

# The Project Gutenberg eBook of Kentucky Poems, by Madison Julius Cawein

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from *Shapes and Shadows* four of the  
poems published in this volume.

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## KENTUCKY POEMS

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BY

MADISON CAWEIN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

EDMUND GOSSE



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NOTE

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The poems included in this volume have been  
selected from the following volumes of the author:

*Moods and Memories, Red Leaves and Roses, Poems of Nature and Love, Intimations of the Beautiful, Days and Dreams, Undertones, Idyllic Monologues, The Garden of Dreams, Shapes and Shadows, Myth and Romance, and Weeds by the Wall.* None of the longer poems have been included in this selection.

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## INTRODUCTION

[xi]

Since the disappearance of the latest survivors of that graceful and somewhat academic school of poets who ruled American literature so long from the shores of Massachusetts, serious poetry in the United States seems to have been passing through a crisis of languor. Perhaps there is no country on the civilised globe where, in theory, verse is treated with more respect and, in practice, with a greater lack of grave consideration than America. No conjecture as to the reason of this must be attempted here, further than to suggest that the extreme value set upon sharpness, ingenuity and rapid mobility is obviously calculated to depreciate and to condemn the quiet practice of the most meditative of the arts. Hence we find that it is what is called 'humorous' verse which is mainly in fashion on the western side of the Atlantic. Those rhymes are most warmly welcomed which play the most preposterous tricks with language, which dazzle by the most mountebank swiftness of turn, and which depend most for their effect upon paradox and the negation of sober thought. It is probable that the diseased craving for what is 'smart,' 'snappy' and wide-awake, and the impulse to see everything foreshortened and topsy-turvy, must wear themselves out before cooler and more graceful tastes again prevail in imaginative literature.

[xii]

Whatever be the cause, it is certain that this is not a moment when serious poetry, of any species, is flourishing in the United States. The absence of anything like a common impulse among young writers, of any definite and intelligible, if excessive, *parti pris*, is immediately observable if we contrast the American, for instance, with the French poets of the last fifteen years. Where there is no school and no clear trend of executive ambition, the solitary artist, whose talent forces itself up into the light and air, suffers unusual difficulties, and runs a constant danger of being choked in the aimless mediocrity that surrounds him. We occasionally meet with a poet in the history of literature, of whom we are inclined to say, Charming as he is, he would have developed his talent more evenly and conspicuously,—with greater decorum, perhaps,—if he had been accompanied from the first by other young men like-minded, who would have formed for him an atmosphere and cleared for him a space. This is the one regret I feel in contemplating, as I have done for years past, the ardent and beautiful talent of Mr. Cawein. I deplore the fact that he seems to stand alone in his generation; I think his poetry would have been even better than it is, and its qualities would certainly have been more clearly perceived,

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[xiv]

and more intelligently appreciated, if he were less isolated. In his own country, at this particular moment, in this matter of serious nature-painting in lyric verse, Mr. Cawein possesses what Cowley would have called 'a monopoly of wit,' In one of his lyrics Mr. Cawein asks—

'The song-birds, are they flown away,  
The song-birds of the summer-time,  
That sang their souls into the day,  
And set the laughing hours to rhyme?  
No cat-bird scatters through the hush  
The sparkling crystals of her song;  
Within the woods no hermit-thrush  
Trails an enchanted flute along.'

To this inquiry, the answer is: the only hermit-thrush now audible seems to sing from Louisville, Kentucky. America will, we may be perfectly sure, calm herself into harmony again, and possess once more her school of singers. In those coming days, history may perceive in Mr. Cawein the golden link that bound the music of the past to the music of the future through an interval of comparative tunelessness. [xvi]

The career of Mr. Madison Cawein is represented to me as being most uneventful. He seems to have enjoyed unusual advantages for the cultivation and protection of the poetical temperament. He was born on the 23rd of March 1865, in the metropolis of Kentucky, the vigorous city of Louisville, on the southern side of the Ohio, in the midst of a country celebrated for tobacco and whisky and Indian corn. These are commodities which may be consumed in excess, but in moderation they make glad the heart of man. They represent a certain glow of the earth, they indicate the action of a serene and gentle climate upon a rich soil. It was in this delicate and voluptuous state of Kentucky that Mr. Cawein was born, that he was educated, that he became a poet, and that he has lived ever since. His blood is full of the colour and odour of his native landscape. The solemn books of history tell us that Kentucky was discovered in 1769, by Daniel Boone, a hunter. But he first discovers a country who sees it first, and teaches the world to see it; no doubt some day the city of Louisville will erect, in one of its principal squares, a statue to 'Madison Cawein, who discovered the Beauty of Kentucky.' The genius of this poet is like one of those deep rivers of his native state, which cut paths through the forests of chestnut and hemlock as they hurry towards the south and west, brushing with the impulsive fringe of their currents the rhododendrons and calmas and azaleas that bend from the banks to be mirrored in their flushing waters. [xvii]

Mr. Cawein's vocation to poetry was irresistible. I do not know that he ever tried to resist it. I have even the idea that a little more resistance would have been salutary for a talent which nothing could have discouraged, and which opposition might have taught the arts of compression and selection. Mr. Cawein suffered at first, I think, from lack of criticism more than from lack of eulogy. From his early writings I seem to gather an impression of a Louisville more ready to praise what was second-rate than what was first-rate, and practically, indeed, without any scale of appreciation whatever. This may be a mistake of mine; at all events, Mr. Cawein has had more to gain from the passage of years in self-criticism than in inspiring enthusiasm. The fount was in him from the first; but it bubbled forth before he had digged a definite channel for it. Sometimes, to this very day, he sports with the principles of syntax as Nature played games so long ago with the fantastic caverns of the valley of the Green River or with the coral-reefs of his own Ohio. He has bad rhymes, amazing in so delicate an ear; he has awkwardness of phrase not expected in one so plunged in contemplation of the eternal harmony of Nature. But these grow fewer and less obtrusive as the years pass by. [xviii]

The virgin timber-forests of Kentucky, the woods of honey-locust and buck-eye, of white oak and yellow poplar, with their clearings full of flowers unknown to us by sight or name, from which in the distance are visible the domes of the far-away Cumberland Mountains, this seems to be the hunting-field of Mr. Cawein's imagination. Here all, it must be confessed, has hitherto been unfamiliar to the Muses. If Persephone 'of our Cumnor cowslips never heard,' how much less can her attention have been arrested by clusters of orchids from the Ocklawaha, or by the song of the Whippoorwill, rung out when 'the west was hot geranium-red' under the boughs of a black-jack on the slopes of Mount Kinnex. 'Not here,' one is inclined to exclaim, 'not here, O Apollo, are haunts meet for thee,' but the art of the poet is displayed by his skill in breaking down these prejudices of time and place. Mr. Cawein reconciles us to his strange landscape—the strangeness of which one has to admit is mainly one of nomenclature,—by the exercise of a delightful instinctive pantheism. He brings the ancient gods to Kentucky, and it is marvellous how quickly they learn to be at home there. Here is Bacchus, with a spicy fragment of calamus-root in his hand, trampling down the blue-eyed grass, and skipping, with the air of a hunter born, into the hickory thicket, to escape Artemis, whose robes, as she passes swiftly with her dogs through the woods, startle the humming-birds, silence the green tree-frogs, and fill the hot still air with the perfumes of peppermint and penny-royal. It is a queer landscape, but one of new natural beauties frankly and sympathetically discovered, and it forms a *mise en scène* which, I make bold to say, would have scandalised neither Keats nor Spenser. [xix]

It was Mr. Howells,—ever as generous in discovering new native talent as he is unflinching in reproof of the effeteness of European taste,—who first drew attention to the originality and beauty of Mr. Cawein's poetry. The Kentucky poet had, at that time, published but one tentative volume, the *Blooms of the Berry*, of 1887. This was followed, in 1888, by *The Triumph of Music*, and since then hardly a year has passed without a slender sheaf of verse from Mr. Cawein's garden. Among these (if a single volume is to be indicated), the quality which distinguishes him [xxi]

from all other poets,—the Kentucky flavour, if we may call it so,—is perhaps to be most agreeably detected in *Intimations of the Beautiful*. But it is time that I should leave the American lyrist to make his own appeal to English ears, with but one additional word of explanation, namely, that in this selection Mr. Cawein's narrative poems on mediæval themes, and in general his cosmopolitan writings, have been neglected in favour of such lyrics as would present him most vividly in his own native landscape, no visitor in spirit to Europe, but at home in that bright and exuberant West—

[xxii]

Where, in the hazy morning, runs  
The stony branch that pools and drips,  
Where red-haws and the wild-rose hips  
Are strewn like pebbles; where the sun's  
Own gold seems captured by the weeds;  
To see, through scintillating seeds,  
The hunters steal with glimmering guns.  
To stand within the dewy ring  
Where pale death smites the bone-set blooms,  
And everlasting's flowers, and plumes  
Of mint, with aromatic wing!  
And hear the creek,—whose sobbing seems  
A wild man murmuring in his dreams,—  
And insect violins that sing!

So sweet a voice, so consonant with the music of the singers of past times, heard in a place so fresh and strange, will surely not pass without its welcome from the lovers of genuine poetry.

EDMUND GOSSE.

## PROLOGUE

[Pg 1]

*There is a poetry that speaks  
Through common things: the grasshopper,  
That in the hot weeds creaks and creaks,  
Says all of summer to my ear:  
And in the cricket's cry I hear  
The fireside speak, and feel the frost  
Work mysteries of silver near  
On country casements, while, deep lost  
In snow, the gatepost seems a sheeted ghost.*

*And other things give rare delight:  
Those guttural harps the green-frogs tune,  
Those minstrels of the falling night,  
That hail the sickle of the moon  
From grassy pools that glass her lune:  
Or,—all of August in its loud  
Dry cry,—the locust's call at noon,  
That tells of heat and never a cloud  
To veil the pitiless sun as with a shroud.*

[2]

*The rain,—whose cloud dark-lids the moon,  
The great white eyeball of the night,—  
Makes music for me; to its tune  
I hear the flowers unfolding white,  
The mushroom growing, and the slight  
Green sound of grass that dances near;  
The melon ripening with delight;  
And in the orchard, soft and clear,  
The apple redly rounding out its sphere.*

*The grigs make music as of old,  
To which the fairies whirl and shine  
Within the moonlight's prodigal gold,  
On woodways wild with many a vine:  
When all the wilderness with wine  
Of stars is drunk, I hear it say—  
'Is God restricted to confine  
His wonders only to the day,  
That yields the abstract tangible to clay?'*

[3]

*And to my ear the wind of Morn,—*

*When on her rubric forehead far  
One star burns big,—lifts a vast horn  
Of wonder where all murmurs are:  
In which I hear the waters war,  
The torrent and the blue abyss,  
And pines,—that terrace bar on bar  
The mountain side,—like lovers' kiss,  
And whisper words where naught but grandeur is.*

[4]

*The jutting crags,—all iron-veined  
With ore,—the peaks, where eagles scream,  
That pour their cataracts, rainbow-stained,  
Like hair, in many a mountain stream,  
Can lift my soul beyond the dream  
Of all religions; make me scan  
No mere external or extreme,  
But inward pierce the outward plan  
And learn that rocks have souls as well as man.*

[5]

## FOREST AND FIELD

### I

Green, watery jets of light let through  
The rippling foliage drenched with dew;  
And golden glimmers, warm and dim,  
That in the vistaed distance swim;  
Where, 'round the wood-spring's oozy urn,  
The limp, loose fronds of forest fern  
Trail like the tresses, green and wet,  
A wood-nymph binds with violet.  
O'er rocks that bulge and roots that knot  
The emerald-amber mosses clot;  
From matted walls of brier and brush  
The elder nods its plumes of plush;  
And, Argus-eyed with many a bloom,  
The wild-rose breathes its wild perfume;  
May-apples, ripening yellow, lean  
With oblong fruit, a lemon-green,  
Near Indian-turnips, long of stem,  
That bear an acorn-oval gem,  
As if some woodland Bacchus there,—  
While braiding locks of hyacinth hair  
With ivy-tod,—had idly tost  
His thyrsus down and so had lost:  
And blood-root, that from scarlet wombs  
Puts forth, in spring, its milk-white blooms,  
That then like starry footsteps shine  
Of April under beech and pine;  
At which the gnarled eyes of trees  
Stare, big as Fauns' at Dryades,  
That bend above a fountain's spar  
As white and naked as a star.

[6]

The stagnant stream flows sleepily  
Thick with its lily-pads; the bee,—  
All honey-drunk, a Bassarid,—  
Booms past the mottled toad, that, hid  
In calamus-plants and blue-eyed grass,  
Beside the water's pooling glass,  
Silenus-like, eyes stolidly  
The Mænad-glittering dragonfly.  
And pennyroyal and peppermint  
Pour dry-hot odours without stint  
From fields and banks of many streams;  
And in their scent one almost seems  
To see Demeter pass, her breath  
Sweet with her triumph over death.—  
A haze of floating saffron; sound  
Of shy, crisp creepings o'er the ground;

[7]

The dip and stir of twig and leaf;  
Tempestuous gusts of spices brief  
Borne over bosks of sassafras  
By winds that foot it on the grass;  
Sharp, sudden songs and whisperings,  
That hint at untold hidden things—  
Pan and Sylvanus who of old  
Kept sacred each wild wood and wold.  
A wily light beneath the trees  
Quivers and dusks with every breeze—  
A Hamadryad, haply, who,—  
Culling her morning meal of dew  
From frail, accustomed cups of flowers,—  
Now sees some Satyr in the bowers,  
Or hears his goat-hoof snapping press  
Some brittle branch, and in distress  
Shrinks back; her dark, dishevelled hair  
Veiling her limbs one instant there.

[8]

## II

Down precipices of the dawn  
The rivers of the day are drawn,  
The soundless torrents, free and far,  
Of gold that deluge every star.  
There is a sound of brooks and wings  
That fills the woods with carollings;  
And, dashed on moss and flow'r and fern,  
And leaves, that quiver, breathe and burn,  
Rose-radiance smites the solitudes,  
The dew-drenched hills, the dripping woods,  
That twitter as with canticles  
Of shade and light; and wind, that smells  
Of flowers, and buds, and boisterous bees,  
Delirious honey, and wet trees.—  
Through briers that trip them, one by one,  
With swinging pails, that take the sun,  
A troop of girls comes—berriers,  
Whose bare feet glitter where they pass  
Through dewdrop-trembling tufts of grass.  
And, oh! their laughter and their cheers  
Wake Echo 'mid her shrubby rocks  
Who, answering, from her mountain mocks  
With rapid fairy horns; as if  
Each mossy vale and weedy cliff  
Had its imperial Oberon,  
Who, seeking his Titania, hid  
In coverts caverned from the sun,  
In kingly wrath had called and chid.

[9]

[10]

Cloud-feathers, oozing orange light,  
Make rich the Indian locks of night;  
Her dusky waist with sultry gold  
Girdled and buckled fold on fold.  
One star. A sound of bleating flocks.  
Great shadows stretched along the rocks,  
Like giant curses overthrown  
By some Arthurian champion.  
Soft-swimming sorceries of mist  
That streak blue glens with amethyst.  
And, tinkling in the clover dells,  
The twilight sound of cattle-bells.  
And where the marsh in reed and grass  
Burns, angry as a shattered glass,  
The flies make golden blurs, that shine  
Like drops of amber-scattered wine  
Spun high by reeling Bacchanals,  
When Bacchus wreathes his curling hair  
With vine-leaves, and from every lair  
His worshippers around him calls.  
They come, they come, a happy throng,  
The berriers with gibe and song;  
Their pails brimmed black to tin-bright eaves  
With luscious fruit, kept cool with leaves  
Of aromatic sassafras;

[11]

'Twixt which some sparkling berry slips,  
Like laughter, from the purple mass,  
Wine-swollen as Silenus' lips.

[12]

### III

The tanned and tired noon climbs high  
Up burning reaches of the sky;  
Below the drowsy belts of pines  
The rock-ledged river foams and shines;  
And over rainless hill and dell  
Is blown the harvest's sultry smell:  
While, in the fields, one sees and hears  
The brawny-throated harvesters,—  
Their red brows beaded with the heat,—  
By twos and threes among the wheat  
Flash their hot scythes; behind them press  
The binders—men and maids that sing  
Like some mad troop of piping Pan;—  
While all the hillsides swoon and ring  
Such sounds of Ariel airiness  
As haunted freckled Caliban.  
'O ho! O ho! 'tis noon I say.

[13]

    The roses blow.  
Away, away, above the hay,  
To the tune o' the bees the roses sway;  
The love-songs that they hum all day,  
    So low! So low!  
The roses' Minnesingers they.'

Up velvet lawns of lilac skies  
The tawny moon begins to rise  
Behind low, blue-black hills of trees,—  
As rises up, in Siren seas,  
To rock in purple deeps, hip-hid,  
A virgin-bosomed Oceanid.—  
Gaunt shadows crouch by tree and scaur,  
Like shaggy Satyrs waiting for  
The moonbeam Nymphs, the Dryads white,  
That take with loveliness the night,  
And glorify it with their love.  
The sweet, far notes I hear, I hear,  
Beyond dim pines and mellow ways,  
The song of some fair harvester,  
The lovely Limnad of the grove,  
Whose singing charms me while it slays.  
'O deep! O deep! the earth and air  
    Are sunk in sleep.  
Adieu to care! Now everywhere  
Is rest; and by the old oak there  
The maiden with the nut-brown hair  
    Doth keep, doth keep  
Tryst with her lover the young and fair.'

