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POEMS

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POEMS

POEMS

By
CYNTHIA DAVRIL - *Holding*



LONDON
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TO
ELLEN TUCKFIELD
MY FRIEND AND CO-WORKER

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POEMS

THE BRONZEN BELL

WHEN the Temple bell is ringing
In the garden of Wai-wun
Then a woman's voice comes singing,-
Silvery notes that swell or croon
'Neath the radiance of the moon.

In the bronze a soul lies throbbing,—
Soul of her whose body fell
In the molten metal, sobbing ;
Still her anguish gives the bell
Human notes that weave a spell.

And a spell your voice is weaving
Round my spirit, Lady mine,
Intermingling with the grieving
Of the bell in shades so fine
That as one they intertwine.

Lovely women, dead and living,
Scarce it seems that they are twain !
To the dead new birth I'm giving ;
To the living, passion's pain
That a soul be born again.

The Bronzen Bell

And the swaying lotus lily
On the moon-illuminated pond
Seems her shadow, willy-nilly
Guided from the Great Beyond
By the Moon-ray's magic wand.

Let me stoop unto the water,
Cull the blossom with my hands ;—
I, the man whose spirit sought her
Far away in planet lands
Till she answered my demands !

And this lotus blossom crushing
Where we mingle breast to breast
Hearken to the sudden hushing
Of the Spirit's wailing quest
As the bell sinks slow to rest.

NOTE.—There is an old Chinese legend telling of the making of a wonderful bronze bell. He who was to cast it could not get the tones as sweet as he desired, and after many unsuccessful attempts, despair filled him. It was then that his daughter threw herself into the molten metal, so that her voice, for which she was noted, might live in the tones of the bell for ever.

A CHINESE NIGHT

THE bamboo's gentle, ghostly speech
Whispers by the riverside
Where silent waters swiftly glide
To meet the ocean's reach.

And from afar a wailing sound
Tells of women sorrowing :—
Yet all their racket cannot bring
To life the body drowned !

And as I sit, a lonely man,
Within my chamber memories rise
So poignant that the nighttime flies,
And dawn breaks in a moment's span.

IN A CHINESE GARDEN

A POOL lies in my garden's rocky heart,
 Curving beneath an overhanging tree ;
 This pool assumes the shape still loved by me,
 Of my Moon-maiden.

Silence, mourning heart,
 See you not she would encircle me ?

Encircle me with undulating hips
 Formed by the breeze-kissed waters' gentle flow ;
 Her snowy breasts two transformed lotus flowers ;
 Their pliant stems the tresses of her hair ;
 Her breath the balmy movement of the air ;
 Her voice the silvery note of fountain-showers.

All these assembled in my garden's pool
 Speak of my maiden, whose sweet starry eyes
 Are stars reflected from the cloudless skies.

Alas ! the rocky rim is cold as death :—
 Your carven tomb, too, felt thus icy cold !—
 And with the years I wither, growing old
 In a strange world where I appear a wraith.

A WOODLAND TALE

GOD Pan's asleep,—and sleeping, dreams of love ;
 Of sweet wood-nymphs playing round his grove,
 Voluptuous bacchantes who woo him sensuously,
 Dryads, fauns and satyrs loving gloriously.
 He smiles a little as each dream finds birth
 And flicks his tail, and paws the scented earth
 With sharp goat-hoofs, sighing long and deep
 E'er sinking into quieter, dreamless sleep.
 Little soft whispers creep about the trees
 Among whose blossoms drone the languorous bees ;
 A gentle rustling glides along the grass
 As lazily the sunlit moments pass.
 God Pan's asleep !

Yet waking suddenly,

With ears alert, he listens anxiously.
 A curious, speaking silence fills the glade
 As, slowly moving, through the forest shade
 A girlish form approaches God Pan's lair,
 Her face half-hidden by her loose-bound hair.
 Sighing she sinks upon the sun-warmed ground,
 Lost in her thoughts ; when suddenly a sound,
 The plaintive piping of a reedy flute,
 Strikes on her ear. Half nervous, wholly mute
 She listens to the notes that fill the air,
 Which, so alluring, full of love's despair,
 Rouse in her soul a longing undefined.
 A rapturous ecstasy enwraps her mind,

And slowly losing thought and consciousness,
 With outstretched limbs of graceful waywardness,
 She sinks to sleep.

