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FAGOTS

BY

HESTER A. BENEDICT

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1523 Willow St
Alameda
Calif.)*



BUFFALO

CHARLES WELLS MOULTON

1895

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PRINTED BY
CHARLES WELLS MOULTON,
BUFFALO, N. Y.

TO
HON. LYMAN W. HALL.

UP FROM DUSK-LAND AND DREAMLAND I BRING
THESE FAGOTS TO THE HEARTHSTONE OF
YOUR HEART, MY FATHER'S FRIEND AND
MINE, THAT WITH THEM YOU MAY LIGHT
TO FRESHER LIFE THE MEMORY OF
ONE WHO OWES TO YOUR FAITH-
FUL FRIENDSHIP AND WISE DIREC-
TION WHATEVER OF WORTH IS
IN THE SONG SHE SINGS.



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FAGOTS .

TO THE SPIRIT OF SONG.

WITH bosom where burdensome breath is,
From rocks where a beautiful bark
Lieth wreck'd in the caverns where death is,
I rise like a ghost in the dark
Crying out to thee, Come from thy palace,
Thy palace where praises belong,
And hold to my white lips thy chalice,
O, comforting Spirit of Song!

O'er the path of my past thou hast fluttered
Sometimes like a breeze o'er the sea,
And a few of all words I have uttered,
Had in them a little of thee.
It is not enough! Do the shadows
Of ships that are stately and strong
Save the drowning? or dreams of old meadows
Where home is? O, Spirit of Song!

Nay, nay! hold me hard! I am done with
All things that the world deemeth dear;
All dreams that my lone life begun with
Forever and ever end here—
Save its one dream of thee. Lo! I cover
Them carefully, crying to thee:
Be more than a mother or lover,
Henceforth and forever to me!

Be life of my life! be the duty
That life's weary way making sweet!
Be brightness, be bloom and be beauty
Be calm and be comfort complete!
Forgetting to weep or to wonder
Grown quiet, majestic and strong,
Let me be like an *immortelle* under
Thy mantle, O, Spirit of Song!

Hand in hand let us con the old pages
By poet-souls written and read;
Heart to heart let us traverse old ages
By poet-lips never named dead;
By a ladder more rosy than roses,
'Neath banners by angels unfurled,
Let us climb where heaven's portal uncloses
High over a wondering world.

Behold me! I lay on thine altar
All days and all deeds I have loved;
All faith that my soul has seen falter;
All loves I have proved or disproved.
And I swear by my life that was lonely,
By my soul that with thee waxeth strong,
Evermore to be thine, and thine only,
Thou comforting Spirit of Song!

ONLY A WOMAN.

ONLY a woman, shriveled and old,
The play of the winds and the prey of the cold!

Cheeks that are shrunken,
Eyes that are sunken,
Lips that were never o'erbold;

Only a woman, forsaken and poor,
Asking an alms at the bronze church door.

Hark to the organ! roll upon roll
The waves of its music go over her soul!

Silks rustle past her
Thicker and faster;

The great bell ceases its toll,
Fain would she enter, but not for the poor
Swingeth wide open the bronze church door.

Only a woman—waiting alone,
Icily cold on an ice-cold throne.

What do they care for her?
Mumbling a prayer for her,
Giving not bread but a stone.

Under old laces their haughty hearts beat,
Mocking the woes of their kin in the street.

Only a woman! In the old days
Hope caroled to her, her happiest lays;

Somebody missed her,
Somebody kissed her,

Somebody crowned her with praise;
Somebody faced up the battles of life
Strong *for her sake* who was mother, or wife.

Somebody lies with a tress of her hair
Light on his heart where the death-shadows are;
Somebody waits for her,
Opening the gates for her,
Giving delight for despair.
Only a woman—nevermore poor—
Dead in the snow at the bronze church door!

ON THE SHORELAND.

WIND that I know not, if nothing will stay you
From my own lattice where moonlight is fair,
If nothing will stay you, be wary I pray you,
How you sail into and out of my hair.
Let it be lightly for love of the loving;
Let it be softly for sake of the sweet;
Lightly and softly forever, O roving
Wind from the somewhere where mysteries
meet,

For, when my darling one sailed to Vanesses,
Over the heart of the treacherous sea,
He left in my tresses a world of caresses—
True as the truest of lovers' may be.
And in the night-time when sleep cometh softly,
And in the morning when sunrise is sweet,
I whisper a prayer for him oftly and oftly,
Adding, "God hasten the hour when we meet!"

Years they are coming, and years they are going,
Still not a sign of his ship on the sea,
And in the waves flowing not anything showing
What it is keeping my darling from me.
Oh! but to see his white sails in the harbor!
Oh! but to hear his call answering mine!
Oh! for his feet in my jessamine arbor!
Oh! for the raptures of days of lang syne!

What shall I do? Oh! will any one tell me
What I shall do with my heart that is his,
When it calleth for comfort, with cryings that kill
me,
Hard from the heart of the waiting that is?
What shall I do with its desolate aching?
What with its pulses of passionate pain?
What with its bondage, and what with its break-
ing,
If he comes back to me never again?

I will say, "Father, whose palm hath the pillows
Of the dear sleepers on shoreland and sea,
Guarding the willows and guarding the billows,
Give of thy pity a little to me!
And, till the hour when death cometh kindly,
And, till the morning forevermore fair,
Feeling my way to him through the dark blindly,
Leave me, for comfort, his kiss in my hair."

THREE-SCORE YEARS.

You are saying the strange words over and over,
Leaning your cheek on your tremulous palm,
And watching—just over the fallen-down clover—
The orchard asleep in a midwinter calm.
The orchard where fluttered, in times unforgotten,
The little bright locks, and the little light feet,
And the little, low laughs of the children begotten
Of love that you think of as loyal and sweet;
And you smile in the knowledge that sowing or
reaping,
Happily under or over the blue;
Proud of naught else—they are proud to be keeping
Here, or in heaven, their worship of you.

Swift as a thought through the sunshiny spaces,
Over the mountain tops covered with snow,
Over the meadows, with mists in their faces,
Into the warmth of your bosom I go.
What to my heart that on your heart is beating
Are the great changes that others may see,
But the pure parts of a poem repeating
All your life's labor for them and for me!
Toil in the day-time, and tears that have written
In the night's silence your pain and your prayer,
Fear that has faded, and blight that has bitten
Half the old ebon hue out of your hair!

Tears on your lashes? I'll kiss them away, dear!
 Kiss the low lips and the beautiful brow,
 Kiss the kind hands I have missed so, and say, dear!
 Never to me were you lovely as now.
 And I know, in the rhymings of fact or of fiction,
 Nothing is told of so old or so new,
 Nothing so sweet as the Christ benediction
 Resting forever on mothers like you.
 Mothers content if the seeds of their hoping
 Yield but in others a fruitage, tho' late;—
 Mothers who stand on life's westerly sloping
 Patient to journey and patient to wait.

Still on your bosom, I seem to be sailing
 Past the pale sunset away and away,
 Swift as a whisper of want or of wailing,
 Into the splendor of infinite day.
 And—like a saint 'mid the saints' defloration—
 Welcomed of all in the welcome Unknown,
 I see the white soul of my soul's adoration
 Reap the ripe harvest of all it has sown;
 See the sheen and the snow of its drapery, woven
 Of lilies whose leaflets still cradle the dew,
 And its crown of full recompense tenderly cloven
 From the great heart of Compassion, for you.

* * * * * *

Over the meadow-land, moonlight is streaming;
 Day from the weary world walketh apart;
 Shadows enfolded us while I was dreaming
 Here in my old place over your heart,

Here in the calm I have failed to discover
Whether in laughter or whether in tears,
Hunting the happy world over and over,
All the sweet length of my womanhood's years.
Low at your feet let me say the old prayer again,
Lifting my passionless palms from your knee,
Feeling your breath in my tangled-up hair again,
Knowing "the angels are envying me."

TO-DAY AND FOREVER.

I.

My breath but touches the rose in your palm,
 And lo! how the light leaves scatter,
 Leaving no semblance of bloom or of balm;
 But what, I pray, does it matter?
 Laugh, as they flutter away, my dear,—
 As they flow with the flow of the river!
 We are done with dead roses to-day, my dear,
 Done with them to-day and forever.

II.

Your eyes but turn to the tress in my palm—
 The wee little tress so golden,—
 And low I whisper: "The sweetest calm
 Was born of that sorrow olden."
 Sing, as it sinks to the mosses, my dear,—
 To the mosses that border the river!
 We are done with old losses and crosses, my dear,
 Done with them to-day and forever.

III.

