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Title: Ships in Harbour

Author: David Morton

Release date: February 9, 2009 [eBook #28043]

Language: English

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Transcriber's note

Minor punctuation errors have been corrected without notice. One printer's error was changed, and it is indicated with a mouse-hover and listed at the [end](#). All other inconsistencies are as in the original.

SHIPS IN HARBOUR

BY

DAVID MORTON

**G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1921**

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To
T. B. M.
AND
M. W. M.
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

For the privilege of reprinting some of the poems included in this book, the author's thanks are due to *The Bookman*, *The Century*, *The New York Evening Post*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, *The Designer*, *The Nation*, *The New York Sun*, *Collier's Weekly*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Bellman*, *Contemporary Verse*, *Everybody's Magazine*, *The Smart Set*, *Ainslee's*, *The Sonnet*, *McCall's Magazine*, *The Touchstone Magazine*, *The Forum*, and *The Lyric*.

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SHIPS IN HARBOUR

[1]

[2]

WOODEN SHIPS

[3]

They are remembering forests where they grew,—
The midnight quiet, and the giant dance;
And all the murmuring summers that they knew
Are haunting still their altered circumstance.
Leaves they have lost, and robins in the nest,
Tug of the goodly earth denied to ships,
These, and the rooted certainties, and rest,—
To gain a watery girdle at the hips.

Only the wind that follows ever aft,
They greet not as a stranger on their ways;
But this old friend, with whom they drank and laughed,
Sits in the stern and talks of other days
When they had held high bacchanalias still,
Or dreamed among the stars on some tall hill.

OCTOBER DAY-MOON

[4]

Loosed from her secret moorings,
The thin and silver moon,
Floats wide above these oceans
Of yellow afternoon,—
Who slipped her fragile cables,
And blew to sea too soon.

She bears no bales—but wonder,
Not anything of note:
How should she, being merely
A slender petal-boat?...
But rated in the shipping:
The dearest tramp afloat.

A GARDEN WALL

[5]

The Roman wall was not more grave than this,
That has no league at all with great affairs,
That knows no ruder hands than clematis,
No louder blasts than blowing April airs.
Yet, with a grey solemnity it broods,
Above the walk where simple folk go past,
And in its crannies keeps their transient moods,
Holding their careless words unto the last.

The rains of summer, and the creeping vine
That season after season clings in trust,
And shivered poppies red as Roman wine,—
These things at last will haunt its crumbled dust—
Not dreams of empires shattered where they lie,
But children's laughter, birds, and bits of sky.

NAPOLEON IN HADES

[6]

They stirred uneasily, drew close their capes,
And whispered each to each in awed surprise,
Seeing this figure brood along the shapes,
World tragedies thick-crowding through his eyes.
On either side the ghostly groups drew back
In huddled knots, yielding him way and room,
Their foolish mouths agape and fallen slack,
Their bloodless fingers pointing through the gloom.

Still lonely and magnificent in guilt,
Splendid in scorn, rapt in a cloudy dream,

He paused at last upon the Stygian silt,
And raised calm eyes above the angry stream....
Hand in his breast, he stood till Charon came,
While Hades hummed with gossip of his name.

SYMBOLS

[7]

Beautiful words, like butterflies, blow by,
With what swift colours on their fragile wings!—
Some that are less articulate than a sigh,
Some that were names of ancient, lovely things.
What delicate careerings of escape,
When they would pass beyond the baffled reach,
To leave a haunting shadow and a shape,—
Eluding still the careful traps of speech.

And I who watch and listen, lie in wait,
Seeing the cloudy cavalcades blow past,—
Happy if some bright vagrant, soon or late,
May venture near the snares of sound, at last—
Most fortunate captor if, from time to time,
One may be taken, trembling, in a rhyme.

EXILED

[8]

Sensing these sweet renewals through the earth,
Where seed and soil most happily conspire
To furnish forth gay rituals of mirth,
Of shaken leaves and pointed blooms of fire,—
I wonder then that thoughtful man, alone,
Walks darkly and all puzzled with a doubt,
Bewildered, and in truth, half-fearful grown
Of wild, wild earth and April's joyous rout.

When we are dust again with soil and seed,
With happy earth through many a happy Spring,
We yet may learn that joy was all our need,—
That man's long thought is but a broken wing,
Of less account, as things may come to pass,
Than Spring's first robin breasting through the grass.

MARY SETS THE TABLE

[9]

She brings such gay and shining things to pass,
With delicate, deft fingers that are learned
In ways of silverware and cup and glass,
Arrayed in ordered patterns, trimly turned;—
And never guesses how this subtle ease
Is older than the oldest tale we tell,
This gift that guides her through such tricks as these,—
And my delight in watching her, as well.

She thinks not how this art with spoon and plate,
Is one with ancient women baking bread:
An epic heritage come down of late
To slender hands, and dear, delightful head,—
How Trojan housewives vie in serving me,
Where Mary sets the table things for tea.

AUTUMN TEA TIME

[10]

The late light falls across the floor,
Turned amber from a yellow tree,—

And there are yellow cups for four,
And lemon for the tea.

The maples, with a million flames,
Have lit the golden afternoon,
An ambient radiance that shames
The ineffective moon....

Till dull and smoky greys return,
Quenching the street with chills and damp—
Leaving these asters where they burn,
Mellow like evening lamps.

BATTLEFIELDS

[11]

Unto these fields of torn and rutted earth,
These hills that lift their many a naked scar,
There yet shall come the indomitable mirth
Of Springs that have remembered where they are.
The slow processions of sweet sun and rain
Will crown the changing seasons as they pass,
With healing and green fruit and swollen grain,
And banners of the gay and dauntless grass.

Here little paths will find their way again,
And here the patient cattle come to stand,
Until, grown half-incredulous, these men
Looking from doorways on the evening land,
Can scarcely think—so deep the quiet lies—
How all of this was ever otherwise.

ONE DAY IN AUTUMN

[12]

With all our going through this golden weather,
Where leaves have littered every forest way,
If there be lovers, they should be together:
For this is golden ... but the end is grey.
Beyond this shimmer where the bright leaves fall,
Behind this haze of silver shot with gold,
There is a greyness waiting for it all,—
A little longer ... and the world is old.

And never loneliness grew more and more,
As this that haunts these late October days,
With smoky twilights gathering at the door,
With grey mist clouding on familiar ways ...
And well for him who has another near,
When fires are lighted for the dying year.

AN OLD HOUSE AND GARDEN

[13]

After wet twilights, when the rain is done,
I think they walk these ways that knew their feet,
And tread these sunken pavements, one by one,
Keen for old Summers that were wild and sweet;
Where rainy lilacs blow against the dark,
And grasses bend beneath the weight they bear,
The night grows troubled, and we still may mark
Their ghostly heart-break on the tender air.

Be still! We cannot know what trysts they keep,
What eager hands reach vainly for a door,
Remembered since they folded them in sleep,—
Frail hands that lift like lilacs, evermore,
And lean along the darkness, pale and still,
To touch a window or a crumbling sill.