Now, Pan, approaching near,
 Ceases the notes she can no longer hear.
 Clad in his tiger-skin's dissembling stripes
 He bends low down ;—then, flinging far his pipes
 Gathers her swiftly in his amorous arms,
 Gloating upon her unawakened charms.
 Long time in ecstasies of fond caress
 He bends her body to his passionate stress,
 Breathing his hot desire into her soul
 While yet unconscious, under his control.
 And in her dreams it seems that she has known
 Some glorious lover, calling her his own.

(Pan sings his Song of Love.)

Maiden, in thy slumbers
 Listen to my song !
 Out of all the numbers
 That attend the throng
 Of my sylvan followers,—
 Beautiful and fair,
 Dryads and bacchantes,
 Nymphs of charms most rare,—
 None can match thy loveliness,
 Innocence or daintiness.
 Waiting, watching long I planned
 This sweet moment ; passion fanned

Into flame consumes my soul.
Thou alone canst make me whole !
Maiden, in thy slumbers
I make thee mine own ;
Nature's million wonders
Unto thee make known.
Now ere waking sunders
Our united selves
I will teach thee secret lore
Known to woodland elves.
Thou, the bride of Woodland Pan,
Art protected from the ban
We impose on timid mortals.
Fearless now within our portals
Thou shalt walk,—commune at will
With the ancient sprites that still
Love this Earth, and, loving, stay
Hidden from the turbulent fray
Men call life in modern times,
Where the murky smoke begrimes
Cleanly limbs, and mind and heart.
From that crowd then live apart !
Maiden, whom God Pan desired,
Whom he won !—to leave inspired
With an everlasting rapture
For that spirit none can capture,—
Spirit of the Fruitful Earth,
From whose womb we all had birth.
Maiden, from thy slumbers
Waken newly wise !

A Woodland Tale

Earth's well-guarded wonders
 Spread before thine eyes !

(He ends his song.)

At length Pan, tiring, leaves her, sleeping still,
 To find repose beside some shaded rill.
 And with his going her charmed sleep dissolves.
 Slowly she wakens. Her whole world revolves
 Still in her dream ! With dazed and haunted look
 She gazes round the shaded woodland nook,
 Searching the shadows for that presence real
 Whose vital force she still can strongly feel.
 Her unawakened senses seem to spring
 To fullest consciousness, and with them bring
 An altered aspect towards Mother Earth,
 Brimming with knowledge of intrinsic worth.

(The Maiden speaks to her invisible Lover.)

Who art thou, Love,
 And how shall I find thee ?
 Where hast thou gone ?—
 For still I seem to be
 Half in thy power ;
 And in my heart there sings
 A canticle adoring woodland things.
 Still on my lips your wakening kisses burn,
 Still can I smell the acrid scent of fern
 Bruised and crushed, where on the ground we lay
 Lost in an ecstasy of loving play.
 Where hast thou gone,

And how shall I find thee,—
Who came in dreams,
But yet appear to be
Close to my side,
Invisible and still,
The dominating master of my will ?

(She finishes speaking.)

New-born within her, humorously wise,
Another soul lives shadowed in her eyes
That bear a look of passion mystical,
In closest touch with vision mythical.
And from this day she understands the moods
Of untamed Nature ; loves secluded woods.
Her sympathy with sylvan life and pain,
And reverence for all that men disdain
Of force primæval,—counting it as nought,—
Missing therein instinctive, perfect thought
Become to her the motive power of life.
She revels in wild elemental strife,
Communes with spirits that none others hear,
And understands where once she used to fear.
She cannot tell whence sprang this sympathy,
Yet often now, to feel the ecstasy
She knows in dreams, she seeks the silent glade
And there beneath the oak-tree's drowsy shade
Awaits the plaintive piping known so well
Since that first time, when the hypnotic spell
Lulled her to sleep ; endowing her for aye
With comprehending love nought can dismay.

SONNET

TO THE WOMEN OF THE GREAT WAR

AH!, waiting, watching, yearning women's hearts,
Whose prayers rise up in silent misery;—
Ye bear, each one, a nation's agony,
Yet show no sign of torture,—nor the darts
Of wounds dealt cunningly by fiendish arts.
Brave to the world, ye smile and joke o'er things,
Facing undaunted what th' occasion brings,—
As actors would, assuming various parts.

Soon from your pain must rise, metamorphosed,
A nobler race, inspired by tragedy;
Since from the calm thus grandly self-imposed
Your sons must gain in clean virility!
And you, long since released from this sad earth,
Will know your tears, your yearning, gave it birth.

1918.

SONNET

A HAUNTED, lonely port hides Death-in-life,
The spectre of a stately galleon,—
Where life-like marionettes do carry on
The varied motions of desire and strife.
Each active figure bears a sharpened knife,
With which he probes some fellow myrmidon ;
And each thus suffers the phenomenon
He fain would fathom,—wherefore pain is rife !

