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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ONE DAY & ANOTHER: A LYRICAL ECLOGUE ***

ONE DAY AND ANOTHER

A Lyrical Eclogue

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A Lyrical Eclogue

MADISON CAWEIN

THE LYRIC LIBRARY

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(Incorporated)
1901**

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The poem herewith presented was first published some ten years ago in a volume entitled *Days and Dreams*. The original verses have been re-written throughout and extensively added to, making it comparatively a new poem.

LAKEVIEW PRESS, SOUTH FRAMINGHAM, MASS.

TO

G. F. M.

**THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED IN MEMORY
OF MANY DAYS.**

*What though I dreamed of mountain heights,
Of peaks, the barriers of the world,
Around whose tops the Northern Lights
And tempests are unfurled.*

[Pg 7]

*Mine are the footpaths leading through
Life's lowly fields and woods,—with rifts,
Above, of heaven's Eden blue,—
By which the violet lifts*

*Its shy appeal; and holding up
Its chalice'd gold, like some wild wine,
Along the hillside, cup on cup,
Blooms bright the celandine.*

*Where soft upon each flowering stock
The butterfly spreads damask wings;
And under grassy loam and rock
The cottage cricket sings.*

*Where overhead eve blooms with fire,
In which the new moon bends her bow,
And, arrow-like, one white star by her
Burns through the afterglow.*

*I care not, so the sesame
I find; the magic flower there,
Whose touch unseals each mystery
In water, earth and air.*

[Pg 8]

*That in the oak tree lets me hear
Its heart's deep speech, its soul's wise words;
And to my mind makes crystal clear
The melodies of birds.*

*Why should I care, who live aloof
Beyond the din of life and dust,
While dreams still share my humble roof,
And love makes sweet my crust?*

ONE DAY AND ANOTHER

[Pg 9]

A Lyrical Eclogue

PART I

LATE SPRING

*The mottled moth at eventide
Beats glimmering wings against the pane;
The slow, sweet lily opens wide,
White in the dusk like some dim stain;
The garden dreams on every side
And breathes faint scents of rain.
Among the flowering stocks they stand:
A crimson rose is in his hand.*

Herein the dearness of her is;
The thirty perfect days of June
Made one, in maiden loveliness
Were not more sweet to clasp and kiss,
With love not more in tune.

Ah me! I think she is too true,
Too spiritual for life's rough way;
For in her eyes her soul looks new—
Two bluet blossoms, watchet-blue,
Are not so pure as they.

[Pg 10]

So good, so beautiful is she,
So soft and white, so fond and fair,
Sometimes my heart fears she may be
Not long for me, and secretly
A sister of the air.

2

Dusk deepens. A whippoorwill calls.

The whippoorwills are calling where
The golden west is graying;
"Tis time," they say, "to meet him there—
Why are you still delaying?

"He waits you where the old beech throws
Its gnarly shadow over
Wood-violet and the bramble rose,
Frail maiden-fern and clover.

"Where elder and the sumach creep
Above your garden's paling,
Whereon at noon the lizards sleep
Like lichens on the railing.

"Come! ere the early rising moon's
Gold floods the violet valleys;
Where mists, like phantom picaroons
Anchor their stealthy galleys.

[Pg 11]

"Come! while the deepening amethyst
Of dusk above is falling—
'Tis time to tryst! 'tis time to tryst!"
The whippoorwills are calling.

They call you to these twilight ways
With dewy odor dripping—
Ah, girlhood, through the rosy haze
Come like a moonbeam slipping.

3

He enters her garden, speaking dreamily:

There is a fading inward of the day,
And all the pansy heaven clasps one star;
The dwindling acres eastward glimmer gray,
While all the world to westward smoulders far.

Now to your glass will you pass for the last time?
Pass! humming some ballad, I know,—
Here where I wait it is late and is past time—
Late! and the moments are slow, are slow.

There is a drawing downward of the night;
The bridegroom Heaven bends down to kiss the moon;
Above, the heights hang silver in her light;
Below, the woods stretch purple, deep in June.

[Pg 12]

There in the dew is it you hiding lawny?
You, or a moth in the vines?—
You!—by your hand, where the band twinkles tawny!
You!—by your ring, like a glowworm, that shines!

She approaches, laughing. She speaks,—

You'd given up hope?

HE

Believe me.

SHE

Why, is your love so poor?

HE

I knew you'd not deceive me.

SHE

As many a girl before,—
Ah, dear, you will forgive me?

HE

Say no more, sweet, say no more!

SHE

Love trusts, and that's enough, my dear.
Trust wins to trust; whereof, my dear,
Love holds to love; and love, my dear,
Is—well, that's all my lore.

HE

Come, pay me or I'll scold you.—
Give me the kiss you owe.—
You fly when I'd enfold you?

SHE

No! no! I say! now, no!
How often have I told you,
You must not treat me so?

HE

More sweet the dusk for this is,
For lips that meet in kisses.—
Come! come! why run from blisses
As from a mortal foe?

She stands smiling at him. She speaks:

How many words in the asking!
How easily I can grieve you!—
My "no" in a "yes" was a-masking,
Nor thought, dear, to deceive you.—
A kiss?—the humming-bird happiness here
In my heart consents.... But what are words,
When the thought of two souls in speech accords?
Affirmative, negative—what are they, dear?
I wished to say "yes," but somehow said "no."
The woman within me thought you would know
Thought that your heart would hear.

He speaks:

So many hopes in a wooing!—
Therein you could not deceive me;
Some things are sweeter for the pursuing—
I knew what you meant, believe me.—
Bunched bells of the blush pomegranate, to fix
At your throat ... six drops of fire they are...
Will you look where the moon and its following star
Rise silvery over yon meadow ricks?
While I hold—while I lean your head back, so—
For I know it is "yes" though you whisper "no,"
And my kisses, sweet, are six.

[Pg 15]

6

Moths flutter around them. She speaks:

Look!—where the fiery
Glow-worm in briery
Banks of the moon-mellowed bowers
Sparkles—how hazily
Pinioned and arily
Delicate, warily,
Drowsily, lazily,
Flutter the moths to the flowers.

White as the dreamiest
Bud of the creamiest
Rose in the garden that dozes,
See how they cling to them!
Held in the heart of their
Hearts like a part of their
Perfume they swing to them
Wings that are soft as the roses.

Dim as the forming of
Dew in the warming of
Moonlight, they light on the petals;
All is revealed to them;
All—from the sunniest
Tips to the honiest
Heart, whence they yield to them
Spice through the darkness that settles.

[Pg 16]

So to our tremulous
Souls come the emulous
Spirits of love; through whose power
All that is best in us,
All that is beautiful,
All that is dutiful,
Is made confessed in us,
Even as the scent of a flower.

7

Taking her hand, he says:

What makes you beautiful?
Answer, now, answer!—
Is it that dutiful
Souls are all beautiful?
Is't that romance or
Beauty of spirit,
Which souls of merit
Of heaven inherit?—
Have you no answer?

She roguishly:

What makes you lovable?
Answer, dear, answer!—
Is it not provable
That man is lovable
Just because chance or
Nature makes woman

[Pg 17]

Love him?—Her human
Part's to illumine.—
Have you no answer?

8

Then, regarding him seriously, she continues:

Could I recall every joy that befell me
There in the past with its anguish and bliss,
Here in my heart it has whispered to tell me,
Those were no joys like this.

Were it not well if our love could forget them
Veiling the *was* with the dawn of the *is*?
Dead with the past we should never regret them,
Being no joys like this.

When they were gone and the Present stood speechful,
Ardent in word and in look and in kiss,
What though we know that their eyes are beseechful,
Those were no joys like this.

Is it not well to have more of the spirit,
Living for Futures where naught is amiss,
Less of the flesh with the Past pining near it?
Is there a joy like this?

[Pg 18]

9

Leaving the garden for the lane. He, with lightness of heart.

We will leave reason,
Sweet, for a season;
Reason were treason
Now that the nether
Spaces are clad, oh,
In silvery shadow—
We will be glad, oh,
Glad as this weather!

She, responding to his mood:

Heart unto heart, where the moonlight is slanted,
Let us believe that our souls are enchanted:—
I in the castle-keep; you are the airy
Prince who comes seeking me; Love is the Fairy
Bringing our hearts together.

HE

Starlight in masses
Over us passes;
And in the grass is
Many a flower:
Now will you tell me
How'd you enspell me?
What once befell me
There in your bower?

[Pg 19]

SHE

Soul unto soul—in the moon's wizard glory,
Let us believe we are parts in a story:—
I am a poem; a poet you hear it
Whispered in star and in flower; a Spirit,
Love, puts my soul in your power.

10

He, suddenly and very earnestly:

Perhaps we lived in the days

Of the Khalif Haroun er Reshid;
And loved, as the story says
Did the Sultan's favorite one
And the Persian Emperor's son,
Ali ben Bekkar, he
Of the Kisra dynasty.

Do you know the story?—Well,
You were Haroun's Sultana.
When night on the palace fell,
A slave through a secret door,—
Low-arched on the Tigris' shore,—
By a hidden winding stair
Brought me to your bower there.

[Pg 20]

Then there was laughter and mirth,
And feasting and singing together,
In a chamber of wonderful worth;
In a chamber vaulted high
On columns of ivory;
Its dome, like the irised skies,
Mooned over with peacock eyes;
Its curtains and furniture,
Damask and juniper.

Ten slave girls—like unto blooms—
Stand, holding tamarisk torches,
Silk-clad from the Irak looms;
Ten handmaidens serve the feast,
Each girl like a star in the east;
Ten lutanists, lutes a-tune,
Wait, each like the Ramadan moon.

For you in a stuff of Merv
Blue-clad, unveiled and jewelled,
No metaphor known may serve:
Scarved deep with your raven hair,
The jewels like fireflies there,
Blossom and moon and star,
The Lady Shemsennehar.

