

## The Project Gutenberg eBook of Poems New and Old, by John Freeman

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# POEMS NEW AND OLD

## PRESS NOTICES

Mr. Freeman's landscapes have an individuality which entitles him to his own place as a poet of nature.... The appreciation of his lofty arduous, his desolate landscapes and his strange, though beautiful, rhythms and forms of verse, is not one which springs up instantly in the mind; but once it has arisen it does not diminish.—*New Statesman*.

I think that whatever limitations our age and our poetry may have, Mr. Freeman's poetry, and much else that is now being written, will find in all succeeding generations readers to whom it will give companionship and comfort.—Mr. J.C. Squire, in *Land and Water*.

This book must be read steadily through; quotation can reveal little of its scope, its richness.... When a man, in poems that are clearly fragments of autobiography, thus surrenders to the world the life of his spirit, the beauty of what he writes is inseparable from its truth. Truth endures, and a prophet would have a sad foreboding of posterity if he did not believe that of this day's poets Mr. Freeman will not be among the forgotten.—*Times Literary Supplement*.

This rarefied air is something to which the reader must adjust himself; but he finds the process of adjustment made easy by a peculiar fascination in the atmosphere which Mr. Freeman creates. If it is aloof from ordinary experience, it is by so much the more individual; and in it there are to be found thrills and feelings, an understanding of a particular aspect of nature, which have not hitherto been reported in poetry.—*Westminster Gazette*.

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# POEMS NEW AND OLD

By John Freeman

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1920

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"—He still'd  
All sounds in air; and left so free mine ears  
That I might hear the music of the spheres,  
And all the angels singing out of heaven,  
Whose tunes were solemn, as to passion given."

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## NOTE.

With the exception of two or three poems which have appeared in newspapers, or in an anthology entitled *Twelve Poets*, the verses in the first part of this volume have not hitherto been printed. The second part contains *Memories of Childhood and Other Poems*, and the third part retrieves many verses from *Presage of Victory* (1916), *Stone Trees* (1916), *Fifty Poems* (1911) and *Twenty Poems* (1909). Chronological order has not been carefully observed, or avoided, in the arrangement of the third part, but the earlier pieces will easily be distinguished by those who may wish to distinguish them.

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## PART I

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### THE EVENING SKY

Rose-bosom'd and rose-limb'd  
 With eyes of dazzling bright  
 Shakes Venus mid the twinèd boughs of the night;  
 Rose-limb'd, soft-stepping  
 From low bough to bough  
 Shaking the wide-hung starry fruitage—dimmed  
 Its bloom of snow  
 By that sole planetary glow.

Venus, avers the astronomer,  
 Not thus idly dancing goes  
 Flushing the eternal orchard with wild rose.  
 She through ether burns  
 Outpacing planetary earth,  
 And ere two years triumphantly returns,  
 And again wave-like swelling flows,  
 And again her flashing apparition comes and goes.

This we have not seen,  
 No heavenly courses set,  
 No flight unpausing through a void serene:  
 But when eve clears,  
 Arises Venus as she first uprose  
 Stepping the shaken boughs among,  
 And in her bosom glows  
 The warm light hidden in sunny snows.

She shakes the clustered stars  
 Lightly, as she goes  
 Amid the unseen branches of the night,  
 Rose-limb'd, rose-bosom'd bright.  
 She leaps: they shake and pale; she glows—  
 And who but knows  
 How the rejoiced heart aches  
 When Venus all his starry vision shakes;

When through his mind  
 Tossing with random airs of an unearthly wind,  
 Rose-bosom'd, rose-limb'd,  
 The mistress of his starry vision arises,  
 And the boughs glittering sway  
 And the stars pale away,  
 And the enlarging heaven glows  
 As Venus light-foot mid the twinèd branches goes.

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### BEECHWOOD

Hear me, O beeches! You  
 That have with ageless anguish slowly risen  
 From earth's still secret prison  
 Into the ampler prison of aery blue.  
 Your voice I hear, flowing the valleys through  
 After the wind that tramples from the west.  
 After the wind your boughs in new unrest  
 Shake, and your voice—one voice uniting voices  
 A thousand or a thousand thousand—flows

Like the wind's moody; glad when he rejoices  
In swift-succeeding and diminishing blows,  
And drooping when declines death's ardour in his breast;  
Then over him exhausted weaving the soft fan-like noises  
Of gentlest creaking stems and soothing leaves  
Until he rest,  
And silent too your eased bosom heaves.

That high and noble wind is rootless nor  
From stable earth sucks nurture, but roams on  
Childless as fatherless, wild, unconfined,  
So that men say, "As homeless as the wind!"  
Rising and falling and rising evermore  
With years like ticks, æons as centuries gone;  
Only within impalpable ether bound  
And blindly with the green globe spinning round.  
He, noble wind,  
Most ancient creature of imprisoned Time,  
From high to low may fall, and low to high may climb,  
Andean peak to deep-caved southern sea,  
With lifted hand and voice of gathered sound,  
And echoes in his tossing quiver bound  
And loosed from height into immensity;  
Yet of his freedom tires, remaining free.  
—Moulding and remoulding imponderable cloud,  
Uplifting skiey archipelagian isles  
Sunnier than ocean's, blue seas and white isles  
Aflush with blossom where late sunlight glowed;—  
Still of his freedom tiring yet still free,  
Homelessly roaming between sky, earth and sea.

But you, O beeches, even as men, have root  
Deep in apparent and substantial things—  
Earth, sun, air, water, and the chemic fruit  
Wise Time of these has made. What laughing Springs  
Your branches sprinkle young leaf-shadows o'er  
That wanting the leaf-shadows were no Springs  
Of seasonable sweet and freshness! nor  
If Summer of your murmur gathered not  
Increase of music as your leaves grow dense,  
Might even kine and birds and general noise of wings  
Of summer make full Summer, but the hot  
Slow moons would pass and leave unsatisfied the sense.  
Nor Autumn's waste were dear if your gold snow  
Of leaves whirled not upon the gold below;  
Nor Winter's snow were loveliness complete  
Wanting the white drifts round your breasts and feet.  
To hills how many has your tossed green given  
Likeness of an inverted cloudy heaven;  
How many English hills enlarge their pride  
Of shape and solitude  
By beechwoods darkening the steepest side!  
I know a Mount—let there my longing brood  
Again, as oft my eyes—a Mount I know  
Where beeches stand arrested in the throe  
Of that last onslaught when the gods swept low  
Against the gods inhabiting the wood.  
Gods into trees did pass and disappear,  
Then closing, body and huge members heaved  
With energy and agony and fear.  
See how the thighs were strained, how tortured here.  
See, limb from limb sprung, pain too sore to bear.  
Eyes once looked from those sockets that no eyes  
Have worn since—oh, with what desperate surprise!  
These arms, uplifted still, were raised in vain  
Against alien triumph and the inward pain.  
Unlock your arms, and be no more distressed,  
Let the wind glide over you easily again.  
It is a dream you fight, a memory  
Of battle lost. And how should dreaming be  
Still a renewed agony?  
But O, when that wind comes up out of the west  
New-winged with Autumn from the distant sea  
And springs upon you, how should not dreaming be  
A remembered and renewing agony?

Then are your breasts, O unleaved beeches, again  
Torn, and your thighs and arms with the old strain  
Stretched past endurance; and your groans I hear  
Low bent beneath the hoofs by that fierce charioteer  
Driven clashing over; till even dreaming is  
Less of a present agony than this.

Fall gentler sleep upon you now, while soft  
Airs circle swallow-like from hedge to croft  
Below your lowest naked-rooted troop.  
Let evening slowly droop  
Into the middle of your boughs and stoop  
Quiet breathing down to your scarce-quivering side  
And rest there satisfied.

Yet sleep herself may wake  
And through your heavy unlit dome, O Mount of beeches, shake.  
Then shall your massy columns yield  
Again the company all day concealed....  
Is it their shapes that sweep  
Serene within the ambit of the Moon  
Sentinel'd by shades slow-marching with moss-footed hours that creep  
From dusk of night to dusk of day—slow-marching, yet too soon  
Approaching morn? Are these their grave  
Remembering ghosts?  
... Already your full-foliaged branches wave,  
And the thin failing hosts  
Into your secrecies are swift withdrawn  
Before the certain footsteps of the dawn.

But you, O beeches, even as men have root  
Deep in apparent and substantial things.  
Birds on your branches leap and shake their wings,  
Long ere night falls the soft owl loosens her slow hoot  
From the unfathomed fountains of your gloom.  
Late western sunbeams on your broad trunks bloom,  
Levelled from the low opposing hill, and fold  
Your inmost conclave with a burning gold.  
... Than those night-ghosts awhile more solid, men  
Pass within your sharp shade that makes an arctic night  
Of common light,  
And pause, swift measuring tree by tree; and then  
Paint their vivid mark,  
Ciphering fatality on each unwrinkled bark  
Across the sunken stain  
That every season's gathered streaming rain  
Has deepened to a darker grain.  
You of this fatal sign unconscious lift  
Your branches still, each tree her lofty tent;  
Still light and twilight drift  
Between, and lie in wan pools silver sprent.  
But comes a day, a step, a voice, and now  
The repeated stroke, the noosed and tethered bough,  
The sundered trunk upon the enormous wain  
Bound kinglike with chain over chain,  
New wounded and exposed with each old stain.  
And here small pools of doubtful light are lakes  
Shadowless and no more that rude bough-music wakes.

So on men too the indifferent woodman, Time,  
Servant of unseen Master, nearing sets  
His unread symbol—or who reads forgets;  
And suns and seasons fall and climb,  
Leaves fall, snows fall, Spring flutters after Spring,  
A generation a generation begets.  
But comes a day—though dearly the tough roots cling  
To common earth, branches with branches sing—  
And that obscure sign's read, or swift misread,  
By the indifferent woodman or his slave  
Disease, night-wandered from a fever-dripping cave.  
No chain's then needed for no fearful king,  
But light earth-fall on foot and hand and head.

Now thick as stars leaves shake within the dome  
Of faintly-glinting dusking monochrome;

And stars thick hung as leaves shake unseen in the round  
Of darkening blue: the heavenly branches wave without a sound,  
Only betrayed by fine vibration of thin air.  
Gleam now the nearer stars and ghosts of farther stars that bare,  
Trembling and gradual, brightness everywhere....  
When leaves fall wildly and your beechen dome is thinned,  
Showered glittering down under the sudden wind;  
And when you, crowded stars, are shaken from your tree  
In time's late season stripped, and each bough nakedly  
Rocks in those gleamless shallows of infinity;  
When star-fall follows leaf-fall, will long Winter pass away  
And new stars as new leaves dance through their hasty May?  
—But as a leaf falls so falls weightless thought  
Eddying, and with a myriad dead leaves lies  
Bewildered, or in a little air awhile is caught  
Idly, then drops and dies.

Look at the stars, the stars! But in this wood  
All I can understand is understood.  
Gentler than stars your beeches speak; I hear  
Syllables more simple and intimately clear  
To earth-taught sense, than the heaven-singing word  
Of that intemperate wisdom which the sky  
Shakes down upon each unregarding century,  
There lying like snow unstirred,  
Unmelting, on the loftiest peak  
Above our human and green valley ways.  
Lowlier and friendlier your beechen branches speak  
To men of mortal days  
With hearts too fond, too weak  
For solitude or converse with that starry race.  
Their shaken lights,  
Their lonely splendours and uncomprehended  
Dream-distance and long circlings 'mid the heights  
And deeps remotely neighboured and attended  
By spheres that spill their fire through these estranging nights:—  
Ah, were they less dismaying, or less splendid!  
But as one deaf and mute sees the lips shape  
And quiver as men talk, or marks the throat  
Of rising song that he can never hear,  
Though in the singer's eyes her joy may dimly peer,  
And song and word his hopeless sense escape—  
Sweet common word and lifted heavenly note—  
So, beneath that bright rain,  
While stars rise, soar and stoop,  
Dazzled and dismayed I look and droop  
And, blinded, look again.

"Return, return!" O beeches sing you then.  
I like a tree wave all my thoughts with you,  
As your boughs wave to other tossed boughs when  
First in the windy east the dawn looks through  
Night's soon-dissolving bars.  
Return, return? But I have never strayed:  
Hush, thoughts, that for a moment played  
In that enchanted forest of the stars  
Where the mind grows numb.  
Return, return?  
Back, thoughts, from heights that freeze and deeps that burn,  
Where sight fails and song's dumb.  
And as, after long absence, a child stands  
In each familiar room  
And with fond hands  
Touches the table, casement, bed,  
Anon each sleeping, half-forgotten toy;  
So I to your sharp light and friendly gloom  
Returning, with first pale leaves round me shed,  
Recover the old joy  
Since here the long-acquainted hill-path lies,  
Steeps I have clambered up, and spaces where  
The Mount opens her bosom to the air  
And all around gigantic beeches rise.



Thy hill leave not, O Spring,  
Nor longer leap down to the new-green'd Plain.  
Thy western cliff-caves keep  
O Wind, nor branch-borne Echo after thee complain  
With grumbling wild and deep.  
Let Blossom cling  
Sudden and frozen round the eyes of trees,  
Nor fall, nor fall.  
Be still each Wing,  
Hushed each call.

So was it ordered, so  
Hung all things silent, still;  
Only Time earless moved on, stepping slow  
Up the scarped hill,  
And even Time in a long twilight stayed  
And, for a whim, that whispered whim obeyed.

There was no breath, no sigh,  
No wind lost in the sky  
Roamed the horizon round.  
The harsh dead leaf slept noiseless on the ground,  
By unseen mouse nor insect stirred  
Nor beak of hungry bird.

Then were voices heard  
Mingling as though each  
Earth and grass had individual speech.  
—Has evening fallen so soon,  
And yet no Moon?  
—No, but hark: so still  
Was never the Spring's voice adown the hill!  
I do not feel her waters tapping upon  
The culvert's under stone.  
—And if 'tis not yet night a thrush should sing.  
—Or if 'tis night the owl should his far echo bring  
Near, near.—And I  
Should know the hour by his long-shaking distant cry.  
—But how should echo be? The air is dead,  
No song, no wing,  
—No footfall overhead  
Of beast,—Or labourer passing, and no sound  
Of labourer's Good-night, good-night, good-night!  
—That we, here underground,  
Take to ourselves and breathe unheard Good-night!  
—O, it is lonely now with not one sound  
Neath that arched profound,  
—No throttled note  
Sweet over us to float,  
—No shadow treading light  
Of man, beast, bird.  
—If, earth in dumb earth, lie we here unstirred,  
—Why, brother, it were death renewed again  
If sun nor rain,  
—O death undying, if no dear human touch nor sound  
Fall on us underground!

---

## THE CAVES

Like the tide—knocking at the hollowed cliff  
And running into each green cave as if  
In the cave's night to keep  
Eternal motion grave and deep;—

That, even while each broken wave repeats  
Its answered knocking and with bruised hand beats  
Again, again, again,  
Tossed between ecstasy and pain;

Still in the folded hollow darkness swells,  
Sinks, swells, and every green-hung hollow fills,  
Till there's no room for sound  
Save that old anger rolled around;

So into every hollow cliff of life,  
Into this heart's deep cave so loud with strife,  
    In tunnels I knew not,  
    In lightless labyrinths of thought,

The unresting tide has run and the dark filled,  
Even the vibration of old strife is stilled;  
    The wave returning bears  
    Muted those time-breathing airs.

—How shall the million-footed tide still tread  
These hollows and in each cold void cave spread?  
    How shall Love here keep  
    Eternal motion grave and deep?

---

### I WILL ASK

I will ask primrose and violet to spend for you  
Their smell and hue,  
And the bold, trembling anemone awhile to spare  
Her flowers starry fair;  
Or the flushed wild apple and yet sweeter thorn  
Their sweetness to keep  
Longer than any fire-bosomed flower born  
Between midnight and midnight deep.

And I will take celandine, nettle and parsley, white  
In its own green light,  
Or milkwort and sorrel, thyme, harebell and meadowsweet  
Lifting at your feet,  
And ivy blossom beloved of soft bees; I will take  
The loveliest—  
The seeding grasses that bend with the winds, and shake  
Though the winds are at rest.

"For me?" you will ask. "Yes! surely they wave for you  
Their smell and hue,  
And you away all that is rare were so much less  
By your missed happiness."  
Yet I know grass and weed, ivy and apple and thorn  
Their whole sweet would keep  
Though in Eden no human spirit on a shining morn  
Had awaked from sleep.

---

### IN THOSE OLD DAYS

In those old days you were called beautiful,  
But I have worn the beauty from your face;  
The flowerlike bloom has withered on your cheek  
With the harsh years, and the fire in your eyes  
Burns darker now and deeper, feeding on  
Beauty and the remembrance of things gone.  
Even your voice is altered when you speak,  
Or is grown mute with old anxiety  
    For me.

Even as a fire leaps into flame and burns  
Leaping and laughing in its lovely flight,  
And then under the flame a glowing dome  
Deepens slowly into blood-like light:—  
So did you flame and in flame take delight,  
So are you hollow'd now with aching fire.  
But I still warm me and make there my home,  
Still beauty and youth burn there invisibly  
    For me.

Now my lips falling on your silver'd skull,  
My fingers in the valleys of your cheeks,  
Or my hands in your thin strong hands fast caught,  
Your body clutched to mine, mine bent to yours:  
Now love undying feeds on love beautiful,  
Now, now I am but thought kissing your thought ...  
—And can it be in your heart's music speaks

A deeper rhythm hearing mine: can it be  
Indeed for me?

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## THE ASH

The undecaying yew has shed his flowers  
Long since in golden showers.  
The elm has robed her height  
In green, and hangs maternal o'er the bright  
Starred meadows, and her full-contented breast  
Lifts and sinks to rest.  
Shades drowsing in the grass  
Beneath the hedge move but as the hours pass.  
Beech, oak and beam have all put beauty on  
In the eye of the sun.  
Because the hawthorn's sweet  
All the earth is sweet and the air, and the wind's feet.  
In the wood's green hollows the earth is sweet and wet,  
For scarce one shaft may get  
The sudden green between:  
Only that warm sweet creeps between the green;  
Or in the clearing the bluebells lifting high  
Make another azure sky.

All's leaf and flower except  
The sluggish ash that all night long has slept,  
And all the morning of this lingering spring.  
Every tree else may sing,  
Every bough laugh and shake;  
But the ash like an old man does not wake  
Even though draws near the season's poise and noon  
Of heavy-poppied swoon ...  
Still the ash is asleep,  
Or from his lower upraised palms now creep  
First green leaves, promising that even those gaunt  
Tossed boughs shall be the haunt  
Of Autumn starlings shrill  
Mid his full-leaved high branches never still.

If to any tree,  
'Tis to the ash that I might likened be—  
Masculine, unamenable, delaying,  
With palms uplifted praying  
For another life and Spring  
Yet unforeshadowed; but content to swing  
Stiff branches chill and bare  
In this fine-quivering air  
That others' love makes sweetness everywhere.

---

## IMAGINATION

To make a fairer,  
A kinder, a more constant world than this;  
To make time longer  
And love a little stronger,

To give to blossoms  
And trees and fruits more beauty than they bear,  
Adding to sweetness  
The aye-wanted completeness,

To say to sorrow,  
"Ease now thy bosom of its snaky burden";  
(And sorrow brightened,  
No more stung and frightened),

To cry to death,  
"Stay a little, O proud Shade, thy stony hand";  
(And death removing  
Left us amazed loving);—

For this and this,  
O inward Spirit, arm thyself with power;

Be it thy duty  
To give a body to beauty.

Thine to remake  
The world in thy hid likeness, and renew  
The fading vision  
In spite of time's derision.

Be it thine, O spirit,  
The world of sense and thought to exalt with light;  
Purge away blindness,  
Terror and all unkindness.

Shine, shine  
From within, on the confused grey world without  
That, growing clearer,  
Grows spiritual and dearer.

---

## NO MORE ADIEU

Unconscious on thy lap I lay,  
A spiritual thing,  
Stirless until the yet unlooked-for day  
Of human birth  
Should call me from thy starry twilight, Earth.  
And did thy bosom rock and clear voice sing?  
I know not—now no more a spiritual thing.  
Nor then thy breathed Adieu  
I rightly knew.

—Until those human kind arms caught  
And nursed my head  
Upon her breast who from the twilight brought  
This stranger me.  
Mother, it were yet happiness to be  
Within your arms; but now that you are dead  
Your memory sleeps in mine; so mine is comforted,  
Though I breathed dear Adieu  
Unheard by you.

And I have gathered to my breast  
Wife, mistress, child,  
Affections insecure but tenderest  
Of all that clutch  
Man's heart with their "Too little!" and "Too much!"  
O, what anxieties, what passions wild  
Bind and unbind me, what storms never to be stilled  
Until Adieu, Adieu  
Breathe the night through.

O, when all last farewells are said  
To these most dear;  
O, when within my purged heart peace is shed;  
When these old sweet  
Humanities move out on hushing feet,  
And all is hush; then in that silence clear  
Who is it comes again—near and near and near,  
Even while the sighed Adieu  
Fades the hush through?

O, is it on thy breast I fall,  
A spiritual thing  
Once more, and hear with ear insensual  
The voice of primal Earth  
Breathed gently as on Eden faint airs forth;  
And so contented to thy bosom cling,  
Though all those loves are gone nor faithful echoes ring,  
Nor fond Adieu, Adieu  
My parted spirit pursue?

—So hidden in green darkness deep,  
Feel when I wake  
The tides of night and day upon thee sweep,  
And know thy forehead bared before the East,  
And hear thy forests hushing in the West

And in thy bosom, Earth, the slow heart shake:  
But hear no more the infinite forest murmurs break  
    Into Adieu, Adieu,  
    No more Adieu!

---

## THE VISIT

I reached the cottage. I knew it from the card  
He had given me—the low door heavily barred,  
Steep roof, and two yews whispering on guard.

Dusk thickened as I came, but I could smell  
First red wallflower and an early hyacinth bell,  
And see dim primroses. "O, I can tell,"

I thought, "they love the flowers he loved." The rain  
Shook from fruit bushes in new showers again  
As I brushed past, and gemmed the window pane.

Bare was the window yet, and the lamp bright.  
I saw them sitting there, streamed with the light  
That overflowed upon the enclosing night.

"Poor things, I wonder why they've lit up so,"  
A voice said, passing on the road below.  
"Who are they?" asked another. "Don't you know?"

Their voices crept away. I heard no more  
As I crossed the garden and knocked at the door.  
I waited, then knocked louder than before,

And thrice, and still in vain. So on the grass  
I stepped, and tap-tapped on the rainy glass.  
Then did a girl without turning towards me pass

From the room. I heard the heavy barred door creak,  
And a voice entreating from the doorway speak,  
"Will you come this way?"—a voice childlike and quick.

The way was dark. I followed her white frock,  
Past the now-chiming, sweet-tongued unseen clock,  
Into the room. One figure like a rock

Draped in an unstarred night—his mother—bowed  
Unrising and unspeaking. His aunt stood  
And took my hand, murmuring, "So good, so good!"

Never such quiet people had I known.  
Voices they scarcely needed, they had grown  
To talk less by the word than muted tone.

"We'll soon have tea," the girl said. "Please sit here."  
She pushed a heavy low deep-seated chair  
I knew at once was his; and I sat there.

I could not look at them. It seemed I made  
Noise in that quietness. I was afraid  
To look or speak until the aunt's voice said,

"You were his friend." And that "You were!" awoke  
My sense, and nervousness found voice and spoke  
Of what he had been, until a bullet broke

A too-brief friendship. The rock-like mother kept  
Night still around her. The aunt silently wept,  
And the girl into the screen's low shadow stepped.

"You were great friends," said with calm voice the mother.  
I answered, "Never friend had such another."  
Then the girl's lips, "Nor sister such a brother."

Her words were like a sounding pebble cast  
Into a hollow silence; but at last  
She moved and bending to my low chair passed

Swift leaf-like fingers o'er my face and said,

"You are not like him." And as she turned her head  
Into full light beneath the lamp's green shade

I saw the sunken spaces of her eyes.  
Then her face listening to my dumb surprise.  
"Forgive," she said, "a blind girl's liberties."

"You were his friend; I wanted so to see  
The friends my brother had. Now let's have tea."  
She poured, and passed a cup and cakes to me.

"These are my cakes," she smiled; and as I ate  
She talked, and to the others cup and plate  
Passed as they in their shadow and silence sat.

"Thanks, we are used to each other," she said when I  
Rose in the awkwardness of seeing, shy  
Of helping and of watching helplessly.

And from the manner of their hands 'twas clear  
They too were blind; but I knew they could hear  
My pitiful thoughts as I sat aching there.

... I needs must talk, until the girl was gone  
A while out of the room. The lamp shone on,  
But the true light out of the room was gone.

"Rose loved him so!" her mother said, and sighed.  
"He was our eyes, he was our joy and pride,  
And all that's left is but to say he died."

She ceased as Rose returned. Then as before  
We talked and paused until, "Tell me once more,  
What was it he said?" And I told her once more.

She listened: in her face was pride and pain  
As in her mind's eye near he stood and plain....  
Then the thin leaves fell on my cheek again

And on my hands. "He must have loved you well,"  
She whispered, as her hands from my hands fell.  
Silence flowed back with thoughts unspeakable.

It was a painful thing to leave them there  
Within the useless light and stirless air.  
"Let me show you the way. Mind, there's a stair

"Here, then another stair ten paces on....  
Isn't there a moon? Good-bye."

And she was gone.  
Full moon upon the drenched fruit garden shone.

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## TRAVELLING

They talked of old campaigns, nineteen-fourteen  
And Mons and watery Yser, nineteen-fifteen  
And Neuve Chapelle, 'sixteen, 'seventeen, 'eighteen  
And after. And they grumbled, leaving home,  
Then talked of nineteen-nineteen, nineteen-twenty  
And after.

Their thoughts wandered, leaving home  
Among familiar places and known years;  
Anticipating in the river, of time  
Rocks, rapids, shallows, idle glazing pools  
Mirroring their dark dreams of heaven and earth.  
—And then they parted, one to Chatham, one  
To Africa, Constantinople one,  
One to Cologne; and all to an unknown year,  
Nineteen-nineteen perhaps, or another year.

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## THE SONG OF THE FOREST

*(11th November, 1918)*

## I

To Thee, Most Holy, Most Obscure, light-hidden,  
Shedding light in the darkness of the mind  
As gold beams wake the air to birds a-wing;  
To Thee, if men were trees, would forests bow  
In all our land, as under a new wind;  
To Thee, if trees were men, would forests sing  
Lifting autumnal crowns and bending low,  
Rising and falling again as inly chidden,  
Singing and hushing again as inly bidden.  
To Thee, Most Holy, men being men upraise  
Bright eyes and waving hands of unarticulating praise.

## II

To Thee, Most Holy, Most Obscure, who pourest  
Thy darkness into each wild-heaving human forest,  
While some say, "'Tis so dark God cannot live,"  
And some, "It is so dark He never was,"  
And few, "I hear the forest branches give  
Assured signs His wind-like footsteps pass;"  
To Thee, now that long darkness is enlightened,  
Lift men their hearts, shaking the death-chill dews.  
Even sad eyes with morning light are brightened,  
And in this spiritual Easter's lovely hues  
Are no more with death's arctic shadow frightened.

## III

Here in this morning twilight gleaming pure  
Mid the high forest boughs and making clear  
The motion the night-wakeful brain had guessed;  
Here in this peace that wonders, Is it Peace?  
And sighs its satisfaction on the shivering air;  
Here, O Most Holy, here, O bright Obscure,  
Every deep root within the earth's quick breast  
Knows that the long night's ended and sore agitations cease,  
And every leaf of every human tree  
In England's forest stirs and sings, Light Giver, now to Thee.

## IV

I cannot syllable that unworded praise—  
An ashen sapling bending in Thy wind,  
Uplifting in Thy light new-budded leaves;  
Nor for myself nor any other raise  
My boughs in music, though the woodland heaves—  
O with what ease of pain at length resigned,  
What hope to the old inheritance restored!  
Thy praise it is that men at last are glad.  
Long unaccustomed brightness in their eyes  
Needs must seem beautiful in thine, bright Lord,  
And to forget the part that sorrow had  
In every shadowed breast, where still it lies,  
Is there not praise in such forgetfulness?  
For to grieve less means not that love is less.

## V

—Nor for myself nor any other. Yet  
I cannot but remember all that passed  
Since justice shook these bosoms, and the fret  
Of indignation stirred them and they cast  
Forgot aside all lesser wrongs, and rose  
Against the spiritual evil of that threat  
That made them of dishonour slaves or foes.  
And who may but with pride remember how  
Not by ten righteous justice might be saved,  
But by unsaintly millions moving all  
As the tide moves when myriad tossed waves flow

One way, and on the crumbling bastions fall;  
Then sinking backwards unopposed and slow  
Over the ruined towers where those vain angers raved.

## VI

Creep tarnished gilded figures to their holes  
Who once walked like great men upon the earth  
Flickering their false shadows. Fear, like a hound,  
Hunts them, and there's a death in every sound;  
And had they souls sorrow would prick their souls  
At every heavy sigh the wind waved forth.  
... Into their holes they've crept, and they will die.  
Of them no more and never any more.  
Their leper-gilt is gone, and they will lie  
Poisoning a little earth and nothing more.

## VII

—That justice has been saved and wrong been slain,  
That the slow fever-darkness ends in day,  
Nor madness shakes the pillared world again  
With the same blind proud fury; that in vain  
Whispers the Tempter now, "So pass away  
Strength, honesty and hope, and nothing left but pain!"  
That the many-voiced confusion of the night  
Clears in the winging of a spirit bright  
With new-recovered joy;—for this, O Light,  
Light Giver, Night Dispeller, praise should be.  
But praise is dumb from burning hearts to Thee.

## VIII

But as a forest bending in the wind  
Murmurs in all its boughs after the wind,  
Sounds uninterpreted and untaught airs;  
So now when Thy wind over England stirs,  
The proud and untranslating sounds of praise  
Mingle tumultuous over our human ways;  
And magnifying echoes of Thy wind  
Rouse in the profoundest forests of the mind.

## IX

And in the secret thicket where Thy light  
Is dimmed with starry shining of the night,  
Hearing these mingled airs from every wood  
Thou'lt smile serenely down, murmuring, "'Tis good."  
While Angels in the thicket borders curled  
Amid the farthest gold beams of Thy hair,  
Seeing on one drooped beam this distant world  
Floating illumined, cry, "Bright Lord, how fair!"

