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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BEHIND THE ARRAS: A BOOK OF THE UNSEEN \*\*\*

Behind the Arras

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Behind the Arras  
A Book of the  
Unseen

By Bliss Carman

With Designs by T. B. Meteyard



Boston and New York  
Lamson, Wolfe, and Company  
M·DCCC·XC·V

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To G. H. B.

“I shut myself in with my soul,  
And the shapes come eddying forth.”



Behind the Arras

I LIKE the old house tolerably well,  
Where I must dwell  
Like a familiar gnome;  
And yet I never shall feel quite at home:

I love to roam.

Day after day I loiter and explore  
From door to door;  
So many treasures lure  
The curious mind. What histories obscure  
They must immure!

I hardly know which room I care for best;  
This fronting west,  
With the strange hills in view,  
Where the great sun goes,—where I may go too,  
When my lease is through,—

Or this one for the morning and the east,  
Where a man may feast  
His eyes on looming sails,  
And be the first to catch their foreign hails  
Or spy their bales.

Then the pale summer twilights towards the pole!  
It thrills my soul  
With wonder and delight,  
When gold-green shadows walk the world at night,  
So still, so bright.

There at the window many a time of year,  
Strange faces peer,  
Solemn though not unkind,  
Their wits in search of something left behind  
Time out of mind;

As if they once had lived here, and stole back  
To the window crack  
For a peep which seems to say,  
“Good fortune, brother, in your house of clay!”  
And then, “Good day!”

I hear their footsteps on the gravel walk,  
Their scraps of talk,  
And hurrying after, reach  
Only the crazy sea-drone of the beach  
In endless speech.

And often when the autumn noons are still,  
By swale and hill  
I see their gipsy signs,  
Trespassing somewhere on my border lines;  
With what designs?

I forth afoot; but when I reach the place,  
Hardly a trace,  
Save the soft purple haze  
Of smouldering camp-fires, any hint betrays  
Who went these ways.

Or tatters of pale aster blue, descried  
By the roadside,  
Reveal whither they fled;  
Or the swamp maples, here and there a shred  
Of Indian red.

But most of all, the marvellous tapestry  
Engrosses me,  
Where such strange things are rife,  
Fancies of beasts and flowers, and love and strife,  
Woven to the life;

Degraded shapes and splendid seraph forms,  
And teeming swarms  
Of creatures gauzy dim  
That cloud the dusk, and painted fish that swim,  
At the weaver’s whim;

And wonderful birds that wheel and hang in the air;  
And beings with hair,  
And moving eyes in the face,

2

3

4

And white bone teeth and hideous grins, who race  
From place to place;

They build great temples to their John-a-nod,  
And fume and plod  
To deck themselves with gold,  
And paint themselves like chattels to be sold,  
Then turn to mould.

Sometimes they seem almost as real as I;  
I hear them sigh;  
I see them bow with grief,  
Or dance for joy like an aspen leaf;  
But that is brief.

They have mad wars and phantom marriages;  
Nor seem to guess  
There are dimensions still,  
Beyond thought's reach, though not beyond love's will,  
For soul to fill.

And some I call my friends, and make believe  
Their spirits grieve,  
Brood, and rejoice with mine;  
I talk to them in phrases quaint and fine  
Over the wine;

I tell them all my secrets; touch their hands;  
One understands  
Perhaps. How hard he tries  
To speak! And yet those glorious mild eyes,  
His best replies!

I even have my cronies, one or two,  
My cherished few.  
But ah, they do not stay!  
For the sun fades them and they pass away,  
As I grow gray.

Yet while they last how actual they seem!  
Their faces beam;  
I give them all their names,  
Bertram and Gilbert, Louis, Frank and James,  
Each with his aims;  
One thinks he is a poet, and writes verse  
His friends rehearse;  
Another is full of law;  
A third sees pictures which his hand can draw  
Without a flaw.

Strangest of all, they never rest. Day long  
They shift and throng,  
Moved by invisible will,  
Like a great breath which puffs across my sill,  
And then is still;

It shakes my lovely manikins on the wall;  
Squall after squall,  
Gust upon crowding gust,  
It sweeps them willy nilly like blown dust  
With glory or lust.

It is the world-ghost, the time-spirit, come  
None knows where from,  
The viewless draughty tide  
And wash of being. I hear it yaw and glide,  
And then subside,

Along these ghostly corridors and halls  
Like faint footfalls;  
The hangings stir in the air;  
And when I start and challenge, "Who goes there?"  
It answers, "Where?"

The wail and sob and moan of the sea's dirge,  
Its plangor and surge;

5

6

7

The awful biting sough  
Of drifted snows along some arctic bluff,  
That veer and luff,

And have the vacant boding human cry,  
As they go by;—  
Is it a banished soul  
Dredging the dark like a distracted mole  
Under a knoll?

Like some invisible henchman old and gray,  
Day after day  
I hear it come and go,  
With stealthy swift unmeaning to and fro,  
Muttering low,

Ceaseless and daft and terrible and blind,  
Like a lost mind.  
I often chill with fear  
When I bethink me, What if it should peer  
At my shoulder here!

Perchance he drives the merry-go-round whose track  
Is the zodiac;  
His name is No-man's-friend;  
And his gabbling parrot-talk has neither trend,  
Beginning, nor end.

A prince of madness too, I'd cry, "A rat!"  
And lunge thereat,—  
Let out at one swift thrust  
The cunning arch-delusion of the dust  
I so mistrust,

But that I fear I should disclose a face  
Wearing the trace  
Of my own human guise,  
Piteous, unharmed, loving, sad, and wise,  
With the speaking eyes.

I would the house were rid of his grim pranks,  
Moaning from banks  
Of pine trees in the moon,  
Startling the silence like a demoniac loon  
At dead of noon,

Or whispering his fool-talk to the leaves  
About my eaves.  
And yet how can I know  
'T is not a happy Ariel masking so  
In mocking woe?

Then with a little broken laugh I say,  
Snatching away  
The curtain where he grinned  
(My feverish sight thought) like a sin unsinned,  
"Only the wind!"

Yet often too he steals so softly by,  
With half a sigh,  
I deem he must be mild,  
Fair as a woman, gentle as a child,  
And forest wild.

Passing the door where an old wind-harp swings,  
With its five strings,  
Contrived long years ago  
By my first predecessor bent to show  
His handcraft so,

He lays his fingers on the æolian wire,  
As a core of fire  
Is laid upon the blast  
To kindle and glow and fill the purple vast  
Of dark at last.

Weird wise and low, piercing and keen and glad,

Or dim and sad  
As a forgotten strain  
Born when the broken legions of the rain  
Swept through the plain—

He plays, like some dread veiled mysteriarch,  
Lighting the dark,  
Bidding the spring grow warm,  
The gendering merge and loosing of spirit in form,  
Peace out of storm.

11

For music is the sacrament of love;  
He broods above  
The virgin silence, till  
She yields for rapture shuddering, yearning still  
To his sweet will.

I hear him sing, "Your harp is like a mesh,  
Woven of flesh  
And spread within the shoal  
Of life, where runs the tide-race of the soul  
In my control.

"Though my wild way may ruin what it bends,  
It makes amends  
To the frail downy clocks,  
Telling their seed a secret that unlocks  
The granite rocks.

"The womb of silence to the crave sound  
Is heaven unfound,  
Till I, to soothe and slake  
Being's most utter and imperious ache,  
Bid rhythm awake.

12

"If with such agonies of bliss, my kin,  
I enter in  
Your prison house of sense,  
With what a joyous freed intelligence  
I shall go hence."

I need no more to guess the weaver's name,  
Nor ask his aim,  
Who hung each hall and room  
With swarthy-tinged vermilion upon gloom;  
I know that loom.

Give me a little space and time enough,  
From ravelings rough  
I could revive, reweave,  
A fabric of beauty art might well believe  
Were past retrieve.

O men and women in that rich design,  
Sleep-soft, sun-fine,  
Dew-tenuous and free,  
A tone of the infinite wind-themes of the sea,  
Borne in to me,

Reveals how you were woven to the might  
Of shadow and light.  
You are the dream of One  
Who loves to haunt and yet appears to shun  
My door in the sun;

13

As the white roving sea tern fleck and skim  
The morning's rim;  
Or the dark thrushes clear  
Their flutes of music leisurely and sheer,  
Then hush to hear.

I know him when the last red brands of day  
Smoulder away,  
And when the vernal showers  
Bring back the heart to all my valley flowers  
In the soft hours.

O hand of mine and brain of mine, be yours,  
While time endures,  
To acquiesce and learn!  
For what we best may dare and drudge and yearn,  
Let soul discern.

So, fellows, we shall reach the gusty gate,  
Early or late,  
And part without remorse,  
A cadence dying down unto its source  
In music's course;

14

You to the perfect rhythms of flowers and birds,  
Colors and words,  
The heart-beats of the earth,  
To be remoulded always of one worth  
From birth to birth;

I to the broken rhythm of thought and man,  
The sweep and span  
Of memory and hope  
About the orbit where they still must grope  
For wider scope,

To be through thousand springs restored, renewed,  
With love imbrued,  
With increments of will  
Made strong, perceiving unattainment still  
From each new skill.

