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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A VOICE ON THE WIND, AND OTHER
POEMS ***

Transcriber's Notes

List of Poems did not appear in original book. Original spellings and punctuation have been retained. Typographical error marked with mouse-hover pop-up.

LIST OF POEMS

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A Voice on the Wind

AND OTHER POEMS

by

Madison Cawein



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INSCRIBED

TO

EDMUND GOSSE

AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF APPRECIATION AND ESTEEM

PROEM.

OH, FOR A SOUL THAT FULFILLS
MUSIC LIKE THAT OF A BIRD!
THRILLING WITH RAPTURE THE HILLS,
HEEDLESS IF ANY ONE HEARD.

OR, LIKE THE FLOWER THAT BLOOMS
LONE IN THE MIDST OF THE TREES,
FILLING THE WOODS WITH PERFUMES,
CARELESS IF ANY ONE SEES.

OR, LIKE THE WANDERING WIND,
OVER THE MEADOWS THAT SWINGS,
BRINGING WILD SWEETS TO MANKIND,
KNOWING NOT THAT WHICH IT BRINGS.

OH, FOR A WAY TO IMPART
BEAUTY, NO MATTER HOW HARD!
LIKE UNTO NATURE, WHOSE ART
NEVER ONCE DREAMS OF REWARD.

A Voice on the Wind

[Pg 1]



A VOICE ON THE WIND

She walks with the wind on the windy height
When the rocks are loud and the waves are white,
And all night long she calls through the night,
 "O, my children, come home!"
Her bleak gown, torn as a tattered cloud,
Tosses around her like a shroud,
While over the deep her voice rings loud,—
 "O, my children, come home, come home!
 O, my children, come home!"

Who is she who wanders alone,
When the wind drives sheer and the rain is blown?
Who walks all night and makes her moan,
 "O, my children, come home!"
Whose face is raised to the blinding gale;
Whose hair blows black and whose eyes are pale,
While over the world is heard her wail,—
 "O, my children, come home, come home!
 O, my children, come home!"

She walks with the wind in the windy wood;
The sad rain drips from her hair and hood,
And her cry sobs by, like a ghost pursued,
 "O, my children, come home!"
 "O, my children, come home!"
Where the trees are gaunt and the rocks are drear,
The owl and the fox crouch down in fear,
While wild through the wood her voice they hear,—
 "O, my children, come home, come home!
 O, my children, come home!"

[Pg 2]

Who is she who shudders by
When the boughs blow bare and the dead leaves fly?
Who walks all night with her wailing cry,
 "O, my children, come home!"
Who, strange of look, and wild of tongue,
With pale feet wounded and hands wan-wrung,
Sweeps on and on with her cry, far-flung,—
 "O, my children, come home, come home!
 O, my children, come home!"

'Tis the Spirit of Autumn, no man sees,
The mother of Death and Mysteries,
Who cries on the wind all night to these,
 "O, my children, come home!"
The Spirit of Autumn, pierced with pain,
Calling her children home again,
Death and Dreams, through ruin and rain,
 "O, my children, come home, come home!
 O, my children, come home!"

[Pg 3]

Do you know the way that goes
Over fields of rue and rose,—
Warm of scent and hot of hue,
Roofed with heaven's bluest blue,—
To the Vale of Dreams Come True?

Do you know the path that twines,
Banked with elder-bosks and vines,
Under boughs that shade a stream,
Hurrying, crystal as a gleam,
To the Hills of Love a-Dream?

Tell me, tell me, have you gone
Through the fields and woods of dawn,
Meadowlands and trees that roll,
Great of grass and huge of bole,
To the Land of Hearts Made Whole?

On the way, among the fields,
Poppies lift vermilion shields,
In whose hearts the golden Noon,
Murmuring her drowsy tune,
Rocks the sleepy bees that croon.

[Pg 4]

On the way, amid the woods,
Mandrakes muster multitudes,
'Mid whose blossoms, white as tusk,
Glides the glimmering Forest-Dusk,
With her fluttering moths of musk.

Here you hear the stealthy stir
Of shy lives of hoof and fur;
Harmless things that hide and peer,
Hearts that sucked the milk of fear—
Fox and rabbit, squirrel and deer.

Here you see the mossy flight
Of faint forms that love the night—
Whippoorwill- and owlet-things,
Whose far call before you brings
Wonder-worlds of happenings.

Now in sunlight, now in shade,
Water, like a brandished blade,
Foaming forward, wild of flight,
Startles then arrests the sight,
Whirling steely loops of light.

Thro' the tree-tops, down the vale,
Breezes pass and leave a trail
Of cool music that the birds,
Following in happy herds,
Gather up in twittering words.

[Pg 5]

Blossoms, frail and manifold,
Strew the way with pearl and gold;
Blurs, that seem the darling print
Of the Springtime's feet, or glint
Of her twinkling gown's torn tint.

There the myths of old endure:
Dreams that are the world-soul's cure;
Things that have no place or play
In the facts of Everyday
'Round your presence smile and sway.

Suddenly your eyes may see,
Stepping softly from her tree,
Slim of form and wet with dew,
The brown dryad; lips the hue
Of a berry bit into.

You may mark the naiad rise
From her pool's reflected skies;
In her gaze the heaven that dreams,
Starred, in twilight-haunted streams,

Mixed with water's grayer gleams.

You may see the laurel's girth,
Big of bloom, give fragrant birth
To the oread whose hair,
Musk and darkness, light and air,
Fills the hush with wonder there.

[Pg 6]

You may mark the rocks divide,
And the faun before you glide,
Piping on a magic reed,
Sowing many a music seed,
From which bloom and mushroom bead.

Of the rain and sunlight born,
Young of beard and young of horn,
You may see the satyr lie,
With a very knowing eye,
Teaching youngling birds to fly.

These shall cheer and follow you
Through the Vale of Dreams Come True;
Wind-like voices, leaf-like feet;
Forms of mist and hazy heat,
In whose pulses sunbeams beat.

Lo! you tread enchanted ground!
From the hollows all around
Elf and spirit, gnome and fay,
Guide your feet along the way
Till the dewy close of day.

Then beside you, jet on jet,
Emerald-hued or violet,
Flickering swings a firefly light,
Aye to guide your steps a-right
From the valley to the height.

[Pg 7]

Steep the way is; when at last
Vale and wood and stream are passed,
From the heights you shall behold
Panther heavens of spotted gold
Tiger-tawny deeps unfold.

You shall see on stocks and stones
Sunset's bell-deep color tones
Fallen; and the valleys filled
With dusk's purple music, spilled
On the silence rapture-thrilled.

Then, as answering bell greets bell,
Night ring in her miracle
Of the doméd dark, o'er-rolled,
Note on note, with starlight cold,
'Twixt the moon's broad peal of gold.

On the hill-top Love-a-Dream
Shows you then her window-gleam;
Brings you home and folds your soul
In the peace of vale and knoll,
In the Land of Hearts Made Whole.

