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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONGS OF WOMANHOOD \*\*\*

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# Songs of Womanhood

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

*Uniform with this Volume.*  
REALMS OF UNKNOWN KINGS.

**The Athenæum.**—*In this volume*

*the critic recognises with sudden joy  
the work of a true poet.'*

**The Saturday Review.**—*'It is a  
book in which deep feeling speaks ...  
and it has something of that  
essentially poetical thought, the  
thought that sees, which lies deeper  
than feeling.'*

---

LONDON: GRANT RICHARDS.

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# **Songs of Womanhood**

**BY**

**LAURENCE ALMA TADEMA**

**GRANT RICHARDS  
48 LEICESTER SQUARE  
LONDON  
1903**

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A great number of the following verses are already known to readers of *The Herb o' Grace*, and of the little reprint, *Songs of Childhood*. As these pamphlets, however, did not reach the public, it has been thought advisable to re-issue the verses in book-form, together with three or four more collected from various reviews, and a number that are here printed for the first time.

L.A.T.

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[xi]

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## CHILDHOOD

---

[3]

## King Baby

King Baby on his throne  
Sits reigning O, sits reigning O!  
King Baby on his throne  
Sits reigning all alone.

His throne is Mother's knee,  
So tender O, so tender O!  
His throne is Mother's knee,  
Where none may sit but he.

His crown it is of gold,  
So curly O, so curly O!  
His crown it is of gold,  
In shining tendrils rolled.

His kingdom is my heart,  
So loyal O, so loyal O!  
His kingdom is my heart,  
His own in every part.

Divine are all his laws,  
So simple O, so simple O!  
Divine are all his laws,  
With Love for end and cause.

King Baby on his throne  
Sits reigning O, sits reigning O!  
King Baby on his throne  
Sits reigning all alone.

[4]

---

[5]

## A Blessing for the Blessed

ToC

When the sun has left the hill-top,  
And the daisy-fringe is furled,  
When the birds from wood and meadow  
In their hidden nests are curled,  
Then I think of all the babies  
That are sleeping in the world....

There are babies in the high lands  
And babies in the low,  
There are pale ones wrapped in furry skins  
On the margin of the snow,  
And brown ones naked in the isles,  
Where all the spices grow.

And some are in the palace  
On a white and downy bed,  
And some are in the garret  
With a clout beneath their head,  
And some are on the cold hard earth,  
Whose mothers have no bread.

[6]

O little men and women,  
Dear flowers yet unblown!  
O little kings and beggars  
Of the pageant yet unshown!  
Sleep soft and dream pale dreams now,  
To-morrow is your own....

Though some shall walk in darkness,

And others in the light,  
Though some shall smile and others weep  
In the silence of the night,  
When Life has touched with many hues  
Your souls now clear and white:

God save you, little children!  
And make your eyes to see  
His finger pointing in the dark  
Whatever you may be,  
Till one and all, through Life and Death,  
Pass to Eternity....

[7]

---

[8]

## To Raoul Bouchard

ToC

Dear were your kisses, baby boy,  
Your weight upon my arm:  
Gay were your tuneful cries of joy  
As I danced you round the farm:  
And sweet your softness when we lay  
Laughing and cooing in the hay.

The summer sun will shine again,  
Old arms will mow and reap;  
There'll be new flowers on the plain,  
New lambs among the sheep;  
But never in this world of men  
Shall we two be as we were then.

Your feet have touched the ground, my bird,  
And now your wondering eyes  
Will gaze no more as if they heard  
A seraph in the skies:  
A little boy, with leap and shout  
You'll wildly chase your dreams about.

[9]

But when you are a man, soft thing,  
And life has made you stern,  
May we who watched you in your spring  
Still feel our babe return  
In hallowed moments, such as shine  
When thought or deed makes man divine.

---

[10]

## To-day and To-morrow

ToC

Little hands—what will you grasp  
When you leave this nest, O?  
Little arms—what will you clasp  
Against that tender breast, O?  
Cling to mother's finger, babe,  
Throw sweet arms about me!  
Here no noons may linger, babe,  
Soon you'll love without me.

Little toes—where will you turn,  
East or south or west, O?  
Little feet—what sands that burn  
Will you soon have pressed, O?  
Lie on mother's knee, my own,  
Dance your heels about me!  
Apples leave the tree, my own,  
Soon you'll live without me....

---

[11]

## **The Nesting Hour**

**ToC**

Robin-friend has gone to bed,  
Little wing to hide his head—  
Mother's bird must slumber too  
Just as baby Robins do—  
When the stars begin to rise,  
Birds and babies close their eyes.

---

[12]

## **The Little Sister**

**ToC**

### **BATH-TIME:**

Baby's got no legs at all,  
They're soft and pinky, crumpled things;  
If he stood up he'd only fall:  
But then, you see, he's used to wings.

### **BED-TIME:**

[13]

Baby baby bye,  
Close your little eye!  
When the dark begins to creep,  
Tiny-wees must go to sleep.

Lammy lammy lie,  
I am seven, I;  
Little boys must sleep and wait,  
If they want their bed-time late.

Fidgy fidgy fie,  
There's no need to cry!  
Soon you'll never dress in white,  
But sit up working half the night....

---

[14]

## A Twilight Song

ToC

Baby moon, 'tis time for bed,  
Owlet leaves his nest now;  
Hide your little horned head  
In the twilight west now;  
When you're old and round and bright,  
You shall stay and shine all night.

Baby girl is going too  
In her bed to creep now;  
She is little, just like you,  
Time it is to sleep now;  
When she's old and tired and wise,  
She'll be glad to close her eyes.

---

[15]

## A Wintry Lullaby

ToC

Blow, wind, blow,  
The fields are white with snow—  
Sleeping daisies, deep and warm,  
Cannot hear the Winter storm.

Freeze, air, freeze,  
The rime is on the trees—  
Sleeping buds within the bough,  
Dream of spring and cuckoos now.

Turn, earth, turn,  
The flames of life do burn—  
Sleeping girl, my baby dove,  
Knows no world but mother's love.

