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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONG-SURF ***

SONG-SURF

By the Same Author

Nirvana Days
Yolanda of Cyprus
A Night in Avignon
Charles di Tocca
David
Many Gods

SONG-SURF

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

NEW YORK
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MCMX

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TO
MY SISTERS

FOREWORD

These poems, first published as "Song-Surf" in 1900, by a firm which failed before the book, left the press, were republished with additions as the "lyrics" of "Plays & Lyrics," by Hodder & Stoughton, of London, in 1905. Revision and omissions have been made for this volume of a uniform edition in which they now appear.

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[Pg xi]

I sat with Omar by the Tavern door,
Musing the mystery of mortals o'er,
And soon with answers alternate we strove
Whether, beyond death, Life hath any shore.

*"Come, fill the cup," said he. "In the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling.
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing."*

"The Bird of Time?" I answered. "Then have I
No heart for Wine. Must we not cross the Sky
Unto Eternity upon his wings—Or,
failing, fall into the Gulf and die?"

[Pg 4]

*"Ay; so, for the Glories of this World sigh some,
And some for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
But you, Friend, take the Cash—the Credit leave,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"*

"What! take the Cash and let the Credit go?
Spend all upon the Wine the while I know
A possible To-morrow may bring thirst
For Drink but Credit then shall cause to flow?"

*"Yea, make the most of what you yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!"*

"Into the Dust we shall descend—we must.
But can the soul not break the crumbling Crust
In which he is encaged? To hope or to
Despair he will—which is more wise or just?"

[Pg 5]

*"The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers: and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone."*

"Like Snow it comes—to cool one burning Day;
And like it goes—for all our plea or sway.
But flooding tears nor Wine can ever purge
The Vision it has brought to us away."

*"But to this world we come and Why not knowing,
Nor Whence, like water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the waste,
We know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing."*

"True, little do we know of *Why* or *Whence*.
But is forsooth our Darkness evidence
There is no Light?—the worm may see no star
Tho' heaven with myriad multitudes be dense."

[Pg 6]

*"But, all unasked, we're hither hurried Whence?
And, all unasked, we're Whither hurried hence?
O, many a cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence."*

"Yet can not—ever! For it is forbid
Still by that quenchless Soul within us hid,
Which cries, 'Feed—feed me not on Wine alone,
For to Immortal Banquets I am bid.'"

*"Well oft I think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled:
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely Head."*

"Then if, from the dull Clay thro' with Life's throes,
More beautiful spring Hyacinth and Rose,
Will the great Gardener for the uprooted soul
Find Use no sweeter than—useless Repose?"

[Pg 7]

*"We cannot know—so fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regret and future fears:"*

*To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow we may be
Ourselves with Yesterday's sev'n thousand Years."*

"No Cup there is to bring oblivion
More during than Regret and Fear—no, none!
For Wine that's Wine to-day may change and be
Marah before to-morrow's Sands have run."

*"Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door where in I went."*

"The doors of Argument may lead Nowhither,
Reason become a Prison where may wither
From sunless eyes the Infinite, from hearts
All Hope, when their sojourn too long is thither."

*"Up from Earth's Centre thro' the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravelled by the Road—
But not the Master-knot of Human fate."*

[Pg 8]

"The Master-knot knows but the Master-hand
That scattered Saturn and his countless Band
Like seeds upon the unplanted heaven's Air:
The Truth we reap from them is Chaff thrice fanned."

*"Yet if the Soul can fling the Dust aside
And naked on the air of Heaven ride,
Wer't not a shame—wer't not a shame for him
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?"*

"No, for a day bound in this Dust may teach
More of the Sáki's Mind than we can reach
Through æons mounting still from Sky to Sky—
May open through all Mystery a breach."

[Pg 9]

*"You speak as if Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sáki from that Bowl has poured
Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour."*

"Bubbles we are, pricked by the point of Death.
But, in each bubble, may there be no Breath
That lifts it and at last to Freedom flies,
And o'er all heights of Heaven wandereth?"

*"A moment's halt—a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo—the phantom Caravan has reached
The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!"*

"And yet it should be—it should be that we
Who drink shall drink of Immortality.
The Master of the Well has much to spare:
Will He say, 'Taste'—then shall we no more be?"

[Pg 10]

*"The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it."*

"And were it other, might we not erase
The Letter of some Sorrow in whose place
No truer sounding, we should fail to spell
The Heart which yearns behind the mock-world's Face?"

*"Well, this I know; whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me, quite,
One flash of it within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright."*

"In Temple or in Tavern 't may be lost.
And everywhere that Love hath any Cost
It may be found; the Wrath it seems is but
A Cloud whose Dew should make its power most."

"But see His Presence thro' Creation's veins
 Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
 Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
 They change and perish all—but He remains."

"All—it may be. Yet lie to sleep, and lo,
 The soul seems quenched in Darkness—is it so?
 Rather believe what seemeth not than seems
 Of Death—until we know—*until we know.*"

"So wastes the Hour—gone in the vain pursuit
 Of This and That we strive o'er and dispute.
 Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
 Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit."

"Better—unless we hope that grief is thrown
 Across our Path by urgency of the Unknown,
 Lest we may think we have no more to live
 And bide content with dim-lit Earth alone."

[Pg 12]

"Then, strange, is't not? that of the myriads who
 Before us passed the door of Darkness through
 Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
 Which to discover we must travel too?"

"Such is the Ban! but even though we heard
 Love in Life's All we still should crave the word
 Of one returned. Yet none is *sure*, we know,
 Though they lie deep, they are by Death deterred."

"Send then thy Soul through the Invisible
 Some letter of the After-life to spell:
 And by and by thy Soul returned to thee
 But answers, 'I myself am Heaven and Hell.'"

"From the Invisible, he does. But sent
 Thro' Earth, where living Goodness tho' 'tis blent
 With Evil dures, may he not read the Voice,
 'To make thee but for Death were toil ill spent'?"

[Pg 13]

"Well, when the Angel of the darker drink
 At last shall find us by the river-brink
 And offering his Cup invite our souls
 Forth to our lips to quaff, we shall not shrink."

"No. But if in the sable Cup we knew
 Death without waking were the wilful brew,
 Nobler it were to curse as Coward Him
 Who roused us into light—then light withdrew."

"Then Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
 Beset the Road I was to wander in,
 Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
 Enmesh, and then impute my fall to sin."

"He will not. If one evil we endure
 To ultimate Debasing, oh, be sure
 'Tis not of Him predestined, and the sin
 Not His nor ours—but Fate's He could not cure."

[Pg 14]

"Yet, ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
 That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
 The Nightingale that on the branches sang,
 Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows?"

"So does it seem—no other joys like these!
 Yet Summer comes, and Autumn's honoured ease;
 And wintry Age, is't ever whisperless
 Of that Last Spring, whose Verdure may not cease?"

"Still, would some winged Angel ere too late
 Arrest the yet unfolded roll of Fate,
 And make the stern Recorder otherwise
 Enregister, or quite obliterate!"

"To otherwise enregister believe
 He toils eternally, nor asks Reprieve."

And could Creation perfect from his hands
Have come at Dawn, none overmuch should grieve."

[Pg 15]

So till the wan and early scent of day
We strove, and silent turned at last away,
Thinking how men in ages yet unborn
Would ask and answer—trust and doubt and pray.

J A E L

[Pg 16]

Jehovah! Jehovah! art Thou not stronger than gods of the heathen?
I slew him, that Sisera, prince of the host Thou dost hate.
But fear of his blood is upon me, about me is breathe
His spirit—by night and by day come voices that wait.

Athirst and affrightened he fled from the star-wrought waters of Kishon.
His face was as wool when he swooned at the door of my tent.
The Lord hath given him into the hand of perdition,
I smiled—but he saw not the face of my cunning intent.

[Pg 17]

He thirsted for water: I fed him the curdless milk of the cattle.
He lay in the tent under purple and crimson of Tyre.
He slept and he dreamt of the surge and storming of battle.
Ah ha! but he woke not to waken Jehovah's ire.

He slept as he were a chosen of Israel's God Almighty.
A dog out of Canaan!—thought he I was woman alone?
I slipt like an asp to his ear and laughed for the sight he
Would give when the carrion kites should tear to his bone.

[Pg 18]

I smote thro' his temple the nail, to the dust, a worm, did I bind him.
My heart was a-leap with rage and a-quiver with scorn.
And I danced with a holy delight before and behind him—
I that am called blessed o'er all unto Judah born.

"Aye, come, I will show thee, O Barak, a woman is more than a warrior,"
I cried as I lifted the door wherein Sisera lay.
"To me did he fly and I shall be called his destroyer—
I, Jael, who am subtle to find for the Lord a way!"