Always the flawless beauty, always the chord  
Of the Overword,  
Dominant, pleading, sure,  
No truth too small to save and make endure.  
No good too poor!

15

And since no mortal can at last disdain  
That sweet refrain,  
But lets go strife and care,  
Borne like a strain of bird notes on the air,  
The wind knows where;

Some quiet April evening soft and strange,  
When comes the change  
No spirit can deplore,  
I shall be one with all I was before,  
In death once more.

### Fancy's Fool

16

“CORNEL, cornel, green and white,  
Spreading on the forest floor,  
Whither went my lost delight  
Through the silent door?”

“Mortal, mortal, overfond,  
How come you at all to know  
There be any joys beyond  
Blisses here and now?”

“Cornel, cornel, white and cool,  
Many a mortal, I've heard tell,  
Who is only Fancy's fool  
Knows that secret well.”

“Mortal, mortal, what would you  
With that beauty once was yours?  
Perishable is the dew,  
And the dust endures.”

“Cornel, cornel, pierce me not  
With your sweet, reserved disdain!  
Whisper me of things forgot  
That shall be again.”

17

"Mortal, we are kinsmen, led  
By a hope beyond our reach.  
Know you not the word unsaid  
Is the flower of speech?"

All the snowy blossoms faded,  
While the scarlet berries grew;  
And all summer they evaded  
Anything they knew.

"Cornel, cornel, green and red  
Flooring for the forest wide,  
Whither down the ways of dread  
Went my starry-eyed?"

"Mortal, mortal, is there found  
Any fruitage half so fair  
In the dim world underground  
As there grows in air?"

"Wilding cornel, you can guess  
Nothing of eternal pain,  
Growing there in quietness  
In the sun and rain."

"Mortal, where your heart would be  
Not a wanderer may go,  
But he shares the dark with me  
Underneath the snow."

And the scarlet berries scattered  
With the coming on of fall;  
Not to one of them it mattered  
Anything at all.

18



19

## The Moondial

**I**RON and granite and rust,  
In a crumbling garden old,  
Where the roses are paler than dust  
And the lilies are green with gold,



Under the racing moon,  
Inconscious of war or crime,  
In a strange and ghostly noon,  
It marks the oblivion of time.

The shadow steals through its arc,  
Still as a frosted breath,  
Fitful, gleaming, and dark  
As the cold frustration of death.

20

But where the shadow may fall,  
Whether to hurry or stay,  
It matters little at all  
To those who come that way.

For this is the dial of them  
That have forgotten the world,  
No more through the mad day-dream  
Of striving and reason hurled.

Their heart as a little child  
Only remembers the worth  
Of beauty and love and the wild  
Dark peace of the elder earth.

It registers the morrows  
Of lovers and winds and streams,  
And the face of a thousand sorrows  
At the postern gate of dreams.

When the first low laughter smote  
Through Lilith, the mother of joy,  
And died and revived from the throat  
Of Helen, the harpstring of Troy,

21

And wandering on through the years,  
From the sobbing rain and the sea,  
Caught sound of the world's gray tears  
Or sense of the sun's gold glee,

Whenever the wild control  
Burned out to a mortal kiss,  
And the shuddering storm-swept soul  
Climbed to its acme of bliss,

The green-gold light of the dead  
Stood still in purple space,  
And a record blind and dread  
Was graved on the dial's face.

And once in a thousand years  
Some youth who loved so well  
The gods had loosed him from fears  
In a vision of blameless hell,

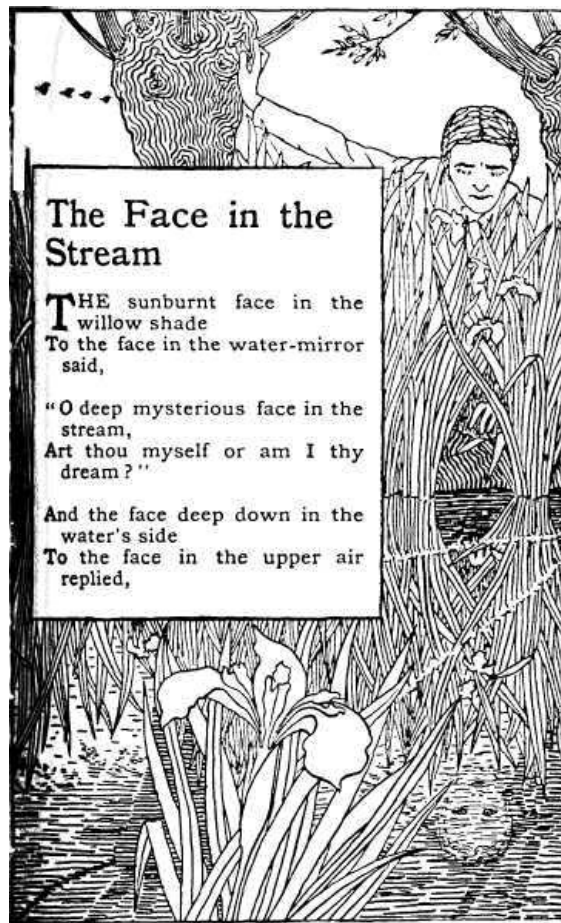
Has gone to the dial to read  
Those signs in the outland tongue,  
Written beyond the need  
Of the simple and the young.

For immortal life, they say,  
Were his who, loving so,  
Could explain the writing away  
As a legend written in snow.

22

But always his innocent eyes  
Were frozen into the stone.  
From that awful first surprise  
His soul must return alone.

In the morning there he lay  
Dead in the sun's warm gold.  
And no man knows to this day  
What the dim moondial told.



## The Face in the Stream

**T**HE sunburnt face in the  
willow shade  
To the face in the water-mirror  
said,

“O deep mysterious face in the  
stream,  
Art thou myself or am I thy  
dream?”

And the face deep down in the  
water's side  
To the face in the upper air  
replied,

## The Face in the Stream

**T**HE sunburnt face in the willow shade  
To the face in the water-mirror said,

“O deep mysterious face in the stream,  
Art thou myself or am I thy dream?”

And the face deep down in the water's side  
To the face in the upper air replied,

“I am thy dream, them poor worn face,  
And this is thy heart's abiding place.

“Too much in the world, come back and be  
Once more my dream-fellow with me,

“In the far-off untarnished years  
Before thy furrows were washed with tears,

“Or ever thy serious creature eyes  
Were aged with a mist of memories.

“Hast thou forgotten the long ago  
In the garden where I used to flow,

“Among the hills, with the maple tree  
And the roses blowing over me?—

“I who am now but a wraith of this river,  
Forsaken of thee forever and ever,

“Who then was thine image fair, forecast  
In the heart of the water rimpling past.

“Out in the wide of the summer zone  
I lulled and allured thee apart and alone,

“The azure gleam and the golden croon  
And the grass with the flaky roses strewn.

“There you would lie and lean above me,  
The more you lingered the more to love me,

"Till I became, as the year grew old,  
Thy fairest day-dream's fashion and mould,

"Deep in the water twilight there,  
Smiling, elusive, wonderful, fair,

"The beautiful visage of thy clear soul  
Set in eternity's limpid shoal,

"Thy spirit's countenance, the trace  
Of dawning God in the human face.

"And when yellow leaves came down  
Through the silent mornings one by one

"To the frosty meadow, as they fell  
Thy pondering heart said, 'All is well;

"'Aye, all is best, for I stake my life  
Beyond the boundaries of strife,'

"And then thy feet returned no more,—  
While years went over the garden floor,

"With frost and maple, with rose and dew,  
In the world thy river wandered through;—

"Came never again to revive and recall  
Thy youth from its water burial.

"But now thy face is battle-dark;  
The strife of the world has graven a mark

"About the lips that are no more mine,  
Too sweet to forget, too strong to repine.

"With the ends of the earth for thy garden now,  
What solace and what reward hast thou?"

Then he of the earth's sun-traversed side  
To him of the under-world replied,

"O glad mysterious face in the stream,  
My lost illusion, my summer dream,

"Thou fairer self of a fonder time,  
A far imperishable clime,

"For thy dear sake I have fared alone  
And fronted failure and housed with none.

"What youth was that, when the world was green,  
In the lovely mythus Greek and clean,

"Was doomed with his flowery kin to bide,  
A blown white star by the river side,

"And no more follow the sun, foot free,  
Too long enamoured of one like thee?

"Shall God who abides in the patient flower,  
The painted dust sustained by his power,

"Refuse to the wing of the dragonfly  
His sanction over the open sky,—

"A frail detached and wandering thing  
Torn loose from the blossomy life of spring?

"And this is man, the myriad one,  
Dust's flower and time's ephemeron.

"And I who have followed the wander-list  
For a glimpse of beauty, a wraith in the mist,

"Shall be spilt at last and return to peace,  
As dust which the hands of the wind release.

"This is my solace and my reward,

Who have drained life's dregs from a broken shard."

