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POEMS

BY

FREDERIC MANNING

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1910

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TO

LLE. and RYLLIS

WITH MY LOVE

"Kore" in *The English Review*. I am indebted to the Editors of these Reviews for permission to include them in this volume.

F. M.

[Pg viii]

[Pg ix]

CONTENTS

	PAGE
	1
THESEUS AND HIPPOLYTA	
LA TOUSSAINT	11
THE FOUNT	13
TRISTRAM	14
THE SOUL OF MAN	16
THE VENTURERS	18
AFTER NIGHT	20
APRIL DANCE-SONG	25
SONG OF THE SOUL	27
A. C. S.	29
TO A BUSH-BABY	31
CANZONE	33
EROS GLITTERING	36
KORE	38
STILL LIFE	40
BLODEUWEDD	41
HELGI OF LITHEND	44
LES HEURES ISOLÉES	69
THE POOL	70
NOON	71
BEAUTY'S WISDOM	72
THE HOUSE IN THE	
WOOD	73
BUTTERFLIES	74
THE SWALLOW	75
LIGHT	76
LOVE'S HOUSE	77
FOREST MURMURS	78
THE CRYSTAL DREAMER	80
SOLEIL COUCHANT	81
TOUT PASSE	82
LOVE ALONE	83
LARK AND NIGHTINGALE	86
REVENANTS DES	
ENFANTS	87
AD CINARAM	89
PAST	90
SERENADE	91
MEMORY	92
L'AUBE	94
DEATH AND MEMORY	95
DEATH AND NATURE	96

[Pg x]

[Pg xi]

[Pg xii]

[Pg 1]

THESEUS AND HIPPOLYTA

TO J. G. FAIRFAX

Noon smote down on the field,

Burning on spears and helms,
Shining from Theseus' shield.
As a wave of the sea that whelms
A rock, and its crest uprears,
Through the wreck of the trampled wheat
The charge of the charioteers
Thundering broke. A sleet
Veiled light, and the air was alive,
As with hissing of snakes, as with swarms
Of the Spring by a populous hive,
As with wind, and the clamour of storms:
So hurtled the arrowy hail
Loosed from the Amazon ranks,
Smote ringing on brazen mail,
Struck fanged through the shuddering flanks
Of the stallions; and half were hurled
In the dust, and broken, and brayed
By the chariots over them whirled,
Which, eager and undismayed,
Swept ruining on to the hordes
Of the Amazonian camp,
With the lightning of terrible swords;
Till the dead were heaped, as a ramp
For the quick. But the chariots shocked
On the thicket of close-set spears;
And the long ranks reeled, and rocked,
Broke; and the charioteers
Went through them, cleaving as ploughs
Cleave earth: they were rent, and tossed
With the tumult of tortured boughs.
And the stallions, with foam embossed,
Fought, tearing each other with teeth,
In the red, blind rage of their lust,
Screaming; and writhed underneath
The wounded, trodden as must
Of the grapes trodden out in the press,
Empurpling the knees, and bare
Thighs of the men. Through the stress
Of their shoulders drove as a share,
Hippolyta. Avenging she came;
And they streamed, and they surged round her car,
The women: her face was a flame
As she rode through the tempest of war;
And they cried, made glad with the sight,
As those desiring the dawn,
When the darkness is cloven by light,
Cry for gladness: they rallied, upborne,
When she rayed as the sun through their cloud.
But she strung the bow, and she prayed
Unto Artemis, calling aloud,
As a maid might call to a maid;
And the Goddess of shining brows
Heard, as she paused from the chace
Upon Tainaros hoary with snows;
And a shadow darkened her face:
A shadow, and then a ray
Lightening, glorying, smiled,
As her thought pierced years to a day
Unborn, and an unborn child,
With the pure fount of his praise
Lifted to her, from the shrine
Rock-hewn, at the three cross-ways
In a waste of hills, as wine
Gladdening her; and she shed
A wonder, a terror, a fear,
A beauty that filled with dread,
A glory no eyes might bear
On her maid; stooped, hushed, from the height
Her thought, as a bird on the wing,
Rained down from her, swifter than light.
Hippolyta notched on the string
An arrow, and loosed it, and smote,
As he drove at her car with a jest,
Agelaus, cleaving his throat
Speechless; and smote through the breast

[Pg 2]

[Pg 3]

[Pg 4]

[Pg 5]