"Above all the daughters of men be blest—of Gilead or Asshur,"
Sang Deborah, prophetess, then, from her waving palm.
"Behold her, ye people, behold her the heathen's abasher;
Behold her the Lord hath uplifted—behold and be calm!"

[Pg 19]

"The mother of him at the window looks out thro' the lattice to listen—
Why roll not the wheels of his chariot? why does he stay?
Shall he not return with the booty of battle, and glisten
In songs of his triumph—ye women, why do ye not say?"

And I was as she who danced when the Seas were rended asunder
And stood, until Egypt pressed in to be drowned unto death.
My breasts were as fire with the glory, the rocks that were under
My feet grew quick with the gloating that beat in my breath.

[Pg 20]

At night I stole out where they cast him, a sop to the jackal and raven.
But his bones stood up in the moon and I shook with affright.
The strength shrank out of my limbs and I fell, a craven,
Before him—the nail in his temple gleamed bloodily bright.

Jehovah! Jehovah! art Thou not stronger than gods of the heathen?
I slew him, that Sisera, prince of the host Thou dost hate.
But fear of his blood is upon me, about me is breathe
His spirit—by day and by night come voices that wait.

[Pg 21]

I fly to the desert, I fly to the mountain—but they will not hide me.
His gods haunt the winds and the caves with vengeance that cries
For judgment upon me; the stars in their courses deride me—
The stars Thou hast hung with a breath in the wandering skies.

Jehovah! Jehovah! I slew him, the scourge and sting of Thy Nation.
Take from me his spirit, take from me the voice of his blood.
With madness I rave—by day and by night, defamation!
Jehovah, release me! Jehovah! if still Thou art God!

TO THE SEA

[Pg 22]

Art thou enraged, O sea, with the blue peace
Of heaven, so to uplift thine armèd waves,
Thy billowing rebellion 'gainst its ease,
And with Tartarean mutter from cold caves,
From shuddering profundities where shapes
Of awe glide thro' entangled leagues of ooze,
To hoot thy watery omens evermore,
And evermore thy moanings interfuse
With seething necromancy and mad lore?

Or, dost thou labour with the drifting bones
Of countless dead, thou mighty Alchemist,
Within whose stormy crucible the stones
Of sunk primordial shores, granite and schist,
Are crumbled by thine all-abrasive beat?
With immemorial chanting to the moon,
And cosmic incantation, dost thou crave
Rest to be found not till thy wild be strewn
Frigid and desert over earth's last grave?

[Pg 23]

Thou seemest with immensity mad, blind—
With raving deaf, with wandering forlorn;
Parent of Demogorgon whose dire mind
Is night and earthquake, shapeless shame and scorn
Of the o'ermounting birth of Harmony.
Bound in thy briny bed and gnawing earth
With foamy writhing and fierce-panted tides,
Thou art as Fate in torment of a dearth
Of black disaster and destruction's strides.

And how thou dost drive silence from the world,
Incarnate Motion of all mystery!
Whose waves are fury-wings, whose winds are hurled
Whither thy Ghost tempestuous can see
A desolate apocalypse of death.
Oh, how thou dost drive silence from the world,
With emerald overflowing, waste on waste
Of flashing susurrations, dashed and swirled
O'er isles and continents that shrink abased!

[Pg 24]

Nay, frustrate Hope art thou, of the Unknown,
Gathered from primal mist and firmament;
A surging shape of Life's unfathomed moan,
Whelming humanity with fears unmeant.
Yet do I love thee, O, above all fear,
And loving thee unconquerably trust
The runes that from thy ageless surfing start
Would read, were they revealed, gust upon gust,
That Immortality is might of heart!

THE DAY-MOON

[Pg 25]

So wan, so unavailing,
Across the vacant day-blue dimly trailing!

Last night, sphered in thy shining,
A Circe—mystic destinies divining;

To-day but as a feather
Torn from a seraph's wing in sinful weather,

Down-drifting from the portals
Of Paradise, unto the land of mortals.

Yet do I feel thee awing
My heart with mystery, as thy updrawing

Moves thro' the tides of Ocean
And leaves lorn beaches barren of its motion;

Or strands upon near shallows
The wreck whose weirded form at night unhallows

[Pg 26]

The fisher maiden's prayers—
"For *him!*—that storms may take not unawares!"

So wan, so unavailing,
Across the vacant day-blue dimly trailing!

But Night shall come atoning
Thy phantom life thro' day, and high enthroning

Thee in her chambers arrased
With star-hieroglyphs, leave thee unharassed

To glide with silvery passion,
Till in earth's shadow swept thy glowings ashen.

A SEA-GHOST

[Pg 27]

Oh, fisher-fleet, go in from the sea
And furl your wings.
The bay is gray with the twilit spray
And the loud surf springs.

The chill buoy-bell is rung by the hands
Of all the drowned,
Who know the woe of the wind and tow
Of the tides around.

Go in, go in! Oh, haste from the sea,
And let them rest—
A son and one who was wed and one
Who went down unblest.

[Pg 28]

Aye, even as I, whose hands at the bell
Now labour most.
The tomb has gloom, but Oh, the doom
Of the drear sea-ghost!

He evermore must wander the ooze
Beneath the wave,
Forlorn—to warn of the tempest born,
And to save—to save!

Then go, go in! and leave us the sea,
For only so
Can peace release us and give us ease
Of our salty woe.

ON THE MOOR

[Pg 29]

1

I met a child upon the moor
A-wading down the heather;
She put her hand into my own,
We crossed the fields together.

I led her to her father's door—
A cottage mid the clover.
I left her—and the world grew poor
To me, a childless rover.

2

I met a maid upon the moor,
The morrow was her wedding.
Love lit her eyes with lovelier hues
Than the eve-star was shedding.

[Pg 30]

She looked a sweet good-bye to me,
And o'er the stile went singing.
Down all the lonely night I heard
But bridal bells a-ringing.

3

I met a mother on the moor,
By a new grave a-praying.
The happy swallows in the blue
Upon the winds were playing.

"Would I were in his grave," I said,
"And he beside her standing!"
There was no heart to break if death
For me had made demanding.

THE CRY OF EVE

[Pg 31]

Down the palm-way from Eden in the mid-night
Lay dreaming Eve by her outdriven mate,
Pillowed on lilies that still told the sweet
Of birth within the Garden's ecstasy.
Pitiful round her face that could not lose
Its memory of God's perfecting was strewn
Her troubled hair, and sigh grieved after sigh
Along her loveliness in the white moon.
Then sudden her dream, too cruelly impent
With pain, broke and a cry fled shuddering
Into the wounded stillness from her lips—
As, cold, she fearfully felt for his hand,
And tears, that had before ne'er visited
Her lids with anguish, drew from her the moan:

[Pg 32]

"Oh, Adam! What have I dreamed?
Now do I understand His words, so dim
To creatures that had quivered but with bliss!
Since at the dusk thy kiss to me, and I
Wept at caresses that were once all joy,
I have slept, seeing through Futurity
The uncreated ages visibly!
Foresuffering phantoms crowded in the womb
Of Time, and all with lamentable mien
Accusing without mercy, thee and me!
And without pity! for tho' some were far
From birth, and without name, others were near—
Sodom and dark Gomorrah—from whose flames
Fleeing one turned ... how like her look to mine
When the tree's horror trembled on my taste!
And Babylon upbuilded on our sin;
And Nineveh, a city sinking slow
Under a shroud of sandy centuries
That hid me not from the buried cursing eyes
Of women who e'er-bitterly gave birth!
Ah, to be mother of all misery!
To be first-called out of the earth and fail
For a whole world! To shame maternity
For women evermore—women whose tears
Flooding the night, no hope can wipe away!
To see the wings of Death, as, Adam, thou
Hast not, endlessly beating, and to hear
The swooning ages suffer up to God!
And Oh, that birth-cry of a guiltless child
In it are sounding of our sin and woe,
With prophesy of ill beyond all years!
Yearning for beauty never to be seen—
Beatitude redeemless evermore!

[Pg 33]

"And I whose dream mourned with all motherhood
Must hear it soon! Already do soft skill,
Assuasive lulls, enticings and quick tones
Of tenderness—that will like light awake

The folded memory children shall bring
Out of the dark—move in me longingly.
Yet thou, Adam, dear fallen thought of God,
Thou, when thou too shall hear humanity
Cry in thy child, wilt groaning wish the world
Back in unsummoned Void! and, woe! wilt fill
God's ear with troubled wonder and unrest!"

[Pg 34]

Softly he soothed her straying hair, and kissed
The fever from her lips. Over the palms
The sad moon poured her peace into their eyes,
Till Sleep, the angel of forgetfulness,
Folded again dark wings above their rest.

