



POEMS

Dorothy Landers Beall



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DEDICATION
TO MARY B. WILKIE

When all my world shall read me ; when bright tongues
Like tiny searing flames shall burn and run
Among my spirit-palaces ; when smoke
Of much dissension rises like a ghost,
Blue-pale above the ashes of the end,
There will be one to raise me, one whose heart,
(Dearest Interpreter!) will know me best,
Regardful of the pinnacles unbuilt ;
One, prophesying all the glory dreamed,
Forever dreamed and one day consummate !

POEMS

	PAGE
REVELATION	11
TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH	59
THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN	75
MATINS	111
A LOST LOVE	112
THE ANSWER	114
SELF-KNOWLEDGE	115
SOUL	117
APOLOGY	118
THE BRIDGE	119
THE SONG OF THE SUBWAY	120
THE GRAY APE	123
MONA LISA	125
A CLOUD	126
BACCHANALIAN	127
SICK FANCIES	128
THE HEALER	130
THE LOVER	131
THE SUNSET	132

REVELATION

PART ONE

I

O, I might tell you how her eyes' warm blue
Kindles her face to beauty! I might say
Her hands are delicate as evening clouds,
And so enumerate her loveliness.
This shall suffice to show you what she is:
Her soul is wide and infinite, a sky
Wherefrom grave, beautiful and tender stars
Do lean above the world. High, still and sure,
Whiter than whitest woman-purity
Is her magnificent and tender soul.
So that, in mounting on my wings of love
Up awedly into that arching peace,
I fold me in all beauty, so, transcend
By her high spirit to the feet of God!

REVELATION

II

My life had paced quiescent thro' the years
Until I saw her—melancholy years—
Dull, lagging, pitiless and loveless years!
I was not wholly miserable, no,
Study absorbed me. All my day was spent
In 'getting understanding,' which is good,
But cheerless at the end and profitless
If no transcendent treasure be secured!
But when I saw her, my dead spirit woke,
Smote lightly all my heart-strings, softly breathed
Such wonderful and eloquent sweet sound
That all my being answered, 'This is She!'
Thus did I come upon her, as it were,
Down passage-ways of cloud-rift to a star!

REVELATION

III

Such exquisite seclusion guards her soul
(As if an angel sits beside the door
Of her pure being) that I dared not hope
Even a quiet boon of friendliness.
I was so reverent before her grace
That her quick robe-sweep set my heart aflame
Into my eyes and voice. She walked apart,
Sometime communing with primeval calm
Like a grave maiden in a forest place
Where the fair greenery and silentness
Shield her as utterly as innocence.
She was absorbed into a star-lit peace
And talked with God! Then I gazed at my soul,
Crying, 'O Fool and dar'st thou love her—thou?'

REVELATION

IV

Once I was bold to give her a white rose,
Not whiter than her delicate fair hands,
Not warm and radiant with life as they,
But fragrant, meet for laying at her shrine,
And, as she touched it, all my loving rose
In a white, ardent, tumultuous flame
That ran o'er all my body! Then I cried,
'Look deeper in the flower-heart, look well!
Is there no other gold—true gold of love?'
Her eyes plunged fathom-deep into my soul
And on her face, a terrible, wide pain
Scarred all the quiet pleasure—'You love me?'
She questioned dully. 'O learn not to love!'
But tenderly she guarded my white rose!

REVELATION

V

Her heart is great as all the universe
For suffering and childhood! You should see
How lovingly she touches the round heads
Of the small parish children. Here, I thought,
Is a sweet mother-nature, long frustrate
Of its true loving. O my Lady, you
Who would so gladly fold a rose-small form
Into your eager arms, God fore-ordained
That you should clasp the whole, weak, weary
world
Into a great embrace of sympathy!
You are a little mother of us all,
My gentle-fingered Lady, my dear love!
I walked along beside her, marvelling
That such great love as mine were unexpressed.

REVELATION

VI

My love for her, and her great dread of love,
Made me as dumb as sadness. How could I
Offer my soul and see her shrink? But she
Gave me the friendliness I sought at first.
Once, I remember, she wrote, gallantly
A note of mock surrender—'I reserve
My heart for you—faithful and constant!'

'Love,

Dear Love,' I cried, (for I was half unmanned,
Alone, in a vast waste of tenderness!)
'Is there no truth, no deep sincerity
In your small note?' The elves of merriment
Retreated from her eyes and left, instead,
Two gray, wan shadows that were full of woe,
Reproaching me that I had caused her pain.

REVELATION

VII

But those first days were pleasant. All my hope
That her soul would grow eager at my touch
Could not break up an intercourse so rare
In sympathy. Music awoke in us
Like rapture. With our hearts attuned, our hands
Hidden beneath her furs and velvet, touched
Often, in very ecstasy of joy
At such a blent infinity of sound!
The tender sadness of the violins
As they wailed up into a great despair
Beat at her spirit like the voice of God!
'It is too exquisite for life!' she cried.
Then turned to me for sympathy and met
Music of love that hovered on my lips.

REVELATION

VIII

Why do I love you? First and chief of all
Because, in your white human soul I find
An answer to my boundless questioning—
A satisfaction of that great desire
To love all, be all, compass all—the cry,
Vain, weak, insistent, wherewith finite minds
Do storm the fortress of infinity!
O I do love in you the tender calm
That lies somewhere quite near the throne of God,
Where silver angels of your gracious thought
Walk meekly, slender fingers clasped in prayer!
And last, I love you, because God has touched
My dullard soul and quickened it to flame
That leaps in ardent beauty to your life!

REVELATION

IX

My Lady has a friend, gray, plummy-tailed
And very elegant. He lives, sky-roofed,
In the great, gaunt and melancholy trees
That rail above us in the winter night.
The squirrel-friend is lonely (so she says,
My ever-tender Lady!) and has need
Of all the nuts she carries for his sake!
To see her hold her slender gray-gloved hand
Cautiously out to him, is joy enough
For me who stand attentive. See him come,
Fastidiously, lightly as gray cloud—
Half-condescendingly! Ah, small proud friend,
Would I so hesitate, if she outstretched
Her slender hand and summoned me to her?

REVELATION

X

Her letter, 'tis epitome of her!
See the fair writing speeding like her thought!
How reminiscent is the wide white marge
Of her great tolerance. The words, themselves,
Are somehow all peculiar to herself!
Letter I love, letter how dumbly dear,
(For every line speaks subtly, tenderly,
Spite of the seeming coldness!) I do see
My Lady's hand that formed you; I can hear
The music of her spirit, mystical
That played along the paper! Can it be
The letter is a thing material?
Rather 'tis instinct with her tenderness
And golden with the beauty of her soul!

REVELATION

XI

My Lady has the quickness of a wish!
She speeds before me ever, just ahead,
Never beside me. And in argument
She doth outstrip my tongue eternally!
Yet the position gives me vantage-ground.
I can muse long upon her moon-spun hair.
(Moon-fairies kissed her as she lay asleep
And touched her hair in token, silver sprites!)
I can exult, proud in my happiness
When her lithe vigor struggles with a wind
And battles him to nothingness! I ween
Never was Lady fleeter than mine own,
Nor more exquisitely and wholly dear
Nor more intrinsically beautiful!

REVELATION

XII

The rivals that do crawl along my path
I crush, thus—as a monster doth a worm.
Their puny small resistance I subdue
Into dull formlessness. But anger leaps
To see them swarm around her! O my moths,
Tho' the sweet radiance may smile for you,
The flame has never flickered at your breath.
This light is too effulgent, poor weak moths!
And yet, is my condition more secure?
Meseems the flame has lately quickened, shone
In fuller beauty—yet my moth-dom grows
More thralling at the moment—and the Light,
That Light of her great spirit, shines as firm
For all my beating flight! Alas, poor moth!

REVELATION

XIII

Listen, I play my soul into the notes,
The leaping silver notes! Chopin was wise
To write of loving. 'Tis the only theme
For life and inspiration! Will you hear
Great-browed Beethoven, the magnificent
Who mounted wingedly into the night
And plucked the stars for music! Hark, dear
love,
Grieg lilts of folk-lore and quaint Norway-love,
Or flings the tragedy of northern life
Into his songs of magic melody!
In each I find great pulsing sympathy—
A moonlit pathway whereby tender dreams
May reach the portal of your spirit-land.
God grant them welcome and an open way!

REVELATION

XIV

The shadow of departure spread gray wings
Above my ecstasy of happy love.
I knew that I must speak to her, must say
All my great passion into throbbing words.
God, to consign her to eternity
Of shrieking winds and steel-gray bitter waves—
To leave her—not to see the morning-light
Shine in her sky-wide eyes—to miss the leap—
The quivering great leap of all my thoughts
When she drew near me—O to lose the love,
The tangible dear human love of her—
This is supremest bitterness—and now
My heart must face her clearly! 'Tis her due
Before the avid distance seizes us!

