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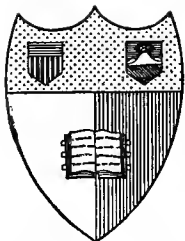


SHAPES
&
SHADOWS.

MADISON CAWEIN



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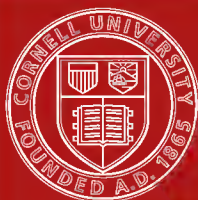
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S h a p e s



S h a d o w s



S H A P E S

and

S H A D O W S

POEMS by *Madison Cawein*



NEW YORK: *R. H. Russell*

MDCCCXCVIII

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To
HARRISON S. MORRIS



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The Dedication



*Ah, not for us the Heavens that hold
GOD's message of Promethean fire!
The Flame that fell on bards of old
To hallow and inspire.*

*Yet let the Soul dream on and dare
No less SONG's height that these possess:
We can but fail; and may prepare
The way to some success.*



Shapes & Shadows

By Madison Cawein

THE EVANESCENT BEAUTIFUL.

DAY after Day, young with eternal beauty,
Pays flowery duty to the month and clime;
Night after night erects a vasty portal
Of stars immortal for the march of Time.

But where are now the Glory and the Rapture,
That once did capture me in cloud and stream?
Where now the Joy that was both speech and silence?
Where the beguillance that was fact and dream?

I know that Earth and Heaven are as golden
As they of olden made me feel and see;
Not in themselves is lacking aught of power
Through star and flower—something's lost in me.

*Return! Return! I cry, O Visions vanished,
O Voices banished, to my Soul again!—*
The near Earth blossoms and the far Skies glisten,
I look and listen, but, alas! in vain.

Shapes & Shadows

August.

I

CLAD on with glowing beauty and the peace,
Benign, of calm maturity, she stands
Among her meadows and her orchard-lands,
And on her mellowing gardens and her trees,
Out of the ripe abundance of her hands,
Bestows increase
And fruitfulness, as, wrapped in sunny ease,
Blue-eyed and blonde she goes,
Upon her bosom *Summer's* richest rose.

II

And he who follows where her footsteps lead,
By hill and rock, by forest-side and stream,
Shall glimpse the glory of her visible dream,
In flower and fruit, in rounded nut and seed:
She in whose path the very shadows gleam;
Whose humblest weed
Seems lovelier than *June's* loveliest flower, indeed,
And sweeter to the smell
Than *April's* self within a rainy dell.

III

Hers is a sumptuous simplicity
Within the fair Republic of her flowers,
Where you may see her standing hours on hours,

Poems

Breast-deep in gold, soft-holding up a bee
To her hushed ear ; or sitting under bowers
Of greenery,
A butterfly a-tilt upon her knee ;
Or, lounging on her hip,
Dancing a cricket on her finger-tip.

IV

Aye, let me breathe hot scents that tell of you :
The hoary catnip and the meadow-mint,
On which the honour of your touch doth print
Itself as odour. Let me drink the hue
Of ironweed and mist-flow'r here that hint,
With purple and blue,
The rapture that your presence doth imbue
Their inmost essence with,
Immortal though as transient as a myth.

V

Yea, let me feed on sounds that still assure
Me where you hide: the brooks', whose happy din
Tells where, the deep retired woods within,
Disrobed, you bathe ; the birds', whose drowsy lure
Tells where you slumber, your warm-nestling chin
Soft on the pure
Pink cushion of your palm . . . What better cure
For care and memory's ache
Than to behold you so and watch you wake !

Shapes & Shadows

THE HIGHER BROTHERHOOD.

TO come in touch with mysteries—
Of beauty idealizing Earth,
Go seek the hills, grown old with trees,
The old hills wise with death and birth.

There you may hear the heart that beats
In streams, where music has its source;
And in wild rocks of green retreats
Behold the silent soul of force.

Above the love that emanates
From human passion, and reflects
The flesh, must be the love that waits
On Nature, whose high call elects

None to her secrets save the few
Who hold that facts are far less real
Than dreams, with which all facts indue
Themselves approaching the Ideal.

Poems

GRAMARYE.

THERE are some things that entertain me more
Than men or books ; and to my knowledge seem
A key of Poetry, made of magic lore
Of childhood, opening many a fabled door
Of superstition, mystery, and dream
 Enchantment locked of yore.

For, when through dusking woods my pathway lies,
Often I feel old spells, as o'er me flits
The bat, like some black thought that, troubled, flies
Round some dark purpose ; or before me cries
The owl that, like an evil conscience, sits
 A shadowy voice and eyes.

Then, when down blue canals of cloudy snow
The white moon oars her boat, and woods vibrate
With crickets, lo, I hear the hautboys blow
Of Elf-land ; and when green the fireflies glow,
See where the goblins hold a Fairy Fête
 With lanthorn row on row.

Strange growths, that ooze from long-dead logs and spread
A creamy fungus, where the snail, uncoiled,
And fat slug feed at morn, are Pixy bread
Made of the yeasted dew ; the lichens red,
Besides these grown, are meat the Brownies broiled
 Above a glow-worm bed.

Shapes & Shadows

The smears of silver on the webs that line
The tree's crook'd roots, or stretch, white-wove, within
The hollow stump, are stains of Faëry wine
Spilled on the cloth where Elf-land sat to dine,
When night beheld them drinking, chin to chin,
O' the moon's fermented shine.

What but their chairs the mushrooms on the lawn,
Or toadstools hidden under flower and fern,
Tagged with the dotting dew! — With knees updrawn
Far as his eyes, have I not come upon
PUCK seated there? but scarcely 'round could turn
Ere, presto! he was gone.

And so though Science from the woods hath tracked
The Elfin; and with prosy lights of day
Unhallowed all his haunts; and, dulling, blacked
Our eyesight, still hath Beauty never lacked
For seers yet; who, in some wizard way,
Prove Fancy real as Fact.

Poems

DREAMS.

