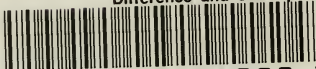


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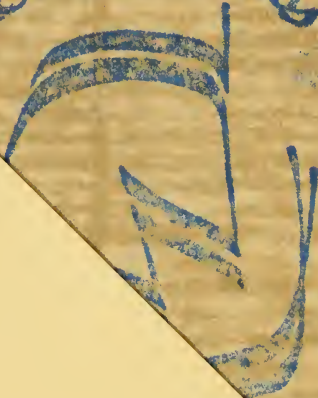
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THE DIFFERENCE
AND OTHER POEMS



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THE DIFFERENCE
AND OTHER POEMS

Including the Columbian Ode

By
HARRIET MONROE

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1925

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TO HENRY B. FULLER

In admiration of his varied and distinguished art, and in grateful recognition of a friendship which bridges the interval of time covered by this volume.

BY WAY OF PREFACE

THE leading title in this book, *The Difference*, may carry an application beyond its special poem; for the inclusion of the *Columbian Ode* with poems all of quite recent date bridges over a space of thirty years, and emphasizes "the difference" between the point of view, not only of an individual poet but to a large degree of people in general, during the early nineties of the ever-memorable Columbian festival, and our own early twenties of this war-shaken century.

The author of the *Columbian Ode* grew up in a world which appeared to her not only warless but dedicated to a wise future of peaceful development—for the Franco-Prussian war of twenty years earlier seemed, to the imagination of youth, almost as remote an object-lesson as Napoleon's conquests. War was not a reality, but a legend, to her consciousness; and the prophetic optimism at the climax of the ode was not merely a mood inspired by the splendid international courtesies of the great festival, but the sincere utterance of a young poet's profound faith in the future brotherhood of nations and of men—a brotherhood potent, beyond all imagining, for the loosing of creative energy in vast works and marvellous discoveries.

The Difference, written thirty years later, shows not only a change of opinion and feeling from youth to middle-age,

but the terrible enforcement of that change through the immense and wasteful disaster of the World War. In the early summer of 1914 the poet still lived in a warless world; and the War, when it came, seemed a huge and monstrous anachronism, a super-tragic evidence of human slavery to inherited ideas. How modern civilization, enriched as it is by world-wide intimacies, complicated as it is by immensities of power and predatory pride, of discovery and dream—how men and nations are to throw off their inherited chains, and avert a new war which may utterly destroy the magnificent fabric they have created—this is the problem which overawed her in the conception of this poem. A century ago each man's world was small, each neighborhood supplied most of its own needs; and even statesmen could measure up to national crises. Today each man's world is enormously enlarged, each village makes demands to the ends of the earth, and governmental issues seem to outgrow the capacity of the individual human brain. The author is compelled to confess herself less hopeful today than thirty years ago of a world "Laden with joy for all her thronging souls."

In poetic art also these thirty years have made a difference—a difference of which we are all so aware that one need not analyze it. The *Columbian Ode*, however, if more expansive and eloquent in style than the stricter modern fashion would sanction, yet obeys, to a degree which caused comment at the time, the canons which its author believed in then, and for which she has been fighting throughout her editorship of *Poetry*. Especially it resists the temptation, sanctified by tradition, to make use of symbols derived from classic myth.

In preparing this poem for the press the author has made a few slight changes of words and phrases, but no essential alteration except the omission of a final lyric which, having never been an integral part of the poem, now seems ineffective. The present text of the ode is now the only authorized one.

Most of the recent poems in this book were first published in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (Chicago).

H. M.

THE DIFFERENCE

THE DIFFERENCE

1823

Azenath, child, I have errands for thee in town—
For now that the baby is ailing, I cannot leave.
When thou hast wiped the dishes, and made thy room,
And skimmed the cream for the churning, and set out
Clean linen for the supper-table tonight
To honor the new young parson and his bride,
Put on thy riding-skirt and saddle the mare,
Forgetting not the leather saddle-bags.
Thou'lt take this yarn that we have spun and dyed
From the young lambs' wool, unto Tom the weaver;
And tell him he shall follow my instruction,
And weave the finest cloth his loom can furnish
To make a coat and shorts thy father shall wear
To Congress in December. Think how proud
We both shall be to fit him grandly forth,
Sent on that seven-days' journey to make laws
For all our sovereign states, agreeing together
In brotherly peace against the quarrelling world!
Ah well, we are but women, knowing naught
Of great affairs, else would my weak heart tremble
At this bold doctrine of our President,
Stretching our flag to cover a continent
Of derelict Spanish rebels to the South—
So far away our fastest brig must sail
A long half-year to anchor in their ports!
We are but women, and would bide at home,

But men must shout their pride to the ends of the earth—
It is their kingly nature—and reach out
To gather in the world.

Go to the mill,
And tell Seth Hoyt to grind our wheat at once,
Now that the river has risen—we need the flour.
And finer and whiter he should sift it—tell him—
Than the last binful. Sith thou'rt a good girl,
Doing thy tasks, learning thy little lessons,
Thou'lt take this bunch of hides to Welsh, the tanner,
And choose his finest kid-skin for the gloves,
And a baby calf-skin for the little shoes
Thou'lt wear at Sylvia's wedding in the fall.
Bear these to Diggs the glover, and old Philip
Who makes my party shoes, and bid them measure
Thy hand and foot, and fit thee daintily.
Then to the grocer's for some tea from China—
Strange the good Lord should make us send so far
For this kind beverage—why should the leaves not grow
Here in my garden with the other herbs?
And some are boiling a new tropic bean,
Burnt in the oven and ground! It is a scandal
To take from the hand of the heathen these luxuries,
And give him in return the gold we sweat for,
To be upreared in temples to his gods!
I vow, my conscience gnaws me when I wear
My silken gown thy father bought for me
Four years ago come Christmas-time; although
The pattern was woven in France, a Christian nation—

If papists indeed be Christians in God's sight.
A state should be sufficient to itself,
The growth of its own soil; and luxury
Is the fat worm, to be destroyed in the bud
If we would see the fruit perfect and sound,
Fit to feed hardy men and mothering women.

Now to thy tasks—and child, always remember,
Doing them well, with neatness and dispatch,
Helps to build up a ruled and ordered state—
A true republic thou'lt be proud to bequeath
Unto thy children's children; where each man
Stands free before his God, and self-sufficient
Before his neighbor. Even a woman, a girl,
May do her part to make her country great
And build the future firmly on the past.

Go, get thee ready now; and for companion
One of thy little brothers shall ride with thee—
Matthew perhaps, or Jerry, for Peter and John
Are stacking hay today out in the field.

1923

Well, here we are, Mother—
Atoms, electrons
Afloat in this vast universe—
Going to town in a motor-car
Absurdly driven by exploding little drops of oil;
Going to town to send a cable to China—
“Congratulations, love”—
Because a baby, your grandchild,
Was born today in Peking!
A tiny baby,
Heiress of all the ages, of this age
Inexplicable!
Azenath, great-great-granddaughter of Azenath
The Puritan,
Great-granddaughter of Azenath the pioneer.
Queer!
Born in Peking,
To grow up in Russia perhaps,
And vote in Chicago,
And marry in Caracas!
Her father cutting railroads through Asia,
Stringing the Orient to the modern world
With little lines of steel.
She'll feel
Outdistanced, beaten by magnitudes.
Already the walls are down—
Fences, state lines,
Castle walls,

Harem walls.
We are out in the glare,
We face
Space;
Each little spark of life measuring by millions—
Millions of people, millions of stars.
Today
No neighbors in prim array
Of class, religion, fortune;
But crowds, but masses,
Surging from under,
Hurling from over,
Shouting across gulfs,
Across oceans,
Across centuries.
Informed from everywhere so,
What can we know?
Through noise how can we hear?
Queer!

What other errands in town?
We must get a tire.
The Congo must send us rubber—
Let us hope it costs no lives
As in good King Leopold's day!
Manila will offer hemp,
Alabama cotton,
Pittsburgh the bits of metal.
How many brains have planned it, I wonder—
Invented each valve and screw, each cord and tread,

Serving me, ignorant, these many years
Since Goodyear put the sulphur
Into his first black sticky brew?
He thought of me—he knew! . . .
And see—we must order
Oranges from Arizona,
Sugar from Cuba,
And avocado pears—the satin fruit—
From Panama;
Beef also from Texas, or maybe Argentina—
Tomorrow it will be reindeer from Alaska!
How many hands,
In how many lands,
Have grown and harvested and transported and made
The dinner we shall nibble at daintily
Under the shaded candles!
Black hands, yellow hands,
Hands brown and hard,
White hands, perhaps of children:
Hands that have never touched us,
Steel-cold fingers of the implacable, ceaseless
Engine of civilization;
Moving for whom they know not,
Making they scarcely know what detail of the whole,
Grasping their pay from the engine's clutch
At the end of the forty-four hours, the forty-eight, sixty—
The week's-end of their labor;
Or throwing down their tools,
Stopping the engine,
If it goes too fiercely

And yields them too little of its plunder—
Its heaped-up wealth of the world.
When I think of it all I fear—
Queer!