REVELATION

XV

So, on a day I heaped my loving up
In mad, tumultuous and mighty show
Before her. O, I told her all my heart,
Tore wide the curtain of my self-conceit,
Showed her myself—my naked, paltry self
Sole-garbed in the garment of my love!
Neither did I disguise a wanton wish
Creeping into my eyes like wickedness,
A vast desire for her love, her love!
O, I was mad, yet can it be forgot
That I was likewise pulsed with earnestness
And lost all reckoning in the great haste
To have her to eternity of love?
And thus I spoke my heart out utterly.

REVELATION

XVI

Then darkness fell between us for a space,
Wherein small slimy creatures of my thought
Wove misconceptions in my consciousness.
Yet I demanded clearly, 'Give me truth!'
(For that one wish shone whitely, manifest
Above the waiting silence of my heart!)

At last, her voice came like an evening wind:
'I cannot give you what your spirit craves!'
Great God—the mighty agony! I fell
Amid the desolation of great space.

Then weary darkness closed and covered me,
Merciful darkness born of God and Time!
Yet ever came the evening-gentle wind:—
'I cannot give you what your spirit craves!'

PART TWO

I

There is some other way! So, I believed,
Argued and reasoned when my life awoke
And numbly stretched its members—thus took up
The often-trodden, weary ways of Hope!
She might, because of my unselfishness
Thro' long and patient years be brought to love
Half-imperceptibly as one who reads
An oft-perusèd volume, shuts the book
And, all unconsciously, repeats the lines,
Not knowing that his mind has caught the sense!
O, I was happy thus to cheat myself!
O Hope, Hope, Hope—thou witching slender elf
That lurkest in the forests of our life
To lead us to the swarthy mouth of Hell!

REVELATION

II

My letters followed her like silver gulls
Even into the land of her desire.
How beautiful was all the world to me
Because I loved her, being far from her.
Far from her? Yes, for my heart whispered me,
'It is not terrible as you have thought!
Teach her to love you!' and, with her away
My spirit listened like a foolish child.
Beautiful laughed the sea! 'Dear Sea,' I cried,
'Guard well my Lady! Gallant-going wind,
Breathe on the ocean like a lover! Sky,
Great Sky, smile down at her! She is my love
And worthy of your uttermost great care,
For God has touched her spirit with His light.'

REVELATION

III

Hope came to me seductive in my grief—
Beautiful Hope arrayed in living green!
And far adown her fell her sun-gold hair,
In her light laughter rang clear silverness!
And, all unwittingly, I yielded me
Utterly to her glowing soul! Her arms,
White, slender arms, that clasped so lovingly,
Suddenly chilled and clutched me! See, her eyes
Grown cavernous and gray—her long hair, cold
With lifeless hoariness—her tender mouth
Agrin with ghastly teeth! Ha, is this Hope,
This the young Hope that came to me but now?
Not so, not so—I loose thy haggard arms!
Thou art no Hope, but terror-old Despair!

REVELATION

IV

How can it be that you are not beside me?
But now I felt insistent gentle sound
As if a mist-gray shadow that is you
(Yet not, O Love, as tender-warm as you!)
Trailed its long robes and rustled at mine ear!
Love, can it be that your voice pulsing out
Under the star-eyed beauty of the night
Has reached me and become articulate,
Tangible, true—incarnate, as it were
In dear familiar sounds of sweeping robes
That heralded your light free-going step
In happy gracious love-time long ago?
It cannot be; your life is heaped so full
With love and hope there is no need of me!

REVELATION

V

Her letters were so kind to me that I
Read into them a passionate warm sense,
Remembering how near she was the night
I held her prisoner and cried to her
'Love me at last—love me!' Surely I win
By my persistent seeking what I seek!
And other days confirmed me: 'When again
You look into her wonderful blue eyes,
Their light will hold some tenderness for you!'
Meanwhile I wrote her passionately, dinned
Against her ears my clamoring hot love,
Cruelly belaboring mere kindness,
Selfish, alas, in my unselfishness!

REVELATION

VI

I wove such wondrous visions in the night
When all the world lay still around me, stars
Whirled in my brain, and silver moon-lit thoughts
Created her before me—incarnate!
O thou, whose eyes bear mystical, complete
The holy peace of God! Whose heart is wide,
A universe of tender, woman-thoughts,
Whose touch is music and whose coming, light,
I cannot penetrate the mist-gray veil
Of thine own beauty! O Lord God Divine,
How can it be that I may love her so—
I—who am altogether steeped in pain?
Thus, thro' the silver silence of the night,
I touched the floating hem of her white robe.

REVELATION

VII

Yes, I have felt a night of weariness
Creep o'er her tender face. The shadow grew
Terrible, gray, folded her brooding eyes
Just as the darkness deepens round the stars!
The evil clamor of the shrieking world
Stormed her calm spirit like a rude assault
And all her life withdrew to solitude
Where she might meet her being unafraid.
Dear Love, it is not right, not right, I say,
That lassitude should seize you in its arms.
You were not made to suffer—you are pure
And gentle as the Mother-Maid of Christ—
It is not right! Rather let me submit
And suffer in your stead, O tender love!

REVELATION

VIII

This terrible desire for her soul,
This force that eats my very inmost life
And kills the tender buddings of delight—
Surely she understands it—O, she knows
That I would rather see her heart leap up
To meet my questing heart than gather in
The wide great adoration of the world
And its attendant pomp of loyalty!
If I might see the love-stars in her eyes
Shine out in a great mist of tender blue
I would not look up at the angels' stars
That mount above the majesty of night!
O, I would almost send my soul to Hell
If she might love me to eternity!

REVELATION

IX

I am too cruel to happiness! I snatch
Her flowers rudely and compress them—so—
Against my famished lips, that all their breath
Sweet to an exquisite great sweetness, dies
And life-blood oozes from them, heavy, slow,
Dropping against my heart—O avid heart,
Empty of happiness, why art thou rude,
Except that thou be brutal by despair?
So with fair joy—the tangible sane joy
Of nearness to my Lady, that were great
Did I but look upon it calmly—see,
I crushed it to me and the petals fell
And I disclosed an empty flower-heart,
Then wrapped me once again in loneliness!

REVELATION

X

Love me for love's sake! Since you cannot give
The gracious boon of woman's tenderness,
Love me because I bring you such a gift
As never heaped the altars of dead queens!
Love me because I pour my spirit out
In turbid, vehement and flowing stream
That shines, here, silver-white, all purity,
There, darkly-crimson with my burning pain!
Yes, love me for my loving. I am shamed—
Humble, contrite to thus entreat of you,
I, who was proud to ask no boon, ah fool!
But now I kneel as prostrate at your feet
As some poor tamèd beast! Love me, I cry,
Love me, at last, if only for my love!

REVELATION

XI

O, I have seen such love leap in her eyes,
Such a great morning-rise of happiness
Light up her spirit in effulgent beam,
And waken all the beauty of her soul!
So that her eyes, erstwhile a midnight blue,
Shone clearly in a sudden tenderness,
And her dear voice did wreath around that name
Exquisite summer-garlands of her thought—
Flowers of her loving! Then, she lifted up
Her memories and spoke of them to me,
So that her speech was gentle as her love
And every separate word a great caress!
O, I have seen such love leap in her eyes—
Infinite tenderness, magnificent!

REVELATION

XII

Christ pity us who wait—who sit half-crouched
Over the dying fires of our hopes,
Seeing the mounting blue flame of desire
Dart upward spirit-like as anciently;
Grown old with misery, our white hair wrapped
About chill bosoms like eternal snow;
Who start quick upward at a gentle sound
Insistent on the pathway to our souls,
Shrieking aloud—‘It must be she—she comes,
She comes imperial! Was waiting long!’
And then to hear the footsteps pass away
Irrevocably! Down we sink again.
Christ pity us who wait eternally
The footsteps of a love that never comes!

REVELATION

XIII

Ingeniously, I wove my web of hope
Across my mind's too troublesome keen eyes,
And thus ensconced me comfortably behind,
Unmindful of the woe of self-deceit.
One came to me and spoke of self-respect,
Saying 'Give not too overwhelmingly!
The idol will be overthrown some day
And you be left to crawl among the ruins!'
I did not err in giving her too much—
Too much to her—that great transcendent soul!
But I was blinded, blinded, searching here
A bud of hope, finding it, tending it
Exultant with a too-persistent joy,
Unmindful of the woe of self-deceit.