THE WIND OF WINTER

[Pg 8]

The Winter Wind, the wind of death,
Who knocked upon my door,
Now through the key-hole entereth,
Invisible and hoar;
He breathes around his icy breath
And treads the flickering floor.

I heard him, wandering in the night,
Tap at my window pane,

With ghostly fingers, snowy white,
I heard him tug in vain,
Until the shuddering candle-light
With fear did cringe and strain.

The fire, awakened by his voice,
Leapt up with frantic arms,
Like some wild babe that greets with noise
Its father home who storms,
With rosy gestures that rejoice
And crimson kiss that warms.

Now in the hearth he sits and, drowned
Among the ashes, blows;
Or through the room goes stealing 'round
On cautious-stepping toes,
Deep mantled in the drowsy sound
Of night that sleets and snows.

And oft, like some thin fairy-thing,
The stormy hush amid,
I hear his captive trebles ring
Beneath the kettle's lid;
Or now a harp of elfland string
In some dark cranny hid.

[Pg 9]

Again I hear him, imp-like, whine
Cramped in the gusty flue;
Or knotted in the resinous pine
Raise goblin cry and hue,
While through the smoke his eyeballs shine,
A sooty red and blue.

At last I hear him, nearing dawn,
Take up his roaring broom,
And sweep wild leaves from wood and lawn,
And from the heavens the gloom,
To show the gaunt world lying wan,
And morn's cold rose a-bloom.

THE WIND OF SUMMER

[Pg 10]

From the hills and far away
All the long, warm summer day
Comes the wind and seems to say:

"Come, oh, come! and let us go
Where the meadows bend and blow,
Waving with the white-tops' snow.

"'Neath the hyssop-colored sky
'Mid the meadows we will lie
Watching the white clouds roll by;

"While your hair my hands shall press
With a cooling tenderness
Till your grief grows less and less.

"Come, oh, come! and let us roam
Where the rock-cut waters comb
Flowing crystal into foam.

"Under trees whose trunks are brown,
On the banks that violets crown,
We will watch the fish flash down;

"While your ear my voice shall soothe
With a whisper soft and smooth
Till your care shall wax uncouth.

"Come! where forests, line on line,
Armies of the oak and pine,
Scale the hills and shout and shine.

[Pg 11]

"We will wander, hand in hand,
Ways where tall the toadstools stand,
Mile-stones white of Fairyland.

"While your eyes my lips shall kiss,
Dewy as a wild rose is,
Till they gaze on naught but bliss.

"On the meadows you will hear,
Leaning low your spirit ear,
Cautious footsteps drawing near.

"You will deem it but a bee,
Murmuring soft and sleepily,
Till your inner sight shall see

"'Tis a presence passing slow,
All its shining hair ablow,
Through the white-tops' tossing snow.

"By the waters, if you will,
And your inmost soul be still,
Melody your ears shall fill.

"You will deem it but the stream
Rippling onward in a dream,
Till upon your gaze shall gleam

"Arm of spray and throat of foam—
'Tis a spirit there aroam
Where the radiant waters comb.

"In the forest, if you heed,
You shall hear a magic reed
Sow sweet notes like silver seed.

"You will deem your ears have heard
Stir of tree or song of bird,
Till your startled eyes are blurred

"By a vision, instant seen,
Naked gold and beryl green,
Glimmering bright the boughs between.

"Follow me! and you shall see
Wonder-worlds of mystery
That are only known to me!"

Thus outside my city door
Speaks the Wind its wildwood lore,
Speaks and lo! I go once more.

[Pg 12]

THE SPIRIT OF THE FOREST SPRING

[Pg 13]

Over the rocks she trails her locks,
Her mossy locks that drip, drip, drip;
Her sparkling eyes smile at the skies
In friendship-wise and fellowship;
While the gleam and glance of her countenance
Lull into trance the woodland places,
As over the rocks she trails her locks,
Her dripping locks that the long fern graces.

She pours clear ooze from her heart's cool cruse,
Its crystal cruse that drips, drips, drips;
And all the day its diamond spray
Is heard to play from her finger-tips;
And the slight soft sound makes haunted ground
Of the woods around that the sunlight laces,
As she pours clear ooze from her heart's cool cruse,
Its dripping cruse that no man traces.

She swims and swims with glimmering limbs,
With lucid limbs that drip, drip, drip;

Where beechen boughs build a leafy house
For her form to drowse or her feet to trip;
And the liquid beat of her rippling feet
Makes three-times sweet the forest mazes,
As she swims and swims with glimmering limbs,
With dripping limbs through the twilight's hazes.

[Pg 14]

Then wrapped in deeps of the wild she sleeps,
She whispering sleeps and drips, drips, drips;
Where moon and mist wreathes neck and wrist,
While, starry-whist, through the night she slips;
And the heavenly dream of her soul makes gleam
The falls that stream and the foam that races,
As wrapped in deeps of the wild she sleeps,
She dripping sleeps or starward gazes.

TO THE LEAF-CRICKET

[Pg 15]

I

Small twilight singer
Of dew and mist: thou ghost-gray, gossamer winger
Of dusk's dim glimmer,
How cool thy note sounds; how thy wings of shimmer
Vibrate, soft-sighing,
Meseems, for Summer that is dead or dying.
I stand and listen,
And at thy song the garden-beds, that glisten
With rose and lily,
Seem touched with sadness; and the tuberose chilly,
Breathing around its cold and colorless breath,
Fills the pale evening with wan hints of death.

II

I see thee quaintly
Beneath the leaf; thy shell-shaped winglets faintly—
As thin as spangle
Of cobwebbed rain—held up at airy angle;
I hear thy tinkle,
Thy fairy notes, the silvery stillness sprinkle;
Investing wholly
The moonlight with divinest melancholy:
Until, in seeming,
I see the Spirit of the Summer dreaming
Amid her ripened orchards, apple-strewn,
Her great, grave eyes fixed on the harvest-moon.

III

As dew-drops beady,
As mist minute, thy notes ring low and reedy:
The vaguest vapor
Of melody, now near; now, like some taper
Of sound, far fading—
Thou will-o'-wisp of music aye evading.
Among the bowers,
The fog-washed stalks of Autumn's weeds and flowers,
By hill and hollow,
I hear thy murmur and in vain I follow—
Thou jack-o'-lantern voice, thou elfin cry,
Thou dirge, that tellest Beauty she must die.

[Pg 16]

IV

And when the frantic
Wild winds of Autumn with the dead leaves antic;
And walnuts scatter
The mire of lanes; and dropping acorns patter
In grove and forest,
Like some frail grief, with the rude blast thou warrest,

Sending thy slender
Far cry against the gale, that, rough, untender,
Untouched of sorrow,
Sweeps thee aside, where, haply, I to-morrow
Shall find thee lying, tiny, cold and crushed,
Thy weak wings folded and thy music hushed.

