thought—the shade of thine;
Most is of earth, some little all divine.
By hands God-given, mine, this tower doth thrive;
Thine are the clouds which round my turrets drive.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author's and publishers' acknowledgments and thanks are due to The George H. Doran Company for permission to reprint *The Ivory Latch*, *A Lullaby* and *The Song of Ignoble Ease* from a previously published work, *The Road To Avalon*; to The Cosmopolitan Magazine for the poem here entitled *Out of The Blackness*, but formerly entitled *Life*; to Good-Housekeeping for the poem entitled *Answered Prayer*; and to The Independent for *Childish Travelling*.



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FLORENCE ON A CERTAIN NIGHT

FLORENCE ON A CERTAIN NIGHT

(October, 1504)

[*Someone sings in the street below*]

*Fair-fleeting Youth must snatch at happiness,
He knows not if To-morrow curse or bless,
Nor round what bend upon his travel-way
The bandit Death lurks armed—of Yesterday
His palely featured griefs he knows too well;
Therefore with jests To-day, come Heaven, come Hell,
He plucks with either hand what joys he may.*

*Joy is a flower
White-leaf'd or red,
None knows which colour
Till it is dead:
White gives forth fragrance
Pure as God's breath;
Red in its dying
Yields the gatherer death.*

[*Leonardo da Vinci speaks*]

So 'tis Lorenzo's song they sing to-night,
That haunting song which long years since he sang
When, with his gallants through the torch-
smirched dusk,

He laughing rode toward the Carnival,
And young girls loosened all abroad their hair
And flung up petals through the cool moonlight,
Some of which falling rested on his face,
Some of which falling covered up his eyes;
And girls there were who kissed his drooping
hands

And clasped his stirrups, begging him to stay,
To halt one little moment, stay with them:
“*Life is so short. Delay with us a while.*”
But he rode on, and sang of joy and love.

Lorenzo il Magnifico is dead;
His lips are silent, and he now could halt
Oh, endlessly, if one of those fair maids
Should come to him imploring him to stay.
For twelve slow years within the sacristy
Of San Lorenzo he has never waked,
But has the rest he could not find in life—
Ungrateful now, because postponed too long.
If one should steal to him from out the past
And bending down should whisper low his name,
He would not hearken. True, she would be old,
As are all maids of that spent gala-night;
So, if he heard her, he would only smile,
For he loved only beauty in his day.

[*Someone sings in the street below*]

*Fair-fleeting Youth wends ever to the West,
He, like the sun, too soon must sink to rest.
Stars of Remorse, fast-following on his track,
Moon of Old-Age, can nothing turn ye back?
Ah, soon the golden Day'll have spent his breath!
Then comes the drear, eventless Night of Death
When Youth, no longer young, all joys must lack.*

[*Leonardo da Vinci speaks*]

"Then comes the drear, eventless Night of Death!"
'Tis true, for who in Tuscany to-day
Dares breathe the Medicean name aloud?
When a man dies, the watchers by the bed
Close down his eye-lids, so is he once dead;
Twice dead is he whose mem'ry men dang down
To dark oblivion when his soul is fled.
Florence forgets her singer, but his song
Still echoes through her streets on autumn nights,
And pausing at the door of some old friend,
Bids him remember all the hope he had
In spacious days, before Lorenzo died . . .

It seems Lorenzo's soul crept back to earth
Re-seeking Joy he coveted in life,
Seeking the happiness he never found.

6 FLORENCE ON A CERTAIN NIGHT

Yet, was his labour lost? Did he not find?
He sang one song which lingers in men's hearts
And, having sung, he surely solved his quest.
Who of Joy's seekers finds the flower itself,
And plucking, knows the snow-white from the red?
Not I, for I've been truant in my search;
I've pluck't the mauve of Honour and the green
Of cloistered Knowledge, yellow of Romance,
The blue which feigns a deep Tranquillity,
Scarlet of Boldness, purple of Despair,
Orange of Idleness which flaunts the sun,
And indigo of wizard Heresy—
And gray which gives to Weariness unrest.
Perchance I've clutched within this eager hand
The Death of Joy—the fatal flower of blood.
I know not. This I know, I have not trod
The quiet vale where grows the flower of white.

Like an unwise distiller of perfume
I've blended each new fragrance as it came,
Made something perfect for a day—two days;
Then ruined all by adding something fresh.
First I would be a scholar, so I learned
Latin and Greek, and Mathematic Law.
Then I would be a poet, so I wrote
“Chi non può quel che vuol, quel che può voglia;

Che quel che non si può folle è volere.
Adunque saggio l'uomo è da tenere,
Che da quel che non può sua vogler toglia.”
I could not live the wisdom which I taught,
So I must be a master of design
And studied sculpture with Verocchio,
Verocchio who had his dusty shop
On Arno's banks in grand Lorenzo's time.
Thither, while yet a boy, I did resort
And out of terra-cotta caused to smile
Women whose beauty ne'er hath been surpassed,
Nor equalled in the flesh for Man's delight.

Still not content, I'd be an architect
And renovate this battered world for God,
Hurling across steep valleys, mile on mile
Through cloudland, spans of marble aqueduct;
Leading chained rivers from the mountain-heights
Down to the plains where men are wont to toil,
There I would cause these Samsons of the crags,
Scenting the sea, whose waves are unconfined,
To shake themselves as once at other times,
And rush in frenzy forward turning mills.
So would each city echo to the hum
Of loom, and web, and swift-revolving wheels.
Then, when prosperity had reached its height

And merchants cavilled at each other's gains,
I'd frame for them the iron beasts of war
And hound them on to harry and destroy—
And when our world was fallen, who but I,
Da Vinci, should stand forth to raise it up?
These were my dreams; I thought myself divine—
All this was long ago, when I was young.

Next I would make me wings, and I would fly
As do the morning birds straight t'ward the sun,
Piercing the mists, rise far above the clouds
To seek out where God walks and whom He loves.
I made me wings, but had not strength to fly.
Still discontent and tethered to this world,
I strove to wrench the secret out of Life,
And swept the far horizon of the stars
If there, at least, I might discern some sign
To tell me whence souls come, to where depart.
I, in my overhaste, pursued too far,
Seeking that vague and fabled Paradise
Where Adam and his many sons sing chaunts,
While Eve walks through them pale and deified.
I missed my track in pathless swamps of Time,
I chilled my hands against the cold-dead stars,
And lost my mind in unremembered Past,
Remote from God and out of human sight.

Lastly I took to painting down my thoughts,
And pictured for the King of Portugal
That fatal meadow in the Eden Land,
Where Man's first sweet and deadly sin was
wrought.

I, in this art, all others did excel;
Yet with success I was not satisfied
But hourly craved for the impossible—
To fashion men as real as flesh and blood.
To-day I'd toil with fire in my brain
And paint away the faults of yesterday,
And shadow forth the dreams of yesternight,
And so on through long months and weary years
Till, losing heart, I'd toss my brush aside
Leaving the thing unfinished as it was—
Adding this broken promise to my last.

There's Raphael with his wide unanxious eyes,
He does his work as though it were his play;
He never talks of fame, but sings the while
He paints the Virgin with Lord Jesus Christ—
Goes to the door, throws kisses to a child,
Goes to the window, smiles to some slim girl,
And so returns and flashes kiss and smile
Into the canvas quaking 'neath his brush,
Creating thus a masterpiece sublime.

And then there's surly Michelangelo
 Who chisels *Davids* through the death-long night,
 And paints *Last Judgments* through the livelong
 day,
 Pantingly running, pace on pace with Fame,
 Racing clean-limbed toward his goal in life.

But I, poor changeling, wake, and dream, and
 wake,
 And dream again, retarded by desire.
 I was eight years in painting at Milan
 A fresco for the monks of Dominic—
 And even this I hear's begun to fade;
 It was a picture of that sacred feast
 Our Saviour gave before he went to die.
 Ten years I laboured on the Sforza horse
 Which should have been my monument through
 Time.

I built it huge and true in every line,
 Studied anatomy to make it strong,
 And set on top Francesco with his sword;
 But, when the time for casting had arrived
 And I had done one perfect work at last,
 The hungry French across the border came,
 Bringing their Gascons, who got drunk and shot
 The clay of my poor Titan into space.

So were ten years of strenuous effort lost;
 And now I'm painting Mona Lisa's face . . .

[*Someone sings in the street below*]

*Seize then thy gladness ere it turns to dust,
 Youth can make all acts lovely, all deeds just;
 Heed not the tyrant, lean Morality,
 But steer thy passion down to the purple sea,
 Through winding hills where Beauty hath her home
 And calls to travellers, until thou come
 Unto the Deep of Love's Satiety.*

[*Leonardo da Vinci speaks*]

Ha-ha, my passion to the purple sea!
 And yet, I'd go if Mona Lisa'd come.
 We two, close-seated in one crimson boat
 Would drift the yellow waters of Romance,
 Glide down its stream through hills of mystery
 Where Beauty roams, of which the song hath
 sung,
 Nor ever speak of where that tide should end.
 We'd dip no oars, we'd set no hurrying sail,
 But swept on the full current of desire
 Would steer our course with unimpeded hands,
 Watching the pleasure in each other's eyes.

Ah well, 'tis vain to talk! Two-thirds of life
Till now I've spent in spotless purity—
Affection's been retarded by desire
As has my work; my dreams have far excelled
The beauty God moulds into human shape.
The sweet perfection of the womankind
Who haunt my brain, has held me back from love.
This . . . this was so till Mona Lisa came.

Four years I've painted when it was her day,
A day of mist, of mingled rain and sun;
Four years before me silently she's sat
And smiled to see me strive to catch her smile
In liquid paint, with canvas and with brush,
So that her eyes, searching, inscrutable,
May question her sons' sons when she is dust.
I only just begin to know her face.
To learn its sudden changes I have paid
The skill'dest men in all our Tuscan vales,
Harpists, lute-players, masters of the viol,
To make soft music while on her I gaze.
For her content I ordered to be made
A fountain in the courtyard of my house
Whose waters falling, ere they dash to spray,
Smite on smooth spheres, which thus revolve and
hum

The chaunt the winds toll in our upland pines.
 About the fountain's brink I caused to plant
 Pale iris roots and dew-blanch'd narcissi,
 Since white's the flower which most of all she loves.
 Also about the pillars, where the sun
 Lengthens the shadows when the evening fades,
 I've sculptured . . .