REVELATION

XIV

Nay, give me now yourself, yourself: one kiss
Upon the lips that I do raise to you—
Some foretaste of the passion-wonderment,
The love that lives *somewhere* within you, dear!
O let me now possess you utterly,
Let me so clasp you in my empty heart,
Close, close against me—'twere felicity
As great as morning and as hot as life!
Nearer—come nearer—O, your eyes are blue,
A veiled loveliness of blue, of blue!
Let me possess you even bodily
That haply thro' your body, I may seize
Your soul straightway! Then, dropping back to
 woe
Fathomless in its blackness—take me, Death!

REVELATION

XV

How shall I greet you? With my inmost soul,
Love-lit, serene and brooding at my lips!
I shall have cut away the gray old growth
Of mossy evil that has crept around
This old stump of my heart. A flame-quick leaf—
A little new-born leaf, green as fair life,
Shall spring up phœnix-like and grow aloft
Into a mighty tree that, as God wills,
Shall some day touch great heaven and be blest!
This I shall bring you—and a love, dear heart,
As constant as the blue strength of the sea,
As surging as the sea and as witch-wild!
O, I shall live in that brief moment's span
A fervid, glowing life-time's happiness!

PART THREE

I

I know all now. I looked up tim'rously
At her great beauty and in looking so
Gained knowledge with the inspiration-flash.
O she is beautiful! Her eyes—her eyes
Hold such deep intimations of her soul!
Her heart sings at her lips! Her hands are white
As benediction! She is beautiful!
And thus, aspiring to her loveliness,
I gazed at sky-born truth, I know all now—
She cannot love me! O ye mocking stars,
You vastly cruel sky, I tell ye all
She cannot love me! O Infinity
That tells me this is best, I hate your voice,
I hate your mandates, hate your majesty!

REVELATION

II

Lucifer, thou great angel of my hope,
How art thou fallen, fallen utterly!
One time I saw thee striding like a star
Thro' the immensity of heaven's field;
One time thy heart was red with ecstasy,
Thy limbs more swift in going than the wind;
And in thy hands the lightnings for swords,
And all the sunset was thy flowing robe!
Lucifer of my hope, I sent thee out
To climb the wilderness of midnight sky
And gather me a mystic asphodel!
Thou climbdst too high and thus must fall as low!
Lucifer, thou great angel of my hope,
How art thou fallen, fallen utterly!

REVELATION

III

O, the denial of her tender eyes—
The sea-gray, sea-wide eyes that are to me
So ultimately, passionately dear!
This is too bitter—I—I give her pain
Who have so loved her that the slightest hurt
To her fair body raised such woe in me
That I was fain to tear my soul apart
And offer her the fragments for a balm.
I asked her what her truth can never give.
Her eyes were wounded, all her tenderness
Seemed weighted with my awfulness of pain.
I—I have hurt her, yet, O stern, just God,
Hell is around me, demon-voices, sin—
Hell of denial that I may not span!

REVELATION

IV

It is not right that I should lose her so!
Stern Infinite, she was my all of light,
My sunrise at the morning, my warm gold
When the great sunset agonized to rest;
She was the reason of my vanquishing.
O, her wide soul was the vast sky for me—
Her eyes were deeper than the blue-gray sea,
Deeper in hope, deeper in purity.
It is not right—not right that I should lose
All the sweet glory of her loveliness,
All impulse to a forward-moving life.
O far, grave God, can it be Thou art cruel?
It is not right that I should lose her so!

REVELATION

V

It was impossible! I loved her well,
But luridly and evilly it seems,
Her, whom it were a blasphemy to touch
With other than mute reverence and peace.
I cast myself before her—I grew old
In loving with such passion. But I loved—
That were sufficient homage for a few.
But she could not bend from her starry height
Where truth is as the blessed atmosphere
And holiness the very winds from God—
She has the slender white straightforward grace
Of a fair lily—and my God, I—I
Am like the very earth she treads upon.
Therefore it was impossible—this love!

REVELATION

VI

You say you once were happy in my love.
Gray seas of bitterness roll in on me.
How can I bear the life-long, damning sense
That I have miserably, wholly failed?
I have put out the sunlight of my life
By the close, palling cloud of my desire.
You said once, (we were near in heart that day)
'This, your great loving gives me happiness!'
And I, poor fool, unknowing my weak soul
Did heap wild protestation at your shrine—
Silver for truth, gold for sincerity
And purple for regality of hope!
But the spoils sickened you—they were too huge—
Ah fool—poor, passionate and tender fool!

REVELATION

VII

And all around me there are memories
Like fragrant lilies of a dream-wrapped life—
And O, the perfume and the joy of them—
And O, the bitterness and woe of them!
Every chance movement of my life is full
Of subtle reminiscence—I but turn
My books—a wee wild rose she gave me once,
Here her last letter. O my tender Love,
My unapproachable and far-off Love,
What hast thou heaped upon me carelessly!
What is there left me from the wrack of things,
That smoking desolation, save, perhaps,
Infinite tenderness, immaculate,
Infinite loneliness, unconquerable!

REVELATION

VIII

I send my love out thro' the kindly night,
Six-wingèd like the Seraph of the Book,
Fleet, in the darkness, as a streaming star
Cutting the gray-cold vapors of my doubts!
Each wing doth bear him gallantly and strong,
And every wing is rosy with desire,
Pearl-pinioned with my purity of faith
And widely arching o'er the Seraph's head!
His face is whitely glorious, aflame—
His hands are strong to hold a woman's heart,
But not yours, O transcendent You of dreams!
I send my love out thro' the kindly night,
Six-wingèd like the Seraph of the Book,
With sunset-colored wings of my desire!

REVELATION

IX

I creep along unmindful of the day
Because my woe has blinded me. I see
Nothing but darkness in futurity,
No hope to stir the curtains of my soul
That hang so darkly motionless. I rise
Mechanically and my spirit shrieks
'Wherefore the daily old accustomed things?
Go hide thee in the blankness of despair.
Wherefore, wherefore? A slender woman's hand
Has drawn the terrible wide midnight down
For thee to hide in, but has left the stars
To sing together! Hollow vast of night
Is thine inheritance—so creep thou on,
Furtive as fear in a wide wilderness!'

REVELATION

X

Dearest! I want you utterly to-night!
I fling from me the shallowness of hope,
The sordid cowardice that shames my soul
Even when I am surest of myself—
I fling them all away—and in the night,
The hospitable darkness, I stretch out
My hungry arms to gather you at last!
Dearest, I want you in this agony!
Do you remember how you came to me
When some slight ailment woke your sympathy?
That was a small, small hurt! Now, all my soul
Is rent asunder with great bitterness
And yet you cannot come to me to-night—
God, how my spirit hungers for your love!

REVELATION

XI

The demons bid me suffer and I writhe
Upon the rack of pain that they prepare!
And yet my deadened brain has held a thought
That makes me almost hope I am not mad,
So reasonable seemed it. I have asked
The cruel thing they worship: wherefore this
Eternal tearing at my heart-strings? Why
Must I be rent apart and tortured? Then,
Came a great voice of peaceful silver sound
And sank into my spirit! Then I knew
That we are rent upon the rack of things
That we may look into the eyes of men
And say—'I suffered. Dost thou suffer, too?'

REVELATION

XII

Not that I blame her! O, her way is right,
Irrevocably right. To that I fix
My stricken spirit. If one time a light
Has crept into the chambers of my soul
Revealing all the emptiness and dust,
If a star, a radiant clothèd star,
Has streamed across the night of my desire,
That light, that star is her soul-righteousness.
And when I looked upon the tenderness
Of gentle evening leaning on the earth
I murmured, 'So would her love-tender soul
Lean on my spirit.' I have dreamed too well,
Have dreamed gigantic fantasy, and she
Has flooded my drunk soul with morning light.

REVELATION

XIII

So—I renounce it. All the mighty wish
That she should love me has passed from my soul
Leaving an utter solitude and peace
That bring a benediction, mem'ry-blessed!
So take your place in my hurt life, Beloved,
You, the incarnate spirit of my love,
You, the one gracious vision of my art,
The inspiration of my fortitude,
The intimate pure beauty of my soul!
I do so love you that my will can bow.
I love you to eternity and death
And in my loving am thus reconciled—
You are the unattainable, Beloved—
Lady of my life, Lady of my life!

REVELATION

XIV

This you can never take from me—my love
And the great joy that floods my heart to-night
When I remember all your loveliness:—
The generous firm promise of your mouth,
Your marvellous rare hair, most like, I think,
To that impalpable and subtle gray
Of dropping summer twilight—your hands' clasp
And the white, rose-sweet fingers, gently laid!
Never can you take from me that great time
When I stood breathless on a mountain-top
Of exultation and gazed out beyond
Into the upper silence of your soul
As great as God's blue sky—and cried aloud,
'How I do love her, love her—gracious God!'