THE OWLET

[Pg 17]

I

When dusk is drowned in drowsy dreams,
And slow the hues of sunset die;
When firefly and moth go by,
And in still streams the new-moon gleams,
A sickle in the sky;
Then from the hills there comes a cry,
The owlet's cry;
A shivering voice that sobs and screams,
That, frightened, screams:

"Who is it, who is it, who?
Who rides through the dusk and dew,
With a pair o' horns,
As thin as thorns,
And face a bubble blue?
Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who?"

II

When night has dulled the lily's white,
And opened wide the primrose eyes;
When pale mists rise and veil the skies,
And 'round the height in whispering flight
The night-wind sounds and sighs;
Then in the woods again it cries,
The owlet cries;
A shivering voice that calls in fright,
In maundering fright:

"Who is it, who is it, who?
Who walks with a shuffling shoe,
'Mid the gusty trees,
With a face none sees,
And a form as ghostly too?
Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who?"

[Pg 18]

III

When midnight leans a listening ear
And tinkles on her insect lutes;
When 'mid the roots the cricket flutes,
And marsh and mere, now far, now near,
A jack-o'-lantern foots;
Then o'er the pool again it hoots,
The owlet hoots;
A voice that shivers as with fear,
That cries in fear:

"Who is it, who is it, who?
Who creeps with his glow-worm crew
Above the mire
With a corpse-light fire,
As only dead men do?
Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who?"

I

Here where a tree and its wild liana,
Leaning over the streamlet, grow,
Once a nymph, like the moon'd Diana,
Sat in the ages long ago.
Sat with a mortal with whom she had mated,
Sat and laughed with a mortal youth,
Ere he of the forest, the god who hated,
Saw and changed to a form uncouth....

II

Once in the woods she had heard a shepherd,
Heard a reed in a golden glade;
Followed, and clad in the skin of a leopard,
Found him fluting within the shade.
Found him sitting with bare brown shoulder,
Lithe and strong as a sapling oak,
And leaning over a mossy boulder,
Love in her wildwood heart awoke.

III

White she was as a dogwood flower,
Pinkly white as a wild-crab bloom,
Sweetly white as a hawtree bower
Full of dew and the May's perfume.
He who saw her above him burning,
Beautiful, naked, in light arrayed,
Deemed her Diana, and from her turning,
Leapt to his feet and fled afraid.

IV

Far she followed and called and pleaded,
Ever he fled with never a look;
Fled, till he came to this spot, deep-reeded,
Came to the bank of this forest brook.
Here for a moment he stopped and listened,
Heard in her voice her heart's despair,
Saw in her eyes the love that glistened,
Sank on her bosom and rested there.

V

Close to her beauty she strained and pressed him,
Held and bound him with kiss on kiss;
Soft with her arms and her lips caressed him,
Sweeter of touch than a blossom is.
Spoke to his heart, and with sweet persuasion
Mastered his soul till its fear was flown;
Spoke to his soul till its mortal evasion
Vanished, and body and soul were her own.

VI

Many a day had they met and mated,
Many a day by this woodland brook,
When he of the forest, the god who hated,
Came on their love and changed with a look.
There on the shore, while they joyed and jested,
He in the shadows, unseen, espied
Her, like the goddess Diana breasted,
Him, like Endymion by her side.

VII

Lo! at a word, at a sign, their folded
Limbs and bodies assumed new form,

Hers to the shape of a tree were molded,
His to a vine with surrounding arm....
So they stand with their limbs enlacing,
Nymph and mortal, upon this shore,
He forever a vine embracing
Her a silvery sycamore.

THE POET

[Pg 22]

He stands above all worldly schism,
And, gazing over life's abysm,
Beholds within the starry range
Of heaven laws of death and change,
That, through his soul's prophetic prism,
Are turned to rainbows wild and strange.

Through nature is his hope made surer
Of that ideal, his allurer,
By whom his life is upward drawn
To mount pale pinnacles of dawn,
'Mid which all that is fairer, purer
Of love and lore it comes upon.

An alkahest, that makes gold metal
Of dross, his mind is—where one petal
Of one wild-rose will all outweigh
The piled-up facts of everyday—
Where commonplaces, there that settle,
Are changed to things of heavenly ray.

He climbs by steps of stars and flowers,
Companioned of the dreaming hours,
And sets his feet in pastures where
No merely mortal feet may fare;
And higher than the stars he towers
Though lowlier than the flowers there.

His comrades are his own high fancies
And thoughts in which his soul romances;
And every part of heaven or earth
He visits, lo, assumes new worth;
And touched with loftier traits and trances
Re-shines as with a lovelier birth.

[Pg 23]

He is the play, likewise the player;
The word that's said, also the sayer;
And in the books of heart and head
There is no thing he has not read;
Of time and tears he is the weigher,
And mouthpiece 'twixt the quick and dead.

He dies: but, mounting ever higher,
Wings Phœnix-like from out his pyre
Above our mortal day and night,
Clothed on with sempiternal light;
And raimented in thought's far fire
Flames on in everlasting flight.

Unseen, yet seen, on heights of visions,
Above all praise and world derisions,
His spirit and his deathless brood
Of dreams fare on, a multitude,
While on the pillar of great missions
His name and place are granite-hewed.

EVENING ON THE FARM

[Pg 24]

From out the hills, where twilight stands,
Above the shadowy pasture lands,
With strained and strident cry,

Beneath pale skies that sunset bands,
The bull-bats fly.

A cloud hangs over, strange of shape,
And, colored like the half-ripe grape,
Seems some uneven stain
On heaven's azure, thin as crape,
And blue as rain.

By ways, that sunset's sardonix
O'erflares, and gates the farmboy clicks,
Through which the cattle came,
The mullein stalks seem giant wicks
Of downy flame.

From woods no glimmer enters in,
Above the streams that wandering win
From out the violet hills,
Those haunters of the dusk begin,
The whippoorwills.

Adown the dark the firefly marks
Its flight in golden-emerald sparks;
And, loosened from his chain,
The shaggy watchdog bounds and barks,
And barks again.

[Pg 25]

Each breeze brings scents of hill-heaped hay;
And now an owlet, far away,
Cries twice or thrice, "Twohoo;"
And cool dim moths of mottled gray
Flit through the dew.

The silence sounds its frog-bassoon,
Where on the woodland creek's lagoon,
Pale as a ghostly girl
Lost 'mid the trees, looks down the moon
With face of pearl.

Within the shed where logs, late hewed,
Smell forest-sweet, and chips of wood
Make blurs of white and brown,
The brood-hen cuddles her warm brood
Of teetering down.

The clattering guineas in the tree
Din for a time; and quietly
The henhouse, near the fence,
Sleeps, save for some brief rivalry
Of cocks and hens.

A cow-bell tinkles by the rails,
Where, streaming white in foaming pails,
Milk makes an uddery sound;
While overhead the black bat trails
Around and 'round.

[Pg 26]

The night is still. The slow cows chew
A drowsy cud. The bird that flew
And sang is in its nest.
It is the time of falling dew,
Of dreams and rest.