Polythereses; and Euenor then
Felt the teeth of the flints at his veins,
As his mares dragged him back to his men
All bloody, entangled in reins;
Then Damastor she smote: and they fled
As doves or as linnets fly
When a hawk that has towered overhead
Stoops, ravening, out of the sky
On their quires. But her arrows sighed
After them, swifter than feet:
They ran, shrieked, stumbled, and died,
Shot through with her shafts. In the wheat,
With the sunlight gilding their greaves,
Helmets, and shields, and mail,
They lay, strewn thickly as leaves
When Autumn has swung his flail.
But afar, where Thermodon rolled
The deep, swift strength of its flood
To the ocean turbidly gold,
Drave Theseus, eager for blood;
And as herds stampede in affright
At the reek of the beast in the air
Precipitately through the night
When a lion forth comes from his lair,
So the women before him fled
In a rout, headlong, overborne,
For he drave as a beast all red,
With the blood of the prey he had torn,
Circled them round; they were rent,
Whirled under him, flung from him, far
Seaward, and lost; until spent,
Heaped in a mound by her car
Broken, and dying, and dead,
Hippolyta saw. And she fled.

[Pg 6]

Theseus followed. Afar,
Over the storm of the spears,
He had seen her face as a star
Shine; and no tremble of tears
Softened her terrible eyes,
Cruel they shone there, and blue
With the beauty of windless skies.
But her bowstring ever she drew,
Loosening arrows that sang
Through the air exulting as wind;
And the clamour of battle rang
Most by her car, while behind
The fierce, wild women upheld
Their queen, and their anger burned
In staring eyeballs. She felled
A man as her car overturned,
Sped onward, her swift white feet
The dead and the dying spurned
Who lay in the wasted wheat.
Theseus followed his prey
As a lean hound follows the fleet
Quarry: the dusty way
Smoked with the speed of his feet.
She was swift; but he burned in the chace:
He was flame, he was sandalled with fire,
Hungering after her face,
With a fury, a lust, a desire,
As a hound that whines for the blood
Of the hart flying winged with fear;
And she yearned, and she longed for the wood,
Seeming far from her still, though near,
And she strained, and she panted, and pressed,
With her head flung backward for breath,
And the quick sobs shaking her breast,
Agonised, now, as by death,
Fearing utterly, fighting with fate,
Stumbling. And swifter behind,
With a love made hot by his hate,
Strained he pursuing. The wind,
Lifted, and played with the fold

[Pg 7]

[Pg 8]

Of her chlamys; and showed made bare
The swift limbs shining, as gold
From sunlight, and streamed through her hair
As wind in a cresset of fire,
As tresses of flame in the night,
While she fled, desired, from desire,
Till the brakes hid the flame from his sight.

[Pg 9]

Yea, but no long time he stood,
As one who resigns the prize
When a moment baffled. The wood
Hid her indeed from his eyes,
But the track of her feet lay clean
As the slot of a deer in the grass.
Slower he followed, and keen
Were his downcast eyes. As a glass
A wide lake gleamed in the ebb
Of the latest tide of the light;
Stars shone clear through the web
Of the branches, beckoning night;
The leaves fell softly, gilt
With autumn, and tawny and red;
And the blue of the skies lay spilt,
Pooled, shining, from late rains shed;
The tall reeds seemed to dream
By the full lake's murmuring marge.
She paused by a chiming stream,
Listened awhile, hung her targe
From a tree with her unstrung bow,
Loosened her breast-plate and greaves,
Bathing her limbs: and slow,
Like a snake through the fallen leaves,
Theseus crept on his prize,
Paused, to gaze on her grace,
The fine clean curve of the thighs,
Pure brow, and well-chiselled face,
Beautiful knees, and the play
Of muscles, splendidly wrought.
Theseus leapt on his prey.

[Pg 10]

Laughing softly, he sought
Ease from desire as a flame:
Struggled she still, and fought,
Calling on Artemis' name,
Who went, unheeding her prayer,
Beyond Tainaros streaming with floods,
Till the cries came faint through the air,
Dwindling among the woods,
For the numberless tongues of the leaves
Echoed with myriad cries
Low, and as plaintive as grieves
The wood under darkening skies.
The quick, sharp sobs from her breast
Came thick, and she, to whom spears
Hurling close were a zest
To battle, felt the hot tears
Well and fall from her eyes,
Struggled not long, lay still.
Theseus stooped on his prize,
Drank of her lips his fill.

[Pg 11]

LA TOUSSAINT

The wind wails overhead,
With a grieving sore;
And the little souls of the dead
Beat on the door.

