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Author: Olive Tilford Dargan

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PATH FLOWER, AND OTHER VERSES ***

PATH FLOWER

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PATH FLOWER

AND

OTHER VERSES

BY

OLIVE T. DARGAN



MCMXIV

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PATH FLOWER

[1]

A RED-CAP sang in Bishop's wood,
 A lark o'er Golder's lane,
 As I the April pathway trod
 Bound west for Willesden.
 At foot each tiny blade grew big
 And taller stood to hear,
 And every leaf on every twig
 Was like a little ear.
 As I too paused, and both ways
 tried
 To catch the rippling rain,—
 So still, a hare kept at my side
 His tussock of disdain,—
 Behind me close I heard a step,

A soft pit-pat surprise,
And looking round my eyes fell
 deep
 Into sweet other eyes;
The eyes like wells, where sun lies
 too,
 So clear and trustful brown,
Without a bubble warning you
 That here's a place to drown.
"How many miles?" Her broken
 shoes
 Had told of more than one.
She answered like a dreaming
 Muse,
 "I came from Islington."
"So long a tramp?" Two gentle
 nods,
 Then seemed to lift a wing,
And words fell soft as willow-buds,
 "I came to find the Spring."
A timid voice, yet not afraid
 In ways so sweet to roam,
As it with honey bees had played
 And could no more go home.
Her home! I saw the human lair,
 I heard the hucksters bawl,
I stifled with the thickened air
 Of bickering mart and stall.
Without a tuppence for a ride,
 Her feet had set her free.
Her rags, that decency defied,
 Seemed new with liberty.
But she was frail. Who would
 might note
 The trail of hungering
That for an hour she had forgot
 In wonder of the Spring.
So shriven by her joy she glowed
 It seemed a sin to chat.
(A tea-shop snuggled off the road;
 Why did I think of that?)
Oh, frail, so frail! I could have
 wept,—
 But she was passing on,
And I but muddled "You'll accept
 A penny for a bun?"
Then up her little throat a spray
 Of rose climbed for it must;
A wilding lost till safe it lay
 Hid by her curls of rust;
And I saw modesties at fence
 With pride that bore no name;
So old it was she knew not whence
 It sudden woke and came;
But that which shone of all most
 clear
 Was startled, sadder thought
That I should give her back the
 fear
 Of life she had forgot.
And I blushed for the world we'd
 made,
 Putting God's hand aside,
Till for the want of sun and shade
 His little children died;
And blushed that I who every year
 With Spring went up and
 down,
Must greet a soul that ached for
 her
 With "penny for a bun!"
Struck as a thief in holy place
 Whose sin upon him cries,
I watched the flowers leave her
 face,

[2]

[3]

[4]

The song go from her eyes.
Then she, sweet heart, she saw my
rout,
And of her charity
A hand of grace put softly out
And took the coin from me.
A red-cap sang in Bishop's wood,
A lark o'er Golder's lane;
But I, alone, still glooming stood,
And April plucked in vain;
Till living words rang in my ears
And sudden music played:
*Out of such sacred thirst as hers
The world shall be remade.*
Afar she turned her head and
smiled
As might have smiled the
Spring,
And humble as a wondering child
I watched her vanishing.

[5]

THE PIPER

[6]

I MET a crone 'twixt wood and
wood,
Who pointed down the piper's road
With shaken staff and fearsome
glance,—
"Ware, ware the dance!"
But when the piper me did greet,
The wind, the wind was in my feet,
The rose and leaf on eager boughs
Unvestalled them of dew-writ
vows,
And I as light as leaf and rose
Danced to the summer's close.
Now every tree is weary grown,
Of singing birds there is not one;
All, all the world droops into grey,
—
O piper Love, must thou yet play?
The wildest note of all he blew,
And fast my worn feet flew.
Old is the year, the leaf and rose
Are long, long gone;
So chill, so chill the grey wind
blows
Through heart and bone;
No grasses warm the winter ways
That wound my feet;
But with unwearied fingers yet,
Bold, undelayed on stop and fret,
Unmercifully sweet,
The piper plays....

[7]

TO A HERMIT THRUSH

[8]

DWELLER among leaves, and shining
twilight boughs
That fold cool arms about thine altar
place,
What joyous race
Of gods dost serve with such unfaltering
vows?
Weave me a time-fringed tale
Of slumbering, haunted trees,
And star-sweet fragrances
No day defiled;

Of bowering nights innumerable,
And nestling hours breath-nigh a dryad's
heart
That sleeping yet was wild
With dream-beat that thou mad'st a part
Of thy dawn-fluting; ay, and keep'st it
still,
Striving so late these godless woods to
fill
With undefeated strain,
And in one hour build the old world
again.
Wast thou found singing when Diana
drew
Her skirts from the first night?
Didst feel the sun-breath when the
valleys grew
Warm with the love of light,
Till blades of flower-lit green gave to the
wind
The mystery that made sweet
The earth forever,—strange and
undefined
As life, as God, as this thy song complete
That holds with me twin memories
Of time ere men,
And ere our ways
Lay sundered with the abyss of air
between?

*List, I will lay
The world, my song,
Deep in the heart of day,
Day that is long
As the ages dream or the stars
delay!
Keep thou from me,
Sigh-throated man,
Forever to be
Under the songless wanderer's
ban.
I am of time
That counteth no dawn;
Thy æons yet climb
To skies I have won,
Seeking for aye an unrisen sun!*

Soft as a shadow slips
Before the moon, I creep beneath the
trees,
Even to the boughs whose lowest
circling tips
Whisper with the anemones
Thick-strewn as though a cloud had
made
Its drifting way through spray and leafy
braid
And sunk with unremembering ease
To humbler heaven upon the mossy
heaps.
And here a warmer flow
Urges thy melody, yet keeps
The cool of bowers; as might a rose
blush through
Its unrelinquished dew;
Or bounteous heart that knows not woe,
Put on the robe of sighs, and fain
Would hold in love's surmise a
neighbour's pain.
Ah, I have wronged thee, sprite!
So tender now thy song in flight,
So sweet its lingerings are,
It seems the liquid memory
Of time when thou didst try
Thy gleaning wing through human years,
And met, ay, knew the sigh
Of men who pray, the tears

[9]

[10]

[11]

That hide the woman's star,
The brave ascending fire
That is youth's beacon and too soon his
pyre,—
Yea, all our striving, bateless and
unseeing,
That builds each day our Heaven new.
More deep in time's unnearing blue,
Farther and ever fleeing
The dream that ever must pursue.

*Heart-need is sorest
When the song dies:
Come to the forest,
Brother of the sighs.
Heart-need is song-need,
Brother, give me thine!
Song-meed is heart-meed,
Brother, take mine!
I go the still way,
Cover me with night;
Thou goest the will way
Into the light.
Dust and the burden
Thou shall outrun;
Bear then my guerdon,
Song, to the sun!*

[12]

O little pagan with the heart of Christ,
I go bewildered from thine altar place,
These brooding boughs and grey-lit
forest wings,
Nor know if thou deniest
My destiny and race,
Man's goalward falterings,
To sing the perfect joy that lay
Along the path we missed somewhere,
That led thee to thy home in air,
While we, soil-creepers, bruise our way
Toward heights and sunrise bounds
That wings may know nor feet may win
For all their scars, for all their wounds;
Or have I heard within thy strain
Not sorrow's self, but sorrowing
That thou did'st seek the way more free,
Nor took with us the trail of pain
That endeth not, e'er widening
To life that knows what Life may be;
And ere thou fall'st to silence long
Would golden parting fling:
*Go, man, through death unto thy star;
I journey not so far;
My wings must fail e'en with my song.*

[13]

THANKSGIVING

[14]

SUPREMEST Life and Lord of All,
I bring my thanks to thee;
Not for the health that does not
fail,
And wings me over land and
sea;
Not for this body's pearl and rose,
And radiance made sure
By thine enduring life that flows
In sky-print swift and pure;
Not for the thought whose glowing
power
Glides far, eternal, free,
And surging back in thy full hour
Bears the wide world to me;
Not for the friends whose presence
is

The warm, sweet heart of
things
Where leans the body for the kiss
That gives the soul its wings;
Not for the little hands that cling,
The little feet that run,
And make the earth a fitter thing
For thee to look upon;
Not for mine ease within my door,
My roof when rains beat
strong,
My bed, my fire, my food in store,
My book when nights are long;
But, Lord, I know where on lone
sands
A leper rots and cries;
Find thou my offering in his hands,
My worship in his eyes.
As thou dost give to him, thy least,
Thou givest unto me;
As he is fed I make my feast,
And lift my thanks to thee.

