



THE EARTH
TURNS SOUTH
BY
CLEMENT WOOD



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THE EARTH TURNS SOUTH

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GLAD OF EARTH

A BOOK OF POEMS

\$1.50 net

E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK

THE EARTH TURNS SOUTH.

BY
CLEMENT WOOD
AUTHOR OF "GLAD OF EARTH"



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY
681 FIFTH AVENUE

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PS 3545
O4715E-2
1919



\$1.50

Printed in the United States of America

APR 21 1919
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TO
MILDRED
POET AND WIFE

VOYAGER'S SONG

(Suggested by Hodgson's "The Mystery")

*What if I coasted near the shore
Of ultimate utter sleep—
You were the tide that swung me back
Into the living deep.*

*I did not heed what all the world
Held in its proud embrace;
But it was life to hear you speak,
And heaven to see your face.*

Feb. 11, 1919

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Acknowledgment is due to the editors of *Ainslie's*, *The Century*, *Collier's*, *The Conservator*, *Contemporary Verse*, *The Forum*, *The Independent*, *The Liberator*, *Life*, *The Lyric*, *McClure's*, *The Masses*, *The Midland*, *The Nation*, *The New York Call*, *Poetry*, *Smith's*, *The Touchstone*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *The World Tomorrow*, for their permission to reprint certain of these poems, which have been copyrighted by them; and to the Newark Committee of One Hundred, for permission to reprint "The Smithy of God."

I.

RESTLESS YEARS

THE RADIANT

When this body drifts in dust
Lightly on the nervous air,
Vagabonding everywhere
In this restless planet's crust,

Wet by foam of every sea,
Dancing up the thinning sky
To its terrible and high
Journey through infinity,—

When it softly voyages
Past the outermost lone star,
On to what dim wonders are
In the spaceless distances,

It shall never lose the zest
That is mine by night and day,
As I push my groping way
On life's fogged and clouded quest;

It shall never waste or lose
The illogical delight
That is mine by day and night,
As I steer my chartless cruise;

THE RADIANT

Or the love that fires me through,
Or the hope that lifts my eyes
Higher than the present skies,
Toward the goal I struggle to.

When this spirit makes its way
Scatteringly further still,
It shall bear the deathless will
That I build—and bear—today!

I SEE AMERICA MARCHING

I.

I see America marching:

Over the perilous waves her khakied thousands
flood;

Over the bloodied Atlantic the steady drive of her
fleets,

And through the swirling air the whirr of her
clouds of bird-men.

II.

I see America marching:

Wheat from the stubborn soil of the North, cot-
ton snow from the South,

Iron and steel from the Lakes and the glinting
miles of mountains,

Sugar and meat, timber and coal, powder and
steel-wrought rails,

The army at home, with lengthening arm, smash-
ing unending blows.

III.

I see America marching:

This is no war of armies, nor even of nations.

I SEE AMERICA MARCHING

Behold—a continent—America!—hurls itself over
the seaway

To crush the hateful tyranny of the squat Teu-
tonic land.

For following the khakied line and the driving
fleets

Katahdin lifts an awakened head, and summons
his brothers to follow—

An army of mountains marching to battle!

Mount Washington comes, Mount Mitchell wakes,

Bald Head and Round Top answer the call,

Pike's Peak and Massive Mountain trumpet over
the plain,

Rainier and Whitney, Shasta and Hood advance
to the onslaught,

And Mount McKinley leads frozen Alaska to the
charge.

How the squat Hunnish summits cower!

Zugspitze and Schneekoppe flatten, Altvater and
Arber flee,

Brocken and Vogelsberg scream horribly as the
Adirondacks and Rockies surge upon
them.

I SEE AMERICA MARCHING

The rivers wind upon the foe—
The mighty Father of Waters drowns the puny
Rhine,
Yukon and Colorado, Rio Grande and the Hudson,
flood over the fleeing Elbe and Danube.
The Great Lakes rage over the lowlands,
And the mighty land, three millions of mighty
miles,
Plunges upon the desperate Deutschland's two
hundred thousand,
Until it yields to the continent singing of liberty,
And the people's rule buds and blossoms over the
blood-drenched earth.

IV.

I see America marching:
Mountain and river, lake and prairie, marching
under the white stars of blue heaven,
Through a continent's red-barred agony,
To win the white goal, the peace of the peoples'
vision!

THE BATTLE LINE

Like gray ghosts on a sea of gray
The great gray fleet at anchor rides,
Proud conqueror of the nervous tides,
Whose broken rollers slosh away,
Defeated, from its sides.

There in the doubtful mists they wait,
Tense for the vision they may see
Of grim and ghostly foes—when, free,
They may at last unloose their great
Red voice of victory!

SEEDTIME

Not too deep we plant the grain,
So that it can rise again
To re-green the naked field,
Minting all its golden yield.

But these slaughtered men should sleep
Planted deep, planted deep.
They have had their share of pain,
And they would not rise again.

HARVEST

Out of the blood-washed trenches,
Leaving their bodies there,
The souls of the dead young soldiers
Float up the friendless air.

They do not seek the masters
Who herded them to this fate,
With hearts all hot for vengeance,—
They are too dead to hate.

But each one finds the maiden
He trembled for in life—
She who was yet his sweetheart,
She who was his young wife.

And she feels on her hungry bosom
The ghost of a dead caress,
As the soul of her lover scatters
Into gray nothingness.

TO AN ENEMY NATION

You have grown fat,—
Too fat and gross
To leap and dance
Like a slim maiden
In the doubtful Spring.

Your voice is hoarse
With hawking your body,
Hoarse and cracked—
You who once sang
Like leaves in the wind.

And that slinking glance,—
Can you never forget
The red midnight
When you sold your soul,
Liberty?

COMRADE JUDAS

(Years of the Great War)

Man has no credit for the twisted ways
Truth comes to him; to us, as unto you,
Somehow, out of these struggling, groping days,
Some vision of the future blurred into view.
And we clung to it, as a precious thing
Worth dying for, and, more than that, worth
living;
While all this priceless visioning you fling
Coldly away—the sin beyond forgiving.
No, not by us; we bid you go your way,
Knowing that we are stronger with you gone,—
Stronger, because the heart that could betray
Down its own furtive course has wandered on.
But you will slowly see the things you miss,
And you cannot forgive yourself for this.

IMMORTALITY

For Crystal Eastman and Walter G. Fuller

Come, War! Come, mad destruction, come!
Thump with your glum and thundering drum,
Let all shrill-piercing bugles peal,
Waken the angry snarl of steel,
Till men come tumbling at your heel,
Welcoming out of the sky the hell
Of withering bomb and bursting shell,
And the slow-rolling deaths that creep,
Impalpable, along the ground,
Stifling the cannon's sullen sound,
Bringing the final quivering sleep
On blackened land and ruined town
And desolate, deserted sea.
The years' slow progress crumbles down,
As war makes sure his sovereignty.

Come, War, best comrade! Swiftly come!
For as you pass, our lips are dumb,
Our bodies stiffen, and grow numb. . . .
And then, and imperceptibly,
What was mankind with all its chatter,
Its thus and so, its futile clatter,
Begins to tremble restlessly,

IMMORTALITY

Begins to melt away, and scatter,
Speeding in changing ways; it lifts
Where lilacs bud in purple drifts,
It mounts the greenly glowing trees,
It seeps into the parent earth,
And joins the cool and liquid mirth
Of brooks that bubble to the seas;
It lends its agile ordered strength
To cattle, and to ants that crawl;
It writhes within the serpent's length,
It peals the thrush's whistling call.
Men and women and children die,—
Seeds plowed under by bomb and shell,—
Scatter, and recombine, and swell
A lovely harvest toward the sky.

As men, we were not worthy; we
Were weighed, found wanting, and set free
From suicidal liberty.
For lilac bush and slender larch
Are fixed too firm to "Forward, March!"
And laughing water cannot wet
With what drips from a bayonet;
And snake and cattle do not loose

IMMORTALITY

Their honor to a hateful use,
Nor do the thrushes of the sky
Prepare a wholesale way to die.
Man jars the skyey harmony;
So War, best savior, comes, to friend
Him to his red and sudden end,
Setting his prisoned substance free
For kindlier immortality!

ALIEN

I saw a negro in the snow—
His vast face dark and pondering,
Shoulders whitened, and head hunched low.

What vagabonding lust could bring
You from the cotton-field's soft glow,
The white magnolia drifts of Spring?

The thin sun here will whiten your face,
The lean, long winters ruthlessly
Wither your slouching jungle grace.

Our nights grow longer; better flee
This callous and transforming place. . . .
Or would you grow no more than we?

NIGGER HEBB'N

Nigger Hebb'n! Nigger Hebb'n!
I'm gonter go, I'm gonter go, I'll leave dis world
of woe,
Pack an' trabbel, pack an' trabbel,
To de kingdom of my Lawd;
Howdy sebb'n! Come elebb'n!
I'm goin' there, I'm goin' there, I'll climb de
golden stair,
Leave de debbil, an' his rabble,
Fer to claim my soul's reward.

Dar dey'll wash me white as snow,
In Jerusalem land.

Dar dose honey ribbers flow,
In Jerusalem land.

I go, you go, all of us go,
To de Lawd's baptizin', I know—
Wash me white as de dribb'n snow,
In Jerusalem land.

No, not all of you—only de sheep,
Gwineter come home ter Jesus.
Hell fer de goats—an' hell am deep;
Debbil's gang don't nebber sleep;

NIGGER HEBB'N

What I'se sowed, I'se gwineter reap,
Gwineter come home ter Jesus.

Dar dey'll gib me raiment new,
In Jerusalem land.

Turkey red, an' calico blue,
In Jerusalem land.

Feed on possum 'n' 'taters too,
Drink dose draps of hebb'nly dew,
Lots fer me—an' some fer you
In Jerusalem land.

Nigger Hebb'n! Nigger Hebb'n!
I'm flyin' high, I'm flyin' high, de top seat in de
sky,
Risin' *through* yer, risin' *through* yer,
To receive my soul's reward.
Howdy sebb'n! Come elebb'n!
O come erlong, O come erlong, an' jine de serrubs'
song—
Dey'll howdy-do yer, Halleluyah!
In de kingdom of my Lawd!

DEBBIL-FOOT

Ole Nigger John! Debbil-foot John!
Steal' ev'ything dat his han's got on!
Straw hats an' han'-saws an' things tuh eat,
Cow-feed an' hoss-feed an' shoes fuh his feet,
Grubbin'-hoses, suits er clo'es, an' all fuh fun—
Lock' 'um in his shack, whar he kep' his gun!
Folks come huntin' fuh de things dey miss'—
John he holler an' he shake his fis',
Shoot in de air er shoot in de groun'—
Scare all de niggers fuh miles erroun'!