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## OUT OF THE EAST

When man first walked upright and soberly  
Reflecting as he paced to and fro,  
And no more swinging from wide tree to tree,  
Or sheltered by vast boles from sheltered foe,  
Or crouched within some deep cave by the sea  
Stared at the noisy waste of water's woe  
Where the earth ended, and far lightning died  
Splintered upon the rigid tideless tide;

When man above Time's cloud lifted his head  
And speech knew, and the company of speech,  
And from his alien presence wild beasts fled  
And birds flew wary from his arrow's reach,  
And cattle trampling the long meadow weed  
Did sentry in the wind's path set; when each  
Horn, hoof, claw, sting and sinew against man



Was turned, and the old enmity began;

When, following, beneath the hand of kings  
Moved men their parting ways, and some passed on  
To forest refuge, some by dark-browed springs,  
And some to high remoter pastures won,  
And some o'er yellow deserts spread their wings,  
Thinning with time and thirst and so were gone  
Forgotten; when between each wandered host  
The seldom travellers faltered and were lost;—

In those old days, upon the soft dew'd sward  
That held its green between the thicket's cloud,  
Walked two men musing ere the wide moon poured  
Her full-girthed weightless flood. And one was bowed  
With years past knowledge, and his face was scored  
Where light or deep had every long year ploughed—  
Pain, labour, present peril, distant dread  
Scored in his brow and bending his shagged head.

Palsy his frame shook as a harsh wind shakes  
Complaining reeds fringing a frozen river;  
His eye the aspect had of frozen lakes  
Whereunder the foiled waters swirl and quiver;  
His voice the deep note that the north wind takes  
Drawn through bare beechwoods where forlorn birds shiver—  
Deep and unfaltering. A younger man  
Listened, while warmer currents in him ran.

"Was not my son even as myself to me,  
As you to him showed his own life again?  
Now he is dead, and all I looked to see  
In him removes to you—less near and plain,  
Confused with other blood; and what will be  
I groping cannot tell, and grope in vain.  
For men have turned to other ways than mine:  
Yourself are less fulfilment than a sign,

"Sign of a changing world. And change I fear.  
I have seen old and young like brief gnats die,  
And have faced death by plague and flood and spear:  
I have seen mine own familiar people lie  
In generations reaped; and near and near  
Age leads on Death—I hear his husky sigh.  
Yet Death I fear not, but these clouds of change  
Sweeping the old firm world with new and strange.

"Son of my son, to whom the world shines new,  
You are strange to me for whom the world is old.  
Your thoughts are not my thoughts, and unto you  
The past, sole warmth for me, is void and cold.  
Another passion pours your spirit through,  
Another faith has leapt upon the fold  
And wrestles with the ancient faith. 'And lo!'  
Lightly men say, 'Even the gods come and go!'"

He paused awhile in pacing and hung still,  
Amid the thickening shades a darker shade.  
Down the steep valley from the barren hill  
A herd of deer with antlered leader made  
Brief apparition. Mist brimmed up until  
Only the great round heights yet solid stayed—  
Then they too changed to spectral, and upon  
The changing mist wavered, and were gone....

"Standing to-day your father's grave beside,  
I knew my heart with his was covered there;  
O, more than flesh did in the cold earth hide—  
My past, his promise. There was none to care  
Save for the body of a prince that died  
As princes die; there was none whispered, 'Where  
Moves now among us his unburied part?  
What breast beats with the pulses of his heart?'

"—Vain thoughts are these that but a dying man  
Searches among the dark caves of his mind!

But as I stood, the very wind that ran  
Between the files breathed more than common wind,  
As though the gods of men when Time began,  
Fathers of fathers of old humankind,  
Startled, heard now the changeful future knock;  
And their lament it was from rock to rock

"Tossed with the wind's long echo ... O, speak not,  
Nor tell me with my loss I am so dazed,  
That my tongue speaks unfaithfully my thought;  
That you, you too, within his shadow raised,  
Stand bare now, wanting all you held or thought,  
By aimless love or prisoned grief amazed.  
Tell me not: let me out of silence speak,  
Or let me still my thoughts in silence break."

And so both stood, and not a word to say,  
By silence overborne, until at last  
The young man breathed, "Look how the end of day  
Falls heavily, as though the earth were cast  
Into a shapeless soundless pit, where ray  
Of heavenly light never the verge has past.  
Yet will the late moon's light anon shine here,  
And then gray light, and then the sun's light clear.

"Sire, 'twas my father died, and like night's pit  
Soundless and shapeless yawn my orphaned years.  
And yet I know morn comes and brings with it  
Old tasks again, and new joys, hopes and fears.  
Or sword or plough these fingers will find fit,  
And morrows end with other cries and tears,  
With women's arms and children's voices and  
The sacred gods blessing the new-sown land.

"But look, upon your beard the dew is bright,  
Chill is the winter fall: let us go in."  
Then moved they slowly downward till a light  
Shining the door-post and thonged door between  
Showed the square Prince's House. Out of the night  
They passed the sudden rubied warmth within.  
Curled shadowy by the wall a servant slept:  
A sleepy hound from the same corner crept.

Soon were they couched. The young man fell asleep;  
While the old Prince drowsing uneasily,  
Tossing on the crest of agitations deep,  
Dreamed waking, waking dreamed. Then memory  
The unseen hound, did from her corner creep  
Into his bosom and stirred him with her sigh  
Soundless. And he arose and answering pressed  
Her beloved head yet closer to his breast....

Happy those years returned when first he strode  
Beside his father's knees, or climbed and felt  
The warm strength of those arms, or singing rode  
High on his shoulders; or in winter pelt  
Of dread beasts wrapt, set as his father showed  
Snares in the frosty grass, and at dawn knelt  
Beside the snares, and shouting homeward tore,  
Winged with such pride as seldom manhood wore.

—How many, many, many years ago!  
There was no older man now walked the earth.  
Had all those years sunk to a bitter glow,  
Like the fire lingering yet upon the hearth?  
Ah, he might warm his hands there still, and so  
Must warm his heart now in this wintry dearth,  
Till the reluming sunken fire should give  
Warmth to his ageing wits and bid him live.

Even this house! It was his father told  
How in the days half lost in icy time  
Men first forsook their wormy caves and cold  
To build where the wind-footed cattle climb;  
And noise of labour broke the silence old  
By such unbroken since the sparkling prime

Of the world's spring. And so the house arose,  
A builded cave, perpetual as the snows

On the remotest summits of the range  
Hemming the north. Then house by house appeared  
'Neath valley-eaves, and change following on change  
Unnoted tamed earth's shaggy front. Men heard  
Strange voices syllabing with accents strange,  
By travellers breathed who, startled, paused and feared  
Seeing the smoke of habitations curled  
Above this hollow of an unrumoured world.

Startled, they paused and spoke by doubtful sign,  
Answered by hesitating sign, until  
Moved one with aspect fearless and benign,  
And met one fearless, while all else hung still.  
And then was welcome, rest, and meat and wine  
And intercourse of uncouth word, as shrill  
Voice with deep voice was mingled. So they stayed  
And to astonished eyes strange arts betrayed.

By them the oarage of the wind was taught,  
And how the quick tail steered the cockled boat.  
They netted fruitful streams, and smiling brought  
Their breaking wickers home, too full to float.  
And opening the earth's rich womb they wrought  
Arms from the sullied ore; and labouring smote  
The mountain's bosom, till a path was seen  
Stony amid the flushed snow and flushed green.

Then first upon earth's wave the silver share  
Floated, by the teamed oxen drawn; then first  
Were seed-time rites, and harvest rites when bare  
The cropped fields lay, and gathered tumult—nurst  
Long in the breasts of men that laboured there—  
Now in the broad ease of fulfilment burst;  
And when the winter tasks failed in days chill,  
Weaving of bright-hued yarn, and chattering shrill;

And the loved tones of music sounded sweet  
Unwonted, when the new-stopped pipe was heard  
Rising and falling, and the falling feet  
Of sudden dancers. And old men were stirred  
With old men's memories of ancient heat  
When youth sang in their bosoms like a bird....  
Sweet that divine musician, Memory,  
Fingering her many-reeded melody.

Then as he stared into the wasting glow  
And watched the fire faint in the whitening wood,  
Came starker shadows moving vast and slow,  
And echoes of wild strife and smell of blood,  
Twitching of slain men, cries of parting woe,  
Bruised bodies ghastly in the mountain flood;  
Burials and burnings, triumph with terrors blent,  
And widowed languors and night-long lament.

Like seeds long buried, these dead memories  
Upthrust in their new green and spread to flower:  
An eager child against his father's knees  
Leaning, he had listened many an evening hour.  
Now these remote reworded histories  
Entangled with his own renewed their power,  
Breathing an antique virtue through his mind,  
As through dense yew boughs breathes the undying wind.

Sighing, he rose up softly. On the wall  
A dark shape shambled aimless to and fro;  
Head bent, eyes inward-seeing, rugged, tall,  
Himself a shadow moved with musings slow  
Amid his cumbered past, and heard sweet call  
Of mother voice, and mother folk, and flow  
Of gentle and proud speech and tender laughter,  
Story and song, fault and forgiveness after;

And a voice graver, gentler than a man

Might hear from any but a woman beloved,  
Stilling and awakening the blood that ran  
Like ocean tide, as neared she or removed ...  
Faded that music. Then a voice began  
Paining within his heart, yet unreproved;  
For dear the anguish is that steals upon  
A father's spirit lamenting his lost son.

—The latest born and latest lost of those  
Of his strong and her gentle being born.  
By earthquake, pestilence, by human foes  
Long were they dead; and yet not all forlorn  
He grieved, for at his side the youngest rose  
Bright as a willow gilded by dewy morn....  
Felled now the tree, silent that music, still  
The motion that did all the vale-air fill.

Once more they bore the body from the hunt  
Where he alone had died. Once more he heard  
The wail and sigh, and saw once more their front  
Of drooping grief; once more the wailing stirred  
Old hounds to baying wilder than was wont;  
Fell once more like slow, sullen rain each word  
Reluctant, telling to his senses strayed,  
How while the gods drowsed and men hung afraid.

Slain was the Prince unwary by the paw  
Of a springing beast that died in giving death.  
Again the featureless torn face he saw,  
The ribboned bosom emptied of warm breath;  
Again the circle sudden hush'd with awe,  
And smothered moaning heard the hush beneath.  
Again, again, and every night again,  
Vision renewed and voice recalled in vain.

Again those dear and lamentable rites  
Within the winter stems of forest shade,  
The pile, the smokeless flame, the thousand lights,  
The one light that in all the thousand played;  
Deep burthened voices while, around the heights  
Lifting, young trebles their wild echo made;  
Then the returning torches at the pyre  
Lit, when the eye glowed faint within the fire.

---

Even as a man that by slow steps may climb  
An unknown mountain path with tired tread  
By ice-fringed brook and close herb white with rime,  
Sees sudden far below a strange land spread  
Immense; so from his lonely crag of Time  
The Prince, his eye bewildered and adread,  
Gazed at the vast, with mist and storm confused,  
Cloud-racked, and changing even while he mused.

Ending were the old wise and stable ways.  
Adventurers into distant lands had fared,  
From distant lands adventurers with gaze  
Proud and unenvying on his kingdom stared,  
And sojourning had shaken quiet days  
With restless knowledge, and strange worship reared  
Of foreign altars, idols, prayers and songs  
And sacrifice as to such gods belongs.

And all unsatisfied his people grown  
Would move from this rejected mountain range  
By yearlong valley journeys slowly down,  
Sun-following, till surfeited with change,  
Mid idle pastures pitched or fabled town,  
Subdued to climes and kings and customs strange,  
At length their very name should die away  
And all their remnant be a vague "Men say."

"Men say!" he sighed, and from that lofty verge  
Of inward seeing drooped his doubtful sight.  
Sweet was it from such reverie to emerge  
And breathe once more the thoughtless air of night,

And watch the fire-slave through fresh billets urge  
The sleeping flame, until the vivid light  
And toothed shadows wearied.... And then crept  
The hounds a little nearer, and all slept.

---

But the young man still lay in quiet sleep,  
Or half-sleep, and a dream-born cloud enwreathed  
With memories, hopes and longings hidden deep  
In his flown mind. Another air he breathed,  
Saw from an unsubstantial mountain sweep  
In purest light, soon in low shadow sheathed,  
Semblance of faint-known faces, or beloved  
Daily-acquainted still, or long removed.

Even as sacred fire in fennel stalks  
Through windy ways is borne and densest night,  
Till where the outpost shivering sentry walks  
Beating the minutes into hours, the light  
Touches the guarded pile and, flaring, balks  
Beasts padding near and each unvisioned sprite  
By old dread apprehended; and new gladness  
Shakes in the village prone in winter sadness:—

So through the young man's dream the kingly flame  
In his own breast was undiminished borne.  
And other peoples catching from his fame  
A noble heat, in neighbouring lands forlorn,  
Would glow with new power and the ancient name  
Bless, that had brightened through their narrow morn.  
And purer yet and steadier would pass on  
The sacred flame to son and son and son.

Or with contracting mind he saw the host  
Of mountain warriors banded, moving down  
Untrodden ways, as on young buds a frost  
Falls, and the spring lies stiff. The air was sown  
With strife, the fields with blood, the night with ghost  
Wandering by ghost, and wounded men were strown  
Surprised, unweaponed; and chill air congealed  
Each hurt, and with the blood their breath was sealed.

And the loved tones of music sounded fierce  
When the returning files with aspect proud  
Approached, and brandished their rich trophied spears.  
Sweet the pipes' spearlike music, sweet and loud,  
And music of smitten arms was sweet to tears;  
Sweet the dance unto smiling gods new vowed,  
Sweet the recounting song and choral cries,  
And age's quaverings and girls' envious sighs.

—So of himself, a father-king, he dreamed,  
Holding an equal nation in his eye.  
O with what golden points the future gleamed!  
Rustled the years like laden mule-trains by,  
Each with its burthen of old time redeemed....  
Splendour on splendour poured, and so would lie  
Unnoted and unmeasured:—metals, herds,  
Distant-sought wonders, strange growths, beasts and birds.

Within the summer of that splendid shade  
Might men live happy and nought left to fear,  
Or if an antique restless spirit played  
Fretful within their bones, and change drew near  
Drumming wild airs, and another music made,  
A father-king, speaking assured and clear,  
Bidding them follow he would lead them forth  
Through the yet undiscovered frowning north.

And the last fire on the warm stones would burn,  
And the smoke linger on the mountain skies.  
And seeing, they would muse yet of return  
And then forget their sadness in the cries  
Confused of the great caravan; and so turn  
Towards the next sun-setting and the next sunrise  
Many and many a day and wind and wind

Through foreign earth, as a dream through the mind.

Flowing on with the changes of its thought.

And doubtful kings entreating them to stay  
Would sleep the easier when they lingered not;  
And sullen tribes menacing would make way,  
And broad slow rivers in their tide be caught,  
And the long caravan o'er the ford all day  
And all day and all day pass; while the tide slept  
In sluggish shallows, or through marsh-reeds crept.

So would they on and on, with death and birth  
For wayfellows and nightly stars for guide,  
While seasons bloomed and faded on the earth,  
And jealous gods their wandering gods would chide.  
Until, weary of endless going forth  
Dark-locust-like, the old fret would subside,  
And young men with aged men and women cry,  
"In this full-rivered pasture let us lie!

"Here let us lie, and wanderings be at rest!"  
Midmost a cedar grove high sacrifice  
Needs then be made, that gods be manifest;  
And while the smoke spread in long twilit skies,  
"Here let us lie, and wanderings be at rest,"  
Would old men breathe repeated between sighs.  
"In this green world and cool," would mothers say,  
"Rest we, nor with thin babes yet longer stray."

—So stealing from the mind of the old King  
Exhausted, into the sleeping young man's brain  
Crept the same dream and lifted on new wing  
And took from his swift passions a new stain,  
Sanguine and azure, and first fluttering  
Rose then on easy vans that bore again  
The sleeper past his common thought's confine:—  
So borne, so soaring, in that air divine,

He saw his people stayed, their journeys ended....  
There should they, no more fretful, dwell for ever  
In the full-nourished pasture where untended  
Herds multiplied, and famine threatened never,  
And where high border-hills glittered with splendid  
Sparse-covered veins washed by the hill-born river.  
So stead by stead arose, and men there moved  
Satisfied, and no more vain longings roved.

Again the silver plough gleamed in the sod,  
And seed from old fields slept in furrows new.  
Then when Spring's rain and sun together trod  
And interweaved swift steps the meadow through,  
Old rites revived; they bore the shapen god  
With green stalks and first-budded boughs, and drew  
Together youth and age. And sowers leapt  
High o'er the seed in earth's cold bosom wrapt:—

So in the golden-hued and burning hours  
Of harvest, leapt on high the full-eared corn.  
Friendly to pious hands those imaged Powers  
Of rain and sun. And when the grain was borne  
By oxen trailing tangled straws and flowers,  
With leaves and dying blossoms on each horn,  
Friendly the gods commingling in the shades  
Of moon and torch and smoke-delaying glades.

Fell slowly sunset; the starred evening cool  
Drooped round as mid his people the king rode,  
Blessing and blessed, and in the faithful pool  
Of their old loves his clear reflection glowed  
Like summer's golden moon:—in wise and fool,  
Noble and mean, accustomed reverence showed  
Clear-shining; so he reached the unbarred hall  
Where lamps, lords, servitors flashed festival,

Remembering old journeys and their end.  
Bright-throned he sat there, with those lords around

Snow-polled, co-eval, as with friends their friend  
Feasting. Arose at length the awaited sound  
Of bardic chanting, bidding their thoughts descend  
Into the chamber where the Past lay bound,  
Wanting but music's finger; so upspringing,  
The Past stormed all their minds in that loud singing.

And strangers, furred and tawny, seated there,  
Far travellers from the sunrise, looking on  
The feasting and the splendour, and with ear  
Uncertain listening to the solemn tone  
Of most dear Memory, envied all and sware  
A sudden fealty. But the bard sang on  
While silver beakers brimmed untouched; and darkened  
The proud remembering eyes of men that hearkened.

Then came once more those strangers leading long  
Migration of their subject folk. They stayed  
And medley'd and were mingled, and their throng  
Melted in his like snows, and so were made  
One with them, and forgot their useless tongue,  
Nor now their ancient bloody worship paid  
To painted gods:—name, language, story died  
When their last faithless exile parting sighed.

So year on year, century on century  
In his imagination of delight  
Followed, in a new world all innocency  
And simpleness, and made for beings bright,  
Where man to man was friend, unfearful, free,  
And natural griefs alone darkened their night,  
And natural joys as the wide air were common,  
And kindness was the bond of all kin human.

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—When the loved reeds of music sounded clear  
From birds' breasts quivering in tall woodland trees  
That rustled leafless in the winter air,  
And with morn's new voice shrilled the western breeze:  
Folding her wings the dream crept from his ear  
To hang where bats drowse until daylight dies.  
Then he from sleep's dear vanity awaking  
Watched a sole sunbeam the roof-shadows raking.

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## PART II

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### THE WAKERS

The joyous morning ran and kissed the grass  
And drew his fingers through her sleeping hair,  
And cried, "Before thy flowers are well awake  
Rise, and the lingering darkness from thee shake.

"Before the daisy and the sorrel buy  
Their brightness back from that close-folding night,  
Come, and the shadows from thy bosom shake,  
Awake from thy thick sleep, awake, awake!"

Then the grass of that mounded meadow stirred  
Above the Roman bones that may not stir  
Though joyous morning whispered, shouted, sang:  
The grass stirred as that happy music rang.

O, what a wondrous rustling everywhere!  
The steady shadows shook and thinned and died,  
The shining grass flashed brightness back for brightness,  
And sleep was gone, and there was heavenly lightness.

As if she had found wings, light as the wind,  
The grass flew, bent with the wind, from east to west,  
Chased by one wild grey cloud, and flashing all  
Her dews for happiness to hear morning call....

But even as I stepped out the brightness dimmed,  
I saw the fading edge of all delight.  
The sober morning waked the drowsy herds,  
And there was the old scolding of the birds.

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## MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

To  
MARJORY

### I

#### CHILDHOOD CALLS

Come over, come over the deepening river,  
Come over again the dark torrent of years,  
Come over, come back where the green leaves quiver,  
And the lilac still blooms and the grey sky clears.

Come, come back to the everlasting garden,  
To that green heaven, and the blue heaven above.  
Come back to the time when time brought no burden  
And love was unconscious, knowing not love.

### II

#### THE ANSWER

O, my feet have worn a track  
Deep and old in going back.  
Thought released turns to its home  
As bees through tangling thickets come.  
One way of thought leads to the vast  
Desert of the mind, and there is lost,  
But backward leads to a dancing light  
And myself there, stiff with delight.  
O, well my thought has trodden a way  
From this brief day to that long day.

### III

#### THE FIRST HOUSE

That is the earliest thing that I remember—  
The narrow house in the long narrow street,  
Dark rooms within and darkness out of doors  
Where grasses in the garden lift in the wind,  
Long grasses clinging round unsteady feet.  
The sunlight through one narrow passage pours,  
As through the keyhole into a dusty room,  
Striking with a golden rod the greening gloom.  
The tall, tall timber-stacks have yet been kind,  
Letting the sun fling his rod clear between,  
Lest there should be no gold upon the green,  
And no light then for a child to dream upon,  
And day be of day's brightness all forlorn.  
I saw those timber piles first dark and tall,  
And then men clambered up, and stumbled down,  
Each with a heavy and long timber borne  
Upon broad shoulders, leather-covered, bent.  
Hour after hour, day after day they went,  
Until the piles were gone and a new sky  
Stretched high and white above the garden wall.  
And then fresh piles crept slowly up and up,  
The strong men staggering, more cruelly bowed,  
Till at last they lay idle on the top  
Looking down from their height on things so small,  
While I looked wondering and fearful up  
At the strong men at rest on the new-built cloud.  
But there was other gold than the sun's sparse gold—  
Florence's hair, its brightness lying still  
Upon my mind as then upon the grass.



Now the grass covers it and I am old,  
Remembering but her hair and that long grass,  
And the great wood-stacks threatening to fall—  
When all dark things will.

#### IV

##### THE OTHER HOUSE

That other house, in the same crowded street,  
One red-tiled floor had, answering to my feet,  
And a bewildering garden all of light and heat.

Only that red floor and garden now remain,  
One glowing firelike in my glowing brain,  
One with smell, colour, sun and cloud revived again.

Yet in the garden the sky was very small,  
Closed by some darkness beyond the low brown wall;  
But from the west the gold could long unhindered fall.

Of human faces I remember none  
Amid the garden; but myself alone  
With creeping-jenny, sunflower, marigold, snapdragon—

These all my love, these now all my light,  
Bringing their kindness to any painful night.  
The sun brushed all their brightness with his skirt more bright.

And I was happy when I knew it not,  
Dreaming of nothing more than that small plot,  
And the high sky and sun that floated bright and hot.

But what night was, save dark, I did not know.  
The blind shut out the stars: the moon would go  
Staring, unstared at, moon and stars unnoted flow.

Until one night, into the strange street led,  
To stare at a strange light from the Factory shed,  
Wheeling and darting, withdrawn, and sudden again outsped—

No one knew why—but I knew darkness then,  
And saw the stars that hung so still; but when  
I lay abed the old starless dark came back again.

Night is not night without the stars and moon.  
I knew them not, or I forgot too soon,  
And now remember only the glowing sun of noon,

The red floor, and yellow flowers, and a lonely child,  
And a whistle morn and noon and evening shrilled,  
And darkness when the household murmurs even were stilled.

#### V

##### THE FIRE

Near the house flowed, or paused, the black Canal,  
Edged by the timber piles so black and tall.  
From the rotten fence I watched the horses pull  
Along the footpath, slow and beautiful,  
Moving with strength and ease, in their great size  
And untired movement wonderful to my eyes;  
Their dull brass clanking as each shaggy foot  
Stamped the soft cinder track as fine as soot.  
The driver lurched old and forbidding by,  
Not seeing the child that feared to meet his eye.  
I watched the rope dip, tighten, and the water flash  
In falling, and then heard the hiss and splash;  
I watched the barge drag slowly on and on,  
Not dreaming how lovely a ship could ride the water upon,  
Not dreaming how lovely flowing water was,  
Sung to by trees and fingered by long grass,  
Or running from the bosom of a hill  
Down, where it flows so deep that it seems still.

But it was by that rotten fence one night  
I saw the timber piles break into light,  
Suddenly leaping into a heavenly flame  
That played with the wind and one with the wind became.  
Pile to pile gave its fire, till they were like  
Bright angels with flashing swords before they strike,  
Terrible and lovely. But men those angels fought,  
Small and humble and patient all night wrought,  
And all day wrought and night and day again,  
And night and day, pouring their hissing rain,  
Until the angels tired and one by one died.  
Then their black spectres haunted the waterside,  
Charred ruins, broken-limbed, no more erect,  
Or heaped black dust, with cold white ashes flecked.  
But I had seen the angel-quelling men,  
With blackened and bruised face, the horses thin,  
The glittering harness, the leaky, bubbling mains,  
The broad smoke, and the steam from the leaping rains:—  
O I had seen what I should not forget,  
Men that defeated ruinous angels and shall still defeat.

## VI

### THE KITE

It was a day  
All blue and lifting white,  
When I went into the fields with Frank  
To fly his kite.

The fields were aged, bare,  
Shut between houses everywhere.  
All the way there  
The wind tugged at the kite to take it  
Untethered, toss and break it;  
But Frank held fast, and I  
Walked with him admiringly;  
In his light brave and fine  
How bright was mine!

We tailed the kite  
While the wind flapped its purple face  
And yellow head.  
Frank's yellow head  
Was scarcely higher, and not so bright.  
"Let go!" he cried, and I let go  
And watched the kite  
Swaying and rising so  
That I was rooted to the place,  
Watching the kite  
Rise into the blue,  
Lifting its head against the white  
Against the sun,  
Against the height  
That far-off, farther drew;  
Shivering there  
In that fine air  
As we below shivered with delight  
And fear.

There it floated  
Among the birds and clouds at ease  
Of others all unnoted,  
Swimming above the ranked stiff trees.  
And I lay down, looking up at the sky,  
The clouds and birds that floated  
By others still unnoted,  
And that swaying kite  
Specking the light:  
Looking up at the sky,  
The birds and clouds that drew  
Nearer, leaving the blue,  
Stooping, and then brushing me,  
With such tenderness touching me

That I had still lain there  
In those fields bare,  
Forgetting the kite;  
For every cloud was now a kite  
Streaming with light.

## VII

### THE CHAIR

The chair was made  
By hands long dead,  
Polished by many bodies sitting there,  
Until the wood-lines flowed as clean as waves.

Mine sat restless there,  
Or propped to stare  
Hugged the low kitchen with fond eyes  
Or tired eyes that looked at nothing at all.

Or watched from the smoke rise  
The flame's snake-eyes,  
Up the black-bearded chimney leap;  
Then on my shoulder my dull head would drop.

And half asleep  
I heard her creep—  
Her never-singing lips shut fast,  
Fearing to wake me by a careless breath.

Then, at last,  
My lids upcast,  
Our eyes met, I smiled and she smiled,  
And I shut mine again and truly slept.

Was I that child  
Fretful, sick, wild?  
Was that you moving soft and soft  
Between the rooms if I but played at sleep?

Or if I laughed,  
Talked, cried, or coughed,  
You smiled too, just perceptibly,  
Or your large kind brown eyes said, O poor boy!

From the fireside I  
Could see the narrow sky  
Through the barred heavy window panes,  
Could hear the sparrows quarrelling round the lilac;

And hear the heavy rains  
Choking in the roof-drains:—  
Else of the world I nothing heard  
Or nothing remember now. But most I loved

To watch when you stirred  
Busily like a bird  
At household doings; with hands floured  
Mixing a magic with your cakes and tarts.

O into me, sick, froward,  
Yourself you poured;  
In all those days and weeks when I  
Sat, slept, woke, whimpered, wondered and slept again.

Now but a memory  
To bless and harry me  
Remains of you still swathed with care;  
Myself your chief care, sitting by the hearth

Propped in the pillowed chair,  
Following you with tired stare,  
And my hand following the wood lines  
By dead hands smoothed and followed many years.

## VIII

### THE SWING

It was like floating in a blessed dream to roam  
Across green meadows, far from home,  
With only trees and quivering sky to hedge the sight,  
Dazzling the eyes with strange delight.  
Such wide, wide fields I had never seen, and never dreamed  
Could be; and wonderful it seemed  
To wander over green and under green and run  
Unwatched even of the shining sun.

One tree there was that held a wrinkled creaking bough  
Far over the grass, hanging low;  
And a swing from it hanging drew us near and made  
New brightness beneath that doming shade.  
For there my sisters swung long hours delightedly,  
And there delighted clambered I;  
And all our voices shrilled as one when up we flung  
And into the stinging sharp leaves swung.

Then in a garden dense with bramble and sweet flowers  
Where honeysuckle a new sweetness pours,  
We sat and ate and drank. Well I remember how  
We were all shaded by one bough  
Bending with red fruit over our uplifted eyes,  
Teasing our well-watched covetousness.

And then we went back happy to the empty swing,  
But I was tired of everything  
Except the grass and trees and the wide shadows there  
Widening slowly everywhere.  
It was like swinging in a solemn dream to roam  
In a strange air, far from home—  
Until I saw the shadows suddenly wake and move,  
And float, float down from above.  
Then I ran quickly back, round the large gloomy trees,  
O with what shivering unease!  
And stumbled where they waited, and was far too glad,  
Finding them, to be afraid or sad.  
—Then waited an unforgetting year once more to see  
So wide a sky, so great a tree.

## IX

### FEAR

Surely I must have ailed  
On that dark night,  
Or my childish courage failed  
Because there was no light;  
Or terror must have come  
With his chill wing,  
And made my angel dumb,  
Or found him slumbering.  
Because I could not sleep  
Terror began to wake,  
Close at my side to creep  
And sting me like a snake.  
And I was afraid of death,  
But when I thought of pain—  
O, language no word hath  
To recall that thought again!  
Into my heart fear crawled  
And wreathed close around,  
Mortal, convulsive, cold,  
And I lay bound.  
Fear set before my eyes  
Unimaginable pain;  
Approaching agonies  
Sprang nimbly into my brain.  
Just as a thrilling wind  
Plucks every mournful wire,  
So terror on my wild mind

Fingered, with ice and fire.  
O, not death I feared,  
But the anguish of the body;  
My dizzying passions heard,  
Saw my own bosom bloody.  
I thought of years of woe,  
Moments prolonged to years,  
Heard my heart racing so,  
Redoubling all those fears.  
Yet still I could not cry,  
Not a sound the stillness broke;  
But the dark stirred, and my  
Negligent angel woke.