MY thoughts have borne me far away
To Beauties of an older day,
Where, crowned with roses, stands the DAWN,
Striking her seven-stringed barbiton
Of flame, whose chords give being to
The seven colours, hue for hue ;
The music of the colour-dream
She builds the day from, beam by beam.

My thoughts have borne me far away
To Myths of a diviner day,
Where, sitting on the mountain, NOON
Sings to the pines a sun-soaked tune
Of rest and shade and clouds and skies,
Wherein her calm dreams idealize
Light as a presence, heavenly fair,
Sleeping with all her beauty bare.

My thoughts have borne me far away
To Visions of a wiser day,
Where, stealing through the wilderness,
NIGHT walks, a sad-eyed votaress,
And prays with mystic words she hears
Behind the thunder of the spheres,
The starry utterance that 's hers,
With which she fills the Universe.

Shapes & Shadows

THE OLD HOUSE.

QUAINT and forgotten, by an unused road,
An old house stands: around its doors the dense
 Blue iron-weeds grow high;
The chipmunks make a highway of its fence;
And on its sunken flagstones slug and toad
 Silent as lichens lie.

The timid snake upon its hearth's cool sand
Sleeps undisturbed; the squirrel haunts its roof;
 And in the clapboard sides
Of closets, dim with many a spider web,
Like the uncertain tapping of a hand,
 The beetle-borer hides.

Above its lintel, under mossy eaves,
The mud-wasps build their cells; and in the floor
 Of its neglected porch
The black bees nest. Through each deserted door,
Vague as a phantom's footsteps, steal the leaves,
 And dropped cones of the larch.

But come with me when sunset's magic old
Transforms the ruin of that ancient house;
 When windows, one by one,—

Poems

Like age's eyes, that youth's love-dreams arouse,—
Grow lairs of fire; and glad mouths of gold
 Its wide doors, in the sun.

Or let us wait until each rain-stained room
Is carpeted with moonlight, pattered oft
 With the deep boughs o'erhead;
And through the house the wind goes rustling soft,
As might the ghost—a whisper of perfume—
 Of some sweet girl long dead.

Shapes & Shadows

THE ROCK.

HERE, at its base, in dinged deeps
Of spice-bush, where the ivy creeps,
The cold spring scoops its hollow ;
And there three mossy stepping-stones
Make ripple murmurs ; undertones
Of foam that blend and follow
With voices of the wood that drones.

The quail pipes here when noons are hot ;
And here, in coolness sunlight-shot
Beneath a roof of briers,
The red-fox skulks at close of day ;
And here at night, the shadows gray
Stand like FRANCISCAN friars,
With moonbeam beads whereon they pray.

Here yawns the ground-hog's dark-dug hole ;
And there the tunnel of the mole
Heaves under weed and flower ;
A sandy pit-fall here and there
The ant-lion digs and lies a-lair ;
And here, for sun and shower,
The spider weaves a silvery snare.

The poison-oak's rank tendrils twine
The rock's south side ; the trumpet-vine,

P o e m s

With crimson bugles sprinkled,
Makes green its eastern side ; the west
Is rough with lichens ; and, gray-pressed
 Into an angle wrinkled,
The hornets hang an oblong nest.

The north is hid from sun and star,
And here, —like an Inquisitor
 Of Faëry Inquisition,
That roots out Elf-land heresy, —
Deep in the rock, with mystery
 Cowled for his grave commission,
The Owl sits magisterially.

Shapes & Shadows

RAIN.

AROUND, the stillness deepened; then the grain
Went wild with wind; and every briery lane
Was swept with dust; and then, tempestuous black,
Hillward the tempest heaved a monster back,
That on the thunder leaned as on a cane;
And on huge shoulders bore a cloudy pack,
That gullied gold from many a lightning-crack:
One great drop splashed and wrinkled down the pane,
And then field, hill, and wood were lost in rain.

At last, through clouds,—as from a cavern hewn
Into night's heart,—the sun burst, angry roon;
And every cedar, with its weight of wet,
Against the sunset's fiery splendour set,
Frightened to beauty, seemed with rubies strewn:
Then in drenched gardens, like sweet phantoms met,
Dim odours rose of pink and mignonette;
And in the East a confidence, that soon
Grew to the calm assurance of the Moon.

STANDING-STONE CREEK.

A weed-grown slope, whereon the rain
Has washed the brown rocks bare,
Leads tangled from a lonely lane
Down to a creek's broad stair
Of stone, that, through the solitude,
Winds onward to a quiet wood.

An intermittent roof of shade
The beech above it throws;
Along its steps a balustrade
Of beauty builds the rose;
In which, a stately lamp of green
At intervals the cedar's seen.

The water, carpeting each ledge
Of rock that runs across,
Glints 'twixt a flow'r-embroidered edge
Of ferns and grass and moss;
And in its deeps the wood and sky
Seem patterns of the softest dye.

Long corridors of pleasant dusk
Within the house of leaves
It reaches; where, on looms of musk,
The ceaseless locust weaves

Shapes & Shadows

A web of summer ; and perfume
Trails a sweet gown from room to room.

Green windows of the boughs, that swing,
It passes, where the notes
Of birds are glad thoughts entering,
And butterflies are motes ;
And now a vista where the day
Opens a door of wind and ray.

It is a stairway for all sounds
That haunt the woodland sides ;
On which, boy-like, the southwind bounds,
Girl-like, the sunbeam glides ;
And, like fond parents, following these,
The oldtime dreams of rest and peace.

THE MOONMEN.

I stood in the forest on HURON HILL
When the night was old and the world was still.

The Wind was a wizard who muttering strode
In a raven cloak on a haunted road.

The Sound of Water, a witch who crooned
Her spells to the rocks the rain had runed.

And the Gleam of the Dew on the fern's green tip
Was a sylvan passing with robe a-drip.

The Light of the Stars was a glimmering maid
Who stole, an elfin, from glade to glade.

The Scent of the Woods in the delicate air,
A wildflower shape with chilly hair.