Laugh low! Sing softly! Love is alive
 And awake where we walk together;
 But Love is fragile, and Love will thrive
 Best in the sunniest weather.
 So, let the past *be* the past, my dear;
 Let it go, as the shade on the river!
 We are done with old sorrows, at last, my dear,
 Done with them to-day and forever.

FATHER AND CHILD.

GRAY-HAIRED and brown-haired they stood where
the sunrise,
Wove of its wonder their girdle and crown,
He, with his old heart and face to his grainland,
She with her young heart and face to the town.

“Good-bye!” he whispered—his voice sounding,
somehow,
As if it climbed from a prison of pain,
To catch the Christ-comfort—“May our God keep
you
Strong for His service in body and brain.

“Where you are going it may be they need you
More than I need you, my own little one!
Harvest fields whiten I know, in the distance,
And workers are few, darling, under the sun.

“So, though my days may be lone, shall I shirk, dear,
The burden God sends through this parting with
you?
Nay, nay! since somewhere, not here, there is work,
dear,
For your small hands and your large heart to do.”

Silent he grew then. She from his bosom
Slid; kneeled on the hard earth; bowed her bright
head,
And—"Never again shall I kneel thus before you
This side the Better Land, father," she said.

"Give me your blessing!" Quickly he answered—
Barring the brown of her beautiful hair
With his pale fingers—"Bless you, my darling!
May you be ever the great Father's care.

"Stainless and white be your garments of living;
Well-done the labor God gives you to do;
Sweet may your songs and brave may your heart be,
In storm or in sunshine, the whole journey
through."

Gray-haired and brown-haired they parted that
morning;
Never a tender thing grew at their feet;
Never a happy thing troubled the silence
With a low singing of anything sweet.

Only God's heaven of comfort above them;
Only God's heaven of hope in their hearts;
Only God's heaven of faith for their armor,
Saving and shielding from deathfulest darts.

Old hands and young hands forever divided;
Old heart and young heart for aye undefiled;
Singing the snows from their burden of crosses,
Calm to the Christ-Land, go father and child.

LAURA.

IN queenly quiet, she standeth there,
With the morning sunbeams o'er her,
Fair and sweet as the roses are,
In the sweet world-ways before her,
To merriest music her young life leaps;
And, under their hazel lashes,
Her sweet eyes hold in their tender deeps,
Brighter than star-light flashes.

I never have touched with my human lips
A thread of her braided tresses;
I never have reached my finger tips
To a vine that her hand caresses;
But I know she is fair as the fair may be;
That Sorrow—he kens not of her;
That her life sings ever a-low, like the sea,
And that I am forever her lover!

Reaching for laurel and bay, I stand
Where the wild waves rise in riot,
And long for a touch of the maiden's hand,
A dream in her bower's quiet.
If she loved me a little, my songs, I think,
Would be sweeter the sweet world over;
But never the nectar of Hope I drink,
Though I am her loyalest lover.

WHAT SHE OWNS.

ONLY a little land toward the sunset—
A tract not wide nor long—
With trailing vines and violets upon it,
And slow airs sweet with song,
And all the place so canopied with quiet
That, listening, you may hear,
To its soft couch of grasses running riot,
The angels drawing near.

No more than this—though much perchance ye
wonder—
Hath she of whom ye ask;
No more, save something the green grasses under,
With eyes that white lids mask,
And sweet, sweet heart, for some unspoken reason,
Never to bound or break
In any time or any place or season,
For any young love's sake.

No more than this—this side the happy heaven—
That she may call her own,
Than this and these! for, morn and noon and even,
Wends she her way alone
Across the world, with pale, proud lips shut tightly,
And eyes too sad to see
Along her lone way quivering ever brightly
The lights of memory.

Empty around her fall your words of wooing,
 Empty your words of praise;
 No love hath she for any love's pursuing,
 No faith for wedded days;
 No thought of giving, asking or receiving,
 Enters her heart or head,
 For all the fair young buds of her believing
 Lie in her bosom—dead.

Up the high hillside leading to her treasure
 Some one will walk ere long,
 With pulses beating to a sense of pleasure
 And to a sense of song,
 Plucking the blooms and treading down the grasses
 Till, suddenly astir,
 A bough that bends with every breath that passes
 Yields him a glimpse of *her*.

Her snowy cheek on snowy tablet lying—
 As 'twere the mother's breast—
 Her lashes, heavy with no hints of crying,
 Over her dark eyes prest,
 Her tired heart, past pain and past beseeching,
 Nestling, as pure as snow,
 Among the violets, as though 'twere reaching
 Down to the dead below;

Her poor, pale lips just parted, as for saying
 Some words of shamelessness;
 Her poor, pale palms just folded as for praying
 In very blamelessness;

Upon her brow no trace of any fever,
Nor any life enthroned;
Only a prayer that all the world will leave her
Alone with what she owned.

OVERHEARD.

AN orchard old and gnarly, and a wood
Stretching away behind,
With birds that in the shadows build and brood,
Sweet'ning the summer wind.

A cottage to the southward, gray and old;
Northward the waving grain,
With thirsty bees from blossoms manifold
Drinking the recent rain.

Above, light clouds across the perfect blue
Of skies serene and sweet;
Below, a well-worn winding path where true
And happy lovers meet.

Two faces where a grape vine bendeth low
Over a breadth of balm;
Two voices with their quiet ebb and flow;
Two hands turned palm to palm.

I tell not what I chance to overhear,
Nor to the night nor day;
I only say: "God bless and keep you, dear!"
Then turn, and go my way.

They age so soon! so soon forget their play,
These little ones of ours!
To-day betrothed—and only yesterday
Were babes among the flowers.

But if, forevermore they walk, with Love,
The ways made smooth or rough,
Facing up fair the one white gate above,
Perhaps it is enough.

UNCONFESED.

I.

ACROSS the fields of summer bloom
A wind went, slow and sweet,
To lay his burden of perfume
Low at my lady's feet.
The brooklet murmured, "Stay, my dear!"
The white rose whispered "Wait!"
And the red rose hinted, "I am here,
Close to the garden gate!"

II.

But on and away the wild wind went,
Humming a love-song old,
Till he found my lady, and died content,
Kissing her locks of gold.
The brooklet's murmur may reach her ear,
The white rose climb to her breast,
And the red rose follow! but *I stay here,*
With my one love unconfessed.

ACROSS THE YEARS.

SWEETHEART, do you remember how,
Half hidden in the bloomy heather,
We watched a workman at his plough,
One idle summer day together ?
One idle, balmy, dreamful day,
Not over-full of song or splendor,
But rare with sweets of new-mown hay,
And rare with music soft and tender.

We were but children—you and I—
With childhood's trust and childhood's hoping,
Tinting with crimson all the sky
O'er all our future's upward sloping.
If cold and care were anywhere,
Or anywhere the dark of sorrow,
We thought not, knew not, dreaming there
Of but the day and but the morrow.

We listened to the song of birds,
Ourselves as softly, lightly singing,
Yet troubling not with sound of words
The silence where perfumes were swinging.
Enough for us that we could feel
Our pulses to the Day's pulse beating,
And know that for divinest weal
His spirit and our own were meeting.

I know not why—O, sweetheart mine!
But that dear day my heart is haunting
What time I watch the lessening line
Of ships that sail o'er seas enchanting.
I lean across the years, across
Unlevel lengths of sun and shadow,
Hiding my kisses in the moss
That edges all the old-home meadow.

I wrap the red rose in my hair;
I rock the red rose on my bosom,
But can not find you anywhere
On seas of space or beds of blossom.
I reach the sunshine and the dew,
I hear the nested bluebird calling,
And yet I know not if with you
The sunshine or the rain is falling.

So be it. All the world is sweet,
And haply you are somewhere in it;
No shadow of regret shall meet
The sunshine of a single minute.
Summer is with me. Calm on calm
Is lying in my heart and over,
The while I sit here—palm on palm—
With all the laughing land my lover.

IF YOU KNOW.

IF you know where the tenderest breezes
Tarry from morning till night,
With singing as sweet as the sea's is—
Wanton and wild with delight—
Then you know where the face of my lover
Beams with a beauty divine;
And the heart of your heart hath, moreover,
Part of the secret of mine.

If you know where the blossom uncloses,
That floodeth the soft-swelling sod
With fragrance as rare as the roses
That brighten the bosom of God,
Then you know where the feet of my lover
Pulse with a passion divine;
And the heart of your heart hath, moreover,
Part of the secret of mine.

If you know where the robin no longer
Remembers the nest on the hill,
Where she tarries—grown suddenly stronger—
To catch a new chorus and trill,
Then you know where the voice of my lover
Rises in rapture divine;
And the heart of your heart hath, moreover,
Part of the secret of mine.

