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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LITTLE WINDOW ***

A LITTLE WINDOW

JEAN M. SNYDER

A LITTLE WINDOW

VERSES BY

JEAN M. SNYDER

"In good sooth, my masters this is no door, yet it is a little window that looketh upon a great world."

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The two exceptions are "Joy" (page 46) and "Triumph" (page 49), which are also copyrighted and reprinted by permission.

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A Little Window

Stars

[Pg 7]

(At Locheven)

Have you walked in the woods
When twilight wraps a veil of mist
Around the gray-green trees
In early spring?
It is then the snow-white trillium
Gleam like stars from the carpet
Of last year's leaves:
And tall white violets glow
Like clouds of nebulæ along the path.
And flecked, like points of light
In the quiet pools of water
Among the gray-green holes,
Are the stars of heaven.

The Brook

[Pg 8]

(Westfield, N. Y.)

Curling and humming its cadences,
It slips past me under the rim of the gorge,
As I peer down through the scarlet sumacs.
Sparkling in the sunlight,
Shimmering in the moonlight,
On and on it goes,
A silvery sheet of song.

In Eden Valley

[Pg 9]

I saw

A spray of orange berries etched against the
silver of a stone wall:

A scarlet vine encircling a golden sapling;

On the ground, a carmine robe that had
slipped from the shoulders of a maple.

A sweep of meadow,
A curve of bronzy hill,
A glow of ruby and amethyst
And the evergreens making deep quiet spots
in it.

Benediction

[Pg 10]

Silent, I stood in the forest—
Lured by the liquid song
Of a thrush.
Clear, it was, then fading
And softly echoed,
As he slipped into the embrace
Of the night.
So pure, so holy, was his song
That my heart was calmed
And I was filled
With serenity.

A Moment

[Pg 11]

The beaten silver waters cut
By the prow of our ship,
Send off stars of phosphorous
To vie with the stars overhead.
Nothing but sky and the starlight,
And a stretch of limitless sea,
Nothing but peace and dominion,—
Silence, immensity.

[Pg 12]

The Month of Moonlight

Moonlight is not cold!
It is tender and benignant,
Softening all it touches,
Hiding the roughness,
Covering the coarseness,
With a glow of silver splendor
And a lucent flood
Of beauty.

Wings

[Pg 13]

There come to the flowers
In my garden
Butterflies, golden-spotted tawny,
Blue-spangled and sulphur;
Glistening dragon-flies, zooming bumble bees,
Droning honey-bees.

Softly whirring comes
The vivid humming-bird,
Sipping, sipping all day long.
At nightfall I hear the flutter of the
Luna's wings, as
She caresses the velvet cheek
Of the lily.

Heart's Ease

[Pg 14]

(Locheven)

I love to tread a winding path
Through the woods,
And, world weary, pause upon it.
The trees bend and enclose me
In brooding calm;
I feel the presence of Deity.

I hear the cadence of the stillness—
A stillness so alive.
The whisper of the leaves,
The song of the brook over golden stone
The whir of a bird's wings;
And I know the presence of Deity.

The Sign Reads—"To Troutbeck"

[Pg 15]

(English Lakes)

An upcurving lane, hedged high,
An ancient stile,
A rambling path,
A brook,
And musk,—
Golden bells of fragrance,
Fusing all the odors
Of English earth.

Robin, robin,
Shouting your song,
Your throat swelling
With joy!
Yes, I hear, I know
What you say.
For I, too,
Would sing
My praise and
Gratitude
To God!

In Early Evening

[Pg 17]

When I drive through
The villages and the countryside
In early evening,
And see people sitting in gardens
Or at their doors
In peace and contentment,
I long to stop and speak to them.
They might tell me of a loved one
Doing some great work
In a big city,
Or of a deep sorrow,
And I might say a word
To help lighten it.
They might show me treasured china
Or a bit of lace, handmade;
Once some one did.
And I could talk with the children.
I long to do this,
But it always seems
That there is a hurry
To get to the next place.

Fearless Winging

[Pg 18]

Into Niagara's abyss of blackness,
Into its cavernous chaos,
I saw birds wing.
Sweeping down
Through the mist
Of its mighty waters,
Undaunted by the roar,
Unmindful of the churning,
Of the terror of its power,
On sure pinions
And happy in flight
They dipped and soared and
Mounted, upward and upward.
Into the light
And the rainbow
Above them.