And Silence, a spirit who sat alone
With a lifted finger and eyes of stone.

And it seemed to me these six were met
To greet a greater who came not yet.

And the speech they spoke, that I listened to,
Was the archetype of the speech I knew.

Shapes & Shadows

For the Wind clasped hands with the Water's rush,
And I heard them whisper, *Hush, oh, hush!*

The Light of the Stars and the Dew's cool gleam
Touched lips and murmured, *Dream, oh dream!*

The Scent of the Woods and the Silence deep
Sighed, bosom to bosom, *Sleep, oh, sleep!*

And so for a moment the six were dumb,
Then exulted together, *They come, they come!*

And I stood expectant and seemed to hear
A visible music drawing near.

And the first who came was the Captain Moon
Bearing a shield in GOD's House hewn.

Then an Army of glamour, a glittering Host,
Beleaguered the night from coast to coast.

And the world was filled with spheric fire
From the palpitant chords of many a lyre,

As out of the East the MOONMEN came
Smiting their harps of silver and flame.

Poems

More beauty and grace did their forms express
Than the QUEEN OF LOVE'S white nakedness.

More chastity too their faces held
Than the snowy breasts of DIANA swelled.

Translucent-limbed, I saw the beat
In their hearts of pearl of the golden heat.

And the hair they tossed was a crystal light,
And the eyes beneath it were burning white.

Their hands that lifted, their feet that fell,
Made the darkness blossom to asphodel.

And the heavens, the hills, and the streams they trod
Shone pale with th' communicated God.

A placid frenzy, a waking trance,
A soft oracular radiance,

Wrapped forms that moved as melodies move,
Laurelled with god-head and halo'd with love.

So there in the forest on HURON HILL
The MOONMEN camped when the world was still. . . .

Shapes & Shadows

What wonder that they who have looked on these
Are lost to the earth's realities!

That they sit aside with a far-off look
Dreaming the dreams that are writ in no book!

That they walk alone till the day they die,
Even as I, yea, even as I!

THE OLD MAN DREAMS.

THE blackened walnut in its spicy hull
Rots where it fell ;
And, in the orchard, where the trees stand full,
The pear's ripe bell
Drops ; and the log-house in the bramble lane,
From whose low door
Stretch yellowing acres of the corn and cane,
He sees once more.

The cat-bird sings upon its porch of pine ;
And o'er its gate,
All slender-podded, twists the trumpet-vine,
A leafy weight ;
And in the woodland, by the spring, mayhap,
With eyes of joy
Again he bends to set a rabbit-trap,
A brown-faced boy.

Then, whistling, through the underbrush he goes,
Out of the wood,
Where, with young cheeks, red as an *Autumn* rose,
Beneath her hood,
His sweetheart waits, her school-books on her arm ;
And now it seems
Beside his chair he sees his wife's fair form—
The old man dreams.

Shapes & Shadows

SINCE THEN.

I found myself among the trees
What time the reapers ceased to reap;
And in the berry blooms the bees
Huddled wee heads and went to sleep,
Rocked by the silence and the breeze.

I saw the red fox leave his lair,
A shaggy shadow, on the knoll;
And, tunnelling his thoroughfare
Beneath the loam, I watched the mole—
Stealth's own self could not take more care.

I heard the death-moth tick and stir,
Slow-honeycombing through the bark;
I heard the crickets' drowsy chirr,
And one lone beetle burr the dark—
'The sleeping woodland seemed to purr.

And then the moon rose; and a white
Low bough of blossoms—grown almost
Where, ere you died, 't was our delight
To tryst,—dear heart!—I thought your ghost . . .
The wood is haunted since that night.

Poems

COMRADES.

DOWN through the woods, along the way
That fords the stream; by rock and tree,
Where in the bramble-bell the bee
Swings; and through twilights green and gray
The red-bird flashes suddenly,
My thoughts went wandering to-day.

I found the fields where, row on row,
The blackberries hang black with fruit;
Where, nesting at the elder's root,
The partridge whistles soft and low;
The fields, that billow to the foot
Of those old hills we used to know.

There lay the pond, still willow-bound,
On whose bright surface, when the hot
Noon burnt above, we chased the knot
Of water-spiders; while around
Our heads, like bits of rainbow, shot
The dragonflies without a sound.

The pond, above which evening bent
To gaze upon her rosy face;
Wherein the twinkling night would place
A vague, inverted firmament,

Shapes & Shadows

In which the green frogs tuned their bass,
And firefly sparkles came and went.

The oldtime woods we often ranged,
When we were playmates, you and I;
The oldtime fields, with boyhood's sky
Still blue above them!— Naught was changed!
Nothing!— Alas, then tell me why
Should we be? whom long years estranged.

Poems

WAITING.

COME to the hills, the woods are green—
The heart is high when LOVE is sweet—
There is a brook that flows between
Two mossy trees where we can meet,
Where we can meet and speak unseen.

I hear you laughing in the lane—
The heart is high when LOVE is sweet—
The clover smells of sun and rain
And spreads a carpet for our feet,
Where we can sit and dream again.

Come to the woods, the dusk is here—
The heart is high when LOVE is sweet—
A bird upon the branches near
Sets music to our hearts' glad beat,
Our hearts that beat with something dear.

I hear your step; the lane is passed;—
The heart is high when LOVE is sweet—
The little stars come bright and fast,
Like happy eyes to see us greet,
To see us greet and kiss at last.

Shapes & Shadows

CONTRASTS.

NO eve of summer ever can attain
The gladness of that eve of late *July*,
When 'mid the roses, filled with musk and rain,
Against the wondrous topaz of the sky,
I met you, leaning on the pasture bars,—
While heaven and earth grew conscious of the stars.

No night of blackest winter can repeat
The bitterness of that *December* night,
When at your gate, gray-glittering with sleet,
Within the glimmering square of window-light,
We parted,—long you clung unto my arm,—
While heaven and earth surrendered to the storm.

Poems

IN *June*.