The zone that girdles your waist
Would ransom a Prince and Emeer;
In your coronet's gold enchased,
And your bracelet's twisted bar,
Burn rubies of Istakhar;
And pearls of the Jamshid race
Hang looped on your bosom's lace.

[Pg 21]

You stand like the letter I;
Dawn-faced, with eyes that sparkle
Black stars in a rosy sky;
Mouth like a cloven peach,
Sweet with your smiling speech;
Cheeks that the blood presumes
To make pomegranate blooms.

With roses of Rocknabad,
Hyacinths of Bokhara,—
Creamily cool and clad
In gauze,—girls scatter the floor
From pillar to cedarn door.
Then a poppy-bloom at each ear,
Come the dancing girls of Kashmeer.

Kohl in their eyes, down the room,—
That opaline casting-bottles
Have showered with rose perfume,—
They glitter and drift and swoon
To the dulcimer's languishing tune;
In the liquid light like stars,
And moons and nenuphars.

Carbuncles, tragacanth-red,
Smoulder in armllet and anklet;
Gleaming on breast and on head

[Pg 22]

Bangles of coins, that are angled,
Tinkle; and veils, that are spangled,
Flutter from coiffure and wrist
Like a star-bewildered mist.

Each dancing-girl is a flower
Of the Tuba from vales of El Liwa.—
How the bronzen censers glower!
And scents of ambergris pour
And myrrh brought of Lahore,
And musk of Khoten! how good
Is the scent of the sandal-wood!

A lutanist smites her lute;
Sings loves of Mejnoon and Leila—
Her voice is a houri flute;—
While the fragrant flambeaux wave
Barbaric o'er free and slave,
O'er fabrics and bezels of gems
And roses in anadems.

Sherbets in ewers of gold,
Fruits in salvers carnelian;
Flagons of grotesque mold,
Made of a sapphire glass,
Brimmed with wine of Shiraz;
Shaddock and melon and grape
On plate of an antique shape.

[Pg 23]

Vases of frosted rose,
Of limpid alabaster,
Filled with the mountain snows;
Goblets of mother-of-pearl,
One filigree silver-swirl;
Vessels of gold foamed up
With spray of spar on the cup.

Then a slave bursts in with a cry:
"The eunuchs! the Khalif's eunuchs!—
With scimitars bared draw nigh!
Wesif and Afif and he,
Chief of the hideous three,
Mesrour!—the Sultan's seen
'Mid a hundred weapons' sheen!"

Did we part when we heard this? No!
It seems that my soul remembers
How I clasped you and kissed you, so.
When they came they found us—dead
On the flowers our blood dyed red;
Our lips together, and
The dagger in my hand.

11

[Pg 24]

She, musingly:

How it was I cannot tell,
For I know not where nor why;
But perhaps we loved too well
In some world that does not lie
East or west of where we dwell,
And beneath no mortal sky.

Was it in the golden ages
Or the iron?—I had heard,—
In the prophecy of sages,—
Haply, how had come a bird,
Underneath whose wing were pages
Of an unknown lover's word.

I forget. You may remember
How the earthquake shook our ships;
How our city, one huge ember,
Blazed within the thick eclipse.

When you found me—deep December
Sealed my icy eyes and lips.

I forget. No one may say
That such things can not be true:—
Here a flower dies to-day,
And to-morrow blooms anew....
Death is silent.—Tell me, pray,
Why men doubt what God can do?

12

[Pg 25]

He, with conviction.

As to that, nothing to tell,
You being all my belief;
Doubt may not enter or dwell
Here where your image is chief;
Here where your name is a spell,
Potent in joy and in grief.

Is it the glamor of spring
Working in us so we seem
Aye to have loved? that we cling
Even to some fancy or dream,
Rainbowing everything
Here in our souls with its gleam?

See! how the synod is met
There of the heavens to preach us—
Freed from the earth's oubliette,
See how the blossoms beseech us—
Were it not well to forget
Winter and night as they teach us?

Dew and a bud and a star,
These,—like a beautiful thought,
Over man's wisdom how far!—
God for some purpose has wrought;
And though they're that which they are,
What are the thoughts they have brought?

Stars and the moon; and they roll
Over our way that is white.
Here shall we end the long stroll?
Here shall I kiss you good-night?
Or, for a while, soul to soul,
Linger and dream of delight?

[Pg 26]

13

They enter the garden again.... She, somewhat pensively.

Myths tell of walls and cities that arose
To melody. But I would build with tone,
Had I that harp, a world for us alone,
A world of love, and joy, and deep repose.

A land of lavender light, of blue-bell skies;
Pale peaks that rise against the gold of eve;
And on one height, the splendors never leave,
Our castled home o'er which the wild swan flies.

There, pitiless, the ruined hand of death
Should never reach. No bud, no thing should fade;
All should be perfect, pure, and unafraid;
And life serener than an angel's breath.

The days should move to music; wildly tame
The nights should move to music and the stars;
And morn and evening in their opal cars,
Like heralds, banner God's eternal name.

[Pg 27]

O world! O life! desired and to be!
How shall we reach thee?—dark the way and dim.

—Give me your hand, love, let us follow him,
Love with the mystery and the melody.

14

He, observing the various flowers around them:

Violets and anemones
The surrendered hours
Pour, as handsels, round the knees
Of the Spring, who to the breeze
Flings her myriad flowers.

Like to coins the sumptuous day
Strews with blossoms golden
Every furlong of his way,—
Like a Sultan gone to pray
At a Kaaba olden.

And the night, with spark on spark,
Clad in dim attire,
Dots with Stars the haloed dark,—
As a priest around the Ark
Lights his lamps of fire.

These are but the cosmic strings
To the harp of Beauty,
To that instrument which sings
In our souls of love that brings
Peace and faith and duty.

[Pg 28]

15

She, seriously:

Duty?—Comfort of the sinner
And the saint!—when grief and trial
Weigh us, and within our inner
Selves,—responsive to love's viol,—
Hope's soft voice grows thin and thinner,
It is kin to self-denial.

Self-denial!—through whose feeling
We are gainer though we're loser;
All the finer force revealing
Of our natures. No accuser
Is the conscience then, but healing
Of the wound of which we're chooser.

Some one said no flower knoweth
Of the fragrance it revealeth;
Song, its soul that overfloweth,
Never nightingale's heart feeleth—
Such the love the spirit groweth,
Love unconscious if it healeth.

16

He, after a pause, lightly:

An elf there is who stables the hot
Red wasp that stings on the apricot;
An elf who rowels his spiteful bay
Like a mote on a ray, away, away;
An elf who saddles the hornet lean
To din i' the ear o' the swinging bean;
Who straddles, with cap cocked all awry,
The bottle-blue back o' the dragon-fly.

And this is the elf who sips and sips
From clover-horns whence the perfume drips;
And, drunk with dew, in the glimmering gloam
Awaits the wild-bee's coming home;
In ambush lies, where none may see,

[Pg 29]

And robs the caravan bumble-bee—
Gold bags of honey the bees must pay
To the bandit elf of the fairy way.

Another outhen the butterflies know,
Who paints their wings with the hues that glow
On blossoms.—Squeezing from tubes of dew
Pansy colors of every hue
On his bloom's pied pallet, he paints the wings
Of the butterflies, moths, and other things.
This is the elf that the hollyhocks hear,
Who dangles a brilliant in each one's ear;
Teases at noon the pane's green fly,
And lights at night the glow-worm's eye.

[Pg 30]

But the dearest elf, so the poets say,
Is the elf who hides in an eye of gray;
Who curls in a dimple and slips along
The strings of a lute to a lover's song;
Who smiles in her smile, and frowns in her frown,
And dreams in the scent of her glove or gown;
Hides and beckons as all may note
In the bloom or the bow of a maiden's throat.

17

She, standing among the flowers:

Soft through the trees the night wind sighs,
And swoons and dies.
Above, the stars hang wanly white;
Here, through the dark,
A drizzled gold, the fireflies
Rain mimic stars in spark on spark.—
'Tis time to part, to say good-night.
Good-night.

From fern to flower the night-moths cross
At drowsy loss.
The moon drifts veiled through clouds of white;
And pearly pale,
A silver blur, through beds of moss,
Their tiny moons the glow-worms trail.—
'Tis time to part, to say good-night.
Good-night.

[Pg 31]

18

He, at parting, as they proceed down the garden:

You say you cannot wed me, now
That roses and the June are here?
To your decision I must bow.—
Ah, well! 'tis just as well, my dear:
We'll swear again each old love vow,
And wait another year.

Another year of love with you!
Of dreams and doubts, of sun and rain!
When field and forest bloom anew,
And locust clusters pelt the lane,
When all the song-birds wed and woo,
I'll not take "no" again.

Oft shall I lie awake and mark
The hours by no clanging clock,
But in the dim and distant dark
The crowing of some punctual cock;
Then up as early as the lark
To meet you by our rock.

The rock where first we met at tryst;
Where first I wooed and won your love—
Remember how the moon and mist
Made mystery of the heaven above

[Pg 32]

As now to-night?—How first I kissed
Your lips, you trembling like a dove?

So, then, you cannot wed me now
That roses and the June are here,
That warmth and fragrance weigh each bough?
And yet your reason is not clear.
Ah, well! We'll swear anew each vow,
And wait another year.

PART II

[Pg 33]

EARLY SUMMER

*The cricket in the rose-bush hedge
Sings by the vine-entangled gate;
The slim moon slants a timid edge
Of pearl through one low cloud of slate;
Around dark door and window-ledge
Like dreams the shadows wait.
And through the summer dusk she goes,
On her white breast a crimson rose.*

1

She delays, meditating. A rainy afternoon.

Gray skies and the foggy rain
Dripping from sullen eaves;
Over and over again
Dull drop of the trickling leaves;
And the woodward-winding lane,
And the hill with its shocks of sheaves
One scarce perceives.