REVELATION

XV

We who have found a certain rare, great love,
Must keep it sacred in a sacred place
Of ideality! No passion's wind
Must rage among those silences! No wish
For great impossibilities must stir
The plume-tipped trees of that vast solitude!
So, having purified our hearts and eyes
To see as purely as the arching sky,
We enter by the gate of tenderness
Into the region of our sacred love
To meet the glory of white loveliness!
And, looking to the God of gracious Peace
Yield us to beauty incarnate! O Thou,
My Love, so shall I meet Thee and be blest!

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

I sit upon this summit of my life,
Looking out wonderingly on the world.
Surely there can be nothing lovelier
Without my boundaries!

And yet
They say great cities tower on the plains
And myriad swift streams of life flow down
Toward the ocean. What can that be like—
The ocean? I have known great rush of winds
And felt my soul tear at the doors of life
Eager to join and blow across the world!
What joy of movement—what great happiness
Sings in my life! 'Thro' tumult of strong wind
I rush along the battlements, sob out
'Let me go with you, wind!' fling my long hair
To blow and toss and leap since I may not.
The ocean must be like the wind—as blue,
Wide, limitless and mighty as the sky!
O, to be free for just a moment's span,
To run along those westward gentle slopes,

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

So fair because beyond my boundary—
O, to be free—to leap out like a deer
Free—free!

O heart, why wilt thou image forth
A beauty never to be thine? The wish
Can only hurt my close-pent life and rend
My being all apart.

My father said,
When he lay dying, 'Guard her tenderly!
I would she grew as fair as morning-wind,
As virgin and as white and undefiled.
Create a wonderment of castle-ground,
Flowers and trees and little living things:
Within, ancestral sternness, frowning walls,
Dark to impress her with authority.
Hang tapestry of old-world tales! She'll read
On them such fantasies as can be shown
Not detrimental to her purity.
But let no murmur from a living world,
No slightest whisper of the way of men
Molest her, I would have her pure!

O ye
Who loved me see to this consummate wish!
And so he died.

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

O, sometimes I have felt
(When I walked breathless thro' the empty halls
A-tip-toe lest I wake a creeping sound)
His haughty spirit—in the tapestry
A rustle like the rustle of his dress,
A throbbing heart-beat near me. Nay, I swear
In the long slanting bridge of yellow light
From some high casement I have seen his hand
Stretched out to keep me to obedience.
And yet despite him I have heard the noise
Of life. In some mysterious small way
The tidings crept in thro' my castle-walls
Like the green tendrils of a living vine.
He has no right to chain me. O great God,
I am a woman. Let me live my life
As Thou ordainest! O my father, you
Have stolen from me all the things I seek.
I could have loved you, but you follow me
Thro' these thick walls, a spectre, sombre-eyed,
Terrible-browed and grim; you have no right,
You who are dead, to grasp my living heart
Between the iron fingers of your will.
O let me go!

I am too passionate,

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

Too bitter! He was very kind to me
And they are kind, his servants, but not keen,
Not understanding—and I am alone!

To-day the world is all awake. I saw
The grasses swaying blithely in the wind,
Laughing and swaying merrily. A small
Yellow winged warbler threw a note at me
Quintessence of pure liquid melody,
Happiness compassed in a single sound.
The little leaves are all a-dance with joy.
Why, I am happy too!

An old wife came
Mumbling between her worn pink gums a word
Of merry rout that passed the castle, lords
A-hunting mirth and love with hounds at leash,
Soft-nosed dear hounds with kindly, vacant eyes.
She curtsied as she told me.

'O,' I cried,
'Why didst not tell me in the morning? O,
I would so gladly see my kind—not these
Old servants who surround me like a wall,
Each man a figure-head of irony,
Each woman grinning like a gargoye-mask

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

To please me! O, I want the heart of youth,
Gay laughter, jest and merriment!’

She smiled

And curtsied foolishly. They told her to;
I must be humored.

Thou great golden day,

I was so happy—am so miserable.

Who can hold joy? And yet I would that one,

One of the flock of lords had thought of me

As the gay company ran by my walls.

He might have looked up thoughtfully, have said,

‘Some one lives pent within those wondrous walls,

So marvellously kissed by greenery,

So beautified by love—some beating life

Thrusts its poor head between the ivied bars,

Eager for liberty!’ They never think,

Those happy nobles. I am very poor

In reason if I hope so. Let it be.

The wind wails tearfully along the walks

And the gray sky hangs ominously low.

What haunts me? I have felt a heavy hand

Laid on my shoulder. I have heard a step

Following stealthily along the hall,

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

Following ghost-like, terrible and grim,
Following ceaselessly until my heart
Echoed the haunting footsteps in my ears,
Beating out life-throbs wearily. O hark,
Hear it come after me—O God, O God!

My shriek has rent the vapors of my fears,
I breathe again. Why, I am young and brave;
Even the spectre of my father's will
Following hard upon me cannot hold
The springing, soaring freedom of my hope.

To-night I look up at the vast black sky
Seeking a star! I love them. They are small,
Seem somehow friendly and protective. O,
There shines my star, wondrously silver-pure
Gleaming upon me thro' the awful night!
I look into the blackness of my life
And find a mystery of new-born joy.
What is this strange new impulse—happiness?
I never knew the fleet sweet winsome thing.
Hope? O, I have killed all hope with tears.
This is desire like a flame-hot star
Streaming across the night of hopelessness.

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

Drop down, O very swift and mighty star!
Thou dost but herald bitterness more vast—
A surging fire kindled at thy light
To set my soul aflame. Most hellishly
Shall I burn unconsumed, forever burn!

Desire of what nameless ecstasy?
I swore to stifle it, but I am drawn
Half-fascinated to the edge of night
To gaze upon it. *What* do I desire?
O mad, mad soul—O frenzied spirit!

God,

This is the mandate of thy tyranny.
I do desire *love*—O flaming star,
I do desire love!

I dared not look
Upon my image in the lofty glass
(When I had fled the magic of the night
And that hot star): I hid my burning eyes
Under the cloud of hair that fell around,
Lifeless and heavy. So I stood. The night
Marched mightily across the world—no sound
To stir my spirit—breathless, silent, dull

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

The great room yawned around me and beyond
A small white glimmer in the heavy dark
Showed me my bed, that narrow place of pain
Tenanted by my agony and dreams,
Tumbled by sleepless thoughts.

Sudden I cried
'This fear is craven,' lifted up my head
And stared upon mine image. One tall light
Like a pale ghost lit up the gleaming glass
In its black ebon frame. I looked—O God,
Another face stole all my lineaments.
The eyes frowned out at me from massy brows,
The lips, a firm hard line in the black mesh
Of beard—a broad white forehead, mighty neck,
My father! Quick I seized the candlestick,
Hurled it against that stony brow—the crash
Shivered my being! I have lain all night
Prone in the blackness on my chamber-floor
Knowing myself a murderer in thought.

The hunt has passed again. I saw them all:
Perched on a battlement of stone, so high
I must have seemed like some rare pennant flung
In many-colored folds upon the wind,
I saw them. There were ladies purple-clad

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

With gallant-streaming plumes upon their heads
And many knights in strangest gay array.
I never saw a man like that. They laughed!
Strange—I have never laughed. The ladies
looked

Gayly upon the lords who doffed their hats,
Let out the riot of long hair to play
And dance upon the wind. There rode a knight
Hindmost of all the company, tall, fair,
Sunny-haired like a god! His plumes flew out,
White messengers of peace. How strong he was,
As strong as my desire for him. Ah,
He could raze all these fierce old walls, could
spring

Lightly o'er every barrier between
And yet he passed and left me!

How they laughed!

How strange they seemed to me and beautiful!

I shall send after him a wind-swift wish
To run upon his track, leap at his steed
And creep into his heart—this, my desire
Shall surely bring him to me. O, I want
More than all freedom, more than life and hope,

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

More than the happiness I hungered for,
More than aught else I want his tenderness!

How great a thing this love of loves can be,
How it can seize the soul and spur the life
Into a frenzy of attainment! Hear,
O rushing winds, I love him—hoary trees,
I love him!

I have lived so long alone
With my own life I know the very beat
Of smallest impulse. Know myself? My God,
What other can I know? What hast Thou willed
For mine employment but the endless look
Into my own poor being? Introspect?
What is there left me but cold introspect?
So that I know myself and loathe myself,
Sick, sick to death of looking on myself!

He would be very tender. In the night
When I am lonely with vast loneliness
Too great for tears, his love would fold my heart
Quite warmly all around and leave no room
For pain!