I fear
Not only because this devilish god-like power
Of massed and ordered men
Turns into fury
Whenever some autocrat—
Imperial, proletarian—
Shouts a proud "I!"
And waves a patterned rag;
Fury that reddens
The green earth, flowered with homes,
And the blue ship-bearing sea,
Till hundreds of people, thousands,
An hundred millions maybe,
Lie ashen and bloodless:
I fear not only War—
War may even cease!—
But Peace.

I fear for the human spirit left alone
In vastness—
Alone with too much knowledge
That obliterates God,
Alone with too much power
That separates souls;
Alone in crowds,

Crowds huge beyond reach of a leader,
Crowds moving back and forth,
Shouting this cry or that;
Crowds laboring, loving, hating—
They know not what nor why,
Spending their passion for confusion and sorrow,
Till it goes to bitter seed,
And sows
Greed.
I fear for him, for her—
The human atom
Caught in the immense, the incomprehensible drift.
His little gods were arrogant—
We struck them down,
And spread great Nature's ribald book of truth
Before his half-reading eyes,
His docile half-comprehending mind.
His little tools were weak,
Too easily used and loved—
We threw them away
And gave him the machine.
His little world
Too small was, too cosy and friendly and close—
We invaded it with trains and telephones,
Newspapers, immigrants,
With unions, movements,
With dreams and new ideas.
What have we given him,
Poor underling—
More under than ever, more impotent—

To pay
For all we took away?

Will such as he

Win free?

Will the crowd make us over?

Will some Man of the crowd,

Some seer and lover,

Lift this mess of a world—

This boiling cauldron—

From the ancient abominable fires,

And set it to cool in the winds of Time,

And mold it to beauty again,

And swing it high

To its path of joy

Sublime?

Little baby Azenath, will you see

A world set free?—

Free of the rich,

Free of the poor;

Free of the idle and the toil-enslaved;

Free of the ignorant and the over-knowing?

A world aware of its road,

Sure of its goal,

Moving grandly along

With a song?

It might be done,

Little one!

There is power enough, light enough, wealth enough—
If we work together,
And waste not,
Haste not.
Is there love enough,
Little one?

Well, here we are in town—
Let me down.
I'll start the cable on its copper path—
"Congratulations—love."
Poor innocent Azenath!

CAROLINA WOOD-CUTS

THE BLUE RIDGE

Still and calm,
In purple robes of kings,
The low-lying mountains sleep at the edge of the world.
The forests cover them like mantles;
Day and night
Rise and fall over them like the wash of waves.

Asleep, they reign.
Silent, they say all.
Hush me, O slumbering mountains—
Send me dreams.

WHITE

Purple mountains—oh, purple and blue—
Rippling under the sky;
And against them, nearer and brighter,
The many-colored trees,
With tasseled boughs uplifted,
And flowery young leaves.
And before me, trailing down the slope,
The dogwood, like a snow-nymph,
Leads the filmy-robed Spring.

THE FRINGE-BUSH

Delicate white fringe-bush blossom,
Drooping among pale leaves
In the deepest wood,
Why do you hide your secret?
You are the ghost of a lilac
Revisiting the world.

AZALEAS

Spread them wide,
Lovely ladies,
Spread your skirts wide.
Pink and white—
Oh, fair and chaste!—
Flutter down the mountain,
Rest in the wood.
Gold and red fire—
Oh, eager and warm!—
Gather in the hollows,
Shine in the shade.

Come in rings,
Come in crowds!
Storm the shy coverts
And the gloomy glades!
The sun will fish for you
Through the pine-tops;
The rain will jewel you
As you dance in the wind.

THE OAK

The old oak lets fall its crimson leaves—
Tiny fuzzy leaves,
Drooping, shivering,
Tender as a babe new-born.
The hard old oak,
Brother of the wind,
Friend of storms,
Shakes out young leaves like a thin pale veil
Of rose and mauve,
That shades the sun for him,
And fluttering, flickering,
Softens the breeze.

Is it a new, new world,
That rosy baby leaves—
So tender!—
Should droop from the brown old oak?
A new, new world?

THE LAUREL

The mountain laurel moves in rosy cloud-drifts
Over the wood's brown floor.
Cumulous masses,
Rounded,
Tipped with crimson,
Foam up from the dark green leaves.
More and more,
Like the sweep of bright spoil over the blue
When the storm has gone,
They move over and under
The sunshine and shadow,
Capturing the new-blown Summer
As she walks in the wood.

THE MOCKING-BIRD

I hear a thousand thousand tremors
Of clear water
Falling lacily in the sun.
I hear one, two—seven shivers
Of deep bells
Ringing under the sea.
I hear a chiming of soldiers in bright armor
Riding up a hill—
Oh, far away, far away!
I hear sweet words, silver words,
Musically clashing down
From the tune-locked lips of lovers
Up in Heaven.
I hear
 Is it you, brown bird?

MY PORCH

My porch stands high,
And between the floor and the roof the apple-tree
Shoots in its green branches.
The blossoms are gone,
But silver sunlight dapples the leaves,
And little apples are rounding in the shadows.
Below me in the garden
Young shoots make green lines in the tawny soil.
Little peach-trees border it,
With three dark pines behind them.
And beyond, blue and green through the new-washed air,
Curves upward the crest of a hill
Against the pale blue sky.

So sweet, so still—
Hardly a breeze is blowing
To rustle the shining leaves.
At peace is the round green world—
At peace.
Everywhere.

THE ROMNEY

They lived alone
Under the portraits of their ancestors—
Two elderly spinsters slowly graying away.
They cooked thin little meals,
And ate them on Lowestoft china
At the banquet-table no longer served by slaves.
Year by year
Their shadowy income dwindled.

One portrait was a Romney—
Two brave young lads in velvet.
A London dealer heard of it and came over,
And politely, insinuatingly, asked to see.
Reluctantly they showed the stranger in.

Twenty thousand dollars he offered,
Sure of the prize—
Were they not visibly starving, these ladies,
In the ashes of grandeur?

The sisters stirred a little
In pained surprise.
“You quite mistake us,” the elder said;
“We cannot sell our family portraits.”
And the dealer, in pained surprise,
Bowed himself out.

A few days later came a letter

Offering thirty thousand.
But the dealer waited in vain for an answer.

Then forty thousand.

A young nephew,
Blowing in from the U. of S. C.,
Was paying a duty call on his aunts.
“By the Lord, I’d take it!” he said.

The ladies shrank like gray moths frosted,
And the elder said:
“Great-aunt Millicent, whose name I bear,
Left the picture to Father.
They were stepsons of old Simeon Hugea,
Her grandfather—
His wife had been the widow of an Italian.”

“Yes, and so not of our line—
They don’t belong here.”

The younger sister turned her eyes inward:
“Old Simeon could make nothing of those boys.
He gave them the grand tour
And ordered this portrait,
And they never came back—
Took to fiddling and painting like their father.
Millicent, do you think—”

“I am in doubt,” said the elder sister;
“They were collateral.”

So a family council gathered in the ashen-coated
drawing-room,
And argued acrimoniously.
And it was decided that the half-Italian collaterals,
Who were not of the blood,
Might well be sold and forgotten.
And the deal was closed.

“It is a great deal of money,” said the elder sister,
“But I am not quite sure—”

And the younger,
“Who was this Romney?”

THE MOUNTAINEER'S WIFE

"Twelve miles?"

"Twelve miles—in the cool o' th' mornin'."

"But look—such a tiny baby!"

"He's five weeks a'ready"—she snuggled him
close in her arms—

"But I couldn' quite leave him with the othah children."

"Others?"—she looked so young,

Her milky brow and blue-gentian eyes.

"O' cou'se—six—an' Co'nelia an' Jim ah lots o' help;
Las' wintah, when they couldn' go to school—"

"Couldn't go to school?"

"Coz 'twas too fah an' they had no shoes—

See, they made these nice little baskets,

Jus' like my big ones."

"Oh yes, the baskets—you came all these miles
to sell them?"

"We jus' had to have money t' rent a plow,

Or else we won't have no co'n—

It's plantin' time."