[14]

### IV

Like Atalanta's spheres of gold,  
Within the orchard, apples rolled  
From sudden hands of boughs that lay  
Their leaves, like palms, against the day;  
And near them pears of rusty brown  
Lay bruised; and peaches, pink with down,  
And furry as the ears of Pan,  
Or, like Diana's cheeks, a tan  
Beneath which burnt a tender fire;  
Or wan as Psyche's with desire.  
And down the orchard vistas,—young,  
A hickory basket by him swung,  
A straw-hat, 'gainst the sloping sun  
Drawn brim-broad o'er his face,—he strode;  
As if he looked to find some one,  
His eyes far-fixed beyond the road.  
Before him, like a living burr,  
Rattled the noisy grasshopper.  
And where the cows' melodious bells

[15]



Trailed music up and down the dells,  
Beside the spring, that o'er the ground  
Went whimpering like a fretful hound,  
He saw her waiting, fair and slim,  
Her pail forgotten there, for him.

[16]

Yellow as sunset skies and pale  
As fairy clouds that stay or sail  
Through azure vaults of summer, blue  
As summer heavens, the wildflowers grew;  
And blossoms on which spurts of light  
Fell laughing, like the lips one might  
Feign for a Hebe, or a girl  
Whose mouth is laughter-lit with pearl.  
Long ferns, in murmuring masses heaped;  
And mosses moist, in beryl steeped  
And musk aromas of the wood  
And silence of the solitude:  
And everything that near her blew  
The spring had showered thick with dew.—  
Across the rambling fence she leaned,  
Her fresh, round arms all white and bare;  
Her artless beauty, bonnet-screened,  
Rich-coloured with its auburn hair.  
A wood-thrush gurgled in a vine—  
Ah! 'tis his step, 'tis he she hears;  
The wild-rose smelt like some rare wine—  
He comes, ah, yes! 'tis he who nears.  
And her brown eyes and all her face  
Said welcome. And with rustic grace  
He leant beside her; and they had  
Some talk with youthful laughter glad:  
I know not what; I know but this  
Its final period was a kiss.

[17]

[18]

## SUMMER

### I

Hang out your loveliest star, O Night! O Night!  
Your richest rose, O Dawn!  
To greet sweet Summer, her, who, clothed in light,  
Leads Earth's best hours on.  
Hark! how the wild birds of the woods  
Throat it within the dewy solitudes!  
The brook sings low and soft,  
The trees make song,  
As, from her heaven aloft  
Comes blue-eyed Summer like a girl along.

[19]

### II

And as the Day, her lover, leads her in,  
How bright his beauty glows!  
How red his lips, that ever try to win  
Her mouth's delicious rose!  
And from the beating of his heart  
Warm winds arise and sighing thence depart;  
And from his eyes and hair  
The light and dew  
Fall round her everywhere,  
And Heaven above her is an arch of blue.

### III

Come to the forest, or the treeless meadows  
Deep with their hay or grain;  
Come where the hills lift high their thrones of shadows,  
Where tawny orchards reign.  
Come where the reapers whet the scythe;  
Where golden sheaves are heaped; where berriers blythe,

[20]

With willow-basket and with pail,  
Swarm knoll and plain;  
Where flowers freckle every vale,  
And beauty goes with hands of berry-stain.

#### IV

Come where the dragon-flies, a brassy blue,  
Flit round the wildwood streams,  
And, sucking at some horn of honey-dew,  
The wild-bee hums and dreams.  
Come where the butterfly waves wings of sleep,  
Gold-disked and mottled over blossoms deep;  
Come where beneath the rustic bridge  
The green frog cries;  
Or in the shade the rainbowed midge,  
Above the emerald pools, with murmurings flies.

[21]

#### V

Come where the cattle browse within the brake,  
As red as oak and strong;  
Where far-off bells the echoes faintly wake,  
And milkmaids sing their song.  
Come where the vine-trailed rocks, with waters hoary,  
Tell to the sun some legend or some story;  
Or, where the sunset to the land  
Speaks words of gold;  
Where ripeness walks, a wheaten band  
Around her hair and blossoms manifold.

[22]

#### VI

Come where the woods lift up their stalwart arms  
Unto the star-sown skies;  
Knotted and gnarled, that to the winds and storms  
Fling mighty rhapsodies:  
Or to the moon repeat what they have seen,  
When Night upon their shoulders vast doth lean.  
Come where the dew's clear syllable  
Drips from the rose;  
And where the fire-flies fill  
The night with golden music of their glows.

#### VII

Now while the dingles and the vine-roofed glens  
Whisper their flowery tale  
Unto the silence; and the lakes and fens  
Unto the moonlight pale  
Murmur their rapture, let us seek her out,  
Her of the honey throat, and peachy pout,  
Summer! and at her feet,  
The love of old  
Lay like a sheaf of wheat,  
And of our hearts the purest gold of gold.

[23]

[24]

## TO SORROW

#### I

O dark-eyed goddess of the marble brow,  
Whose look is silence and whose touch is night,  
Who walkest lonely through the world, O thou,  
Who sittest lonely with Life's blown-out light;  
Who in the hollow hours of night's noon  
Criest like some lost child;  
Whose anguish-fevered eyeballs seek the moon  
To cool their pulses wild.  
Thou who dost bend to kiss Joy's sister cheek,  
Turning its rose to alabaster; yea,

Thou who art terrible and mad and meek,  
Why in my heart art thou enshrined to-day?  
O Sorrow say, O say!

[25]

## II

Now Spring is here and all the world is white,  
I will go forth, and where the forest robes  
Itself in green, and every hill and height  
Crowns its fair head with blossoms,—spirit globes  
Of hyacinth and crocus dashed with dew,—  
I will forget my grief,  
And thee, O Sorrow, gazing on the blue,  
Beneath a last year's leaf,  
Of some brief violet the south wind woos,  
Or bluet, whence the west wind raked the snow;  
The baby eyes of love, the darling hues  
Of happiness, that thou canst never know,  
O child of pain and woe.

[26]

## III

On some hoar upland, sweet with clustered thorns,  
Hard by a river's windy white of waves,  
I shall sit down with Spring,—whose eyes are morns  
Of light; whose cheeks the rose of health enslaves,—  
And so forget thee braiding in her hair  
The snowdrop, tipped with green,  
The cool-eyed primrose and the trillium fair,  
And moony celandine.  
Contented so to lie within her arms,  
Forgetting all the sear and sad and wan,  
Remembering love alone, who o'er earth's storms,  
High on the mountains of perpetual dawn,  
Leads the glad hours on.

[27]

## IV

Or in the peace that follows storm, when Even,  
Within the west, stands dreaming lone and far,  
Clad on with green and silver, and the Heaven  
Is brightly brooched with one gold-glittering star.  
I will lie down beside some mountain lake,  
'Round which the tall pines sigh,  
And breathing musk of rain from boughs that shake  
Storm balsam from on high,  
Make friends of Dream and Contemplation high  
And Music, listening to the mocking-bird,—  
Who through the hush sends its melodious cry,—  
And so forget a while that other word,  
That all loved things must die.

[28]

## NIGHT

Out of the East, as from an unknown shore,  
Thou comest with thy children in thine arms,—  
Slumber and Dream,—whom mortals all adore,  
Their flowing raiment sculptured to their charms:  
Soft on thy breast thy lovely children rest,  
Laid like twin roses in one balmy nest.  
Silent thou comest, swiftly too and slow.  
There is no other presence like to thine,  
When thou approachest with thy babes divine,  
Thy shadowy face above them bending low,  
Blowing the ringlets from their brows of snow.

[29]

Oft have I taken Sleep from thy dark arms,  
And fondled her fair head, with poppies wreathed,  
Within my bosom's depths, until its storms  
With her were hushed and I but faintly breathed.  
And then her sister, Dream, with frolic art

Arose from rest, and on my sleeping heart  
Blew bubbles of dreams where elfin worlds were lost;  
Worlds where my stranger soul sang songs to me,  
And talked with spirits by a rainbowed sea,  
Or smiled, an unfamiliar shape of frost,  
Floating on gales of breathless melody.

Day comes to us in garish glory garbed;  
But thou, thou bringest to the tired heart  
Rest and deep silence, in which are absorbed  
All the vain tumults of the mind and mart.  
Whether thou comest with hands full of stars,  
Or clothed in storm and clouds, the lightning bars,  
Rolling the thunder like some mighty dress,  
God moves with thee; we seem to hear His feet,  
Wind-like, along the floors of Heaven beat;  
To see His face, revealed in awfulness,  
Through thee, O Night, to ban us or to bless.

[30]

[31]

## A FALLEN BEECH

Nevermore at doorways that are barken  
Shall the madcap wind knock and the moonlight;  
Nor the circle which thou once didst darken,  
Shine with footsteps of the neighbouring moonlight,  
Visitors for whom thou oft didst hearken.

Nevermore, gallooned with cloudy laces,  
Shall the morning, like a fair freebooter,  
Make thy leaves his richest treasure-places;  
Nor the sunset, like a royal suitor,  
Clothe thy limbs with his imperial graces.

[32]

And no more, between the savage wonder  
Of the sunset and the moon's up-coming,  
Shall the storm, with boisterous hoof-beats, under  
Thy dark roof dance, Faun-like, to the humming  
Of the Pan-pipes of the rain and thunder.

Oft the Satyr-spirit, beauty-drunken,  
Of the Spring called; and the music measure  
Of thy sap made answer; and thy sunken  
Veins grew vehement with youth, whose pressure  
Swelled thy gnarly muscles, winter-shrunken.

And the germs, deep down in darkness rooted,  
Bubbled green from all thy million oilets,  
Where the spirits, rain-and-sunbeam-suited,  
Of the April made their whispering toilets,  
Or within thy stately shadow footed.

[33]

Oft the hours of blonde Summer tinkled  
At the windows of thy twigs, and found thee  
Bird-blithe; or, with shapely bodies, twinkled  
Lissom feet of naked flowers around thee,  
Where thy mats of moss lay sunbeam-sprinkled.

And the Autumn with his gypsy-coated  
Troop of days beneath thy branches rested,  
Swarthy-faced and dark of eye; and throated  
Songs of roaming; or with red hand tested  
Every nut-bur that above him floated.

Then the Winter, barren-browed, but rich in  
Shaggy followers of frost and freezing,  
Made the floor of thy broad boughs his kitchen,  
Trapper-like, to camp in; grimly easing  
Limbs snow-furred and moccasined with lichen.

[34]

Now, alas! no more do these invest thee  
With the dignity of whilom gladness!

They—unto whose hearts thou once confessed thee  
Of thy dreams—now know thee not! and sadness  
Sits beside thee where, forgot, dost rest thee.

[35]

## A TWILIGHT MOTH

All day the primroses have thought of thee,  
Their golden heads close-haromed from the heat;  
All day the mystic moonflowers silkenly  
Veiled snowy faces,—that no bee might greet  
Or butterfly that, weighed with pollen, passed;—  
Keeping Sultana-charms for thee, at last,  
Their lord, who comest to salute each sweet.

Cool-throated flowers that avoid the day's  
Too fervid kisses; every bud that drinks  
The tipsy dew and to the starlight plays  
Nocturns of fragrance, thy wing'd shadow links  
In bonds of secret brotherhood and faith;  
O bearer of their order's shibboleth,  
Like some pale symbol fluttering o'er these pinks.

[36]

What dost thou whisper in the balsam's ear  
That sets it blushing, or the hollyhock's,—  
A syllabled silence that no man may hear,—  
As dreamily upon its stem it rocks?  
What spell dost bear from listening plant to plant,  
Like some white witch, some ghostly ministrant,  
Some spectre of some perished flower of phlox?

O voyager of that universe which lies  
Between the four walls of this garden fair,—  
Whose constellations are the fireflies  
That wheel their instant courses everywhere,—  
'Mid fairy firmaments wherein one sees  
Mimic Boötes and the Pleiades,  
Thou steerest like some fairy ship-of-air.

[37]

Gnome-wrought of moonbeam fluff and gossamer,  
Silent as scent, perhaps thou chariotest  
Mab or King Oberon; or, haply, her  
His queen, Titania, on some midnight quest.—  
Oh for the herb, the magic euphrasy,  
That should unmask thee to mine eyes, ah me!  
And all that world at which my soul hath guessed!

[38]

## THE GRASSHOPPER

What joy you take in making hotness hotter,  
In emphasising dulness with your buzz,  
Making monotony more monotonous!  
When Summer comes, and drouth hath dried the water  
In all the creeks, we hear your ragged rasp  
Filling the stillness. Or,—as urchins beat  
A stagnant pond whereon the bubbles gasp,—  
Your switch-like music whips the midday heat.  
O bur of sound caught in the Summer's hair,  
We hear you everywhere!

[39]

We hear you in the vines and berry-brambles,  
Along the unkempt lanes, among the weeds,  
Amid the shadeless meadows, gray with seeds,  
And by the wood 'round which the rail-fence rambles,  
Sawing the sunlight with your sultry saw.  
Or,—like to tomboy truants, at their play  
With noisy mirth among the barn's deep straw,—

You sing away the careless summer-day.  
O brier-like voice that clings in idleness  
    To Summer's drowsy dress!

You tramp of insects, vagrant and unheeding,  
    Improvident, who of the summer make  
    One long green mealtime, and for winter take  
No care, aye singing or just merely feeding!  
Happy-go-lucky vagabond,—'though frost  
    Shall pierce, ere long, your green coat or your brown,  
And pinch your body,—let no song be lost,  
    But as you lived into your grave go down—  
Like some small poet with his little rhyme,  
    Forgotten of all time.

[40]

[41]

## BEFORE THE RAIN

Before the rain, low in the obscure east,  
    Weak and morose the moon hung, sickly gray;  
Around its disc the storm mists, cracked and creased,  
    Wove an enormous web, wherein it lay  
    Like some white spider hungry for its prey.  
Vindictive looked the scowling firmament,  
    In which each star, that flashed a dagger ray,  
Seemed filled with malice of some dark intent.

The marsh-frog croaked; and underneath the stone  
    The peevish cricket raised a creaking cry.  
Within the world these sounds were heard alone,  
    Save when the ruffian wind swept from the sky,  
    Making each tree like some sad spirit sigh;  
Or shook the clumsy beetle from its weed,  
    That, in the drowsy darkness, bungling by,  
Sharded the silence with its feverish speed.

[42]

Slowly the tempest gathered. Hours passed  
    Before was heard the thunder's sullen drum  
Rumbling night's hollow; and the Earth at last,  
    Restless with waiting,—like a woman, dumb  
    With doubting of the love that should have clomb  
Her casement hours ago,—avowed again,  
    'Mid protestations, joy that he had come.  
And all night long I heard the Heavens explain.

[43]

## AFTER RAIN

Behold the blossom-bosomed Day again,  
With all the star-white Hours in her train,  
Laughs out of pearl-lights through a golden ray,  
That, leaning on the woodland wildness, blends  
A sprinkled amber with the showers that lay  
Their oblong emeralds on the leafy ends.  
Behold her bend with maiden-braided brows  
Above the wildflower, sidewise with its strain  
Of dewy happiness, to kiss again  
Each drop to death; or, under rainy boughs,  
With fingers, fragrant as the woodland rain,  
Gather the sparkles from the sycamore,  
    To set within each core  
Of crimson roses girdling her hips,  
Where each bud dreams and drips.  
Smoothing her blue-black hair,—where many a tusk  
Of iris flashes,—like the falchions' sheen  
Of Faery 'round blue banners of its Queen,—  
Is it a Naiad singing in the dusk,

[44]

That haunts the spring, where all the moss is musk  
With footsteps of the flowers on the banks?  
Or just a wild-bird voluble with thanks?

Balm for each blade of grass: the Hours prepare  
A festival each weed's invited to.  
Each bee is drunken with the honied air:  
And all the air is eloquent with blue.  
The wet hay glitters, and the harvester  
Tinkles his scythe,—as twinkling as the dew,—  
That shall not spare  
Blossom or brier in its sweeping path;  
And, ere it cut one swath,  
Rings them they die, and tells them to prepare.

[45]

What is the spice that haunts each glen and glade?  
A Dryad's lips, who slumbers in the shade?  
A Faun, who lets the heavy ivy-wreath  
Slip to his thigh as, reaching up, he pulls  
The chestnut blossoms in whole bosomfuls?  
A sylvan Spirit, whose sweet mouth doth breathe  
Her viewless presence near us, unafraid?  
Or troops of ghosts of blooms, that whitely wade  
The brook? whose wisdom knows no other song  
Than that the bird sings where it builds beneath  
The wild-rose and sits singing all day long.

Oh, let me sit with silence for a space,  
A little while forgetting that fierce part  
Of man that struggles in the toiling mart;  
Where God can look into my heart's own heart  
From unsoiled heights made amiable with grace;  
And where the sermons that the old oaks keep  
Can steal into me.—And what better then  
Than, turning to the moss a quiet face,  
To fall asleep? a little while to sleep  
And dream of wiser worlds and wiser men.