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

What if he came and loved me not?
It cannot be. But if he came and laughed
Carelessly at me as at those fair dames
And flung his scornful manhood at my fears
Half-satirizing my poor earnestness,
I would draw out the dagger that I wear
And plunge it in his heart—quite deep.

You see

I am not altogether young. But if
He loved another I would cast my life
Broken and trampled like a searèd leaf
Down at his feet and lie there half alive,
Half dead in impulse, vibrant with my woe
And let him raise or kill me as he would.

Since I have loved, I live! O, in this space
The world has opened to me and I read
The meaning of all life. So do we learn,
We women. I have read so much in books,
Have known the soul of woman, Helen, Ruth,
Great passion-blinded Cleopatra, her,
The wife of wives Alcestis. I have lived
With them and learned their spirits, found in them
The very unnamed forces of my life

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

Quiescent, till my love has raised them up!
Those women taught me how to think. We are
So quick to grasp all beauty, very swift
To seize the truth—intuitive. We live
From the heart-centres, do we not, all ye
Great women I have known and loved?

God knows,

So far my father failed to hamper me,
He left me books, forgetting that they are
The monuments of thought and life.

I lie

Among the gentle grasses. I can hear
Them tug against the fetters of their roots.
They love the sun, a warm and real thing.
What do I love? A shadow. All the rest,
The beings in my life are shadows too,
Myself, a queen of shadows. But I know
Somehow the living impulse of it all
Has taught me that desire of a thing
Is prophecy of its attainment. Lo,
I shall yet have my love because my soul
Cries out for it—this wondrous sun-gold thing,
This most divinest ecstasy, my love!

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

I peered behind a tapestry by chance
And saw a little low-browed beetling door
That lurked away from me. I flung it wide
And stepped within the chamber—rangèd books
Of war and law and history, wide maps
The world in miniature, an ample chair
Sternly carved in black walnut, empty walls
And iron hangings—that was all and yet
My father's spirit lived there incarnate.
It seemed as tho' I stood within his heart,
That iron prison, in the dark stern place,
I the sole light, the only beauty, I
The loneliest drear love of all his life!
Then the great walls closed on me nearer, strong,
Terrible, cruel, loving with that love
That kills the well-belovèd. How they closed,
Drew tall around me—'Room, O give me room!'
I shrieked, 'I cannot love you—give me room!'
The walls cracked from the topmost, rushed apart,
Fell into ruin, left me desolate
In that old empty chamber. O my life,
Why must this awful memory of him
Tower colossally above my mind?
I have lived quietly within the walls

TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH

And never broken his stern rule.

Thereon

A voice came to me like a star-clear bell:
'Yet thou hast lived, lived, loved in spite of him—
He was the thief. O dare to live and love.
Be not afraid—Thou art thyself—thine own!'

When the old earth stirs under morning kiss
And lifts up arms to seize all beauty, I
Stand quite alone upon my battlement
And send my soul out to my love. Desire,
Strong, vital and prophetic, lives in me,
Grows into great perfection! He will come,
Tho' I wait thro' the night of centuries,
Sit carven like a lichen-covered rock,
Motionless, gray and waiting; I shall wait,
Sure of his coming, sending that great wish
To speed him! I have conquered. He will come.

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

I

Below us sings the sea; to-day he casts
His majesty aside and lulls the rocks
With such sweet music, that his tenderness
Tears at their stony feet! 'O let us go,'
They cry, 'The sea is masterful! And we,
Tho' rugged, are all eager for his love.'

Out there, a delicate gray ocean bird
Swims in that other blue above us, wide,
So wide it is, so infinitely great,
My soul mounts up, up, like the silver bird,
Inspired yet knowing not the potency
That speaks aloud thro' such blue magnitude.

The sands come gladly down to meet the sea.
On them I read strange writings, destiny

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

Too great for me—a prophecy of joy
And hope and bitter sorrow. Far away,
One solitary figure walks along
Toward me. All the blueness of the world
And that one figure walking toward me. God,
I am so very small—Thou art so great!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

II

He takes such strong possession of my life
That I am meek before him, penitent
To be unworthy of the ardent strife
He wages for my spirit, well-content.
The great virility of his desire
That would raze all the obstacles between
The creature, me, does potently inspire
Great reverence within me. O, I ween
He is a man—a man! And I am weak,
Being a woman. O, I fear his love,
Fear the great passion-vengeance he would wreak.
And yet, how very tender he would prove.

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

III

O very long ago I made a vow
Never to yield my soul up utterly,
Never to stoop to such ignoble truce,
Never to seek the solace of a love
That were half-sensual—to know no rest
Till I had shut me forcibly within
The iron prison of my self-control,
And once inside surround me wondrously
With undreamed beauty, delicate as morn,
Tender as evening, passionate as noon,
Yet beauty of my own creation, pure,
Immaculate, untainted by desire!
That was my vow; should I not reverence it?

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

IV

To-night he comes. O little kindly star
Hung quaintly at the window of my soul,
Shine silverly! And tho' my pain doth mar
This chamber of my spirit, make me whole,
Cleanse me and fashion me! O infinite
White light of beauty, glorify my night!

To-night he comes and in that little word
I do unroll the carpet of my dreams
Before this arrogant and gracious lord
Who has so stormed my spirit. O meseems,
This is a world of tenderness! Afar,
Ten thousand lovers worship thee, my star.

I do so love him that my heart would pray
Great pain for him, soul-tearing agony,
That I might kiss his suffering away
And blot his woe out with vast sympathy.
Yet, if he suffer, all my tenderness
Doth bleed great drops of life-red bitterness!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

V

He turned my face up swiftly to his lips
And kissed me hard upon the eyes. I feel
The burning beauty of his passion now:
The magic loveliness of that first kiss
Sealing my eyes to dreams magnificent
Clears my low vision. I can see his soul,
His vast and gentle soul, can hear his life
Beat up against my heart.

In the still night,
He strode so resolutely thro' my dreams
It seemed as tho' he stood beside my bed!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

VI

Worn and cavern-eyed, sorrowful, gray,
Towers the ancient woman of Flete.
Her eyes go questing away, away
Where the worlds of sea and heaven meet.
(O woe for the women that wait!)

Panting and agonized, eagerly swift
Beats the life of her bosom, that ancient place
Where her loves have lain. Will the mist-clouds
lift
And show her the gleam of a tender face?
(O woe for the women that wait!)

Never the voice I would hear,
Never the heart I would hold,
But a horrible icy fear
And the creeping salt-sea cold!
(O woe for the women that wait!)

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

VII

Such a hush on the world—such immaculate
morning peace,
Such a tremulous throb of waiting. The gray
waves cease
Their ardently murmurous whisper. The
beaches lie
In generous silver surrender beneath the sky.
O the wonderful matinal quiet! My spirit aspires
To the wide-soaring archway of heaven. This
beauty inspires
Such exquisite tenderness in me—such terrible joy!
Kneel reverent, O my young spirit! The day
is at hand
And the marvellous sea and the sky and the low-
lying land
Unite their great pæans of worship—the day is
at hand!
Gold beauty that shines on the sea
Shine softly on me!
Great grayness of sea rushing in,
Multitudinous din,

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

Teach me thy resignation! Give me peace;
Roll over me thy endless waves, nor cease
To chant melodious loud prophecy
Of the black stretches of futurity.
Love is not greatest in this wondrous world
Where all is great. I turn me to the sky
And all the company of nature, woods
Of mystery and lakes and ocean waves—
Let me grow wise in your humility!

And yet the mystic writing on the beach!
I must go on. I must accomplish this
For which the centuries have sent me forth!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

VIII

White roses climbing up the hill,
White roses, are ye virgin still?
Or has some finger spoiled your loveliness
By a too-ardent sudden tenderness?

White roses swaying to the wind,
White roses, are ye always kind
To the hot bee that sucks your soul out? Shine
Ever your petals tremulous, divine?

White roses, dropping autumn tears,
White roses, do your heart's arrears
Of love and hope and yearning torture ye?
Or are ye well-content as I must be?

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

IX

Paces his love thro' all my soul-rooms. O,
I am a puerile creature! Must I yield
And cease the torture that is hell to me
And lowest hell to him?

 Last night I tore
All self-deceit and folly from my life
And looked at truth. I love him, yet am proud,
Too pitiably proud of my poor self
To tender him my soul. Can this be right?
In loving we must lose identity
And worship to the fullness of our souls.
I should be glad to yield me and am sad.
I am irrevocably cursed. His step?
Why do I start and tremble? He is near,
O he is near, my great impetuous
And lordly love! His footsteps follow me
Like those swift bodeful writings on the beach!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

X

My loving is accomplished—I do yield.
I am ashamed to look on heaven's face
For I acknowledge that this human love
Is greater than my spirit. O my God,
Forgive me for my pitiable self,
Forgive me for the weakness of my life!