[*Someone sings in the street below*]

*Passion's a flower
 White-leaf'd or red—
 None knows which colour
 Till it is dead;
 Love gives forth fragrance
 Pure as God's breath;
 Lust in its dying
 Yields the gatherer death.*

[*Leonardo da Vinci speaks*]

And had Lorenzo sung those words to me
 His voice had had no more familiar sound;
 Had he turned back from lordly Paradise
 To urge me on in my pursuit of Joy,
 Knowing its flower almost within my hand,
 He had not said those words more earnestly.

Lo, even now he stands without and I,
By leaning forward, may discern his face.

[Rises, goes to the window; looks out]

Nothing; the sky is covered with a cloud,
The moon's obscured and all the stars are dead.

[Cries, as though hailing someone]

Lorenzo, ho Lorenzo! Are you there?
I heard your singing. I am come, old friend.

[Listens; then to himself]

What's over there? I thought a shadow stirred.
There, over there! Beneath Piero's wall.
Hath Pagan Plato triumphed over Christ
And sent his chief apostle back to us?
Or hath Lord Christ in his compassion wrought
That kindness Dives craved of Abraham,
Sending Lorenzo here from off his breast
To bid me snatch my Joy ere Death befalls?
No . . . no, the moon shines through and makes
all plain.

This is some old Florentine Lazarus—
A soldier crippled in our Pisan wars
Who begs upon San Marco's steps by day.

Hi, here's a scudo! Catch it in your cap.

D'you hear me fellow?

Strange, he does not stay,
But hastens on as if he . . . there, he's gone.
Perchance he's mad or deaf, or blind and mad.
And yet methought that, when he turned to go,
His face looked upward, so it caught the light;
And it was like to one . . .

[Comes back from the window and sits down]

Ah well,

I'll think no more of spirits and of ghosts;

Let the dead past go bury up its dead.

I'll think of Mona Lisa's face alone . . .

Of Mona Lisa's face.

Just now I said

One thing I knew, that I had never trod

The quiet vale where grows the flower of white.

'Twas false. Four years I've lived and wandered
there

And seen my flower, but feared to break its stem.

Dear God, thou knowest how often I have prayed

That this temptation might not make me fall—

Yea, I have asked for death's deliverance.

Is this thy answer, that it is no sin

For men to gather that which most they love?

So be it. Silence answers every prayer;
Thy voice hath spoken—I am satisfied.

Men say in Florence, while I watched her face,
That I bewitched her, so her very eyes
Grew in expression like unto my own,
So that her hands took on my restless ways,
So that her mouth hath altered in its smile
And, when I paint her face, I paint my own.
Then let that be God's answer to my prayer.

Ah, she is like me, she is very like!
God made her for the sister of my soul;
He would not have His plans jerked out of joint
By one mistake, because she chanced to wed
Her bankrupt father's sternest creditor
To save his name—and this, some years ago;
Therefore He sent His singer here to-night
That he, in words I loved, might tell me so.
Certainly God is good and very great.

'Tis said her husband hath returned this night,
Passing at sundown through the southern gate
From Naples, where last spring he went to sell
Certain Sicilian cattle which he had.
(He sold, I'll warrant, at the highest price),
So, if the husband's come, then *she* is home.

That day she left me, 'twas an April day,
One of her days of mingled mist and sun,
I well remember how she paused and gazed
Full in my eyes, as if forbidden love
Were vainly seeking words which shame denied;
Then suddenly she stooped, and her lips brushed
My forehead. God gave gentle words; she prayed,
"May the Christ-Mother have you in her care"—
Nothing besides. Passionately I rose up,
Willing for her sake to be crucified;
Stretched forth my arms to snatch her to my
 breast,
And found her gone—the courtyard filled with sun.
Six months have passed since then—six tortured
 months!
There hangs her portrait, it has felt no brush
Since on that April morn she went away;
And now the empty courtyard's filled with night,
And back to Florence Mona Lisa's come.

To-morrow I will go to her and say,
"Lisa, here take my life for it is yours.
Do with it as you will; but do not stay
To add, subtract, and reckon up its cost.
Act a brave part and, if your love's like mine,
We need not fear; for what we lose we gain,

And, though we gain much, still to-day's to-day
 And, while we tarry, one day's love is lost."

Ah, would that I might speak those words to-night
 For, while I halt, another night is gone—
 Crush'd to a mem'ry 'neath the heel of Time.
 I'm minded even now to venture forth,
 To go to her, although the hour is late;
 And through the darkness, when she hears me call,
 Only to say to her this one word, "Come."
 Thus unto men speak Birth, Fate, Love and Death,
 The four great captains of this brief campaign;
 Casting a shadow at the soul's tent-door,
 Each in his turn beckons and whispers, "Come."
 And I to her am Death, Birth, Love and Fate;
 And she to me is Love, and only Love.
 I'll go to her. How can I longer wait?
 Her nearer presence sets my blood aflame;
 I'll seize my flower . . .

[*Commences to descend the stairway, then pauses*]

Ah, the song again!

[*Someone sings in the street below*]

*Let naught of fear Youth's laughing steps delay,
 Aye, gather gladness; pluck it while ye may—*

*We know not if To-morrow curse or bless.
 Who cares—one red bud more, one white bud less?
 Only we know that love was meant to spend,
 And this we know, that each life hath its end;
 Therefore, O Youth, snatch all thy happiness.*

[Descends slowly; passes out into the street]

[Leonardo da Vinci speaks]

There's truth in every line that song hath sung.
 The hand that wrote it's twelve years turned to
 dust,
 The brain's become a hollow nothingness—
 A little grayness lying in a skull;
 And yet Lorenzo guides my steps to-night
 Unto my love as truly as in life.
 Oh wonderful and strange that men should die
 And, being buried, still should talk with us!
 When *I* am free, and future ages come
 To stand amazed before the girl I loved,
 Then I will speak with them, say thus and thus,
 And, though departed, never shall be dead.
 For this I'll paint her portrait till 'tis done,
 Singing, like Raphael, from gray dawn to dusk,
 Pausing to kiss her forehead, lips, throat, eyes,
 Learning their beauty, where mine own lips touch;
 So I, like Angelo, with measured stride

Will race with Fame, until the prize is won.
 Yea, men attain most only when they love.
"But steer thy passion down to the purple sea,"
 (How went the song?) *"Until at length thou come
 Unto the Deep of Love's Satiety."*

Truly, that is the way that brave men love:
 Reckless of blame, despising consequence,
 Not counting on a better day to come,
 Seizing with warrior-hands their Joy at once.
 And love in life is everything to us,
 And I have failed because I have not loved.
 But, when her soft arms go about my neck
 And I grow pale before her great desire,
 A new success will pass into my blood
 And I'll be strong . . .

Ah, someone's coming up!

I'll draw into the shadow of this gate;
 Perhaps he'll pass. I seem to know his tread.
 No good! He's seen me; I must seek the light.
 Is't you Vitelli?

[*Vitelli*]

Leonardo?

[*Leonardo da Vinci*]

Yes. .

[*Vitelli speaks*]

Well, how's the painting? Is her portrait done?

Whose portrait? Why, the one of Lisa's face.

Not finished! What, 'tis only just begun?

Well, that's a pity. Four years seems some time
To gape before a canvas with a brush.

Beg pardon. This is what I meant to say:

That since you could not paint her in her life,

You'll scarce be more successful now she's
dead . . .

You did not know? . . . *Why, she's been dead
three months.*

CENTURIES AGO

IN the solemn twilight, centuries ago,
God walked in His Garden, all His stars below;
God was very lonely, so He caused to grow
Man, in some ways like Him, centuries ago.

Man roamed through the twilight, centuries ago,
Always thinking, thinking—wishing he might know
Who it was that made him; then God caused to
grow
Woman, who was half-God, centuries ago.

These, within God's Garden, centuries ago,
Stood beneath the twilight calling very low
To some voice to answer, whereby they might
know
Had God really made them—centuries ago.

Thus whilst they were listening, centuries ago,
Solemn feet drew nigh them, treading very slow;
Solemn hands so touched them that they caused to
grow
Something that was All-God, centuries ago.

Then they left God's Garden, centuries ago.
Scarcely dared to question, never hoped to know,
Who it was that touched them, causing thus to
 grow
That small child, so like them—centuries ago.

HIS MOTHER

I BORE him in my breast—
Yes, it was I.
My mother's hands impressed
Stars of the sky
On to his infant sight,
As we watched night by night,
Jesus and I.

I taught him how to pray;
Yes, it was I
Gave him the words to say.
God drawing nigh,
We two walked hand-in-hand
Close to God's Hidden Land,
Jesus and I.

This little son of mine
Fell from the sky;
God made him all divine—
Yet there was I.
I came to bear his loss,
He came to take his cross—
He came to die.

Thus we went hand-in-hand,
My son and I,
Up to God's Hidden Land—
Went up to die.
He entered in to reign
And came not back again—
Yet there was I.

PERHAPS

“PERHAPS tomorrow, but not today.
I am young and life is long,” she said;
And she smiled to herself and tossed her head—
She scarcely cared that he went away.
“Perhaps tomorrow, but not today.”

“Perhaps tomorrow, perhaps today,”
She laughed; and the green things rose from bed
And lived their moment. But still she said,
Till the sky grew old and the world grew gray,
“Perhaps tomorrow, but not today.”

“Neither tomorrow, nor yet today.”
Night fell. She heard the voice and sped,
And followed his steps, till she found Love dead.
The forest muttered, as it would say,
“Neither tomorrow, nor any day.”

BELLUM AMORIS

OH, the romance of it,
Soul-thrilling trance of it,
Though lives are lost which no love can restore!
Hearts ride a-prance at it,
Taking their chance at it—
Wing-thriven hearts to the seat of Love's War.
Sorrow is theirs in store;
This they know well before,
Yet do they ride from the West and the East
Hoping for this at least,
Out from the West and East,
Glory with death at the end of the war.

Should they return again,
Life sings the old refrain,
Mystery, madness and mirth at the core:
Patter of falling rain,
Dawnings which wax and wane,
Life which is war at the end of Love's War.
Thunders have ceased to roar,
Terrors they knew before

When they rode out from the East and the West.
Though passions will not rest,
Love, which is always best,
Honours brave lips at the end of the war.