MARY AT NAZARETH

[Pg 35]

I know, Lord, Thou hast sent Him—
Thou art so good to me!—
But Thou hast only lent Him,
His heart's for Thee!

I dared—Thy poor hand-maiden—
Not ask a prophet-child:
Only a boy-babe laden
For earth—and mild.

But this one Thou hast given
Seems not for earth—or me!
His lips flame truth from heaven,
And vanity

[Pg 36]

Seem all my thoughts and prayers
When He but speaks Thy Law;
Out of my heart the tares
Are torn by awe!

I cannot look upon Him,
So strangely burn His eyes—
Hath not some grieving drawn Him
From Paradise?

For Thee, for Thee I'd live, Lord!
Yet oft I almost fall
Before Him—Oh, forgive, Lord,
My sinful thrall!

But e'en when He was nursing,
A baby at my breast,
It seemed He was dispersing
The world's unrest.

[Pg 37]

Thou bad'st me call Him "Jesus,"
And from our heavy sin
I know He shall release us,
From Sheol win.

But, Lord, forgive! the yearning
That He may sometimes be
Like other children, learning
Beside my knee,

Or playing, prattling, seeking
For help—comes to my heart....
Ah sinful, Lord, I'm speaking—
How good Thou art!

ADELIL

[Pg 38]

Proud Adelil! Proud Adelil!
Why does she lie so cold?

(I made her shrink, I made her reel,
I made her white lids fold.)

We sat at banquet, many maids,
She like a Valkyr free.
(I hated the glitter of her braids,
I hated her blue eye's glee!)

In emerald cups was poured the mead;
Icily blew the night.
(But tears unshed and woes that bleed
Brew bitterness and spite.)

"A goblet to my love!" she cried,
"Prince where the sea-winds fly!"
(Her love!—it was for that he died,
And for it she should die.)

She lifted the cup and drank—she saw
A heart within its lees.
(I laughed like the dead who feel the thaw
Of summer in the breeze.)

They looked upon her stricken still,
And sudden they grew appalled.
("It is thy lover's heart!" I shrill
As the sea-crow to her called.)

Palely she took it—did it give
Ease there against her breast?
(Dead—dead she swooned, but I cannot live,
And dead I shall not rest.)

[Pg 39]

INTIMATION

[Pg 40]

All night I smiled as I slept,
For I heard the March-wind feel
Blindly about in the trees without
For buds to heal.

All night in dreams, for I smelt,
In the rain-wet woods and fields,
The coming flowers and the glad green hours
That summer yields.

All night—and when at dawn
I woke with the blue-bird's cheep,
Winter with all its chill and pall
Seemed but a sleep.

IN JULY

[Pg 41]

This path will tell me where dark daisies dance
To the white sycamores that dell them in;
Where crow and flicker cry melodious din,
And blackberries in ebon ripeness glance
Luscious enticings under briery green.
It will slip under coppice limbs that lean
Brushingly as the slow-belled heifer pants
Toward weedy water-plants
That shade the pool-sunk creek's reluctant trance.

I shall find bell-flower spires beside the gap
And lady phlox within the hollow's cool;
Cedar with sudden memories of Yule
Above the tangle tipped with blue skullcap.
The high hot mullein fond of the full sun
Will watch and tell the low mint when I've won
The hither wheat where idle breezes nap,
And fluffy quails entrap

[Pg 42]

Me from their brood that crouch to escape mishap.

Then I shall reach the mossy water-way
That gullies the dense hill up to its peak,
There dally listening to the eerie eke
Of drops into cool chalices of clay.
Then on, for elders odorously will steal
My senses till I climb up where they heal
The livid heat of its malingering ray,
 And woingly betray
To memory many a long-forgotten day.

There I shall rest within the woody peace
Of afternoon. The bending azure frothed
With silveryness, the sunny pastures swathed,
Fragrant with morn-mown clover and seed-fleece;
The hills where hung mists muse, and Silence calls
To Solitude thro' aged forest halls,
Will waft into me their mysterious ease,
 And in the wind's soft cease
I shall hear hintings of eternities.

[Pg 43]

FROM ABOVE

[Pg 44]

What do I care if the trees are bare
And the hills are dark
And the skies are gray.

What do I care for chill in the air
For crows that cark
At the rough wind's way.

What do I care for the dead leaves there—
Or the sullen road
By the sullen wood.

There's heart in my heart
To bear my load!
So enough, the day is good!

BY THE INDUS

[Pg 45]

Thou art late, O Moon,
Late,
 I have waited thee long.
The nightingale's flown to her nest,
 Sated with song.
The champak hath no odour more
To pour on the wind as he passeth o'er—
 But my heart it will not rest.

Thou art late, O Love,
Late,
 For the moon is a-wane.
The kusa-grass sighs with my sighs,
 Burns with my pain.
The lotus leans her head on the stream—
Shall I not lean to thy breast and dream,
 Dream ere the night-cool dies?

[Pg 46]

Thou art late, O Death,
Late,
 For he did not come!
A pariah is my heart,
 Cast from him—dumb!
I cannot cry in the jungle's deep—
Is it not time for the Tomb—and Sleep?
 O Death, strike with thy dart!

(NIKKO, JAPAN, 1905)

Dim thro' the mist and cryptomeria
Booms the temple bell,
Down from the tomb of Iéyasü
Yearning, as a knell.

Down from the tomb where many an æon
Silently has knelt;
Many a pilgrimage of millions—
Still about it felt.

Still, for I see them gather ghostly
Now, as the numb sound
Floats, an unearthly necromancy,
From the past's dead ground.

[Pg 48]

See the invisible vast millions,
Hear their soundless feet
Climbing the shrine-ways to the gilded
Carven temple's seat.

And, one among them—pale among them—
Passes waning by.
What is it tells me mystically
That strange one was I?...

Weird thro' the mist and cryptomeria
Dies the bell—'tis dumb.
After how many lives returning
Shall I hither come?

Hither again! and climb the votive
Ever mossy ways?
Who shall the gods be then, the millions
Meek, entreat or praise?

THE CHILD GOD GAVE

[Pg 49]

"Give me a little child
To draw this dreary want out of my breast,"
I cried to God.
"Give, for my days beat wild
With loneliness that will not rest
But under the still sod!"

It came—with groping lips
And little fingers stealing aimlessly
About my heart.
I was like one who slips
A-sudden into Ecstasy
And thinks ne'er to depart.

"Soon he will smile," I said,
"And babble baby love into my ears—
How it will thrill!"
I waited—Oh, the dread,
The clutching agony, the fears!—
He was so strange and still.

[Pg 50]

Did I curse God and rave
When they came shrinkingly to tell me 'twas
A witless child?
No ... I ... I only gave
One cry ... just one ... I think ... because ...
You know ... he never smiled.

[Pg 51]

THE WINDS

The East Wind is a Bedouin,
And Nimbus is his steed;
Out of the dusk with the lightning's thin
Blue scimitar he flies afar,
Whither his rovings lead.
The Dead Sea waves
And Egypt caves
Of mummied silence laugh
When he mounts to quench the Siroc's stench
And to wrench
From his clutch the tyrant's staff.

The West Wind is an Indian brave
Who scours the Autumn's crest.
Dashing the forest down as a slave,
He tears the leaves from its limbs and weaves
A maelstrom for his breast.
Out of the night
Crying to fright
The earth he swoops to spoil—
There is furious scathe in the whirl of his wrath,
In his path
There is misery and moil.

The North Wind is a Viking—cold
And cruel, armed with death!
Born in the doomful deep of the old
Ice Sea that froze ere Ymir rose
From Niflheim's ebon breath.
And with him sail
Snow, Frost, and Hail,
Thanes mighty as their lord,
To plunder the shores of Summer's stores—
And his roar's
Like the sound of Chaos' horde.

The South Wind is a Troubadour;
The Spring 's his serenade.
Over the mountain, over the moor,
He blows to bloom from the winter's tomb
Blossom and leaf and blade.
He ripples the throat
Of the lark with a note
Of lilting love and bliss,
And the sun and the moon, the night and the noon,
Are a-swoon—
When he woos them with his kiss.

TRANSCENDED

I who was learnèd in death's lore
Oft held her to my heart
And spoke of days when we should love no more—
In the long dust, apart.

"Immortal?" No—it could not be,
Spirit with flesh must die.
Tho' heart should pray and hope make endless plea,
Reason would still outcry.

She died. They wrapped her in the dust—
I heard the dull clod's dole,
And then I knew she lived—that death's dark lust
Could never touch her soul!

LOVE'S WAY TO CHILDHOOD

We are not lovers, you and I,
Upon this sunny lane,
But children who have never known
Love's joy or pain.