## X

### THE STREETS

Marlboro' and Waterloo and Trafalgar,  
Tuileries, Talavera, Valenciennes,  
Were strange names all, and all familiar;

For down their streets I went, early and late  
(Is there a street where I have never been  
Of all those hundreds, narrow, skylless, straight?)—

Early and late, they were my woods and meadows;  
The rain upon their dust my summer smell;  
Their scant herb and brown sparrows and harsh shadows

Were all my spring. Was there another spring?  
I knew their noisy desolation well,  
Drinking it up as a child drinks everything,

Knowing no other world than brick and stone,  
With one rich memory of the earth all bright.  
Now all is fallen into oblivion—

All that I was, in years of school and play,  
Things that I hated, things that were delight,  
Are all forgotten, or shut all away

Behind a creaking door that opens slow.  
But there's a child that walks those streets of war,  
Hearing his running footsteps as they go

Echoed from house to house, and wondering  
At Marlboro', Waterloo and Trafalgar;  
And at night, when the yellow gas lamps fling

Unsteady shadows, singing for company;  
Yet loving the lighted dark, and any star  
Caught by sharp roofs in a narrow net of sky.

## XI

### WHEN CHILDHOOD DIED

I can recall the day  
When childhood died.  
I had grown thin and tall  
And eager-eyed.

Such a false happiness  
Had seized me then;  
A child, I saw myself  
Man among men.

Now I see that I was  
Ignorant, surprised,  
As one for the surgeon's knife  
Anæsthetized.

So that I did not know  
What loomed before,

Nor how, a child, I became  
A child no more.

The world's sharpened knife  
Cut round my heart;  
Then something was taken  
And flung apart.

I did not, could not know  
What had been done.  
Under some evil drag  
I lived as one

At home in the seeming world;  
Then slowly came  
Through years and years to myself  
And was no more the same.

I know now an ill thing was done  
To a young child  
By the world's wary knife  
Maimed and defiled.

I can recall the day  
Almost without anger or pain,  
When childhood did not die  
But was slain.

## XII

### ALL THAT I WAS I AM

Hateful it seems now, yet was I not happy?  
Starved of the things I loved, I did not know  
I loved them, and was happy lacking them.  
If bitterness comes now (and that is hell)  
It is when I forget that I was happy,  
Accusing Fate, that sits and nods and laughs,  
Because I was not born a bird or tree.  
Let accusation sleep, lest God's own finger  
Point angry from the cloud in which He hides.  
Who may regret what was, since it has made  
Himself himself? All that I was I am,  
And the old childish joy now lives in me  
At sight of a green field or a green tree.

---

### THE SHOCK

Thinking of these, of beautiful brief things,  
Of things that are of sense and spirit made,  
Of meadow flowers, dense hedges and dark bushes  
With roses trailing over nests of thrushes;

Of dews so pure and bright and flush'd and cool,  
And like the flowers as brief as beautiful;  
Thinking of the tall grass and daisies tall  
And whispered music of the waving bents;

Of these that like a simple child I love  
Since they are life and life is flowers and grass;  
Thinking of trees, and water at their feet  
Answering the trees with murmur childlike sweet;

Thinking of those high thoughts that passed like the wind  
Yet left their brightness lying on the mind,  
As the white blossoms the raw airs shake down  
That lie awhile yet lovely on the chill grass;

Thinking of the dark, where all these end like cloud,  
And the stars watch like Knights to Honour vowed,  
Of those too lovely colours of the East,  
And the too tender loveliness of grey:

Thinking of all, I was as one that stands

'Neath the bewildering shock of breaking seas;  
Mortal-immortal things had lost their power,  
I knew no more than sweetness in the flower;

No more than colour in the changing light,  
No more than order in the stars of night;  
A breathing tree was but gaunt wood and leaves;  
All these had lost their old power over me.

I had forgotten that ever such things were:  
Immortal-mortal, I had been but blind ...  
O the wild sweetness of the renewing sense  
That swept me and drove all but sweetness hence!

... As beautiful as brief—ah! lovelier,  
Being but mortal. Yet I had great fear—  
That I should die ere these sweet things were dead,  
Or live on knowing the wild sweetness fled.

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## THE UNLOOSENING

Winter was weary. All his snows were failing—  
Still from his stiff grey head he shook the rime  
Upon the grasses, bushes and broad hedges,  
But all was lost in the new touch of Time.

And the bright-globèd hedges were all ruddy,  
As though warm sunset glowed perpetual.  
The myriad swinging tassels of first hazel,  
From purple to pale gold, were swinging all

In the soft wind, no more afraid of Winter.  
Nor chaffinch, wren, nor lark was now afraid.  
And Winter heard, or (ears too hard of hearing)  
Snuffed the South-West that in his cold hair played.

And his hands trembled. Then with voice a-quaver  
He called the East Wind, and the black East ran,  
Roofing the sky with iron, and in the darkness  
Winter crept out and chilled the earth again.

And while men slept the still pools were frozen,  
Mosses were white, with ice the long grasses bowed;  
The hawthorn buds and the greening honeysuckle  
Froze, and the birds were dumb under that cloud.

And men and beasts were dulled, and children even  
Less merry, under that low iron dome.  
Early the patient rocks and starlings gathered;  
Any warm narrow place for men was home.

And Winter laughed, but the third night grew weary,  
And slept all heavy, till the East Wind thought him dead.  
Then the returning South West in his nostrils  
Breathed, and his snows melted. And his head

Uplifting, he saw all the laughing valley,  
Heard the unloosened waters leaping down  
Broadening over the meadows; saw the sun running  
From hill to hill and glittering upon the town.

All day he stared. But his head drooped at evening,  
Bent and slow he stumbled into the white  
Cavern of a great chalk hill, hedged with tall bushes,  
And in its darkness found a darker night

Among the broken cliff and falling water,  
Freezing or falling quietly everywhere;  
Locked in a long, long sleep, his brain undreaming,  
With only water moving anywhere.

Old men at night dreamed that they saw him going,  
And looked, and dared not look, lest he should turn.  
And young men felt the air beating on their bodies,  
And the young women woke from dreams that burn.

And children going through the fields at morning  
Saw the unloosened waters leaping down,  
And broke the hazel boughs and wore the tassels  
Above their eyes—a pale and shaking crown.

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## WILD HEART

### I

#### DARK AND STRANGE

When first Love came, then was I but a boy  
Swept with delirium of undreamt joy.  
Now Love comes to a man serious with change  
Of life and death—and makes the world dark and strange.

### II

#### WILD HEART

Wild heart, wild heart,  
Where does the wind find home?  
Wild heart, wild heart,  
Where does the wild blood rest?  
Home, home,  
Rest, rest—  
Unto you I come  
And catch you to my breast.

Wild heart, wild heart,  
There the wind will sleep.  
Wild heart, wild heart,  
And the blood gently flow.  
Come, come,  
Unresting rest  
Within my heart's cave deep  
Where thoughts like bright stars glow.

Wild heart, wild heart,  
Here, here is your home.  
Wild heart, wild heart,  
With that winged star I come.  
Home, home,  
Rest in unrest—  
Unto you, wild heart, I come.  
My wild heart is your home.

### III

#### HOME FOR LOVE

Because the earth is vast and dark  
And wet and cold;  
Because man's heart wants warmth and light  
Lest it grow old;

Therefore the house was built—wall, roof  
And brick and beam,  
By a lost hand following the lost  
Delight of a dream,

And room and stair show how that hand  
Groped in eager doubt,  
With needless weight of teasing timber  
Matching his thought—

Such fond superfluousness of strength  
In wall and wood  
As his half-wise, half-fearful eye  
Deemed only good.

His brain he built into the house,



Labour'd his bones;  
He burnt his heart into the brick  
And red hearth-stones.

It is his blood that makes the house  
Still warm, safe, bright,  
Honest as aim and eye and hand,  
As clean, as light.

Because the earth is vast and dark  
The house was built—  
Now with another heart and fire  
To be fulfilled.

#### IV

##### THE ALDE

How near I walked to Love,  
How long, I cannot tell.  
I was like the Alde that flows  
Quietly through green level lands,  
So quietly, it knows  
Their shape, their greenness and their shadows well;  
And then undreamingly for miles it goes  
And silently, beside the sea.

Seamews circle over,  
The winter wildfowl wings,  
Long and green the grasses wave  
Between the river and the sea.  
The sea's cry, wild or grave,  
From, bank to low bank of the river rings;  
But the uncertain river though it crave  
The sea, knows not the sea.

Was that indeed salt wind?  
Came that noise from falling  
Wild waters on a stony shore?  
Oh, what is this new troubling tide  
Of eager waves that pour  
Around and over, leaping, parting, recalling?...  
How near I moved (as day to same day wore)  
And silently, beside the sea!

#### V

##### AGAINST THE COLD PALE SKY

Against the cold pale sky  
The elm tree company rose high.  
All the fine hues of day  
That flowered so bold had died away.  
Only chill blue, faint green,  
And deepening dark blue were seen.

There swinging on a bough  
That hung or floated broad and low.  
The lamp of evening, bright  
With more than planetary light,  
Was beautiful and free—  
A white bird swaying on the tree.

You watched and I watched,  
Our eyes and hearts so surely matched.  
We saw the white bird leap, leap  
Shining in his journey steep  
Through that vast cold sky.  
Our hearts knew his unuttered cry—

A cry of free delight  
Spreading over the clustering night.  
Pole Hill grave and stark  
Stared at the valley's tidal dark,

The Darent glimmered wan;  
But that eager planet winging on,

And singing on, went high  
Into the deeps and heights of sky.  
And our thoughts rising too  
Brightened the mortal darkness through  
Trembled and danced and sang  
Till the mute invisible heavens rang.

## VI

### THE DARK FIRE

Love me not less  
Yet ease me of this fever,  
That in my wondering heart  
Burns, sinks, burns again ever.

Is it your love  
In me so fiercely burning,  
Or my love leaping to you  
Then requickened returning?

Come not to me,  
Bring not your body nearer,  
Though you overleapt the miles  
I could not behold you clearer.

I could not clasp you  
Than in my thought more surely;  
Breast to breast, heart to heart  
Might cling no more securely.

I do not know you,  
Seeing you, more than unseeing.  
What you are that you are  
Here in my spiritual being.

Leave me you cannot,  
Nor can I remove me  
From the sevenfold dark fire  
You have lit here since you love me.

Yet love unsure  
No wilder could be burning.  
Come, go, come, go,  
There's neither leaving nor returning.

Love me, love me more.  
O, not my heart shall quaver  
If the dark fire more deep  
Sinks and is sevenfold sevenfold graver.

## VII

### THE KESTREL

In a great western wind we climbed the hill  
And saw the clouds run up, ride high and sink;  
And there were shadows running at our feet  
Till it seemed the very earth could not be still,  
Nor could our hearts be still, nor could we think  
Our hearts could ever be still, our thought less fleet  
Than the dizzy clouds, less than the flying wind.  
Eastward the valley and the dark steep hill  
And other hills and valleys lost behind  
In mist and light. The hedges were not yet bare  
Though the wind picked at them as he went by.  
The woods were fire, a fire that dense or clear  
Burned steady, but could not burn up the shadows  
Rooted where the trees' roots entangled lie,  
In darkness; or a flame burned solitary  
In the middle of the highest of brown meadows,  
Burned solitary and unconsuming where

A red tree stooped to its black shadow and  
The kestrel's shadow hunted the kestrel up the hill.  
We climbed, and as we stood (where yet we stand  
And of the visioned sun and shadow still drink)  
Happiness like a shadow chased our thought  
That tossed on free wings up and down the world;  
Till by that wild swift-darting shadow caught  
Our free spirits their free pinions furled.  
Then as the kestrel began once more the heavens to climb  
A new-winged spirit rose clear above the hills of time.

## VIII

### THE IMAGE

I am a river flowing round your hill,  
Holding your image in my lingering water,  
With imaged white clouds rising round your head;  
And I am happy to bear your image still.  
Though a loud ruffling wind may break and scatter  
That happiness, I know it is not fled.

But when the wind is gone or gentled so  
That only the least quivering quivers on,  
Your image recomposes in my breast  
With those high clouds, quiet and white as snow—  
Spiritual company; and when day's gone  
And those white clouds have stepped into the west;

And the dark blue filling the heavens deep  
Is bright with stars that sing above your head,  
Their light lies in the deep of my dark eyes  
With your dark shape, a shadow of your sleep ...  
I am happy still, watching the bright stars tread  
Around your shadow that in my bosom lies.

## IX

### PERVERSITIES

#### I

Now come,  
And I that moment will forget you.  
Sit here  
And in your eyes I shall not see you.  
Speak, speak  
That I no more may hear your music.  
Into my arms,  
Till I've forgotten I ever met you.

I shall not have you when I hold you  
Body to body,  
Though your firm flesh, though your strong fingers  
Be knit to these.  
On a wild hill I shall be chasing  
The thought of you;  
False will be those true things I told you:  
I shall forget you.

No, do not come.  
Where the wind hunts, there shall I find you.  
In cool gray cloud  
Where the sun slips through I shall see you,  
Or where the trees  
Are silenced, and darken in their branches.  
Your coming would  
Loosen, when my thought still would bind you.

Against my shoulder your warm shoulder  
When last you leaned—  
Think, were you nearer then and dearer,  
Or I more glad?  
O eternal love, your body brings you

No nearer.  
Trust me, be bold, be even a little bolder  
And do not come.

## X

### PERVERSITIES

#### II

Yet when I am alone my eyes say, Come.  
My hands cannot be still.  
In that first moment all my senses ache,  
Cells, that were empty fill,  
The clay walls shake,  
And unimprisoned thought runs where it will.

Runs and is glad and listens and doubts, and glooms  
Because you are not here.  
Then once more rises and is clear again  
As sense is never clear,  
And happy, though in vain  
These eyes wait and these arms to bring you near.

Yet spite of thought my arms and eyes say, Come,  
Pained with such discontent.  
For though thought have you all my senses ache—  
O, it was not meant  
My body should never wake  
But on thought's tranquil bosom rest content.

## XI

### THE VALLEY

Between the beechen hill and the green down  
The valley pastures sink;  
And the green river runs through their warm green  
Northward into the sea.

Dark is the beechen hill these winter days,  
The trees swallow the light  
And make an evening there when morning shines  
And the down heaves to the south.

Only when the sun's low a fire creeps through  
The dark of the beechen hill;  
While the green down, misty from head to foot,  
Grows huge and dim with sleep.

Then in the valley by the yet shining river,  
Under the noisy elms,  
I know how like twin shadows over me  
Rising high, east and west,

Are Love's dark hills, quiet, unchanging, vast,  
Sleeping beneath the stars;  
While I with those stars in my bosom shining  
Move northward to the sea.

## XII

### THE DARK NIGHT OF THE MIND

I could not love if my thought loved not too,  
Nor could my body touch the body of you,  
Unless first in the dark night of the mind  
Love had fulfilled what Love had well designed.

Was it in thought or flesh we walked, when low  
The sun dropped, and the white scar on the hill  
Sank into the dark trees?  
Could we indeed so quietly go  
Body by body into that heavenly glow?

The elms that rose so vast above the mill  
Near leafless were and still;  
But from the branches with such loud unease  
Black flocking starlings mixed their warring cries  
That seemed the greater noise of the creaking mill;  
And every branch and extreme twig was black  
With birds that whistled and heard and whistled back,  
Filling with noise as late with wings the skies.  
Was it their noise we heard,  
Or clamour of other thoughts in our quiet mind that stirred?

Then through the climbing hazel hedge new thinned  
By the early and rapacious wind,  
We saw the silver birches gleam with light  
Of frozen masts in seas all wild and green.  
O, were they truly trees, or some unseen  
Thought taking on an image dark and bright?  
And did those bodies see them, or the mind?  
And did those bodies face once more the hill  
To bathe in night, or on a darker road  
Our spirits unseeing unwearying rise and rise  
Where these feet never trod?

From that familiar outer darkness I  
Would rise to the inner, deeper, darker sky  
And find you in my spirit—or find you not,  
O, never, never, if not in my thought.

---

## THE BODY

When I had dreamed and dreamed what woman's beauty was,  
And how that beauty seen from unseen surely flowed,  
I turned and dreamed again, but sleeping now no more:  
My eyes shut and my mind with inward vision glowed.

"I did not think!" I cried, seeing that wavering shape  
That steadied and then wavered, as a cherry bough in June  
Lifts and falls in the wind—each fruit a fruit of light;  
And then she stood as clear as an unclouded moon.

As clear and still she stood, moonlike remotely near;  
I saw and heard her breathe, I years and years away.  
Her light streamed through the years, I saw her clear and still,  
Shape and spirit together mingling night with day.

Water falling, falling with the curve of time  
Over green-hued rock, then plunging to its pool  
Far, far below, a falling spear of light;  
Water falling golden from the sun but moonlike cool:

Water has the curve of her shoulder and breast,  
Water falls as straight as her body rose,  
Water her brightness has from neck to still feet,  
Water crystal-cold as her cold body flows.

But not water has the colour I saw when I dreamed,  
Nor water such strength has. I joyed to behold  
How the blood lit her body with lamps of fire  
And made the flesh glow that like water gleamed cold.

A flame in her arms and in each finger flame,  
And flame in her bosom, flame above, below,  
The curve of climbing flame in her waist and her thighs;  
From foot to head did flame into red flame flow.

I knew how beauty seen from unseen must rise,  
How the body's joy for more than body's use was made.  
I knew then how the body is the body of the mind,  
And how the mind's own fire beneath the cool skin played.

O shape that once to have seen is to see evermore,  
Falling stream that falls to the deeps of the mind,  
Fire that once lit burns while aught burns in the world,  
Foot to head a flame moving in the spirit's wind!

If these eyes could see what these eyes have not seen—  
The inward vision clear—how should I look for joy,  
Knowing that beauty's self rose visible in the world  
Over age that darkens, and griefs that destroy?

---

## THE TOSSING MOUNTAINS

They were like dreams that in a drowsy hour  
A sad old God had dreamed in loneliness of power.  
They were like dreams that in his drowsy mind  
Rose slowly and then, darkening, made him wise and blind—  
So that he saw no more the level sun,  
Nor the small solid shadow of unclouded noon.  
The dark green heights rose slowly from the green  
Of the dark water till the sky was narrowly seen;  
Only at night the lifting walls were still,  
And stars were bright and calm above each calm dark hill.  
... I could not think but that a God grown old  
Saw in a dream or waking all this round of bold  
And wavelike hills, and knew them but a thought,  
Or but a wave uptost and poised awhile then caught  
Back to the sea with waves a million more  
That rise and pause and break at last upon the shore.  
A God, a God saw first those hills that I  
Saw now immense upholding the starry crowded sky:  
His breath the mist that clung their shoulders round,  
His slow unconscious sigh that easeless floating sound.  
Ere mine his thought failed under each rough height  
And then was brave, seeing the stars climb calm and bright.  
Ere they were named he named them in his mood,  
Like varying children of one giant warring brood—  
Broad-Foot, Cloud-Gatherer, Long-Back, Winter-Head,  
Bravery and Bright-Face and that long Home of the Dead;  
And their still waters glittering in his glance  
Named Buckler, Silver Dish, Two Eyes and Shining Lance,  
Names unrecorded, but the circling wind  
Remembers and repeats them to the listening mind....  
That mind was mine. At Shining Lance I stared  
Between Long-Back and Winter-Head as the new sun bared  
The Lake and heights of shadow and the wan gold  
Deepened and new warmth came into the light's sharp cold.  
And the near trees shivered no more but shook  
Their music over Shining Lance; and the excited brook  
Freshened in the sun's eye and tossed his spray  
High and sparkling, and then sprang dancing, dancing away.  
But Winter-Head and Long-Back, gravely bright,  
Stood firm as if for ever and a day and a night—  
As they were more than a wave before 'tis caught  
Back to the tossing tide, more than a flying thought,  
More than a dream that an old God once dreamed  
When visionary not at all visionary seemed.

---

## THE POND

Gray were the rushes  
Beside the budless bushes,  
Green-patched the pond.  
The lark had left soaring  
Though yet the sun was pouring  
His gold here and beyond.

Bramble-branches held me,  
But had they not compelled me  
Yet had I lingered there  
Hearing the frogs and then  
Watching the water-hen  
That stared back at my stare.

There amid the bushes  
Were blackbird's nests and thrush's,  
Soon to be hidden  
In leaves on green leaves thickening,  
Boughs over long boughs quickening

Swiftly, unforbidden.

The lark had left singing  
But song all round was ringing,  
As though the rushes  
Were sighingly repeating  
And mingling that most sweet thing  
With the sweet note of thrushes.

That sweetness rose all round me,  
But more than sweetness bound me,  
A spirit stirred;  
Shadowy and cold it neared me,  
Then shrank as if it feared me—  
But 'twas I that feared.

---

## TEN O'CLOCK NO MORE [\[A\]](#)

The wind has thrown  
The boldest of trees down.  
Now disgraced it lies,  
Naked in spring beneath the drifting skies,  
Naked and still.

It was the wind  
So furious and blind  
That scourged half England through,  
Ruining the fairest where most fair it grew  
By dell and hill.

And springing here,  
The black clouds dragging near,  
Against this lonely elm  
Thrust all his strength to maim and overwhelm  
In one wild shock.

As in the deep  
Satisfaction of dark sleep  
The tree her dream dreamed on,  
And woke to feel the wind's arms round her thrown  
And her head rock.

And the wind raught  
Her ageing boughs and caught  
Her body fast again.  
Then in one agony of age, grief, pain,  
She fell and died.

Her noble height,  
Branches that loved the light,  
Her music and cool shade,  
Her memories and all of her is dead  
On the hill side.

But the wind stooped.  
With madness tired, and drooped  
In the soft valley and slept.  
While morning strangely round the hush'd tree crept  
And called in vain.

The birds fed where  
The roots uptorn and bare  
Thrust shameful at the sky;  
And pewits round the tree would dip and cry  
With the old pain.

"Ten o'clock's gone!"  
Said sadly every one.  
And mothers looking thought  
Of sons and husbands far away that fought:—  
And looked again.

---

[\[A\]](#) *Ten o'clock* is the name of a tall tree that crowned the eastern Cotswolds.

## FROM WEAR TO THAMES

Is it because Spring now is come  
That my heart leaps in its bed of dust?  
Is it with sorrow or strange pleasure  
To watch the green time's gathering treasure?

Or is there some too sharp distaste  
In all this quivering green and gold?  
Something that makes bare boughs yet barer,  
And the eye's pure delight the rarer?

Not that the new found Spring is sour....  
The blossom swings on the cherry branch,  
From Wear to Thames I have seen this greenness  
Cover the six-months-winter meanness.

And windflowers and yellow gillyflowers  
Pierce the astonished earth with light:  
And most-loved wallflower's bloody petal  
Shakes over that long frosty battle.

But this leaping, sinking heart  
Finds question in grass, bud and blossom—  
Too deeply into the earth is prying,  
Too sharply hears old voices crying.

There is in blossom, bud and grass  
Something that's neither sorrow nor joy,  
Something that sighs like autumn sighing,  
And in each living thing is dying.

It is myself that whispers and stares  
Down from the hill and in the wood,  
And in the untended orchard's shining  
Sees the light through thin leaves declining.

Let me forget what I have been  
What I can never be again.  
Let me forget my winter's meanness  
In this fond, flushing world of greenness.

Let me forget the world that is  
The changing image of my thought,  
Nor see in thicket and hedge and meadow  
Myself, a grave perplexèd shadow;

And O, forget that gloomy shade  
That breathes his cloud 'twixt earth and light ...  
All, all forget but sun and blossom,  
And the bird that bears heaven in his bosom.

---

## TIME FROM HIS GRAVE

When the south-west wind came  
The air grew bright and sweet, as though a flame  
Had cleansed the world of winter. The low sky  
As the wind lifted it rose trembling vast and high,  
And white clouds sallied by  
As children in their pleasure go  
Chasing the sun beneath the orchard's shadow and snow.  
Nothing, nothing was the same!  
Not the dull brick, not the stained London stone,  
Not the delighted trees that lost their moan—  
Their moan that daily vexed me with such pain  
Until I hated to see trees again;  
Nor man nor woman was the same  
Nor could be stones again,  
Such light and colour with the south-west came.  
As I drank all that brightness up I saw  
A dark globe lapt in fold of gloom,  
With all her hosts asleep in that cold tomb,  
Sealed by an iron law.  
And there amid the hills,  
Locked in an icy hollow lay the bones



Of one that ghostly and enormous slept  
Obscure 'neath wrinkled ice and bedded stones.  
But as spring water the old dry channel fills,  
Came the south-west wind filling all the air.  
Then Time rose up, ghostly, enormous, stark,  
With cold gray light in cold gray eyes, and dark  
Dark clouds caught round him, feet to rigid chin.  
The wind ran flushed and glorious in,  
Godlike from hill to frozen hill-top stepp'd,  
And swiftly upon that bony stature swept.  
Then a long breath and then quick breaths I heard,  
In those black caves of stillness music stirred,  
Those icy heights were riven:  
From crown to clearing hollow grass was green;  
And godlike from flushed hill to hill-top leapt  
Time, youthful, quick, serene,  
Dew flashing from his limbs, light from his eyes  
To the sheeny skies.  
A lark's song climbed from earth and dropped from heaven,  
Far off the tide clung to the shore  
Now silent nevermore.  
... Into what vision'd wonder was I swept,  
Upon what unimaginable joyance had I leapt!

---

### WILDER MUSIC

Came the same cuckoo's cry  
All day across the mead.  
Flitted the butterfly  
All day dittering over my head.  
Came a bleak caw-caw  
Between tall broad trees.  
Came shadows, floating, drifting slowly down  
Large leaves from darker trees.

Rose the lark with the rising sun,  
Rose the mist after the lark,  
O wild and sweet the clamour begun  
Round the heels of the limping dark.  
Rose after white cloud white cloud,  
Nodded green cloud to green;  
The stiff and dark earth stirred, breathing aloud,  
And dew shook from the green.

Remained the eyes that stared,  
Ears that ached to hear;  
Remained the nerve of being, bared,  
Stung with delight and fear.  
Beauty flushed, ran and returned,  
Like a music rose and fell;  
Staring and blind and deaf I listened and burned—  
A wilder music fell.

---

### GRASSES

O cover me, long gentle grasses,  
Cover me with your seeding heads,  
Cover me with your shaking limbs,  
Cover me with your light soft hands,  
Cover me as the delicious long wind passes  
Over you and me, green grasses.

'Tis of your blood I would be drinking,  
To your soft shrilling listening now,  
And your thin fingers peering through  
At the deep forests of the sky.  
O satisfy my peevish thought past thinking,  
My sense with your sense linking.

Already are your brown roots creeping  
Around the roots of my mind's mind,  
Into the darkness hidden within  
The rayed dark of unconsciousness;

And your long stems in a bright wind are leaping  
Over me uneasily sleeping.

O cover me, long gentle grasses,  
As one day over a quiet flesh  
You will shake, shake and dance and sing;  
And body too still and spirit astir  
Will hear you in every firm bright wind that passes  
Over you, loved green grasses.

---

## FAIR AND BRIEF

So fair, that all the morning aches  
With such monotony!  
So brief, that sadness breaks  
The brittle spell.

Nothing so fair, nothing so brief:  
The sun leaps up and falls.  
The wind tosses every leaf:  
Every leaf dies.

Blossom, a white cloud in the air,  
Is blown like a cloud away.  
Must all be brief, being fair?  
Nothing remain?

Yes, night and that high regiment  
Of stars that wheel and march,  
Ever their bright lines bent  
To a secret thought;

Moving immutable, bright and grave,  
Fair beyond all things fair;  
Though all else vanish, save  
Imagination's dream.

---

## NIGHTFALL

### I

Eve goes slowly  
Dancing lightly  
Clad with shadow up the hills;  
Birds their singing  
Cease at last, and silence  
Falling like fine rain the valley fills.

Not a bat's cry  
Stirs the stillness  
Perfect as broad water sleeping,  
Not a moth's wings  
Flit in the gathering darkness,  
Not a mouselike moonray ev'n comes creeping.

Then a light shines  
From the casement,  
Wreathed with jasmine boughs and stars,  
Palely golden  
As the late eve's primrose,  
Glimmers through green leafy prison bars.

### II

Only joy now  
Come in silence,  
Come before your look's forgot;  
Come and hearken  
While the lonely shadow  
Broadens on the hill and then is not.

Now the hour is,

Here the place is,  
Here am I who saw thee here.  
Evening darkens  
All is still and marvellous,  
Now the sharp stars in the deep sky peer.

Come and fill me  
As the wind fills  
Leafy wide boughs of a tree;  
Come and windlike  
Cleanse my slumbrous branches,  
Come and moonlike bathe the leaves of me.

### III

Eve has gone and  
Night follows,  
Every bush is now a ghost;  
Every tree looms  
Lofty large and sombre;  
All day's simple friendliness is lost.

See the poplars  
Black in blackness,  
In all their leaves there is no sigh.  
'Neath that darkling  
Cedar who dare wander  
Now, or under the vast oak would lie!...

Till that tingling  
Silence broken  
Every clod renews its breath;  
Birds, leaves, grasses  
Heave as one, then sleep on  
Full of sweeter sleep and unlike death.

### IV

Only joy now  
Come like music  
Falling clear from strings of light;  
Come like shadow  
Drinking up late sunrays,  
Come like moonrays sweeping the round night.

See how night is  
Opening flowerlike:  
Open so thy bosom to me.  
See how earth falls  
Easeful into silence:  
Let my moth-wing'd thought so fall on thee.

While the lamp's beam  
Primrose golden  
Now is like a shifting spear  
Borne in battle,  
Seen awhile then hidden,  
Bold then beaten—now long lost, and here!

---

## THE SLAVES

The tall slaves bow if that capricious King  
But glances as he passes;  
Their dark hoods drawing over abashed faces  
They bow humbly, unappealingly.  
The dark robes round their shuddering bodies cling,  
They bow and but whisper as he passes.

They have not learned to look into his eyes,  
If he insults to answer,  
To stand with head erect and angry arching bosom:  
They bow humbly, unappealingly,  
As though he mastered earth and the violet inky skies,

And whisper piteously for only answer.

So they stand, tall slaves, ashamed of their great height,  
And if he comes raving,  
Shouting from the west, furious and moody,  
They bow more humbly, unappealingly,  
Ashamed to remember how they lived in that calm light;  
They droop until he passes, tired of raving.

Only when he's gone they lift their darkened brows,  
Light comes back to their eyes,  
Their leaves caress the light, the light laves their branches,  
They move loverlike, appealingly;  
Slaves now no more the poplars lift and shake their boughs,  
And there's a heaven of evening in their eyes.

---

### THE FUGITIVE

In the hush of early even  
The clouds came flocking over,  
Till the last wind fell from heaven  
And no bird cried.

Darkly the clouds were flocking,  
Shadows moved and deepened,  
Then paused; the poplar's rocking  
Ceased; the light hung still

Like a painted thing, and deadly.  
Then from the cloud's side flickered  
Sharp lightning, thrusting madly  
At the cowering fields.

Thrice the fierce cloud lighten'd,  
Down the hill slow thunder trembled;  
Day in her cave grew frightened,  
Crept away, and died.