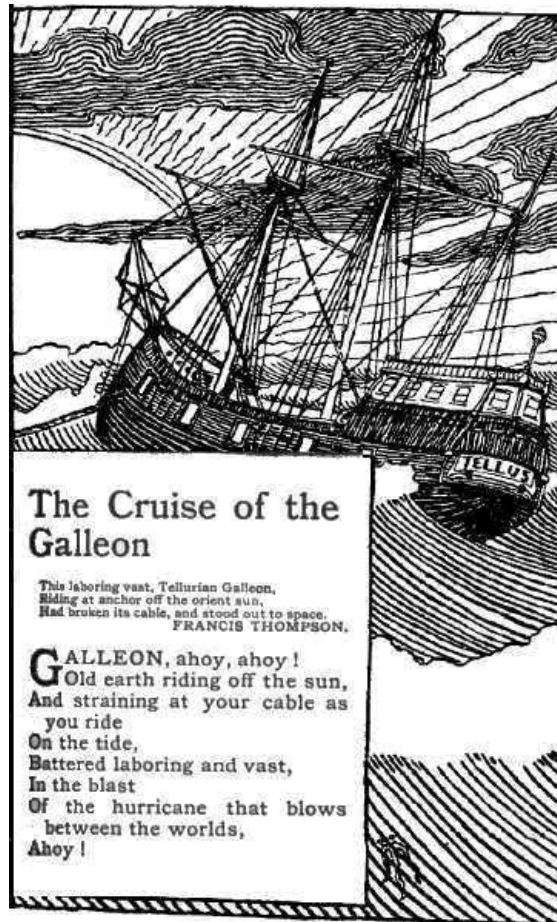
Wise and grave was the water face,  
A youth grown man in a little space;

While the wayworn face by the river side  
Grew gentler-lipped and shadowy-eyed;

For he heard like a sea-horn summoning him  
That sound from the world's end vast and dim,

Where the river went wandering out so far  
Through a gate in the mountain left ajar,

The sea birds love and the land birds flee,  
The large bleak voice of the burly sea.



29

### The Cruise of the Galleon

This laboring vast, Tellurian Galleon,  
Riding at anchor off the orient sun,  
Had broken its cable, and stood out to space.

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

**G**ALLEON, ahoy, ahoy!  
Old earth riding off the sun,  
And straining at your cable as you ride  
On the tide,  
Battered laboring and vast,  
In the blast  
Of the hurricane that blows between the worlds,  
Ahoy!

'Morning, shipmates! 'Drift and chartless?  
Laded deep and rolling hard?  
Never guessed, outworn and heartless,  
There was land so close aboard?

Ice on every shroud and eyelet,  
Rocking in the windy trough?  
No more panic; Man's your pilot;  
Turns the flood, and we are off!

30

At the story of disaster,  
From the continents of sleep,  
I am come to be your master  
And put out into the deep.

What tide current struck you hither,  
Beating up the storm of years?  
Where are those who stood to weather  
These uncharted gulfs of tears?

Did your fellows all drive under  
In the maelstrom of the sun,  
While you only, for a wonder,  
Rode the wash you could not shun?

We'll crowd sail across the sea-line,—  
Clear this harbor, reef and buoy,  
Bowling down an open bee-line  
For the latitudes of joy;

31

Till beyond the zones of sorrow,  
Past griefs haven in the night,  
Some large simpler world shall morrow  
This pale region's northern light.

Not a fear but all the sea-room,  
Wherein time is but a bay,  
Yet shall sparkle for our lee-room  
In the vast Altrurian day.

And the dauntless seaworn spirit  
Shall awake to know there are  
What dominions to inherit,  
Anchored off another star!



32

## A Song Before Sailing

"Cras ingens iterabimus aequor."

**W**IND of the dead men's feet,  
Blow down the empty street  
Of this old city by the sea

With news for me!

Blow me beyond the grime  
And pestilence of time!  
I am too sick at heart to war  
With failure any more.

Thy chill is in my bones;  
The moonlight on the stones  
Is pale, and palpable, and cold;  
I am as one grown old.

33

I call from room to room  
Through the deserted gloom;  
The echoes are all words I know,  
Lost in some long ago.

I prowl from door to door,  
And find no comrade more.  
The wolfish fear that children feel  
Is snuffing at my heel.

I hear the hollow sound  
Of a great ship coming round,  
The thunder of tackle and the tread  
Of sailors overhead.

That stormy-blown hulloo  
Has orders for me, too.  
I see thee, hand at mouth, and hark,  
My captain of the dark.

O wind of the great East,  
By whom we are released  
From this strange dusty port to sail  
Beyond our fellows' hail,

34

Under the stars that keep  
The entry of the deep,  
Thy somber voice brings up the sea's  
Forgotten melodies;

And I have no more need  
Of bread, or wine, or creed,  
Bound for the colonies of time  
Beyond the farthest prime.

Wind of the dead men's feet,  
Blow through the empty street!  
The last adventurer am I,  
Then, world, good-by!

## In the Wings

35

**T**HE play is Life; and this round earth,  
The narrow stage whereon  
We act before an audience  
Of actors dead and gone.

There is a figure in the wings  
That never goes away,  
And though I cannot see his face,  
I shudder while I play.

His shadow looms behind me here,  
Or capers at my side;  
And when I mouth my lines in dread,  
Those scornful lips deride.

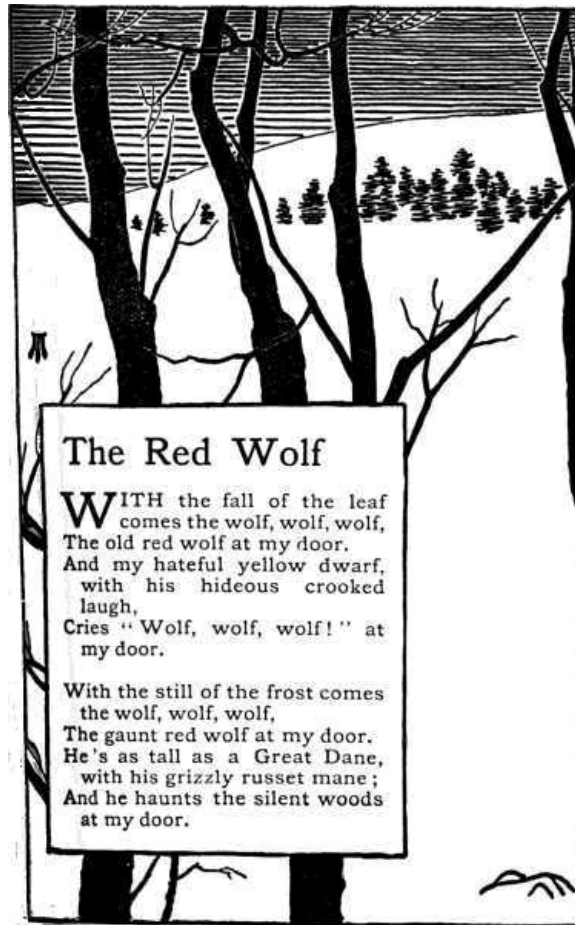
Sometimes a hooting laugh breaks out,  
And startles me alone;  
While all my fellows, wondering  
At my stage-fright, play on.

I fear that when my Exit comes,

I shall encounter there,  
Stronger than fate, or time, or love,  
And sterner than despair,

36

The Final Critic of the craft,  
As stage tradition tells;  
And yet—perhaps 'twill only be  
The jester with his bells.



37

### The Red Wolf

**W**ITH the fall of the leaf comes the wolf, wolf, wolf,  
The old red wolf at my door.

And my hateful yellow dwarf, with his hideous crooked  
laugh,  
Cries "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at my door.

With the still of the frost comes the wolf, wolf, wolf,  
The gaunt red wolf at my door.  
He's as tall as a Great Dane, with his grizzly russet mane;  
And he haunts the silent woods at my door.

38

The scarlet maple leaves and the sweet ripe nuts,  
May strew the forest glade at my door,  
But my cringing cunning dwarf, with his slavered kacking  
laugh,  
Cries "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at my door.

The violets may come, the pale wind-flowers blow,  
And tremble by the stream at my door;  
But my dwarf will never cease, until his last release,  
From his "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at the door.

The long sweet April wind may woo the world from grief,  
And tell the old tales at my door;  
The rainbirds in the rain may plead their far refrain,  
In the glad young year at my door;

And in the quiet sun, the silly partridge brood  
In the red pine dust by my door;

Yet my squinting runty dwarf, with his lewd ungodly  
laugh,  
Cries "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at my door.

39

I'm his master (and his slave, with his "Wolf, wolf, wolf!")  
As he squats in the sun at my door.  
There morn and noon and night, with his cuddled low  
delight,  
He watches for the wolf at my door.

The wind may parch his hide, or freeze him to the bone,  
While the wolf walks far from the door;  
Still year on year he sits, with his five unholy wits,  
And watches for the wolf at the door.

But the fall of the leaf and the starting of the bud  
Are the seasons he loves by the door;  
Then his blood begins to rouse, this Caliban I house,  
And it's "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at the door.

In the dread lone of the night I can hear him snuff the  
sill;  
Then it's "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at the door;  
His damned persistent bark, like a husky's in the dark,  
His "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at the door.