IMMORTALIS

[14]

All loved and lovely women, dear to rhyme:
Thais, Cassandra, Helen and their fames,
Burn like tall candles through forgotten time,
Lighting the Past's dim arras with their names.
Around their faces wars the eager dark,
Wherein all other lights are sunken now;
Yet, casting back, the seeker still may mark
A flame of hair, a bright, immortal brow.

Surely, where they have passed, one after one,
Wearing their radiance to the darkened room,—
Surely, new-comers to Oblivion
May still descry, in that all-quenching gloom,
Rare faces, lovely, lifted and alight,
Like tapers burning through the windy night.

TOURING

[15]

God of Summer—I have seen
World on world of summer green—
Summer earth and summer sky,
Fields of summer turning by;
Hills beyond us fall away,
Tumbled slopes in disarray,
Fold and melt into a plain:
Fire and gold of summer grain.

Orchards curving on a hill,
Heavy-fruited, green and still,
Heave a shoulder to the sky,
Bend and bow and hurry by;
Fields of clover burn and pass,
Cattle knee-deep in the grass
Lift a lazy head and look
Pictures in a picture-book...
Corn in swift, revolving rows,
Dripping sunlight where it goes,
Wheels and glitters and returns:
Bladed beauty's lifted urns;
Woods all shadowed, cooling earth,
Murmuring of a quiet mirth,
Pour damp odours where they pass,
Breath of fern and earth and grass ...
Ramblers on a lichened wall,
Ramblers, ramblers pouring all
Colour that the world has known
Out upon an aging stone.—
Little towns of street and spire,
Dooryard roses, heart's desire,
Light a dream within the mind,
Light a dream ... and fall behind.

[16]

God of mercies—when I slept,
World on world of summer kept
Turning, turning softly by,—
Summer earth and summer sky:
Fields of summer that will be
Summer always unto me—
Never lost, not left behind:
Always summer for my mind.

SUMMER

[17]

From what lost centuries that were sweet before,
Comes this long wave of Summer, bursting white

In shivered apple-blossoms on the shore
That is our homeland for a day and night!
A wide, hushed spirit floats above the foam,
A sweetness that was ancient flower and face,
When wine-red poppies stained the walls of Rome,
And daisies starred those summer fields of Thrace.

Something survives and haunts the leafy shade,
Some fragrance that was petals, once, and lips,
And whispered, brief avowals that they made,—
Borne hither, now, in vague, invisible ships,
Whose weightless cargoes, poured upon the air,
Are flowers forgot, and faces that were fair.

OLD SHIPS

[18]

There is a memory stays upon old ships,
A weightless cargo in the musty hold,—
Of bright lagoons and prow-caressing lips,
Of stormy midnights,—and a tale untold.
They have remembered islands in the dawn,
And windy capes that tried their slender spars,
The tortuous channels where their keels have gone,
And calm, blue nights of stillness and the stars.

Ah, never think that ships forget a shore,
Or bitter seas, or winds that made them wise;
There is a dream upon them, evermore;—
And there be some who say that sunk ships rise
To seek familiar harbours in the night,
Blowing in mists, their spectral sails like light.

THE TOWN

[19]

(For Morristown, N. J.)

I

Men loved not Athens in her maiden days
More tenderly than these their tree-lined Town
Which, lacking Muses for a wider praise,
Lives in their hearts in still and sweet renown.
The market square, the wagons in the dawn,
The streets like music when their names are said,
The Sunday spire, the green, untrammelled lawn,—
These be the things on which their hearts are fed.

And one long street climbs slowly to a hill
That lifts her crosses for the Town to see
How sleep those quiet neighbours, townsmen still,
How there is peace for such as weary be ...
And as they come, each like a sleepy guest,
She takes them, one by one, and gives them rest.

II

[20]

SUNDAY MORNING

A thoughtful quiet lies upon the street,
There is a hushed suspension on the air,
And the slow bells summon unhurried feet
To dim reclosures kept for praise and prayer.
Drawn blinds have shut the merchant's wares away,
Where two by two the goodly folk go by,
Out of their toilsome days into this day
Of special airs beneath a special sky.

A little while, and all at last are gone;

The streets are stilled of passers up and down;
Only the pealing bells toll on and on,—
Till these, too, cease, and all the silent Town
In street, and roof, and spire, and grassy sod,
Lies steeped in sunlight, smiling back at God.

III

IN APRIL

The way of Spring with little steeped towns
Is such a shy, transforming sorcery
Of special lights and swift, incredible crowns,
That grave men wonder how such things may be.
No friendly spire, no daily-trodden way
But somehow alters in the April air,
Grown dearer still, on some enchanted day,
For shining garments they have come to wear.

[21]

The way the spring comes to our Town is such
That something quickens in the hearts of men,
Turning them lovers at its subtle touch,
Till they must lift their heads again—again—
As lovers do, with frank, adoring eyes,
Where the long street of lifted steeples lies.

IV

WATCHERS

I think those townsmen, sleeping on the hill,
Are never careless how the Town may fare,
But jealous of her quiet beauty still,
Her ways and worth are things for which they care:
For shuttered house, and gateways and the grass,
And how the streets, tree-bordered all and cool,
Are still a pleasant way for folks to pass:
Men at their work and children home from school.
I cannot doubt that they are pleased to see
Their planted elms grown dearer year by year:
Their living witness unto such as we ...
And they are less regretful when they hear
Some name we speak, some tale we tell again,
Of days when they were warm and living men.

[22]

V

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

These morning streets, the lawns of windy grass,
And spires that wear the sunlight like a crown,
The square where busy, happy people pass:
The living soul that lights the little Town,—
These have been shining beauty for my mind,
And joy, and friendship, and a tale to tell,
And these have been a presence that is kind,
A quiet music and a healing well.

Men who were lovers in the olden time,
Who praised the beauty of bright hair and brow,
And left a little monument of rhyme,—
Wrought not more tenderly than I would, now,
To turn some changing syllables of praise
For her whose quiet beauty fills my days.

VI

THE TOWNSMAN

Here would I leave some subtle part of me,
A moving presence through the friendly Town,
Abiding still, and happy still to be
Where thoughtful men pass daily up and down;—

[23]

An essence stirring on the ways they fare,
Haunting the drifted sunlight where they go,
Till one might mark a Something on the air,
Most near and kind—though why, he would not know.

Happy, if it may chance, where two shall meet,
Pausing to pass the friendly, idle word,
In the hushed twilight of the evening street,
I might stand by, a secret, silent Third,—
Most happy listener, if I hear them tell
How, with the Town—and them—it still is well.

AFTER SUMMER RAIN

[24]

All day the rain has filled the apple-trees,
And stilled the orchard grasses of their mirth,
Turning these acres green and silvered seas
That drowned the summer musics of the earth.
Now that this clearer twilight takes the hill,
This thin, belated radiance, moving by,
Bird-calls return, and odours, rainy still,
And colours glinting through the earth and sky.

Here where I watch the robins from the lane,
That pirouette and preen among the leaves,
These swift, wet-winged arrivals in the rain
Have spilled a wisdom from their dripping eaves,—
And beauty still is more than daily bread,
For fevered minds, and hearts discomforted.