"But your husband?"—he sat there lumpish.

Her voice grew soft as the pink-petalled wind

In the apple-blossoms:

"He nevah c'd sell no baskets—

Besides, I couldn' let him come alone."

THE ROSE-BUSH

“Old Mammy Jones, I came to see your rose-bush.”

“Come right up, sonny!”

“Why does your rose-bush grow so taller and prouder
Than any white people’s roses?”

“Dunno, sonny—ask de good Lo’d.”

“Look, it has a thousand arms,
And they carry a million roses
In their baskets of leaves—
Over your roof, Mammy Jones,
Into your porch, into your wood-shed,
Pushing and crowding out everything
From the ground to the sky—
As round as the world!”

“It’s to trim my ole cabin up, sonny.”

“My mother has a garden, Mammy Jones,

With nice little rose-bushes in it

That the gardener trimmed,

And this morning there were pink and yellow buds

And lots of green ones.

But not roses and roses like yours,

Way up for God to smell ’em

In the sky!

Why is it, Mammy Jones?”

“Dunno, sonny—praps de good Lo’d like Mammy Jones;
Praps he give a bouquet to his gell.”

THE QUESTION

They were sauntering down the red road
As I passed them—
The round-lipped black woman and her child.
And the child was saying:
“Why’s white folks better’n us, Mammy?
What’s white folks, anyhow?”

THE MEETING

The ox-team and the automobile
Stood face to face on the long red road.
The long red road was narrow
At the turn of the hill,
And below was the sun-dancing river
Afoam over the rocks.

The mild-mannered beasts stood pat, chewing their cud.
The stubble-bearded man from the mountains,
Rustier than his wagon,
Unmoving eyed the proud chauffeur.
The little ragged girl
With sun-bleached hair,
Sitting on a hard, yellow-powdery bag,
Looked across at the smart motor hats of the ladies,
And their chiffon scarfs
That the light breeze fingered.

The proud chauffeur blew his horn,
But nothing moved—
Except the foaming, sun-dancing river down below.

Then he jerked his head,
And turned his wheel.
And slowly, carefully,
The automobile moved back over the long red road.

And the mild-mannered beasts lifted their feet,
And the stubble-bearded man flipped his rein, ·
And the ragged little girl looked ahead up the hill.
And the ox-team lumbered and limped over
 the long red road.

APRIL—NORTH CAROLINA

Would you not be in Tryon
Now that the spring is here,
When mocking-birds are praising
The fresh, the blossomy year?

Look—on the leafy carpet
Woven of winter's browns
Iris and pink azaleas
Flutter their gaudy gowns.

The dogwood spreads white meshes—
So white and light and high—
To catch the drifting sunlight
Out of the cobalt sky.

The pointed beech and maple,
The pines, dark-tufted, tall,
Pattern with many colors
The mountain's purple wall.

Hark—what a rushing torrent
Of crystal song falls sheer!
Would you not be in Tryon
Now that the spring is here?

NOTES OF TRAVEL

ON THE TRAIN

I

The lady in front of me in the car,
With little red coils close over her ears,
Is talking with her friend;
And the circle of ostrich foam around her hat,
Curving over like a wave,
Trembles with her little windy words.
What is she saying, I wonder,
That her feathers should tremble
And the soft fur of her coat should slip
 down over her shoulders?
Has her string of pearls been stolen,
Or maybe her husband?

II

He is drunk, that man—
Drunk as a lord, a lord of the bibulous past.
He shouts wittily from his end of the car
 to the man in the corner;
He bows to me with chivalrous apologies.
He philosophizes, plays with the wisdom of the ages,
Flings off his rags,
Displays his naked soul—
Athletic, beautiful, grotesque.

In the good time coming,
When men drink no more,
Shall we never see a nude soul dancing
Stript and free
In the temple of his god?

III

She comes smiling into the car
With iridescent bubbles of children.
She blooms in the close plush seats
Like a narcissus in a bowl of stones.
She croons to a baby in her lap—
The trees come swinging by to listen,
And the electric lights in the ceiling are stars.

HIGH PLACES

My mountains, God has company in heaven—
Crowned saints who sing to him the sun-long day.
He has no need of speech with you—with you,
Dust of his foot-stool! No, but I have need.
Oh, speak to me, for you are mine as well—
Drift of my soul. I built you long ago;
I reared your granite masonry to make
My house of peace, and spread your flowered carpets,
And set your blue-tiled roof, and in your courts
Made musical fountains play. Ah, give me now
Shelter and sustenance and liberty,
That I may mount your sky-assailing towers
And hear the winds communing, and give heed
To the large march of stars, and enter in
The spirit-crowded courts of solitude.

AT O'NEILL'S POINT
Grand Canyon of Arizona

Cardeñas, I salute you!
You, marauding buccaneering Spaniard!
You, ragged and sworded lordling, slashing through to the
 Seven Cities of Cibola;
You, athirst in the desert, seeking to drink
 from the great river—
The mother of western seas, dear to your Hopi guides!
You, Cardeñas the Spaniard, three centuries before the
 next first white man,
You with your handful of starvelings stood on this
 Rim of the Canyon,
And looked down at flecks of water in the deeps,
Like yellow petals fallen.
You scrambled a few hundred feet down
 the sheer rock wall,
And knew you would never drink of that tawny torrent.
You gave it up, and thirsted, and cursed your guides.

And your leader, Coronado the adventurer,
Thought you mad when you told your story—
Mad of thirst in the desert,
Dreaming of loud deep rivers
In demon-haunted caverns.

But I believe you.
Here where I stand you stood—
On the rim of the world.

You saw these sky-swept towers,
These terraced purple temples august and terrible.
And over them—over—
You gazed at the Celestial City,
And counted the steps of gods on its ramparts,
And saw the Great White Throne, all pearl and moonstone,
Beyond, through the turquoise gates.

UTAH

It was a queer country your harsh Lord gave you,
Great Brigham, whom I see coated and curled
In bronze before me in the public square!
It was a scraped and shining skeleton,
Gnawed to the bone long since at God's first breakfast
And thrown away to bleach out in the sun.
Yet here He led you—
The Lord and His vicegerent Joseph Smith.
He ordered you
To take the dead earth from His niggard hand
And set His Throne up by the salty sea—
The little bucketful of ocean, poured
Over the desert's feet between the hills.

And so you starved and prayed,
Thirsted and starved and prayed through the lean years,
Keeping the faith, digging your little ditches,
Making the desert blossom as the rose.
You married many wives,
And got you many children to fulfil
The special order whispered in the night
To His apostle by the Lord Himself—
The God of Abraham, of Saul and David,
Of Solomon and other lustful kings.

And here, tithe upon tithe, stone upon stone,
Your saints built up His throne unto the Lord
From plans the angel taught your hand to draw:

His new Solomon's Temple, heaven-remembered,
To rise again here at the western gate,
And prove His glory in these latter days!

Great Brigham, sleeping now under the desert
With all your wives,
What summary vengeance have you meted out
To that ironic angel?

He alone builds

*Who builds for beauty, shrining his little truth
In stones that make it fair.*

THE CATARACTS

The Yosemite leaps from the peaks
And plunges down deep into the Valley,
Tossing the Spring from his arms
To her couch of flowers.

Tall as El Capitan the mighty,
From earth to heaven he glistens like a god,
And mountain-loads of snow-waters
foam into clouds for his feet.

In thunderous peal on peal
He shouts to all the choral fountains—
To silver-fingered Nevada the dancer,
To Vernal, her dark-browed lover,
massive, square-shouldered,
To Illillouette the fairy, tripping in satin slippers
down over the rocks.

In huge musical volleys he shouts to them,
And they answer in diapasons
rolling from mountain to mountain,
And in songs feather-soft, that float away
airily on the wind.

Rushing, yet forever still,
Tiptoeing the tall sequoias,
The cataracts crown the Summer with rainbows,
As they lift crystal cups to her beauty
And chant her praise to the sun.

IN THE YELLOWSTONE

Little pin-prick geysers, spitting and sputtering;

Little foaming geysers, that spatter and cough;

Bubbling geysers, that gurgle out of the calyx of
morning-glory pools;

Laughing geysers, that dance in the sun, and spread their
robes like lace over the rocks;

Raging geysers, that rush out of hell with a great noise,
and blurt out vast dragon-gulps of steam, and,
finishing, sink back wearily into darkness;

Glad geysers, nymphs of the sun, that rise, slim and nude,
out of the hot dark earth, and stand poised in
beauty a moment, veiling their brows and breasts
in mist;

Winged geysers, spirits of fire, that lift tall and straight
like a sequoia, and plume the sky with foam:

O wild choral fountains, forever singing and seething,
forever boiling in deep places and leaping forth for
bright moments into the air,

How do you like it up here? why must you go back to
the spirits of darkness? what do you tell them
down there about your little glorious life in the sun?