Ole Nigger John wuz a voodoo coon—
Debbil he come in de dark uh de moon,
Come out er John's big swollen foot,
Whar John 'lowed dat he kep' him put.
Dar dey 'ud sit an' dey make er spell,
Wrassle an' holler, an' pray an' yell.
Nex' day John he scream an' he cuss—
Debbil-foot it get wuss an' wuss.

White doctor say dat de leg mus' go.
John he scream an' he take on so
Dey gin him sumpin ter make him sleep,
An' saw off de leg. . . . Ole Nigger John creep

DEBBIL-FOOT

Back tuh his wu'k, wid a "Thank 'ee, ma'am,"
"Mawnin', boss," an' "Howde-do!"
"Yes, suh," "Naw, suh," meek as a lamb. . . .
Dey bury dat leg, an' de debbil too—
Dey bury dem deep in grave-yahd groun',
Fifty foot down, fifty foot down!

DE GLORY ROAD

For Lieutenant Leighton Wood, U. S. N.

O de Glory Road! O de Glory Road!
I'm gwine ter drap mah load upon de Glory Road.

I lay on mah bed untell one erclock,
An' de Lawd come callin' all His faithful flock.
An' He call "Whoo-ee!", an' He call "Whoo-ee!"
An' I knowed dat de Sabior wuz ercallin' me.
An' He call "Whoo-ee!", an' He call "Whoo-ee!",
An' I cry, "Massa Jesus, is you callin' me?"
An' He call "Whoo-ee!", an' He call "Whoo-ee!",
An' I riz up f'um mah pallet, an' I cry, "Hyahs
me!"

De Lawd sez, "Niggah, ain' I call yer thrice
Ter ride erlong behin' me up ter Paradise,
On de Glory Road, on de Glory Road?"
An' I clime up ter de saddle, an' I jined de load!

De hawse he wuz longer dan a thousan' mile';
His tail went lashin', an' his hoofs wuz wil';
His mane wuz flamin', an' his eyes wuz moons,
An' his mouth kep' singin' Halleluyah tunes!

DE GLORY ROAD

De Lawd sez, "Niggah, why 'n' cher look erroun'?"
An' dar we wuz flyin' over risin' groun',
Powerful hills, an' mountains too,
An' de earth an' de people wuz drapt f'um view.
An' I hyahd all 'roun me how de sperits sang,
An' de Lawd sang louder dan de whole shebang!

De Lawd sez, "Niggah, why 'n' cher look ergin?"
An' dar wuz de Debbil, on de back uv Sin,
A-bangin' on de critter wid his whip an' goad,
An' boun' he gwine ter kotch us, on de Glory Road!
"O Lawdy, it's de Debbil, comin' straight f'um
Hell!

I kin tell him by his roarin', an' de brimstone
smell!"

But de Lawd sez, "Niggah, he ain' kotch us yit!"
An' He lashed an' He hustled, an' He loosed de bit.
Den de Debbil crep' closuh, an' I hyahd him yell,
"I'm gwine ter kotch a niggah, fur ter roas' in
Hell!"

An' I cried, "Lawd, sabe me!" An' de Lawd cry,
"Sho!"

An' hyah it was Hebben, an' we shet de do'.

DE GLORY ROAD

O Glory, Glory, how de angels sang!
O Glory, Glory, how de rafters rang!
An' Moses 'n' Aaron, an' Methusalum,
Dey shout an' dey holler, an' dey beat de drum.
King Solomon kissed me, an' his thousan' wives,
Jes' like dey'd knowed me, durin' all dey lives;
An' de Lawd sez, "Niggah, take a gran'-stan' seat.
But I 'specks youse hongry; have a bite ter eat?"
An' de ravens fed me, an' Elijah prayed,
An' de Sabed Ones gathered, while de organ
 played,
An' dey cry, "O sinnah, come an' lose yuh load
On de Glory Road, on de Glory Road.
An' come an' dwell in de Lawd's abode,
Glory, Glory, on de Glory Road!"

Sez de Lawd, "No, sinnah, you mus' trabbel back
Ter he'p po' niggahs up de Glory Track;
Ter he'p old mo'ners an' de scoffin' coons,
By shoutin' loud Halleluyah tunes."

O come, mah breddren, won' you drap yuh load,
An' ride ter Hebben up de Glory Road?

ASH-BLOSSOM

Muck and mire climb jauntily
Through roots, stems, and calyxes,
Until they laugh forth as blossoms.

I love blossoms;
I love to pack the moist brown tobacco into
my pipe
And puff its twinkling glow to the end,
When a fair ash-blossom laughs forth.

Feathery whirls of grayness,
Delicately and intricately fashioned,—
I knock you eagerly into the wind,
To summon again your fellow
Out of the moist brown tobacco.

THE ANTIQUE

“Martha,” she called across the hedge,
“Come over and see the antique I got yesterday—
A dressing table—simply a gem!”

So we went over, Martha and I,
And there, against the living-room wall,
Tangled in a maze of cluttering furniture,
China closets bulging with miscellanies,
Desks, book-cases, sofas, chairs, tables,
With endless repetitions of lamps on them,
Stood the antique.

It was a beauty, she explained,
With spiraling curly-maple legs,
A body of solid mahogany,
And drawer and top of exquisitely feathered
maple.

She gloated over every detail of it and its purchase;
It had been owned by a cousin of ex-Governor
So-and-so,
Which added incalculably to its value;

THE ANTIQUE

She had recognized it through the over-paint of
dirty brown,
And so on and on.

Then she fluttered to the china closets,
On fire to show the stranger each treasure:
The inkstand Daniel Webster had owned,
John Adams' queerly curving lamp,
The Lafayette pitcher, the blueglass lamp and
box,
The red and black English ware found in a Ger-
man hamlet,
The Dutch molasses jugs, the Bavarian peasant
crockery,
Spanish pitcher, Chinese bowl, Bennington tiles,
The self-righteous samplers on the wall,
The upright clock, the fourposters, climbing to
the low ceiling,
That had been her grandmother's,
Aunt Sophie's chest of drawers, the colonial side-
board,
All the while keeping up her excited chatter,
Giving reiterated details of every piece,
And so back to the antique
Where we had started.

THE ANTIQUE

Oh, yes, it took all her time;
She was going tomorrow to look at a cedar chest
In a farmhouse miles away . . .

I could have turned to her
And shown her an antique she overlooked,
With bloodless, gnarled old legs,
With a flattened O-Gee swell toward the head,
And a soul twisted with lust for acquiring;
Reverencing as priceless relics
The discarded shells of man's habitations,
Like a fussy and energetic tumble-bug
Gathering the leavings of the past;
Happily nesting herself in musty fragments
Of a life that was young and lusty and forward-
marching.

What a queer, stagnant back-water
Of the stream of life!

Her flowing chatter aroused me.
"I saw such a queer sign in that shop," she said;
"The Trash of the Past is the Treasure of the
Future."
Such a queer sign."

THE ANTIQUE

For a moment she mused, staring off through the
walls

To I know not what flash of self-revelation.

Then, turning quickly,

“Oh, did I show you *this* pewter jug?

Or these bronze candlesticks from——”

EXIT SALVATORE

Salvatore's dead—a gap

Where he worked in the ditch-edge, shoveling
mud;

Slanting brow; a head mayhap

Rather small, like a bullet; hot Southern blood;

Surly now, now riotous

With the flow of his joy; and his hovel bare,

As his whole life is to us—

A stone in his belly the whole of his share.

Body starved—but the soul secure,

Masses to save it from Purgatory,

And to dwell with the Son and the Virgin
pure—

Lucky Salvatore!

Salvatore's glad—for, see!

On the hearse and the coffin, purple and black,

Tassels, ribbons, broidery,

Fit for the priest's or the Pope's own back.

Flowers costly, waxen, gay,

And the mates from the ditch-edge, pair after
pair;

Dirging band, and the priest to pray,

And the soul of the dead one pleasuring there.

EXIT SALVATORE

Body starved—and the mind as well.
Peace—let him rot in his costly glory,
Cheated no more with a heaven or hell.
Exit Salvatore.

THE SMITHY OF GOD

I.

(A bold, masculine chant.)

I am Newark, forger of men,
Forger of men, forger of men—
Here at a smithy God wrought, and flung
Earthward, down to this rolling shore,
God's mighty hammer I have swung,
With crushing blows that thunder and roar,
And delicate taps, whose echoes have rung
Softly to heaven and back again;
Here I labor, forging men.
Out of my smithy's smoldering hole,
As I forge a body and mold a soul,
The jangling clangors ripplewise roll.

(The voice suggests the noises of the city.)

Clang, as a hundred thousand feet
Tap-tap-tap down the morning street,
And into the mills and factories pour,
Like a narrowed river's breathing roar.

Clang, as two thousand whistles scream
Their seven-in-the-morning's burst of steam,

THE SMITHY OF GOD

Brass-throated sirens, calling folk
To the perilous breakers of din and smoke.

Clang, as ten thousand vast machines
Pound and pound, in their pulsed routines,
Throbbing and stunning, with deafening beat,
The tiny humans lost at their feet.

Clang, and the whistle and whirr of trains,
Rattle of ships unleashed of their chains,
Fire-gongs, horse-trucks' jolts and jars,
Traffic-calls, milk-carts, droning cars. . . .

(A softer strain.)

Clang, and a softer shiver of noise
As school-bells summon the girls and boys;
And a mellower tone, as the churches ring
A people's reverent worshipping.

*(Still more softly and drowsily, the last line whis-
pered.)*

Clang, and clang, and clang, and clang,
Till a hundred thousand tired feet
Drag-drag-drag down the evening street,
And gleaming the myriad street-lights hang;

THE SMITHY OF GOD

The far night-noises dwindle and hush,
The city quiets its homing rush;
The stars glow forth with a silent sweep,
As hammer and hammered drowse asleep . . .
Softly I sing to heaven again,
I am Newark, forger of men,
Forger of men, forger of men.

II.

*(Antichorus, with restrained bitterness, and notes
of wailing and sorrow.)*

You are Newark, forger of men,
Forger of men, forger of men. . . .
You take God's children, and forge a race
Unhuman, exhibiting hardly a trace
Of Him and His loveliness in their face. . . .
Counterfeiting His gold with brass,
Blanching the roses, scorching the grass,
Filling with hatred and greed the whole,—
Shriveling the body, withering the soul.

