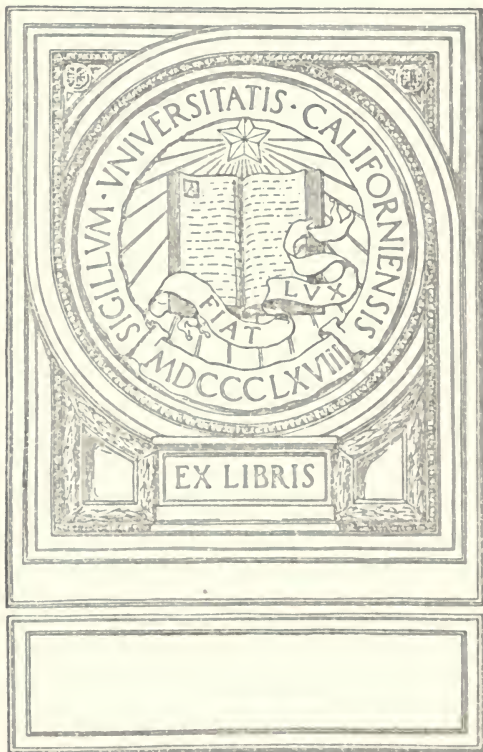


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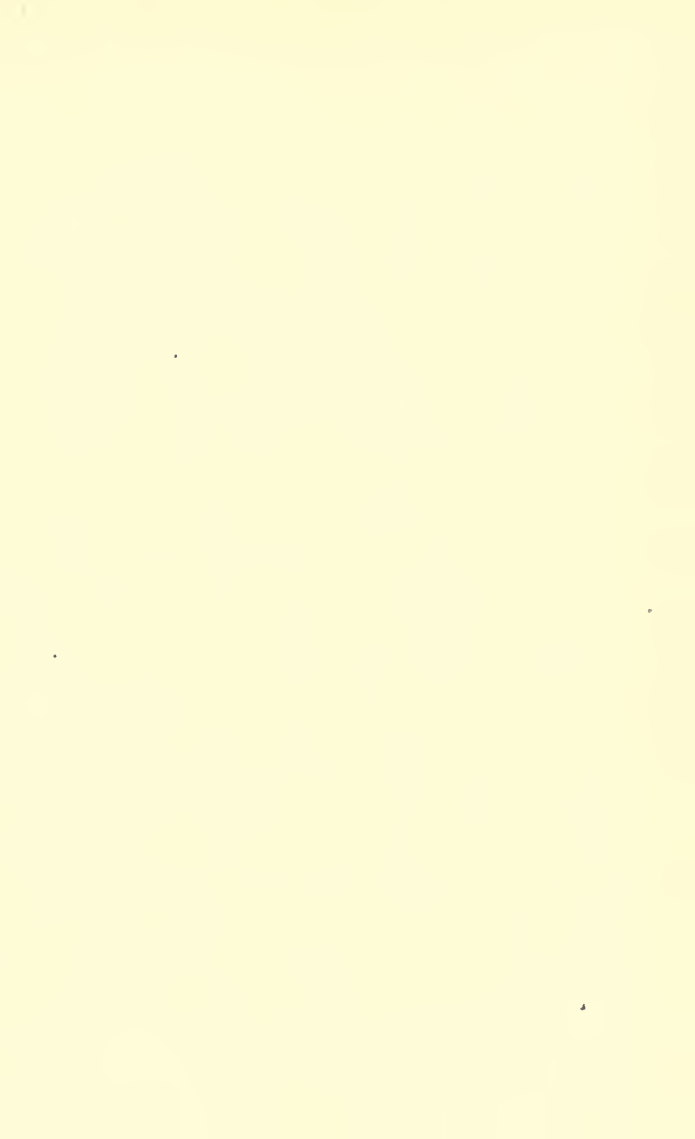


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A

LOVER'S DIARY.

BY ALICE CARY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
1868.

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DEDICATION.

HERE, and not here !
When following care about my house I tread
 Sadly, and all so slowly,
There often seemeth to be round me spread
A blessed light, as if the place were holy,
 And then thou art near.

M174939

Lost, and not lost !
When Silence taketh in the night her place,
 And I my soul deliver
All to sweet dreaming of thy sovereign grace,
I see the green hills on beyond the river
 Thy feet have crossed.

 And so, my friend,
I have and hold thee all the while I wait,
 Musing and melancholy ;
And so these songs to thee I dedicate,
Whose song shall flow henceforth serene and holy,
 Life without end.

 For, dear, dear one,
Even as a traveller doomed alone to go
 Through some wild wintry valley,
Takes in his poor rude hand the wayside snow,
And shapes it to the likeness of a lily,
 So have I done ;

 The while I wove
Lays that to men's minds haply might recall
 Some bower of bliss unsaddened,
Moulding and modulating one and all
Upon thy life, so many lives that gladdened
 With light and love.



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PART I.
DREAM-LAND.





DREAM-LAND.

MONA, SEVEN YEARS OLD.



WHEN I remember the time we
met,
I pause for a little, and give
God praise,
That he, of his grace, in my
life has set
That gladdest, goldenest day
of my days.

Breaking out of her homespun gown,
Just like a wild-flower out of its bur ;
Legs bare to the knees, and the shoulders down
To the waist, I marvelled and mused at her.

Her hands had been kissed and kissed by the
sun

Brown as berries : she held her hair
Away from her dove-like eyes with one,
And stared at me, straight as eyes could stare,

One moment, — then, being well content,
She dropt the tresses, that over the white,
Clear brow and sweet eyes came and went
Like shadows blowing across the light.

“A picture, such as the painter loves,”
I said, and passed, but she would not stay ;
Those sweet eyes staring, round as a dove’s,
Held me and haunted me all the day.

One foot on the other, bare and brown,—
The shining fall of her dead-leaf hair,—
Legs and shoulders out of her gown,—
She held me and haunted me, everywhere.



MONA, EIGHT YEARS OLD.

DARLING MONA! well do I know
The wild March day she was eight years
old,

For, seeing the prints of her feet in the snow,
I sat by our broad, bright fire, a-cold.

She grew in the shade of our house so grand,
White as a lily, and just as meek,
Till I put a rose in her little hand,
And the red ran out of it into her cheek.

The vines from their arbors I used to pull,
While yet their clusters unripe they bore,
Whenever they hid from my oriel
The bright geraniums round her door.

When over the poet's book I leant,
She was the angel of all the rhymes,
And ere she had smiled me sweet consent,
I kissed her in spirit a thousand times.



MONA, AT SCHOOL.

LIKE down of thistles the moments fled,
So soft they were, and light,
When we hid from the plashing rain
Under the hedge by the side of the lane,
Coming from school at night.

Ah, never a rose bloomed half so red,
And never will again,
As that I broke from the flowery hedge
Hiding under its briery edge
Out of the plashing rain!

I cannot think of a word she said,
As memory backward goes,

But ah! she never had looked so fair
As when she put my flower in her hair,
And I called her my double rose.

Life never held an hour so dread,
But I could make it light
With thought of the hedge-row, and the lane,
Where we hid from the plashing rain
Coming from school at night!





MONA, TEN YEARS OLD.

MY darling, dove-eyed Mona,
What a merry tune she sings,
And her feet they fly along the grass
Like little milk-white wings!

In her life and in the season
 'Tis the golden edge o' th' May,
And her heart is like a flower that lies
 In the sunshine all the day.

The cows that feed in the meadow,
 They know her song like a call,
And lift their heads from the clover,
 And follow her, one and all, —

Along the daisied hillsides,
 And through the valleys green,
As loyal to the little maid
 As subjects to their queen.

Seeing her, you would say the year
 Had stolen the tender streaks
From all the wildings of the woods,
 And put them in her cheeks.

Mona, my dove-eyed Mona, —
She is fair and she is gay,
And I would that for her beauty's sake
It might be always May.



MONA, FOURTEEN.

BEAUTEOUS little Mona,
Mona gay and glad,
Wearing on her shoulders
All the wealth she had, —
One white lamb, the tamest
Of all the meadow-flock,
Cheated by the clover-buds
Spangled in her frock ;
Lying at her tiny feet
In the peach-tree shade, —
What a charming picture
Little Mona made !
Blossoms blowing round her,
Rivalling the hues

Of the silken ribbons
 Lacing up her shoes.
Scarce the dew outsparkled
 The brooch upon her breast ;
'T was her birthday holiday,
 And she wore her best.
Stir of every leaflet
 Bashful blushes woke :
On the grass beside her
 Like a yellow cloak
Lay the pleasant sunshine, —
 On the bough above
Sat the robin red-breast
 Calling to his love.

Saucy little Mona,
 Lifting up her eyes
When I stood beside her,
 With such a cold surprise !

Cruel little Mona!—

Very well she knew
That just to have the buckle
Upon her belt so blue,
That just to have the ribbon,
That laced her tiny shoes,
Or the brooch upon her bosom
That sparkled like the dews,
The half of my green acres
I would gladly sell away,
Nor even think of counting
The price I had to pay.
And yet she seemed to see me
With a common, cold surprise,—
How could you, little Mona,
Be so cruel with your eyes!



MONA, SLEEPING.

AH, never had maiden
Such maidenly grace!
Her dream like a veil
Lieth over her face,
And the cheek next the pillow
Is printed with lace.

I dare not look on her!
But soft as I may,
I will steal from her bedside
Her slippers away,
And line them with wool
By the time it is day.

I hate the bold moonlight
That treads (as it dares)
The leaves at her window
As if they were stairs,
And plays with her dear
Little hand, unawares.

For her sake, and not for
Myself, I am proud :
If I live when her bright head
To death shall be bowed,
Of the white leaves of lilies
I'll make her a shroud.

O Mona ! sweet Mona !
If I by God's grace
Had a crown, I would give it
Just now, to efface
With kisses on kisses
The print of the lace.

MONA, SPINNING.

THE woods are black behind and before,
The sunshine lieth asleep on the floor,
And the rose is just beginning
From the bush at the window all red to start,
And I say as I look on it, That is my heart!
For out on the grass by the open door
My little love sits spinning.

All in the shade where the sloe-berries grow
Lieth a water sluggish and low,
And the lily is just beginning
To open her white leaves hour by hour;—
I am the sullen pond, she is the flower,
And my thoughts fall away, pure as snow,
Where my little love sits spinning.

The woods are black as black can be,
But through them shimmer spots o' the sea,
 And the tide is just beginning.
There lieth a shell on the sand apart,
And a wave is kissing her way to its heart,
And the shell is I, and the wave is she
 That sits at the door-side spinning.



MONA, KNITTING.

KNITTING at her mother's door,
Underneath a sycamore,
That did long, white arms extend
Round about her, like a friend,
Saw I maiden Mona next.
She was now become the text
Of my dreams, my thoughts, my life,—
Would she, could she be my wife?

Rows of pinks on either side,
With their red mouths open wide,
And the quail, with tawny breast
Swelling out above her nest,
And the lily's speckled head
Shining o'er the spearmint bed;

All were fair, but more than fair .
Maiden Mona, knitting there.

Round her eyes the hair fell down, —
Sunshine on a leafy brown, —
And her simple rustic dress
Witched my worldly eyes, I guess,
For her apron blue did lie
Like a little patch o' the sky
In her lap, beside the door
Underneath the sycamore.