Yet there is joy in yielding. I can lie
Tenderly on his spirit, knowing well
No shade of bitterness, no slightest thing
Stands grim between us. All my weariness
Has ebbed out with the tide. Across the sea
Love walks to me resplendent and I yield!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XI

Bleak gray of dawn and sorrowful slow rain
And chill cold wind—this is my bridal morn!
Below upon the miserable sand
That seems somehow too flat and desolate
The old gray church shivers up to the trees
Girt by a tombstone company. One light
Shines timidly across the waste between,
Prophetic that across the waste within
A loving faith can send out sympathy.
God knows I am not cowardly! My life
Has passed so isolate from other lives
That I must needs be brave, but this gray morn
And the slow penitent rain have chilled my soul.
The step is so irrevocable. Life
Will lead on so immeasurably long
From that old church-door.

Will the way be glad,
Or infinitely bitter—matters not.
I have elected it and must go on
Thro' shining meadows or thro' barren flats,

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

Always irrevocably I must go!
But this great soul that I have loved, so loved,
With every fibre of my being loved,
With every bitter memory I hold—
With him, what way can lead thro' agony,
What path be altogether desert? See,
The leaden clouds have lifted—O the sun!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XII

Not that my love for him is all desire,
Not that the woman me yearns after him
A man, the master. No, the greatest good
Of this vast passion in me is the pride,
The reverent worship of him. I am wrong,
O many bitter times my way is wrong,
But he has never broken the pure faith
My spirit gives his righteousness.

O love,
Great gracious love, thou soul of me, I yearn
To walk with thee in that ideal ground
Whereon thou buildest thine abiding place.
I would so leave the low paths of the world,
So cut away the garments of the flesh,
So tear away all passion from my soul
That I might mount to thee—and in the light,
Th' effulgent beauty of thine inmost life,
Feeling my way, half-dazed, upward, reach thee
In ecstasy of great attainment, know
The infinite vast wonder of thy soul
And so enfold me in all purity!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XIII

O happy-hearted wind, thou flowest
O'er the world-meadows! Ah, thou knowest
The great gray peaks of mountain-lands and seas
As blameless and as blue as heaven's peace!

O mighty-going wind thou criest,
Over the universe thou fliest
Like some presage-ful bird of sombre mien—
So dost thou hover, vulture-dark dost lean!

O wind, thou hast a heart of sympathy,
Being so great, for such an one as I.
The whole great world is grown so beautiful
Since I have bowed to love and dutiful
Done him obeisance, that my soul would shout
The pæans of my happiness, put out
The stars with the great breathings of its fire!
Lend me thy voice, O wind—give me thy arm!
Let me install myself, exempt from harm

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

Of evil on a godly mountain-peak
And sing my gladness! O my spirit, speak
To the great world, give them the mystic word
That Love, Love, Love is sovereign and lord!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XIV

I know such mystically dear delight,
Such exquisite and tranquil happiness
It seems as tho' I rested in a cloud
Golden as sunset and felt loving strength
Lift me and bear me up forever. Ah,
He is so tender of me, quick to shield,
Strong as the ancient rocks, yet animate
With such dear passion. All our days are dreams
Wherein great happenings are consummate
And all our nights flow peacefully between
Lit by white stars of purest tenderness.
My life has widened infinitely. Now
I do not hold the aims of one small soul
But grasp the beauty of two spirits, blent
In wonderful ecstatic sympathy!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XV

Love, yonder little silver-crownèd wave,
Bringeth thee all the treasures of my heart,
Throweth my loving on thy life-sand's breadth—
In utter glad surrender, I am thine!

Love, yonder exquisite-fair summer cloud
Is where my prayer for thine eternal joy
Passed up to God! He touched it tenderly,
And made it beautiful because of thee,
Because of my great love and reverence!

Love, I can bring thee but my inmost self
Quivering with fair happiness. O love,
Take me and make me what thou deemest well—
In utter glad surrender, I am thine!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XVI

There is a time for tenderness, I ween—
'Tis just when all the beauty of the day
Lies warm against the bosom of the night
And raises love-wide eyes to meet his lips!

There is a time for weariness. I know
'Tis when the night has kissed day's beauty out
Passionately. Her long gray twilight hair
Trails on the earth. Where art thou, O my love?

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XVII

Shadow reigns on thy brow. O let my art
Soothe all the tired bitterness away!
What evil canst thou suffer not mine own?
What terrible swift agony can beat
Molten-hot in thy veins and I not know
The anguish with thee? O, our lives have grown
Too closely knit for separation! E'en
In pain and sorrow we must be akin.
It is my right. May I not suffer too?

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XVIII

All night the wind has crept around the house
Hunted and moaning like a stricken thing;
All night the waves have railed against the beach
Threatening, clamoring and terrible!

All night my heart has crouched within me cold
Before the stroke of some great destiny;
All night my spirit sobs impotently
Before this imminent and bitter woe!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XIX

He spoke to me quite calmly. O my God,
My happiness has crashed to ruin! Lights
Whirl in my brain. I am alone i' the dark
With no one near me. O, I have believed,
Trusted in him, lived, grown and loved in him,
Seen all my future by the gracious light
Of his great spirit—great, O God, no more!
I cannot understand my solitude.
Where art thou, soul? Where art thou, love?
O life,
Crush me beneath thy wheels, crush me, I pray,
But keep him pure for me! My tender love,
Come thou to me—come swiftly! Thou art near—
But not with that black stain upon thy soul!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XX

He has a man's keen cruelty—a high
Cold disregard for women. The black sin
That yawns between us like a great abyss
Opened another chasm for a soul
Made like me, womanly and delicate.
The beauty of our life's all mockery
Since some can drag it vilely in the dust.
I think there's some great evil thing above,
Squats toad-like in the clouds and laughs at us
Poor flies that one day shake their wings too fast,
And so fly up to him and down his jaws!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXI

O, is it right? If thou be there, O God,
Answer me in mine anguish—is it right?
I gave him every glory of my soul,
All the white flowers of my womanhood,
For which he flings me such vast bitterness
As mounts above the world and drowns the stars
And blackens all the universe! My soul
Is torn apart! I cannot reach thee, God.
I cannot touch thy garments to be healed.
O, I am desolate! He was so dear,
So infinitely, tenderly divine,
So infinitely, loathsomely defiled!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXII

Here on my pillow, all my hair outspread
Lies lavishly as he would have it! Ah,
I feel the tender passion of his touch
On these poor locks. Can it be he is here?
Can such wide desolation lie between
Beings as fast united as we two?
His breathing evenly disturbs the peace.
I cannot hear the moaning of the sea
That strives to send me subtle sympathy.
I cannot hear the beating of the wind
That knows my utter woe. I only hear
His horrible slow breathing thro' the gloom.
It rises over all the midnight world,
It shuts out sea and wind and sympathy,
Even and unrelenting as my doom!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXIII

We walk upon the beaches. All the world
Applauds two model lovers. 'There they go,
So sympathetic there's no need for words,
So tender of each other! See her move
Aside to the hard path as wanting him
To walk upon the smoother way!' Ha, ha!
We model lovers walk as unconstrained
As mortal enemies. Our sympathy
Is like the sympathy of mutual hate:
My tenderness for him is just the wish
To turn aside and quick avoid the hand
He reaches out mechanic'ly for help.

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXIV

Now after all, I lie on these great rocks
Alone with God and Emptiness. My Self
Stands up and faces me. I see her eyes
Clouded with one black stain—one fatal brand
Burns in the pallid whiteness of her brow.
Thou Self, go cleanse thee! Thou art so pollute
I cannot look at thee. O mighty Fate,
What hast thou laid upon me? This is woe
More bitter than the bitterness of loss,
More cruel than the wrench of agony.
Must I be wracked and torn and know my sin—
The hate of his black spirit, but the love,
Damnable, wretched, haunting love of him!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXV

Yes, I do love him—there is all my shame.
Now after many years of hellish woe,
Wherein our lives have walked as isolate
One from the other as antipodes,
I do acknowledge love for him. If he
Came to me, seized me, held me to him, cried
'Thou art mine own. Love me!' I would comply
And nestle shamefully against his heart,
Glad of the sweet companionship. O shame,
Terrible shame of women that they love
When he who tore their hearts out smiles awhile
Then lightly hies him to his pleasure place!
He has outraged my purity and seized,
Knowing himself unworthy, that white thing
That could not be his due!

Infinity,
Absorb me in thy boundless nullity!
Hide the abomination of my love
From God and Life and Beauty—Give me
Death!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXVI

Small children play beneath my window-ledge
So near that I could touch their lightsome heads
Were I not half-afraid to spoil their play
By publishing my presence. Little gods,
Sunny-haired, smiling, small—O, I would seize
The boldest of the company and bear
His lithe young beauty to a hiding-place
And love him with the ecstasy of hope
And woe and bliss within me.