Crying: Light and a fire,
We have travelled far
Over the plowed fields' mire.
Will ye lift the bar?

Would ye have us go all night
On the windy ways,
Who were strong men once in the light
Of our own days?

Ours are the fields ye plow,
And ye sow our wheat:
Let us stretch our hands to the glow
Of the warm, red peat.

[Pg 12]

We, who have lain in earth
For a long dark year,
Crave for our own old hearth,
And ye will not hear.

[Pg 13]

THE FOUNT

O quiring voices of the sleepless springs,
O night of beauty, calm and odorous,
O bird of Thrace, that ever ceaseless sings
The passion of thy music amorous,

My heart is but a spring that, with its prayer,
Is choric through an April plenilune;
My music but a rapture in the air,
A nightingale loud-voiced in leafy June.

[Pg 14]

TRISTRAM

Ah, my heart! my heart! It is weary without her.
I would that I were as the winds which play about her!
For here I waste and I sicken, and nought is fair
To mine eyes: nor night with stars in her clouded hair,
Nor all the whitening ways of the stormy seas,
Nor the leafy twilight trembling under the trees:
But mine hands crave for her touch, mine eyes for her sight,
My mouth for her mouth, mine ears for her footfalls light,
And my soul would drink of her soul through every sense,
Thirsting for her, as earth, in the heat intense,
For the soft song and the gentle dropping of rain.
But I sit here as a smouldering fire of pain,
Lonely, here! And the wind in the forest grieves,
And I hear my sorrow sobbing among the leaves.

[Pg 15]

[Pg 16]

THE SOUL OF MAN

TO YNEZ STACKABLE

In the soul of man there are many voices,
That silence wakens, and sound restrains:
A song of love, that the soul rejoices,
With windy music, and murmuring rains;

A song of light, when the dawn arises,
And earth lies shining, and wet with dew;
And life goes by, in a myriad guises,
Under a heaven of stainless blue.

The willows, bending over the river,
Where the water ripples between the reeds,
Where the shadows sway, and the pale lights quiver
On floating lily, and flowing weeds,

[Pg 17]

Have whispering voices, soft as showers
Of April falling on upland lawns,
On the nodding harebell, and pale wind-flowers,
Through silver evens, and golden dawns.

But softer than love, and deeper than longing

Are the sweet, frail voices of drifting ghosts;
In the soul of man they are floating, thronging
As wind-blown petals, pale, flickering hosts.

[Pg 18]

THE VENTURERS

Yea! even such as creep
With eyes bent earthward, in the little space
Between the dawn and waning of the day,
Between a sleep and sleep:
Even these, without a fixed abiding-place,
Travel, though tardily, upon the way
Labouring; while your lighter, swifter sail
Soars, rising over sudden hills of foam,
Exultant, through the storm; and, eager, flies
Like a fleet swallow up to meet the gale,
That drives with anger, through the heaven's dome,
Clouds, like great silver galleons in a sea of skies.

[Pg 19]

For every man, and each,
Is like a venture putting forth to sea,
Voyaging into unknown ways to find
Kindlier lands; and urges on to reach
Kingdoms which there may be
Hidden the grey gloom of the sea behind:
Fabulous kingdoms piled with golden toil
And the slow garnering of mortal dreams:
Such as lured forth the splendid sails of Spain.
So, journeying, we, in hope of that great spoil,
Steer hardily through all conflicting streams
Of Ocean, and count all the exultant battling gain.

[Pg 20]

AFTER NIGHT

TO LILLIE

Lovely thou art, O Dawn!
As a maiden, who wakes,
Opening eyes on a world
Filled with wonder and light,
After a sleep of dreams.
Issuing, clad in a robe
Of blue, and silver, and green.
From the tents of God in the east
Comest thou; as a thought
Slippeth into the mind
Of a maid, awakened from sleep,
By the swallows, under the eaves,
Twittering to their young;
As a flower awakens in Spring,
After the sweet warm rains
Pass away, and the sun
Nourishes it; and slow
The curving petals unclose.
And a presence escapes from its heart,
An odour remote, and vague,
Trembling upon the air,
A frail, mysterious ghost,
That comes and goes on the wind,
Like the inspiration of God.

[Pg 21]

Lovely thou art, O Dawn!
Coming shy as a maid,
At nightfall, to meet her love
By the ricks of clover and hay.
They speak not, but hands
Meet hands, mouth mouth, and desire
Broods like a God in the night,
Under the yellow moon:
They speak not, having all things.