Whimsey

[Pg 19]

In spring my hemlock
Dances gayly in flounces
Of jade green lace.

In summer moonlight
When a soft wind stirs
She dances with a delicate sapling.
They sway and bend in the wind,
And bow to the trees encircling.
I hear the laughter of their leaves.

In autumn she dances
With beech leaves in her hair,

But in winter I have found her still,
Crouching under a blanket of snow.

Remembering

[Pg 20]

(Locheven)

There is a spot in the woods
That is "forever England" to me.
A clump of beech trees
Steeped in silence,
Whose shade and solitude
Shuts me in with my dreams.
The sunshine slants through
Their limpid leaves
And turns them to translucent jade,
Just as it does in an English spring.
Violets are there, and I pluck them,
Remembering the bluebells
In the beech wood
At Sevenoaks.

Aloofness

[Pg 21]

Down among the docks and elevators and
railroad tracks
On the way out of the city,
I pass a tiny cottage so rickety
That its neighbors crowd close
To hold it up. But there it is,
Its one window shining clean, and glowing
With a plant in a tin can and pure white
curtains.
Hanging over the fence and filling the whole
place
With its beauty and almost hiding the cottage
Is a peach tree in full bloom.
In the doorway I glimpse a girl
In a purple dress.
But what matters the smoke and the noise and
the fog
To the peach tree?

Listening

[Pg 22]

(Eden, N. Y.)

Atop Aries hill am I,
The lone flyer, throbbing
Against the sunset
Is higher.
He sees more than I,
But he cannot hear

What I hear.

I hear the wood-thrush
And the veery,
Answer each other.
I hear the voices
Of happy children
And the baying of hounds
Float up from the valley;
The chirp of the cricket
At my feet, and, then,
The silence of nightfall.

He sees more than I,
But he cannot hear
What I hear.

September's End

[Pg 23]

In the ash tree
There is a soft rustling,
Lingering, like
A silken whisper,
Quite different
Than sound the other trees;
As if the bronzy leaves
Had much to say
Before they part,
And were loath
To bid farewell.

Content

[Pg 24]

(Westfield, N. Y.)

When I linger in my garden
And see black swallowtails hovering
Over white phlox and orange zinnias,
And morning glories, in a heavenly blue mass
Surge upward on their trellis;
When I watch the scintillating humming-bird
Sip from the trumpet blossoms across my
 doorway,
I feel no urge of travel to behold
More of earth's beauty.
Here in my little garden I have it all—
And here I am content.

Rhythm

[Pg 25]

Firelight, and strains of a symphony
 Wafting in.
Outside, bare trees
 Against leaden skies
 Weave their own music
 That throbs with the rhythm
 Of the orchestra.
The wind moans, and
 Strong, black branches
 Sway slowly,
 Mark the beat,
 Then stop.
The wind hums,

Delicate, lacelike tops
Quiver and ripple
With the quick response
Of the violins.
With the shriek of the wind
They writhe and toss,
Measuring the crescendo
Of the brasses.

Contrast

[Pg 26]

In an old world palace,
Room after room
Is filled with treasures—
Old masters, jewels, glass.
Yet all I remember
Is the stark whiteness of a gardenia
Blowing against a wall,
And the fairy music of a fountain
In the patio.

Surety

[Pg 27]

I needed the dawn, but
My eyes beheld only clouds
And a valley filled with mists
And a mountain shutting out the east.
I needed the dawn, so
I could but wait.
Surely,
Slowly
Through the clouds
The light came,
Like a presence
Dispelling mist and cloud:
Even the mountain
Could not hide it.
My eyes beheld all clear,
And in the roseate glow,
Like a diamond,
Hung the morning star.

Guests

[Pg 28]

There was emptiness
When the birds left in the fall.
But to fill it came late butterflies,
Dawdling flocks of brilliant things
In clouds of scintillating beauty,
Covering every bush and flower.
As silently as they came did they disappear
And in their place came the music
Of the katydid and the cricket.
Day and night the cheerful songs
Of these tiny insects were our company.

An early blizzard
Buried every green blade and bent to earth
Great trees and slender saplings
Under a thick weight of snow.
To our door came the thrushes
That we thought were gone,—
Shy thrushes, that had turned their backs

[Pg 29]

Upon us in summer and slipped
Into the depth of the woods,—
And whitethroats and tree sparrows,
Unafraid, waiting for food.
Even now the stillness is alive
With the memory of these friendly folk.