DEEP in the West a berry-coloured bar
Of sunset gleams; against which one tall fir
Is outlined dark; above which—courier
Of dew and dreams—burns dusk's appointed star.
And flash on flash, as when the elves wage war
In Goblinland, the fireflies bombard
The stillness; and, like spirits, o'er the sward
The glimmering winds bring fragrance from afar.
And now withdrawn into the hill-wood belts
A whippoorwill; while, with attendant states
Of purple and silver, slow the great moon melts
Into the night—to show me where *she* waits,—
Like some slim moonbeam,—by the old beech-tree,
Who keeps her lips, fresh as a flower, for me.

Shapes & Shadows

AFTER LONG GRIEF AND PAIN.

THERE is a place hung o'er with summer boughs
And drowsy skies wherein the gray hawk sleeps;
Where waters flow, within whose lazy deeps,
Like silvery prisms that the winds arouse,
The minnows twinkle; where the bells of cows
Tinkle the stillness, and the bob-white keeps
Calling from meadows where the reaper reaps,
And children's laughter haunts an old-time house;
A place where life wears ever an honest smell
Of hay and honey, sun and elder-bloom—
Like some dear, modest girl—within her hair:
Where, with our love for comrade, we may dwell
Far from the city's strife whose cares consume—
Oh, take my hand and let me lead you there.

Can I Forget?

CAN I forget how LOVE once led the ways
Of our two lives together, joining them ;
How every hour was his anadem,
And every day a tablet in his praise !
Can I forget how, in his garden place,
Among the purple roses, stem to stem,
We heard the rumour of his robe's bright hem,
And saw the aureate radiance of his face !—
Though I behold my soul's high dreams down-hurled,
And FALSEHOOD sit where Truth once towered white,
And in LOVE's place, usurping lust and shame . . .
Though flowers be dead within the winter world,
Are flowers not there? and starless though the night,
Are stars not there, eternal and the same ?

Shapes & Shadows

THE HOUSE OF FEAR.

VAST are its halls, as vast the halls and lone
Where DEATH stalks listening to the wind and rain;
And dark that house, where I shall meet again
My long-dead Sin in some dread way unknown;
For I have dreamed of stairs of haunted stone,
And spectre footsteps I have fled in vain;
And windows glaring with a blood-red stain,
And horrible eyes, that burn me to the bone,
Within a face that looks as that black night
It looked when deep I dug for it a grave,—
The dagger wound above the brow, the thin
Blood trickling down slantwise the ghastly white;—
And I have dreamed not even GOD can save
Me and my soul from that risen Sin.

P o e m s

AT DAWN.

FAR off I heard dark waters rush ;
The sky was cold ; the dawn broke green ;
And wrapped in twilight and strange hush
The gray wind moaned between.

A voice rang through the House of Sleep,
And through its halls there went a tread ;
Mysterious raiment seemed to sweep
Around the pallid dead.

And then I knew that I had died,
I, who had suffered so and sinned—
And 't was myself I stood beside
In the wild dawn and wind.

Shapes & Shadows

STORM.

I looked into the night and saw
God writing with tumultuous flame
Upon the thunder's front of awe,—
As on sonorous brass,—the Law,
Terrific, of His judgement name.

Weary of all life's best and worst,
With hands of hate, I—who had pled,
I, who had prayed for death at first
And had not died—now stood and cursed
God, yet he would not strike me dead.

Poems

MEMORIES.

HERE where LOVE lies perishèd,
Look not in upon the dead ;
Lest the shadowy curtains, shaken
In my Heart's dark chamber, waken
Ghosts, beneath whose garb of sorrow
Whilom gladness bows his head :
When you come at morn to-morrow,
Look not in upon the dead,
Here where LOVE lies perishèd.

Here where LOVE lies cold interred,
Let no syllable be heard ;
Lest the hollow echoes, housing
In my Soul's deep tomb, arousing
Wake a voice of woe, once laughter
Claimed and clothed in joy's own word :
When you come at dusk or after,
Let no syllable be heard,
Here where LOVE lies cold interred.

Shapes & Shadows

WHICH?

THE wind was on the forest,
And silence on the wold;
And darkness on the waters,
And heaven was starry cold;
When Sleep, with mystic magic,
Bade me this thing behold:

This side, an iron woodland;
That side, an iron waste;
And heaven, a tower of iron,
Wherein the wan moon paced,
Still as a phantom woman,
Ice-eyed and icy-faced.

And through the haunted tower
Of silence and of night,
My Soul and I went only,
My Soul, whose face was white,
Whose one hand signed me listen,
One bore a taper-light.

For, lo! a voice behind me
Kept sighing in my ear
The dreams my flesh accepted,
My mind refused to hear—
Of one I loved and loved not,
Whose spirit now spake near.

P o e m s

And, lo! a voice before me
Kept calling constantly
The hopes my mind accepted,
My flesh refused to see—
Of one I loved and loved not,
Whose spirit spake to me.

This way the one would bid me;
This way the other saith:—
Sweet is the voice behind me
Of LIFE that followeth;
And sweet the voice before me
Of LIFE whose name is DEATH.

Shapes & Shadows

SUNSET IN *Autumn*.

BLOOD-COLOURED oaks, that stand against a sky
of gold and brass;
Gaunt slopes, on which the bleak leaves glow of brier and
sassafras,
And broom-sedge strips of smoky pink and pearl-gray clumps
of grass,
In which, beneath the ragged sky, the rain-pools gleam like
glass.

From West to East, from wood to wood, along the forest-
side,
The winds,—the sowers of the LORD,—with thunderous
footsteps stride;
Their stormy hands rain acorns down; and mad leaves,
wildly dyed,
Like tatters of their rushing cloaks, stream round them far
and wide.

The frail leaf-cricket in the weeds rings a faint fairy bell;
And like a torch of phantom ray the milkweed's windy shell
Glimmers; while wrapped in withered dreams, the wet
autumnal smell
Of loam and leaf, like some sad ghost, steals over field and
dell.