QUEEN MARY OF HEAVEN

SHE sits in God's garden,
Queen Mary of Heaven,
Where birds sing their steven
Hid in the cool tree;
And all the gold day-time,
From morning till even,
Earth's little strange children
Play round her knee.

Earth's lost little children
She binds to her bosom,
Each wind-gathered blossom,
Till mothers are free
To steal to God's Garden
And name them and loose them—
In Eden's green garden,
'Neath Mary's tree.

A BRAVE LIFE

THE arid loneliness of life he knew,
The doubtful darkness of the starless night,
And fear lest he should never see the sight
Of dawn and God the Father breaking through.

Brave offspring of a disenchanted age
He lived as though illusion were not dead;
His was the pain of faiths discredited
Which with new knowledge civil battles wage.

In all his deeds for righteous quests he stood
And we, who watched his face and heard his voice,
Dreamed of the Christ; we had not any choice,
In loving him we knew that God was good—

We knew. And thus, beneath the hooded sky,
Lightly we followed where his pain had made
A path for us; if one should fall, he stayed
To raise him, lest his frailer hope should die.

Ofttimes when summer's day had ceased to shine
And on our London roofs the moon looked down,
We two would wander through the gas-lit town
Speaking in whispers of the things divine;

Or in love's stillness, high above the strife,
We found our spirits strangely catching fire,
And told of that "*unspeakable desire*
After the knowledge of the buried life."

He knows its secret now; the morning mist
Drifts up the road where his last footprint lies;
And I, as ever when a Christ-man dies,
Stand awe-struck, asking, "Was not this the
Christ?"

His soul craved God. I think we always knew
He would be with us but a little while.
Night vanished; dawn broke—when he saw God
smile
Back like a homing-bird to God he flew.

THE MOON-MOTHER

THE world is a child who roams all day
Through windswept meadows of gold and gray.

The gold flowers fade; he falls to sleep,
And night is his cradle wide and deep.

The moon-mother creeps from behind God's throne
And steals up the skies to protect her own.

She leans her breast 'gainst his cradle-rim
While her small star-children gaze down on him.

Stars are his brothers; clouds his dreams;
His mother's arms are the pale moon-beams.

When meadows again grow gold and gray,
He wakes from sleep and runs forth to play.

But every night from behind God's throne
The moon-mother steals to protect her own.

TO A YOUNG GIRL WHO SAID SHE WAS
NOT BEAUTIFUL

It's not her hair and it's not her feet,
Nor the way she walks with her head held high;
It's not because her eye-brows meet
Like a bird's wings over a glimpse of sky;
And it isn't her voice like April bloom
Rustling through an orchard's gloom—
It's none of these; not her wide gray eye,
Nor her crumpled mouth like a rose-bud red
Round which the snows of the jasmine spread.

Though her long white hands
Are like lilies of Lent,
Palely young and purely bent
O'er her breast, where God stands,
It's none of these.

Flowers and trees
With her to compare
Are too little rare.

Though the grass yearns up to touch her feet,
She is loved for this—she is *sweet, sweet, sweet.*

HALLOWE'EN

*Hark to the patter of the rain,
Voices of dead things come again:
Feet that rustle the lush wet grass,
Lips that mutter, "Alas! Alas!"
And shadows that grope o'er my window-pane.*

Poor outcast souls, you saw my light
And thought that I, on such a night,
Would pity take and bid you in
To warm your hands, so palely thin,
Before my fire which blazeth bright.

You come from hells of ice-cold clay
So pent that, striving every way,
You may not stir the coffin-lid;
And well you know that, if you did,
Darkness would come and not the day.

Darkness! With you 'tis ever dark;
No joy of skyward-mounting lark
Or blue of swallow on the wing
Can penetrate and comfort bring
You, where you lie all cramp'd and stark.

Deep sunk beneath the secret mould,
You hear the worm his length unfold
And slime across your frail roof-plank,
And tap, and vanish, like the rank
Foul memory of a sin untold.

And this your penance in the tomb:
To weave upon the mind's swift loom
White robes, to garb remorsefully
A *Better Life*—which may not be
Or, when it comes, may seal your doom.

Thus, side by side, through all the year,
Yet just apart, you wake and hear,
As men on land the ocean's strum,
Your Dead World's hushed delirium
Which, sounding distant, yet is near.

So near that, could he lean aside,
The bridegroom well might touch his bride
And reach her flesh, which once was fair,
And, slow across the pale lips where
He kissed her, feel his fingers glide.

So distant, that he can but weep
Whene'er she moans his name in sleep:

A cold-grown star, with light all spent,
 She gropes the abyssmal firmament.
 He hears her surging in the Deep.

Ever throughout the year 'tis thus
 Till drones the dream-toned Angelus
 Of Hallowe'en; then, underground,
 Unto dead ears its voice doth sound
 Like Christ's voice, crying, "*Lazarus.*"

Palsied with haste the dead men rise
 Groaning, because their unused eyes
 Can scarce endure Earth's blackest night;
 It wounds them as 'twere furious light
 And stars were flame-clouds in the skies.

What tenderness and sad amaze
 Must grieve lost spirits when they gaze
 Beneath a withered moon, and view
 The ancient happiness they knew—
 The live, sweet world and all its ways!

.
 Ho, Deadmen! for a night you're free
 Till Dawn leads back Captivity.
 To make your respite seem more dear
 Mutter throughout your joy this fear:

*“Who knows, within the coming year,
That God, our gaoler, may not die;
Then, who'll remember where we lie?
Who then will come to set us free?
Through all the ages this may be
Our final night of liberty.”*

Aye, hoard your moments miserly.

.
And yet and yet, it is His rain
That drives against my window-pane.
Oh, surely all Earth's dead have rest
And stretch at peace in God's own breast,
And never can return again!

And yet

UNSEEN

Oh mother, why are you weeping
When all the world's asleeping?
Rest ye, rest ye, mother,
I am near, dear, near.
Not beneath the moon-drenched grass
Do I turn to hear you pass—
You would see me walk beside you, if your eyes
saw clear.

Oh mother, why are you crying?
There was no loss in dying.
Rest ye, rest ye, mother,
Have no fear, no fear.
Still long hangs my golden hair,
But the body that I wear
Treads more kindly and more lightly, could you
hear, dear, hear.

She has stayed her eyes from weeping;
She is sleeping, sweetly sleeping.
Rest ye, weary mother,
I am here, dear, here.

Now the dawn-wind fans her cheek,
And she knows not that I speak—
But my arms are warm about her, could her eyes
see clear.

WHY THEY LOVED HIM

So kindly was His love to us,
(We had not heard of love before),
That all our life grew glorious
When He had halted at our door.

So meekly did He love us men,
Though blind we were with shameful sin,
He touched our eyes with tears, and then
Led God's tall angels flaming in.

He dwelt with us a little space,
As mothers do in childhood's years;
And still we can discern His face
Wherever Joy or Love appears.

He made our virtues all His own,
And lent them grace we could not give;
And now our world seems His alone,
And while we live He seems to live.

He took our sorrows and our pain,
And hid their torture in His breast;
Till we received them back again
To find on each His grief impressed.

He clasped our children in His arms,
And showed us where their beauty shone;
He took from us our gray alarms,
And put Death's icy armor on.

So gentle were His ways with us
That crippled souls had ceased to sigh;
On them He laid His hands, and thus
They gloried at His passing by.

Without reproof or word of blame,
As mothers do in childhood's years,
He kissed our lips, in spite of shame,
And stayed the passage of our tears.

So tender was His love to us,
(We had not learnt to love before),
That we grew like to Him, and thus
Men sought His grace in us once more.

ABSENT IN SPRING

APRIL fields and England's flowers,
English friends and April showers,
April voices o'er the sea
Calling, calling unto me:

“Oh, why tarry, why delay!
Hither lies the meadow-way;
No such meadows shalt thou see,
Oh, come back to Arcady.”

Happy English Arcady
Thou art calling, calling me
Through thin flutes as frail as Pan
Fingered, when long since he ran

Careless as these foreign flowers,
Trailing through these tropic bowers
All their largess of gold leaf,
Piling splendors sheaf on sheaf.

Some there be who think Pan dead,
Say his nymphs and flutings sped;
I know better, I have seen
Where his racing feet have been.

Still I hear the dead god's voice—
England's. Had my soul the choice,
It should wade through starry bloom
Knee-deep to the brown-burnt broom.

April fields and April flowers,
April friends and April showers,
England shouting o'er the sea,
Calling, calling unto me.

CHILDISH TRAVELLING

Ah, little child, as you lie in my breast,
Leaning your hair of gold close to my face,
Flushed in the gathering glow of the West,
Where shall we travel—to what joyous place?
Shall we refashion our castles in Spain,
Or sail to the Indies with Sinbad again,
Or noiselessly drift to where tired stars wane—
Shall it be Africa, Sinbad or Spain?
Speak, little child, and together we'll go
Back to the musical dreamlands we know.

Dear little child, you have wandered to rest.
While you are sleeping I wonder and think
Where you will go, and what land will be best
Treading for such baby feet, and I shrink.
Should they be hillsides of laughing and song,
Or gardens of mercy and righting of wrong,
Of weeping, or triumph, or love growing strong,
Journeys of shouting, of sorrow or song?
I can but love you and kiss your gold hair,
Happy in hoping that Christ may be there.

THE IVORY LATCH

RATTLE the Ivory Latch of Love
And who will unbar the gate?
*Ask no questions, my dearest love,
But wait—wait—wait.*

Ah, will she be haughty Isabeau,
Pale Isodore, or Kate?
*Hush, dearest dear, some day you'll know,
Be not importunate.*

Perchance I might love Isodore,
I think I could love Kate;
I have no fears for Isabeau
Should she unbar the gate.

*Perchance she may be Isabeau,
Perhaps she will be Kate;
But which, dear heart, you'll never know,
Till you have learned to wait.*

THE ONCE SUNG SONG

CHRIST along the Road to Fame,
When all birds were singing,
Pluck't white lilies as He came,
Set the blue-bells ringing;
Poppies flared in strident flame
When they heard His singing.

Further up the Road to Fame
Birds grew still in sorrow;
Though His feet were very lame
Courage did He borrow,
Singing as He onward came,
Dreaming of the morrow.