Storm

[Pg 30]

When the storm rushes upon the deep woods,
It lets down curtains of mist
And sheets of rain, that drip
Crystal beads among the trees.
Way above, the branches lash and moan
And weave. Below, it is still,
Still as the undersea.
Soft fern and feathery bracken
Loom through the mist
Like branching coral,
And drifting leaves float down
Like snowy fishes,
Lazily moving.

A Reminder

[Pg 31]

Down beneath the office windows
In a chestnut clump,
A robin sings all day long,
“Joyously, joyously!”

Above the whirl of traffic,
The bands and the sirens,
Floats his song all day,
“Joyously, joyously!”

The lilting song brings to me,
The peace of field and merry brook,
And I myself, sing all day, too,
“Joyously, joyously!”

Buffalo Harbor

[Pg 32]

Some say that it is ugly and hurry on through,
But I love these impressive symbols
Of man’s ingenuity.
Here are the great grain elevators, looming
In tones and shades of grey, veiled
In the clouds of black smoke from the
Tugs at their feet;
Puffing engines shifting strings of cars,
And huge ships nosed in against each other
Or riding at anchor, and canal boats
In straight lines at the docks.
Farther on, across a slip, there are
Mountains of ore in reds and brown,
And pile upon pile of gravel and slag,
And sand in soft saffron hues,
Heaped up for the steel mills to devour;
Those gigantic mills whose tall stacks
Belch varicolored gases, against
The deep blue of the inner harbor,
Where the waves pound in
Over the sea wall.

[Pg 33]

All this cupped by the towering
City skyscrapers, and outlined against
The peaceful Eden hills,
Miles to the south.
And when I wait for the big bridge to lift
For a freighter with its important tugs,
I pull out of line, off to the side,
And let the other cars go by,
And look, and look.
I never seem to get enough.

From a Train Window

[Pg 34]

Once, before dawn,
In the Mohawk valley,
Dots of light flashed
And floated off
Into the blackness,
Like sparks of flame
Blasted from the engine.
Then more and more,
Mile after mile,
Almost never ending—
Millions of fire-flies,
Like tiny torches,
Dancing over swamp lands
In the night air.

Scotland

[Pg 35]

(The Highlands)

Mountains,
 Veiled in shifting vapors,
Mountains,
 Bleak, foreboding,
Mountains,
 Stark and overpowering.
Torrents,
 Tumbling, crashing,
 Dragging boulders
 In their rushing,
Lakes,
 Forlorn and lonesome
Heather
 In magenta patches,
Sheep, and cattle
 Black and somber,
Winding roads
 Through massive passes.
Rain,
Sun,
Flowers,
Mist,
Rain,—
 Loved Scotland!

Friends

[Pg 36]

(At Lake Windermere, England)

Across the lake

Lying calm and black
Under the night,
Floats the wail
Of the pipes:
And beyond, loom
Langdale Pikes, dim,
Shadowy sentinels.
Over all, the stars,
Like friends, faithful
And changeless.

A Poem of Color

[Pg 37]

Stretched on the ground beneath the
Hawthorn,
The perfume of its blossoms mingled with
falling petals, floats down to me.
Winged things alight there on the blanket of
fragrance above,—a bunting, blue as the
sky, a warbler, all gold, an Admiral,
wings banded with crimson,
Make a poem of color of the Hawthorn tree.

Dream

[Pg 38]

(Stratford-on-Avon)

One warm June evening
I sat in the churchyard
Of old Trinity. I sat there for hours
On an ancient stone, forgetting time.
The Avon, as silent as the centuries it had
known,
Glided past, carrying me on with its memories.
From the lush meadow across the river came
the bleating of lambs,
And from the limes floated the song of
blackbirds.
All about the scent of roses hung heavy.
Then, over the roof of Trinity, the moon arose.
Shakespeare saw the Avon, thus, and loved it,
—
Winding on in the moonlight.

Escape

[Pg 39]

How simple life can be!
A cabin,
Mountains, afar and near,
A brook,
Deer, blowing at night.
Perchance,
Rain on the roof,
Then,
The loved books,
A fire on the hearth,
And endless time
To think.
How simple life is!

(Locheven)

Would you choose
The formal garden
With lilac hedges
And vistas of velvet lawn
And marble fountain
Shining pool and
Marble bench o'er-topped
By drooping willow;
Massed color in trim beds,
And stately garden house
Festooned with wisteria
And guarded by strutting peacock?

