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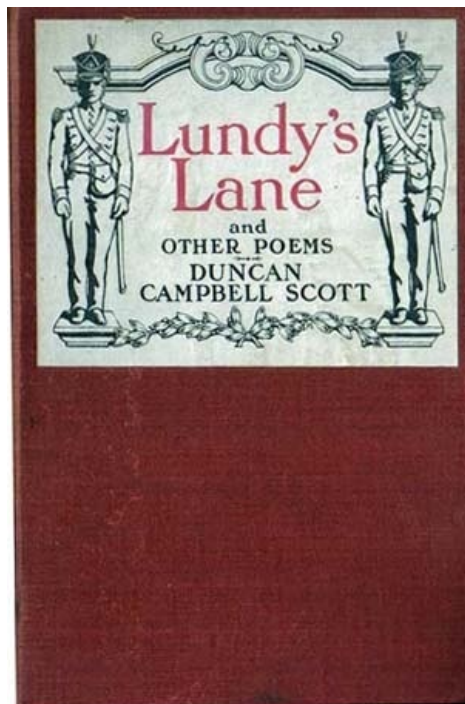
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LUNDY'S LANE, AND OTHER POEMS



Lundy's Lane

and Other Poems

By

Duncan Campbell Scott

Author of "The Magic House," "In the Village of Viger," etc., etc.

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To the Memory of My Daughter
ELIZABETH DUNCAN SCOTT
1895-1907

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THE BATTLE OF LUNDY'S LANE

THE BATTLE OF LUNDY'S LANE

Rufus Gale speaks—1852

Yes,—in the Lincoln Militia,—in the war of eighteen-twelve;
 Many's the day I've had since then to dig and delve—
 But those are the years I remember as the brightest years of all,
 When we left the plow in the furrow to follow the bugle's call.
 Why, even our son Abner wanted to fight with the men!
 "Don't you go, d'ye hear, sir!"—I was angry with him then.
 "Stay with your mother!" I said, and he looked so old and grim—
 He was just sixteen that April—I couldn't believe it was him;
 But I didn't think—I was off—and we met the foe again,
 Five thousand strong and ready, at the hill by Lundy's Lane.
 There as the night came on we fought them from six to nine,
 Whenever they broke our line we broke their line,
 They took our guns and we won them again, and around the levels
 Where the hill sloped up—with the Eighty-ninth,—we fought like devils
 Around the flag;—and on they came and we drove them back,
 Until with its very fierceness the fight grew slack.

It was then about nine and dark as a miser's pocket,
 When up came Hercules Scott's brigade swift as a rocket,
 And charged,—and the flashes sprang in the dark like a lion's eyes;
 The night was full of fire—groans, and cheers, and cries;
 Then through the sound and the fury another sound broke in—
 The roar of a great old duck-gun shattered the rest of the din;
 It took two minutes to charge it and another to set it free.

Every time I heard it an angel spoke to me;
Yes, the minute I heard it I felt the strangest tide
Flow in my veins like lightning, as if, there, by my side,
Was the very spirit of Valor. But 'twas dark—you couldn't see—
And the one who was firing the duck-gun fell against me
And slid down to the clover, and lay there still;
Something went through me—piercing—with a strange, swift thrill;
The noise fell away into silence, and I heard as clear as thunder
The long, slow roar of Niagara: O the wonder
Of that deep sound. But again the battle broke
And the foe, driven before us desperately—stroke upon stroke,
Left the field to his master, and sullenly down the road
Sounded the boom of his guns, trailing the heavy load
Of his wounded men and his shattered flags, sullen and slow,
Setting fire in his rage to Bridgewater mills and the glow
Flared in the distant forest. We rested as we could,
And for a while I slept in the dark of a maple wood:
But when the clouds in the east were red all over,
I came back there to the place we made the stand in the clover;
For my heart was heavy then with a strange deep pain,
As I thought of the glorious fight, and again and again
I remembered the valiant spirit and the piercing thrill;
But I knew it all when I reached the top of the hill,—
For there, there with the blood on his dear, brave head,
There on the hill in the clover lay our Abner—dead!—
No—thank you—no, I don't need it; I'm solid as granite rock,
But every time that I tell it I feel the old, cold shock,
I'm eighty-one my next birthday—do you breed such fellows now?
There he lay with the dawn cooling his broad fair brow,
That was no dawn for him; and there was the old duck-gun
That many and many's the time,—just for the fun,
We together, alone, would take to the hickory rise,
And bring home more wild pigeons than ever you saw with your eyes.
Up with Hercules Scott's brigade, just as it came on night—
He was the angel beside me in the thickest of the fight—
Wrote a note to his mother—He said, "I've got to go;
Mother what would home be under the heel of the foe!"
Oh! she never slept a wink, she would rise and walk the floor;
She'd say this over and over, "I knew it all before!"
I'd try to speak of the glory to give her a little joy.
"What is the glory to me when I want my boy, my boy!"
She'd say, and she'd wring her hands; her hair grew white as snow—
And I'd argue with her up and down, to and fro,
Of how she had mothered a hero, and his was a glorious fate,
Better than years of grubbing to gather an estate.
Sometimes I'd put it this way: "If God was to say to me now
'Take him back as he once was helping you with the plow,'
I'd say, 'No, God, thank You kindly; 'twas You that he obeyed;
You told him to fight and he fought, and he wasn't afraid;
You wanted to prove him in battle, You sent him to Lundy's Lane,
'Tis well!" But she only would answer over and over again,
"Give me back my Abner—give me back my son!"
It was so all through the winter until the spring had begun,
And the crocus was up in the dooryard, and the drift by the fence was
thinned,
And the sap drip-dropped from the branches wounded by the wind,
And the whole earth smelled like a flower,—then she came to me one night—
"Rufus!" she said, with a sob in her throat,—
"Rufus, you're right."
I hadn't cried till then, not a tear—but then I was torn in two—
There, it's all right—my eyes don't see as they used to do!

But O the joy of that battle—it was worth the whole of life,
You felt immortal in action with the rapture of the strife,
There in the dark by the river, with the flashes of fire before,
Running and crashing along, there in the dark, and the roar
Of the guns, and the shrilling cheers, and the knowledge that filled your heart
That there was a victory making and you must do your part,
But—there's his grave in the orchard where the headstone glimmers white:
We could see it, we thought, from our window even on the darkest night;
It is set there for a sign that what one lad could do
Would be done by a hundred hundred lads whose hearts were stout and true.
And when in the time of trial you hear the recreant say,
Shooting his coward lips at us, "You shall have had your day:
For all your state and glory shall pass like a cloudy wrack,
And here some other flag shall fly where flew the Union Jack,"—

Why tell him a hundred thousand men would spring from these sleepy farms,
To tie that flag in its ancient place with the sinews of their arms;
And if they doubt you and put you to scorn, why you can make it plain,
With the tale of the gallant Lincoln men and the fight at Lundy's Lane.=

1908.

VIA BOREALIS

TO
Pelham Edgar

SPRING ON MATTAGAMI

Far in the east the rain-clouds sweep and harry,
Down the long haggard hills, formless and low,
Far in the west the shell-tints meet and marry,
Piled gray and tender blue and roseate snow;
East—like a fiend, the bolt-breasted, streaming
Storm strikes the world with lightning and with hail;
West—like the thought of a seraph that is dreaming,
Venus leads the young moon down the vale.

Through the lake furrow between the gloom and bright'ning
Firm runs our long canoe with a whistling rush,
While Potàn the wise and the cunning Silver Lightning
Break with their slender blades the long clear hush;
Soon shall I pitch my tent amid the birches,
Wise Potàn shall gather boughs of balsam fir,
While for bark and dry wood Silver Lightning searches;
Soon the smoke shall hang and lapse in the moist air.

Soon shall I sleep—if I may not remember
One who lives far away where the storm-cloud went;
May it part and starshine burn in many a quiet ember,
Over her towered city crowned with large content;
Dear God, let me sleep, here where deep peace is,
Let me own a dreamless sleep once for all the years,
Let me know a quiet mind and what heart ease is,
Lost to light and life and hope, to longing and to tears.

Here in the solitude less her memory presses,
Yet I see her lingering where the birches shine,
All the dark cedars are sleep-laden like her tresses,
The gold-moted wood-pools pellucid as her eyen;
Memories and ghost-forms of the days departed
People all the forest lone in the dead of night;
While Potàn and Silver Lightning sleep, the happy-hearted,
Troop they from their fastnesses upon my sight.

Once when the tide came straining from the Lido,
In a sea of flame our gondola flickered like a sword,
Venice lay abroad builded like beauty's credo,
Smouldering like a gorget on the breast of the Lord:
Did she mourn for fame foredoomed or passion shattered
That with a sudden impulse she gathered at my side?
But when I spoke the ancient fates were flattered,
Chill there crept between us the imperceptible tide.

Once I well remember in her twilight garden,
She pulled a half-blown rose, I thought it meant for me,
But poising in the act, and with half a sigh for pardon,
She hid it in her bosom where none may dare to see:
Had she a subtle meaning?—would to God I knew it,
Where'er I am I always feel the rose leaves nestling there,
If I might know her mind and the thought which then flashed through it,
My soul might look to heaven not commissioned to despair.

Though she denied at parting the gift that I besought her,
Just a bit of ribbon or a strand of her hair;
Though she would not keep the token that I brought her,
Proud she stood and calm and marvellously fair;
Yet I saw her spirit—truth cannot dissemble—
Saw her pure as gold, staunch and keen and brave,
For she knows my worth and her heart was all atremble,
Lest her will should weaken and make her heart a slave.

If she could be here where all the world is eager
For dear love with the primal Eden sway,
Where the blood is fire and no pulse is thin or meagre,
All the heart of all the world beats one way!
There is the land of fraud and fame and fashion,
Joy is but a gaud and withers in an hour,
Here is the land of quintessential passion,
Where in a wild throb Spring wells up with power.