Nevermore

May I press close against me a young thing
Small, perfect, and mine own. O mother-soul,
New-born within me, yearning, tremulous,
Destined to hunger ever, mother-soul,
Thou art the purest part of me intact
Where all my other faculties are numb,
Broken, defiled and blackened. O great God,
I am so infinitely desolate!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXVII

Weariness creeps upon me. At the end
I ask no great exultant destiny,
I ask no beating, wingèd flight, but rest,
Peace and a little foothold for my soul.
Let me lie passively and watch my life
Pace by me dreamily and steadfast—sure
That out there in the world men call to arms
And wage the same brave warfare valiantly.
I have so bruised my spirit in the fray,
Beaten my being cruelly on the steel
Of bitterness, I hunger for deep rest,
Rest, infinite oblivion and repose
As strangely changeless as Eternity!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXVIII

No, up, my soul, we fight. We wear our arms
Like resolution. On we march steadfast.
No cowardly oblivion, no repose,
No craven closing of the eyes. Up, soul!
The battlefield lies wide as life and we
Have all our lives to fight in! Victory!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXIX

The little eager waves run up in the gloom,
They call to me, insistent—‘Sister, come!’
I must rise earnestly and go to them,
Out under quietude of waning night,
Out to the wide firm beaches—to the sea!
How eagerly and formlessly it heaves
Darkly beneath the darkness of the sky.
Breathes a low whisper of eternity,
Breathes—then the quietude. I am afraid.
In the thick darkness I can feel the wings
Of a great spirit multitude. I know
God walks this way! Come up, ye little waves,
Pitiful weeping waves, come up to me!
Let me enfold ye in my barren heart.
Ye will forget the solitude of night
And the great empty solitude of day!
No, get ye back. The Mother-Sea is wroth,
Lashes her indignation at my feet.
O, be thou gentle—I am desolate!

Why am I troubled? This vast mystery

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

Holds no great menace for me. Harken—there!
Did I not hear a footstep beating, swift
Along the barren sands?

God, is it Thou?
That solitary figure and the sands
Placid below, the sky and the great sea—
I saw it all before.

‘You here? *You—here?*’
He answered, ‘I can play the farce no more.
Let us walk quietly out to the sea,
Leave the fierce strife and lose identity,
Dying united where we lived apart.
Forgive me—that were cowardice! Come in
To the low level of our common life!’

‘O no,
Let me see dawn run lightly o’er the sky!’
We waited. Thro’ the midnight-gray expanse
Only the melancholy pain of waves
That sobbed along the beaches bitterly.

With the white dawn came peace. I saw my woe
Futile and foolish. All my wickedness
Of judgment where Eternity must judge.
I turned to him and all the tenderness

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

Of all my loving leaped into my eyes.
'My spirit is too hungry. Love, forgive!'
His heart flamed up to greet me and above
The pure dawn touched us very sacredly!

THIS WOMAN—AND THIS MAN

XXX

Some great white thing lies stricken in our hearts,
Some good of infinite wide loveliness
Can never glorify our souls. We live
The bitter life of failure wearily.
All vast ideal beauty lieth dead,
And yet, our love has consecrated death!

M A T I N S

Last night, my once-belovèd, I lay gaunt
Upon the narrow bed of agony
And felt gray wind upon my face—O cold,
So cold was I with that inherent chill
Deepest around the heart that my poor tears
Froze on my face—O icy bitter drops,
I could not brush them off!

I dreamed of you,
One of those terrible insistent dreams.
The folly of my spirit-emptiness,
The barren mockery of that old stir
I never feel—shall never feel again;
The utter weak impossibility
Of giving, giving what I cannot give—
Flooded me like a steel and bitter wave
From some wide awful ocean of regret!
This morning as I rise in weariness
With a same hopeless question in my mind;
Wherefore? I find your letter written fair
And loving. God, the mummery! my mask
I strip off! Lo, I loose my bounden soul—
No love, no love, and I must live it out!

A LOST LOVE

O, I am weary for you, deadly weary,
Sick of the clamor of my daily living,
Hungry for rest, peace, tenderness! O Love,
The world oppresses me, a bitter burden
Laid on the sensitive fine spirit-vision,
Blinding me with the coarseness of its meaning,
Its pettiness and endless weary noise!
O, I have need of great sweet sympathy,
O, I have need of some dear firm belief,
O, I have need of some vast loving faith!
Dearest, come near me thro' the gloom of failure,
Across the deserts where I walked but lately,
Seeking a love, seeking a tender spring
To bathe my aching lips, across the forests
Of disillusion, O come steadfastly!

Touch me with some immortal eager yearning,
Touch me with inspiration, bring me courage
To mount up thro' the lower air of warfare
Up thro' the midnight to the stars!

O dearest,
It may be I have wronged you, built a temple
Too coldly white, too sternly idealistic

A LOST LOVE

For your abode. I worshipped you. Forgive
me:

Let me but love you for your wondrous beauty,
The ecstasy of hand-clasp in the twilight,
The touch of living passions, lips that linger
Against the shining chism of your forehead,
Hearts that leap madly one against the other;
Let me but love you with my all of loving!

THE ANSWER

No, dear, I cannot love you as you wish,
But from my soul I thank you! Could you know
The great exultant happiness of hope
That sings within me since you love me, dear!
You are my solitary lover—all
Have left me destitute! Until you came
I was the lover! Then the silence thrilled,
Quivered a little, broke before your step
And all the silver bells of living air
Rang out majestically! On, you came
Masterful, holding out a gift to me,
Stretching great hungry arms to seize me—me,
O the vast wonder of it! Your wide eyes
Lifted a worshipful hot love to mine,
Love, love and yet more terrible, strong love!
And I who longed so passionately, cried
So futilely for tenderness like yours—
I who was lonely with a loneliness
No life could vitalize to ecstasy—
I who have wanted love so poignantly
Am dumb before the great desired thing
And have no love to give you in return!

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

In the great march of long infinity
What am I? Why am I thus racked by hope,
Tuned to divinest frenzy by my love,
Tortured by deep remorse, consumed to know,
To know, know, know!

What am I? After all
A thousand hearts have suffered all I bear,
A thousand souls have loved as I can love,
A thousand lives have paced along the world
And many thousands shall come after me
In a long ceaseless unresisting march,
Eternal, ever-going! I create,
But God created universe before
Wherein all poets sing themselves thro' life.
What are my little deeds, hopes, failure, strife
To the harmonious and wondrous swing
Of world and star and firmament? My tears?
What are they when the tears of infinite,
Rain pours upon our world? What are my deeds
When midnight marches down the universe
With companies of stars upon his train
And hush of beauty palpitating?

God,

What am I in a universe?

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

One point
One little point of life that can resume
In its small compass all a universe!

S O U L

We are as ultimately isolate
One from the other as if seas of air,
Void, voiceless, fathomless, divided us.
No help above us but the empty blue;
No hope beneath us but deep nothingness;
No life but universal solitude.
Thus we reach out our hands to other hands,
Meet in the darkness for a breathing-space,
Perchance hold great community of thought,
Ideal, vision, then seek deeper bonds,
Strive to knit soul with soul accomplishing
For one eternity of instant bliss
Infinite sympathy! Then (pity us,
Great God Creator!) lose the mutual light,
Feel the great walls of darkness close on us,
And once more dwell as isolate as death!

APOLOGY

Why do I laugh? Because my very life
Has turned into the inmost chamber, death;
Has crouched, a pallid shivering reproof
At God and sunshine, by the awful wall
Of secret sin—because my soul is choked
Among the withered vines of stricken hope!
Why do I laugh? Because my eyes have poured
In bitter tears the gladness of their spring
Utterly out! The sorrow has made way
Mysteriously to the fields of peace
And bubbling mirth and mountainous delight
And tree-tall joy!

First cometh tragedy,
After—the human ripeness, comedy!
Why do I laugh? Because I often wept.
Come, laugh with me into the arms of death!
Who knows? A smile may warm his chilly soul!

THE BRIDGE

I am the bridge—stretched here like a thread
Of luminous silver taut in the sky,
Under the blue, I hang! Below,
Tree-length below me, water runs
Ever and ever, tumbles, leaps,
Shrieks in wild passion, sobs like pain,
Whispers and laughs—a human thing,
A divine clear frenzy—water runs!
Against the pallid sky, tall trees,
Leafless and delicate-branched, design
Rare arabesque. Who can read such device
God writes above? Yet all may see!
Give us the key to the mystery, wind!
What know *I*? I am the bridge!