Something sacred did divide her
From me, when I stood beside her:
I was born to house and land, —
She had but her heart and hand,
Yet she seemed so high above
The aspiring of my love,
That I stood in bashful shame,
Trembling just to speak her name.

MONA, MILKING.

I FOUND my Mona milking
In the blithesome summer morn,
When the dew was on the clover,
And the tassel on the corn,
Sweeter than any red rose
In her royal, reigning hours ;
The leaf-brown hair about her eyes,
And her feet among the flowers !

O day of days ! thy memory
Will never fade, nor pass ;
Patches of lowly violets
Were clouding all the grass, —

The jealous brook lay fretting
Between his banks of moss,
And shrugged his dimpled shoulders
As I lightly leapt across.

Adown her cheek the blushes
Ran rippling like a veil
Into the bosom, warm and white
As the froth within her pail,
As I watched her at her milking
In the blithesome summer morn,
When the dew was on the clover,
And the tassel on the corn.



K R U M L E Y .

O N the banks of Krumley,
Lighting up their shades,
Lives my beauteous Mona,
The fairest maid of maids.

O blushing flowers of Krumley!
'T is she that makes you sweet,
And I'm sighing by the silver waves
That murmur at her feet, —
I am sighing, dying by the waves
That murmur at her feet.

Ye woody banks of Krumley,
I'm jealous of your boughs,
For they murmur love to Mona
When she's calling home her cows!

I hate ye, woods of Krumley!
For your dewy, drooping boughs
Caress and kiss my Mona
As she's calling home her cows.

I tell ye, banks of Krumley,
It is not your sunny days
That set your grassy reaches
With blossoms all ablaze!
O dim and dewy dingles,
It is not your birds at all
That make the air one warble
From rainy spring till fall!

O bold, bold winds of Krumley,
Do ye mean my heart to break,
That ye toss her hair so lightly,
And so lightly kiss her cheek?
O bold, bold winds of Krumley,
Do ye mean my heart to break?

MONA, FIFTEEN.

OVER the hedge I leaned one day
To see my darling as she lay
On the May grass,—it was not fair,
I know, in me to see her there.

Her soft locks down her graceful head
Drawn all one way, not wide dispread,
Were by her white hand gathered in
A shining coil beneath her chin.

The dress she wore was simply wrought
To the expression of her thought:
I never saw where it begun,
Or ended,—she and it were one.

The smile could only just get through
The mouth which she together drew,
That tender secret to repress
Which tells itself by silentness.

Near her two lilies, flamy light,
Bickering upon their ground of white,
O'ershadowed by her beauty, stood
Like the lost babies in the wood.

The ruby in her cheek did gleam
Like cherries in a pot of cream ;
But wherefore separate graces trace
Where all was one excelling grace ?

She did not raise her eyes above
The hedge, to chide my look of love,
Such fancies did about her close,
Like sunbeams feeding on a rose.

My passion to sad verse I set,
(I had not got my beard as yet,)
And she my worship did not wrong,—
The hedge was not between us long.



MONA, PERFECT.

HER language is so sweet and fit
You never have enough of it.
If she smiles, the house is bright
Without any candle-light.

Whether that her hair is rolled
Round an ivory comb, or gold,
Pinned or no, I cannot tell,
In itself it shines so well.

Whether she doth wear her coat
Loose, or buttoned to the throat,
Hems or ruffles, plain or gay,
Seems to me the sweetest way.

She's so pitiful to all,
Sighs, as if by chance, do fall,
Daily, in her childlike prayers,
Getting heavenward unawares.

Every little word she speaks
Sends the color to her cheeks,
Rippling high and rippling low
Over bosom, over brow ;

So, if stripped of dress and veil,
Like Godiva in the tale,
Modesty with blushes sweet
Would clothe her all from head to feet.

By her innocence she awes
Evil from her ; through love's laws,
That so bind us like a cord,
Each to all, she seeks the Lord.

PART II.
SERENADES.





SERENADES.

I.

APRIL.

WITH the yellow daybreak
Shimmering on his wings,
A robin in my orchard-trees
Sings and sings and sings ;
Come to my nest o' down,
Lady-bird o' mine,
Come in your russet gown, —
Don't you be too fine!

Flushing like great jewels
Warmed alive in the sun,

Dainty triflers round me
 Are flitting, many a one ;
Some with caps of sky-blue
 Dashed with flakes of white, —
Some with golden zigzags
 In velvets black as night.

Some in pretty bodices
 Of green, with silver specks,
And some with blood-red ruffles
 Shivering on their necks.
How they flash and sparkle
 Round each orchard-tree,
With their darling little heads
 All aside to me !

You may go, my beauties,
 Each of you your gate, —
Your finery frightens from me
 My modest little mate ;

She will come in colors
As quiet as a mouse, —
Go your ways and sing your lays, —
She shall keep my house!

So this robin with the dews
Shimmering on his wings,
Daily in my orchard-trees
Sings and sings and sings;
Come to my nest o' down
Lady-bird o' mine, —
Come in your russet gown, —
Don't you be too fine!



II.

MAY.

TO meet my darling May,
Under the boughs of the milk-white thorn,
I hastened early the summer morn,
Up with the shining day,—
Ay, long ere the shining day.

•
The clovers white and high,
Covered her feet as she crossed the hill
To tell that she loved me truly still,
And stay till the dew was dry,—
Ay, till after the dew was dry.

O the sweet, sweet troth
We plighted under the milk-white thorn!
The golden cloak of the friendly morn

Softly wrapping us both, —
Ay, closely wrapping us both.

The cold of heart may frown,
That I and my gentle, gentle May,
Under the milk-white thorn that day,
Talked till the sun was down, —
Ay, till after the sun was down.





III.

JUNE.

AS I went out to plough in the corn,
In the field beside the mill,
In the tender light of the early morn,
My heart was calm and still ;
And the sheep, with fleeces wet with dew,
Went with me up the hill,
To the meadow by the mill.

As I went home, at the shut of day,
In a window of the mill
There hung modest Muriel May,
Like a lily, over the sill ;
And when I ploughed the corn, next day,
My heart would not be still,
For Muriel, in the mill.



IV.

JULY.

ON the mountain, in the mowing,
Over valleys bright and gay,
Now coming, and now going,
I've been hunting all the day.

I have seen the river winding
Its slow mist, fold in fold,
And the flag-flower meekly binding
Her dim leaves all in gold.

I have seen the little bosoms
Of the larkspurs all aglow,
And the mullein with her blossoms
Like a turban on her brow.

The willow-flower has drifted
 In sweetness to my lips,
And the lady-rose has lifted
 To my hand her finger-tips.

I have seen the ivy twining
 With the low and knotty grass,
And the long red berries shining
 In the pleasant sassafras.

But lacking one thing only,
 All the rest is incomplete, —
The gladdest place is lonely,
 And the sweetest is not sweet.

So, the flowery folk affronting
 With my sad and selfish pain,
I've been all day a-hunting,
 A-hunting all in vain.

V.

JULY.

DOWN by the mill, down by the mill,
Through all the summer hours,
There they grew and grew and grew,
Red and white and purple and blue,
My beautiful, beautiful flowers!
Down by the water, bright and still,
Set like sentinels round the mill,
My beautiful, beautiful flowers!

There they grew and there they stood
Together, two and two,
And some had hearts like a drop of blood,
And some like a drop of dew;
Down by the mill, down by the mill,
Through all the summer hours,

There they swung and there they swayed,
Like spots of sunshine over the shade ;
And over the waters, cold and still,
My beautiful, beautiful flowers !

And some had slippers of yellow gold,
And some had caps of snow,
And some their heads held high and bold,
And some their heads held low ;
And so they stood up side by side,
Meek and mournful and modest-eyed,
Through all the summer hours ;
Down in the meadow, gay and green,
Like bridesmaids standing round their queen,
My beautiful, beautiful flowers !

O, to see them bloom and blush
Was the sweetest show of shows !
The daisy under the lilac-bush,
And the violet by the rose !

Down by the mill, down by the mill,
Through all the summer hours,
Some so high and some so low,
But all as fair as fair can grow,
Down by the water, bright and still,
My beautiful, beautiful flowers !

O, the little maid of the mill,
That dazzles and deceives,
With a head as bright as the daffodil,
And a hand like the lily-leaves,
She it is that makes them grow
Through all the summer hours ;
They with cloaks of speckled dyes,
And they with hoods about their eyes,
Meek and modest and high and low ;
She can tell, if tell she will,
Why they dazzle down by the mill,
My beautiful, beautiful flowers !

VI.

AUGUST.

COME out to the side of the sea, my love,
Come out to the side of the sea ;
The sun is set, and the stars are met,
And the winds and the waves agree ;
But star so bright nor wave so light
Brings pleasure or peace to me.
O come, for I sit and wait, alone,
On the rocks by the side of the sea !

I am going down in my memory
To the blessed long ago,
When the golden ground of the buttercups
Was dashed with the daisies' snow.

And I'm thinking of all you said to me,
And if it were true or no,
While I watch the tide as it runs away
From the beach so black and low.

If I should die, my love, my sweet,
Die of your smile forlorn,
Bury me here by the side of the sea,
Where all my joy was born.
Where the waves shall make my lullaby,
And the winds from night till morn
Shall say to the rocks, "He is gone to sleep
Where all his joy was born."



VII.

AUGUST.

COME and comfort the flowers, my sweet,
Come and comfort the flowers!

They're hanging their heads in the garden-beds,

They're dying in all the bowers;

Like a beam from the sun, my pretty one,

Come and comfort the flowers!

The violet, she is faint with heat,—

The lily is all forlorn;

My love arise, with thy dewy eyes,

Arise, and be their morn!

With thy hand so white and thy cheek so bright,

Come thou, and be their morn!

Sad as Lear with the straw on his head,
The fringed sunflower stands ;
The rose doth wait in her queenly state
To scent herself in your hands ;
Come, my dove, my lady and love,
And comfort the flowery bands !

The robin has learned your name, my sweet,
And that is all he sings ;
The bee so brown her flight keeps down
To fan your cheek with her wings,
And the homely bean of his tendrils green
Is tying you finger rings.

She is stitching all with true-love knots
Her sampler round, I know,
With true-love knots and sanguine spots,
Unconscious of your woe,
Else, pretty flowers, she 'd seek your bowers,
And comfort your grief, I know.

VIII.

SEPTEMBER.

EVE after eve, from early spring,
Till the autumn winds are heard,
I hear a wild bird sing and sing,
But I never see the bird!

All together the high notes fall,
And each doth each prolong,
For he never ends his song at all,
And he never begins his song!

But at the golden middle still
He taketh up his tune,
And sings from sunset till the hill
Is lighted by the moon.

The cricket, then, he creeps in the sedge,
The hum-bee into the flower,
And the water dripping under the bridge
Is almost still for an hour.

The speckled trout, he taketh care
That not a wave is stirred,
And the merry-makers everywhere,
They are silent for my bird!

The oarsman doth his paddle drop,
And his craft to the music floats,
As my minstrel runneth down and up
Through the golden middle notes,

That all together rise and fall,
A sweetly tangled throng,
For he never ends his song at all,
And he never begins his song.