She would hear the partridge drumming in the distance,
Rolling out his mimic thunder in the sultry noons;
Hear beyond the silver reach in ringing wild persistence
Reel remote the ululating laughter of the loons;
See the shy moose fawn nestling by its mother,
In a cool marsh pool where the sedges meet;
Rest by a moss-mound where the twin-flowers smother
With a drowse of orient perfume drenched in light and heat:

She would see the dawn rise behind the smoky mountain,
In a jet of colour curving up to break,
While like spray from the iridescent fountain,
Opal fires weave over all the oval of the lake:
She would see like fireflies the stars alight and spangle
All the heaven meadows thick with growing dusk,
Feel the gipsy airs that gather up and tangle
The woody odours in a maze of myrrh and musk:

There in the forest all the birds are nesting,
Tells the hermit thrush the song he cannot tell,
While the white-throat sparrow never resting,
Even in the deepest night rings his crystal bell:
O, she would love me then with a wild elation,
Then she must love me and leave her lonely state,
Give me love yet keep her soul's imperial reservation,
Large as her deep nature and fathomless as fate:

Then, if she would lie beside me in the even,
On my deep couch heaped of balsam fir,
Fragrant with sleep as nothing under heaven,
Let the past and future mingle in one blur;
While all the stars were watchful and thereunder
Earth breathed not but took their silent light,
All life withdrew and wrapt in a wild wonder
Peace fell tranquil on the odorous night:

She would let me steal,—not consenting or denying—
One strong arm beneath her dusky hair,
She would let me bare, not resisting or complying,
One sweet breast so sweet and firm and fair;
Then with the quick sob of passion's shy endeavour,
She would gather close and shudder and swoon away,
She would be mine for ever and for ever,
Mine for all time and beyond the judgment day.

Vain is the dream, and deep with all derision—
Fate is stern and hard—fair and false and vain—
But what would life be worth without the vision,
Dark with sordid passion, pale with wringing pain?
What I dream is mine, mine beyond all cavil,
Pure and fair and sweet, and mine for evermore,
And when I will my life I may unravel,
And find my passion dream deep at the red core.

Venus sinks first lost in ruby splendour,
Stars like wood-daffodils grow golden in the night,
Far, far above, in a space entranced and tender,
Floats the growing moon pale with virgin light.

Vaster than the world or life or death my trust is
Based in the unseen and towering far above;
Hold me, O Law, that deeper lies than Justice,
Guide me, O Light, that stronger burns than Love.

AN IMPROMPTU

Here in the pungent gloom
Where the tamarac roses glow
And the balsam burns its perfume,
A vireo turns his slow
Cadence, as if he gloated
Over the last phrase he floated;
Each one he moulds and mellows
Matching it with its fellows:
So have you noted
How the oboe croons,
The canary-throated,
In the gloom of the violoncellos
And bassoons.

But afar in the thickset forest
I hear a sound go free,
Crashing the stately neighbours
The pine and the cedar tree,
Horns and harps and tabors,
Drumming and harping and horning
In savage minstrelsy—
It wakes in my soul a warning
Of the wind of destiny.

My life is soaring and swinging
In triple walls of quiet,
In my heart there is rippling and ringing
A song with melodious riot,
When a fateful thing comes nigh it
A hush falls, and then
I hear in the thickset world
The wind of destiny hurled
On the lives of men.

THE HALF-BREED GIRL

She is free of the trap and the paddle,
The portage and the trail,
But something behind her savage life
Shines like a fragile veil.

Her dreams are undiscovered,
Shadows trouble her breast,
When the time for resting cometh
Then least is she at rest.

Oft in the morns of winter,
When she visits the rabbit snares,
An appearance floats in the crystal air
Beyond the balsam firs.

Oft in the summer mornings
When she strips the nets of fish,
The smell of the dripping net-twine
Gives to her heart a wish.

But she cannot learn the meaning
Of the shadows in her soul,
The lights that break and gather,
The clouds that part and roll,

The reek of rock-built cities,
Where her fathers dwelt of yore,
The gleam of loch and shealing,
The mist on the moor,

Frail traces of kindred kindness,
Of feud by hill and strand,
The heritage of an age-long life
In a legendary land.

She wakes in the stifling wigwam,
Where the air is heavy and wild,
She fears for something or nothing
With the heart of a frightened child.

She sees the stars turn slowly
Past the tangle of the poles,
Through the smoke of the dying embers,
Like the eyes of dead souls.

Her heart is shaken with longing
For the strange, still years,
For what she knows and knows not,
For the wells of ancient tears.

A voice calls from the rapids,
Deep, careless and free,
A voice that is larger than her life
Or than her death shall be.

She covers her face with her blanket,
Her fierce soul hates her breath,
As it cries with a sudden passion
For life or death.

NIGHT BURIAL IN THE FOREST

Lay him down where the fern is thick and fair.
Fain was he for life, here lies he low:
With the blood washed clean from his brow and his beautiful hair,
Lay him here in the dell where the orchids grow.

Let the birch-bark torches roar in the gloom,
And the trees crowd up in a quiet startled ring
So lone is the land that in this lonely room
Never before has breathed a human thing.

Cover him well in his canvas shroud, and the moss
Part and heap again on his quiet breast,
What recks he now of gain, or love, or loss
Who for love gained rest?

While she who caused it all hides her insolent eyes
Or braids her hair with the ribbons of lust and of lies,
And he who did the deed fares out like a hunted beast
To lurk where the musk-ox tramples the barren ground
Where the stroke of his coward heart is the only sound.

Haunting the tamarac shade,
Hear them up-thronging
Memories foredoomed
Of strife and of longing:
Haggard or bright
By the tamaracs and birches,
Where the red torch light

Trembles and searches,
The wilderness teems
With inscrutable eyes
Of ghosts that are dreams
Commingled with memories.

Leave him here in his secret ferny tomb,
Withdraw the little light from the ocean of gloom,
He who feared nought will fear aught never,
Left alone in the forest forever and ever.

Then, as we fare on our way to the shore
Sudden the torches cease to roar:
For cleaving the darkness remote and still
Comes a wind with a rushing, harp-like thrill,
The sound of wings hurled and furred and unfurled,
The wings of the Angel who gathers the souls from the wastes of the world.

DREAM VOYAGEURS

To ports of balm through isles of musk
The gentle airs are leading us;
To curtained calm and tents of dusk,
The wood-wild things unheeding us
Will share their hoards of hardihood,
Cool dew and roots of fern for food,
Frail berries full of the sun's blood.

To planets bland with dales of dream
A tranquil life is leading us,
We shall land from the languid stream,
The musing shades, unheeding us,
Will share their veils of angelhood,
Thoughts that are tranced with mystic food,
Still broodings tinct with a seraph's blood.

SONG

Creep into my heart, creep in, creep in,
Afar from the fret, the toil and the din,
Where the spring of love forever flows,
As clear as light and as sweet as the rose;
(Creep into my heart),
Where the dreams never wilt but their tints refine,
Rooted in beautiful thoughts of thine;
Where morn falls cool on the soul, like sleep,
And the nights are tranquil and tranced and deep;
Where the fairest thing of all the fair
Thou art, who hast somehow crept in there,
Deep into my heart,
Deep into my heart.

ECSTASY

The shore-lark soars to his topmost flight,
Sings at the height where morning springs,
What though his voice be lost in the light,

The light comes dropping from his wings.

Mount, my soul, and sing at the height
Of thy clear flight in the light and the air,
Heard or unheard in the night in the light
Sing there! Sing there!

LYRICS, SONGS AND SONNETS

MEDITATION AT PERUGIA

The sunset colours mingle in the sky,
And over all the Umbrian valleys flow;
Trevi is touched with wonder, and the glow
Finds high Perugia crimson with renown;
Spello is bright;
And, ah! St. Francis, thy deep-treasured town,
Enshrined Assisi, fully fronts the light.

This valley knew thee many a year ago;
Thy shrine was built by simpleness of heart;
And from the wound called life thou drew'st the smart:
Unquiet kings came to thee and the sad poor—
Thou gavest them peace;
Far as the Sultan and the Iberian shore
Thy faith and abnegation gave release.

Deeper our faith, but not so sweet as thine;
Wider our view, but not so sanely sure;
For we are troubled by the witching lure
Of Science, with her lightning on the mist;
Science that clears,
Yet never quite discloses what she wist,
And leaves us half with doubts and half with fears.

We act her dreams that shadow forth the truth,
That somehow here the very nerves of God
Thrill the old fires, the rocks, the primal sod;
We throw our speech upon the open air,
And it is caught
Far down the world, to sing and murmur there;
Our common words are with deep wonder fraught.

Shall not the subtle spirit of man contrive
To charm the tremulous ether of the soul,
Wherein it breathes?—until, from pole to pole,
Those who are kin shall speak, as face to face,
From star to star,
Even from earth to the most secret place,
Where God and the supreme archangels are.

Shall we not prove, what thou hast faintly taught,
That all the powers of earth and air are one,
That one deep law persists from mole to sun?
Shall we not search the heart of God and find
That law empearled,
Until all things that are in matter and mind
Throb with the secret that began the world?

Yea, we have journeyed since thou trod'st the road,
Yet still we keep the foreappointed quest;
While the last sunset smoulders in the West,
Still the great faith with the undying hope
Upsprings and flows,
While dim Assisi fades on the wide slope

And the deep Umbrian valleys fill with rose.

AT WILLIAM MACLENNAN'S GRAVE

Here where the cypress tall
Shadows the stucco wall,
Bronze and deep,
Where the chrysanthemums blow,
And the roses—blood and snow—
He lies asleep.

Florence dreameth afar;
Memories of foray and war,
Murmur still;
The Certosa crowns with a cold
Cloud of snow and gold
The olive hill.

What has he now for the streams
Born sweet and deep with dreams
From the cedar meres?
Only the Arno's flow,
Turbid, and weary, and slow
With wrath and tears.

What has he now for the song
Of the boatmen, joyous and long,
Where the rapids shine?
Only the sound of toil,
Where the peasants press the soil
For the oil and wine.

Spirit-fellow in sooth
With bold La Salle and Duluth,
And La Vérandrye,—
Nothing he has but rest,
Deep in his cypress nest
With memory.

Hearts of steel and of fire,
Why do ye love and aspire,
When follows
Death—all your passionate deeds,
Garnered with rust and with weeds
In the hollows?

God that hardened the steel,
Bid the flame leap and reel,
Gave us unrest;
We act in the dusk afar,
In a star beyond your star,
His behest.

"We leave you dreams and names
Still we are iron and flames,
Biting and bright;
Into some virgin world,
Champions, we are hurled,
Of venture and fight."

Here where the shadows fall,
From the cypress by the wall,
Where the roses are—
Here is a dream and a name,
There, like a rose of flame,
Rises—a star.

THE WOOD-SPRING TO THE POET

Dawn-cool, dew-cool
Gleams the surface of my pool
Bird haunted, fern enchanted,
Where but tempered spirits rule;
Stars do not trace their mystic lines
In my confines;
I take a double night within my breast
A night of darkened heavens, a night of leaves,
And in the two-fold dark I hear the owl
Puff at his velvet horn
And the wolves howl.
Even daylight comes with a touch of gold
Not overbold,
And shows dwarf-cornel and the twin-flowers,
Below the balsam bowers,
Their tints enamelled in my dew-drop shield.
Too small even for a thirsty fawn
To quench upon,
I hold my crystal at one level
There where you see the liquid bevel
Break in silver and go free
Singing to its destiny.