Shall I go in such wet weather
By the lane or over the hill?—
Where the blossoming milkweed's feather
The drops like diamonds fill;
Where, draggled and drenched together,
The ox-eyes rank the rill,
To the old corn-mill.

[Pg 34]

The creek by now is swollen,
And its foaming cascades sound;
And the lilies, smeared with pollen,
In the dam look dull and drowned.
'Tis a path I oft have stolen
To the bridge that rambles round
With willows bound.

Through a valley wild with berry,
Packed thick with the iron-weeds,
And elder,—washed and very
Fragrant,—the fenced path leads;
Past oak and wilding cherry
To a place of flags and reeds,
That the water bredes.

The sun through the sad sky bleaches—
Is that a thrush that calls?
That bird who so beseeches?
And see! on the balsam's balls,
And leaves of the water-beeches—
One blister of wart-like galls—
No raindrop falls.

My shawl instead of a bonnet!...
Though the woods be soaking yet,
Through the wet to the rock I'll run it,—
How sweet to meet i' the wet!
Our rock with the vine upon it,—

[Pg 35]

Each flower a fiery jet—
Where oft we've met!

2

They meet. He speaks.

How fresh the purple clover
Smells in its veil of rain!
And where the leaves brim over
How fragrant is the lane!
See, how the sodden acres,
Forlorn of all their rakers,
Their hay and harvest makers,
Look green as spring again.

Drops from the trumpet flowers
Rain on us as we pass;
And every zephyr showers,
From tilted leaf or grass,
Clear beads of moisture, seeming
Pale, pointed emeralds gleaming;
Where, through the green boughs streaming,
The daylight strikes like glass.

She speaks.

How dewy, clean and fragrant
Look now the green and gold!—
And breezes trailing vagrant
Spill all the spice they hold.
The west begins to glimmer;
And shadows, stretching slimmer,
Crouch on the ways; and dimmer
Grow field and forest old.

[Pg 36]

Beyond those rainy reaches
Of woodland, far and lone,
A whippoorwill beseeches;
And now an owl's vague moan
Strikes faint upon the hearing.—
These say the dusk is nearing.
And, see, the heavens clearing
Take on a tender tone.

How feebly chirps the cricket!
How thin the tree-toads cry!
Blurred in the wild-rose thicket
Gleams wet the firefly.—
This way toward home is nearest;
Of weeds and briars clearest....
We'll meet to-morrow, dearest;
Till then, dear heart, good-bye.

3

They meet again under the greenwood tree. He speaks:

Here at last! And do you know
That again you've kept me waiting?
Wondering, anticipating,
If your "yes" meant "no."

[Pg 37]

Now you're here we'll have our day....
Let us take this daisied hollow,
And beneath these beeches follow
This wild strip of way

Towards the stream; wherein are seen
Stealing gar and darting minnow;
Over which snake-feeders winnow
Wings of black and green.

Like a cactus flames the sun;

And the mighty weaver, Even,
Tenuous colored, there in heaven,
His rich weft's begun....

How I love you! from the time—
You remember, do you not?—
When, within your orchard-plot,
I was reading rhyme,

As I told you. And 'twas thus—
"By the blue Trinacrian sea,
Far in pastoral Sicily
With Theocritus"—

That I answered you who asked.
But the curious part was this:—
That the whole thing was amiss;
That the Greek but masked

[Pg 38]

Tales of old Boccaccio—
Tall Decameronian maids
Strolled among Italian glades,
Smiling, sweet and slow.

And when you approached,—my book
Dropped in wonder,—seemingly
To myself I said, "'Tis she!"
And arose to look

In Lauretta's eyes and—true!
Found them yours.—You shook your head,
Laughing at me, as you said,
"Did I frighten you?"

You had come for cherries; these
Dreamily I climbed for while
You still questioned with a smile,
And still tried to tease.

Ah, love, just two years have gone
Since then. I remember, you
Wore a dress of billowy blue
Muslin, or of lawn.

And that apron still I see,—
White, with cherry-juice red-stained,—
Which you held; wherein I rained
Ripeness from the tree.

[Pg 39]

And I asked you—for, you know,
To my eyes your serious eyes
Spoke such sweet philosophies,—
If you'd read Rousseau.

You remember how a chance,
Somewhat like to mine, one June
Happened him at castle Toune,
Over there in France?

And a cherry dropping fair
On your cheek I, envying it,
Said—remembering Rousseau's wit—
"Would my lips were there!"

How you laughed and blushed, I know.—
Here's the stream. The west has narrowed
To a streak of gold, deep arrowed.—
There's a skiff. Let's row.

4

Entering the skiff, she speaks:

Waters, flowing dark and bright
In the sunlight or the moon,
Seize my soul with such delight

As a visible music might;
 As some slow, majestic tune
 Made material to the sight.

Blossoms colored like the skies,
 Sunset-hued and tame or wild,
 Fill my soul with such surmise
 As the mind might realize
 If our thoughts, all undefiled,
 Should take form before our eyes.

So to me do these appeal;
 So they sway me every hour:
 Letting all their beauty steal
 On my soul to make it feel,
 Through a rivulet or flower,
 More than any words reveal.

5

He speaks, rowing.

See, sweetheart, how the lilies lay
 Their lambent leaves about our way;
 Or, pollen-dusty, nod and float
 Their moon-like flowers around our boat.—
 The middle of the stream we've reached
 Three strokes from where our boat was beached.

Look up. You scarce can see the sky,
 Through trees that lean, dark, deep, and high;
 And coiled with grape and trailing vine
 Build a vast roof of shade and shine;
 A house of leaves, where shadows walk,
 And whispering winds and waters talk.

[Pg 41]

There is no path. The saplings choke
 The trunks they spring from. There an oak
 Lies rotting; and that sycamore,
 Which lays its bulk from shore to shore,—
 Uprooted by the floods,—perchance,
 May be the bridge to some romance.

Now opening through a willow fringe
 The waters creep, one tawny tinge
 Of sunset; and on either marge
 The cottonwoods make walls of shade;
 And, near, the gradual hills loom large
 Within its mirror. Herons wade,
 Or fly, like Faery birds, from grass
 That mats the shore by which we pass.

She speaks.

On we pass; we rippling pass,
 On sunset waters still as glass.
 A vesper-sparrow flies above
 Soft twittering to its woodland love.
 A whippoorwill now calls afar;
 And 'gainst the west, like some swift star,
 A glittering jay flies screaming. Slim
 The sand-snipes and king-fishers skim
 Before us; and some evening thrush—
 Who may discover where such sing?—
 The silence rinses with a gush
 Of mellow music bubbling.

[Pg 42]

He speaks.

On we pass.—Now let us oar
 To yonder strip of ragged shore,
 Where, from a rock with lichens hoar,
 A ferny spring wells. Gliding by
 The sulphur-colored firefly

Lights its pale lamp where mallows gloom,
And wild-bean and wild-mustard bloom.—
Some hunter there within the woods
Last fall encamped those ashes say
And campfire boughs.—The solitudes
Grow dreamy with the death of day.

6

She sings.

Over the fields of millet
A young bird tries its wings;
And sweet as a woodland rillet,
Its first wild music rings—
Soul of my soul, where the meadows roll
What is the song it sings?

"Love, and a glad good-morrow,
Heart where the rapture is!
Good-morrow, good-morrow!
Adieu to sorrow!
Here is the road to bliss:
Where all day long you may hearken my song,
And kiss, kiss, kiss!"

[Pg 43]

Over the fields of clover,
Where the wild bee drones and sways,
The wind, like a shepherd lover,
Flutes on the fragrant ways—
Heart of my heart, where the blossoms part,
What is the air he plays?

"Love, and a song to follow,
Soul with the face a-gleam!
Come follow, come follow,
O'er hill and o'er hollow,
To the land o' the bloom and beam;
Where under the flowers you may listen for hours,
And dream, dream, dream!"

7

He speaks, letting the boat drift.

Here the shores are irised. Grasses
Clump the water dark that glasses
Broken wood and deepened distance.
Far the musical persistence
Of a field-lark lingers low
In the west where tulips blow.

White before us flames one pointed
Star; and Day hath Night anointed
King; from out her azure ewer
Pouring starry fire, truer
Than pure gold. Star-crowned he stands
With the star-light in his hands.

[Pg 44]

Will the moon bleach through the ragged
Tree-tops ere we reach yon jagged
Rock, that rises gradually,
Pharos of our homeward valley?—
All the west is smouldering red;
Embers are the stars o'erhead.

At my soul some Protean elf is;
You're Simaetha; I am Delphis.
You are Sappho and your Phaon,
I.—We love.—There lies a ray on
All the Dark Æolian seas
'Round the violet Lesbian leas.

On we drift. I love you. Nearer
Looms our island. Rosier, clearer,

The Leucadian cliff we follow,
Where the temple of Apollo
Shines—a pale and pillared fire....
Strike, oh, strike the Lydian lyre!—
While in Hellas still we seem,
Let us sing of that we dream.

8

[Pg 45]

Landing, he sings.

Night, night, 'tis night. The moon drifts low above us,
And all its gold is tangled in the stream:
Love, love, my love, and all the stars, that love us,
The stars smile down and every star's a dream.

In odorous purple, where the falling warble
Of water cascades and the plunged foam glows,
A columned ruin lifts its sculptured marble
Friezed with the chiselled rebeck and the rose.

She sings.

Sleep, Sleep, sweet Sleep sleeps at the drifting tiller,
And in our sail the Spirit of the Rain—
Love, love, my love, ah, bid thy heart be stiller,
And, hark! the music of the resonant main.

What flowers are those that blow their balm unto us
From mouths of wild aroma, each a flame?—
That breathe of love, of love we know that drew us,
That kissed our eyes, so we might see the same.

He speaks.