---

[16]

## The Warm Cradle

ToC

Hush, baby, hush,  
Sweet robin's in the bush—  
All the birdies lie so quiet,  
Won't my little dicky try it?  
Hush, baby, hush.

Sleep, baby, sleep,  
The lammies love the sheep—  
Woolly babes all nestle cosy,  
Lie, my lambkin, warm and rosy,  
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Dream, baby, dream,  
Our feet are in the stream—



Stones below but stars above, child,  
Life is warm so long we love, child,  
Dream, baby, dream.

---

[17]

## **The Drooping Flower**

[ToC](#)

Baby's rather ill to-night,  
Little face is long and white,  
Eyes are all too large and bright—  
What shall mother do now?

Never leave him out of sight,  
Hold him warm and still and tight,  
Make him well with all her might,  
That's what she will do now.

---

[18]

## **Mothers in the Garden**

[ToC](#)

### **I**

Wagtail—pied Wagtail—  
What tremor's in your breast?  
On nimble feet, when we draw near,  
You run about to hide your fear,  
As if to say: There's nothing here,  
I have no nest....

Wagtail—pied Wagtail—  
We too their voices heard;  
Away then to the water-side,  
And fetch the food for which they cried;  
From us there is no need to hide,  
My dainty bird.

### **II**

[19]

The thrushes' nest has fallen  
From the ivy on the wall:  
The dear blue eggs are broken,  
All broken by the fall.

But we heard a song at sundown  
That said: O tears are vain!—  
And babe and I ceased grieving:  
We think they will build again.

---

## The Gravel Path

[ToC](#)

Tiny mustn't frown  
 When she tumbles down;  
 If the wind should change—Ah me,  
 What a face her face would be!

Rub away the dirt,  
 Say she wasn't hurt;  
 What a world 'twould be—O my,  
 If all who fell began to cry!

[21]

---

## The New Pelisse

[ToC](#)

Baby's got a new pelisse,  
 Very soft and very neat—  
 Like a lammy in her fleece  
 She's all white from head to feet.

Thirty lambs each gave a curl,  
 Mother sewed them, stitch by stitch—  
 All to clothe a baby-girl:  
 Don't you think she's very rich?

[22]

---

## Solace

[ToC](#)

Whom does Miss belong to?  
 Just to Mother, Mother only:  
 That's whom Miss belongs to,  
 —And Mother's never lonely.

Whom's this little song to?  
 Just to Baby, Baby only:  
 That's whom little song's to,  
 —And Baby's never lonely.

[23]

---

## Strange Lands

[ToC](#)

Where do you come from, Mr. Jay?—  
'From the land of Play, from the land of Play.'  
And where can that be, Mr. Jay?—  
'Far away—far away.'

Where do you come from, Mrs. Dove?—  
'From the land of Love, from the land of Love.'  
And how do you get there, Mrs. Dove?—  
'Look above—look above.'

Where do you come from, Baby Miss?—  
'From the land of Bliss, from the land of Bliss.'  
And what is the way there, Baby Miss?—  
'Mother's kiss—mother's kiss.'

---

[24]

## March Meadows

ToC

### A LARK:

Lark-bird, lark-bird soaring high,  
Are you never weary?  
When you reach the empty sky,  
Are the clouds not dreary?  
Don't you sometimes long to be  
A silent gold-fish in the sea?

Gold-fish, gold-fish diving deep,  
Are you never sad, say?  
When you feel the cold waves creep  
Are you really glad, say?  
Don't you sometimes long to sing  
And be a lark-bird on the wing?

### LAMBS:

[25]

O little lambs! the month is cold,  
The sky is very gray;  
You shiver in the misty grass  
And bleat at all the winds that pass;  
Wait! when I'm big—some day—  
I'll build a roof to every fold.

But now that I am small, I'll pray  
At mother's knee for you;  
Perhaps the angels with their wings  
Will come and warm you, little things;  
I'm sure that, if God knew,  
He'd let the lambs be born in May.

---

[26]

## The Robin

ToC

When father takes his spade to dig,  
Then Robin comes along;  
He sits upon a little twig  
And sings a little song.

Or, if the trees are rather far,  
He does not stay alone,  
But comes up close to where we are  
And bobs upon a stone.

---

[27]

## **The Mouse**

[ToC](#)

Little Master Mouse,  
You'd better leave this house;  
Crumbs are scarce upon the floor,  
And pussy sleeps behind the door.

Mousie soft and grey,  
I wish you'd run away!  
Cook will catch you in a trap,  
And mice mayn't sit in mother's lap....

---

[28]

## **The Bat**

[ToC](#)

Bat, Bat, that flies at night  
When angels' breath has blown the light,  
When all the bees are hived in bed  
And swallow sleeps with hidden head:  
Songless bird! until this hour,  
Among the bells in the ivied tower  
Have you hung dreaming in your house?  
Are you a living wingèd mouse?—  
Bat, Bat, I often doubt;  
And when I see you flit about,  
I wonder if the dead birds roam  
In circles round their nestlings' home....

---

[29]

## **The Swallow**

[ToC](#)

O Swallow! if I had your wings  
I would not stay below;  
I'd leave off catching flies and things

And up to Heaven I'd go.

I'd sail above the tallest tree  
That waves its arms on high;  
Beyond the furthest cloud we see,  
And deeper than the sky.

Perhaps, when live birds find the way,  
They're all sent down again,  
And that is why you dive to-day  
For insects in the rain.

---

[30]

## **Snowdrops**

[ToC](#)

Little ladies, white and green,  
With your spears about you,  
Will you tell us where you've been  
Since we lived without you?

You are sweet, and fresh, and clean,  
With your pearly faces;  
In the dark earth where you've been  
There are wondrous places:

Yet you come again, serene,  
When the leaves are hidden;  
Bringing joy from where you've been  
You return unbidden—

Little ladies, white and green,  
Are you glad to cheer us?  
Hunger not for where you've been,  
Stay till Spring be near us!

[31]

---

[32]

## **Frost**

[ToC](#)

The flowers in the garden  
Are very cold at night;  
When I look out of window  
Their beds are hard and white.