If you know where I sit with my fingers
Tangled up fair with the moon's,
Keeping the twilight that lingers
Tender with touches of tunes,
Then you know where the heart of my lover
Is, in this moment divine;
And the heart of your heart hath, moreover,
All the sweet secret of mine!

TWO HOURS.

I.

A STORMY sea and a stormy sky,
Winds a-shudder and ships ashore;
And one alone where the waves are high,
With a broken boat and a broken oar.

A swift step ringing among the rocks;
A quick cry crossing the angry seas;
A lull in the terrible thunder shocks,
And wild winds laden with prayers like these:

“Turn to me, turn to me! What do you there
Where Death is hidden, my love, my sweet?
Here are my lips for your nut-brown hair,
Here is my heart for your snow-white feet.

“God, God!—if anywhere God may be—
When ships are sinking and true hearts break,
Give, I pray Thee, give back to me
My love, my love, for Thine own love’s sake!”

II.

A quiet sea and a quiet sky;
Winds a-whisper and ships a-sail,
And two together with no one nigh
To hush the telling of love’s old tale.

Bird-songs echoing far and near;
A whirl of wings and a buzz of bees;
Blue eyes bent to the waters clear
And seraphine smiling at words like these:

“Darling—darling! This is the place
And this is the hour you came to me,
With your snow-white heart and snow-white face,
Safe from my rival, the Blue-beard sea.

“Say you are glad, dear.” Did she reply?
Over his bosom her bright hair fell;
But the birds and the blue waves know, not I,
Whatever her sweet lips dared to tell.

HER LOVER.

SINGING, she follows the winds out West,
 When the day fades fragrant and fair,
 And haply she finds him taking his rest,
 As of old, in the chintz-covered chair.
 Her ever-new lover—
 Her ever-true lover—
 Her brightest, her bravest, her best!
 And go the world over,
 She'll never discover
 A lover like him in the West!

Softly she glides to him; lifts from his breast
 The paper, a score of times read,
 And the silver-bowed spectacles, loose on his vest,
 Laying her head there instead.
 For he is her lover—
 Her ever-new lover—
 Her brightest, her bravest, her best!
 And go the world over,
 She'll never discover
 A lover like him in the West!

“My father!” she falters; her fair finger-tips
 A-sail on his beard's silver stream;
 And all the lost rubies return to her lips
 As he answers, “My child!” in his dream.

Oh, he is her lover—
Her ever-true lover—
Her brightest, her bravest, her best!
And go the world over,
She'll never discover
A lover like him in the West!

“Dream on, dear,” she whispers; “for I, too, dream,
In the twilight, down here by the sea;
And it's better, I ween, than to walk in the gleam
And the glitter that waiteth for me!
For you are my lover—
My tender, true lover—
My brightest, my bravest, my best!
And go the world over,
There's none can discover
A lover like mine in the West!”

BARBARA.

SHE sits in the twilight, busily knitting,
The kitchen behind her is dingy and old,
And up where the day-blind bats are flitting,
You'll find the rafters covered with mold.
But little of this is Barbara thinking;
Her life has folded its dreariness up,
And laid it away out of sight. She is drinking
Now from an old-time memory cup.

She is going, hand-in-hand, with her lover—
As true a lover as ever was born—
Up through a meadow of milk-white clover,
Edging a valley of tasseling corn.
The birds pipe low, and the winds pipe lower;
The bees are busy among the blooms,
And the feet of the brook go slower and slower
On through the heart of the gathering glooms.

And they love each other ! The world before them
Lengthens away like a flowery lea,
Sweeter to them than the heaven that's o'er them,
Fairer than ever that heaven may be.
They love each other ! They walk together !
And what is there more of heaven, I pray,
For those in the evermore summery weather,
If Love would linger, or Time would stay ?

But Time stays never for call or crying,
And Barbara follows its quick tides on—
On and away where the rocks are lying
That wreck and ruin at dark or dawn;
And she kneels again, with her long hair over
The bosom where never a pulse-beat is,
Her hand on the dead-white hand of her lover,
Her lips as numb and as dumb as his.

Oh, Barbara! Barbara! Come back quickly,
While you have life, from that memory-way;
For ghosts of the old time glide there thickly,
With smiles that stifle and swords that slay.
Come back, and dream of a day-dawn breaking
Over some beautiful land, somewhere,
Where your feet will wander ere long, forsaking
The shadowy shores of the world of care.

Barbara! Barbara! Never she answers;
Her hands lie, listlessly crossed, in her lap,
And the wind—the daintiest, dearest of dancers—
Comes from his revel and kisses her cap,
Dropping down tenderly into her bosom,
Where a heart lieth as heavy as lead,
Odors of white clover, leaflet and blossom—
Barbara—Barbara Allen—is dead!

“ IN THE OLD LIKENESS.”

DOUGLASS, my Douglass, O hear how I cry to you,
 Facing your land of the lupine and palm!
 Hear how I cry to you, longing to fly to you
 From the cold heart of this comfortless calm.
 Call me, I pray, from the reeds where the robin,
 Swinging and singing alone to his mate,
 Stirs my slow pulse to a passionate sobbing
 For the home-lilies that grow by the gate.
 Oh! at the gate, love;
 Call, for I wait, love;
 Call, and I answer at breaking of day;
 Swift to your bosom,
 O'er hillside and blossom,
 Breeze-like and bird-like, awake and away.

Douglass, my Douglass, O hear how I cry to you!
 Leave me no longer so lorn and so lone;
 Call me your darling, and say I may fly to you,
 Never to leave you, O Douglass, mine own!
 Oh! if you heard the winds carry my sobbing
 Over the mountain and over the plain!
 Oh! if you heard my heart heavily throbbing,
 Under its burden of passion and pain!
 Now, at the gate, love;
 Call, for I wait, love;
 Call, and I answer at breaking of day;
 Swift to your bosom,
 O'er hillside and blossom,
 Breeze-like and bird-like, awake and away.

COME WITH THE SPRING WINDS
AND BLOSSOMS.

COME with the Spring winds and blossoms, my
Violet!

Starry-eyed Violet! tender and sweet!
Come with the perfume of buds through the sunset;
Come with the dews on your rose-tinted feet.

Lean from the heart of the calm, little Blossom,
As a star leans from the mystical blue
To the black of a tempest, and over my bosom
Drop the fine gold of your tresses anew.

Come! On my rose-vines the sunset is lingering,
Lighting the green leaf, and lighting the gray;
And the fair Spirit of Silence is fingering
All the white keys of the jubilant Day.

Yet, can I lift for the Night's tender kisses,
Lips that are red with the rare wine of song,
And brows that are radiant, remembering blisses
That throbbed through the heart of Aprils ago?

Remembering all your low laughter, and missing
The tenderest notes from my life's broken psalm?
Oh, Blossom! shine sweet through the night of my
wishing,
And lean to my heart from the heart of the calm.

She comes with the Spring winds and blossoms, the
 Violet,
 Lost from the green of a morning ago,
And held, like a lily, through all the white sunsets,
 Sleepily, dreamily, under the snow.

She comes from the soul of the silence, my Blossom
 My starry-eyed Violet, tender and sweet!
But Paradise-buds are too fair on her bosom—
 The Paradise-dews are too bright on her feet.

Too fair and too bright for a gaze that is human!
 It is not for me—the sweet dawn of the day,
And not for my hands—the weak hands of a woman,
 To hold in their clasping, an angel astray.

Still, still do I lift for the night's tender kisses,
 Lips that are red with the nectar of song,
And brows that are radiant, remembering blisses
 Throbbled through the heart of the Aprils agone.

And smiling to think how the dainty-faced Violet,
 Borne from the clay on a cherubic wing,
Has oped her blue eyes far beyond the white sunset,
 And blossoms anew in the Paradise-Spring.

NOTHING TO US.

I.

THE day is dark and the day is cold,
Sing, my bonnie bird, sing!
Sing loud and long, while into the wold
The sea wind saileth so swift and bold,
For it's nothing to us—to you and to me—
That the day is dark as a day may be,
And the wind but a biting thing.

II.

You know when the sun shines?—so do I!
Were my eyes blindfolded fast,
And I alone in the clamor and cry
Of a terrible storm that shook the sky
And drowned the lilies—and half-drowned me,—
I should know—for my heart and my soul would
see—
When the sun shone through at last.

III.

Come to my bosom, bonnie bright bird!
I love you—and he loves *me!*
His story—the truest that ever was heard—
I will tell you, my beautiful, word for word;
Tell it softly and oftly, and often again,
Till its meaning is plain to your heart and your
brain,
And you warble it back in glee.