[Pg 46]

Night, night, 'tis night!—no dream is this to banish;
The temple and the nightingale *are* there!
Our love has made them, nevermore to vanish,
Real as yon moon, this wild-rose in your hair.

Night, night, 'tis night!—and love's own star's before us,
Its bright reflection in the starry stream—
Yes, yes, ah, yes! its presence shall watch o'er us,
Night, night, to-night, and every night we dream.

9

Homeward through flowers; she speaks:

Behold the offerings of the common hills!
Whose lowly names have made them three times dear:
The evening-primrose and dim multitudes
Of violets that sky the mossy dells
With heaven's ambrosial blue; dew-dripping plumes
Of mauve lobelias; and the red-stained cups
Of blackberry-lilies all along the creek,
Where, lulled, the freckled silence sleeps, and vague

The water flows; where, at high noon, the cows
Wade knee-deep, and the heat is honied with
The drone of drowsy bees. The fleur-de-lis,
Blue, streaked with crystal like a summer day,
The monkey-flower and the touch-me-not,
All frailly scented and familiar as
Fair baby faces and soft infant eyes.

[Pg 47]

Simple suggestions of a life most fair!
You whisper me of love and untaught faith,
Whose habitation is within the soul,
Not of the Earth, yet for the Earth indeed....
What is it halcyons my heart? makes calm,
With calmness not of wisdom, all my soul
To-night?—Is't love? or faith? or both?—
The lore of all the world is less than these

Simple suggestions of a life most fair,
And love most sweet; that I have learned to know!

10

He speaks, musingly.

Yes, I have known its being so;
Long ago was I seeing so—
Beckoning on to a fairer land,
Out of the flowers it waved its hand;
Bidding me on to life and love;
Life with the hope of the love thereof.

What is the value of knowing it,
If you are shy in showing it?—
Need of the earth unfolds the flower,
Dewy sweet at the proper hour;
And in the world of the human heart
Love is the flower's counterpart.

[Pg 48]

So when the soul is heedable,
Then is the heart made readable—
I in the book of your heart have read
Words that are truer than truth has said;
Measures of love, the spirit's song,
Writ of your soul to haunt me long.

Love can hear each laudable
Thought of the loved made audible,
Spoken in wonder, or bliss, or pain,
And re-echo it back again;
Ever responsive, ever awake,
Ever replying with ache for ache.

11

She speaks, dreamily.

Earth gives its flowers to us
And heaven its stars. Indeed,
These are as lips that woo us,
Those are as lights that lead,
With love that doth pursue us,
With hope that still doth speed.

Yet shall the flowers lie riven,
And lips forget to kiss;
The stars fade out of heaven,
And lights lead us amiss—
As love for which we've striven;
As hope that promises.

[Pg 49]

12

He laughs, wishing to dispel her seriousness:

If love I have had of you, you had of me,
Then doubtless our loving were over;
One would be less than the other, you see;
Since what you returned to your lover
Were only his own; and—

13

She interrupts him, speaking impetuously:

But if I lose you, if you part with me,
I will not love you less
Loving so much now. If there is to be
A parting and distress,—
What will avail to comfort or relieve
The soul that's anguished most?—

The knowledge that it once possessed, perceive,
The love that it has lost.
You must acknowledge, under sun and moon
All that we feel is old;
Let morning flutter from night's brown cocoon
Wide wings of flaxen gold;
The moon split through the darkness, soaring o'er,
Like some great moth and white,
These have been seen a myriad times before
And with the same delight.—
So 'tis with love—how old yet new it is!—
This only should we heed,—
To once have known, to once have felt love's bliss,
Is to be rich indeed.—
Whether we win or lose, we lose or win,
Within our gain or loss
Some purpose lies, some end unseen of sin,
Beyond our crown or cross.

[Pg 50]

14

Nearing home, he speaks.

True, true!—Perhaps it would be best
To be that star within the west;
Above the earth, within the skies,
Yet shining in your own blue eyes.

Or, haply, better here to blow
A flower beneath your window low;
That, brief of life and frail and fair,
Finds yet a heaven in your hair.

Or well, perhaps, to be the breeze
That sighs its soul out to the trees;
A voice, a breath of rain or drouth,
That has its wild will with your mouth.

[Pg 51]

These thing I long to be. I long
To be the burthen of some song
You love to sing; a melody,
Sure of sweet immortality.

15

At the gate. She speaks.

Sunday shall we ride together?—
Not the root-rough, rambling way
Through the wood we went that day,
In last summer's sultry weather.

Past the Methodist camp-meeting,
Where religion helped the hymn
Gather volume; and a slim
Minister, with textful greeting

Welcomed us and still expounded.—
From the service on the hill
We had gone three hills and still
Very near the singing sounded.

Nor that road through weed and berry
Drowsy days led me and you
To the old-time barbecue,
Where the country-side made merry.

[Pg 52]

Dusty vehicles together;
Darkies with the horses near
Tied to trees; the atmosphere
Redolent of bark and leather.

As we went the homeward journey
You exclaimed,—“They intermix
Pleasure there with politics.

It reminds me of a tourney."

And the fiddles!—through the thickets,
How the wind brought from the hill
Remnants of the old quadrille!—
It was like the drone of crickets....

Neither road. The shady quiet
Of that path by beech and birch,
Winding to the ruined church
Near the stream that sparkles by it.

Where the silent Sundays listen
For the preacher—Love—we bring
In our hearts to preach and sing
Week-day shade to Sabbath glisten.

16

[Pg 53]

He, at parting:

Yes, to-morrow. Early morn.—
When the House of Day uncloses
Portals that the stars adorn,—
Whence Light's golden presence throws his
Fiery lilies, burning roses
On the world,—how good to ride
With one's sweetheart at one's side!

So to-morrow we will ride
To the wood's cathedral places;
Where the prayer-like wildflowers hide,
Sweet religion in their faces;
Where, in truest, untaught phrases,
Worship in each rhythmic word,
God is praised by many a bird.

Look above you.—Pearly white,
Star on star now crystallizes
Out of darkness; and the night
Hangs them round her like devices
Of strange jewels. Vapour rises,
Glimmering, from each wood and dell—
Till to-morrow, then, farewell.

PART III

[Pg 54]

LATE SUMMER

*Heat lightning flickers in one cloud,
As in a flow'r a firefly;
Some rain-drops, that the rose-bush bowed,
Jar through the leaves and dimly lie;
Among the trees, now low, now loud,
The whispering breezes sigh.
The place is lone; the night is hushed;
Upon the path a rose lies crushed.*

1

Musing he strolls among the quiet lanes by farm and field.

Now rests the season in forgetfulness,
Careless in beauty of maturity;
The ripened roses 'round brown temples, she
Fulfils completion in a dreamy guess.
Now Time grants night the more and day the less;
The gray decides; and brown
Dim golds and drabs in dulling green express
Themselves and redden as the year goes down.
Sadder the fields where, thrusting hoary high

Their tasseled heads, the Lear-like corn-stocks die,
And, Falstaff-like, buff-bellied pumpkins lie.—
Deeper to tenderness,
Sadder the blue of hills that lounge along
The lonesome west; sadder the song
Of the wild red-bird in the leafage yellow.—
Deeper and dreamier, ay!
Than woods or waters, leans the languid sky
Above lone orchards where the cider-press
Drips and the russets mellow.

[Pg 55]

Nature grows liberal: from the beechen leaves
The beech-nuts' burs their little pockets thrust,
Bulged with the copper of the nuts that rust;
Above the grass the spendthrift spider weaves
A web of silver for which Dawn designs
Thrice twenty rows of pearls; beneath the oak,
That rolls old roots in many gnarly lines,—
The polished acorns, from their saucers broke,
Strew wildwood agates.—On sonorous pines
The far wind organs, but the forest near
Is silent; and the blue-white smoke
Of burning brush, beyond that field of hay,
Hangs like a pillar in the atmosphere;
But now it shakes—it breaks; and all the vines
And tree-tops tremble;—see! the wind is here!
Billowing and boisterous; and the smiling day
Rejoices with its clamor. Earth and sky
Resound with glory of its majesty,
Impetuous splendor of its rushing by.—
But on those heights the forest yet is still,
Expectant of its coming. Far away
Each anxious tree upon each waiting hill
Tingles anticipation, as in gray
Surmise of rapture. Now the first gusts play,
Like little laughs, about their rippling spines;
And now the wildwood, one exultant sway,
Shouts—and the light at each tumultuous pause,
The light that glooms and shines,
Seems hands in wild applause.

[Pg 56]

How glows that garden! though the white mists keep
The vagabonding flowers reminded of
Decay that comes to slay in open love,
When the full moon hangs cold and night is deep;
Unheeding still, their happy colors leap
And laugh encircled of the scythe of death,—
Like lovely children he prepares to reap,—
Staying his blade a breath
To mark their beauty ere, with one last sweep,
He lays them dead and turns away to weep.—
Let me admire,—
Ere yet the sickle of the coming cold
Has mown them down,—their beauties manifold:—
How like to spurts of fire
That scarlet salvia lifts its blooms, which heap
Yon space of sunlight. And, as sparkles creep
Through charring parchment, up that window's screen
The cypress dots with crimson all its green,
The haunt of many bees.
And, showering down cascaded lattices,
That nightshade bleeds with berries; drops of blood,
In clusters hanging 'mid the blue monk's-hood.

[Pg 57]

There in the garden old
The bright-hued clumps of zinnias unfold
Their formal flowers; and the marigold
Lifts its pinched shred of orange sunset caught
And elfed in petals. The nasturtium,
All pungent leaved and bitter of perfume,
Hangs up its goblin bonnet, fairy bought
From Gnomeland. There, predominant, red,
And arrogant the dahlia lifts its head,
Beside the balsam's rosy horns of honey,
Within the murmuring, sunny

Dry wildness of the weedy flower bed;
Where crickets and the weed-bugs, noon and night,
Sing dirges for the flowers that soon will die,
For flowers already dead.—
I seem to hear the passing Summer sigh;
A voice, that seems to weep,
"Too soon, too soon the Beautiful passes by!"—
If I perchance might peep
Beneath those leaves of podded hollyhocks,
That the bland wind with odorous whispers rocks,
I might behold her,—white
And weary,—Summer, 'mid her flowers asleep,
Her drowsy flowers asleep,
The withered poppies knotted in her locks.