40

I have tried to rid the house of the misbegotten spawn;  
But he skulks like a shadow at my door,  
With the same uncanny glee as when he came to me  
With his first cry of wolf at my door.

I curse him, and he leers; I kick him, and he whines;  
But he never leaves the stone at my door.  
Peep of day or set of sun, his croaking's never done  
Of the Red Wolf of Despair at my door.

But when the night is old, and the stars begin to fade,  
And silence walks the path by my door,  
Then is his dearest hour, his most unbridled power,  
And low comes his "Wolf!" at the door.

I turn me in my sleep between the night and day,  
While dreams throng the yard at my door.  
In my strong soul aware of a grewsome terror there  
Soon to knock with command at my door.

41

Is it the hollow voice of the census-taker Time  
In his old idle round from door to door?  
Or only the north wind, when all the leaves are thinned,  
Come at last with his moan to my door?

I cannot guess nor tell; only it comes and comes,  
As from a vaster world beyond my door,  
From centuries of eld, the death of freedom knelled,  
A host of mortal fears at my door.

Then I wake; and joy and youth and fame and love and  
bliss,  
And all the good that ever passed my door,  
Grow dim, and faint and fade, with the whole world  
unmade,  
To perish as the summer at my door.

The crouching heart within me quails like a shuddering  
thing,  
As I turn on my pillow to the door;  
Then in the chill white dawn, when life is half withdrawn,  
Comes the dream-curdling "Wolf!" at my door.

42

Only my yellow dwarf; (my servitor and lord!)  
I hear him lift the latch of my door;  
I see his wobbling chin and his unrepentant grin,  
As he lets his oafship in at the door.

He is low and humped and foul, and shambles like an  
ape;  
And stealthily he barricades the door,



Then lays his goblin head against my lonely bed,  
With a "Wolf, wolf, wolf," at the door!

I loathe him, but I feed him; I'll tell you how it was  
(Hear him now with his "Wolf!" at the door!)  
That I ever took him in; he is—he is my kin,  
And kin to the wolf at the door!

I loathe him, yet he lives; as God lets Satan live,  
I suffer him to slumber at my door,  
Till that long-looked-for time, that splendid sudden prime,  
When Spring shall go in scarlet by my door. 43

That day I will arise, put my heel upon his throat,  
And squirt his yellow blood upon the door;  
Then watch him dying there, like a spider in his lair,  
With a "Wolf, wolf, wolf!" at my door.

The great white morning sun shall walk the earth again,  
And the children return to my door,  
I shall hear their merry laugh, and forget my buried  
dwarf,  
As a tale that is told at the door.

Far from the quiet woods the gaunt red wolf shall flee,  
As a cur that is stoned from the door;  
And God's great peace come back along the lonely track,  
To fill the golden year at my door.

## The Faithless Lover 44

### I

**O** LIFE, dear Life, in this fair house  
Long since did I, it seems to me,  
In some mysterious doleful way  
Fall out of love with thee.

For, Life, thou art become a ghost,  
A memory of days gone by,  
A poor forsaken thing between  
A heartache and a sigh.

And now, with shadows from the hills  
Thronging the twilight, wraith on wraith,  
Unlock the door and let me go  
To thy dark rival Death!

### II

O Heart, dear Heart, in this fair house  
Why hast thou wearied and grown tired,  
Between a morning and a night,  
Of all thy soul desired? 45

Fond one, who cannot understand  
Even these shadows on the floor,  
Yet must be dreaming of dark loves  
And joys beyond my door!

But I am beautiful past all  
The timid tumult of thy mood,  
And thou returning not must still  
Be mine in solitude.

## The Crimson House 46

**L**OVE built a crimson house,  
I know it well,  
That he might have a home  
Wherein to dwell.

Poor Love that roved so far

And fared so ill,  
Between the morning star  
And the Hollow Hill,

Before he found the vale  
Where he could bide,  
With memory and oblivion  
Side by side.

He took the silver dew  
And the dun red clay,  
And behold when he was through  
How fair were they!

The braces of the sky  
Were in its girth,  
That it should feel no jar  
Of the swinging earth;

47

That sun and wind might bleach  
But not destroy  
The house that he had builded  
For his joy.

"Here will I stay," he said,  
"And roam no more,  
And dust when I am dead  
Shall keep the door."

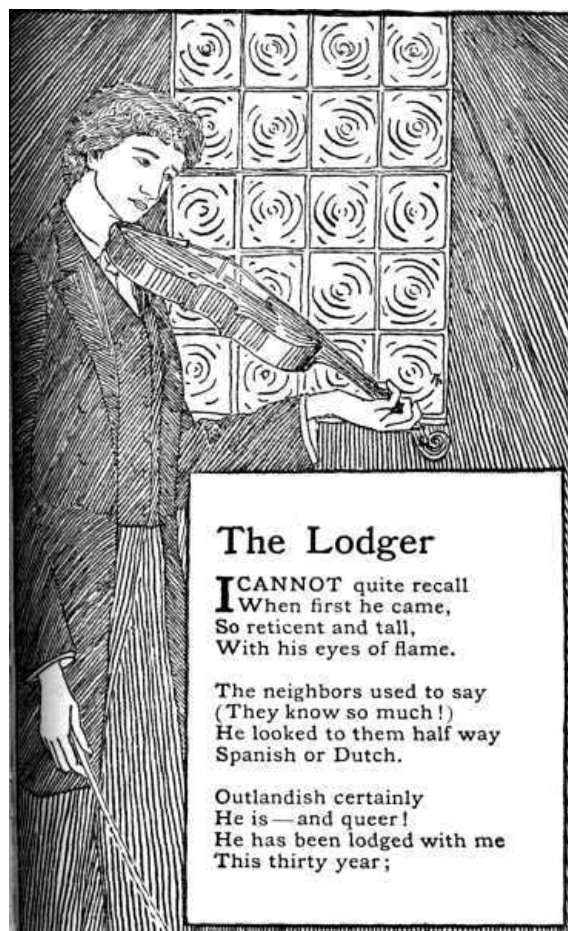
There trooping dreams by night  
Go by, go by.  
The walls are rosy white  
In the sun's eye.

The windows are more clear  
Than sky or sea;  
He made them after God's  
Transparency.

It is a dearer place  
Than kirk or inn;  
Such joy on joy as there  
Has never been.

48

There may my longed-for rest  
And welcome be,  
When Love himself unbars  
The door for me!



## The Lodger

**I**CANNOT quite recall  
When first he came,  
So reticent and tall,  
With his eyes of flame.

The neighbors used to say  
(They know so much!)  
He looked to them half way  
Spanish or Dutch.

Outlandish certainly  
He is—and queer!  
He has been lodged with me  
This thirty year;

## The Lodger

**I**CANNOT quite recall  
When first he came,  
So reticent and tall,  
With his eyes of flame.

The neighbors used to say  
(They know so much!)  
He looked to them half way  
Spanish or Dutch.

Outlandish certainly  
He is—and queer!  
He has been lodged with me  
This thirty year;

All the while (it seems absurd!)  
We hardly have  
Exchanged a single word.  
Mum as the grave!

Minds only his own affairs,  
Goes out and in,  
And keeps himself upstairs  
With his violin.

Mum did I say? And yet  
That talking smile  
You never can forget,  
Is all the while

Full of such sweet reproofs  
The darkest day,  
Like morning on the roofs  
In flush of May.

Like autumn on the hills;  
At four o'clock  
The sun like a herdsman spills  
For drove and flock

Peace with their provender,  
And they are fed.  
The day without a stir  
Lies warm and red.

51

Ah, sir, the summer land  
For me! That is  
Like living in God's hand,  
Compared to this.

His smile so quiet and deep  
Reminds me of it.  
I see it in my sleep,  
And so I love it.

An anarchist, say some;  
But tush, say I,  
When a man's heart is plumb,  
Can his life be awry?

Better than charity  
And bigger too,  
That heart. You've seen the sea?  
Of course. To you

'T is common enough, no doubt.  
But here in town,  
With God's world all shut out,  
Save the leaden frown

52

Of the sky, a slant of rain,  
And a straggling star,  
Such memories remain  
The wonders they are.

Once at the Isles of Shoals,  
And it was June . . .  
Now hear me dote! He strolls  
Across my noon,

Like the sun that day, where sleeps  
My soul; his gaze  
Goes glimmering down my deeps  
Of yesterdays,

Searching and searching, till  
Its light consumes  
The reluctant shapes that fill  
Those purple glooms.

Let others applaud, defame,  
And the noise die down;  
His voice saying your name,  
Is enough renown.

Too patient pitiful,  
Too fierce at wrong,  
To patronize the dull,  
Or praise the strong.

53

And yet he has a soul  
Of wrath, though pent  
Even when that white ghoul  
Comes for his rent.

The landlord? Hush! My God!  
I think the walls  
Take notes to help him prod  
Us up. He galls

My very soul to strife,  
With his death's-head face.  
He is foul too in his life,  
Some hid disgrace,

Some secret thing he does,  
I warrant you,

For all his cheek to us  
Is shaved so blue.

He takes good care (by the shade  
Of seven wives!)  
That the undertaker's trade  
He lives by thrives.