Crimsoned by the Road of Fame
Christ passed sick and dying.
Through the hedges, red with shame,
Crippled men there lying,
Seeing how He singing came,
Marvelled at their sighing.

Distant down the Road to Fame,
When all else ceased singing,
Messengers of music came—
Little echoes winging
Withered hearts with wings of flame—
Fragments of Christ's singing.

SPRING

*Sing, sing,
Spring and birth!
A maid shall be mother of all the earth.*

Winter's bones lie bare and bleak,
Scattered white on the mountain peak.

Through stark woods the Madonna Spring
Glides with her unborn offering.

Where she treads dead flowers stir
And raise their heads to gaze after her,

And trees make dense their boughs with green
That her motherhood may not be seen.

Summer lies hid 'neath her girlish breast;
Till her babe is born she shall find no rest.

Yet is she glad in her wandering
And weaves meek songs 'gainst her mothering.

*Birth, birth,
Love and mirth!
Spring is Madonna of all the earth.*

A LULLABY

SON of God, thou little child
O'er whose sleep the Virgin smiled,
Guard us, though this night be wild,
From Lilith—Lilith.

Guard us, though our watch be slack,
Guard us, though the night be black,
Though this night all stars should lack
From Lilith—Lilith.

Stay her steps from drawing nigh,
Kiss my baby lest he cry,
And she hear him, and he die
From Lilith—Lilith.

Son of God, thou little child
O'er whose sleep the Virgin smiled,
May his soul be unbeguiled
By Lilith—Lilith.

UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS

Is there light of moon or sun
In the land where thou hast gone?

Does the rush of wind and rain
Smite thy woodlands green again?

Do dawn-birds rise up and sing,
"Sunrise. Sunrise," heralding?

Dost thou fear, as once, the stark
Hours of panther-footed dark?

Oh, little maiden, sweetly frail,
Naught can these empty words avail.

For thee I clasp God's mantle fast,
Praying till night is overpast.

THE HILL-TOWER

A Romance

*“ Bianca of the yellow hair,
With witch-face white as ivory,
Yield to our might that we may bear
Thy body back to Rimini.”*

And thus the foemen cried all day
And strove to daunt with fierce display
Of armoured strength her maiden heart,
So that with them she might depart
From out that hill-tower where with three
She'd held the pass right fearlessly—
So that with them she might depart
To shameful death in Rimini.

Bianca, child of Abramo
The despot lord of Reggio,
Had set our country-side on flame
With the burning torch of her beauty's fame,
And a deadman's hate of her deadly name.
For she had gazed with cold gray eyes
On Rufo—he now starkly lies

Deep in a sculptured sepulchre,
Smitten with death through love of her.
Rufo, the heir of Ugo Count
Of Rimini and vast amount
Of warrior-men and chivalry,
Had come to claim her haughtily;
But had scorched his soul in her golden hair.
As a wounded beast creeps to his lair,
So he vilely died by slow degrees
Of heart-break and a sore disease,
Till his eyes grew glazed and ceased to stir,
And his life gave out for his love of her.

Then Ugo swore a mighty oath,
“By God’s own Christ and by Christ’s truth,
Though I go unarmed and go alone,
For my son’s death she shall atone.
I’ll take this witch of Reggio
And through the flames will make her go,
Till her sweet red lips grow cracked and sere,
Till her eyes are scarred and mad with fear,
Till her false young tongue cannot speak love’s
name,
Till her tender feet drop off with flame—
Till she hath naught left that men desire
She shall pass and pass through consuming fire.”

This was the oath which he did swear
When he cursed her face in his hate of her.

So Ugo rode on Reggio
And called on the name of Abramo,
Claiming the body of her who wrought
Love's enchantments and made distraught
The souls of the lovers who came to her,
And told of the oath which he did swear.
They bade him stand without the wall
And bore his tidings to the hall.
From early morn he stood till eve,
And still no message did receive.
When night was falling, dusk and dim,
A city harlot drew nigh to him
And grayly glimmered along the wall,
And stopped where the Count was standing tall.
"What news," he cried, "from Abramo,
Must I raze this city of Reggio?"

He reared his plume to its towering height.
She leaned far out in the waning light.
He clutched with one hand his saddle-bow
And saw her smile when she answered, "No,"
And spat on his face and strained down on
him.

He rode away 'neath the crescent rim
Of a new-made moon through an olive-grove,
And evil passions within him strove;
In anger he gained the shining sea
Which silvers the shores of Rimini.
There he made great stir and called out his men,
And marshalled their ranks on a level fen,
And clothed them in black and gave beside
His knights black stallions which to ride,
And ordered no singing. "For," said he,
"We mourn one dead in Rimini."

Over the hills he caused to go
His sombre ranks to Reggio;
Through pleasant valleys and dew-drenched woods
His horsemen paced in their sable hoods
With no shrill of bugle or revelry,
Like angels of Death's dread company.
At night they stole to the city-wall
And clustered beneath the ramparts tall;
And hearkened for noise of warlike din,
And found no breath of strife within;
And watched for lights in the houses' eyes,
And saw but the stars within the skies.
Then as one voice they raised the shout,
The echo eddied their cry about,

“We call on you men of Reggio
To give us the daughter of Abramo,
That she pass and pass through consuming fire
Till she hath naught left that men desire.
Give us the daughter of Abramo.”

Swift and dread, dark-robed and dim,
Like thunder about a crater's brim,
They surged round the city at dead of night
And chased their shadows in stately flight,
And swept the circle with beating hoof,
And flashed their blades on high as proof
Of the hate they had; nor ceased to moan
Like men long dead 'neath the charnel-stone,
“Give us the daughter of Abramo.”

The dawn was groping up the sky,
An early bird was heard to cry;
Forth from the gate with haunted eyes
Four figures crept in leper's guise,
And two had long and yellow hair
And none had face or body bare.
Swiftly they ran from tree to tree
And wound their way all secretly
Through gloom and grove to the rising sun,
And through that day did onward run

Till evening came, and they drew at length
To the lonely might and granite strength
Of the hill-tower in the narrow pass
Where refuge and a safety was.
Then did they lock and bar the door
And armed themselves, for they knew before
Another moon should flood the sky
They would hear Count Ugo's hunting cry,
"Yield to us, daughter of Abramo."

Two frail maids, two boyish men,
Lovers all in the good days when
Only the sun was in the sky
Nor clouds of grief came trailing by;
Two brave maids and two brave men
Now, in an hour of darkness, when
Only the clouds were in the sky
Loved more dearly than formerly.
Corrado, page of Bianca's court,
Had loved his mistress and long had sought
To speak his heart but feared, for he
Was a love-child owned of no family.
Celia was her half-sister,
Wondrous sweet and like to her,
So like that she had fled lest she
For Bianca's self should mistaken be.

Ciro, son of a noble name,
Loved this girl, therefore he came
To give his life, if need should be,
He loved her life so utterly.
Oft in the hush of a summer's night
When earth has rest from the savage might
Of flaming suns, and starlight sheds
Kindness of dew on flowers' heads,
And birds have got them away to rest,
These lads had whispered breast to breast
Of the joy they felt and happy thrills
When they heard so much as the shaken frills
Of these they loved in the passing by;
And then, betwixt a sob and sigh,
Had dreamed of a day when they should wed.
Vain dream! Vain dream! now here, instead,
With Bianca fled to the hill-side tower
They should strain and hearken hour by hour,
With clutching hands and bated breath,
For man's last bride—the Woman, Death.

And thus they sat a lengthy while
Till one face lit with a wandering smile:
“Come now, my lords,” Bianca said,
“Why sit ye heavy-eyed and sad?
Men say ye each have loved a maid;

Surely, I think, I should be glad
To draw so near for an hour or two
The maid I loved, though well I knew
The early morn should find me dead."

Then he who loved her, laughed and said,
"Yea, lady mine, I will be bold
Too long my love hath lain untold;
Yet mine was not an unshared sorrow
But grief for thine and thy sad to-morrow
If my lord, thy father, fail to send
His cavalry."

'God will defend
His maid," she said, "God will provide.
But, if to Rimini I ride,
I shall be glad recalling this,
That thou did'st not withhold thy kiss
When all my loves had forsaken me."

"Aye love, brief love, sweet love," sighed he,
"Thou art more than life—far more, far more."

So through that night, by the fast-locked door,
They spake of love till they drooped to sleep,
Nor heard at dawn the wary creep

Of one who traced the outer-wall,
And found the marks of their foot-fall.

When mists were lifting off the sky
They sprang from dreams at a sudden cry,
And gazed with startled eyes around:
“’Tis naught,” they laughed, “’twas a country
 sound—

A late-awakened bird did call,
A wind blew through the water-fall.
’Tis naught—’tis naught.”

 But afar they heard
A wail not made by beast or bird;
A hungry moan, long-drawn and low,
“Give us the daughter of Abramo.”

She stretched her arms along the wall
And leant aside as she would fall,
And cowered low ’neath her yellow hair
As though its weight were too much to bear.
And, “Oh, sweet God, dear God,” she cried,
“Hark how they come! They ride, they ride!
What ill have I ever done to Thee
That men should burn my fair body?
Stoop from Thy skies and succour me.”

“Yea, God hath stooped. Fear not, dear heart,
For I and Ciro will play God’s part,
And Celia sweet shall comfort thee
While we brand these dogs of Rimini.”

With hurried feet they clomb the stair
And quickly gained the outer air,
And ghostly saw through the morning haze
The winding funeral arrays
Of Ugo’s knights and warrior-men.
Dumbly they watched, and heard often
Their hunting cry borne down the breeze.
Corrado laughed with an ugly ease,
“And thus it is he comes with these:
Strong stallions, lances, Genoese—
To take one slim and fragrant girl!
Oh, Ciro mine, our hands shall hurl
These valiant fighters from the wall,
Though we be lads and they be tall.
If God there be above us all,
Then love shall give us strength this day.”

Down on the stones they kneeled to pray
That He who brought their lives to be
Should crown their loves with victory.
They rose and flew their heraldry:

An evening star, a saffron sea,
And on the sea, the star below,
The dry-shod pard of Reggio.