[Pg 22]

Lovely thou art, O Dawn!
Healing comes in thine hands,
The wide sea laughs at thy birth,
The multitudinous waves
Ripple about thy feet,
For joy at thy coming; the birds
Shake the dew from the leaves,
Shake the song from their throats;
The full ewes call to the lambs;
Lowing, the cattle come
To drink at the reed-fringed pool,
Bending, they drink, and lift
Dripping muzzles, to gaze
With patient, satisfied eyes
Over the plenteous earth.
While slowly out of the fens,
And heavy plough-lands the mist
Rises to greet thee, and spires
Of thin blue smoke, that ascend
Trembling into the calm
Windless air, and float
From the habitations of man.

[Pg 23]

Man, too, cometh forth; but he
Scarcely regards thee: with eyes
Bent to the earth he comes,
Busy with cares of toil,
Plotting to gain him ease,
Meat, drink, and warmth for his age:
Plotting in vain! He goes
Out of the ways of life,
Utterly frustrate, and spent.
Gone, who was king of thy fields!
Gone, who was lord of thy flocks!
Like a dream. And his children forget,
Even they, too, that he was.
They turn to their toil, and eat,
Sleep, drink, as of old he did,
Spinning the woof and the warp
Of life, on the Looms of Stone
Which the Fates rule, and God.

[Pg 24]

Yea, we are labourers all;
Even as bees for man
Gather the honey from flowers,
So do we labour for God
Unwittingly. Yea, and the days
Bringeth to each his reward,
A final sleep and a peace.
Swiftly they pass, the days,
Winged with flame are their feet,
Devouring us and our kin,
As flame the stubble consumes.
But the grain is garnered, perchance,
In the great, wide barns of God,
Laid up in a golden heap,
As a wise king's treasury is
Heaped with the yellow gold.

Lovely thou art, O Dawn!
Creating, out of the dark,
This bright, and beautiful world
Again: and leading each day
As a bride to man, whence he
Begets him wonderful deeds.
And, surely, because thine hands
Lead us at last to peace,
Lovely thou art, O Dawn!

[Pg 25]

APRIL DANCE-SONG

TO MISS DORA CURTIS

April with her fleet, sweet,
Silver rain, and sun-rays,
Cometh, and her feet beat
Lightly, on the lawn.
Softly, for her sake, break
Flowering the wet boughs;
By the brimming lake, wake
Lilies every dawn.

Broken on the stream, gleam
Rays, to drown where weeds wave;
Shining with her dream, seem
April's eyes bedewed.
Shakes a silver chain, rain
Chiming with her music;
Life, that long hath lain slain
Riseth up renewed.

[Pg 26]

Softly as a dove, Love
Croons beneath the twilight;
While the winds above move
Softly through the night.
Out of all the skies, dies
Light, and only stars shine:
Stars to me her wise eyes,
And her face a light.

[Pg 27]

SONG OF THE SOUL

My life was woven long ago,
Or ever this our earth was fair,
With mingled threads of love and woe,
Hate, tears, and laughter, hope, despair.
Yea! it was made ere water was,
Ere snow fell, or the bright dew shone
Upon the tender blades of grass;
It sate and dreamed its life alone.

Ere golden stars swam through the blue
Of heaven, singing as they came,
God wrought into it every hue,
And gave it wings and feet of flame:
A little thing of His own breath,
A word that trembled into song,
To fall through mists of life and death,
A frail thing conquering the strong.

[Pg 28]

All things that in the heavens are,
The silver-hornéd sailing moon,
The golden fire of every star,
Through seas of time shall slip and swoon,
And be as if they had not been;
But through the darkness of the night,
Through silence of that peace serene,
Lo! I shall fashion mine own light,

Remembering earth's shining streams
And all the heavens' starry grace.
Yea, dreaming once again the dreams,
Which were the beauty of thy face.

[Pg 29]

A. C. S.

April 10th, 1909

Ah! the golden mouth is stopped,
That so sweet was with its song,
Bright, and vehement as fire.
Grieve we, as a star had dropped
Out of Heaven's singing throng,
For the lord of our desire.

Bring we blossoms, lilies bring,
Such frail blooms as lured of old
Proserpina from the Hours:
All this April's lavishing,
Flame of sudden crocus-gold,
Sudden foam of starry flowers.

[Pg 30]

Spring hath slain the lord of Spring:
He, whose song was fire and dew,
Lieth in her lap, and slain
By her, whom he loved to sing,
As she came, with sandals blue,
Through the shifting rays, and rain.