Two shores

Draw off in proud beauty—two pebbled lines
Of beach and sand and solitude,
Two separate shores draw proudly off.
And I—the bridge—can span the way
Lying so widely between them—I,
Consummate structure of steel and wood,
God-planned and man-built—I, the bridge,
Can span the void, can unite two shores!

I am the bridge!

THE SONG OF THE SUBWAY

Out of the darkness I come—
Out of terrific black chaos—
Thro' the great echoing tunnel,
Generous arching, but dreadful
In its deep underground stillness!
Out of that silence make way—
I issue fleet, fleet from my prison,
Break my black bonds, cast my mantle
Of midnight and wide desolation!

The darkness was thick as I passed,
The emptiness seized on me! Fingers
Of vapor-blue demons assailed me,
Missed my firm iron-clad hugeness!
I trampled my foes in the road-bed—
I strode on the demons that mocked me,
Clamored derisively downward,
And sent their wild glee to the archway!
'Free,' shouted all my vast framework—
'Free,' all the archways applauded—
'Free,' welcomed God and the sunlight!

Brief the sweet term of my freedom,
Brief as the triumph of beauty.

THE SONG OF THE SUBWAY

I am a creature of darkness,
Born of the hurrying chaos.
Back must I plunge like a mad thing
Into the cursed drear silence.
I shriek—for my heart is a discord—
Discord and clamor metallic!
Doomed am I—doomed to long bondage!

See—the swift sudden light beckons—
I must restrain my vast motion.
Eager-eyed people are waiting.
Here at the station I rest me—
Lovingly toward me they hasten—
In—get ye in to my bosom,
All ye—my children who hasten!
Have I not loved ye and borne ye
Swift, as the lightning titanic,
Swift, as the thunder majestic!

Am I not sentient, glowing?
Am I not pulsed with their life-blood?
Beats not their heart in my bosom,
Iron, magnificent? Soars not
A something transcendent within me,

THE SONG OF THE SUBWAY

Blent of their myriad soul-light,
Sad with their hunger and wailing,
With joy multitudinous, hopeful?
Beats not *my* heart with their impulse?
Soars not my iron soul upward?

Out of the darkness I come—
Out of terrific black chaos,
Thro' the great echoing tunnel,
Generous arching, but dreadful
In its deep underground stillness!
Out of that silence—make way—
I issue, fleet, fleet from my prison,
Break my black bonds, cast my mantle
Of midnight and wide desolation!

THE GRAY APE

Sitteth shivering and gray
Thro' the golden summer day
Sitteth melancholy there!
In that agèd shriveled air,
In that sloping wrinkled front,
I can read the ancient vaunt
Of the animal supreme!

With long, agile, winding arms
He mechanically warms,
Wraps himself and shivers still.
His bright eyes have found their fill
In the human farce that runs
Endless by his window! Suns
Marched above him long ago,
Pierced the jungle roof below
With an unrelenting beam!

Hark the jungle-music! Hear,
Past his little human ear
Myriad and sheenful noise
Of the evening leaves! His toys
Drop unheeded at his feet—
O how whimsically sweet!

THE GRAY APE

Gone—the street-cries hurry in
With a hideous old din
Like the clamor of a dream!

Sitteth melancholy still,
Bodeful, brooding on great ill—
All the mighty motions spent,
All the age-wide wonderment
That by some consummate span
Might have made of him a man,
Not a little slinking ape
Of repellent lanky shape!
O the unrelenting plan
Which by some consummate span
Might have made of him a man!

MONA LISA

Inscrutably she smiles. Across her face
Winds of great agony sweep ruthlessly.
Passes the breath of joy, a gasp of pain,
Happiness, tranquil tenderness, death's shade,
Icily pallid, life's wild thrill of hope,
Sorrow and all the kindred bitterness
Of memory—so pass they, but behold,
Inscrutably, eternally she smiles!

A CLOUD

Yon cloud is a messenger hound!
Gray-pelted and fleet
To the feet of my love he is bound.
Lo, welcome him, Sweet!

He hath rangèd the blueness of heaven,
Hath captured a star
And of mystical asphodels, seven
He beareth afar!
Fleet, fleet, O my messenger hound,
Cloud-footed, O speed!
To the feet of my love art thou bound,
In my gifts she shall read
All the magical love I have found,
Shall interpret my need!
Range the blueness of heaven—O speed!

BACCHANALIAN

Drink deep of life! To the last lowest dregs
Of bitterness, quaff all the dainty foam
Of ecstasy, quintessence of the draught!
Drink deep! Some mighty hand may grasp the
cup
And spill the crimson vintage! Drink, I say!

Drink deep of love! Who knows what potency
May change the sweet to bitterness—may crush
The rose-leaf goblet into nothingness?
Drink deep, nor question what may lie concealed
Beneath the glitter of the draught, what woe,
Cold disillusion and oblivion!
Drink deep of love nor question! Drink, I say!

Drink deep of death! Plunge in the infinite,
Down ever deeper to the blackest depths
No spirit ever quaffed! Drink bravely, man!
Some greater draught awaits thee, some rare wine
More golden than the tenderness of love,
More crimson than the majesty of life—
Drink deep of death, O man, nor be afraid!

SICK FANCIES

Pain has become to me the throbbing beat
Of all the hearts of men. Steady, superb,
Marches the progress of my suffering
Till all my thoughts throb with it, pulse and throb,
Steadily, unrelenting, horribly!
This is not pain—it is the beating woe
Of many million spirits, blent, transfused—
The aching spirit of the universe!

Caught in the subtle net of circumstance
We struggle vainly. Yet, O mighty God,
Let us look up between the cloaking mesh
And gather thy white stars into our souls!

Yon blinking window fascinates me! I
Would see what lieth outside! O, I yearn
To feel the rush of dear humanity;
The struggling force of life, the strength of souls
Eager against each other—once more know
The interchange of little gentle ways,
The warm hand-clasp—the happiness, the hope,
And all the clanging din of war!

I lie
In this small room companioned by my pain,
Seeing the long procession of my dreams

SICK FANCIES

That files so ghostly thro' my spirit ways!
These dull blank walls—this meagre little bed,
The pageantry of suffering and death!

The men that heal us lose their kindliness
By constant contact with our body's ills.
O no, I do not blame them—they are good.
This restiveness seems scarcely manly! Pain
Of body is so infinitely less
Than that accursed agony of soul
That lately rent my passions!

Lo, one stands
White-capped and kindly, summoning me there
To meet alleviation of my hurt.
They will press down the cone and shut out light,
Leaving me a great agony of fire
Poured in my veins—no air to breathe, no air,
Only the hell-thick ether—then, long sleep,
The skilful stab of bright consummate steel,
Directed by a masterful, strong hand—
Relief, no pain—no pain!

So, I will go!
But if I never wake? This body can
Not chain that wonderful and tender thing,
The flame-quick mounting soul that lives in me!

THE HEALER

O Heart of all the World, I hold Thee here
Between my fingers, pulsing terribly!
I look into the blazing eyes of joy,
I catch the human rapture of release
From old, long haggard pain—and then, behold,
I see the quiet calm of Motherhood,
I hear the little whimpering shrill cry
Of new-born agony and fear and hope.
I see the coward shiver icily
Before the scintillant and bitter steel;
I see the brave man going to great pain
Like a young lover to a bridal tryst!

I heal—I give release. I know all life,
Alike at the momentous entrance, when
Reluctantly the soul breathes into flesh,
Impelled and most unwilling—at the last
When Death sits at the pillow, hand on wrist,
Gaunt fingers at the ashy lips. Behold,
O Heart of all the World, I hold Thee here,
Between my fingers, pulsing terribly!

THE LOVER

God gives me love! He opens my young eyes
To the white glory of true woman-guise.
The steadfast gaze—the pallid hand that lies
So light, so tender—like the summer skies
Just where they touch the waiting earth! Sunrise,
Moon-birth—the silver stars with age-wise eyes,
The life-blood flush of sunset where day dies,
What are they all? *I hail love-rise,*
Love-birth! Now praised be God, I love!

God gives me love—the heart wrench of fierce
 pain,
The dull half-brutish longing for great days
Of life now dead that *must* not rise again,
The very hell of love—Yet, murky haze
Of sorrow, parts—love-birth, love-rise—
I love—still, God be praised. I love!

THE SUNSET

The hot, gold color beats along the west
And quietly aspire the slender trees
To incommunicable far-off heights.
Above, the wide blue greatness of the sky
Arches in infinite and tender calm
And all around us peace of evening lies,
As if the world were waiting vision-filled!

The great warm glory of your woman's love;
The thoughts that reach up heav'nward from your
 mind
As those far-off immaculate young trees;
The arching wonder of your sky-wide Soul;
And my heart waiting peaceful, vision-filled!



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