The trees we pass, the summer brook,
The bird that o'er us darts—
We do not know 'tis they that thrill
Our childish hearts.

The earth-things have no name for us,
The ploughing means no more
Than that they like to walk the fields
Who plough them o'er.

The road, the wood, the heaven, the hills
Are not a World to-day—
But just a place God's made for us
In which to play.

[Pg 56]

AUTUMN

[Pg 57]

I know her not by fallen leaves
Or resting heaps of hay;
Or by the sheathing mists of mauve
That soothe the fiery day.

I know her not by plumping nuts,
By redded hips and haws,
Or by the silence hanging sad
Under the wind's sere pause.

But by her sighs I know her well—
They are like Sorrow's breath;
And by this longing, strangely still,
For something after death.

SHINTO

[Pg 58]

(MIYAJIMA, JAPAN, 1905)

Lowly temple and torii,
Shrine where the spirits of wind and wave
Find the worship and glory we
Give to the one God great and grave—

Lowly temple and torii,
Shrine of the dead, I hang my prayer
Here on your gates—the story see
And answer out of the earth and air.

For I am Nature's child, and you
Were by the children of Nature built.
Ages have on you smiled—and dew
On you for ages has been spilt—

Till you are beautiful as Time
Mossy and mellowing ever makes:
Wrapped as you are in lull—or rhyme
Of sounding drum that sudden breaks.

[Pg 59]

This is my prayer then, this: that I
Too may reverence all of life,
Lose no power and miss no high
Awe, of a world with wonder rife!

That I may build in spirit fair
Temples and torii on each place
That I have loved—Oh, hear it, Air,
Ocean and Earth, and grant your grace!

MAYA

[Pg 60]

(HIROSHIMA, JAPAN, 1905)

Pale sampans up the river glide,
With set sails vanishing and slow;
In the blue west the mountains hide,
As visions that too soon will go.

Across the rice-lands, flooded deep,
The peasant peacefully wades on—
As, in unfurrowed vales of sleep,
A phantom out of voidness drawn.

Over the temple cawing flies
The crow with carrion in his beak.
Buddha within lifts not his eyes
In pity or reproof meek;

[Pg 61]

Nor, in the bamboos, where they bow
A respite from the blinding sun,
The old priest—dreaming painless how
Nirvana's calm will come when won.

"All is illusion, *Maya*, all
The world of will," the spent East seems
Whispering in me; "and the call
Of Life is but a call of dreams."

A JAPANESE MOTHER

[Pg 62]

(IN TIME OF WAR)

The young stork sleeps in the pine-tree tops,
Down on the brink of the river.
My baby sleeps by the bamboo copse—
The bamboo copse where the rice field stops:
The bamboos sigh and shiver.

The white fox creeps from his hole in the hill;
I must pray to Inari.
I hear her calling me low and chill—
Low and chill when the wind is still
At night and the skies hang starry.

And ever she says, "He's dead! he's dead!
Your lord who went to battle.
How shall your baby now be fed,
Ukibo fed, with rice and bread—
What if I hush his prattle?"

[Pg 63]

The red moon rises as I slip back,
And the bamboo stems are swaying.
Inari was deaf—and yet the lack,
The fear and lack, are gone, and the rack,
I know not why—with praying.

For though Inari cared not at all,
Some other god was kinder.
I wonder why he has heard my call,
My giftless call—and what shall befall?...
Hope has but left me blinder!

THE DEAD GODS

[Pg 64]

I thought I plunged into that dire Abyss
Which is Oblivion, the house of Death.

I thought there blew upon my soul the breath
Of time that was but never more can be.

Ten thousand years within its void I thought
I lay, blind, deaf, and motionless, until—
Though with no eye nor ear—I felt the thrill
Of seeing, heard its phantoms move and sigh.

First one beside me spoke, in tones that told
He once had been a god—"Persephone,
Tear from thy brow its withered crown, for we
Are king and queen of Tartarus no more;
And that wan, shrivelled sceptre in thy hand,
Why dost thou clasp it still? Cast it away,
For now it hath no virtue that can sway
Dull shades or drive the Furies to their spoil.

[Pg 65]

"Cast it away, and give thy palm to mine:
Perchance some unobliterated spark
Of memory shall warm this dismal Dark.
Perchance—Vain! vain! love could not light such gloom."

He sank... Then in great ruin by him moved
Another as in travail of some thought
Near unto birth; and soon from lips distraught
By aged silence, fell, with hollow woe:

"Ah, Pluto, dost thou, one time lord of Styx
And Acheron make moan of night and cold?
Were we upon Olympus as of old
Laughter of thee would rock its festal height.

[Pg 66]

"But think, think thee of me, to whom or gloom
Or cold were more unknown than impotence!
See the unhurlèd thunderbolt brought hence
To mock me when I dream I still am Jove!"

Too much it was: I withered in the breath;
And lay again ten thousand lifeless years;
And then my soul shook, woke—and saw three biers
Chiselled of solid night majestically.

The forms outlaid upon them were enwound
As with the silence of eternity.
Numbing repose dwelt o'er them like a sea,
That long hath lost tide, wave and roar, in death.

"Ptah, Ammon, and Osiris are their names,"
A spirit hieroglyphed unto my soul.
"Ptah, Ammon, and Osiris—they who stole
The heart of Egypt from the God of gods:

[Pg 67]

"Aye, they! and these!" pointing to many wraiths
That stood around—Baal, Ormuzd, Indra, all
Whom frightened ignorance and sin's appall
Had given birth, close-huddled in despair.

Their eyes were fixed upon a cloven slope
Down whose descent still other forms a-fresh
From earth were drawn, by the unceasing mesh
Of Time to their irrevocable end.

"They are the gods," one said—"the gods whom men
Still taunt with wails for help."—Then a deep light
Upbore me from the Gulf, and thro' its might
I heard the worlds cry, "God alone is God!"

CALL TO YOUR MATE, BOB-WHITE

[Pg 68]

O call to your mate, bob-white, bob-white,
And I will call to mine.
Call to her by the meadow-gate,
And I will call by the pine.

Tell her the sun is hid, bob-white,
The windy wheat sways west.
Whistle again, call clear and run
To lure her out of her nest.

For when to the copse she comes, shy bird,
With Mary down the lane
I'll walk, in the dusk of the locust tops,
And be her lover again.

Ay, we will forget our hearts are old,
And that our hair is gray.
We'll kiss as we kissed at pale sunset
That summer's halcyon day.

That day, can it fade?... ah, bob, bob-white,
Still calling—calling still?
We're coming—a-coming, bent and weighed,
But glad with the old love's thrill!

[Pg 69]

THE DYING POET

[Pg 70]

Swing in thy splendour, O silent sun,
Drawing my heart with thee over the west!
Done is its day as thy day is done,
Fallen its quest!

Swoon into purple and rose, then die:
Tho' to arise again out of the dawn:
Die as I praise thee, ere thro' the Dark Lie
Of death I am drawn!

Sunk? art thou sunken? how great was life!
I like a child could cry for it again—
Cry for its beauty, pang, fleeting and strife,
Its women, its men!

For, how I drained it with love and delight!
Opened its heart with the magic of grief!
Reaped every season—its day and its night!
Loved every sheaf!

Aye, not a meadow my step has trod,
Never a flower swung sweet to my face,
Never a heart that was touched of God,
But taught me its grace.

Off from my lids then a moment yet,
Fingering Death, for again I must see
Lifted by memory all that I met
Under Time's lee.

There!... I'm a child again—fair, so fair!
Under the eyes does a marvel not burn?
Speak they not vision—and frenzy to dare,
That still in me yearn?...

Youth! my wild youth!—O, blood of my heart,
Still you can answer with swirling the thought!
Still like the mountain-born rapid can dart,
Joyous, distraught!...

Love, and her face again! there by the wood!—
Come, thou invisible Dark with thy mask!
Shall I not learn if she lives? and could
I more of thee ask?...

Turn me away from the ashen west,
Where love's sad planet unveils to the dusk.
Something is stealing like light from my breast—
Soul from its husk ...

Soft!... Where the dead feel the buried dead,
Where the high hermit-bell hourly tolls,

[Pg 71]

[Pg 72]

Bury me, near to the haunting tread
Of life that o'errolls.

THE OUTCAST

[Pg 73]

I did not fear,
But crept close up to Christ and said,
"Is he not here?"

They drew me back—
The seraphs who had never bled
Of weary lack—

But still I cried,
With torn robe, clutching at His feet,
"Dear Christ! He died

"So long ago!
Is he not here? Three days, unfleet
As mortal flow

"Of time I've sought—
Till Heaven's amaranthine ways
Seem as sere nought!"