Do you ask me what he sings about,
This minstrel of the grove?
I cannot tell, nor can you doubt
That, first and last, 't is Love!



IX.

NOVEMBER.

O LEAVES, will you never be stayed,
Till all the garden is bare?

Fade, fade, fade!

They are falling and filling the air!
But what care I for the naked bushes,
So long as my darling be clothed with blushes!

O rain, are you never to stop?

O sky, will you never be cleared?

Drop, drop, drop!

All over my hair and my beard!
But what for the cold and the wet care I,
So long as my darling be warm and dry!

O winds, are you always to blow ?

O clouds, are you never to lift ?

Snow, snow, snow !

I am up to my knees in the drift !

But what care I though it cover my head,

So long as my darling be safe in her bed !

O night, so laden with ill,

Will you never and never depart ?

Chill, chill, chill !

To the innermost blood of my heart !

But what care I though I freeze where I stand,

If my darling but throw me a kiss from her hand !





X.

DECEMBER.

THE moon, she is little and old,
The flowers are all in their graves,
And the withered leaves they are drifting by
In the cruel and crazy waves ;
For the boughs are brown, and the leaves are down
In the cold and curdling waves.

The moon she is little and low,
And over the hill, and away
By the huts of the fishers, I see the lift
Of the sea-fog cold and gray ;
And the bars of sand lying in toward the land
Are blind with the fog so gray.

I am come to an unknown world,
Where all is dreary and dim,
And no man speaketh back to me
In the tongue that I speak to him,
And my old old dreams they are like the streams
With the leaves of December dim.

The moon she is little and old,
And down in the fields by the sea
The cow-boy calls to his cows in a voice
That is sad and strange to me ;
And the winds have a tone that is not their own,
Beating about on the sea.

XI.

. DECEMBER.

ONE, by the stroke of the clock !
The time drags heavy and slow ;
And I wake from dreams as full of thee
As the clouds are full of snow, —
From dreams as white with thee, my dove,
As the clouds are white with snow.

I call thee all sweet names,
Song-lark, lily, and rose,
And I only hear the night-fowl's cry,
And the wind as it beats and blows,
And the moan of the river under the hill
Freezing as it flows.

One, by the stroke of the clock !
The night will never go by !
My love, thou hast grown as cold
As the gray cloud up in the sky !
Yet come, and snow thyself in my arms,
And chill me, till I die.



XII.

JANUARY.

WHEN Winter sends
The frost to make his rude alarms,
The frozen dove doth leave her mate,
And, wintering in my love's white arms,
Doth for her melancholy fate
Find fair amends.

When winds unblest,
Blow down the chimney night by night,
And all the heavy ashes stir,
And from his song the cricket fright,
They do not dare to come to her,
In her warm nest.

When from the skies
The lady-moon goes in white grace,
(No matter in what secret nook
My love be hid,) she finds the place,
And leaves a tender piteous look
In her dear eyes.

When snow-drifts drive,
And all the other flowers expire,
Or beds of quiet slumber seek,
The red rose maketh up a fire
Upon my modest darling's cheek,
And there doth live.



PART III.
RHAPSODIES.





R H A P S O D I E S .

I.

MY beautiful little one,
My little darling one,
My dove-eyed little one,
She comes to me at night ;
When all the flowers are sleeping,
When all the dews are weeping,

The waters crawling and creeping,
And only heaven is bright !

My beautiful little one,
My darling little one,
My sweet-eyed little one,
She comes to me at morn ;
When birds from their nest are going,
When waters are falling and flowing,
When the winds their horns are blowing,
And the light o' the world is born.

My beautiful little one,
My little darling one,
My sweet-eyed little one,
All the day and the night ;
Her smile is a soft caressing,
Her blushes a sweet confessing,
Her lily-white hand a blessing,
And she is the light of my light !

II.

SPRING.

WITH bosoms aflame from your bath in
the sunset,

Fly thick to her windows, ye birds of the west ;
And flutter about her, and fall in her bosom,
And sing to her all that I never expressed.

Sing loudly, sing proudly, my wild-wingéd min-
strels,

Ay, loudly and proudly, nor stop but to start,
Until with the wonderful wealth of your music
The air in her chamber shall beat like my
heart.

Forsaking the glad, golden light of the morning,
The hill-tops, the hedges, besprinkled with dew,
Your choruses render so sweet and so tender
That she shall perceive I am singing through
you.

Make friends with my darling all friendship ex-
ceeding,
Fly up from the grass as she walks, and repeat
Soft tunes that shall tell of the love that is
pleading
In every white daisy that kisses her feet.

Make friends with my darling all friendship ex-
ceeding,
Sing lowly, sing slowly, until she shall see
The depth of the love that is evermore bleeding,
In every wild rose that she breaks from the
tree.

Fold round her your light wings, fold round her
your bright wings,
And keep her away from the least little harms ;
And through all your cooing let me be a-wooing,
Until I persuade her to come to my arms.



III.

CRAZY.

HER tresses so soft and so curling
Are bright as the sunbeams at noon,
And the cheek and the mouth of my darling
Are red as the roses in June.
My heart with its bliss is half crazy,
A week is as short as an hour ;
O, she's a sweet little daisy !
O, she's a sweet little flower !

Her tenderness melts into sadness
When pity her bosom hath stirred,
Yet is she so glad in her gladness
She seemeth half lamb and half bird.

My heart with its bliss is set crazy,
A week is as short as an hour ;
O, she's a white little daisy !
O, she's a bright little flower !

To lose her glad smiling would kill me,
The day would be dim as the night,
And if I am blind, as they tell me,
Pray God I may come not to sight !
My heart with its bliss is half crazy,
A week is as short as an hour ;
O, she's a dear little daisy,
My light and my love and my flower !



IV.

IN ABSENCE.

O TO be back in the pleasant fields
To which my thoughts are going,—
In some still place across my face
To feel the west wind blowing,
And to let my song run wild along,
Like dewberries through the mowing!

O to feel my heart once more
Beating light as a feather,—
To see the bushes alive with blushes
Through all the warm May weather,—
And O to lie, the wind and I,
On the ground, and sing together!

O to be under the apple-trees
With flowers about me snowing,
And over the valleys sunny with lilies
To keep my glad tune flowing,
And to let my song run wild along,
Like dewberries through the mowing!



V.

ALL IN ALL.

NO delights are delightful
But only what Love gives,
And there is no sweet, sweet country
But only where Love lives.

Often with tender frowning
He comes to us for grace ;
So morning seeks the kiss of the sun
With her wings about her face !

Pillows downy with broideries
Of swans are not so fair
As any lowly bed of moss
That Love will agree to share.

He now under palace windows
His pipe for a queen doth play,
And now for a village maid he trails
A sheephook all the day.

Pitiful, poor little flowers, would
I could gather you out of the dew,
For the wind and the rain are fantasies,
And nothing but Love is true.

Daisy, daffodil, red-leaved rose,
Lily that never spun,
What lives you would live, what joy you
could give,
If Love could be your sun.



VI.

VAGARIES.

I WOULD that my love were a lily fair,
And I would that I were a sunbeam bold,
Still to be dressing her flowery hair
All day long with my airy gold.

Or would she were the dew that lies
In the rose, and I the rose-tree were,
To fold my red leaves over her eyes,
And make my sweetness a part of her.

Would *I* were a breeze that is where it will,
And she a leaf in some lonely place ;
How I would cling to her, sing to her, till
She gathered me up in her green embrace.

Or would that she were a fawn so gay,
And I within some lowly bed,
Where oft her silvery feet would stray,
And dimple the turf above me spread.

Nay, leave the sunbeam the light that's his,
And leave the lily her airy gold,
And give me my Mona just as she is,
To kiss and sing to, and keep and hold!



VII.

MONA, SAD.

I HAVE told the winds my sorrow,
I have told them o'er and o'er,
But they never stop to sing for me,
Or to kiss me any more.

I have made the moon acquainted
With all my gloomy fear,
But still she stays among the stars,
And leaves me lonesome here.

I ask the larks to mourn with me
That ever I was born,
But they fly away and hide their heads
In the red wings of the morn.

I have told the winds my sorrow,
The moon, and the larks, in vain :
Nothing can give me any peace
Till Mona smile again.



VIII.

MONA, SICK.

THE sun is set but there falls no dew ;
The year is old and the moon is new ;
My fate is cruel, my heart is true,
And I sit in the silence and think of you,
My dearest, dear little heart.

I sit in the silence and watch the skies,
As the tender red of the evening dies ;
My fate is cruel, but faith defies
The dreary night that between us lies,
My dearest, dear little heart.

All the dreaming is broken through ;
Both what is done and undone I rue ;

Nothing is steadfast and nothing true
But your love for me and my love for you,
My dearest, dear little heart.

With the waves that ebb, with the waves that
flow,
When the winds are loud, when the winds are
low,
When the roses come, when the roses go,
One thought, one feeling, is all I know,
My dearest, dear little heart.

The time is weary, the year is old ;
The light o' the lily burns close to the mould ;
The grave is cruel, the grave is cold,
But the other side is the city of gold,
My dearest, dear little heart.

IX.

MONA, SICK.

DAY and night, and night and day,
I pray, and cannot choose but pray,
With lowly bended brows :
God, let the glory come to pass
Of Easter-daisies in the grass,
And green leaves on the boughs !

All sick and pale my Mona lies,
All pale and sick, with longing eyes, —
A flower that dies for rain ;
And day and night my heart's wild beats
Cry for a thousand sweetest sweets
To charm away her pain.

O waters bound with curdling rime !
Come dancing on before your time,
Through mists of silver spray ;
And, picking out your tenderest trills,
Come yellow bills, come mellow bills,
And sing your lives away !

O little golden-bodied bees,
Hum tunes her heavy heart to ease !
And butterflies, so fair,
Upon your wings of red and brown,
Balance before her up and down,
And brighten all the air !

All buds with unfulfilléd hours
Have birth at once in perfect flowers,
I charge you, in love's name ;
For when the unsanctioned is allied
So nearly to the sanctified,
Not Heaven itself can blame !

Then shall the lily leave the shade,
And tend her like a waiting-maid,
 Making her pillow sweet ;
The rose shall to her window climb,
And tell her that the low-leaved thyme
 Is waiting for her feet.

O drowsy-lidded violets !
Constellate flower that never sets !
 And blush-bells, low and small,
And pinks, and pansies, plain and pied,
And sovereign marigolds beside, —
 My Mona needs you all !

O star-flower, pushing from your breast
The dead leaves, shine out with the rest !
 And from the garden beds,
Ye daffodillies, made 'of light,
To please her with a pretty sight,
 Toss high your lovely heads !

Low lying in her pallid pain,
A flower that thirsts and dies for rain,
I see her night and day ;
And every heart-beat is a cry,
And every breath I breathe a sigh, —
O for the May ! the May !





X.

INSPIRED.

MILDEW was on the corn, —
The stubble was matted and gray,

And the hardy oak and the knotty thorn
 Looked dead on the hills of clay ;
The ponds were covered with spongy green,
 And the slow rain fell all day.

All under the hills of clay,
 And the boughs so black and bare,
A shivering woman crouched away
 In the silence of despair,
And idly picked the dead wet leaves
 Out of her dripping hair.