What have you done with the lift of youth,
As they bend in the mill, and bend in the mill?
Where have you hidden beauty and truth,
As they bend in the mill?

THE SMITHY OF GOD

Where is the spirit seeking the sky,
As they stumble and fall, stumble and fall?
What is life, if the spirit die,
As they stumble and fall?

(*With bitter resignation.*)

Clang, and the strokes of your hammer grind
Body and spirit, courage and mind;
Smith of the devil, well may you be
Proud of your ghastly forgery.
Dare you to speak to heaven again,
Newark, Newark, forger of men,
Forger of men, forger of men?

III.

(*Beginning quietly, gathering certainty.*)

I am Newark, forger of men,
Forger of men, forger of men.
Well I know that the metal must glow
With a scorching, searing heat;
Well I know that blood must flow,
And floods of sweat, and rivers of woe;
That underneath the beat
Of the hammer, the metal will writhe and toss;
That there will be much and much of loss

THE SMITHY OF GOD

That has to be sacrificed,
Before I can forge body and soul
That can stand erect and perfect and whole
In the sight of Christ.

(Sadly and somberly.)

My hammer is numb to sorrows and aches,
My hammer is blind to the ruin it makes,
My hammer is deaf to shriek and cry
That ring till they startle water and sky.

And sometimes with me the vision dims
At the sight of bent backs and writhing limbs;
And sometimes I blindly err, and mistake
The perfect glory I must make.

(Rising to a song of exultant triumph.)

But still I labor and bend and toil,
Shaping anew the stuff I spoil;
And out of the smothering din and grime
I forge a city for all time:
A city beautiful and clean,
With wide sweet avenues of green,
With gracious homes and houses of trade,
Where souls as well as things are made.

THE SMITHY OF GOD

I forge a people fit to dwell
Unscathed in the hottest heart of hell,
And fit to shine, erect and straight,
When we shall see His kingdom come
On earth, over all of Christendom,—
And I stand up, shining and great,
Lord of an unforeseen estate.
Then I will cry, and clearly then,
I am Newark, forger of men.

II.

AS A MAN THINKETH—

AWAKENING

(After a Song by Ou-Yang Hsiu)

The chilled air shivers,
Dim ice-blooded, thin-souled crones
Hug haughtily indifferent fires.
The beaded icicles poise
Over specked patches of snow.

But they cannot fool me—
I know it is Spring;
For I saw a laughing girl
Slip furtively homeward
Through the dark.

HER ROOM

She is away, but everywhere I look

Her traces linger;

The casual piling there of book on book,

With careful finger;

The marshaled flower-pots that blurred and
changed

The view of the alley;

The picture righted, cushions disarranged

Artistically;

My careless pipes and ash-trays whipped into line,

Painfully dusted;

A handkerchief—its scent sways me like wine;

A hat-pin rusted,

A dozen vagrant hair-pins, and a veil

Sprinkling the table;

A crumpled ribbon, eager to tell its tale—

Would it were able!

And always a vague something in the air,

A keen reminder

Of her dear intimate self, that everywhere

Bids me go find her. . . .

HER ROOM

She is away, but her room throbs and teems
 In incompleteness,
Flooding me with intense, imperative dreams
 Of her full sweetness.

I PASS A LIGHTED WINDOW

For Sara Teasdale

I pass a lighted window
And a closed door—
And I am not troubled
Any more.

Though the road is murky,
I am not afraid,
For a shadow passes
On the lighted shade.

Once I knew the sesame
To the closed door;
Now I shall not enter
Any more;

Nor will people passing
By the lit place
See our shadows marry
In a gray embrace.

Strange a passing shadow
Has a long spell!
What can matter, knowing
She does well?

I PASS A LIGHTED WINDOW

How can life annoy me

Any more?

Life: a lighted window

And a closed door.

WHEN I LOVE YOU

When I love you

Let not my love pour fouled and thinned,

Like close air in a stuffy room;

Let my desire enfold you

Like sunlight drenching flowers.

Let me not woo you

With doubtful chatter and sinuous hint,

Sibilant and cautious;

I would sweep through you

Like a swelling rain-wind through a thirsty forest.

I would lie on your lips

Like moon shimmer on quiet water,

One with you

As day and night are one,

As life and death are one.

NARCISSI

(*For My Mother*)

I.

They read: A youth in higher Thessaly,
Hot with the chase, came to a lost pool, lying
Under great jutting rocks and a vast tree
That hid it from the sun's hot curious spying,
Still and ice-cool, and ringed with quiet grass
That pressed to curve its blades into the pool,
As rippleless and clear as burnished brass.

He slouched, relieved, to a low shaley stool
And leaned to drink, when in the glass below
A face leaned up to meet him, flushed and laugh-
ing,
Gay-eyed, with thirsty lips that formed a bow
As if from his own beauty to be quaffing.
He paused, torn with amazement and faint fear,
At sight of the fair naiad mounting near.

II.

The careless hair, he saw, was in a tousle,
The brow was olive-pale, the cheeks were red
As fresh-clipped roses flung in mad carousal;

NARCISSI

The bended neck sloped downward from the
head
Like some arched flower's stem, into a cloak
Of mellow white, just of his peplum's hue.
He leaned to kiss the nymph,—the image broke,
A shivering thing that rippled out of view.
He drew away—again the face returned,
The loveliest features that he yet had seen;
He panted for the naiad, his arms burned
To clasp the eager love, who seemed to lean
With wide, taut arms and all-inviting face
As if to drag him down to the embrace.

III.

He gazed around—no spiers. Then he flung
His creamy peplum on a low-grown limb,
Stripped down his sandals, and slipped off and
hung
His chiton where it made a screen for him.
He poised, a supple javelin, above
The grassy margin,—and he saw the nymph
Poise in the pool below, beckoning his love
Into the pleasant depths of the still lymph.
A leap, and he was one with pool and lover;

NARCISSI

One rather with the pool; the naiad fled,
Fled to some dank bed he could not discover.

He climbed without, pressing his dripping head
With hands that could not stifle vain love's sor-
row,
Bound he would track his tempter on the morrow.

IV.

"You fool!" companions jeered, "And is your
face

So strange to you, Narcissus, you can throw
Yourself into each woodland watering place,
Mad to embrace your shadow-self below?"

He would not heed, he sought unceasingly
The treacherous sprite, who answered smile
with smile,

Gesture with gesture, pain with misery,

Yet would not yield its body any while.
He sickened and died beside the pool, and not
A seeker found his body; in its stead
A sweet strange flower bloomed upon the spot,
Drooping to its reflection its fair head,
Whose purple heart and creamy petals' hem
Hold still his name and grief embroidering them.

NARCISSI

v.

“A foolish tale,” they said, and closed the book,
And parted to their tasks. The poet went
And sought his couch, while the world softly took
Away its noisy ache and merriment,
And he, brooding above his spirit pool,
Admiring his own rhymes, his singing gift,
Plunged himself headlong down into the cool
Depths where the hidden inner waters drift,
Then rose, and then again adventured far,
Until life ended, and where he had been
His flower of song shone like a new-spun star,
Lighting the tuneless darkness men were in,
Purple with his heart’s cry, and mellow white
With his insistent summons to delight.

vi.

So the musician plumbed his spirit’s well,
Whose brooding bosom rippled into song,
Which blossomed after he had gone, to tell
His joy and sorrow to the cowed, dumb throng.
The sculptor sought into his own loved dreaming
The way to wake dead marble into breath,

NARCISSI

And now his quiet and frozen flowers are gleaming

Where he was, who lies quiet enough in death.

The actor, singer, each leaves living flowers

Within the minds and on the lips of men,

Which now we own, and when no longer ours

In other minds and lips will bloom again,

Blossoms on whose live beauty all men look.—

“A foolish tale,” they said, and closed the book.

IF THE SEAS DRY—

If the seas dry and the lands burn
And the day goes blind,
If the round earth grows a dead thing,
Why should I mind?

If the stars freeze and the skies freeze,
I could turn to you;
But if your love grows a dead thing,
I die too.

THE SILVER WAY

I.

You think to shut me out of your life,
You smile upon me frostily,
Cloaking the red flame of your love
In black cloths of space and silence.
You click the key in the reluctant lock,
And pass softly to your single couch,
Locking me out of your thoughts.

II.

As long as you are anything,
I shall find you . . . touch you.
If you were shriveled to nothing,
I would be the something cuddling it.

III.

The wan wind of dawn
Tugs fitfully at your window,
Thins into tiny openings,
Swells laughingly throughout your morning
chamber,
And smoothes your rose-blown body
As you yawn, happily,

THE SILVER WAY

Your welcome to day. . . .

I am the wind.

IV.

The loud golden sunlight
Touches your hand in the shadowed gloom,
Wakes it to rosy splendor. . . .
It draws you slowly to the open window,
And makes your lips a scented flame. . . .
I am the sunlight.

V.

The dew-dusted rose
Powers its living perfume on you;
You yield yourself to its clasp. . . .
I am the rose.

VI.

At the blank midnight,
Under the restless seas of heaven,
Where dim flotillas pitch,
With golden-lanterned prows
And crimson stars at their sterns,
A quiet moonbeam presses its silvery way
To where you breathe and sleep. . . .
I am the moonbeam.

THE SILVER WAY

VII.

Silent you sleep—
The black womb of the sky
Aches to push forth its silver child.

I am the thin sickle-edge of light,
Cleaving the darkness to you.

I am the round silver eye,
Rapt with your helpless beauty.

I am the golden arms stretched down
From the late low moon,
Lifting you.

It is the darkness. . . .
And we are one.

APHRODITE ENOIKIA

I.

Out of the russet sea, over the crackling sands,
Scarved with a shimmering veiling of foam, the
sea-sired goddess stands.

Lo, at her back the waves gnash with their whi-
tened teeth,

And all is a desolate anguish above, a deep
drowned grief beneath.

But here where her footfall pauses, and here
where her blue eyes stay,

The soil is awake with a blossoming madness, a
rapture of flowery spray:

Poppy, hydrangea and odorous violet, and the
red flame of the rose,

Carpet the glad and fortunate path where her
sweet self goes.

So came love to the land, out of the earliest sea;
So came love to the land—as love has come to me.

II.

How did he chance to mark your coming so,
That earliest singing soul of long ago?
Sick of way-worn search for a tarnished fleece,

APHRODITE ENOIKIA

He bade the balm of your step quiet Greece.
He bade your silver silence flood the soul,
And wake the pulse to make the half-man whole.
Out of the moist mad sea you came to the land,
Confident, wind-footed, siren-eyed—and grand
With confident grandeur, that your sovereignty
Alone could bring the ultimate ecstasy.