Poems

The oaks against a copper sky—o'er which, like some black
lake

Of *DRs*, dark clouds, like surges fringed with sullen fire,
break—

Loom sombre as *Doom's* citadel above the vales, that make
A pathway to a land of mist the moon's pale feet shall take.

Now, dyed with burning carbuncle, a *Limbo-litten* pane,
Within its wall of storm, the *West* opens to hill and plain,
On which the wild geese ink themselves, a far triangled
train;

And then the shuttering clouds close down—and night is
here again.

Shapes & Shadows

THE LEGEND OF THE STONE.

THE year was dying, and the day
Was almost dead ;
The West, beneath a sombre gray,
Was sombre red.
The gravestones in the ghostly light,
'Mid trees half bare,
Seemed phantoms, clothed in glimmering white,
That haunted there.

I stood beside the grave of one,
Who, here in life,
Had wronged my home ; who had undone
My child and wife.
I stood beside his grave until
The moon came up —
As if the dark, unhallowed hill
Lifted a cup.

No stone was there to mark his grave,
No flower to grace —
'T was meet that weeds alone should wave
In such a place.
I stood beside his grave until
The stars swam high,
And all the night was iron still
From sky to sky.

Poems

What cared I if strange eyes seemed bright
 Within the gloom!
If, evil blue, a wandering light
 Burnt by each tomb!
Or that each crookèd thorn-tree seemed
 A witch-hag cloaked!
Or that the owl above me screamed,
 The raven croaked!

For I had cursed him when the day
 Was sullen red;
Had cursed him when the West was gray,
 And day was dead;
And now when night made dark the pole,
 Both soon and late
I cursed his body, yea, and soul,
 With the hate of hate.

Once in my soul I seemed to hear
 A low voice say,—
'Twere better to forgive,—and fear
 Thy God,—and pray.
I laughed; and from pale lips of stone
 On sculptured tombs
A mocking laugh replied alone
 Deep in the glooms.

Shapes & Shadows

And then I felt, I felt—as if
Some force should seize
The body; and its limbs stretch stiff,
And, fastening, freeze
Down, downward deeper than the knees
Into the earth—
While still among the twisted trees
That voice made mirth.

And in my Soul was fear, despair,—
Like lost ones feel,
When knotted in their pitch-stiff hair,
They feel the steel
Of devils' forks lift up, through sleet
Of hell's slant fire,
Then plunge,—as white from head to feet
I grew entire.

A voice without me, yet within,
As still as frost,
Intoned: *Thy sin is thrice a sin.*
Thrice art thou lost.
Behold, how God would punish thee!
For this thy crime—
Thy crime of hate and blasphemy—
Through endless time!

P o e m s

*O'er him, whom thou wouldst not forgive,
Record what good
He did on earth! and let him live
Loved, understood!
Be memory thine of all the worst
He did thine own!
There at the head of him I cursed
I stood—a stone.*

Shapes & Shadows

TIME AND DEATH AND LOVE.

LAST night I watched for Death—
So sick of life was I!—
When in the street beneath
I heard his watchman cry
The hour, while passing by.

I called. And in the night
I heard him stop below,
His owlish lanthorn's light
Blurring the windy snow—
How long the time and slow!

I said, *Why dost thou cower*
There at my door and knock?
Come in! It is the hour!
Cease fumbling at the lock!
Naught's well! 'Tis no o'clock!

Black through the door with him
Swept in the *Winter's* breath;
His cloak was great and grim—
But he, who smiled beneath,
Had the face of Love not Death.

P o e m s

P A S S I O N .

THE wine-loud laughter of indulged Desire
Upon his lips, and, in his eyes, the fire
Of uncontrol, he takes in reckless hands,—
And interrupts with discords,—the sad lyre
Of LOVE's deep soul, and never understands.

Shapes & Shadows

When the Wine-Cup at the Lip.

WHEN the wine-cup at the lip
Slants its sparkling fire,
O'er its level, while you sip,
Have you marked the finger-tip
Of the god DESIRE slip,
Of the god DESIRE?
Saying— *Lo, the hours run!*
Live your day before 't is done!

When the empty goblet lies
At the ended revel,
In the glass, the wine-stain dyes,
Have you marked the hollow eyes
Of a mocking Devil rise,
Of a mocking Devil?
Saying— *Lo, the day is through!*
Look on joy it gave to you!

Poems

ART.

[*A Phantasy.*]

I know not how I found you
With your wild hair a-blow,
Nor why the world around you
Would never let me know:
Perhaps 'twas Heaven relented,
Perhaps 'twas Hell resented
My dream, and grimly vented
Its hate upon me so.

In Shadowland I met you
Where all dim shadows meet;
Within my heart I set you,
A phantom bitter-sweet:
No hope for me to win you,
Though I with soul and sinew
Strive on and on, when in you
There is no heart or heat!

Yet ever, aye, and ever,
Although I knew you lied,
I followed on, but never
Would your white form abide:

Shapes & Shadows

With loving arms stretched meward,
As Sirens beckon seaward
To some fair vessel leeward,
 Before me you would glide.

But like an evil fairy,
 That mocks one with a light,
Now near, you led your airy,
 Now far, your fitful flight:
With red-gold tresses blowing,
And eyes of sapphire glowing,
With limbs like marble showing,
 You lured me through the night.

To some unearthly revel
 Of mimes, a motley crew,
'Twixt Angel-land and Devil,
 You lured me on, I knew,
And lure me still! soft whiling
The way with hopes beguiling,
While dark Despair sits smiling
 Behind the eyes of you!

Poems

A SONG FOR OLD AGE.

NOW nights grow cold and colder,
And North the wild vane swings,
And round each tree and boulder
The driving snow-storm sings—
Come, make my old heart older,
O memory of lost things!

Of Hope, when promise sung her
Brave songs and I was young,
That banquets now on hunger
Since all youth's songs are sung;
Of Love, who walks with younger
Sweethearts the flowers among.