---

### THE UNTHRIFT

Here in the shade of the tree  
The hours go by  
Silent and swift,  
Lightly as birds fly.  
Then the deep clouds broaden and drift,  
Or the cloudless darkness and the worn moon.  
Waking, the dreamer knows he is old,  
And the day that he dreamed was gone  
Is gone.

---

### THE WREN

Within the greenhouse dim and damp  
The heat floats like a cloud.  
Pale rose-leaves droop from the rust roof  
With rust-edged roses bowed.  
As I go in  
Out flies the startled wren.

By the tall dark fir tree he sings  
Morn after morn still,  
Shy and bold he flits and sings  
Tinily sweet and shrill.  
As I go out  
His song follows me about ...

About the orchard under trees  
Beaded with cherries bright,  
Past the rat-haunted Honeybourne  
And up those hills of light:  
As up I go  
His notes more sweetly flow.

Or down those dark hills when night's there  
Full of dark thoughts and deep,  
A thin clear soundless music comes  
Like stars in broken sleep.  
When I come down  
All those dark thoughts are flown.

And now that sweetness is more sweet,  
Here where the aeroplanes  
Labouring and groaning in the height  
Lift their lifeless vans:—  
Sweet, sweet to hear  
The far off wren singing clear.

---

## THE WINDS

In these green fields, in this green spring,  
In this green world of burning sweet  
That drives its sour from everything  
And burns the Arctic with new heat,  
That seems so slow and flies so fleet  
On half-seen wing;

In this green world the birds are all  
With motion mad, are wild with song;  
The grass leaps like a sudden wall  
Flung up against a foe that long  
Strode round and wrought his frosty wrong.  
The bright winds call,

The bright winds answer; the clouds rise  
White from the grave, shaking their head,  
Strewing the grave-clothes through the skies,  
In languid drifting shadow shed  
Upon the fields where, slowly spread,  
Each shadow dies.

In every wood is green and gold,  
The unbridged river runs all green  
With queenly swan-clouds floating bold  
Down to the mill's swift guillotine.  
Beyond the mill each murdered queen  
Floats white and cold.

—If I could rise up in a cloud  
And look down on the new earth in flight,  
Shadow-like cast my thought's thin shroud  
Back upon these fields of light;  
And hear the winds of day and night  
Meet, singing loud!

---

## THE WANDERER

Over the pool of sleep  
The night mists creep,  
Then faint thin light and then clear day,  
Noontide, and lingering afternoon;  
Then that Wanderer, the Moon  
Wandering her old wild way.

How many spirits follow  
Her in that dark hollow!  
Like a lost lamb she roams on high  
Through the cold and soundless sky,  
And stares down into her deep  
Reflection in the pool of sleep.

How many follow  
Her in that lone hollow!  
She sees them not nor would she hear  
Though both shape and sound were clear,  
But stares, stares into the pool  
Of her fear and beauty full.

Far in strange gay skies  
She pales and dies,  
Forgetting that bright transitory  
Reflection of astonished glory,  
Nor heeds the spirits that follow  
Her into day's bright hollow.

---

## MERRILL'S GARDEN

There is a garden where the seeded stems of thin long grass are bowed  
Beneath July's slow rains and heat and tired children's trailing feet;  
And the trees' neglected branches droop and make a cloud beneath the cloud,  
And in that dark the crimson dew of raspberries shines more sweet than  
sweet.

The flower of the tall acacia's gone, the acacia's flower is white no more,  
The aspen lifts his pithless arms, the aspen leaves are close and still;  
The wind that tossed the clouds along, gray clouds and white like feathers  
bore,  
Lets even a feather faintly fall and smoke spread hugely where it will.

But though the acacia's flower is gone and raspberries bear bright fruit  
untasted,  
Beauty lives there, oh rich and rare, past the sum of eager June.  
The lime tree's pyramid of flower and leaf and yellow flower unwasted  
Rises at eve and bars the breast wild-heaving of the timid moon.

Now the tall pear-trees unrebuked lift their green fingers to the sky;  
Their lower boughs are crossed like arms of templars in long stony sleep.  
Their arms are crossed as though the wind, returning from wild war on high,  
Had touched them with an angry breath, or whispered from his cavern deep.

A foxglove lifts her bells and bells silent above the singing grass,  
Still the old marigold her light sprinkles like riches to the poor.  
Snapdragon still his changeling blossom shakes with the burden of the bees,  
And the strong bindweed creeps and winds and springs on high a conqueror.

---

Would now her eyes grieve to behold snapdragon, foxglove, marigold  
Daily diminish in their sweet and bindweed wreathing over all—  
Weed and grass and weed and grass, friendless, melancholy, cold,  
Wreathing the earth like wreathing snow from bare wall to low greening wall?

Old were her eyes that lingered on old trees and grass and flowers trim.  
She smelt the ripe pears when they drooped and fell and broke upon the path.  
Old were her thoughts of things of old; her present thoughts were few and  
dim;  
Her eyes saw not the things she saw; she listened, to no living breath.

Her youth and prime and autumn time bloomed in her thought all light and  
sweet:  
No wallflower more of sweet could hold, of sunny light no marigold.  
Fruit on her mind's boughs ripened full, in summer's and calm autumn's heat:  
Then fell, for there came none to pick; but winter came, and she was old.

Now if her sons come they will find—not her: her empty garden only,  
The wallflower done and snapdragon still swinging with the greedy bees,  
Marigold glittering in the grass, scant foxglove ringing faintly, lonely,  
Close red fruit beading the long boughs and bindweed wreathing where it  
please.

A tawny lean cat *Marmalade* slinks like a panther through the tall  
Thin bending grass and watches long a scholar thrush rehearsing song;  
Or children running in the sun hunt and hunt a well lost ball;  
But most the garden sleeps away the day, but still, when eves are long,

When eves are long and no moon rises, and nervous, still, is all the air,  
That small stiff figure moves again, silent amid the hushing grass;  
In the firm-carven lime tree's shade she moves, and meets her old thoughts  
there,  
Then in the deepening dark is lost, or her light steps unnoted pass.

Only that careless garden keeps secure her memory though it sleeps,  
And the bright flowers and tyrant weed and tall grass shaking its loud seed  
Less lovely were if wanting her who like a living thought still creeps

And sees what once she saw and music hears of her living sons and dead.

---

### THE LIME TREE

That lime tree on the distant rising ground  
(If it was a lime tree) showed her yellow leaves  
Above the renewed green of wet August grass—  
First Autumn yellow that on first Autumn eves  
    Too soon was found.

Comfortless lime tree! Scarce an aspen leaf  
Like a green butterfly flitted to the ground;  
There was no sign of Autumn in the grass.  
Even the long garden beds their beauty brief—  
    Their mignonette,

Nasturtium and sweet-william and red stocks,  
And clover crouching in the border grass,  
And blood-like fuschia, eve's primrose and white phlox  
And honeysuckle—waved all their smell and hue  
    Morn and eve anew.

But that far lime tree yellowing by the oak,  
Warning oak, elm and poplar and each fresh tree  
Shaking in the south wind delightedly,  
And clover in the closeness of the grass,  
    Warns also me.

And now when all the trees are standing still  
Beneath the purple and white of the west sky,  
And time is standing still—as stand it will—  
That early yellowing lime with palsied fingers  
    Cannot be still.

---

### DARK CHESTNUT

Thou shaking thy dark shadows down,  
Like leaves before the first leaves fall,  
Pourest upon the head of night  
Her loveliest loveliness of all—  
    Dark leaves that tremble  
When soft airs unto softer call.

O, darker, softer fall her thoughts  
Upon the cold fields of my mind,  
Weaving a quiet music there  
Like leaf-shapes trembling in least wind:  
    Dark thoughts that linger  
When the light's gone and the night's blind.

I see her there beneath your boughs.  
Dark chestnut, though you see her not;  
Her white face and white hands are clear  
As the moon in your stretched arms caught;  
    But stranger, clearer,  
The living shadows of her thought.

---

### LONELY AIRS

Ah, bird singing late in the gloam  
While the evening shadow thickens,  
And the dizzy bat-wings roam,  
And the faint starlight quickens;

    And her bud eve's primrose bares  
Before night's cold fingers come:  
Thine are such lonely airs,  
Bird singing late in the gloam!

---

### THE CREEPER

It covered all  
The cold east wall,  
Its green, thin gold, purple, brown,  
And flame running up and down;  
Lifting its quiet bosom to every wind that crept  
Up the high wall and in its darkness slept.  
Then when the wind slept all the creeper turned  
To undiminishing fire that burned and burned and burned.

But one black night  
(For not in the light  
May such treacheries be done)  
Came with dishonoured weapon one  
And cut the stem just where the branches thin  
Their million-leaf'd wild wandering begin:  
Cut the firm stem quite through, and so it bled,  
And all the million leaves shivered and hung there dead.

The wall how cold,  
The house how old  
Became when that warm bright fire died,  
And the fond wind could no more hide.  
And it was strange that so much death could be  
From one dark night-hour's darker felony;  
And how the leaves being dead could not cast down  
Their colours in bright pools of red and gold and brown.

—It did not die,  
But flamed on high  
Morn after morn, even when white snow  
Covered all brightness, high and low;  
And in the night when the snow glimmered wan  
Still beautiful as a fire its brightness shone:  
Its million quiet leaves quivering in my mind,  
When from no earthly meadows crept the remembered wind.

---

## SMOKE

They stood like men that hear immortal speech  
Moving among their branches, and like trees  
We stood and watched them, and in our still branches  
Echoes of that immortal music stirred.  
October days had touched their breasts with light,  
With yellow light and red light and wan green;  
And the gray cloud that grew from low to high  
Made the warm light more warm, the green more wan.  
We stood and watched them and in our still branches  
We felt the warm light glow, though now the rain  
Was loud upon the leaves.

And standing there  
You cried, "O, that sweet smell, where is the fire?  
Where is the fire?" For sharp upon the rain  
The smell came of a wood fire and clung round  
Hanging upon our branches, till we saw  
No more those lighted trees nor heard the rain—  
Knew only the deep echoes and the smell  
Of a wood fire that breathed its smoke across  
From some near hearth, or undiscovered world.

---

## QUEENS

The red sun stared unwinking at the East  
Then slept under a cloak of hodden gray;  
The rimy fields held the last light of day,  
A little tender yet. And I remember  
How black against the pale and wintry west  
Stood the confused great army of old trees,  
Topping that lean, enormous-shouldered hill  
With crossing lances shivering and then still.

I looked as one that sees  
Queens passing by and lovelier than he dreamed,  
With fringe of silver light following their feet,  
And all those lances vail'd, and solemn Knights



Watching their Queens as with eyes grave and sweet  
They left for the gray fields those airy heights.  
Nothing had lovelier seemed—  
Not April's noise nor the early dew of June,  
Nor the calm languid cow-eyed Autumn Moon,  
Nor ruffling woods the greenest I remember—  
Than this pale light and dark of cold December.

---

### THE RED HOUSE

On the wide fields the water gleams like snow,  
And snow like water pale beneath pale sky,  
When old and burdened the white clouds are stooped low.  
Sudden as thought, or startled near bird's cry,  
The whiteness of first light on hills of snow  
New dropped from skiey hills of tumbling white  
Streams from the ridge to where the long woods lie;  
And tall ridge-trees lift their soft crowns of white  
Above slim bodies all black or flecked with snow.  
By the tossed foam of the not yet frozen brook  
Black pigs go straggling over fields of snow;  
The air is full of snow, and starling and rook  
Are blacker amid the myriad streams of light.  
Warm as old fire the Red House burns yet bright  
Beneath the unmelting snows of pine and larch,  
While February moves as slow, as slow  
As Spring might never come, never come March.

Amid such snows, by generations haunted,  
By echoes, memories and dreams enchanted,  
Firm when dark winds through the night stamp and shout,  
Brightest when time silvers the world all about,  
That old house called *The Heart* burns, burns, and still  
Outbraves the mortal threat of the hanging hill.

---

### THE BEAM

The dead white on the fields' dead white  
Turned the peace to misery.  
Tall bony trees their wild arms thrust  
Into the cold breast of the night.  
Brightly the stars shone in their dust.  
The hard wind's gust  
Scratched like a bird the frozen snow.

Against the dead light grew the gold,  
Lifting its beam to that high dust;  
The lamp within the hut's small pane  
Called the world to life again.  
Arms of the trees atremble thrust  
Defiance at the cold  
Night of narrow shrouding snow.

A human beam, small spear of light,  
Lifting its beauty to that high  
Indifference of starry dust.  
The aching trees were comforted,  
And their brave arms more deeply thrust  
Into the sky.  
Earth's warm light fingered the dead snow.

---

### LAST HOURS

A gray day and quiet,  
With slow clouds of gray,  
And in dull air a cloud that falls, falls  
All day.

The naked and stiff branches  
Of oak, elm, thorn,  
In the cold light are like men aged and  
Forlorn.

Only a gray sky,  
Grass, trees, grass again,  
And all the air a cloud that drips, drips,  
All day.

Lovely the lonely  
Bare trees and green grass—  
Lovelier now the last hours of slow winter  
Slowly pass.

---

### THE WISH

That you might happier be than all the rest,  
Than I who have been happy loving you,  
Of all the innocent even the happiest—  
This I beseeched for you.

Until I thought of those unending skies—  
Of stagnant cloud, or fleckless dull blue air,  
Of days and nights delightless, no surprise,  
No threat, no sting, no fear;

And of the stirless waters of the mind,  
Waveless, unfurrowed, of no living hue,  
With dead eaves dropping slowly in no wind,  
And nothing flowering new.

And then no more I wished you happiness,  
But that whatever fell of joy or woe  
I would not dare, O Sweet, to wish it less,  
Or wish you less than you.

---

### NOWHERE, EVERYWHERE

Flesh and blood, bone and skin,  
Are the house that beauty lives in.  
Formed in darkness, grown in light  
Are they the substance of delight.  
Who could have dreamed the things he sees  
In these strong lovely presences—  
In cheeks of children, thews of men,  
Women's bodies beloved of men?  
Who could have dreamed a thing so wise  
As that clear look of the child's eyes?  
Who the thin texture of her hand  
But with a hand's touch understand?  
Shaped in eternity were these  
Body's miracles, where the seas  
Their continuous rhythm learned,  
And the stars in their bright order burned.  
From stars and seas was motion caught  
When flesh, blood, bone and skin were wrought  
Into swift lovely liveliness.

Oh, but beauty less and less  
Than beauty grows. The cheeks fall in,  
Colour dies from the smooth skin,  
And muscles slack and bones are brittle;  
Veins and arteries little by little  
Delay the tides of the blood:  
That is a ditch that was a flood.  
Then all but dry bones disappears,  
White bones that lie a hundred years  
Cheated of resurrection....  
Where is that beauty gone?  
Escaped even while we watched it so,  
And none guessed the way it would go?  
Only it's fled, and here alone  
Lie blood and skin and flesh and bone.  
Where is the beauty that was here?  
—Nowhere, everywhere.

---

### TAKE CARE, TAKE CARE

Bind up, bind up your dark bright hair  
And hide the smouldering sunken fire.  
Let it be held no more than fair,  
Nor yourself guess how rare, how rare  
Its movement, colour and deep fire.

Your eyes they have their consciousness,  
Your lips their grave reflective smile,  
Your hands their cunning for distress:  
Your hair has only beauteousness  
And hid flame for its only guile.

That glowing hair on shoulders white  
Is pride past sum: take care, take care!  
Even to dream of wish'd delight  
Too much perturbs the ebb of night—  
Bind up, bind up your burning hair!

---

## NEARNESS

Thy hand my hand,  
Thine eyes my eyes,  
All of thee  
Caught and confused with me:  
My hand thy hand  
My eyes thine eyes,  
All of me  
Sunken and discovered anew in thee....

No: still  
A foreign mind,  
A thought  
By other yet uncaught;  
A secret will  
Strange as the wind:  
The heart of thee  
Bewildering with strange fire the heart in me.

Hand touches hand,  
Eye to eye beckons,  
But who shall guess  
Another's loneliness?  
Though hand grasp hand  
Though the eye quickens,  
Still lone as night  
Remain thy spirit and mine, past touch and sight.

---

## THE SECOND FLOOD

How could I know, how could I guess  
That here was your great happiness—  
In mine? And how could I know  
Your love infinite must grow?

Suddenly at dawn I wake  
To see the cruse of colour break  
Over the East, and then the gray  
Creep up with light of common day ...  
No, no, no! again that bright  
Flashing, flushing, flooding light  
Leading on day, until I ache  
With love to see the dark world wake.

O, with such second flood your love  
Painted my earth and heaven above,  
With such wild magnificence  
As bruised my heart in every sense,  
In every nerve. Was ever man  
Fit this renewed love to sustain?

Now in these days when Autumn's leaf  
Is red and gold, and for a brief  
Day the earth flowers ere it dies,

What if Spring came with new surprise,  
Came ere the aspen shivered bare  
Or the beech coins glittered in cold air,  
Before the rough wind the maple stripped  
And this bare moon on bare boughs stepped!  
Vain thought—O, yet not wholly vain:  
Even to me Love has come again,  
Moving from your quick breast where he  
Fluttered in his wondering infancy.

---

### THE GLASS

Your face has lost  
The clearness it once wore,  
And your brow smooth and white  
Its look of light;  
Your eyes that were  
So careless, are how deep with care!

O, what has done  
This cruelty to you?  
Is it only Time makes strange  
Your look with change,  
Or something more  
Than the worst pang Time ever bore?—

Regret, regret!  
So bitter that it changes  
Bright youth to madness,  
Poisoning mere sadness ...  
O, vain glass that shows  
Less than the bitterness the heart knows.

---

### BUT MOST THY LIGHT

I know how fire burns,  
How from the wrangling fumes  
Rose and amber blooms,  
And slowly dies.

Nothing's so swift as fire,  
There's nothing alive so fierce.  
The lifted lances pierce,  
Sink, and upspring.

Like an Indian sword it leaps  
Out of the smoking sheath.  
Even the winged feet of death  
Learn speed from fire;

And pain its cunning learns;  
Languor its sweet  
From the decaying heat  
That never dies.

I know how fire burns  
Ungessed, save for tears,  
When the thousand-fanged flame spears  
The body's guard;

Or when the mind, the mind  
Is ever-glowing wood,  
And fire runs in the blood  
Lunatic, blind;

When remorse burns and burns  
And burns always, always—  
The fire that surest slays  
Or surest numbs.

I know how fire burns  
But how I cannot tell.  
And Heaven burns like Hell  
Yet the Heart endures.

'Tis the immortal Flame  
In mortal life that's bitter,  
Or than all sweet sweeter  
    Though life burns down.

Teach me, fire, but this,  
Nor alone destroying burn:—  
Of thy warmth let me learn,  
    But most thy light.

---

### IN THAT DARK SILENT HOUR

In that dark silent hour  
When the wind wants power,  
And in the black height  
The sky wants light,  
Stirless and black  
In utter lack,  
And not a sound  
Escapes from that untroubled round:—

To wake then  
In the dark, and ache then  
Until the dark is gone—  
Lonely, yet not alone;  
Hearing another's breath  
All the quiet beneath,  
Knowing one sleeps near  
That day held dear

And dreams held dear; but now  
In this sharp moment—how  
Share the moment's sweetness,  
Forgo its completeness,  
Nor be alone  
Now the dark is grown  
Spiritual and deep  
More than in dreams and sleep?

O, it is pain, 'tis need  
That so will plead  
For a little loneliness.  
If it be pain to miss  
Loved touch, look and lip,  
Companionship  
Yet is verier pain  
Then, then

In that dark silent hour  
When the wind wants power,  
And you, near or far, sleep,  
And your released thoughts toward me creep  
While I, imprisoned, awake,  
Ache—ache  
To be for one  
Long, little moment with myself alone.

---

### ONCE THERE WAS TIME

Let no tears fall  
    If then they fell not.  
If eyes told nothing,  
    Now let them tell not.  
Once there was time  
    For words, looks and tears:  
That time is past, is past—  
    Heart, thou shalt tell not!

Beyond any speech  
    Is silence bitter,  
As between love and love  
    Nothing is sweeter.  
Once there was time, time yet

For words, looks and tears ...  
Past, past, past, past—  
Nothing so bitter!

Now if tears come  
That then fell never;  
If eyes such sad, sad things  
Look now for ever;  
If words, looks or tears  
Tremble with telling,  
Oh, what returning voice is it whispers  
*Never, never, never!*

---

## SCATTER THE SILVER ASH LIKE SNOW

O, what insect is it  
That burrows in the heart and frets  
The heart's near nerves,  
Leaving its unclean  
Stigmata in the mind serene,  
Making the proud how mean?

It is not common hate,  
Anger has not such deadly cunning  
To annul, to chill.  
Wild anger is not  
So cunning even while so hot;  
Hate is too soon forgot.

There is no sword so sharp  
With lightnings as the wanton tongue;  
Nothing that burns like words—  
Bubbling flames that spread  
In the now unspiritual head,  
By sleepless fevers fed.

O evil words that are  
The knives of desolating thought!  
And though words be still  
The hot eyes yet dart  
Burning deaths from this mad heart  
Into that torn heart.

O Love, forget, forget,  
Put by that glittering edge, put by;  
Slay the insect with light;  
Smother that smoky glow,  
Scatter the silver ash like snow  
When thy spring airs blow!

---

## JUSTIFICATION

From far-off it came near  
Deep-charactered and clear,  
Until I saw the features close to mine  
And the eyes unhappy shine.

It was Sorrow's face,  
Wanting kindness and grace,  
And wanting strength of silence, and the power  
To abide a luckier hour.

The first fear turned to hating  
As I saw him dumbly waiting,  
For it was my true likeness that he wore  
And would wear evermore:—

My face that was to be  
When his years' misery  
With here a little and there a little had made  
My strong spirit afraid.

I saw his face and hated,  
Seeing mine so sad-fated.

And then I struck and killed him, knowing that he  
Had else slain me.

---

## I HAVE NEVER LOVED YOU YET

I have never loved you yet, if now I love.

If Love was born in that bright April sky  
And ran unheeding when the sun was high,  
And slept as the moon sleeps through Autumn nights  
While those dear steady stars burn in their heights:

If Love so lived and ran and slept and woke  
And ran in beauty when each morning broke,  
Love yet was boylike, fervid and unstable,  
Teased with romance, not knowing truth from fable.

But Winter after Autumn comes and stills  
The petulant waters and the wild mind fills  
With silence; and the dark and cold are bitter,  
O, bitter to remember past days sweeter.

Then Spring with one warm cloudy finger breaks  
The frost and the heart's airless black soil shakes;  
Love grown a man uprises, serious, bright  
With mind remembering now things dark and light.

O, if young Love was beautiful, Love grown old  
Experienced and grave is not grown cold.  
Life's faithful fire in Love's heart burns the clearer  
With all that was, is and draws darkling nearer.

I have never loved you yet, if now I love.

---

## THE PIGEONS

The pigeons, following the faint warm light,  
Stayed at last on the roof till warmth was gone,  
Then in the mist that's hastier than night  
Disappeared all behind the carved dark stone,  
Huddling from the black cruelty of the frost.  
With the new sparkling sun they swooped and came  
Like a cloud between the sun and street, and then  
Like a cloud blown from the blue north were lost,  
Vanishing and returning ever again,  
Small cloud following cloud across the flame  
That clear and meagre burned and burned away  
And left the ice unmelting day by day.

... Nor could the sun through the roof's purple slate  
(Though his gold magic played with shadow there  
And drew the pigeons from the streaming air)  
With any fiery magic penetrate.  
Under the roof the air and water froze,  
And no smoke from the gaping chimney rose.  
The silver frost upon the window-pane  
Flowered and branched each starving night anew,  
And stranger, lovelier and crueller grew;  
Pouring her silver that cold silver through,  
The moon made all the dim flower bright again.

... Pouring her silver through that barren flower  
Of silver frost, until it filled and whitened  
A room where two small children waited, frightened  
At the pale ghost of light that hour by hour  
Stared at them till though fear slept not they slept.  
And when that white ghost from the window crept,  
And day came and they woke and saw all plain,  
Though still the frost-flower blinded the window-pane,  
And touched their mother and touched her hand in vain,  
And wondered why she woke not when they woke;  
And wondered what it was their sleep that broke  
When hand in hand they stared and stared, so frightened;  
They feared and waited, and waited all day long

While all the shadows went and the day brightened,  
All the ill shadows but one shadow strong.

Outside were busy feet and human speech  
And daily cries and horns. Maybe they heard,  
Painfully wondering still, and each to each  
Leaning, and listening if their mother stirred—  
Cold, cold,  
Hungering as the long slow hours grew old,  
Though food within the cupboard idle lay  
Beyond their thought, or but beyond their reach.  
The soft blue pigeons all the afternoon  
Sunned themselves on the roof or rose at play,  
Then with the shrinking light fluttered away;  
And once more came the icy hearted moon,  
Staring down at the frightened children there  
That could but shiver and stare.

... How many hours, how many days, who knows?  
Neighbours there were who thought they had gone away  
To return some luckier or luckless day.  
No sound came from the room: the cold air froze  
The very echo of the children's sighs.  
And what they saw within each other's eyes,  
Or heard each other's heart say as they peered  
At the dead mother lying there, and feared  
That she might wake, and then might never wake,  
Who knows, who knows?  
None heard a living sound their silence break.

In those cold days and nights how many birds  
Flittering above the fields and streams all frozen  
Watched hungrily the tended flocks and herds—  
Earth's chosen nourished by earth's wise self-chosen!  
How many birds suddenly stiffened and died  
With no plaint cried,  
The starved heart ceasing when the pale sun ceased!  
And when the new day stepped from the same cold East  
The dead birds lay in the light on the snow-flecked field,  
Their song and beautiful free winging stilled.

I walked under snow-sprinkled hills at night,  
And starry sprinkled, skies deep blue and bright.  
The keen wind thrust with his knife against the thin  
Breast of the wood as I went tingling by  
And heard a weak cheep-cheep—no more—the cry  
Of a bird that crouched the smitten wood within....  
But no one heeded that sharp spiritual cry  
Of the two children in their misery,  
When in the cold and famished night death's shade  
More terrible the moon's cold shadows made.  
How was it none could hear  
That bodiless crying, birdlike, sharp and clear?

I cannot think what they, unanswered, thought  
When the night came again and shadows moved  
As the moon through the ice-flower stared and roved,  
And that unyielding Shadow came again.  
That Shadow came again unseen and caught  
The children as they sat listening in vain,  
Their starved hearts failing ere the Shadow removed.  
And when the new morn stepped from the same cold East  
They lay unawakening in the barren light,  
Their song and their imaginations bright,  
Their pains and fears and all bewilderment ceased....  
While the brief sun gave  
New beauty to the death-flower of the frost,  
And pigeons in the frore air swooped and tossed,  
And glad eyes were more glad and grave less grave.

There is not pity enough in heaven or earth,  
There is not love enough, if children die  
Like famished birds—oh, less mercifully.  
A great wrong's done when such as these go forth  
Into the starless dark, broken and bruised,  
With mind and sweet affection all confused,



And horror closing round them as they go.  
There is not pity enough!

And I have made, children, these verses for you,  
Lasting a little longer than your breath,  
Because I have been haunted with your death;  
So men are driven to things they hate to do.  
Jesus, forgive us all our happiness,  
As Thou dost blot out all our miseries.

---

## AND THESE FOR YOU

### I

#### NOT WITH THESE EYES

Let me not see your grief!  
O, let not any see  
That grief,  
Nor how your heart still rocks  
Like a temple with long earthquake shocks.  
Let me not see  
Your grief.

These eyes have seen such wrong,  
Yet remained cold:  
Ills grown strong,  
Corruption's many-headed worm  
Destroying feet that moved so firm—  
Shall these eyes see  
Your grief?

And that black worm has crawled  
Into the brain  
Where thought had walked  
Nobly, and love and honour moved as one,  
And brave things bravely were begun....  
Now, can thought see  
Unabashed your grief?

Into that brain your grief  
Has run like cleansing fire:  
Your grief  
Through these unfaithful eyes has leapt  
And touched honour where it lightly slept.  
Now when I see  
In memory your grief

There is no thought that's not  
Yours, yours,  
No love that sleeps,  
No spiritual door that opens not  
In the green quiet village of thought  
Shining with light,  
And silent to your silence.

### II

#### ASKING FORGIVENESS

I did not say, "Yes, we had better part  
Since love is over or must be suppressed."  
I did not say, "I'll hold you in my heart  
Saint-like, and in the thought of your thought rest,  
And pray for you and wish you happiness  
In a better love than mine."

I was another man to another woman,  
Tears falling or burnt dry were nothing then.  
I struck your heart, I struck your mind; inhuman,  
Future and past I stabbed and stabbed again,  
Cursing the very thought of your happiness  
In another love than mine:

—Then left you sick to death, and I like death.  
It was a broken body bore me away—  
A broken mind—poisoned by my own breath,  
And love self-poisoned.... Was it but yesterday?  
—Forgive, forgive, forgive, forgive, forgive,  
    Forgive!

---

## JUDGMENT DAY

When through our bodies our two spirits burn  
Escaping, and no more our true eyes turn  
Outwards, and no more hands to fond hands yearn;

Then over those poor grassy heaps we'll meet  
One morning, tasting still the morning's sweet,  
Sensible still of light, dark, rain, cold, heat;

And see 'neath the green dust that dust of gray  
Which was our useless bodies laid away,  
Mocked still with menace of a Judgment Day.

We then that waiting dust at last will call,  
Each to the other's,—"Rise up at last, O small  
Ashes that first-love held loveliest of all!

"'Tis Judgment Day, arise!" And they will arise,  
The dust will lift, and spine, ribs, neck, head, knees  
At the sound remember their old unities,

And stand there, yours with mine, as once they stood  
Beloved, obeyed, despised, with that swift blood,  
Those looks and trembling lips, heart's pause and thud.

---

"And was it these that love-galled thought pursued  
And with his immortality indued,  
Nor was by their mortality quite subdued?

"This was the bony hand that held my hand,  
The shoulders whereon all my world might stand:  
They fell, but in their fall was I unmanned?

"This was the breast my eyes delighted in,  
The ribs were faint as now under the skin:  
They mouldered, but not my love mouldered within.

"Away, away! This was not truly thee—  
A mortal bravery, Time's delinquency,  
A dream that held me from thee, thee from me.

"It was not in these bodies that we drew  
Near, nearer: never, never by these we knew  
Transfusion past all sense of 'I' and 'You.'

"It was youth's blindness held the body so dear:  
Slowly, slowly, year after bewildered year,  
The dark thinned and the eyes of love grew clear,

"And thought following thought, enlinking each,  
Ran where the delighting body could not reach,  
And had speech when there was no voice for speech;

"So that we scarce grieved when those bodies died,  
And our eyes more than our true spirits cried;  
But as when trees fall, the free wind that sighed

"Awhile in their fond branches ceases not,  
But sings a moment over the cumbered spot,  
Then flies away:—our unentangled thought,

"Our vivid spirits of love, unbroken moved  
And lifted no more sense-confined, and roved  
And knew till then we had not utterly loved ...