The brown bees sleep; and 'round the walk,
The garden path, from stalk to stalk
The bungling beetle booms,
Where two soft shadows stand and talk
Among the blooms.

The stars are thick: the light is dead
That dyed the West: and Drowsyhead,
Tuning his cricket-pipe,
Nods, and some apple, round and red,
Drops over ripe.

Now down the road, that shambles by,
A window, shining like an eye

Through climbing rose and gourd,
Shows where Toil sups and these things lie,
His heart and hoard.

THE BROOK

[Pg 27]

To it the forest tells
The mystery that haunts its heart and folds
Its form in cogitation deep, that holds
The shadow of each myth that dwells
In nature—be it Nymph or Fay or Faun—
And whispering of them to the dales and dells,
It wanders on and on.

To it the heaven shows
The secret of its soul; true images
Of dreams that form its aspect; and with these
Reflected in its countenance it goes,
With pictures of the skies, the dusk and dawn,
Within its breast, as every blossom knows,
For them to gaze upon.

Through it the world-soul sends
Its heart's creating pulse that beats and sings
The music of maternity whence springs
All life; and shaping earthly ends,
From the deep sources of the heavens drawn,
Planting its ways with beauty, on it wends,
On and forever on.

SUMMER NOONTIDE

[Pg 28]

The slender snail clings to the leaf,
Gray on its silvered underside:
And slowly, slower than the snail, with brief
Bright steps, whose ripening touch foretells the sheaf,
Her warm hands berry-dyed,
Comes down the tanned Noontide.

The pungent fragrance of the mint
And pennyroyal drench her gown,
That leaves long shreds of trumpet-blossom tint
Among the thorns, and everywhere the glint
Of gold and white and brown
Her flowery steps waft down.

The leaves, like hands with emerald veined,
Along her way try their wild best
To reach the jewel—whose hot hue was drained
From some rich rose that all the June contained—
The butterfly, soft pressed
Upon her sunny breast.

Her shawl, the lace-like elder bloom,
She hangs upon the hillside brake,
Smelling of warmth and of her breast's perfume,
And, lying in the citron-colored gloom
Beside the lilled lake,
She stares the buds awake.

Or, with a smile, through watery deeps
She leads the oaring turtle's legs;
Or guides the crimson fish, that swims and sleeps,
From pad to pad, from which the young frog leaps;
And to its nest's green eggs
The bird that pleads and begs.

[Pg 29]

Then 'mid the fields of unmown hay
She shows the bees where sweets are found;
And points the butterflies, at airy play,

And dragonflies, along the water-way,
Where honeyed flowers abound
For them to flicker 'round.

Or where ripe apples pelt with gold
Some barn—around which, coned with snow,
The wild-potato blooms—she mounts its old
Mossed roof, and through warped sides, the knots have holed,
Lets her long glances glow
Into the loft below.

To show the mud-wasp at its cell
Slenderly busy; swallows, too,
Packing against a beam their nest's clay shell;
And crouching in the dark the owl as well
With all her downy crew
Of owlets gray of hue.

These are her joys, and until dusk
Lounging she walks where reapers reap,
From sultry raiment shaking scents of musk,
Rustling the corn within its silken husk,
And driving down heav'n's deep
White herds of clouds like sheep.

[Pg 30]

HEAT

[Pg 31]

I

Now is it as if Spring had never been,
And Winter but a memory and dream,
Here where the Summer stands, her lap of green
Heaped high with bloom and beam,
Among her blackberry-lilies, low that lean
To kiss her feet; or, freckle-browed, that stare
Upon the dragonfly which, slimly seen,
Like a blue jewel flickering in her hair,
Sparkles above them there.

II

Knee-deep among the tepid pools the cows
Chew a slow cud or switch a slower tail.
Half-sunk in sleep beneath the beechen boughs,
Where thin the wood-gnats ail.
From bloom to bloom the languid butterflies drowse;
The sleepy bees make hardly any sound;
The only things the sunrays can arouse,
It seems, are two black beetles rolling 'round
Upon the dusty ground.

III

Within its channel glares the creek and shrinks,
Beneath whose rocks the furtive crawfish hides
In stagnant places, where the green frog blinks,
And water-spider glides.
And water-spider glides.
Far hotter seems it for the bird that drinks,
The startled kingfisher that screams and flies;
Hotter and lonelier for the purple pinks
Of weeds that bloom, whose sultry perfumes rise
Stifling the swooning skies.

[Pg 32]

IV

From ragweed fallows, rye fields, heaped with sheaves,
From blistering rocks, no moss or lichens crust,
And from the road, where every hoof-stroke heaves
A cloud of burning dust,
The hotness quivers, making limp the leaves,

That loll like tongues of panting hounds. The heat
Is a wan wimple that the Summer weaves,
A veil, in which she wraps, as in a sheet,
The shriveling corn and wheat.

V

Furious, incessant in the weeds and briers
The sawing weed-bugs sing; and, heat-begot,
The grasshoppers, so many strident wires,
Staccato fiercely hot:
A lash of whirling sound that never tires,
The locust flails the noon, where harnessed Thirst,
Beside the road-spring, many a shod hoof mires,
Into the trough thrusts his hot head, immersed,
'Round which cool bubbles burst.

VI

[Pg 33]

The sad, sweet voice of some wood-spirit who
Laments while watching a loved oak tree die,
From the deep forest comes the wood-dove's coo.
A long, lost, lonely cry.
Oh, for a breeze, a mighty wind to woo
The woods to stormy laughter; sow like grain
The world with freshness of invisible dew.
And pile above far, fevered hill and plain.
Vast bastions black with rain.

JULY

[Pg 34]

Now 'tis the time when, tall,
The long blue torches of the bellflower gleam
Among the trees; and, by the wooded stream.
In many a fragrant ball.
Blooms of the button-bush fall.

Let us go forth and seek
Woods where the wild plums redden and the beech
Plumps its packed burs: and, swelling, just in reach.
The pawpaw, emerald sleek.
Ripens along the creek.

Now 'tis the time when ways
Of glimmering green flaunt white the misty plumes
Of the black-cohosh; and through bramble glooms,
A blur of orange rays,
The butterfly-blossoms blaze.

Let us go forth and hear
The spiral music that the locusts beat,
And that small spray of sound, so grassy sweet,
Dear to a country ear,
The cricket's summer cheer.

Now golden celandine
Is hairy hung with silvery sacks of seeds.
And bugled o'er with freckled gold, like beads.
Beneath the fox-grape vine,
The jewel-weed's blossoms shine.

Let us go forth and see
The dragon- and the butterfly, like gems,
Spangling the sunbeams; and the clover stems,
Weighed down by many a bee,
Nodding mellifluously.

[Pg 35]

Now morns are full of song;
The catbird and the redbird and the jay
Upon the hilltops rouse the rosy day,
Who, dewy, blithe, and strong,
Lures their wild wings along.

Now noons are full of dreams;
The clouds of heaven and the wandering breeze
Follow a vision; and the flowers and trees,
The hills and fields and streams,
Are lapped in mystic gleams.