Ah, well! while Life holds levee,
Death's ceaseless dance goes on.
So let the curtains, heavy
About my couch, be drawn—
The curtains, sad and heavy,
Where all shall sleep anon.

Shapes & Shadows

Tristram AND Isolt.

NIGHT and vast caverns of rock and of iron ;
Voices like water, and voices like wind ;
Horror and tempests of hail that environ
Shapes and the shadows of two who have sinned.

Wan on the whirlwind, in loathing uplifting
Faces that loved once, forever they go,
TRISTRAM and ISOLT, the lovers, go drifting,
The sullen laughter of Hell below.

THE BETTER LOT.

HER life was bound to crutches: pale and bent,
But smiling ever, she would go and come:
For of her soul GOD made an instrument
Of strength and comfort to an humble home.

Better a life of toil and slow disease
That LOVE companions through the patient years,
Than one whose heritage is loveless ease,
That never knows the blessedness of tears.

Shapes & Shadows

DUSK IN THE WOODS.

THREE miles of hill it is; and I
Came through the woods that waited, dumb,
For the cool *Summer* dusk to come;
And lingered there to watch the sky
Up which the gradual sunset clomb.

A tree-toad quavered in a tree;
And then a sudden whip-poor-will
Called overhead, so wildly shrill,
The startled woodland seemed to see
How very lone it was and still.

Then through dark boughs its stealthy flight
An owl took; and, at sleepy strife,
The cricket turned its fairy fife;
And through the dead leaves, in the night,
Soft rustlings stirred of unseen life.

And in the punk-wood everywhere
The insects ticked, or bored below
The rotted bark; and, glow on glow,
The gleaming fireflies here and there
Lit up their Jack-o'-lantern show.

P o e m s.

I heard a vesper-sparrow sing,
Withdrawn, it seemed, into the far
Slow sunset's tranquil cinnabar ;
The sunset, softly smouldering
Behind gaunt trunks, with its one star.

A dog barked ; and down ways, that gleamed,
Through dew and clover faint the noise
Of cow-bells moved. And then a voice,
That sang a-milking, so it seemed,
Made glad my heart as some glad boy's.

And then the lane ; and full in view
A farmhouse with a rose-grown gate,
And honeysuckle paths, await
For night's white moon and love and you—
These are the things that made me late.

Shapes & Shadows

AT THE FERRY.

O H, dim and wan came in the dawn,
And gloomy closed the day ;
The killdee whistled among the weeds,
The heron flapped in the river reeds,
And the snipe piped far away.

At dawn she stood—her dark gray hood
Flung back—in the ferry-boat ;
Sad were the eyes that watched him ride,
Her raider love, from the riverside,
His kiss on her mouth and throat.

Like some wild spell the twilight fell,
And black the tempest came ;
The heavens seemed filled with the warring dead,
Whose batteries opened overhead
With thunder and with flame.

At night again in the wind and rain,
She toiled at the ferry oar ;
For she heard a voice in the night and storm,
And it seemed that her lover's shadowy form
Beckoned her to the shore.

P o e m s

And swift to save she braved the wave,
And reached the shore and found
His riderless horse, with head hung low,
A blur of blood on the saddle-bow,
And the empty night around.

Shapes & Shadows

HER VIOLIN.

I

HER violin!—Again begin
The dream-notes of her violin;
And dim and fair, with gold-brown hair,
I seem to see her standing there,
Soft-eyed and sweetly slender:
The room again, with strain on strain,
Vibrates to LOVE's melodious pain,
As, sloping slow, is poised her bow,
While round her form the golden glow
Of sunset spills its splendour.

II

Her violin!—now deep, now thin,
Again I hear her violin;
And, dream by dream, again I seem
To see the love-light's tender gleam
Beneath her eyes' long lashes:
While to my heart she seems a part
Of her pure song's inspired art;
And, as she plays, the rosy grays
Of twilight halo hair and face,
While sunset burns to ashes.

III

O violin!—Cease, cease within
My soul, O haunting violin!

P o e m s

In vain, in vain, you bring again
Back from the past the blissful pain
Of all the love then spoken ;
When on my breast, at happy rest,
A sunny while her head was pressed—
Peace, peace to these wild memories !
For, like my heart naught remedies,
Her violin lies broken.

Shapes & Shadows

HER VESPER SONG.

THE *Summer* lightning comes and goes
In one pale cloud above the hill,
As if within its soft repose
A burning heart were never still—
As in my bosom pulses beat
Before the coming of his feet.

All drugged with odorous sleep, the rose
Breathes dewy balm about the place,
As if the dreams the garden knows
Took immaterial form and face—
As in my heart sweet thoughts arise
Beneath the ardour of his eyes.

The moon above the darkness shows
An orb of silvery snow and fire,
As if the night would now disclose
To heav'n her one divine desire—
As in the rapture of his kiss
All of my soul is drawn to his.

The cloud, it knows not that it glows;
The rose knows nothing of its scent;
Nor knows the moon that it bestows
Light on our earth and firmament—
So is the soul unconscious of
The beauties it reveals through LOVE.

Poems

AT PARTING.

WHAT is there left for us to say,
Now it has come to say good-by?
And all our dreams of yesterday
Have vanished in the sunset sky—
What is there left for us to say,
Now different ways before us lie?

A word of hope, a word of cheer,
A word of love, that still shall last,
When we are far to bring us near
Through memories of the happy past;
A word of hope, a word of cheer,
To keep our sad hearts true and fast.

What is there left for us to do,
Now it has come to say farewell?
And care, that bade us once adieu,
Returns again with us to dwell—
What is there left for us to do,
Now different ways our fates compel?

Clasp hands and sigh, touch lips and smile,
And look the love that shall remain—
When severed so by many a mile—
The sweetest balm for bitterest pain;
Clasp hands and sigh, touch lips and smile,
And trust in GOD to meet again.

Shapes & Shadows

CARISSIMA MEA.