No answer made the sable foe,
But round the tower, with footsteps slow,
Paced till his journeys numbered three;
Then from the host one silently,
Thrust on a spear for mockery,
And raised the head of Abramo.
Swift round the tower in mirthless rout
They raced and tossed the words about,

*“Bianca of the yellow hair,
With witch-face white as ivory,
Yield to our might that we may bear
Thy body back to Rimini.”*

'Twas thus the foemen cried all day
And strove to daunt with fierce display
Of armoured strength her maiden heart,
So that with them she might depart
To shameful death in Rimini.

Bianca, in the vault below,
Crouched at her prayers and did not know
This death, and of her father's shame;
But heard their shouts and heard her name.

“Oh, little hands,” she softly sighed,
“Wherefore should ye be crucified,
What have ye done that men should see
Naught in your grace, save witchery?
Oh, yellow hair, so like the sun,
What is this sin that thou hast done
That men should have such hate of thee?
And sweet grave face of ivory,
So made for love and for desire,
Why should they crave thee for the fire?
Fire of love was meant for thee.”

Her sister bent and kissed the hands
Which hung straight down like two white wands,
And hid her lips in a yellow tress,
And kissed the breasts where they met the dress,
And laid her cheek on the weary face
To wipe away each tear's distress,
To cleanse of grief each grievous place.
“And this for thee,” she said and kissed.
“And this for thee,” and held each wrist.
“And this for thee,” and met the lips.
As priest in sacred water dips
His hand at last confessional
To purge each thoroughfare of sense
And bring again lost innocence,

So she made pure and perfect all.
Shrill through their peace shrieked the battle-
call,

“Per Jesum Christum! Reggio!
Have at them Death! They fall, they fall!”
And hoarse, hard-breathed, the wall below,
Surged up the wrath of the hungry foe,
“Give us the daughter of Abramo.”

Fierce through that day the struggle went,
And blood was spilt and swords were bent.
The sun sank bloody in the West;
The day died bitter and unblest.
The mountains strained against the sky
And angrily, as they would try
To wrench from earth their trampled gowns.
An eagle o'er the upland downs
Hung poised, then beat his wings, as he
Refused to share man's cruelty.
At nightfall, when the host withdrew,
A spearman, whom they counted dead,
In dying strength raised up his head
And sped a poisoned dart, which slew
Ciro, who from the tower's height
Leaned out to watch the evening light.
And thus of four there remained but three.

Celia clomb the winding stair
And thought of how her yellow hair
Could save the three, if she should dare
To yield herself to Rimini.
“For I am very like to her,”
She said, “so like that if I were
To feign myself for my sister
By night—this night if I should go,
I think the Count would never know
Till they were safe and I was burned.”
The last bend in the stair she turned
And halted as she gained the roof,
And stretched her gaze abroad for proof
Of where her lover might keep guard.
There, where a shafted moonbeam barred
An alcove of gray masonry,
His face shone out, so tranquilly
She thought him sleeping; but his eyes
Were wide, intent on her and wise
Beyond the sight of living men.
Softly she called to him and, when
He answered not, ’twas then she knew. . . .
She kissed his forehead, and withdrew
Her tired feet adown the stair.
Bianca kneeled entranced in prayer
And noticed not her passing by,

But counted fast her rosary.
Corrado, touched upon the arm,
Reeled as he turned in fierce alarm.
She said, "We change the watch this hour.
I will abide; guard you the tower."
Then, as he set his foot to go,
"Kiss me, dear friend, for you must know
We may not ever meet again,
This war has brought us so much pain."
He gazed on her a tender while,
And wondered at the gracious smile
Around her lips. "While we are four,"
He said, "we need not fear this war;
Love is more than life . . . far more, far more."
She answered, "Not while we are four."
"Ah, have no fear at all," he said;
"She prays for us, see how her head
Is bowed in reverence to God."
He took his sword and clanking trod
The stone-paved vault and winding stair,
Till she could judge him mounting where
Another turn would bring to sight
Her dead love's face in the shafted light
Where the moonbeam washed the turret white.
She bared her feet and crept the floor,
With eager hands wrenched loose the door,

And weeping passed into the night.
The dawn thrust up a wild white face
And stared toward the lonely place,
Where through the vigil, hour by hour,
Corrado guarded well the tower.
It seemed his own reflected face,
So wannish and so wide of eye;
The lips moved and he caught their sigh,
"I am thyself and I must die."
Thus did he learn the uttermost,
The live man meeting his own ghost,
And knew that surely he must die.
The sun flashed up; the face was fled.
By night he knew he must be dead.
He leaned beyond the parapet
To scan the rocky pass if yet
Some help might wind around the hill.
The morning air was very still;
He heard the noise of climbing feet,
Of something dragged across the peat,
And saw two knights who, drawing near,
Bore that which clogged his heart with fear—
A white gown, sown with golden threads
Which held the light as do the meads
When dandelions toss their heads
Mid meadow-sweet and field-clover,

Which poppy-leaves drift red over—
A long white gown and smirched with red,
And hands so still, they must be dead.
They laid her on a grass-grown bank
And loosed about her neck the stole,
So that her gold hair round her sank
To frame a burning aureole.

“How now, ye dogs of Rimini,
What crime is this that ye have done
To show to God’s new-risen sun,
Which he will tell God secretly?”

And one in shame drew back a pace,
And one raised up his vizored face,
“No crime, Sir Knave. God’s work, I trow.
Give us the witch, and we will go—
The match to this, from Reggio.”

“We have no witch, as well ye know.”
But, as he spake, he heard with pain
Their scornful laugh.

To make things plain,
The black knight pitched his voice and said
And pointed, “Ho sir, turn your head;
The witch stands by you even now.”
The world across his eyes and brow

Streamed scarlet. By his side she stood,
Her eyes bent on a distant wood
Wherein the shadows came and went,
Where horsemen from their stallions leant
All eager for the bugle cry.

“We fight in vain,” he heard her sigh,
“God wills it thus, that I should die.”

“Nay, courage, sweetheart, while I stand
With strength to grasp a sword in hand
No harm shall come thee nigh nor by.”
But she had seen that on the hill
Which made her moan, so that she still
Kept looking and, “Oh, Christ,” she sobbed,
“What is that thing so palely robed?”
Her shadow slid throughout the space
Until it reached across the face
Of that dead maid, until their lips
Strained to the kiss, their finger-tips
Met at the touch.

The enemy
Shouted, “A witch, yea, verily,
See how her shade feeds on the dead.”
“Oh, I must go to her,” she said:
“She sleeps alone, alone, alone.”
Her thin hands grazed against the stone,

So blindly did she walk, her throat
Stretched back, her hair far out did float
Like sun-clouds following the sun.
He followed her, passed down the stair,
On through the vault and halted where
She paused to swing the iron door;
Then, out upon the trampled moor.
There, where the dead girl lay, she knelt
And made of her fair arms a belt
Around the corse; there, with her hair,
Wiped clean the face of earth and blood;
There, with her mouth, rebuked the stare
Of those strange eyes; last, made all good
By placing in the hands for rood
That which she pluck't from out the breast.
They watched if God should stand the test.
"Ah, see," she cried, "God is awake,
The dagger's bloodstains weep and make
Large tears of red: the metal bleeds!"
"If Lord God is awake and heeds,
He must heed quickly." So he said,
For wading up the river-bed,
Half-hid between its tree-topped banks,
He caught the gleam of horses' flanks
And, mingled with the water's flow,
The low-breathed panting of the foe.

“Yea, God doth heed, and even now
His finger burns across each brow
His final lettering of doom:
Not one of these beyond Hell’s gloom
Shall thrive to win a Heavenly home.”
The words fell so remote and meek
She seemed not her own self to speak,
But with her eyes to voice the spell
Which should bring true the oracle.

He caught her hand. “Come quick,” he
cried,

“Come back, dear heart! See where they ride
With sword in hand across the grass
To thwart us, so we may not pass
Within the tower-gate.”

“Too late,”

She said: “We may not win the gate.
Yet now, true friend, though I must burn
At Rimini, time is to learn
One little lesson more of love:
What would you?”

“That I die your knight.”

“Eh, truly?” So she held above
And touched him with his jagged sword,
And whispered low the crowning word

Which flooded all his face with light.
He said, "I shall not fear to die."
She raised him, smiling wondrously,
"Nor I to ride to Rimini,
When you have died my knight."

Twelve lancers circled into sight.
Count Ugo galloped through the green
And laughed at that which he had seen.
"And yet one lover more?" scoffed he,
"God's death, you use them royally;
Maids grow less bold in Rimini."
"My only lover and my last,"
She said. He scowled and caught her fast,
Twisting his steel-glove in her hair,
Jerked back her head, her eyes on him,
So that her throat and breasts shone bare
Above her corset's jewelled rim.
"Too good for fuel," he hissed, "too fair;
Yet those pale cheeks, this yellow hair,
Were not too good to deal out death.
Eh? Hark to what the vixen saith,
'She did not sin, nor meant to kill.'
My son lies dead, say what you will;
Lies dead because of you, you witch,
While leprous things in our town's ditch

And every pace the march along
The hunters sang their hunting song,

*“Bianca of the yellow hair,
With witch-face white as ivory,
Thy tender body back we bear
To die the death in Rimini.”*

THE DREAM MAID

WITHIN the lands of rising night
And fields of departing day,
What hours we wandered, you and I,
How fain were we to stay!
Star-flowers were in your maiden hands—
The stars were white with May.

Between moon-set and morning sun
Where mist of the Dreamland lies,
What glory there was yours and mine,
What love was in our eyes!
For Sleep and Love walk hand-in-hand,
And Sleep with morning flies.

Our star-lit land was wholly ours,
No warning of beast or bird
Perturbed the twilight of our peace,
No watchers' tread was heard;
We dwelt alone and loved alone,
Naught save our lips was stirred.

Would that this holiest mystery
Might come again to me!
The radiance of thy moon-lit face,
The eyes of purity—
The wide gray eyes, the beckoning lips,
The silent cloudland sea.

DAYBREAK

IN frenzied haste, by legioned shadows pressed,
The Chariot of Charity in flight
Glittered along the Parapet of Night,
With wheels of gold fast whirling to the West.

Bridging with flame the barricaded Deep,
It strove with sparking hoof and spangled heat,
Where those twin rivers, Death and Life, retreat,
And surge across the Agony of Sleep.