[46]

[47]

## THE HAUNTED HOUSE

### I

The shadows sit and stand about its door  
Like uninvited guests and poor;  
And all the long, hot summer day  
The grating locust dins its roundelay  
In one old sycamore.  
The squirrel leaves upon its rotting roof,  
In empty hulls, its tracks;  
And in its clapboard cracks  
The spider weaves a windy woof;  
Its cells the mud-wasp packs.  
The she-fox whelps upon its floor;  
The owlet roosts above its door;  
And where the musty mosses run,  
The freckled snake basks in the sun.

[48]

### II

The children of what fathers sleep  
Beneath these melancholy pines?  
The slow slugs crawl among their graves where creep  
The doddered poison-vines.  
The orchard, near the meadow deep,  
Lifts up decrepit arms,  
Gray-lichened in a withering heap.  
No sap swells up to make it leap  
As once in calms and storms;  
No blossom lulls its age asleep;  
Each breeze brings sad alarms.  
Big, bell-round pears and apples, russet-red,

No maiden gathers now;  
The worm-bored trunks weep gum, like tears, instead,  
From each decaying bough.

[49]

### III

The woodlands around it are solitary  
And fold it like gaunt hands;  
The sunlight is sad and the moonlight is dreary,  
And the hum of the country is weary, so weary!  
And the bees go by in bands  
To other lovelier lands.  
The grasses are rotting in walk and in bower;  
The lonesomeness,—dank and rank  
As a chamber where lies for a lonely hour  
An old-man's corpse with many a flower,—  
Is hushed and blank.  
And even the birds have passed it by,  
To sing their songs to a happier sky,  
A happier sky and bank.

[50]

### IV

In its desolate halls are lying,  
Gold, blood-red and browned,  
Drifted leaves of summer dying;  
And the winds, above them sighing,  
Turn them round and round,  
Make a ghostly sound  
As of footsteps falling, flying,  
Voices through the chambers crying,  
Of the haunted house.

### V

Gazing down in her white shroud,  
Shroud of windy cloud,  
Comes at night the phantom moon;  
Comes and all the shadows soon,  
Crowding in the rooms, arouse;  
Shadows, ghosts, her rays lead on,  
Till beneath the cloud  
Like a ghost she's gone,  
In her gusty shroud,  
O'er the haunted house.

[51]

[52]

## OCTOBER

I oft have met her slowly wandering  
Beside a leafy stream, her locks blown wild,  
Her cheeks a hectic flush, more fair than Spring,  
As if on her the sumach copse had smiled.  
Or I have seen her sitting, tall and brown,—  
Her gentle eyes with foolish weeping dim,—  
Beneath a twisted oak from whose red leaves  
She wound great drowsy wreaths and cast them down;  
The west-wind in her hair, that made it swim  
Far out behind, deep as the rustling sheaves.

Or in the hill-lands I have often seen  
The marvel of her passage; glimpses faint  
Of glimmering woods that glanced the hills between,  
Like Indian faces, fierce with forest paint.  
Or I have met her 'twixt two beechen hills,  
Within a dinged valley near a fall,  
Held in her nut-brown hand one cardinal flower;  
Or wading dimly where the leaf-dammed rills  
Went babbling through the wildwood's arrased hall,  
Where burned the beech and maples glared their power.

[53]

Or I have met her by some ruined mill,



Where trailed the crimson creeper, serpentine,  
On fallen leaves that stirred and rustled chill,  
And watched her swinging in the wild-grape vine.  
While Beauty, sad among the vales and mountains,  
More sad than death, or all that death can teach,  
Dreamed of decay and stretched appealing arms,  
Where splashed the murmur of the forest's fountains;  
With all her loveliness did she beseech,  
And all the sorrow of her wildwood charms.

[54]

Once only in a hollow, girt with trees,  
A-dream amid wild asters filled with rain,  
I glimpsed her cheeks red-berried by the breeze,  
In her dark eyes the night's sidereal stain.  
And once upon an orchard's tangled path,  
Where all the golden-rod had turned to brown,  
Where russets rolled and leaves were sweet of breath,  
I have beheld her 'mid her aftermath  
Of blossoms standing, in her gypsy gown,  
Within her gaze the deeps of life and death.

[55]

[56]

## INDIAN SUMMER

The dawn is a warp of fever,  
The eve is a woof of fire;  
And the month is a singing weaver  
Weaving a red desire.

With stars Dawn dices with Even  
For the rosy gold they heap  
On the blue of the day's deep heaven,  
On the black of the night's far deep.

It's—'Reins to the blood!' and 'Marry!'—  
The season's a prince who burns  
With the teasing lusts that harry  
His heart for a wench who spurns.

[57]

It's—'Crown us a beaker with sherry,  
To drink to the doxy's heels;  
A tankard of wine o' the berry,  
To lips like a cloven peel's.

"S death! if a king be saddened,  
Right so let a fool laugh lies:  
But wine! when a king is gladdened,  
And a woman's waist and her eyes.'

He hath shattered the loom of the weaver,  
And left but a leaf that flits,  
He hath seized heaven's gold, and a fever  
Of mist and of frost is its.

He hath tippled the buxom beauty,  
And gotten her hug and her kiss—  
The wide world's royal booty  
To pile at her feet for this.

[58]

## ALONG THE OHIO

Athwart a sky of brass long welts of gold;  
A path of gold the wide Ohio lies;  
Beneath the sunset, billowing manifold,  
The dark-blue hilltops rise.

And westward dips the crescent of the moon

Through great cloud-feathers, flushed with rosy ray,  
That close around the crystal of her lune  
The redbird wings of Day.

A little skiff slips o'er the burnished stream;  
A fiery wake, that broadens far behind,  
Follows in ripples; and the paddles gleam  
Against the evening wind.

[59]

Was it the boat, the solitude and hush,  
That with dead Indians peopled all the glooms?  
That made each bank, meseemed, and every bush  
Start into eagle-plumes?

That made me seem to hear the breaking brush,  
And as the deer's great antlers swelled in view,  
To hear the arrow twang from cane and rush,  
That dipped to the canoe?

To see the glimmering wigwams by the waves?  
And, wildly clad, around the camp-fires' glow,  
The Shawnee chieftains with their painted braves,  
Each grasping his war-bow?

[60]

But now the vision like the sunset fades,  
The ribs of golden clouds have oozed their light;  
And from the west, like sombre sacheM shades,  
Gallop the shades of night.

The broad Ohio glitters to the stars;  
And many murmurs whisper in its woods—  
Is it the sorrow of dead warriors  
For their lost solitudes?

The moon goes down; and like another moon  
The crescent of the river twinkles there,  
Unchanged as when the eyes of Daniel Boone  
Beheld it flowing fair.

[61]

## A COIGN OF THE FOREST

The hills hang woods around, where green, below  
Dark, breezy boughs of beech-trees, mats the moss,  
Crisp with the brittle hulls of last year's nuts;  
The water hums one bar there; and a glow  
Of gold lies steady where the trailers toss  
Red, bugled blossoms and a rock abuts;  
In spots the wild-phlox and oxalis grow  
Where beech-roots bulge the loam, protrude across  
The grass-grown road and roll it into ruts.

And where the sumach brakes grow dusk and dense,  
Among the rocks, great yellow violets,  
Blue-bells and wind-flowers bloom; the agaric  
In dampness crowds; a fungus, thick, intense  
With gold and crimson and wax-white, that sets  
The May-apples along the terraced creek  
At bold defiance. Where the old rail-fence  
Divides the hollow, there the bee-bird whets  
His bill, and there the elder hedge is thick.

[62]

No one can miss it; for two cat-birds nest,  
Calling all morning, in the trumpet-vine;  
And there at noon the pewee sits and floats  
A woodland welcome; and his very best  
At eve the red-bird sings, as if to sign  
The record of its loveliness with notes.  
At night the moon stoops over it to rest,  
And unreluctant stars. Where waters shine  
There runs a whisper as of wind-swept oats.

[63]

## CREOLE SERENADE

Under mossy oak and pine  
Whispering falls the fountained stream;  
In its pool the lilies shine  
Silvery, each a moonlight gleam.

Roses bloom and roses die  
In the warm rose-scented dark,  
Where the firefly, like an eye,  
Winks and glows, a golden spark.

Amber-belted through the night  
Swings the alabaster moon,  
Like a big magnolia white  
On the fragrant heart of June.

[64]

With a broken syrinx there,  
With bignonia overgrown,  
Is it Pan in hoof and hair,  
Or his image carved from stone?

See! her casement's jessamines part,  
And, with starry blossoms blent,  
Like the moon she leans—O heart,  
'Tis another firmament.

### SINGS

The dim verbena drugs the dusk  
With lemon-heavy odours where  
The heliotropes breathe drowsy musk  
Into the jasmine-dreamy air;  
The moss-rose bursts its dewy husk  
And spills its attar there.

[65]

The orange at thy casement swings  
Star-censers oozing rich perfumes;  
The clematis, long-petalled, clings  
In clusters of dark purple blooms;  
With flowers, like moons or sylphide wings,  
Magnolias light the glooms.

Awake, awake from sleep!  
Thy balmy hair,  
Down-fallen, deep on deep,  
Like blossoms there,—  
That dew and fragrance weep,—  
Will fill the night with prayer.  
Awake, awake from sleep!

And dreaming here it seems to me  
A dryad's bosom grows confessed,  
Bright in the moss of yonder tree,  
That rustles with the murmurous West —  
Or is it but a bloom I see,  
Round as thy virgin breast?

[66]

Through fathomless deeps above are rolled  
A million feverish worlds, that burst,  
Like gems, from Heaven's caskets old  
Of darkness—fires that throb and thirst;  
An aloe, showering buds of gold,  
The night seems, star-immersed.

Unseal, unseal thine eyes!  
O'er which her rod  
Sleep sways;—and like the skies,  
That dream and nod,  
Their starry majesties  
Will fill the night with God.  
Unseal, unseal thine eyes!

[67]

## WILL O' THE WISPS

Beyond the barley meads and hay,  
    What was the light that beckoned there?  
That made her sweet lips smile and say—  
'Oh, busk me in a gown of May,  
    And knot red poppies in my hair.'

Over the meadow and the wood  
    What was the voice that filled her ears?  
That sent into pale cheeks the blood,  
Until each seemed a wild-brier bud  
    Mown down by mowing harvesters?...

[68]

Beyond the orchard, down the hill,  
    The water flows, the water whirls;  
And there they found her past all ill,  
A plaintive face but smiling still,  
    The cresses caught among her curls.

At twilight in the willow glen  
    What sound is that the silence hears,  
When all the dusk is hushed again  
And homeward from the fields strong men  
    And women go, the harvesters?

One seeks the place where she is laid,  
    Where violets bloom from year to year—  
'O sunny head! O bird-like maid!  
The orchard blossoms fall and fade  
    And I am lonely, lonely here.'

[69]

Two stars burn bright above the vale;  
    They seem to him the eyes of Ruth:  
The low moon rises very pale  
As if she, too, had heard the tale,  
    All heartbreak, of a maid and youth.

[70]

## THE TOLLMAN'S DAUGHTER

She stood waist-deep among the briars:  
    Above in twisted lengths were rolled  
    The sunset's tangled whorls of gold,  
Blown from the west's cloud-pillared fires.  
And in the hush no sound did mar,  
    You almost heard o'er hill and dell,  
Deep, bubbling over, star on star,  
    The night's blue cisterns slowly well.  
A crane, like some dark crescent, crossed  
    The sunset, winging towards the west;  
    While up the east her silver breast  
Of light the moon brought, white as frost.

[71]

So have I painted her, you see,  
    The tollman's daughter.—What an arm  
    And throat was hers! and what a form!—  
Art dreams of such divinity.  
What braids of night to hold and kiss!  
    There is no pigment anywhere  
A man might use to picture this—  
    The splendour of her raven hair.  
A face as beautiful and bright,  
    As rosy fair as twilight skies,  
    Lit with the stars of hazel eyes  
And eyebrowed black with pencilled night.

For her, I know, where'er she trod

Each dewdrop raised a looking-glass  
To flash her beauty from the grass;  
That wild-flowers bloomed along the sod,  
And whispered perfume when she smiled;  
The wood-bird hushed to hear her song,  
Or, all enamoured, tame, not wild,  
Before her feet flew fluttering long.  
The brook went mad with melody,  
Eddied in laughter when she kissed  
With naked feet its amethyst—  
And I—I fell in love; ah me!

[72]

[73]

## THE BOY COLUMBUS

And he had mused on lands each bird,—  
That winged from realms of Falerina,  
O'er seas of the Enchanted Sword,—  
In romance sang him, till he heard  
Vague foam on Islands of Alcina.

For rich Levant and old Castile  
Let other seamen freight their galleys;  
With Polo he and Mandeville  
Through stranger seas a dreamy keel  
Sailed into wonder-peopled valleys.

[74]

Far continents of flow'r and fruit,  
Of everlasting spring; where fountains  
'Mid flow'rs, with human faces, shoot;  
Where races dwell, both man and brute,  
In cities under golden mountains.

Where cataracts their thunders hurl  
From heights the tempest has at mercy;  
Vast peaks that touch the moon, and whirl  
Their torrents down of gold and pearl;  
And forests strange as those of Circe.

Let rapiered Love lute, in the shade  
Of royal gardens, to the Palace  
And Court, that haunt the balustrade  
Of terraces and still parade  
Their vanity and guile and malice.

[75]

Him something calls diviner yet  
Than Love, more mighty than a lover;  
Heroic Truth that will not let  
Deed lag; a purpose, westward set,  
In eyes far-seeing to discover.

[76]

## SONG OF THE ELF

I  
When the poppies, with their shields,  
Sentinel  
Forest and the harvest fields,  
In the bell  
Of a blossom, fair to see,  
There I stall the bumble-bee,  
My good stud;  
There I stable him and hold,  
Harness him with hairy gold;  
There I ease his burly back  
Of the honey and its sack  
Gathered from each bud.

[77]

## II

Where the glow-worm lights its lamp,  
  There I lie;  
Where, above the grasses damp,  
  Moths go by;  
Now within the fussy brook,  
Where the waters wind and crook  
  Round the rocks,  
I go sailing down the gloom  
Straddling on a wisp of broom;  
Or, beneath the owlet moon,  
Trip it to the cricket's tune  
  Tossing back my locks.

## III

Ere the crowfoot on the lawn  
  Lifts its head,  
Or the glow-worm's light be gone,  
  Dim and dead,  
In a cobweb hammock deep,  
'Twixt two ferns I swing and sleep,  
  Hid away;  
Where the drowsy musk-rose blows  
And a dreamy runnel flows,  
In the land of Faëry,  
Where no mortal thing can see,  
  All the elfin day.

[78]

[79]

## THE OLD INN

Red-winding from the sleepy town,  
    One takes the lone, forgotten lane  
Straight through the hills. A brush-bird brown  
    Bubbles in thorn-flowers, sweet with rain,  
    Where breezes bend the gleaming grain,  
And cautious drip of higher leaves  
    The lower dips that drip again.—  
Above the tangled trees it heaves  
Its gables and its haunted eaves.

One creeper, gnarled and blossomless,  
    O'erforests all its eastern wall;  
The sighing cedars rake and press  
    Dark boughs along the panes they sprawl;  
    While, where the sun beats, drone and drawl  
The mud-wasps; and one bushy bee,  
    Gold-dusty, hurls along the hall  
To buzz into a crack.—To me  
The shadows seem too scared to flee.

[80]

Of ragged chimneys martins make  
    Huge pipes of music; twittering, here  
They build and roost.—My footfalls wake  
    Strange stealing echoes, till I fear  
    I'll see my pale self drawing near,  
My phantom face as in a glass;  
    Or one, men murdered, buried—where?—  
Dim in gray stealthy glimmer, pass  
With lips that seem to moan 'Alas.'

[81]

## THE MILL-WATER

The water-flag and wild cane grow  
'Round banks whereon the sunbeams sow

Fantastic gold when, on its shores,  
The wind sighs through the sycamores.

In one green angle, just in reach,  
Between a willow-tree and beech,  
Moss-grown and leaky lies a boat  
The thick-grown lilies keep afloat.

And through its waters, half awake,  
Slow swims the spotted water-snake;  
And near its edge, like some gray streak,  
Stands gaunt the still fly-up-the-creek.

[82]

Between the lily-pads and blooms  
The water-spirits set their looms,  
That weave the lace-like light that dims  
The glimmering leaves of under limbs.

Each lily is the hiding-place  
Of some dim wood-imp's elvish face,  
That watches you with gold-green eyes  
Where bubbles of its breathing rise.

I fancy, when the waxing moon  
Leans through the trees and dreams of June,  
And when the black bat slants its wing,  
And lonelier the green-frogs sing;

I fancy, when the whippoorwill  
In some old tree sings wild and shrill,  
With glow-worm eyes that dot the dark,—  
Each holding high a firefly spark

[83]

To torch its way,—the wood-imps come:  
And some float rocking here; and some  
Unmoor the lily leaves and oar  
Around the old boat by the shore.

They climb through oozy weeds and moss;  
They swarm its rotting sides and toss  
Their firefly torches o'er its edge  
Or hang them in the tangled sedge.

The boat is loosed. The moon is pale.  
Around the dam they slowly sail.  
Upon the bow, to pilot it,  
A jack-o'-lantern gleam doth sit.