"Leave now this dust!"

And then the dust will sink,  
The upheaved mound to its old shape will shrink,  
And we shall turn again from Time's dusk brink.

---

Will it be thus? It will be thus. Even now,  
Though body to body submissively still bow,  
'Tis not on body's blood that our loves grow.

Though I am old and you are old, though nerves  
Slacken, and beauty slowly lose its curves,  
And greedy Time the bone and sinew starves,

Like some lean Captain gloating over a town  
That has not fallen, but will fall, every stone  
O'erthrust and every bravery overthrown;

Who entering the defeated walls at last  
Finds emptiness, and hears an escaping blast,  
Triumphant from the shining east hills cast,

And knows defeat in victory.... O that rare  
Music is ours, is ours—prelusive air  
Caught from the Judgment music high and severe.

Will it indeed be thus? Yes, thus! The body burns,  
Not with desire, and into pale smoke turns,  
And there is only flame towards flame that yearns.

While that ill lecherous Time among the stones  
Sits musing and rocking his old brittle bones,  
Irked by long shadows, mocked by those bright far tones.

---

### **LIGHTING THE FIRE**

You were a gipsy as you bent  
Your dark hair over the black grate.  
Hardly the west light above the hill  
Showed your shadow, crooked and still.  
The bellows hissed, and one bright spark  
Deepened the hasty dark.

The bellows hissed, and the old smell  
Crept on the air of smoking peat,  
And round the spark a bubbling flame  
Grew bright and loud. Sweeping the gloom  
Lunatic shadows fled and came  
Whirling about the room.

Then as you raised your head I saw  
In the clear light of the bubbling fire  
Your dark hair all lined with the gray  
Sprinkled by years and sorrow and pain ...  
Till as the bellows idle lay  
Shadow swept back again.

---

### **RECOVERY**

Where are you going with eyes so dull,  
You whose eyes were beautiful,  
You whose hair with the light was gay,  
And now is thin and harsh and gray?  
Is it age alone or age and tears  
That has slowly rubbed your beauty away?

Where were you going when your swift eyes  
Were like merry birds under May skies?—  
In your cheeks the colours fluttering brave  
As you danced with the wind and ran with the wave.  
From what bright star was your brightness caught?  
What to your music the music gave?

Now is your beauty a thing of old,  
The fire is sunken, the ashes cold.

But if sweet singing on your ear stray,  
Or the praise is uttered of yesterday,  
Or of courage and nobleness one word said—  
Like a cloud Time's ravage is brushed away.

---

## EYES

A winter sky of pale blue and pale gold,  
Bare trees, a wind that made the wood-path cold,  
And one slow-moving figure, gray and old.

We met where the soft path falls from the wood  
Down to the village. As I came near she stood  
And answered when I spoke, drawing the hood

Back from her face. I saw only her eyes,  
Large and sad. I could not bear those eyes.  
They were like new graves. I could not bear her eyes.

But what we said as each passed on is gone.  
We looked and spoke and passed like strangers on,  
I to the high wood, she towards the paling sun.

And there, where the clear-heavened small pool lies,  
And the tallest beeches brush the bending skies,  
In pool and tree I saw again her eyes.

---

## FULFILMENT

Happy are they whom men and women love,  
And you were happy as a river that flows  
Down between lonely hills, and knows  
The pang and virtue of that loneliness,  
And moves unresting on until it move  
Under the trees that stoop at the low brink  
And deepen their cool shade, and drink  
And sing and hush and sing again,  
Breathing their music's many-toned caress;  
While the river with his high clear music speaks  
Sometimes of loneliness, of hills obscure,  
Sometimes of sunlight dancing on the plain,  
Or of the night of stars unbarred and deep  
Multiplied in his depths unbarred and pure;  
Sometimes of winds that from the unknown sea creep,  
Sometimes of morning when most clear it breaks  
Spilling its brightness on his breast like rain:—  
And then flows on in loneliness again  
Towards the unknown near sea.

Was it in mere happiness or pain?  
There were things said that spoke of naked pain,  
With nothing between the wound and the sharp-edged world;  
Things seen that told of such perplexity  
As darkened night with night: but was that pain?  
And there were things created all delight,  
Making delight fruitful a hundred fold:  
Sweetness of earth, energy of sun and rain,  
Colour and shape, flowers and grasses bright,  
And the clear firm body of a bare lovely hill,  
And woods around its feet fast caught and curled,  
And the cold sweets of lonely travelled night....  
And was that happiness?—or something more,  
That gathered happiness and pain like flowers  
Half perished, and let them perish; and brightened still  
In those dark mental journeys of cold hours  
That found you what you were and left you stronger,  
Shutting a door and opening a door?...

O door that you have passed so quickly through,  
Ere we well knew what man you were, nor knew  
What you had shown in life but a little longer!  
It was not pain nor happiness for you,  
Not any named delight or pang of sense,  
But swift fulfilment past all sense or thought  
Of what you were with all that time could make you;

No separate gift, spiritual influence,  
But something wrought  
From your own heart, with all that life could make you.

---

### **BRING YOUR BEAUTY**

Bring your beauty, bring your laughter, bring even your fears,  
Bring the grief that is, the joy that was in other years,  
Bring again the happiness, bring love, bring tears.

There was laughter once, there were grave, happy eyes,  
Talk of firm earth, old earth-sweeping mysteries:  
There were great silences under clear dark skies.

Now is silence, now is loneliness complete; all is done.  
The thrush sings at dawn, too sweet, up creeps the sun:  
But all is silent, silent, for all that was is done.

Yet bring beauty and bring laughter, and bring even tears,  
And cast them down; strew your happiness and fears,  
Then leave them to the darkness of thought and years.

Fears in that darkness die; they have no spring.  
Grief in that darkness is a bird that wants wing....  
O love, love, your brightness, your beauty bring.

---

### **MEMORIAL**

The wild October sky  
Rises not so high,  
The tree's roots that creep  
Into the earth's body thrust not so deep  
As our high and dark thought.

Yet thought need not roam  
Far off to bring you home.  
The sky is our wild mind,  
Your roots are round our spirits twined,  
To ours are your hearts caught.

O, never buried dead!  
The living brain in the head  
Is not so quick as you  
Burning our conscious darkness through  
With brightness past our thought.

---

### **THE HUMAN MUSIC**

At evening when the aspens rustled soft  
And the last blackbird by the hedge-nest laughed,  
And through the leaves the moon's unmeaning face  
Looked, and then rose in dark-blue leafless space;  
Watching the trees and moon she could not bear  
The silence and the presence everywhere.  
The blackbird called the silence and it came  
Closing and closing round like smoke round flame.  
Into her heart it crept and the heart was numb,  
Even wishes died, and all but fear was dumb—  
Fear and its phantoms. Then the trees were enlarged,  
And from their roundness unguessed shapes emerged,  
Or no shape but the image of her fear  
Creeping forth from her mind and hovering near.  
If a bat flitted it was an evil thing;  
Sadder the trees grew with every shadowy wing—  
Their shape enlarged, their arms quivered, their thought  
Stirring in the leaves a silent anguish wrought.  
"What are they thinking of, the evil trees,  
Nod-nodding, standing in malignant ease?  
Something against man's mortal heart was sworn  
Once, when their dark Powers were conceived and born;  
And in such fading or such lightless hours  
The world is delivered to these plotting Powers."

No physical swift blow she dreaded, not  
Lightning's quick mercy; but her heart grew hot  
And cold and hot with uncomprehended sense  
Of an assassin spiritual influence  
Moving in the unmoving trees....

Till, as she stared,  
Her eyes turned cowards at last, and no more dared.  
Yet could she never rise and shut the door:  
Perhaps those Powers would batter at the door,  
And that were madness. So right through the house  
She set the doors all wide when she could arouse  
The body's energy to serve the mind.  
Then the air would move, and any little wind  
Would cleanse awhile the darkness and diminish  
Her fear, and the dumb shadow-war would finish.

But it was not the trees, the birds, the moon;  
Birds cease, months fly, green seasons wither soon:  
Nature was constant all the seasons through,  
Sinister, watchful, and a thick cloud drew  
Over the mind when its simplicity  
Challenged what seemed with thought of what must be....  
She wondered, seeing how a child could play  
Lightly in a shady field all day:  
For in that golden, brief, benignant weather  
When spring and summer calling run together  
And the sun's fresh and hot, she saw deep guile  
In the sweetness of that unconditioned smile.  
Sweetness not sweetness was but indifference  
Or wantonness disguised, to her grave sense;  
And if she could have seen the things she felt  
She'd looked for darkness, and lit shapes that knelt  
Appealing, unregarded, at a high  
Altar uprising from the pit to the sky....  
Had the trees consciousness, with flowers and clouds  
And winds that hung like thin clouds in the woods,  
And stars and silence:—had they each a mind  
Bending on hers, clear eyes on her eyes blind?  
In the green dense heights—elm, oak, ash, yew or beech  
She scarce saw—was there not a brain in each,  
An undiscovered centre of quick nerves  
By which (like man) the tree lives, masters, serves,  
Waxes and wanes? Oppressed her mind would shrink  
From thought, and into her trembling body sink.

Something of this had childhood taught her when  
Sickly she lay and peered again and again  
At gray skies and white skies and void bright blue,  
And watched the sun the bare town-tree boughs through,  
And then through leafy boughs and once more bare.  
Or in the west country's heavy hill-drawn air  
Had felt the green grass pushing within her veins,  
Tangling and strangling: and the warm spring rains  
Tapping all night upon her childish head:  
She shivered, lying lonely on her bed,  
With all that life all round and she so weak,  
Longing to speak—yet what was there to speak?  
And as she grew and health came and love came  
And life was happier, happier, still the same  
Inhuman spirit rose whenever she  
Held in her thoughts more than her eyes could see.  
Behind the happiest hours the dark cloud hung  
Distant or nearing, and its dullness flung  
On the south meadows of her thought, the fairest  
Shrinking in shadow; aspirations rarest  
Falling, like shot birds in a reedy fen,  
Slain by the old Enemy of men.  
Life ebbed while men strove for the means of life;  
The grudging earth turned labour into strife.  
The moving hosts within the heavy clod  
Seemed infinite in malice; frost and flood,  
Season and inter-season, were conspired  
In smiling or sour mockery; and untired  
And undelighted, man scratched and scratched on,  
And what he did, by Nature was undone.

She saw men twisted more than rocks or trees,  
Bruised, numbed, by age and labour and the disease  
Of labour in the cold fields; women worn  
By many child-bearings, and their self-scorn  
Because of time and their lost woman's powers.  
Bitter was Nature to women; for those hours  
Of the spirit's and the body's first delight  
Passed soon, and the long day, evening, night  
Of life uncherished; bitterest when even  
That brief hour was denied, of dancing heaven,  
Dewy love, and fulfilled desires.

But age

Of all ills made her pity and anger rage.  
To see and smell the calm months bud and bloom,  
April's first warmth, June's hues and slow perfume,  
The sweetness drifting by in those long hours  
While, out of her she nursed, the vital powers  
Were pressed by pain and pressed by pain renewed,  
Till, closing the life-long vicissitude,  
Came starving death with full-heaped summer, and  
Wrung the last pangs that spirit could withstand ...  
Or to see age in its prison slowly freeze  
With impotence more disastrous than disease,  
While trees flowered on, or all the winter through  
Upheld brave arms and with spring flowered anew  
Above those living graves and graves of the dead;—  
'Twas all such bitterness, but she nothing said.  
She saw men as courageous boats that sailed  
On all the seas, and some a far port hailed  
Perhaps to sail again, or anchor there  
Forever; some would quietly disappear  
In stormless waters, and some in storms be broken  
And all be hidden and no clear meaning spoken,  
Nor any trace upon the waters linger.  
Where the boat went the wind with hasty finger,  
Savage and sly as aught of land could be,  
Erased the little wrinkling of the sea.  
O, in such enmity was man ensiled,  
Such loneliness, by foolish shades beguiled,  
That it was bravery to see and live,  
But cowardice to see and to forgive,  
The wrong of evil, the wrong of death to life,  
The defeat of innocence, the waste of strife,—  
The heavy ills of time, injustice, pain—  
In field and forest and flood rose huge and plain,  
Brushing her mind with darkness, till she thought  
Not with her brain, but all her nerves were wrought  
Into an apprehension burning strong,  
Unslackening, of mortality's old wrong.  
But if her eyes she raised to those clear lonely  
Altitudes of stars and ether only,  
Her eyes fell and rebuked her as forbidden  
With human mind to question what was hidden.  
At summer dusk the broad moon rising high  
Put gentleness in the vast strength of the sky,  
Easing its weight; or the hot summer sun  
Made noonday kind, and the hours lightly run.  
But in those blazing midnights of the stars  
Gathered and brightening for immortal wars  
With spears and darts and arrows of sharp light,  
She read the indifference of the infinite,  
The high strife flashing through eternity  
While on the earth stared mortals but as she.

O 'twas a living world that rose around  
And in her sentience burned a hollow wound.  
Such easy brightness as the poets see,  
Or easy gloom, or hues of faerie,  
She never saw, but into her own heart peered  
To find what spirit indeed it was she feared:—  
Whether in antique days a divine foe  
Sprung branchlike from dense woods had wrought her woe;  
Whether in antique days a pagan rite  
(Herself a pagan still) unfilmed her sight  
And taught her secrets never to be forgot,

And by man's generation pardoned not....  
The same blood in ancestral veins ran fleet  
As now made hers a road for pain's quick feet.  
Into the marrow of her hidden life  
Had poured the agony of their termless strife  
With immaterial and material things;  
And as a bird an unlearned music sings  
Because a million generations sang,  
So in her breast the old alarum rang,  
So the old sorrowfulness in her thought  
Renewed, and apprehensions all untaught;  
As if indeed a creature primitive  
Still did she in the world's dim morning live,  
That wanted human warmth and gentleness  
To make its solitude a little less.

Kindness gave solitude the lovely light  
She loved, and made less terrible black midnight.  
Even as a bird its unlearned music pours  
Though windows all be blind and shut the doors,  
And sings on still though no faint sound be heard  
But wind and leaves and another lonely bird:  
So poured she untaught kindness all around  
And in that human music comfort found—  
Music her own and music heard from others,  
Prime music of all lovers, children, mothers,  
Precarious music between all men sounding,  
The horror of silent and dark Powers confounding.  
Singing that music she could bravely live;  
Hearing it, find less sorrow to forgive.

---

## THE CANDLE

Time like a cloud  
Has risen from the East  
And whelmed the sky over  
Even to the wide-arched West,  
Darkening the blue,  
Embrowning the early gold,  
Until no more the eternal Sun  
Looks simply through.

In each man's eyes  
The cloud is set,  
With but the chill light  
Of silver January skies.  
On each man's heart  
Time's firm shadow falls,  
And the mind throws but a candle's beam  
On the dark walls.

But on those walls  
Man paints his dream  
Rejoicing purely  
In the faithful candle's beam:  
Lives by its beauty,  
Pictures his heart's delight,  
And with that only beam outbraves  
Time's gathering night.

O spiritual flame,  
Calm, faithful, bright!  
Time may whelm over  
All but this candle's light:  
Shadow but shadow is;  
Dark though it lies  
'Tis blazon'd with man's long-dreamed dreams,  
Pierced by his eyes.

---

## OLD FIRES

The fire burns low  
Where it has burned ages ago,



Sinks and sighs  
As it has done to a hundred eyes  
Staring, staring  
At the last cold smokeless glow.

Here men sat  
Lonely and watched the golden grate  
Turn at length black;  
Heard the cooling iron crack:  
Shadows, shadows,  
Watching the shadows come and go.

And still the hiss  
I hear, the soft fire's sob and kiss,  
And still it burns  
And the bright gold to crimson turns,  
Sinking, sinking,  
And the fire shadows larger grow.

O dark-cheeked fire,  
Wasting like spent heart's desire,  
You that were gold,  
And now crimson will soon be cold—  
Cold, cold,  
Like moon-shadows on new snow.

Shadows all,  
They that watched your shadows fall.  
But now they come  
Rising around me, grave and dumb....  
Shadows, shadows,  
Come as the fire-shadows go.

And stay, stay,  
Though all the fire sink cold as clay,  
Whispering still,  
Ancestral wise Familiars—till,  
Staring, staring,  
Dawn's wild fires through the casement glow.

---

## THE CROWNS

Cherry and pear are white,  
Their snows lie sprinkled on the land like light  
On darkness shed.  
Far off and near  
The orchards toss their crowns of delight,  
And the sun casts down  
Another shining crown.

The wind tears and throws down  
Petal by petal the crown  
Of cherry and pear till the earth is white,  
And all the brightness is shed  
In the orchards far off and near,  
That tossed by the road and under the green hill;  
And the wind is fled.

Far, far off the wind  
Has shaken down  
A brightness that was as the brightness of cherry or pear  
When the orchards shine in the sun.  
—Oh there is no more fairness  
Since this rareness,  
The radiant blossom of English earth—is dead!

---

## THE BRIGHT RIDER

All the night through I drank  
Sleep like water or cool cider;  
Life flowed over and I sank  
Down below the night of clouds....  
Then on a pale horse was rider

Through long brushing woods  
Where the owl in silence broods,  
Quavers, and is quiet again;  
Where the grass dark and rank  
Breathes on the still air its rain.  
Rain and dark and green and sound  
Closing slowly round  
Swept me as I rode,  
And rode on until I came  
Where a white cold river flowed  
Under woods thin and bare  
In the moon's long candle flame.  
Through the woods the wind crawled  
Leviathan, and here and there  
Branches creaked and old winds howled  
Sick for home.  
All the night I saw the river,  
As a girl that sees beside her  
Love, between fear and fear  
Riding, and is dumb.  
The white horse turned to cross the river,  
But the waters like a wall  
Rose and hung dark over all;  
And as they fell the river wider  
Wider grew, and sky was bare  
Save of the sick candle's stare.  
Death the divider  
Glittered cold and dark and deep  
Under banks of fear.  
But that rider  
Trembling, bright, rode on,  
Trembling and bright rode on  
Through green lanes of sleep.

---

### TO THE HEAVENLY POWER

When this burning flesh  
Burns down in Time's slow fire to a glowing ash;  
When these lips have uttered  
The last word, and the ears' last echoes fluttered;  
And crumbled these firm bones  
As in the chemic air soft blackened stones;  
When all that was mortal made  
Owns its mortality, proud yet afraid;

Then when I stumble in  
The broad light, from this twilight weak and thin,  
What of me will change,  
What of that brightness will be new and strange?  
Shall I indeed endure  
New solitude in that high air and pure,  
Aching for these fingers  
On which my assured hand now shuts and lingers?

Now when I look back  
On manhood's and on childhood's far-stretched track,  
I see but a little child  
In a green sunny world-home; there enisled  
By another, cloudy world  
Of unsailed waters all around him curled,  
And he at home content  
With the small sky of wonders over him bent:—

Lonely, yet not alone  
Since all was friendly being all unknown;  
To-day yesterday forgetting,  
And never with to-morrow's sorrow fretting;  
Not seeing good from ill  
Since but to breathe and run and sleep was well;  
Asking nor fearing nought  
Since the body's nerves and veins held all his thought....

Such a child again shall I  
Stray in some valley of infinity,

Where infinite finite seems  
And nothing more immortal than my dreams?  
Where earthly seasons play  
Still with their snows and blossoms and night and day,  
And no unsetting sun  
Brightens the white cloud and awakes the moon?

In such half-life's half-light  
To cloak with mortal an immortal sight?  
With uninformed desire,  
Shorn passion, gentle mind, contented fire,  
Ignorant love; to run  
But with the little journeys of the sun,  
And at evening sleep  
With birds and beasts, and stars rocked in the deep?

But maybe this man's mind  
Will leave not its maturity behind,  
And nothing will forget  
Of all that teased or eased it here, while yet  
A mortal dress it wore;  
And these quick-darting thoughts and probings sore  
More sharply than will turn;  
And lonelier and yet hungrier the heart burn.

O, I would not forget  
Earth is too rich, too dark, too sour, too sweet:—  
Nor be divorcèd quite  
From the late tingling of the nerves' delight.  
Less I would never be  
Than the deep-graving years have made of me—  
A memory, pulse, mind,  
Seed and harvest, a reaper and sower blind.

I shall no more be I  
If I forget the world's joy and agony;  
If I forget how strong  
Is the assault of scarce-rebukèd wrong.  
I shall no more be I  
If my ears hear not earth's embittered cry  
Perpetual; and forget  
The unrighteous shackles on man's ankle set;

If no more my heart beat  
Quicker because on earth is something sweet;  
I shall no more be I  
If the ancestral voices no more sigh  
Familiar in my brain,  
And leave me to cold silence and its pain,  
And the bewildered stare  
On an unhomely land in biting air:

If the blood no more vex  
The heart with the importunities of sex,  
If indeed marriage bind  
No more body to body, mind to mind,  
And love be powerless, cold,  
That once by love's strength only was controlled,  
And that chief spiritual force  
Be dam'd back and stretch frozen to its source....

To the Heavenly Power I cry,  
Foiled by these dreams of immortality,  
"Let all be as Thou wilt,  
And the foundations in Thy dark mind built;  
Even infinity  
Be but imagination's dream of Thee;  
And let thought still, still  
Vainly its waves on night's cliff break and spill.

"But, Heavenly Power," I'd cry,  
Knowing how, near or far, He still is nigh,  
"When this burning flesh  
Is burnt away to a little driven ash,  
What thing soever shall rise  
From that cold ash unseen to unseen skies,

Grant that so much of me  
Shall rise as may remember Thy world, and Thee."

---

## SNOWS

Now the long-bearded chilly-fingered winter  
Over the green fields sweeps his cloak and leaves  
Its whiteness there. It caught on the wild trees,  
Shook whiteness on the hedges and left bare  
South-sloping corners and south-fronting smooth  
Barks of tall beeches swaying 'neath their whiteness  
So gently that the whiteness does not fall.  
The ash copse shows all white between gray poles,  
The oaks spread arms to catch the wandering snow.  
But the yews—I wondered to see their dark all white,  
To see the soft flakes fallen on those grave deeps,  
Lying there, not burnt up by the yews' slow fire.  
    Could Time so whiten all the trembling senses,  
The youth, the fairness, the all-challenging strength,  
And load even Love's grave deeps with his barren snows?  
Even so. And what remains?  
    The hills of thought  
That shape Time's snows and melt them and lift up  
Green and unchanging to the wandering stars.

---

## THE THORN

The days of these two years like busy ants  
Have gone, confused and happy and distressed,  
    Rich, yet sad with aching wants,  
    Crowded, yet lonely and unblessed.

I stare back as they vanish in a swarm,  
Seeming how purposeless, how mean and vain,  
    Till creeping joy and brief alarm  
    Are gone and prick me not again.

The days are gone, yet still this heart of fire  
Smouldering, smoulders on with ancient love;  
    And the red embers of desire  
    I would not, oh, nor dare remove!

Where is the bosom my head rested on,  
The arms that caught my boy's head, the soft kiss?  
    Where is the light of your eyes gone?—  
    For now I know what darkness is....

It is the loneliness, the loneliness,  
Since she that brought me here has left me here  
    With the sharp need of her to press  
    Sudden upon the nerve of fear;

It is the loneliness that wounds me still,  
Shut from the generations that are past,  
    That with their blood my warm veins fill  
    And on my spirit their spirit cast;

That haunt me so and yet how strangely keep  
Beyond communion, alone, alone,  
    Like that huge ancient hill asleep,  
    With to-day's noisy winds o'erblown.

There from the hill is sprung a single thorn,  
Wind-twisted, straining from the earth to the skies,  
    Thin branches pleading with wild morn  
    And root that pressed in darkness lies.

From the unknown of earth and heaven are brought  
Her strength, her weakness, death and bravest life;  
    Shadow and light and wind have wrought  
    Beauty from change, calm out of strife.

That tree upon the unchanging hill am I,  
Alone upon the dark unwhispering hill:—

You in the stirless cold past lie,  
But I ache warm and lonely still.

There's not a storm tossing among my boughs,  
Nor gentle air drawn under quiet skies,  
There's not an idle cloud that flows  
Across the mind, nor bird that cries,

But says (if I have eyes, or ears to hear),  
"You in this mortal being are alone."  
And morn and noon and night-stars clear  
Repeat, "Alone, alone, alone."

Yet the tree in wild storm her dark boughs shakes,  
Thrusting her roots in the earth, her arms to heaven,  
Fresh washed with dew when morning breaks;  
And new light back to the light is given.

---

Is it that I that loved have yet forgot?  
Is it that I that looked have yet been blind?  
Longing, have yet remembered not  
Nor heard you whispering in my mind?

But at a word you are nearer now than when  
We sat and spoke, or merely looked and thought,  
Knowing all speech superfluous then,  
Since what we needed, silence brought;—

And your warm bosom my head rested on,  
The arms that caught my boy's head, the soft kiss,  
The brown grave eyes that gently shone—  
Are here again, and brightness is.

Two years have gone, but nearer now are you,  
Being dearer now; and this false loneliness  
Is but a dream that cloudlike grew,  
Then growing cloudlike less and less

Passes away, leaving me like the tree  
Bright with the sun and wind and lingering dew;  
Homely is all the world for me  
Being sweeter with the sense of you.

---

## CHANGE

Just as this wood, cast on the snaky fire,  
Crushes the curling heads till smoke is thickened  
And the ash sinks beneath the billet's weight,  
And then again the hissing heads are quickened:  
Just as this wood, by fretful fangs new stung,  
Glowing angrily, then whitens in the grate  
And slowly smouldering smoulders away,  
And dies defeated every famished tongue  
And nothing's left but a memory of heat  
And the sunk crimson telling warmth was sweet:  
Just as this wood, once green with Spring's swift fire  
Dies to a pinch of ashes cold and gray....  
Just as this wood—

---

## BEYOND THE BARN

I rose up with the sun  
And climbed the hill.  
I saw the white mists run  
And shadows run  
Down into hollow woods.

I went with the white clouds  
That swept the hill.  
A wind struck the low hedge trees  
And clustering trees,  
And rocked in each tall elm.

The long afternoon was calm  
When down the hill  
I came, and felt the air cool,  
The shadows cool;  
And I walked on footsore,

Saying, "But two hours more,  
Then, the last hill....  
Surely this road I know,  
These hills I know,  
All the unknown is known,

"And that barn, black and lone,  
High on the hill—  
There the long road ends,  
The long day ends,  
And travelling is over." ...

Nor thought nor travelling's over.  
Here on the hill  
The black barn is a shivering ruin,  
A windy cold ruin.  
I must go on and on,

Where often my thought has gone,  
Up hill, down hill,  
Beyond this ruin of Time;  
Forgetting Time  
I must follow my thought still.

---

### LET HONOUR SPEAK

Let Honour speak, for only Honour can  
End nobly what in nobleness began.  
Nor hate nor anger may, though just their cause,  
This strife prolong, if Honour whisper, Pause!  
Let Honour speak.  
For Honour keeps the ashes of the dead,  
Accounts the anguish of all widowhead,  
All childlessness, all sacrifice, defeat,  
And all our dead have died for, though to live was sweet.  
Let Honour speak,  
Nor weariness nor weakness murmur, Stay!  
Nor for this *Now* England's *To be* betray.  
All else be dumb, for only Honour can  
End nobly what in nobleness began.

---

### TALK

So many were there talking that I heard  
Nothing at first quite plain, as I sat down;  
Until from this man's gibe and that keen word,  
Another's chilly smile or peevish frown,  
I caught their talk—but added none of mine.  
They said how she still fumbled with her fate,  
How she had banished visitants divine,  
How long her sleep had been, her sloth how great,  
How others had drawn near and passed her by,  
While she luxuriously had dreamed, dreamed on,  
She, she her own eternal enemy,  
And wanting brain, brain, brain would be undone.  
The glasses tinkled as they talked and laughed,  
And if the door a moment hung ajar  
The noises of the street, remotely soft,  
Crept in as from a world sunken afar.  
And still they talked, and then well pleased were pleased  
To talk of other things—another's wife,  
Money that ministers to a mind diseased,  
And queer extravagant whims of death and life....  
But I rose up, flushed at the careless slander,  
Heedless what other laughing things were said,  
And my bruised thoughts began to lift and wander  
Far off, as from that jargoning I fled.

I saw the sharp green hills, the silver clouds  
At rest upon the hills, the silver streams  
Creeping between prone shoulders of dark woods.  
I saw wide marshlands laved with level beams  
Of the last light; I saw ships on the sea  
That foamed hard by, stinging the fretful shore;  
I smelt old ships on the deserted quay  
That English sailors sailed, and will no more;  
I thought of men I loved, and of dead men  
I had longed to know—and each heroic ghost  
Rose and moved on, and left me alone again  
Aching for love and splendour glimpsed and lost.

God knows what things I thought when anger broke  
Her narrow dam and swept my spirit clean.  
Yet I for very shame not a word spoke,  
But to my heart's heart caught the things I had seen,  
And *England, England!* murmuring, stood and stared,  
Swept like a lover with sweet influence  
In brain and bone—and happy that I had spared  
Her nobleness the indignity of defence.

---

## THE UNDYING

In thin clear light unshadowed shapes go by  
Small on green fields beneath the hueless sky.  
They do not stay for question, do not hear  
Any old human speech: their tongue and ear  
Seem only thought, for when I spoke they stirred not  
And their bright minds conversing my ear heard not.  
—Until I slept or, musing, on a heap  
Of warm crisp fern lay between sense and sleep  
Drowsy, still clinging to a strand of thought  
Spider-like frail and all unconscious wrought.  
For thinking of that unforgettable thing,  
The war, that spreads a loud and shaggy wing  
On things most peaceful, simple, happy and bright,  
Until the spirit is blind though the eye is light;  
Thinking of all that evil, envy, hate,  
The cruelty most dark, most desolate;  
Thinking of the English dead—"How can you dead,"  
I muttered, "with your life and young joy shed,  
How can you but in these new lands of life  
Relume the fiery passion of old strife—  
Just anger, mortal hate, the natural scorn  
Of men true-born for all things foully born?"  
For I had thought that not death's touch could still  
In man's clean spirit the hate of good for ill.

But now to see their shapes go lightly by  
On those vast fields, clear 'neath the hueless sky,  
With not one furious gesture, and (when seen  
With but the broad dark hedgerow space between)  
No eye's disdain, no thin drawn face of grief,  
But pondering calm or lightened look and brief  
Smile almost gay;—yet all seen in the air  
That driv'n mist makes unreal everywhere—  
"So strange," I breathed, "How can you English dead  
Forget them for whose life your life was shed?"

