

The Project Gutenberg eBook of A Prelude, by Francis Sherman

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: A Prelude

Creator: Francis Sherman

Release date: June 2, 2013 [EBook #39797]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A PRELUDE ***

A PRELUDE

Francis Sherman

*Privately Printed
at Christmas
1897*

A Prelude

Watching the tremulous flicker of the green
Against the open quiet of the sky,
I hear my ancient way-fellows convene

In the great wood behind me. Where I lie
They may not see me; for the grasses grow
As though no foot save June's had wandered by;

Yet I, who am well-hidden, surely know,
As I have waited them, they yearn for me
To lead them whither they are fain to go.

Weary as I, are they, O Time, of thee!
Yea, we, who once were glad only of Spring,
Gather about thy wall and would be free!

With wounded feet we cease from wandering,
And with vain hands beat idly at thy gate;
And thou,—thou hast no thought of opening,
And from thy peace are we still separate.

Yet, comrades, though ye come together there,

And search across the shadows for my face,
Until the pines murmur of your despair,

I think I shall not tell my hiding-place,
For ye know not the path ye would pursue,
And it is late our footsteps to retrace.

Too weak am I, and now not one of you—
So weary are ye of each ancient way—
Retaineth strength enough to seek a new;

And ye are blind—knowing not night from day;
Crying at noontime, "Let us see the sun!"
And with the even, "O for rest, we pray!"

O Blind and fearful! Shall I, who have won
At last this little portion of content,
Yield all to be with you again undone?

Because ye languish in your prisonment
Must I now hearken to your bitter cry?
Must I forego, as ye long since forewent,

My vision of the far-off open sky?
Nay! Earth hath much ungiven she yet may give;
And though to-day your laboring souls would die,
From earth my soul gaineth the strength to live.

O covering grasses! O Unchanging trees!
Is it not good to feel the odorous wind
Come down upon you with such harmonies

Only the giant hills can ever find?
O little leaves, are ye not glad to be?
Is not the sunlight fair, the shadow kind,

That falls at noon-time over you and me?
O gleam of birches lost among the firs,
Let your high treble chime in silverly

Across the half-imagined wind that stirs
A muffled organ-music from the pines!
Earth knows to-day that not one note of hers

Is minor. For, behold, the loud sun shines
Till the young maples are no longer gray,
And stronger grow their faint, uncertain lines

Each violet takes a deeper blue to-day,
And purpler swell the cones hung overhead,
Until the sound of their far feet who

About the wood, fades from me; and, instead,
I hear a robin singing—not as one
That calls unto his mate, uncomforted—
But as one sings a welcome to the sun.

Not among men, or near men-fashioned things,
In the old years found I this present ease,
Though I have known the fellowship of kings

And tarried long in splendid palaces.
The worship of vast peoples has been mine,
The homage of uncounted pageantries.

Sea-offerings, and fruits of field and vine
Have humble folk been proud to bring to me;
And woven cloths of wonderful design

Have lain untouched in far lands over-sea,
Till the rich traffickers beheld my sails.
Long caravans have toiled on wearily—

Harassed yet watchful of their costly bales—
Across wide sandy places, glad to bear
Strange oils and perfumes strained in Indian vales,

Great gleaming rubies torn from some queen's hair,
Yellow, long-hoarded coin and golded dust,
Deeming that I would find their offerings fair.

—O fairness quick to fade! Ashes and rust
And food for moths! O half-remembered things
Once altar-set!—I think when one is thrust

Far down in the under-world, where the worm clings
Close to the newly-dead, among the dead
Not one awakes to ask what gift she brings.

The color of her eyes, her hair outspread
In the moist wind that stifles ere it blows,
Falls on unwatching eyes; and no man knows
The gracious odors that her garments shed.

And she, unwearied yet and not grown wise,
Follows a little while her devious way
Across the twilight; where no voice replies

When her voice calls, bravely; and where to-day
Is even as yesterday and all days were.
Great houses loom up swiftly, out of the gray.

Knocking at last, the gradual echoes stir
The hangings of unhaunted passages;
Until she surely knows only for her

Has this House hoarded up its silences
Since the beginning of the early years,
And that this night her soul shall dwell at ease

And grow forgetful of its ancient fears

In some long-kept, unviolated room.
And so the quiet city no more hears
Her footsteps, and the streets their dust resume.

But what have I to do with her and death
Who hold these living grasses in my hands,—
With her who liveth not, yet sorroweth?

(For it shall chance, however close the bands
Of sleep be drawn about her, nevertheless
She must remember always the old lands

She wandered in, and their old hollowness.)
—Awaiting here the strong word of the trees,
My soul leans over to the wind's caress,

One with the flowers; far off, it hears the sea's
Rumor of large, unmeasured things, and yet
It has no yearning to remix with these.

For the pines whisper, lest it may forget,
Of the near pool; and how the shadow lies
On it forever; and of its edges, set

With maiden-hair; and how, in guardian-wise,
The alder trees bend over, until one
Forgets the color of the unseen skies

And loses all remembrance of the sun.
No echo there of the sea's loss and pain;
Nor sound of little rivers, even, that run

Where with the wind the hollow reeds complain;
Nor the soft stir of marsh-waters, when dawn
Comes in with quiet covering of rain:

Only, all day, the shadow of peace upon
The pool's gray breast; and with the fall of even,
The noiseless gleam of scattered stars—withdrawn
From the unfathomed treasures of heaven.

And as the sea has not the strength to win
Back to its love my soul, O Comrades, ye—
In the wood lost, and seeking me therein—

Are not less impotent than all the sea!
My soul at last its ultimate house hath won,
And in that house shall sleep along with me.

Yea, we shall slumber softly, out of the sun,
To day and night alike indifferent,
Aware and unaware if Time be done.

Yet ere I go, ere yet your faith be spent,

For our old love I pass Earth's message on:
"In me, why shouldst thou not find thy content?"

"Are not my days surpassing fair, from dawn
To sunset, and my nights fulfilled with peace?
Shall not my strength remain when thou art gone

"The way of all blown dust? Shall Beauty cease
Upon my face because thy face grows gray?
Behold, thine hours, even now, fade and decrease,

"And thou hast got no wisdom; yet I say
This thing there is to learn ere thou must go:
Have no sad thoughts of me upon the way

*"Thou takest home coming; for thy soul shall know
The old glad things and sorrowful its share
Until at last Time's legions overthrow
The House thy days have builded unaware."*

Now therefore am I joyful who have heard
Earth's message plain to-day, and so I cry
Aloud to you, O Comrades, her last word,

That ye may be as wise and glad as I,
And the long grasses, and the broad green leaves
That beat against the far, unclouded sky:

*Who worships me alway, who alway cleaves
Close unto me till his last call rings clear
Across the pathless wood,—his soul receives
My peace continually and shall not fear.*

A PRELUDE WRITTEN BY FRANCIS
SHERMAN IS PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR
HIM AND FOR HERBERT COPELAND
AND F. H. DAY AND THEIR FRIENDS
CHRISTMAS M D CCC XCVII

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A PRELUDE ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see

Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.