IV.

The day is dark and the day is cold,
 But merrily, O, we'll sing!
Sing loud and long while into the wold
The sea wind saileth so swift and bold.
For it's nothing to us—to you and me—
That the day is dark as a day may be,
 And the wind but a biting thing.

DREAM BY THE SEA.

I.

PERHAPS it was only a dream
Of something too sweet to be,
But I saw you with eyes a-gleam
Like the myriad eyes of the sea.
And you looked not old,
And you looked not cold,
Your step it was firm and free;
And the rose in your hand
Was queen of the land
Of roses a-bloom for me.

II.

Surely I slept and dreamed!
For you were a-nigh, a-nigh,
And I knew you all that you seemed
What time you were living a lie.
And the rose in my hair,
You had fastened it there;
And my pulses were happy and high;
For love it was new,
And love it was true,
And heaven was under the sky.

III.

There were words from the world apart;
There was laughter of wind and wave;
Till something struck at my heart,
From the heart of the rose you gave.

FAGOTS.

And lo! for a wonder,
 The wild storm and thunder,
 And moaning from many a grave;
 And the end of the dream!
 Then a new day's gleam,
 And spirits that shield and save.

IV.

And this is the song for me:
 Oh! sweet as a young babe's breath
 Is the beautiful, beautiful sea;
 But he wooeth a-down to death,
 And tenderness lies
 In his myriad eyes
 But treachery lurks beneath;
 And an arrowy dart
 For the delicate heart,
 Forever the sweet sea hath.

V.

A rose is a coveted thing,
 It is silken and soft and warm,
 It is fanned by the humming-bird's wing,
 It is fondled by sun and storm.
 We pluck it in blossom,
 And wear on the bosom
 Till, suddenly, faint with alarm,
 We snatch from our laces
 The gleam of its graces,
 And shake from its petals the worm.

VI.

True love is the loveliest thing
That ever a life may know;
'Tis a child of the Paradise spring
Let loose in the valleys below.
Embrace him and bind him
If once you but find him
And sing in the sun and the snow;
And smile on him purely
And journey securely,
Forever, wherever, you go.

YOU AND I KNOW.

I.

O BLITHE little robbin, a-calling to me
From your uppermost perch in my palmetto-tree:
Is there anything sweeter, in all the sweet world,
Than the quiet where your wings and my wings are
furred?

II.

I lean to my lilies, yet listen to you,
With face in the sunshine, with feet in the dew;
And I answer you back again, singing, "O ho!
Who cometh cheerily?—You and I know."

III.

And what does it matter to you or to me
That sorrow is somewhere on shoreland or sea?
We two are as safe as the stars are, my bird,
And the whisper of want is a whisper unheard.

IV.

But somewhere the dark is! and somewhere the
snows
Are guarding the gravelets of lily and rose!
No robin sings there; and the winds are as wild
As the destiny waiting for Nobody's child.

V.

Yet sing, O my pretty one! Sing in the calm
That holdeth and foldeth your perch in the palm!
Let the notes flutter high, let the notes flutter low—
For never our one world is under the snow.

VI.

Honey-bees hide in its blossoming clover,
Shaking the dainty dews under and over;
Murmuring something too sweet for a name—
Summer and Winter time ever the same.

VII.

Look—O my darling! Look over the hill,
And see if one crosseth the bridge by the mill;
For the rollicking breezes are suddenly grown
Of tenderer touch and of tenderer tone;

VIII.

And I think—ah, no matter! Sing, little bird,
A melody sweeter than ever was heard;
And *I'll* answer merrily, shouting, "O ho!
Who cometh cheerily?—You and I know."

MY LITTLE LOVE.

I.

My little love, asleep so far, so far
 Beyond the hills I can not cross nor climb,
 Forgetting where the bees and wild birds are,
 And minding not the running river's rhyme—
 I pray you, in the silences grown sweet
 And full of heaven—since having you to hold,—
 Dream that the wind hath kisses for your feet,
 Blown from my heart with blessings manifold.

II.

The palms are proud above me! and I go,
 Singing, across the laughter-loving land,
 Yet saying, sometimes, with my voice dropped low:
 "If only *she* could wake and understand!"
 It may be that my fancy runneth riot,
 Watching the wee birds peering from the nest;
 But O, it seemeth often in the quiet
 Your light breath rocks the roses on my breast.

III.

And so I say: "My love, awake so far
 Beyond the skies that yet I may not climb,
 I think you know where all my treasures are;
 I think you hold the meaning of my rhyme.
 I think you stand, this moment, warm and sweet,
 And reaching dimpled fingers as of old,
 To catch the kisses for your face and feet,
 Blown from my heart with blessings manifold."

IV.

And so I sing with brooks, and birds, and bees,
Under the palms and where the pampa grows;
Choosing my many friends from them and these
And from wild winds that seek Sierra's snows.
And so I wear the raiment of delight;
And so I walk with glad, unfaltering feet;
And so I wait, till, past the day and night,
Finding my love, I find my life complete.

PAUPERS.

Two little hands and two little feet
 That never will weary again;
 Two soft eyes shut under lashes sweet—
 God! can I bear this pain?
 Can I *live* with this pitiless sorrow
 Tearing my heart and head?
 Can I *pray* when the pitiless morrow
 Leaves me not even my dead?

They are merry there, where the bright lights are—
 Merry as merry can be.
 What do they care that the youngling's hair,
 Fluttering over my knee,
 Will never be ruffled and never be kissed
 By the warm young mouth of Spring—
 That her cry on the street will never be missed,
 Or the song that she used to sing?

What do they care for a *pauper*? Hark!
 They are playing a favorite air;
 And in where the warmth is, in from the dark
 There is bread enough and to spare.
 One little crumb from their burdened board,
 One drop of their wasted wine,
 Had saved my child! Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!
 Art lost in that heaven of Thine?

The night grows deeper. The swift snows beat
 My bosom with dead-white hands;
But, dull to their fury, I turn my feet
 To the spot where the old home stands.
How happy it is! And the daises grow
 Athirst for my lips' light touch,
Just as they did in the long ago—
 Ah, child! we have borne so much!

But never mind now. It is all, all past—
 The hunger, the cold, the pain—
And the voice of my mother I hear at last
 A-singing an old refrain.
How happy it is! Lie close, my child;
 For, sheltered, and warm, and bright—
Forgetting the world that is wide and wild—
 I think we shall sleep to-night!

WITH YOU.

AN hour of hours and a time for dreaming,
The slow sun sinking in a sea of mist;
God's grace our own, and all his heaven seeming
To near us through the fading amethyst.
My hand in yours, I hear your words low spoken;
"He leadeth you the way your darling went"
And know them true by many a tender token,
Trying for her sweet sake, to be content.

And yet, somehow, the dead leaves drifting round
us,
The whispers in the hemlock and the fir,
The very calm and quiet that have found us,
Seem but to make me hungrier for her.
Across the mountains sleep is sweet upon her;
I would not loose his strong hold if I might;
But oh, my friend, my friend, had death not won
her,
How changed to me were all the world to-night.

If as in days I can not make seem olden,
Facing the dark, I faced my darling, too,
Feeling the fairness of her locks so golden,
Feeling the fullness of her love so true,

A something tenderer I could discover
 In all the touches of the tender wind;
A something sweeter where my sweet thoughts
 hover,
A something dearer in the dream behind.

I try to think what the long years have brought her,
 The years since she was made so all-divine,
What happy songs the angels may have taught her,
 To sing at morn and eve, instead of mine.

I try to think how she will fly to meet me
 In some glad hour that may not be afar,
And with what words of welcome she will greet me
 Beyond the valley where the shadows are.

But thought so burdens! and the mother in me
 Cries for the clinging of the warm young mouth;
The voice's call that from the grave could win me,
 The slow breath, sweeter than our own sweet
 South;

The nut-brown eyes filled over-full of laughter;
 The fine, gold tresses treasuring the light;
Oh, friend! how can I wait for the hereafter,
 That seems, for me, so far away to-night?

Forgive me! Tears are hot upon your lashes,
 And pain is hiding in your patient eyes;
Yet I have brought you gold from out the ashes
 Of that one pure and priceless sacrifice.
And heaven itself hath nothing worth the finding
 If I shall miss therefrom the hand I hold,
And the calm presence that to-night is binding
 My life to earth as nothing could of old.

WITH PANSIES.

“ ‘THESE be for thoughts,’ my gentle friend,”
She said, and kissed the purple blooms,
“ For tenderest thoughts where dream-boughs bend
To fold thee in their faint perfumes.
Let swing and ring of marriage bells,
Swift from the happy olden time,
Be sweetest sound that sinks and swells
Where roses rock and rivers rhyme.