[Pg 58]

2

He is reminded of another day with her.

The hips were reddening on this rose,
Those haws were hung with fire,
That day we went this way that goes
Up hills of bough and brier.
This hooked thorn caught her gown and seemed
Imploring her to linger;
Upon her hair a sun-ray streamed
Like some baptizing finger.

This false-foxtglove, so golden now
With yellow blooms like bangles,
Was fading then. But yonder bough,—
The sumach's plume entangles,—
Was like an Indian's painted face;
And, like a squaw, attended
That bush, in vague vermilion grace
With beads of berries splendid.

And here we turned to mount that hill,
Down which the wild brook tumbles;
And, like to-day, that day was still,
And soft winds swayed the umbles
Of these wild carrots lawny gray;
And there, deep-dappled o'er us,
An orchard stretched; and in our way
Dropped ripened fruit before us.

[Pg 59]

A muffled thud the pippin fell,
And at our feet rolled dusty;
A hornet clinging to its bell,
The pear lay bruised and rusty.
The smell of pulpy peach and plum,
From which the juice oozed yellow,
Around which bees made sleepy hum,
Filled warm the air and mellow.

And then we came where, many hued,
The wet wild-morning-glory
Hung its balloons in shadows dewed
For dawning's offertory.
With bush and bramble, far away,
Beneath us stretched the valley,
Cleft of one creek, as clear as day,
That bickered musically.

The brown, the bronze, the green, the red
Of weed and brier ran riot
To walls of woods, whose vistas led
To shadowy nooks of quiet.
Long waves of feathering golden-rod
Ran through the gray in patches;
As in a cloud the gold of God
Burns, that the sunset catches.

And there, above the blue hills, rolled,
Like some vast conflagration,

[Pg 60]

The sunset, flaming rose and gold,
We watched in exultation.
Then turning homeward, she and I
Went in love's sweet derangement—
How different now seem earth and sky,
Since this undreamed estrangement!

3

He enters the woods. He sits down despondently.

Here where the day is dimmest,
And silence company,
Some might find sympathy
For loss, or grief the grimmest,
In each great-hearted tree—
Here where the day is dimmest—
But, ah, there's none for me!

In leaves might find communion,
Returning sigh for sigh,
For love the heavens deny;
The love that yearns for union,
Yet parts and knows not why.—
In leaves might find communion—
But, ah, not I, not I!

My eyes with tears are aching.—
Why has she written me?
And will no longer see?—
My heart with grief is breaking,
With grief that this should be—
My eyes with tears are aching—
Why has she written me?

[Pg 61]

4

He proceeds in the direction of a stream.

Better is death than sleep,
Better for tired eyes.—
Why do we weep and weep
When near us the solace lies?
There in that stream, that, deep,—
Reflecting woods and skies,—
Could comfort all our sighs.

The mystery of things,
Of dreams, philosophies,
'Round which the mortal clings,
That can unriddle these.—
What is't the water sings?
What is't it promises?—
End to all miseries!

5

He seats himself on a rock and gazes steadily into the stream.

And here alone I sit and it is so!—
O vales and hills! O valley lands and knobs!
What cure have you for woe?
None that my heart may know!—
The wearying sameness!—yet this thing is so!—
This thing is so, and still the waters flow,
The leaves drop slowly down; the daylight throbs
With sun and wind, and yet this thing is so!—
Here, at this culvert's mouth,
The shadowy water, flowing towards the south,
Seems deepest, stagnant-stayed.—
What is there yonder that makes me afraid?—
Of my own self afraid?—what is't below?
What power draws me to the striate stream?
What evil or what dream?—

[Pg 62]

Me, dropping pebbles in the quiet wave,
That echoes, strange as music in a cave,
Hollow and thin; vibrating in the shade
Like sound of tears—the shadow of some woe,
An ailing phantom that will not be laid,
Since this is so, since this sad thing is so.

There, in the water, how the lank green grass
Mats its rank blades, each blade a crooked kris,
Making a marsh; 'mid which the currents miss
Their rock-born melodies.
But there, and there one sees
The wide-belled mallow, as within a glass,
Long-pistiled, leaning o'er
The root-contorted shore,
As if its own pink image it would kiss.
And there the tangled wild-potato vine
Lifts conical blossoms, each a cup of wine,
As pale as moonlight is.
And there tall gipsy lilies, all a-sway,
Their savage, coppery faces, fierce of hue,
Dull purple-streaked, bend in inverted view.—
And where the stream around those rushes creeps,
The dragon-fly, in endless error, keeps
Sewing the pale gold gown of day
With tangled stitches of a burning blue:
Its brilliant body seems a needle fine,
A thread of azure ray.
But here below me where my pensive shade
Looks up at me, the stale stream stagnant lies,
Deep, dark, but clear and silent; save the hiss
Of bursting bubbles in the spawny ooze.—
All flowers here refuse
To grow or blossom; beauties, too, are few,
That haunt its depths: no glittering minnows braid
Its languid crystal; and no gravels strew
With colored orbs its bottom. Half afraid
I shrink from my own eyes
There in its cairngorm skies—
I know not why, and yet it seems 'tis this:—

I know not what—but where the kildees wade
Slim in the foamy scum,
From that direction hither doth it come,
And makes my heart afraid.
Nearer it draws to where those low rocks ail,
Warm rocks on which some water-snake hath clomb
To bask its spotted body, coiling numb.—
At first it seemed a prism on the grail,
A bubble's prism yonder; then a trail,
An angled sparkle in a shadow, swayed
Frog-like through deeps, to crouch a flaccid, pale,
Squat bulk below.... Reflected trees and skies,
And breeze-blown clouds that lounge at sunny loss,
Seem in its stolid eyes,
Deep down—the dim disguise
Of something ghoulish there, whose features fail,
Then come again in rhythmic waviness,
With arms like tentacles that seem to press
Up towards me. Limbs that writhe, and fade,
And clench—tough limbs, that twist and cross
Through flabby hair like smoky moss.

How horrible to see this thing at night!
Or when the sunset slants its brimstone light
Above the water! when, in phantom flight,
The will-o'-the-wisps, perhaps, above it reel.
Then haply would it rise, a rotting green,
Up, up, and gather me with arms of steel,
Soft steel, and drag me where the wave is white,
Beneath that boulder there, that plants a keel
Against the ripple there, a shoulder lean.—
No! no! I must away before 'tis night!
Before the fire-flies dot
The dusk with sulphur blurrings bright!

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[Pg 64]

[Pg 65]

Before upon yon height
The white wild-carrots vanish from the sight;
And boneset blossoms, tossing there in clusters,
Fade to a ridge, a streak of ghostly lustres.
And in yon sunlit spot,
That cedar tree is not!—
But a huge cap instead, that, half-asleep,
Some giant dropped while driving home his sheep.
And 'mid those fallow browns
And russet grays, the fragrant peak
Of yonder timothy stack,
Is not a stack, but something hideous, black,
That threatens and, grotesquely demon, frowns.

I must away from here.—
Already dusk draws near.
The owlet's dolorous hoot
Sounds quavering as a gnome's wild flute;
The toad, within the wet,
Begins to tune its goblin flageolet.
The slow sun sinks behind
Those hills; and like a withered cheek,
Distorted there, the spectral moon's defined
Above those trees; above that mass of vines
That, like a wrecked apprentice, roofs those pines.—
Oh, I am faint and weak.—
I must away, away,
Before the close of day!—
Already at my back
I feel the woods grow black;
And sense the evening wind,
Guttural and gaunt and blind,
Snarling behind me like a were-wolf pack.—
When will it cease to pierce,
This anguish dull and fierce,
At heart and soul? when will it let me go?—

At last, with footsteps slow,
With half averted cheek,
I've reached this woodland creek,
Far from that place of fear;
And still I seem to hear
A dripping footstep near;
A gurgling voice dim glimmering at my ear.
I try to fly!—I can not!—yes, and no!—
What horror holds me!—God! that obscene, slow,
Sure mastering chimera there
Has yet some horrible feeler round my neck,
Or in my scattered hair!—
Off! off! thou devil's coil!—
The waters, thrashing, boil—
Once more I'm free! once more I'm free!
Glad of that firefly fleck,
That, like a lamp of golden fairy oil,
Lights me the way I flee.—
No more I stare, magnetic-fixed; nor reck,
Nor little care to foil
The madness there! the murder there! that slips
Back to its lair of slime, that seeps and drips,
That sought in vain to fasten on my lips.

6

Taking a letter from his pocket, he hurries away.

What can it mean for me? What have I done to her?
I, in our season of love as a sun to her:
She, all its heaven of silvery, numberful
Stars and its moon shining golden and slumberful;
Who on my life, that was thorny and lowery,
Gazed—and made beautiful; smiled—and made flowery.
She, to my heart and my soul a divinity!
She, who—I dreamed!—seemed my spirit's affinity!—
What have I done to her? what have I done?

What can she mean by this?—what have I said to her!
I, who have idolized, worshipped, and pled to her;
Sung for her, laughed for her, sorrowed and sighed for her;
Lived for her only; would gladly have died for her!
See!—she has written me thus! she has written me....
Sooner would dagger or serpent had smitten me!—
Would you had shriveled ere ever you'd read of it,
Eyes, that are wide to the bitterest dread of it!—
What have I said to her? what have I said?