THE WATER OUZEL

Little brown surf-bather of the mountains!
Spirit of foam, lover of cataracts, shaking your wings
 in falling waters!
Have you no fear of the roar and rush
 when Nevada plunges—
Nevada, the shapely dancer, feeling her way with
 slim white fingers?
How dare you dash at Yosemite the mighty—
Tall, white-limbed Yosemite, leaping down, down,
 over the cliff?
Is it not enough to lean on the blue air of mountains?
Is it not enough to rest with your mate at timber-line,
 in bushes that hug the rocks?
Must you fly through mad waters
 where the heaped-up granite breaks them?
Must you batter your wings in the torrent?
Must you plunge for life or death through the foam?

THE PINE AT TIMBER-LINE

What has bent you,
Warped and twisted you,
Torn and crippled you?
What has embittered you,
O lonely tree?

You search the rocks for a footing,
 dragging scrawny roots;
You bare your thin breast to the storms,
 and fling out wild arms behind you;
You throw back your witch-like head,
 with wisps of hair stringing the wind.

You fight with the snows,
You rail and shriek at the tempests.
Old before your time, you challenge the cold stars.

Be still, be satisfied!
Stand straight like your brothers in the valley,
The soft green valley of summer down below.

Why front the endless winter of the peak?
Why seize the lightning in your riven hands?
Why cut the driven wind and shriek aloud?

Why tarry here?

A LADY OF THE SNOWS

The mountain hemlock droops her lacy branches

Oh, so tenderly

In the summer sun!

Yet she has power to baffle avalanches—

She, rising slenderly

Where the rivers run.

So pliant yet so powerful! Oh, see her

Spread alluringly

Her thin sea-green dress!

Now from white winter's thrall the sun would free her

To bloom unenduringly

In his glad caress.

MOUNTAIN SONG

I have not where to lay my head;
Upon my breast no child shall lie;
For me no marriage feast is spread:
I walk alone under the sky.

My staff and scrip I cast away—
Light-burdened to the mountain height!
Climbing the rocky steep by day,
Kindling my fire against the night.

The bitter hail shall flower the peak,
The icy wind shall dry my tears.
Strong shall I be, who am but weak,
When bright Orion spears my fears.

Under the horned moon I shall rise,
Up-swinging on the scarf of dawn.
The sun, searching with level eyes,
Shall take my hand and lead me on.

Wide flaming pinions veil the West—
Ah, shall I find? and shall I know?
My feet are bound upon the Quest—
Over the Great Divide I go.

IMPROVISATIONS

NOON UNDER MY TREE

Even the wind hushes,
Even the birds are still.
The dreaming dog lies curled.
Distance muffles a cricket's trill.
Day sleeps on the cloud-pillowed mountains.
Poised at the centre of motion is the spinning world.

Almost I hold it—
The silence in the centre of things.
Almost I softly fold it,
Wrapping dark noises round in loops and rings.
Almost I hear
Something incredibly still—
Oh, blissfully near!—
That sings.

THE GARDEN

Hiding under the hill,
Heavy with trailing robes and tangled veils of green,
Till only its little haggard face was visible,
The garden lay shy and wistful,
Lovelorn for summer departing,
Blowing its little trickling fountain tune into the air.
And over all, hushing, soothing,
Lay the clematis
Like early snow.

THE MOMENT

Waters, waters,
Wash over me.
Ripples blue, green, gold,
Finger my eyelids.
And down below is blackness.

Come, little boats,
Will you save me?
Little boats with banners flying—
Yellow and purple and rich red?
Love-boat, work-boat, flying boat of faith,
May I catch your shining rail, O one of you,
And lift me up to your foam-washed deck,
And scud away in the light
To the shore?

Waters, waters,
Wash over me
With a loud noise.
O little boats, come swiftly!
Darkness is under me—
Silence.

PROUD MAN

Is it now or long ago—
By this summer water,
With a little boat
Like a shell afloat
Light and slow—
That I was a caveman's daughter?

Proud man, to show he is free,
Utters commands to the sea;
His imperious ships,
Foaming through iron lips,
Ride her and hold her under;
His divers steely and slim
Slip down—impudent, sly—
For a swim;
His wings of wonder
Tear her clouds asunder
And laugh at her out of the sky;
And ashore, when she booms and lowers,
He fronts her with towers.
To show he is strong and free
Man utters commands to the sea.

Yet still—
Is it now or long ago?—
The fisherman puts out in a little boat,
Like a shell afloat
At the waves' will

Light and slow;
And draws his nets from under
The rippling water,
And counts his plunder.

The first fisher sifting the new sea?
And am I a caveman's daughter?

ON A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MOON

From the great Mount Wilson Telescope

A dead world—yes, that's evident.
No verdure now;
No living, breathing thing
In those gaunt craters—
Not for millions of years!

But never, you say?—
Never a green blade,
Never the first quick cell?
The big earth stole its atmosphere?
Nothing could live?
That gives me a creepy feeling—
It sends me reeling.

Listen—
Then is it there, the moon?
Was it ever there?
Can anything be
Till life creates it?

I see
That silver shadow swinging through the night,
I feel its ghostly beauty—
Therefore it is.
And the other suns have living worlds, perhaps,
Created in beating hearts.
But when life is gone,

When these little lives are gone, and I—
And I!—
Then surely all will be over,
The whole grand show:
The stars will be out in the sky;
The curtain, the thick gray curtain,
Will fall
Over all.

A dead world, rolling, swinging
Around the earth, around the sun—
Always dead, never begun!

THE ORCHESTRA LEADER

To Frederick A. Stock

Dear Mr. Stock, grandly you stand before us,
Playing on violins in airy chorus,
On harps and trombones and the big bassoon,
Flutes and bass-drums and cellos all in tune.
Perhaps you think these are your instruments
For making music out of wind and dreams.
Ah no, a thing is seldom what it seems!—
These are materials and elements.
We are the orchestra whereon you play—
Our hearts at your command quiver like strings.
We make your music—on your spirit's wings
We rise and strike supernal chords; with you
We join the choir invisible, and say
Melodious words too wonderful for speech.
Ah, master, play us well—keep our hearts true
To key and pitch and vision! Let us reach
High courts together, where the tunes that fly
Circle the stars and echo in the sky.

IN MEMORY

William F. Calhoun

Oct. 5th, 1848—Sept. 19th, 1916

Why is it, when they wreathe about your name
Garlands of praise—cry soldier, diplomat,
Lover of justice, statesman; and enrich
The pillage of their hearts with bitter tears
For your great heart that beats no more—
Why do I see only that tilt of the lip
And gleam of the eyes, the sudden whimsical smile
That used to break the grand lines of your face?—
And hear only some little tender word,
Some love-joke tripping up our futile pride
With doubt of human grandeur?

Sweet—oh, brave!

Oh, brave and sweet through the strange sun-shot maze
You passed unwavering—holding out your hands
To give and bless, freeing your eager mind
In warm bold words, opening wide your eyes
To see the light, follow the leafy path
Out to great spaces.

Go—go forth!—they win you.

I see you there against the sunset glow
Waving your hand, smiling your quizzical smile.
“What next?” I hear you say. Then the sun flaunts
Its crimson to the zenith, and goes down
To make another day. And you are gone.

AT THE PRADO

THEIR GOD

I wonder sometimes at their idea of God—these great artists who painted for The Catholic Kings.

He is an old man—their God; a senile white-fringed man, decaying visibly.

Rafael, showing Elizabeth visiting Mary,
both large with child,

Has a little flying God Almighty in the sky,
carrying the two unborn babies in his arms—

A little busy-body white-haired God, powerful as a moth,
he paints him.

Tintoretto's puny God looks worried, though poised in
paradise at the top of things, above Jesus and Mary
and the adoring circles of saints—

How could they adore that God!

And Velasquez, who balked at gods, who made of Mars
a disreputable hard-boiled brainless bruiser, a
bruiser with big moustachios,

Even Velasquez had nothing to say about God—he
painted him bald-headed, decrepit, wearily abdicating
as he passed on the crown to Mary.

How would you paint God?

God, eternally young, young as the sun,
young as Orion's nebula.

God the Creator, stringing worlds like pearls in the sky.

God, molding our little earth after supper of the day he
had spread the Milky Way like a carpet for his feet;

Fingering forth men in millions with his right hand,
and beasts, birds, fishes with his left.