THE KINGS ARE PASSING DEATHWARD

[25]

The Kings are passing deathward in the dark
Of days that had been splendid where they went;
Their crowns are captive and their courts are stark
Of purples that are ruinous, now, and rent.
For all that they have seen disastrous things:
The shattered pomp, the split and shaken throne,
They cannot quite forget the way of Kings:
Gravely they pass, majestic and alone.

With thunder on their brows, their faces set
Toward the eternal night of restless shapes,
They walk in awful splendour, regal yet,
Wearing their crimes like rich and kingly capes....
Curse them or taunt, they will not hear or see;
The Kings are passing deathward: let them be.

RENEWAL

[26]

Strange that this body in its lifted state
Of independent will and power and lust,
Should still attest that kinship, dimmed of late,
Its ancient, honoured brotherhood with dust;—
So that when Spring is quickening in the clay,
Stirring dumb particles the way she fares,
This foolish flesh is no less moved than they,
To sweet, unreasoned happiness, like theirs.

Not seed and soil alone, but heart and mind
Are somehow swayed, till sober, earnest men,
In quick renewal with their dusty kind,
Grow foolish-fond, like lads at play again....
So April, stirring blindly through the earth,
Can move us to a blind, unthinking mirth.

RESPONDIT

[27]

Apple-tree, apple-tree, what is it worth:
Beauty and passion and red-lipped mirth,
Fashioned of fire and the blossoming earth,—
Gone in a transient spring?

Spending and spilling your wealth through the grass,
Coiner of coins that must rust and pass,—
Knowing the end is—alas, and alas!
What may a poet sing?

"Sing of the dust that is blossomy boughs,
Dust that is more than your thought allows;
Sing you for ever impossible vows
Unto the springs to be.

"Dust in the dust is for fire and birth,
Beauty and passion and red-lipped mirth,
Fashioned of dust for the blossoming earth,—
Even of you and me."

JEWELS

[28]

The sea has worn her ships like precious stones,
That marked her bosom's tremulous unrest;
And for their loss no pendant moon atones
That rides eternally upon her breast.
For sunk armadas or a little boat
She still is wistful as a jewelled queen,
Who bears the burning memory at her throat,
Of barque and sloop and brilliant brigantine.

The epic chanted to each sounding cave
Is all of fleets gone down by lonely shores,—
The shining spars, the sails, the light they gave,
Now scattered darkly on her grievous floors;—
And all the sea's long moan is like a sigh
For ruined ships remembered where they lie.

CHORUS

[29]

Always it was the old songs moved us most,
For always there were other voices near,
A silver singing threading like a ghost,
A thinner music than our ears could hear;
So that we sang more softly than we might,
As leaving room for some expected tone;
Our singing was half listening in the night,
For other singing drowned along our own,

And always there was silence at the end,
For something that beguiled us with the thought
Of presences returning, friend to friend.
Seeking again the fellowship they sought,
Pleased that we sing old songs they still may know,
Who sang with us, or listened, long ago.

SYMBOL

[30]

My faith is all a doubtful thing,
Wove on a doubtful loom,—
Until there comes, each showery Spring,
A cherry-tree in bloom;

And Christ who died upon a tree
That death had stricken bare,
Comes beautifully back to me,
In blossoms, everywhere.

TO AN UNKNOWN ANCESTOR

[31]

Among the goodly folk whose name I bear,
Men of the plough, the priesthood, and the mill,
Whose whispered wisdom follows where I fare,
With ghostly promptings that must haunt me still,—
What place was there for you, whose different fame
Delighted, once, the Don Juans of the town?
The family annals have forgot your name,
And time at last has hushed your gay renown.

But often in the chamber of my mind,
The righteous rise and leave, their counsels done,
And there is counsel of another kind,—
The room turns tavern, and there enters one
I pledge as kinsman in a reeling toast,
Still unregenerate and delightful ghost.

INTIMATION

[32]

Here where the sunlight makes more strangely fair
Each shining street, each steeple where it stands,
Something like Spring is blowing down the air,
Touching the Town with light, transforming hands.
Half-shy and hesitant, a Something stays
One trembling instant where the sun is sweet,—
A quickening presence on these winter ways,
Haunting and swift—and gone on shining feet.

Yet, there was hint of coming daffodils,
And slender spears uprising on the lawn,
And apple-blossoms on the April hills ...
Only the timid prophetess was gone,
Leaving a faith as gallant as the grass,
How that these things would surely come to pass.

ON A DEAD MOTH

[33]

Who knows what trouble trembled in that throat,
What sweet distraction for the summer moon,
That lured you out, a frail, careering boat,
Across the midnight's purple, deep lagoon!
Some fire of madness lit that tiny brain,
Some soft propulsion clouded through your breast,
And lifted you, a white and moving stain
Against the dark of that disastrous quest.

The sadness of all brief and lovely things,
The fine and futile passions that we bear,
Haunt the bright wreck of your too fragile wings,
And win a pity for you, ended there,—
Like us, hurled backward to the final shade,
From mad adventures for a moon or maid.

MYSTIC

[34]

For Something glimpsed upon the topmost hill,
For Something glinting down a country lane,

Where apple-blossoms shimmer white and spill
A ghostly shower close along the rain,—
For Something guessed beyond the hedge or tree,
Hinted and hid behind the evening star,
I am made captive and am never free
Of Something that is neither near nor far.

A waking through the windy shapes of grass,
A trembling as of light along a bough,—
These are for footprints and a way to pass,
To follow after and to make a vow,—
To seek past glammers that are hourly spent,
And find but fainting lights down ways she went.

LEVIATHANS

[35]

You who have seen the foam upon bright wrecks
Of stately ships that never come to port,
Where sea-things crawl upon those sunken decks,
And fishes through those cabins take their sport,—
There where at last the gilded, gay saloon
Turns watery cavern for the spawn of seas,
And spars, once splendid, rot beneath the moon
That once was glad to sail with such as these,—

Let never word of pity pass your lips:
For these were proud in ways you cannot know,
And pride is slow to die in ruined ships
Who can but dream that some day they will go,
Their wounds all healed, their clean strength whole again,
Monarch of seas, marvel of moons and men.

INVIOULATE

[36]

I would be dumb before the evening star,
And no light word should stir upon my lips
For autumn dusks where dying embers are,
For evening seas and slow, returning ships.
I would be hushed before the face I love,
Rising in star-like quiet close to mine,
Lest all the beauty thought is dreaming of
Be rudely shaken and be spilled like wine.

For present loveliness there is no speech,
A word may wrong a flower or a face,
And stars that swim beyond our stuttering reach
Are safer in some golden, silent place....
Only when these are broken, or pass by,
Wonder and worship speak ... or sing ... or cry.

MANUSCRIPTS

[37]

As some monastic scrivener in his cell,
Sensing a chill along the stony crypt,
Might labour yet more gorgeously to spell
The final, splendid entries of his script,—
So with bright rubrics has the Autumn writ
A coloured chronicle of things that pass,
Thumbing a yellow parchment that is lit
With brief, illumined letters through the grass.