The primrose and the scilla,  
The merry crocus too—  
O Jane! if we were flowers,  
What should we children do?

We'd have to sleep all naked  
Beneath the windy trees;  
Yet we should die, I know it,  
With even a chemise....

---

## Apples

[ToC](#)

Red cheeks, red cheeks,  
Will you play with me?  
No boy, pale boy,  
I want to climb that tree.

Red cheeks, red cheeks,  
You will tumble down—  
No boy, pale boy,  
I'll eat the apples brown.

Red cheeks, red cheeks,  
Barns are best for rain—  
No boy, pale boy,  
I'll soon be down again.

---

## Lonely Children

[ToC](#)**I**

The trees are dusty in the Park,  
The grass is hard and brown;  
I'm glad I've got a Noah's ark,  
But I'm sorry I'm in town.

A lot of little girls and boys  
Are not so rich as me;  
But O! I'd give them all my toys  
For shells beside the sea....

**II**

The flowers are happy in the garden,  
For the bees are always there;  
The clouds are happy up in Heaven  
With the angels in the air;  
But little boy and little mouse  
Are rather lonely in the house.

---

## Playgrounds

[ToC](#)

In summer I am very glad  
We children are so small,  
For we can see a thousand things  
That men can't see at all.

They don't know much about the moss  
And all the stones they pass:  
They never lie and play among  
The forests in the grass:

They walk about a long way off;  
And, when we're at the sea,  
Let father stoop as best he can  
He can't find things like me.

But, when the snow is on the ground  
And all the puddles freeze,  
I wish that I were very tall,  
High up above the trees....

[37]

---

[38]

## Fairings

[ToC](#)

O, Father has donned his suit of brown  
And saddled the gelding gray,  
And he's ridden off to London town  
Where the streets are fine and gay.

And Mother has asked for a yard of lace,  
And Kate for a kerchief new,  
And Moll for a mirror to look at her face,  
And Bessie for beads, all blue;

And Dick has been promised a kite so tall,  
And Jamie a leathern whip,  
And Baby shall play with a painted ball,  
And O! I have asked for a ship!—

But our eldest sister stood apart,  
And I think I heard her say:  
'O bring me back a little white heart  
Like the one I lost in May....'

[39]

---

[40]

## The Flower to the Bud

[ToC](#)

Tiny heart beneath my hand,  
Say, what treasures will you hold?  
O, what blossom will unfold,  
Late to bloom, or soon to fade,  
From this bud, my baby-maid?  
Through what shallows will you wade,  
To what heights will you aspire  
In your spirit's white desire?  
Will you mar or will you make?  
Will you give or will you take?

Will you glow or will you break  
With the running of the sand—  
Tiny heart beneath my hand?...

---

[41]

## SIX SONGS OF GIRLHOOD

---

[42]

[43]

### Love and the Maidens

[ToC](#)

He seemed asleep; his wings were wet  
With dew; he lay among the flowers,  
Sweeter than Spring; his radiant curls  
With primrose and with violet  
Were crowned; and in a silent ring the girls  
Watched, all an April morning's misty hours....

Not one dared wake him—yet each breast  
Yearned to be pillow to a thing  
So fair. 'How will he smile?' thought they,  
'In waking?...' But between them pressed  
One who with laughter bore the rogue away,  
Ere they had touched a feather of his wing.

---

[44]

### Awakenings

[ToC](#)

The first time she awoke,  
Her room was filled with light;  
Thought she: They've made a little fire  
To warm me through the night....

The next time she awoke,  
Sweet music stirred the air;  
Thought she: They've brought a magic lyre  
To make my dreams more fair....

The third time she awoke,  
The dawn-swept sky was gray;  
Thought she: I know my heart's desire  
Will come to me to-day....



But empty was the street,  
And ashen was the hearth;  
And the music-maker's nimble feet  
Were speeding o'er the earth.

[45]

---

[46]

### **The Clouded Soul**

[ToC](#)

O what have you done with your heart, daughter,  
And what have you done to your soul, my dear?  
Your heart was like a lily in June,  
And your soul as a crystal clear....

O, I've thrown my heart in a well, mother,  
For the lily was sick, and needed rain:  
O, I've wept a cloud round my soul, mother,  
And we never shall see it again....

---

[47]

### **The Healer**

[ToC](#)

O will you have my heart, sweet maid,  
My heart so true, my heart so red?  
O will you have my heart, dear maid,  
And give me yours instead?

O keep your heart, my good young man,  
For mine is wounded, deep and sore;  
O keep your heart, my kind young man,  
For mine shall love no more....

---

[48]

### **The Open Door**

[ToC](#)

Why have you locked the door, my maid,  
Why have you locked the door?  
O! I have let Grief out, she said,  
Never to enter more.

Open and set it wide, my maid,  
Open and set it wide!  
Lest Joy should come one day, he said,  
And have to stand outside.

---

## The Fugitive

ToC

When she returned to the clouded land,  
 She held sweet flowers in her hand;  
     Her eyes were bright  
     With a beaming light  
 That none could understand.

Said they: Where, sister, hast thou been?  
 What hidden glory hast thou seen?  
     What magic sod  
     Has thy white foot trod;  
 What song-filled groves of green?

Said she: I followed across the plain  
 To the gates of Love, to the gates of Pain:  
     By one, by two,  
     All the rest went through:  
 But I came back again....

[50]

[51]

---

## THE FAITHFUL WIFE

[52]

[53]

---

## The Faithful Wife

ToC

It was a banished chieftain  
 Returned from oversea,  
 And he saw his wife and children  
 Come smiling o'er the lea.

The moon had wrapped them in her beams,  
 The wind was in their hair,  
 Their feet that trod the wild bluebell  
 Were light as wings on air.

'O have you come to meet me, wife,  
 As you once did swear to do?  
 Full seven years have I been gone,  
 And was your word so true?'

He took her by the white cool hand  
 Where the golden rings shone gay;

[54]

He took her youngest on his arm  
And joyful led the way.