Give, Poet, give!
Thus only shalt thou live.
Give! for 'tis thy joyous doom
To charm, to comfort, to illumine.

Speak to the maiden and the child
With accents deep and mild,
Tell them of the world so wide
In words of wonder and pure pride,
Touched with the rapture of surprise
That dwells in a child angel's eyes,
Awed with the strangeness of new-birth,
When the flaming seraph sent
To lead him into Paradise,
Calls his name with the mother's voice
He has just ceased to hear on earth.

Give to the youth his heart's content,
But power with prudence blent,
Thicken his sinews with love,
With courage his heart prove,
Till over his spirit shall roll
The vast wave of control.
In the cages and dens of strife,
Where men draw breath
Thick with a curse at the dear thing called life,
Give them courage to bear,
Strength to aspire and dare;
Give them hopes rooted in stone,
That the loveliest flowers take on,
Bind on their brows with a gesture free
The palm green bays of liberty.

Give to the mothers of men
The knowledge of joy in pain,
Give them the sense of reward
That grew in the breast of the Lord
On the dawn of the seventh morn;
For 'tis they who re-create the world
Whenever a child is born.

Give, Poet, give!
Give them songs that charm and fill
The soul with an alluring pleasure,
Prelusive to a deeper thrill,
A richer tone, a fuller measure;
Like voices, veiled with hidden treasure,
Of angels on a windy morning,

That first far off, then all together,
Come with a glorious clarion calling;
And when they swoon beneath the spell
Recapture them to hear the echoes
Falling—falling—falling.

To those stoned for the truth
Give ruth;
Give manna for the mourner's mouth
Sovereign as air;
For his heart's drouth
A prayer.

Give to dead souls that mock at life
Aweary of their cankered hearts,
Weary of sleep and weary of strife,
Weary of markets and of arts,—
Helve them a song of life,
Two-edged with joyous life,
Tempered trusty with life,
Proud pointed with wild life,
Plunge it as lightning plunges,
Stab them to life!

Give to those who grieve in secret,
Those who bear the sorrows of earth,
The deep unappeasable longings
Which beset them with throngings and throngings,
(As, on a windless night,
Through the fold of a dark mantle furled,
Gleams on our world, world after unknown world)
Give them peace,
Wide as the veil that hides God's face,
The pure plenitude of space,
In which our universe is but a glittering crease,—
Give them such peace.

Give, Poet, give!
Thus only shalt thou live:
Give as we give who are hidden
In myriad dimples of rock and fern;
Give as we give unbidden
To tarn and rillet and burn,
Where the lake dreams,
Where the fall is hurled,
Striving to sweeten
The oceans of the world.

Should my song for a moment cease,
Silence fall in the woodland peace;
Should I wilfully check the flow
Bubbling and dancing up from below;
Say to my heart be still—be still,
Let the murmur die with the rill;
Then should the glittering, grey sea-things
Sigh as they wallow the under springs;
Where the deep brine-pools used to lie
Deserts vast would stare at the sky,
And even thy rich heart
(O Poet, Poet!)
Even thy rich heart run dry.

THE NOVEMBER PANSY

This is not June,—by Autumn's stratagem
Thou hast been ambushed in the chilly air;
Upon thy fragile crest virginal fair
The rime has clustered in a diadem;
The early frost

Has nipped thy roots and tried thy tender stem,
Seared thy gold petals, all thy charm is lost.

Thyself the only sunshine: in obeying
The law that bids thee blossom in the world
Thy little flag of courage is unfurled;
Inherent pansy-memories are saying
That there is sun,
That there is dew and colour and warmth repaying
The rain, the starlight when the light is done.

These are the gaunt forms of the hollyhocks
That shower the seeds from out their withered purses;
Here were the pinks; there the nasturtium nurses
The last of colour in her gaudy smocks;
The ruins yonder
Show but a vestige of the flaming phlox;
The poppies on their faded glory ponder.

Here visited the vagrant humming-bird,
The nebulous darting green, the ruby-throated;
The warm fans of the butterfly here floated;
Those two nests reared the robins, and the third
Was left forlorn
Muffled in lilacs, whence the perfume stirred
The tremulous eyelids of the dewy morn.

Thy sisters of the early summer-time
Were masquers in this carnival of pleasure;
Each in her turn unrolled her golden treasure,
And thou hast but the ashes of the prime;
'Tis life's own malice
That brings the peasant of a race sublime
To feed her flock around her ruined palace.

Yet for withstanding thus the autumn's dart
Some deeper pansy-insight will atone;
It comes to souls neglected and alone,
Something that prodigals in pleasure's mart
Lose in the whirl;
The peasant child will have a purer heart
Than the vain favourite of the vanished earl.

And far above this tragic world of ours
There is a world of a diviner fashion,
A mystic world, a world of dreams and passion
That each aspiring thing creates and dowers
With its own light;
Where even the frail spirits of trees and flowers
Pause, and reach out, and pass from height to height.

Here will we claim for thee another fief,
An upland where a glamour haunts the meadows,
Snow peaks arise enrobed in rosy shadows,
Fairer the under slopes with vine and sheaf
And shimmering lea;
The paradise of a simple old belief,
That flourished in the Islands of the Sea.

A snow-cool cistern in the fairy hills
Shall feed thy roots with moisture clear as dew;
A ferny shield to temper the warm blue
That heaven is; a thrush that thrills
To answer his mate,
And when above the ferns the shadow fills,
Fireflies to render darkness consolate.

Here muse and brood, moulding thy seed and die
And re-create thy form a thousand fold,
Mellowing thy petals to more lucent gold,
Till they expand, tissues of amber sky;
Till the full hour,
And the full light and the fulfilling eye
Shall find amid the ferns the perfect flower.

THE HEIGHT OF LAND

Here is the height of land:
The watershed on either hand
Goes down to Hudson Bay
Or Lake Superior;
The stars are up, and far away
The wind sounds in the wood, wearier
Than the long Ojibway cadence
In which Potàn the Wise
Declares the ills of life
And Chees-que-ne-ne makes a mournful sound
Of acquiescence. The fires burn low
With just sufficient glow
To light the flakes of ash that play
At being moths, and flutter away
To fall in the dark and die as ashes:
Here there is peace in the lofty air,
And Something comes by flashes
Deeper than peace;—
The spruces have retired a little space
And left a field of sky in violet shadow
With stars like marigolds in a water-meadow.

Now the Indian guides are dead asleep;
There is no sound unless the soul can hear
The gathering of the waters in their sources.

We have come up through the spreading lakes
From level to level,—
Pitching our tents sometimes over a revel
Of roses that nodded all night,
Dreaming within our dreams,
To wake at dawn and find that they were captured
With no dew on their leaves;
Sometimes mid sheaves
Of braken and dwarf-cornel, and again
On a wide blue-berry plain
Brushed with the shimmer of a bluebird's wing;
A rocky islet followed
With one lone poplar and a single nest
Of white-throat-sparrows that took no rest
But sang in dreams or woke to sing,—
To the last portage and the height of land—:
Upon one hand
The lonely north enlaced with lakes and streams,
And the enormous targe of Hudson Bay,
Glimmering all night
In the cold arctic light;
On the other hand
The crowded southern land
With all the welter of the lives of men.
But here is peace, and again
That Something comes by flashes
Deeper than peace,—a spell
Golden and inappellable
That gives the inarticulate part
Of our strange being one moment of release
That seems more native than the touch of time,
And we must answer in chime;
Though yet no man may tell
The secret of that spell
Golden and inappellable.

Now are there sounds walking in the wood,
And all the spruces shiver and tremble,
And the stars move a little in their courses.
The ancient disturber of solitude
Breathes a pervasive sigh,
And the soul seems to hear
The gathering of the waters at their sources;

Then quiet ensues and pure starlight and dark;
The region-spirit murmurs in meditation,
The heart replies in exaltation
And echoes faintly like an inland shell
Ghost tremors of the spell;
Thought reawakens and is linked again
With all the welter of the lives of men.

Here on the uplands where the air is clear
We think of life as of a stormy scene,—
Of tempest, of revolt and desperate shock;
And here, where we can think, on the bright uplands
Where the air is clear, we deeply brood on life
Until the tempest parts, and it appears
As simple as to the shepherd seems his flock:
A Something to be guided by ideals—
That in themselves are simple and serene—
Of noble deed to foster noble thought,
And noble thought to image noble deed,
Till deed and thought shall interpenetrate,
Making life lovelier, till we come to doubt
Whether the perfect beauty that escapes
Is beauty of deed or thought or some high thing
Mingled of both, a greater boon than either:
Thus we have seen in the retreating tempest
The victor-sunlight merge with the ruined rain,
And from the rain and sunlight spring the rainbow.

The ancient disturber of solitude
Stirs his ancestral potion in the gloom,
And the dark wood
Is stifled with the pungent fume
Of charred earth burnt to the bone
That takes the place of air.
Then sudden I remember when and where,—
The last weird lakelet foul with weedy growths
And slimy viscid things the spirit loathes,
Skin of vile water over viler mud
Where the paddle stirred unutterable stench,
And the canoes seemed heavy with fear,
Not to be urged toward the fatal shore
Where a bush fire, smouldering, with sudden roar
Leaped on a cedar and smothered it with light
And terror. It had left the portage-height
A tangle of slanted spruces burned to the roots,
Covered still with patches of bright fire
Smoking with incense of the fragrant resin
That even then began to thin and lessen
Into the gloom and glimmer of ruin.

'Tis overpast. How strange the stars have grown;
The presage of extinction glows on their crests
And they are beautied with impermanence;
They shall be after the race of men
And mourn for them who snared their fiery pinions,
Entangled in the meshes of bright words.

A lemming stirs the fern and in the mosses
Eft-minded things feel the air change, and dawn
Tolls out from the dark belfries of the spruces.
How often in the autumn of the world
Shall the crystal shrine of dawning be rebuilt
With deeper meaning! Shall the poet then,
Wrapped in his mantle on the height of land,
Brood on the welter of the lives of men
And dream of his ideal hope and promise
In the blush sunrise? Shall he base his flight
Upon a more compelling law than Love
As Life's atonement; shall the vision
Of noble deed and noble thought immingled
Seem as uncouth to him as the pictograph
Scratched on the cave side by the cave-dweller
To us of the Christ-time? Shall he stand
With deeper joy, with more complex emotion,
In closer commune with divinity,

With the deep fathomed, with the firmament charted,
With life as simple as a sheep-boy's song,
What lies beyond a romaunt that was read
Once on a morn of storm and laid aside
Memorious with strange immortal memories?
Or shall he see the sunrise as I see it
In shoals of misty fire the deluge-light
Dashes upon and whelms with purer radiance,
And feel the lulled earth, older in pulse and motion,
Turn the rich lands and the inundant oceans
To the flushed color, and hear as now I hear
The thrill of life beat up the planet's margin
And break in the clear susurrus of deep joy
That echoes and reëchoes in my being?
O Life is intuition the measure of knowledge
And do I stand with heart entranced and burning
At the zenith of our wisdom when I feel
The long light flow, the long wind pause, the deep
Influx of spirit, of which no man may tell
The Secret, golden and inappellable?