I, to my casement, stark with horror crept;
Day tottered tall, and breathed a shuddering
breath:

Wading, knee-deep, the turgid fords of Death,
He clomb the cloven cliff of Dawn—and leapt.

A hand of ivory caught up the rein;
The Chariot rolled back superb again.

HOME

WE shall not always dwell as now we dwell,
Together 'neath one home-protecting roof.
For some of us our lives may not go well:
'Gainst such small perils courage will be proof,
'Gainst stronger ills these memories may be proof;
To some of us this life may say farewell—
We cannot always dwell as now we dwell.

What though we dwell not then as now we dwell?
Hearts can recover hearts, when hearts are fain;
While love stays with us everything is well;
The roof of love is proof against the rain,
Dead hands will guard our hearts against the rain—
Love will abide when all have said farewell:
Our hearts may ever dwell as now they dwell.

VANISHED LOVE

WHEN my love was nigh me
Naught had I to say:
Then I feigned a false love—
And turned my lips away.

When my love lay dying,
Sorrowing I said,
'Soon shall I wear scarlet,
Because my love is dead.'

When my love had vanished,
Then was nothing said:
I forgot the scarlet
For tears—and bowed my head.

THALATTA! THALATTA!

NOT with a cry, nor with the stifled sound
Of one who 'neath Death's billows of Despair
Thrusts up blue lips toward the outer air,
Searching if any breathing may be found;
Who plucks with groping finger-tips to rend
The water's edges for a fraction's space,
Through which he may push up his haggard face
For one last look—the last before the end.

As a broad river, having journeyed far
Constrained by banks—too often fretfully—
'Neath a full moon goes rocking out to sea
Sombred by night, cheered by a rising star,
So may my days move murmurously to rest,
Throbbled through with Death who knew Life's
sorrows best.

TO ENGLAND'S GREATEST SATIRIST

UNFRIEND to man and darkly passionate,
Sneering in solitude, wide-winged for flight
Lest one, from all our world, should read thee right
And pity thee thy self-lured madman's fate,
Why did'st thou strive so well to tempt our hate?
Are we not comrades through the self-same night?
The Caravan of Kindness, out of sight,
We also follow—and arrive o'erlate.
Thou, having failed thy Heaven, did'st scoff in
Hell.

Fiercely disguising, too much thou did'st dare;
We caught the jangle of the cap and bell,
And seeking, saw a quivering heart laid bare
When thou wast dead—a sequel which did spell
The pangs of love—"only a woman's hair."

N. B. "In a note in his biography, Scott says that his friend, Doctor Tuke of Dublin, has a lock of Stella's hair, enclosed in a paper by Swift, on which are written, in the Dean's hand, the words: 'Only a woman's hair.' An instance, says Scott, of the Dean's desire to veil his feelings under the mask of cynical indifference."—THACKERAY in his Essay on Dean Swift.

REMEMBERING IN HEAVEN

YEARS hence we two—I who wept yesterday,
You who with death-chilled hands unheeding lay—
Gazing from Heaven adown the sky's wild face,
Seeing this pigmy planet churning space,
“Do you remember?” then we two shall say,
Quite in the dear old-fashioned worldly way,
“Do you remember, in a former age,
What happened in that girdled finite cage?”

And you, through joy having forgot your pain,
Laughing will shake your head and rack your brain,
Clasping my hand and thinking all in vain.
“No,” you will say, “it is a distant way
From grief to God; my memories go astray.”

Then, I, staring athwart the jewelled pit
Which God hath dug between the infinite
And the great little loss of death's decay,
Will tell you all that happened yesterday.
“Don't you recall, dear, how the fierce blow came?
Earth was at Spring-tide, all the fields aflame;

Hope was just freed from Winter's servitude
And songsters through the tree-tops he had strewed,
And promises of greenness in the wood,
While you, dear, grew in grace to womanhood."
Then you: "I would remember if I could,
But all is vague. Faint, like a far off strain,
I catch the rustle of field-flowers again
And hear the muffled skirmish of the rain."

"Don't you recall, dear, anything of pain?"

"Nothing," you whisper.

Then I tell to you
How in a week from life to death you grew,
Your spirit yearning Godward, as did fail
The strength of your white body, lily-pale;
How through long nights and seven too brief
days

I held you fast, and flattered God with praise,
Calling Him every kind endearing name,
Hoping my love would fill His heart with shame
Of doing that deed which He meant to do.

"What happened?"

"God was wise and He took you."

“Strange!”

“Ah yes, dearest, human loves are strange;
Change seems so final in a world of change.

“Through the last night I watched your fluttering
breath,

Desperate lest the unseen hand of Death
Should touch you, still you e'er I was aware,
Leaving me nothing save your golden hair
And the wide doors of an abandoned place,
And the wise smiling of your quiet face—
The perishable chalice of your grace.

“‘In Heaven they all are serious,’ so you said
In your delirium. You shake your head,
Denying what I surely heard you say.
Since then you've seen the boys and girls at
play
Climbing the knees of God.

“Listen again.

Far out across the gulf you see a stain—
Follow my hand—a smudge, a blur of gray;
That is the world. Though you forget the day,
We lived there once, suffered, had joy, laughed,
loved,
And in sweet worship of each other moved.

Then you fell sick and, while I held your hand,
One took you

“Ah, you do not understand!
Only field-flowers you remember well.
This seems an idle fable that I tell;
Then never trouble, dear; forget the pain.
See, here comes God; perhaps He will explain.”

IN THE GLAD MONTH OF MAY

IN the glad month of May,
When morning was breaking,
She rose from her body
And vanished away.

From a tree cloaked in gray
A shrill bird kept calling,
“Come quick. God is waiting.
He cannot delay.”

We had no heart to pray,
But, seeing her glory,
Said, “Go, little sister;
God needs you to-day.”

Very stilly she lay:
The bird had ceased calling—
We let in the morning
And kissed her dear clay.

THE LILIES BLOOM

THE lilies bloom above her head
All unaware that she is dead.

The small brown birds, with folded wing,
Do not one whit less blithely sing.

The sun goes on his usual round,
Seeking the quiet she has found.

And God looks down on everything,
And that is why the small birds sing.

HERE, SWEET, WE LAY

HERE, sweet, we lay
Thy sorrow and pain,
Earth will resolve them to gladness again.

Lily-white hands
To lilies shall grow;
Breath of thy body in breezes shall blow.

Languor and grief,
These Death could slay;
God took the portion which cannot decay.

Thou hast thy joy,
We have thy pain;
Flame of a soul I shall know thee again.

OUT OF THE BLACKNESS

OUT of the blackness into the light,
From birth to death—a swallow's flight.

Stars burning fainter, onward we strive.
Cauldron of dawn! The East's alive.

Joy in the journey, joy at the last;
Day in its splendour—darkness past!

In life's beginning clouds to be trod;
At its brave ending, sunrise—God.

FROM THE VEILED HEREAFTER

FROM the veiled Hereafter
Whither you have fled,
Snatches of your laughter
Vaguely wed
With rustling of field-flowers,
Angel-stirred,
Guarded by God's towers,
I have heard.

God, in His compassion,
Left Death's gate ajar
So our faith might fashion
Where you are;
God's Mother walks beside you,
Hand-in-hand,
And Lord Christ doth guide you,
Through that Land.

IF GOD SHOULD COME

IF God should come to me and say,
"Your little maiden, whom I took away
But yesterday,
I will give back to you again,
If so you say, when you have seen the pain
I did refrain
In love from letting her endure.
I knew death's surgery the only cure
For one so pure.
Joy in my breast is sure."

Then should He show me all the way,
Weary at whiles, her feet must stray,
Had He decreed her death's delay,
How should I choose? What should I say?

A NEW TENANT

I WATCHED for her in the night,
I watched for her in the day—
But how could I hope to find her
When her body had gone away?

I spoke to her in the rooms
Where she had been wont to play—
But how could my dearest answer
When her body had gone away?

I searched for her in my heart,
And when it unfroze to pray,
I knew that we shared one mortal house
Since hers had resolved to clay.

LIFE WITHOUT THEE

LIFE without thee would be, dearest,
Eyes without sight;
Death, if thou stood'st not nearest,
Night without light.

Since thou Death's token wearest,
Freedom from strife,
This I have learnt, my dearest,
Death's name is Life.

ANSWERED PRAYER

We prayed that unto you, dear,
God's best gifts might be given;
We wished to strew for you, dear,
Earth's paths with Heaven.

We planned your life a May-day
When young flowers should be born,
That you might stray the smooth way
Of gold-robed Morn.

We dared more than we knew, dear;
When half God's gifts were given,
He answered all our prayers, dear—
He gave you Heaven.

THE SEARCHING OF THE SHEEP

THE shepherd is dead men tell me,
He died upon a tree
When Springtide was befalling
Field-flowers in Galilee;
But whenever the wind is blowing
Straight out from the East or West,
I can hear his brave voice calling,
“Come after me. Come after me.
Rise up, rise up and follow me—
I am Christ, thy rest.”

Then, rising I quickly gird me,
For wherever Christ may be,
The land where he is staying
He turns to Galilee;
Through whose vales when the wind is blowing
From meadows his feet have blest,
He aye calls to his loved ones saying,
“Come after me. Come after me.
Rise up, rise up and follow me—
Where I am, is rest.”

I seek him in every city,
I travel land and sea
From dawn till dusk is falling
And God hangs lamps for me.
But whenever the wind is blowing,
'Tis then that I find him best;
For I hear his brave voice calling,
"In seeking me, thou followest me;
Then where thou art is Galilee,
And I am—thy rest."

IN BEDLAM

LORD, there is music in my world to-day.
For this I thank Thee; once again I hear
The foamy clash of cymbals and the grave
Hoarse-throated shout of brass which is repulsed,
And the clear triumph of unvanquished pipes—
Battles against stringed instruments and fifes
Which angels wage from organ-stops in Heaven.
I, through the hostile grating of my cell,
Can tiptoe just discern where warrior clouds
Churn smoking broken waters in their wakes,
Which unseen challengers, the winds, do chase,
Drowning their anger to a tranquil depth,
Till in blue sky-weed unrevengeed they lie
Like gaunt Armada galleons long since sunk.
So all is calm again, and I look out
With prison'd eyes upon Thy travelling world.