A grieving stole
Up from His heart and waned the gaze
Of His clear soul

Into my eyes.
"He is not here," troubled He sighed.
"For none who dies

"Beliefless may
Bend lips to this sin-healing Tide,
And live alway."

Then darkness rose
Within me, and drear bitterness.
Out of its throes

I moaned, at last,
"Let me go hence! Take off the dress,
The charms Thou hast

"Around me strown!
Beliefless too am I without
His love—and lone!"

Unto the Gate
They led me, tho' with pitying doubt.
I did not wait

But stepped across
Its portal, turned not once to heed
Or know my loss.

Then my dream broke,
And with it every loveless creed—
Beneath love's stroke.

[Pg 74]

[Pg 75]

APRIL

[Pg 76]

A laughter of wind and a leaping of cloud,
And April, oh, out under the blue!
The brook is awake and the blackbird loud
In the dew!

But how does the robin high in the beech,
Beside the wood with its shake and toss,
Know it—the frenzy of bluets to reach

Thro' the moss!

And where did the lark ever learn his speech?
Up, wildly sweet, he's over the mead!
Is more than the rapture of earth can teach
In its creed?

[Pg 77]

I never shall know—I never shall care!
'Tis, oh, enough to live and to love!
To laugh and warble and dream and dare
Are to prove!

AUGUST GUESTS

[Pg 78]

The wind slipt over the hill
And down the valley.
He dimpled the cheek of the rill
With a cooling kiss.
Then hid on the bank a-glee
And began to rally
The rushes—Oh,
I love the wind for this!

A cloud blew out of the west
And spilt his shower
Upon the lily-bud crest
And the clematis.
Then over the virgin corn
Besprinkled a dower
Of dew-gems—And,
I love the cloud for this!

TO A DOVE

[Pg 79]

1

Thy mellow passioning amid the leaves,
That tremble dimly in the summer dusk,
Falls sad along the oatland's sallow sheaves
And haunts above the runnel's voice a-husk
With plashy willow and bold-wading reed.
The solitude's dim spell it breaketh not,
But softer mourns unto me from the mead
Than airs that in the wood intoning start,
Or breath of silences in dells begot
To soothe some grief-wan soul with sin a-smart.

2

A votaress art thou of Simplicity,
Who hath one fane—the heaven above thy nest;
One incense—love; one stealing litany
Of peace from rivered vale and upland crest.
Yea, thou art Hers, who makes prayer of the breeze,
Hope of the cool upwelling from sweet soils,
Faith of the darkening distance, charities
Of vesper scents, and of the glow-worm's throb
Joy whose first leaping rends the care-wound coils
That would earth of its heavenliness rob.

[Pg 80]

3

But few, how few her worshippers! For we
Cast at a myriad shrines our souls, to rise
Beliefless, unanointed, bound not free,
To sacrificing a vain sacrifice!
Let thy lone innocence then quickly null
Within our veins doubt-led and wrong desire—
Or drugging knowledge that but fills o'erfull
Of feverous mystery the days we drain!

Be thy warm notes like an Orphean lyre
To lead us to life's Arcady again!

AT TINTERN ABBEY

[Pg 81]

(June, 1903)

O Tintern, Tintern! evermore my dreams
Troubled by thy grave beauty shall be born;
Thy crumbling loveliness and ivy streams
Shall speak to me for ever, from this morn;
The wind-wild daws about thy arches drifting,
Clouds sweeping o'er thy ruin to the sea,
Gray Tintern, all the hills about thee, lifting
Their misty waving woodland verdancy!

The centuries that draw thee to the earth
In envy of thy desolated charm,
The summers and the winters, the sky's girth
Of sunny blue or bleakness, seek thy harm.
But would that I were Time, then only tender
Touch upon thee should fall as on I sped;
Of every pillar would I be defender,
Of every mossy window—of thy dead!

[Pg 82]

Thy dead beneath obliterated stones
Upon the sod that is at last thy floor,
Who list the Wye not as it lonely moans
Nor heed thy Gothic shadows grieving o'er.
O Tintern, Tintern! trysting-place, where never
Are wanting mysteries that move the breast,
I'll hear thy beauty calling, ah, for ever—
Till sinks within me the last voice to rest!

OH, GO NOT OUT

[Pg 83]

Oh, go not out upon the storm,
Go not, my sweet, to Swalchie pool!
A witch tho' she be dead may charm
 Thee and befool.

A wild night 'tis! her lover's moan,
Down under ooze and salty weed,
She'll make thee hear—and then her own!
 Till thou shalt heed.

And it will suck upon thy heart—
The sorcery within her cry—
Till madness out of thee upstart,
 And rage to die.

[Pg 84]

For him she loved, she laughed to death!
And as afloat his chill hand lay,
"Ha, ha! to hell I sent his wraith!"
 Did she not say?

And from his finger strive to draw
The ring that bound him to her spell?
Till on her closed his hand whose awe
 No curse could quell?

Oh, yea! and tho' she struggled pale,
Did it not hold her cold and fast,
Till crawled the tide o'er rock and swale,
 To her at last?

Down in the pool where she was swept
He holds her—Oh, go not a-near!
For none has heard her cry but wept
 And died that year.

HUMAN LOVE

[Pg 85]

We, spoke of God and Fate,
And of that Life—which some await—
 Beyond the grave,
"It will be fair," she said,
"But love is here!
I only crave thy breast
Not God's when I am dead.
For He nor wants nor needs
 My little love.
But it may be, if I love thee
And those whose sorrow daily bleeds,
He knows—and somehow heeds!"

ASHORE

[Pg 86]

What are the heaths and hills to me?
 I'm a-longing for the sea!
What are the flowers that dapple the dell,
And the ripple of swallow-wings over the dusk;
What are the church and the folk who tell
Their hearts to God?—my heart is a husk!
 (I'm a-longing for the sea!)

Aye! for there is no peace to me—
 But on the peaceless sea!
Never a child was glad at my knee,
And the soul of a woman has never been mine.
What can a woman's kisses be?—
I fear to think how her arms would twine.
 (I'm a-longing for the sea!)

[Pg 87]

So, not a home and ease for me—
 But still the homeless sea!
Where I may swing my sorrow to sleep
In a hammock hung o'er the voice of the waves,
Where I may wake when the tempests heap
And hurl their hate—and a brave ship saves.
 (I'm a-longing for the sea!)

Then when I die, a grave for me—
 But in the graveless sea!
Where is no stone for an eye to spell
Thro' the lichen a name, a date and a verse.
Let me be laid in the deeps that swell
And sigh and wander—an ocean hearse!
 (I'm a-longing for the sea!)

THE VICTORY

[Pg 88]

See, see!—the blows at his breast,
 The abyss at his back,
The perils and pains that pressed,
 The doubts in a pack,
That hunted to drag him down
 Have triumphed? and now
He sinks, who climbed for the crown
 To the Summit's brow?

No!—though at the foot he lies,
 Fallen and vain,
With gaze to the peak whose skies
 He could not attain,
The victory is, with strength—
 No matter the past!—
He'd dare it again, the dark length,

AT WINTER'S END

[Pg 89]

The weedy fallows winter-worn,
Where cattle shiver under sodden hay.
The plough-lands long and lorn—
The fading day.

The sullen shudder of the brook,
And winds that wring the writhen trees in vain
For drearier sound or look—
The lonely rain.

The crows that train o'er desert skies
In endless caravans that have no goal
But flight—where darkness flies—
From Pole to Pole.

[Pg 90]

The sombre zone of hills around
That shrink in misty mournfulness from sight,
With sunset aureoles crowned—
Before the night.

MOTHER-LOVE

[Pg 91]

The seraphs would sing to her
And from the River
Dip her cool grails of radiant Life.
The angels would bring to her,
Sadly a-quiver,
Laurels she never had won in earth-strife.

And often they'd fly with her
O'er the star-spaces—
Silent by worlds where mortals are pent.
Yea, even would sigh with her,
Sigh with wan faces!
When she sat weeping of strange discontent.

But one said, "Why weapest thou
Here in God's heaven—
Is it not fairer than soul can see?"
"'Tis fair, ah!—but keepest thou
Not me deprived
Of some one—somewhere—who needeth most me?"

[Pg 92]

"For tho' the day never fades
Over these meadows,
Tho' He has robed me and crowned—yet, yet!
Some love-fear for ever shades
All with sere shadows—
Had I no child *there*—whom I forget?"

TO A SINGING WARBLER

[Pg 93]

"Beauty! all—all—is beauty?"
Was ever a bird so wrong!
"No young in the nest, no mate, no duty?"
Ribald! is this your song?

"Glad it is ended," are you?
The Spring and its nuptial fear?
"And freedom is better than love?" beware you,
There will be May next year!

"Beauty!" again, still "beauty"?