“ O hills, wild hills,” she cries,
 “ Be friendly, and fall, I pray,
And bury my child and me from the eyes
 Of the cold rebuking day :
Fall hills so wild o’er me and my child,
 And bury us both away !”

And if she had wine and bread,
And a shelter from the storm,
And if she lay that night in a bed
With her baby in her arm, —
If she did not die, it was not I
That saved her out of harm.

For though her locks I bound
From their drenched and dripping fall,
And though I built my strength around
Her weakness, like a wall,
It was the thought of Mona drowned
That made me do it all.



XI.

WHO wills it so, may praise
The warm spring days,
When all adown the good wife's garden bed,
Sweet marjoram and camomile are spread ;
But as for me, my voice shall be
Only for thee, — only, my love, for thee !

Who wills it may compose
His song about the rose,
That, to her maiden blushes doth prefer
The killing flattery that gathers her ;
But as for me, my eyes can see
No flower but thee, — no flower, my love, but
thee !

Who wills may celebrate
The saintly state
Of that white sovereign blossom ever seen
Dressed with the royal radiance of a queen ;
But as for me, my heart can be
Enamored only, my true love, of thee !

Who wills may praise them both,
Giving each merry mouth
That smiles upon him in his idle way
The kisses of his fancy, day by day ;
But as for me, this may not be, —
Eyes, heart, and soul, my love, are full of thee.



XII.

WEARY.

I 'M weary, a-weary
Of dust and of books !
I 'm tired of the tameness, --
I 'm sick of the sameness, --
And long to renew, in
My eyes, the glad looks
Of the wild little vagrants
That live by the brooks.

The strange little vagrants
By wantonness led
To be labor-sharers, --
To be water-bearers, --

And run through the woods
With their faces flushed red,
Each one with a bright drop
Of dew on her head.

They are servitors, all,
Of my dear little queen :
The pale bear her languor, —
The sanguine her anger, —
The lowly her overmuch
Meekness of mien, —
So making her perfectest
Maid ever seen.

When cometh she, casting,
Rude vagrants ye are,
Her charity on ye
By treading upon ye ?

Her shoulders are dimpled,
Her tiny feet bare,
And her simple hood lined
With her leafy-brown hair.

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PART IV.
REJECTED.





R E J E C T E D .

P R O P O S A L .

SINCE you have made my heart so large
and grand,

And filled it with love's furniture complete,
Will you not deign to climb up by my hand,
And live in it forever, Mona, sweet?

O, come, and hold me with your arms so pale!

O, come, and fold me with your love so true!
The hall, the garden, — all the Cedar Dale
Is yours, and henceforth only mine through
you.

POSTSCRIPT.

WILL you come and be my love, Mona!

My sweetheart, good and true?

I 've nothing in the great wide world

To live for, — only you.

You shall be safe from ill, Mona!

As never wife has been ;

The morning-glory by the door

Shall hardly dare look in ;

And when my merry harvesters

The sheaves together bind,

They all shall bring to you, Mona,

The fairest flowers they find.

REFUSAL.

YOU ask me, Charley, if I will come
To the Cedar Dale to live,—
Will I give to you my heart, you say, and you
know
That I have no heart to give!

Cruelly, cruelly kind! and I would
The words had never been said,—
I love you, Charley, love you so well
That we must never be wed!

The honors of your grand old house,
They are not for me to share,—
I can call you Charley sitting here,
But I could not say so there!

Sitting here by my cabin door
Between the fields of corn,—
In the daisy vale, in the darling vale
Where first our love was born.

Here where my days and dreams are all
A long and sweet romance,—
Ah, dare we trust such happiness
To any change or chance?

Your crimson carpets would put to shame
My dress of homespun blue ;
So leave me with the sun on my hair,
And my bare feet in the dew;—

And keep to your halls with pictured walls,
To your lands, and gardens gay,
And I will be your little wild rose
Loved far, and far away.

III.

THOU, that drawest aside the curtain
Letting in the noon's broad beams,
Give me back the sweet, th' uncertain, —
Give, O give me back my dreams!

Take the larger light and grander,
Piercing all things through and through;
Give me back the misty splendor,
Give me back the darling dew!

Take the harvest's ripe profusions,
Golden as the evening skies;
Give me back my soft delusions,
Give me back my wondering eyes!

Take the passionless caresses
All to waveless calm allied ;
Give me back my heart's sweet guesses,
And my hopes unsatisfied !

Thou that mak'st the real too real,
O, I pray thee get thee hence !
Give me back my old ideal,
Give me back my ignorance.



IV.

KISS me, though you make believe, —
Kiss me, though I almost know
You are kissing to deceive, —

Let the tide a moment flow
Backward, ere it rise and break
And bear me down, — for pity's sake !

Give me of your flowers, one leaf !

Give me of your smiles, one smile ;
Backward hold this tide of grief

Just a moment, though the while
I should feel, and almost know,
You are jesting with my woe !

Whisper to me sweet and low !

Tell me how you sit and weave

Dreams about me, though I know
It is only make believe !
Just a moment, — though 't is plain
You are trifling with my pain.



PART V.
IN DESPAIR.





IN DESPAIR.

I.

THROUGH her I felt the evening's hush,
The morning's golden stir, —
The blue-bird fluttering in the bush
I only saw through her.

When that she praised the rose's glow
I knew the rose was bright,
And when her white hand held the snow,
I saw the snow was white.

When the lame beggar-lad besought
Our help, it was the sighs

Of her soft, piteous heart, that brought
The tears into my eyes.

So poor was I in every grace,
It must have been that she
Saw her sweet self in my rough face,
And loved a shade, not me.

I did not know till hope was gone
The power which love confers ;
I stepped from world to world upon
A smile, a look of hers !

And now, if light be in the sky,
'T is light I cannot see :
O Mona, Mona, I must die,
Or you must live for me !

II.

TO THE MARCH FLOWERS.

KEEP your muddy covers close, flowers,
Nor dare to open your eyes,
For all this month your lover, the Sun,
Will only tell you lies!

He will only tell you lies, flowers,
Pretty, and undesigned,
For through this rough and cloudy month
He never knows his mind.

The daffodil may look at him
With her bright and angry eyes,

But pinks that come with their hearts in their
mouths

Must wait for warmer skies.

O daisies, stay in your grassy house,

Ye poor deluded things,

And keep your little white fingers shut

Away from his golden rings.

Ye meadow lilies, leopard-like,

Under the mould, so deep,

Crouch close, and keep your spotted cubs

For a month yet, fast asleep.

Trust not, ye modest violets,

His promises to you,

Nor dare upon his fickle smile

To broaden your kerchiefs blue,

Ye little twinkling marigolds,
'T is wise sometimes to doubt,
And though the wind should shake his moans
To music, look not out.

'T is a rough and churlish month, flowers,
So heed ye my advice,
Else you will wake, to go to sleep
With cheeks as cold as ice.



III.

I WISH the rose were not so red,
The bird more bashful with his glee, —
They join themselves to bliss that I
Shall never in my lifetime see.

I wish the wind would cease to play
Upon the elm-leaves at the door,
The old, sweet tunes, — I cannot bear
Ever to hear them any more.

O, gift of God's good speech abused!
I do not mean the things I say;
Last year my single plot of flowers
Within the sickle's compass lay;

And when I think how little ground
They needed, and how sagely sweet
They taught me their humility,
Growing no higher than my feet,

I cannot bear to see the Spring
Renew again her soft green lease,—
The honeysuckle's scarlet throat
Reminds me of my murdered peace.



IV.

THE violets, O the violets!
They are dripping with the dew,
The lark is singing in the sky,
And the sky is bright and blue;
But my heart is aching, aching,—
Aching through and through!

The daisies, O the daisies!
They are round and fair of face,
And the daffodil has bribed the sun
To lie in her embrace;
But my heart is crying, dying
Like a soul that lacketh grace!

The roses, O the roses !

They have pledged and plighted faith
To the winds that kiss and kiss them
Till they faint and fail for breath ;
But my heart is bleeding, bleeding, —
Bleeding slowly into death !



V.

AUGUST.

SINK out of sight to the realm of night,
O false and faithless day ;
For the lovely leaves of my rose of morn
Are broken and blown away.
My leaves are dead, — my hopes are fled, —
And my heart is sick with pain, —
Swing open silver gates o' the night,
And bring my dream again !

The flower o' the wind on the grass lies blind,
And, spite the daffodil's pride,
His pot of gold grows heavy to hold,
And he hangs his head aside.

There is only one, the flower o' the sun,
That still from morn till night
Can stand and stare through her curly hair,
In the face of the flaunting light.

Hasten away, O faithless day,
For the light of my life is set,
And thou seemest to me to only be
A cruel and cold coquette.
Now with a smile to flatter awhile
The creeping, credulous rills,
And now to lie on a bank o' the sky,
Kissing the heads o' the hills!

Your frown will fade, my little maid,
When I sink to the arms of sleep;
And my rose will seem to bloom in my dream
When the dews so softly weep.

Then haste away, O faithless day
That has turned my peace to pain, —
Swing open silver gates o' the west,
And bring my dream again !





VI.

THE moon that was a crescent yesterday,
Comes up so full of light
No cloud can touch her but her golden round
Spills over: 't is a night

To make the roughest sailor on the sea
Forget the chill, white foam,
And tattoo on his brawny arms the names
Of his wild crew at home.

A night to make sad housewives, all too long
Unpraised, take heart again,
And mend with some poor blushing shred of
love
Their tattered lives. In vain

Comes the full moon to those unfriended men
Whose lives are wastes of care ;
No hearth, — no row of shining little heads
To think of, anywhere.

God help them ! what is outward loveliness,
Unless within the mind
Some lovely memory all in shadow lies
Waiting to be defined !

VII.

O FOR the summers when
I used to sit as idle as the grass,
Watching the clouds make pictures in the air!
Ah me! I am no longer what I was, —
The rose, so lovely then,
Can hardly now persuade me she is fair.

O for the golden key
That would unlock the chamber of delight!
From whence I used to see
The morning coming up so warm and bright,
In promise of a day, whose far-off even
Lay sweet among the stars, and close to heaven.

O for a single hour
To have life's knot of evil and self-blame
All straightened, all undone!
As in the time when fancy had the power
The weariest and forlornest day to bless,
At sight of any common little flower
That warmed her pallid fingers in the sun,
And had no garment but her loveliness.



VIII.

OCTOBER.

FROM working her green miracles,
Among the leaves and in the grass,
Summer has gone, alas! alas!
In every wind her requiem swells;
The fountain's stony lip is dry,
And all the overarching sky
Is sombre as a smoky glass.

Her bridegroom Sun, erewhile so brave,
Alone in his high chamber grieves;
The trees shake down their pleasant leaves,
And stand, bareheaded, at her grave.
The misty waves, in silver calms,
Lie like a flock of sleepy lambs;
Busy the black-browed spider weaves.

The clouds, like bars of dull, dry sand
From which the liquid blue has fled,
Darken the east, and rusty red
Gathers about the sunset land.

No mother bird is heard to call
Her downy nestlings now, and all
The flowery folk have gone to bed.