Or,

The wood's garden,
The wild garden,
Tumbling over itself
With pale Jacks, and violets—
Blue and gold, and
Baby ferns, tucked
Within sheltering gnarled roots!
And mossy mounds, starred
With Trillium and Crane's bill;
And patches of lavender sunlight,
(No, it's wild Phlox,
In the flickering light)—
And fire-flies and flapping owls,
At twilight, and furry rabbits,
Bobbing ahead up the path.

Which would you choose?

[Pg 41]

When You Were a Little Girl

[Pg 42]

When you were a little girl
And you went driving with Grandfather,
If it rained, didn't he braid up the horse's tail
Binding it round with a bright silver band,
And fasten on the side curtains of the carriage
And pull the rubber "boot" over the
 dashboard?
And do you remember how the horse's feet
Went "Plop, plop," in and out of the mud,
And you felt the mist blow in on your face
When you managed to peer out over the
 curtain?
And didn't you snuggle up close to
 Grandfather
And hug the Fairy Tale book
Which he was going to listen to
When the rain stopped and you lunched
Beside the road?

Didn't your Grandfather always drive over
To the cheese factory, and bring out
The fresh cheese curd to you?
Can't you remember the taste, even now?
And sometimes, when it stormed hard, and
 thundered
And lightened, and the crashing made the
 horse
Want to run, wouldn't your Grandfather
 always say:
"Steady there, now, boy! Steady, boy!" so
 gently,

[Pg 43]

That neither you nor the horse were afraid
after that
Because Grandfather said everything was all
right,
And he knew. And wasn't your Grandmother
Waiting in the doorway, watching a bit
anxiously,
Until you turned into the yard?
Mine was.

Flight

[Pg 44]

So still lay the city,
So very quietly it slept,
That from high in the west
I heard the honking of geese
Winging southward.
Yearningly I listened
As they swept over,
Yearningly I cried—
O wild things, that I
Could fly as do you!
Then out of the silent darkness,
Like a flying star,
Flashed a plane
With its skyborne humans.
And all of a sudden
I remembered that I, too,
Could take to wings.

Petit Trianon

[Pg 45]

(Versailles, France)

When the long drawn notes of a bird's song
Echoes through the trees,
It brings to remembrance the songs
Of the blackbirds at Petit Trianon:
Chiming, reverberating, floating down
From the tops of the tall cedars
As from an invisible, celestial choir.

Nor can I forget the ages-old wisteria
Clambering over gray palace walls,
Nor the gamut of color in the azaleas there—
Pink, orange, cerise, yellow—
In pale green foliage.

Joy

[Pg 46]

When your heavens are as brass
And joy has fled, and
Every door is shut,
Do not forget the one
That opens inward—
The door of your heart,
Whose handle is on the inside
And which only you can open.
Go out through that door
And find one whose skies
Are darker than yours,
Whose burden is heavier;
Bring him back with you

Into your heart.

There can you cleanse him with love,
And clothe him with garments of truth,
And put the ring of his unity
With God upon his hand;
There feed him with the word,
And let him go.
Then will your heavens be
As radiant light,
And your happiness and joy
Such as never were
On land or sea.

[Pg 47]

Twilight Song Service

[Pg 48]

("B.A." Chestnut Hill, Mass.)

In the deepening twilight there floats
From the chapel above, the loved hymns of
healing—
Hymns of comfort, of courage, welling up from
grateful hearts
And bringing reassurance of God's power
To one who listens below in silent prayer and
praise.
Great peace of God, be with us all!
Great peace of God encompass us!
Speak to the waves tonight, Father, that they
stand.
Stretch forth Thy hand and stay their power,
Calm them, that they overwhelm not.
For Thy voice is "mightier than the noise of
many waters,
Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."
This Thou canst do, O my God.

Triumph

[Pg 49]

These are they, O God,
Who came out of great tribulation
And have washed their robes white.
Oh, holy triumph of those
Who have endured the fire
And the tempest's rage and, delivered,
Stand exalted in this very hour,
Purged, sanctified, and satisfied.
These are they who have surrendered
All the vanities of mortal selfhood,
And serve Thee
Day and night in Thy temple,
Lifting others to behold
The tearless, ageless, deathless reality
Of Thy glory.

Transcriber's Note

Minor typographic errors have been corrected without note.

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