NEW YEAR'S NIGHT, 1916

The Earth moans in her sleep
Like an old mother
Whose sons have gone to the war,
Who weeps silently in her heart
Till dreams comfort her.

The Earth tosses
As if she would shake off humanity,
A burden too heavy to be borne,
And free of the pest of intolerable men,
Spin with woods and waters
Joyously in the clear heavens
In the beautiful cool rains,
Bearing gladly the dumb animals,
And sleep when the time comes
Glistening in the remains of sunlight
With marmoreal innocency.

Be comforted, old mother,
Whose sons have gone to the war;
And be assured, O Earth,
Of your burden of passionate men,
For without them who would dream the dreams
That encompass you with glory,
Who would gather your youth
And store it in the jar of remembrance,
Who would comfort your old heart
With tales told of the heroes,
Who would cover your face with the cerecloth
All rustling with stars,
And mourn in the ashes of sunlight,
Mourn your marmoreal innocency?

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO CANADA

This is the land!
It lies outstretched a vision of delight,
Bent like a shield between the silver seas
It flashes back the hauteur of the sun;
Yet teems with humblest beauties, still a part

Of its Titanic and ebullient heart.

Land of the glacial, lonely mountain ranges,
Where nothing haps save vast Æonian changes,
The slow moraine, the avalanche's wings,
Summer and Sun,—the elemental things,
Pulses of Awe,—Winter and Night and the lightnings.
Land of the pines that rear their dusky spars
A ready midnight for the earliest stars.
The land of rivers, rivulets, and rills,
Straining incessant everyway to the sea
With their white thunder harnessed in the mills,
Turning one wealth to another wealth perpetually;
Spinning the lightning with dynamic spindles,
Till some far city dowered with fire enkindles.

The land of fruit, fine-flavoured with the frost,
Land of the cattle, the deep-chested host,
The happy-souled, that contemplate the hours,
Their dew-laps buried in the grass and flowers.
And, O! the myriad-miracle of the grain
Cresting the hill, brimming the level plain,
The miracle of the flower and milk and kernel,
Nurtured by sun-fire and frost-fire supernal,
Until the farmer turns it in his hand,
The million-millioned miracle of the land.

And yet with all these pastoral and heroic graces,
Our simplest flowers wear the loveliest faces;
The sparrows are our most enraptured singers,
And round their songs the fondest memory lingers;
Our forests tower and tremble, star-enchanted,
Their roots are by the timid spirits haunted
Of hermit thrushes,—tranced is the air,
Ever in doubt when they shall sing or where;
The mountains may with ice and avalanche wrestle,
Far down their rugged steeps dimple and nestle
The still, translucent, turquoise-hearted tarns.

And Thou, O Power, that 'stablishest the Nation,
Give wisdom in the midst of our elation;
Who are so free that we forget we are—
That freedom brings the deepest obligation:
Grant us this presage for a guiding star,
To lead the van of Peace, not with a craven spirit,
But with the consciousness that we inherit
What built the Empire out of blood and fire,
And can smite, too, in passion and with ire.
Purge us of Pride, who are so quick in vaunting
Thy gift, this land, that is in nothing wanting;
Give Mind to match the glory of the gift,
Give great Ideals to bridge the sordid rift
Between our heritage and our use of it.

Then in some day of terror for the world,
When all the flags of the Furies are unfurled,
When Truth and Justice, wildered and unknit,
Shall turn for help to this young, radiant land,
We shall be quick to see and understand:
What shall we answer in that stricken hour?
Shall the deep thought be pregnant then with power?
Shall the few words spring swift and grave and clear?
Use well the present moment. They shall hear.

August, 1911.

Here in Samarcand they offer emeralds,
Pure as frozen drops of sea-water,
Rubies, pale as dew-ponds stained with slaughter,
Where the fairies fought for a king's daughter
In the elfin upland.
Here they sell you jade and calcedony,
And the matrix of the turquoise,
Spheres of onyx held in eagles' claws,
But they keep the gems as far asunder
From the dull stones as the lightning from the thunder;
They can never come together
On the mats of Turkish leather
In the booths of Samarcand.

Here they sell you balls of nard and honey,
And squat jars of clarid butter,
And the cheese from Kurdistan.
When you offer Frankish money,
Then they scowl and curse and mutter,
Deep in Kurdish or Persian
For they want your heart out and my hand
In the booths of Samarcand.

They would sell your heart's blood separate,
In a jar with a gold brim,
With a text of burning hatred
Coiled around the rim;
They would sell my hand upon a beam of teak wood,
In the other scale a feather curled;
They would sell your heart upon a silver balance
Weighed against the world.
But your heart could never touch my hand,
They could never come together
On the mats of Turkish leather
In the booths of Samarcand.

THE LOVER TO HIS LASS

Crown her with stars, this angel of our planet,
Cover her with morning, this thing of pure delight,
Mantle her with midnight till a mortal cannot
See her for the garments of the light and the night.

How far I wandered, worlds away and far away,
Heard a voice but knew it not in the clear cold,
Many a wide circle and many a wan star away,
Dwelling in the chambers where the worlds were growing old.

Saw them growing old and heard them falling
Like ripe fruit when a tree is in the wind;
Saw the seraphs gather them, their clarion voices calling
In rounds of cheering labour till the orchard floor was thinned.

Saw a whole universe turn to its setting,
Old and cold and weary, gray and cold as death,
But before mine eyes were veiled in forgetting,
Something always caught my soul and held its breath.

Caught it up and held it, now I know the reason;
Governed it and soothed it, now I know why;
Nurtured it and trained it and kept it for the season
When new worlds should blossom in the springtime sky.

How have they blossomed, see the sky is like a garden!
Ah! how fresh the worlds look hanging on the slope!
Pluck one and wear it, Love, and ask the Gardener's pardon,
Pluck out the Pleiads like a spray of heliotrope.

See Aldebaran like a red rose clamber,
See brave Betelgeux pranked with poppy light;

This young earth must float in floods of amber
Glowing with a crocus flame in the dells of night.

O you cannot cheat the soul of an inborn ambition,
'Tis a naked viewless thing living in its thought,
But it mounts through errors and by valleys of contrition
Till it conquers destiny and finds the thing it sought.

Crown her with stars, this angel of our planet,
Cover her with morning, this thing of pure delight,
Mantle her with midnight till a mortal cannot
See her for the garments of the light and the night.

THE GHOST'S STORY

All my life long I heard the step
Of some one I would know,
Break softly in upon my days
And lightly come and go.

A foot so brisk I said must bear
A heart that's clean and clear;
If that companion blithe would come,
I should be happy here.

But though I waited long and well,
He never came at all,
I grew weary of the void,
Even of the light foot-fall.

From loneliness to loneliness
I felt my spirit grope—
At last I knew the uttermost,
The loneliness of hope.

And just upon the border land,
Where flesh and spirit part,
I knew the secret foot-fall was
The beating of my heart.

NIGHT

The night is old, and all the world
Is wearied out with strife;
A long gray mist lies heavy and wan
Above the house of life.

Four stars burn up and are unquelled
By the low, shrunken moon;
Her spirit draws her down and down—
She shall be buried soon.

There is a sound that is no sound,
Yet fine it falls and clear,
The whisper of the spinning earth
To the tranced atmosphere.

An odour lives where once was air,
A strange, unearthly scent,
From the burning of the four great stars
Within the firmament.

The universe, deathless and old,
Breathes, yet is void of breath:

As still as death that seems to move
And yet is still as death.

THE APPARITION

Gentle angel with your mantle,
All of tender green,
I was yearning for a vision
Of the life unseen.

When you hovered in the sunset,
Just as rain was done;
Where the dropping from the poplars
Seemed like rain begun.

There you gathered forming slowly
Rounding into view:
All your vesture glowed like verdure
When the sap is new.

Then you mutely gave your warning
And I felt the stress
Of its passion and its presage
And its utterness.

There you swayed one tranquil moment,
Mystically fair,
Then you were not of the sunset,
Were not in the air.

AT SEA

Three are emerald pools in the sea,
And wing-like flashes of light;
The sea is bound with the heavens
In a large delight.

Night comes out of the east
And rushes down on the sun;
The emerald pools and the light pools
Are darkened and done.

Our boat dips and cleaves onward,
Careless of night or of light,
Following the line of her compass
By her engines' might.

Through the desert of air and of water;
Like the lonely soul of man,
Following her fate to the ending,
Unaware of the hidden plan.

Sure only of battle and longing,
Of the pain and the quest,
And beyond in the darkness somewhere
Sure of her rest.

MADONNA WITH TWO ANGELS

Under the sky without a stain
The long, ripe, rippling of the grain;
Light, broadcast from the golden oats
Over the blackberry fences floats.
Madonna sits in a cedar chair
Tranquillized by the warm, still air;
One of the angels asleep on her knee
Under the shade of an apple tree.
The other angel holds a doll,
Covered warm in a tiny shawl;
The toy is supposed to be fast asleep
As the sister angel: in dimples deep
The grave, sweet charm on the baby face
Repeats the look of maturer grace
That hovers about Madonna's eyes,
One of the heavenly mysteries
From far ethereal latitudes
Where neither doubt nor trouble intrudes.
Ponder here in the orchard nest
On the truth of life made manifest:
The struggle and effort was all to prove
That the best of the world is home and love.

MID-AUGUST

From the upland hidden,
Where the hill is sunny
Tawny like pure honey
In the August heat,
Memories float unbidden
Where the thicket serries
Fragrant with ripe berries
And the milk-weed sweet.

Like a prayer-mat holy
Are the patterned mosses
Which the twin-flower crosses
With her flowerless vine;
In fragile melancholy
The pallid ghost flowers hover
As if to guard and cover
The shadow of a shrine.

Where the pine-linnet lingered
The pale water searches,
The roots of gleaming birches
Draw silver from the lake;
The ripples, liquid-fingered,
Plucking the root-layers,
Fairy like lute players
Lulling music make.