I look upon my lady's face,
And, in the world about me, see
No face like hers in any place:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

It is not made, as others sing
Of their dear loves, like ivory,
But like a wild rose in the spring:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Her brow is low and very fair,
And o'er it, smooth and shadowy,
Lies deep the darkness of her hair:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Beneath her brows her eyes are gray,
And gaze out glad and fearlessly,
Their wonder haunts me night and day:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Her eyebrows, arched and delicate,
Twin curves of pencilled ebony,
Within their spans contain my fate:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Poems

Her mouth, that was for kisses curved,
So small and sweet, it well may be
That it for me is yet reserved:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Between her hair and rounded chin,
Calm with her soul's calm purity,
There lies no shadow of a sin:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Of perfect form, she is not tall,
Just higher than the heart of me,
Where'er I place her, all in all:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

She is not shaped, as some have sung
Of their dear loves, like some slim tree,
But like the moon when it is young:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Her hands, that smell of violet,
So white and fashioned gracefully,
Have woven round my heart a net:
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Shapes & Shadows

Yea, I have loved her many a day ;
And though for me she may not be,
Still at her feet my love I lay :
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Albeit she be not for me,
GOD send her grace and grant that she
Know nought of sorrow all her days :
Therefore it is I sing her praise.

Poems

Margery.

I

WHEN *Spring* is here and MARGERY
Goes walking in the woods with me,
She is so white, she is so shy,
The little leaves clap hands and cry—

Perdie!

So white is she, so shy is she,

Ab me!

The maiden May hath just passed by!

II

When *Summer's* here and MARGERY
Goes walking in the fields with me,
She is so pure, she is so fair,
The wildflowers eye her and declare—

Perdie!

So pure is she, so fair is she,

Just see,

Where our sweet cousin takes the air!

III

Why is it that my MARGERY
Hears nothing that these say to me?
She is so good, she is so true,

Shapes & Shadows

My heart it maketh such ado ;
 Perdie !
So good is she, so true is she,
 You see,
She can not hear the other two.

Constance.

BEYOND the orchard, in the lane,
The crested red-bird sings again—
O bird, whose song says, *Have no care.*
Should I not care when CONSTANCE there,—
My CONSTANCE, with the bashful gaze,
Pink-gowned like some sweet hollyhock,—
If I declare my love, just says
Some careless thing as if in mock?
Like—*Past the orchard, in the lane,*
How sweet the red-bird sings again!

There, while the red-bird sings his best,
His listening mate sits on the nest—
O bird, whose patience says, *All's well,*
How can it be with me, now tell?
When CONSTANCE, with averted eyes,—
Soft-bonneted as some sweet-pea,—
If I speak marriage, just replies
With some such quaint irrelevancy,
As, *While the red-bird sings his best,*
His loving mate sits on the nest.

What shall I say? what can I do?
Would such replies mean aught to you,
O birds, whose gladness says, *Be glad?*
Have I not reason to be sad

Shapes & Shadows

When CONSTANCE, with demurest glance,
Her face a-poppy with distress,
If I reproach her, pouts, perchance,
And answers so in waywardness? —
What shall I say? what can I do?
My meaning should be plain to you!

Gertrude.

WHEN first I gazed on GERTRUDE's face,
Beheld her loveliness and grace;
Her brave gray eyes, her raven hair,
Her ways, more winsome than the kiss
Spring gives the flowers; her smile, that is
Brighter than all the summer air
Made sweet with birds:—I did declare,—
And still declare!—there is no one,
No girl beneath the moon or sun,
So beautiful to look upon!
And to my thoughts, that on her dwell,
Nothing seems more desirable—
Not OPHIR gold nor ORIENT pearls—
Than seems this jewel-girl of girls.

Shapes & Shadows

Lydia.

WHEN *Autumn's* here and days are short,
Let LYDIA laugh and, hey!
Straightway 'tis *May-day* in my heart,
And blossoms strew the way.

When *Summer's* here and days are long,
Let LYDIA sigh and, ho!
December's fields I walk among,
And shiver in the snow.

No matter what the Seasons are,
My LYDIA is so dear,
My soul admits no Calendar
Of earth when she is near.

A SOUTHERN GIRL.

SERIOUS but smiling, stately and serene,
And dreamier than a flower ;
A girl in whom all sympathies convene
As perfumes in a bower ;
Through whom one feels what soul and heart may mean,
And their resistless power.

Eyes, that commune with the frank skies of truth,
Where thought like starlight curls ;
Lips of immortal rose, where love and youth
Nestle like two sweet pearls ;
Hair, that suggests the Bible braids of RUTH,
Deeper than any girl's.

When first I saw you, 't was as if within
My soul took shape some song—
Played by a master of the violin—
A music pure and strong,
That rapt my soul above all earthly sin
To heights that know no wrong.

Shapes & Shadows

A DAUGHTER OF THE STATES.

SHE has the eyes of some barbarian Queen
Leading her wild tribes into battle; eyes,
Wherein th' unconquerable soul defies,
And Love sits throned, imperious and serene.

And I have thought that Liberty, alone
Among the mountain stars, might look like her,
Kneeling to GOD, her only emperor,
Kindling her torch on FREEDOM's altar-stone.

For in her self, regal with riches of
Beauty and youth, again those Queens seem born—
BOADICEA, meeting scorn with scorn,
And ERMENGARDE, returning love for love.

Poems

AN *Autumn* NIGHT.

SOME things are good on *Autumn* nights,
When with the storm the forest fights,
And in the room the heaped hearth lights
 Old-fashioned press and rafter :
Plump chestnuts hissing in the heat,
A mug of cider, sharp and sweet,
And at your side a face petite,
 With lips of laughter.

Upon the roof the rolling rain,
And tapping at the window-pane,
The wind that seems a witch's cane
 That summons spells together :
A hand within your own awhile ;
A mouth reflecting back your smile ;
And eyes, two stars, whose beams exile
 All thoughts of weather.