III.

How did he mark your coming so?
Where did he get the eyes to see?
How could he paint a love of snow
Out of your warm dishevelry?
Were you a being of his dream,
Into the day's glow lingering;
Or did you live, not only seem—
You prodigal of the joys you bring,
Cool and odorous to the clasp,
Warm and yielding with desire,
Wisp in the chase, but in the grasp
Awakening . . . fire?

IV.

I think that singer of ancient Greece
Knew you—loved you—as men love now.

APHRODITE ENOIKIA

You shattered his restless, unsatisfied peace;
Yours was the hand to madden his brow,
Yours were the lips to melt in his,
Promising, yielding ecstasies.

Yours was the breast to pillow his cheek,
Yours was the spark to fire his soul,
Until the seeker had found his goal,
Until the strong was humble and weak.
Large and ample-bodied and dear,
You gave to love yourself—and him;
There is no higher rapture here,
Nor where man's heavens fade and dim.

Then, when you left him, desolate grief
Found in his song some thin relief.
Then he visioned you born in spray,
Out of the russet-pale sea-way.
But his arms still stung from the broken clasp,
His lips were red with no trodden wine;
And his body had held within its grasp
What now he called divine.

The song was sweet within your ear,
When back to the havening clasp you came;
But most he sang for himself to hear,

APHRODITE ENOIKIA

To warm forever at that red flame
His soul remembered at your name.

v.

Nor could I sing of you, divinity,
If in these rounding arms I had not known you;
And since you gave your shining self to me,
Forevermore my heart and singing own you.
In the taut midnight hour you bade me learn
What starry raptures lovers earn together.
Our bodies were a breathing torch, to burn
My memory through all succeeding weather.
Life mounts unnoticed to a crest of passion. . . .
Love still is dear, but dulling in its hue;
Its flame must gutter, and its fire grow ashen,—
Yet one red reverent hour my spirit knew,
And knew how full love's cordial touch could be,
O woman who made Love grow flesh for me.

vi.

Out of the smiling sea, over the welcoming sand,
Scarfed with the nebulous robe of my dreams,
goddess, I see you stand.

APHRODITE ENOIKIA

Lo, where your footfall pauses, Spring has come
back to flower;

Poppy, hydrangea and odorous violet wake for
a brief sweet hour.

Ever eternal, eternal, you come to the children
of men,

To point them the path to the blossoming way
of ecstasy again.

So came love to the land, out of the womanly sea;

So came love to the land, leading you to me.

ROMANCE

You cannot find Romance at home?
Her lonely opal trail you place
In some forgotten land,
Some dim, moon-shivering strand
Where waves unflesh their fangs of wanton foam?
In common things before your face
You find no swing to toss your spirit high
Into an unsoared sky?

Any uncharted moment may open a door
Through which you pass, as in a golden glamor,
To a new world unguessed before:
The living room, with its friendly clamor,
Is an intense and passion-breathing place;
Your wife, the babies, your own face,
Shine with new meanings and new dignities;
Your pen, your work-stool, chisel, saw and ham-
mer
Are live fresh marvels—do others touch such as
these?
The brother, bronzed from sea-sun and salt air,
Has lesser passions, fighting the insensible ocean,
Than grip you everywhere;
And each new moment breeds its fresh emotion,

ROMANCE

Its untapped flood of coldness or devotion,
Freezing or burning life to ice or cinder;
Your own soul's naked progress through the
 hours,
Its curious pligrimage through things that
 hinder,
That it cleaves as a light parts mistiness,
Old doubts seen clearly, new problems starkly
 seen,
Which must be met with undivided powers,—
Can misty, imagined land
Or night-dark visions, mean
So much as things at hand,
Tinily wondrous, intimately grand?

The postman's casual whistle looses daily
Innumerable fancies; each greeting of a friend
Is only welcoming gaily
Another soul on travel, who may lend
Some of his clinging soul-dust to your own;
The vague caress you squander on a kitten,
The home-kiss—these unleash the self-same fire
That lifted Beatrice heaven-higher

ROMANCE

And bared a queen's breast, where an asp had
bitten.

And each one hurries, careless of his ticket's read-
ing,

To the same city, with its numberless gates,

Choicelessly speeding

To the wild scattering destiny, that awaits

Body and soul, apprenticed to voyages deeper,

Further, more magical, than fantastic trips

On flying carpets, or the dream-voyage that whips

Capriciously the unresisting sleeper.

Perhaps it greets us, with the next vague glance,—

And we speak of Romance!

THE POEM

I.

I lift my gaze from one poet's book,
Archaic, pallid, underwise,
Then stop my strained and fretful look—
Why, here's a poem before my eyes!

Not in the books, whose marshaled rows
Wait for my seeking, to disclose
Their thin and varied thus-and-soes;

Not in the iris flower of June,
That proudly spills its purple boon,
A wordless, soundless, fragrant tune;

Not in the waiting ivory keys,
Nor the room's pleasant harmonies,
Sweet with disheveled memories,—

My restless eyes achieve their rest,
Break to a smile, and ponder, where,
With face at peace, and moveless breast,
My tired young wife lies sleeping there.

II.

Peace on her face, peace in this room—
Oh, it is far to the flaring gloom

THE POEM

Where war's strange fiery flowers bloom.

Immobile breast, and moveless air—

Oh, it is far to red roads where

Torn bodies twitch, and still eyes stare.

Oh, can there be so mad a place,

Where writhes a self-destructive race? . . .

Immobile breast, peace in her face.

III.

Her gentle breathing scarce unfurls

The tiniest of her sleeping curls.

The eyes are closed, the soul withdrawn,

The wax cheeks show a doubtful flush

As when the East begins to dawn;

As quiet is her couch's hush.

One hand is cupped beneath her brow,

The other lies with fingers still

Upon the coverlet; and now

She almost smiles, as some deep thrill,

Dream-woven, has its vagrant will.

IV.

Where do you wander

Out in your dreams?

THE POEM

What gay adventures,
What somber journeys,
What wings upbear you
As you accomplish
All your hid longings?

Do you climb lonely
Sky-secret mountains?
Do you grope blindly,
Leaden, foot-hindered,
Through threatening caverns?

Do you face dangers,
Stormy gray sea-ways,
Night-haunted sorrows?
And am I with you,
I, the beloved?
Or do you fly me,
Me, a dream-enemy?

May you tread safely,
In your far dreaming,
Gaining the goals!

THE POEM

v.

Ah, you seem so sound asleep!
Body laved in stillness deep,
Soul, whose silent slumbers keep

Far away the restlessness
Of the stupid world's distress,
Plastic to the dream's caress.

And I am so far away,
Here, where my quick fancies play
With your quiet self today!

Why seek within a printed place,
When in her sleeping beauty lies,
With moveless breast and peaceful face,
A poem before my eyes?

TO A WOMAN

✓
You have ended it today;
 Nine slow months of fear and yearning
You have stepped the narrowing way
 Of the lane that had no turning.

Then the ultimate, taut gate,
 Where no soul could lift or aid you—
And, tight-lipped, you met the fate
 That once met the one who made you.

Now the road widens again,
 And you hold against your bosom,
Gathered at the gate of pain,
 This your body's breathing blossom.

October 6th, 1917

BIRTHDAY

Today that earliest miracle
Comes to my memory again—
Of thirty years ago, when first
I breathed, in the old way of men.

Out of a woman's agony,
Out of a loving—and a pain—
I budded forth, to take my fill
Of the earth's excellent domain.

There was a time I was not I,
But alien things, that clung and blent . . .
Now I have grown, and trod the dust,
And I am weary . . . and content.

For I have seen the miracle
Here in my own home's dear domain—
Another life, my first-born, bud
Out of a loving—and a pain.

September 1st, 1918

TO A BABY, REACHING FOR THE SMOKE

For Janet

Your gray eyes dance with ecstasy,
A cooing chuckle lifts and purls,
And rose-soft fingers laughingly
Grope, as the slow smoke coils and curls

Out of my pipe, a spiral mist
You reach and close on, gay with hope
That in your tiny tight-locked fist
It will stay captive. . . . Still you grope,

And still it slips, dissolves, eludes
To feathery nothingness—and a new
Pillar of grayness slowly broods
Up from the pipe's bowl, teasing you.

If once those rose-soft fingers turn
And find a solid goal, they gain
Only the soiling pipe, to burn
With reddening memories of pain. . . .

Endlessly so we strain and grope
To reach some coiling, curling wraith

TO A BABY, REACHING FOR THE SMOKE

That circles near—dissolving hope,
Elusive truth, or slipping faith.

And if too eagerly we yearn
To touch the soul of things that are,
We find the touch will soil and burn,
And that its memory is—a scar.

THE LEARNERS

O little feet, unused to weight and burden,
O little legs, uncertain, timorous,
We smile as we behold your faint successes,
Your doubtful stumbling seems too vain to us.

Each three steps' journey is a wild adventure,
And perils lurk in floor and carpet spaces,
Far from the sheltering chair and couch; and
farther
The passage here to havening arms and faces.

But still you dare—for life is spun of daring;
And step by step your earnest journeys
lengthen,
As mastery grows out of careful seeking,
As little legs and little purpose strengthen.

We smile: and hardly think of long days coming
When you will walk with firm and careless
trust,
Watching, perhaps, more little feet that falter,
Long after we who smile are quiet dust.

LOVE-GIVERS

I.

You are remembered, women once loved well:
O brown-eyed girl of Florence,
You looked when Dante Alighieri passed. . . .
He paid for this with a life's adoration,
Crowning you over the daughters of heaven.

There was Helen, who fled from her Spartan husband,
Sick of the endless clatter of wars;
Fled with a dazzled youth, over the tousled sea,—
As the oar-blades flashed to the moon, and sliced
the waters,
—And gave her body to him. . . .
He rendered the last bruised drop of his blood,
And a towered city burned and ended.

And that warm dusky queen of the Nile
Lent of her practiced body to a Roman,
Who paid the world for her. . . .
Women who were loved, you are well remembered.

II.

And what of you, in your slim shining beauty,
Dawn-lipped, eyed like the gray-blue sky of March,

LOVE-GIVERS

Who have given me the body's toll
That Helen and Cleopatra paid,
And more?

Who have yielded a field for a blossoming human
harvest,

Have walked, clear-eyed,
Into the torture room of pain,
That our love might come to its fruitage?

I have no Troy to dower you with,
No world, stained with a Roman peace.
I have only myself—
Little enough for the debt I owe you,—
You, whose beauty is minted
As lover, and mother of days to be!