O to lie here brooding
Where the pine-tree column
Rises dark and solemn
To the airy lair,
Where, the day eluding,
Night is couched dream laden,
Like a deep witch-maiden
Hidden in her hair.

In filmy evanescence
Wraithlike scents assemble,
Then dissolve and tremble
A little until they die;
Spirits of the florescence
Where the bees searched and tarried
Till the blossoms all were married

In the days before July.

Light has lost its splendour,
Light refined and sifted,
Cool light and dream drifted
Ventures even where,
(Seeping silver tender)
In the dim recesses,
Trembling mid her tresses,
Hides the maiden hair.

Covered with the shy-light,
Filling in the hushes,
Slide the tawny thrushes
Calling to their broods,
Hoarding till the twilight
The song that made for noon-days
Of the amorous June days
Preludes and interludes.

The joy that I am feeling
Is there something in it
Unlike the warble the linnet
Phrases and intones?
Or is a like thought stealing
With a rapture fine, free
Through the happy pine tree
Ripening her cones?

In some high existence
In another planet
Where their poets cannot
Know our birds and flowers,
Does the same persistence
Give the dreams they issue
Something like the tissue
Of these dreams of ours?

O to lie athinking—
Moods and whims! I fancy
Only necromancy
Could the web unroll,
Only somehow linking
Beauties that meet and mingle
In this quiet dingle
With the beauty of the whole.

MIST AND FROST

Veil-like and beautiful
Gathered the dutiful
Mist in the night,
True to the messaging,
Dreamful and presaging
Vapour and light.

Ghostly and chill it is,
Pallid and still it is,
Sudden uprist;
What is there tragical,
Moving or magical,
Hid in the mist?

Millions of essences,
Fairy-like presences
Formless as yet;
Light-riven spangles,
Crystalline tangles
Floating unset.

Frost will come shepherding
Nowise enjeoparding
 Fronnage or flower;
Just a degree of it,
Nought can we see of it
 Only its power.

Earth like a Swimmer
Plunged into the dimmer
 Wave of the night,
Now is uprisen,
An Elysian vision
 Of spray and of light.

'Tis the intangible
Delicate frangible
 Secret of mist,
Breathing may banish it,
Thought may evanish it,—
 Ponder and whist!

Passionless purity,
Calmness in surety
 Dwells everywhere,
A winnowed whiteness,
A lunar lightness
 Glow in the air.

But in the heart of it
Every least part of it
 Blooms with the charm,
Star-shape and fronnage
Broken from bondage
 Forged into form.

Crystals encrusted,
Diamonds dusted
 Line everything,
Tiny the stencillings
Are as the pencillings
 On a moth's wing.

And O, what a wonder!
No farther asunder
 Than atoms are laid,
The arches and angles
Of star-froth and spangles
 Cast their own shade.

Out from the chalices,
The pigmy palaces
 Where the tint hides,
Opal and sapphire
Half-pearl and half-fire
 The colour slides;

Till the frail miracle
Rapturous lyrical
 Flushes and glows
With a wraith of florescence
That tempers or lessens
 The light of the snows.

Held all aquiver,—
But now with a shiver
 The power of the sun
Dissolves the laces
Of the tender mazes,
 All is undone.

But the old Earth brooding,
All wisdom including,
 Affirms and assures
That above the material,
Triumphal imperial
 Beauty endures.

THE BEGGAR AND THE ANGEL

An angel burdened with self-pity
Came out of heaven to a modern city.

He saw a beggar on the street,
Where the tides of traffic meet.

A pair of brass-bound hickory pegs
Brought him his pence instead of legs.

A murky dog by him did lie,
Poodle, in part, his ancestry.

The angel stood and thought upon
This poodle-haunted beggar man.

"My life is grown a bore," said he,
"One long round of sciamachy;

I think I'll do a little good,
By way of change from angelhood."

He drew near to the beggar grim,
And gravely thus accosted him:

"How would you like, my friend, to fly
All day through the translucent sky;

To knock at the door of the red leaven,
And even to enter the orthodox heaven?

If you would care to know this joy,
I will surrender my employ,

And take your ills, collect your pelf,
An humble beggar like yourself.

For ages you these joys may know,
While I shall suffer here below;

And in the end we both may gain
Access of pleasure from my pain."

The stationary vagrant said,
"I do not mind, so go ahead."

The angel told the heavenly charm,
He felt a wing on either arm;

"Good-day," he said, "this floating's queer
If I should want to change next year—?"

"Pull out that feather!" the angel said,
"The one half black and the other half red."

The cripple cried, "Before you're through
You may get fagged, and if you do,—"

The angel superciliously—
"My transformed friend, don't think of me.

I shall be happy day and night,
In doing what I think is right."

"So so," the feathered beggar said,
"Good-bye, I am just overhead."

The angel when he grasped the dish,
Began to criticize his wish.

The seat was hard as granite rocks,
His real legs were in the box.

His knees were cramped, his shins were sore,
The lying pegs stuck out before.

In vain he clinked the dish and whined.
The passers-by seemed deaf and blind.

As pious looking as Saint Denis,
An urchin stole his catch-penny.

And even the beggar's drab-fleeced poodle
Began to know him for a noodle.

"It has an uncelestial scent,
The clothing of this mendicant;"

He cried, "That trickling down my spine
Is anything but hyaline.

This day is like a thousand years:
I'd give an age of sighs and tears

To see with his confectioned grin
One cherub sitting on his chin.

That cripple was by far too sly—
I wish he'd tumble from the sky,

That things might be as they were before;
I really cannot stand much more!"

The beggar in the angel's guise,
Rose far above the smoky skies.

But being a beggar, never saw
The charm of the compelling law

That turned the swinging universe:
'Twas gloomy as an empty purse.

Often with heaven in his head,
He blundered on a planet dead.

And when with an immortal fuss,
He singed his wings at Sirius.

He plucked the feather with his teeth,
The charm was potent and beneath,

He saw the turmoil of the way
Grown wilder at the close of day,

With the sad poodle, can in hand,
The angel still at the old stand.

"My friend," said the angel, hemming and humming,
"Truly I thought you were never coming."

"That's an unhandsome thing to say,
Seeing I've only been gone a day.

But there's nothing in all your brazen sky
To match the cock of that poodle's eye.

Take your dish and give me my wings,
'Tis but a fair exchange of things."

The beggar felt his garment's rot,
The horn ridge of each callous spot;

He clinked his can and was content;
His poverty was permanent.

IMPROVISATION ON AN OLD SONG

(The refrain is quoted by Edward Fitzgerald in one of his letters)

I

Growing, growing, all the glory going;
Flashing out of fire and light, burning to a husk,
All the world's a-dying and failing in the dusk—
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Rust is on the door-latch, ashes at the root,
Dry rot in the ridge-pole, canker in the fruit;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Plot, ye subtle statesmen,—a trace of melted wax;
Bind, ye haughty prelates,—a thread of ravelled flax;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

March, ye mighty captains,—an eddy in the dust;
Rave, ye furious lovers,—a stain of crimson rust;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Pictures, poems, music—their essential soul,
Idle as dry roses in a silver bowl;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

London is a hearsay, Paris but a myth,
Rome a wand of sweet-flag withered to the pith;
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

Palsy shakes the planets, frost has chilled the sun,
In a crushing silence the All is dead and done.
Growing, growing, all the glory going.

II

Going, going, all the glory growing,
See it stir and flutter; that is singing, hark!
Singing in the caverns of the primal dark.
Going, going, all the glory growing.

What is in the making, what immortal plan
Draws to its unfolding? 'Tis the Soul of man.
Going, going, all the glory growing.

See it mount and hover, singing as it goes,
Battling with the darkness, nourished by its woes;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The bale-fires of midnight glaring in its eyes,
Past the phantom shadows see it rush and rise;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The supernal morning on its dewy wings,
Soaring and scorning the lust of earthy things;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

The beatific noontide on its eager breast
Springing and singing to its halcyon rest;
Going, going, all the glory growing.

In its starry vesture not a vestige of the sod,
Winging still and singing to the heart of God.
Going, going, all the glory growing.

O TURN ONCE MORE

O turn once more!

The meadows where we mused and strayed together
Abound and glow yet with the ruby sorrel;
'Twas there the bluebirds fought and played together,
Their quarrel was a flying bluebird-quarrel;
Their nest is firm still in the burnished cherry,
They will come back there some day and be merry;
O turn once more.

O turn once more!

The spring we lingered at is ever steeping
The long, cool grasses where the violets hide,
Where you awoke the flower-heads from their sleeping
And plucked them, proud in their inviolate pride;
You left the roots, the roots will flower again,
O turn once more and pluck the flower again;
O turn once more.

O turn once more!

We were the first to find the fairy places
Where the tall lady-slippers scarf'd and snooded,
Painted their lovely thoughts upon their faces,
And then, bewitched by their own beauty brooded;
This will recur in some enchanted fashion;
Time will repeat his miracles of passion;
O turn once more.

O turn once more!

What heart is worth the longing for, the winning,
That is not moved by currents of surprise;
Who never breaks the silken thread in spinning,
Shows a bare spindle when the daylight dies;
The constant blood will yet flow full and tender;
The thread will mended be though gossamer-slender;
O turn once more.

AT THE GILL-NETS

Tug at the net,
Haul at the net,
Strip off the quivering fish;
Hid in the mist
The winds whist,
Is like my heart's wish.

What is your wish,
Your heart's wish?
Is it for home on the hills?
Strip off the fish,
The silver fish,
Caught by their rosy gills.

How can I know,
I love you so,
Each little thought I get
Is held so,
It dies you know,
Caught in your heart's net.

Tug at your net,
Your heart's net,
Strip off my silver fancies;
Keep them in rhyme,
For a dull time,
Fragile as frost pansies.

A LOVE SONG

I gave her a rose in early June,
Fed with the sun and the dew,
Each petal I said is a note in the tune,
The rose is the whole tune through and through,
The tune is the whole red-hearted rose,
Flush and form, honey and hue,
Lull with the cadence and throb to the close,
I love you, I love you, I love you.

She gave me a rose in early June,
Fed with the sun and the dew,
Each petal she said is a mount in the moon,
The rose is the whole moon through and through,
The moon is the whole pale-hearted rose,
Round and radiance, burnish and blue,
Break in the flood-tide that murmurs and flows,
I love you, I love you, I love you.

This is our love in early June,
Fed with the sun and the dew,
Moonlight and roses hid in a tune,
The roses are music through and through,
The moonlight falls in the breath of the rose,
Light and cadence, honey and hue,
Mingle, and murmur, and flow to the close,
I love you, I love you, I love you.