It was no voice that answered, yet plain word  
Less plain is than the unspoken that I heard,  
As I lay there on the dry heap of fern  
And watched them pass, mix, disappear and return,  
And felt their mute speech into empty senses burn:  
"Earth's is the strife. The Heavenly Powers that sent  
The gray globe spinning in the firmament,  
The Heavenly Powers that soon or late will stay  
The spinning, as a child that tires of play,  
And globe by spent globe put forgot away  
In some vast airless hollow: could they see  
Or seeing endure immortal misery  
Made out of mortal, and undying hate  
Earth's perishing agonies perpetuate?"

O spirits unhappy, if from earth men brought  
The mind's disease, the sickness of mad thought!  
Sooner the Heavenly Powers would let them lie  
Eternally unrising 'neath a sky  
Arctic and lonely, where death's starven wind  
Raged full-delighted:—sooner would those kind  
Serenities man's generation cast  
Back into nothingness, than heaven should waste  
With finite anguish infinitely prolonged  
Until the Eternal Spring were stained and wronged.  
O, even the Heavenly Powers at such a breath  
From mortal shores would fade and fade to death."

—Was it a voice or but a thought I heard,  
Mine or another's, in my boughs that stirred  
Waking the leafy darkness of the mind?  
Was it a voice, or but a new-roused wind  
That answered—"O, I know, I know, I know!  
The oldest rivers into the full sea flow  
And there are lost: so everything is lost,  
On midnight waves into oblivion tost.  
Yet—the high passion, the pity, the joy and pride,  
The righteousness for which these men have died,  
The courage, the uncounted sacrifice,  
The love and beauty, all that's beyond all price;  
That this, the immortal heart of mortal man,  
Should be—O tell me what, tell me again, again—  
Petals lost on the river of the years  
When April sweetness pauses, fades and disappears!  
That this high Quarrel should be quenched in death  
As some vexed petty plaint unworthy breath;  
That the blood and the tears should never rise  
Renewed, accusing in grave judgment skies ...  
Tell me again—O, rather tell me not  
Lest that ill telling never be forgot."

And then I rose from that warm ferny heap  
And my thoughts climbed from the abyss of sleep.  
No more in human guise did cloud-shapes pass,  
Nor sighed with sad intelligence the grass.  
I saw the hueless sky break into blue,  
And I remembered how that heaven I knew  
When, a small child, I gazed at the great height,  
And thought of nothing but the blue and white,  
Pools of sweet blue swimming in fields of light.  
And as tired men from mine and stithy turn  
While still the midnight fires unslackened burn  
Flushing their road, and so reach home and then  
Dream of old childhood's days and dream again;  
So I forgot those inward fires and found  
Old happiness like dew lying all around.  
Under the hedge I stood and far below  
Saw on the Worcester Plain the swift clouds flow  
Like ships on seas no greener than the Plain  
That shone between October sun and rain;  
And thinking how time's plenteousness would bring  
Back and more bright the young delicious Spring,  
Between wet brambles thrust my hand, and tasted  
Ripe berries on neglected boughs that wasted.

---

## THE NATIVE COUNTRY

Where is that country? The unresting mind  
Like a lapwing nears and leaves it and returns.  
I know those unknown hill-springs where they rise,  
I know the answer of the elms to the wind  
When the wind on their heaving bosom lies  
And sleeps. I know the grouping pines that crown  
The long green hill and fling their darkness down,  
A never-dying shadow; and well I know  
How in the late months the whole wide woodland burns  
Unsmoking, and the earth hangs still as still.  
I know the town, the hamlets and the lone  
Shelterless cottage where the wind's least tone



Is magnified, and his far-flung thundering shout  
Brings near the incredible end of the world. I know!  
Even in sleep-walk I should linger about  
Those lanes, those streets sure-footed, and by the unfenced stream go,  
Hearing the swift waters past the locked mill flow.

Where is that country? It lies in my mind,  
Its trees and grassy shape and white-gashed hill  
And springs and wind and weather; its village stone  
And solitary stone are in my mind;  
And every thought familiarly returns  
To find its home, and birdlike circling still  
Above the smouldering beeches of November  
And the bare elms and rattled hedgerows of December.  
That native country lies deep in my mind  
For every thought and true affection's home.

And like that mental land are you become,  
Part of that land, and I the thought that turns  
Towards home. And as in that familiar land I find  
Myself among each tree, spring, road and hill,  
And at each present step my past footsteps remember;  
So you in all my inward being lies,  
In you my history, my earth and stream and skies.  
Your late fire is it that in my boughs yet burns,  
Your stone that to my passing footfall cries.

## PART III

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### STONE TREES

Last night a sword-light in the sky  
Flashed a swift terror on the dark.  
In that sharp light the fields did lie  
Naked and stone-like; each tree stood  
Like a tranced woman, bound and stark.

Far off the wood  
With darkness ridged the riven dark.

And cows astonished stared with fear,  
And sheep crept to the knees of cows,  
And conies to their burrows slid,  
And rooks were still in rigid boughs,  
And all things else were still or hid.

From all the wood  
Came but the owl's hoot, ghostly, clear.

In that cold trance the earth was held  
It seemed an age, or time was nought.  
Sure never from that stone-like field  
Sprang golden corn, nor from those chill  
Gray granite trees was music wrought.

In all the wood  
Even the tall poplar hung stone still.

It seemed an age, or time was none ...  
Slowly the earth heaved out of sleep  
And shivered, and the trees of stone  
Bent and sighed in the gusty wind,  
And rain swept as birds flocking sweep.

Far off the wood  
Rolled the slow thunders on the wind.

From all the wood came no brave bird,  
No song broke through the close-fall'n night,  
Nor any sound from cowering herd:  
Only a dog's long lonely howl  
When from the window poured pale light.

And from the wood  
The hoot came ghostly of the owl.

It was the lovely moon—she lifted  
Slowly her white brow among  
Bronze cloud-waves that ebbled and drifted  
Faintly, faintlier afar.  
Calm she looked, yet pale with wonder,  
Sweet in unwonted thoughtfulness,  
Watching the earth that dwindled under  
Faintly, faintlier afar.  
It was the lovely moon that lovelike  
Hovered over the wandering, tired  
Earth, her bosom gray and dovelike,  
Hovering beautiful as a dove....  
The lovely moon:—her soft light falling  
Lightly on roof and poplar and pine—  
Tree to tree whispering and calling,  
Wonderful in the silvery shine  
Of the round, lovely, thoughtful moon.

---

## THE HOUNDS

Far off a lonely hound  
Telling his loneliness all round  
To the dark woods, dark hills, and darker sea;

And, answering, the sound  
Of that yet lonelier sea-hound  
Telling his loneliness to the solitary stars.

Hearing, the kennelled hound  
Some neighbourhood and comfort found,  
And slept beneath the comfortless high stars.

But that wild sea-hound  
Unkennelled, called all night all round—  
The unneighbourd and uncomforted cold sea.

---

## HECTOR

Sleep, sleep, you great and dim trees, sleeping on  
The still warm, tender cheek of night,  
And with her cloudy hair

Brushed: sleep, for the violent wind is gone;  
Only remains soft easeful light,  
And shadow everywhere,

And few pale stars. Hardly has eve begun  
Dreaming of day renewed and bright  
With beams than day's more fair;

Scarce the full circle of the day is run,  
Nor the yellow moon to her full height  
Risen through the misty air.

But from the increasing shadowiness is spun  
A shadowy shape growing clear to sight,  
And fading. Was it Hector there,

Great-helmed, severe?—and as the last sun shone  
Seeming in solemn splendour dight  
Such as dream heroes bear;

And such his shape as heroes stare upon  
In sleep's tumultuary fight  
When a cry's heard, "Beware!" ...

—'Twas Hector, but the moment-splendour's gone:  
Shadow fast deepens into night,  
Night spreads—cold, wide, bare.

---

## LISTENING

There is a place of grass

With daisies like white pools,  
Or shining islands in a sea  
Of brightening waves.

Swallows, darting, brush  
The waves of gentle green,  
As though a wide still lake it were,  
Not living grass.

Evening draws over all,  
Grass and flowers and sky,  
And one rich bird prolongs the sweet  
Of day on the edge of dark.

The grass is dim, the stars  
Lean down the height of heaven;  
And the trees, listening in all their leaves,  
Scarce-breathing stand.

Nothing is as it was:  
The bird on the bough sings on;  
The night, pure from the cloud of day,  
Is listening.

---

## STONES

Small yellow stones  
That, lifted, through my idle fingers fall  
Leaving a score—  
And these I toss between the parted lips  
Of the lapping sea,  
And the sea tosses again with millions more—  
Yellow and white stones;  
Then drawing back her snaky long waves all,  
Leaves the stones  
Yellow and white upon the sandy shore....  
As they were bones  
Yellow and white left on the silent shore  
Of an unfoaming far unvisioned Sea.

---

## THE ENEMIES

The angry wind  
That cursed at me  
Was nothing but an evil sprite  
Vexed with any man's delight.

And strange it seemed  
That a dark wind  
Should run down from a mountain steep  
And shout as though the world were asleep.

But when he ceased  
And silence was—  
Who could but fear what evil sprite  
Crept through the tunnels of the night?

---

## THE SILVERY ONE

Clear from the deep sky pours the moon  
Her silver on the heavy dark;  
The small stars blink.

Against the moon the maple bough  
Flutters distinct her leafy spears;  
All sound falls weak....

Weak the train's whistle, the dog's bark,  
Slow steps; and rustling into her nest  
At last, the thrush.

All's still; only earth turns and breathes.  
Then that amazing trembling note

Cleaves the deep wave

Of silence. Shivers even that silvery one;  
Sigh all the trees, even the cedar dark  
---O joy, and I.

---

## THE FLUTE

It was a night of smell and dew  
When very old things seemed how new;  
When speech was softest in the still  
Air that loitered down the hill;  
When the lime's sweetness could but creep  
Like music to slow ears of sleep;  
When far below the lapping sea  
Lisped but of tired tranquillity....  
No, 'twas a night that seemed almost  
Of real night the little ghost,  
As though a painter painted it  
Out of the shallows of his wit—  
The easy air, the whispered trees,  
Faint prattle of strait distant seas,  
Pettiness all: but hark, hark!  
Large and rich in the narrow dark  
Music rose. Was music never  
Braver in her pure endeavour  
Against the meanness of the world.  
Her purple banner she unfurled  
Of stars and suns upon the night  
Amazed with the strange living light.  
The notes rose where the dark trees knelt;  
Their fiery joy made stillness melt  
As flame in woods the low boughs burns,  
Sere leaves, dry bushes, flame-shaped ferns.  
The notes rose as great birds that rise  
Majestically in lofty skies,  
And in white clouds are lost; and then  
Briefly they hushed, and woke again  
Renewed.

Slowly silence came  
As smoke after sinking flame  
That spreads and thins across the sky  
When day pales before it die.

---

## STARS

The naked stars, deep beyond deep,  
Burn purely through the nervèd night.  
Over the narrow sleep  
Of men tired of light;

Deep within deep, as clouds behind  
Huge grey clouds hidden gleaming rise,  
Untroubled by sharp wind  
In cold desert skies.

Cold deserts now with infinite host  
Of gathered spears at watch o'er small  
Armies of men lost  
In glooms funereal.

O bitter light, all-threatening stars,  
O tired ghosts of men that sleep  
After stern mortal wars  
'Neath skies chill and steep.

These mortal hills, this flickering sea,  
This shadowy and thoughtful night,  
Throb with infinity,  
Burn with immortal light.

---

It stands there  
Tall and solitary on the edge  
Of the last hill, green on the green hill.  
Ten o'clock the tree's called, no one knows why.  
Perhaps it was planted there at ten o'clock  
Or someone was hanged there at ten o'clock—  
A hundred such good reasons might be found,  
But no one knows. It vexed me that none knew,  
Seeing it miles and miles off and then nearer  
And nearer yet until, beneath the hill,  
I looked up, up, and saw it nodding there,  
A single tree upon the sharp-edged hill,  
Holding its leaves though in the orchard all  
Leaves and fruit were stripped or hung but few  
Red and yellow over the littered grass.  
—It vexed me, the brave tree and senseless name,  
As I went through the valley looking up  
And then looked round on elm and beech and chestnut  
And all that lingering flame amid the hedge  
That marked the miles and miles.

Then I forgot:

For through the apple-orchard's shadow I saw  
Between the dark boughs of the cherry-orchard  
A great slow fire which Time had lit to burn  
The mortal seasons up, and leave bare black  
Unchanging Winter.

*Weston-sub-Edge.*

---

## THE YEW

The moon gave no light.  
The clouds rode slowly over, broad and white,  
From the soft south west.  
The wind, that cannot rest,  
Soothed and then waked the darkness of the yew  
Until the tree was restless too.

Of all the winds I knew  
I thought, and how they muttered in the yew,  
Or raved under the eaves,  
Or nosed the fallen dry leaves,  
Or with harsh voice holloa'd the orchard round,  
With snapped limbs littering the ground.

And I thought how the yew  
Between the window and the west his shadow threw,  
Grave and immense,  
Darkening the dark past thought and sense,  
And how the moon would make the darkness heavenly bright:  
But the moon gave no light.

---

## NOVEMBER SKIES

Than these November skies  
Is no sky lovelier. The clouds are deep;  
Into their gray the subtle spies  
Of colour creep,  
Changing that high austerity to delight,  
Till even the leaden interfolds are bright.  
And, where the cloud breaks, faint far azure peers  
Ere a thin flushing cloud again  
Shuts up that loveliness, or shares.  
The huge great clouds move slowly, gently, as  
Reluctant the quick sun should shine in vain,  
Holding in bright caprice their rain.

And when of colours none,  
Not rose, nor amber, nor the scarce late green,  
Is truly seen,—  
In all the myriad gray,  
In silver height and dusky deep, remain  
The loveliest,  
Faint purple flushes of the unvanquished sun.

---

## DELIGHT

Winter is fallen  
On the wretched grass,  
Dark winds have stolen  
All the colour that was.  
No leaf shivers:  
The bare boughs bend and creak as the wind moans by  
Fled is the fitful gleam of brightness  
From the stooping sky.

A robin scatters  
Like bright rain his song,  
Of merry matters  
The sparrows gossip long.  
Snow in the sky  
Lingers, soon to cover the world with white,  
And hush the slender enchanting music  
And chill the delight.

But snow new fallen  
On the stiffened grass  
Gives back beauty stolen  
By the winds as they pass:—  
Turns the climbing hedge  
Into a gleaming ladder of frozen light:  
And hark, in the cold enchanted silence  
A cry of delight!

---

## CHANGE

A late and lonely figure stains the snow,  
Into the thickening darkness dims and dies.  
Heavily homeward now the last rooks go,  
And dull-eyed stars stare from the skies.  
A whimpering wind  
Sounds, then's still and whimpers again.

Yet 'twas a morn of oh, such air and light!  
The early sun ran laughing over the snow,  
The laden trees held out their arms all white  
And whiteness shook on the white below.  
Lovely the shadows were,  
Deep purple niches, 'neath a dome of light.

And now night's fall'n, the west wind begins to creep  
Among the stiff trees, over the frozen snow;  
An hour—and the world stirs that was asleep,  
A trickle of water's heard, stealthy and slow,  
First faintly here and there,  
And then continual everywhere.

And morn will look astonished for the snow,  
And the warm, wind will laugh, "It's gone, gone, gone!"—  
And will, when the immortal soft airs blow,  
This mortal face of things change and be gone  
So—and with none to hear  
How in the night the wind crept near?

---

## SLEEPING SEA

The sea  
Was even as a little child that sleeps  
And keeps  
All night its great unconsciousness of day.  
No spray  
Flashed when the wave rose, drooped, and slowly drew away.  
No sound  
From all that slumbering, full-bosomed water came;  
The sea

Lay mute in childlike sleep, the moon was a gold candle-flame.  
No sound  
Save when a faint and mothlike air fluttered around.  
No sound:  
But as a child that dreams and in his full sleep cries,  
So turned the sleeping sea and heaved her bosom of slow sighs.

---

### THE WEAVER OF MAGIC

Weave cunningly the web  
Of twilight, O thou subtle-fingered Eve!  
And at the slow day's ebb  
With small blue stars the purple curtain weave.  
If any wind there be,  
Bid it but breathe lightly as woodland violets o'er the sea;  
If any moon, be it no more than a white fluttering feather.  
Call the last birds together.

O Eve, and let no wisp  
Of day's distraction thine enchantment mar;  
Thy soft spell lisp  
And lure the sweetness down of each blue star.  
Then let that low moan be  
A while more easeful, trembling remote and strange, far oversea;  
So shall the easeless heart of love rest then, or only sigh,  
Hearing the swallows cry!

---

### THE DARKSOME NIGHTINGALE

Why dost thou, darksome Nightingale,  
Sing so distractingly—and here?  
Dawn's preludings prick my ear,  
Faint light is creeping up the vale,  
While on these dead thy rarer  
Song falls, dark night-farer.

Were it not better thou shouldst sing  
Where the drenched lilac droops her plume,  
Spreading frail banners of perfume?  
Or where the easeless pines enring  
The river-lullèd village  
Whose lads the lilac pillage?

Oh, if aught songful these hid bones  
Might reach, like the slow subtle rain,  
Surely the dead had risen again  
And listened, white by the white stones;  
Back to rich life song-charmed,  
By ghostly joys alarmed.

This may not be. And yet, oh still  
Pour like night dew thy richer speech  
Some late-lost youth perchance to reach,  
Or unloved girl; and stir and fill  
Their passionless cold bosoms  
Under red wallflower blossoms!

---

### UNDER THE LINDEN BRANCHES

Under the linden branches  
They sit and whisper;  
Hardly a quiver  
Of leaves, hardly a lisp or  
Sigh in the air.  
Under the linden branches  
They sit, and shiver  
At the slow air's fingers  
Drawn through the linden branches  
Where the year's sweet lingers;  
And sudden avalanches  
Of memories, fears,  
Shake from the linden branches

Upon them sitting  
With hardly a sigh or a whisper  
Or quiver of tears.

---

### STRIFE

The wind fought with the angry trees.  
All morning in immense unease  
They wrestled, and ruin strawed the ground,  
    And the north sky frowned.  
The oak and aspen arms were held  
Defiant, but the death was knelled  
Of slender saplings, snappy boughs,  
    Twigs brittle as men's vows.  
How moaned the trees the struggle through!  
Anger almost to madness grew.  
The aspen screamed, and came a roar  
Of the great wind locked in anguish sore,  
Desolate with defeat ... and then  
    Quiet fell again:  
The trees slept quiet as great cows  
That lie at noon under broad boughs.  
How pure, how strange the calm; but hist!...  
Was it the trees by the wind kissed?  
Or from afar, where the wind's hid,  
    A throb, a sob?

---

### FOREBODING

O linger late, poor yellow whispering leaves!  
    As yet the eves  
Are golden and the simple moon looks through  
    The clouds and you.  
O linger yet although the night be blind,  
    And in the wind  
You wake and lisp and shiver at the stir  
    And sigh of her  
Whose rimy fingers chill you each and all:  
    And so you fall  
As dead as hopes or dreams or whispered vows....  
    O *then* the boughs  
That bore your busy multitude shall feel  
    The cold light steal  
Between them, and the timorous child shall start,  
    Hearing his heart  
Drubbing affrighted at the frail gates, for lo,  
    The ghostly glow  
Of the wild moon, caught in the barren arms  
Of leafless branches loud with night's alarms!

---

### DISCOVERY

Beauty walked over the hills and made them bright.  
She in the long fresh grass scattered her rains  
Sparkling and glittering like a host of stars,  
But not like stars cold, severe, terrible.  
Hers was the laughter of the wind that leaped  
Arm-full of shadows, flinging them far and wide.  
Hers the bright light within the quick green  
Of every new leaf on the oldest tree.  
It was her swimming made the river run  
Shining as the sun;  
Her voice, escaped from winter's chill and dark,  
Singing in the incessant lark...  
All this was hers—yet all this had not been  
Except 'twas seen.  
It was my eyes, Beauty, that made thee bright;  
My ears that heard, the blood leaping in my veins,  
The vehemence of transfiguring thought—  
Not lights and shadows, birds, grasses and rains—  
That made thy wonders wonderful.



For it has been, Beauty, that I have seen thee,  
Tedious as a painted cloth at a bad play,  
Empty of meaning and so of all delight.  
Now thou hast blessed me with a great pure bliss,  
Shaking thy rainy light all over the earth,  
And I have paid thee with my thankfulness.

---

### MORE THAN SWEET

The noisy fire,  
The drumming wind,  
The creaking trees,  
And all that hum  
Of summer air  
And all the long inquietude  
Of breaking seas——

Sweet and delightful are  
In loneliness.  
But more than these  
The quiet light  
From the morn's sun  
And night's astonished moon,  
Falling gently upon breaking seas.

Such quietness  
Another beauty is—  
Ah, and those stars  
So gravely still  
More than light, than beauty pour  
Upon the strangeness  
Of the heart's breaking seas.

---

### THE BRIGHTNESS

Away, away—  
Through that strange void and vast  
Brimmed with dying day;  
Away,  
So that I feel  
Only the wind  
Of the world's swift-rolling wheel.

See what a maze  
Of whirling rays!  
The sharp wind  
Weakens; the air  
Is but thin air,  
Not fume and flying fire....  
O, heart's desire,  
Now thou art still  
And the air chill.

And but a stem  
Of clear cold light  
Shines in this stony dark.  
Farewell, world of sense,  
Too fair, too fair  
To be so false!  
Hence, hence  
Rosy memories,  
Delight of ears, hands, eyes.  
Rise  
When I bid, O thou  
Tide of the dark,  
Whelming the pale last,  
Reflection of that vast  
Too-fair deceit.

Ah, sweet  
To miss the vexing heat  
Of the heart's desire:  
Only to know

All's lost, lost....  
Sweet  
To know the lack of sweet.

—Thou fool!  
See how the steady dark  
Is filled with eyes—  
Eyes that smile,  
Hot, then how cool!  
Eyes that were stars till thou  
Mad'st them eyes.  
O, the tormenting  
Look, the unrelenting  
Passionate kiss  
Of their wild light on thine—  
Light of thine eyes!

As if one could  
Loathe the world for too much sweetness!  
All the air's a flame,  
Wonderful—yet the same  
Thou'st hated,  
Being briefly sated  
With sweet of sweetness.

Forgive a heart whose madness  
Was not of madness born,  
But of mere wild  
Waste of desire....  
Who does not know  
One speaks so, or so,  
Out of mere passion  
That sees not love  
From hate, nor life from death,  
Nor hell from heaven?

In the East—oh, that flashed  
Brightness, past  
The loveliness even  
Of sunset's flush!

---

## THE HOLY MOUNTAINS

The holy mountains,  
The gay streams,  
Heavy shadows,  
And tall, trembling trees;  
The light that sleeps  
Between the heavy shadows,  
Wind that creeps  
Faintly, from far-off seas—

The mountains' light,  
Waters' noise,  
Trees' shadows,  
Clear, slow, calm air,  
Are dreams, dreams,  
And far, far-fallen echoes  
Of secret worlds  
And inconceivable dark seas.

---

## RAPTURE

If thou hast grief  
And passion vex the spirit that is in thee—

There was a stony beach  
Where the heat flickered and the little waves  
Whispered each to each.  
Dove-coloured was that stony beach,  
And white birds hungering hovered over  
The shining waves;  
And men had kindled there

A great fierce heap of golden flame—  
Spoiled grasses with dead buttercups and pale clover.  
The agonising flame  
Yearned in its vitals towards the quiet air  
And died in a little smoke.  
And on the coloured beach the black warm ash  
Remained.

Then on that warm ash  
Another heap of grasses was outpoured,  
And instant came  
Another knot of struggling yellow smoke  
That burst into new agonies of flame,  
Dying into a drift of smoke;  
And on the coloured beach the black cold ash  
Remained.

Or is thy grief too deep,  
Passion too dear, the spirit in thee asleep?—

Twelve deep and sombre, still,  
Expectant, hushed,  
The miles-long crowd stood—and then listening.  
The nervous drums,  
The unendurable, low reeds:  
Silence—and then the nearing drums  
Again, again the thrilling reeds,  
And then  
(The deep crowd hushed)  
Following an almightier King  
That rode unseen,  
Drew near the tributary magnificence....  
Hushed, hushed,  
The deep crowd stood, devouring, listening;  
But a child on his father's shoulder cried,  
"Hurrah, hurrah!"—

Only have thou no fear  
Pride, but no fear.

---

## MUSIC COMES

Music comes  
Sweetly from the trembling string  
When wizard fingers sweep  
Dreamily, half asleep;  
When through remembering reeds  
Ancient airs and murmurs creep,  
Oboe oboe following,  
Flute answering clear high flute,  
Voices, voices—falling mute,  
And the jarring drums.

At night I heard  
First a waking bird  
Out of the quiet darkness sing....  
Music comes  
Strangely to the brain asleep!  
And I heard  
Soft, wizard fingers sweep  
Music from the trembling string,  
And through remembering reeds  
Ancient airs and murmurs creep;  
Oboe oboe following,  
Flute calling clear high flute,  
Voices faint, falling mute,  
And low jarring drums;  
Then all those airs  
Sweetly jangled—newly strange,  
Rich with change....  
Was it the wind in the reeds?  
Did the wind range  
Over the trembling string;  
Into flute and oboe pouring

Solemn music; sinking, soaring  
Low to high,  
Up and down the sky?  
Was it the wind jarring  
Drowsy far-off drums?

Strangely to the brain asleep  
Music comes.

---

## THE IDIOT

He stands on the kerb  
Watching the street.  
He's always watching there,  
Listening to the beat  
Of time in the street,  
Listening to the thronging feet,  
Laughing at the world that goes  
Scowling or laughing by.

He sees Time go by,  
An old lonely man,  
Crooked and furtive and slow.  
He laughs as he sees  
Time shambling by  
While he stands at his ease,  
Until Time smiles wanly back  
At his laughing eye.

Greed's great paunch,  
Lean Envy's ill looks,  
Fond forgetful Love,  
He reads them like books:  
Whatever their tongue  
He reads them like children's books,  
Stands staring and laughing there  
As all they go by.

O, he laughs as he sees  
The fat and the thin,  
The simple, the solemn and wise  
Nod-nodding by.  
He stares in their eyes,  
Till they're angry and murmur, *Poor fool!*  
And he hears and he laughs again  
From the depth of his folly.

Even when with heavy  
Plume and pall  
The sleeky coaches roll by,  
Coffin, flowers and all,  
He laughs, for he sees  
Crouched on the coffin a small  
Yellowy shape go by—  
Death, uneasy and melancholy.

---

## THE MOUSE

Standing close by you  
In the cold light  
Of two tall candles  
That measure the dark of night,  
I hear the mouse,  
The only thing that's moving  
In the quiet house.

Don't you hear it,  
That furious mouse?  
How can you sleep so deep  
And that noise in the house?  
Won't you stir  
At the furious scratching  
In the cupboard there?

No! a sharper sound  
Would wake you not;  
Not the sweetest fluting  
Tease you back to thought.  
Yet the scratching mouse  
Makes all my flesh a nervous  
Haunted house.

O, the dream, the dream  
Must be sweet and deep  
If life's scratching's heard not  
On your cold sleep.  
Yet if you should hear it,  
So furious and fretful—  
How could you bear it?

---

## HAPPINESS

I have found happiness who looked not for it.  
There was a green fresh hedge,  
And willows by the river side,  
And whistling sedge.

The heaviness I felt was all around.  
No joy sang in the wind.  
Only dull slow life everywhere,  
And in my mind.

Then from the sedge a bird cried; and all changed.  
Heaviness turned to mirth:  
The willows the stream's cheek caressed,  
The sun the earth.

What was it in the bird's song worked such change?  
The grass was wonderful.  
I did not dream such beauty was  
In things so dull.

What was it in the bird's song gave the water  
That living, sentient look?  
Lent the rare brightness to the hedge?  
That sweetness shook

Down on the green path by the running water?  
Or the small daisies lit  
With light of the white northern stars  
In dark skies set?

What was it made the whole world marvellous?  
Mere common things were joys.  
The cloud running upon the grass,  
Children's faint noise,

The trees that grow straight up and stretch wide arms,  
The snow heaped in the skies,  
The light falling so simply on all;  
My lifted eyes

That all this startling aching beauty saw?  
I felt the sharp excess  
Of joy like the strong sun at noon—  
Insupportable bliss!

---

## COMFORTABLE LIGHT

Most comfortable Light,  
Light of the small lamp burning up the night,  
With dawn enleagued against the beaten dark;  
Pure golden perfect spark;

Or sudden wind-bright flame,  
That but the strong-handed wind can urge or tame;  
Chill loveliest light the kneeling clouds between,  
Silverly serene;

Comfort of happy light,  
That mouse-like leaps amid brown leaves, cheating sight;  
Clear naked stars, burning with swift intense  
Earthward intelligence;—

Sensitive, single  
Points in the dark inane that purely tingle  
With eager fire, pouring night's circles through  
Their living blue;

Dark light still waters hold;  
Broad silver moonpath trodden into gold:  
Candle-flame glittering through the traveller's night—  
Most comfortable light....

And lovelier, the eye  
Where light from darkness shines unfathomably,  
Light secret, clear, shallow, profound, known, strange,  
Constant alone in change:—

Not that wild light that turns  
Hunted from dying eyes when the last fire burns;  
O, not that bitter light of wounded things,  
When bony anguish springs

Sudden, intolerable;  
Nor light of mad eyes gleaming up from hell....  
Come not again, wild light! Shine not again,  
Hill-flare of pain!

But thou, most holy light....  
Not the noon blaze that stings, too fiercely bright,  
Not that unwinking stare of shameless day;  
But thou, the gray,

Nun-like and silent, still,  
Fine-breathed on many an eastern bare green hill;  
Keen light of gray eyes, cool rain, and stern spears;  
Sad light, but not to tears:—

—O, comfort thou of eyes  
Watching expectant from chill northern skies,  
Excellent joy for lids heavy with night—  
Strange with delight!

---

## HALLO!

"Hallo, hallo!" impatiently he cried,  
And I replied,  
Sleepily, "Hallo—hallo!"  
No sound then; and I stretched  
My hand for the receiver, all my nerves  
Tingling and listening.  
My hand clutched nothing, and I lit  
The candle—strange!  
I could have sworn it was the shouting wire....  
But no!  
Besides, a bare and unfamiliar room  
And he, why, long-forgotten, maybe dead.  
Yet all around,  
Filling the silence up with tiny sound,  
A million tremulous thin echoings,  
"Hallo—hallo—  
Hallo!"

---

## FEAR

There was a child that screamed,  
And if it was the gathering tingling dark,  
Or if it was the tingling silences  
Between few words,  
Or if the water's drip and quivering drip—  
Who knows?  
Or if the child half sleeping suddenly dreamed—

Who knows? for she knew not, but was afraid,  
And then angry with fear,  
And then it seemed afraid of all the voices  
Echoing hers.  
And then afraid again of that drip, drip  
Of water somewhere near.