God, smiling at life as at a field of nodding flowers,
Finding its good and evil good.

God fecund, magnificent, glorious.

God of the love intolerable, love dark and bright,
that searches, challenges, rewards.

God, moving forever at the centre,
with space like a thin robe around him.

God, facing his universe ever beginning and ending,
and calling it a day.

God of the blazing eyes that see.

God of the secret ears that hear.

“God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.”

How would you paint God?

EL GRECO

They call you the Greek, Dominico, but Spain caught you.
They call you the Greek, but what Greek ever cast purple
shadows or lit purple fires!

They call you the Greek, but you suffered
in your search for God.

Your half-divine Christ bearing his cross
was but a way-station on the road—

God was always just beyond, out of reach.

God was a dark shade—the inquisition might have been
his instrument.

God was a star-blue flame—his saints died for him
with joy.

And even the little men you painted, Dominico,

The little Count of This and Prince of That,

Even they had felt the fire—

It burned purple behind their eyes.

Dark and bright—O bright and dark, O cruel and tender,
Have you met William Blake in some lonely walk
of Paradise?

And have you found God?

VELASQUEZ

You would have loved them at the Mermaid,
Velasquez.

You and Shakespeare would have drunk
a pot of ale together,

And talked of cabbages and kings, of callots
and little princesses with flaxen hair.

And you would have painted him—
we should have known how he looked—

And he would have put you in a play.

So true and sure—grand-hearted!—

For whom dwarfs and beggars and jesters
were good enough, and King Philip on his throne
was not a whit too good;

You who couldn't help telling the truth
when your brush felt the color on it,

The truth of your loves and doubts—

(And oh, how tenderly the truth about a child—
about solemn little Balthazar Carlos
on his rearing steed;
about little Princess Margaret standing stiff
in her scarlet-and-silver crinoline,
but soft and sweet as a wild-rose heart within)—

You, Velasquez, man, lover, artist,
seer and revealer of life;

You who loved your neighbor,
and tried, perhaps in vain, to love your God;

You who knew your neighbor
and despaired of knowing God:

Yes, Shakespeare, like the rest, would have been
none too good for you;
And Christ, looking at your pictures of him,
would have said, "Never mind, friend."

TITIAN ON CHARLES V, PHILIP II,
AND THE EMPRESS ISOBEL

O wandering Venetian, you knew a great man
when you saw him.

Charles the Fifth, reigning and abdicating,
who could swing the world and put it aside—

No need of history to prove his power!

Here he is in his gold-encrusted armor,
on the beautiful crimson-aproned horse—

A man.

And there, not far away, his son:

The narrow-between-the-eyes, the would-be-great;

Hard, tyrannic, resolute, patient and prying,

Who said long prayers, morning, noon and night,

To his hard, tyrannic, resolute, patient and prying God—

You knew him too, O wandering painter from Venice.

He shall never escape you.

But she, so beautiful in velvet and pearls—

Wife of the one, mother of the other—

Did she feel, did she know?

You looked into her eyes, but they do not tell us.

There between those two she stood—cool, firm, perfect.

A crystal, holding her world ensphered.

No need of scribbling pens, O wandering Venetian!

MURILLO

Sweet, and milky soft, and pious, Sevillian,
You painted out your truth, your faith.
You saw her enskied and sainted—
Your little Spanish Virgin Mary Immaculate—
Saw her floating in clouds,
 blue-robed and cherub-guarded,
Her melting eyes turned heavenward
 and her foot on the crescent moon.
Religion was easy—who could help believing?
It was easy to paint saints and angels
And pretty little Infant Christs—
Easy.

FRA ANGELICO'S ANNUNCIATION

Little virgin girl, to you the angel is bowing—
Great Gabriel, with gold-enameled wings.
Little girl in blue, dewy like a gentian at sunrise,
To you comes the angel straight from God.
So sweet, so fresh and fair—no wonder!
As clear as a spring under green leaves,
As innocent as a fluffy baby dove two or three days
 from the egg,
As still as deep-sea water—
To you the angel.

Blessed art thou amongst women, little virgin girl.

RUBENS

Here you are, grand old sensualist!
And here are the three goddesses
 displaying their charms to Paris.
It was all one to you—goddesses, saints, court ladies—
Your world was all curves of flesh,
 rolling curves repeated like a shell.
Mary Magdalen was almost as good copy as Venus,
Angels might be as voluptuous as nymphs.

It was a rich old gorgeous world you painted—
For kings or prelates, what mattered!—palace or church!
You had a wonderful glorious time!—
And no doubt the ladies loved you.

GOYA

They let you paint them—this little King Carlos,
 and this fussy little self-satisfied
 Maria Luisa, his queen.
Smiling and proud of themselves,
 with all their thirteen children around them,
They let you paint them,
Bolshevist!

You painted also freemen being shot down,
 and common people dancing,
And wide-flooned ladies of the court,
 and girls with nothing on.
And you painted your father-in-law, Bayen,
 with bitter mouth and eyes
 because you could paint better than he.

And your helter-skelter world of murdered freemen
 and fussy little kings
Puzzled you, knotted your brows.
You painted it, not knowing what else to do.

DÜRER'S PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF

Were you so beautiful as that, Albrecht Dürer—
Curled and nobly dressed as for a bride,
chaste and cool?

Serious, young, your bowed mouth never smiling,
why indeed should you deny your beauty?

Your lips droop for sorrow, not joy,
and your eyes are haunted.

Your eyes!

They are deep and full, like Truth's well,
and none shall ever sound them—

Not you yourself, Albrecht Dürer, shall ever
darken down to those deeps—

You, the inscrutable.

THE WAR

ON THE PORCH

As I lie roofed in, screened in,
From the pattering rain,
The summer rain—
As I lie
Snug and dry,
And hear the birds complain:

Oh, billow on billow,
Oh, roar on roar,
Over me wash
The seas of war.
Over me—down—down—
Lunges and plunges
The huge gun with its one blind eye,
The armored train,
And, swooping out of the sky,
The aeroplane.
Down—down—
The army proudly swinging
Under gay flags,
The glorious dead heaped up like rags,
A church with bronze bells ringing,
A city all towers,
Gardens of lovers and flowers,
The round world swinging
In the light of the sun:
All broken, undone,

All down—under
Black surges of thunder . . .

Oh, billow on billow,
Oh, roar on roar,
Over me wash
The seas of war . . .
As I lie roofed in, screened in,
From the pattering rain,
The summer rain—
As I lie
Snug and dry,
And hear the birds complain.

June, 1915

A LETTER OF FAREWELL

Mother, little Mother,
They will tell you,
After they have shot me at sunrise,
I died a coward.
It is not true, little Mother—
You will believe me.

You know how we marched away—
Banners—bright bayonets—the Marseillaise.
I shut up the old *chansons*—
Ah, my *diplome!*—
France needed her sons for war.
We waited, aching for the hour.
At last it came—
I had my turn in the trenches.

I won't tell you all—
What it meant to learn the new trade.
A scholar, was I?—and young?
Youth died in me;
And all the old epics, the beautiful songs long silent—
Ah, that was another life.
At first it sickened me—
The torn flesh bleeding, the horrible bodies long dead,
The ruined towns sprawling like toothless hags,
The mud, the lice, the stench,
The stupefying noise—
A crashing of damned worlds;

And then the command to kill.
At first the loathing was a vomit in my heart.

Then something rose in me from the abyss.
Life, the great cannibal,
Killing and feeding on death—
I was his workman from ten million years.
I ran to the slaughter singing;
I killed with a shout.
The red rage sucked me up
In its whirlwind,
Dashed me on dancing feet
Against the enemy,
The enemy everlasting.
And my life, tossed on bayonets,
Blown against guns—
Staked, like a last piece of gold, on the hundredth chance—
Always my life came back to me unscathed.

Was it man to man—
The haughty beauty of war?
I grew numb at last,
I felt no more.
I slipped off man's pride like a garment,
A rotten rag—
It was brute to brute in a wallow of blood and filth.

And so, in that last charge on Thiaumont—
Little shattered city,
Lost and won, won and lost

Day after day
In the interminable battle—
In that hot rush I killed three Boches,
Stuck them like squeaking pigs.
The soft flesh sputtering,
The nick of the steel at bones—
I felt them no more than the crunch of an insect
 under my foot
In the old days.
Then I fell, worn out,
Under a wall.
Hungry, thirsty, listless—
My gun dropped from my hand.
I could not rise;
Perhaps my eyes closed. . . .