With what a prodigality of stains,
Is fashioned this last entry and design,
By one aware of cold, approaching rains,—
Who senses, through each iridescent line,
A presence at the shoulder—chills and blights,

IN AN OLD BURIAL GROUND

[38]

I have imagined ... but I have not known
What swift, recaptured seasons, lost of late,
What long-regretted Aprils yet may wait
For each of these beyond his crypted stone.
Some Springtime that was all too quickly blown,
Some Summer that was roses in his heart,
May wake again in every sweetest part,
And show themselves familiarly his own.

It well may be there are eternal days
For every frailest thing, beyond this door,
Where roses are not ruined any more,
And April with her jonquils stays and stays,
Outlingering walls of granite where they blow ...
I have imagined ... but I do not know.

ENCORE

[39]

This old slow music will have never done
With dancers who were graceful long ago;
A sigh returns them, one by ghostly one,
To tunes and measures that they knew—and know.
These lifted faces, floating on a stream,
Are one with other faces that were fair,—
That once were light, and summertime and dream,
And drifted laughter over hall and stair.

The viols end, and two by two they pass
Out of this blaze into the leafy dark,
Too ghostly and too dim across the grass,
Too soon obscured and blotted, all,—till Hark!
This old, slow music that is like a sigh
For silver feet gone, ah, how lightly by.

REDEMPTION

[40]

The old gods wait where secret beauty stirs,
By green, untempled altars of the Spring,
If haply, still, there be some worshippers
Whose hearts are moved with long remembering.
The cloven feet of Pan are on the hill,
His reedy musics sadder than all rains,
Since none will seek—pipe ever as he will—
Those unanointed and neglected fanes.

Beauty and joy—the bread and wine and all—
We have foresworn; our noisy hearts forget;
We stray and on strange altars cry and call ...
Ah, patient gods, be patient with us yet,
And Pan, pipe on, pipe on, till we shall rise,
And follow, and be happy, and be wise.

THE HUNTED

[41]

There is no rest for them, even in Death:
As life had harried them from lair to lair,
Still with unquiet eyes and furtive breath,
They haunt the secret by-ways of the air.
They know Earth's outer regions like a street,

And on pale ships that make no port of call,
They pass in silence when they chance to meet,
Saying no names, telling no tales at all.

Yet, on November nights of wind and storm,
Shivered and driven from their ghostly shores,
They peer in lighted windows glowing warm,
And thrill again at dear, remembered doors—
But they are wary listeners in the night:
Speak but a name, and they are off in flight.

THE SCHOOL BOY READS HIS ILIAD

[42]

The sounding battles leave him nodding still:
The din of javelins at the distant wall
Is far too faint to wake that weary will
That all but sleeps for cities where they fall.
He cares not if this Helen's face were fair,
Nor if the thousand ships shall go or stay;
In vain the rumbling chariots thron'g the air
With sounds the centuries shall not hush away.

Beyond the window where the Spring is new,
Are marbles in a square, and tops again,
And floating voices tell him what they do,
Luring his thought from these long-warring men,—
And though the camp be visited with gods,
He dreams of marbles and of tops, and nods.

MOMENTS

[43]

Earth has been splendid in her changing moods,
Whose scattered glories mark the moment spent;
Reliques of mirth or thoughtful solitudes
Betoken what a Christ or Dante meant.
What smiling dream, what happy, happy hour
Yielded an Athens for the bride of Time!
What darker reverie wrought the Roman flower
Whose crimson petals stained the grass with crime!

Mood after mood, its subtle secret hid,
Plies in the earth and has its moody way,
Patient or swift—to build a pyramid,
Or strike a Phidias from the quickened clay ...
A reverie, that is cities on a hill,
Or laughter trembling in a daffodil.

CLEAR MORNING

[44]

The air is full of thin and blowing bells
Whose delicate, faint music breaks and swells

For every lightest wind, and dies unheard,—
Unless it be by some leaf-hidden bird,

Or some shy faun who listens in the reeds,
If haply there be tunes to suit his needs.

RENAISSANCE

[45]

This glittering sense of bright and bladed grass,
Of hedges topped with blossom, white like foam,
And moons that know a purple way to pass,—

This beauty that the mind has taken home—
Goes never wholly from us at the last,
But stays beyond each summer's slow decay,
Storing our thought with summers that are past:
Hedges and moons, white in their ancient way.

So, in some subtle instant, for their sake,
The winter world turns summer earth and sky:
Blossom and bird and musics in their wake ...
And one bright moment, ere it hurries by,
Throngs all the mind with colour, light and mirth,
Like summertimes returning through the earth.

AN OLD LOVER

[46]

Whenever he would talk to us of ships,
Old schooners lost, or tall ships under weigh,
The god of speech was neighbour to his lips,
A lover's grace on words he loved to say.
He called them by their names, and you could see
Spars in the sun, keels, and their curling foam;
And all his mind was like a morning quay
Of ships gone out, and ships come gladly home.

He filled the bay with sails we had not seen:
The *Marguerita L.*, "a maid for shape,"
The slender *Kay*, the worthy *Island Queen*,—
That was his own, he lost her off the Cape,
"She was a ship"—and then he looked away,
And talked to us no more of ships that day.

ONE DAY IN SUMMER

[47]

This singing Summertime has never done
With afternoons all gold and dust and fire,
And windy trees blown silver in the sun,
The lights of earth, her musics and desire;—
But day by day, and hour by lighted hour,
Something beyond the summer earth and sky,
Burns through this passion of a world in flower,—
Some ghostly sense of lovers thronging by.

And I have thought, upon this windy hill,
Where bends and sways the long, dream-troubled grass,
That I may know the heart-beats, tender still,
Of gone, forgotten lovers where they pass,—
Their love, too long for one brief life to hold,
Beating and burning through this dust and gold.

VINES

[48]

No hint was told to these untutored seed:
Along the mould wherein their roots are curled,
No whisper runs of station, caste or creed,
To guide their tendrils through a jealous world.
From palace wall or cottage door, these blooms,
In careless disarray of white and red,
Will peer through open windows into rooms
Where princes sit, or women kneading bread.

Along these tender twilights where they lean,
They send no whispered gossip down at all,
Of cradle songs, or counsels of a queen,
To roots indifferent if that upper wall
Be loud with battles and the clash of Kings,
Or quiet, where a mother sits and sings.

AUDIENCE

[49]

I am aware of crowds behind the night,
Of eager faces just beyond our eyes,
Immured in silences and lost to light,
Piteous and pleading with a hurt surprise
That we who live will never turn a head
To speak them any answer, or to hark
The pregnant whispered wisdom of the Dead,
The futile finger pointed in the Dark.

THE DANCE

[50]

When we had gone from out the blazing room,
Into the cool and leafy dark, at last,
And found a sweetness in the summer gloom,
A holy quiet on the ways we passed,—
We turned, with only half-regretful glance
At silhouettes beyond that square of light,—
Content to leave the laughter and the dance,
For green, cool chambers of the summer night.

I think that we shall not be otherwise,
When we have quit all rooms where once we went,—
But gazing back with grave, untroubled eyes,
Shall find ourselves so quietly content,
We shall not wish to alter that estate,
Nor seek again the dance we left of late.