[Pg 68]

What shall I make of it? I who am trembling,
Dreading to lose her.—A moth, the dissembling
Flame of the candle attracts with its guttering,
Flattering on till its body lies fluttering,
Scorched in the summer night.—Foolish, importunate,
Why did'st thou leave the cool flowers, unfortunate!—
Such has she been to me making me such to her,
Slaying me, saying I never was much to her!—
What shall I make of it? what can I make?

Love, in thy everglades, moaning and motionless,
Look, I have fallen; the evil is potionless.
I,—with no thought but the heav'n that did lock us in,—
Set naked feet 'mid the cottonmouth, moccasin,
Under the roses, the Cherokee, eyeing me.—
I,—in the sky with the egrets that, flying me,
Loosened like blooms from magnolias, rose slenderly,
White and pale pink; where the mocking-bird tenderly
Sang, making vistas of mosses melodious;—
Wandered unheeding my steps in the odious
Ooze and the venom. I followed the wiry
Violet curve of thy star falling fiery—
So was I lost in night! thus am undone!

[Pg 69]

Have I not told to her—living alone for her—
Purposed unfoldments of deeds I had sown for her
Here in the soil of my soul? their variety
Endless—and ever she answered with piety.
See! it has come to this—all the tale's suavity
At the ninth chapter grows wretched to gravity;
Cruel as death all our beautiful history—
Close it!—the finis is more than a mystery.—
Yes, I will go to her; yes, I will speak.

7

[Pg 70]

After the last meeting; the day following.

I seem to see her still; to see
That dim blue room. Her perfume comes
From lavender folds draped dreamily—
One blossom of brocaded blooms—
Some stuff of orient looms.

I seem to hear her speak; and back
Where lies the sun on books and piles
Of porcelain and bric-a-brac,
A tall clock ticks above the tiles,
Where Love's framed profile smiles.

I hear her say, "Ah, had I known!—
I suffer too for what has been—
For what must be."—A wild ache shone
In her sad eyes that seemed to lean
On something far, unseen.

And as in sleep my own self seems
Outside my suffering self.—I flush
'Twixt facts and undetermined dreams,
And wait as silent as that hush
Of lilac light and plush.

Smiling, but suffering, I feel,
Beneath that face, so sweet and sad,
In those pale temples, thoughts like steel

Pierce burningly.—I had gone mad
Had I once deemed her glad.—

[Pg 71]

Unconsciously, with eyes that yearn
To look beyond the present far
For some faint future hope, I turn—
Above her garden, day's fierce star,
Vermilion at the window bar,

Sank sullenly—like love's own sun—
An omen of our future life.—
And then the memory of one
Rich day she'd said she'd be my wife
Set heart and brain at strife.

Again amid the heavy hues,
Soft crimson, seal, and satiny gold
Of flowers there, I stood 'mid dews
With her; deep in her garden old,
While sunset fires uprolled.

And now... It can not be! and yet
To feel 'tis so!—In heart and brain
To know 'tis so!—while warm and wet
I seem to smell those scents again,
Verbena-scents and rain.

I turn, in hope she'll bid me stay.
Again her cameo beauty mark
Set in that smile.—She turns away.
No word of love! not even a spark
Of hope to cheer the dark!

[Pg 72]

That sepia sketch—conceive it so—
A jaunty head with mouth and eyes
Tragic beneath a rose-chapeau,
Silk-masked, unmasking—it denies
The look we half surmise,

We know is there. 'Tis thus we read
The true beneath the false; perceive
The smile that hides the ache.—Indeed!
Whose soul unmask?... Not mine!—I grieve,—
Oh God!—but laugh and leave....

8

He walks aimlessly on.

Beyond those twisted apple-trees,
That partly hide the old brick-barn,
Its tattered arms and tattered knees
A scare-crow tosses to the breeze
Among the shocks of corn.

My heart is gray as is the day,
In which the rain-wind drearily
Makes all the sounding branches sway,
And in the hollows far away
The dry leaves rustle wearily.

And soon we'll hear the far wild-geese
Honk in frost-bitten heavens under
Arcturus; when my walks must cease,
And by the fireside's log-heaped peace
I'll sit and nod and ponder.—

[Pg 73]

When every fall of this loud creek
Is architected ice; and hinted
Brown acres of yon corn stretch bleak,
White-sculptured with the snows, that streak
The hillsides bitter-tinted,

I'll sit and dream of that glad morn
We went down ways where blooms were blowing;
That dusk we strolled through flower and thorn,

By tasseled meads of cane and corn,
To where the stream was flowing.

Again I'll oar our boat among
The lily-pads that dot the river;
And reach her hat the grape-vine long
Strikes in the stream; we'll sing that song,
And then.... I'll wake and shiver.

Why is it that my mind reverts
To that sweet past? while full of parting
The present is; so full of hurts
And heartache, that what it asserts
Adds only to the smarting.

How often shall I sit and think
Of that sweet past! through lowered lashes
What-might-have-been trace link by link;
Then watch it gradually sink
And crumble into ashes.

Outside I'll hear the sad wind weep
Like some lone spirit, grieved, forsaken;
Then shuddering to bed shall creep
And lie awake, or haply sleep
A sleep by visions shaken.

Dreams of the past that paint and draw
The present in a hue that's wanting;
A scare-crow thing of sticks and straw,—
Like that just now I, passing, saw,—
Its empty tatters flaunting.

9

He compares the present day with a past one.

The sun a splintered splendor was
In trees, whose waving branches blurred
Its disc, that day we went together,
'Mid wild-bee hum and whirring buzz
Of insects, through the fields that purred
With Summer in the perfect weather.

So sweet it was to look and lean
To her young face and feel the light
Of eyes that met my own unsaddened!
Her laugh, that left lips more serene;
Her speech, that blossomed like the white
Life-everlasting there and gladdened.

Maturing Summer! you were fraught
With more of beauty than than now
Parades the pageant of September:
Where what-is-now contrasts in thought
With what-was-once, that bloom and bough
Can only help me to remember.

10

He pauses before a deserted house by the roadside.

Through iron-weeds and roses
And ancient beech and oak,
Old porches it discloses
Above the weeds and roses,
The drizzling raindrops soak.

Neglected walks a-tangle
With dodder-strangled grass;
And every mildewed angle
Heaped with dead leaves that spangle
The paths that round it pass.

The creatures there that bury

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[Pg 75]

And hide within its rooms,
And spidered closets—very
Dim with gray webs—will hurry
Out when the twilight glooms.

[Pg 76]

Owls roost in room and basement;
Bats haunt its hearth and porch,
And through some paneless casement
Flit, in the moon's enlacement,
Or firefly's twinkling torch.

There is a sense of frost here,
And gusts that sigh away.—
What was it that was lost here?
Long, long ago was lost here?—
Can anybody say?

My foot perhaps would startle
Some bird that mopes within;
Some owl above its portal,
That stares upon the mortal
As on a thing of sin.

The rutty road winds by it
This side the dusty toll.—
Why do I stop to eye it?
My heart can not deny it—
The house is like my soul.

11

[Pg 77]

He proceeds on his way.

I bear a burden—look not therein!
Naught will you find but sorrow and sin;
Sorrow and sin that wend with me
Wherever I go. And misery,
A gaunt companion, a wretched bride,
Goes always with me, side by side.

Sick of myself and all the Earth,
I ask my soul now—is life worth
The little pleasure that we gain
For all our sorrow and our pain?
The love, to which we gave our best,
That turns a mockery and a jest?

12

Among the twilight fields.

The things we love, the loveliest things we cherish,
Pass from us soonest, vanish utterly.
Dust are our deeds, and dust our dreams that perish
Ere we can say *they be!*

I have loved man and learned we are not brothers—
Within myself, perhaps, may lie the cause;—
Then set one woman high above all others,
And found her full of flaws.

[Pg 78]

Made unseen stars my keblahs of devotion;
Aspired to knowledge and remained a clod:
With heart and soul, led on by blind emotion,
The way to failure trod.

Chance, say, or fate that works through good and evil;
Or destiny, that nothing may retard,
That to some end, above life's empty level,
Perhaps withholds reward.

LATE AUTUMN

*They who die young are blest.—
Should we not envy such?
They are Earth's happiest,
God-loved and favored much!—
They who die young are blest.*

1

Sick and sad, propped among pillows, she sits at her window.

'Though the dog-tooth violet come
With April showers,
And the wild-bees' music hum
About the flowers,
We shall never wend as when
Love laughed leading us from men
Over violet vale and glen,
Where the bob-white piped for hours,
And we heard the rain-crow's drum.

Now November heavens are gray;
Autumn kills
Every joy—like leaves of May
In the rills.—
Still I sit and lean and listen
To a voice that has arisen
In my heart—with eyes that glisten
Looking at the happy hills
Fading dark-blue far away.

[Pg 80]

2

She gazes out upon the dying garden.

There rank death clutches at the flowers
And drags them down and stamps in earth.
At morn the thin, malignant hours,
Shrill-mouthed among the windy bowers,
Clamor a bitter mirth.—
Or is it heart-break that, forlorn,
Would so conceal itself in scorn?

At noon the weak, white sunlight crawls,
Like feeble feet once beautiful,
From mildewed walks to mildewed walls,
Down which the oozing moisture falls
Upon the cold toadstool.—
Faint on the leaves it drips and creeps—
Or is it tears of one who weeps?

At night a misty blur of moon
Slips through the trees,—pale as a face
Of melancholy marble hewn;—
And, like the phantom of some tune,
Winds whisper in the place.—
Or is it love come back again,
Seeking its perished joy in vain?

3

She muses upon the past.

When in her cloudy chiton,
Spring freed the frozen rills,
And walked in rainbowed light on
The forests, fields, and hills;
Beyond the world's horizon,
That no such glory lies on,
And no such hues bedizen,
Love led us far from ill.