54

Nor chick nor child has he.  
So servile smug,  
With that cringe in his knee,—  
God curse his lug!

But him, you should have seen  
Him yesterday;  
The landlord's smirk turned green  
At his smile. The way

He served that bloodless fish,  
Were like to freeze him.  
But meeting elsewhere, pish!  
He never sees him.

Yet such a gentleman,  
So sure and slow.  
The vilest harridan  
Is not too low,

If there is pity's need;  
And no man born,  
For cruelty or greed  
Escapes that scorn.

Most of all things, it seems,  
He loves the town.  
Watching the bright-faced streams  
Go up and down,

55

I have surprised him often  
On Tremont street,  
And marked the grave face soften,  
The mouth grow sweet,

In a brown study over  
The men and women.  
An unsuspected rover  
That, for our Common.

When the first jonquils come,  
And spring is sold  
On the street corners, some  
Of the pretty gold

Is sure to find its way  
Home in his hand.  
And many a winter day  
At some cab-stand,

He'll watch the cabmen feed  
The pigeon flocks,  
Or bid some liner speed  
From the icy docks.

56

His rooms? I much regret  
You cannot see  
His rooms, but they were let  
With guarantee

Of his seclusion there—  
Except myself.  
Each morning, table, chair,  
Lamp, hearth, and shelf,

I rearrange, refreshen,  
Put all to rights,  
Then leave him in possession.  
Ah, but the nights,

The nights! Sir, if I dared  
But once set eye  
To keyhole, nor be scared,  
From playing Paul Pry,

I doubt not I should learn  
A wondrous thing  
Or two; and in return  
Go blind till spring.

The light under his door  
Is glory enough,  
It outshines any star  
That I know of.

57

Wirrah, my lad, my lad,  
'T is fearsome strange,  
The hints we all have had  
Passing the range

Of science, knowledge, law,  
Or what you will,  
Whose intangible touch of awe  
Makes reason nil.

Many a night I start,  
Sudden awake,  
Feeling my smothered heart  
Flutter and quake;

Like an aspen at dead of noon,  
When not a breath  
Is stirring to trouble the boon  
Valley. A wraith

Or a fetch, it must be, shivers  
The soul of the tree  
Till every leaf of it quivers.  
And so with me.

58

Was it the shuffle of feet  
I heard go by,  
With muffled drums in the street?  
Was it the cry

Of a rider riding the night  
Into ashes and dawn,  
With news in his nostrils and fright  
Where his hoof-beats had gone?

Did the pipes, at "Bonny Dundee,"  
Bid regiments form?  
Did a renegade's soul get free  
On a wail of the storm?

Did a flock of wild geese honk  
As they cleared the hill?  
Or only a bittern cronk,  
Then all was still?

Was it a night stampede  
Of a thousand head?  
I know I shook like a reed  
There on my bed.

Nameless and void and wild  
Was the fear before me,  
Ere I bethought me and smiled  
As the truth flashed o'er me.

59

Of course, it was only his hand  
Freeing the bass  
Of his old Amati, grand  
In the silence' face.

Rummaging up and down,  
From string to string,

Bidding the discords drown,  
The harmonies spring,

Where tides and tide-winds rove  
Far out from land,  
On the ocean of music a-move  
At the will of his hand.

Sobbing and grieving now,  
Now glad as a bird,  
Thou, thou, thou  
Of the joys unheard,

Luminous radiant sea  
Of the sounds and time,  
Surely, surely by thee  
Is eternal prime.

Holy and beautiful deep,  
Spread down before  
The imperial coming of sleep,  
Endure, endure!

And sleep, be thou the ranger  
Over it wan.  
And dream, be thou no stranger  
There with the dawn.

Then wings of the sun, go abroad  
As a scarlet desire,  
Unwearied, unwaning, unawed,  
To quest and aspire,

Till the drench of the dusk you drink  
In the poppy-field west;  
Then veer and settle and sink  
As a gull to her nest.

Wind,  
Away, away!  
And hurry your phantom kind  
Through the gates of day,

Or ever the king's dark cup  
With its studs and spars  
Be inverted, and earth look up  
To the shuddering stars.

Blaring and triumphing now,  
Now quailing and lone,  
Thou, thou, thou  
Of the joys unknown!

Unknown and wild, wild,  
Where the merrymen be,  
Sink to sleep, soul of a child,  
Slumber, thou sea!

All this his fiddle plays,  
And many a thing  
As strange, when his mood so lays  
The bow to the string.

Sleepless! He never sleeps  
That I can find.  
I marvel how he keeps  
A bit of his mind.

There is neither sight nor sound  
In the world of sense,  
But he has fathomed and found  
In the silvery tense

Keen cords on the amber wood.  
As he wrings them thence,  
Death smiles at his hardihood  
For recompense.

Oh fair they are, so fair!  
No tongue can tell  
How he sets them chiming there  
Clear as a bell.

An orchard of birds in June,  
The winds that stream,  
The cold sea-brooks that croon,  
The storms that scream,

The planets that float and swing  
Like buoys on the tide,  
The north-going legions in spring,  
The hills that abide,

The frigate-bird clouds that range,  
The vagabond moon—  
That wilful lover of change—  
And the workaday sun,

Dying summer and fall,  
Seasons and men  
And herds, he has them all  
In his shadowy ken.

He calls and they come, leaving strife,  
Leaving discord and death,  
Out of oblivion to life,  
Though its span be a breath.

There they are, all the beautiful things  
I loved and lost sight of  
Long since in the far-away springs,  
Come back for a night of

New being as good as their old,  
Aye, better in fact,  
For somehow he gilds their fine gold,—  
Gives the one thing they lacked,

The breath, aspiration, desire,  
Core, kindle, control,  
Memory and rapture and fire,—  
The touch of man's soul.

How know the true master? I know  
By my joys and my fears,  
For my heart crumbles down like the snow  
With spring rain into tears.

Now I am a precious one!  
With nothing to do  
But idle here in the sun  
And gossip with you

Of a stranger you have not seen,  
As like never will.  
I would every soul had a screen,  
When the wind sets ill

In the world's bleak house, like this  
Strange lodger of mine.  
His presence is worse to miss  
Than sun's best shine.

I put no thought at all  
Upon the end,  
If only I may call  
Such a man friend.

And a friend he is, heart light  
With love for heft,  
Proud as silence, whose right  
Hand ignores his left.

Yes, odd! he gives his name  
As Spiritus.



But that is vague as a flame  
In the wind to us.

65

And then (but not a breath  
Of this!) you see,  
All his effects, my faith!  
Are marked D.V.

His cape-coat has a rip,  
But for all that,  
(Folk smile, suggest a dip  
In the dyer's vat,—

Those purple aldermen  
Who roll about  
In coaches, drive till ten,  
And die of gout),

I think he finely shows  
How learning's crumbs  
At least can rival those  
Of— 'st, here he comes!

## Beyond the Gamut

66

**S**OFTLY, softly, Niccolo Amati!  
What can put such fancies in your head?  
There, go dream of your blue-skied Cremona,  
While I ponder something you have said.

Something in that last low lovely cadence  
Piercing the green dusk alone and far,  
Named a new room in the house of knowledge,  
Waiting unfrequented, door ajar.

While you dream then, let me unmolested  
Pass in childish wonder through that door,—  
Breathless, touch and marvel at the beauties  
Soon my wiser elders must explore.

Ah, my Niccolo, it's no great science  
We shall ever conquer, you and I.  
Yet, when you are nestled at my shoulder,  
Others guess not half that we descry.

67

As all sight is but a finer hearing,  
And all color but a finer sound,  
Beauty, but the reach of lyric freedom,  
Caught and quivering past all music's bound;

Life, that faint sigh whispered from oblivion,  
Harks and wonders if we may not be  
Five small wits to carry one great rhythmus,  
The vast theme of God's new symphony.

As fine sand spread on a disc of silver,  
At some chord which bids the notes combine,  
Heeding the hidden and reverberant impulse,  
Shifts and dances into curve and line,

The round earth, too, haply, like a dust-mote,  
Was set whirling her assigned sure way,  
Round this little orb of her ecliptic  
To some harmony she must obey.

Did the Master try the taut string merely,  
Give a touch, and she must throb to time?  
Think you how his bow must rouse the echoes,  
Quailing triumphing on, secure, sublime!

68

Ah, thought cannot far without the symbol!  
Help me, little brother, hold the trend.  
Dear good flesh, that keeps the spirit steady,  
Lest it faint, grown dizzy at thought's end!

Waves of sound (Is this your thought, Amati?),  
Climbing into treble thin and clear,  
Past the silence, change to waves of color,  
We must say, when eye takes place of ear?

Not a bird-song, but it has for fellow  
Some-wood-flower, its speechless counterpart,  
Form and color moulded to one cadence,  
To voice something of the wild mute heart.

Thrushes, we'll suppose, have for their tune-mates  
The gold languorous lilies of the glade;  
And the whippoorwill, that plaintive dreamer,  
Some dark purple flower that loves the shade.