ON HEARING A BIRD SING AT NIGHT

[51]

Out of what ancient summer of soft airs
Was spun this song that stills each listening leaf—
This silver, moon-bright minstreling that fares
Through all old time, still laden with a grief?
Some hidden bird, by turrets and black bars,
Where one had languished for her face was fair,
Heard thus some troubadour beneath the stars,
And learned this song of vanished hands and hair.

Who knows what golden story first gave birth
To this old music that is heavy-sweet
With gardens long forgotten of the earth,
With passion that was silver wings and feet,
To cross the silent centuries and be heard,
Calling again in this dream-troubled bird!

DAWN

[52]

The thousand muffled noises of the dawn:
The drowsy stir of birds, surprised from sleep,
The faint applause of leaves above the lawn,
The bleat, far off, of closely-cabined sheep,—
Are like dim perfumes blowing down the stairs,
All sweetly prescient of the coming day,—
And less like sounds, than little tender airs
Gone softly shod and happily astray.

The later sleepers, where the garden lies,
Such heavy-lidded ladies as the rose,
Hear the soft tumult with a dim surprise,
There, where an early wind as roundsman goes,
To rouse each languid, over-sleepy head,
And shame them that they lie so long abed.

DAFFODILS OVER NIGHT

[53]

(A Short Tale for Children)

I think the ghost of Leerie
Came by with ghostly tread,
And little lighted tapers,
When we had gone to bed,—
Past gravel-walk and garden,
As he was wont to go,
And lit these yellow lanterns,
Burning where thy blow.

VALUES

[54]

It moves my heart but little to suppose
That planted men, like planted seed, shall rise,
That faulty dust re-blossoms as the rose,
In new perfections for more perfect skies;
Nor should I greatly care if one who knew
Should tell that out beyond the Grievous Gate,
The sleepy country that we travel to,
Has never any waking, soon or late.

But what if I should hear a prophet say:
Next year will bring no robins round the door,
And April will not have her ancient way,
The hedge will bear no blossoms any more,
The earth will not be green for living men,—
For Spring will not pass by this way again!...

A GHOST OUT OF STRATFORD

[55]

For all the crowd that packed the house to-night,
Marked you the vacant seat none came to claim,...
The fourth row from the front, and to the right?...
Vacant, I call it now.... But I could name
A thing that happened when the lights were off,
Of one who walked in buckles down the aisle,
Wearing a great hat that he scorned to doff,
And richly kerchiefed, wrist and neck in style.

Once in the play—I swear it—once I heard,
Along the tumult of our loud applause,
A sly and ghostly chuckle at a word
That Falstaff mouthed with those outrageous jaws ...
I think he liked the play ... and stayed, no doubt,
Long after us, and lingered going out.

WHO WALKS WITH BEAUTY

[56]

Who walks with Beauty has no need of fear:
The sun and moon and stars keep pace with him;
Invisible hands restore the ruined year,
And time itself grows beautifully dim.
One hill will keep the footprints of the moon
That came and went a hushed and secret hour;
One star at dusk will yield the lasting boon:
Remembered beauty's white, immortal flower.

Who takes of Beauty wine and daily bread,
Will know no lack when bitter years are lean;
The brimming cup is by, the feast is spread;

The sun and moon and stars his eyes have seen,
Are for his hunger and the thirst he slakes:
The wine of Beauty and the bread he breaks.

RACONTEUR

[57]

The Earth remembers many, many things,
Kept of her pride, a rich and ancient lore,—
The fading footprints of her transient Springs,
Her nameless cities, and the stones they wore.
Anointed shrines that men had perished for,
And women who were music for their times,
These, and the world's long iliads of war,
Will haunt her heart like dear, remembered rhymes.

I have imagined how it might be so,
When Earth takes home this wandering dust again,
There may be stories I shall come to know,
Of tragic queens and towns and valiant men,—
Old honoured tales that Earth may tell to me,
As mothers do, for children at the knee.

AFFINITIES

[58]

Young girls love a slender birch,
Tall and blowing in the wind,
Silvered in the sun and rain,
And beautifully thinned.

Old men love an apple-tree
Twisted and gnarled as they;
But when new blossoms line the bough,
The old men look away.

TRANSFIGURATION

[59]

What old historic dust gives back the rose!
What crumbled empires yield the creeping vine!
And purple grapes have sucked a pleasant wine
From ramparts that had bowed to sudden blows.
Where now the unregarded river flows,
Old dissolute cities, their debauches done,
Lift up a slender blossom to the sun,
Steeped in the thoughtful silence where it grows.

Where Splendour was, no Splendour is today:
Ruin has wrought upon the crowns of kings,
Their throne-rooms all are green and tender things ...
And wonder dies,—save in the patient way
Of these slow transmutations in the dust:
Beauty from power, lilies out of lust.

ONE WAY OF SPRING

[60]

The Spring came to this street with spinning tops,
And marbles rolling where the yards were bare,
With parti-coloured bonnets in the shops,
And young girls' laughter on the sterile air.
Through open windows and from stair to stair,
Went women's voices, calling each to each,
And in the cramped and crowded little square,
The ancient hush of soft and tender speech.

For all the lack of green things coming in,
That magic that was marbles in the street,
That swept the stairs, and moved the tops to spin,
Was wine and music, potent still and sweet,
As when it swayed those graceful girls of Troy,
And set to dreaming many a Trojan boy.

FOR A SEQUESTERED LADY

[61]

Roses, roses at her door,
Roses bringing something more
Than one Summer to her door,—
Beauty, beauty evermore.

Roses that were Guinivere
In a far-off golden year,
Hair that blinded like the sun,
Hands that never would have done
With the white spells that they wrought,
Till a city came to naught,—
Hands and hair and hearts, at last,
Dust! Till now, their slumbers past,
Roses bloom about her door,
Beauty, beauty evermore....
Trojan maidens who had been
Still, white faces through the din
Of those chariots gone by,
Stars above a troubled sky—
Beauty passing to re-pass,
Pearl-white feet across the grass,
Crowns of beauty that they wore
Given to the dust for more
Roses, roses at her door....
All old tales of beauty dead,
Hands and hair and lifted head,
Gone from cities long forgot:
Rimini and Camelot,
Lovers who had been like light,
Summertime and dream ... and Night ...
Now, their night of sleeping gone,
Roses rise above the lawn.

[62]

Roses, roses at her door,
Roses bringing something more
Than one Summer to her door ...
Beauty, beauty evermore.

HERITAGE

[63]

All purged, at last, are glories in the dust,—
Those temples that were worship for a day.
The gallant banners of a people's trust,
And hands and lips—and Aprils brief as they.
Beyond their lighted moment in the sun,
They bore away their splendours and their stains;
Now they are dust, the cleansing ritual done,
And only their dim holiness remains.

Since I am somehow fashioned out of these,
The quickened dust of city, saint and grass,
Of holy altars and old mysteries,—
Let me be mindful of them where I pass,
Dishonouring not this garment among men,
Lest I be shamed when I am dust again.

"SHIPPING NEWS"

[64]

(A Maritime Paper)

Here is the record of their splendid days:
The curving prow, the tall and stately mast,
And all the width and wonder of their ways,
Reduced to little printed words, at last;
The *Helen Dover* docks, the *Mary Ann*
Departs for Ceylon and the Eastern trade;
Arrived: *The Queen*, with cargoes from Japan,
And *Richard Kidd*, a tramp, and *Silver Maid*.