Wait till the winter comes!
Till kestrel and hungry kite seek booty
And the bleak cold benumbs!

[Pg 94]

Wait? nay, fling it to heaven
The false little song you prate!
Too sweet are its fancies not to leaven
Even the rudest fate!

SONGS TO A. H. R.

[Pg 95]

I

THE WORLD'S, AND MINE

The world may hear
The wind at his trees,
The lark in her skies,
The sea on his leas;
May hear Song rise
On words as immortal
As any that sound
Thro' Heaven's Portal.
But I have a music they can never know—
The touch of you, soul of you, heart of you, Oh!
All else that is said or sung 's but a part of you—
Be it forever so!

[Pg 96]

II

LOVE-CALL IN SPRING

Not only the lark but the robin too
(Oh, heart o' my heart, come into the wood!)
Is singing the air to gladness new
As the breaking bud
And the freshet's flood!

Not only the peeping grass and the scent—
(Oh, love o' my life, fly unto me here!)
Of violets coming ere April's spent—
But the frog's shrill cheer
And the crow's wild jeer!

Not only the blue, not only the breeze,
(Oh, soul o' my heart, why tarry so long!)
But sun that is sweeter upon the trees
Than rills that throng
To the brooklet's song!

[Pg 97]

Oh, heart o' my heart, oh, heart o' my love,
(Oh soul o' my soul, haste unto me, haste!)
For spring is below and God is above—
But all is a waste
Without thee—haste!

III

MATING

The bliss of the wind in the redbud ringing!
What shall we do with the April days!
Kingcups soon will be up and swinging—
What shall we do with May's!

The cardinal flings, "They are made for mating!"
Out on the bough he flutters, a flame.
Thrush-flutes echo, "For mating's elating!
Love is its other name!"

They know! know it! but better, oh, better,

[Pg 98]

Dearest, than ever a bird in Spring,
Know we to make each moment debtor
Unto love's burgeoning!

IV

UNTOLD

Could I, a poet,
Implant the truth of you,
Seize it and sow it
As Spring on the world.
There were no need
To fling (forsooth) of you
Fancies that only lovers heed!
No, but unfurled,
The bloom, the sweet of you,
(As unto me they are opened oft)
Would with their beauty's breath repeat of you
All that my heart breathes loud or soft!

[Pg 99]

V

LOVE-WATCH

My love's a guardian-angel
Who camps about thy heart,
Never to See thine enemy,
Nor from thee turn apart.

Whatever dark may shroud thee
And hide thy stars away,
With vigil sweet his wings shall beat
About thee till the day.

VI

AT AMALFI

Come to the window, you who are mine.
Waken! the night is calling.
Sit by me here—with the moon's fair shine
Into your deep eyes falling.

[Pg 100]

The sea afar is a fearful gloom;
Lean from the casement, listen!
Anear it breaks with a faery spume,
Spraying the rocks that glisten.

The little white town below lies deep
As eternity in slumber.
O, you who are mine, how a glance can reap
Beauties beyond all number!

And, how as sails that at anchor ride
Our spirits rock together
On a sea of love—lit as this tide
With tenderest star-weather!

Till the gray dawn is redd'ning up,
Over the moon low-lying.
Come, come away—we have drunk the cup:
Ours is the dream undying!

[Pg 101]

VII

ON THE PACIFIC

A storm broods far on the foam of the deep;
The moon-path gleams before.
A day and a night, a night and a day,
And the way, love, will be o'er.

Six thousand wandering miles we have come

And never a sail have seen.
The sky above and the sea below
And the drifting clouds between.

Yet in our hearts unheaving hope
And light and joy have slept.
Nor ever lonely has seemed the wave
Tho' heaving wild it leapt.

For there is talismanic might
Within our vows of love
To breathe us over all seas of life—
On to that Port, above,

Where the great Captain of all ships
Shall anchor them or send
Them forth on a vaster Voyage, yea,
On one that shall not end.

And upon *that* we two, I think,
Together still shall sail.
Oh, may it be, my own, or may
We perish in death's gale!

[Pg 102]

THE ATONER

[Pg 103]

Winter has come in sackcloth and ashes
(Penance for Summer's enverdured sheaves).
Bitterly, cruelly, bleakly he lashes
His limbs that are naked of grass and leaves.

He moans in the forest for sins unforgiven
(Sins of the revelous days of June)—
Moans while the sun drifts dull from the heaven,
Giftless of heat's beshriving boon.

Long must he mourn, and long be his scourging,
(Long will the day-god aloof frown cold),
Long will earth listen the rue of his dirging—
Till the dark beads of his days are told.

TO THE SPRING WIND

[Pg 104]

Ah, what a changeling!
Yester you dashed from the west,
Altho' it is Spring,
And scattered the hail with maniac zest
Thro' the shivering corn—in scorn
For the labour of God and man.
And now from the plentiful South you haste,
With lovingest fingers,
To ruefully lift and wooingly fan
The lily that lingers a-faint on the stalk:
As if the chill waste
Of the earth's May-dreams,
The flowers so full of her joy,
Were not—as it seems—
A wanton attempt to destroy.

THE RAMBLE

[Pg 105]

Down the road which asters tangle,
Thro' the gap where green-briar twines,
By the path where dry leaves dangle
Sere from the ivy vines

We go—by sedgy fallows

And along the stifled brook,
Till it stops in lushy mallows
Just at the bridge's crook.

Then, again, o'er fence, thro' thicket,
To the mouth of the rough ravine,
Where the weird leaf-hidden cricket
Chirrs thro' the weirder green,

There's a way, o'er rocks—but quicker
Is the beat of heart and foot,
As the beams above us flicker
Sun upon moss and root!

And we leap—as wildness tingles
From the air into our blood—
With a cry thro' golden dingles
Hid in the heart of the wood.

Oh, the wood with winds a-wrestle!
With the nut and acorn strown!
Oh, the wood where creepers trestle
Tree unto tree o'ergrown!

With a climb the ledging summit
Of the hill is reached in glee.
For an hour we gaze off from it
Into the sky's blue sea.

But a bell and sunset's crimson
Soon recall the homeward path.
And we turn as the glory dims on
The hay-field's mounded math.

Thro' the soft and silent twilight
We come, to the stile at last,
As the clear undying eyelight
Of the stars tells day is past.

[Pg 106]

[Pg 107]

RETURN

[Pg 108]

Ah, it was here—September
And silence filled the air—
I came last year to remember,
And muse, hid away from care.
It was here I came—the thistle
Was trusting her seed to the wind;
The quail in the croft gave whistle
As now—and the fields lay thinned.

I know how the hay was steeping,
Brown mows under mellow haze;
How a frail cloud-flock was creeping
As now over lone sky-ways.
Just there where the catbird's calling
Her mock-hurt note by the shed,
The use-worn wain was stalling
In the weedy brook's dry bed.

And the cricket, lone little chimer
Of day-long dreams in the vines,
Chirred on like a dotting rhymer
O'er-vain of his firstling lines.
He's near me now by the aster,
Beneath whose shadowy spray
A sultry bee seeps faster
As the sun slips down the day.

And there are the tall primroses
Like maidens waiting to dance.
They stood in the same shy poses
Last year, as if to entrance
The stately mulleins to waken

[Pg 109]

From death and lead them around:
And still they will stand untaken,
Till drops their gold to the ground.

Yes, it was here—September
And silence round me yearned.
Again I've come to remember,
Again for musing returned
To the searing fields' assuaging,
And the falling leaves' sad balm:
Away from the world's keen waging—
To harvest and hills and calm.

[Pg 110]

LISETTE

[Pg 111]

Oh ... there was love in her heart—no doubt of it—
Under the anger.
But see what came out of it!

Not a knave, he!—A smitten rhyme-smatterer,
Cloaking in languor
And heartache to flatter her.

And just as a woman will—even the best of them—
She yielded—brittle.
God spare me the rest of them!

For! though but kisses—she swore!—he had of her,
Was it so little?
She thought 'twas not bad of her,

[Pg 112]

Said I would lavish a burning hour-full
On any grisette.
And silenced me, powerful!

But she was mine, and blood is inflammable—
For a Lisette!
My rage was undammable....

Could a stiletto's one prick be prettier?
Look at the gaping.
No?—then you're her pitier!

Pah! she's the better, and I ... I'm your prisoner.
Loose me the strapping—
I'll lay one more kiss on her.

FROM ONE BLIND

[Pg 113]

I cannot say thy cheek is like the rose,
Thy hair like rippled sunbeams, and thine eyes
Like violets, April-rich and sprung of God.
My barren gaze can never know what throes
Such boons of beauty waken, tho' I rise
Each day a-tremble with the ruthless hope
That light will pierce my useless lids—then grope
Till night, blind as the worm within his clod.