'O fair are ye, my father's towers,  
And sweet my garden dear:  
God grant I never leave you more  
Till Death o'ertake me here!'

The lights were burning in the hall,  
As they sat them down to meat;  
The pipers piped a merry tune  
The while their lord did eat.

He looked to right, he looked to left,  
And a happy man was he,  
As he stroked the head of the good gre-hound  
That stood beside his knee.

'O, I am weary, wife, my wife,  
And the flames begin to pale;  
Lead on, for I would sleep awhile  
Before I tell my tale.'

[55]

She lifted the bright curtain  
That led into her bower;  
There came the tramp of parting feet  
And silence held the tower.

'O wife, how long have I been gone?  
The room smells of roses still—  
O wife, our babes are very young,  
Their limbs are cold and chill...'

She folded up their raiment small,  
She smiled but said no word:  
She laid her children in one bed,  
Then came beside her lord.

He could not sleep, he could not wake,  
But lay in silence there;  
His dear wife held him by the hand,  
He felt her wind-blown hair—

[56]

'O Mother! Mother!' whispered one,  
'Why must we sleep so soon?  
The sun is hidden down below,  
I still can see the moon.'

'Be quiet, be quiet, my little child,  
And watch the moonbeams creep;  
To-night you may not play about,  
For your father lies asleep.'

'O Mother! Mother!' whispered one,  
'It is not time for bed!  
Where have you put my little lid?  
I cannot hide my head.'

'Lie still, lie still, my tiny child,  
Your father dear is found:  
We four shall never sleep again  
In the dark and heavy mound.'

[57]

'O Mother! Mother!' whispered one,  
'How shall that ever be?  
We may not bide in the light of day  
To watch upon the lea.'

'No need, no need, my pretty child,  
For your father dear has come;  
We'll kiss him once, we'll kiss him twice,  
Then seek our own far home.'

He heard them laugh with baby joy,  
He felt their kisses sweet,  
He heard the patter to the door  
Of their unearthly feet....

He could not stir when she bent low  
To kiss him on the lips—  
He could not raise, to hold her fast,  
His anguished finger-tips;

[58]

But his heart against her silent breast  
Beat loud in wild despair—  
He heard the swaying of her skirt,  
And his soul leapt forth in prayer.

A shepherd rose to call his sheep  
When the morning sky was gray;  
The owl flew back to the ruined tower—  
He led his flock that way.

And lo! amid the scattered stones  
That the foe had strewn around,  
He saw his long-lost chieftain lie  
A corpse upon the ground.

A smile was on his breathless lips,  
And he lay on the flowered sward,  
Where his wife and babes had bled to death  
Beneath a traitor's sword.

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[61]

---

## WOMANHOOD

[62]

[63]

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### A Woman to her Poet

ToC

In three worlds King art thou of my desire,  
O thou of many crowns! whose brow, birth-bound  
With light, wears wisdom's diadem. Thou lyre  
Of the speechless soul, in silence triple-crowned!  
My love's proud empire smiles to know thee King;  
And in the realms of Womanhood I wind  
A coronet of Faith, a blood-rose ring  
With azure chain of sapphire intertwined;  
And where the mind's pure kingdom is, I seek  
Bright crystals, pearls of Truth divine and rare  
To honour thee; but on the aërial peak  
That marks the Soul's eternal region—there  
Thou throne'st Monarch of a world serene,  
Crowned with the emerald's unfathomed green.

---

## The Infidel

[ToC](#)

My soul at times, outworn by length of woe,  
 A strange appeasement seeks in doubting thee,  
 And cries: My sacred mount's a thing as low  
 As any hillock; shallow rolls the sea  
 That should have quenched my deep unbounded thirst;  
 My star's a lamp that flickers earthly light;  
 Mere surf-worn glass my emerald; why burst,  
 O heart! for love of these?—Then, fullest night  
 Environs me, thou banished; stretching wide  
 My arms, I grope for refuge; all my pain  
 Cries babe-like for a breast whereon to hide,  
 And on to thine I fling myself again....  
 Thus fools, impatient of God's silence, cry:  
 There is no God!—and seek what they deny.

---

## Love Within Vows

[ToC](#)

We love, and O! we know it; yet Love's name  
 Upon our lips a tremulous wish must die;  
 We both were made for loving, you and I,  
 And still was Love denied. To both it came,  
 More fleeting than the beauty of a flame:  
 Now each within the other's hungering eye  
 Beholds the corse of Joy embalmed lie,  
 And smiles to know his penury the same.  
 There is no sorrow in this love, O Friend,  
 New-sprung from ruin, tho' our lips be sealed  
 By silence and the world's hard fetter. Dear  
 To me your being; yet we know nor fear  
 Of loss nor of possession; here's a shield  
 Shall part us nobly faithful to the end.

---

## The Exile

[ToC](#)

You too mistook me; for no man is wise  
 Whom Love enclouds. Nor soul-piercing nor keen  
 Your vision, else there never would have been  
 A cause for parting. Love-enwrapped, your eyes  
 Failed in my love Love's self to recognise:  
 You saw its outer garment, where the green  
 Of perfect faith was marred by passion's sheen,  
 By outworn patience and desire's disguise.  
 Had you but read me to the inner soul,  
 You would have held me fast. I can forego

All that is sought of hand and lip, the whole  
Of Love's poor joy. But I have need to know  
That, when the heart fails, I may come and rest  
My head upon your wide and sheltering breast.

---

[67]

### **The Scar Indelible**

[ToC](#)

O your voice, your voice in the night!  
How shall I wipe your voice from the night?  
Only Hope could wipe it away—  
And you have driven Hope away.

O your eyes, your eyes in my sight!  
How shall I hide your eyes from my sight?  
Only Joy could hide them away,  
And you have driven Joy away.

O your name, your name in the light!  
How shall I thrust your name from the light?  
Only Love could thrust it away,  
And you have driven Love away.

---

[68]

### **Revulsion**

[ToC](#)

My heart is weary of Love and Hate:  
Too sick of its Love to love you still,  
Too sick of its Hate to hate you yet—  
My heart is weary and would forget.