The narrow print is wide enough for these:
But here: "Reported missing" ... the type fails,
The column breaks for white and angry seas,
The jagged spars thrust through, and flapping sails
Flagging farewells to wind and sky and shore,
Arrive at silent ports, and leave no more.

ARTICULATION

[65]

With what bright symbols have we learned, at last,
To write the epic of the tender Springs!—
We, who were dumb so many centuries past,
Who found no word for frail and lovely things.
In tongue-tied wonder at the blossoming earth,
We watched the trailing seasons loiter by,
Too inarticulate of their transient worth,
Beyond the saddened utterance of a sigh.

What Aprils taught us, children at the knee,
Word by slow word, the language April knows!
What Summers broke that brooding reverie,
Through patient iterations of the rose!—
Ah, dearest tutors of our lisp-ing-time,
Today we bring you of our brightest rhyme.

MOONFLOWERS

[66]

These frail, white blooms have lit the Summer night
Like ghosts of beauty that had gone too soon,—
With something less than any glimmering light
That sways and faints and trembles in the moon.
I think the Earth, grown half-regretful, now,
Of faces that were lovely of old time,
Lifts here again dim hands and hair and brow,
In loveliness more fragile than a rhyme.

So that the listening night has somehow learned
A way of prescient waiting through the dark,
For half-forgotten loveliness returned,—
Too frail and dim for eyes like ours to mark
More than a ghostly glimmer on the air,
That once was lighted brows and hands and hair.

CHALLENGE

[67]

The Spring has crowned the startled grass with light,
And lit each apple-tree with blooms of May,
Her footprints flowering through the silent night,
Show where she went her hurried, careless way ...
A magic that awakens and goes by,
Too care-free to be bound, too fickle-fleet,
Leaves helpless legions staring at the sky,
Confronted with a later, sure defeat.

A bird, half-hid among the apple boughs,

Sings and sings on above the blossoming earth,
A high, clear music of eternal vows
To transient joy ... and joy's eternal worth ...
Above the certain wreck, this dauntless thing,
Caught up and hurled from ruined Spring to Spring.

BEFORE SPRING

[68]

Who knows what endless practices are held,
Before bright pencils mark the April earth—
Where grasses learn how gaiety is spelled,
And jonquils trace the golden writs of mirth;
Some slow, imperfect patterns must be wrought
Some, cast aside in dark, abandoned crypts,
Before the swift, impulsive hands are taught
To shape the Spring's illuminated scripts.

What gifted fingers are so quick to mould
And form aright the thin Aprilian line,
The frail, fair lettering in green and gold!—
What art has taught that intricate design,
From which those later scribes compose
Such final, crowning rubrics as the rose!

MOONS KNOW NO TIME

[69]

Moonlight is memory ... though the sun forget,
And moonlight lingers by a crumbling wall,
And grass-grown walks where flagging-stones are set
For feet that pass that way no more at all.
Summers gone by, and laughter that is still,
And hair whose gold is hidden from the sun,—
Moonlight remembering on a lonesome hill
Might half return them, one by ghostly one.

Suns mark the days ... but moonlight knows no time,
Finding old springs in every lighted face,
Old musics in a whisper hushed like rhyme:
And Summers that have gone and left no trace,
Are one with each new Summer come to flower,
Moving in moonlight through a haunted hour.

MY NEIGHBOUR

[70]

He never could grow old, for gay Romance
Walks with him daily through our crowded ways,
Illumining each common circumstance,
And rearing splendid dreams about his days.
Whether he walks or rides, it is the same,
He is the grey-haired knight, his cane for lance,
On some adventure for a lady's name,
With fancied kings and queens for confidants.

Folk that he meets—woman or man or boy—
All play a rôle in some forgotten place:
His carriage is a chariot at Troy,
And somewhere, at the end, is Helen's face ...
I like to wonder, when he looks at me,
What glorious thing, that instant, I may be.

AT THE NEXT TABLE

[71]

O, Lady like a tea-cup,

A flower, or a fan,
What dear, archaic fancy
Devised you as it ran
Through gone Arcadian summers
Of sweet and gentle airs,
Of roses at the casement,
And slippers on the stairs?
O, Lady like a poem
Out of the olden time,
Be now the fading pattern
Of this archaic rhyme.

SALVAGE

[72]

Since we have learned how beauty comes and goes:
A phantom fading from the hills like light,
Summer and slow disaster in the rose,
An April face that wanders toward the night,—
It is not strange that we who linger here,
Are haunted by the colours of the sky,
The ghost of beauty in the stricken year,
The thought of beauty gone too swiftly by.

So that men strive with chisel, pen and brush,
To save the lifted brow, the transient spring,
Happy if they may fix the fading blush,
Or make the mood a memorable thing,
And snare one glowing hour from fleeting time,
A golden bird, caged in a golden rhyme.

IN A GIRLS' SCHOOL

[73]

These walls will not forget, through later days,
How they had bloomed with lifted, tossing heads
Of swaying girls who thronged these ordered ways
Like windy tulips blowing in their beds.
Stones may remember laughter down a hall,
And eyes more bright than blossoms in the grass,—
A dream to haunt them—after all and all—
When they are dust with dusty things that pass.

So that some wind of beauty, waking then,
Whose breath shall be new summertimes for earth,
Will stir these scattered stones to dreams, again,
Of blowing shapes, of brightening eyes and mirth,
And corridors, like windy tulip beds,
Of swaying girls and beautiful, bright heads.

AT ELSINORE

[74]

... And still, they say, when nights are nearly spent,
And watchmen take their doze, before relief,
He comes to walk upon the battlement,
And all his brow is clouded with a grief.
From end to end, from end to end he goes,
Muttering his maledictions—and a name
Of one who drowned, it seems—though no one knows,
For there's a madness in his words, they claim.

TO WILLIAM GRIFFITH

[75]

(He that is Pierrot)

I think your soul goes clad in dominoes,
Haunting old gardens that are always June,
To sit within the shadow of a rose,
And strum and sing your every fragile tune.
For all we meet you where the great world rides,
You have no league with anything we are:
Your life is all entangled in the tides
Of goblin moons and musics and a star.

You talk to us of what the moment brings,
Of earnest men and worlds of work-a-day,
Of stocks and stores and half a hundred things,—
And all the while, your soul is leagues away,
Troubling old ghostly gardens where it goes,
Motlied with moonlight and your dominoes.

REVELATION

[76]

Walking these long, late twilights of the Spring,
Where all the fret of life seems nothing worth,
And grief, itself, a half-forgotten thing,
Less keen than these cool odours of the earth,—
I sometimes think we find the secret gate
That gives on gardens of enchanted light,
Restoring glories that we lost of late,
To quiet wisdom and more certain sight.

A holier mood will haunt our stubborn will,
Till we shall see revealments through the grass,
And stop, abashed, before a daffodil,
A shining weed, a stone on ways we pass,
Stand with bared head before the evening star,
And know these holy things for what they are.