Yet a man dying would not with such fear  
Scream out at hell.  
Easier it were to die than to endure,  
Unless death brought the instant consciousness  
Of all the wrongs of all lost years  
Falling like water, drip after trembling drip  
Upon the naked anguish of the soul.

But death's stupidity  
Is gentle to the lunatic last wits.  
Little of terror, little of consciousness,  
But stupor, a great ease,  
Narrowing silences,  
And silence;  
And then no more the drip, drip of the years,  
No more the strangeness, agonies and fears;  
No more the noise, but one imponderable unhaunted  
Hush....

I heard the child that cried  
Chattering a moment after in the light,  
And singing out of such contentment as  
Lamps and familiar voices bring.  
She needs must sing  
Now that sharp, spiny agony thrust no more,  
Nor water fell, drip, drip by quivering drip;  
Her face was bright,  
Unapprehensive as a day in spring.

---

## WAKING

Lying beneath a hundred seas of sleep  
With all those heavy waves flowing over me,  
And I unconscious of the rolling night  
Until, slowly, from deep to lesser deep  
Risen, I felt the wandering seas no longer cover me  
But only air and light....

It was a sleep  
So dark and so bewilderingly deep  
That only death's were deeper or completer,  
And none when I awoke stranger or sweeter.  
Awake, the strangeness still hung over me  
As I with far-strayed senses stared at the light.

I—and who was I?  
Saw—oh, with what unaccustomed eye!  
The room was strange and everything was strange  
Like a strange room entered by wild moonlight;  
And yet familiar as the light swept over me  
And I rose from the night.

Strange—yet stranger I.  
And as one climbs from water up to land  
Fumbling for weedy steps with foot and hand,  
So I for yesterdays whereon to climb  
To this remote and new-struck isle of time.  
But I found not myself nor yesterday—

Until, slowly, from deep to lesser deep  
Risen, I felt the seas no longer over me  
But only air and light.  
Yes, like one clutching at a ring I heard  
The household noises as they stirred,  
And holding fast I wondered. What were they?

I felt a strange hand lying at my side,  
Limp and cool. I touched it and knew it mine.

A murmur, and I remembered how the wind died  
In the near aspens. Then  
Strange things were no more strange.  
I travelled among common thoughts again;

And felt the new forged links of that strong chain  
That binds me to myself, and this to-day  
To yesterday. I heard it rattling near  
With a no more astonished ear.  
And I had lost the strangeness of that sleep,  
No more the long night rolled its great seas over me.

—O, too anxious I!  
For in this press of things familiar  
I have lost all that clung  
Round me awaking of strangeness and such sweetness  
Nothing now is strange  
Except the man that woke and then was I.

---

## THE FALL

From that warm height and pure,  
The peak undreamed of out of heavy air  
Rising to heaven more strange and rare;  
From that amazed brief sojourn, exquisite, insecure;

Fallen from thence to this,  
From all immortal sunk to mortal sweet,  
To slow gross joys from joy so fleet,  
Fallen to mere remembrance of unsustainable bliss....

O harsh, O heavy air,  
Difficult endurance, pain of common things!  
The slow sun east to westward swings,  
The flat-faced moon climbs labouring with a senseless stare.

From that inconceivable height——  
O inward eyes that saw and ears that heard,  
Spiritual swift wings that stirred  
In that warm-flushing air and unendurable light;

When I was as mere down  
On a swift-running youthful wind uptaken  
Over tall trees, white mountains, shaken,  
Into the uttermost azure lifted, lifted alone.

From that peak can it be  
That I am fallen, fallen that was so high?  
Or was that truly, surely I?  
Who is it crawls here now, sad, uncontentedly?

Fallen from that high content,  
—Fool, thou that wast content merely with bliss!  
Happy those lovers that will not kiss;  
Never to be fulfilled was the heart's endless passion meant.

Never on joys attainable  
To linger, never on easy near delight—  
O bitter, unreached infinite,  
Merciful defeat, availless anguish, hunger unendurable!

O who shall be in longing wise,  
Skilled in refusal, in embracing free,  
Glad with earth's innocent ecstasy,  
Yet all the uncomprehended heaven in his eyes!

---

## STAY

Stay, thou desired one, stay!  
Brighten the curious darkness of the world.  
Cold through the chill dark swings the sleeping world,  
Sense-heavy, dreaming dully of clear day.  
No moon, no stars, no sound of wind or seas:  
Wearily sleeping in immense unease,



Dreams, dreams the world of day.  
Stay, thou adored one, stay,  
Who on the dark hang'st lamps of gold delight,  
Gold flames amid the purple pit of night.  
Stay, stay,  
Who the cool dawn's most lovely gray  
Mak'st lovelier with rose of far away.  
Stay, thou, who buildest wonder of things mean  
(More truly so they're seen).  
Stay—nay, fly not, nay—stay;  
Youth gone, remain thou yet and yet.  
Though the world spin in darkness and forget  
The light,  
Stay thou, whose coming's joy and flight despair.  
Thou unimaginably more than fair,  
Brief unsustainable strange dream, stay yet!  
Lamping the world's close unsustainable dark  
With golden unimaginable day.

---

## SHADOWS

The shadow of the lantern on the wall,  
The lantern hanging from the twisted beam,  
The eye that sees the lantern, shadow and all.

The crackle of the sinking fire in the grate,  
The far train, the slow echo in the coombe,  
The ear that hears fire, train and echo and all.

The loveliness that is the secret shape  
Of once-seen, sweet and oft-dreamed loveliness,  
The brain that builds shape, memory, dream and all....

A white moon stares Time's thinning fabric through,  
And makes substantial insubstantial seem,  
And shapes immortal mortal as a dream;  
And eye and brain flicker as shadows do  
Restlessly dancing on a cloudy wall.

---

## WALKING AT EVE

Walking at eve I met a little child  
Running beside a tragic-featured dame,  
Who checked his blitheness with a quick "For shame!"  
And seemed by sharp caprice froward and mild.  
Scarce heeding her the sweet one ran, beguiled  
By the lit street, and his eyes too aflame;  
Only, at whiles, into his eyes there came  
Bewilderment and grief with terror wild.

So, Beauty, dost thou run with tragic life;  
So, with the curious world's caress enchanted,  
Even of ill things thine ecstasy dost make;  
Yet at the touch of fear and vital strife  
The splendours thy young innocence forsake,  
And with thy foster-mother's woe thou art haunted.

---

## THE PHYSICIAN

She comes when I am grieving and doth say,  
"Child, here is that shall drive your grief away."  
When I am hopeless, kisses me and stirs  
My breast with the strong lively courage of hers.  
Proud—she will humble me with but a word,  
Or with mild mockery at my folly gird;  
Fickle—she holds me with her loyal eyes;  
Remorseful—tells of neighbouring Paradise;  
Envious—"Be not so mad, so mad," she saith,  
"Envied and envier both race with Death"  
She my good Angel is: and who is she?—  
The soul's divine Physician, Memory.

---

## VISION AND ECHO

I have seen that which sweeter is  
Than happy dreams come true.  
I have heard that which echo is  
Of speech past all I ever knew.  
Vision and echo, come again,  
Nor let me grieve in easeless pain!

It was a hill I saw, that rose  
Like smoke over the street,  
Whose greening rampires were upreared  
Suddenly almost at my feet;  
And tall trees nodded tremblingly  
Making the plain day visionary.

But ah, the song, the song I heard  
And grieve to hear no more!  
It was not angel-voice, nor child's  
Singing alone and happy, nor  
Note of the wise prophetic thrush  
As lonely in the leafless bush.

It was not these, and yet I knew  
That song; but now, alas,  
My unpurged ears prove all too gross  
To keep the nameless air that was  
And is not; and my eyes forget  
The vision that I follow yet.

Yet though forgetful I did see.  
And heard, but cannot tell,  
And on my forehead felt an air  
Unearthly, on my heart a spell.  
I have seen that which deathless is,  
And heard—what I for ever miss!

---

## REVISITATION

It is here—the lime-tree in the garden path,  
The lilac by the wall, the ivied wall  
That was so high, the heavy, close-leaved creeper,  
The harsh gate jarring on its hinges still,  
The echoing clean flags—all  
The same, the same, and never more the same.

That mound was once a hill,  
The old lime-tree a forest (now as small  
As the poor lilac by the ivied wall),  
And this neglected narrow greenery  
A wilderness, and I its king and keeper;  
Lying upon the grass I saw the sky  
And all its clouds: the garden edged the sky.

The harsh gate jars upon its hinges still.

---

## UNPARDONED

Gentle as the air that kisses  
The splendid and ignoble with one breath,  
Gentle as obliterating Death—  
Though you be gentler yet,  
In days when the old, old things begin to fret  
The backward-looking consciousness,  
Will you forget?  
Or if remembering, will you forgive?

But there is one severer.  
Stung by your forgivingness so great  
Shall I forgive you then?—  
Basest of men  
Would rise in bitterness and sting again.  
Not if you should forget

Could I forget:  
Or if remembering, myself could I forgive?

Never! And yet such things have been,  
And ills as dark forgiven or forgot.  
But in those black hours when the heart burns hot  
And there's no nerve that's not  
Quick with the sense of things unheard, unseen—  
A terrible voice that's mine yet not mine cries,  
"Can that Eternal Righteousness  
Remembering forgive?"

---

### **SOME HURT THING**

I came to you quietly when you were lying  
In perfect midnight sleep.  
Your dark soft hair was all about your pillow,  
So black upon the white.  
I could not see your face except the lovely  
Curve of the pale cheek;  
Your head was bent as though your stirless slumber  
Was sea-like heavy and deep.  
The wind came gently in at the wide window,  
Shaking the candle-light  
And shadows on the wall; and there was silence,  
Or sound but far and weak.  
By the bedside your daytime toys were gathered:  
The bright bell-ringing wheel,  
Dolls clad in violent yellow and vermilion,  
Strings of gay-coloured beads....  
But you were far and far from these beside you,  
Entranced with other joys  
In fresh fields, among other children running:  
Your voice, I knew, must peal  
Purely among their high unearthly voices  
Over green daisied meads,  
While I stood watching your scarce-heaving slumber  
Beside your human toys—  
And heard, faint from the woods all through the night,  
The cry of some hurt thing that moaned for light.

---

### **THE WAITS**

Frost in the air and music in the air,  
And the singing is sweet in the street.  
She wakes from a dream to a dream—O hark!  
The singing so faint in the dark.

The musicians come and stand at the door,  
A fiddler and singers three,  
And one with a bright lamp thrusts at the dark,  
And the music comes sudden—O hark!

She hears the singing as sweet as a dream  
And the fiddle that climbs to the sky,  
With head 'neath the curtain she stares out—O hark!  
The music so strange in the dark.

She listens and looks and sees but the sky,  
While the fiddle is sweet in the porch,  
And she sings back into the singing dark  
Hark, herald angels, hark!

---

### **IN THE LANE**

The birds return,  
The blossom brightens again the cherry bough.  
The hedges are green again  
In the airless lane,  
And hedge and blossom and bird call, Now, now, now!

O birds, return!

Who will care if the blossom die on the bough,  
Or the hedge be bare again  
In the screaming lane?  
For what they were these are not, are not now.

The one gone makes  
All that remain seem strange and lonely now.  
She will not walk here again  
In the blossoming lane:—  
And there's a dead bough in every blossoming bough.

---

### THE LAST TIME

For the last time,  
The last, last time,  
The last ...  
All those last times have I lived through again,  
And every "last" renews itself in pain—  
Yes, each returns, and each returns in vain:  
You return not, the last remains the last,  
And I remain to cast  
Weak anchors of my love in shifting sands  
Of faith:—  
The anchors drag, nothing I see save death.

Together we  
Talked and were glad. I could not see  
That one black gesture menaced you and me!  
We kissed, and parted;  
I left you, and was even merry-hearted....  
And now my love is thwarted  
That reaches back to you and searches round,  
And dares not look on that harsh turfless mound.

And that last time  
We walked together and the air acold  
Hummed shrill around; the time that you  
Walked heavily,  
And I dared not to see,  
Nor dared you then to speak of what must be.  
We knew not what the shut days would unfold—  
Nay, could not know till all the days were told....  
But that last time we walked together, and  
—And walk no more together, nor clasp hand  
In hand, just stiffly as we used to do.

Never in dreams,  
O happy, never in stealing dreams  
We meet; never again  
I live by night the day's slow-dying pain ...  
The last, last time,  
The last—  
That time *is* past; yet in too-golden day  
My heart goes from me whispering,  
"Where are you—you—you—?"  
And comes back easeless to an easeless breast.  
But at night I rest  
Dreamless as derelict ships ride out to sea  
Empty, and no bird even on the snapp'd mast  
Pauses: into oblivion her shadow's cast;  
Into the empty night goes lonely she,  
And into sleep go—oh, more lonely I.

---

### YOU THAT WERE

You that were  
Half my life ere life was mine;  
You that on my shape the sign  
Set of yours;  
You that my young lips did kiss  
When your kiss summed up my bliss....  
Ah, once more  
You to kiss were all my bliss!

You whom I  
Could forget—strange, could forget  
Even for days (ah, now the fret  
Of my grief!);  
You who loved me though forgot;  
Welcomed still, reproaching not....  
    Ah, that now  
That forgetting were forgot!

You that now  
On my shoulder as I go  
Put your hand that wounds me so;  
You that brush  
Yet my lips with that one last  
Kiss that bitters all things past....  
    How shall I  
Yet endure that kiss the last?

You that are  
Where the feet of my blind grief  
Find you not, nor find relief;  
You that are  
Where my thought flying after you  
Broken falls and flies anew,  
    Now you're gone  
My love accusing aches for you.

*March 4, 1911.*

---

### **"THE LIGHT THAT NEVER WAS ON SEA OR LAND"**

O gone are now those eager great glad days of days, but I remember  
    Yet even yet the light that turned the saddest of sad hours to mirth;  
I remember how elate I swung upon the thrusting bowsprits,  
    And how the sun in setting burned and made the earth all unlike earth.

O gone are now those mighty ships I haunted days and days together,  
    And gone the mighty men that sang as crawled the tall craft out to sea;  
And fallen ev'n the forest tips and changed the eyes that watched their  
    burning,  
    But still I hear that shout and clang, and still the old spell stirs in me.

And as to some poor ship close locked in water dense and dark and vile  
    The wind comes garrulous from afar and sets the idle masts a-quiver;  
And ev'n to her so foully docked, swift as the sun's first beam at dawn  
    The sea-bird comes and like a star wheels by and down along the river;—

So to me the full wind blows from far strange waters echoingly,  
    And faint forgotten longings break the fast-sealed pools within my breast;  
So to me when sunset glows the scream comes of the white sea-bird,  
    And all those ancient raptures wake and wakes again the old unrest.

I see again the masts that crowd and part lie trees in living wind,  
    I hear again the shouts and cries and lip-lap of the waveless pool;  
I see again the smalling cloud of sail that into distance fades,  
    I am again the boy whose eyes with tears of grief and hope are full.

---

### **AT EVENING'S HUSH**

Now pipe no more, glad Shepherd,  
    Your joys from this fair hill  
    Through golden eves and still:  
There sounds from yon dense quarry  
A burden harsh and sorry.

No piping now, poor Shepherd.  
    Men strive with violent hand,  
    And anger stirs the bland  
Blithe heaven that ne'er yet trembled,  
Save with great spirits assembled.

No more, no more, sad Shepherd,  
    Let thy bright fingers stray  
    Idly in the old way;

No more their nimble glancing  
Set gleeful spirits a-dancing.

Put by thy pipe, O Shepherd!  
There needs no note of thine  
For men deaf, undivine....  
And lest brute hands should take it,  
O sorrowful Shepherd, break it!

---

### HAPPY DEATH

Bugle and battle-cry are still,  
The long strife's over;  
Low o'er the corpse-encumbered hill  
The sad stars hover.

It is in vain, O stars! you look  
On these forsaken:  
Awhile with blows on blows they shook,  
Or struck unshaken.

Needs now no pity of God or man ...  
Tears for the living!  
They have 'scaped the confines of life's plan  
That holds us grieving.

The unperturbed soft moon, the stars,  
The breeze that lingers,  
Wake not to ineffectual wars  
Their hearts and fingers.

Warriors o'ercoming and o'ercome,  
Alike contented,  
Have marched now to the last far drum,  
Praised, unlamented.

Bugle and battle-cry are still,  
The long strife's over;  
Oh, that with them I had fought my fill  
And found like cover!

---

### WISDOM AND A MOTHER

Why, mourner, do you mourn, nor see  
The heavenly Earth's felicity?

I mourn for him, my Dearest, lost,  
Who lived a frail life at my cost.

A grief like yours how many have known!

Were that a balm to ease my own!  
Or rather might I not accuse  
The Hand that does not even choose,  
But, taking blindly, took my best,  
And as indifferently takes the rest ...  
Like mine? Is there denied to me  
Even Sorrow's singularity?

---

### THE THRUSH SINGS

Singeth the Thrush, forgetting she is dead....  
How could you, Thrush, forget that she is dead?  
Or though forgetting, sing—and she is dead?  
O hush,  
Untimely, truant Thrush!

Singeth the Thrush, "I sing that she is dead!"  
Thou thoughtless Thrush, she loved you who is dead,  
Singeth the Thrush, "I sing her praise though dead."  
O hush,  
Untimely, grievous Thrush!

Singeth the Thrush, "I sing your happy dead,  
I sing her who is living, and no more dead,  
I sing her joy—she is no longer dead."

O hush,  
Enough, thou heavenly Thrush!

---

### TO MY MOTHER

No foreign tribute from a stranger-hand,  
Mother, I bring thee, whom not Heaven's songs  
Would as an alien reach.... Ah, but how far  
From Heaven's least heavenly is the changing note  
And changing fancy of these fitful cries!  
Mother, forgive them, as the best of me  
Has ever pleaded only for thy pardon,  
Not for thy praise.

Mother, there is a love  
Men give to wives and children, lovers, friends;  
There is a love which some men give to God.  
Ah! between this, I think, and that last love,  
Last and too-late-discovered love of God,  
There shines—and nearer to the love of God—  
The love a man gives only to his mother,  
Whose travail of dear thought has never end  
Until the End. Oh that my mouth had words  
Comfortable as thy kisses to the boy  
Who loved while he forgot thee! Now I love,  
Sundered and far, with daily heart's remembrance  
The face the wind brings to me, the sun lights,  
The birds and waters sing; the face of thee  
Whom I love with a love like love of God.

---

### THE UNUTTERED

For so long and so long had I forgot,  
Serenely busied  
With thousand things; at whiles desire grew hot  
And my soul dizzied  
With hapless and insatiable salt thirst.  
Nor was I humbled  
Saving with shame that, running with the worst  
My feet yet stumbled.  
Pride and delight of life enchained my heart,  
My heart enchanted,  
And oh, soft subtle fingers had their part,  
And eyes love-haunted.  
But while my busy mind was thus intent,  
Or thus surrendered,  
What was it, oh what strange thing was it sent  
Through all that hindered  
A thrill that woke the buried soul in me?—  
It seemed there fluttered  
A thought—or was it a sudden fear?—of Thee,  
Remote, unuttered.

---

### FAIR EVE

Fair Eve, as fair and still  
As fairest thought, climbs the high sheltering hill;  
As still and fair  
As the white cloud asleep in the deep air.

As cool, as fair and cool,  
As starlight swimming in a lonely pool;  
Subtle and mild  
As through her eyes the soul looks of a child.

A linnet sings and sings,  
A shrill swift cleaves the air with blackest wings;  
White twinkletails  
Run frankly in their meadow as day fails.

On such a night, a night  
That seems but the full sleep of tired light,  
I look and wait  
For what I know not, looking long and late.

Is it for a dream I look,  
A vision from the Tree of Heaven shook,  
As sweetness shaken  
From the fresh limes on lonely ways forsaken?

A dream of one, maybe,  
Who comes like sudden wind from oversea?  
Or most loved swallow  
Whom all fair days and golden musics follow?—

More sudden yet, more strange  
Than magic airs on magic hills that range:—  
Of one who'll steep  
The soul in soft forgetfulness ere it sleep.

Yes, down the hillside road,  
Where Eve's unhasty feet so gently trod,  
Follow His feet  
Whose leaf-like echoes make even spring more sweet.

---

### THE SNARE

Loose me and let me go!  
I am not yours.  
I do not know  
Your dark name ev'n, O Powers  
That out of the deep rise  
And wave your arms  
To weave strange charms.

Though the snare of eyes  
You weave for me,  
As a pool lies  
In wait for the moon when she  
Out of the deep will rise;  
And though you set  
Like mist your net;

And though my feet you catch,  
O dark, strange Powers,  
You may not snatch  
My soul, or call it yours.  
Out of your snare I rise  
And pass your charms,  
Nor feel your harms.

You loose me and I go:  
O see the arms  
Spread for me! lo,  
His lips break your charms.  
From the deep did He rise  
And round me set  
His Love for net.

---

### O HIDE ME IN THY LOVE

O hide me in Thy love, secure  
From this earth-clinging meanness.  
Lave my uncleanness  
In Thy compassionating love!

Bury this treachery as deep  
As mercy is enrooted.  
My days ill-fruited  
Shake till the shrivelled burden fall.

Put by those righteous arrows, Lord,  
Put even Thy justice by Thee;  
So I come nigh Thee



As came the Magdalen to Thy feet.

And like a heavy stone that's cast  
In a pool, on Thee I throw me,  
And feel o'erflow me  
Ripples of pity, deep waves of love.

---

### **PRAYER TO MY LORD**

If ever Thou didst love me, love me now,  
When round me beat the flattering vans of life,  
Kissing with rapid breath my lifted brow.  
Love me, if ever, when the murmur of strife,  
In each dark byway of my being creeps,  
When pity and pride, passion and passion's loss  
Wash wavelike round the world's eternal cross,  
Till 'mid my fears a new-born love indignant leaps.

If ever Thou canst love me, love me yet,  
When sweet, impetuous loves within me stir  
And the frail portals of my spirit fret—  
The love of love, that makes Heaven heavenlier,  
The love of earth, of birds, children and light,  
Love of this bitter, lovely native land....  
O, love me when sick with all these I stand  
And Death's far-rumoured wings beat on the lonely night.

---

### **THE TREE**

Oh, like a tree  
Let me grow up to Thee!  
And like a Tree  
Send down my roots to Thee.

Let my leaves stir  
In each sigh of the air,  
My branches be  
Lively and glad in Thee;

Each leaf a prayer,  
And green fire everywhere ...  
And all from Thee  
The sap within the Tree.

And let Thy rain  
Fall—or as joy or pain  
So that I be  
Yet unforget of Thee.

Then shall I sing  
The new song of Thy Spring,  
Every leaf of me  
Whispering Love in Thee!

---

### **EARTH TO EARTH**

What is the soul? Is it the wind  
Among the branches of the mind?  
Is it the sea against Time's shore  
Breaking and broken evermore?  
Is it the shore that breaks Time's sea,  
The verge of vast Eternity?  
And in the night is it the soul  
Sleep needs must hush, must needs kiss whole?  
Or does the soul, secure from sleep,  
Safe its bright sanctities yet keep?  
And oh, before the body's death  
Shall the confined soul ne'er gain breath,  
But ever to this serpent flesh  
Subdue its alien self afresh?  
Is it a bird that shuns earth's night,  
Or makes with song earth's darkness bright?

Is it indeed a thought of God,  
Or merest clod-fellow to clod?  
A thought of God, and yet subdued  
To any passion's apish mood?  
Itself a God—and yet, O God,  
As like to earth as clod to clod?

---

### ON A PIECE OF SILVER

So! the fierce acid licks the silver clean,  
Unwonted plain the superscription's seen  
Round the cleared head; the metal, virgin-bright,  
Shines a mild Moon to the Sun candle-light.  
And in these floating stains, this evil murk,  
All your change-crowded, moment-histories lurk,  
Voluble Silverling! Dost yield me now  
Your chance-illumined record, and allow  
Prying of idle eyes?... you came a boon  
To men as weary as any the weak moon  
Shines on but cheers not; you were life in death;  
Almost a God to give the prize of breath,  
Almost a God to give the prize of joy,  
Almost a God—but God! the veriest toy  
Child's fingers break, from death to buy back life,  
Turn the keen trouble of grief's eager knife,  
Or sense-confounded hearts heal of the ancient strife.  
O Coin that men have toiled for, lacked and mourned,  
Sold life for and sold honour, won and scorned;  
O Coin that oft hast been a spinning Fate,  
Yet impotent *her* bitterness to abate;  
O Coin that Love contemns, reckoning nought  
(But with you, ah, Love's best is sold and bought)—  
Heart of the harlot, you; the Judas blood  
Hell's devils leech on; you the Price of God!

---

### THE ESCAPE

Like one who runs  
Fearful at night, he knows not why,  
Dreading the loneliness, yet shuns  
The highway's casual company;

Wherefore he hastes,  
The friendly gloom of ancient trees  
Unheeding, and the shining wastes  
Lying broad and quiet as the seas;

The beauty of night  
Hating for very fear, until  
Beyond the bend a lowly light  
Beams single from a lowly sill;

And the poor fool,  
Flying the sacred, solemn dark,  
Leaves gladly the large, cool  
Night for that serviceable spark;

And thankful then  
To have 'scaped the peril of the way,  
Turns not his timid steps again  
That night, but waits the common day;—

So I, as weak,  
Have fled the great hills of Thy love,  
Too faint to hear what Thou dost speak,  
Too feeble with fear to look above,

And hasten to win  
Some flickering, brief security,  
In sinful sleep or waking sin,  
From the enfolding thought of Thee!

---

## WONDER

Following upon the faint wind's fickle courses  
A feather drifts and strays.  
My thought after her thought  
Floated—how many ways and days!

She swayed me as the wind swayeth a feather.  
I was a leaf upon  
Her breath, a dream within  
Her dream. The dream how soon was done!

For now all's changed, not Time's change more wondrous,  
I am her sun, and she  
(Herself doth swear) the moon;  
Or she the ship upon my sea.

How should this be? I know not; I so grossly  
Mastering her spirit pure.  
O, how can her bird's breast  
My nervous and harsh hand endure?

Tell me if this be love indeed, fond lovers,  
That high stoop to low,  
Soul be to flesh subdued;  
That the sun around the earth should go?

I know not: I but know that love is misery,  
O'erfilled with delight.  
Day follows night: her love  
Is gay as day, yet strange as night.

---

## LAMBOURN TOWN

The rain beat on me as I walked,  
In the roadside it ran and muttered.  
It seemed the rain to the wind talked  
Of storm: in the wind the wild cloud fluttered.

Across the down, now bleak and loud,  
I went and the rain ran with me.  
How swift the rain, how low the cloud!  
No heavenly comfort could I see,

Nor comfort of low beaming light  
From any casement creeping out.  
The swift rain on the patient night  
Swept, and anon would great winds shout.

Rain, rain, nought else, until I turned  
The thrusting shoulder of the down,  
And through the mist of rain there burned  
The few green lanterns of the town.

And in the rain the night was lit  
With my love's eyes burning for me;  
Her white face in the dark was sweet,  
Her hands like moonflowers quiveringly

Fell upon mine, and each was dashed  
With rain blown in from streaming eaves,  
While overhead the broad flood plashed  
Noisily on the broad plane leaves.

Within we heard the gurgle-glock  
In the pipe, the tip-tap on the sill  
Like the same ticking of the clock;  
We heard the water-butt o'erspill,

The wind come blustering at the door,  
The whipped white lilac thrash the wall;  
The candle flame upon the floor  
Crept between shadows magical....

In the black east a pallid ray

Rose high; and sweeping o'er the down  
The slow increase of stormless day  
Lit the wet roofs of Lambourn town.

---

### THE LAMP

The lamp shone golden where she slept,  
Shining against deep-folded shadows.  
There was no stir but her slow breathing  
Save when a long sigh crept  
Between her lips.

Her hair spread dark in that faint light,  
Her shut eyes showed the long dark lashes—  
Still now, that with her laughter quivered.  
On the white sheet lay white  
And limp her hands.

Golden against the shadow shone  
The lamp's small flame, till dawn was brightening,  
And on the flame a gold beam slanted.  
The shadows lingering on  
Grew faint and thin.

Sleeping she murmured, stirred and sighed,  
A dream from her sleep-vision faded.  
Her earthly eyes 'neath languid eyelids  
Wakened: her bosom cried,  
"Come back, come back,

"Come back, my dream!" Rising she drest  
Her beauty's lamp with cunning fingers.  
She had the look of birds a-flutter  
Round dewy trees with breast  
Throbbing with song.

---

### WHO IS IT THAT ANSWERS?

The clouds no more are flocking  
After the flushing sun;  
Bees end their long droning,  
The bat's hunt is begun;  
And the tired wind that went flittering  
Up and down the hill  
Lies like a shadow still,  
Like a shadow still.

Who is it that's calling  
Out of the deepening dark,  
Calling, calling, calling?—  
No!—yet hark!  
The sleepy wind wakes, carrying  
Up and down the hill  
A voice how small and still,  
How sweet and still!

Who is it that answers  
Out of a quiet cloud—  
"Stay, oh stay! I come, I come!"  
Cried at last aloud?  
My voice, my heart went answering  
Up and down the hill—  
Mine so strange and still,  
Mine grave and still.

---

### WAITING

Rich in the waning light she sat  
While the fierce rain on the window spat.  
The yellow lamp-glow lit her face,  
Shadows cloaked the narrow place  
She sat adream in. Then she'd look

Idly upon an idle book;  
Anon would rise and musing peer  
Out at the misty street and drear;  
Or with her loosened dark hair play,  
Hiding her fingers' snow away;  
And, singing softly, would sing on  
When the desire of song had gone.  
"O lingering day!" her bosom sighed,  
"O laggard Time!" each motion cried.  
Last she took the lamp and stood  
Rich in its flood,  
And looked and looked again at what  
Her longing fingers' zeal had wrought;  
And turning then did nothing say,  
Hiding her thoughts away.

---

### ABSENCE

Distance no grace can lend you, but for me  
Distance yet magnifies your mystery.  
With you, and soon content, I ask how should  
In your two eyes be hid my heaven of good?  
How should your own mere voice the strange words speak  
That tease me with the sense of what's to seek  
In all the world beside? How your brown hair,  
That simply and neglectfully you wear,  
Bind my wild thoughts in its abundant snare?  
With you, I wonder how you're stranger than  
Another woman to another man;  
But parted—and you're as a ship unknown  
That to poor castaways at dawn is shown  
As strange as dawn, so strange they fear a trick  
Of eyes long-vexed and hope with falseness sick.  
Parted, and like the riddle of a dream,  
Dark with rich promise, does your beauty seem.  
I wonder at your patience, stirless peace,  
Your subtle pride, mute pity's quick release.  
Then are you strange to me and sweet as light  
Or dew; as strange and dark as starless night.  
Then let this restless parting be forgiven:  
I go from you to find in you strange heaven.