[15]

THE ROAD

[16]

ON Gilead road the shadows creep;
(’Tis noon, and I forget;)
By Gilead road the ferns are deep,
And waves run emerald, wind-
beset,
To some unsanded shore
Of doe and dove and fay;
And I for love of that before,
Forget the hindward way.
By Gilead road a river runs,
(To what unshadowed sea?)
Bough-hidden here,—there by the
sun’s
Gold treachery unbared to me.
O Beauty in retreat,
From beckoned eyes you steal,
But the pursuing heart, more fleet,
Lifts your secretest veil.
A thrush! What unbuilt temples rear
Their domes where thrushes sing!
My heart glides in, a worshipper
At shrines that ne’er knew
offering,
Nor eye hath seen, and yet
What soul hath not been there,
Deep in song’s fane where we forget
To pray, for we are prayer.
And now the shadows start and glide;
I hear soft, woodland feet;
And who are they that deeper bide
Where beechen twilights meet?
What tranced beings smile
On things I may not see?
As with a dream they would beguile
Their own eternity?
I too shall find my own as they;
(’Tis eve, and I forget;)
Here in this world where mortals play
As gods with no god’s leave or let.
My hope in high purlieus
Desire erst lockt and kept,
On wing unbarred shall seek and
choose,—
Ay, choose, when I have slept.
For happy roads may yet be long,
And bliss must sometime bed.

[17]

[18]

Fern-deep I fall, lose sight and song,
 The slim palms close above my
 head,
 And Life, the Shadow, weaves
 The charm on sleepers laid
 Till Time's spent ghost comes not nor
 grieves
 An hourless Gilead.
 Ay me, I dream my eyes are wet;
 I sigh, I turn, I weep.
 Alack, that waking we forget
 But to remember when we sleep!
 O vision of closed eyes,
 That burns the heart awake!
 O the forgotten truth's reprise
 For the forsaken's sake!
 Far land, blood-red, I feel again
 Thy hot, unsilenced breath;
 Meet thy unburied eyes of pain
 That, dying ever, find no death;
 See childhood's one gold hour
 Bartered for crust and bed,
 And man's o'erdriven noon devour
 His evening peace and bread.
 I hear men sob,—ay, men,—and shout
 To souls on Gilead road:
 "Tell us the way—we sent ye out—
 We bought ye free—we paid our
 blood!"
 Gaunt arms make signal mad;
 O, feel the woe-waves break!
 Does no one hear in Gilead?
 Will one, not one turn back?
 Rolls higher from the land blood-red
 That sea-surge of despair!
 A flame creeps over Gilead,
 Unseen, unfelt by any there.
 They look not back, the while
 Doom shadows round them dance,
 And smile meets slow, unstartled smile
 As in it sleep's mid-chance.
 "We give our days, we give our blood,
 We send ye far to see!
 We break beneath the double load
 That ye may walk unbowed and
 free!
 'Tis ours, the healing shade;
 'Tis ours, the singing stream;
 'Tis ours, the charm on sleepers laid;
 'Tis ours, the toil-won dream!"
 Dim grown is Gilead, ashen, lost
 To me who hear that cry.
 "Our every star is hid with dust;
 The way, the way! Let us not die!"
 Up from the trampled ferns,
 (O Beauty's praying hands!)
 I stricken start, as one who turns
 From plague's unholy lands.
 Pale is the dream we dream alone,
 An unresolving fire,
 Till beacon hearts make it their own
 And men are lit with man's desire.
 I mourn no Gilead fair,
 Back to my own I speed,
 And all my tears are falling where
 They sell the sun for bread.
 Mine too the blow, the unwept scar;
 Mine too the flames that sere;
 And on my breast not one proud star
 That leaves a brother's heaven
 bare.
 Life is the search of God
 For His own unity;
 I walk stone-bare till all are shod,
 No gold may sandal me.

[19]

[20]

[21]

I come, O comrades, faster yet!
For me no bough-hung shade
Till every burning foot be set
In ferns of Gilead.
The old, old pain of kind,
Once mine, is mine once more;
And I forget the way behind,
So dear is that before.

[22]

LA DAME REVOLUTION

[23]

RED was the Might that sired thee,
White was the Hope that bore
thee,
Heaven and Earth desired thee,
And Hell from thy lovers tore
thee;
But barren to the ravisher,
Thou bearest Love thy child,
Immortal daughter, Peace; for her
Waits Man, the Undefined.

THE REBEL

[24]

A RIOT-MAKER! Can the fruit
Of frenzy be a gracious thing?
His soul has hands; above the bruit
They lift a song-bird quivering.
World-wrecker! Shall he trampling
go
Till Beauty's drenched and lonely
eyes
Mourn a deserted earth? But no!
Men go not down till men arise.
The game is Life's. She plays to win;
And whirls to dust her overlings;
Her ablent winds shall spare no sin,
Though hidden in the breast of
kings;
And Earth is smiling as she takes
To her old lap their fallen bones,
For down the throbbing ways there
wakes
The laughter of her greater sons.

THESE LATTER DAYS

[25]

TAKE down thy stars, O God! We look not up.
In vain thou hangest there thy
changeless sign.
We lift our eyes to power's glowing cup,
Nor care if blood make strong that
wizard wine,
So we but drink and feel the sorcery
Of conquest in our veins, of wits grown
keen
In strain and strife for flesh-sweet
sovereignty,—
The fatal thrill of kingship over men.
What though the soul be from the body
shrunk,
And we array the temple, but no god?
What though, the cup of golden greed once
drunk,

Our dust be laid in a dishonoured sod,
While thy loud hosts proclaim the end of
wars?
We read no sign. O God, take down thy
stars!

ABNEGATION

[26]

CHRIST, dear Christ, were the wood-ways
sweet
By the long, white highway bare,
Where the hot road dust made grey Thy
feet?
Ay,—but the woman's hair!
Brother, my Christ, when thou camest
down
The cup of water to give,
Did a poet die on the mount's cool
crown?
Ay,—and for that dost thou live!

THE LITTLE TREE

[27]

It pushed a guided way between
The pebbles of her grave;
A poplar hastening to be green
And silver signals wave.
And we who sought her with the
moon,
Were met by branches stirred,
And whiter grew as grew the croon
That seemed her hidden word.
"O, she would speak!" my heart-
beat said;
My eyes were on the mound;
And lowlier hung my waiting head
Above the prisoning ground.
Then smiled the lad and whispered
me,—
The lad who most did love;
"She stoops to us; the little tree
Is wakened from above!"

THE GAME

[28]

'Tis played with eyes; one uttered
word
Would cast the game away.
As silent as a sailing bird,
The shift and change of play.
So many eyes to me are dear,
So many do me bless;
The hazel, deep as deep wood-mere
Where leaves are flutterless;
The brown that most bewildereth
With dusking, golden play
Of shadows like betraying breath
From some shy, hidden day;
The black whose torch is ever
trimmed,
Let stars be soon or late;
The blue, a morning never dimmed,
Opposing Heaven to fate;
The grey as soft as farthest skies

[29]

That hold horizon rain;
Or when, steel-darkling, stoic-wise,
They bring the gods again;
And wavelit eyes of nameless glow,
Fed from far-risen streams;
But oh, the eyes, the eyes that know
The silent game of dreams!
Three times I've played. Once 'twas a
child,
Lap-held, not half a year
From Heaven, looked at me and
smiled,
And far I went with her.
Out past the twilight gates of birth,
And past Time's blindfold day,
Beyond the star-ring of the earth,
We found us room to play.
And once a woman, spent and old
With unavailing tears,
Who from her hair's down-tangled
fold
Shook out the grey-blown years,
Sat by the trampled way alone,
And lifted eyes—what themes!
I could not pass, I sat me down
To play the game of dreams.
And once ... a poet's eyes they were,
Though earth heard not his
strain;
And since he went no eyes can stir
My own to play again.

[30]

BALLAD

[31]

WHEN I with Death have gone on
quest,
And grief is mellowed in your breast;
When you do nothing fret
If jest come gently in with tea,
And Purr is stroked for want of me;
When thought robust bestirs your
mind,
And with a candid start you find
The world must move
To living love
And you forthright on travel set;
I do not ask you strive to keep
Awake the woe that winks for sleep,
Or swell the lessening tear;
I do not ask; dear to me still
May be the eyes regret would fill;
And, sooth, in vain I'd Nature sue
To go a little out for you;
But whether 'tis
Or that or this
Is from the matter there and here.
Forget the kisses dying not
Till each a thousand more begot;
Such easy progeny
You with small trouble still may
have;
(Though women die, love has no
grave;)
Forget the quaint, the nest-born
ways,
And ponder things more to my
praise,
That I may long
Be worth a song
Though deep in tongueless clay I be.
Admit my eye, than yours less keen,

[32]