The nights are full of love;
The stars and moon take up the golden tale
Of the sunk sun, and passionate and pale,
Mixing their fires above,
Grow eloquent thereof.

Such days are like a sigh
That beauty heaves from a full heart of bliss:
Such nights are like the sweetness of a kiss
On lips that half deny,
The warm lips of July.

TO THE LOCUST

[Pg 36]

Thou pulse of hotness, who, with reed-like breast,
Makest meridian music, long and loud,
Accentuating summer!—dost thy best
To make the sunbeams fiercer, and to crowd
With lonesomeness the long, close afternoon
When Labor leans, swart-faced and beady browed,
Upon his sultry scythe—thou tangible tune
Of heat, whose waves incessantly arise
Quivering and clear beneath the cloudless skies.

Thou singest, and upon his haggard hills
Drouth yawns and rubs his heavy eyes and wakes;
Brushes the hot hair from his face; and fills
The land with death as sullenly he takes
Downward his dusty way: 'midst woods and fields
At every pool his burning thirst he slakes:
No grove so deep, no bank so high it shields
A spring from him; no creek evades his eye;
He needs but look and they are withered dry.

Thou singest, and thy song is as a spell
Of somnolence to charm the land with sleep;
A thorn of sound that pierces dale and dell,
Diffusing slumber over vale and steep.
Diffusing slumber over vale and steep.
Sleepy the forest, nodding sleepy boughs;
The pastures sleepy with their sleepy sheep;
Sleepy the creek where sleepily the cows
Stand knee-deep: and the very heaven seems
Sleepy and lost in undetermined dreams.

[Pg 37]

Art thou a rattle that Monotony,
Summer's dull nurse, old sister of slow Time,
Shakes for Day's peevish pleasure, who in glee
Takes its discordant music for sweet rhyme?
Or oboe that the Summer Noontide plays,
Sitting with Ripeness 'neath the orchard-tree,
Trying repeatedly the same shrill phrase,
Until the musky peach with drowsiness
Drops, and the hum of bees grows less and less?

YOUNG SEPTEMBER

[Pg 38]

I

With a look and a laugh where the stream was flowing,
September led me along the land;
Where the golden-rod and lobelia, glowing,
Seemed burning torches within her hand.

And faint as the thistle's or milk-weed's feather
I glimpsed her form through the sparkling weather.

II

Now 'twas her hand and now her hair
That tossed me welcome everywhere;
That lured me onward through the stately rooms
Of forest, hung and carpeted with glooms,
And windowed wide with azure, doored with green.
Through which rich glimmers of her robe were seen—
Now, like some deep marsh-mallow, rosy gold;
Now, like the great Joe-Pye-weed, fold on fold
Of heavy mauve; and now, like the intense
Massed iron-weed, a purple opulence.

III

Along the bank in a wild procession
Of gold and sapphire the blossoms blew;
And borne on the breeze came their soft confession
In syllables musk of honey and dew;
In words unheard that their lips kept saying,
Sweet as the lips of children praying.

IV

And so, meseemed, I heard them tell
How here her loving glance once fell
Upon this bank, and from its azure grew
The ageratium mist-flower's happy hue:
How from her kiss, as crimson as the dawn,
The cardinal-flow'r drew its vermilion;
And from her hair's blond touch th' elecampane
Evolved the glory of its golden rain;
White from her starry footsteps, redolent,
The aster pearled its flowery firmament.

[Pg 39]

UNDER THE HUNTER'S MOON

[Pg 40]

White from her chrysalis of cloud,
The moth-like moon swings upward through the night;
And all the bee-like stars that crowd
The hollow hive of heav'n wane in her light.

Along the distance, folds of mist
Hang frost-pale, ridging all the dark with gray;
Tinting the trees with amethyst,
Touching with pearl and purple every spray.

All night the stealthy frost and fog
Conspire to slay the rich-robed weeds and flowers:
To strip of wealth the woods, and clog
With piled-up gold of leaves the creek that cowers.

I seem to see their Spirits stand,
Molded of moonlight, faint of form and face,
Now reaching high a chilly hand
To pluck some walnut from its spicy place:

Now with fine fingers, phantom-cold,
Splitting the wahoo's pods of rose, and thin
The bittersweet's balls o' gold,
To show the coal-red berries packed within:

Now on dim threads of gossamer
Stringing pale pearls of moisture; necklacing
The flow'rs; and spreading cobweb fur,
Crystaled with stardew, over everything:

While 'neath the moon, with moon-white feet,
They go and, chill, a moon-soft music draw

[Pg 41]

From wan leaf-cricket flutes—the sweet,
Sad dirge of Autumn dying in the shaw.

RAIN IN THE WOODS

[Pg 42]

When on the leaves the rain persists,
And every gust brings showers down;
When all the woodland smokes with mists,
I take the old road out of town
Into the hills through which it twists.

I find the vale where catnip grows,
Where boneset blooms, with moisture bowed;
The vale through which the red creek flows,
Turbid with hill-washed clay, and loud
As some wild horn a hunter blows.

Around the root the beetle glides,
A living beryl; and the ant,
Large, agate-red, a garnet, slides
Beneath the rock; and every plant
Is roof for some frail thing that hides.

Like knots against the trunks of trees
The lichen-colored moths are pressed;
And, wedged in hollow blooms, the bees
Seem clots of pollen; in its nest
The wasp has crawled and lies at ease.

The locust harsh, that sharply saws
The silence of the summer noon;
The katydid that thinly draws
Its fine file o'er the bars of moon;
And grasshopper that drills each pause:

The mantis, long-clawed, furtive, lean—
Fierce feline of the insect hordes—
And dragonfly, gauze-winged and green,
Beneath the wild-grape's leaves and gourd's,
Have housed themselves and rest unseen.

[Pg 43]

The butterfly and forest-bird
Are huddled on the same gnarled bough,
From which, like some rain-voweled word
That dampness hoarsely utters now,
The tree-toad's voice is vaguely heard.

I crouch and listen; and again
The woods are filled with phantom forms—
With shapes, grotesque in mystic train,
That rise and reach to me cool arms
Of mist; the wandering wraiths of rain.

I see them come; fantastic, fair;
Chill, mushroom-colored: sky and earth
Grow ghostly with their floating hair
And trailing limbs, that have their birth
In wetness—fungi of the air.

O wraiths of rain! O ghosts of mist!
Still fold me, hold me, and pursue!
Still let my lips by yours be kissed!
Still draw me with your hands of dew
Unto the tryst, the dripping tryst.

IN THE LANE

[Pg 44]

When the hornet hangs in the hollyhock,
And the brown bee drones i' the rose,
And the west is a red-streaked four-o'-clock,

And summer is near its close—
It's—Oh, for the gate and the locust lane
And dusk and dew and home again!

When the katydid sings and the cricket cries,
And ghosts of the mists ascend,
And the evening-star is a lamp i' the skies,
And summer is near its end—
It's—Oh, for the fence and the leafy lane,
And the twilight peace and the tryst again!