And, while the wind lulls, still to sit
And watch her fire-lit needles flit
A-knitting, and to feel her knit
 Your very heartstrings in it :
Then, when the old clock ticks 't is late,
To rise, and at the door to wait,
Two words, or at the garden gate,
 A kissing minute.

Shapes & Shadows

LINES.

IF GOD should say to me, *Behold!*—
Yea, who shall doubt?—
They who love others more than me,
Shall I not turn, as oft of old,
My face from them and cast them out?
So let it be with thee, behold!—
I should not care, for in your face
Is all GOD's grace.

If GOD should say to me, *Behold!*—
Is it not well?—
They who have other gods than me,
Shall I not bid them, as of old,
Depart into the outer HELL?
So let it be with thee, behold!—
I should not care, for in your eyes
Is PARADISE.

THE BLIND GOD.

I know not if she be unkind,
If she have faults I do not care;
Search through the world—where will you find
A face like hers, a form, a mind?
I love her to despair.

If she be cruel, cruelty
Is a great virtue, I will swear;
If she be proud—then pride must be
Akin to Heaven's divinest three—
I love her to despair.

Why speak to me of that and this?
All you may say weighs not a hair!
In her,—whose lips I may not kiss,—
To me naught but perfection is!—
I love her to despair.

Shapes & Shadows

A VALENTINE.

MY life is grown a witchcraft place
Through gazing on thy form and face.

Now 'tis thy Smile's soft sorcery
That makes my soul a melody.

Now 'tis thy Frown, that comes and goes,
That makes my heart a page of prose.

Some day, perhaps, a word of thine
Will change me to thy VALENTINE.

Poems

A CATCH.

WHEN roads are mired with ice and snow,
And the air of morn is crisp with rime ;
When the holly hangs by the mistletoe,
And bells ring in the CHRISTMAS time : —
It's—Saddle, my Heart, and ride away,
To the sweet-faced girl with the eyes of gray !
Who waits with a smile for the gifts you bring—
A man's strong love and a wedding-ring—
It's—Saddle, my Heart, and ride !

When vanes veer North and storm-winds blow,
And the sun of noon is a blur o'erhead ;
When the holly hangs by the mistletoe,
And the CHRISTMAS service is sung and said : —
It's—Come, O my Heart, and wait awhile,
Where the organ peals, in the altar aisle,
For the gifts that the church now gives to you—
A woman's hand and a heart that's true.
It's—Come, O my Heart, and wait !

When rooms gleam warm with the fire's glow,
And the sleet raps sharp on the window-pane ;
When the holly hangs by the mistletoe,
And CHRISTMAS revels begin again : —
It's—Home, O my Heart, and love, at last !

Shapes & Shadows

And her happy breast to your own held fast;
A song to sing and a tale to tell,
A good-night kiss, and all is well.
 It's—Home, O my Heart, and love!

THE NEW YEAR.

LIFT up thy torch, O Year, and let us see
What Destiny
Hath made thee heir to at nativity!

Doubt, some call Faith; and ancient Wrong and Might,
Whom some name Right;
And Darkness, that the purblind world calls Light.

Despair, with Hope's brave form; and Hate, who goes
In Friendship's clothes;
And Happiness, the mask of many woes.

Neglect, whom Merit serves; Lust, to whom, see,
Love bends the knee;
And Selfishness, who preacheth charity.

Vice, in whose dungeon Virtue lies in chains;
And Cares and Pains,
That on the throne of Pleasure hold their reigns.

Corruption, known as Honesty; and Fame
That's but a name;
And Innocence, the outward guise of Shame.

And Folly, men call Wisdom here, forsooth;
And, like a youth,
Fair Falsehood, whom some worship for the Truth.

Shapes & Shadows

Abundance, who hath Famine's house in lease ;
 And, high 'mid these,
War, blood-black, on the spotless shrine of Peace.

Lift up thy torch, O Year ! assist our sight !
 Deep lies the night
Around us, and GOD grants us little light !

THEN AND NOW.

WHEN my old heart was young, my dear,
The Earth and Heaven were so near
That in my dreams I oft could hear
 The steps of unseen races ;
In woodlands, where bright waters ran,
On hills, God's rainbows used to span,
I followed voices not of man,
 And smiled in spirit faces.

Now my old heart is old, my sweet,
No longer Earth and Heaven meet ;
All Life is grown to one long street
 Where fact with fancy clashes ;
The voices now that speak to me
Are prose instead of poetry :
And in the faces now I see
 Is less of flame than ashes.

Epilogue.

BEYOND the moon, within a land of mist,
Lies the dim Garden of all Dead Desires,
Walled round with morning's clouded amethyst,
And haunted of the sunset's shadowy fires ;
There all lost things we loved hold ghostly tryst—
Dead dreams, dead hopes, dead loves, and dead desires.

Sad are the stars that day and night exist
Above the Garden of all Dead Desires ;
And sad the roses that within it twist
Deep bow'rs ; and sad the wind that through it quires ;
But sadder far are they who there hold tryst—
Dead dreams, dead hopes, dead loves, and dead desires.

There, like a dove, upon the twilight's wrist,
Soft in the Garden of all Dead Desires,
Sleep broods ; and there, where never a serpent hissed,
On the wan willows music hangs her lyres,
ÆOLIAN dials by which phantoms tryst—
Dead dreams, dead hopes, dead loves, and dead desires.

There you shall hear low voices ; kisses kissed,
Faint in the Garden of all Dead Desires,
By lips the anguish of vain song makes whist ;

P o e m s

And meet with shapes that art's despair attires ;
And gaze in eyes where all sweet sorrows tryst—
 Dead dreams, dead hopes, dead loves, and dead desires.

Thither we go, dreamer and realist,
 Bound for the Garden of all Dead Desires,
Where we shall find, perhaps, all Life hath missed,
 All Life hath longed for when the soul aspires,
All Earth's elusive loveliness at tryst—
 Dead dreams, dead hopes, dead loves, and dead desires.

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