Still knew a bead of Hippocrene
From baser bubbles bright;
My ear could catch, or short or long,
The echo of true-hammered song;
And many a book we journeyed
through;
Some turned us home again, 'tis
true,
(Not all who pen
Are more than men,
And some, like stars, outwore the
night.
Say I could break a lance with Fate,
Took half, at least, my troubles
straight,
(Let women have their boast;)
Homed well with chance, and
passing where
The gods kept house would take a
chair,
Perchance at ease, with naught ado,
With Jove would toss a quip or two;
The nectar stale,
A mug of ale
On goodly earth would serve a toast.
And if I left thee by a stile
Where thou didst choose to dream,
the while
I sought a farther mead,
Or clomb a ridge for flowers that
wore
Of earth the less, of stars the more,
I hastened back, confess of me,
To lay my treasure on thy knee;
Nor didst thou hear
Of stone or brere,
Or how my hidden feet did bleed.
And in the piping season when
The whole round world takes heart
again
To rise and dance with Spring;
When robin drives the snow-wind
home,
And sweetened is the warmèd loam,
When deeper root the violets,
And every bud its fear forgets
With upward glance
For lovers' chance
In Venus' dear and fateful ring;
Let not a thought of my cold bed
Bechill thy warm heart beating red,
And thy new ardours dim;
But if, good hap, you rove where I
Beneath the twinkling moss then lie,
Be glad to see me decked so gay,
(Spring's the best handmaid without
pay,
I like things new,
In season too,
And fain must smile to be so trim.
Then hie thee to some bonny brake
Another mate to woo and take,
And as thy soul to love.
Rise with the dew, stay not the noon,
What's good cannot be found too
soon,
The wind will not be always south,
Nor like a rose is every mouth,
Time's quick to press,
Do thou no less,
And may the night thy wisdom prove.
And as all love doth live again
In great or small that loved hath
been,
Keep this sole troth with me,—

[33]

[34]

[35]

Forget my name, my form, my face,
But meet me still in every place,
Since we are what we love, and I
Loved everything beneath the sky.
 So may I long
 Be worth a song,
Though I who sang forgotten be.

[36]

A DIRGE

[37]

MORTAL child, lay thee where
 Earth is gift and giver;
Midnight owl, witch, or bear
 Shall disturb thee never!
Softly, softly take thy place,
Turn from man thy waning face;
Fear not thou must lie alone,
Sleep-mates thou shalt have
 anon.
(Clock of Time none commands,
 Driveth not the winter
 floods,
Where the silent, tireless sands
 Run the ages of the gods.)
Thine is not a jealous bed;
Pillow here hath every head;
All that are and all to be
Shall ask a little room of thee.
(Feet of flame, haste nor creep
 Where the stars are of thy
 pace;
Heart of fire, in shadows sleep,
 With the sun in thy
 embrace.)
Babe of Time, old in care,
 Sweet is Earth, the giver;
Owlet, witch, or midnight bear
 Shall disturb thee never.

[38]

HIS ARGUMENT

[39]

ONE time I wooed a maid (dear is she yet!)
 All in the revel eye of young Love's moon.
Content she made me,—ah, my dimpling mate,
 My Springtime girl, who walked with
 flower-shoon!
But near me, nearer, steals a deep-eyed maid
 With creeping glance that sees and will
 not see,
And blush that would those yea-sweet eyes
 upbraid,—
 O, might I woo her nor inconstant be!
But is not Autumn dreamtime of the Spring?
 (Yon scarlet fruit-bell is a flower asleep;)
 And I am not forsworn if yet I keep
Dream-faith with Spring in Autumn's deeper
 kiss.
 Then so, brown maiden, take this true-love
 ring,
And lay thy long, soft locks where my heart is.

THE CONQUEROR

[40]

O SPRING, that flutter'st the slow Winter by,

To drop thy buds before his frosty feet,
Dost thou not grieve to see thy darlings lie
In trodden death, and weep their beauty
sweet?
Yet must thou cast thy tender offering,
And make thy way above thy mournèd
dead,
Or frowning Winter would be always king,
And thou wouldst never walk with
crownèd head.
So gentle Love must make his venturous way
Among the shaken buds of his own pain;
And many a hope-blown garland meekly lay
Before the chilly season of disdain;
But as no beauty may the Spring outglow,
So he, when throned, no greater lord doth
know.

TO MOINA

[41]

THERE were no heaven but for lovers' eyes;
Save in their depths do all Elysiums fade;
And gods were dead but for the life that lies
In kisses sweet on sweeter altars laid.
There were no heroes did not lovers ride,
And pyramid high deeds upon new time;
Nor tale for feast, or field, or chimney-side,
And harps were dumb and song had ne'er
a rhyme.
Then live, proud heart, in happy fealty,
Nor sigh thee more thy dear bonds to
remove;
Thou art not thrall to liege of mean degree,
For all are kings who bear the lance of
love;
No wight so poor but may his tatters lose,
And find his purple if his lady choose.

"THERE'S ROSEMARY"

[42]

O LOVE that is not love, but dear, so dear!
That is not love because it goes so soon,
Like flower born and dead within one
moon,
And yet is love for that it comes full near
The guarded fane where love alone may peer,
Ere like young Spring by Summer soon
outshone,
It trembles into death, but comes anon,
As thoughts of Spring will come though
Summer's here.
O star full sweet, though one arose more fair,
Within my heart I'll keep a heaven for thee
Where thou mayst freely come and
freely go,
Touching with thy pale gold the twilight air
Where dream-closed buds could never
flower show,
Yet fragrant keep the shadowy way for
me.

AT THE GRAVE OF HEINE

[43]

In winter drest,
Death mends thy wrong;
That is life's best.
Bird, who didst sing
From a bare bough,
Call, and what Spring
Will answer now!
And haste with her
Bud-legacy,—
O, not to share,
To take of thee!
Thy night, slow, dark,
Yet song-lit shone,
Till who did hark
Missed not the moon;
When Morning found
Thy cold, pierced breast,
'Twas she who moaned,
To thy thorn pressed.
*Here lies the thorn-wound of the dawn
Through whose high morn the bird
sings on.*

[44]

TO A LOST COMRADE

[45]

WE found the spring at eager noon,
And from one cup we drank;
Then on until the forest croon
In twilight tangle sank;
The night was ours, the stars, the
dawn;
The manna crust, bird-shared;
And never failed our magic shoon,
Whatever way we fared.
If caged at last, ceased not the
flow
Of sky-gleam through the bars;
And where were wounds I only
know
Tear-kisses hid the scars.
And when, as round the world
death-free
We wind-embodied roam,
I hear the gale that once was thee
Cry "Hollo!" I will come.

FOR M. L. P.

[46]

ROSE Love lay dreaming where I
passed,
Like flower blown from careless
stem;
So still I dared to touch at last
Her white robe's hem.
Rose Love looked up and caught my
hand,
Though in her eyes the sea-birds
were;
When o'er my brow there blew a
strand
Of cold, grey hair.
Rose Love stood up unriddling this,
Till shadows in my eyes grew
old;
Then warmed the lock with sudden
kiss;
Now flames it gold.

TO SLEEP

[47]

O SILENT lover of a world day-worn,
Taking the weary light to thy dusk arms,
Stealing where pale forms lie, sun-hurt and
torn,
Waiting the balm of thy oblivious charms,
Make me thy captive ere I guess pursuit,
And cast me deep within some dreamless
close,
Where hopes stir not, and white, wronged lips
are mute,
And Pain's hot wings fold down o'er
hushèd woes.
And if ere morn thou choosest me to free,
Let it not be, dear jailer, through the door
That timeward opes, but to eternity
Set thou the soul that needs thee
nevermore;
So I from sleep to death may softly wend
As one would pass from gentle friend to friend.

"LE PENSEUR"

[48]

WARM in this marble, that is stone no more,
Life at wound-pause lifts ear to
woundless mind;
Backward the ages their slow clew
unwind,
And step by step, and star by star, lead o'er
The trail again, where eyeless passion tore
Its red way to a soul. Mist-bound and
blind
No more, the thinker waits, and God
grown kind
Flashes a foot-print where He goes before.
Not to be followed! Falls the cloud again;
Folds the stern form around the striving
doubt,
And curve betrays to curve the silent
birth
That shall be voice to later times and men;
While lone in unlit dark, within, without,
He sits immortal on a godless earth.

VISION

[49]

Look in, O Mystic, on thy lease,
Thou tenant soul in God's
demesne;
Forego the show of eyes that fail,
And walk the world that cannot pale,
Thine by a sealed and termless
lien
Within His met eternities.
Yet look thou out from thy still hour
With eyes that know and bear
His fire;
Till kindling on thy wonder's verge
The transient days immortal merge
In Him fulfilled as worlds expire
In nestled love, a song, a flower.

My dream-fruit tree a palace bore
 In stone's reality,
 And friends and treasure, art and
 lore,
 Came in to dwell with me.
 But palaces for gods are made;
 I shrank to man, or less;
 Gold-barriered, yet chill, afraid,
 My soul shook shelterless.
 I found a cottage in a wood,
 Warmed by a hearth and maid,
 And fed and slept, and said 'twas
 good,—
 Ah, love-nest in the shade!
 The walls grew close, the roof
 pressed low,
 Soft arms my jailers were;
 My naked soul arose to go,
 And shivered bright and bare.
 No more I sought for covert kind;
 The blast blew on my head;
 And lo, with tempest and with wind
 I felt me garmented.
 Here on the hills the writhing storm
 Cloaks well and shelters me;
 I wrap me round and I am warm,
 Warm for eternity.