When the owlet hoots in the dogwood-tree,
That leans to the rippling Run,
And the wind is a wildwood melody,
And summer is almost done—
It's—Oh, for the bridge and the bramble lane,
And the fragrant hush and her hands again!

When fields smell moist with the dewy hay,
And woods are cool and wan,
And a path for dreams is the Milky-way,
And summer is nearly gone—
It's—Oh, for the rock and the woodland lane
And the silence and stars and her lips again!

When the weight of the apples breaks down the boughs,
And musk-melons split with sweet,
And the moon is a-bloom in the Heaven's house,
And summer has spent its heat—
It's—Oh, for the lane, the trysting lane,
And the deep-mooned night and her love again!

[Pg 45]

A FOREST IDYL

[Pg 46]

I

Beneath an old beech-tree
They sat together,
Fair as a flower was she
Of summer weather.
They spoke of life and love,
While, through the boughs above,
The sunlight, like a dove,
Dropped many a feather.

II

And there the violet,
The bluet near it,
Made blurs of azure wet—
As if some spirit,
Or woodland dream, had gone
Sprinkling the earth with dawn,
When only Fay and Faun
Could see or hear it.

III

She with her young, sweet face
And eyes gray-beaming,
Made of that forest place
A spot for dreaming:
A spot for Oreads
To smooth their nut-brown braids,
For Dryads of the glades
To dance in, gleaming.

IV

So dim the place, so blest.
One had not wondered

[Pg 47]

Had Dian's moonéd breast
The deep leaves Sundered,
And there on them awhile
The goddess deigned to smile.
While down some forest aisle
The far hunt thundered.

V

I deem that hour perchance
Was but a mirror
To show them Earth's romance
And draw them nearer:
A mirror where, meseems,
All that this Earth-life dreams,
All loveliness that gleams,
Their souls saw clearer.

VI

Beneath an old beech-tree
They dreamed of blisses;
Fair as a flower was she
That summer kisses:
They spoke of dreams and days,
Of love that goes and stays,
Of all for which life prays,
Ah me! and misses.

UNDER THE ROSE

[Pg 48]

He told a story to her,
A story old yet new—
And was it of the Faëry Folk
That dance along the dew?

The night was hung with silence
As a room is hung with cloth,
And soundless, through the rose-sweet hush,
Swooned dim the down-white moth.

Along the east a shimmer,
A tenuous breath of flame,
From which, as from a bath of light,
Nymph-like, the girl-moon came.

And pendent in the purple
Of heaven, like fireflies,
Bubbles of gold the great stars blew
From windows of the skies.

He told a story to her,
A story full of dreams—
And was it of the Elfin things
That haunt the thin moonbeams?

Upon the hill a thorn-tree,
Crooked and gnarled and gray,
Against the moon seemed some crutch'd hag
Dragging a child away.

And in the vale a runnel,
That dripped from shelf to shelf,
Seemed, in the night, a woodland witch
Who muttered to herself.

Along the land a zephyr,
Whose breath was wild perfume,
That seemed a sorceress who wove
Sweet spells of beam and bloom.

He told a story to her,

[Pg 49]

A story young yet old—
And was it of the mystic things
Men's eyes shall ne'er behold?

They heard the dew drip faintly
From out the green-cupped leaf;
They heard the petals of the rose
Unfolding from their sheaf.

They saw the wind light-footing
The waters into sheen;
They saw the starlight kiss to sleep
The blossoms on the green.

They heard and saw these wonders;
These things they saw and heard;
And other things within the heart
For which there is no word.

[Pg 50]

He told a story to her,
The story men call Love,
Whose echoes fill the ages past,
And the world ne'er tires of.

IN AUTUMN

[Pg 51]

I

Sunflowers wither and lilies die,
Poppies are pods of seeds;
The first red leaves on the pathway lie,
Like blood of a heart that bleeds.

Weary always will it be to-day,
Weary and wan and wet;
Dawn and noon will the clouds hang gray,
And the autumn wind will sigh and say,
*"He comes not yet, not yet.
Weary always, always!"*

II

Hollyhocks bend all tattered and torn,
Marigolds all are gone;
The last pale rose lies all forlorn,
Like love that is trampled on.

Weary, ah me! to-night will be,
Weary and wild and hoar;
Rain and mist will blow from the sea,
And the wind will sob in the autumn tree,
*"He comes no more, no more.
Weary, ah me! ah me!"*

EPIPHANY

[Pg 52]

There is nothing that eases my heart so much
As the wind that blows from the purple hills;
'Tis a hand of balsam whose healing touch
Unburdens my bosom of ills.

There is nothing that causes my soul to rejoice
Like the sunset flaming without a flaw:
'Tis a burning bush whence God's own voice
Addresses my spirit with awe.

There is nothing that hallows my mind, meseems,
Like the night with its moon and its stars above;
'Tis a mystical lily whose golden gleams

Fulfill my being with love.
There is nothing, no, nothing, we see and feel.
That speaks to our souls some beautiful thought,
That was not created to help us, and heal
Our lives that are overwrought.

LIFE

[Pg 53]

I

PESSIMIST

There is never a thing we dream or do
But was dreamed and done in the ages gone;
Everything's old; there is nothing that's new,
And so it will be while the world goes on.

The thoughts we think have been thought before;
The deeds we do have long been done;
We pride ourselves on our love and lore
And both are as old as the moon and sun.

We strive and struggle and swink and sweat,
And the end for each is one and the same;
Time and the sun and the frost and wet
Will wear from its pillar the greatest name.

No answer comes for our prayer or curse,
No word replies though we shriek in air;
Ever the taciturn universe
Stretches unchanged for our curse or prayer.

With our mind's small light in the dark we crawl,—
Glow-worm glimmers that creep about,—
Tilt the Power that shaped us, over us all
Poises His foot and treads us out.

Unasked He fashions us out of clay,
A little water, a little dust,
And then in our holes He thrusts us away,
With never a word, to rot and rust.

'Tis a sorry play with a sorry plot,
This life of hate and of lust and pain,
Where we play our parts and are soon forgot,
And all that we do is done in vain.

[Pg 54]

II

OPTIMIST

There is never a dream but it shall come true,
And never a deed but was wrought by plan;
And life is filled with the strange and new,
And ever has been since the world began.

As mind develops and soul matures
These two shall parent Earth's mightier acts;
Love is a fact, and 'tis love endures
'Though the world make wreck of all other facts.

Through thought alone shall our Age obtain
Above all Ages gone before;
The tribes of sloth, of brawn, not brain,
Are the tribes that perish, are known no more.

Within ourselves is a voice of Awe,
And a hand that points to Balanced Scales;
The one is Love and the other Law,
And their presence alone it is avails.

[Pg 55]

For every shadow about our way
There is a glory of moon and sun;
But the hope within us hath more of ray
Than the light of the sun and moon in one.