When Summer came, a sickle

[Pg 81]

Stuck in her sheaf of gleams,
And let the honey trickle
From out the beehives' seams;
Within the violet-blotted
Sweet book to us allotted,—
Whose lines are starry dotted,—
Love read us still his dreams.

Then Autumn came,—a liar,
A fair-faced heretic;—
In gypsy garb of fire,
Throned on a harvest rick.—
Our lives, that fate had thwarted,
Stood pale and broken hearted,—
Though smiling when we parted,—
Where love to death lay sick.

Now is the Winter waited,
The tyrant hoar and old,
With death and hunger mated,
Who counts his crimes like gold.—
Once more before forever
We part—once more, then never—
Once more before we sever
Must I his face behold!

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4

She takes up a book and reads.

What little things are those
That hold our happiness!
A smile, a glance, a rose
Dropped from her hair or dress;
A word, a look, a touch,—
These are so much, so much.

An air we can't forget;
A sunset's gold that gleams;
A spray of mignonette,
Will fill the soul with dreams
More than all history says,
Or romance of old days.

For of the human heart,
Not brain, is memory;
These things it makes a part
Of its own entity;
The joys, the pains whereof
Are the very food of love.

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5

She lays down the book.

How true! how true!—but words are weak
In sympathy they give the soul,
To music—music, that can speak
All the heart's pain and dole;
Still making us remember most
The love we've lost, the love we've lost.

So weary am I, and so fain
To see his face, to feel his kiss
Thrill rapture through my soul again,
There is no hell like this.—
Ah, God! my God, were it not best
To give me rest, to give me rest?

6

She writes to him to come to her.

Dead lie the dreams we cherished,

The dreams we loved so well;
Like forest leaves they perished,
Like autumn leaves they fell.
Alas! that dreams so soon should pass!
Alas! Alas!

The stream lies bleak and arid
That once went singing on;
The flowers once that varied
Its banks are dead and gone:
Where these were once are thorns and thirst—
The place is curst.

Come to me; I am lonely:
Forgive what you have heard.—
Come to me; if for only
One last sad parting word:
For one last word before the pall
Falls over all.

The day and hour are suited
For what I'd say to you
Of love that I uprooted—
But I have suffered too!
Come to me; I would say good-by
Before I die.

7

The wind rises; the trees are agitated.

Woods, that beat the wind with frantic
Gestures and drop darkly 'round
Acorns gnarled and leaves that antic
Wildly on the rustling ground!

Is it tragic grief that saddens
Through your souls this autumn day?
Or the joy of death that gladdens
In exultance of decay?

Arrogant you lift defiant
Boughs against the moaning blast,
That, like some invisible giant,
Wrapped in tumult, thunders past.

Is it that in such insurgent
Fury tossed from tree to tree,
You would quench the fiercely urgent
Pangs of some old memory?

As in toil and violent action,
That still help them to forget,
Mortals drown the dark distraction
And insistence of regret.

8

She muses in the gathering twilight.

Last night I slept till midnight; then woke, and far away
A cock crowed; lonely and distant came mournful a watch-dog's
bay:
But lonelier, sadder the tedious, old clock ticked on towards day.

And what a day!—remember those morns of summer and spring,
That bound our lives together! each morn a wedding-ring
Of dew, aroma and sparkle, and flowers and birds a-wing.

Sweet morns when I strolled my garden awaiting him, the rose
Expected too, with blushes—the Giant-of-Battle that grows
A bank of radiance and fragrance where the gate its shadow
throws.

Not in vain did I wait, departed summer, amid your phlox!

The powdery crystal and crimson of your hollow hollyhocks;
Your fairy-bells and poppies and the bee that in them rocks.

Cool-clad 'neath the pendulous purple of the morning-glory vine,
By the jewel-mine of the pansies and the snapdragons in line,
I waited, and there he met me whose heart was one with mine.

How warm was the breath of the garden when he met me there
that day!
How the burnished beetle and butterfly flew past us, each a ray!

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—
The memory of those meetings still bears me far away.

Ah, me! when I think of the handfuls of little gold coins a-mass
My bachelor's-buttons scattered over the garden grass,
And the marigolds that boasted their bits of burning brass;

More bitter I feel the autumn tighten 'round spirit and heart;
And regret the days remembered as lost—that stand apart,
A chapter holy and sacred, I read with eyes that smart.

Again to the woods a-trysting by the watermill I steal,
Where the lilies tumble together, the madcap wind at heel;
And meet him among the blossoms that the rocks and the trees
conceal.

Or the wild-cat grey of the meadows that the ox-eyed daisies dot;
Fawn-eyed and tiger-yellow, that tangle a tawny spot
Of languid leopard beauty that dozes fierce and hot....

Ah! back again with the present! with winds that pinch and twist
The leaves in their peevish passion, and whirl wherever they list;
With the autumn, hoary and nipping, whose mausolean mist

[Pg 88]

Builds wan a tomb for the daylight;—each morning shaggy with
fog,
That fits grey wigs to the cedars, and furs with frost each log;
That carpets with pearl the meadow, and marbles brook and bog,

—
Alone at dawn—indifferent: alone at eve—I sigh:
And wait, like the wind complaining: complain and know not why:
But ailing and longing and pining because I do not die.

How dull is that sunset! dreary and cold, and hard and dead!
The ghost of the one last August that, deeply rich and red,
Like the wine of God's own vintage, poured purple overhead.

But now I sit with the sighing dead dreams of a dying year;
Like the fallen leaves and the acorns, am worthless and feel as
sear,
With a withered soul and body whose heart is one big tear.

[Pg 89]

As I stare from my window the daylight, like a bravo, its cloak
puts on.
The moon, like a cautious lanthorn, glitters and then is gone.—
Will he come to-night? will he answer?—Oh, God! would it were
dawn!

9

He enters. Taking her in his arms he speaks.

They said you were dying—
You shall not die!...
Why are you crying?
Why do you sigh?—
Cease that sad sighing!—
Love, it is I.

All is forgiven!—
Love is not poor;
Though he was driven
Once from your door,
Back he has striven,
To part nevermore!

Will you remember
 What I forget?—
 Words, each an ember,
 That you regret?
 Now in November,
 Now we have met?

What if love wept once!
 What though you knew!
 What if he crept once
 Pleading to you!—
 He never slept once,
 Nor was untrue.

Often forgetful,
 Love may forget;
 Froward and fretful,
 Dear, he will fret;
 Ever regretful,
 He will regret.

Life is completer
 Through his control;
 Living made sweeter
 Even through dole,
 Hearing Love's metre
 Sing in the soul.

Flesh may not hear it,
 Being impure;
 And mind may fear it,
 May not endure;
 But in the spirit—
 There we are sure.

So when to-morrow
 Ceases, and we
 Quit this we borrow,
 Mortality,
 Love chastens sorrow
 So it can see....

Still you are weeping!
 Why do you weep?—
 Are tears in keeping
 With joy so deep?
 Gladness so sweeping?—
 Are you asleep?

Speak to me, dearest!
 Say it is true!—
 That I am nearest,
 Dearest to you.—
 Smile with those clearest
 Eyes of grey blue.

She smiles through her tears; holding his hands she speaks.

They did not say I could not live beyond this weary night,
 But now I know that I shall die before the morning's light.
 How weak I am!—but you'll forgive me when I tell you how
 I loved you—love you; and the pain it is to leave you now?

We could not marry!—See, the flesh, that clothes the soul of me,
 Ordained at birth a sacrifice to this heredity,
 Denied, forbade.—Ah, you have seen the bright spots in my
 cheeks
 Flush hectic, as before the night the west burns blood-red
 streaks?

Consumption.—"But I promised you my hand"?—a thing forlorn
 Of life; diseased!—Oh, God!—and so, far better so, forsworn!—
 Oh, I was jealous of your love. But think: if I had died
 Ere babe of mine had come to be a solace at your side!

Had it been little then—your grief, when Heaven had made us
one
In everything that's good on earth and then the good undone?
No! no! and had I had a child, what grief and agony
To know that blight born in him, too, against all help of me!

[Pg 93]

Just when we cherish him the most, and youthful, sunny pride
Sits on his curly front, to see him die ere we have died.—
Whose fault?—Ah, God!—not mine! but his, that ancestor who
gave
Escutcheon to our humble house—a Death's-head and a Grave.

Beneath the pomp of those grim arms I live and may not move;
Nor faith, nor truth, nor wealth avail to hurl them down, nor love!
How could I tell you this?—not then! when all the world was spun
Of morning colors for our love to walk and dance upon.

I could not tell you how disease hid here a hideous germ,
Precedence slowly claiming and so slowly fixing firm.
And when I broke our plighted troth and would not tell you why,
I loved you, thinking, "time enough when I have come to die."

[Pg 94]

Draw off my rings, and let my hands rest so ... the wretched
cough
Will interrupt my feeble speech and will not be put off....
Ah, anyhow my anodyne is this—to know that you
Are near me, love me!—Kiss me now, as you were wont to do.

And tell me you forgive me all; and say you will forget
The sorrow of that breaking-off, the fever and the fret.—
Now set those roses near my face and tell me death's a lie—
Once it was hard for me to live ... now it is hard to die.

PART V

[Pg 95]

WINTER

*We, whom God sets a task,
Striving, who ne'er attain,
We are the curst!—who ask
Death, and still ask in vain.
We, whom God sets a task.*

1

In the silence of his room. After many days.

All, all are shadows. All must pass
As writing in the sand or sea;
Reflections in a looking-glass
Are not less permanent than we.

The days that mould us—what are they?
That break us on their whirling wheel?
What but the potters! we the clay
They fashion and yet leave unreal.

Linked through the ages, one and all,
In long anthropomorphous chain,
The human and the animal
Inseparably must remain.

Within us still the monster shape
That shrieked in air and howled in slime,
What are we?—partly man and ape—
The tools of fate, the toys of time!

[Pg 96]

2

The bitterness of his bereavement speaks in him.