Unendingly these foolish figures seek
The explanation they may not evoke ;
They stake discovery on each cutlass stroke,
Greeting successive failures with pale shriek.

The harbour of this ship is my lone soul,
And echoes to her hollow-clanging roll !

SONNET

LIKE whirling snowflakes distraught by the wind,
In eddying, endless circles aimlessly
Descending, darting, drifting by,
My thoughts revolve unceasingly, and find
No outlet from, or rest within, my mind.
Oh! death-fraught moment, when so mockingly
Distrust and Disillusion suddenly
Appeared before my eyes, no longer blind.

In that one moment, I seemed turned to stone:
Then slowly rose my ancient bitterness,
—Which two years' trustful love had well-nigh killed.
Once more I turned to fight the world alone,
Feeling no pain, no joy, no tenderness,—
Drugged by the draught that broken faith distilled.

SONNET

ROAMING invisible, like pollen floats
Through the wide air, the seed of Friendship goes ;
And fruitfully alighting, wakes the throes
Of ardent life, whose energy promotes
A rapid growth,—bringing the sobs to throats
Of doubting souls, whose pessimism knows
That blossom from the hothouse quickly blows,
To wither in an hour to dry dust motes.
And yet these short-lived flowers are lovely blooms
That bear a subtle fragrance of their own,
And decorate the simple, quiet rooms
Where year by year perennial plants have grown,
Until their beauty (an accepted thing)
No longer causes wondering tears to spring.

SONNET TO GEORGE MEREDITH

OH! giant-minded lover of great woods,
Thou noble singer of the south-west wind,—
To whom Earth's secrets, by most undivined,
Were lovely treasures answering thy moods :
Thy spirit wingeth now, a pagan thing,
To riot with the sou'-west gale, whose clouds
Attend thee—trailing opalescent shrouds—
While Phœbus 'twixt their banks swift rays doth
fling.

The glorious days of vivid, cloud-chased light
With sudden rain, and still more sudden sun ;
The grand, soul-cleansing tempests, multi-voiced
Singer of Woods and South-west wind ! their might
Inspire me, too, whose song has but begun.
Hail ! kindred soul, whose heart they long rejoiced.

CALIFORNIAN POEMS

A NIGHT IN HOLLYWOOD

UPON the cooling air a fragrance hung
Of countless orange blossoms, and each frond
Of seeding grass became a slender tree
Beneath the glowing moon's transforming mystery.

The hedge of scarlet-bloomed geranium
Stretched up to her, and each fair compact bunch
Of flowers shone phosphorescent in the night,
As scarlet petals caught and held the moon's strong
light.

SUNSET AT LAGUNA

As each wave breaks
A snow-white fan unfurls upon the surface of the
 little bay,
Perfect in form, of dainty foam-wrought lace.
Succeeding waves add a renewed grace
Unto the fan, whose handle, far at sea,
Touches a jagged rock,—
The hand that makes the fan unfurl so gracefully.
The setting sun drops swiftly in the west,
His glowing golden sphere
Set in a sky like bougainvillea flowers
Shining through heliotrope and periwinkle mists :
And as this passes into rose-flushed grey
The sun glows orange near the horizon line,
Fading to palest gold upon his crown.
Swiftly he sinks :
And now the crescent moon,
That rode a ghostlike sickle in the sky,
Draws from the west a richer colouring,
Radiant, like ripened grass in mid-July.

NEAR LAGUNA

PALE eucalyptus lift wind-twisted stems
Towards the cobalt sky,
And, soaring high,
A buzzard casts his flickering shadow-form
On sandy hills,
Where grey sagebrush distils
A subtle perfume, redolent of warm
Wide open spaces :
Past me a squirrel races ;
Stops, sits erect, paws crossed, his eyes like gems.

NOON

DEEP silence of a basking world at noon
Where, silhouetted 'gainst a vivid sky
The green-black pines stand dreaming, while a sigh
Stirs in the branches, as an idle breeze
Comes from the ocean, lingering in the trees.
Afar off, dully tapping, may be heard
Woodpeckers' drilling; while the humming bird
Poises, all quivering, on the sunlit air.
Oh! such a world is infinitely fair,
Where Earth lies listening to the waters' croon!