Yes, I have seen it in my dreams!—  
Naught is forgotten! naught, it seems!—  
The strangled face, the tangled hair  
Of the drown'd woman trailing there.

[84]

## THE DREAM

This was my dream:

It seemed the afternoon  
Of some deep tropic day; and yet the moon  
Stood round and bright with golden alchemy  
High in a heaven bluer than the sea.  
Long lawny lengths of perishable cloud  
Hung in a west o'er rolling forests bowed;  
Clouds raining colours, gold and violet,  
That, opening, seemed from mystic worlds to let  
Hints down of Parian beauty and lost charms  
Of dim immortals, young, with floating forms.  
And all about me fruited orchards grew,  
Pear, quince and peach, and plums of dusty blue;  
Rose-apricots and apples streaked with fire,  
Kissed into ripeness by the sun's desire  
And big with juice. And on far, fading hills,

[85]

Down which it seemed a hundred torrent rills  
Flashed rushing silver, vines and vines and vines  
Of purple vintage swollen with cool wines;  
Pale pleasant wines and fragrant as late June,  
Their delicate tang drawn from the wine-white moon.  
And from the clouds o'er this sweet world there dripped  
An odorous music, strangely feverish-lipped,  
That swung and swooned and panted in mad sighs;  
Investing at each throb the air with eyes,  
And forms of sensuous spirits, limpid white,  
Clad on with raiment as of starry night;  
Fair, faint embodiments of melody,  
From out whose hearts of crystal one could see  
The music stream like light through delicate hands  
Hollowing a lamp. And as on sounding sands  
The ocean murmur haunts the rosy shells,  
Within whose convolutions beauty dwells,  
My soul became a vibrant harp of love,  
Re-echoing all the harmony above.

[86]

[87]

## SPRING TWILIGHT

The sun set late; and left along the west  
A belt of furious ruby, o'er which snows  
Of clouds unrolled; each cloud a mighty breast  
Blooming with almond-rose.

The sun set late; and wafts of wind beat down,  
And cuffed the blossoms from the blossoming quince;  
Scattered the pollen from the lily's crown,  
And made the clover wince.

By dusky forests, through whose fretful boughs  
In flying fragments shot the evening's flame,  
Adown the tangled lane the quiet cows  
With dreamy tinklings came.

[88]

The sun set late; but hardly had he gone  
When o'er the moon's gold-litten crescent there,  
Clean Phosphor, polished as a precious stone,  
Burned in fair deeps of air.

As from faint stars the glory waned and waned,  
The crickets made the oldtime garden shrill;  
And past the luminous pasture-lands complained  
The first far whippoorwill.

[89]

## A SLEET-STORM IN MAY

On southern winds shot through with amber light,  
Breathing soft balm and clothed in cloudy white,  
The lily-fingered Spring came o'er the hills,  
Waking the crocus and the daffodils.  
O'er the cold Earth she breathed a tender sigh—  
The maples sang and flung their banners high,  
Their crimson-tasselled pennons, and the elm  
Bound his dark brows with a green-crested helm.  
Beneath the musky rot of Autumn's leaves,  
Under the forest's myriad naked eaves,  
Life woke and rose in gold and green and blue,  
Robed in the starlight of the twinkling dew.  
With timid tread adown the barren wood  
Spring held her way, when, lo! before her stood  
White-mantled Winter wagging his white head,  
Stormy his brow and stormily he said:  
'The God of Terror, and the King of Storm,

[90]



Must I remind thee how my iron arm  
Raised my red standards 'mid these conquered bowers,  
Turning their green to crimson?—Thou, with flowers,  
Thou wouldst supplant me! nay! usurp my throne!—  
Audacious one!—And at her breast he tossed  
A bitter javelin of ice and frost;  
And left her lying on th' unfeeling mould.  
The fragile blossoms, gathered in the fold  
Of her warm bosom, fell in desolate rows  
About her beauty, and, like fragrant snows,  
Covered her lovely hands and beautiful feet,  
Or on her lips lay like last kisses sweet  
That died there. Lilacs, musky of the May,  
And bluer violets and snowdrops lay  
Entombed in crystal, icy dim and fair,  
Like teardrops scattered in her heavenly hair.

[91]

Alas! sad heart, break not beneath the pain!  
Time changeth all; the Beautiful wakes again.—  
We should not question such; a higher power  
Knows best what bud is ripest or what flower,  
And silently plucks it at the fittest hour.

[92]

## UNREQUITED

Passion? not hers, within whose virgin eyes  
All Eden lay.—And I remember how  
I drank the Heaven of her gaze with sighs—  
She never sighed, nor gave me kiss or vow.

So have I seen a clear October pool,  
Cold, liquid topaz, set within the sear  
Gold of the woodland, tremorless and cool,  
Reflecting all the heartbreak of the year.

Sweetheart? not she whose voice was music sweet;  
Whose face was sweeter than melodious prayer.  
Sweetheart I called her.—When did she repeat  
Sweet to one hope or heart to one despair?

[93]

So have I seen a rose set round with thorn,  
Sung to and sung to by a bird of spring,  
And when, breast-pierced, the bird lay all forlorn,  
The rose bloomed on, fair and unnoticing.

[94]

## THE HEART O' SPRING

Whiten, oh whiten, O clouds of lawn!  
Lily-like clouds that whiten above,  
Now like a dove, and now like a swan,  
But never, oh never—pass on! pass on!  
Never so white as the throat of my love.

Blue-black night on the mountain peaks  
Is not so black as the locks o' my love!  
Stars that shine through the evening streaks  
Over the torrent that flashes and breaks,  
Are not so bright as the eyes o' my love!

[95]

Moon in a cloud, a cloud of snow,  
Mist in the vale where the rivulet sounds,  
Dropping from ledge to ledge below,  
Turning to gold in the sunset's glow,  
Are not so soft as her footstep sounds.

Sound o' May winds in the blossoming trees,

Is not so sweet as her laugh that rings;  
Song o' wild birds on the morning breeze,  
Birds and brooks and murmur o' bees,  
Are harsh to her voice when she laughs or sings.

The rose of my heart is she, my dawn!  
My star o' the east, my moon above!  
My soul takes ship for the Avalon  
Of her heart of hearts, and shall sail on  
Till it anchors safe in its haven of love.

[96]

## 'A BROKEN RAINBOW ON THE SKIES OF MAY'

A broken rainbow on the skies of May,  
Touching the dripping roses and low clouds,  
And in wet clouds its scattered glories lost:—  
So in the sorrow of her soul the ghost  
Of one great love, of iridescent ray,  
Spanning the roses dim of memory,  
Against the tumult of life's rushing crowds—  
A broken rainbow on the skies of May.

A flashing humming-bird among the flowers,  
Deep-coloured blooms; its slender tongue and bill  
Sucking the syrups and the calyxed myrrhs,  
Till, being full of sweets, away it whirrs:—  
Such was his love that won her heart's rich bowers  
To give to him their all, their honied showers,  
The bloom from which he drank his body's fill—  
A flashing humming-bird among the flowers.

[97]

A moon, moth-white, that through long mists of fleece  
Moves amber-girt into a bulk of black,  
And, lost to vision, rims the black with froth:—  
A love that swept its moon, like some great moth,  
Across the heaven of her soul's young peace;  
And, smoothly passing, in the clouds did cease  
Of time, through which its burning light comes back—  
A moon, moth-white, that moves through mists of fleece.

[98]

A bolt of living thunder downward hurled,  
Momentary blazing from the piled-up storm,  
That instants out the mountains and the ocean,  
The towering crag, then blots the sight's commotion:—  
Love, love that swiftly coming bared the world,  
The deeps of life, 'round which fate's clouds are curled,  
And, ceasing, left all night and black alarm—  
A bolt of living thunder downward hurled.

[99]

## ORGIE

On nights like this, when bayou and lagoon  
Dream in the moonlight's mystic radiance,  
I seem to walk like one deep in a trance  
With old-world myths born of the mist and moon.

Lascivious eyes and mouths of sensual rose  
Smile into mine; and breasts of luring light,  
And tresses streaming golden to the night,  
Persuade me onward where the forest glows.

And then it seems along the haunted hills  
There falls a flutter as of beautiful feet,  
As if tempestuous troops of Mænads meet  
To drain deep bowls and shout and have their wills.

[100]

And then I feel her limbs will be revealed  
Like some great snow-white moth among the trees;  
Her vampire beauty, waiting there to seize  
And dance me downward where my doom is sealed.

[101]

## REVERIE

What ogive gates from gold of Ophir wrought,  
What walls of Parian, whiter than a rose,  
What towers of crystal, for the eyes of thought,  
Hast builded on far Islands of Repose?  
Thy cloudy columns, vast, Corinthian,  
Or huge, Ionic, colonnade the heights  
Of dreamland, looming o'er the soul's deep seas;  
Built melodies of marble, that no man  
Has ever reached, except in fancy's flights,  
Templing the presence of perpetual ease.

Oft, where o'er plastic frieze and plinths of spar,—  
In glimmering solitudes of pillared stone,—  
The twilight blossoms with one violet star,  
With thee, O Reverie, I have stood alone,  
And there beheld, from out the Mythic Age,  
The rosy breasts of Cytherea—fair,  
Full-cestused, and suggestive of what loves  
Immortal—rise; and heard the lyric rage  
Of sun-burnt Poesy, whose throat breathes bare  
O'er leopard skins, fluting among his groves.

[102]

Oft, where thy castled peaks and temped vales  
Cloud—like convulsive sunsets—shores that dream,  
Myrrh-fragrant, over siren seas whose sails  
Gleam white as lilies on a liliated stream,  
My soul has dreamed. Or by thy sapphire sea,  
In thy arcaded gardens, in the shade  
Of breathing sculpture, oft has walked with thought,  
And bent, in shadowy attitude, its knee  
Before the shrine of Beauty that must fade  
And leave no memory of the mind that wrought.

[103]

Who hath beheld thy caverns where, in heaps,  
The wines of Lethe and Love's witchery,  
In sealéd Amphoræ a sibyl keeps,  
World-old, for ever guarded secretly?—  
No wine of Xeres or of Syracuse!  
No fine Falernian and no vile Sabine!—  
The stolen fire of a demigod,  
Whose bubbled purple goddess feet did bruise  
In crusted vats of vintage, where the green  
Flames with wild poppies, on the Samian sod.

[104]

Oh, for the deep enchantment of one draught!  
The reckless ecstasy of classic earth!—  
With godlike eyes to laugh as gods have laughed  
In eyes of mortal brown, a mighty mirth.  
Of deity delirious with desire!  
To breathe the dropping roses of the shrines,  
The splashing wine-libation and the blood,  
And all the young priest's dreaming! To inspire  
My eager soul with beauty, 'til it shines  
An utt'rance of life's loftier brotherhood!

So would I slumber in the old-world shades,  
And Poesy should touch me, as some bold  
Wild bee a pulpy lily of the glades,  
Barbaric-covered with the kernelled gold;  
And feel the glory of the Golden Age  
Less godly than my purpose, strong to dare  
Death with the pure immortal lips of love:  
Less lovely than my soul's ideal rage  
To mate itself with Music and declare

[105]

## LETHE

### I

There is a scent of roses and spilt wine  
 Between the moonlight and the laurel coppice;  
 The marble idol glimmers on its shrine,  
 White as a star, among a heaven of poppies.  
 Here all my life lies like a spilth of wine.  
 There is a mouth of music like a lute,  
 A nightingale that singeth to one flower;  
 Between the falling flower and the fruit,  
 Where love hath died, the music of an hour.

### II

To sit alone with memory and a rose;  
 To dwell with shadows of whilom romances;  
 To make one hour of a year of woes  
 And walk on starlight, in ethereal trances,  
 With love's lost face fair as a moon-white rose.  
 To shape from music and the scent of buds  
 Love's spirit and its presence of sweet fire,  
 Between the heart's wild burning and the blood's,  
 Is part of life and of the soul's desire.

[107]

### III

There is a song to silence and the stars,  
 Between the forest and the temple's arches;  
 And down the stream of night, like nenuphars,  
 The tossing fires of the revellers' torches.—  
 Here all my life waits lonely as the stars.—  
 Shall not one hour of all those hours suffice  
 For resignation God hath given as dower?  
 Between the summons and the sacrifice  
 One hour of love, th' eternity of an hour?

[108]

### IV

The shrine is shattered and the bird is gone;  
 Dark is the house of music and of bridal;  
 The stars are stricken and the storm comes on;  
 Lost in a wreck of roses lies the idol,  
 Sad as the memory of a joy that's gone.—  
 To dream of perished gladness and a kiss,  
 Waking the last chord of love's broken lyre,  
 Between remembering and forgetting, this  
 Is part of life and of the soul's desire.

[109]

## DIONYSIA

The day is dead; and in the west  
 The slender crescent of the moon—  
 Diana's crystal-kindled crest—  
 Sinks hillward in a silvery swoon.  
 What is the murmur in the dell?  
 The stealthy whisper and the drip?  
 A Dryad with her leaf-light trip?  
 A Naiad o'er her fountain well?—  
 Who with white fingers for her comb,  
 Sleeks her blue hair, and from its curls  
 Showers slim minnows and pale pearls,  
 And hollow music of the foam.

What is it in the vistaed ways  
 That leans and springs, and stoops and sways?—  
 The naked limbs of one who flees?  
 An Oread who hesitates  
 Before the Satyr form that waits,  
 Crouching to leap, that there she sees?  
 Or under boughs, reclining cool,  
 A Hamadryad, like a pool  
 Of moonlight, palely beautiful?  
 Or Limnad, with her liliated face,  
 More lovely than the misty lace  
 That haunts a star and gives it grace?  
 Or is it some Leimoniad  
 In wildwood flowers dimly clad?  
 Oblong blossoms white as froth,  
 Or mottled like the tiger-moth;  
 Or brindled as the brows of death,  
 Wild of hue and wild of breath:  
 Here ethereal flame and milk  
 Blent with velvet and with silk;  
 Here an iridescent glow  
 Mixed with satin and with snow:  
 Pansy, poppy and the pale  
 Serpolet and galingale;  
 Mandrake and anemone,  
 Honey-reservoirs o' the bee;  
 Cistus and the cyclamen,—  
 Cheeked like blushing Hebe this,  
 And the other white as is  
 Bubbled milk of Venus when  
 Cupid's baby mouth is pressed,  
 Rosy to her rosy breast.  
 And, besides, all flowers that mate  
 With aroma, and in hue  
 Stars and rainbows duplicate  
 Here on earth for me and you.

[111]

Yea! at last mine eyes can see!  
 'Tis no shadow of the tree  
 Swaying softly there, but she!—  
 Mænad, Bassarid, Bacchant,  
 What you will, who doth enchant  
 Night with sensuous nudity.  
 Lo! again I hear her pant  
 Breasting through the dewy glooms—  
 Through the glow-worm gleams and glowers  
 Of the starlight;—wood-perfumes  
 Swoon around her and frail showers  
 Of the leaflet-tilted rain.  
 Lo! like love, she comes again  
 Through the pale voluptuous dusk,  
 Sweet of limb with breasts of musk.  
 With her lips, like blossoms, breathing  
 Honeyed pungence of her kiss,  
 And her auburn tresses wreathing  
 Like umbrageous helichrys,  
 There she stands, like fire and snow,  
 In the moon's ambrosial glow,  
 Both her shapely loins low-looped  
 With the balmy blossoms, drooped,  
 Of the deep amaracus.  
 Spiritual, yet sensual,  
 Lo, she ever greets me thus  
 In my vision; white and tall,  
 Her delicious body there,—  
 Raimented with amorous air,—  
 To my mind expresses all  
 The allurements of the world.  
 And once more I seem to feel  
 On my soul, like frenzy, hurled  
 All the passionate past.—I reel,  
 Greek again in ancient Greece,  
 In the Pyrrhic revelries;  
 In the mad and Mænad dance;  
 Onward dragged with violence;

[112]

[113]

Pan and old Silenus and  
Faunus and a Bacchant band  
Round me. Wild my wine-stained hand  
O'er tumultuous hair is lifted;  
While the flushed and Phallic orgies  
Whirl around me; and the marges  
Of the wood are torn and rifted  
With lascivious laugh and shout.  
And barbarian there again,—  
Shameless with the shameless rout,  
Bacchus lusting in each vein,—  
With her pagan lips on mine,  
Like a god made drunk with wine,  
On I reel; and in the revels  
Her loose hair, the dance dishevels,  
Blows, and 'thwart my vision swims  
All the splendour of her limbs....

[114]

So it seems. Yet woods are lonely.  
And when I again awake,  
I shall find their faces only  
Moonbeams in the boughs that shake;  
And their revels, but the rush  
Of night-winds through bough and brush.  
Yet my dreaming—is it more  
Than mere dreaming? Is a door  
Opened in my soul? a curtain  
Raised? to let me see for certain  
I have lived that life before?

[115]

[116]

## THE NAIAD

She sits among the iris stalks  
Of babbling brooks; and leans for hours  
Among the river's lily flowers,  
Or on their whiteness walks:  
Above dark forest pools, gray rocks  
Wall in, she leans with dripping locks,  
And listening to the echo, talks  
With her own face—Iothera.