The song-sparrow tells me what the clover  
Nods about beneath the gorgeous blue;  
While the snowballs tell me old love-stories  
Thistle-birds half hinted as they flew.

69

April's faith, in robin at his vespers,  
Breathes a prayer too in my lilac blooms.  
What the cloudy asters told the hillside,  
My lone rainbird in the dusk resumes.

Bobolink is voice for apple blossom,  
Breezy, abundant, good for human joys;  
Oriole has touched the burning secret  
Poppies hide with their deliberate poise.

Tiny twin-flowers, what are they but fancies,  
Subtler than a field-lark can express?  
Swallows make the low contented twitter  
Lying just beyond the pansies' guess.

Yellowbird, the hot noon's warbler, pierces  
Sense where tiger-lilies may not pass.  
Are not crickets and all field-wise creatures  
Brahmins of the universal grass?

Saffron butterflies and mute ephemera,  
Doubt not, have their songs too, could we hear.  
Every raindrop is a sea sonorous  
As the great worlds thundering sphere to sphere.

70

There's no silence and no dark forever,  
Clangoring suns to us are placid stars;  
Swift-foot lightning with his henchman thunder  
Lags behind these gnomes in Leyden jars.

Peal and flash and thrill and scent and savour  
Pulse through rhythm to rapture, and control,—  
Who shall say how far along or finely?—  
The infinite tectonics of the soul.

Low-bred peoples, Hottentots, Basutos,  
Have a taste for scarlet and brass bands.  
Our friend Monet, feeling red repulsive,  
Sees blue shadows in pale purple lands.

Sees not only, but instructs our seeing;  
Taught by him a twelvemonth, we confess  
Earth once robed in crude barbaric splendor,  
Has put on a softer lovelier dress.

71

Feast my eyes on some old Indian fabric,  
Centuries of culture went to weave,  
And I grow the fine fastidious artist,  
No mere shop-made textile can deceive.

Red the bass and violet the treble,  
Soul may pass out where all color ends.  
Ends? So we say, meaning where the eyesight  
With some yet unborn perception blends.

You, Amati, never saw a sunset,—  
Hear tornadoes in a spider's loom;

I, at my wits' end, may still develop  
Unknown senses in life's larger room.

Superhuman is not supernatural.  
How shall half-way judge of journey done?  
Shall this germ and protoplast of being  
Rest mid-life and say his race is run?

Softly there, my Niccolo, a moment!  
Shall I then discard my simpler joys?  
No, for look you, every sense's impulse  
Is a means the master soul employs.

Test and use of all things, lowest, highest,  
Are alone of import to the soul;  
Joys of earth are journey-aids to heaven,  
Garb of the new sainthood sane and whole.

Earth one habitat of spirit merely,  
I must use as richly as I may,—  
Touch environment with every sense-tip,  
Drink the well and pass my wander way.

Ah, drink deep and let the parching morrow  
Quench what thirst its newer need may bring!  
Slake the senses now, that soul hereafter  
Go not forth a starved defrauded thing.

Not for sense sake only, but for soul sake;  
That when soul must shed the leaves of sense,  
Sun and sap may solace and support her,  
Stored in those green hours for her defence.

Shall the grub deny himself the rose-leaf  
That he may be moth before his time?  
Shall the grasshopper repress his drumbeats  
For small envy of the kingbird's chime?

Certain half-men, never touched by worship,  
Soil the goodly feast they cannot use;  
Others, maimed too, holding flesh a hindrance,  
Vilify the bounty they refuse.

He's most man who loves the purple shadows,  
Yet must love the flaring autumn too,—  
Follow when the skrieling pipes bid forward,  
Lie and gaze for hours into the blue.

He would have gone down with Alexander,  
Quelling unknown lands beneath the sun;  
Watched where Buddha in the Bo tree shadows  
Saw this life's web woven and undone;

Freed his stifled heart in Shakespeare's people,  
Sweet and elemental and serene;  
Dared the unknown with Blake and Galileo;  
Fronted death with Daulac's seventeen.

So shall mighty peace possess his spirit  
Whom the noonday leads alone apart,  
Through the wind-clear early Indian summer,  
Where no yearning more shall move his heart.

Wise and foot-free, of the tranquil tenor,  
He shall wayfare with the homeless tides;  
Time enough, when life allures no longer,  
To frequent the tavern death provides.

Life be neither hermitage nor revel;  
Lent or carnival alone were vain;  
Sin and sainthood—Help me, little brother,  
With your largo finder-thought again!

Lift, uplift me, higher still and higher!  
Climb and pause and tremble and plunge on,  
Till I, toiling after you, come breathless  
Where the mountain tops are touched with dawn!

72

73

74

Dark this valley world; and drenched with slumber  
We have kept the centuries of night.  
Cry, Amati, pierce the waiting stillness  
Tremulous with forecast of the light!

75

Cry, Amati! Melt the twilight dirges  
In "Te Deums" fit for marching men!  
"Good," the days are chorusing, "shall triumph;"  
Though the far-off morrows whisper, "When?"

What is good? I hear your soft string answer,  
"I am that whereon the round world leans,  
I am every man's poor guess at wisdom;  
Evil is the soul's misuse of means.

"Up through me, with melody and meaning,  
Well the floods of being or subside,  
The first dim desire of self for selfhood,  
The last smile that puts all self aside.

"Hate is discord lessening through the ages;  
Anger a false note, fear a slackened string.  
Key thy soul up to the wiser manhood,  
Gentler lovelier joy from spring to spring!"

Here in turn I help you, little brother,  
Half surmise what you have half explained.  
Store it by to ripen, and repeat it  
Long hereafter as a glimpse you gained,

76

When the nineteenth century was dying,  
From a strolling hand that held you dear,—  
Appanage of time put in your keeping  
For my far-off heritor to hear.

I imagine how his eye will kindle  
When he fondles you as I do now,—  
Bends above you wooing like a lover,  
While you yield him all your heart knows how.

I shall have been dust a thousand summers,  
But my dear unprofitable dreams  
Shall be part of all the good that thrills you  
In the oversoul's orchestral themes.

What is good? While God's unfinished opus  
Multitudinous harmony obeys,  
Evil is a dissonance not a discord,  
Soon to be resolved to happier phrase,—

From time immemorial permitted,  
Lest the too sweet melody grow tame,  
And, untouched of pathos or of daring,  
Hearts should never know what hearts proclaim:

77

The unstained unconquerable valor,  
The unflinching loyalties of love.  
Or if evil be at worst a blunder  
No musician ever could approve,

The mere bungling of a hand that faltered,—  
Mine or his who bade the planets poise,—  
What a thing unthinkable for smallness  
Is your frayed E string one touch destroys.

How that sea-gull out across the bay there  
Rows himself at leisure up the blue!  
Evil the mere eddy from his wing-sweep,  
Good the morning path he must pursue.

Good, you think, and evil live together,  
Both persisting on from change to change  
Through interminable conservation,—  
Primal powers no ruin can derange?

Deed and accident alike unending  
By eternal consequence of cause?

No. For good is impetus to Godward;  
Evil, but our ignorance of laws.

Say I let you, spite of all endeavor,  
Mar some nocturne by a single note;  
Is there immortality of discord  
In your failure to preserve the rote?

78

When the sound shall pass my sense's confines,  
Melt away to color or thin flame,  
Does it still malingering in the prism,  
Falsify the crucible with shame?

Hardly. For the melody and marring,  
When they put the dear oblivion on,  
Are become as fresh clay for the potter,  
Neither good nor bad, for use anon.

Blighted rose and perfect shall commingle  
In one excellence of garden mould.  
Soul transfusing comeliness or blemish  
Can alone lend beauty to the old.

While the streams go down among the mountains,  
Gathering rills and leaving sand behind,  
Till at last the ocean sea receives them,  
And they lose themselves among their kind,

79

Man, the joy-born and the sorrow-nurtured,  
(One with nothingness though all things be,—  
Great lord Sirius and the moving planets  
Fleet as fire-germs in the torn-up sea,—)

Linked to all his half-accomplished fellows,  
Through unfrontiered provinces to range,  
Man is but the morning dream of nature  
Roused by some wild cadence weird and strange.

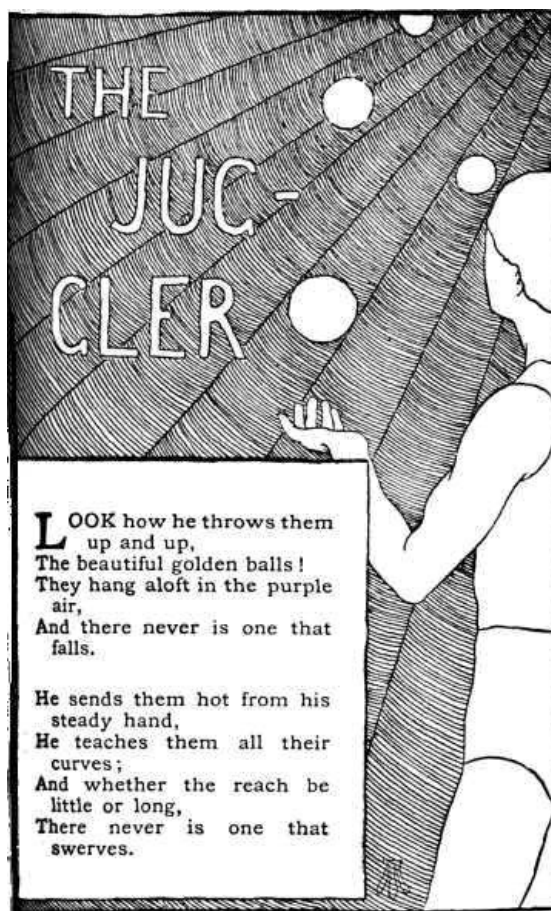
Slowly therefore, Niccolo, and softly,  
With more memories than tongue can tell,  
Lower me down the slope of life, and leave me  
Knowing the hereafter will be well.