O give me nothing! 'Tis far too late:  
Your much were little my thirst to fill,  
Your little were scorn of Faith so deep—  
O give me nothing!—and let me sleep.

---

[69]

### **The Captive**

[ToC](#)

I want to take my heart away,  
Break it away from the branch where it clings;  
I want to quit the barren spray  
Where now no throstle sings.

The butterflies have long since gone,

Gone to the bough where the gay blossoms are;  
The sinking sun now bears the dawn  
To other lands afar.

I want to break my heart away,  
Tear it away from the bough where it grows;  
O for the light of a free new day,  
On the hill beyond the snows!

---

[70]

### **Possession's Anguish**

[ToC](#)

One tree in my garden, one tree  
Out of all the forests of the world:  
One little ship afloat upon the sea,  
One shell beneath the waves, flawless and pearled:

One rose on my bower, one rose  
For a day to scatter on the grass:  
One shifting star a gleam where the wind blows,  
One gem upheld, that all may share who pass:

One heart to be ached for, one heart  
Out of all the bosoms that are here:  
One fragile hope alive, the starver's part,  
One joy already faint and pale with fear:

One flame in the darkness, one flame  
For the night to sever with a breath:  
One poor faith fettered to a mortal name—  
And over all, the beating wings of death....

[71]

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[72]

### **Treasures of Poverty**

[ToC](#)

I sometimes watch the lips of other women  
And think of all the kisses they have known;  
I sometimes touch the hands of other women  
In wonder at the memoried palms they own....

The kiss upon my brow was sadly given,  
The hands I held but once were not my own;  
And yet I would not change what I was given  
For all the kisses I have never known....

Nor would I change again my heart's white desert;  
O wondrous are the meetings I have known,  
And strange the eyes that seek me in the desert,  
Then smiling vanish to rejoin their own....

---

## Solitude

[ToC](#)

Now empty lies the house. The languid air  
 Unstirred by voices creeps from room to room;  
 No footstep falls upon the silent stair,  
 All's still and dark. In every nook the tomb  
 Of some thought lies; remembrance everywhere  
 Lingers to seek a joy no longer there;  
 And, as I sit here lonely in the gloom,  
 I ask myself which evil I would choose:  
 Never to have, or else to have, and lose.

[74]

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## The Heart Asleep

[ToC](#)

Within me now my heart's asleep  
 And none shall wake it more;  
 The silence of all pain is deep  
 Within me. Now my heart's asleep,  
 It dreams of joys it might not keep;  
 And nothing looks before  
 Within me now. My heart's asleep  
 And none shall wake it more.

[75]

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## Adversity

[ToC](#)

Black winds of the world!  
 There is pity in your breath,  
 Against wild tempest weaponing.

Grey clouds of the sky!  
 You are gentle in your shade,  
 Against night-darkness tempering.

Red wounds of the heart!  
 There is mercy in your blood,  
 Against hope-murder hardening.

Pale swoons of the soul!  
 You are tender in your pangs  
 Against dire death emboldening.

[76]



I dreamed that, wandering by a river's bank,  
 I came across a lonely ship that sank  
 In lifeless waters. Day was dim;—in dreams  
 We see nor sun, nor moon; unearthly gleams  
 Of deadened light fall strangely from the sky.—  
 There were but three that struggled not to die:  
 A man, a woman, and a tender child;  
 He sought to save them both with effort wild  
 And dragged his love to the entangled shore;  
 But down the slimy weeds she slid once more  
 Into the water, and her lover's breast  
 Received her, and together they found rest.  
 The child was saved; my hand towards her hand  
 Outstretched, drew all her sweetness to the land,  
 Where naked, like a lily wet with rain,  
 She sank and loudly wept at her life's gain.  
 Quite small she was, and light; I bore her fast  
 To what seemed home, and there she smiled at last  
 And sat upright within my arms; I found  
 A bright-hued veil wherein to wrap her round,  
 Tissues that far in morning-lands were spun  
 By those who love the flowers and the sun.  
 I laid her softly in a silken bed,  
 Strewed fragrant violets about her head  
 And left her.

[77]

'Twas my dream then that I slept.  
 But when at dawn unto her bed I crept,  
 The child was lost. Her pillow was all wet  
 With tears that still flowed on; and faster yet  
 They flowed in quickening rills, until I thought  
 I stood beside a torrent wide that sought  
 An unknown sea. The day was sad, tho' young;  
 Upon a misty branch some bird had sung  
 And left a trembling silence; all around  
 I saw the little daisies on the ground  
 Fast closed, with folded arm-petals in vain  
 Shielding their yellow hearts from the cold rain.  
 —A voice invisible made murmur then:  
 'Come here and look upon these poor drowned men!  
 The ship was sunk a year ago to-day....'  
 But I stepped back and shuddering turned away,  
 For I had never seen the face of Death.  
 Yet Fear itself soon drew me with quick breath  
 Back to the place, even to the river's brink  
 Where I had seen that lonely vessel sink.  
 And there in waters deep I saw them lie,  
 With hands at rest and eyes that sought the sky:  
 Clear eyes wide open to an unseen day.  
 In wondrous silence motionless they lay,  
 With white lips smiling on their spirit's bliss.  
 'Is Death but this?' I cried, 'no more but this?'  
 And answer came: 'Among those faces there  
 Are all unknown?'

[78]

'Twas then I saw him, fair  
 With perfect peace, my enemy, even he  
 Of all the world who most had tortured me.  
 He lay there, blessed among the blessed, and smiled  
 With eyes more pure than any wakening child.  
 The little waves in passing—like the breeze  
 That stirs the foliage of the unmoved trees—  
 Played in their hair, and fluttering grasses rose  
 And fell and danced about their mute repose.  
 But I gazed on until I too had drunk  
 Of their lips' joy, until their peace had sunk  
 Into my troubling earth-stirred heart that ached  
 To join them ... and then waked....

[79]

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## The Sleeper

[ToC](#)

There lay a man on clovered ground  
 Whose life was death, he slept so sound;  
 A child bent low to watch his eyes—  
 He smiling waked, and saw the skies.