ON A NIGHT OF FULL MOON NEAR
MIDWAY POINT

THE venerable cypress bend their stems
In stately salutation to the surf,
Gleaming in snowy brilliance round the rocks
That spring unheralded where ends the turf.
In sable grandeur the great masses stand
Fearless before the mighty southern waves
Spending themselves in rhythmic undertones
Against those bulwarks, whose resistance paves
The ocean's rim with phosphorescent foam.
The cypress watch their sport through centuries,
Till all the air is full of memories.

A SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

Now will I tell the beauty of that night
Of moon and stars, whose matter-piercing light
Reached to our spirits, enabling us to hear
The individual music of each sphere !

The luminous sky glowed richly from within,
With texture as of pearly, satin skin
O'erveiled with blue-black gauze ; the stars
 appeared
As brilliant jewels ; and where the wave-crests
 reared
Their foamy rim along the rocky shore,
With rhythmic rustle, or with muffled roar,
Scaling the rocks,—the moon her semblance gave
Of purest silver to each noble wave.
Her faultless disc made night as clear as day ;
And on the waters in reflected play
She shone afar, made merry hide and seek
Amidst the ripples of the sheltered creek :
She silvered all the turf about the trees
Where giant pines, unstirred by slightest breeze,
Cast clear-cut shadows on the sloping lawn.
Upon the motionless, warm air was borne
A lingering essence, faintly resinous,
As if the pines exhaled their souls to us.

A Symphony of the Night

31

Now e'en the restless ocean seemed to pause
One magic moment, fearless of all laws,
Entranced and silent, almost hypnotised
By too much beauty fully realised.

And we two stood beside the waters' edge,
Upon a rock sea-worn to a broad ledge,
—O'erlapped and undermined by countless tides,—
Hearing the matchless music that resides
Where Mother Nature still holds absolute sway.
We thought of him whose gift 'twas to portray
The pagan spirit,—rich in many themes
That gave the birds their songs, the flowers their
dreams,

That made the waters swell to organ tones,
Or murmur like the hive-imprisoned drones
On summers' days,—immortal Wagner, lord
Of all the secrets Music long had stored
Till Poesy should join her by the hand,
To dwell with her in that abundant land,
The fertile spirit of a little man
In whom all music ended and began.

While standing there, audaciously I sang
Sieglinde's rapture,—while the spring-song rang
Still in her ears, as Siegmund told his love ;—
I sang the war-cry of Brunnhild', and wove
The melodies of dying Isold's song
Into the subtle harmonies that throng

A Symphony of the Night

The sea's rich music,—for my soul required
An outlet for the ecstasy inspired
By so much loveliness, and the delight
That sharing some great truth by common right
Must always give,—since, friend, in you I found
A fellow devotee, like me love-bound
For ever by the subtle wizardry
Of Wagner's overwhelming harmony.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

TO THE CREATIVE MUSE

DESPOTIC Muse ! for you we suffer thus ;—
That from our pain be rendered unto you
The homage we all pay who would create.
For ever must our souls lie quivering
Beneath the lash of disillusionment,
Till, from the agony of hours thus spent,
We may learn truths to set men wondering.

TO AN ACQUAINTANCE

You look at me ! Your eyes have much to say :
A wondering amusedness, and then again
A something more than that, akin to pain.

You look at me ! My curiosity
Would probe the half-veiled meaning in your eye,
Whereof the Thought I cannot yet descry.

THE CHALLENGE

DISSECT your butterfly ! Tear off both wings ;
The antennæ ; the dainty, thread-like legs !—
'Tis man's delight to ruin lovely things.

Now watch the death-throes, as the torturing pin
Holds the frail body on the soulless board !—
Humanity counts this is not a sin.

Probe and dissect and watch the victim writhe ;
No butterfly, but some frail woman now !—
Yet one day man shall pay the utmost tithe.

RECOGNITION

AWAKENER of the Past, you rouse strange things
Within my breast !
All night I could not rest,
Dreaming of days when borne on passion's wings
Our selves communed,—
So wondrously attuned,
That Life vibrated like harmonious strings.

Once more you held me !—while from your embrace
My body thrilled :
Life's purpose seemed fulfilled,
And all the instincts of that forceful race
And noble time
Of Egypt's golden prime
Arose from slumber,—full of sensuous grace.

PEACE

WHEN I meet you, Heart of mine,
In the Great Immensity
Where your spirit lingers love-bound to this earth,—
Then I know Space is a bridge
Which all loving hearts may span,
Where both Life and Death assume proportionate
worth!

Though my body's still alive
While your body's dead, my dear,
This so little hampers the eternal soul
That at will we now commune,
Free, unhampered by the flesh,
Since I fear not life, nor shrink from Death's control.