There is no forest of the hills,  
No valley of the solitude,  
Nor fern nor moss, that may elude  
Her searching step that stills:  
She dreams among the wild-rose brakes  
Of fountains that the ripple shakes,  
And, dreaming of herself, she fills  
The silence with 'Iothera.'

[117]

And every wind that haunts the ways  
Of leaf and bough, once having kissed  
Her virgin nudity, goes whist  
With wonder and amaze.  
There blows no breeze which hath not learned  
Her name's sweet melody, and yearned  
To kiss her mouth that laughs and says,  
'Iothera, Iothera.'

No wild thing of the wood, no bird,  
Or brown or blue, or gold or gray,  
Beneath the sun's or moonlight's ray,  
That hath not loved and heard;  
They are her pupils; she can say  
No new thing but, within a day,  
They have its music, word for word,  
Harmonious as Iothera.

[118]

No man who lives and is not wise  
With love for common flowers and trees,  
Bee, bird, and beast, and brook, and breeze,

And rocks and hills and skies,—  
Search where he will,—shall ever see  
One flutter of her drapery,  
One glimpse of limbs, or hair, or eyes  
Of beautiful Iothera.

[119]

## THE LIMNAD

### I

The lake she haunts gleams dreamily  
'Twixt sleepy boughs of melody,  
Set 'mid the hills beside the sea,  
In tangled bush and brier;  
Where the ghostly sunsets write  
Wondrous things in golden light;  
And above the pine-crowned height,  
Clouds of twilight, rosy white,  
Build their towers of fire.

### II

'Mid the rushes there that swing,  
Flowering flags where voices sing  
When low winds are murmuring,  
Murmuring to stars that glitter;  
Blossom-white, with purple locks,  
Underneath the stars' still flocks,  
In the dusky waves she rocks,  
Rocks, and all the landscape mocks  
With a song most sweet and bitter.

[120]

### III

Soft it sounds, at first, as dreams  
Filled with tears that fall in streams;  
Then it soars, until it seems  
Beauty's very self hath spoken;  
And the woods grow silent quite,  
Stars wax faint and flowers turn white;  
And the nightingales that light  
Near, or hear her through the night,  
Die, their hearts with longing broken.

[121]

### IV

Dark, dim and sad o'er mournful lands,  
White-throated stars heaped in her hands,  
Like wildwood buds, the Twilight stands,  
The Twilight dreaming lingers;  
Listening where the Limnad sings  
Witcheries, whose beauty brings  
A great moon from hidden springs,  
Pale with amorous quiverings  
Feet of fire and silvery fingers.

### V

In the vales Auloniads,  
On the mountains Oreads,  
On the leas Leimoniads,  
Naked as the stars that glisten,  
Pan, the Satyrs, Dryades,  
Fountain-lovely Naiades,  
Foam-lipped Oceanides,  
Breathless 'mid their seas and trees,  
Stay and stop and lean and listen.

[122]

### VI

Large-eyed, Siren-like she stands,

In the lake or on its sands,  
And with rapture from the hands  
    Of the Night some stars are shaken;  
To her song the rushes swing,  
Lilies nod and ripples ring,  
Lost in helpless listening—  
These will wake that hear her sing,  
    But one mortal will not waken.

[123]

## INTIMATIONS

### I

Is it uneasy moonlight  
On the restless field, that stirs?  
Or wild white meadow-blossoms  
The night-wind bends and blurs?

Is it the dolorous water,  
That sobs in the woods and sighs?  
Or heart of an ancient oak-tree,  
That breaks and, sighing, dies?

The wind is vague with the shadows  
That wander in No-Man's Land;  
The water is dark with the voices  
That weep on the Unknown strand.

[124]

O ghosts of the winds that call me!  
O ghosts of the whispering waves!  
As sad as forgotten flowers  
That die upon nameless graves!

What is this thing you tell me  
In tongues of a twilight race,  
Of death, with the vanished features,  
Mantled, of my own face?

### II

The old enigmas of the deathless dawns  
And riddles of the all immortal eves,—  
That still o'er Delphic lawns  
Speak as the gods spoke through oracular leaves—  
I read with new-born eyes,  
Remembering how, a slave;  
They buried me, a living sacrifice,  
Once in a dead king's grave.

[125]

Or crowned with hyacinth and helichrys,  
How, towards the altar in the marble gloom,—  
Hearing the magadis  
Dirge through the pale amaracine perfume,—  
'Mid chanting priests I trod,  
With never a sigh or pause,  
To give my life to pacify a god,  
And save my country's cause.

Again: Cyrenian roses on wild hair,  
And oil and purple smeared on breasts and cheeks,  
How, with mad torches there,—  
Reddening the cedars of Cithæron's peaks,—  
With gesture and fierce glance,  
Lascivious Mænad bands  
Once drew and slew me in the Pyrrhic dance,  
With Bacchanalian hands.

[126]

### III

In eons of the senses,  
My spirit knew of yore,



I found the Isle of Circe  
And felt her magic lore;  
And still the soul remembers  
What I was once before.

She gave me flowers to smell of  
That wizard branches bore,  
Of weird and sorcerous beauty,  
Whose stems dripped human gore—  
Their scent when I remember  
I know that world once more.

[127]

She gave me fruits to eat of  
That grew upon the shore,  
Of necromantic ripeness,  
With human flesh at core—  
Their taste when I remember  
I know that life once more.

And then, behold! a serpent,  
That glides my face before,  
With eyes of tears and fire  
That glare me o'er and o'er—  
I look into its eyeballs,  
And know myself once more.

[128]

## BEFORE THE TEMPLE

### I

All desolate she sate her down  
Upon the marble of the temple's stair.  
You would have thought her, with her eyes of brown,  
Flushed cheeks and hazel hair,  
A dryad dreaming there.

### II

A priest of Bacchus passed, nor stopped  
To chide her; deeming her—whose chiton hid  
But half her bosom, and whose girdle dropped—  
Some grief-drowned Bassarid,  
The god of wine had chid.

[129]

### III

With wreaths of woodland cyclamen  
For Dian's shrine, a shepherdess drew near,  
All her young thoughts on vestal beauty, when—  
She dare not look for fear—  
Behold the goddess here!

### IV

Fierce lights on shields of bossy brass  
And helms of gold, next from the hills deploy  
Tall youths of Argos. And she sees *him* pass,  
Flushed with heroic joy,  
On towards the siege of Troy.

[130]

## ANTHEM OF DAWN

### I

Then up the orient heights to the zenith that balanced the crescent,—  
Up and far up and over,—the heaven grew erubescant,

Vibrant with rose and with ruby from hands of the harpist Dawn,  
Smiting symphonic fire on the firmament's barbiton;  
And the East was a priest who adored with offerings of gold and of gems,  
And a wonderful carpet unrolled for the inaccessible hems  
Of the glittering robes of her limbs; that, lily and amethyst,  
Swept glorying on and on through temples of cloud and mist.

[131]

## II

Then out of the splendour and richness, that burned like a magic stone,  
The torrent suffusion that deepened and dazzled and broadened and shone,  
The pomp and the pageant of colour, triumphal procession of glare,  
The sun, like a king in armour, breathing splendour from feet to hair,  
Stood forth with majesty girdled, as a hero who towers afar  
Where the bannered gates are bristling hells and the walls are roaring  
war:  
And broad on the back of the world, like a Cherubin's fiery blade,  
The effulgent gaze of his aspect fell in glittering accolade.

[132]

## III

Then billowing blue, like an ocean, rolled from the shores of dawn to  
even:  
And the stars, like rafts, went down: and the moon, like a ghost-ship  
driven,  
A feather of foam, from port to port of the cloud-built isles that  
dotted,  
With pearl and cameo, bays of the day, her canvas webbed and rooted,  
Lay lost in the gulf of heaven: while over her mixed and melted  
The beautiful children of Morn, whose bodies are opal-belted;  
The beautiful daughters of Dawn, who, over and under and after  
The rivered radiance wrestled; and rainbowed heaven with laughter  
Of halcyon sapphire.—O Dawn! thou visible mirth,  
Thou hallelujah of heaven! hosanna of Earth!

[133]

[134]

## AT THE LANE'S END

### I

No more to strip the roses from  
The rose-boughs of her porch's place!—  
I dreamed last night that I was home  
Beside a rose—her face.

I must have smiled in sleep—who knows?—  
The rose aroma filled the lane;  
I saw her white hand's lifted rose  
That called me home again.

And yet when I awoke—so wan,  
An old face wet with icy tears!—  
Somehow, it seems, sleep had misdrawn  
A love gone thirty years.

[135]

### II

The clouds roll up and the clouds roll down  
Over the roofs of the little town;  
Out in the hills where the pike winds by  
Fields of clover and bottoms of rye,  
You will hear no sound but the barking cough  
Of the striped chipmunk where the lane leads off;  
You will hear no bird but the sapsuckers  
Far off in the forest,—that seems to purr,  
As the warm wind fondles its top, grown hot,  
Like the docile back of an ocelot:  
You will see no thing but the shine and shade  
Of briars that climb and of weeds that wade  
The glittering creeks of the light, that fills  
The dusty road and the red-keel hills—  
And all day long in the pennyroy'l

The grasshoppers at their anvils toil;  
 Thick click of their tireless hammers thrum,  
 And the wheezy belts of their bellows hum;  
 Tinkers who solder the silence and heat  
 To make the loneliness more complete.  
 Around old rails where the blackberries  
 Are reddening ripe, and the bumble-bees  
 Are a drowsy rustle of Summer's skirts,  
 And the bob-white's wing is the fan she flirts.  
 Under the hill, through the iron weeds,  
 And ox-eyed daisies and milkweeds, leads  
 The path forgotten of all but one.  
 Where elder bushes are sick with sun,  
 And wild raspberries branch big blue veins  
 O'er the face of the rock, where the old spring rains  
 Its sparkling splinters of molten spar  
 On the gravel bed where the tadpoles are,—  
 You will find the pales of the fallen fence,  
 And the tangled orchard and vineyard, dense  
 With the weedy neglect of thirty years.  
 The garden there,—where the soft sky clears  
 Like an old sweet face that has dried its tears;—  
 The garden plot where the cabbage grew  
 And the pompous pumpkin; and beans that blew  
 Balloons of white by the melon patch;  
 Maize; and tomatoes that seemed to catch  
 Oblong amber and agate balls  
 Thrown from the sun in the frosty falls:  
 Long rows of currants and gooseberries,  
 And the balsam-gourd with its honey-bees.  
 And here was a nook for the princess-plumes,  
 The snap-dragons and the poppy-blooms,  
 Mother's sweet-williams and pansy flowers,  
 And the morning-glories' bewildered bowers,  
 Tipping their cornucopias up  
 For the humming-birds that came to sup.  
 And over it all was the Sabbath peace  
 Of the land whose lap was the love of these;  
 And the old log-house where my innocence died,  
 With my boyhood buried side by side.

[137]

[138]

Shall a man with a face as withered and gray  
 As the wasp-nest stowed in a loft away,—  
 Where the hornets haunt and the mortar drops  
 From the loosened logs of the clap-board tops;—  
 Whom vice has aged as the rotting rooms  
 The rain where memories haunt the glooms;  
 A hitch in his joints like the rheum that gnars  
 In the rasping hinge of the door that jars;  
 A harsh, cracked throat like the old stone flue  
 Where the swallows build the summer through;  
 Shall a man, I say, with the spider sins  
 That the long years spin in the outs and ins  
 Of his soul, returning to see once more  
 His boyhood's home, where his life was poor  
 With toil and tears and their fretfulness,  
 But rich with health and the hopes that bless  
 The unsoiled wealth of a vigorous youth;  
 Shall he not take comfort and know the truth  
 In its threadbare raiment of falsehood?—Yea!  
 In his crumbled past he shall kneel and pray,  
 Like a pilgrim come to the shrine again  
 Of the homely saints that shall soothe his pain,  
 And arise and depart made clean from stain!

[139]

### III

Years of care can not erase  
 Visions of the hills and trees  
 Closing in the dam and race;  
 Not the mile-long memories  
 Of the mill-stream's lovely place.

[140]

How the sunsets used to stain  
 Mirror of the water lying

Under eaves made dark with rain!  
Where the red-bird, westward flying,  
Lit to try one song again.

Dingles, hills, and woods, and springs,  
Where we came in calm and storm,  
Swinging in the grape-vine swings,  
Wading where the rocks were warm,  
With our fishing-nets and strings.

Here the road plunged down the hill,  
Under ash and chinquapin,—  
Where the grasshoppers would drill  
Ears of silence with their din,—  
To the willow-girdled mill.

[141]

There the path beyond the ford  
Takes the woodside, just below  
Shallows that the lilies sword,  
Where the scarlet blossoms blow  
Of the trumpet-vine and gourd.

Summer winds, that sink with heat,  
On the pelted waters winnow  
Moony petals that repeat  
Crescents, where the startled minnow  
Beats a glittering retreat.

Summer winds that bear the scent  
Of the iron-weed and mint,  
Weary with sweet freight and spent,  
On the deeper pools imprint  
Stumbling steps in many a dent.

[142]

Summer winds, that split the husk  
Of the peach and nectarine,  
Trail along the amber dusk  
Hazy skirts of gray and green,  
Spilling balms of dew and musk.

Where with balls of bursting juice  
Summer sees the red wild-plum  
Strew the gravel; ripened loose,  
Autumn hears the pawpaw drum  
Plumpness on the rocks that bruise:

There we found the water-beech,  
One forgotten August noon,  
With a hornet-nest in reach,—  
Like a fairyland balloon,  
Full of bustling fairy speech.—

[143]

Some invasion sure it was;  
For we heard the captains scold;  
Waspish cavalry a-buzz,—  
Troopers uniformed in gold,  
Sable-slashed,—to charge on us.

Could I find the sedgy angle,  
Where the dragon-flies would turn  
Slender flittings into spangle  
On the sunlight? or would burn—  
Where the berries made a tangle—

Sparkling green and brassy blue;  
Rendezvousing, by the stream,  
Bands of elf-banditti, who,  
Brigands of the bloom and beam,  
Drunken were with honey-dew.

[144]

Could I find the pond that lay  
Where vermilion blossoms showered  
Fragrance down the daisied way?  
That the sassafras embowered  
With the spice of early May?

Could I find it—did I seek—

The old mill? Its weather-beaten  
Wheel and gable by the creek?  
With its warping roof; worm-eaten,  
Dusty rafters worn and weak.

Where old shadows haunt old places,  
Loft and hopper, stair and bin;  
Ghostly with the dust that laces  
Webs that usher phantoms in,  
Wistful with remembered faces.

[145]

While the frogs' grave litanies  
Drowse in far-off antiphone,  
Supplicating, till the eyes  
Of dead friendships, long alone  
In the dusky corners,—rise.

Moonrays or the splintered slip  
Of a star? within the darkling  
Twilight, where the fire-flies dip—  
As if Night a myriad sparkling  
Jewels from her hands let slip:

While again some farm-boy crosses,—  
With a corn-sack for the meal,—  
O'er the creek, through ferns and mosses  
Sprinkled by the old mill-wheel,  
Where the water drips and tosses.

[146]

## THE FARMSTEAD

Yes, I love the homestead. There  
In the spring the lilacs blew  
Plenteous perfume everywhere;  
There in summer gladioles grew  
Parallels of scarlet glare.

And the moon-hued primrose cool,  
Satin-soft and redolent;  
Honeysuckles beautiful,  
Filling all the air with scent;  
Roses red or white as wool.

[147]

Roses, glorious and lush,  
Rich in tender-tinted dyes,  
Like the gay tempestuous rush  
Of unnumbered butterflies,  
Clustering o'er each bending bush.

Here japonica and box,  
And the wayward violets;  
Clumps of star-enamelled phlox,  
And the myriad flowery jets  
Of the twilight four-o'-clocks.

Ah, the beauty of the place!  
When the June made one great rose,  
Full of musk and mellow grace,  
In the garden's humming close,  
Of her comely mother face!

[148]

Bubble-like, the hollyhocks  
Budded, burst, and flaunted wide  
Gypsy beauty from their stocks;  
Morning glories, bubble-dyed,  
Swung in honey-hearted flocks.

Tawny tiger-lilies flung  
Doublets slashed with crimson on;  
Graceful slave-girls, fair and young,  
Like Circassians, in the sun

Alabaster lilies swung.

Ah, the droning of the bee;  
In his dusty pantaloons  
Tumbling in the fleurs-de-lis;  
In the drowsy afternoons  
Dreaming in the pink sweet-pea.

[149]

Ah, the moaning wildwood-dove!  
With its throat of amethyst  
Rippled like a shining cove  
Which a wind to pearl hath kissed,  
Moaning, moaning of its love.

And the insects' gossip thin—  
From the summer hotness hid—  
In lone, leafy deeps of green;  
Then at eve the katydid  
With its hard, unvaried din.

Often from the whispering hills,  
Borne from out the golden dusk,—  
Gold with gold of daffodils,—  
Thrilled into the garden's musk  
The wild wail of whippoorwills.

[150]

From the purple-tangled trees,  
Like the white, full heart of night,  
Solemn with majestic peace,  
Swam the big moon, veined with light;  
Like some gorgeous golden-fleece.

She was there with me.—And who,  
In the magic of the hour,  
Had not sworn that they could view,  
Beading on each blade and flower  
Moony blisters of the dew?