I know a soul now, fast asleep,  
 Whose dreams are sad: I hear him weep;  
 I bend and gaze for pity's sake—  
 But all in vain; he will not wake.

---

## Stars

[ToC](#)

O Kings and Queens, that in my happy heart,  
 As in a royal chapel, warm and white,  
 Ensanctuaried are! I come to-night  
 Beneath the moonless sky—this radiant chart  
 Of the unfathomable Heavens where dart  
 Beam-trailing stars—with lamp of love alight  
 Unto your images; my reverent sight  
 Enfolds you, and I bring you each your part  
 Of piety. The Will that guides each star  
 Gave jewels to my hands I might not hold,  
 Whose grace remembered fills my palm. So rest,  
 O Joy-givers! your kingdoms are afar,  
 Yet here I own you, shrined in pearls and gold,  
 The sovereign captives of my loyal breast.

---

## Trelawny's Grave

[ToC](#)

I know a garden near the gates of Rome  
 Where Life and Death hold hands in silence; here  
 In solemn shade where towering cypress rear  
 Their green eternal, white as wind-led foam  
 Lie scattered stones that shield the final home  
 Of exiles. Fair their bed; by violets dear  
 And swaying roses decked; above them, clear  
 In bluest glory arches Heaven's dome.  
 'Twas here my heart encountered peace one day  
 Beside an old man's grave that said: If God  
 Condemn you live beyond your friend, this way  
 You too may rest.—The heart is childish; dread  
 Of earth-loss fades before Trelawny dead  
 Close-gathered to his Shelley in the sod.

---

**V.R.I.**

[ToC](#)

**JANUARY 22, 1901.**

As, in a house where solemn-footed Death  
Has trodden, all the little children stand  
Before a silent door, with quickened breath,  
Holding each other tightly by the hand—

So we, O Mother! at the keyless door  
Stand gathered, heart-astir with nameless fears:  
A strength has left the hour; the world before  
Was warmer; and we face the day with tears.

---

**Lines on a Picture by Mary Gow**

[ToC](#)

O whirling World! I know a corner still  
Unsoiled by Hate and Strife:  
Where hushed and gentle is the voice of Life:  
Where Time—a summer rill  
Soft-flowing through the grass—in measure slow  
Sings sweetly as we go.  
Here is a room wherein the white day gleams:  
Silence o'er Peace has spread her pearly wings:  
A smiling woman reads of simple things:  
A child's blue eyes are blinded by their dreams....

---

**To Serenity**

[ToC](#)

**Before a Madonna—by Botticelli.**

Thine is the face our driven souls shall wear,  
O sweet serenity!—No earthly wind  
Can rend thine azure mantle now, nor tear  
Those veils that shield the radiant locks they bind.

Thy brow is calm with storm appeased; thy lids  
Are heavy with the wisdom of all tears:  
Thy mouth is strong with silence that forbids  
Weary lament and craven wail of fears.

Within thy guarded bosom now no fire

Is ardent; thou hast hidden all thy scars:  
We too may tread the ashes of desire,  
And wing our spirits thus to touch the stars.

[86]

[87]

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## ELEVEN SONNETS

[88]

[89]

### I

[ToC](#)

I will not close the door, O Love, on thee,  
Although I fear thee still. In days of old  
Thy magic echoes lured me on to be  
The slave of dreams; but now that I behold  
The earth again, and that my wings are gone,  
I will take refuge, simply, on thy breast.  
No miracle I seek, no rapturous dawn  
Of an unearthly day; I will but rest  
My weary eyes, and lay between thy hands  
These empty fingers that have ceased to clutch  
At stars. Because my spirit understands  
Renouncement, thou wilt give, maybe. Not much  
I ask of thee: I only ask to keep  
Thee near, O Love! until my heart's asleep.

[90]

### II

[ToC](#)

My Friend of Friends! in you my heart's at rest,  
That wandered homeless as the ocean-wind  
Hither and thither, seeking still to find  
Some refuge. As a ship that east and west  
Roams havenless, and quits each shore distressed,  
So wandered I, so left each land behind,  
Bearing my soul as helmsman, sage but blind;  
And still we journeyed on at Fate's behest.  
But now I hold my harbour, and the ship  
Casts anchor here. The unnested winds that blow  
May reach me still and rock me to and fro.  
What matter? Here is Peace that bids me slip  
Closer and closer to the enfolding shore,  
Lower the sails, and stay for evermore.

---

### III

ToC

Are we not happy? though this bond of ours  
 Be strange and out of harmony with life  
 As men accept it, in this world of strife  
 Between the spirit and the flesh?—Dark hours  
 Are in the doom of every love; no flowers  
 Bloom rainless; wind and war and pain are rife  
 Within us all.—Yet we are happy. Wife  
 Or sister, these are earth-words; the soul showers  
 Its gifts of love and seeks no earthly bond.  
 So ask we none but, smiling, soul to soul  
 Stand gathered in Love's very essence, whole  
 And indivisible. These white strong bands  
 Suffice; 'tis but the shell, too frail and fond,  
 That weeps, alas! and wrings her mortal hands.

---

### IV

ToC

Farewell! you cannot go from me, my dear,  
 For I have closed you in my inmost heart,  
 Beyond the reach of earthly things that part  
 The loving from the loved. Now far or near  
 Ceases to be; I am where you are; here  
 Or there, no matter. Mild should be the smart  
 Of leave-taking, where nothing stays apart  
 But what is mortal, and where souls are clear.  
 Beloved! I can but lose you earthly-wise;  
 The hunger of the years is stilled; no pain  
 Of solitude can chill my heart again,  
 Possessing you. Therefore with steadfast eyes  
 I say farewell, O brother! nor dare weep  
 My little loss, with all this wealth to keep.

---

### V

ToC

I seek to call you near me in the dark  
 And silent prison of my solitude,  
 Where Memory with visions heaven-hued  
 Now mocks the night, and Hope with timid spark  
 Kindles vain torches. Lonely in my ark  
 Of Faith, on battling waves I float, pursued

By all those doubting monsters that delude  
Pain-sunken breasts, and bid the soul embark  
For perilous despair. I call you near  
That I may cheat the helmsman of his fear:  
And yet I know you far, I know you lost  
To me, on this same ocean tempest-tossed  
Alone—O you who should my pilot be!  
You, whom my love could steer through any sea....