Thus my living years will pass
Meeting you when sleep descends
On this heart and mind so free from earthly fears :
Oh! my love, our sympathy
Time and Space annihilates,—
Makes a lovely plaything of a thousand years!

TO A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE

FALCON-FACED ! with keen blue eye
Brimful of audacity :—
Lover of all womankind,
Think you then I am so blind,
That in you I'll not descry
Out of sight is out of mind ?

You have quaffed enchanted wine
That to you I seem divine.
Why insist my hand to hold ?
You'll regret you were so bold
When to-morrow's sun doth shine,—
Wish your vows remained untold !

Men delight to ape at love,
Though they know next day will prove
Worthless their impassioned play.
Women's courage makes them gay,
Since of sadness men disprove ;
So I laugh !—with thoughts astray.

SUMMER HAZE

THE dreamy haze of noontide
About the hills doth creep ;
The tree-boughs rustle gently,
As children sigh in sleep.
The dreams of each sweet blossom
Are borne upon the breeze ;
And e'en the tireless swallows
Fold wings in restful ease ;
While with sweet voice the goddess
Calls men to slumber blest,
" Come, cease ! ye weary toilers,
Dame Nature bids ye rest."

COURTLY LOVE

SWEET love, your kindness surpasseth aught I
dreamed !
The faint, clean, drowsy fragrance of the new-mown
hay ;
The scent of clover fields beneath the summer sun ;
The silver light of fountains, gleaming as they play
Against the trim-cut yew-hedge, when summer's
days have run ;
The bees' monotonous murmur amidst the flowering
limes ;
The gurgle of the mill-stream ; the lark's note rising
high ;—
All these, my dear, are perfect,—as perfect at all
times
As your regard for me ! I smile,—while yet I sigh,—
When dreaming of your courtly love whence passion
was exiled.

A PICTURE

A BOUNDLESS azure sky,
And deepest gentian sea ;
A belt of sand that sparkles in the sun ;
While foam-like, on the shore
The wild anemone
Awakes at morn,—to sleep when day is done.

TO THE WAVES

RIPPLE, rustle, splash or shatter,
As you meet the ancient rocks !
Life you hold of little matter ;—
Bind fair limbs with mermaids' locks,
Seaweed strands as strong as cables—
Lull their anguish with strange fables ;
While, at hand, Death swims ;—and mocks !

SUMMER

(Near Sennen, Cornwall).

SILENCE :—

And the soothing sound of the summer sea
Lazily lapping the boulder-strewn shore ;
And the heather-clad cliffs, and the thrift, and the
 gorse,
And the measureless peace of a tree-barren moor.
And the high, wailing cry of the slow-winged gulls ;
And the soft, warm breeze caressing the skin ;
And the scabious and crowsfoot, wild orchids and
 thyme ;
And the sea-merging line in the sky that begins.

IN A SURREY WOOD

DEEP restful woods, cool whispering woods,
Your atmosphere breathes calm :
Within your bounds grow sturdy oak ;
Young larch of elfin charm ;
Delicious, slender silver birch,
Child of the 'witching moon,—
And luscious, copper-tinted beech,
Shading to deep maroon.
And fronds of bracken, freshly green,
'Twixt bramble-bushes grow :
The mossy carpet deadens sound
Where scarlet moss-flowers show.
No plashing chatter from the brook
That flows o'er last year's leaves :—
To Silence all is consecrate,
Where Earth, Earth's soul perceives.

INDIFFERENCE

How pitiful is calm indifference !
More tragic than an overburdening hate ;
More hopeless than a love that woke too late ;
More final than the hour that sends us hence
Into the great infinity of Space.

No active thought can hold a certainty
So final, so unchanging, void of hope !
For action gives emotion varied scope
While, motionless, indifference lets us be
Apart, within the world of our own Self.

And to that world no call can ever pierce
Save as a distant echo, scarcely heard,
By which the soul's vibrations are not stirred
No matter though the call be loud and fierce,—
The keening of a mortal in despair.

THE TWILIT BORDERLAND

Now the long days have done their weary length
And solemnly, like funeral mutes, have passed
Into the twilight of the borderland,
Where shrouded figures gather, hand-in-hand,
Speechless, uncaring, languid, without strength.
They form an endless and monotonous chain,
Of formless shapes in melancholy clothes ;
Their silence breathes a deathly hopelessness,
And resignation to their Fate's duress,
An apathy that dulls all power of pain.
Slowly they pass : their shrouds form whispering
trails
Over the leaves of dead hopes lying there,
Over the husks of splendid chances lost,
Which to this windless place were sometime tossed
By the swift whirlwind of emotion's flails.







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