Close with, "Love is but the perfect knowledge,  
The one thing no failure can befall;  
Lovingkindness betters loving credence;  
Love and only love is best of all."

Beauty, beauty, beauty, sense and seeming,  
With the soul of truth she calls her lord!  
Stars and men the dust upon her garment;  
Hope and fear the echoes of her word.

80

How escape we then, the rainbow's brothers,  
Endless being with each blade and sod?  
Dust and shadow between whence and whither,  
Part of the tranquillity of God.



### The Juggler

LOOK how he throws them up and up,  
 The beautiful golden balls!  
 They hang aloft in the purple air,  
 And there never is one that falls.

He sends them hot from his steady hand,  
 He teaches them all their curves;  
 And whether the reach be little or long,  
 There never is one that swerves.

Some, like the tiny red one there,  
 He never lets go far;  
 And some he has sent to the roof of the tent  
 To swim without a jar.

So white and still they seem to hang,  
 You wonder if he forgot  
 To reckon the time of their return  
 And measure their golden lot.

Can it be that, hurried or tired out,  
 The hand of the juggler shook?  
 O never you fear, his eye is clear,  
 He knows them all like a book.

And they will home to his hand at last,  
 For he pulls them by a cord  
 Finer than silk and strong as fate,  
 That is just the bid of his word.

Was ever there such a sight in the world?  
 Like a wonderful winding skein,—  
 The way he tangles them up together  
 And ravel them out again!

He has so many moving now,  
 You can hardly believe your eyes;  
 And yet they say he can handle twice  
 The number when he tries.

You take your choice and give me mine,

I know the one for me,  
It's that great bluish one low down  
Like a ship's light out at sea.

It has not moved for a minute or more.  
The marvel that it can keep  
As if it had been set there to spin  
For a thousand years asleep!

If I could have him at the inn  
All by myself some night,—  
Inquire his country, and where in the world  
He came by that cunning sleight!

Where do you guess he learned the trick  
To hold us gaping here,  
Till our minds in the spell of his maze almost  
Have forgotten the time of year?

One never could have the least idea.  
Yet why be disposed to twit  
A fellow who does such wonderful things  
With the merest lack of wit?

Likely enough, when the show is done  
And the balls all back in his hand,  
He'll tell us why he is smiling so,  
And we shall understand.

84

## Hack and Hew

85

**H**ACK and Hew were the sons of God  
In the earlier earth than now;  
One at his right hand, one at his left,  
To obey as he taught them how.

And Hack was blind and Hew was dumb,  
But both had the wild, wild heart;  
And God's calm will was their burning will,  
And the gist of their toil was art.

They made the moon and the belted stars,  
They set the sun to ride;  
They loosed the girdle and veil of the sea,  
The wind and the purple tide.

Both flower and beast beneath their hands  
To beauty and speed outgrew,—  
The furious fumbling hand of Hack,  
And the glorying hand of Hew.

Then, fire and clay, they fashioned a man,  
And painted him rosy brown;  
And God himself blew hard in his eyes:  
"Let them burn till they smoulder down!"

And "There!" said Hack, and "There!" thought Hew,  
"We'll rest, for our toil is done."  
But "Nay," the Master Workman said,  
"For your toil is just begun.

"And ye who served me of old as God  
Shall serve me anew as man,  
Till I compass the dream that is in my heart,  
And perfect the vaster plan."

And still the craftsman over his craft,  
In the vague white light of dawn,  
With God's calm will for his burning will,  
While the mounting day comes on.

Yearning, wind-swift, indolent, wild,  
Toils with those shadowy two,—  
The faltering restless hand of Hack,  
And the tireless hand of Hew.

86



## The Night Express

OUT through the hills of  
midnight,  
Hurling and thundering on,  
The night express from the  
outer world  
Speeds for the open of dawn.

Out of the past and gloom-  
wrack,  
Out of the dim and yore,  
Freighted as train or caravan  
Was never freighted before;

## The Night Express

OUT through the hills of midnight,  
Hurling and thundering on,  
The night express from the outer world  
Speeds for the open of dawn.

Out of the past and gloom-wrack,  
Out of the dim and yore,  
Freighted as train or caravan  
Was never freighted before;

Built when the Sphinx's query  
Was new on the lips of peace;  
Hurled through the aching and hollow years  
Till time shall have release;

Stealing and swift as a shadow,  
Sinuous, urging, and blind,  
Unpent as a joy or the flight of a bird,  
With oblivion behind;

Down to the morrow country  
Into the unknown land!  
And the Driver grips the throttle-bar;  
Our lives are in his hand.

The sleeping hills awake;  
A tremor, a dread, a roar;  
The terror is flying, is come, is past;  
The hills can sleep once more.

A moment the silence throbs,  
The dark has a pulse of fire;  
And then the wonder of time is gone,  
A wraith and a desire.

Demonish, toiling, grim,  
In the ruddy furnace flare,  
While the Driver fingers the throttle-bar,  
Who stands at his elbow there?



Can it be, this thing like a shred  
Of the firmament torn away,  
Is a boarded train that Death and his crew  
Consorted to waylay?

His wreckers, grinning and lean,  
Are lurking at every curve;  
But the Driver plays with the throttle-bar;  
He has the iron nerve.

We are travelling safe and warm,  
With our little baggage of cares;  
Why tease the peril that yet would come  
Unbidden and unawares?

The lonely are lonely still;  
And the friend has another friend;  
Only the idle heart inquires  
The distance and the end.

We pant up the climbing grade,  
And coast on the tangent mile,  
While the Driver toys with the throttle-bar,  
And gathers the track in his smile.

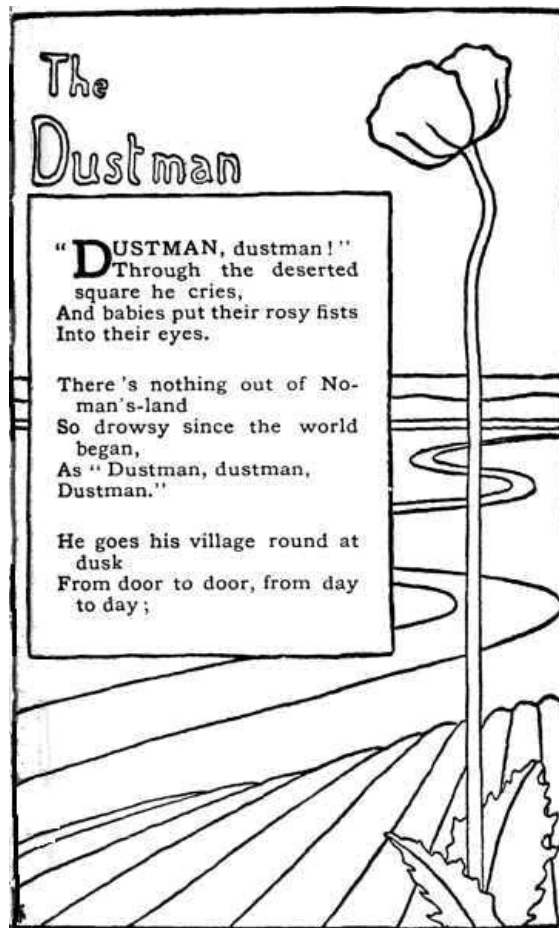
The dreamer weary of dreams,  
The lover by love released,  
Stricken and whole, and eager and sad,  
Beauty and waif and priest,

All these adventure forth,  
Strangers though side by side,  
With the tramp of time in the roaring wheels,  
And haste in their shadowy stride.

The star that races the hills  
Shows yet the night is deep;  
But the Driver humors the throttle-bar;  
So, you and I may sleep.

For He of the sleepless hand  
Will drive till the night is done—  
Will watch till morning springs from the sea,  
And the rails stand gold in the sun;

Then he will slow to a stop  
The tread of the driving-rod,  
When the night express rolls into the dawn;  
For the Driver's name is God.



### The Dustman

"DUSTMAN, dustman!"  
Through the deserted square he cries,  
And babies put their rosy fists  
Into their eyes.

There's nothing out of No-man's-land  
So drowsy since the world began,  
As "Dustman, dustman,  
Dustman."

He goes his village round at dusk  
From door to door, from day to day;  
And when the children hear his step  
They stop their play.

"Dustman, dustman!"  
Far up the street he is descried,  
And soberly the twilight games  
Are laid aside.