[51]

ON BOSWORTH FIELD

[52]

HERE, Richard, didst thou fall, caparisoned
 With kingdoms of thy lust;
 And here wouldst lie, by Fame's bent
 gleaners shunned,
 But came unto thy dust
 A swaggerer, perdy!
 Who cried "A horse, a horse!" and straight
 Thou wert abroad again on kingly feet
 To tread eternity.

OLD FAIRINGDOWN

[53]

SOFT as a treader on mosses
 I go through the village that sleeps;
 The village too early abed,
 For the night still shuffles, a gipsy,
 In the woods of the east,
 And the west remembers the sun.
 Not all are asleep; there are faces
 That lean from the walls of the gardens;
 Look sharply, or you will not see them,
 Or think them another stone in the wall.
 I spoke to a stone, and it answered
 Like an aged rock that crumbles;
 Each falling piece was a word.
 "Five have I buried," it said,
 "And seven are over the sea."
 Here is a hut that I pass,
 So lowly it has no brow,
 And dwarfs sit within at a table.
 A boy waits apart by the hearth;
 On his face the patience of firelight,
 But his eyes seek the door and a far world.
 It is not the call to the table he waits,
 But the call of the sea-rimmed forests,

[54]

And cities that stir in a dream.
I haste by the low-browed door,
Lest my arms go in and betray me,
A mother jealously passing.
He will go, the pale dwarf, and walk tall among
giants;
The child with his eyes on the far land,
And fame like a young, curled leaf in his heart.
The stream that darts from the hanging hill
Like a silver wing that must sing as it flies,
Is folded and still on the breast
Of the village that sleeps.
Each mute, old house is more old than the other,
And each wears its vines like ragged hair
Round the half-blind windows.
If a child should laugh, if a girl should sing,
Would the houses rub the vines from their eyes,
And listen and live?
A voice comes now from a cottage,
A voice that is young and must sing,
A honeyed stab on the air,
And the houses do not wake.
I look through the leaf-blowzed window,
And start as a gazer who, passing a death-vault,
Sees life sitting hopeful within.
She is young, but a woman, round-breasted,
Waiting the peril of Eve;
And she makes the shadows about her sweet
As the glooms that play in a pine-wood.
She sits at a harpsichord (old as the walls are),
And longing flows in the trickling, fairy notes
Like a hidden brook in a forest
Seeking and seeking the sun.
I have watched a young tree on the edge of a
wood
When the mist is weaving and drifting.
Slowly the boughs disappear and the leaves
reach out
Like the drowning hands of children,
Till a grey blur quivers cold
Where the green grace drank of the sun.
So now, as I gaze, the morrows
Creep weaving and winding their mist
Round the beauty of her who sings.
They hide the soft rings of her hair,
Dear as a child's curling fingers;
They shut out the trembling sun of eyes
That are deep as a bending mother's;
And her bridal body is scarfed with their chill.
For old and old is the story;
Over and over I listen to murmurs
That are always the same in these towns that
sleep;
Where grey and unwed a woman passes,
Her cramped, drab gown the bounds of a world
She holds with grief and silence;
And a gossip whose tongue alone is unwithered
Mumbles the tale by her affable gate;
How the lad must go, and the girl must stay,
Singing alone to the years and a dream;
Then a letter, a rumour, a word
From the land that reaches for lovers
And gives them not back;
And the maiden looks up with a face that is old;
Her smile, as her body, is evermore barren,
Her cheek like the bark of the beech-tree
Where climbs the grey winter.
Now have I seen her young,
The lone girl singing,
With the full round breast and the berry lip,
And heart that runs to a dawn-rise
On new-world mountains.
The weeping ash in the dooryard
Gathers the song in its boughs,
And the gown of dawn she will never wear.

[55]

[56]

[57]

I can listen no more; good-bye, little town, old
Fairingdown.
I climb the long, dark hillside,
But the ache I have found here I cannot
outclimb.
O Heart, if we had not heard, if we did not know
There is that in the village that never will sleep!

THE KISS

[58]

I STOLE into the secret room
Where Love lay dying;
Mystic and faint perfume
Met me like sighing;
As heaven had cast a still-born star
He lay nor stirred; the shell-thin
hand
Nerveless of high command
Where once the lord-veins sped
their fire.
And I had thought me glad
To let him go. "He reaps
His own," I pious said.
But this, ah, this
Unpleading helplessness!
"Give me thy death," I cried,
And took it from his lips.
The windows burst them wide.
The sun came in;
And Love high at my side
Stood sovereign.

[59]

YOUTH

[60]

HE hears the hour's low hint and
springs
To the chariot-side of Truth, while
fast
The wild car swings
Through dust and cloud;
And the watchful elders, prophet-
proud,
Give o'er his bones
To the wracking stones—
But he has passed!
A weft of sky, and castles stare
High from a wizard shore,
Sun-arrowed, tower-strong;
Gold parapets in air
Down-pour, down-pour
Sea-falls of peri song;
Then earth, the dragon's lair;
Cave eyes and burning breath;
And the lance the Grail lords bore
This day flies swift and fair,
This day of the dragon's death.
Must doff the wind-wreath, find
thee lone?
Put on meek age's hood?
Feel but the frost within the dawn?
Wrap courage in a swaddling
mood?
His bare throat flings
All-powered nay;
The world, his vast, unfingered
lyre,
Stirs in her thousand strings;
Lit with redemptive flame

[61]

Burns miracle desire,
And dedicated day
Is long as freedom's dream.
Youth of the lance, youth of the
 lyre,
How far, how far shalt go?
Where will the halting be?
Sun-courier, whose roads of fire
Bridge God's delay,
The hearts that know thee, ah,
 they know,
Ageless in clay,
Sole immortality!

TO MIRIMOND
(HER BIRTHDAY, IN DECEMBER)

[62]

Dost think that Time, to whom stars vainly
 sue,
Will for thy beauty keep one fixèd place?
Or that he may, o'er-weighed with seasons
 due,
Forget one Spring where veinlet tendrils
 lace
Rose over rose to make this flower, thy
 face?
Look round thee now, dear dupe of sweet
 hey-day!
Of what once blooming joy canst thou
 find trace
Save in the bosom of a cold decay?
What violet of Summer's yester sway
 Usurps these clouds to throne her
 slender moon?
Look on the wrinkling year, the shrunken
 way,
The wintry bier of all that gaudy shone,
And gather love ere loveliness wear pall,
If thou, when all is gone, wouldst still have
 all.

SOROLLA

[63]

"I AM fleet," said the joy of the sun,
Trembling then on the breast
Of the summer, white, still;
"I am fleet, I am gone!"
Smiling came one
With brush and a will,
Undelaying, unpressed,
And the glancing gold of the tremulous
 sun
Lingers for man, inescapable, won.
"Not here, nor yet there,"
Cried the waves that fled,
"Shall ye set us a snare.
Motion is breath of us,
Stillness is death of us;
We live as we run,
We pause and are sped!"
Laughing came one
With brush and a will,
And the waves never die and are
 nevermore still.
"I pass," said the light
On the joy-child's face;
But softly came one

[64]

And it leaves not its place.
 Here Time shall replight
 His faith with the dawn,
 And his ages, gaunt grey,
 Ever cycling, behold
 Their youth never flown
 In a world never old,
 Though they pass and repass with
 their trailing decay.
 "We stay," said the shadows, and hung
 On the brush of the master; "we are
 thine own."
 Fearless he flung
 The magical chains around them, and
 said,
 "Ye too shall be light, and to life bring
 the sun!"
 And man delayed
 By the captive pain's revealing glow
 Feeleth earth's breathing woe,
 And his vow is made;
 "Ye shall pass, ye shadows, yea;
 And life, as the sun, be free;
 The God in me saith!"
 And the shadows go;
 For joy is the breath
 Of eternity,
 And sorrow the sigh of a day.