“ Roses of rest thy heart hath known,
Rivers of peace thy soul hath sailed
Though many a happy hope is flown
And many an anchorage has failed,
I give thee joy, O gentle friend! ”
She said, and kissed each purple bloom,
“ God’s love go with thee to the end,
And on his bosom give thee room.”

WHAT SHALL I SAY?

WHAT shall I say to you to-night,
Oh, friend, whose face I can not see,
Save as I keep it in the light
Of "this lone lamp of memory" ?
What little timid, trembling word,
Whose meaning sweet is still so new,
Shall I entrust to breeze or bird
To bear across the night to you?

I catch from out the shadowy grass
A sound of something glad and free,
And turning, think to see you pass
Along the way that winds to me
And, radiant, I reach my hand
To find the fairness of your own;
But, ah! for silence hath the land
That holds me in its heart alone.

Alone, alone! Yet not alone,
Since evermore one walks with me
Whose closely-curtained, quiet throne
Henceforth within my life shall be.
I may not reach the reaching hand,
I may not hear the pulses true,
And yet along the happy land
I walk for aye, my love, with you.

And so the young bird o'er my head,
 Dreaming, within her downy nest
Of sweetnesses as yet unshed
 Upon her little patient breast,
Knows not so dear a dream as I
 That lean with violet-scented hair
And languid lips, that smile and sigh,
 T'ward the low lattice where you are.

And so I softly say to-night,
 O, friend, whose face I can not see—
Save as I watched it "by the light
 Of this lone lamp of memory"—
Say o'er and o'er each tender word
 Born of my love so sweetly new,
Trusting some blessed breeze or bird
 To bear them through the night to you.

JOHNNY AND I.

WE were barefooted children together,
Driving the Alderney cows,
In the 'witching and wonderful weather
Familiar with perfumes and plows.
There was Bessie, and Beauty, and Brindle,
And Fanny — as fleet as a deer,
With eyes that would color and kindle
Whenever we children were near.

There was Daisy, the darling, and Whitefoot—
Watching each way for the calf
Pat had murdered that morning — and Lightfoot,
Whose capers always made us laugh.
And Johnny and I, and the seven
Sleek milkers — the Alderney cows —
Cared nothing, just then, for a heaven
That had not its pastures and plows.

“I wish,” Johnny said — and a brittle
Old bramble broke under his feet —
“I wish you would always stay little,
And brown as a bird, and as sweet!
For you are so good and so jolly,
You can make me whatever you try,
And you love me, *to-day*, little Mollie —”
“And I'll love you *to-morrow!*” said I.

" Ah, yes; but you'll be a fine lady "—
 Poor Johnny was thumbing his knife—
 " And but yesterday, Ichabod Brady
 Said something 'bout *you* for a wife."
 "'Bout *me*, for a *wife*?" " And I hate him!"
 My bonnie boy-lover broke in.
 " If I weren't too little to mate him,
 I'd flog him to death for a pin."

" Now, Johnny," said I, with a flutter
 Of heart that my heart could not ken,
 And not a word more could I utter,
 For the rogue he was kissing me then;
 And the Alderney cows — they were cropping
 The grasses 'way down by the brook,
 Not human enough for eaves-dropping,
 Nor ever once turning to look.

* * * * *

From the pasture two children together
 Are coming up slow with the cows,
 In the 'witching and wonderful weather,
 Familiar with perfumes and plows.
 There's a Beauty, a Bessie, a Brindle,
 But they are the young of the kine,
 Whose eyes have forgotten to kindle;
 The children are — Johnny's and mine.

AT THE GATE.

“TROUBLE her not”—I heard them say—

“With crying and beseeching,
 She goeth God’s appointed way
 To God’s own arms upreaching.
 Let quiet compass all the space
 This side the gate unclosing,
 And smile to see the growing grace
 On lip and brow reposing.”

* * * * *

And so—the end is come, for which
 We two have cried together
 O heart of mine! so poor, so rich,
 So tired of changeful weather;
 And here we part, who long have been
 The truest of true lovers,
 Thou for the willows waving green,
 And sleep where silence hovers.

For me—I trust, yet can not know
 The Father’s dispensation,
 Perchance to penance I shall go,
 Perchance to compensation.
 But thou shalt rest! Above thy bed
 The grasses shall be growing,
 And roses nodding, white and red,
 And poppy-buds a-blowing.

Good-bye, my heart! I seem to hear
 A sound of bells a-ringing,
And far away — yet drawing near,
 A child's seraphic singing.
Good-bye, good-bye — sweetheart of mine!
 Thou truest friend and lover;
I hear the call of Love divine
 And life, with thee, is over.

MY GIRL.

HARK to the wind that passes,
 Hailing the hills — "Heigh-ho!"
 See how the long lawn grasses
 Shine in the sunset glow!

The palm trees, stately and strong and tall,
 Are guarding the gates of the garden wall,
 While over and under and all about
 The roses are whispering in and out—

"Oh, she is near to us!

Oh, she is dear to us!"

Sighing with envy of me,

Dying with envy of me.

For the maiden sitting and singing there,
 With goldenrod in her golden hair,
 The maiden dainty and dear and fair,
 Is mine — *my girl!*

II.

Hark to the sea that crieth,
 Missing the winds that creep
 Low where my one love lieth,
 Singing still in her sleep!

The moonlight stealeth under the stars,
 To brighten the blooms at her casement bars;
 And something stirs, in an answering way,
 The pulse of the palms where I kneel and pray:

“ Let her be near to Thee,
Let her be dear to Thee,
 Thou that lovest us all,
 Thou that provest us all!
Be mine the sorrow for love’s own sake;
Be mine the burden for two to take;
Let *my* heart hunger and ache and break,
 But spare *my girl!*”

III.

And, when her dream is over
 Under the skies’ soft blue,
When never for friend or lover
 Is anything left to do;
When care is quiet and souls are free
To sail as a ship on an unknown sea;
To soar as a bird or to shine as a star,
Where Life’s interpreted mysteries are,
 O by the mother-love
 Wiser than other love;
 By the pain plead for me,
 By the blood shed for me,
Under the palm trees stately and tall,
Guarding the gates of the jasper wall;
Where Love’s own scepter is over all—
 Give me *my girl!*

MARGUERITE.

SHE made on the upland a picture that never an artist
could paint,
Sandled with sheen of a sunset—crowned with the
calm of a saint.

Her face from the face of her lover turned, touched
with a breath from the sea:
Her heart held the words of her lover: “The cup
is most bitter for me!”

“‘The cup is most bitter?’” she echoed. “I know
it, O tenderest friend;
And the way stretches darkly before you; but you
will go straight to the end,”

“‘To the end?’ and what then?”—all the doubt of
his soul surging into his tone—
“Missing you, though I journey with angels, I
journey forever alone!”

“You’ll not miss me,” she said smiling softly, her
eyes on the opal afar,
Their light burning steadily, clearly, as once burned
the Bethlehem star,

And all her poor, pitiful pallor that told its own
story of strife,
Flushing warmly, as if for an instant some seraph
had kissed it to life.

“Dear friend, you’ll not miss me—since fetters were
fashioned for only the clay—
Since love is immortal as God is—since we two are
wedded for aye.

“You go where the night is, and with you a sorrow
more deathful than death;
But you follow the white feet of Duty—your hand
in the white hand of Faith.

“And you will bear bravely the tempest of agonies
sharper than hail,
Nor shrink from the sands of the desert—nor falter
where others would fail.

“For you are my hero, beloved, my king—among
cowards of men—
And the time is not long to the sunrise; wait, work
and be brave until then.”

“You walk with the angels, my darling—you echo
their music,” he said,
A smile on his lips, such as lingers sometimes on
the lips of the dead.

And so, on the upland, they parted; dim shadows
stole into the skies;
Only the chill of her fingers answered the prayer in
his eyes.

FOR LOVE'S SWEET SAKE.

HERE, where the waves make answer
To every wind that calls,
Where the sea-birds bide
When the ebbing tide
Leaveth the weed-wound walls,
Where the hours are fleet
And the hours are sweet,
And life like a loveful song,
He made me a bower
Of fern and of flower,
And hid me a whole day long.

O, but we heard the waters
Mocking the moveless ships!
And we saw, in a dream,
The glow and the gleam
Of myriad, musical lips
That stirred in the shade,
The lily leaves made—
Neither asleep nor awake—
And no one was near
To harm or to hear
If he kissed me for Love's sweet sake.