And each fairy of our home,—  
Firefly,—its taper lit  
In the honey-scented gloam,  
Dashing down the dusk with it  
Like an instant-flaming foam.

[151]

And we heard the calling, calling,  
Of the screech-owl in the brake;  
Where the trumpet-vine hung, crawling  
Down the ledge, into the lake  
Heard the sighing streamlet falling.

Then we wandered to the creek  
Where the water-lilies, growing  
Thick as stars, lay white and weak;  
Or against the brooklet's flowing  
Bent and bathed a bashful cheek.

And the moonlight, rippling golden,  
Fell in virgin aureoles  
On their bosoms, half unfolden,  
Where, it seemed, the fairies' souls  
Dwelt as perfume,—unbeholden;—

[152]

Or lay sleeping, pearly-tented,  
Baby-cribbed within each bud,  
While the night-wind, piney-scented,  
Swooning over field and flood,  
Rocked them on the waters dented.

Then the low, melodious bell  
Of a sleeping heifer tinkled,  
In some berry-briered dell,  
As her satin dewlap wrinkled  
With the cud that made it swell.

And, returning home, we heard,  
In a beech-tree at the gate,  
Some brown, dream-behaunted bird,

Singing of its absent mate,  
Of the mate that never heard.

[153]

And, you see, now I am gray,  
Why within the old, old place,  
With such memories, I stay;  
Fancy out her absent face  
Long since passed away.

She was mine—yes! still is mine:  
And my frosty memory  
Reels about her, as with wine  
Warmed into young eyes that see  
All of her that was divine.

Yes, I loved her, and have grown  
Melancholy in that love,  
And the memory alone  
Of perfection such whereof  
She could sanctify each stone.

[154]

And where'er the poppies swing—  
There we walk,—as if a bee  
Bent them with its airy wing,—  
Down her garden shadowy  
In the hush the evenings bring.

[155]

## A FLOWER OF THE FIELDS

Bee-bitten in the orchard hung  
The peach; or, fallen in the weeds,  
Lay rotting, where still sucked and sung  
The gray bee, boring to its seed's  
Pink pulp and honey blackly stung.

The orchard-path, which led around  
The garden,—with its heat one twinge  
Of dinning locusts,—picket-bound  
And ragged, brought me where one hinge  
Held up the gate that scraped the ground.

[156]

All seemed the same: the martin-box—  
Sun-warped with pigmy balconies—  
Still stood, with all its twittering flocks,  
Perched on its pole above the peas  
And silvery-seeded onion-stocks.

The clove-pink and the rose; the clump  
Of coppery sunflowers, with the heat  
Sick to the heart: the garden stump,  
Red with geranium-pots, and sweet  
With moss and ferns, this side the pump.

I rested, with one hesitant hand  
Upon the gate. The lonesome day,  
Droning with insects, made the land  
One dry stagnation. Soaked with hay  
And scents of weeds the hot wind fanned.

[157]

I breathed the sultry scents, my eyes  
Parched as my lips. And yet I felt  
My limbs were ice.—As one who flies  
To some wild woe.—How sleepy smelt  
The hay-sweet heat that soaked the skies!

Noon nodded; dreamier, loner  
For one long, plaintive, forest-side  
Bird-quaver.—And I knew me near  
Some heartbreak anguish.... She had died.  
I felt it, and no need to hear!

I passed the quince and pear-tree; where,

All up the porch, a grape-vine trails—  
How strange that fruit, whatever air  
Or earth it grows in, never fails  
To find its native flavour there!

[158]

And she was as a flower, too,  
That grows its proper bloom and scent  
No matter what the soil: she, who,  
Born better than her place, still lent  
Grace to the lowliness she knew....

They met me at the porch, and were  
Sad-eyed with weeping.—Then the room  
Shut out the country's heat and purr,  
And left light stricken into gloom—  
So love and I might look on her.

[159]

## THE FEUD

Rocks, trees and rocks; and down a mossy stone  
The murmuring ooze and trickle of a stream  
Through bushes, where the mountain spring lies lone,—  
A gleaming cairngorm where the shadows dream,—  
And one wild road winds like a saffron seam.

Here sang the thrush, whose pure, mellifluous note  
Dropped golden sweetness on the fragrant June;  
Here cat—and blue-bird and wood-sparrow wrote  
Their presence on the silence with a tune;  
And here the fox drank 'neath the mountain moon.

[160]

Frail ferns and dewy mosses and dark brush,—  
Impenetrable briars, deep and dense,  
And wiry bushes,—brush, that seemed to crush  
The struggling saplings with its tangle, whence  
Sprawled out the ramble of an old rail-fence.

A wasp buzzed by; and then a butterfly  
In orange and amber, like a floating flame;  
And then a man, hard-eyed and very sly,  
Gaunt-cheeked and haggard and a little lame,  
With an old rifle, down the mountain came.

He listened, drinking from a flask he took  
Out of the ragged pocket of his coat;  
Then all around him cast a stealthy look;  
Lay down; and watched an eagle soar and float,  
His fingers twitching at his hairy throat.

[161]

The shades grew longer; and each Cumberland height  
Loomed, framed in splendours of the dolphin dusk.  
Around the road a horseman rode in sight;  
Young, tall, blonde-bearded. Silent, grim, and brusque,  
He in the thicket aimed—The gun ran husk;

And echoes barked among the hills and made  
Repeated instants of the shot's distress.—  
Then silence—and the trampled bushes swayed;—  
Then silence, packed with murder and the press  
Of distant hoofs that galloped riderless.

[162]

## LYNCHERS

At the moon's down-going, let it be  
On the quarry hill with its one gnarled tree....



The red-rock road of the underbush,  
Where the woman came through the summer hush.

The sumach high and the elder thick,  
Where we found the stone and the ragged stick

The trampled road of the thicket, full  
Of footprints down to the quarry pool.

The rocks that ooze with the hue of lead,  
Where we found her lying stark and dead.

[163]

The scraggy wood; the negro hut,  
With its doors and windows locked and shut.

A secret signal; a foot's rough tramp;  
A knock at the door; a lifted lamp.

An oath; a scuffle; a ring of masks;  
A voice that answers a voice that asks.

A group of shadows; the moon's red fleck;  
A running noose and a man's bared neck.

A word, a curse, and a shape that swings;  
The lonely night and a bat's black wings....

At the moon's down-going, let it be  
On the quarry hill with its one gnarled tree.

[164]

## DEAD MAN'S RUN

He rode adown the autumn wood,  
A man dark-eyed and brown;  
A mountain girl before him stood  
Clad in a homespun gown.

'To ride this road is death for you!  
My father waits you there;  
My father and my brother, too,—  
You know the oath they swear.'

He holds her by one berry-brown wrist,  
And by one berry-brown hand;  
And he hath laughed at her and kissed  
Her cheek the sun hath tanned.

[165]

'The feud is to the death, sweetheart;  
But forward will I ride.'—  
'And if you ride to death, sweetheart,  
My place is at your side.'

Low hath he laughed again and kissed  
And helped her with his hand;  
And they have ridd'n into the mist  
That belts the autumn land.

And they had passed by Devil's Den,  
And come to Dead Man's Run,  
When in the brush rose up two men,  
Each with a levelled gun.

'Down! down! my sister!' cries the one;—  
She gives the reins a twirl.—  
The other shouts, 'He shot my son!  
And now he steals my girl!'

[166]

The rifles crack: she will not wail:  
He will not cease to ride:  
But, oh! her face is pale, is pale,  
And the red blood stains her side.

'Sit fast, sit fast by me, sweetheart!  
The road is rough to ride!'—  
The road is rough by gulch and bluff,  
And her hair blows wild and wide.

'Sit fast, sit fast by me, sweetheart!  
The bank is steep to ride!'—  
The bank is steep for a strong man's leap,  
And her eyes are staring wide.

'Sit fast, sit fast by me, sweetheart!  
The Run is swift to ride!'—  
The Run is swift with mountain drift,  
And she sways from side to side.

[167]

Is it a wash of the yellow moss,  
Or drift of the autumn's gold,  
The mountain torrent foams across  
For the dead pine's roots to hold?

Is it the bark of the sycamore,  
Or peel of the white birch-tree,  
The mountaineer on the other shore  
Hath followed and still can see?

No mountain moss or leaves, dear heart!  
No bark of birchen gray!—  
Young hair of gold and a face death-cold  
The wild stream sweeps away.

[168]

## AUGUST

### I

Clad on with glowing beauty and the peace,  
Benign, of calm maturity, she stands  
Among her meadows and her orchard-lands,  
And on her mellowing gardens and her trees,  
Out of the ripe abundance of her hands  
Bestows increase  
And fruitfulness, as, wrapped in sunny ease,  
Blue-eyed and blonde she goes  
Upon her bosom Summer's richest rose.

### II

And he who follows where her footsteps lead,  
By hill and rock, by forest-side and stream,  
Shall glimpse the glory of her visible dream,  
In flower and fruit, in rounded nut and seed:  
She, in whose path the very shadows gleam;  
Whose humblest weed  
Seems lovelier than June's loveliest flower, indeed,  
And sweeter to the smell  
Than April's self within a rainy dell.

[169]

### III

Hers is a sumptuous simplicity  
Within the fair Republic of her flowers,  
Where you may see her standing hours on hours,  
Breast-deep in gold, soft-holding up a bee  
To her hushed ear; or sitting under bowers  
Of greenery,  
A butterfly a-tilt upon her knee;  
Or lounging on her hip,  
Dancing a cricket on her finger-tip.

[170]

### IV

Ay, let me breathe hot scents that tell of you;

The hoary catnip and the meadow-mint,  
On which the honour of your touch doth print  
Itself as odour. Let me drink the hue  
Of iron-weed and mist-flow'r here that hint,  
With purple and blue,  
The rapture that your presence doth imbue  
Their inmost essence with,  
Immortal though as transient as a myth.

## V

Yea, let me feed on sounds that still assure  
Me where you hide: the brooks', whose happy din  
Tells where, the deep retired woods within, [171]  
Disrobed, you bathe; the birds', whose drowsy lure  
Tells where you slumber, your warm nestling chin  
Soft on the pure,  
Pink cushion of your palm.... What better cure  
For care and memory's ache  
Than to behold you so, and watch you wake! [172]

## THE BUSH-SPARROW

### I

Ere wild-haws, looming in the glooms,  
Build bolted drifts of breezy blooms;  
And in the whistling hollow there  
The red-bud bends, as brown and bare  
As buxom Roxy's up-stripped arm;  
From some gray hickory or larch,  
Sighed o'er the sodden meads of March,  
The sad heart thrills and reddens warm  
To hear you braving the rough storm,  
Frail courier of green-gathering powers;  
Rebelling sap in trees and flowers;  
Love's minister come heralding—  
O sweet saint-voice among bleak bowers!  
O brown-red pursuivant of Spring! [173]

### II

'Moan' sob the woodland waters still  
Down bloomless ledges of the hill;  
And gray, gaunt clouds like harpies hang  
In harpy heavens, and swoop and clang  
Sharp beaks and talons of the wind:  
Black scowl the forests, and unkind  
The far fields as the near: while song  
Seems murdered and all beauty wrong.  
One weak frog only in the thaw  
Of spawnly pools wakes cold and raw,  
Expires a melancholy bass  
And stops as if bewildered: then  
Along the frowning wood again,  
Flung in the thin wind's vulture face,  
From woolly tassels of the proud,  
Red-bannered maples, long and loud,  
'The Spring is come! is here! her Grace! her Grace!' [174]

### III

'Her Grace, the Spring! her Grace! her Grace!  
Climbs, beautiful and sunny browed,  
Up, up the kindling hills and wakes  
Blue berries in the berry brakes:  
With fragrant flakes, that blow and bleach,  
Deep-powders smothered quince and peach:  
Eyes dogwoods with a thousand eyes:  
Teaches each sod how to be wise  
With twenty wildflowers to one weed,

And kisses germs that they may seed.  
In purest purple and sweet white  
Treads up the happier hills of light,  
Bloom, cloudy-borne, song in her hair  
And balm and beam of odorous air.  
Winds, her retainers; and the rains  
Her yeomen strong that sweep the plains:  
Her scarlet knights of dawn, and gold  
Of eve, her panoply unfold:  
Her herald tabarded behold!  
Awake to greet! prepare to sing!  
She comes, the darling Duchess, Spring!

[175]

[176]

## QUIET

A log-hut in the solitude,  
A clapboard roof to rest beneath!  
This side, the shadow-haunted wood;  
That side, the sunlight-haunted heath.

At daybreak Morn shall come to me  
In raiment of the white winds spun;  
Slim in her rosy hand the key  
That opes the gateway of the sun.

Her smile shall help my heart enough  
With love to labour all the day,  
And cheer the road, whose rocks are rough,  
With her smooth footprints, each a ray.

[177]

At dusk a voice shall call afar,  
A lone voice like the whippoorwill's;  
And, on her shimmering brow one star,  
Night shall descend the western hills.

She at my door till dawn shall stand,  
With gothic eyes, that, dark and deep,  
Are mirrors of a mystic land,  
Fantastic with the towns of sleep.

[178]

## MUSIC

Thou, oh, thou!  
Thou of the chorded shell and golden plectrum, thou  
Of the dark eyes and pale pacific brow!  
Music, who by the plangent waves,  
Or in the echoing night of labyrinthine caves,  
Or on God's mountains, lonely as the stars,  
Touchest reverberant bars  
Of immemorial sorrow and amaze;—  
Keeping regret and memory awake,  
And all the immortal ache  
Of love that leans upon the past's sweet days  
In retrospection!—now, oh, now,  
Interpreter and heart-physician, thou  
Who gazest on the heaven and the hell  
Of life, and singest each as well,  
Touch with thy all-mellifluous finger-tips,  
Or thy melodious lips,  
This sickness named my soul,  
Making it whole  
As is an echo of a chord,  
Or some symphonic word,  
Or sweet vibrating sigh,  
That deep, resurgent still doth rise and die  
On thy voluminous roll;

[179]

Part of the beauty and the mystery  
 That axles Earth with music; as a slave,  
 Swinging it round and round on each sonorous pole,  
 'Mid spheric harmony,  
 And choral majesty,  
 And diapasoning of wind and wave;  
 Speeding it on its far elliptic way [180]  
 'Mid vasty anthemings of night and day.—  
 O cosmic cry  
 Of two eternities, wherein we see  
 The phantasms, Death and Life,  
 At endless strife  
 Above the silence of a monster grave. [181]

## THE PURPLE VALLEYS

Far in the purple valleys of illusion  
 I see her waiting, like the soul of music,  
 With deep eyes, lovelier than cerulean pansies,  
 Shadow and fire, yet merciless as poison;  
 With red lips sweeter than Arabian storax,  
 Yet bitterer than myrrh. O tears and kisses!  
 O eyes and lips, that haunt my soul for ever!

Again Spring walks transcendent on the mountains:  
 The woods are hushed: the vales are blue with shadows:  
 Above the heights, steeped in a thousand splendours, [182]  
 Like some vast canvas of the gods, hangs burning  
 The sunset's wild sciography: and slowly  
 The moon treads heaven's proscenium,—night's stately  
 White queen of love and tragedy and madness.

Again I know forgotten dreams and longings;  
 Ideals lost; desires dead and buried  
 Beside the altar sacrifice erected  
 Within the heart's high sanctuary. Strangely  
 Again I know the horror and the rapture,  
 The utterless awe, the joy akin to anguish,  
 The terror and the worship of the spirit.

Again I feel her eyes pierce through and through me;  
 Her deep eyes, lovelier than imperial pansies,  
 Velvet and flame, through which her fierce will holds me, [183]  
 Powerless and tame, and draws me on and onward  
 To sad, unsatisfied and animal yearnings,  
 Wild, unrestrained—the brute within the human—  
 To fling me panting on her mouth and bosom.

Again I feel her lips like ice and fire,  
 Her red lips, odorous as Arabian storax,  
 Fragrance and fire, within whose kiss destruction  
 Lies serpent-like. Intoxicating languors  
 Resistlessly embrace me, soul and body;  
 And we go drifting, drifting—she is laughing— [184]  
 Outcasts of God, into the deep's abysm.

## A DREAM SHAPE

With moon-white hearts that held a gleam  
 I gathered wild-flowers in a dream,  
 And shaped a woman, whose sweet blood  
 Was odour of the wildwood bud.

From dew, the starlight arrowed through,  
 I wrought a woman's eyes of blue;  
 The lids that on her eyeballs lay,

Were rose-pale petals of the May.

Out of a rosebud's veins I drew  
The fragrant crimson beating through  
The languid lips of her, whose kiss  
Was as a poppy's drowsiness.

[185]

Out of the moonlight and the air  
I wrought the glory of her hair,  
That o'er her eyes' blue heaven lay  
Like some gold cloud o'er dawn of day.

I took the music of the breeze  
And water, whispering in the trees,  
And shaped the soul that breathed below  
A woman's blossom breasts of snow.

A shadow's shadow in the glass  
Of sleep, my spirit saw her pass:  
And thinking of it now, meseems  
We only live within our dreams.

For in that time she was to me  
More real than our reality;  
More real than Earth, more real than I—  
The unreal things that pass and die.

[186]

## THE OLD BARN

Low, swallow-swept and gray,  
Between the orchard and the spring,  
All its wide windows overflowing hay,  
And crannied doors a-swing,  
The old barn stands to-day.