---

### SLEEP

Not a dream brush your sleep,  
Not a thought wake and creep  
In upon your spirit's slumber;  
Not a memory encumber,  
Nor a thievish care unbar  
Sleep's portcullis that no star  
Nor sentry hath. I'll not speak  
With my soul even: no, nor seek  
Other happiness for you  
When you this happy sleep sleep through.  
Let no least desire waver  
Between us, nor impatience quaver;  
No sudden nearness of me flush  
Your veins with welcome.... Hush, hush!  
Be still, my thoughts, lest you creep  
Unawares into her sleep.

---

### YOUR SHADOW

From Swindon out to White Horse Hill  
I walked, in morning rain,  
And saw your shadow lying there.  
As clear and plain  
As lies the White Horse on the Hill  
I saw your shadow lying there.

Over the wide green downs and bleak,

Unthinking, free I walked,  
And saw your shadow fluttering by.  
Almost it talked,  
Answering what I dared not speak  
While thoughts of you ran fluttering by....

So on to Baydon sauntered, teased  
With that pure native air.  
Sometimes the sweetness of wild thyme  
The strings of care  
Did pluck; sometimes my soul was eased  
With more than sweetness of wild thyme.

Sometimes within a pool I caught  
Your face, upturned to mine.  
And where sits Chilton by the waters  
Your look did shine  
Wildly in the mill foam that sought  
To hide you in those angry waters.

And yet, O Sweet, you never knew  
Those downs, the thymy air  
That with your spirit haunted is—  
Yes, everywhere!  
Ah, but my heart is full of you,  
And with your shadow haunted is.

---

### THE FULL TIDE

Now speaks the wave, whispering me of you;  
In all his murmur your music murmurs too.  
O 'tis your voice, my love, whispering in  
The wave's voice, even your voice so far and thin;  
And mine to yours answering clear is heard  
In the high lonely voice of the last bird.

And when, my love, the full tide runneth again,  
Shall yet the seabird call, call, call in vain?  
Will not the tide wake in my heart and stir  
The old rich happiness that's sunken there?  
Thou moon of love, bid the retreated tide  
Return, for which the wandering bird has cried.

---

### HANDS

Your hands, your hands,  
Fall upon mine as waves upon the sands.  
O, soft as moonlight on the evening rose,  
That but to moonlight will its sweet uncloze,  
Your hands, your hands,  
Fall upon mine, and my hands open as  
That evening primrose opens when the hot hours pass.

Your hands, your hands,  
They are like towers that in far southern lands  
Look at pale dawn over gloom-valley'd miles,  
White temple towers that gleam through mist at whiles.  
Your hands, your hands,  
With the south wind fall kissing on my brow,  
And all past joy and future is summed in this great "Now!"

---

### THE NIGHT WATCH

Beneath the trees with heedful step and slow  
At night I go,  
Fearful upon their whispering to break  
Lest they awake  
Out of those dreams of heavenly light that fill  
Their branches still  
With a soft murmur of memoried ecstasy.  
There 'neath each tree  
Nightlong a spirit watches, and I feel

His breath unseal  
The fast-shut thoughts and longings of tired day,  
That flutter away  
Mothlike on luminous soft wings and frail  
And moonlike pale.  
There in the flowering chestnuts' bowering gloom  
And limes' perfume  
Wandering wavelike through the moon-drawn night  
That heaves toward light,  
There hang I my dark thoughts and deeper prayers;  
And as the airs  
Of star-kissed dawn come stirring and o'er-creep  
The ford of sleep,  
Thy shape, great Love, grows shadowy in the East,  
Thine accents least  
Of all those warring voices of false morn:  
And oh, forlorn  
Thy hope, thy courage vanishing, thine eyes  
Sad with surprise.  
Oh, with the dawn I know, I know how vain  
Is love that's fain  
To beat and beat against her obstinate door.  
For as once more  
It groans, she passes out not heeding me,  
Nay, will not see:—  
As when a man, rich and of high estate,  
Sees at his gate  
(Or will not see) a famishing poor wretch,  
Whose longings fetch  
Old anger from his pain-imprisoning breast,  
Till sad despair his anger puts to rest.

---

### THE HAUNTED SHADOW

Fair Trees, O keep from chattering so  
When I with my more fair do go  
Beneath your branches;  
For if I laugh with her your sigh  
Her rare and sudden mirth puts by,  
Or your too noisy glee will take  
Persuasion from my lips and make  
Her deaf as winter.

O be not as the pines—that keep  
The shadow-charmèd light asleep—  
Perverse and sombre!  
For when we in the pinewood walked  
And of young love and far age talked,  
Their solemn haunted shadow broke  
Her peace—ah, how the sharp sob shook  
Her shadowed bosom!

---

### ALONE AND COLD

Do not, O do not use me  
As you have used others.  
Better you did refuse me:  
You have refused others.  
Better, far better hope to banish  
A small child than, grown old,  
Hope should decay, his vigour vanish,  
And I be left alone and  
Cold, cold.

Ah, use no guile nor cunning  
If you should even yet love me.  
Hark, Time with Love is running,  
Death cloud-like floats above me.  
Love me with such simplicity  
As children, frankly bold,  
Do love with; oh, never pity me,  
Though I be left alone and  
Cold, cold.

---

## INEVITABLE CHANGE

Young as the Spring seemed life when she  
Came from her silent East to me;  
Unquiet as Autumn was my breast  
When she declined into her West.

Such tender, such untroubling things  
She taught me, daughter of all Springs;  
Such dusty deathly lore I learned  
When her last embers redly burned.

How should it hap (Love, canst thou say?)  
Such end should be to so pure day?  
Such shining chastity give place  
To this annulling grave's disgrace?

Such hopes be quenched in this despair,  
Grace chilled to granite everywhere?  
How should—in vain I cry—how should  
That be, alas, which *only* could!

---

## LONELINESS

How green and strange the light is,  
Creeping through the window.  
Lying alone in bed,  
How strange the night is!

How still and chill the air is.  
It seems no sound could live  
Here in my room  
That now so bare is.

All bright and still the room is,  
But easeless here am I.  
Deep in my heart  
Cold lonely gloom is!

---

## I HEARD A VOICE UPON THE WINDOW BEAT

I heard a voice upon the window beat  
And then grow dim, grow still.  
Opening I saw the snowy sill  
Marked with the robin's feet.  
Chill was the air and chill  
The thoughts that in my bosom beat.

I thought of all that wide and hopeless snow  
Crusting the frozen lands.  
Of small birds that in famished bands  
A-chill and silent grow.  
And how Earth's myriad hands  
Clutched only hills of frosted snow.

And then I thought of Love that beat and cried  
Famishing at my breast;  
How I, by chilling care distrest,  
Denied him, and Love died....  
O, with what sore unrest  
Love's ghost woke with the bird that cried!

---

## FIRST LOVE

I

"No, no! Leave me not in this dark hour,"  
She cried. And I,  
"Thou foolish dear, but call not dark this hour;  
What night doth lour?"



And nought did she reply,  
But in her eye  
The clamorous trouble spoke, and then was still.

O that I heard her once more speak,  
Or even with troubled eye  
Teach me her fear, that I might seek  
Poppies for misery.  
The hour was dark, although I knew it not,  
But when the livid dawn broke then I knew,  
How while I slept the dense night through  
Treachery's worm her fainting fealty slew.

O that I heard her once more speak  
As then—so weak—  
"No, no! Leave me not in this dark hour."  
That I might answer her,  
"Love, be at rest, for nothing now shall stir  
Thy heart, but my heart beating there."

## II

Come back, come back—ah, never more to leave me!  
Come back, even though your constant longing grieve me,  
Longing for other looks and hands than mine.  
By all that's most divine  
In your frank human beauty, come and cover  
With that deceiving smile the love your lover  
Has taught you, and the light that in your eyes  
Tells of the painful joys that make your ruinous Paradise.

Come back, that so, upon the shining meadow  
When the sun draws the magic of your shadow,  
Or when the red fire's gradual sinking light  
Yields up the room to night;  
Seeing you thus or thus I may recapture  
The very sharpness of remembered rapture:—  
So it may seem, by exquisite deceit,  
You are yet mine, I yours, and life yet rare and sweet.

Come back—no, come not back now, come back never;  
That day you went I knew it was for ever.  
I know you, how the spectre of cold shame  
Would chill you if you came.  
Lo, here first love's first memory abideth;  
Here in my heart the image of you yet hideth.  
But though you should come back and hope thrilled me anew,  
First love would yet be dead—oh, it would not be you!

## III

O but what grace if I could but forget you!  
You have made league with all familiar things—  
The thrush that still, evening and morning, sings,  
The aspen leaves that sigh  
"My dear!" with your true voice when I pass by....  
O, and that too-long-dying flush of tender sky  
That minds me, and with sense too grave for tears,  
Of those forever dead too-blissful years.

Yet 'twere a miracle could I forget you,  
Since even dead things, once sensible of you,  
Yield up your ghost; as all the garden through  
Murmurs the rose, "'Twas she  
Shook in her palm the dew that shone in me;"  
And on the stairs your recent footstep echoingly  
Sounds yet again, and each dark doorway speaks  
Of you toward whom my sharpened longing seeks.

O that I could forget or not regret you!  
Could I but see you as I have seen a fair  
Child under apple-burdened boughs that bear  
Morn's autumn beauty, and  
Seeing her saw all heaven at my hand,

And all day long that happy child before me stand....  
Not thus I see you, but as one drowning sees  
Home, friends—and loves his very enemies!

---

### THE CALL

Is it the wind that stirs the trees,  
Is it the trees that scratch the wall,  
Is it the wall that shakes and mutters,  
Is it a dumb ghost's call?

The wind steals in and twirls the candle,  
The branches heave and brush the wall,  
But more than tree or wild wind mutters  
This night, this night of all.

"Open!" a cry sounds, and I gasp.  
"Open!" and hands beat door and wall.  
"Open!" and each dark echo mutters.  
I rise, a shape and shadow tall.

"Open!" Across the room I falter,  
And near the door crouch by the wall;  
Thrice bolt the door as the voice mutters  
"Open!" and frail strokes fall.

"Open!" The light's out, and I shrink  
Quaking and blind against the wall;  
"Open!" no sound is, yet it mutters  
Within me now, this night of all.

Was it the wind that stirred the trees,  
Was it the trees that scratched the wall,  
Was it the wall that shook and muttered.  
Or Love's last, ghostly call?

---

### THE SHADE

I saw him as he went  
With merry voice and eye.

I met him when he came  
Back, tired but the same—  
The same clear voice, bright eye,  
Merry laugh, quick reply.

And now, if I but look  
Unnoting at a book,  
Or from the window stare  
At dark woods newly bare,  
I see that shining eye,  
The same as when he went:

—But whose is the low sigh,  
The cold shade o'er me bent?

---

### HAPPY IS ENGLAND NOW

There is not anything more wonderful  
Than a great people moving towards the deep  
Of an unguessed and unfeared future; nor  
Is aught so dear of all held dear before  
As the new passion stirring in their veins  
When the destroying Dragon wakes from sleep.

Happy is England now, as never yet!  
And though the sorrows of the slow days fret  
Her faithfullest children, grief itself is proud.  
Ev'n the warm beauty of this spring and summer  
That turns to bitterness turns then to gladness  
Since for this England the beloved ones died.

Happy is England in the brave that die  
For wrongs not hers and wrongs so sternly hers;  
Happy in those that give, give, and endure  
The pain that never the new years may cure;  
Happy in all her dark woods, green fields, towns,  
Her hills and rivers and her chafing sea.

Whate'er was dear before is dearer now.  
There's not a bird singing upon his bough  
But sings the sweeter in our English ears:  
There's not a nobleness of heart, hand, brain  
But shines the purer; happiest is England now  
In those that fight, and watch with pride and tears.

---

## THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES

And now, while the dark vast earth shakes and rocks  
In this wild dream-like snare of mortal shocks,  
How look (I muse) those cold and solitary stars  
On these magnificent, cruel wars?—  
Venus, that brushes with her shining lips  
(Surely!) the wakeful edge of the world and mocks  
With hers its all ungentle wantonness?—  
Or the large moon (pricked by the spars of ships  
Creeping and creeping in their restlessness),  
The moon pouring strange light on things more strange,  
Looks she unheedfully on seas and lands  
Trembling with change and fear of counterchange?

O, not earth trembles, but the stars, the stars!  
The sky is shaken and the cool air is quivering.  
I cannot look up to the crowded height  
And see the fair stars trembling in their light,  
For thinking of the starlike spirits of men  
Crowding the earth and with great passion quivering:—  
Stars quenched in anger and hate, stars sick with pity.  
I cannot look up to the naked skies  
Because a sorrow on dark midnight lies,  
Death, on the living world of sense;  
Because on my own land a shadow lies  
That may not rise;  
Because from bare grey hillside and rich city  
Streams of uncomprehending sadness pour,  
Thwarting the eager spirit's pure intelligence ...  
How look (I muse) those cold and solitary stars  
On these magnificent, cruel wars?

Stars trembled in broad heaven, faint with pity.  
An hour to dawn I looked. Beside the trees  
Wet mist shaped other trees that branching rose,  
Covering the woods and putting out the stars.  
There was no murmur on the seas,  
No wind blew—only the wandering air that grows  
With dawn, then murmurs, sighs,  
And dies.  
The mist climbed slowly, putting out the stars,  
And the earth trembled when the stars were gone;  
And moving strangely everywhere upon  
The trembling earth, thickened the watery mist.

And for a time the holy things are veiled.  
England's wise thoughts are swords; her quiet hours  
Are trodden underfoot like wayside flowers,  
And every English heart is England's wholly.  
In starless night  
A serious passion streams the heaven with light.  
A common beating is in the air—  
The heart of England throbbing everywhere.  
And all her roads are nerves of noble thought,  
And all her people's brain is but her brain;  
And all her history, less her shame,  
Is part of her requicken'd consciousness.  
Her courage rises clean again.

Even in victory there hides defeat;  
The spirit's murdered though the body survives,  
Except the cause for which, a people strives  
Burn with no covetous, foul heat.  
Fights she against herself who infamously draws  
The sword against man's secret spiritual laws.  
But thou, England, because a bitter heel  
Hath sought to bruise the brain, the sensitive will,  
The conscience of the world,  
For this, England, art risen, and shalt fight  
Purely through long profoundest night,  
Making their quarrel thine who are grieved like thee;  
And (if to thee the stars yield victory)  
Tempering their hate of the great foe that hurled  
Vainly her strength against the conscience of the world.

I looked again, or dreamed I looked, and saw  
The stars again and all their peace again.  
The moving mist had gone, and shining still  
The moon went high and pale above the hill.  
Not now those lights were trembling in the vast  
Ways of the nervy heaven, nor trembled earth:  
Profound and calm they gazed as the soft-shod hours passed.  
And with less fear (not with less awe,  
Remembering, England, all the blood and pain)  
How look, I cried, you stern and solitary stars  
On these disastrous wars!

*August, 1914.*

---

## SWEET ENGLAND

I heard a boy that climbed up Dover's Hill  
Singing *Sweet England*, sweeter for his song.  
The notes crept muffled through the copse, but still  
Sharply recalled the things forgotten long,  
The music that my own boy's lips had known,  
Singing, and old airs on a wild flute blown;

And other hills, more grim and lonely far,  
And valleys empty of these orchard trees;  
A sheep-pond filled with the moon, a single star  
I had watched by night searching the wreckful seas;  
And all the streets and streets that childhood knew  
In years when London streets were all my view.

And I remembered how that song I heard,  
*Sweet England*, sung by children on May-day,  
Nor any song was sweeter of a bird  
Than that half-grievous air from children gay—  
For then, as now, youth made the sadness bright,  
Till the words, *Sweet, Sweet England*, shone with light.

Now, listening, I forgot how men yet fought  
For this same England, till the song was done  
And no sound lingered but the lark's, that brought  
New music down from fields of cloud and sun,  
Or the sad lapwing's over fields of green  
Crying beneath the copse, near but unseen.

Then I remembered. All wide England spread  
Before me, hill and wood and meadow and stream  
And ancient roads and homes of men long dead,  
And all the beauty a familiar dream.  
On the green hills a cloud of silver grey  
Gave gentle light stranger than light of day.

And clear between the hills, past the near crest  
And many hills, the hungry cities crept,  
Noble and mean, oppressive and oppressed,  
Where dreams unrealized of England slept:  
And they too England, packed in dusty street  
With men that half forgot England was sweet.

Now men were far, but like a living brain

Quick with their thought, the earth, hills, air and light  
Were quivering as though a shining rain  
Falling all round made even the light more bright;  
And trees and water and heath and hedge-flowers fair  
With more than natural sweetness washed the air.

From hill to hill a sparkling web it swung,  
A snare for happiness, lit with lovely dews.  
The very smoke of cities now was hung  
But like a grave girl's dress of tranquil hues:  
And how (I thought) can England, seen thus bright,  
Lifting her clear frank head, but love the light?—

No, not her brain! that bright web was the shadow  
Of the high spirit in their spirit shining  
Who on scarred foreign hill and trenchèd meadow  
Kept the faith yet, unfearful, unrepining;—  
Her faith that with the dark world's liberty  
Mingles as earth's great rivers with the sea.

O with what gilding ray was the land a gleam!  
It was not sun and dew, bush, bough and leaf,  
But human spirits visible as in a dream  
That turns from glad to aching, being too brief:  
Courage and beauty shining in such brightness  
That all the thoughtful woods were no more lightless.

But most the hills a splendour had put on  
Of golden honour, bright and high and calm  
And like old heroes young men dream upon  
When midnight stirs with magic sword and palm;—  
With the fled mist all meanness put away  
And the air clear and keen as salt sea-spray....

And yet no dream; no dream! I saw the whole,  
The reap'd fields, idle kine and wandering sheep.  
A weak wind through the near tall hedge-tree stole,  
And died where Dover's Hill rose bare and steep;  
I saw yet what I saw an hour ago,  
But knew what save by dreams I did not know—

*Sweet England!*—wild proud heart of things unspoken  
Spirit that men bear shyly and love purely;  
That dies to live anew a life unbroken  
As spring from every winter rising surely:  
*Sweet England* unto generations sped,  
Now bitter-sweetest for her daily dead.

*September, 1916.*

---

## PRESAGE OF VICTORY

### I

Then first I knew, seeing that bent grey head,  
How England honours all her thousand dead.  
Then first I knew how faith through black grief burns,  
Until the ruined heart glows while it yearns  
For one that never more returns—  
Glows in the spent embers of its pride  
For one that careless lived and fearless died.  
And then I knew, then first,  
How everywhere Hope from her prison had burst—  
On every hill, wide dale, soft valley's lap,  
In lonely cottage clutch'd between huge downs,  
And streets confused with streets in clanging towns—  
Like spring from winter's jail pouring her sap  
Into the idle wood of last year's trees.  
Then first I knew how the vast world-disease  
Would die away, and England upon her seas  
Shake every scab of sickness; toward new skies  
Lifting a little holier her head,  
With honesty the brighter in her eyes,  
And all that urgent horror well forgot,

The dark remembered not;  
Only remembered then, with bosom yet hot,  
The blood that on how many a far field lies,  
The bones enriching not our English earth  
That brought them to such splendid birth  
And the last sacrifice.

## II

Then first I knew, seeing that head bent low,  
How gravely all her days she needs must go,  
Bearing an image in her faded breast....

O, the dark unrest  
Of thoughts that never cease their flight,  
Never vanishing, yet never still,  
Like birds that wail round the bewildering nest!  
But other nestlings never shall be hers,  
Only a painful image his place fill,  
Only a memory remain for her thin bosom to nurse  
In all that dark unrest  
Of sleepless and tormented night.

## III

Yet from *her* eyes presage of victory  
Looked steadfast out at mine.  
It is not to be thought of (said her eyes)  
That only a foul blotch the sun may shine  
On England, through low poisonous thick skies!  
Never, O never again  
This pain, this pain!  
Else from that foreign earth his bones would rise  
And thrust in anger at the bitter skies.  
It is not to be thought of that such prayer  
Should fall unheeded back through heavy air.  
But I have heard, in the night I have heard,  
When not a leaf in all the orchard stirred,  
And even the water of the bourne hung still,  
And the old twitching, creaking house was still,  
And all was still,  
What was it I heard?  
It could not be his voice, come from so far;  
I know 'twas not a bird.  
It *was* his voice, or that lone watchful star  
Creeping above the casement bar,  
Saying: Fear thou no ill,  
No ill!  
Then all the silence was an echoing round,  
The water and dumb trees their antique murmur found,  
And clear as music came the repeated Sound:  
Fear thou no ill, no ill!

Was it her eyes or her tongue told me this?

## IV

Yet but sad comfort from such pain is caught....  
I went out from the house and climbed the coombe,  
And where the first light of sweet morning hung  
I found the light I sought.  
From somewhere south a bugle's note was flung,  
From somewhere north a sombre boom;  
On the opposing hills white flecks and grey  
Spotted the misty green,  
And blue smoke wraiths around the tall trees clung.  
Presently rose thick dust clouds from the green:  
Came up, or seemed to come, the instant beat  
Of marching feet;  
Then with the clouds the beating died away,  
And nothing was seen  
But broken hills and the new flush of day.

## V

All round the folding hills were like green waves,  
Tossing awhile together ere they fall  
And fling their salt on the steep stony beach.  
The sound I heard was sound of Roman feet—  
I saw the sparkling light on Roman glaives,  
I heard the Roman speech  
Answering the wild Iberian battle-call:  
They passed from sight on the long street.  
And I saw then the Mercian Kings that strode  
Proudly from the small city of grey stone  
And climbed the folding hills,  
Past the full springs that bubbled and flowed  
Through the soft valley and on to Avon stream.  
They passed—as all things pass and seem  
No other than a dream,  
All but the shining and the echo gone.  
But still I listened and looked. Their voice it was  
Blown through the valley grass;  
Their dust it was that sprang from the hard road  
Where now these English legions flowed,  
Waking the quiet like a steady wind.  
That ancient soldiery before me passed  
With all that followed them, and these the last  
Of my own generation, my own mind;  
Their strength and courage rooted deep in the earth  
That brings men to such splendid birth  
And no vain sacrifice ...  
It was as when the land all darkness lies,  
And shades, nor only shades, move freely out  
And through the trees are heard and all about  
Their ancient ways, 'neath the old stars and skies.  
So now in morning's light I knew them there  
Leading the men that marched and marched away,  
And mounted up the hill, and down the hill  
Passed from my eyes and ears, and left the air  
Trembling everywhere,  
And then how still!

## VI

Then first I knew the joy that yet should be  
Ringing from camped hill and guarded sea  
With England's victory.  
The dust had stirred, the infinite dust had stirred,  
It was the courage of the past I heard,  
The virtue of those buried bones again  
Animate in these marching Englishmen;  
And nothing wanted if the dead but nerved  
The living hands that the same England served.  
With new-washed eyes I saw as I went down  
On the hill crest the oak-grove's crown,  
With new delighted ear heard the lark sing—  
That mad delighted thing;  
The very smoke that rose was strangely blue,  
But most the orchard brightened wonderfully new,  
Where the wild spring, ere winter snow well gone,  
Scattered her whiter, briefer snow-cloud down.  
And England lovelier looked than when  
Her dead roused not her living men.

*May, 1916.*

---

## THE RETURN

I heard the rumbling guns. I saw the smoke,  
The unintelligible shock of hosts that still,  
Far off, unseeing, strove and strove again:  
And Beauty flying naked down the hill.

From morn to eve: and then stern night cried Peace!  
And shut the strife in darkness; all was still.

Then slowly crept a triumph on the dark—  
And I heard Beauty singing up the hill.

---

## ENGLISH HILLS

O that I were  
Where breaks the pure cold light  
On English hills,  
And peewits rising cry,  
And gray is all the sky.

Or at evening there  
When the faint slow light stays,  
And far below  
Sleeps the last lingering sound,  
And night leans all round.

O then, O there  
'Tis English haunted ground.  
The diligent stars  
Creep out, watch, and smile;  
The wise moon lingers awhile.

For surely there  
Heroic shapes are moving,  
Visible thoughts,  
Passions, things divine,  
Clear beneath clear star-shine.

O that I were  
Again on English hills,  
Seeing between  
Laborious villages  
Her cool dark loveliness.

---

## HOMECOMING

When I came home from wanderings  
In a tall chattering ship,  
I thought a hundred happy things,  
Of people, places, and such things  
As I came sailing home.

The tall ship moved how slowly on  
With me and hundreds more,  
That thought not then of wanderings,  
But of unwhispered, longed-for things,  
Familiar things of home.

For not in miles seemed other lands  
Far off, but in long years  
As we came near to England then;  
Even the tall ship heard secret things  
As she moved trembling home.

It was at dawn. The chattering ship  
Was strangely hushed; faint mist  
Crept everywhere, and we crept on,  
And every eye was creeping on  
The mist, as we moved home....

Until we saw, far, very far,  
Or dreamed we saw, her cliffs,  
And thought of sweet, intolerable things,  
Of England—dark, unwhispered things,  
Such things, as we crept home.

---

## ENGLAND'S ENEMY

She stands like one with mazy cares distraught.  
Around her sudden angry storm-clouds rise,  
Dark, dark! and comes the look into her eyes



Of old. All that herself herself hath taught  
She cons anew, that courage new be caught  
Of courage old. Yet comfortless still lies  
Snake-like in her warm bosom (vexed with sighs)  
Fear of the greatness that herself hath wrought.

No glory but her memory teems with it,  
No beauty that's not hers; more nobly none  
Of all her sisters runs with her; but she  
For her old destiny dreams herself unfit,  
And fumbling at the future doubtfully  
Muses how Rome of Romans was undone.

---

### FROM PICCADILLY IN AUGUST

Now the trees rest: the moon has taught them sleep,  
Like drowsy wings of bats are all their leaves,  
Clinging together. Girls at ease who fold  
Fair hands upon white necks and through dusk fields  
Walk all content,—of them the trees have taken  
Their way of evening rest; the yellow moon  
With her pale gold has lit their dreams that lisp  
On the wind's murmuring lips.

And low beyond

Burn those bright lamps beneath the moon more bright,  
Lamps that but flash and sparkle and light not  
The inward eye and musing thought, nor reach  
Where, poplar-like, that tall-built campanile  
Lifts to the neighbouring moon her head and feels  
The pale gold like an ocean laving her.

---

### EVENING BEAUTY: BLACKFRIARS

Nought is but beauty weareth, near and far,  
Under the pale, blue sky and lonely star.  
This is that quick hour when the city turns  
Her troubled harsh distortion and blind care  
Into brief loveliness seen everywhere,  
While in the fuming west the low sun smouldering burns.

Not brick nor marble the rich beauty owns,  
Not this is held in starward-pointing stones.  
Sun, wind and smoke the threefold magic stir,  
Kissing each favourless poor ruin with kiss  
Like that when lovers lovers lure to bliss,  
And earth than towered heaven awhile is heavenlier.

Tall shafts that show the sky how far away!  
The thousand-window'd house gilded with day  
That fades to night; the arches low, the streamer  
Everywhere of the ruddy'd smoke.... Is aught  
Of loveliness so rich e'er sold and bought?  
Look visions fairer in the eyes of any dreamer?

Needs must so rare a beauty be so brief!  
Night comes, of this delight the subtle thief.  
Thou canst not, Night, this same rich thievery keep;  
Seize it and look! 'tis gone, ere seized is gone—  
Only in our warm bosoms lingering on,  
A nest of precious dreams when our lids droop in sleep.

So in her darkening loveliness is she seen  
Like an autumnal passion-haunted queen,  
Who hears, "A captain-king is at the gate"—  
"Tis Antony, Antony!" Then hastens she,  
Beauty to beauty adding yet, till—see,  
A queen within the queen perilous with love and fate!

---

### SAILING OF THE *GLORY*

Merrily shouted all the sailors  
As they left the town behind;

Merrily shouted they and gladdened  
At the slip-slap of the wind.  
But envious were those faint home-keepers,  
Faint land-lovers, as they saw  
How the *Glory* dipped and staggered—  
Envy saw  
Pass the ship while all her sailors  
Merrily shouted.

Far and far on eastern waters  
Sailed the ship and yet sailed on,  
While the townsmen, faint land-lovers,  
Thought, "How long is't now she's gone?  
Now, maybe, Bombay she touches,  
Now strange craft about her throng";  
Till she grew but half-remembered,  
Gone so long:  
Quite forgot how all her sailors  
Merrily shouted.

Far in unfamiliar waters  
Ship and shipmen harbourage found,  
Where the rocks creep out like robbers  
After travellers tempest-bound.  
Then those faint land-lovers murmured  
Doleful thanks not dead were they:—  
Ah, yet envious, though the *Glory*  
Sunken lay,  
Hearing again those farewell voices  
Merrily shouting.

---

## AT THE DOCK

They loiter round the Dock that holds yon Ship  
Shuddering at the dark pool's defiled lip  
From springing bows to foam-deriding stern;  
They have left her, and await her call "Return!"  
Like any human mistress she has cast  
Careless her ancient lovers, till at last  
Perforce she calls them, and perforce they come  
Like any human lovers.... Ah, what home  
Know these, save in the Ship, the Ship! She groans  
Day and night with travail of their strenuous bones.  
They know her for their mother, sister, spouse,  
Heart of their passion, idol of their vows;  
They ward her, and she is their sure defence  
'Gainst the sad waters' leagued malevolence.  
The Ship, the Ship: they are her slaves, and she  
Their Liege, their Faith, their Fate, their History.  
Lo! they have bought her buoyancy with their blood  
And their ribs cling the keel that cleaves the flood.  
Their watches in the night, their loneliness,  
Their toil, hunger and thirst, their heart's distress,  
Their hands, their feet, far eye and smitten head  
Whereon the Sea's upgathered weight is shed;  
With these the Ship, the Ship is laid and rigged,  
Launched and steered out; with these her living grave is digged,

They lean close over her—and long, perhaps,  
For the broad seas and the loud wind that claps  
Boisterous hands on the Ship's course; and wait  
Her call who calls them with the voice of Fate.

---

## "THE MEN WHO LOVED THE CAUSE THAT NEVER DIES"

O come you down from the far hills  
Whereon you fought, triumphed and died,  
Men at whose names the quick blood thrills  
And the heart's troubled in our side.

Your shadows o'er our fields ere night  
Draw from the shadow of old trees;  
Ghost-hallowed run the streams, and light

Hangs halo-wise in the great peace.

Warriors of England whom we praise  
(Ah, vain all praise!), your spirit is not  
Lost in the meanness of these days,  
Not wholly is your charge forgot.

And this perplexity of strife  
Not all estrangèd leaves our heart;  
England is ours yet, and her life  
Has yet in ours the purest part.

But come you down and stand you yet  
A little closer to our side,  
Or in the darkness we forget  
The cause for which Earth's noblest died.

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