[65]

IN THE BLUE RIDGE

[66]

THE mountain night is shining, Jim of Tellico,
 Shining so it hurts the heart to see
 The gleam upon the laurel leaf, the locust shaking
 snow
 To the rippling Nantahala that is laughing up
 to me,
 Hurts till the cry comes and the big tears are
 free.
 O, why should my heart cry to you that will not
 hear,
 Yonder where the ridges lie so still above the
 town?
 But the pain that's calling seems to bring you
 near,
 As the tears in my eyes bring the stars a-
 swimming down.
 Mother sits and cries, with my baby on her knee;
 Father curses deep, a-breathing hard your
 name;
 But never do I hear and never do I see,
 I with my head low, working out my shame,
 Eyes burning dry and my heart like a flame;
 For I hate you then—I hate you, Jim of Tellico,
 And grip my needle tighter, every stitch a sin,
 The hate growing bigger till the thing I sew
 Seems a shroud I'm glad a-making just to lay
 you in.
 But the slow sun passes with its day-long stare,
 Like a bold eye at the window when the blind
 Is missing and you mustn't know the eye is there,
 —
 Just shut your heart up close and hide the
 thing you mind;
 And comes the blessed twilight calling of its
 kind,
 When all the little creatures with soft voices stir,
 Little hiding things that cry so tremblingly,
 Till I lay my needle by,—O, how the sweet woods
 whirr!
 And fly down to the river that is laughing up to

[67]

me.
Then the hate goes out o' me with the moonlight
creeping in,
And the water crooning cool-like in my veins.
Who could smell the white azalea thinking then of
sin,
Or look on laurel buds a-caring for her pains?
It's just my heart breaks open and the wild
flood rains.
O beauty of the moon-mist winding, winding slow,
Till the tall lynns quiver vainly up to hold
One leafy moment more the breathing, gliding
flow
Of the loosened wreath of silver lifting into
gold!
The moosewood bride is glowing, all her curls
awave,
The colt's-foot in millions makes the ground
like a bed,
So sweet-breathed and green now, in winter
scarlet brave,
And blossom lips of tulip trees are meeting
overhead,
But never shall a tear fall for their love spent
and dead.
Doves are building yonder in that clump of maples
deep,
Do maple leaves come soonest for they love to
hide
The earliest nest and hear the first faint cheep
Telling them of joy too dear, too sweet to bide?
The joy that was my own, Jim, when our birdling
came,
Telling me that love is never spent and dead,—
Though you left the tears to me, and left to me the
shame,—
For the wildwood broke in blossoms round my
bed,
And the fairest on my bosom laid its stainless
head.
Can God who made this night His own great heart
to please,
And made that other night like this a year ago,
Be mad at us for loving? I fall upon my knees
And beg Him bless you, bless you ever, Jim of
Tellico!

[68]

[69]

YE WHO ARE TO SING

[70]

O SILENCE of all silences, where wait
Fame's unblown years whose choir my soul
would greet!
Graves, nor dead Time, are sealed so dumb in fate,
For Death and Time must pass on echoing
feet.
No grass-locked vault, no sculptured winding-
sheet,
No age-embalmed hour with mummied wing,
Is bosomed in such stillness, vast, complete,
As wraps the future, and no prayer may bring
From that unfathomed pause one minstrel
murmuring.
Yet never earth a lyreless dawn shall know;
No moon shall move unharped to her pale
home;
No midnight wreath its chain of choric glow
But answering eye flash rhythmic to the dome.
No path shall lie too deep in forest gloam
For the blithe singer's tread; no winds fore'er
Blow lute-lorn barks o'er unawakened foam;
Nor hidden isle sleep so enwaved but there

[71]

Shall touch and land at last Apollo's mariner.
 And soon shall wake that morrow's melody,
 When men of labour shall be men of dream,
 With hand seer-guided, knowing Deity
 That breathes in sonant wood and fluting
 stream,
 Shapes too the wheel, the shaft, the
 shouldering beam,
 Nor ceased to build when Magian toil began
 To lift its towered world. What chime supreme
 Shall turn our tuneless march to music when
 Sings the achieving God in conscious hearts of
 men!
 And one voice shall be woman's, lifting lay
 Till all the lark-heights of her being ring;
 Majestic she shall take the chanted way,
 And every song-peak's golden bourgeoning
 Shall thrill beneath her feet that lyric spring
 From ventured crest to crest. Strong, masterless,
 She, last in freedom, as the first shall sing,
 Who, great in freedom, takes by Love her place,
 Wife, mother,—more, her starward moving self—
 the race.

Ay, ye shall come, ye spirits girt with light
 That falls o'er heaven's hills from dawn to be;
 Ye warders in the planet house of night,
 Gliding to unguessed doors with prophet key,
 And out where dim paths stir with minstrelsy
 Wordless and strange to man until your clear
 Doubt-shriven strain interprets to the clay.
 Oh, might I hear ye as the world shall hear,
 Nearer, a poet's journey, to the Golden Year!
 Dear, honoured bards of centuries dim and sped,
 Yet glowing ever in your fadeless song,
 No dust shall heap its silence o'er ye dead,
 No cadent seas shall drown your chorus strong
 In more melodious waves. I've lingered long
 By your brave harps strung for eternity;
 But now runs my wild heart to meet the throng
 Who yet shall choir. O wondrous company,
 If graves may listen then, I then shall listening be!

[72]

"AND THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST"

[73]

OF the dumb, bayed god in men,
 Of the burdened mother eyes,
 Of the little, lifted hands,
 Of the passion and the dream
 Sighing up from trodden lands,
 Fearless, he is born again;
 Bold inquisitor of skies,
 Treading earth unmastered, free,
 And the way grows wide for him
 Walking with the day to be.
 Dead the grasp of custom then,
 Silent grows her voice and pen;
 Part as air the birth-wrong bands,
 Break as thread the steel-drawn
 strands,
 Graves no longer over-awe,
 Dust is dust and men are men;
 A living tongue again gives living
 law.
 Trophies ours by gold and gun,
 Little treasures, houses,—nay,
 Guerdons of our dearest fight,
 Now are fuel for his sun,
 And the dreams that lit the night
 Burn as candles in the day.
 Yet we made thee, Man of Right,
 As our being plead to rise;

[74]

Of our straining arm thy might;
Even as we prayed for sight,
Lo, afar thou hadst thy prophet
eyes.

Ay, thy gleaming spear is ours;
Ours thy fearless, golden bow;
And our shining arrows go
From thy bright untaken towers.
Thou art what we will to be,
Sceptre, star, and wingèd cloud;
We are blood and brawn of thee,
Glowing up through sod and stone,
Burning through thy rended
shroud,
Moving with thee, chainless, on,
Till the world, a quickened whole,
Truth-delivered, naked, free,
Once again hath found its
deathless soul.

[75]

MAGDALEN TO HER POET

[76]

TAKE back thy song; or let me hear what
thou

 Heardst anciently from me,
 The woman; now
This wassail drift on boughless shores;
 Once lyre-veined leading thee
 To singing doors
 Out of the coiling dark;
 Teaching thee hark
Earth's virgin candours, blossomed
 wonderings,
And sanctities inaudible till strings
 Of lyric gentleness
 Wooed Heaven to confess
 Her world, and I was near,
 The earliest listener,
Who of my bosom then made Arcady,
And drew thy forest feet to Castaly.
Take back thy pity. Is it not from man
 Who made that world his own?

[77]

 As barbican
Sends out its darts, and after flings
 A dole of myrrh where groan
 Is loudest, sings
 Thy grace to me, me thus
 Unbeauteous
By thee. Uneased thy covenanted bit
From Levite ark till now. Thy judges sit,
 Gods ruminant, to keep
 Earth pure for dulcet sleep
 Of babe and mother. Ay,
 Drones yet the lulling lie,
Whilst I, Disease uncinctured, darkly mate
With guard and sentry of thy hierarchate.
Thine ages, are they fair? Shall they yet
 draw
 Child-homage from our eyes?
 The woman awe
As her own babe? Far stretch the avid
 spans
 Of fame-drunk emperies,
 And all are man's;
 But from what tower of praise
 Does Justice gaze?
Art is thy boast? "See how we garland her,
The goddess of our hands?" Yea, yea, but
 where
 Is Truth, save by whose breath
 Art is a laurelled death?

[78]

"Our churches these, and this
 Our Holy Writ; there wis
 Our altars high, and sanctuarised sod!"
 But what, care-taking soul, hast done with
 God?
 The bairning time I knew, the whispering
 breast,
 But in thy world no place
 Was for my nest,
 Fragrant for perilous brooding pause.
 Thou went'st thy pace;
 My gathered straws
 And grasses cast to dust
 To make thy lust
 A wayside couch. Deep from the nation's
 root,
 The bower-tree where homes are nesting
 fruit,
 Thy blight creeps up unseen
 On bitten way to the green,
 Till no hope-banneret
 Makes Spring in windy fret
 Of flagellant boughs that whip my fingers
 bare,
 Too chill at last to build, to bleed, to care.
 Must surge so late with Nature's spawning
 ruse?
 Her stintless passioning
 Lest she should lose
 The younglet of her dearest pang?
 To thee, her tenderling,
 She gave lust-fang
 To run the jungle's harm;
 Now strives thee to disarm,
 And fend Life from that weapon lent thy
 wear
 Till thou, forsaking dust, mightst capture
 her.
 What need now of the blood
 Whose wasteful plenitude
 Swept thee through hostile slime
 To shores of light and time,
 Man-minim safe mid frost and poison dews
 Where naught could live that had not life
 to lose?
 Yet dost thou foster it as thy veined sun;
 Thy Heaven and Holy Rood
 Build toppling on
 Its strifehell; root there thy art,
 Thy dreams of tenderest bud;
 Gaze on the heart
 Of its fetidity,
 This wreck of me,
 And sing. O God, what death, in eyes so
 bound,
 They see Life's beauty in her draining
 wound!
 Lay thou the blind thing down
 With saurian tusk and bone,
 With dust of sworded maw
 And peril's fossil claw,
 Lest sexton Earth even Man inter, nor
 trover
 Of after-law untomb for Love her Lover!
 Her lover yet uncarnate; of thy race
 To be; long-dreamèd mate
 Of her embrace;
 Whose godling fruit, too prized, too dear
 For bandit breath, shall wait
 The Garnerer.
 Not then mute, anguished wives,
 Dumb in law's gyves,
 Shall shrink to mother a soul-famined
 brood,—
 Unbudding sentiencies of flowerhood,