A breath of flowers is in the air to-day,
Spring flowers which have not bloomed for many
months,
Which, for my sake, have come to life this day.
I cannot see them, they grow far from here

With feet entangled in the green, gray earth.
They too are prisoners from their earliest birth,
Yet they have flung their fragrance forth to me
That I, a captive mind, may share their joy.

Now, as I listen, laughter dies away;
In Earth's tall tree-tops, dim and out of sight,
I hear the mining beak of one small bird,
Striving for freedom with its puny strength.
Now the shell breaks; it struggles into life;
Its mother's wings enfold it; it is safe.
Far down beneath the nest the forest sighs,
Swaying its branches, as it too would say,
*"I will protect thee from the driving rain,
My leaves shall cover thee, so have no dread."*
I also in my ruined strength would pray,
"God grant thee rest, and shelter thee from fear."
If I should live the seasons round again
And God vouchsafe me one more summer's day
Of utter peace, perchance thy voice I'll hear
Trilling in confidence from some cool glade—
And thus my madman's prayer will be repaid.

Laughter breaks forth again; the world is glad.
There's music in the very rocks to-day.
Yea, through my sullen bars the red sun peers
And stains my confines with his golden smile;

God shakes His happiness abroad to-day.
See, I will rake this yellow harvest home
And treasure it against a sadder hour,
When Winter's mantled all our stars in night.
When that shall be, I'll paint my walls with gold,
Loosen my breast and let the sun's rays free,
Re-capture them and hoard them up again;
And so will halt the summer at its prime.

Lord, I am mad; but Thou canst heal my mind.
Once, not long since—long after Thou hadst made
And bastioned with grace my living soul—
Thou, in a careless hour, didst plan my frame,
Moulding my body from the oozy clay;
But, just before Thy task was most complete,
Didst nod, and drowse, and waking didst forget
Thy task unfinished—so was I born mad;
So was my perfect soul a bondsman made
To serve vile lusts of my imperfect brain.
Hast Thou to-day remembered Thy mistake?
This morn I wakened, found that I was sane,
Beheld the East as no unchartered dread
Threat'ning the world with universal fire,
But as Thy kindness held aloft for men;
Then craned I forth my hands to clutch Thy winds,
Nor shrank from them as fore-runners of Death.

Father, before the Darkness falls again,
Before my soul wends backward to the Night,
Grant unto me Thy earliest gift to Man,
Form me in image godlike to Thyself.

Is it beyond Thy power to make me well?
Thou weakling God! then send me down Thy
Christ,

He whose strong pity hath dethroned Thy might,
And made a man a worthier god than Thou:
For he in peasant lands of Galilee
Did love, and love, and love till his heart brake;
He took away the anguish of men's pain
By spending all their pain on his own life;
He drove away the shadows from men's minds
By giving them himself, who was the Light.

Ah Christ, that thou hadst not been crucified!
Wert thou still living by the fishers' lake,
Then thou hadst heard me half across the world;
Though from the Andes, I had cried to thee,
Still hadst thou heard, and come from Palestine
Only to stretch thy cooling hands on me,
Only to rest thy cooling hands in mine—
Those gentle hands, by bleeding feet borne thence.

A SONG OF IGNOBLE EASE

WHEN Pleasure's found,
Away with the tear;
Grief's a starved hound,
Pursued by lean Fear.

Life is a round
Of languor and pain;
When Joy is found,
Go forth not again.

Music's a sound
Which guides men to rest;
Love is the bound
That ends every quest.

Lie down to rest,
Slay fragile Pain,
Vanquish lean Fear,
Away with the Tear.

Finish thy quest
And strive not again.

AFTER TOO MUCH PAIN

SICK I had been, and very sore afraid,
Baffled of life, and lost to every hope,
Hounded by dread, pursued and left dismayed
Standing alone, abandoned and afraid.

Then did I ask, "What now is left to say?
Why should I question? Wherefore should I
strive?"

Man was made thus, to fail and creep away;
Thus was Man made, and there is naught to say."

Oh, I was weak, and blind with too much pain,
Bankrupt and blind, all feeble in my tread;
"Would I might touch one friendly hand again—
Find love to rid me of this too much pain."

I spoke in fear, and knew not what I said,
Thought not of anguish hands of love must share,
Lonely I was, because my hope was dead,
Yearning and sad. I knew not what I said.

Then did One come who laid His hands in mine,
One who did kiss my poor unseeing eyes,
Tenderly led to where the stars do shine,
Speaking kind words, He placed His hands in mine.

There did I see the trees go riding by
Moved by the wind, and heard the nightingale
Carol and slur, and sing, and sob, and sigh,
Wing-mounted moths, and angels riding by.

Then did I seek to see the healing friend;
But He had vanished. I was left alone.
There, where He stood, my body I did bend,
Weeping in prayer, to Him my healing friend.

A WISH FOR HER

PEACE unto thee
Wherever thou art,
Childlike companion,
Friend of my heart.

Joy unto thee
Dear image of God;
Flowers are blowing
Where thou hast trod.

Peace unto thee
And respite from pain;
Whiteness of raiment,
Freedom from stain.

Love unto thee,
Remembrance of Heaven,
Tokens of Jesus
By angels given.

A WISH FOR HER

Peace unto thee
Wherever thou art,
Christlike companion
Made for my heart.

WE MEET

WE meet
In a lamp-lit street,
You and I—
Life is sweet.

Clouds' tumultuous feet
Shake the sky;
They are all in retreat—
Death draws nigh.
Life is sweet—
With anonymous beat
Crowds surge by.

Only I
And my sweet
Dare to linger and greet.
Your lips sigh,
"Time is fleet."
Stars repeat,

“Life is sweet—
Kiss her,” they cry;
“In an unlit street
One day you must die.”

Thus we meet.

HEART-BREAK

LORD God of Cities, how long must we wait
Bound in our Babylons of tawdry sin;
Hast Thou so many other stars to win,
Is greed of conquest so insatiate?

Or does Omnipotence design to take
Example from the flaws of childhood's years,
And what of folly in Thy work appears
Thou studiest for newer worlds' sweet sake?

Nay, Thou art shamed of Thy first dwelling-place,
And we are wearied; neither of us know
How we may remedy Thy fault, and so
With slow tired hands Thou coverest Thy face.

Poor Man! foredoomed to spurn such love as this!
Sad God! what grief to make a world amiss!

UP AGAIN

DOWN in the mud again!
Thank God I'm up again,
On through the rife of rain.
Clouds, in their height,
Gleam where some moon shines white—
Thank God I'm up again!
Stars are in sight,
Or will be in sight
This night or next night.
God be praised for the sight!
It's brave to be up again.

If I should fall again,
Why, I'll rise up again—
On through the rush of rain
Search out some light.
Somewhere on wings of white—
Praise God I'm up again—
Something's in flight,
Star-flight or dawn-flight,
Hereward through the night.
God be praised for such flight!
It's glad to be up again.

MASTERLESS

WITH tattered sail, as ships which driven are
On whatsoever course the winds may list,
Which every peaceful waterway have missed,
And drift on open seas with shattered spar
And gaping seam, which toss and sway and nod,
Remote from sight of land and hope of aid,
So is the canvassed, crude conveyance made
In which Man journeys to the port of God.
No pillow in his vessel rests the head
Of one who, sleeping, has the power to save—
Who, when the clouds fly far, can calm the wave
And send it sobbing to the ocean bed.
Storm follows storm, the waters run more high;
Across the vain and vacant void of death
We lilt with lifeless motion to each breath,
And grope grotesquely on, yet cannot die.
Oh, for a respite from this weary place,
Or else to see but once the Master's face!

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD

WITH you the world's at evening-light,
With me the world's at day;
Yet in my heart I think 'tis night
While you are far away:
While you are far away, dear lad,
While you are far away,
There comes no dawn, nor change of light,
Nor any hope in day.

With you it nears the hour of sleep;
With me 'tis time to pray,
That God may guide you o'er His deep
Back from the Far-Away;
Home from the Far-Away, dear lad,
Back from the Far-Away,
That God may drift you home in sleep,
And bring me back my day.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

CHRIST placed his hand in mine and said,
"Come, little child, for thou art mine."
I kissed him, raising up my head,
And whispered, "Yea, Lord, I am thine."

We wandered through white clover-flowers
Beside a murmuring brook all day;
When night led back the dream-tide hours
Within his shepherd arms I lay.

Older I grew, until at last
Unto a clanging town we came;
Christ wept for me, but in I passed
Alone. It was the town of Fame,

Wherein are lands of diverse name—
The Saffron East, the Purple West,
Whose walls enclose a Crimson Shame
But hold no Land of Quiet Rest.

Weary I grew and sad, and lame,
Until in scorn I heard one say,
How to the gate there seeking came
A wounded shepherd yesterday.

Painfully at the stroke of dawn
I to the open country crept;
And on a distant dewy lawn
I found Christ, while the city slept.

My crippled hands in his, I said,
"O Lord and art thou truly mine?"
Upon his breast he laid my head,
"Yea, little child, am I not thine?"

ONLY THESE WORDS TO SAY

NEWS, sent from far away,
Came unto me to-day,
Only these words to say,
"Lo, he is dead."

He, who to comfort me,
Laughing right merrily,
Said, "Think, how glad we'll be
When I return."

He, strumming out Hope's song
Wending lone lands among,
Swept Life's harp overstrong—
Felt the strings break.

"I shall return, you know,"
So he spake long ago;
"How brave our love must grow,"
Wrote a week since.

Then news, from far away,
Came unto me this day,
Only these words to say,
"Lo, *he* is dead."

FEAR

“The Terror by Night: the Arrow by Day: the Pestilence walking in Darkness: the Destruction wasting at Noonday.”

THOU Demon Fear, Assassin of Delight,
Who makest impotent Man's royal might,
Turning to poverty his wealth of days
With hushed pursuit of him in all his ways,
Whence art thou come, from what dead land of
Night?

Speak, only speak, occult, accursèd shade,
Who ne'er to human eyes hast yet displayed
Thine awful shape; ah, could we only hear
Thy thin, pale voice! Thy ghastly step draws
near,
But bring not *thee*—therefore we grow afraid.

What things men fear they do not dare to say
Lest, thus provoked, Fate should no more delay
But run on them and wreak those ills they dread:
To Death we kneel, to God we bow the head;
Yet of our fears we have the most dismay.