Vased in her bedroom window, white

As her chaste girlhood, never lost,
I smelt the roses—and the night
Outside was fog and frost.

What though I claimed her dying there!
God nor one angel understood
Nor cared, who from sweet feet to hair
Had changed to snow her blood.

She had been mine so long, so long!
Our harp of life was one in word—
Why did death thrust his hand among
The chords and break one chord!

A placid lily was the face,
A sad pale rose the mouth I kissed
That morn, when filled with Heaven's own grace
She passed into the mist.

3

[Pg 97]

Her dead face seems to rise up before him.

The face that I said farewell to,
Pillowed a flower on flowers,
Comes back with its eyes to tell to
My soul what its lips would spell too—
Comes back to me at hours!—

Dear, is your heart still daggered
There by something amiss?
Love—is he still a laggard?
Hope—is her face still haggard
Tell me what it is!

You, who are done with To-morrow!
Done with these worldly skies!
Done with our pain and sorrow!
Done with the griefs we borrow!
Prayers and tears and sighs!

Must we say "gone forever"?
Or will it all come true?
Shall I attain to you ever?
And, o'er the doubts that sever,
Rise to the truth that's you?

Love, in my flesh so fearful,
Medicine me this pain!—
Love, with the eyes so tearful,
How can my soul be cheerful,
Seeing its joy is slain!

[Pg 98]

Gone!—'twas only a vision!—
Gone! like a thought, a gleam!—
Such to our indecision
Utter no empty mission,
Truer than that they seem.

4

He sinks into deep thought.

There are shadows that compel us,
There are voices that control;
More than substance these can tell us,
Speaking to the human soul.

In the moonlight, when it glistened
On my window, white as snow,
Once I woke and, leaning, listened
To a voice that sang below.

Full of gladness, full of yearning,
Strange with dreamy melody,

Like a bird whose heart is burning,
Wildly sweet it sang to me.

I arose; and by the starlight,
Pale beneath the mystic sky,
I have seen it full of far light,—
My dead joy go singing by.

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In the darkness, when the glimmer
Of the storm was on the pane,
I have sat and heard a dimmer
Voice lamenting in the rain.

Full of parting and unspoken
Heartbreak, faint with agony,
Like a bird whose heart is broken,
Sadly low it cried to me.

I arose; and in the darkness
Wan beneath the haunted sky,
I have seen it, cold to starkness,—
My dead love go weeping by.

5

He arouses from his abstraction.

So long it seems since last I saw her face,
So long ago it seems,
Like some sad soul in un conjectured space
Still seeking happiness through perished grace
And unrealities,—a little while
Illusions lead me, ending in the smile
Of Death triumphant in a thorny place
Among Love's ruined roses and dead dreams.

Since she is gone, no more I see the light,—
Since she has left all dark,—
Cleave like a revelation through the night.
I wander blindly, filled with fear and fright,
Among the fragments and the wrecks and stones
Of life, where Hope, amid the skulls and bones,
With weary face, disheartened, wild and white,
Trims her pale lamp with its expiring spark.

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Now she is dead, the Soul, naught can o'erawe,—
Now she has passed from me,—
Questions God's justice that seems full of flaw
As is His world, where misery is law,
And men but fools too willing to be slaves.—
My House of Faith, built up on dust of graves,
The wind of doubt sweeps down as made of straw,
And all is night, and I no longer see.

6

He looks from his window toward the sombre west.

Ridged and bleak the gray forsaken
Twilight at the night has guessed;
And no star of dusk has taken
Flame unshaken in the west.

All day long the woodlands dying
Moaned, and drippings as of grief
Tossed from barren boughs with sighing
Death of flying twig and leaf.

[Pg 101]

Ah, to live a life unbroken,
Scornful of the worst of fate!
Like that tree ... with branches oaken....
Joy's unspoken intimate.—

Who can say that man has never
Lived the life of plants and trees?

Not so wide the lines that sever
Us forever here from these.

Colors, odors, that are cherished,
Haply hint we once were flowers;
Memory alone has perished
In this garished world of ours.

Music,—that all things expresses,
All for which we've loved or sinned,—
Haply in our treey tresses
Once was guesses of the wind....

But I dream!—The dusk, upbraiding,
Deepens without moon or star;
Darkness and my sorrow aiding,
We but fading phantoms are.

And within me doubt keeps saying—
"What is wrong? and what is right?
Hear the cursing! hear the praying!
All are straying on in night."

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7

He turns from the window, takes up a book and reads.

The Soul, like Earth, hath silences
Which speak not, yet are heard—
The voices mute of memories
Are louder than a word.

Theirs is a speech which is not speech;
A language that is bound
To soul-vibrations vague that reach
Deeper than any sound.

No words are theirs. They speak through things,
A visible utterance
Of thoughts—like those some sunset brings
Or withered rose perchance.

The heavens that once, in purple and flame,
Spake to two hearts as one,
In after years may speak the same
To one sad heart alone.

Through it the vanished face and eyes
Of her, the sweet and fair,
Of her the lost, again shall rise
To comfort his despair.

[Pg 103]

And so the love that led him long
From golden scene to scene,
Within the sunset is a tongue
To tell him what has been.—

How loud it speaks of that dead day,
The rose whose bloom is fled!
Of her who died; who, clasped in clay,
Lies numbered with the dead.

The dead are dead; with them 'tis well
Within their narrow room;—
No memories haunt their hearts who dwell
Within the grave and tomb.

But what of those—the dead who live!
The living dead, whose lot
Is still to love—ah, God forgive!—
To live and love, forgot!—

8

[Pg 104]

The storm is heard sounding wildly with wind and hail.

The night is wild with rain and sleet.
Each loose-warped casement claps and groans.
I hear the plangent forest beat
The tempest with long blatant moans
As of despair, defeat.

And sitting here beyond the storm,
Alone within the lonely house,
It seems that some mesmeric charm
Hangs over all.—Why, even the mouse,
That gnawed, has come to harm.

And in the silence, stolen o'er
All things, I strangely seem to fear
Myself—that, opening yon door,
I'd find my dead self drawing near,
With face that once I wore.

The stairway creaks with ghostly gusts.
The flue moans—'tis a gorgon throat
Of wailing winds. Ancestral dusts,—
That yonder Indian war-gear coat
With gray and spectral crusts,—

Are trembled down.—Or can it be,
That he who wore it in the dance,
Or battle, now fills shadowy
Its wampum skins? And shakes his lance
And warrior plume at me?—

[Pg 105]

Mere fancy!—Yet those curtains toss
Mysteriously as if some dark
Hand moved them.—And I'd fear to cross
The shadow there where lies that spark—
A glow-worm sunk in moss.

Outside 'twere better!—Yes, I yearn
To walk the waste where sway and dip
The dark December boughs—where burn
Some late last leaves, that drip and drip
No matter where you turn.

Where sodden soil, you scarce have trod,
Fills oozy footprints—but the blind
Night there, tho' like the frown of God,
Presents no phantoms to the mind,
Like these that have o'erawed.—

The months I count: how long it seems
Since summer! summer, when with her,
There on her porch, in rainy gleams
We watched the flickering lightning stir
In heavens gray as dreams.

When all the west, a sheet of gold,
Flared,—like some Titan's opened forge,—
With storm; revealing manifold
Vast peaks of clouds with crag and gorge,
Where thunder torrents rolled.

[Pg 106]

Then came the wind; again, again
The lightning lit the world—and how
The tempest roared with rushing rain!...
We could not read.—Where is it now,
That tale of Charlemagne?

That old romance, ah me! that we
Were reading? till we heard the plunge
Of summer thunder sullenly,
And left to watch the lightning lunge,
And winds bend down each tree.—

That summer! how it built us there
A world of love and necromance!
A spirit-world, where all was fair;
An island, sleeping in a trance

Of lilled light and air.

Where every flower was a thought;
And every bird, a melody;
And every fragrance, zephyr brought,
Was but the rainbowed drapery
Of some sweet dream long sought.

O land of shadows! shadow-home,
Within my world of memories!
Around whose ruins sweeps the foam
Of sorrow's immemorial seas,
By whose dark shores I roam!

How long in your wrecked halls alone
With ghosts of joys must I remain?
Between the unknown and the known,
Still listening to the wind and rain,
And my own heart's wild moan.

[Pg 107]

9

He sits by the slowly dying fire. The storm is heard with increased violence.

Wild weather. The lash of the sleet
On the gusty casement tapping—
The sound of the storm like a sheet
My soul and senses wrapping.

Wild weather. And how is she,
Now the rush of the rain falls serried
Over the turf and the tree
Of the place where she is buried?

Wild weather. How black and deep
Is the night where the mad winds scurry!—
Do I sleep? do I dream in my sleep
That I hear her footsteps hurry?

Hither they come like flowers—
And I see her raiment glisten,
Like the robe of one of the hours
Where the stars to the angels listen.

Before me, behold, how she stands!
With lips high thoughts have weighted,
And testifying hands,
And eyes with glory sated.

I have spoken and I have kneeled;
I have kissed her feet in wonder—
But lo! her lips—they are sealed,
God-sealed, and will not sunder.

Though I sob, "Your stay was long!
You are come,—but your feet were laggard!—
With mansuetude and song
For the soul your death has daggered."

Never a word replies,
Never to all my weeping—
Only a sound of sighs,
And raiment past me sweeping....

I wake; and a clock strikes three—
And the night and the storm beat serried
Over the turf and the tree
Of the place where she is buried.

[Pg 108]

Ernest McGaffey

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[Pg 110]

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IRISH MIST AND SUNSHINE

[Pg 111]

BALLADS AND LYRICS BY

REV. JAMES B. DOLLARD
(Sliav-na-mon)

With an introduction by William O'Brien, M. P. With frontispiece. Small quarto. Cloth ornamental. \$1.50

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FOUR DAYS OF GOD

[Pg 112]

By HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

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