[79]

[80]

[81]

Shut miracles no wand
 May touch, that from the hand
 Of Toil, the reaver, fall
 To dust, their grudgèd pall,
 Leaving imperial web to those who wear
 That woof of blood and tears as gossamer.
 Not then! Where now the wailing way
 o'erteems,
 And baffled starvelings bar
 The way of dreams;
 Pouring to Want, grey-veined Disease,
 To Greed, and lurking War,—
 Brute goblinries
 With horde-lip sateless on
 God-food dust-thrown,—
 Lover and Love shall pass, each babe of
 theirs,
 Darling of Life, born for the higher wars
 Where knights of spirit sway,
 Summoned to holiest fray
 By heralds never bare
 To clodded vision. There,
 Shriven and sure, the sun-dipped lance
 shall leap
 Till Dream uncorselet clay and put off
 sleep.
 For me one rift! Through this sepulchral
 blight
 A breath runs living, new;
 Unburdening light
 As when the flame-borne prophet on
 The Syrian ploughman threw
 A people's dawn.
 The world is Heaven worth,
 The cradle earth
 Casts orphanhood, a Bethlehem God-
 swung
 From crimson grapple with his lyric young.
 Here triumph I, so low,
 Knowing that Lust shall go,
 With whited, anarch train,—
 Shall pass, this curbless, vain
 Usurping deity that would compel
 The Mary-longing Love to yet mould
 Jezebel.
 Drag me with life that keeps Death
 shadow-near
 Till I, unfrighted, wake
 His charnel fear
 In every face that warifful
 Meets mine; this bud-mouth make
 Unkissable
 With kisses; and up-lap
 My soul's youth sap
 Till 't withers to a clutch about the gold
 You think pays all; yet from this reedy
 mould,
 This swamped, unfructant sedge,
 Gentility's marsh edge,
 I, on free wing, shall take
 My swan-course o'er the brake,
 Leaving the chanson of thy sin to thee
 Who hast not seen, not touched the
 unstainable me.
 Yet art thou dear, O singer! When we rest
 Past all Life's hostel doors,
 On her home crest;
 And 'neath our feet the dark vat night
 From pain's crushed star-grapes pours
 The climbing light;
 There thou, beside me then,
 With moteless ken,
 Remembering these, thy pity and thy song,
 Dropped at the cross where thou didst nail
 me long,

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[84]

Shalt sereless 'scape the aim
Of hot, lance-darting shame,
For over thee shall fall
The dawn-tressed coronal
Of Love I then shall be, wrapping thee in
The pity at whose touch dies every sin.

FRIENDS

[85]

THERE'S one comes often as the sun
And fills my room with morning; comes with step
Light as a youth's that joy has hurried home.
If he should greet my cheek, so might a wind
Blow roses till they touch, silk leaf to leaf,
And on their beauty leave no deeper dye;
But with that touch an old world is untombed,
Gay, festal-gowned; and two with nuptial eyes
Walk arm-locked there, flinging the curls of
Greece

From proud, smooth brows. As trapped between
two throbs,

Their laughter dies in silent passion's kiss;
And I from glow of ancient dust look up
To meet the untroubled eyes of my friend's bride,
Her pretty, depthless eyes that smile and smile
Possessingly, not grudging alien me
A footstool place about her sceptred love.

And I, too, from imperial largess, smile.

Another comes more rarely than new moon,
And always with a flower,—one; pours tea
Like an old picture softly made alive,
Sings me a ballad that once teased the ears
Of golden Bess, and reads the book I love.

If he must journey, first he comes to lay
Knight-service on my hand; no passion then
More swift than when a last cool petal falls
To faded summer grass; but as he goes

I see a girl deep in a forest lane,
A narrow lane dark-roofed with locking firs;
And there are purple foxgloves shoulder high,
And round the girl's knees Canterbury bells.
Upon the air is scent of wounded trees,
As though a storm had passed there, and great
owls

Ruffle a shade unloved of birds that sing.
But at the green lane's end, far down
A bit of heart-shaped sun tells where the road
Lies wide and open; on the sun the still
Dark shadow of a steed: and by the girl
One who shall ride,—unvisored now, and pale.
"And when I come," he says, to me who know
He'll come that way no more; then hear my door
Closed softly on a sob ten centuries old.

And there is one whom never sun or moon
Brings to my gate; but when amid a throng
That fills some worldly room I see him pass.
The light about me is of regions where
Cold peaks are blue against a colder sky,
And in the dusk-line where begins the Doubt
Men call the Known, we stand in wingless pause,
Unheavened weariness in untaught feet,
And in our hearts sad longing for the fire
Of stars from whence we came. "The earth," he
says,

And warms in his my hand amazed to lie
In strange, near comfort,—blossom of first pain.
Then low we dip into the clinging night
That is the Lethe of God-memories;
Stumble and sink in chains of time and sense
Tangle in treacheries of a weed-hung globe,
And tread the dun, dim verges of defeat

[86]

[87]

Till spirit chafes to vision, and we learn
What morning is, and where the way of love.
In that gold dawn we part, knowing at last
That earth can not divide us. With a smile
He goes, and Fate leads not but runs before
Like an indulgèd child. That smile again
I sometimes see across the world—a room.

[88]

TRYST

[89]

(AFTER READING FROM SHAKESPEARE)

NIGHT, thou art heavy, with no stars to chain
Thy darkness unto heaven, that thy feet
May dance along these cliffs in gay
retreat
Of the pursuing sea; heavy as pain
Where eyes see not the end, or tears that
stain
The joy of him who conquers by defeat;
Or this dark sea whose heart doth climb
and beat
The stones that make no sign, then falls
again.
Cry with the night and wrestle with the
wave,
Ye two-edged winds that cut this shore
and me;
I warm me still with thinking of a grave
That can not hold the dust's eternal part;
For here across the centuries and the sea,
A dead hand lies like flame upon my
heart.

IN THE STUDIO

[90]

BOWED in the firelight's softly climbing gleam,
I sit a shadow, in a shadow's place;
While through the great, grey window
vaguely stream
Twilight caresses on each pictured face
That one hour gone was cold in art's repose;
Now each still canvas answers
tremblingly,
Till eyes unveil and living spirit glows
Where no light was while the rude Day
went by.
And rudest Day, that passed so sternly bare,
Cold as the life that walks without
desire,
Unbeauteous as duty or despair,
Plucked by a hope that will not set her
free,
Turns back, while memory's soft, informing
fire
Falls on her face, and Beauty looks at
me.

LOVERS' LEAP

[91]

IN Greece I found the place, though earth
Has many such; and wandering there
alone,
One Autumn evening when the moon rose

late,
I heard this song, though none was there
to sing.

A ghostly rune, yet left the alarmed dark
Quivering with life, tear-warm and
murmuring:

No morrow is if hearts say no;
Life is gone when love doth go.
No tear to weep, no prayer to pray;
Endeth time with lovers' day.
This trailing night will pale and flee,
And dawn again creep o'er the sea;
Light's tender hands will earth attire,
Aloft will swim the golden fire,
And every bird begin his lay,
But I shall know there is no day.
And Spring shall come. With teary
cheek,

[92]

But heart of Bacchus, she will seek
With healing eyes each winter wound,
Till little minstrels of the ground,
The choral buds, in wonder wake
To croon the dewy songs they take
From brooks that haunt the
woodman's glade

And lose a dream in every shade.
And ere the Spring has vanished,
Summer will make her rosy bed
And new loves take with every wind
Till earth be laden with her kind
And foster-bosomed Autumn come
To nurse the darlings of her womb.
But naught of season, change, or sun,
Recks the heart whose love is done.
Oh, ne'er again will beauty wear
For my sad eyes a robe more fair,
And ne'er again will music make
A sweeter song for my poor sake.
No tear to weep, no prayer to pray!
Endeth time with lover's day.

[93]

No morrow is if hearts say no;
Life is gone when love doth go.
Death, O Death, why dost thou flee
From one whose wish is but for thee?
Here is thy pillow, on my breast.
No dove but would its spiced nest
Forego to couch in this sweet bed
That here I open for thy head.
Thou wilt not hear? Thou wilt not
come?

Then must I seek thee in thy home.
Once more lift up this stone-dead
heart,
And leap to find thee where thou art!