Behind all being a purpose lies,
Undeviating as God hath willed;
And he alone it is who dies,
Who leaves that purpose unfulfilled.

Life is an epic the Master sings,
Whose theme is Man, and whose music, Soul,
Where each is a word in the Song of Things,
That shall roll on while the ages roll.

NEVER

[Pg 56]

(Song)

Love hath no place in her,
Though in her bosom be
Love-thoughts and dreams that stir
Longings that know not me:
Love hath no place in her,
No place for me.

Never within her eyes
Do I the love-light see;
Never her soul replies
To the sad soul in me:
Never with soul and eyes
Speaks she to me.

She is a star, a rose,
I but a moth, a bee;
High in her heaven she glows,
Blooms far away from me:
She is a star, a rose,
Never for me.

Why will I think of her
To my heart's misery?
Dreaming how sweet it were
Had she a thought of me:
Why will I think of her!
Why, why, ah me!

MEETING IN THE WOODS

[Pg 57]

Through ferns and moss the path wound to
A hollow where the touchmenots
Swung horns of honey filled with dew;
And where—like foot-prints—violets blue
And bluets made sweet sapphire blots,
'Twas there that she had passed he knew.

The grass, the very wilderness
On either side, breathed rapture of
Her passage: 'twas her hand or dress
That touched some tree—a slight caress—
That made the wood-birds sing above;
Her step that made the flowers up-press.

He hurried, till across his way,
Foam-footed, bounding through the wood,
A brook, like some wild girl at play,
Went laughing loud its roundelay;
And there upon its bank she stood,
A sunbeam clad in woodland gray.

And when she saw him, all her face
Grew to a wildrose by the stream;
And to his breast a moment's space
He gathered her; and all the place
Seemed conscious of some happy dream
Come true to add to Earth its grace.

Some joy, on which Heav'n was intent—
For which God made the world—the bliss,
The love, that raised her innocent
Pure face to his that, smiling, bent
And sealed confession with a kiss—
Life needs no other testament.

[Pg 58]

A MAID WHO DIED OLD

[Pg 59]

Frail, shrunken face, so pinched and worn,
That life has carved with care and doubt!
So weary waiting, night and morn,
For that which never came about!
Pale lamp, so utterly forlorn.
In which God's light at last is out.

Gray hair, that lies so thin and prim
On either side the sunken brows!
And soldered eyes, so deep and dim,
No word of man could now arouse!
And hollow hands, so virgin slim,
Forever clasped in silent vows!

Poor breasts! that God designed for love,
For baby lips to kiss and press!
That never felt, yet dreamed thereof,
The human touch, the child caress—
That lie like shriveled blooms above
The heart's long-perished happiness.

O withered body, Nature gave
For purposes of death and birth,
That never knew, and could but crave
Those things perhaps that make life worth—
Rest now, alas! within the grave,
Sad shell that served no end of Earth.

COMMUNICANTS

[Pg 60]

Who knows the things they dream, alas!
Or feel, who lie beneath the ground?
Perhaps the flowers, the leaves, and grass
That close them round.

In spring the violets may spell
The moods of them we know not of;
Or lilies sweetly syllable
Their thoughts of love

Haply, in summer, dew and scent
Of all they feel may be a part;
Each red rose be the testament
Of some rich heart.

The winds of fall be utterance,
Perhaps, of saddest things they say;
Wild leaves may word some dead romance
In some dim way.

In winter all their sleep profound
Through frost may speak to grass and stream;
The snow may be the silent sound
Of all they dream.

THE DEAD DAY

[Pg 61]

The West builds high a sepulchre
Of cloudy granite and of gold.
Where twilight's priestly hours inter
The day like some great king of old,

A censer, rimmed with silver fire,
The new moon swings above his tomb;
While, organ-stops of God's own choir,
Star after star throbs in the gloom.

And night draws near, the sadly sweet—
A nun whose face is calm and fair—
And kneeling at the dead day's feet
Her soul goes up in silent prayer.

In prayer, we feel through dewy gleam
And flowery fragrance, and—above
All Earth—the ecstasy and dream
That haunt the mystic heart of love.

KNIGHT-ERRANT

[Pg 62]

Onward he gallops through enchanted gloom.
The spectres of the forest, dark and dim,
And shadows of vast death environ him—
Onward he spurs victorious over doom.
Before his eyes that love's far fires illumine—
Where courage sits, impregnable and grim—
The form and features of *her* beauty swim,
Beckoning him on with looks that fears consume.
The thought of her distress, her lips to kiss,
Mails him with triple might; and so at last
To Lust's huge keep he comes; its giant wall,
Wild-towering, frowning from the precipice;
And through its gate, borne like a bugle blast,
O'er night and hell he thunders to his all.

THE END OF SUMMER

[Pg 63]

Pods are the poppies, and slim spires of pods
The hollyhocks; the balsam's pearly bredes
Of rose-stained snow are little sacs of seeds
Collapsing at a touch; the lote, that sods
The pond with green, has changed its flowers to rods
And discs of vesicles; and all the weeds,
Around the sleepy water and its reeds.
Are one white smoke of seeded silk that nods.
Summer is dead, ay me! sweet Summer's dead!
The sunset clouds have built her funeral pyre,
Through which, e'en now, runs subterranean fire:
While from the East, as from a garden bed,
Mist-vined, the Dusk lifts her broad moon—like some
Great golden melon—saying, "Fall has come."

LIGHT AND WIND

[Pg 64]

Where, through the leaves of myriad forest trees,
The daylight falls, beryl and chrysoprase,
The glamour and the glimmer of its rays
Seem visible music, tangible melodies:
Light that is music; music that one sees—
Wagnerian music—where forever sways

The spirit of romance, and gods and fays
Take form, clad on with dreams and mysteries.
And now the wind's transmuting necromance
Touches the light and makes it fall and rise,
Vocal, a harp of multitudinous waves
That speaks as ocean speaks—an utterance
Of far-off whispers, mermaid-murmuring sighs—
Pelagian, vast, deep-down in coral caves.

SUPERSTITION

[Pg 65]

In the waste places, in the dreadful night,
When the wood whispers like a wandering mind,
And silence sits and listens to the wind,
Or, 'mid the rocks, to some wild torrent's flight;
Bat-browed thou wadest with thy wisp of light
Among black pools the moon can never find;
Or, owlet-eyed, thou hootest to the blind
Deep darkness from some cave or haunted height.
He who beholds but once thy fearsome face,
Never again shall walk alone! but wan
And terrible attendants shall be his—
Unutterable things that have no place
In God or Beauty—that compel him on,
Against all hope, where endless horror is.

UNCALLED

[Pg 66]

As one, who, journeying westward with the sun,
Beholds at length from the up-towering hills,
Far off, a land unspeakable beauty fills,
Circean peaks and vales of Avalon:
And, sinking weary, watches, one by one,
The big seas beat between; and knows it skills
No more to try; that now, as Heaven wills,
This is the helpless end, that all is done:
So 'tis with him, whom long a vision led
In quest of Beauty, and who finds at last
She lies beyond his effort. All the waves
Of all the world between them: While the dead,
The myriad dead, who people all the Past
With failure, hail him from forgotten graves.