---

[94]

## VI

[ToC](#)

When Spring awakens and no Spring is there,  
None for the heart, it is a joyless thing.  
Yet Winter softens, and all breezes bring  
To the hard earth now tidings vague and fair.  
The lilac buds are swelling, the mild air  
Tempted forth the green; at dusk the thrushes sing  
Out in the garden, and their raptures wring  
The heart whose joy is of the past. I bear  
Remembrance in me of dear foliage gone,  
Of wilted heather and of perished flowers.  
For me not one of Spring's foreshadowed hours  
Is quick with presages of joy. Alone  
Who cares to creep? The solitary ways  
Are primrose-less, and vain the violet days.

---

[95]

## VII

[ToC](#)

If I must live without you, I must learn  
To love the earth and all that grows once more,  
With the old good love that satisfied before  
I saw you smile. Now, let me turn and turn,  
Your memory covers earth and sky; I yearn  
For you, and not for Spring; my heart is sore  
With absence, not with Winter's length. Of yore,  
When climbing noons began to softly burn,  
There seemed a tender joy in every bud  
That swelled and burst, in every little spear  
That broke the clods; and Spring sang in my blood  
As in the sap; and all that lived was dear.  
These treasures now are veiled and strange and far,  
Whilst I go wandering where your footprints are.

---

[96]

## VIII

[ToC](#)

Beloved! are we not wanderers on a road  
Unknown, that grope their way among the rocks  
Together?—Yes, together; for these shocks  
Our hearts have borne and given, part not, goad  
Unto no hatred. Though I be your load  
Of care and you my anguish, something locks  
Our hands, my brother: Destiny, that mocks  
Man's thinkings, and here finds a new strange mode  
Of welding chance-divided loves, a link  
That's more than human, that is half divine,  
Since, beggared of you, still I hold you mine  
Above all bonds. So love me well. We'll drink  
Of all pure streams together, dear, and break  
These rocks to sand for one another's sake.

---

[97]

## IX

[ToC](#)

Yes, love me, love me well. You need not fear  
To hurt me further. Like a careless knight  
That riding lonely, with averted sight,  
Has struck a passer unawares, so here  
Have you struck me amid the branches sere  
Of this dark forest. If you now alight,  
Give water to my lips and through the night  
Keep peril from me, with the morning's clear  
New dawn I'll rise again, and both will reap  
The mercy of the wound you dealt. Asleep,  
Awake, I'll be your shield-bearer, and guard  
Your steps upon this road so long and hard.  
Then help us both, for all the love you give  
But turns to strength whereby we both may live.

---

[98]

## X

[ToC](#)

Dearest of all, and nearest though most far!  
My spirit follows you across both sea  
And land; all bounds, all spaces, are to me  
Erased; my heart upon its wingèd car  
Of thought outstrips you; nothing now shall mar  
My joy in you, O brother!—save that we  
Are of the earth and ask to touch and see  
The thing we love upon this yearning star.  
O world of strange desires! Have not we two  
Lived to behold each other and to smile?  
Have our two notes not mingled in one chord?  
What ails us? Were we joined this earthly while,  
You would not love me better than you do,  
Nor in my heart be otherwise adored.

---

**XI**
[ToC](#)

Without, you seem forgotten. Am I sad  
 Or happy? None can tell. The lonely days  
 Recur, and draw me on the beaten ways  
 Of all who strive and toil. The things I had  
 Remain; all daily happenings, good or bad,  
 Fall as they did: success and loss, delays  
 That sweeten victory: the balance sways  
 Unceasingly, makes heavy, or makes glad.  
 And this is life, such as the world demands.  
 Within, 'tis otherwise; for in the far  
 Depths where my soul recoiled sits, there are  
 No echoes of such wisdom; there my hands  
 Are folded, and in yours: I seek your eyes,  
 Your voice, your smile.... Within, 'tis otherwise.

[100]

[101]

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**THE OPEN AIR**

[102]

[103]

---

**Sunshine in February**
[ToC](#)

O winter Sun!  
 How beautiful thy beams  
 Upon the chainèd earth!  
 The snows are melting and the gale  
 Is hushed; thou shinest, soft and pale,  
 O Winter Sun!  
 Upon a world that dreams,  
 And trembles with awakened hopes of birth.

O Joyful Green!  
 'Mid snowy patches gay  
 Thou peerest, and the sky  
 Shines blue through twiggèd boughs; each tree  
 Is aching now with thoughts of thee,  
 O Joyful Green!  
 Spring's heart is in the day  
 Though Winter's hands upon night's bosom lie.

*Fairseat.*



## The Cuckoo

ToC

Sing, cuckoo, sing,  
 Dear herald of the Spring!  
 Minstrels in all ages born,  
 Hearing thee on such a morn—  
 When the cowslips all around  
 Waft their fragrance from the ground,  
 And the blossom of the pear  
 Quivers white in bluest air—  
 Such as I, in all the ages  
 Thus have covered rapturous pages  
 With thy praise, O loveliest bird  
 Ear of man has ever heard!

Though thy note be one of sadness,  
 Messenger thou art of gladness  
 Only; for thou comest first  
 When the buds their prison burst,  
 When, upon an April day,  
 Earth awakes to cast away  
 What remains of wintry sorrow,  
 And to don for summer's morrow  
 Joyful garb of newest green.  
 Spirit-like thou sing'st, unseen:  
 East and west thy piercing note  
 From the forest seems to float  
 Over plain and over hill,  
 And thy echoing cries instil  
 Hope into each breath that blows.  
 Who that hears thy voice but knows  
 That the joys of June are nearing?  
 See the lilies in the clearing,  
 How they raise their green young bells!  
 Every hasty bud that swells  
 Answers thee in joyfulness;  
 And the winter's long distress,  
 Like a lifted cloud at dawn,  
 Melts and quivers and is gone.  
 Autumn leaves that strew the ways  
 Have outlived their kindly days:  
 Now the sun shall warm the earth:  
 Now all things of tender birth,  
 Newly waked from shielded sleep,  
 Lift their coverlet and peep  
 Gaily at the world.