So, he kissed me! Whisper it softly—
Windlets never asleep!
Till all the white clover
Hears over and over
My secret too sweet to keep;

Till all the green grasses
The meadow-brook passes,
And all the bright blooms of the brake,
Are glad and are gay,
For forever and aye,
That he kissed me for Love's sweet sake.

This is the bower he built me!
Dainty and dear it is,
With song of the sea,
Of bird and of bee
Woven with song of his,
And filling my breast
With infinite rest
Whether I sleep or wake;
While my lips laugh low,
"All, the saints may know
He kissed me for Love's sweet sake!"

A WISE WAIF.

THE winds were sweet in the hawthorn hedge,
 And the lilies bent in a beautiful dream
 To the reeds that swung in the shadowy edge
 Of a gnarled old forest's musical stream;
 And everywhere, everywhere Love laughed low,
 When, taking her brown hand, Algernon said.
 "Kiss me, dear Ethel, before I go;
 For I'll love you forever, living or dead!"

Over the red of the maiden's lips
 A rare smile rippled, then passed away,
 As softly she answered: "Where go the ships,
 You go, my friend, for a year and a day.
 And I—that thrill at the lightest sound
 O' your step on the sward, or your voice on the
 wind,
 That love and live for you—will not be bound
 By sign or by token, and will not bind.

"For how can I know, though we smile or sigh,
 That our love is true, since our love is new?
 Since simply a waif o' the woods am I,
 Since surely a man of the world are you?
 But if, till the hedge is in blossom again,
 Your heart in its homage remains the same,
 Come to me! I'll wait i' the sun or the rain;
 And I'll give you a kiss when you give me your
 name."

The year and the day went tardily by;
The birds were again in the hawthorn hedge,
And the lilies bent, with never a sigh,
To the reeds that rocked in the brooklet's edge;
For, fair in the flush of a roseate day,
Loving—with never a chance for blame—
Ethel and Algernon passed that way,
And he claimed her kiss, for she bore his name.

DOWERED.

I.

A WIND came this morning from over the river
And brought me a legion of things
To be hidden and hidden, forever and ever,
Away under memory's wings.
And I—with my tresses blown fuller of sweetness
Than ever the lips of the sea,
Leaned over my casement in rapture's complete-
ness,
To take what he gave unto me.

II.

There were whispers of waters and little wild
snatches
Of songs sung alow to a shore,
Where, dreaming and dreaming, a young lover
watches
For one who returns nevermore.
There were promises broken and fragments of
speeches
And something that sounded like tears;
A-dripping and dripping down over the beeches
That keep all the secrets of years.

III.

And yet, oh, and yet, as I listened and listened,
 I caught the light laughter of leaves
 That swung in the sunshine, that glistened and glistened
 O'er swallows asleep in the eaves;
 The eaves of a cottage where, climbing and climbing,
 The jessamine bloomed as of old,
 When I sat in its shadow a-rhyming and rhyming
 About the young butter-cups' gold.

IV.

And over and over the meadows of clover
 And hill-tops so green and so grand,
 I wandered again with my lover, my lover,
 The bonniest lad in the land,
 Forgetting the fire, the famine, the fever,
 Forgetting the torture of tears—
 "Give love, and love only, forever and ever!"
 I cried to the manifold years.

V.

To the manifold years that were leaning unto us
 From arches of splendor afar,
 And happily, happily, seeking to woo us
 Where never the red roses are.
 Sweet was the dreaming—no matter what came of
 it—
 Sweet was the tasseling corn;
 Sweet was the—something!—no matter the name
 of it—
 Heard by the merry May morn.

VI.

Ah! softly and softly, down over the river,
Droop the dark shadows to-night!
But all the wild willows they shiver and shiver
As if they were stricken of fright!
And I—with my tresses blown fuller of sadness
Than ever the lips of the sea—
Lean over my casement to phantoms of gladness,
And take what they give unto me.

BEFORE THE BALL.

I AM here in the purple, black twilight;
My room as you left it remains;
The pictures, the fountain, the flowers;
The gas is unlighted; it rains;
And the wind thro' my half-open shutters
Cries lonesome and low to me, dear,
As I cry to you through the darkness.
Listen, my love! Do you hear?

Do you sit as I sit, with a wonder
Growing up rank in your heart—
A tare in the grain that is tasseled—
Why we too are praying apart?
Do you lean as I lean, at this moment
From darkness to darkness, and say,
"O spirit of Infinite Goodness
Be good to my darling, I pray!"

Ah, well! Over there in the corner
I can see by the fire's faint light,
The robe of most delicate amber
That I am to dance in to-night.
There's garniture gorgeous—a snow-shine
Of pearls and of point appliqué;
And yet, O I'm wild for the daises
That darken the hills far away!

I want the light lips of the lilies
On my lips that quiver and ache,
All the white bright lips of the lilies
That border our own happy lake.
And I want you, O darling of darlings!
O, one world of all worlds mine own!
I want you to laugh or to cry to—
And still—O, and still, I'm alone.

They are lighting the myriad burners
At Hasselman's over the way;
The crowd is beginning to gather;
The band is beginning to play;
Hark! What a throbbing and sobbing
Of melody tender and sweet,
Stirs the pulse of the rose on my bosom
Till it sinks in a swoon at my feet.

Hark again! O the musical army
That climbs the cold steps of the air
To storm the stronghold of my spirit—
It gives not a minute for prayer.
It has me and holds me, a captive
Despite all my wish and my will—
Afar from the lake and the lilies—
Afar from the daisy-decked hill.

Yet, somehow, it brings you the nearer,
And the dark grows suddenly light;
The heart of our bird in his prison,
Like mine, has forgotten the night.

The fountain flows freer; the flowers
Seem swinging in sweetnesses new;
And all of earth fades from the Heaven
That comes with the music and you.

THROUGH THE SNOW.

ONE April sunset, singing with the streams,
I sought—upon a happy hill-side slope—
A spot that I had dreamed of in the dreams
Of years kept calm by memory and hope.

A dainty dimple in the dear hill's breast—
As I remembered—it for aye had been,
A dainty dimple by the winds caressed—
My secret folded with its fairness in.

Laughing a-low I leaned there—parted the wet
Bare boughs that bent beside me where I stood,
And said, "Ah, surely I shall here forget
The famine and the fever! God is good."

A sudden start—a catching of the breath—
A quick down-dropping of the hands, for lo,
A stillness in the hollow as of death,
And over all its perfectness the snow.

Prone to the ground (the angels pitying me)
I fell the waving, wondering boughs between,
Clung there and cried, "Ah God! that this should
be,
When all my heart was hungry for the green.

"I can not, can not bear it!" From my breath
The frail snows faded, feverish and wet,
And 'round me floated from the world beneath,
The longed for fragrance of a violet.

So, to the snow of all your words my friend,
Found in the letter that before me lies,
My soul leans crying, "Christ! is this the end?"
And lo, the spirit of your sacrifice

Folds every fear in fragrance! and I see
(With eyes that laugh, albeit their lids are wet,)
Ever alive and ever fair to me
The royal purple of Love's violet.

AWAY FROM ME.

Do you find the heaven I can not reach,
So beautiful, O my sweet!
That ever in vain the sea-swept beach
I search for your small white feet?
Or is it, my love, that the angels there
Whom neither I know nor see,
Finding you fairer than all the fair
Hold you away from me?

O mine, my own! If I had you back
In the poor place over my heart,
I think I could tread the thorniest track
And never a tear would start.
I think I could welcome the wildest storm;
Could laugh, though the whole world wept,
If you were but nestling safe and warm
Where once you nestled and slept.

But the raindrops dimple the waves, my dear,
And I am alone, alone,
Listing the croak of the ravens near,
And wishing my heart were stone,
For it aches so under its velvet vest,
And dies—yet never is dead—
And it can not rise and it can not rest,
Missing your fair, young head.

A LESSON.

“WAIL your wild notes over and over,
Bonnie bright bird in the sycamore tree;
For long, too long, like an unloved lover,
Has the wind been teasing and torturing me!
I am a-weary of working and weeping;
Sing me to quiet and sing me to sleeping;
Let your low numbers float lightly to me,
Bonnie bright bird in the sycamore tree !”

Thus, in the shadows, prayed a lone maiden,
Leaning her face from the bosom of care,
While the wind, sweetly and heavily laden,
Braided his heather-breath in with her hair.
Lost was the light from her life that was dreary;
Lost were the smiles from her eyes that were teary;
Never a true thing to treasure had she—
The fair maiden under the sycamore tree.

Down from the dark boughs fluttered the robin,
Furling his wings on the folds of her vest;
“Kindred are we, dear,” murmured she, sobbing
Over a death-wound she found in his breast.
Still, in his agony, singing and singing,
Never his wild way again to be winging,
Seeming as happy as happy could be,
Died the bright bird neath the sycamore tree.