Yet unto me thou art not less divine,
I touch thy cheek—and know the mystery hid
Within the twilight breeze; I smooth thy hair
And understand how slipping hours may twine
Themselves into eternity: yea, rid
Of all but love, I kiss thine eyes and seem
To see all beauty God Himself may dream.
Why then should I o'ermuch for earth-sight care?

[Pg 114]

IN A CEMETERY

When Autumn's melancholy robes the land
With silence, and sad fadings mystical
Of other years move thro' the mellow fields,
I turn unto this meadow of the dead,
Strewn with the leaves stormed from October trees,
And wonder if my resting shall be dug
Here by this cedar's moan or under the sway
Of yonder cypress—lair of winds that rove
As Valkyries sent from Valhalla's court
In search of worthy slain.
And sundry times with questioning I tease
The entombed of their estate—seeking to know
Whether 'tis sweeter in the grave to feel
The oblivion of Nature's silent flow,
Or here to wander wistful o'er her face.
Whether the harvesting of pain and joy
Which men call Life ends so, or whether death
Pours the warm chrism of Immortality
Into each human heart whose glow is spent.

[Pg 115]

And oft the Silence hears me. For a voice
Of sighing wind may answer, or a gaze,
Though wordless, from a marble seraph's face.
Or sometimes from unspeakable deeps of gold,
That ebb along the west, revealings wing
And tremble, like ethereal swift tongues
Unskilled of human speech, about my heart—
Till youth, age, death, even earth's all, it seems,
Are but brave moments wakened in that Soul,
To whom infinities are as a span,
Eternities as bird-flights o'er the sun,
And worlds as sands blown from Sahara's wilds
Into the ceaseless surging of the sea....

Then twilight hours lead back my wandered spirit
From out the wilderness of mystery
Whence none may find a path to the Unknown,
And chastened to content I turn me home.

WAKING

[Pg 116]

Oh, the long dawn, the weary, endless dawn,
When sleep's oblivion is torn away
From love that died with dying yesterday
But still unburied in the heart lies on!

Oh, the sick gray, the twitter in the trees,
The sense of human waking o'er the earth!
The quivering memories of love's fair birth
Now strown as deathless flowers o'er its decease!

Oh, the regret, and oh, regretlessness,
Striving for sovranity within the soul!
Oh, fear that life shall never more be whole,
And immortality but make it less!

STORM-EBB

[Pg 117]

Dusking amber dimly creeps
Over the vale,
Lit by the kildee's silver sweeps,
Sad with his wail.

Eastward swing the silent clouds
Into the night.
Burdens of day they seem—in crowds
Hurled from earth's sight.

Tilting gulls whip whitely far
Over the lake,
Tirelessly on o'er buoy and spar
Till they o'ertake

[Pg 118]

Shadow and mingled mist—and then
Vanish to wing
Still the bewildering night-fen,
Where the waves ring.

Dusking amber dimly dies
Out of the vale.
Dead from the dunes the winds arise—
Ghosts of the gale.

LINGERING

[Pg 119]

I lingered still when you were gone,
When tryst and trust were o'er,
While memory like a wounded swan
In sorrow sung love's lore.

I lingered till the whippoorwill
Had cried delicious pain
Over the wild-wood—in its thrill
I heard your voice again.

I lingered and the mellow breeze
Blew to me sweetly dewed—
Its touch awoke the sorceries
Your last caresses brewed.

[Pg 120]

But when the night with silent start
Had sown her starry seed,
The harvest which sprang in my heart
Was loneliness and need.

FAUN-CALL

[Pg 121]

Oh, who is he will follow me
With a singing,
Down sunny roads where windy odes
Of the woods are ringing?

Where leaves are tossed from branches lost
In a tangle
Of vines that vie to clamber high—
But to vault and dangle!

Oh, who is he?—His eye must be
As a lover's
To leap and woo the chicory's hue
In the hazel-hovers!

[Pg 122]

His hope must dance like radiance
That hurries
To scatter shades from the silent glades
Where the quick hare scurries.

And he must see that Autumn's glee
And her laughter
From his lips and heart will quell all smart—
Of before and after!

THE LIGHTHOUSEMAN

[Pg 123]

When at evening smothered lightnings

Burn the clouds with fretted fires;
When the stars forget to glisten,
And the winds refuse to listen
To the song of my desires,
 Oh, my love, unto thee!

When the livid breakers angered
Churn against my stormy tower;
When the petrel flying faster
Brings an omen to the master
Of his vessel's fated hour—
 Oh, the reefs! ah, the sea!

Then I climb the climbing stairway,
Turn the light across the storm;
You are watching, fisher-maiden
For the token-flashes laden
With a love death could not harm—
 Lo, they come, swift and free!

One—that means, "I think of thee!"
 Two—"I swear me thine!"
Three—Ah, hear me tho' you sleep!—
 Is, that I know thee mine!
Thro' the darkness, One, Two, Three,
 All the night they sweep:
Thro' raging darkness o'er the deep,
 One—and Two—and Three.

[Pg 124]

SERENITY

[Pg 125]

And could I love it more—this simple scene
Of cot-strewn hills and fields long-harvested,
That lie as if forgotten were all green,
 So bare, so dead!

Or could my gaze more tenderly entwine
Each pallid beech and silvery sycamore
Outreaching arms in patience to divine
 If winter's o'er?

Ah no, the wind has blown into my veins
The blue infinity of sky, the sense
Of meadows free to-day from icy pains—
 From wintry vents.

And sunny peace more virgin than the glow
Falling from eve's first star into the night,
Brings hope believing what it ne'er can know
 With mortal sight.

[Pg 126]

WANTON JUNE

[Pg 127]

I knew she would come!
Sarcastic November
Laughed cold and glum
On the last red ember
Of forest leaves.
He was laughing, the scorner,
At me forlorn
Than any that grieves—
Because I asked him if June would come!

But I knew she would come
When snow-hearted winter
Gripped river and loam,
And the wind sped flinter
On icy heel,
I was chafing my sorrow
And yearning to borrow

[Pg 128]

A hope that would steal
Across the hours—till June should come.

And now she is here—
The wanton!—I follow
Her steps, ever near,
To the shade of the hollow
Where violets blow:
And chide her for leaving,
Tho' half believing
She taunted me so,
To make her abided return more dear.

SPIRIT OF RAIN

[Pg 129]

(MIYANOSHITA, JAPAN, 1905)

Spirit of rain—
With all thy mountain mists that wander lonely
As a gray train
Of souls newly discarnate seeking new life only!

Spirit of rain!
Leading them thro' dim torii, up fane-ways onward
Till not in vain
They tremble upon the peaks and plunge rejoicing downward.

Spirit of rain!
So would I lead my dead thoughts high and higher,
Till they regain
Birth and the beauty of a new life's fire.

AUTUMN AT THE BRIDGE

[Pg 130]

Brown dropping of leaves,
Soft rush of the wind,
Slow searing of sheaves
On the hill;
Green plunging of frogs,
Cool lisp of the brook,
Far barking of dogs
At the mill;
Hot hanging of clouds,
High poise of the hawk,
Flush laughter of crowds
From the Ridge;
Nut-falling, quail-calling,
Wheel-rumbling, bee-mumbling—
Oh, sadness, gladness, madness,
Of an autumn day at the bridge!

TEARLESS

[Pg 131]

Do women weep when men have died?
It cannot be!
For I have sat here by his side,
Breathing dear names against his face,
That he must list to, were his place
Over God's throne—
Yet have I wept no tear and made no moan.

Do women weep—not gaze stone-eyed?
Grief seems in vain.
Do women weep?—I was his bride—
They brought him to me cold and pale—
Upon his lids I saw the trail

Of deathly pain.
They said, "Her tears will fall like autumn rain."

[Pg 132]

I cannot weep! Not if hot tears,
Dropped on his lids,
Might burn him back to life and years
Of yearning love, would any rise
To flood the anguish from my eyes—
And I'm his bride!
Ah me, do women weep when men have died?

SUNSET-LOVERS

[Pg 133]

Upon how many a hill,
Across how many a field,
Beside how many a river's restful flowing,
They stand, with eyes a-thrill,
And hearts of day-rue healed,
Gazing, O wistful sun, upon thy going!

They have forgotten life,
Forgotten sunless death;
Desire is gone—is it not gone for ever?
No memory of strife
Have they, or pain-sick breath.
No hopes to fear or fears hope cannot sever.

Silent the gold steals down
The west, and mystery
Moves deeper in their hearts and settles darker.
'Tis faded—the day's crown;
But strange and shadowy
They see the Unseen as night falls stark and starker.