The light strikes faint at noontide's hour
Against the low, gray, stubble-tracts,
Leaned to the hills' long, dusky backs ;
The cornfields, like a golden shower,
Rustle and patter ; the rough bur
Has broken faith to the grasshopper ;
And all the scene its glory lacks.

Summer has gone, — her brief life spent ;
Alas ! no longer might she stay, —
And I, alas ! can only say

My peace went with her when she went :
I had my flower, as she her flowers,
And now must while the weary hours
With dole as tender as I may.



IX.

SOME quiet beams at daylight's close
Had stayed behind the rest,
To watch the shutting of the rose
Of twilight in the west ;

And I, beneath a tree with joints
Of knots, had watched the blue,
Until I saw the silver points
Of evening's star come through ;

My heart unconsciously, the light
Reflecting, till surprised,
It found one image, strangely bright,
Within it, crystallized.

'T was summer, and the hopes of youth
Were in their sweet extreme,
And phantasy was like the truth,
And truth was like a dream.

Even at midnight, wild and sad,
The sunshine seemed not gone,
But only just as if it had
A cloak of shadows on.

The morn unwinked her golden eyes
Before her time, next day, —
Would that such morns would never rise,
Or never fade away!



X.

THE nights they come and the nights they
go,

And the rosy twilights round them lie, —
And the stars are bright and the stars are
sweet,

And I sit in the silence and watch them meet ;
But all the while my heart beats low,

For the moon is out of my sky !

The seasons come and the seasons go, —

Spring so gay, and winter so drear, —
And I sit in the light of the golden hours,
And pick the blushing and beautiful flowers ;
But all the while my heart beats low,

For the May is out of my year !

The mornings come and the mornings go, —
Yellow and purple, crimson and gray, —
And the milkmaid sings as she calls her cows,
And the farm lad whistles the while he ploughs ;
But all the while my heart beats low,
For the lark, the lark is away !

The rain descends, and the gardens grow,
And the camomile makes green her bed,
And the bushes are full as bushes can hold,
Of bells of silver and globes of gold ;
But all the while my heart beats low,
For the rose, the rose, she is dead !

The tides they ebb and the tides they flow,
And the sun shines more than the storm can
frown,
And the ships with their white sails flowing free
Like a forest of silver cover the sea ;
And all the while my heart beats low,
For the one good ship gone down !

XI.

HER mouth was red, and you would say
 Bespoke a spirit glad,
But for the undulating play
 Of serious thought it had.

The pathos of her wondrous eyes
 Was made of shade and sun, —
Half expectation, half surprise,
 Terror and trust in one.

Her voice was sweeter than a sigh,
 And sadder than a song,
And quiet as the shadow by
 Her side, she went along.

The sunshine of her gayer mood
On all things freely shone,
But in her tender solitude
Of soul, I dwelt alone.

She might not lift her head in pride,
An ostentatious tree, —
An herb whose flowers spread far and wide
Under the grass, was she.

Healing was in her hands, and while
We loved, I knew no night, —
Strange, that with just one little smile
The world can be so bright.

All things are changed, — I feel aggrieved
And wronged, I know not how, —
Is it a dream we ever loved,
Or am I dreaming now?

XII.

I KNOW not what the world may be, —
For since I have nor hopes nor fears,
All things seem strange and far to me,
As though I had sailed on some sad sea,
For years and years, and years and years !

Sailed through blind mists, you understand,
And leagues of bleak and bitter foam ;
Seeing belts of rock and bars of sand,
But never a strip of flowery land,
And never the light of hearth or home.

All day and night, all night and day,
I sit in my darkened house alone ;

Come thou, whose laughter sounds so gay,
Come hither, for charity come! and say
 What flowers are faded, and what are blown.

Does the great, glad sun, as he used to, rise?
 Or is it always a weary night?
A shadow has fallen across my eyes,
Come hither and tell me about the skies,—
 Are there drops of rain? are there drops of
 light?

Keep not, dear heart, so far away,
 With thy laughter light and laughter low,
But come to my darkened house, I pray,
And tell me what o' the fields to-day,—
 Or lilies, or snow? or lilies, or snow?

Do the hulls of the ripe nuts hang apart?
 Do the leaves of the locust drop in the well?

Or is it the time for the buds to start ?
O gay little heart, O little, gay heart,
Come hither and tell, come hither and tell !

The day of my hope is cold and dead,
The sun is down and the light is gone ;
Come hither thou of the roses red,
Of the gay, glad heart, and the golden head,
And tell o' the dawn, of the dew and the
dawn.



XIII.

MY heart, my heart! I'm weary of your
sighing,

Your dumb despair, your doubt ;
I've listened, listened, listened to your crying,
Till I am wearied out.

Desolate, desolate! and your wounds full ten-
der, —

I know it, my poor heart ;
But what have I of help or hope to render ?
'T is better we should part.

Better to part at once with no returning
(Since I can nothing give)
To any piteous pain, or mood of mourning,
So long as we both live.

Vex me no more ! Can I by my consenting
To wail, make less your woe,
Or, with my foolish tears, or wild lamenting,
Lighten your burdens ? No !

Nothing can meet, or match the sad disgraces
Which Fortune doth prefer ;
You can but gather from life's rough, hard places
Stones for your sepulchre !

No more, no more ! no solace can befriend you,
My bleeding, pleading heart ;
The demon you have cherished needs must rend
you
Before it can depart.

This, only this : through sorrow cometh learning ;
Through suffering, greater growth ;
In patience, therefore, wait the golden morning
That draweth near us both.

XIV.

THE sun comes up and the sun goes down,
And day and night are the same as one ;
The year grows green and the year grows brown,
And what is it all, when all is done !
Grains of sombre, or shining sand
Sliding into or out of the hand.

And men go down in ships to the seas,
And a hundred ships are the same as one ;
Backward and forward blows the breeze,
And what is it all, when all is done !
A tide, with never a shore in sight,
Setting steadily on to the night.

The fisher droppeth his net in the stream,
And a hundred streams are the same as one ;
And the maiden dreameth her love-lit dream,
And what is it all, when all is done !
The net of the fisher, the burden breaks,
And always the dreaming, the dreamer wakes.



XV.

THE sun has vanished out o' my sight,
And the moments sadly roll,
For my heart is dark with the thought of night,
And the night is in my soul.

The day is set, and never will rise,
And my heart is sick and sore,
For the sweet, sweet light of my true love's eyes
Will shine for me no more.

My very sleep of rest is shorn,
I am full of pain and care ;
Sick with the thought of what I have borne,
And of what is left to bear.

I am sad and sick, I am sick and sad,
For my pleasures cease to please ;
My soul is away from the faith it had,
And my heart is ill at ease.

For I know the sun will dry the stream,
And the floweret fade in the frost,
And I know that my dream is all a dream,
And the charm of the dream is lost.

There will never, never be any more light,
For my hope and I must part ;
And my soul is dark with the thought of night,
And the night is in my heart.



PART VI.
LOVE-LETTERS.





LOVE-LETTERS.

I.

TO MONA.

STRANGE fancies I sometimes pursue,—
I have been thinking now, to-day,
If I perforce must write to you
A letter, what things could I say?

My wits, in truth, cannot suppose
A first line, — 't would not do, I think,
If I were writing of a rose,
To say geranium or pink.

And of the searching were no end,
For synonymes of *love*, or *sweet*,
Therefore, I must begin with *friend*,
And leave my meaning incomplete.

And so I sit and muse my hour
Without a single word to say,
My thoughts like bees to some sweet flower
Flying back to that delicious day,

When, shadowed by the hill so high, —
That all in dress of summer state
Was standing at the sunset sky
Like some old shepherd at his gate, —

I bade you listen to the call
Of wind to wind, and to the birds,
And told you these were telling all
That I could never tell in words.

But if I should a letter send
Tinged with the light of that sweet sky,
What answer would you make, my friend?
Heart-sick, I wait for your reply.



II.

MONA'S ANSWER.

YOUR letter came three hours ago,
And musing on it still I sit,—
For, to be plain, I hardly know
In what way I should answer it !

You write about a certain day
When there were colors in the sky
That pleased your fancy, — then you say,
If you could get them back, would I

Be charmed as you are? Here I wait,
Reminding you, my honored sir,
That you have quite forgot to state,
In asking this, what hues they were !

I have my preference, that 's true,
And hold myself still ready, when
Your color is named, to answer you,
And so, dear sir, am yours, till then.

10



III.

TO MONA.

GRANTED the briefest interview,
With fullest, freest leave to speak,
And I engage to paint the hue
That charms me, on my lady's cheek.

No likeness that I could enclose
In words would imitate the hue ;
Not even the ripest mid-May rose.
Therefore I ask the interview,

And promise my part to fulfil
At any hour of any day, —
Name one, the earliest that you will,
I pray, and so will ever pray.

IV.

MONA'S ANSWER.

FROM day-dawn till the sunset hours
My mother keeps me within call:
Besides, I'm busy with my flowers,
And cannot name a day at all.

I'm sorry ; but the world is full
Of things for which we have to sigh ;
But, lest my letter grow too dull,
I'll break it off, — and so, good by.



V.

MY cruel little Mona,
In vain you banish me!
Your face is blushing through the leaves
Of every rose I see.

And wheresoe'er along my path
A modest daisy stands,
I take her slender fingers up
And kiss them for your hands.

The careful little violet,
She makes me think of you,
Holding her leafy petticoats
From out the morning dew.

And when I see the daffodils
A-shining in their beds,
I cannot choose but walk that way,
And touch their lovely heads.

The buttercups, they nod to me, —
I whisper with the wind, —
O Lord, it is a gracious boon
That nature is so kind!

A gracious boon, my cruel love,
If we must live apart,
That fancies such as these can come
To my poor crazy heart.



VI.

BEFORE the daybreak I arise,
And search to find if earth or air
Hold anywhere
The likeness of thy sweet, sweet eyes,
My loveliest love, my excellently fair.

In nature's book
I mark each place
Where semblances of thee I trace,
With flowers that have a bleeding look,
For pity, gentleness, and grace,
With lilies white,
And roses that are burning bright,
I take for blushes ; then I catch
The sunbeams, making all the air
Jealously cold, — they cannot match
The beauteous crowning of thy hair.

The pink wild-brier
Shines through the book in many a place,
Her good attire
Stolen from the smiling of thy face.

The dews that stay in thirsty lands
Or withered wood,
Are like thy hands,
Quietly busy doing good.

The brown-eyed sunflower, all the day
Looking one way,
I take for patience, made divine
By melancholy fears, like thine.

From June till May,
I'm searching, searching earth and air,
To find out where
Nature hath copied, to her praise,
The beauty of thy gracious ways.
I make believe the brooks that run
From sun to shade and shade to sun,

Mimic the murmur of thy joys,
Making their pleasant noise.

Sometimes I walk the stubbly ways
That have small praise,
But spy out, ne'ertheless,
Some patch of moss, all softly pied,
Or rude stone, with a speckled side,
Telling thy loveliness.
The songs of birds,
Floating the orchard tops among,
Echo the music of thy tongue ;
And fancy tries to find what words
Come nestling to my breast
With melody so consummately dressed.