We fear our fears, but thee, Oh Fear, we hate,
For thou with all our sins art intimate
As He who made us; crimes wrought long ago,
Follies and half-faults, each one thou dost know
And dost avenge with rods deliberate.

Ah, were this all, our lives might yet go well
For, since we suffer here the pains of Hell,
Heav'n should be certain, Death—God's just re-
prieve.

But thou with vain forebodings dost conceive
To break our hearts, and turn us infidel.

Oh for that silence, virgin of all sound,
Vast, uncalamitous which did abound
When Darkness, drooping from Eternity,
Trailed his slow pinions o'er Time's tideless
sea

Before Fear was called forth from underground.

Then Quiet, from the Nothingness of Space,
Gazed down on Chaos with untroubled face,
Such as babes have who enter Life still-born;
For Evening Strife, nor Hurricane of Morn,
Had then perturbed God's wonted resting-place.

Now, though through utterest lands we wend our
way,
We hear thy footstep, so we cannot stay;
Yea, though we search out Peace in dreams by
night,
Too soon we know thee following our flight,
And shrieking wake, and clamour for new-day.

Only Man's bygone days are truly sweet:
This day is darkened by *To-morrow's* threat,
To-morrow by the menace of *To-day*;
From out the Past is fled away for aye
The grinding doubt of possible defeat.

Ah, were we wise, our lives 'tis thus we'd spend:
Because the Past glides onward without end,
Engulfing *our* To-day and *our* Hereafter,
We'd greet This Day, or Next, with careless
laughter
As 'twere the Past, and so our fortunes mend.

Too weak are we, too diligent in doubt,
This fiend with sage philosophy to flout;
When all his lawful issue fail his need,
Fear doth with harlot Fancy quickly breed
Frenzy, to put Tranquillity to rout.

Nightly earth's infants, garret-roofs beneath,
 Wake shuddering and hark, with indrawn breath
 And small clenched hands and faces woe-begone,
 Till through the creaking gloom there mounteth
 one
 Whom they in ignorance mistake for Death.

Nor are we braver when we older grow,
 For still "'Tis Death!" we sob. "'Tis Death! Ah
 woe,
 Deep woe, is me!" whene'er thou drawest nigh:
 Therefore, Oh Fear, full many times men die
 And Dissolution's torments undergo.

Man, who was made in image like to God,
 Whom angels tended wheresoe'er he trod
 With glad huzzas and harpings all the way,
 So that the untamed beasts allowed his sway,
 Cringes a coward 'neath thine up-raised rod.

Secret Chastiser of our secret heart,
 Speak, but this once, to tell us who thou art;
 Whether the hound that runs before Death's
 feet,
 Discrowned Imagination in retreat,
 Or Echo, of our own flight the counterpart.

Like God, most silent ever thou dost keep.
Thine eyes must be as God's, which never sleep
But watch, aye watch, and know us all in all.
Oh, can it be, that thou art but the call
Of God, the Shepherd, guarding o'er His sheep?

ABANDON

JUST to be true to one grand swift desire
Which shall all other furious faiths outpace;
To run with strength an uncontested race
Till, knowing how the soul is catching fire
And generous flame is clambering through the
heart—

For Self, what though heroic, is not best—
I grasp my life and hurl it with the rest,
Joining myself to God—a puny part.

One holy thing to fail for—thus to die;
To give men love, who knew before remorse;
Then, meekly seek with Christ some scornful
Cross,

But leave the world more kind in passing by—
In piercing through the covering cloth of night
To lodge one star, and vanish strong in flight.

THE LAST EMBRACE

“KISS me,” she said, “for I must die
Ere any star his flight hath ta'en,
And cold and unperturbed shall lie
When Night doth pace our earth again.
And thou, dear love, if thou should'st weep,
And if thy heart with anguish break,
From sweet sad dreams thy solace take
And lose thy pain in painless sleep.
Kiss me, dear love, for I must die
And cold and unperturbed shall lie.”

“Kiss me, dear friend, for now I feel
That thou art as a glimpse of God;
More tender passions through me steal
Than when this wayward world I trod.
Lie still, dear heart, and do not speak—
God would not stoop to such as me;
With silent mouth and noiselessly
I would my grave Creator seek.
Kiss me, dear love, for now I feel
More noble passions through me steal.”

“Kiss me, this last, for I must flee
From all I loved and cherished here,
And now must go distressfully
Bereft, in solitude and fear.
But, when your eyes are closed in sleep,
I shall descend the starry steeps
Where Leon for her lover weeps
And tired hands have naught to reap.
Kiss me, dear love, alone I flee
To meet unknown Eternity.”

MAN'S BEGINNING

WHEN God was young and wandered through the
skies

Supreme and unadored, content to be

The only vessel on His starry sea,

He had no wish for sight of other eyes.

But, as the years flew by, He older grew,

And held less dear the loneliness He found,

When from some long-since reign He caught the
sound

Of play-mate deities, whom once He knew.

Half-heedlessly He stooped toward a star

And kissed its silver lips, when forth there came

A little god, in speech like to those same

Dear children whom in sleep He heard afar.

The Father God pulsated through His heart,

He cried, "O Child, my little son thou art."

LOVE AT LAST

WHEN I have looked upon Thy face
I hear a wandering discontent
Wail through my living, and retrace
The leaf-strewn paths my feet frequent.
Folly abode within a glade
And saw my flight and, laughing, bade
Me greet her lips and kiss her hair,
Till I was fain to kiss her there.

But Thou art sad and dost not speak,
So sad and sorrowful art Thou;
Thine eyes are scarred, my eyes they seek,
And cruel marks have marred Thy brow.
Pleasure laid hands on me and mine,
She crowned my head with tangled vine,
Her arms about my neck lay bare;
I was constrained to kiss her there.

Yea, Thou hast suffered. This I tell
By those long wound-prints in Thy hands;
Mankind has never used Thee well,
And loves not Thee, nor Thy commands.

Bitterness found me desolate
And kissed me with the breath of hate;
Since Folly fled, she bade me wear
Her angry scarlet in my hair.

Now, as I look into Thy face,
Despised and battered though it be,
Visage of scorn in every place,
I know that I belong to Thee.
Worthless these lips to give the kiss—
And yet I dare, recalling this,
When Life's last lovers left me bare
Thy patient face was constant there.

THE MIRROR OF THOUGHT

WHEN earnest-eyed we conversed through the
night,
Recalled past pleasure, followed up the hour
With plaintive music—sad memorial flower
Of melancholy and of old delight—
Rode bold as Taillefer with tossing brand
Across the hills of fancy, chanting strains
Of ancient chivalry, while loud refrains
Rumbled responsive through our faery band,
Then Courage kindled Courage, making gay
Carnage and conflict, poverty and fear;
The path to glory golden did appear,
And I was brave to wend it any day.
A far-blown cry of love and minstrelsy,
Revealed to me myself as I would be.

I'M SORRY

I'm sorry, dear—
But I did not know
That behind your eyes,
Where the joy-fields grow
And dance to the joy of dancing skies,
There were forests where graver flowers rise;
Weighted with shadow,
They stand tiptoe:
So I'm sorry, dear—
I did not know.

I'm sorry, dear.
As we older grow
There will come a day,
May its feet move slow,
When we, where the life-fields fade to gray
And the skies dance not, shall have naught to say,
Met by a Shadow,
In voices low,
But, "I'm sorry, God—
I did not know."

DREAMLAND LOVE

HERE in the Far Land of our own begetting,
Crouched on the haunted cliff begirt by sea,
Hushed in the murmurous swell of dim waves
fretting

Walls and sheer rocks which cradle you and me,
How shall we lisp of older worlds and cities?
How shall we sigh for newer worlds to be?
Naught here is left of moanings or of pities,
Only the whispered silence of the sea.

We had no stars to shine our curved prows hither,
Nor had we moons to guide us fearlessly,
Only the age-long yearnings of the river
Bruised by steep banks and aching for the sea;
Rivers whose tides grow tired of earthly lilies,
Too full of splendour to last so long as we,
Rivers whose length-long craving and strong will is
Once to see space, and then to cease to be.

Hither we journeyed sunset-ways by water,
I in my phantom keel of Poesy,
You in Sleep's arms, of whom you are the daughter,
Till in my arms Sleep laid you noiselessly.

Down through the dusk our dreamland barque
drove gleaming,

Under gray sails, through gradual groves of sea,
Till from your eyes I saw the love-light streaming,
And gave the kiss which set your spirit free.

All the fair glories of our first beginnings
We did forsake to gain this quiet place;
Passions we left, and fears, and youthful sinnings;
Virtues we left, and early signs of grace.
Dreamings we brought and beauty of the May-
time,

All else we flung to where Time's whirlwinds race.
Timeless are we in this our godlike play-time,
Since Sleep has led us gently face to face.

Gray glide the mists around our ocean's edges,
Gray grope the tides across the gray-paved sea,
Gray clings the foam about our granite ledges,
Naught, naught remains to safeguard you from
me.

These are the souls who watch us at our dreaming,
Spirits of mist, of spray-dashed crag and sea;
All, all is hushed, save your gray eyes deep gleam-
ing,
Eyes of veiled flame in caves of mystery.

Like frozen stars, we watched each other's shining,
Wondered with pain if any time might be,
When we should lean beyond our own divining,
Touching the lips of others such as we,
Till I grew faint within my lonely heaven,
Sank through the cloudland stretched twixt you
and me,
Plunged through the thunder where firmaments
rocked riven,
So gave the kiss which set your spirit free.

We must go hence, when flames the tyrant morn-
ing,
We shall go hence at breaking of new day;
We, like the stars strange midnight lands adorning,
We must go hence, steal separately away.
Yet, like the stars, perchance we may glide burn-
ing
When round the earth the skies are growing gray;
We to our haunted cliff may sail returning,
Nearing the crags where yesternight we lay,

Thus from the Far Land of our own begetting
I must depart across Sleep's sundering sea,
Throughout the Sun Land wander inly fretting,
Till night drifts back restoring you to me;

Till through the dark I see Love's pennons stream-
ing,

When you will kiss and set my spirit free;

Till through the dusk our dreamland barque drives
gleaming,

Under gray sails, through gradual groves of sea.

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