Deep in its hay the Leghorn hides  
A round white nest; and, humming soft  
On roof and rafter, or its log-rude sides,  
Black in the sun-shot loft,  
The building hornet glides.

[187]

Along its corn-crib, cautiously  
As thieving fingers, skulks the rat;  
Or in warped stalls of fragrant timothy,  
Gnaws at some loosened slat,  
Or passes shadowy.

A dream of drouth made audible  
Before its door, hot, smooth, and shrill  
All day the locust sings... What other spell  
Shall hold it, lazier still  
Than the long day's, now tell:—

Dusk and the cricket and the strain  
Of tree-toad and of frog; and stars  
That burn above the rich west's ribbéd stain;  
And dropping pasture bars,  
And cow-bells up the lane.

[188]

Night and the moon and katydid,  
And leaf-lisp of the wind-touched boughs;  
And mazy shadows that the fireflies thrid;  
And sweet breath of the cows,  
And the lone owl here hid.

[189]

## THE WOOD WITCH

There is a woodland witch who lies  
With bloom-bright limbs and beam-bright eyes,  
Among the water-flags that rank  
The slow brook's heron-haunted bank.  
The dragon-flies, brass-bright and blue,  
Are signs she works her sorcery through;  
Weird, wizard characters she weaves  
Her spells by under forest leaves,—  
These wait her word, like imps, upon  
The gray flag-pods; their wings, of lawn  
And gauze; their bodies, gleaming green.  
While o'er the wet sand,—left between  
The running water and the still,—  
In pansy hues and daffodil,  
The fancies that she doth devise  
Take on the forms of butterflies,  
Rich-coloured.—And 'tis she you hear,  
Whose sleepy rune, hummed in the ear  
Of silence, bees and beetles purr,  
And the dry-droning locusts whirr;  
Till, where the wood is very lone,  
Vague monotone meets monotone,  
And slumber is begot and born,  
A faery child beneath the thorn.  
There is no mortal who may scorn  
The witchery she spreads around  
Her din demesne, wherein is bound  
The beauty of abandoned time,  
As some sweet thought 'twixt rhyme and rhyme.  
And through her spells you shall behold  
The blue turn gray, the gray turn gold  
Of hollow heaven; and the brown  
Of twilight vistas twinkled down  
With fireflies; and in the gloom  
Feel the cool vowels of perfume  
Slow-syllabled of weed and bloom.  
But, in the night, at languid rest,—  
When like a spirit's naked breast  
The moon slips from a silver mist,—  
With star-bound brow, and star-wreathed wrist,  
If you should see her rise and wave  
You welcome—ah! what thing could save  
You then? for evermore her slave!

[190]

[191]

[192]

## AT SUNSET

Into the sunset's turquoise marge  
The moon dips, like a pearly barge  
Enchantment sails through magic seas  
To fairyland Hesperides,  
Over the hills and away.

Into the fields, in ghost-gray gown,  
The young-eyed Dusk comes slowly down;  
Her apron filled with stars she stands,  
And one or two slip from her hands  
Over the hills and away.

Above the wood's black caldron bends  
The witch-faced Night and, muttering, blends  
The dew and heat, whose bubbles make  
The mist and musk that haunt the brake  
Over the hills and away.

[193]

Oh, come with me, and let us go  
Beyond the sunset lying low,  
Beyond the twilight and the night  
Into Love's kingdom of long light  
Over the hills and away.

[194]

## MAY

The golden discs of the rattlesnake-weed,  
That spangle the woods and dance—  
No gleam of gold that the twilights hold  
Is strong as their necromance:  
For, under the oaks where the woodpaths lead,  
The golden discs of the rattlesnake-weed  
Are the May's own utterance.

The azure stars of the bluet bloom,  
That sprinkle the woodland's trance—  
No blink of blue that a cloud lets through  
Is sweet as their countenance:  
For, over the knolls that the woods perfume,  
The azure stars of the bluet bloom  
Are the light of the May's own glance.

[195]

With her wondering words and her looks she comes,  
In a sunbeam of a gown;  
She needs but think and the blossoms wink,  
But look, and they shower down.  
By orchard ways, where the wild bee hums,  
With her wondering words and her looks she comes  
Like a little maid to town.

[196]

## RAIN

### I

Around, the stillness deepened; then the grain  
Went wild with wind; and every briery lane  
Was swept with dust; and then, tempestuous black,  
Hillward the tempest heaved a monster back,  
That on the thunder leaned as on a cane;  
And on huge shoulders bore a cloudy pack,  
That gullied gold from many a lightning-crack:  
One great drop splashed and wrinkled down the pane,  
And then field, hill, and wood were lost in rain.

[197]

### II

At last, through clouds,—as from a cavern hewn  
Into night's heart,—the sun burst, angry roon;  
And every cedar, with its weight of wet,  
Against the sunset's fiery splendour set,  
Frightened to beauty, seemed with rubies strewn:  
Then in drenched gardens, like sweet phantoms met,  
Dim odours rose of pink and mignonette;  
And in the East a confidence, that soon  
Grew to the calm assurance of the moon.

[198]

## TO FALL

Sad-hearted spirit of the solitudes,  
Who comest through the ruin-wedded woods!  
Gray-gowned with fog, gold-girdled with the gloom  
Of tawny twilights; burdened with perfume  
Of rain-wet uplands, chilly with the mist;  
And all the beauty of the fire-kissed  
Cold forests crimsoning thy indolent way,  
Odorous of death and drowsy with decay.



I think of thee as seated 'mid the showers  
Of languid leaves that cover up the flowers,—  
The little flower-sisterhoods, whom June  
Once gave wild sweetness to, as to a tune  
A singer gives her soul's wild melody,—  
Watching the squirrel store his granary.  
Or, 'mid old orchards I have pictured thee:  
Thy hair's profusion blown about thy back;  
One lovely shoulder bathed with gypsy black;  
Upon thy palm one nestling cheek, and sweet  
The rosy russets tumbled at thy feet.  
Was it a voice lamenting for the flowers?  
A heart-sick bird that sang of happier hours?  
A cricket dirging days that soon must die?  
Or did the ghost of Summer wander by?

[199]

[200]

## SUNSET IN AUTUMN

Blood-coloured oaks, that stand against a sky of gold and brass;  
Gaunt slopes, on which the bleak leaves glow of brier and sassafras,  
And broom-sedge strips of smoky-pink and pearl-gray clumps of grass  
In which, beneath the ragged sky, the rain pools gleam like glass.

From West to East, from wood to wood, along the forest-side,  
The winds,—the sowers of the Lord,—with thunderous footsteps stride;  
Their stormy hands rain acorns down; and mad leaves, wildly dyed,  
Like tatters of their rushing cloaks, stream round them far and wide.

[201]

The frail leaf-cricket in the weeds rings a faint fairy bell;  
And like a torch of phantom ray the milkweed's windy shell  
Glimmers; while, wrapped in withered dreams, the wet autumnal smell  
Of loam and leaf, like some sad ghost, steals over field and dell.

The oaks, against a copper sky—o'er which, like some black lake  
Of Dis, bronze clouds, like surges fringed with sullen fire, break—  
Loom sombre as Doom's citadel above the vales that make  
A pathway to a land of mist the moon's pale feet shall take.

[202]

Now, dyed with burning carbuncle, a limbo-litten pane,  
Within its walls of storm, the West opens to hill and plain,  
On which the wild-geese ink themselves, a far triangled train,  
And then the shuttering clouds close down—and night is here again.

[203]

## THE HILLS

There is no joy of earth that thrills  
My bosom like the far-off hills!  
Th' unchanging hills, that, shadowy,  
Beckon our mutability  
To follow and to gaze upon  
Foundations of the dusk and dawn.  
Meseems the very heavens are massed  
Upon their shoulders, vague and vast  
With all the skyey burden of  
The winds and clouds and stars above.  
Lo, how they sit before us, seeing  
The laws that give all Beauty being!  
Behold! to them, when dawn is near,  
The nomads of the air appear,  
Unfolding crimson camps of day  
In brilliant bands; then march away;  
And under burning battlements  
Of twilight plant their tinted tents.  
The truth of olden myths, that brood  
By haunted stream and haunted wood,  
They see; and feel the happiness

[204]

Of old at which we only guess:  
The dreams, the ancients loved and knew,  
Still as their rocks and trees are true:  
Not otherwise than presences  
The tempest and the calm to these:  
One, shouting on them all the night,  
Black-limbed and veined with lambent light;  
The other with the ministry  
Of all soft things that company  
With music—an embodied form,  
Giving to solitude the charm  
Of leaves and waters and the peace  
Of bird-begotten melodies—  
And who at night doth still confer  
With the mild moon, that telleth her  
Pale tale of lonely love, until  
Wan images of passion fill  
The heights with shapes that glimmer by  
Clad on with sleep and memory.

[205]

[206]

## CONTENT

When I behold how some pursue  
Fame, that is Care's embodiment  
Or fortune, whose false face looks true,—  
An humble home with sweet content  
Is all I ask for me and you.

An humble home, where pigeons coo,  
Whose path leads under breezy lines  
Of frosty-berried cedars to  
A gate, one mass of trumpet-vines,  
Is all I ask for me and you.

[207]

A garden, which all summer through,  
The roses old make redolent,  
And morning-glories, gay of hue,  
And tansy, with its homely scent,  
Is all I ask for me and you.

An orchard, that the pippins strew,  
From whose bruised gold the juices spring;  
A vineyard, where the grapes hang blue,  
Wine-big and ripe for vintaging,  
Is all I ask for me and you.

A lane that leads to some far view  
Of forest or of fallow-land,  
Bloomed o'er with rose and meadow-rue,  
Each with a bee in its hot hand,  
Is all I ask for me and you.

[208]

At morn, a pathway deep with dew,  
And birds to vary time and tune;  
At eve, a sunset avenue,  
And whippoorwills that haunt the moon,  
Is all I ask for me and you.

Dear heart, with wants so small and few,  
And faith, that's better far than gold,  
A lowly friend, a child or two,  
To care for us when we are old,  
Is all I ask for me and you.

[209]

## HEART OF MY HEART

Here where the season turns the land to gold,  
Among the fields our feet have known of old,—  
When we were children who would laugh and run,  
Glad little playmates of the wind and sun,—  
Before came toil and care and years went ill,  
And one forgot and one remembered still;  
Heart of my heart, among the old fields here,  
Give me your hands and let me draw you near,  
Heart of my heart.

Stars are not truer than your soul is true—  
What need I more of heaven than than you?  
Flowers are not sweeter than your face is sweet—  
What need I more to make my world complete? [210]  
O woman nature, love that still endures,  
What strength has ours that is not born of yours?  
Heart of my heart, to you, whatever come,  
To you the lead, whose love hath led me home.  
Heart of my heart. [211]

## OCTOBER

Long hosts of sunlight, and the bright wind blows  
A tourney-trumpet on the listed hill;  
Past is the splendour of the royal rose  
And duchess daffodil.

Crowned queen of beauty, in the garden's space,  
Strong daughter of a bitter race and bold,  
A ragged beggar with a lovely face,  
Reigns the sad marigold.

And I have sought June's butterfly for days,  
To find it—like a coreopsis bloom— [212]  
Amber and seal, rain-murdered 'neath the blaze  
Of this sunflower's plume.

Here drones the bee; and there sky-daring wings  
Voyage blue gulfs of heaven; the last song  
The red-bird flings me as adieu, still rings  
Upon yon pear-tree's prong.

No angry sunset brims with rubier red  
The bowl of heaven than the days, indeed,  
Pour in each blossom of this salvia-bed,  
Where each leaf seems to bleed.

And where the wood-gnats dance, like some slight mist,  
Above the efforts of the weedy stream,  
The girl, October, tired of the tryst,  
Dreams a diviner dream. [213]

One foot just dipping the caressing wave,  
One knee at languid angle; locks that drown  
Hands nut-stained; hazel-eyed, she lies, and grave,  
Watching the leaves drift down. [214]

## MYTH AND ROMANCE

### I

When I go forth to greet the glad-faced Spring,  
Just at the time of opening apple-buds,  
When brooks are laughing, winds are whispering,  
On babbling hillsides or in warbling woods,  
There is an unseen presence that eludes:—

Perhaps a dryad, in whose tresses cling  
The loamy odours of old solitudes,  
Who, from her beechen doorway, calls, and leads  
My soul to follow; now with dimpling words  
Of leaves; and now with syllables of birds;  
While here and there—is it her limbs that swing?  
Or restless sunlight on the moss and weeds?

[215]

## II

Or, haply, 'tis a Naiad now who slips,  
Like some white lily, from her fountain's glass,  
While from her dripping hair and breasts and hips  
The moisture rains cool music on the grass.  
Her have I heard and followed, yet, alas!  
Have seen no more than the wet ray that dips  
The shivered waters, wrinkling where I pass;  
But in the liquid light where she doth hide,  
I have beheld the azure of her gaze  
Smiling; and, where the orbing ripple plays,  
Among her minnows I have heard her lips,  
Bubbling, make merry by the waterside.

[216]

## III

Or now it is an Oread—whose eyes  
Are constellated dusk—who stands confessed,  
As naked as a flow'r; her heart's surprise,  
Like morning's rose, mantling her brow and breast:  
She, shrinking from my presence, all distressed  
Stands for a startled moment ere she flies,  
Her deep hair blowing, up the mountain crest,  
Wild as a mist that trails along the dawn.  
And is't her footfalls lure me? or the sound  
Of airs that stir the crisp leaf on the ground?  
And is't her body glimmers on yon rise?  
Or dogwood blossoms snowing on the lawn?

[217]

## IV

Now 'tis a satyr piping serenades  
On a slim reed. Now Pan and Faun advance  
Beneath green-hollowed roofs of forest glades,  
Their feet gone mad with music: now, perchance,  
Sylvanus sleeping, on whose leafy trance  
The nymphs stand gazing in dim ambuscades  
Of sun-embodied perfume.—Myth, Romance,  
Where'er I turn, reach out bewildering arms,  
Compelling me to follow. Day and night  
I hear their voices and behold the light  
Of their divinity that still evades,  
And still allures me in a thousand forms.

[218]

# GENIUS LOCI

## I

What wood-god, on this water's mossy curb,  
Lost in reflections of earth's loveliness,  
Did I, just now, unconsciously disturb?  
I who haphazard, wandering at a guess,  
Came on this spot, wherein with gold and flame  
Of buds and blooms the season writes its name.—  
Ah me! could I have seen him ere alarm  
Of my approach aroused him from his calm!  
As he, part Hamadryad and, mayhap,  
Part Faun, lay here; who left the shadow warm  
As a wood-rose, and filled the air with balm  
Of his wild breath as with ethereal sap.

[219]

## II

Does not the moss retain some slight impress,  
Green-dented down, of where he lay or trod?  
Do not the flow'rs, so reticent, confess  
With conscious looks the contact of a god?  
Does not the very water garrulously  
Boast the indulgence of a deity?  
And, hark! in burly beech and sycamore  
How all the birds proclaim it! and the leaves  
Rejoice with clappings of their myriad hands!  
And shall not I believe, too, and adore,  
With such wide proof?—Yea, though my soul perceives  
No evident presence, still it understands.

### III

And for a while it moves me to lie down  
Here on the spot his god-head sanctified: [220]  
Mayhap some dream he dreamed may linger, brown  
And young as joy, around the forest side;  
Some dream within whose heart lives no disdain  
For such as I whose love is sweet and sane;  
That may repeat, so none but I may hear—  
As one might tell a pearl-strung rosary—  
Some epic that the leaves have learned to croon,  
Some lyric whispered in the wild-flow'r's ear,  
Whose murmurous lines are sung by bird and bee,  
And all the insects of the night and noon.

### IV

For, all around me, upon field and hill,  
Enchantment lies as of mysterious flutes;  
As if the music of a god's goodwill  
Had taken on material attributes [221]  
In blooms, like chords; and in the water-gleam,  
That runs its silvery scales on every stream;  
In sunbeam bars, up which the butterfly,  
A golden note, vibrates then flutters on—  
Inaudible tunes, blown on the pipes of Pan,  
That have assumed a visible entity,  
And drugged the air with beauty so, a Faun,  
Behold, I seem, and am no more a man. [222]

## DISCOVERY

What is it now that I shall seek  
Where woods dip downward, in the hills;  
A mossy nook, a ferny creek,  
And May among the daffodils.

Or in the valley's vistaed glow,  
Past rocks of terraced trumpet-vines,  
Shall I behold her coming slow,  
Sweet May, among the columbines?

With red-bud cheeks and bluet eyes,  
Big eyes, the homes of happiness,  
To meet me with the old surprise,  
Her hoiden hair all bonnetless. [223]

Who waits for me, where, note for note,  
The birds make glad the forest trees?  
A dogwood blossom at her throat,  
My May among th' anemones.

As sweetheart breezes kiss the blooms,  
And dewdrops drink the moonlight's gleam,  
My soul shall kiss her lips' perfumes,  
And drink the magic of her dreams. [224]

## THE OLD SPRING

### I

Under rocks whereon the rose  
Like a strip of morning glows;  
Where the azure-throated newt  
Drowns on the twisted root;  
And the brown bees, humming homeward,  
Stop to suck the honey-dew;  
Fern and leaf-hid, gleaming gloamward,  
Drips the wildwood spring I knew,  
Drips the spring my boyhood knew.