When life came back a big Boche was standing over me—
He had my gun, but his face was kind.
“I thought you were dead,” he said, and stood looking at me.
Then he unscrewed his canteen—
“Drink,” he said, “poor little one—
I won’t kill you.”

I sprang up, as tall as he, and took his hand,
Babbling, “It’s foolish business—why should we?
I’m through with it.”
And a great strength rose in me,
And a white light filled me;
Waves of unbearable love washed over me,
And I knew I could fight no more.

The charge had rolled on—
I slipped away,
Crying, "It is over—over forever—men shall kill no more."
I shouted the news, I summoned the soldiers.
The tongues of fire swept down upon me—
"Let the guns rot," I said, "and the cannon rust—
Look in your brother's eyes
And clasp his hand."

So they took me and tried me,
And I must die;
But for telling the truth—
Not for what they say.
It will surely be, little Mother.
The sin that was little at first,
In the savage forest when men fought with clubs,
The sin we have gorged and glutted
With gases and bombs,
And machine-guns,
And battle-ships of sea and air—
It has grown heavy and monstrous,
It will be cast off like the plague.

There will be a new nation—
No one shall stop us from loving each other.
So goodbye, little Mother.
I don't mind dying for it—that nation.
I see it.

October, 1916

AMERICA AT WAR

She is young and beautiful—

My country;

She is the mother of many children,

She is free.

Years ago—

A slim girl running on sea sand—

She heard Niagara shouting the message of mountains

And the great lakes singing softly

Of prairies that swing in the wind.

How could she stay, keeping soft and white

her rich and powerful hands?

She rose, and walked like the sun into the West:

Sowing, reaping,

Felling the forests,

Digging out coal and iron and gold from the hills.

Onward, outward—

Past rivers like a sea,

And mountains that snowily, secretly, kiss the moon—

Out to shining Arizona athirst in the sun,

And Oregon shaggy with firs by her northern ocean,

Whom the silver Sierras link together forever.

And she gathered the children of many races

Into her arms,

And said, "Hate dies here—be brothers."

She broke the chains of the slave,

She lifted the humble to the high place,

And the proud she rebuked with a laugh.

At ease in her strength, she lay dreaming
When the heat of the day was done.
But suddenly—far away—
Out of the thick black night,
Out of the past,
Came the terrible booming of guns,
The tramp of armies marching
Over fallen towers,
Over cottages collapsing into dust.
And through the iron clamor she heard agony calling—
The bitter cries of children starved and driven,
Of young girls ravished,
Of boys ripped open on the trench-strung field;
And the dull groans of the old
Prodded from the flaming door.

Once more the incredible thing—
The tyrant gorged and ruthless
Spitting red war in the face of the world!
Once more Freedom at bay,
Threatened, defiant,
Calling her chosen,
Lifting her rainbow-colored flags to the sun!

My country,
Beautiful and strong,
Startled, slowly arising,
Hearing at last the insult,
Feeling the atrocious crimson mist in her eyes,
My country stood up tall to the height of the world—

Straight and tall,
From the blue Caribbean at her feet
To her coronal of islands strung from the arctic sea.
And she summoned her states,
And breathed in their ears the iron vow of war—
War to the end, to the death,
War to the life,
War of the free, for the free,
Till the world is freed.

She gathered her armies,
Her millions of sons,
And loosed them forth like flakes of snow to the storm,
Bidding them cover and smother and put out forever
The abysmal abominable fires.
In massive drifts she hurled them
Over land and sea and through blue trails of air—
Crystal souls of youth,
That seized the sun in a flash,
And flung it to whatever eye would see,
Spending, giving their light lest it be put out in the wind.
She bade them move innumerably,
Mass on mass,
To smother and quench forever the infernal fires,
And nourish the new spring—
The flower-fringed hope of the world.

O my country,
Seeker of freedom,
How shall she pause in the ways of peace or war

On her long march toward the far-off invisible goal—
The city of white towers,
The city of love,
Where the nations of the earth shall meet in joy together
And the souls of men shall be free!

August, 1918

THESE TWO

Maurice Pretyman: 1891-1915

Franklin Remington Pretyman: 1893-1917

They died, these two—
The little boys I knew—
One at Gallipoli and one in France.

Long ago—
Oh, twenty years or so—
They used to romp and dance
Over the grass, under the trees.
One toddling brother
Had golden curls
Fine as a girl's,
And funny little round fat cheeks the other.
They liked me, used to climb
Into my lap, and tease
For stories before bed-time, tugging close
With little arms and knees.

It seems too short a time
For these two to grow tall
Of body and soul,
Grow into men, and hear the iron call,
And give their youth's bright hoard.

Brief was their story
As sunlight on a sword.

VERNON CASTLE

Killed in the Aviation Service Feb. 15th, 1918

Dead dancer, how is this?—the laurel here
 Upon your bier?
The brazen wings, the sword—and the shrill tone
 Of bugles blown?

Why do you wear, light-footed one—O proud!—
 The flag for shroud?
Where have you danced? from what high-sphering dome
 Have you come home?

Bravo!—you trod the measure gallantly,
 Swiftly flew free!
Goodbye—perhaps your flight has just begun
 Under the sun.

LIFTED VEILS

TEN YEARS OLD

An autobiographical episode

I hear them whispering—what is it?

“Lizzie Wescott—hush!”

Where is she? Yesterday she was here—

So nice, so pretty, with curly hair—

Here at her desk, like me.

It's something awful—where is she?

“Hush—Lizzie Wescott is dead.”

Dead.

What is it to be dead?

It is to be white—and still—

And to lie in a coffin

And to be buried in the ground.

Lizzie Wescott will be buried in the ground.

To be sure she was old, six years older than me—

Sixteen.

But that wasn't so very old.

Her curly hair will be buried in the ground.

Can we see her lying white and still

Before they put her in the ground?

Can we go to see her in her coffin?

No, they won't let us.

.

It was hard to go to bed,
And think of her in the dark.
And it's hard to come to school and hear them whispering.
It's something more—oh, tell me!
Tell me!

“She did it, hush—she took a poison, she killed herself—
She committed suicide.”

Oh hush—don't say it—why must I listen?
What do they call it?—
“Suicide.”

Then she wanted to lie white and still, curly hair and all,
And be buried forever in the ground.
Why?
But we mustn't ask why—nobody will tell.
We can crowd around her house—where she is lying
white and still,
But nobody comes out—nobody will ever tell us.
Why?

Then a person can shut them all out—
all the other children,
And school, and our green back-yard, and the lake,
and the sky;
And lie down in her bed, and do it all alone,
And never open her mouth to say no
when they put her in the ground!

“Commit suicide,” they call it.

But what does God think of it? and Jesus?
She used to come to Sunday-school—
Perhaps the minister will tell us.

“Think where she is now!” he says, and he’s almost crying.
And I have to cry—we all have to cry out loud.
“Think where she is now!”—he says it again and again.

Where is she now then? Didn’t they put her
in the ground—
White and still, with curly hair?
But, oh yes, she had something else—
She had a soul!
What is that—a soul?

It’s something inside of you that you can’t see—
Something that tells you about God,
And flies out when you die,
Like smoke from a fire.

And her little soul sinned a great sin.
God Himself, high on His Throne in Heaven,
Forgiving my sins every night when I pray to Him—
God Himself could never forgive so great a sin.
So her little soul is burning now in hell,
And will never burn up forever.

How could she do it!—she liked to dance in the sun!

How could she lie down stiff, and sin so great a sin,
And send her little soul to burn in hell forever!

Suicide—even God could not forgive her!
“Think where she is now!”

It’s awful—too awful to think of.
Why do I have to think of it?
It’s too awful for God to think of, sitting there happy
 on His Great White Throne,
With angels around Him.
How could He send her little soul to burn in hell forever!
He couldn’t.

.

She loved to dance in the sun, and she put them all out—
The grass and the sky.
She had curly hair, and pretty dresses, and she smoothed
 them all out
To lie down stiff and still
Under the ground.
She made the day night, and the night darker—
When I shut my eyes in the closet, it’s not so dark.
She said hush to all the voices, and the dog’s barking,
And the proud trotting of horses when they race
 up and down,
And the shouting of all the girls and boys.

She was grown up—
She might have lived to be very old,

With white hair like Grandma.
I used to see her every day, and now I'll never
see her again.
How could she do it?

.

It's easy then—
Between day-time and day-time she did it,
In one little night,
And she never told anybody—of course she couldn't.
In the morning they found her—they thought
she was sleeping in her bed,
But she was lying white and still.

It's easy—anybody might do it—
Yes, even me!
I'm not too little to shut out Wezie and Rover,
And Mama and Papa and the big willow-tree,
And lie down still and white
And be buried in the ground.
I'm afraid I'll have to.