DERELICTUS.

“ IN the noonday sun I am faint, I am blind ! ”

A pale little Blossom said;

“ Where are the lips of my lover, the Wind,
To kiss me back from the dead ? ”

“ He is so loyal, so tender and true;

He dwells by the singing sea;

And swift he would haste—if he knew—if he
knew—

For he loves no one but me ! ”

Kneeling, I whispered: “ Beautiful flower,
Cling to your beautiful faith!

For oh, it will gladden your life's last hour,
And sweeten the way to death ! ”

But aside: “ Ah, pretty, forgotten flower!

'Tis better to cease to be;

For your lover wooes in the Rose's bower,
With never a thought of thee ! ”

WHERE THE TIDAL WAVES COME IN.

I.

IF you and I were together now
Where the tidal waves come in;
With breast to bosom and brow to brow
And a low, low murmuring—
If we had forgotten, as they forget,
The dark and the dreary day,
The wailing of winds all wild and wet
And whatever they chose to say—
If much was to ask and much to reply
How would the talk begin,
If you and I were together now
Where the tidal waves come in ?

II.

I think the spirits that, long and far,
Have struggled in pain and tears,
To find and enter the "gates ajar"
And the rest of roseate years,
Stand still and dumb when the new life first
Leaps, thrilling, from vein to vein,
Crowding the old with its best and worst
Forever from heart and brain;
So we, my darling, though brow to brow,
Could scarcely our speech begin,
If we were together, together now
Where the tidal waves come in.

ALWAYS.

IF from your lips, my friend, that one small word
Fell through the glooms that girdle me to-night,
Fell, rounding "I shall need you," like a bird,
My life, I think, would climb to clearest light,
Forgot, for aye, were all the cruel tides
That cast me, broken, on a barren coast;
Forgot, for aye, all earth save that which bides
In the safe heaven that I long for most.

Around me in the fair and fragrant space
Floats the low trilling of a twilight tune,
But from its heart I fail to catch the grace
Of dawns that darkened when the month was
June.
I hear, as one held close in dusky dreams,
The blue waves bounding to the beaten sands,
But calm comes not! for, reaching through the
gleams
Of moon and star, I can not find your hands.

And yet, dear friend, not all the leagues, unlit,
Lying this side the land for which I pray,
Can hold me from you wholly! You will sit
Sometimes, I think, your sweet eyes turned this
way,

And through the calms that cover you, a note
Of some low song I sing beside the sea,
Breeze-like and bird-like to your soul will float,
Waking the wonder of a cry for me.

And dreams will haunt you ever. Dreams that
bear

On their light wings the tint of tender rest—
Of rosy rest—that waiteth for us where
The ways wind closely at the soul's behest.
O, blesséd dreams! And yet, if one small word
Fell through the glooms that girdle me to-night,
Fell, rounding "I shall need you," like a bird,
How would my life soar, singing to the light!

HOMEWARD.

I.

“ My poor, poor eyes they are blind with tears,
And I can not work! ” she said,
Tossing aside her thimble and shears,
And winding her spools of thread.

The riotous wind with her roses stayed
A-wooing, a-wooing long;
The swallow she slept all undismayed,
And her dreams they were sweet with song.
But the lady lay on her pillow white,
White as a ghost lay she,
Speeding her soul on a lonely flight
To her lover afar at sea.

II.

“ The night is drunken with drear alarm
And I can not sleep! ” she said,
Tossing the snow of a weary arm
On the gold of a weary head.

The velvety roses—foolish things!
A-nodding, a-nodding were
To the wind a-furling his wanton wings,
Where the lilies were all astir.

But the lady lay at her lattice low,
Low as the land lay she,
With every beat in her breast a blow
For her lover afar at sea.

III.

“My blood is fire, my breath is flame,
And I can not live!” she said,
Wailing the words of her lover’s name,
As if he were doomed and dead.

The beautiful ship went under the moon,
A-sailing, a-sailing on
To the wayward time of a wayward tune,
Till the half world met the dawn.
And the lady leaned to her roses sweet,
Sweet as a rose leaned she,
Hearing the sound of her lover’s feet
And happy of heart as he.

LAST WORDS.

I.

AT sunset of to-morrow you will stand,
Dear friend, with sweet eyes turning back to me,
Remembering how you stood and held my hand
In this sad hour by the sadder sea.
We have few words at parting—you and I—
A little smiling of unquiet lips,
Some common-places and a low good-bye—
With eyes upon the far-off, fading ships—
Are all that could be told of if the world
Told all to-morrow;—all there *is* to tell.
The mists of meeting round about us curled
But yesterday; to-day?—no matter! it is well.

II.

You go to brave life's battle for us both;
To bear the burden and the heat of years
That—leaning from the far-away, seem loth
To yield us fruits not nurtured by our tears.
There may be calms and comforts manifold
Lying beneath what seems to us to-day,
The blackness of a bitterness untold
Shrouding the sweets of many a bloomful May.
We can not know. We touch poor palms and part
In this sad, sunset hour—you and I—
Some struggling cries held silent in the heart
And on the lip a simple, slow "good-bye!"

AFTER YEARS.

WASN'T it neat, though, the cottage where clam-
bered

Roses the reddest that ever you knew?
And wasn't it sweet, though, the wild way we
wandered

Over the hill where the strawberries grew?
And didn't you weave me a girdle of grasses—
Weaving a kiss in with every link?
And didn't you leave me the gladdest of lasses
When you went down to the spring for a drink.

Oh, but the blue-birds went singing and singing
Into the heart of the daisied dells!
Oh, but your new words went ringing and ringing
Into my heart like a flutter of bells!
Oh, but you loved me, you *said!* and my blushes
Rivaled the strawberries under our feet,
And oh, but you proved me your own in the hushes
Of the May morning so tender and sweet!

But wasn't it queer, though, how our young passion
Faded away like a frolicksome snow?
For weren't you dear, though (after a fashion),
Just for a little short summer or so?

Laughing a little, I toy with my laces
 (*Real*, with a clasping of diamonds, dear),
Thinking how brittle are ties to old places—
 Thinking how mighty the bonds that are here.

And who is to blame now for all the sweet folly?
 You are the king of a castle; and I
Would say, if you came now—Wasn't it jolly,
 The olden-time dreaming, forever gone by?
For what needs a woman but jewels and laces,
 And station to make all her living divine?
No matter how human the cry for old places,
 It can not be heard in this kingdom of mine!

BIJOU.

LITTLE Bijou, walking nearer
To the angels far than I,
Come across the moonlit spaces
To the shadows where I lie,
And with lips the Christ has clung to
Tell me something sweet and true,
For my reaching hands are weary,
And my heart is weary, too.

Battle-stained and heavy-burdened
I am facing up the night,
Catching breath and calling to you
From the pauses of the fight.
Come, and let my fevered fingers
Find your tresses free and fair,
Till my life can lean to comfort
From the fastnesses of care.

Come, and let me watch the glory
Growing in your wondrous eyes,
Sweeter far than song or story
Of Italia's sunset skies.
Come, and say if in your dreaming
By the happy, haunted sea
You have ever seen the maiden
Whom the angels keep for me.

I have heard her garments rustling
 'Round me in the lonesome nights,
And have felt my pulses leaping,
 To the life of old delights.
But I could not see the shining
 Of her beauty-beaming eyes,
Though my wailing must have compassed
 All the heights of Paradise.

Lean a little nearer, Bijou!
 Do not look so white and wild;
I am ghostly in the darkness,
 But I could not harm a child.
For the battle not yet over
 I would only stronger stand,
For the clasping and the clinging
 Of a little maiden's hand.

And you walk so near the angels,
 All their secrets you must know;
You can tell me if she loves me
 As she loved me long ago.
You can tell me— Hark! the rising
 And the ringing battle-call.
Kiss me, Bijou! Rest is over.
 There, my darling, that is all!

LOST.

I.

THE white sails come, and the white sails go,
And the days drift to and from me,
And happiest sprites of Autumnal nights
Drop silverest dews upon me.
But never my pulses leap and thrill
When the tell-tale zephyr passes,
At sound of thy laugh in the boat's bright path,
Or sound of thy feet in the grasses.

II.

But over the glitter of goldenest bars,
When the winds of my life blow chilly,
My heart flutters back in a shadowy track,
To the land of the rose and the lily.
And once, once again, O belovéd! away
Over billow and blossoming heather,
Beside the low streams we are dreaming our
dreams,
And weaving our life-hopes together.

III.

Ah, darling! my face, with its quivering lips,
Shut close o'er a storm of sighing,
Leans whitely adown the green hills where the
crown
Of my life, with its glory, is lying.