THE RED SONG

I.

They say, my song, I must grasp my heart
And squeeze you, drop by drop, from its agony.

So the lank Florentine sang of his dammed-up pas-
sion,

Lifting his virgin love above the clouds of angels.

So the crushed hearts of Poe and Thompson

Bled dark dyes for cloths of gloom

To shroud their young dead loves.

So Heine poured his gray and poisoned floods

Over her false soul who once let him love her.

Come forth then, heart:

Let me hold your live scarred vigor over this page,

And wring from you every clotted reminder

To line forth the blackened story of my love.

The drops fall, one by one—

A dead hollow sound, like the throb of a drum

With no body beneath it.

See how the dun spots stain the blank whiteness!

II.

From my earliest hour, I have been in love;

And she who drew the flow of my love to her,

THE RED SONG

And flooded me in the tide of hers,
Yielded to me from the first, kissed me, bound me,
Lent her warm breathingness to my fresh embrace. . . .

But ever when these preludes of love were done,
She fled from me, like a flame before a lifted wave.

She did not pass away from me,
She did not die, nor prove faithless.
But ever between me and those havening brown
eyes

A bar was raised, that I could not overleap,
A gate was lowered, that left me shivering without,
A gulf was opened, whose depth was infinity.
She fled from me, fled from me, my beloved.
Even as at the due time of passion
I drew back from her.

We and a third, her first lover, raised the bar,
Let fall the gate, split wide the impassable gulf.

Blinded, I turned from her,
And flung myself through the eager throng of
womankind,
Seeking in them my beloved.

THE RED SONG

Again and again I found her in another ;
Sealing kiss and caress made me sure of her,—
And then the fog left my eyes,
And I saw a mocking enticer
Who was not what I sought.
There was no rest, no peace for me,
Until I could clench her shining self to my own.

I climbed into the infinite blackness of the gulf,
Seeking her glistening form ;
The better to pass the imperative way
I stripped my soul of its full freightage
Of name and of race, of kindred and faiths ;
I flung God from me in my passionate desire
To uncumber myself for the insistent way.
Ever the path grew steeper and gloomier,
Ever she fled before love was done.

I burned with a giant's fury
To storm the impossible ramparts of heaven,
To hurl God the Father out of His farthest place,
And achieve the beloved—my mother.
Ever my love burned more violently,
Ever her love beckoned, beyond the bar—
But it had been raised by the three of us

THE RED SONG

And by endless generations before us;
No hands—not even mine—could shake its rooted
strength.

So was my naked soul battered and scarred,
So was my heart flamed with hopeless love,
Until its bruised blood stained the path to heaven,
And its weary cry of unfulfillment
Shrieked shuddering through all my dead and liv-
ing moments.

The drops fall, one by one,—
The scarlet stain widens and darkens
To dead blackness.

III.

I will not yield to the hopeless fate,—
I, with a giant's strength and a giant's desire.

Look! I take the form of the beloved within my
hands,
And, fired with a god's creative frenzy,
I shape anew a beloved that I can love.

THE RED SONG

I tear out, strand by strand,
Those chestnut tresses, hiding the depths of mid-
night,
That have strangled my soul so long;
I reach to the sun's great head
And plait his golden rays
For the tresses of a new beloved.

I pluck out the brooding brown eyes,
Those lights that lit my darkness
And led my feet straying
Into endless dismal swamps of despair;
I mold the sky's live blue
Into all-seeing eyes of a new beloved.

I take the willowy grace of the waves,
The sinuous flow of the wind,
The sky-flung curve of the mountains,
The delicate unrest of the Springy leaves,
And out of these I fashion a body
For my new beloved.

And last, I pluck out the sweet soul
That so long held my flood of love,
And place it back with its first lover;

THE RED SONG

And shape out of all starry rapture
A soul for my new beloved.

Scarred heart that beats so triumphantly,
Your dropping blood bugles a song of victory,
A glad and ringing hosannah!
Out of the dead gloom and the hopelessness,
Into the new morning of manhood,
I turn forever from the barred past,
And, singing, live, and, living, sing
My song of love and laughter!
Let the hills burn green, and the blossoms
whiten,—
Let the odors of Spring dart over the wayside,
And the sun by day, and the stars by night,
Choir all the joys of love!
I am man, and woman is mine;
Together we blend, to create the future.

This is the red song of love
My heart's glad drops are singing!

III.

GREEN LEAVES AND BROWN

CALENDAR

Spring will come soon,—there comes an end to
snowing;

Summer her golden melody will bring,

Rich Autumn's gorgeous fires come glowing, glow-
ing,—

Then follows Winter, ere another Spring.

The earth is sore of Winter's blustering;

The pale green leaves clamor to start their
growing,

And to one hope our ice-bound spirits cling:

Spring will come soon; there comes an end to
snowing.

Ah, filmy flowers, you are overflowing

The meadows; and the sky will lift the wing
Of many a bird who seeks you blindly, knowing
Summer her golden melody will bring,

Color, and flame, and fragrance; these will fling

Themselves on crest and lowland, gayly showing
How high the unspoken tide of joy can swing;
Rich Autumn's gorgeous fires come glowing,
glowing,

CALENDAR

Till they burn brown and low, their ardor slowing,
Their passion at its final evening;
Over the fields the withering blasts come blowing;
Then follows Winter, ere another Spring.

Yet will we welcome the raw buffeting,
Thankful for this stern strength it is bestowing,
A goad to sloth, to deadened life a sting:
Prepare your soul for the new time of sowing,—
Spring will come soon.

BERKSHIRES IN APRIL

It is not Spring—not yet—
But at East Schaghticoke I saw an ivory birch
Lifting a filmy red mantle of knotted buds
Above the rain-washed whiteness of her arms.

It is not Spring—not yet—
But by Hoosick Falls I saw a robin strutting,
Thin, still, and fidgety,
Not like the puffed, complacent ball of feathers
That dawdles over the cidery Autumn loam.

It is not Spring—not yet—
But up the stocky Pownal hills
Some springy shrub, a scarlet gash on the gray-
ness,
Climbs, flaming, over the melting snows.

It is not Spring—not yet—
But at Williamstown the willows are young and
golden,
Their tall tips flinging the sun's rays back at
him;
And as the sun drags over the Berkshire crests
The willows glow, the scarlet bushes burn,

BERKSHIRES IN APRIL

The high hill birches shine like purple plumes,
A royal headdress for the brow of Spring.
It is the doubtful, unquiet end of Winter,
And Spring is pulsing out of the wakening soil.

I WOULD NOT DIE IN APRIL

I would not die in April,
When grass and violet wake,
Nor have your spade disturb them
For my sake;

I prize too much the comfort
Of all the pallid shoots
To grub beneath their confident
Slim roots.

Oh rather in the snowtime,—
That from the newly dead
The grass may forage boldly
In my head,

And from my heart the violet
May drink, and flame a blue
Sweet message from the heart of God
To you.

THE ETERNAL COURTESIES

March. . . . The gully is harsh and cold,
Jagged with outpushed rocks and naked tree-
trunks,
Pocked with dust-spotted snow, crumbling and
treacherous,
A petulant trickle in the stream bed.

April—and over night it wakes!
A rainbow mist buds on the trees,—
Gray and timid green, ashen crimson and gold,—
The emerald flaunt of skunk-cabbage laughs by
the stream-bed,
The hooded pitcher-plants, in arrogant red,
among them.
Spring beauty and violet hillocks pimple the hill-
side,
And the golden sunbursts sparkle here and there,
The lily-like adder's tongue, graceful, glowing.

O month of the fitful sun and rain,
Thanks for these sweet courtesies!

GREEN LEAVES

For Clara Ellen Swartz

I.

We slid out of the street-locked park,—
A rolling, curving stretch of wood
May-odorous, and proudly green,—
Into cleft streets, whose bricked walls stood
In stolid death, as our machine
Skidded and righted, like some dark
Low-flying creature, fleeing a shout.
We wound and swirled and bent about,
Yet still the oddly scattered trees
Watched us, in curious disdain. . . .
And then we found a park again,
And a triumphant horde of these
Green guardians of green mysteries.

Out of the green—into the green—
And all the bricked-up blocks between
Blurred to a dulling monochrome:
Here was our first and our last home.

II.

We saw trees watch us, as we sped
Through bricked streets dying or already dead.

GREEN LEAVES

They were on silent sentry go,
Coolly watching the human foe.
Stiffly and silently, as we sped,
They watched with their green eyes overhead.

III.

High on a hill, as we swept by,
We saw green trees buttress the sky,
Stiff and terrible and high,
And in no human way serene.
The sky was gray, but the living sheen
Tortured our eyes. And then the keen
Unsparring sun flung his aureole
Around each rooted living soul. . . .
We scarce dared look upon the whole,
So painfully, passionately green.
But one shade brighter, and those high
Green flames would burn the tortured sky.

IV.

Circling the city's tree-cleared space
The forests peer with covetous face,
The forests creep with wolfish pace,
Faltering, wily, and yet elate.

GREEN LEAVES

There in their pride they crouch and wait,
A green-eyed ring of wolves, who slay
The night-bound straggler for their prey. . . .
Closer and closer they inch their way.

v.

You think a park is a fenced and clipped
Body of tree clones, manacled tight?
They will march free on their own night.
See how one venturesome root has gripped
And twisted the pavement's concrete mass,
Forcing a widening crevasse.
See how the grass between the bricks
Worries them with its gradual tricks.
See how the slow boughs reach an arm
Over the fence to things forbidden;
And the white roots keep up a hidden
Endless restlessness, groping their harm.

The seasons crowd with muffled tread;
Man will abandon the brick-walled street. . . .
The trees' triumph will be complete.
The staid blank walls will be engraved
With what the ivy creepers plaited;

GREEN LEAVES

There will be life where all is dead,
Life, green life, tangled and matted.
Tearing apart what man has paved,
Strange new shoots will force their way:
Life, green life, will conquer the clay.

v.

What are we
But leaves of a tree,
Pallid, fluttering leaves of a tree,
Whited and thinned,
Flung by the wind,
Torn and freed by the scattering wind,
Treading, and trod
By man and god
Into our mother and grave, the sod?

vi.

Before man was, the patient trees
Greened in the Spring, dulled in the fall.
And after us, their vivid shawl
Will cover the nude brown limbs of earth.
Their slavery to man is brief—
They will come back to the free mirth

GREEN LEAVES

Of unhedged stem and unclipped leaf,
Over the earth in triumph running,
Glowing green victory. Man sees
The gradual surge, and builds him poor
Oases of brick and stone and plaster—
But in the end the green is master.
And when man's hand has lost its cunning,
In some unguessed untimed disaster,
He shall lie and see the slow serene
Onward march of the army of green—
See soil and sky, and nothing between
But the endless sweep of the joyous green.