DISCOVERY

[77]

I shall discover ... after all and all ...
From what alembic issues forth the Spring,
What cryptic finger, moving by a wall,
Leaves tulip writs in tulip colouring;
I shall have knowledge of the tug and grip
Of tender roots where they are thrust and curled,
And what frail doors are opened to let slip
The hidden spear into the lighted world.

So I shall know the mint of daffodils,
In darkened rooms where colour comes to birth,
The mouldy chamber where the rose distils
A sweetness that is Summer for the earth ...
And all the strange, alchemic, secret spell,
I shall discover, ... but I shall not tell.

FOR BOB: A DOG

[78]

(In Memoriam)

You, who would never leave us to our sleeping,
But ever nosed us out of bed to play,
How can we ever think of you as keeping
So strangely still, as stirless as the clay?
We cannot think you dead to games and laughter;
Surely in some bright place beyond the sun,
Girls race and play, and you go racing after,
And lie across their feet when games are done.

Who knows, but in our separate times and places

When we have slept the last, last sleep away,
You yet may come, your nose against our faces,
And wake us to our bright, immortal play...
And if you startle us with rude surprise,
You'll beg—and win—forgiveness with those eyes.

IN SUMMER

[79]

I think these stars that draw so strangely near,
That lean and listen for the turning earth,
Are never wholly careless when they hear
The murmur of her hushed and quiet mirth,—
But looking out upon a world in bloom,
They half-remember, and they heed and hark:
An old, old sweetness in the scented gloom,
An old, old music in the singing dark.

Their own full Summers gone, such æons past,
Bird-song and bloom and swallow from the sky,
These dead, desireless worlds find here, at last,
Something remembered when the earth turns by,
Sweet with these blowing odours they had known,
This happy music that was once their own.

SURVIVAL

[80]

Men building ships, and women cooking meals,
The mothering girl-child with her doll in arms,
The ploughman trudging at his horse's heels,
The fires we lay, our chill at war's alarms:—
These epic, ancient gestures of the race
Have still the greatness of those great who wrought
In other days than ours, who keep their place
Along our shadowy borderlands of thought.

A word evokes them,—aye, a lifted hand
Stirs slumbrous queens whose sceptres were upraised
For life or death in what forgotten land!—
Where cowherds pass, old Grecian kine are grazed,
And many a rocking-horse and laughing boy
Lead back the tragic chariots of Troy.

NOMENCLATURE

[81]

There is a magic in the shining name,
A legacy that beauty yields to speech,
Something more quick and subtle than her fame,—
Who else had blown beyond our stunted reach.
By what occult divining does the will
Fashion the cryptic word whose sound and sense
Evoke the trembling image, lovely still,
Of something lost but for this recompense?

There have been ships whose names were music's own;
But speak them—and the lifted prows go by!
Women who stir as from the sculptor's stone,
For syllables still tender as a sigh ...
And banished Aprils that we saw and heard,
Return their lights and colours ... in a word.

TO ONE RETURNED FROM A JOURNEY

[82]

You have come home with old seas in your speech,

And glimmering sea-roads meeting in your mind:
The curve of creeping silver up the beach,
And mornings whose white splendours daze and blind.
You have brought word of ships and where they go,
Their names like music, and the flags they fly:
Steamer ... and barque ... and churning tug and tow,
And a lone sail at sunset blowing by.

Shoreline and mist have still their ancient way:
Through all your speech the sea's long rise and fall
Sound their slow musics in the words you say:—
And I who sit and listen to it all,
Am like an absent lover who would hear
News of one loved, incalculably dear.

ATTENDANTS

[83]

The mild-eyed Oxen and the gentle Ass,
By manger or in pastures that they graze,
Lift their slow heads to watch us where we pass,
A reminiscent wonder in their gaze.
Their low humility is like a crown,
A grave distinction they have come to wear,—
Their look gone past us—to a little Town,
And a white miracle that happened there.

An old, old vision haunts those quiet eyes,
Where proud remembrance drifts to them again,
Of Something that has made them humbly wise,
—These burden-bearers for the race of men—
And lightens every load they lift or pull,
Something that chanced because the Inn was full.

RENDEZVOUS

[84]

... So she came back to you and me,
She who had been the lovely third ...
A little, blue ghost in time for tea;

Smiling and grave and with no word
Of how things fare with such as she,
But suddenly lonely when she heard,

In that still place, the fragile clink
Of tea cups, and her own dear name,
'Twas like her to be touched, I think,

With smiling pity for you and me;—
So, in a breathless haste, she came,
A little, blue ghost in time for tea.

SONNETS FROM A HOSPITAL

[85]

I

SPRING

Remembering sunlight on the steepled square,
Remembering April's way with little streets,
And pouter pigeons coasting down the air,
Spilling a beauty, like white-crested fleets,—
I have imagined, in these pain-racked days,
The look of grasses thrusting through the earth,
Of tender shoots along green-bordered ways,
Of hedges, and their first, frail blossoming mirth.

I have imagined, too, in some such wise
Death may allow, within her darkened room,
Some subtle intimation of wide skies,
Of startled grasses, and the hedge in bloom,—
And we may know when some far spring comes down,
Wearing her magic slippers through the town.

II

[86]

FEVER

The cool, sweet earth is cool and sweet indeed,
To flesh that fever makes a cinder of,—
An angel with cool hands to cup his need,
In ministrations, kinder yet than love.
There, a cool cheek to lay against his own,
And rest for that hot blood's too restless will,
His hands to curve on root or clod or stone;—
And deep-dug earth is very, very still.

Yet some, remembering happiness he had
Of living things, of leaf and sun and air,
Could pity him his prison, and be sad,—
Not knowing how he is companioned there,
Nor how, for such as he and his great need,
The cool, sweet earth is cool and sweet indeed.

III

RUINS

The spring comes in to me like spring in Rome,—
As year by year those ruins, dead to mirth,
Sense a strange quickening in the sweetened loam,
Where new, returning Aprils take the earth;
Something they lost, so many centuries gone,
Something too swift and subtle for a word,
Is half-remembered—in a shattered faun,
A stained and broken bird-bath, and its bird.

[87]

But otherwise, all alien comes the Spring,
Touching but not transforming what they are:
Flowers in the cranny but a foolish thing,
Grass in the pavements, foreign as a star ...
Each reminiscent, half-insensate stone
Mocked with new life it cannot call its own.

IV

VISITATION

All through my fevered nights, their grey ghosts came,
The great, cool sailing ships blown softly by,
More fair than any beauty that we name,
Girdled of water, chrismed of the sky.
I cannot tell what hidden bales of prize,
What mystic spell may haunt the wraiths of ships,
But these were secret healing on my eyes,
And these were cooling water at my lips.

It may be, when the final fever ends,
And flesh burns out, at last, and pulses fail,
They will not know, my grieved and stricken friends,
How in that instant I had given hail
To one white ship come ghostwise in from sea,
And how at last that it is well with me.

[88]

THIS LANE IN MAY

[89]

A fragrance lingers, though the rains be done;
And apple-trees have shaken from their hair

The thin and shining blossoms, one by one,
Starring the roadway like a silver stair.
And something softer than the rain comes by,
Older and dearer than these bright, new days:
An odour ... or a trick of lights that lie
Familiar on these grass-grown, rutted ways.