LOVE DESPISED

[Pg 67]

Can one resolve and hunt it from one's heart?
This love, this god and fiend, that makes a hell
Of many a life, in ways no tongue can tell,
No mind divine, nor any word impart.
Would not one think the slights that make hearts smart,
The ice of love's disdain, the wint'ry well
Of love's disfavor, love's own fire would quell?
Or school its nature, too, to its own art.
Why will men cringe and cry forever here
For that which, once obtained, may prove a curse?
Why not remember that, however fair,
Decay is wed to Beauty? That each year
Takes somewhat from the riches of her purse,
Until at last her house of pride stands bare?

THE DEATH OF LOVE

[Pg 68]

So Love is dead, the Love we knew of old!
And in the sorrow of our hearts' hushed halls
A lute lies broken and a flower falls;
Love's house is empty and his hearth is cold.
Lone in dim places, where sweet vows were told.
In walks grown desolate, by ruined walls,
Beauty decays; and on their pedestals
Dreams crumble, and th' immortal gods are mould.
Music is slain or sleeps; one voice alone,
One voice awakes, and like a wandering ghost
Haunts all the echoing chambers of the Past—
The voice of Memory, that stills to stone
The soul that hears; the mind that, utterly lost,
Before its beautiful presence stands aghast.

GERALDINE, GERALDINE

[Pg 69]

Geraldine, Geraldine,
Do you remember where
The willows used to screen
The water flowing fair?
The mill-stream's banks of green
Where first our love begun,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one?

Geraldine, Geraldine,
Do you remember how
From th' old bridge we would lean—
The bridge that's broken now—
To watch the minnows sheen,
And the ripples of the Run,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one?

Geraldine, Geraldine,
Do you remember too
The old beech-tree, between
Whose roots the wild flowers grew?
Where oft we met at e'en,
When stars were few or none,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one?

Geraldine, Geraldine,
The bark has grown around
The names I cut therein,
And the truelove-knot that bound;
The love-knot, clear and clean,
I carved when our love begun,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one?

[Pg 70]

Geraldine, Geraldine,
The roof of the farmhouse gray
Is fallen and mossy green;
Its rafters rot away:
The old path scarce is seen
Where oft our feet would run,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one.

Geraldine, Geraldine,
Through each old tree and bough
The lone winds cry and keen—
The place is haunted now,
With ghosts of what-has-been,
With dreams of love-long-done,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one.

Geraldine, Geraldine,

[Pg 71]

There, in your world of wealth,
There, where you move a queen,
Broken in heart and health,
Does there ever rise a scene
Of days, your soul would shun,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one?

Geraldine, Geraldine,
Here, 'mid the rose and rue,
Would God that your grave were green.
And I were lying too!
Here on the hill, I mean,
Where oft we laughed i' the sun,
When you were seventeen,
And I was twenty-one.

ALLUREMENT

[Pg 72]

Across the world she sends me word,
From gardens fair as Falerina's,
Now by a blossom, now a bird,
To come to her, who long has lured
With magic sweeter than Alcina's.

I know not what her word may mean,
I know not what may mean the voices
She sends as messengers serene,
That through the silvery silence lean,
To tell me where her heart rejoices.

But I must go! I must away!
Must take the path that is appointed!
God grant I find her realm some day!
Where, by her love, as by a ray,
My soul shall be anointed.

BLACK VESPER'S PAGEANTS.

[Pg 73]

The day, all fierce with carmine, turns
An Indian face towards Earth and dies;
The west, like some gaunt vase, inurns
Its ashes under smouldering skies,
Athwart whose bowl one red cloud streams,
Strange as a shape some Aztec dreams.

Now shadows mass above the world,
And night comes on with wind and rain;
The mulberry-colored leaves are hurled
Like frantic hands against the pane.
And through the forests, bending low,
Night stalks like some gigantic woe.

In hollows where the thistle shakes
A hoar bloom like a witch's-light,
From weed and flower the rain-wind rakes
Dead sweetness—as a wildman might,
From out the leaves, the woods among,
Dig some dead woman, fair and young.

Now let me walk the woodland ways,
Alone! except for thoughts, that are
Akin to such wild nights and days;
A portion of the storm that far
Fills Heaven and Earth tumultuously,
And my own soul with ecstasy.

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WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, in the *North American Review* for January, 1902.

"One never praises an author for certain things without afterward doubting if they were the characteristic things, or whether just the reverse might not be said. Praise is, in fact, a delicate business, and I, who am rather fond of dealing in it, never feel quite safe. Not only is it questionable at the moment, but the later behavior of the author is sometimes such that one is sorry not to have made it blame. It is always with a shrinking, which I try to hide from the public, that I take up the fresh venture of a poet whom I have once bet on. But there is a joy when I find that I have not lost my wager, which is full compensation for the anxiety suffered. This joy has lately been mine in the latest little book of Mr. Madison Cawein, whose work I long ago confessed my pleasure in. I am not sure that he has transcended the limits which he then seemed to give himself as the lover, the prophet, of beauty in the woods and waters and skies of the southern Mid-West. I do not know that he need have done more than unlock the riches of emotion within these limits. What I am sure of is that in 'Weeds by the Wall' he has more deeply charmed me with an art perfected from that I felt in 'Blooms of the Berry' ten or fifteen years since. Many little books of his have come (I hope not also gone) between the first and last, and none of them has failed to make me glad of his work; and now, again, I am finding the same impassioned moods in the same impassive presences. To my knowledge, no such nature poems have been written within the time since Mr. Cawein began to write as his are, or from such an intimacy with the 'various language' which nature speaks. There are other good poems in the book, poems which would have made reputes in the eighteenth century, and which it would be a shame not to own good in the twentieth; but those which speak for 'The Cricket,' 'A Twilight Moth,' 'The Grasshopper,' 'The Tree-Toad,' 'The Screech Owl,' 'The Chipmunk,' 'Drouth,' 'Before the Rain,' and the like, are in a voice which interprets the very soul of what we call the inarticulate things, though they seem to have enunciated themselves so distinctly to this poet. It is cheap to note his increasing control of his affluent imagery and the growing mastery that makes him so fine an artist. These things were to be expected from his early poems, but what makes one think he will go far and long, and outlive both praise and blame, is the blending of a sense of the Kentucky civilization in such a poem as 'Feud.'... Civilization may not be quite the word for the condition of things suggested here, but there can be no doubt of the dramatic and the graphic power that suggests it, and that imparts a personal sense of the tragic squalor, the sultry drouth, the forlorn wickedness of it all. By such a way as this lies Mr. Cawein's hope of rise from nature up to man, if it is up; and also, as I perceive too late, lies confusion for the critic who said that the poet does not transcend the limits he once seemed to give himself."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A VOICE ON THE WIND, AND OTHER POEMS

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