BY-ROADS—I.

Summer

I.

High above the great winds pass,
Tossing the tree-tops to the sky;
And, just before they bluster by,
They stoop to earth to ripple the grass.

II.

The gross black spider seems to nap,
Watching a gnat buzz idly by;
But his black eyes gleam, as a butterfly
Lurches—is caught—in the fine-spun trap.

III.

The village street-lights do their best,
As the storm's lashed rushes come and go;
But only the lightning's flash can show
The tossing trees on the drenched hill's crest.

IV.

A patient bee, with his gold-tipped waist,
Fills the sweet-clover with his hum,

SUMMER

Working unrestingly for some
Honey that he will never taste.

v.

The golden-rod unbuttons each bud,
Flings off its caps, and lets a hot
And flaming splendor warm the spot. . . .
And does gold always bloom out of mud?

vi.

The noon wind woos with soft-tongued hiss,
And each tree trembles, careless of blame,
Hiding her bright green face for shame,
Baring her gray breasts to his kiss.

vii.

The daddy-long-legs, caught in the gate,
Scuttles off, one leg the less.
It does not mar his contentedness;
Are not seven legs as good as eight?

viii.

The evergreens are shut from the sky
By oak and maple and hickory.
Perhaps they are thinking, silently,
It will be winter by and by.

II.

Rebirth

The tufted tussock caterpillar
Pushed out of his stiff cocoon.
He did not see the blue sky,
Nor the sun-roofed splendor of the woods.
He looked at his dogwood branch,
And he sighed, "What a lot of work
For me to accomplish!"
And he began to eat,
And eat, and eat.

III.

This Day

I.

Life is a gaudy scarf,
With a riotous red fringe ringing its white
center.

The mud of things has spattered it again and
again,

And after its many washings
Its threadbare heart is still white,
But the warm fringe
Is a faded, dingy pink.

II.

Life is a rose in bud,
Full of June color and fragrance.
It is old now, old and crackly ;
The scent is musty,
And a careless touch
Shatters to dust its brittle substance.

IV.

Tipsiness

The wine-red sedges stain the rolling hills
A spreading, dusky crimson; and the winds
That frolic there, go reeling forth among
The sober apple orchards; which, grown gray,
Spill down their jolly fruit, until the fields
Are cidery; and buxom mother earth
Sways, tipsy with the fullness of the year.

V.

Coin of the Year

November, you old alchemist,
Who would have thought
You could turn the high arrogance of golden-
rod
To still plumes of silver?

VI.

Homeward

The sheer gray leaves giddily waver
At the top of the nude trunk.
They are wrinkled and decrepit,
But their tremulous, palpitating eagerness
Exceeds youth's . . .
They are about to return
To the last soothing clasp
Of mother earth.

VII.

Source

Like a great blast
Blowing over marshy places,
Beauty, you blow into me,
Possessing me,
Setting me singing
Like a reed in the wind.

VIII.

O Dear Brown Lands

O dear brown lands, out of you I blossomed.
I feed on your rooted and wandering fruits;
And when my puzzled restlessness is done,
You clasp me again,
Scattering me over your brown bosom. . . .
My mother, my sustainer, my children,
And my dusty immortality.



THE WINDOW

A window—just one opening from the gloom

Of a drab, faded room,

Its frame painted a chalky white, its panes

Spattered by last week's rains.

A white shade, creased and thinned by wear,

Lets the impartial glare

Of sunlight dull the carpet's green. . . .

An ordinary scene—

Yet, if it could speak, it could unfold

Passion and dirtiness, snapped strands of human
fate,

Humdrum things, and beauty wonder-souled,—

Love, and its splendor . . . hate. . . .

Oh, every slightest thing has visioned these:

Each warm-lit window questioning the night,

Each silent road, each noisy alley, might

Speak of all wonders and all mysteries.

Could aught be more usual than what lies without?

. . . Staid vines and creepers, winding in and out

The even picket fence; the glowing grass;

Four straggly rose-slips, with no blur of pink;

Weeds, that shrink

THE WINDOW

Affrighted, when steps pass;
One burning spray of geranium, a lit torch
That seems to touch and scorch
The blazing air, until its flaming crest
Decays to dusty rest.
Beyond, the hill, lifting its ancient head.
All usual . . . but there is more to be said.

Past it the grocer's boy carries his wares,
Wrapped in its vast affairs:
The scolding that he got for coming late. . . .
Home squabbles . . . and the movies, when he
sees them. . . .
Mamie—and the next date. . . .
The teachers pass it—boarders at the place—
Each with drawn, nervous face
From the unending cares that irk and tease them.

No, it has not seen war; though three recruits,
In their stiff, awkward suits,
Apologetically stop, "just passing by,"
For milk, and a piece of pie.
Grandma limps slowly, almost at journey's end.
The prim-lipped minister . . . friend after friend.

THE WINDOW

Not only people. Here birds meet and woo,
Nest, and then scatter. Flowers bud and bloom,
The ground drenched with their slow perfume,
Flaunting a gaudy red and blue. . . .
So on the scarring road, the hill's stooped crest—
Day's turmoil, night's unrest.

And it will mull here in its shabby gloom
By the dim, faded room,
With frame repainted, new-washed panes,
New curtains, and new stains.
It sees, but it cannot unfold,
Passion and ugliness, snarled strands of human
fate,
Casual things, and beauty wonder-souled,
Love, and its birth and death . . . and hate.

OCTOBER

Oh thin October sunshine
On thin October leaves—
A ghostly web of laughter
The golden season weaves.

The curt wind's cool caressing
Sinews the laggard soul
To follow, follow, follow
An ever rising goal.

But more to me the laughter
The fading season weaves—
The thin October sunshine
On thin October leaves.

AUTUMN

Now, like a rough buffet in the face,
The first breeze of Autumn,
Burlily swaggering through the blistered streets,
Lashes my summer-drugged spirit.

From the chill far hills it comes,
Brusquely jostling down the fruit in the orchards,
Clawing the gay-colored leaves from the trees,
Until their thin corpses litter the ground,
And crying to the spirits of men:
"Ho, away with you!
Skulk to your dim houses,
Cower from your frosty master!
I and my brother, Winter, proscribe you!
We will chill with our icy touch
The gay glow of your hearts,
We will strip bare the foliage of your souls."

Ah, breeze of Autumn,
You are no conqueror to me,
But brother of my spirit.
Your rough handshake bugles up my laggard self.
Though you bluster with your chill blast

AUTUMN

I will roar you back from my loved ways.
Your tempest heartens my soul
For the keen struggle remaining,
And the glad, hard road.

WIDE HAVEN

Tired of man's futile, petty cry,
Of lips that lie and flout,
I saw the slow sun dim and die
And the slim dusk slip out. . . .
Life held no room for doubt.

What though Death claim the ones I prize
In War's insane crusade,
Last night I saw Orion rise
And the great day-star fade,
And I am not dismayed.

SHADOW

My shadow is a restless thing,—
At dawn it wanly steals
Back from the western darkness,
Till it tags behind my heels.

As morning grows, it hugs me close,—
Until, when noon's rays beat
Out of the blazing overhead,
It cowers beneath my feet.

At evening, it seeks the East,
Inching its dusky way
Farther and farther down the road,
Fleeing the aging day.

And when the sun's at sky-line edge,
It leaps and gayly runs
Thinly out to Aldebaran
And all the cindery suns.

A cloud has dimmed the farthest star,
A frown against its light,—
My shadow's lean gray fingers touch it,
At the edge of night.

SHADOW

Oh, it can touch the farthest star,
But cannot bring me word
Of what pale glitter it has dimmed,
What lost sounds it has heard.

THE SKY-GYPSY

The silver-rimmed cloud-wrack
Falls swiftly toward the eastern hill.
The rounded moon, like a toy balloon suddenly
freed,
Bounds up and away.

Stay with us, stay with us, moon—
Do not fly with your soft radiance
To light some other planet, some farther sun,—
To wander, a sky-gypsy,
Down lost byways of the heavens.

You are tired of our endless songs to you,
And the eternal platitudes
Of lovers, lips unleashed in your maddening
glimmer . . .
But space is a chill labyrinth,
And night will be bleak without you.
Stay with us, moon!

YOUNG MOON

A thin and ruddy crescent,
Over the Hudson's flow;
And you're the same young moon I saw
Oh so long ago!

And then your thin blade lighted
An Alabama sky. . . .
You have traveled from your home
Just as far as I!

LIKE CALLS TO LIKE

For Howard Dietz

Like calls to like; the high stars sing for me,
The harsh rude breezes speak to me alone;
I hear the voices of the hill and sea;
I talk with them, in language all our own.

Over the fields of heaven the stars are sown,
Vast shining ones, who fling their melody
To those whose ears can catch the brave clear
tone—

Like calls to like; the high stars sing for me.

Stirred by the whirling stars, wild-tongued and
free,

The winds out of the far sky-realms are blown,
Chanting their boisterous rebel litany;
The harsh rude breezes speak to me alone.

And as they pass, voices of clod and stone

Come humbly; and of meadows, where the bee
Hums, and the toadstool lifts its tiny throne;
I hear the voices of the hill and sea.

I greet, and take the greeting, of the tree;

And men—the eager child, the shriveled crone,

LIKE CALLS TO LIKE

All of the vari-tongued humanity,
I talk with them, in language all our own.

Flesh of their flesh am I, bone of their bone,—
Blood brother to them all eternally.

All things are one with me, and we are grown
One in our speech, our sadness, our high glee.
Like calls to like.

IV.

A STAR COMES SINGING

*To the memory of
Warfield Creath Richardson*

THE RETURN

“Back to the earth,” a voice whispers,
“Back to the bare bosom of the ground,
To the shaggy-haired pines, and the pungent carpet beneath,
To the lisp of waves, chiding our forgetfulness,
To the whispered wind, and its roaring summons
on high peaks,
And the hurled lightning,
Arms spread and breast bared to receive it!”

A cultured onlooker counsels,
“But this is regression, retreat!
Rather plunge forward into the roar of modern life,
The whirr of machinery, the red furnace gleam
On the glistening backs of half-naked toilers,
The unleashed passion of labor against capital,
With a fantasied and regulated Utopia
Gleaming at the end of the way
Like a Doré illustration
Of New Jerusalem!
This is the part of modern man.”

Shall I refuse to look at the moon,
Until it adopts an 8-hour day?