HAVENED

[94]

COME, Flower of Life, and lay thy beauty's rose
Upon the breast that storm and thee divide;
And like true knights whose queen no laggard
knows,
Forth gently shall my love-bid fancies ride
To serve thy heart, and bring thy wishes in;
And shuttling rhyme a web shall make thee then
Whilst thou dost gaze, nor thy poor weaver
chide.
Sweet wonder lay upon my opening eyes
That showed me in a gracious court of trees
Whose leaves were clouds that caught and lost
sunrise,
And fell in mist upon a twirling breeze

That traced the ground and to a river grew,
Casting its tender spray in tinted dew
As curved its silver way with laughing ease.
I followed, forest deep, this wooing guide
Through fragrant gloom of cliff and bower
o'ergrown,
Free as a fawn the stream 'twas born beside,
Nor held my step with fear at sounds
unknown,—

[95]

High murmurings among the cloudy leaves,
As when some dull and dreamy throng receives
Strange lyric stir from power not its own.
And more and more the murmurs grew like
song,

Save that no song could drop such honey-
rain;
The lyre-god's self would do it unsweet wrong,
Were he that golden sound to breathe again;
And as my guide into a cave did pass,
That closèd seemed, and yet unclosèd was,
That airy cadence stooped and bore me in.
Then wandered life from out my memory,
Gone from desire, as ghost at last must go;
Nor shadow fell, where shadow could not be,
From those dark lures that make our worldly
woe.

[96]

O Sweet, forgive that my inconstant tongue
Should dim the glories that I moved among
With name of gloom that wrongs the world
we know.

The dome was fair as Heaven, or Heaven, in
sooth,

It might have been, but that there shone,
The centre 'neath, a fountain-featured truth
That might no rival of its radiance own.
Ah, this was Heaven's heart, if Heaven be,
And the bright dome but its gold boundary;
Yet gleamèd here no crown or mounted
throne.

The music budded till it dropped soft showers;
All things to other changed, though here no
mage;

Clouds turned to light, and light to sweeter
powers,
And chance and change to all was privilege;
The air was full of phantom-stirring things,
And I not breathed but that I touched new
wings,

And sent some dream on airy pilgrimage.
Ere my delight had held me pausing long
Beneath a cloud that rained me lilies cool,

A stir awoke amid a ferny throng
That leaned their trembling grace above a
pool,

[97]

And following the flutter of a song
To feathery rest where blossoms minute-young
Oped arms of vermeil soft, and dawning
gule,

Mine eye saw Love. White on a verge's mount,
That swelled to show its burden dear, she
lay;

A sighing mist that partly filled the fount,
And o'er the brink sought tenderly to stray,
For her fair body pillowed soft the ground,
Growing glad upward arms to clasp her round
And of each grace take new and sweet
account.

In nymphlike mould her gentle figure ran,
Though nymph so bright did never sport in
dell;

Her eyes an angel's were, if angels' can
Be thousand times more fair than dream can
tell;

Unfalling tears they held, yet so could please
They might have hermits made forget their

knees

And kings find out they had them, such their
spell.

Above her forehead hovered close a star,
Like spirit guard, whose ever-changing ray
Was fed with fires of sacrifice that are
Love's life,—the offerings earth lovers lay
Upon her shrine, and as they pale or glow
She smiles or droops as this true star doth show,
—

Or dim or bright as serve we or betray.
Beside her was an instrument of tune,
Of changeful beauty as her couch of cloud,
And as I looked she woke it to strange rune,
As in low murmur moved her thoughts aloud,
—

For all Love's thoughts are music,—but to make
That ditty o'er, what heart would undertake,
And with a mortal chant her utterance
shroud?

Anear her stood a youth bare of all guise
Save when a light enwrapped him in its
flame;

He bore the ages in his listening eyes,
And prophecy there waited for a name;
Joy loved him best, and gave eternity,
And his lithe, lustrous being seemed to say
"I am the aspiration of all dream."

Upward he gazed as though he would read o'er
The scroll of rising winds, the burst of suns,
And lists—ah, might it be earth's shore
Freed of her epic hates and tunèd groans!
War's passion beat, and woe's sad chorus past,
And all her song pure-winnowed, clear at last,
Pouring the music of her happy moons!
Then moved his lips, but yet unborn is he
Who may with their resound make sweet his
own;

He who shall come as morning walks the sea,
Mate of the Wind when all her harps are
one;

So much we know by frail yet quenchless light
That creeps through shadows of our lute-poor
night,—
The brave rose-glimmers of his singing
dawn.

Lo, every dream new-homing from far ways
On silent wing or spirit wave of air,
Came circling o'er his head in hovering maze,
Seen not, nor heard, albeit I knew them
there;

But as each passed before his lifted face,
They gleamed to sight, and grace so mounted
grace
My eyes seemed there anointed, though
afar.

Then radiant couriers shook the fountain Heart
And turned me thither. Sweet and bold
surprise

Took all my being with such tremorous start
I marvelled how aught else had held my
eyes.

I could not tell what the bright wonder was
Whose garner-breast held every beauteous
cause

Makes earth remember, and forget, the
skies.

There shone the star that lit man's first desire,
And there his hope that latest fluttered bare;
One look translating made me as a lyre
Swept with a joy the heart of Truth might
share,—

Truth that is silent, wanting joy to sing,—
But ere I breathèd had for wondering,
A face out-flashed wreathed with sun-

[98]

[99]

[100]

flinging hair.
Youth was the angel of that countenance,
Where graces sprang in ever fairer throng;
Yet she was old ere any star's birth-dance,
If word of earthly time, or old or young,
Means aught of eyes whose brooding splendour
swept
The silences when Uncreation slept
And gave the dream that woke the suns in
song.
Each age that left a glory left it writ
Upon her brow, as with a pen of light
Whose track was pearls, and as each whiter lit
The story there, the court grew softlier
bright;
Each dullsome thing—Oh, no thing there was
dull!
Flushed o'er itself with glow more beautiful,
As might fair, sleeping gods wake to delight.
Then all the wonder that made vague her form,
Oped on a figure splendid so to view;
Mine eyes an instant swooned; and as from
storm
Of warring rainbows it endeared grew
To shape of her who 'gan descending slow,
Fair Love looked up, and Poesy knelt low:
'Twas Beauty's self, and mother of the two.
Whilst yet I gazed all vanished were the three;
And as a sighing shore no more may hold
The mermaid wave that would go out to sea,
So slipped the vision from my fancy bold.
O Flower of Life, no rest for me but this,
To dream awhile, and then awake to press
Upon my heart thy curls' beloved gold!

[101]

MID-MAY

[102]

HAND clamped to desk,
And eyes on task undone,
I see a meadow pool,
With shaken willows
silvering.
O, gods that trouble me,
Wherefore, wherefore?—
Pan is at the door.
An arabesque
Of sifted sun
And forest star-grass, cool
With shadows tunnelling:
Witch-work that tauntingly
Webs my bare floor:
Ah, Pan is at the door.
I'm civilized,
And in my veins
The mountain brook is still
As water in a jar;
But oh, the heart hill-born,
It paineth sore,
For Pan is at the door.
Ye sacrificed
Of earth, what rains
Have wept their will
And drowned your rebel
star,
That ye should sit forlorn,
Telling Greed's score,
When Pan is at the door?

[103]

[104]

THE LOSS

WHEN thou shalt search thy glass nor find
the flower
That there so long smiled gay,
unwithering,
And from sad vantage of a forlorn hour
That fore nor aft unmasks one hint of
Spring,
Thou mourn'st the barrenness of beauty
spent
With no reservèd treasure for the day
When all that youth and sunny fortune lent
No more should light adoring eyes to
thee,
And fear'st thyself a-cold, by the last storm
Beat to thine inn, a still, uncarping
guest,
Thy once bright eye a pilot to the worm
Making his dungeon way to his new
feast,
Drop not a tear then for thy beauty fled,
But for the wounds it healed not bow
thy head.

CALLED

[105]

I RISE, I pass;
The feast is on, bright is the board,
Undrained the comrade glass;
Love's sheltering eyes are deep and
nigh;
Fame waits with shining word;
But sweeter, goldening the sphere,
A voice falls from another sky;
The wasting world I do not hear,
And no god laughs as I pass by,
A wanderer.
Unpausing lowers
The gleam of her from other airs,
And Being's guarded doors
Are open wide for journey free
Where wait my chosen stars;
And o'er me, O what lustres break
Of that desire, Reality,
That burns a thousand suns to make
One nightingale to sing for me,
A soul awake!
Far, far I sped
Down moonless lanes from doubt to
doubt;
With hasting, hungry tread
Up slopes of frost unpitying
Where the last star went out;
There fell I in unlifting dark,
And lying while an æon's wing
Dragged o'er me bare, wind-stript
and stark,
As leafless planets dream of Spring,
Dreamed she would hark.
Then by me bound,
Came one who wore my lost career
With star on star pinned round,
And stood him by my bones to stare.
With pity's ancient sneer
He mocked my bleachen nudity;
Then did she turn, then did she care,
And pausing where I might not see
She let the winds blow back her hair
And cover me.