THREE SONGS

I

Where love is life
The roses blow,
Though winds be rude
And cold the snow,
The roses climb
Serenely slow,
They nod in rhyme
We know—we know
Where love is life
The roses blow.

Where life is love
The roses blow,
Though care be quick
And sorrows grow,
Their roots are twined
With rose-roots so
That rosebuds find
A way to show
Where life is love
The roses blow.

II

Nothing came here but sunlight,
Nothing fell here but rain,
Nothing blew but the mellow wind,
Here are the flowers again!

No one came here but you, dear,

You with your magic train
Of brightness and laughter and lightness,
Here is my joy again!

III

I have songs of dancing pleasure,
I have songs of happy heart,
Songs are mine that pulse in measure
To the throbbing of the mart.

Songs are mine of magic seeming,
In a land of love forlorn,
Where the joys are had for dreaming,
At a summons from the horn.

But my sad songs come unbidden,
Rising with a wilder zest,
From the bitter pool that's hidden,
Deep—deep—deep within my breast.

THE SAILOR'S SWEETHEART

O if love were had for asking,
In the markets of the town,
Hardly a lass would think to wear
A fine silken gown:
But love is had by grieving
By choosing and by leaving,
And there's no one now to ask me
If heavy lies my heart.

O if love were had for a deep wish
In the deadness of the night,
There'd be a truce to longing
Between the dusk and the light:
But love is had for sighing,
For living and for dying,
And there's no one now to ask me
If heavy lies my heart.

O if love were had for taking
Like honey from the hive,
The bees that made the tender stuff
Could hardly keep alive:
But love it is a wounded thing,
A tremor and a smart,
And there's no one left to kiss me now
Over my heavy heart.

FEUILLES D'AUTOMNE

Gather the leaves from the forest
And blow them over the world,
The wind of winter follows
The wind of autumn furled.

Only the beech tree cherishes
A leaf or two for ruth,
Their stems too tough for the tempest,
Like thoughts of love and of youth.

You may sit by the fire and ponder
While darkness veils the pane,
And fear that your memories are rushing away
In the wind and the rain.

But you'll find them in the quiet
When the clouds race with the moon,
Making the tender silver sound
Of a beech in the month of June.

For you cannot rob the memory
Of the leaves it loves the best;
The wind of time may harry them,
It rushes away with the rest.

TO THE HEROIC SOUL

I

Nurture thyself, O Soul, from the clear spring
That wells beneath the secret inner shrine;
Commune with its deep murmur,—'tis divine;
Be faithful to the ebb and flow that bring
The outer tide of Spirit to trouble and swing
The inlet of thy being. Learn to know
These powers, and life with all its venom and show
Shall have no force to dazzle thee or sting:

And when Grief comes thou shalt have suffered more
Than all the deepest woes of all the world;
Joy, dancing in, shall find thee nourished with mirth;
Wisdom shall find her Master at thy door;
And Love shall find thee crowned with love empearled;
And death shall touch thee not but a new birth.

II

Be strong, O warring soul! For very sooth
Kings are but wraiths, republics fade like rain,
Peoples are reaped and garnered as the grain,
And that alone prevails which is the truth:
Be strong when all the days of life bear ruth
And fury, and are hot with toil and strain:
Hold thy large faith and quell thy mighty pain:
Dream the great dream that buoys thine age with youth.

Thou art an eagle mewed in a sea-stopped cave:
He, poised in darkness with victorious wings,
Keeps night between the granite and the sea,
Until the tide has drawn the warder-wave:
Then from the portal where the ripple rings,
He bursts into the boundless morning,—free!

RETROSPECT

This is the mockery of the moving years;
Youth's colour dies, the fervid morning glow
Is gone from off the foreland; slow, slow,
Even slower than the fount of human tears
To empty, the consuming shadow nears
That Time is casting on the worldly show
Of pomp and glory. But falter not;—below

That thought is based a deeper thought that cheers.

Glean thou thy past; that will alone inure
To catch thy heart up from a dark distress;
It were enough to find one deed mature,
Deep-rooted, mighty 'mid the toil and press;
To save one memory of the sweet and pure,
From out life's failure and its bitterness.

FROST MAGIC

I

Now, in the moonrise, from a wintry sky,
The frost has come to charm with elfin might
This quiet room; to draw with symbols bright
Faces and forms in fairest charactery
Upon the casement; all the thoughts that lie
Deep hidden in my heart's core he would tell,
How the red shoots of fancy strike and swell,
How they are watered, what soil nourished by.

With eerie power he piles his atomies,
Incrusted gems, star-glances overborne
With lids of sleep pulled from the moth's bright eyes,
And forests of frail ferns, blanched and forlorn,
Where Oberon of unimagined size
Might in the silver silence wind his horn.

II

With these alone he draws in magic lines,
Faces that people dreams, and chiefly one
Happy and brilliant as the northern sun,
And by its darling side there gleams and shines
One of God's children with the laughing signs
Of dimples, and glad accents, and sweet cries,
That angels are and heaven's memories:
The wizard thus my soul's estate divines;

All it holds dear he sets alone apart,
Etches the past in likeness of dim groves
Silvered in quiet rime and with rare art,
In crystal spoils and fairy treasure-troves,
He draws the picture of the happy heart,
By those who love it most, whom most it loves.

IN SNOW-TIME

I have seen things that charmed the heart to rest:
Faint moonlight on the towers of ancient towns,
Flattering the soul to dream of old renowns;
The first clear silver on the mountain crest
Where the lone eagle by his chilly nest
Called the lone soul to brood serenely free;
Still pools of sunlight shimmering in the sea,
Calm after storm, wherein the storm seemed blest.

But here a peace deeper than peace is furled,
Enshrined and chalice'd from the changeful hour;
The snow is still, yet lives in its own light.
Here is the peace which brooded day and night,

Before the heart of man with its wild power
Had ever spurned or trampled the great world.

TO A CANADIAN LAD KILLED IN THE WAR

O noble youth that held our honour in keeping,
And bore it sacred through the battle flame,
How shall we give full measure of acclaim
To thy sharp labour, thy immortal reaping?
For though we sowed with doubtful hands, half sleeping,
Thou in thy vivid pride hast reaped a nation,
And brought it in with shouts and exultation,
With drums and trumpets, with flags flashing and leaping.

Let us bring pungent wreaths of balsam, and tender
Tendrils of wild-flowers, lovelier for thy daring,
And deck a sylvan shrine, where the maple parts
The moonlight, with lilac bloom, and the splendour
Of suns unwearied; all unwithered, wearing
Thy valor stainless in our heart of hearts.

THE CLOSED DOOR

*The dew falls and the stars fall,
The sun falls in the west,
But never more
Through the closed door,
Shall the one that I loved best
Return to me:
A salt tear is the sea,
All earth's air is a sigh,
But they never can mourn for me
With my heart's cry,
For the one that I loved best
Who caressed me with her eyes,
And every morning came to me,
With the beauty of sunrise,
Who was health and wealth and all,
Who never shall answer my call,
While the sun falls in the west,
The dew falls and the stars fall.*

BY A CHILD'S BED

She breathèd deep,
And stepped from out life's stream
Upon the shore of sleep;
And parted from the earthly noise,
Leaving her world of toys,
To dwell a little in a dell of dream.

Then brooding on the love I hold so free,
My fond possessions come to be
Clouded with grief;

These fairy kisses,
This archness innocent,
Sting me with sorrow and disturbed content:
I think of what my portion might have been;
A dearth of blisses,
A famine of delights,
If I had never had what now I value most;
Till all I have seems something I have lost;
A desert underneath the garden shows,
And in a mound of cinders roots the rose.

Here then I linger by the little bed,
Till all my spirit's sphere,
Grows one half brightness and the other dead,
One half all joy, the other vague alarms;
And, holding each the other half in fee,
Floats like the growing moon
That bears implicitly
Her lessening pearl of shadow
Clasped in the crescent silver of her arms.

ELIZABETH SPEAKS

(Aetat Six)

Now every night we light the grate
And I sit up till *really* late;
My Father sits upon the right,
My Mother on the left, and I
Between them on an ancient chair,
That once belonged to my Great-Gran,
Before my Father was a man.
We sit without another light;
I really, truly never tire
Watching that space, as black as night,
That hangs behind the fire;
For there sometimes, you know,
The dearest, queerest little sparks,
Without a sound creep to and fro;
Sometimes they form in rings
Or lines that look like many things,
Like skipping ropes, or hoops, or swings:
Before you know what you're about,
They all go out!

My Father says that they are gnomes,
Beyond the grate they have their homes,
In a tall, black, and windy town,
Behind a door we cannot see.
Often when it's time for bed
The children run away instead,
Out through the door to see our fire,
Then their angry parents come
With every candle in the town,
The beadle with his lantern too,
And search and rummage up and down,
To catch the children as they play,
Between the rows of new-mown hay,
And bring them home;
(They must be, O, so very small,
How do they capture them at all?
But then they must be very *dear*);
When they can find no more
They blow a horn we cannot hear,
And march with the beadle at their head,
Right through the little open door,
Then close it tight and go to bed.

My Mother says that may be so;

(They both agree they're *gnomes*, you know).
She says, she thinks that every night,
The gnomes have had a fearful fight;
Their valiant General has been slain,
And all the soldiers leave the camp
To dig his grave upon the plain;
They drag the General on a gun;
Every bandsman has a lamp
And there's a torch for every one,
They dig his grave with bayonets
And wrap him grandly in his flag,
Then they gather in a ring,
The band plays very soft and low,
And all the soldiers sing.
(Of course we cannot hear, you know,)
Then some one calls "The enemy comes!"
They muffle up their pipes and drums;
Every soldier in a fright
Puts out his light.
Then hand in hand, and very still,
They clamber up the dark, dark hill
And hold their breath tight—tight.

(I'd like to know which tale is right.)

O! there is something I forgot!
Sometimes one little spark burns on
Long after the rest have gone.

My Father says that lamp is left
By a little crooked, crotchety man,
Who cannot find his wayward son;
When the horn begins to blow,
He has to drop his light and run.
Of course he limps so slow
He squeezes through the very last,
When he is gone the naughty scamp
Jumps up and puff! out goes the lamp.

My Mother says that is the light,
Borne by the very bravest knight;
He is so very, very brave,
He would not leave his General's grave,
And when the Enemy General tries
To make him tell where his General lies,
He answers boldly, "I—will—not!"
Then they shoot him on the spot,
And give a horrid, dreadful shout,
And then of course his light goes out.