THE RETURN

Shall I close myself from the sun's glow
Till it readjust its wasteful routine?
Shall I condemn the starry dipper as inartistic
and unhygienic,
When compared with individual drinking cups?
Shall I banish Sirius and the Milky Way,
Until they have received the benignant civilized
blessings
Of life today?

Back to the earth!
Back to the wind and the tempest's flame,
And the wheeling stars.
Give them a wide gesture of greeting;
Let their high high harmony flow into your stumb-
ling soul,
Flame up to their unlegislated beauty.

STAR-BEES

The stars are golden bees,
Booming through the sky-meadows.
As they fly, they utter a sweet humming noise,
That rings with melody through the wide heavens.
Sometimes, when my ears are closed,
I can almost catch that far humming.

We see them such a tiny time!
All that we call hours, years, centuries,
They, flashing in their golden speed,
Seem to have hardly moved;
One swift glimpse, and our eyes are closed forever.

Oh, the vast meadows they fly through,
Sky staked out next to sky;
And, oh, the strange sweet flowers they visit,
Burrowing deep into the cloven blossom-hearts for
the honey.

At night the bees go back to the hive;
But it is dawn to them now,
And they scatter in the sky-meadows.
To us the wild splendor of their flaming dawn—is
darkness.

At evening they will fly home to the hive,
And the black final night. . . .

AND THERE WAS LIGHT

The black, impassive face of water,
With one great star at its heart,
As if ready to soar
And join its fellow in the night sky.

So there was once
The black, unmoving water of Chaos,
Out of whose unlit womb
Leapt forth the star, man.

THE WHEEL

I.

The height of a man, it trembled in the corner,
Swayed by their entrance;
Its slender spokes were fragrant
With the resinous breath of pine woods
And of the pungent oil,—
Inert, waiting the touch of life
To bring it to life.

The old grandfather brooded a moment. . . .
“I am not sure what it will do . . . not yet. . . .
Not what I want it to do.”

“And that?”

“To run forever!

From early time men have sought it,—
And I . . . for years. . . . But, watch!”

He loosened a clutch . . . a gentle push. . . .
Whirr—click! Whirr—click!
Around and around, and the click as the spokes,
Reaching the height, folded and shortened,
Lengthening again as it neared the bottom—
Whirr—click! Whirr—click!

THE WHEEL

For a long time it whirled;
Then slower and slower.
Whirr-rr—
It was still.

The old man's eyelids were narrowed;
He gazed out of the window.

II.

“You will make it run forever?”

“No—I will never do it.
There was a man who stole fire from heaven;
But I shall not steal this.
Why, I've been working for years on it,
And never closer than this:
The touch of thing to thing, of wheel to socket, of
body to soul,
Drags, slows the motion.
All things that live and whirl their splendid
courses
Grow slowly old and still; the ardor dies,
Out of the clamor a quiet, out of the stir a rest.
What then but shift the parts,

THE WHEEL

New spokes, hinges at different angles, new sockets,
And whirl it off once more?

III.

“I think God sits and spins His wheels,
Hoping to find the perfect way. . . .
Knowing He never will:
Spinning with restless nebulæ and vagrant comets,
And the streaming shine of the Milky Way.
It will whirl down, some day.

“He tried vast changes on earth:
Warm seas, gross lizards and dragons in the air,
Rending and raging beasts;
The spokes now brown-skinned men,
Now Greek and Roman conquerors,
Now gold-hungry men of the north. . . .
He lets men tinker and potter with wheels,
Vague human brotherhoods, visions of warless
earth,
Bodiless wheels-within-wheels of thought,
Drifting far out of space and time and things. . . .
Look! The wheel spins on;

THE WHEEL

New parts again. . . . I cannot see. . . . I cannot see. . . .

“Still He whirls His wheel; but His hair is gray-
ing,

His voice cracks and wheezes like mine, His wits
nod. . . .

He and His wheel will some day cease,
And other wheels will shine through the spinning
blackness. . . .

And some day it will stop,
And there will be no more motion, no more light,
No more darkness . . . nothing. . . .”

His voice was still, his eyelids narrowed;
He gazed out of the window.

OUT OF THE FOG

I.

To and fro in the heavy fog we walk,
All of us, all life through,
Brain fog . . . heart fog. . . .
And neither the blinding flare of midday
Nor the bright blackness of starless midnight
Nor books, nor the words we say and hear,
Can clear away the mistiness.
Numb, dozing, beast-like we trudge,
Dully aware of objects near,
Unable to pierce to the shining splendor around.
Until at last some inner storm of passion,
And the lightning tears wide the gray shroud
For one clear, soul-shaking vision.
Over the sharp reality of things the mists return,
And we go down the foggy way
To its foggy goal.

II.

Across in the subway they sat,
A mother and father, two sons and a daughter.
The incurious sitters speculated idly
On the woman's cheap sailor and sheer waist,
Her new glossed slippers. . . .

OUT OF THE FOG

On the man's tired face and shiny serge. . . .
On the boys' bright glances,
And the girl's flushed cheek on her father's coat.
Then turned as idly to the car cards above,
Flamboyant praises of soup and corsets;
And slipped to a thousand unaimed fancies
Of the end of the trip, and what would come next,
And yesterday . . . and yesterday. . . .

III.

Did any one of us see through the fog
To the reality there before him,
In this family or any family, this thing or any
 thing?
Time did not begin and end in that instant.
Did we see back to babies clenched to burdened
 breasts,
Or the dreadful hours of swollen torment,
With the doctor's casual comments to the head
 nurse,
Before he turned again to his bloody task
As out of the shaken chaos within
This child, breathless, and tiny,
Was pushed forth?

OUT OF THE FOG

So for each child. . . .

All this, and the wedding and wooing before,
And the girlhood's myriad incidents,
And another narrowing gate, and so unending,
All this is motherhood.

IV.

The father beside—had he no part in this?

As spark to the fuel, as breathing to the body,
As the current to the motionless subway train,
So had he been.

In the dark cavern of mating

A part of him, vibrant and seeking, urged forth,
Avidly finding its goal, before the child began.

This part of him had been shaped in his inner
being

Out of the air and food,

Out of growing plant and breathless soil

Gathered from lost byfields of the earth,

Ceylon, Sumatra, Alberta, Louisiana,

By hordes of his laboring brothers,

Each with his own world of incidents. . . .

All of these are in fatherhood.

OUT OF THE FOG

v.

So backward goes the chain,
Each mortal lessening to a child,
And on to mating cells in the darkness,
The human telescoping again and again,
Back through the frozen ages of earth
And the tropic flowering before them,
So on to the first timid stirrers in the water,
And the burning star-ages earlier.
The restless skin of the earth
Writhes into plant and fish, bird and man,
And what lies in the fog of the future.

vi.

Across in the subway they sit.
They chatter, and yawn, and drowse,
Dwellers in the fog,
Unseeing themselves, or any other thing,
Themselves unseen, except for a fleeting fog-view.
The cars grind to a standstill,
Eyes fall from the car cards,
They pass jostling into the crowd,
Out of the fog, . . . into the fog, . . .
Leaving the fog behind.

GOD IN THE ROAD

*“And God made man in His image; in the image
of God created He him.”*

Cease your tiresome debating about God;
You who would know Him, there is a surer way:
Come walk with me upon the road,
And I will show you His image again and again,
And from these you can truly picture Him.

God in this man with springy step that hurries
past,
In the man who slouches by, face down, gnawing
his frayed mustache,
In the shrill-voiced newsboys,
In the woman lolling impatiently in the auto
blocked by the passing hearse,
In the watchful servitor at the steering-wheel,
In the cold dumb upturned face in the hearse.

God in the tired faces of home-hurrying shopgirls,
In the eyeless woman offering gum,
In the beggar crumpled up in the doorway, breath-
ing heavily, with closed eyes,
In the hounding policeman, in the watery-eyed
judge he lies to,

GOD IN THE ROAD

And in the street-walker he has arrested, who
shrinks beside him.

Each face that we pass is the image of God—

Now an emaciated remnant of features,

A weak chin, a chubby infant's smile,

Now hairy, now bald, now erect, now doubled with
pain,

Now keen-visioned, but oftener miserly and grasp-
ing,

Now white, now a slant-eyed yellow-brown, now
black-faced and thick-lipped.

I am glad to know God.

I thought Him something different, all-powerful,
cosmos-creating.

Which of these furtive faces could even see a cos-
mos?

I thought Him all-knowing, immortal;

And vaguely He is all these.

But I shall not pray to God now,

Nor raise a gaudy temple to Him;

I shall help build Him a house to live in,

And He shall help me with mine.

BLACK NIGHT

O somber, sorrowful black night,
You rise, a bleak and solitary mourner
Over the blackened hills;
And all night long, from your cloud-hooded
 star-gold eyes,
Lonely star-golden tears
Creep down your somber cheek
To nothingness.

You mourn for much:
For a chill, stiffened baby,
Heavy at its mother's bosom. . . .
For a young woman's stilled face,
Eyeless and tongueless forever. . . .
For a reckless, blundering youth,
Sun gold pelting in his veins,
And spilling on the red-stained dust,
As the shrouding smoke drifts,
And the stabbing gas scatters on. . . .
For twitching battlefields. . . .

For Jesus dead, and his clean words
Wounded almost to death. . . .
For gentle Lincoln dead,

BLACK NIGHT

And all day's shining sons
Hunched forward frozenly,
Each on his lone cross. . . .
For laughter stabbed, and rapture gassed,
And joy and love reviled, defiled,
Each on his lone cross. . . .
O sorrowing, somber black night,
You mourn all these . . . and more.

All night long, from your cloud-hooded star-
gold eyes,
Lonely star-golden tears
Creep down your somber cheek
To nothingness.
You pass, a bleak and solitary mourner,
Beyond the blackened hills,
As day comes on.

THE NIGHT COMETH

The Night said: "I plunge into the fiery dawn."

—TAGORE.

Night, you have yielded me royally

Your dear person.

Great was my thirst for love,

And you lifted my soul to the wide clasp

Of your dark, star-jeweled bosom.

Now the due time of love is spent—

The sea of morning is at flood;

You plunge into its fiery splendor,

And I cannot call you back.

I will hold myself for your next embrace.

You will swim powerfully, lithe maiden,

Beneath the bright flood,

And arise, shaking off the dripping sunset,

On the western shore

You do not mind these lessening tides . . .

There will come a time

When morning will only ebb,

And, tossing aside your dulled jewels,

You will sit quietly, communing with yourself,

For an unending season.

A STAR COMES SINGING

I.