### II

Myrrh and music everywhere  
Haunt its cascades;—like the hair  
That a naiad tosses cool,  
Swimming strangely beautiful,  
With white fragrance for her bosom,  
For her mouth a breath of song:—  
Under leaf and branch and blossom  
Flows the woodland spring along,  
Sparkling, singing flows along.

[225]

### III

Still the wet wan mornings touch  
Its gray rocks, perhaps; and such  
Slender stars as dusk may have  
Pierce the rose that roofs its wave;  
Still the thrush may call at noontide  
And the whippoorwill at night;  
Nevermore, by sun or moontide,  
Shall I see it gliding white,  
Falling, flowing, wild and white.

[226]

## THE FOREST SPRING

Push back the brambles, berry-blue:  
The hollowed spring is full in view:  
Deep-tangled with luxuriant fern  
Its rock-embedded, crystal urn.

Not for the loneliness that keeps  
The coigne wherein its silence sleeps;  
Not for wild butterflies that sway  
Their pansy pinions all the day  
Above its mirror; nor the bee,  
Nor dragon-fly, that passing see  
Themselves reflected in its spar;  
Not for the one white liquid star,  
That twinkles in its firmament;  
Nor moon-shot clouds, so slowly sent  
Athwart it when the kindly night  
Beads all its grasses with the light  
Small jewels of the dimpled dew;  
Not for the day's inverted blue  
Nor the quaint, dimly coloured stones  
That dance within it where it moans:  
Not for all these I love to sit  
In silence and to gaze in it.  
But, know, a nymph with merry eyes  
Looks at me from its laughing skies;  
A graceful glimmering nymph who plays

[227]

All the long fragrant summer days  
With instant sights of bees and birds,  
And speaks with them in water words,  
And for whose nakedness the air  
Weaves moony mists, and on whose hair,  
Unfilleted, the night will set  
That lone star as a coronet.

[228]

## TRANSMUTATION

To me all beauty that I see  
Is melody made visible:  
An earth-translated state, may be,  
Of music heard in Heaven or Hell.

Out of some love-impassioned strain  
Of saints, the rose evolved its bloom;  
And, dreaming of it here again,  
Perhaps re-lives it as perfume.

Out of some chant that demons sing  
Of hate and pain, the sunset grew;  
And, haply, still remembering,  
Re-lives it here as some wild hue.

[229]

## DEAD CITIES

Out of it all but this remains:—  
I was with one who crossed wide chains  
Of the Cordilleras, whose peaks  
Lock in the wilds of Yucatan,  
Chiapas and Honduras. Weeks—  
And then a city that no man  
Had ever seen; so dim and old,  
No chronicle has ever told  
The history of men who piled  
Its temples and huge teocallis  
Among mimosa-blooming valleys;  
Or how its altars were defiled  
With human blood; whose idols there  
With eyes of stone still stand and stare.

[230]

So old the moon can only know  
How old, since ancient forests grow  
On mighty wall and pyramid.  
Huge ceibas, whose trunks were scarred  
With ages, and dense yuccas, hid  
Fanes 'mid the cacti, scarlet-starred.  
I looked upon its paven ways,  
And saw it in its kingliest days;  
When from the lordly palace one,  
A victim, walked with prince and priest,  
Who turned brown faces toward the east  
In worship of the rising sun:  
At night ten hundred temples' spires  
On gold burnt everlasting fires.

Uxmal? Palenque? or Copan?  
I know not. Only how no man  
Had ever seen; and still my soul  
Believes it vaster than the three.  
Volcanic rock walled in the whole,  
Lost in the woods as in some sea.  
*I only* read its hieroglyphs,  
Perused its monster monoliths  
Of death, gigantic heads; and read

[231]

The pictured codex of its fate,  
The perished Toltec; while in hate  
Mad monkeys cursed me, as if dead  
Priests of its past had taken form  
To guard its ruined shrines from harm.

[232]

## FROST

Magician he, who, autumn nights,  
Down from the starry heavens whirls;  
A harlequin in spangled tights,  
Whose wand's touch carpets earth with pearls.

Through him each pane presents a scene,  
A Lilliputian landscape, where  
The world is white instead of green,  
And trees and houses hang in air.

Where Elfin gambol and delight,  
And haunt the jewelled bells of flowers;  
Where upside-down we see the night  
With many moons and starry showers.

[233]

And surely in his wand or hand  
Is Midas magic, for, behold,  
Some morn we wake and find the land,  
Both field and forest, turned to gold.

[234]

## A NIGHT IN JUNE

### I

White as a lily moulded of Earth's milk  
That eve the moon bloomed in a hyacinth sky;  
Soft in the gleaming glens the wind went by,  
Faint as a phantom clothed in unseen silk:  
Bright as a naiad's leap, from shine to shade  
The runnel twinkled through the shaken brier;  
Above the hills one long cloud, pulsed with fire,  
Flashed like a great enchantment-welded blade.  
And when the western sky seemed some weird land,  
And night a witching spell at whose command  
One sloping star fell green from heav'n; and deep  
The warm rose opened for the moth to sleep;  
Then she, consenting, laid her hands in his,  
And lifted up her lips for their first kiss.

[235]

### II

There where they part, the porch's steps are strewn  
With wind-blown petals of the purple vine;  
Athwart the porch the shadow of a pine  
Cleaves the white moonlight; and like some calm rune  
Heaven says to Earth, shines the majestic moon;  
And now a meteor draws a lilac line  
Across the welkin, as if God would sign  
The perfect poem of this night of June.  
The wood-wind stirs the flowering chestnut-tree,  
Whose curving blossoms strew the glimmering grass  
Like crescents that wind-wrinkled waters glass;  
And, like a moonstone in a frill of flame,  
The dewdrop trembles on the peony,  
As in a lover's heart his sweetheart's name.

[236]

[237]



## THE DREAMER

Even as a child he loved to thrid the bowers,  
And mark the loafing sunlight's lazy laugh;  
Or, on each season, spell the epitaph  
Of its dead months repeated in their flowers;  
Or list the music of the strolling showers,  
Whose vagabond notes strummed through a twinkling staff,  
Or read the day's delivered monograph  
Through all the chapters of its dædal hours.  
Still with the same child-faith and child regard  
He looks on Nature, hearing at her heart,  
The Beautiful beat out the time and place,  
Through which no lesson of this life is hard,  
No struggle vain of science or of art,  
That dies with failure written on its face.

[238]

## WINTER

The flute, whence Summer's dreamy fingertips  
Drew music,—ripening the pinched kernels in  
The burly chestnut and the chinquapin,  
Red-rounding-out the oval haws and hips,—  
Now Winter crushes to his stormy lips,  
And surly songs whistle around his chin;  
Now the wild days and wilder nights begin  
When, at the eaves, the crooked icicle drips.  
Thy songs, O Summer, are not lost so soon!  
Still dwells a memory in thy hollow flute,  
Which unto Winter's masculine airs doth give  
Thy own creative qualities of tune,  
Through which we see each bough bend white with fruit,  
Each bush with bloom, in snow commemorative.

[239]

[240]

## MID-WINTER

All day the clouds hung ashen with the cold;  
And through the snow the muffled waters fell;  
The day seemed drowned in grief too deep to tell,  
Like some old hermit whose last bead is told.  
At eve the wind woke, and the snow clouds rolled  
Aside to leave the fierce sky visible;  
Harsh as an iron landscape of wan hell  
The dark hills hung framed in with gloomy gold.  
And then, towards night, the wind seemed some one at  
My window wailing: now a little child  
Crying outside my door; and now the long  
Howl of some starved beast down the flue. I sat  
And knew 'twas Winter with his madman song  
Of miseries on which he stared and smiled.

[241]

[242]

## SPRING

First came the rain, loud, with sonorous lips;  
A pursuivant who heralded a prince:  
And dawn put on her livery of tints,  
And dusk bound gold about her hair and hips:  
And, all in silver mail, the sunlight came,  
A knight, who bade the winter let him pass;  
And freed imprisoned beauty, naked as

The Court of Love, in all her wildflower shame.  
And so she came, in breeze-borne loveliness,  
    Across the hills; and heav'n bent down to bless:  
    Above her head the birds were as a lyre;  
And at her feet, like some strong worshipper,  
    The shouting water pæan'd praise of her  
    Who, with blue eyes, set the wild world on fire.

[243]

## TRANSFORMATION

It is the time when, by the forest falls,  
    The touch-me-nots hang fairy folly-caps;  
    When ferns and flowers fill the lichen'd laps  
Of rocks with colour, rich as orient shawls:  
And in my heart I hear a voice that calls  
    Me woodward, where the hamadryad wraps  
    Her limbs in bark, and, bubbling in the saps,  
Sings the sweet Greek of Pan's old madrigals:  
There is a gleam that lures me up the stream—  
    A Naiad swimming with wet limbs of light?  
    Perfume that leads me on from dream to dream—  
An Oread's footprints fragrant with her flight?  
    And, lo! meseems I am a Faun again,  
    Part of the myths that I pursue in vain.

[244]

[245]

## RESPONSE

There is a music of immaculate love,  
    That beats within the virgin veins of Spring,—  
    And trillium blossoms, like the stars that cling  
To fairies' wands; and, strung on sprays above,  
White-hearts and mandrake blooms—that look enough  
    Like the elves' washing—white with laundering  
    Of May-moon dews; and all pale-opening  
Wild-flowers of the woods are born thereof.  
There is no sod Spring's white foot brushes but  
    Must feel the music that vibrates within,  
    And thrill to the communicated touch  
Responsive harmonies, that must unshut  
    The heart of Beauty for Song's concrete kin,  
    Emotions—that are flowers—born of such.

[246]

[247]

## THE SWASHBUCKLER

Squat-nosed and broad, of big and pompous port;  
    A tavern visage, apoplexy haunts,  
    All pimple-puffed: the Falstaff-like resort  
Of fat debauchery, whose veined cheek flaunts  
A flabby purple: rusty-spurred he stands  
    In rakehell boots and belt, and hanger that  
Claps when, with greasy gauntlets on his hands,  
    He swaggers past in cloak and slouch-plumed hat.  
Aggression marches armies in his words;  
    And in his oaths great deeds ride cap-à-pie;  
His looks, his gestures breathe the breath of swords;  
    And in his carriage camp all wars to be:—  
    With him of battles there shall be no lack  
While buxom wenches are and stoops of sack.

[248]

[249]

## SIMULACRA

Dark in the west the sunset's sombre wrack  
Unrolled vast walls the rams of war had split,  
Along whose battlements the battle lit  
Tempestuous beacons; and, with gates hurled back,  
A mighty city, red with ruin and sack,  
Through burning breaches, crumbling bit by bit,  
Showed where the God of Slaughter seemed to sit  
With Conflagration glaring at each crack.—  
Who knows? perhaps as sleep unto us makes [250]  
Our dreams as real as our waking seems  
With recollections time can not destroy,  
So in the mind of Nature now awakes,  
Haply, some wilder memory, and she dreams  
The stormy story of the fall of Troy. [251]

## CAVERNS

### WRITTEN OF COLOSSAL CAVE, KENTUCKY

Aisles and abysses; leagues no man explores,  
Of rock that labyrinths and night that drips;  
Where everlasting silence broods, with lips  
Of adamant, o'er earthquake-built floors.  
Where forms, such as the Demon-World adores,  
Laborious water carves; whence echo slips  
Wild-tongued o'er pools where petrification strips  
Her breasts of crystal from which crystal pours.—  
Here where primordial fear, the Gorgon, sits  
Staring all life to stone in ghastly mirth, [252]  
I seem to tread, with awe no tongue can tell,—  
Beneath vast domes, by torrent-tortured pits,  
'Mid wrecks terrific of the ruined Earth,—  
An ancient causeway of forgotten Hell. [253]

## THE BLUE BIRD

From morn till noon upon the window-pane  
The tempest tapped with rainy finger-nails,  
And all the afternoon the blustering gales  
Beat at the door with furious feet of rain.  
The rose, near which the lily bloom lay slain,  
Like some red wound dripped by the garden rails,  
On which the sullen slug left slimy trails—  
Meseemed the sun would never shine again.  
Then in the drench, long, loud and full of cheer,—  
A skyey herald tabarded in blue,—  
A bluebird bugled ... and at once a bow  
Was bent in heaven, and I seemed to hear  
God's sapphire spaces crystallising through  
The strata'd clouds in azure tremolo. [254]

## QUATRAINS

### POETRY

Who hath beheld the goddess face to face,

Blind with her beauty, all his days shall go  
Climbing lone mountains towards her temple's place,  
Weighed with song's sweet, inexorable woe.

### **THE UNIMAGINATIVE**

Each form of beauty's but the new disguise  
Of thoughts more beautiful than forms can be;  
Sceptics, who search with unanointed eyes,  
Never the Earth's wild fairy-dance shall see.

[255]

### **MUSIC**

God-born before the Sons of God, she hurled,  
With awful symphonies of flood and fire,  
God's name on rocking Chaos—world by world  
Flamed as the universe rolled from her lyre.

### **THE THREE ELEMENTS**

They come as couriers of Heaven: their feet  
Sonorous-sandalled with majestic awe;  
In raiment of swift foam and wind and heat,  
Blowing the trumpets of God's wrath and law.

### **ROME**

Above the circus of the world she sat,  
Beautiful and base, a harlot crowned with pride:  
Fierce nations, upon whom she sneered and spat,  
Shrieked at her feet and for her pastime died.

[256]

### **ON READING THE LIFE OF HAROUN ER RESHID**

Down all the lanternd Bagdad of our youth  
He steals, with golden justice for the poor:  
Within his palace—you shall know the truth!—  
A blood-smeared headsman hides behind each door.

### **MNEMOSYNE**

In classic beauty, cold, immaculate,  
A voiceful sculpture, stern and still she stands,  
Upon her brow deep-chiselled love and hate,  
That sorrow o'er dead roses in her hands.

### **BEAUTY**

High as a star, yet lowly as a flower,  
Unknown she takes her unassuming place  
At Earth's proud masquerade—the appointed hour  
Strikes, and, behold! the marvel of her face.

[257]

### **THE STARS**

These—the bright symbols of man's hope and fame,  
In which he reads his blessing or his curse—  
Are syllables with which God speaks his name  
In the vast utterance of the universe.

### **ECHO**

Dweller in hollow places, hills and rocks,  
Daughter of Silence and old Solitude,  
Tip-toe she stands within her cave or wood,  
Her only life the noises that she mocks.

[258]

### **ADVENTURERS**

Seemingly over the hill-tops,  
Possibly under the hills,  
A tireless wing that never drops,  
And a song that never stills.

Epics heard on the stars' lips?  
Lyrics read in the dew?—  
To sing the song at our finger-tips,  
And live the world anew!

Cavaliers of the Cortés kind,  
Bold and stern and strong,—  
And, oh, for a fine and muscular mind  
To sing a new-world's song!

[259]

Sailing seas of the silver morn,  
Winds of the balm and spice,  
To put the old-world art to scorn  
At the price of any price!

Danger, death, but the hope high!  
God's, if the purpose fail!  
Into the deeds of a vaster sky  
Sailing a dauntless sail.

[260]

## EPILOGUE

### I

O Life! O Death! O God!  
Have we not striven?  
Have we not known Thee, God  
As Thy stars know Heaven?  
Have we not held Thee true,  
True as thy deepest,  
Sweet and immaculate blue  
Heaven that feels Thy dew!  
Have we not *known* Thee true,  
O God who keepest.

### II

O God, our Father, God!—  
Who gav'st us fire,  
To soar beyond the sod,  
To rise, aspire—  
What though we strive and strive,  
And all our soul says 'live'?  
The empty scorn of men  
Will sneer it down again.  
And, O sun-centred high,  
Who, too, art Poet,  
Beneath Thy tender sky  
Each day new Keatses die,  
Calling all life a lie;  
Can this be so—and why?—  
And canst Thou know it?

[261]

### III

We know Thee beautiful,  
We know Thee bitter!  
Help Thou!—Men's eyes are dull,  
O God most beautiful!  
Make thou their souls less full  
Of things mere glitter.  
Dost Thou not see our tears?  
Dost Thou not hear the years  
Treading our hearts to shards,  
O Lord of all the Lords?—  
Arouse Thee, God of Hosts,

[262]

There 'mid Thy glorious ghosts,  
So high and holy!  
Have mercy on our tears!  
Have mercy on our years!  
Our strivings and our fears,  
O Lord of lordly peers,  
On us, so lowly!

#### IV

On us, so fondly fain  
To tell what mother-pain  
Of Nature makes the rain.  
On us, so glad to show  
The sorrow of her snow,  
And all her winds that blow.

[263]

Us, who interpret right  
Her mystic rose of light,  
Her moony rune of night.

Us, who have utterance for  
Each warm, flame-hearted star  
That stammers from afar.

Who hear the tears and sighs  
Of every bud that dies  
While heav'n's dew on it lies.

Who see the power that dowers  
The wildwood bosks and bowers  
With musk of sap and flowers.

[264]

Who see what no man sees  
In water, earth, and breeze,  
And in the hearts of trees.

Turn not away Thy light,  
O God!—Our strength is slight!  
Help us who breast the height!  
Have mercy, Infinite!  
Have mercy!

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