This lane in May is such a haunted thing,
For all the newness of the rain-wet trees:
An old, old May, remembered of the Spring,
Returning ghostwise on such days as these,
Moves in the blowing odours where they pass,
Trailing these scattered blossoms in the grass.

FUGITIVE

[90]

Behind these falling curtains of the rain,
Beauty goes by, a phantom on the hill,
A timid fugitive beyond the lane,
In rainy silver,—and so shy and still
That only peering eyes of some hid bird,
Or furry ears that listened by a stone,
Could guess at Something neither seen nor heard,
Finding escape, and faring by, alone.

For eyes like ours, too faint a thing and fleet,
Too lightly running for such ears to hear
The stealthy going of those weightless feet;
No thrilling sight or sound of her comes near,
Only the shining grasses where they lie,
Give hint of silver slippers hasting by.

AN OLD GARDENER

[91]

He has always a wise and knowing air:
For him there is no mystery in the mould,
Where seeds put on the shimmering things they wear,
And come to birth in yellow, green, and gold.
His quizzical, grey eyes can somehow mark
The silver shaft of sunlight where it goes,
Still radiant and undarkened in the dark,
To find the seed room of the hidden rose.

For him the secret alchemies are plain;
He tells most surely how these things befall,
In words grown intimate with roots and rain;
And yet, he is so tender of it all,
So wise and kind in ways of leaf and sod,
Sometimes I think him very like to God.

THE VEIL

[92]

Here where the snow comes whitely down,
All worldiness is done;
The saintly, silent little Town
Is like a nun;

Most holy in her street and spire,
Most perfectly at rest,—
Ah, God, who knows what hid desire
Is in her breast,

Where peony or daffodil
Or wayward rose begins,
Burning her drifted bosom, still,
Like secret sins.

THE YEAR IS OLD

[93]

Day fades with fading colours from the sky,
And blue smoke blowing where the hills are gold,
Is all a tale of loveliness gone by:
Summer is ended, and the year is old,
Beauty and bloom are wet leaves in the grass,
And music is a lone wind on the hill,
Crying that all things beautiful must pass,
Crying that beauty is remembered still.

There will be wood-mist moving by the gate,
There will be gathering to the fire by night,
The greying ashes falling in the grate,—
And long remembering, in the failing light,
Of ghosts returning for a wisp of fame,
Cloudy and brief along the smoke and flame.

MARINERS

[94]

Men who have loved the ships they took to sea,
Loved the tall masts, the prows that creamed with foam,
Have learned, deep in their hearts, how it might be
That there is yet a dearer thing than home.
The decks they walk, the rigging in the stars,
The clean boards counted in the watch they keep,—
These, and the sunlight on the slippery spars,
Will haunt them ever, waking and asleep.

Ashore, these men are not as other men;
They walk as strangers through the crowded street,
Or, brooding by their fires, they hear again
The drone astern, where gurgling waters meet,
Or see again a wide and blue lagoon,
And a lone ship that rides there with the moon.

AN ABANDONED INN

[95]

Along this stillness steals their ghostly laughter:
The oaths they swore, the clamant song and jest,
Are haunting still each oaken beam and rafter,
That looked on many a gay, forgotten guest.
The clink of cups, the muffled clang of swords,
These, and the flapping cards, will not be stilled,
Though dust has spread the long-abandoned boards,
And hides at last the crimson wine they spilled.

And still, they say, on sullen nights of rain,
A passer-by may hear, beyond the door,
An old accounting for this ugly stain
That makes an evil pattern on the floor—
A sound of dice—an oath—a crashing chair ...
And sudden, grievous silence fallen there.

PRONE

[96]

Here where these grasses thrust between my fingers,
And where the earth against my palms is cool,
The hot day dies ... and only late light lingers
Above the shadowed valley's misty pool.
The trees have bent above me like tall lovers,
The stars return their slow, familiar way,
And a great, stirless quiet comes and covers
The traveller resting at the end of day.

I think this body, with its foolish fears,
May grow less foolish and less fearful so,
Learning that at the end of wandering years,
Waits but this house that it has come to know,
Familiar in its sleepy-hearted mirth,
The cool and kind and hospitable earth.

REVIVAL

[97]

This body, gathering slumber as it goes,
Will come too full of sleep for wandering,
And so lie down,—and yet it somehow knows
It never could be careless of the Spring;
But turning with the happy-minded earth,
When straying Aprils stir the sentient mould,
It still will know these festivals of mirth,
These subtle sorceries of green and gold.

And we may yet discover, after all,
How flesh is glory whitening on the hedge,
Or wine-red tulips burning at a wall;—
And we may learn, by some wild-flowered ledge,
How solemn dust at last turns gay again,
To light the Spring for later, wandering men.

IMPOSTOR

[98]

This Autumn of the yellow lanes
Is come a sorry vagabond,
Grown tearful now and over-fond
Of grey and melancholy rains.

He loves his griefs and broken sighs,
His sorrows of a thousand years,—
And thinks we do not know those tears
Are wood-smoke in his eyes.

If leaves go by us in a gust,
He needs must clutch his heart, and say:
"Alas" or else "Alack-a-day"—
And thinks we take it all on trust.

So sad and sad a rake he is!—
And yet so glad of being sad,
Knowing no fellow ever had
Such fine, becoming griefs as his.

SNOW DUSK

[99]

The iron twilight closes, and the steep
Gates of the day where late the light was hurled,
Swing to on silent hinges, and a sleep,
A still, white sleep is fallen on the world.
There is no stir these trackless miles around:
The Earth is turned a grey cathedral close,
Where is forgot all motion and all sound,
Beneath these smooth, obliterating snows.

One burning taper trembles ... and the sky
Curves like a dome where cloudy anthems are,
Above immaculate distances that lie
In thoughtful adoration of a star ...
Earth has her veil, and takes her silent vow:
Nothing save holiness is left her now.

This grave, unlabouring beauty of the dusk,
Stars and still fields and swallows in the sky,
These cool, damp odours faint with earthen musk,
The fading sheep like ghosts of sheep gone by,—
Have held so long the thought of brooding men,
That something like a mood has gathered there,
Piled deep and high, again and yet again,
A moving, thoughtful presence on the air.

So when the last light passes from the hill,
Leaving these fields a glimmering grey and blue,
And the last bell has sounded and grown still,—
These blinking stars awake and tremble through,
Re-blossomed from those gathering moods of time,
Like brooding thoughts that flower into rhyme.

SHIPS IN HARBOUR

[101]

I have not known a quieter thing than ships,
Nor any dreamers steeped in dream as these,
For all that they have tracked disastrous seas,
And winds that left their sails in flagging strips;
Nothing disturbs them now, no stormy grips
That once had hurt their sides, no crash or swell,
Nor can the fretful harbour quite dispel
This quiet that they learned on lonely trips.

They have no part in all the noisy noons;
They are become as dreams of ships that go
Back to the secret waters that they know,
Each as she will to unforgot lagoons,
Where nothing moves except the ghostly spars
That mark the patient watches on the stars.

Transcriber's note

The following change was made to the text:

Page 13: "weight they bare" changed to "weight they [bear](#)".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SHIPS IN HARBOUR ***

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