"Dustman, dustman!"  
There, Drowsyhead, the old refrain,  
"Dustman, dustman!"  
It goes again.

Dustman, dustman,  
Hurry by and let me sleep.  
When most I wish for you to come,  
You always creep.

Dustman, dustman,  
And when I want to play some more,  
You never then are further off  
Than the next door.

"Dustman, dustman!"  
He heckles down the echoing curb,  
A step that neither hopes nor hates  
Ever disturb.

"Dustman, dustman!"  
He never varies from one pace,  
And the monotony of time  
Is in his face.

And some day, with more potent dust,  
Brought from his home beyond the deep,  
And gently scattered on our eyes,  
We, too, shall sleep,—

Hearing the call we know so well  
Fade softly out as it began,  
"Dustman, dustman,  
Dustman!"

## The Sleepers

94

**T**HE tall carnations down the garden walks  
Bowed on their stalks.

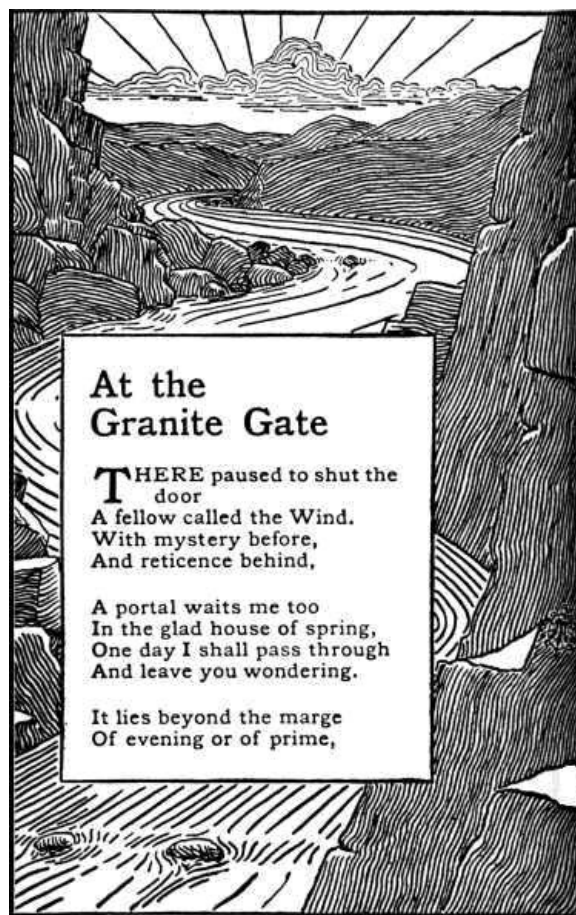
Said Jock-a-dreams to John-a-nods,  
"What are the odds  
That we shall wake up here within the sun,  
When time is done,  
And pick up all the treasures one by one  
Our hands let fall in sleep?" "You have begun  
To mutter in your dreams,"  
Said John-a-nods to Jock-a-dreams,  
And they both slept again.

The tall carnations in the sunset glow  
Burned row on row.

Said John-a-nods to Jock-a-dreams,  
"To me it seems  
A thousand years since last you stirred and spoke,  
And I awoke.  
Was that the wind then trying to provoke  
His brothers in their blessed sleep?" "They choke,  
Who mutter in their nods,"  
Said Jock-a-dreams to John-a-nods.  
And they both slept again.

95

The tall carnations only heard a sigh  
Of dusk go by.



## At the Granite Gate

**T**HERE paused to shut the  
door  
A fellow called the Wind.  
With mystery before,  
And reticence behind,

A portal waits me too  
In the glad house of spring,  
One day I shall pass through  
And leave you wondering.

It lies beyond the marge  
Of evening or of prime,

## At the Granite Gate

**T**HERE paused to shut the door  
A fellow called the Wind.  
With mystery before,  
And reticence behind,

A portal waits me too  
In the glad house of spring,  
One day I shall pass through  
And leave you wondering.

It lies beyond the marge  
Of evening or of prime,  
Silent and dim and large,  
The gateway of all time.

There troop by night and day  
My brothers of the field;  
And I shall know the way  
Their woodsongs have revealed.

The dusk will hold some trace  
Of all my radiant crew  
Who vanished to that place,  
Ephemeral as dew.

Into the twilight dun,  
Blue moth and dragon-fly  
Adventuring alone,—  
Shall be more brave than I?

There innocents shall bloom  
And the white cherry tree,  
With birch and willow plume  
To strew the road for me.

The wilding orioles then  
Shall make the golden air  
Heavy with joy again,  
And the dark heart shall dare

Resume the old desire,

The exigence of spring  
To be the orange fire  
That tips the world's gray wing.

And the lone wood-bird—Hark,  
The whippoorwill night long  
Threshing the summer dark  
With his dim flail of song!—

Shall be the lyric lift,  
When all my senses creep,  
To bear me through the rift  
In the blue range of sleep.

And so I pass beyond  
The solace of your hand.  
But ah, so brave and fond!  
Within that morrow land,

Where deed and daring fail,  
But joy forevermore  
Shall tremble and prevail  
Against the narrow door,

Where sorrow knocks too late,  
And grief is overdue,  
Beyond the granite gate  
There will be thoughts of you.

99



100

### Exit Anima

*"Hospes comesque corporis,  
Quae nunc abitis in loca?"*

**C**EASE, Wind, to blow  
And drive the peopled snow,  
And move the haunted arras to and fro,  
And moan of things I fear to know  
Yet would rend from thee, Wind, before I go  
On the blind pilgrimage.  
Cease, Wind, to blow.

Thy brother too,  
I leave no print of shoe  
In all these vasty rooms I rummage through,  
No word at threshold, and no clue  
Of whence I come and whither I pursue  
The search of treasures lost  
When time was new.

101

Thou janitor  
Of the dim curtained door,  
Stir thy old bones along the dusty floor  
Of this unlighted corridor.  
Open! I have been this dark way before;  
Thy hollow face shall peer  
In mine no more. . . . .

Sky, the dear sky!  
Ah, ghostly house, good-by!  
I leave thee as the gauzy dragon-fly  
Leaves the green pool to try  
His vast ambition on the vaster sky,—  
Such valor against death  
Is deity.

What, thou too here,  
Thou haunting whisperer?  
Spirit of beauty immanent and sheer,  
Art thou that crooked servitor,  
Done with disguise, from whose malignant leer  
Out of the ghostly house  
I fled in fear?

102

O Beauty, how  
I do repent me now,  
Of all the doubt I ever could allow  
To shake me like the aspen bough;  
Nor once imagine that unsullied brow  
Could wear the evil mask  
And still be thou!

Bone of thy bone,  
Breath of thy breath alone,  
I dare resume the silence of a stone,  
Or explore still the vast unknown,  
Like a bright sea-bird through the morning blown,  
With all his heart one joy,  
From zone to zone.

Scituate, June, 1895.

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Transcriber's Note:

One ten-line block of the title poem, beginning

*Yet while they last how actual they seem!*

and ending

*Without a flaw.*

was printed without a stanza break. This may be a typographical error, but it was left as printed.

One illustration was changed for the second edition, issued by a different publisher. Shown are the title page, the new illustration for "Exit Anima", and the back page.

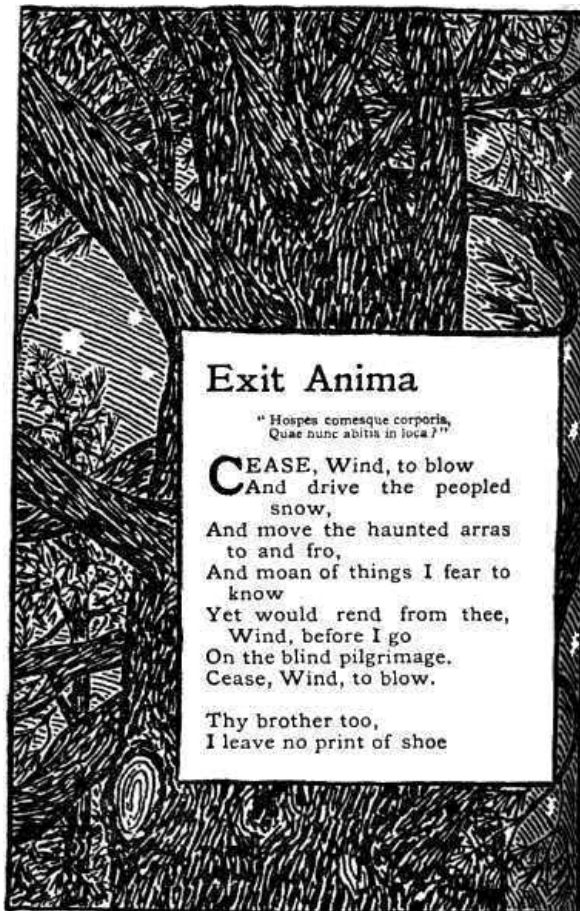
## BEHIND THE ARRAS

A Book of the Unseen  
BY BLISS CARMAN

With Designs By  
T. B. Meteyard



BOSTON  
SMALL, MAYNARD  
AND COMPANY  
1899



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