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[107]

SONG OF TO-MORROW

[108]

SOUND, O Harp of Being, set
Deathless in the winds of time!
All thine ancient part forget,
Wailing lust, and strife, and
crime!
Clouds of hate are now sweet rain:
Thou shalt never moan again.
Harp of Being, O forget
Hesper dead that played on
thee,
All her golden fingers wet
With the blood of misery!
Morning sweeps along thy strings;
Thou art done with yester things.
Bright thou art with drops that fell
Watering earth's long-buried
Spring;
Thou hast quivered safe through
Hell
Where Love found immortal
wing;
Sound, while Life unfrenzied calls
Joy to hallowed Bacchanals!
Harp of Dawn, forget, forget!
Sound thee of the hours now
come
When the vine and violet
Bind to earth the fallen drum.
Palsied as a dying star
Fails the shaken torch of war!
From each pennoned pinnacle
Of the cities of the free,
Clasped in time invisible,
Flows the wonder flown to
thee;
Thou so swift to throb and start
With the singing earth's new
heart!
By the light that sets mind free,
By the night that once it wore,
By the soul man is to be,
By the beast he is no more;
By thy past, unmeasured pain,
Thou shalt never moan again.

[109]

LITTLE DAUGHTERS

[110]

I

WHAT is sweeter, sweet, than you?
Not the fairy dew
Of these bee-sipped pastures where
Time, unsandalled, unaware,
Rests him ere he tire.
Shall I his forgotten hour
Strike for thee?
Fatefully,
Lift the wand that wakes
Woman in the flower?
Then o'er dream's horizon breaks
Rose of other fire;
From a world more sweet
Rival rise the fragrant floods;
Breath that makes
Thy morning meadows dun,

Mutes their dew-bells, misty hoods
 Every leaf that shone;
 Sets thy daisy-fondled feet [111]
 Twinkling to be gone;
 Down the ways and up the ways,
 Hope-fleet, trampling care
 As curling buds,
 Iris goal joy-near;
 Then a-creep on praying knees,
 Frail shoulders bent to bear
 Heaven's falling sphere.
 Ah, not yet, heart's wonder!
 A little hour we'll stay,
 And thou wilt give me grace of dawn
 For travelled, dusk array.
 This gown of mottled years,
 By noon and gnome-light spun,
 Enchant me to surrender
 To Ariel ministers;
 Here poised with thee before
 Thy summer world's wide door,
 And glory that is hers;
 This soft, unclamorous sky
 That makes a lotus ship of every eye
 Upventuring; song's sail that pilotless [112]
 Drifts down, a wing's caress
 On billowed field and climbing shore
 Whose veiny tidelets beat and cling,
 Bloom-labouring,
 Invincibly sweet and far,
 Up looming cone and scaur,
 And clambering spill
 To lap of ledge and aproned hill
 The heaped and whispering greenery
 Of beauty's burden that unburdens me!
 And thou, the fairest thing
 In this fair shaman-ring,
 Shall my sore magic loose thee
 wandering?
 Has Life such faltering need,
 Mid outlands where she runs,
 She cannot reach the suns
 Save thou dost bleed?
 Shall she go fleet,
 With heart of stouter cheer,
 Because thou givest her
 Thy little, bruised feet?
 Thou'dst earn thy Heaven? Dear, I know [113]
 Heaven must not ban thee shining so!
 Why shouldst thou laden bow,
 And climb, and slip, and toil,
 And blanch thy cheek to keep thy soul as
 white,
 Inviolate as now?
 O, we have dreams we shall not put away
 Till earth be fair as they;
 When all this work-night coil
 Shall be unwound by wizard fingers bright
 That send our own to play;
 And wisdom, wiser than we know, shall
 find
 The birth trail to the mind;
 Nor spirit waver, panting here and yon
 Seeking sun-vantage, for all heights are
 won.
 Shall not we then be as the flowers,
 Drinking dew dowers
 As now thou dost?
 Glad petals that unclose
 About Life's heart,—at last the perfect
 Rose?
 Sweet, I will trust
 Love and the morn;
 Fold here the wakeful wand,
 Leave thee in dewy bond [114]

Of blossomy sleep.
Who knows but thou hast won the steep
By silent, angel way,
Hidden and heavenly,
That leaves no trace of thorn?
Star-flower, keep thy sky;
If man must climb, let him go up to thee;
A daisy may be nearer God than he—
Than I.

II

What crime was hers, that she lies hushed,
Dead with the price, while you and I,
With lifted head, walk sinless by?
Pause then,—but spare
That easy tear; the tale I'll bare.
Mid stones that pushed
Her eager life back, grudged her room
For root without one bloom,
There strangely blushed
Some little dreams,—not gloriously fine
As yours and mine,
But vague, and veiled, and few;
She hardly knew their names, but felt the
 stir
That filled her heart with whispers as they
 grew,
And knew that life lay in them, life for her.
When Hunger came she turned her breast
And let him feed. Cold followed, gripped
Her veins and sipped
The thin blood thinner; both she pressed
As close as lovers, lest
A darker fiend might creep within
Her empty arms; lest she might buy,
With one swift hour of sin,
A poisoned ease from tooth of need,—
A little food, a little fire, and die;
And she had dreams to shelter, little
 dreams to feed.
Oh, unresisting dumb!
In wide earth's harvest-gold
She asked no share,
If in the dust a crumb
Might be for her;
If she might round her aching body fold
One hour's undriven sleep,—
But one hour more,
Safe from the Want that pried
Her thin and shaken door,—
That hour the shivering dawn denied
With scream that cut life through,
And made her wretched pillow seem a rose
Her clinging cheek would keep
In soft, ungoaded death! And ah, suppose
A few more pence the day
Were richly hers, to make youth gay
With ribbon or a flower ere it flew!
(So soon toil's wrinkles come!)
Then would she make her dreams a fairer
 home;
Then would her heart be stronger where
 they grew;
Then would she walk more bravely
 knowing them;
Then would her eyes be brighter showing
 them.
Yet did they whisper, yet they stirred
Uptremblingly, till half their breath
Was music, half was song;
Told of free hours and a wild heath
Where wind and sun ran dappling; of a

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[117]

bird
 Bough-throned, whose trill
 Turned all the forest leaves to wings,—
 His singing young;
 Of a moon-goldened hill
 Where blossoms danced; of sweeter, holier
 things;
 A sea-beach grey,
 Where waves were drownèd twilight, and
 the day
 Hung in a pause that softly, suddenwise,
 Became a soul. She too would have a soul,
 And hours with God and friends; no more
 give all,
 Now there were dreams, to the machine.
 Then rose with young, star-driven eyes
 To face the lords of gain,
 And here she lies.
 Lift up the cotton, thinned with wear,
 That hides the poor, starved shoulder;
 bare
 The bruise shows, like a printed paw.
 Haste, draw the dumb, frayed sheet again,
 And think you cover so the stain
 Upon our hearts; for—have the truth!—
 'Twas we who put the club of law
 Into bought hands to strike her battling
 youth.
 She kept her virtue's gold,
 Fought hunger, fiend, and cold
 Unvanquished; when the might of Hell
 Rose in law's name and ours, she broken
 fell.
 O friend, when next you smooth the golden
 head
 Like nestled morning 'gainst your knee,
 Look farther,—see
 Fair girlhood dead.
 These lips, unvisited by love, were sweet
 As are thy fondling's; this want-hollowed
 cheek
 A little ease had made
 Playground of dimples, joy's rose-seat;
 And could these eyes ope they would
 speak
 Of one who bought her dreams of Death
 and paid.
 If blind thou shrinkest yet
 To meet Truth bare,
 Then as thou'st dealt with this pale maid
 Life shall thine own besiege.
 Injustice holds
 No sanctuary folds;
 To fence out care
 We must the planet hedge;
 Justice is God, and waits
 Behind our blood-built tower-gates;
 And as indifference
 Was once our soul's pretence,
 Who then shall heed us, who shall
 understand,
 When our crushed hearts lie in the
 vengeant hand?
 But is she dead? Faint on my ears
 A far-off singing falls,
 Sweet from time's sleep
 Amid the stainless years
 Yet unawake to men.
 Nearer it calls,
 Like music through a rain,
 And o'er the distant ridges sweep
 Soft garments and young feet. O maidens,
 ye
 Are like a cloud in beauty,—nay, more
 swift!

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[119]

If that the milky stream of stars could lift
 Its clustered glory, hasten free,
 And while we marvelled pass from east to
 west,
 Then ye would mirrored be!
 The hills seem lit with brides,
 And she whose death-cold breast
 Was shrouded here, is't she who guides
 This fearless company
 Sure of earth's welcome as a maiden
 Spring?
 And in their eyes the dreams she fought
 for,
 In their hands the flowers she sought for,
 On their lips the songs that here she did
 not sing!
 Not dead! While Destiny hath need
 Of living dream and deed,
 Ay, she shall deathless be!
 While aught availeth, and God is,
 For in her hope lay His!
 O, ye who mar Love's face
 Ere Love be born, leave not this place,
 Pass not this white form by,
 Till from assaulted skies ye hear the cry,
 "She is not dead till ye have murdered
 Me!"

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Transcriber's Note: Minor typographical errors have been corrected without note. Original spellings have been retained.

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