[Pg 134]

Like priests whose altar fires
Are spent, immovable
They stand, in awful ecstasy uplifted.
Zephyrs awake tree-lyres,
The starry deeps are full,
Earth with a mystic majesty is gifted.

Ah, sunset-lovers, though
Time were but pulsing pain,
And death no more than its eternal ceasing,
Would you not choose the throe,
Hold the oblivion vain,
To have beheld so many a day's releasing?

THE EMPTY CROSS

[Pg 135]

The eve of Golgotha had come,
And Christ lay shrouded in the garden Tomb:
Among the olives, Oh, how dumb,
How sad the sun incarnadined the gloom!

The hill grew dim—the pleading cross
Reached empty arms toward the closing gate.
Jerusalem, oh, count thy loss!
Oh, hear ye! hear ye! ere it be too late!

Reached bleeding arms—but how in vain!
The murmurous multitude within the wall
Already had forgot His pain—
To-morrow would forget the cross—and all!

[Pg 136]

They knew not Rome, before its sign,
Bending her brow bound with the nations' threne,
Would sweep all lands from Nile to Rhine
In servitude unto the Nazarene.

Nor knew that millions would forsake
Ancestral shrines great with the glow of time,
And lifting up its token shake
Aeons with thrill of love or battle's crime.

With empty arms aloft it stood:
Ah, Scribe and Pharisee, ye builded well!
The cross emblotted with His blood
Mounts, highest Hope of men, against earth's hell!

UNBURTHENED

[Pg 137]

Not grief nor the sunny wine
Of gladness steeps my spirit as I gaze
Over these meads that lie engarmented
In stubble robes of winter-weary brown.
For, as those solitary trees afar
Have reached unbudding boughs to the dim day
And melted on the infinite calm of space,
So have I reached, and am no more distraught
With the quivering pangs of memory's yesterday.
But the boon of blue skies deeper than despair,
Of rest that rises as a tide of sleep,
Of care borne on the plumes of swan-swift clouds
Away to the sullen shades of the low west,
Have lulled my soul with soft infinitude—
And lent it faith's illimitable Peace.

SONG

[Pg 138]

Her voice is vibrant beauty dipt
In dreams of infinite sorrow and delight.
Thro' an awaiting soul 'tis slipt
And lo, words spring that breathe immortal.

TO HER WHO SHALL COME

[Pg 139]

1

Out of the night of lovelessness I call
Thee, as, in a chill chamber where no rays
Of unbelievable light and freedom fall,
Might cry one manacled! And tho' the ways
Thou'lt come I cannot see; tho' my heart's sore
With emptiness when morning's silent grays
Wake me to long aloneness; yet I know
Thou hast been with me, who like dawn wilt go
Beside me, when I have found thee, evermore!

2

So in the garden of my heart each day
I plant thee a flower. Now the pansy, peace,
And now the lily, faith—or now a spray
Of the climbing ivy, hope. And they ne'er cease
Around the still unblossoming rose of love
To bend in fragrant tribute to her sway.
Then—for thy shelter from life's sultrier suns,
The oak of strength I set o'er joy that runs
With brooklet glee from winds that grieve above.

[Pg 140]

3

But where now art thou? Watching with love's eye
The eve-star wander? Listening through dim trees
Some thrilled muezzin of the forest cry

From his leafy minaret? Or by the sea's
Blue brim, while the spectral moon half o'er it hangs
Like the faery isle of Avalon, do these
My yearnings speak to thee of days thy feet
Have never trod?—Sweet, sweet, oh, more than sweet,
My own, must be our meeting's mystic pangs.

4

And will be soon! For last night near to-day,
Dreaming, God called me thro' the space-built sphere
Of heaven and said, "Come, waiting one, and lay
Thine ear unto my Heart—there thou shalt hear
The secrets of this world where evils war."
Such things I heard as must rend mortal clay
To tell, and trembled—till God, pitying,
Said, "Listen" ... Oh, my love, I heard thee sing
Out of thy window to the morning star!

[Pg 141]

STORM-TWILIGHT

[Pg 142]

Tossing, swirling, swept by the wind,
 Beaten abaft by the rain,
The swallows high in the sodden sky
 Circle oft and again.

They rise and sink and drift and swing,
 Twitterless in the chill;
A-haste, for stark is the coming dark
 Over the wet of the hill.

Wildly, swiftly, at last they stream
 Into their chimney home.
A livid gash in the west, a crash—
 Then silence, sadness, gloam.

SLAVES

[Pg 143]

A host of bloody centuries lie prone
Upon the fields of Time—but still the wake
Of Progress loud is haunted with the groan
Of myriads, from whose peaceful veins, to slake
His scarlet thirst, has War, fierce Polypheme
Of fate, insatiately drunk life's stream.
We bid the courier lightning leap along
Its instant path with spirit speed—command
Stars lost in night-eternity to throng
Before the magnet eye of Science—stand
On Glory's peak and triumphingly cry
Out mastery of earth and sea and air.
But unto War's necessity we bare
Our piteous breasts—and impotently die.

AVOWAL TO THE NIGHTINGALE

[Pg 144]

Tho' thou hast ne'er unpent thy pain's delight
Upon these airs, bird of the poet's love,
Yet must I sing thy singing! For the Night
Has poured her jewels o'er the lap of heaven
As they who hear thee say thou dost above
The wood such ecstasies as were not given
By nestling breasts of Venus to the dove.

2

Oft have I watched the moon with her fair gold

Still clung to by the tattered mists of day
Arise and look for thee. Then hope grew bold.
And almost I could see how the near laurels
Would tremble with thy trembling: but the sway
Of bards who wreathed thee with unfading chorals
Has held my longing lips from this poor lay.

3

[Pg 145]

But take it now. And if the lark—who is
Too high for earth—may vie for praise with thee
In aery rhapsody, yet it is his
To sing of day and joy, while thou of sorrow
And night o'erhovering singest. So thou'lt be
More dear than he—till hearts shall cease to borrow
From grief the healing for life's mystery.

WILDNESS

[Pg 146]

To drift with the drifting clouds,
And blow with the blow of breezes,
To ripple with waves and murmur with caves
To soar, as the sea-mew pleases!

To dip with the dipping sails,
And burn with the burning heaven—
My life! my soul! for the infinite roll
Of a day to wildness given!

BEFORE AUTUMN

[Pg 147]

Summer's last moon has waned—
 Waned
As amber fires
 Of an Aztec shrine.
The invisible breath of coming death has stained
The withering leaves with its nepenthean wine—
 Autumn's near.

Winds in the woodland moan—
 Moan
As memories
 Of a chilling yore.
Magnolia seeds like Indian beads are strown
From crimson pods along the earth's sere floor—
 Autumn's near.

Solitude slowly steals,
 Steals
Her silent way
 By the songless brook.
At the gnarly yoke of a solemn oak she kneels,
The musing joy of sadness in her look—
 Autumn's near.

[Pg 148]

Yes, with her golden days—
 Days
When hope and toil
 Are at peace and rest—
Autumn is near, and the tired year 'mid praise
Lies down with leaf and blossom on his breast—
 Autumn's near.

FULFILMENT

[Pg 149]

A-bask in the mellow beauty of the ripening sun,

Sad with the lingering sense of summer's purpose done,
The shorn and searing fields stretch from me one by one
 Along the creek.

The corn-stalks drop their shadows down the fallow hill;
Wearing autumnal warmth the farm sleeps by the mill,
Around each heavy eave low smoke hangs blue and still—
 Life's flow is weak.

Along the weedy roads and lanes I walk—or pause—
Ponder a fallen nut or quirking crow whose caws
Seem with prehuman hintings fraught or ancient awes
 Of forest deeps.

Of forest deeps the pale-face hunter never trod,
Nor Indian, with the silent stealth of Nature shod;
Deeps tense with the timelessness and solitude of God,
 Who never sleeps.

And many times has Autumn, on her harvest way,
Gathered again into the earth leaf, fruit, and spray;
Here many times dwelt rueful as she dwells to-day,
 The while she reaps.

[Pg 150]

LAST SIGHT OF LAND

[Pg 151]

The clouds in woe hang far and dim:
I look again, and lo,
Only a faint and shadow line
 Of shore—I watch it go.

The gulls have left the ship and wheel
 Back to the cliff's gray wraith.
Will it be so of all our thoughts
 When we set sail on Death?

And what will the last sight be of life
 As lone we fare and fast?
Grief and the face we love in mist—
 Then night and awe too vast?

Or the dear light of Hope—like that,
 Oh, see, from the lost shore
Kindling and calling "Onward, you
 Shall reach the Evermore!"

[Pg 152]

SILENCE

[Pg 153]

Silence is song unheard,
 Is beauty never born,
Is light forgotten—left unstirred
 Upon Creation's morn.

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONG-SURF ***

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