I sit and think when they are through,
Which tale I like best of the two.
Sometimes I like the *Father* one;
It is such fun!
But then I love the *Mother* one,
That dear brave soldier and the rest:—
Now which one do you like the best?

A LEGEND OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

At Bethlehem upon the hill,
The day was done, the night was nigh,
The dusk was deep and had its will,
The stars were very small and still,
Like unblown tapers, faint and high.

The noises had begun to fall,
And quiet stole upon the place,
The howl of dogs along the wall,

Voices that from the houstops call
And answer, and the grace

Of some low breath of even-song
Grew faint apace: between the rocks
In misty pastures, and along
The dim hillside with crook and thong
The lonely shepherds watched their flocks.

The Inn-master within the Inn
Called loudly out after this sort,
"Draw no more water, cease the din,
Pile the loose fodder, and begin
To turn the mules out of the court.

The time has come to shut the gate,
Make way," he cried, and then began
To sweep and set the litter straight,
And pile the saddle-bags and freight
Of some belated caravan.

The drivers whirled their beasts about,
And beat them on with shoutings great;
The nosebags slipped, the feed flew out,
The water-buckets reeled, the rout
Went jostling onward to the gate.

Came one unto the master then,
Hasting to find him through the gloom,
"Give us a place to rest;" and when
He spake, the master cried again,
"There is no room—there is no room."

"But I have come from Nazareth,
Full three days' toil to Bethlehem"—
"What matters that," the master saith,
"For here is hardly room for breath;
The guests curse me for crowding them."

"Hold, Sir! leave me not so, I pray"—
He plucked him sudden by the sleeve,
"My wife is with me and doth say,
Her hour hath come, I beg you, stay,
And make some plan for her relief."

"Two hours ago you might have had
The chamber wherein stands the loom;
But then to drive me wholly mad,
Came this great merchant from Baghdad,
And thrust himself into the room.

"There is no other shelf to call
A bed—But just beyond the gate,
You may find shelter in a stall,
If there be shelter left at all,
You may be even now too late."

Beyond the gate within the night,
A figure rested on the ground,
About her all the rout took flight,
The dizzy noise, the flashing light,
The mules were tramping all around.

Leaning in mute expectancy,
Beneath a stunted sycamore,
She added darkness utterly,
To the dim light, the shrouded tree,
By her hands held her face before.

And yet to mock her eye's desire,
The cavern into which she stared,
Was lit with disks and lines of fire;
When triple darkness did conspire,
The secret founts of light were bared.

And all the wheeling fire was rife
With haunting fears, her broken breath

Grew short with this prophetic strife;
What was for one the dawn of life,
Would be for one the dawn of death.

Meantime the stranger with a lamp,
Which lit the darkness, small and wan,
Searched where the mules did tramp and stamp,
Amid the litter and the damp,
For some small place to rest upon.

And there against the furthest wall,
Where the black shade was dense and deep,
He found a mean and meager stall,
But there when the weak light did fall,
He found a little lad asleep.

He lifted up his childish head,
And smiled serenely at the light,
"And have you found him, then," he said,
"My brother who I thought was dead,
I lost him in the crowd last night.

"His name is Ezra, and he is
So tall and strong that when I try,
Standing on tiptoe for a kiss
I could not reach, except for this,
He lifts me up so easily.

"I had two little doves to take
Up to the booths"—he held his breath,
"Peace, child! and for your mother's sake,
Yield me this place—nay, nay! awake!
My weary wife is sick to death."

"I will," the little lad replied
"I promised never to forget
My mother, years ago she died,
I will lie out on the hillside,
And I may find dear Ezra yet."

And now she drooped her weary head,
Within that comfortless manger,
It might have been a palace bed,
With canopy of gold instead,
So little did she know or care.

*Gentle Jesus, slumber mild,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Succored by a little child,
Lull, lullaby.*

*You of children are the king,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Sovereign to all ministering,
Lull, lullaby.*

*Grace you bring them from above,
Lullaby, lullaby;
They give promise, lisping love,
Lull, lullaby.*

And out upon the darkened hill,
With all the quiet-pastured sheep,
Charmed by the falling of a rill,
Where in the pool it cadenced still,
The little lad was fallen asleep.

All his young dreams were robbed with power.
And glad were all his vision folk;
He wandered on from hour to hour,
With Ezra, happy as a flower
That blooms safe-shadowed by the oak.

But once before his dreams were told,
He thought he saw within the deep
Vault of the sky a rose unfold,
Made all of fire and lovely gold,

Whose petals seemed to glow and leap,

As if each dewy, crystal cell
Were a great angel live with light,
And trembling to the coronal,
Merging in sheen of pearl and shell,
With his great comrade, equal, bright,

Until the petals flashed and sprang,
And folded to the central heart:
Music there was that showered and rang,
As if each angel harped and sang,
Controlled by some celestial art.

The child saw splendor without name,
And turned and smiled, and all the noise
Of strings and singing sank; it came
Faint and dream-altered, yet the same,
Soft-tempered to his mother's voice.

*Slumber, slumber, gentle child,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Sweet as henna, dear and mild,
Lull, lullaby.*

*You the first of all the race,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Gave your master early grace,
Lull, lullaby.*

*Gave a shelter for his head,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Took the chilly earth instead,
Lull, lullaby.*

*Now take comfort infant earth,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Jesus Christ is come to birth,
Lull, lullaby.*

*For his principality,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Children cluster at his knee,
Lull, lullaby.*

*Hail the heaven-happy age,
Lullaby, lullaby;
Love begins his pilgrimage,
Lull, lullaby.*

WILLOW-PIPES

So in the shadow by the nimble flood
He made her whistles of the willow wood,
Flutes of one note with mellow slender tone;
(A robin piping in the dusk alone).
Lively the pleasure was the wand to bruise,
And notch the light rod for its lyric use,
Until the stem gave up its tender sheath,
And showed the white and glistening wood beneath.
And when the ground was covered with light chips,
Grey leaves and green, and twigs and tender slips,
They placed the well-made whistles in a row
And left them for the careless wind to blow.

ANGEL

Come to me when grief is over,
When the tired eyes,
Seek thy cloudy wings to cover
Close their burning skies.

Come to me when tears have dwindled
Into drops of dew,
When the sighs like sobs re-kindled
Are but deep and few.

Hold me like a crooning mother,
Heal me of the smart;
All mine anguish let me smother
In thy brooding heart.

CHRISTMAS FOLK-SONG

Those who die on Christmas Day
(I heard the triumphant Seraph say)
Will be remembered, for they died
Upon the Holy Christmastide;
When they attain to Paradise,
The Angels with the tranquil Eyes
Will ask if Jesus rules on Earth
The Anniversary of His Birth;
This Question do they ask alway
Of those who die on Christmas Day.

Those who are born on Christmas Day
(I heard the triumphant Seraph say)
Will bring again the Peace on Earth
That came with gentle Christ His Birth;
They may be lowly Folk and poor
Living about the Manger Door,
They may be Kings of Mighty Line,
Their Lives alike will be benign;
To them belongeth Peace alway,
Those who are born on Christmas Day.

FROM BEYOND

Here there is balm for every tender heart
Wounded by life;
Rest for each one who bore a valiant part
Crushed in the strife.

I suffered there and held a losing fight
Even to the grave;
And now I know that it was very right
To suffer and be brave.

THE LEAF

This silver-edged geranium leaf

Is one sign of a bitter grief
Whose symbols are a myriad more;
They cluster round a carven stone
Where she who sleeps is never alone
For two hearts at the core,

Bound with her heart make one of three,
A trinity in unity,
One sentient heart that grieves;
And myriad dark-leaved memories keep
Vigil above the triune sleep,—
Edged all with silver are the leaves.

A MYSTERY PLAY

CHARACTERS

The Father. The Child. Death. Angels.
Two Travellers.

*The even settles still and deep,
In the cold sky the last gold burns,
Across the colour snow flakes creep.
Each one from grey to glory turns
Then flutters into nothingness;
The frost down falls with mighty stress
Through the swift cloud that parts on high;
The great stars shrivel into less
In the hard depth of the iron sky.*

The Child:

What is that light, dear father,
That light in the dark, dark sky?

The Father:

Those are the lights of the city
And the villages thereby.

The Child:

There must be fire in the city
To throw that yellow glare;
And fire in the little villages
On all the hearthstones there.

The Father, musing:

Yea, flames are on the hearthstones;
The ovens are full of bread,
But here the coals are dying
And the flames are dead.

The Child:

What is the cold, dear father?
It stings like an angry bee.
Wherever it stings my hand turns white,
See!

The Father:

The cold is a beast, my dear one,
With his paws he tears at the thatch,
His breath is a curse and a warning,
You can see it creep on the latch.

The Child:

If 'tis a wolf, dear father,
That lies with his paw on the floor,
Let us heat the spade in the embers
And drive him away from the door.

Angels:

God is the power of growth,
In the snail and the tree,
God is the power of growth
In the heart of the man.

The Child:

Did you not hear the singing,
Voices overhead?
Mother's voice and Ruth's voice,
Voices of the dead.

The Father, musing:

Our Ruth died in the springtime,
With the spade I turned the sod,
We buried her by the brier rose,
Her life is hid with God.

The Child:

All summer long in the garden
No roses came to the tree.
Father, was it for sorrow,
Sorrow for thee and me?

The Father:

Roses grew in the garden,
I saw them at morning and even,
Shadows of earthly roses
They bloomed for fingers in heaven.

*The air is very clear and still,
The moonlight falls from half the sphere;
The shadow from the silver hill
Fills half the vale, and half is clear
As the moon's self with cloudless snow;
By the dead stream the alders throw
Their shadows, shot with tingling spars;
On the sheer height the elm trees glow:
Their tops are tangled with the stars.*

The Child:

Father, the coals are dying,
See! I have heated the spade,
Let me throw the door wide open,
I will not be afraid.

The Father:

Let me kiss you once on the forehead,
And once on your darling eyes;
We may see them both at the dawning,
In the dales of Paradise.

The Child:

And if I only see them,
I will tell them how you smiled;
For the wolf, you know, is angry,
And I am a little child.

Death:

Undaunted spirits,
I give thee peace,
For a world of dread—
Calm.
For desperate toil—
Rest.
Thou who didst say,
When the waters of poverty
Waxed deep, deep,
What we bear is best;
Just ones,
I give thee sleep.

First Traveller:

Keep up your spirits, I know
There's a cabin under the hill,
The fellow will make a roaring fire;
We'll heat our hands and drink our fill
And go warm to our heart's desire!

Second Traveller:

The door is open,—Heigho!
This pair will claim neither crown nor groat,
The man has gripped his garden spade
As if he would dig his grave in the snow;
The boy has the face of a saint, I trow;
His brow says, "I was not afraid!"