Why do I think of it all the time,
God?
Please take the thought away from me—
I don't want to!
It's too dark for a little girl down there,
And too cold.
Take it away!

He doesn't take it away.
If I step on that crack in the sidewalk I'll have to do it—
Oh awful, if I should step on that crack!
Help me over it, God—surely You don't want me to do it!
Thank You!
Oh, help me!

I couldn't tell Wezie—no, never!—
She would laugh.
Nor Mama, nor anybody.
There's only God to help me, and He's very far away,
And very old.
I couldn't tell anybody.

.

Why am I running so fast—
Running away!
Oh, why did I see it—
That big blue bottle with *Poison* on it, and a skull—
and two bones!
Now I'll have to do it—
It's right there—so near!
How can I help it now?

If I step on that red rose in the carpet I'll have to take it—
One swallow would be enough.
If I step on that rose I'll have to open the closet door,
And take out the bottle and drink some.
Oh, help me not to!—

I don't want to fall white and still,
And be buried in the ground.

Why did they put it there so near—
For me?

I'm afraid to pass that closet—

I'm afraid, afraid!

I'm afraid all the time of the skull on it—

When I wake up in the night it laughs at me.

God, surely You don't want a little girl to sin so great a sin,

And shut You out in the sky,

And be put out of Your sight in the ground.

.

Every day and every night just the same.

That rose in the carpet is always there—

I don't want to step on it.

If I have to do it, what will You say to my

 little flying soul—

When I am lying white and still

Down in the ground?

What did You say to her soul?—she didn't want to either.

What did You say?

SUPERNAL DIALOGUE

*Two beings
Stood on the edge of things—
Their breath was space,
And their eyes were suns.*

I It was this way he passed—
I know the sound.

II More worlds—
He can not forbear—

I Look down this lane—
It was dark till he passed.
Do you see—anything?

II Seeds of light—glowing, whirling—
A handful.

I Separating now.

II Fierce fire-balls—
So many—so many. Will he get what he wants—
The perfect flower?

I Flower of delight—to bloom beside his throne?
Sometime he will.

[*A pause*]

- I* Look—that little one—
Burning, aching—
Trailing its tiny orbs—
- II* Which one?
- I* See—scarlet—oh, alive!
Deep in that right-hand cluster near the dark.
- II* With tiny trailers—will it be one of them?
That clouded one, maybe?
- I* Look—it foams down.
The clouds lift—
There are seas—
- II* Lands—a creeping green—
Sounds of air moving.
- I* Hush—oh, whisper!—do you see
Dark specks that crawl?
And wings that flash in the air?
- II* Spawn—immeasurably minute.
What does he mean, the fecund one, creating without
reason or mercy?
- I* He must—life is his song.
He dreams—he wills.

- II* Watch now—they change, those atoms.
They stand on end—they lay stone on stone—
They go clad—they utter words.
- I* Proud—they take their spoil.
Kings—and slaves.
- II* Oh queer—ingenious! They gather in towns,
They filch our fires to carry them over land and sea.
- I* They measure the stars—they love—they dream.
- II* But war—pain—obliterative war and pain.
- I* So brief—each one a tiny puff—and out.
- II* Grotesque!
- I* A few look up—salute us before they fall.
A few dare face him.
- II* Is it enough?

[*A pause*]

- I* It cools down—their whirling world.
It is silent—cold.
- II* Has he lost again? Can he fail?

I Who are we to question? Though he fail
again and again—

II Yes, who are we?

I He must go on—he must get the flower.

*Two beings
Stood on the edge of things—
Their breath was space,
And their eyes were suns.*



THE COLUMBIAN ODE



The Columbian Ode was written at the request of the Joint Committee on Ceremonies of the World's Columbian Exposition, accepted by that honorable body, and delivered on the four-hundredth anniversary of the Discovery of America, October 21st, 1892, before an audience of over one hundred thousand persons, including officials of all nations, during the dedicatory ceremonies in the building for Manufactures and Liberal Arts. By authority of the Committee, Mr. Theodore Thomas, Director of Music, requested Professor George W. Chadwick, of Boston, to set to music the lyric passages. Professor Chadwick admirably fulfilled the obligation. The song beginning, "Over the wide unknown," and the passage of eight lines, beginning, "Lo, clan on clan, The embattled nations gather to be one," were given by a chorus of five thousand voices, to the accompaniment of a great orchestra and military bands.

The reference in lines 7-10 of page 120 is to John Wellborn Root, first architect-in-chief of the exposition and designer of its ground-plan, who died January 15th, 1891, just before the first conference of the board of architects whom he had summoned.

The portrait of the author leading this poem was taken about 1892.

COLUMBIAN ODE

Columbia, on thy brow are dewy flowers
Plucked from wide prairies and from mighty hills.
To this proud day have led the steadfast hours.
Now to thy hope the world its beaker fills.
The old earth hears a song, sees rainbow gleams,
And lifts her head from a deep couch of dreams.

Her queenly nations, elder-born of Time,
Troop from high thrones to hear,
Clasp thy strong hands, tread with thee paths sublime,
Lovingly bend the ear.
Spain, in the broidered robes of chivalry,
Comes with slow foot and inward-brooding eyes.
Bow to her banner! 'twas the first to rise
Out of the dark for thee.
And England, royal mother, whose right hand
Molds nations, whose white feet the ocean tread,
Lays down her sword upon thy shining strand
To bless thy wreathèd head;
Hearing in thine her voice, bidding thy soul
Fulfil her dream, the foremost at the goal.
And France, who once thy fainting form upbore,
Brings beauty now where strength she brought of yore.
France the swift-footed, who with thee
Gazed in the eyes of Liberty,
And loved the dark no more.

Around the peopled world
Bright banners are unfurled;
The long procession winds from shore to shore.
The Norseman sails
Through icy gales
To the green Vineland of his long-ago.
Russia rides down from realms of sun and snow.
Germany casts afar
Her iron robes of war,
And strikes her harp with thy triumphal song.
Italy opens wide her epic scroll,
In bright hues blazoned, with great deeds writ long,
And bids thee win the kingdom of the soul.
And the calm Orient, wise with many days,
From hoary Palestine to brave Japan
Salutes thy conquering youth;
Bidding thee hush while all the nations praise,
Know, though the world endure but for a span,
Deathless is truth.
Now unto these the ever-living Past
Ushers a mighty pageant, bids arise
Dead centuries, freighted with visions vast,
Blowing pale mists into the Future's eyes.
Their song is all of thee,
Daughter of mystery.

Alone! alone!

Behind wide walls of sea!
And never a ship has flown
A prisoned world to free.

Fair is the sunny day
 On mountain and lake and stream,
Yet wild men starve and slay,
 And the young earth lies adream.
Long have the dumb years passed with vacant eyes,
Bearing rich gifts for nations throned afar,
Guarding thy soul inviolate as a star,
Leaving thee safe with God till man grow wise.
 At last one patient heart is born
 Fearless of ignorance and scorn.
His strong youth wastes before thy secret gate—
Kings will not open to the untrod path.
His hope grows cold while all the ages wait,
The prophet bows under the dull world's wrath;
 Until a woman fair
 As morning lilies are
 Brings him a jeweled key—
 Swiftly a world is free!
Wide swings the portal never touched before,
Strange luring winds blow from an unseen shore.
 Toward dreams that cannot fail
 He bids the three ships sail,
While man's new song of hope rings out against the gale.

*Over the wide unknown,
 Far to the shores of Ind,
On through the dark alone,
 Like a feather blown by the wind;
Into the West away,
 Sped by the breath of God,*

*Seeking the clearer day
Where only his feet have trod,
From the past to the future we sail—
We slip from the leash of kings.
Hail, Spirit of Freedom—hail!
Unfurl thy impalpable wings!
Receive us, protect us, and bless
Thy knights who brave all for thee.
Though death be thy soft caress,
By that touch shall our souls be free.
Onward and ever on,
Till the voice of despair is stilled,
Till the haven of peace is won,
And the purpose of God fulfilled!*

O strange, divine surprise!
Out of the dark man strives to rise,
And struggles inch by inch with toil and tears;
Till suddenly God stoops from his bright spheres,
And bares the glory of his face.
Then darkness flees afar,
This earth becomes a star—
Man leaps up to the lofty place.
So these who dared to pass beyond the pale,
For a rash dream tempting the shrouded seas,
Sought but Cathay; God bade their faith prevail
To find a world—blessed his purposes!
The hero knew not what a virgin soul
Laughed through glad eyes when at her feet he laid
The gaudy trappings of man's masquerade.