And the white sails come, and the white sails go,
And the wind sings on as it passes,
For lost is thy laugh from the boat's bright path,
And gone are thy feet from the grasses.

HER ANSWER.

GOOD-BYE! There have been tears, and kisses;
 These are my last.
 No more a-wail for summer-bloom, and blisses
 Long ago past—
 Stand I a-near the winter with its snowing
 Hard in my face;
 Blind, breathless, groping in the dark, yet knowing
 This is my place.

Good-bye! God's hand upon my shadowed vision,
 Soon will give light
 Somewhere, the break of day that is elysian
 Waits for my night.
 Shall I—because my life's one dream is over,
 Shrink from life's toil,
 Crying because I can not scent the clover
 Sweet from the soil?

Nay, nay! I were unworthy Heaven's high keeping,
 Could this be so;
 Dumb as the dead, and cold—yet without weeping,
 Whitely I go.
 No bird, upon the bough above me, singing
 At Love's behest;
 No star its radiance to my pathway flinging
 Still—it is best!

Good-bye! Thine is the cup, the song, the revel—
 (Mine is the pain!)

God keep thee from the sorrow and the evil
 Found in their train.

Turn I unto my winter with its snowing
 Hard in my face;

Blind, breathless, groping in the dark, yet knowing
 This is my place.

HAUNTING THE HOLLOW.

DROOPING sad eyes to the snow-covers lying
Over a hollow that heard not our words,
Walked we but yesterday, gloomily crying—
“O for the sound of the singing of birds!”

“O for the olden-time splendor of spaces
Round us and over us, summery sweet!
O for the olden-time winds on our faces!
O for the olden-time blooms at our feet!”

Lifting glad eyes to the glory of arches
Daintily dotted by song-burdened birds,
Walk we to-day, keeping time to the marches
Of the warm, wanton winds, wild as our words.

Walk we with pulses that beat to the beating
Of the quick river that cries to the sea;
“Room in thy bosom! And give me thy greeting,
For my world-walls are too narrow for me.”

All the old wailing of winter forgotten;
All the old snow-covers folded away;
Crowned with a splendor of springtime begotten
Haunt we the heart of the hollow to-day.

O SUMMER, DEAR SUMMER.

I.

O SUMMER, where are you? What voice do you
follow,
Singing or sighing through regions unknown?
What luminous height or what desolate hollow
Laughs to your laughter or moans to your moan?
What fetters of living or dying enthrall you?
What hath you in silence that gladdens or grieves?
What strange thing enamors? that vainly I call you
To come to and comfort your children the Leaves!

II.

Is there no wind to your gloom or your gleaming,
Bearing the breath of their pitiful prayers?
Lonely they lie under boughs that are dreaming
Of new loves already, forgetful of theirs.
And you were so tender! You loved as none other
All the dear days that the robins made sweet;
You robed them and rocked them; you are their
mother,
Yet, far from your bosom, they die at my feet.

III.

Have I of comfort a little to give them,
I, with a frost on my hair and my heart?
Nay! though I love, as I surely outlive them,
Comfort is not of my power a part—

Only your singing can call back the flushes,
If flushes come ever, to lives that you gave;
And you are as still as my love in the hushes,
That rule all the wonderful world of the grave!

IV.

O Summer, dear Summer! the Winter is weaving
For your lost little ones' pillow and pall,
And somewhere, ah, somewhere, I think you are
grieving
That over them even your tears may not fall.
Gone are the robins to haunts that I know not;
Under a cold cloud everything grieves;
Snows are a-flutter where sunshine may go not—
Over the graves of your childern, the Leaves.

WHEN THE SHADOWS COME AGAIN.

WHEN the shadows come again
Over hill and over plain,
Creeping through the lattice bars
Where I wait to watch the stars;
When again within his ring
Bonnie bird forgets to sing—
Wooded from riot unto rest
By the dark upon his breast,
I shall listen, O my sweet!
To the coming of your feet,
Saying, "Soft! He hunts the hall,
And he loves me!" That is all.

When the shadows come again
Over hill and over plain,
Purpling all the plaited hair,
You have called so fine and fair;
When, o'er all our little world,
Is the wing of Night unfurled.
I shall feel my pulses rise
Past the height of Paradise,
List'ning, leaning, O my King!
To the vows you say and sing;
Praying, "Angels! do not call,
For he loves me!" That is all.

FAGOTS.

When the shadows come again
Over hill and over plain,
In the land of the forgiven—
In the garden named Heaven—
Fairest of the saintly fair,
With white lilies in her hair;
With her girdle golden-barred;
With her sandals silver-starred,
One will walk beside the river
That flows on and on forever,
Praying, " Let no ill befall—
For I love them!" That is all.

ELLEANORE.

WHERE a sycamore bent to a river's edge,
At the foot of a flowery hill,
And birds swung slow in the swinging sedge,
With their songs all hushed and still,
With silences over her lips apart,
With somebody's portrait over her heart,
With nothing to trouble and nothing to task,
Nothing to answer and nothing to ask,
Fair—as the fading out of the day—
Under the waters asleep she lay.

Out from the woodland crept the Dark,
With his face all wild and wet,
And close by the sycamore stood to hark
To the Wind's and the Waves' regret.
"O, she was my darling!" the River cried;
And "She was my darling!" the Wind replied;
And the Dark responded, "She was my love!
"And nothing was like her, below or above,"
And, all together, "Alas!" they said,
"What is there left us?—the queen is dead!"

And still, with the portrait over her heart,
And the blue-black waves above,
The maiden slept, with her lips apart,
As if in a dream of love.

But dreams were over and dreams were done;
And the moon crept off in the wake of the sun;
And the owlets shrieked and the Wind replied,
And the desolate Dark to the River cried,
And nobody sorrowed and nobody said:
“What is there left me? my love is dead!”

IN THE WALTZ.

A TENDER tune and a time in trance,
Glitter of glasses and wealth of wine,
And afloat, afloat in a dreamy dance,
With the face of my Baronet close to mine.
His glances, that rival the gaslight gleams,
Burning and burning my lids away;
But I hear his whisper, as one in dreams,
And my lips have never a word to say.

For 'round and 'round, as we whirl and whirl,
Under the banners and blooms between,
I see but billows, that curl and curl
'Round capes of memory fair and green;
And again, again, in a radiant time,
My hand in yours, that is kind and true,
I fly from the measures, that climb and climb,
Away from the dancers, alone with you.

And softly and softly up over the bay
Comes the full moon, with her face so new,
A-laughing and laughing at something you say,
And something I answer! and we laugh, too;
For life is alive and love is awake;
The moon it is high and the wind is low;
You give me a kiss and a kiss you take,
And there's nobody, nobody nigh to know.

* * * * *

A tender tune and a time in trance,
Glitter of glasses and wealth of wine,
And I, a-wail for the one romance
I lived in a life that was half divine!
The Baronet's jewels are over my heart,
The Baronet's name I honor and wear;
But *love* "is a thing from our lives apart,"
And neither is cruel enough to care.

PRESS NOTICES

The sixth annual convention of the Pacific Coast Woman's Press Association was held at San José, September 8th and 9th. Mrs. Hester Benedict Dickinson was chosen president. The P. C. W. P. A. is composed of genuine literary workers, many of whom have achieved a brilliant reputation, and among these the new president has a high place. She has published two volumes of poetry, "Vesta" and "Fagots." She now has a volume of prose ready for the press. Mrs. Dickison is described as a woman of great culture and many charms. She was formerly a resident of New York, and in touch with the leading writers of the metropolis. She has been a contributor to many of the leading periodicals of the country.—*Buffalo Times*.

Two volumes of poems by Hester A. Benedict have attracted the flattering criticism of reviewers and readers, "Vesta" being the first one placed upon the literary market. "Fagots," published recently, is a collection which reflects the delicate imaginings of the author's fancy and the sweet womanly depth of a warmly sympathetic nature.—*Pacific Town Talk*.

The book "Vesta" is full of passages of rare beauty for poems of the day. It is the best that we have known issued for years from the pen of an American woman. *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

The poems are brimful of gentle sympathy; they stir and refresh the heart like a summer breeze. * * * The volume is bright from first to last. In fact there is not a dull line in it.—*California Christian Advocate*.

There is good stuff and no rotten sticks in these "Fagots."—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

The poems are in many measures, all of which the author seems to handle with equal skill.—*San Francisco Chronicle*.

Hester A. Benedict's latest effort more than sustains her early reputation. "Fagots" is not only a finished literary production, but the song she sings comes from the heart.—*St. Paul Morning Call*.

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