So, dearest heart,
I cheat the cruelty

That keeps us all too long apart,
 With many a poor conceit of thee.
Before the daybreak I arise,
 But never anywhere
 Find I, in earth or air,
The likeness of thy sweet, sweet eyes.



VII.

MY days dawn upon me in sadness,
In sadness depart ;

For, darling, the old and sweet madness
Is still in my heart.

A cloud on my noontime doth hover,
But O the delight

That comes to me over and over,
And night upon night !

For, light as the light on the billow
In June's sunny hours,

Thou liest, in dreams, on my pillow,
My flower of flowers !

I'm drowned in thy tresses of brightness,
Unloosed from their bands ;

I'm kissing those marvels of whiteness,
Thy dear little hands !

I cover thy eyes, lest my praising
Should do them a wrong,
And lest I should wake thee with gazing
Too fondly and long.
I say, when I hear the brook's purling,
And silvery fret,
Flow gently, and leave me my darling
A little while yet !

Thy smile is more sweet in its beaming
Of kindness for me,
Than thoughts of their homes in the dreaming
Of sad men at sea.
Without thee, my life is so lonely,
And with thee, so bright,
I cannot believe thou art only
A dream of the night.

VIII.

ON RECEIVING SOME FADED FLOWERS.

JUST come into that tender lapse,
That beauty from bloom apart ;
Not so sweet to the sight, perhaps,
But all as sweet to the heart.

More than is lost from their primal dyes
They have gained, you understand ;
They speak, with their little, half-closed eyes,
O' the clasp of your loving hand.

You gathered them for *me* ! that 's it, —
Not another, in your stead ;
What matter though they are faded a bit !
What matter though they were dead !

Their charm is not of the bloom or blight
Of Time's inconstant hours ;
Ah no ! 't is in the immortal light
O' the flowers, within the flowers.



IX.

WHEN SHE HAD PROMISED TO MEET ME.

I 'M waiting under the apple-tree, dear,
Each moment a weary while,
And the beetle has crept from his furrow near,
To sun himself in your smile.

Now comes the moon, and the flaunting pride
Of the twilight fades to gray,
The while she shoulders the clouds aside
To light your steps this way.

Such mortal meanings my love begets
In things which else were dumb,
I think that the very violets
Are looking the way you 'll come !

That the dandelions from the beds
Wherein they softly lie
Are lifting their yellow and curly heads
Whenever a step goes by.

The owl, as I listen, seems to drown
In his muffled coat his cries,
And the hollyhock folds her red skirt down
To please my jealous eyes.

I know, my love, you are coming now,
For the beetle is creeping higher,
And every blossom of every bough
Is red in the face as fire.



X.

AFTER WE MET.

MY Mona, my sweet Mona! twenty times
I heard your coming step before you
came,

And heard the repetition of your name
In every song of every different bird ;
The bluebird's trill, the blackbird's merry start,
All had but one sweet meaning for my heart ;
For thought was all of you, and all the same,
No matter what I heard. The butterfly,
Sunning his purples on the clover-top,
Was ashen to the color of my sky
Low-slanting to the woods. If Time could stop,
And in his old wings hide his scythe awhile,

He must have done so then. The sugar-tree
And thawing March less honeyedly agree
Than did the adversest growths of mortal soil
That blesséd, blesséd time.

It is not past, —
Some joys are born immortal, — that was one, —
Nor rising up nor going down of sun,
Nor months nor years, till all have passed away,
Shall make it seem a thing of yesterday.

II



XI.

WOULD you bide in sweet content
High and high above
Reach of mortal accident?
Listen, for the way is clear:
Rise and go with me, my dear,
To the land of love!

Never any rainy weather
Falleth there, I guess,
Never any frost nor snow
Nor rude wind there, — will you go?
Will you go, my darling, thither?
Say, and say me yes!

In that blissful land, so near,
 In that life of life,
All your little discontents
Shall be worn as ornaments, —
Will you go with me, my dear ?
 Will you be my wife ?



PART VII.
SOLILOQUIES.





SOLILOQUIES.

I.

AS one who from a troubled dream
Awakes, and finds the tender gleam
Of morning round him, and with strength
And joy arises, even so
From my long trance of pain and woe
I wake, and find the day at length.

The hills, so dark awhile ago,
Are all ablaze with flowers, and lo!
Among her corn and hedge-rows sweet
Lies Krumley Valley at my feet.

Who would not feel her beauty's charm !
A river lying in each arm,
And clad in all excelling hues
Which summer from the year may choose.

My heart beats quick, — the scornful rose
Of Krumley Valley tenderer grows,
And pities me at last : my pride
Forsakes me, and my arms are wide.

About my neck I softly wear
The shining wonder of her hair.
A gentle word, a smile, a sigh,
 A light touch of her little hand,
And my rapt soul is up so high
All heaven beneath me seems to lie,
 A dim-discovered, rainy land.

II.

WHY hast thou forgot the snow,
And the leaves so dead and brown?

Why are little tunes and low
Running softly up and down
Through thee all the night and day?
Tell me, heart of mine, I pray!

Thou hast been so long, so long,
Musing all of lonely places,—
Of whatever things are wrong,—
Of disasters, of disgraces,—
How were those dim thoughts undone,
And these sweet low tunes begun?

Fancy, that was used to be,
At her gayest, tinged with care,

Doth not any longer see
 Killing cankers anywhere
But all things within her range
Shine with gladness ; whence this change ?

Hope forgetteth quite the clipping
 Of her wings awhile ago,
For like silver dewdrops slipping
 On a thread of sunshine, so
Run sweet tunes along thee, heart !
Pray they never more depart.



III.

MONA hath a slender waist,
Mona hath a mouth rose-red ;
Once I caught and held her fast,
And in tender whispers said :
“ Dearest, if I let you go,
Will you kiss me? Yes, or no ! ”

Mona's step is light as air,
Mona hath a thousand charms ;
Like a wild bird in a snare,
So she fluttered in my arms,
Giving ne'er a kiss to me, —
If she loved me, would n't she ?

Mona hath a neck milk-white,
Mona's thoughts are free from art ;
Being mad with my delight,
In the beating of her heart,
Said I, "If I let you go,
Will you love me? Yes, or no!"

Mona hath a russet gown, —
To the hem about her feet
Low she cast her eyelids down,
And she answered, sweet, so sweet,
"Love you, if you let me go!"
Was her answer yes, or no?

Close I clasped her slender waist,
Down I drew her to my knee ;
Neck and cheek and mouth I kissed, —
"Mona, will you marry me?
Did your little, light caress,
Lily fingers, mean me yes?"

IV.

DOWN either way, from gentle, dove-like
eyes,

And brows as sweet as ever they can be,
Falls her long hair, and on her bosom lies,
Wide, like the golden light of charity.

Lips sweet as July cherries, and o'errun
With smiles that dim the sunshine's noontide
hours ;

In spirit saintly even as a nun,
In heart as full of love as May of flowers.

All of herself her pleasure she doth make,
By giving, and by ever giving more,
Like to the moon that, for her rough sea's sake,
Maketh her wan face virgin, o'er and o'er.

Mona hath a neck milk-white,
Mona's thoughts are free from art ;
Being mad with my delight,
In the beating of her heart,
Said I, " If I let you go,
Will you love me? Yes, or no !"

Mona hath a russet gown, —
To the hem about her feet
Low she cast her eyelids down,
And she answered, sweet, so sweet,
" Love you, if you let me go !"
Was her answer yes, or no ?

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Down I drew her to my knee ;
Neck and cheek and mouth I kissed, —
" Mona, will you marry me ?
Did your little, light caress,
Lily fingers, mean me yes ?"

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All of herself her pleasure she doth make,
By giving, and by ever giving more,
Like to the moon that, for her rough sea's sake,
Maketh her wan face virgin, o'er and o'er.

V.

LOVE'S light is strange to you? Ah me!
Your heart is an unquickened seed,
And whatsoe'er your fortunes be,
I tell you, you are poor indeed.

What toucheth it, it maketh bright,
Yet loseth nothing, like the sun,
Within whose great and gracious light
A thousand dewdrops shine as one.



VI.

WHENE'ER I see the evening's sober gray
I cannot choose but think about the
day

We quarrelled, I and Mona. Strange we do
The things that we foreknow our hearts must
rue

Until the day we die! Is 't fate, or we
That doth so oft forecast a destiny
Against ourselves, — even to our utter woe?
But to the quarrel. In a valley low,
We sat upon the flowery grass of June;
The westering sun had struck the hills, and
bright
Fell through the woods the fragments of his
light.

And on the silver saddle of the moon
Gray evening posted out to meet the night,
Starry with splendors. What it was about
I quite forget, — some trifle like the hue
Of a moth's wings, I think, — but we fell out,
Mona and I ; and as the quarrel ran,
(Ah ! 't was about the daisies we began,)
Each lied to each, and said the lie was true, —
Then pined and plained, and, as all lovers
do,
Made up with kisses ; for the love that 's true
Doth knit his pretty blushing work anew
Often as quarrels ravel it away, —
Against true love's enthronéd majesty,
Experiment is treason ; yet, alas !
We have our rebel moments, all of us,
When we essay to thwart and overpass
His gentle laws, and call them tyrannous.
We quarrelled, sitting thus among the clovers,

And then we kissed, and said we would be
friends,

True friends, and kissed again, and said true
lovers.

And in the ending of our foolish strife
My Mona promised me to be my wife.



PART VIII.
LIGHT AND SHADOW.





LIGHT AND SHADOW.

LANDMARKS.

AN old house with a porch one side
That brier-vines run across, —
A door set hospitably wide,
And a roof ridged thick with moss.

A sheep-field, level as a floor,
 Outspreading far and wide,
And stretching up to the very door,
 With a thicket either side.

A garden fenced with a paling low,
 And cut right straight in two
By a pathway bordered with row on row
 Of marigolds, pinks, and rue.

A glimpse of distant woods, — but why
 Delay to paint the place ?
For, after all, you will know it by
 The smile-illumined face

Of one you will see who waits for me
 In the shadows of the grove,
With shoulders bare, and leaf-brown hair,
 And eyes like the eyes of a dove.

MONA'S MOTHER.

I N the porch that brier-vines smother,
At her wheel, sits Mona's mother.

O, the day is dying bright !
Roseate shadows, silver dimming,
Ruby lights through amber swimming,
Bring the still and starry night.

Sudden she is 'ware of shadows
Going out across the meadows
From the slowly sinking sun, —
Going through the misty spaces
That the rippling ruby laces, —
Shadows, like the violets tangled,
Like the soft light, softly mingled,
Till the two seem just as one !

Every tell-tale wind doth waft her
Little breaths of maiden laughter.

O, divinely dies the day !

And the swallow, on the rafter,

In her nest of sticks and clay, —

On the rafter, up above her,

With her patience doth reprove her,

Twittering soft the time away :

Never stopping, never stopping,

With her wings so warmly dropping

Round her nest of sticks and clay.

“Take, my bird, O take some other

Eve than this to twitter gay !”