She who had dwelt in forests, heard the roll
Of lakes down-thundering to the sea,
Beheld from gleaming mountain-heights
Two oceans playing with the lights
Of night and morn—ah! what would she
With all the out-worn pageantry
Of purple robes and heavy mace and crown?
 Smiling she casts them down,
 Unfit her young austerity
Of hair unbound and strong limbs bare and brown.

 Yet they who dare arise
 And meet her stainless eyes
Forget old loves, though royal queens these be.
 And whither her winged feet fare
 They follow though death be there—
So sweet, so fleet, so goddess-pure is she.
Her voice is like deep rivers, as they flow
 Through forests bending low.
Her step is softest moonlight, strong to force
 The ocean to its course.
Gentle her smile, for something in man's face,
World-worn, time-weary, furrowed deep with tears,
Thrills her chaste heart with a more tender grace.
Softly she smoothes the wrinkles from his brow
 Lined by the baleful years,
Smiles sunshine on the hoar head, whispers low
New charges from the awakened will of Truth—
Words all of fire, that thrill his soul with youth.
Not with his brother is man's battle here.

The challenge of the earth, that Adam heard,
His love austere breathes in his eager ear.
And so the knight who warred at king's command,
And scarred the face of Europe, sheathes his sword,
Hearing from untaught lips a nobler word,
Taking new weapons from an unstained hand.
With axe and oar, with mallet and with spade,
She bids the hero conquer, unafraid
Though cloud-veiled Titans be his lordly foes—
Spirits of earth and air, whose wars brook no repose.

For from far-away mountain and plain,
From the shores of the sunset sea,
The unwearying rulers complain, complain,
And throng from the wastes to defend their reign,
Their threatened majesty.
The prairies that lie abloom
Sigh out to the summer air:
Shall our dark soil be the tomb
Of the flowers that rise so fair?
Shall we yield to man's disdain,
And nourish his golden grain?
We will freeze and burn and snare—
Ah, bid him beware! beware!
And the forests, heavy and dark and deep
With the shadows of shrouded years,
In a murmurous voice, out of age-long sleep,
Ask the winds: What creature rude
Would storm our solitude?
Has his soul no fears, no tears?

The prone rivers lift up their snow-crowned heads,
Arise in wrath from their rock-hewn beds,
And roar: We will ravage and drown
Ere we float his white ships down.

And the lakes, from a mist

Of amethyst,

Call the storm-clouds down, and grow ashen and brown.

And all the four winds wail:

Our gales shall make him quail;

By blinding snow, by burning sun

His strength shall be undone.

Then men in league with these—

Brothers of wind and waste—

Hew barbs of flint, and darkly haste

From sheltering tents and trees;

And mutter: Away! away!

Ye children of white-browed day!

Who dares profane our wild gods' reign

We torture and trap and slay.

Child of the light, the shadows fall in vain.

Herald of hope, in vain the powers conspire.

Armed with truth's holy cross, faith's sacred fire,

Though often vanquished, he shall rise again,

Nor rest till the wild lords of earth and air

Bow to his will, his burdens glad to bear.

Spirits of heroes lead through the long strife,

Singing large annals of their own wide life

To lure him on to freedom. On that field,

From giants won, shall man be slave to man?

*Lo, clan on clan,
The embattled nations gather to be one,
Clasp hands as brothers on Columbia's shield,
Upraise her banner to the shining sun.*

*Along her sacred shore
One heart, one song, one dream—
Men shall be free forevermore,
And love shall be law supreme.*

When foolish kings, at odds with swift-paced Time,
Would strike that banner down,
A nobler knight than ever writ or rhyme
Has starred with fame's bright crown
Through armed hosts bore it free to float on high
Beyond the clouds, a light that cannot die!
Ah, hero of our younger race!
Strong builder of a temple new!
Ruler, who sought no lordly place!
Warrior, who sheathed the sword he drew!
Lover of men, who saw afar
A world unmarred by want or war,
Who knew the path, and yet forbore
To tread, till all men should implore;
Who saw the light, and led the way
Where the gray world might greet the day:
Father and leader, prophet sure,
Whose will in vast works shall endure,
How shall we praise him on this day of days,
Great son of fame who has no need of praise?

How shall we praise him? Open wide the doors
Of the fair temple whose broad base he laid.
Through shining halls a shadowy cavalcade
Of heroes moves on unresounding floors—
Men whose brawned arms upraised these columns high,
And reared the towers that vanish in the sky—
The strong who, having wrought, can never die.

And here, leading a gallant host, comes one
Who held a warring nation in his heart;
Who knew love's agony, but had no part
In love's delight; whose mighty task was done
Through blood and tears that we might walk in joy,
And this day's rapture feel no sad alloy.
Around him heirs of bliss, whose bright brows wear
Palm-leaves amid their laurels ever fair.

Gaily they come, as though the drum
Beat out the call their glad hearts knew so well.

Brothers once more, dear as of yore,
Who in a noble conflict nobly fell.
Their blood washed pure that banner in the sky,
And quenched the brands under these arches high—
The brave who, having fought, can never die.

Then surging through the vastness rise once more
The aureoled heirs of light, who onward bore
Through darksome times and trackless realms of ruth
The flag of beauty and the torch of truth.
They tore the mask from the foul face of wrong;
To towering mysteries they dared aspire;

High in the choir they lit our altar-fire,
And filled these aisles with color and with song:
The ever-young, the unfallen, wreathing for time
Fresh garlands of the seeming-vanished years;
Faces long luminous, remote, sublime,
And shining brows still dewy with our tears.
Back with the old glad smile comes one we knew—
We bade him rear our house of joy today;
But Beauty opened wide her starry way,
And he passed on. Bright champions of the true,
Soldiers of peace, seers, singers ever blest—
From the wide ether of a loftier quest
Their winged souls throng our rites to glorify—
The wise who, having known, can never die.

Strange splendors stream the vaulted aisles along—
To these we loved celestial rapture clings.
And music, borne on rhythm of rising wings,
Floats from the living dead, whose breath is song.

Columbia, my country, dost thou hear?
Ah, dost thou hear the songs unheard of time?
Hark! for their passion trembles at thine ear.
Hush! for thy soul must heed their call sublime.
Across wide seas, unswept by earthly sails,
Those strange sounds draw thee on, for thou shalt be
Leader of nations through the autumnal gales
That wait to mock the strong and wreck the free.

Dearer, more radiant than of yore,
Against the dark I see thee rise;

Thy young smile spurns the guarded shore
And braves the shadowed ominous skies.
And still that valiant smile who see
Pledge love, life, service all to thee.
The years have brought thee robes most fair—
 The rich processional years—
And filleted thy shining hair,
And zoned thy waist with jewels rare,
 And whispered in thy ears
Strange secrets of eternal ways
Long hid from human awe and praise.

For see! the living God now bares his arm.
No more he makes his house of clouds and gloom.
Lightly the shuttles move within his loom;
Unveiled his thunder leaps to meet the storm.
From God's right hand man takes the powers that sway
 A universe of stars.
He bows them down; he bids them go or stay;
 He tames them for his wars.
He scans the burning paces of the sun,
And names the invisible orbs whose courses run
 Through perilous deeps of space.
He sees in dew upon a rose imperaled
The swarming legions of a monad world
 Begin life's upward race.
Voices of hope he hears
Long dumb to his despair,
And dreams of golden years
Fit for a world so fair.

For now Democracy dares wake and rise
From the sweet sloth of youth.
By storms made strong, by many dreams made wise,
He clasps the hand of Truth.
Through the armed nations lies his path of peace,
The open book of knowledge in his hand.
Food to the starving, to the oppressed release,
And love to all he bears from land to land.
Before his march the barriers fall,
The laws grow gentle at his call.
His glowing breath blows far away
The fogs that veil the coming day—
That wondrous day
When earth shall sing as through the blue she rolls
Laden with joy for all her thronging souls.
Then shall want's call to crime resound no more
Across her teeming fields. And pain shall sleep,
Soothed by brave science with her magic lore;
And war no more shall bid the nations weep.
Then the worn chains shall slip from man's desire,
And ever higher and higher
His swift foot shall aspire,
Still deeper and more deep
His soul its watch shall keep,
Till love shall make the world a holy place,
Where knowledge dares unveil God's very face.

Not yet the heavens have heard life's triumph-song.
Music unconquerably clear and strong

From earth shall rise to haunt the peopled skies
 When the long march of time,
Patient through birth and death, through growth and
 blight,
Shall lead man up through happy realms of light
 Unto his goal sublime.





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