First Traveller:

Ah well, these things must be, you know!
Gather your sables around your throat;
Give us that story about the monk,
His niece, and the wandering conjurer,
Just to keep our blood astir.

The Angels:

The heart of God,
The worlds and man,
Are fashioned and moulded,
In a subtle plan;
Passion outsurges,
Sweeps far but converges:
Nothing is lost,
Sod or stone,
But comes to its own;
Bear well thy joy,
'Tis mixed with alloy,
Bear well thy grief,
'Tis a rich full sheaf:
Gather the souls that have passed in the night,
Theirs is the peace and the light.

*The moon is gone, the dawning brings
A deeper dark with silver blent,
Above the wells where, myriad, springs
Light from the crimson orient;
The elms are born, the shadows creep,
Tremble and melt away—one sweep
The great soft color floods and flows,
Where under snow the roses sleep;
The morn has turned the snow to rose.*

Dear Morris—here is your letter—
Can my answer reach you now?
Fate has left me your debtor,
You will remember how;
For I went away to Nantucket,
And you to the Isle of Orleans,
And when I was dawdling and dreaming
Over the ways and means
Of answering, the power was denied me,
Fate frowned and took her stand;
I have your unanswered letter
Here in my hand.
This—in your famous scribble,
It was ever a cryptic fist,
Cuneiform or Chaldaic
Meanings held in a mist.

Dear Morris, (now I'm inditing
And poring over your script)
I gather from the writing,
The coin that you had flipt,
Turned tails; and so you compel me
To meet you at Touchwood Hills:
Or, mayhap, you are trying to tell me
The sum of a painter's ills:
Is that Phimister Proctor
Or something about a doctor?
Well, nobody knows, but Eddie,
Whatever it is I'm ready.

For our friendship was always fortunate
In its greetings and adieux,
Nothing flat or importunate,
Nothing of the misuse
That comes of the constant grinding
Of one mind on another.
So memory has nothing to smother,
But only a few things captured
On the wing, as it were, and enraptured.
Yes, Morris, I am inditing—
Answering at last it seems,
How can you read the writing
In the vacancy of dreams?

I would have you look over my shoulder
Ere the long, dark year is colder,
And mark that as memory grows older,
The brighter it pulses and gleams.
And if I should try to render
The tissues of fugitive splendour
That fled down the wind of living,
Will they read it some day in the future,
And be conscious of an awareness
In our old lives, and the bareness
Of theirs, with the newest passions
In the last fad of the fashions?

How often have we risen without daylight
When the day star was hidden in mist,
When the dragon-fly was heavy with dew and sleep,
And viewed the miracle pre-eminent, matchless,
The prelusive light that quickens the morning.
O crystal dawn, how shall we distill your virginal freshness
When you steal upon a land that man has not sullied with his intrusion,
When the aboriginal shy dwellers in the broad solitudes
Are asleep in their innumerable dens and night haunts
Amid the dry ferns, in the tender nests
Pressed into shape by the breasts of the Mother birds?
How shall we simulate the thrill of announcement
When lake after lake lingering in the starlight
Turn their faces towards you,
And are caressed with the salutation of colour?

How shall we transmit in tendril-like images,

The tenuous tremor in the tissues of ether,
Before the round of colour buds like the dome of a shrine,
The preconscious moment when love has fluttered in the bosom,
Before it begins to ache?

How often have we seen the even
Melt into the liquidity of twilight,
With passages of Titian splendour,
Pellucid preludes, exquisitely tender,
Where vanish and revive, thro' veils of the ashes of roses,
The crystal forms the breathless sky discloses.

The new moon a slender thing,
In a snood of virgin light,
She seemed all shy on venturing
Into the vast night.

Her own land and folk were afar,
She must have gone astray,
But the gods had given a silver star,
To be with her on the way.

I can feel the wind on the prairie
And see the bunch-grass wave,
And the sunlights ripple and vary
The hill with Crowfoot's grave,
Where he "pitched off" for the last time
In sight of the Blackfoot Crossing,
Where in the sun for a pastime
You marked the site of his tepee
With a circle of stones. Old Napiw
Gave you credit for that day.
And well I recall the weirdness
Of that evening at Qu'Appelle,
In the wigwam with old Sakimay,
The keen, acrid smell,
As the kinnikinick was burning;
The planets outside were turning,
And the little splints of poplar
Flared with a thin, gold flame.
He showed us his painted robe
Where in primitive pigments
He had drawn his feats and his forays,
And told us the legend
Of the man without a name,
The hated Blackfoot,
How he lured the warriors,
The young men, to the foray
And they never returned.
Only their ghosts
Goaded by the Blackfoot
Mounted on stallions:
In the night time
He drove the stallions
Reeking into the camp;
The women gasped and whispered,
The children cowered and crept,
And the old men shuddered
Where they slept.
When Sakimay looked forth
He saw the Blackfoot,
And the ghosts of the warriors,
And the black stallions
Covered by the night wind
As by a mantle.

I remember well a day,
When the sunlight had free play,
When you worked in happy stress,
While grave Ne-Pah-Pee-Ness
Sat for his portrait there,
In his beaded coat and his bare

Head, with his mottled fan
Of hawk's feathers, A Man!
Ah Morris, those were the times
When you sang your inconsequent rhymes
Sprung from a careless fountain:

*"He met her on the mountain,
He gave her a horn to blow,
And the very last words he said to her
Were, 'Go 'long, Eliza, go."*

Foolish,—but life was all,
And under the skilful fingers
Contours came at your call—
Art grows and time lingers;—
But now the song has a change
Into something wistful and strange.
And one asks with a touch of ruth
What became of the youth
And where did Eliza go?
He met her on the mountain,
He gave her a horn to blow,
The horn was a silver whorl
With a mouthpiece of pure pearl,
And the mountain was all one glow,
With gulfs of blue and summits of rosy snow.
The cadence she blew on the silver horn
Was the meaning of life in one phrase caught,
And as soon as the magic notes were born,
She repeated them once in an afterthought.
They heard in the crystal passes,
The cadence, calling, calling,
And faint in the deep crevasses,
The echoes falling, falling.
They stood apart and wondered;
Her lips with a wound were aquiver,
His heart with a sword was sundered,
For life was changed forever
When he gave her the horn to blow:
But a shadow arose from the valley,
Desolate, slow and tender,
It hid the herdsmen's chalet,
Where it hung in the emerald meadow,
(Was death driving the shadow?)
It quenched the tranquil splendour
Of the colour of life on the glow-peaks,
Till at the end of the even,
The last shell-tint on the snow-peaks
Had passed away from the heaven.
And yet, when it passed, victorious,
The stars came out on the mountains,
And the torrents gusty and glorious,
Clamoured in a thousand fountains,
And even far down in the valley,
A light re-discovered the chalet.
The scene that was veiled had a meaning,
So deep that none might know;
Was it here in the morn on the mountain,
That he gave her the horn to blow?

Tears are the crushed essence of this world,
The wine of life, and he who treads the press
Is lofty with imperious disregard
Of the burst grapes, the red tears and the murk.
But nay! that is a thought of the old poets,
Who sullied life with the passional bitterness
Of their world-weary hearts. We of the sunrise,
Joined in the breast of God, feel deep the power
That urges all things onward, not to an end,
But in an endless flow, mounting and mounting,
Claiming not overmuch for human life,
Sharing with our brothers of nerve and leaf
The urgency of the one creative breath,—

All in the dim twilight—say of morning,
Where the florescence of the light and dew
Haloes and hallows with a crown adorning
The brows of life with love; herein the clue,
The love of life—yea, and the peerless love
Of things not seen, that leads the least of things
To cherish the green sprout, the hardening seed;
Here leans all nature with vast Mother-love,
Above the cradled future with a smile.
Why are there tears for failure, or sighs for weakness,
While life's rhythm beats on? Where is the rule
To measure the distance we have circled and clomb?
Catch up the sands of the sea and count and count
The failures hidden in our sum of conquest.
Persistence is the master of this life;
The master of these little lives of ours;
To the end—effort—even beyond the end.

Here, Morris, on the plains that we have loved,
Think of the death of Akoose, fleet of foot,
Who, in his prime, a herd of antelope
From sunrise, without rest, a hundred miles
Drove through rank prairie, loping like a wolf,
Tired them and slew them, ere the sun went down.
Akoose, in his old age, blind from the smoke
Of tepees and the sharp snow light, alone
With his great grandchildren, withered and spent,
Crept in the warm sun along a rope
Stretched for his guidance. Once when sharp autumn
Made membranes of thin ice upon the sloughs,
He caught a pony on a quick return
Of prowess and, all his instincts cleared and quickened,
He mounted, sensed the north and bore away
To the Last Mountain Lake where in his youth
He shot the sand-hill-cranes with his flint arrows.
And for these hours in all the varied pomp
Of pagan fancy and free dreams of foray
And crude adventure, he ranged on entranced,
Until the sun blazed level with the prairie,
Then paused, faltered and slid from off his pony.
In a little bluff of poplars, hid in the bracken,
He lay down; the populace of leaves
In the lithe poplars whispered together and trembled,
Fluttered before a sunset of gold smoke,
With interspaces, green as sea water,
And calm as the deep water of the sea.

There Akoose lay, silent amid the bracken,
Gathered at last with the Algonquin Chieftains.
Then the tenebrous sunset was blown out,
And all the smoky gold turned into cloud wrack.
Akoose slept forever amid the poplars,
Swathed by the wind from the far-off Red Deer
Where dinosaurs sleep, clamped in their rocky tombs.
Who shall count the time that lies between
The sleep of Akoose and the dinosaurs?
Innumerable time, that yet is like the breath
Of the long wind that creeps upon the prairie
And dies away with the shadows at sundown.

What we may think, who brood upon the theme,
Is, when the old world, tired of spinning, has fallen
Asleep, and all the forms, that carried the fire
Of life, are cold upon her marble heart—
Like ashes on the altar—just as she stops,
That something will escape of soul or essence,—
The sum of life, to kindle elsewhere:
Just as the fruit of a high sunny garden,
Grown mellow with autumnal sun and rain,
Shrivelled with ripeness, splits to the rich heart,
And looses a gold kernel to the mould,

So the old world, hanging long in the sun,
And deep enriched with effort and with love,
Shall, in the motions of maturity,
Wither and part, and the kernel of it all
Escape, a lovely wraith of spirit, to latitudes
Where the appearance, throated like a bird,
Winged with fire and bodied all with passion,
Shall flame with presage, not of tears, but joy.

THE END

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