Sayeth, prayeth Mona's mother,

To the slender-throated swallow

On her nest of sticks and clay ;

For her sad eyes needs must follow

Down the misty, mint-sweet hollow,

Where the ruby colors play
With the gold and with the gray.
“Yet, my little Lady-feather,
You do well to sit and sing,”
Crieth, sigheth Mona's mother,
“If you would, you could no other.
Can the leaf fail with the spring?
Can the tendril stay from twining
When the sap begins to run?
Or the dew-drop keep from shining
With her body full o' the sun?
Nor can you, from gladness, either;
Therefore, you do well to sing.
Up and o'er the downy lining
Of your bird-bed I can see
Two round little heads together,
Pushed out softly through your wing.
But alas! my bird, for me!”

In the porch with roses burning
All across, she sitteth lonely.
O, her soul is dark with dread!
Round and round her slow wheel turning,
Lady brow down-dropped serenely,
Lady hand uplifted queenly,
Pausing in the spinning only
To rejoin the broken thread, —
Pausing only for the winding,
With the carded silken binding
Of the flax, the distaff-head.

All along the branches creeping,
To their leafy beds of sleeping
Go the blue-birds and the brown;
Blackbird stoppeth now his clamor,
And the little yellowhammer
Droppeth head in winglet down.
Now the rocks rise bleak and barren

Through the twilight, gray and still ;
In the marsh-land now the heron

Clappeth close his horny bill.

Death-watch now begins his drumming,
And the fire-fly, going, coming,

Weaveth zigzag lines of light, —
Lines of zigzag, golden-threaded,
Up the marshy valley, shaded

O'er and o'er with vapors white.
Now the lily, open-hearted,
Of her dragon-fly deserted,

Swinging on the wind so low,
Gives herself, with trust audacious,
To the wild warm wave that washes
Through her fingers, soft and slow.

O the eyes of Mona's mother !

Dim they grow with tears unshed ;
For no longer may they follow

Down the misty mint-sweet hollow,
Down along the yellow mosses
That the brook with silver crosses.

Ah! the day is dead, is dead ;
And the cold and curdling shadows,
Stretching from the long, low meadows,
Darker, deeper, nearer spread,
Till she cannot see the twining
Of the briers, nor see the lining
Round the porch of roses red, —
Till she cannot see the hollow,
Nor the little steel-winged swallow,
On her clay-built nest o'erhead.

Mona's mother falleth mourning :

O, 't is hard, so hard, to see
Prattling child to woman turning,
As to grander company !

Little heart she lulled with hushes
Beating, burning up with blushes,
All with meditative dreaming
On the dear delicious gleaming
Of the bridal veil and ring ;
Finding in the sweet ovations
Of its new, untried relations
 Better joys than she can bring.

In her hand her wheel she keepeth,
And her heart within her leapeth,
With a burdened, bashful yearning,
 For the babe's weight on her knee,
 For the loving lisp of glee,
Sweet as larks' throats in the morning,
 Sweet as hum of honey-bee.

“O my child!” cries Mona's mother,
“Will you, can you take another

Name ere mine upon your lips ?
Can you, only for the asking,
Give to other hands the clasping
Of your rosy finger-tips ?”

Fear on fear her sad soul borrows, —
O the dews are falling fair !
But no fair thing now can move her ;
Vainly walks the moon above her,
Turning out her golden furrows
On the cloudy fields of air.

Sudden she is 'ware of shadows,
Coming in across the meadows,
And of murmurs, low as love, —
Murmurs mingled like the meeting
Of the winds, or like the beating
Of the wings of dove with dove.

In her hand the slow wheel stoppeth,
Silken flax from distaff droppeth,
And a cruel, killing pain
Striketh up from heart to brain ;
And she knoweth by that token
That the spinning all is vain,
That the troth-plight has been spoken,
And the thread of life thus broken
Never can be joined again.

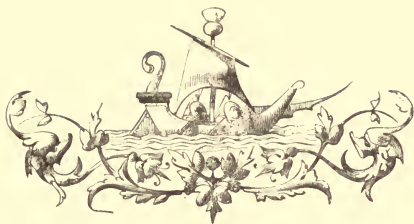




PART IX.

MONA'S SONGS.





MONA'S SONGS.

I.

ALL day yesterday as I spun,
The knots came into my thread,
And the sound of my wheel went "hum-a-drum,"
"Hum-a-drum," in my head!

Last night when I milked my cows and sung
Of the maiden all forlorn,
While the moon came up, a little star
Leading by the horn ;

I heard a leaping over the stile,
And a whistle blithe and gay, —
The tame doves knew him, my lad, my love,
And flew up out of his way!

I knew it was tenderness for me
That made him save the moth
That had dropt into my milking pail,
And was drowning in the froth.

And when I saw the ripple of red
Over his cheek that stole,
I knew the golden jewel of love
Was sinking in his soul.

Not once have I stopt, as I spun to-day
To pull a knot apart,
And the sound of my wheel goes "Marry-me!"
"Marry-me!" in my heart.

II.

WIND that criest and moanest so,
Come to my heart and say
If there be any steps in the snow,
Leading down this way!
Come from the black and stormy wood,
And say if the steps you see,
For I had a dream that bodes me good,
And what else can it be!



III.

LOW, sweet and low,
Sing to the shore, O Sea!
And softly, softly, west wind, blow
My lover's love to me;
Blow and fill my heart with bliss
As full as it can be.

Light, low and light,
Let your whisper, west wind, be,
And tell me whether he sleeps to-night
By the window nearest me!
For if he loves me as I love him,
'Tis there his bed will be.

Creep, west wind, creep
Under the sheets, and see
Whether or not his arms in sleep
Are reaching out for me!
For if the love of my love is mine,
'T is thus his arms will be.

About his pillow flit,
And see if you will see
A name in love's red letters writ
On his cheek, then fly to me,
For I know if a name is written there,
Whose name the name must be!



IV.

SIX skeins and three, six skeins and three !
Good mother, so you stinted me ;
And here they be, — ay, six and three !

Stop, busy wheel ! Stop, noisy wheel !
Long shadows down my chamber steal,
And warn me to make haste and reel.

'T is done, — the weary stint complete ;
O heart of mine, what makes you beat
So fast and sweet, — so fast and sweet !

One, two, three stars along the skies
Begin to wink their golden eyes ;
I'll leave my thread all knots and ties.

My bodice must with green be laced,
And trimmed with flowers along the waist ;
Slow hands of mine, make haste, make haste !

O moon, so red, so round and red,
Sweetheart of night, go straight to bed ;
Love's light will guide us in your stead.

A-tiptoe beckoning me he stands, —
Cease trembling, foolish little hands,
And slip the bands, — and slip the bands !



V.

LIKE a poet in the splendor
Of his genius, all complete,
In your love, so true and tender,
I am hidden, lost, my sweet.

When you leave me, all is yearning,
All is darkness, doubt, and woe,
And the time of your returning
Is the only time I know.



VI.

DEAR heart, a love so truly true
Not Heaven itself opposes,
Blown softly like the morning dew
Among the blowing roses, —
From you to me, from me to you,
Like dew among the roses!

Ay, more, a love so free from stain
High Heaven alone discloses, —
Blown affluent as the morning rain
Among the blowing roses, —
From me to you, and back again,
Like rain among the roses!

Sweet heart, it seemeth to my view
The sweetest of all posies, —
From you to me, from me to you,
Like rain among the roses, —
Like dew and rain, like rain and dew
Among the blowing roses!



VII.

LITTLE daisy, go to bed!
I hear the winds say as they pass,
“Draw your white face under the grass, —
Make of the leaves about you spread,
Brown and yellow, a covered.”

Little daisy, go to bed!

Without either sigh or tear,
Little daisy, say good by
To your sweetheart up in the sky, —
He will come again next year,
And your sisters will appear
All attired in dainty white, —
Kiss him now, and say good night.

Early in the month of May,
When the willow trims her head,
Round and round with tassels gay,
You shall have a wedding-day,
And the clover's angry-red
All shall turn to see you wed ;
So in patience go to bed.

Then in every leafy bush
There shall be a rustling sweet,
And your pleasure to complete,
When you with your lover meet.
With a sympathetic blush
Each young rose your joy will greet ;
So to bed away, away !
And be ready for the May.



VIII.

COME from your long, long roving
On the sea so wild and rough;
Come to me tender and loving,
And I shall be blest enough.

Where your sails have been furling,
What winds have blown on your brow
I know not, and ask not, my darling,
So that you come to me now!

Sorrowful, sinful, and lonely ;
Poor and despised though you be ;
All, all are nothing, if only
You turn from the Tempter to me.

Of men though you be unforgiven ;
 Though priest be unable to shrive ;
I'll pray till I weary all Heaven,
 If only you come back alive !



PART X.
CONVERSATIONS.





CONVERSATIONS.

I.

AH, blame me gently, though I sit for hours
Without a word to say, for words offend
The meanings of my heart, O dearest friend,
And, sweet and silent, as the hues in flowers,
Beneath thy smiling all my thoughts do blend.

And though I seem to woo thee in strange wise,
And from thy glances drop my eyelids down,

Or clip thy tender blushes with a frown,
Thou, sweetest, wilt forgive the rebel guise
Worn by a heart too loyally thine own.

For when I answer with so poor a grace
Thy darling witcheries, 't is but a feint
To put a mist between me and my saint
Lest I fall blind with gazing on her face ;
But thou hast felt, not seen, the worship meant.

Should I make bolder courtship, pray thee rise
And shade the lamp, and trim the evening fire,
Lest I should clothe my love in the attire
Of homely phrases, and thy sovereign eyes
Refuse the heaven to which I dare aspire.



II.

MONA ASKS ME TO SING.

“SING me a song, sing me a song!”

“Well, what shall it be?”

“Sing of a cowboy, keeping cows

In a pasture by the sea;

And make it sweet, and make it sweet,

As ever it can be.”

“A heap of rocks upon one hand,

Rough with old history,

And on the other, high green land,

Leaving flower and tree,

And going down to sit at the feet

Of the cold, complaining sea.

“Far off, a broken, chalky hill,
Rising bleak and high ;
On her shoulder white a village, that
Is toppling on the sky ;
And a brook with the fingers of the grass
In his watery curls, close by.

“I do not care to have him fair,
Either in face or limb,
But, as through a cup of porcelain,
A red rose showeth, dim,
So, through the clay he weareth, make
His spirit show in him

“So great, he cares not to be great
In the proud, repelling eyes
Of the world outside the hem of pines
That round his pasture lies, —
Just poor enough to feel he is rich, —
Simple enough to be wise.

III.

I ASK MONA TO SING.

“**D**EVISE a little song of love,
And set thee like a picture there?

Thou givest me a task above
What any mortal hand may dare!

So tender, and so true of heart ;
So meekly great, so wisely good ;
I could not paint thee as thou art,
And would not, darling, if I could.

Though fond the task, I must forbear,
Or, painting, do thee grievous wrong ;
Else, darling, all men everywhere
Will know thee, when they read my song!

But were this not, — could words portray
Our love? the sweetest ever chose?
What can the dull, cold shadow say
About the red, ripe, living rose?

Ask me no song! words lose their power
Where true enthronéd Love doth sit,
And fall like dew-drops from a flower
When the wind comes and kisses it.

Such music who should understand,
Though my heart sung it, beat by beat?
Ah, we are travellers in a land
Where no man speaks our language, sweet!”



IV.

I SAID, "I have a tale to tell!"