[105]

[106]

Dear Voice,  
 Sing! and bid each soul rejoice!  
 Spring's for every breast that wills;  
 And thy note, O Cuckoo, stills  
 All the ache of winter here.  
 Lo! the scattered leaves are sere  
 Of my sorrow; and I tread them  
 Into earth. The bough that shed them,  
 Soon in budded joy shall be  
 Harmonious with the day's felicity.

*Montmélian,  
 April  
 1902.*

---

## A Song in the Morning

ToC

O sister! 'tis day-time,  
 The world's happy May-time,  
 Come out to the woods where the new nests are!  
 'Tis sin to be pining,  
 The hedge-drops are shining,  
 And the wild winds have fled to the snow-lands far.

O come! and be merry,  
 For white blows the cherry,  
 The bluebells ring out on their stem so tall:  
 Each cowslip's dear yellow  
 Cries joy to its fellow,  
 And the wind-flowers dance to the cuckoo's call.

O what is the sun for?  
 Come, grief is all done for,  
 The folded leaves creep from their beds in the bough:  
 The seeds are awaking,  
 The furrows are breaking,  
 And the blessing of God's on the blackthorn now.

[108]

*Meopham.*

---

 [109]

## In a London Square

ToC

The leaves are green, and in the grass  
 Lie daisy-patches, white and sweet,  
 That spring beneath the tender feet  
 Of baby-girls at play:  
 From ancient boughs, serenely tall,  
 The chequered shadows length'ning fall,  
 And town seems far away.  
 Such rest is here as woodland yields:  
 Here too are lambs in flowered fields—  
 Why heed the wheels that pass?

Thought sinks beneath our fitful speech  
 Into the tremor of our peace,  
 This hallowed hour of release  
 From dust and whirl and haste:  
 Thus each may find within his breast  
 A respite to the world's unrest,  
 Fresh verdure in the waste:  
 Life's wheels encircle us—but, there  
 Where Friendship is, the untainted air  
 Of Heaven seems in reach.

[110]

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 [111]

O who would dwell in the dingy town  
 When June is fair and green?  
 O who would stay in the chimneyed town  
 Where brooks are never seen?  
 Come! roses blow: sweet flower  
 Will snow the virgin's-bower:  
 The shaded lane, the woodland wild,  
 Are better both for man and child.

O who would live in the narrow street  
 When skies are broad and free?  
 O who would bide in the stony street  
 When the sun is on the sea?  
 Come! leave the dust and hasten  
 To the breath of winds that chasten:  
 The surging waves, the starry span,  
 Are better both for child and man.

*Fairseat.*

[112]

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## Summer Ending

ToC

Over the world a breath  
 Has fallen as of Spring; the tender sky  
 Hangs tremulous, a shield through which the sun  
 Shines as the heart smiles in a mist of tears.  
 The trees are green still, but their branches bear  
 The blossoms of the fall; each quivering birch  
 Shakes golden coins upon her silver stem;  
 The little rowan rears his corals gay,  
 The purple sloes are thick upon the thorn,  
 And every breeze new-scatters to the ground  
 Spoils red and yellow. Here upon the hill  
 Where at our feet bee-haunted heather glows  
 Among the rocks, sweet peace enfolds us; see,  
 On velvet slopes afar the patient kine  
 In silence browse; the plough in furrows wide  
 Has turned the weary earth to rest; the sun  
 Sinks and, across the valley, mountains fade  
 From blue to grey and pearl-like touch the sky.  
 The hour of silver comes now, for the moon  
 Awakes and softly films the dusk with light;  
 The narrow river in her ample bed  
 Answers the stars, and soft serenity  
 Has spread her wings upon the earth....

[113]

O Heart

Of man!—why must you throb apart and know  
 A tempered Peace where Nature's Peace is pure?  
 Already winter's snows upon the hills  
 Like phantoms to our vision rise; the trees  
 Groan leafless in the wind, and ghosts of pain  
 Flit dark between the present and our eyes.  
 'Tis thus we murder Joy, and let To-morrow,  
 A still-born Terror, anguish dear To-day:  
 'Tis thus, possessing Wealth, we shiver poor  
 Ere we are stricken: thus our claspèd hands  
 Grow cold and ache with Solitude to be....

*Kāśna,  
 September*

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## Near Autumn

[ToC](#)

Red apple in the leaves,  
 Red robin on the bough,  
 The oats are all in sheaves—  
     Where's summer now?

White foam along the sea,  
 White mist upon the dawn,  
 No flower for the bee—  
     'Tis summer gone.

Black bird is silent, lone,  
 Black berry decks the spray;  
 And Autumn's breath has blown  
     Upon the day.

*Longueil.*

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## November

[ToC](#)

The grey clouds hide the sun now  
 And the leaves flow down with the rain:  
 The golden days are done now  
 And Winter looms again.

'Tis bed-time for the seeds now  
 For the earth is weary of green:  
 She'll hide the very weeds now  
 Till nothing gay be seen.

Yet wait! it is not death now  
 That strips the meadow and grove:  
 The rose but holds her breath now  
 In the garden that we love:

'Tis sleep—the earth must rest now.  
 O Winter's a wondrous thing!  
 For she hides within her breast now  
 The jocund heart of Spring.

*Fairseat.*

O voices of the sea and land,  
 How sweet upon my ear you fall!  
 The curlew's cry, the heron's call,  
 The grey gull's chatter on the strand,  
 The robin on the mossy wall,  
 The coal-tit almost at my hand—  
 How I thank Heaven for you all!

O wonder of the hills and sky,  
 How dear your beauty to my sight!  
 The wintry noon, the sea's delight,  
 The ruddy moorland far and high,  
 The pendant larch's silver white,  
 The golden wind-blown leaves that lie—  
 How I thank God for all this light!

*Rosneath.*

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