The Earth Turns South

The earth turns south again.
Nipped by the sunless spaces, chilled and timorous,
She scuttles back toward the summer glow.

My life turns south again.
Rounding the venturesome sweep of thirty years,
Back on my orbit I go,
My eyes absorbing what lies beyond
In the untraveled cold spaces.
Once more the tender glow of summer for me,
And I shall turn north for the last time.

The circuit of the sun
Is a day to the sun, a year to me.
Yet there shall be sun years,
And an end of sun years.

II.

The Coming

In a desolate space between two distant stars
There is a stir:

A STAR COMES SINGING

An unquiet tremor shakes the emptiness,
A thin sound is born, and swells in stature
Until it is thunderous.

Now up the empty highroad of the suns
A sight—a faint and nebulous shimmer,
Clearing, growing into a huge and pallid moon,
Like a silver eye onrushing in the darkness,
Lit by its tiny cindery sun.

The sound grows vaster, heaven-filling.
The winds awake, pealing their hollow trumpeting,
Dizzying the senses.

Nearer and nearer the wheeling globe,
Sea flecked and hill roughened, dimpled with val-
leys,
Trailing its scarf of misty air.

It is here!—

With a noise like a thousand cities falling together.

III.

Faces

As its huge bulk towers in passing
Faces peer from it, endlessly, endlessly,

A STAR COMES SINGING

Peering grayly, as out of prison bars.
The faces ache and haunt me.
King and ditchman, maiden and dreaming seer,
And my face, and your face, among them,—
Gray faces, endlessly peering.

Why do they look so gray, in the cloud-gray
mists?

Do they brood on the journey's end?
Are their hearts ashen, their souls aging,
As time limps on his appointed way?

IV.

Restless Birth

O singing earth, O restless voyager of heavens,
There has been no rest in your turbulent journey.

After you ceased your flaming tumult,
Your chilled rocks writhed, grinding one another,
Tossing in your shaken sea.

Out of this fertile turmoil
They blossomed into blind life,
Driven by wind and tide;

A STAR COMES SINGING

They woke into plants, rooted, receptive,
Stretched into buoyant cleavers of the sea,
Darters through the sky,
And the more sensitive marvel, man:
All only your rocks alive, erect,
Your restless substance moving
Into a fiercer restlessness.

v.

The Primal Goads

Man is spawned of the restlessness of things.
He drinks, into body and mind,
The rocks, the rooted plants, the stirring animals,
Even his fellow men;
And at the same time he is absorbed by them.

He drives restlessly over earth's surface
Whipped by the primal goads—hunger, and love:
Hunger, that he may grow in stature,
Love, the itching call and response to other beings,
That two restless circling things
May unite, grow inert, grow restful forever.

Out of hunger have come vast fields and factories,
And belts of steel to bind the girth of the world;

A STAR COMES SINGING

Ships, cities, and markets, customs and sciences.
And ever with it, out of love, the home life,
Tenement room to spreading palace,
And songs and music, and all of love's sweet ways:
And out of both have grown
The final winter of civilizations,
The entomber, war.

Seared by these punishing whips
Romance has grown great and stately,
Art flings his iridescent glamor over dumb things,
Making them eloquent;
Glory comes, and a great light
Shining in men's eyes.

In icy and desolate space
Godlike forms are fantasied,
Mad Ashtoreth of love, and sea-spray Aphrodite,
Soft Ceres and staid Vesta for the humbler needs,
Red Mars, ice-locked Thor, heaven-thundering
Jehovah.

There have been gentler gods and teachers—
Ingazing Buddha and lowly Jesus.

A STAR COMES SINGING

Lashed by these restless whips
Man even spans the threshold of the unspannable
 void,
Or clouds it with his wraith-like deities.

At last his calloused back is lashed no more.
He loses that fine crystallization,
Dissolves in the clear solution death,
And again is one with restless rock and soil.

VI.

The Crystal Life

Is life no more than this?
This flogged steed, pulling and twisting the un-
 wieldy chariot of matter
With the coiling lashes of love and hunger
Sealing the naked back, and caking the uneven way
With its blackened blood?

Life is more than this, or any words.
Out of its simple seeds grows strange vegetation,
Sparse in the desert places, and upon the volatile
 sea,
Crowding and furring heavily the spots called
 cities.

A STAR COMES SINGING

And there are crossed and complex things,
Life ever growing out of itself
Toward a perfect crystal,
Then swiftly dissolving and recrystallizing:
What has been only guessed at,
What is, seen vaguely and deceivingly,
What will be, a flowering stupendous and unrealiz-
able—
All out of the restless rock,
And into the restless rock returning.

VII.

Flower of the Dust

What a flower of the dust is man!
With eyes to see his mother earth, forever blind,
With ears to hear her song, who is deaf forever,
With lips to speak the word of the eternal dumb
one.

Into far space reach the sightless chains
That swing earth spiraling on,
And the chains with which she swings the stars,
Even the largest and most radiant.

A STAR COMES SINGING

So toward the infinite space man's arms of light
reach out,

Beholding, weighing: measuring, interpreting.

With ears and eyes he takes the undulant waves
of energy,

And they stir him strangely: light and sound.

He dares to pilfer pitiful fragments of the reason
of things,

This tiny piece claiming to understand

The limitless machine of which it is a part.

He builds cloudy religions and dizzy philosophies.

The spiraling earth climbs higher;

His dizzy structures topple, his clouds dissolve.

The earth is littered with his wrecks,

And the wrecks of the slower blunderers before
him.

The shore of the future is reefed and breakered.

There will be no man-made craft

That shall ever pass its final reef.

What a flower of the dust is man!

Rock, given ears and eyes and feeling,

A STAR COMES SINGING

Dust made eloquent!
The dust would swell into clearer eyes, keener
 hearing,
A more melodious tongue.
In and out, blossom and decay,
And out of the decay blossoms again;
Until the rock and the dust decay,
Until the earth and the sun decay,
In their new turn to blossom again.
So the earth goes singing,
One with the tidal roll of the stars,—
Suns and their clustering planets,
Comets, and wilder vagrants of heaven,
Streaming onward forever.

VIII.

The Perfect Vision

Now as the chilly earth
Whirls past empty and desolate space,
The pallid faces of men
Peer from its prisoning surface.
To each is given some flashing vision
Of beauty or melody, or the final truth:
To some these come again and again.

A STAR COMES SINGING

Man cannot live too long on the high places;
Or the rock of which his body and soul are made
Would melt and dissolve again to lifeless rock.
So with the clearest man-crystal
The light flames, and then dims;
Love and coarse hunger resume their sway.
We pass unheeding into the hidden heart of beauty,
Beneath the silver altar of the stars,
Or in the fresh green shrine of the springtime;
We stand beside a soul at its whitest glow,
Blind and unperceiving.

To each man comes the vision,
And as it comes, it dulls.
But the vision has not gone.
Like moonlight pouring on tumbling waves,
Now one drop, and now another,
Glowing back the mellow splendor;
Or like a seething liquid, whose ever-shifting sur-
face
Bursts into flame at the touch of the air,—
So comes the vision to men.
The man's glow dulls; the vision stays.

A Young God

I saw a young god, in a crowded corner of the
heaven,

Carrying under his arm a graceful world,
As one might carry a cherished family pet
To the merciful chloroforming.

He was a handsome god, kindly and efficient,
And his soul ached at what he was about to do.
For he had poured his spirit into his world—
Love, and a craving for liberty,
And throat-tightening beauty, and many good
gifts

Along with many that were evil.

But the time had come.

His world strayed bloodily too far;
It demanded too much of his spirit:
There was a bleak economy in heaven.
Lovingly and tenderly, he gave it all,
Babylon and Bethlehem, Ætna and polar sea,
Nero and Joan of Arc, Helen, Judas, and Jesus,
To merciful death.

A STAR COMES SINGING

A chilling cinder of a world
Scatters, eyeless and tongueless,
Through the field of dead stars.
Tomorrow the young god
Will go as his world has gone.

x.

Tomorrow

As the whirling globe spins upward
What new shifts will it see,
Before rock and dust decay,
And its spiral flight is stilled
In the breast of its mother, the sun?

Out of the blood-dewed past
Man yet may learn.
The odor of slaughtered blood
Has stained uncounted ages.
Will it learn the wonder of love,
Sole bringer of radiant joy
Over the blackened miles
And blackened hearts?

For love is the divinest selfishness,

A STAR COMES SINGING

The fullest and completest flowering
Of the dust-blossom, man.

Will cordial brotherhood find place among us,
That out of the equal human nebulæ
White stars of human light can rise unhindered?
Or will there be travail and oppression forever,
And hate forever, and blood forever?

XI.

Forest of Men

I too have blossomed for a day,
In the forest of men, of varying trees,
Stout wind-defying pines on open crags,
Shade-sheltering lowland trees,
Stunted trunks, storm-battered, or in crowded
 sunless hollows,
With flowering trees of men and women,
With trees of good and evil fruit, dead and living,
And woodland flowers of children.

I have been a tall and singing tree;
I have pushed my branches toward heaven;
The wind has scattered my pollen,

A STAR COMES SINGING

Has blown through my singing branches, and garnered my fruit.

The trees will die, and I among them;
Out of the rock arising, into the rock descending.

I shall not see what comes—
My scattering body and scattering soul
Will travel unguessed ways,
Never again assembling as one;
Each vibrant bit of me will speed on its way,
Filling its restless part in the earth's gray voyage.

XII.

Prayer

I pray, for me and for all men,
To that which sees and feels and knows,
The god that grows in me and all things living,
That I may stay as long as may be in the gleam:
That I may never lose the power to see,
Piercing through all cloudy fancies and delusions
Toward the shining core of truth outshining all
things.

That I may never yield poison into the world.

A STAR COMES SINGING

That I may have my fill of food and love,
Living as I sing:
That those who know me and come after me,
The human blossoms of my human mating,
May carry further the torch, lift higher the song.

XIII.

The Passing

Now, in this desolate space between two distant
stars,
The planet is passing,
With a noise like a thousand cities falling together.

Like spindrift caught in a foam-wake
The distant stars bend in behind it;
And pelting fragments of shattered worlds
Sweep dizzily after.

Lessening, up the lofty highroad of the suns,
Dimming, stilling its piercing song,
It whirls into the starry distance
Up its chill journey.

Pass on, up-spiraling earth!
What seeds you have, you will bring to fruitage;

A STAR COMES SINGING

O lonely, gray-misted wanderer,
Warmed by the dying glow of the sun,
Steered and steering to the hidden next end of
things!

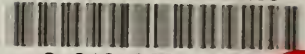
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