I said it with a blush and sigh ;
We were together at the well,
Mona, my little love, and I ;
Serenely up the cloudless sky
The queen moon walked in grace alone ;
And, with her cheek and hair o'erblown
With light, as with a golden veil,
She stood and waited for the tale.

About her little shining head

A wreath of wilding flowers she wore :
Brown, streaked with amber, white and red,
Their like I oft had seen before,
Yet did not know that they were fair,
Until she had them in her hair.

How tenderly my memory notes
Each tithe that made my bliss complete,
The very way her petticoats
Fell dainty round her twinkling feet ;
And how, betwixt the stones so blue,
A wild and straggling brier-bush grew ;
And how the side against the sun
Shone with a dozen flowers for one
Upon the other, in the shade ;
That brier-bush a text I made,
And preached a sermon very wise,
And Mona told me with her eyes
She never heard so sweet a one ;
That we would always live in the sun,
And make our lives on all sides bright,
And so we have done since that night.

V.

FORGIVE me, but I needs must press
One question, since I love you so ;
And kiss me, darling, if it's Yes,
And, darling, kiss me if it's No!

It is about our marriage day, —
I fain would have it even here ;
But kiss me if it's far away,
And, darling, kiss me if it's near!

Ah, by the blushes crowding so
On cheek and brow, 't is near, I guess ;
But, darling, kiss me if it's No,
And kiss me, darling, if it's Yes!

And with what flowers shall you be wed ?

With flowers of snow ? or flowers of flame ?

But be they white, or be they red,

Kiss me, my darling, all the same !

And have you sewed your wedding dress ?

Nay, speak not, even to whisper low ;

But kiss me, darling, if it's Yes,

And, darling, kiss me if it's No !



VI.

“ I WAS blind till yesterday. — ”
“ Darling, till you came to me ? ”

“ Ay, my Charley, man of men,
I can only see since then ! ”

“ I was dead till yesterday.”
“ Brought to life by loving me ? ”
“ Ay, and since, as it appears,
I have lived a thousand years.”

“ Tell me, thou of longer sight,
Was the world as fair and bright
E'er that we two loved so well ? ”
“ How, my Mona, should I tell ! ”

“Pray thee, did the twilight close
Like the shutting of a rose?
And had morn so fair a brow?”
“How should I know, more than thou!”

“Did the moon’s white grace invite,
Companies of stars at night,
And the sun so grandly rise?”
“I have seen but through thine eyes!”



VII.

I ASKED my darling once if she
 Could tell the reason why
I loved her. Slipping from my knee,
 She shook her little shining head,
 And with the tears in her sweet eyes, said,
 “Can I tell the reason why
 You love me? No, not I.”

I asked my darling then to tell
 The reason she loved me :
Off from her face the shadow fell,
 But with sweet trouble still perplexed,
 Smiling and pouting, pleased and vexed,
 She said, coming back to me,
 And sitting on my knee :

“I pray thee to the lily go,
And ask her why she is white ;
Ask the rose why she blushes so ;
Ask the fountain with moss o’ergrown
How came the brooklet to run alone,
Laughing out of her sight,
From shadows into the light !”

I felt my cheek with shame grow hot,
So mean it seemed to be
Questioning love that questioned not ;
For never daisy came to the May
With sweeter trust than she that day
Came and sat on my knee,
Praising and kissing me.



VIII.

“ **H**OW, my love, shall I make thy bed?
Out of the field-lilies, yellow and red?”

“Nay, on thy bosom I’ll rest my head.”

“Where, my love, shall thy lodging be?
By the rock, or under the greenwood tree?”

“Anywhere, so it is only with thee!”

“What will thy supper be? honey, or dew?
Or sweetest mulberries, black all through?”

“Only thy kisses, so fond and true.”

“Shall I call the wood-dove away from her nest
To make thee a lullaby, dearest and best?”

“Nay, in thy praises I only can rest.”

PART XI.
AFTER MARRIAGE.





AFTER MARRIAGE.

I.

SAY, do you love me as in the olden
Time so far away,

When the light o' my hair was golden
As the light o' the May?

Charley, my man of men,

Do you love me now, as when
Earth, to meet the heaven above it,

Seemed with the mist to rise,

And we told each other of it,

Talking with our eyes?

All the horns of the winds a-blowing

Made the warm wood sweet,

And the flowers to see our wooing
Hid in the grass at our feet,
When by the brook, so clear,
We sat, — do you mind, my dear? —
How the deep-worn path of the cattle
Lay across its trace,
And with tags of berry and nettle
Made a star in its face?

How the vale, to our troth agreeing,
Shone with light new-won,
Like a cloud that is flushed with being
Confidant of the Sun.

Charley, my man of men,
Do you love me now as then?
Winter cometh, so sadly whirling
All my bloom away,
And the light o' my hair is not, my darling,
Like the light o' the May.

II.

WE have been lovers now, my dear,
It matters nothing to say how long,
But still at the coming round o' the year
I make for my pleasure a little song ;
And thus of my love I sing, my dear, —
So much the more by a year, by a year.

And still as I see the day depart,
And hear the bat at my window flit,
I sing the little song to my heart,
With just a change at the close of it ;
And thus of my love I sing alway, —
So much the more by a day, by a day.

When in the morning I see the skies
Breaking into a gracious glow,

I say you are not my sweetheart's eyes,
Your brightness cannot mislead me so ;
And I sing of my love in the rising light,—
So much the more by a night, by a night.

Both at the year's sweet dawn and close,
When the moon is filling, or fading away,
Every day, as it comes and goes, ✕
And every hour of every day,
My little song I repeat and repeat,—
So much the more by an hour, my sweet !





III.

CHARITY.

SWEETLY we live, my wife and I,
Sweetly, all the time,
As a May rose in her house of leaves,
Or a poet in his rhyme.

Oft in her pale and quiet cheeks
A dash of red doth show
Her heart is fluttering like a wheel
In the wave of love below.

I call my good wife Charity,
And she blushes at the name,
Though she gave the light of her hair and eyes
To our baby, when it came.

Sweetly we live, — her gentle brows
Know not the way to frown,
And I never see that her head is gray,
And her shoulders stooping down.



IV.

THE clouds in many a windy rack
Are sailing east and west,
And sober suns are bringing back
The days I love the best.

The poet, as he will, may go
To Summer's golden prime,
And set the roses in a row
Along his fragrant rhyme ;

But as for me, I sing the praise
Of fading flowers and trees,
For to my mind the sweetest days
Of all the year are these :—

When stubbly hills and hazy skies
 Proclaim the harvest done,
And Labor wipes his brow, and lies
 A-dreaming in the sun, —

And idly hangs the spider on
 Her broken silver stair,
And ghosts of thistles, dead and gone,
 Slide slow along the air, —

Where all is still, unless perhaps
 The cricket makes ado,
Or when the dry-billed heron snaps
 Some brittle reed in two, —

Or school-boy tramples through the burs
 His tangled path to keep,
Or ripe mast, rustling downward, stirs
 The shadows from their sleep.

Ay, he that wills it so may praise
The lilies and the bees ;
But as for me, the sweetest days
Of all the year are these.

My darling, in the woodland glen
One hour with me apart,
And let us walk and talk as when
I gave you all my heart.

Ah ! wrap you with your veil so thin,
And let us wander slow
To that delicious bower, wherein
We courted, long ago.

Where dying violets scent the air,
And faint the ground-stars burn ;
And where I gave my heart, and where
You gave your heart in turn.

We had a quarrel — do you mind? —
About the daisies' eyes ;
Whether they closed because the wind
Was singing lullabies.

And you said Yes, and I said No,
And you got vexed and cried ;
At that I gave it up, and lo !
You took the other side.

And you said No, and I said Yes ;
The bosoms of the flowers
Were sensitive no whit the less,
Nor tender less than ours.

And you, as I remember yet,
Said that might well be true,
If you against them only set
My tenderness for you.

And I said — being sorely stung
That you my love should slight —
A woman always had a tongue
To make the wrong seem right!

So then your brows you darkly bent,
And killed me with a frown;
And I grew softly penitent,
And to my knees went down;

And where that willow of the glen
Shut out the insolent light,
I took you in my arms, and then
I kissed you just for spite!

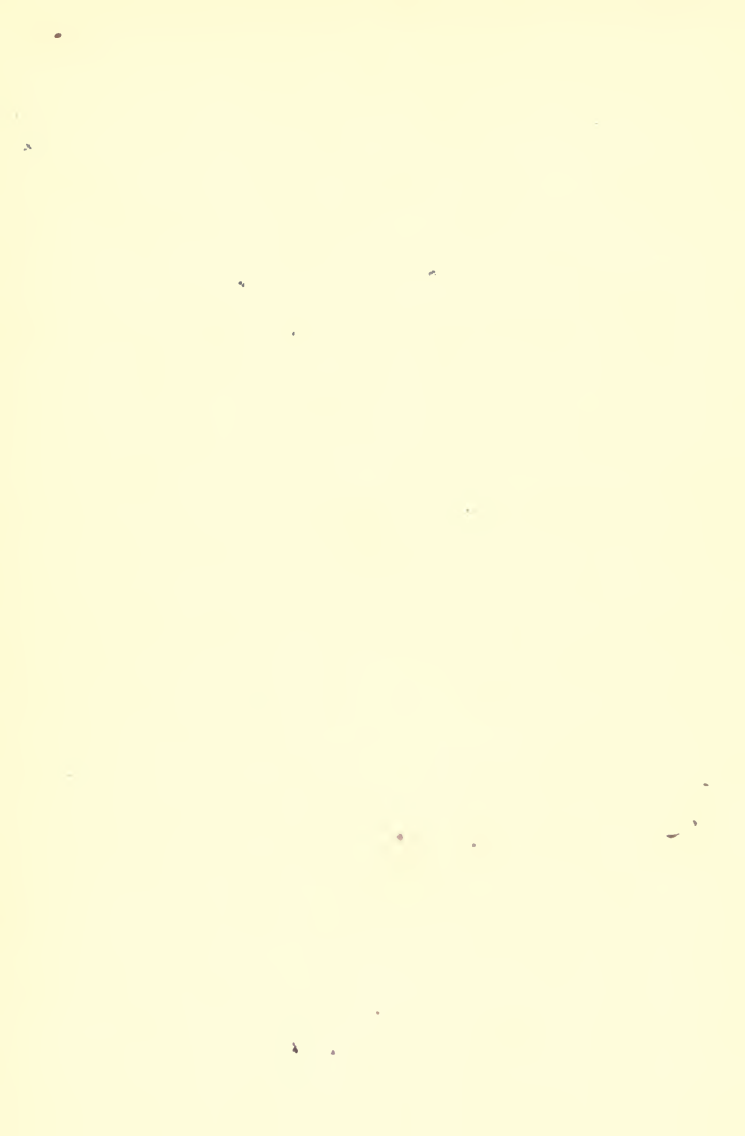
Ay, just for very spite, I said,
But when your sweet cheek grew
So painfully and proudly red,
I spoke the truth to you;

And, brushing from your face the tear,
You gave me back my kiss,
Nor have we quarrelled once, my dear,
From that glad day to this.

Therefore I leave who will to praise
The lilies and the bees,
For, love of mine, the sweetest days
Of all the year are these.







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