Ah! the golden mouth is stopped
Whence the whole of April's song,
All her sudden, wilful fire,
All her stores of honey dropped.
Yet about our ways they throng,
Words he winged with his desire.

[Pg 31]

TO A BUSH-BABY

Little one, so soft and light,
Haunting silent, darkened ways,
In the shadow of the night,
Thee I praise.

Such an elf as danced of old,
Light as thistle-down or froth,
By Titania's throne of gold,
Little Moth.

What strange fate linked thee and me,
In this world of hope and fears?
Surely God hath sheltered thee
From our tears.

Hands thou hast, and eyes that seem
Troubled, by some pain obscure,
As though life were but a dream,
Nothing sure.

[Pg 32]

Is thy tiny spirit vexed,
As our own, by vague distress,
Haunted, by our life's perplex
Weariness?

Wondering, at all the strange
Loveliness of lapsing days;
Change that passeth into change,
Rain or rays?

Little hands that cling to me,
Helpless as mine own, and weak,
What in this world's mystery
Do we seek?

[Pg 33]

CANZONE

TO DOROTHY SHAKESPEAR

Mine eyes have seen the veiled bride of the night,
Before whose footsteps souls of men are blown,
As are dead leaves, about the wind's swift feet.
Wherefore great sorrow cometh through my song:
A wind of grieving, through the branches wet,
When all the alleys of the woods are lit
With yellow leaves, and sere, and full of sighs.

Through the bare woods she came, and pools of light
Were darkened at her coming; and a moan

Broke from the shuddering boughs, and all the fleet
Leaves whirled about her passage, with the throng
Of her lamenting ghosts, who cried regret,
And passed as softly as the bats that flit
Down silent ways, beneath the clouded skies.

[Pg 34]

Wherefore I grieve, that no more in my sight
Are mortal women lovely. I am grown
Amorous of her lips with kisses sweet,
For her deep eyes in their enchantment strong.
Yea! I am wasted with my passion's fret:
Restless, that my poor worship may not quit
The pure light of her face, which made me wise.

Great peace she hath, and dreams for her delight,
Wherewith she weaves upon the Looms of Stone,
Choosing such colours as she deemeth meet,
Gold, blue, and vermeil skeins; and there among
Her spools of weaving threads, her dreams beget
Life, from her nimble fingers and quick wit,
Mirrored in mortal life, which fades and dies.

These are made whole and perfect in the bright
Broderies of her hands, while by her throne
Move unborn hours, which in her cave discrete
She hideth, though her secret thoughts prolong
Soft moments mortal hearts so soon forget,
Bright, supple forms, with swift limbs strongly knit,
Moving as light in dance as melodies.

[Pg 35]

Wherefore, though in the cold I wail my plight,
And wander, through the hoary woods, alone,
Hunted, and smitten of the wind and sleet,
Among these rooted souls, I would not wrong
The intense white flame of beauty mine eyes met,
And married for a moment: in this pit
My blinded soul feeds on her memories.

Go, thou, my song! Tell her, though weeping, yet
Her face is mine: such joy have I in it
I cannot shut the splendour from mine eyes.

[Pg 36]

EROS GLITTERING

Love is born as the day over the floods, rising in tides of light,
Quenching glitter of stars, gloom of the woods, flowing into the night.
Out of delicate dreams, out of a sleep, Love awakens, his eyes
Filled with marvellous light as from the deep wells in the wakened skies.
Glad is he of the earth, glad of the gems morning strews on the lawn,
Trembling on every flower bright diadems: Love, Love too is a dawn!

[Pg 37]

Ah! but not with a peace, not with a light, cometh he always down
Like a swallow in swift beautiful flight! Nay, as swimmers who drown
Those who strive with his strength: even as fire fallen out of the skies,
Even as lightning hurled, so his desire, bright, and blending the eyes.
Glittering through the storm cometh he then, rending all in his path,
Thus the implacable lord, master of men, smites his foes in his wrath.

[Pg 38]

KORE

TO MRS. W. N. MACMILLAN

Yea, she hath passed hereby, and blessed the sheaves,
And the great garths, and stacks, and quiet farms,
And all the tawny and the crimson leaves.
Yea, she hath passed, with poppies in her arms,
Under the star of dusk, through stealing mist,
And blessed the earth, and gone, while no man wist.

With slow, reluctant feet, and weary eyes,
And eyelids heavy with the coming sleep,
With small breasts lifted up in stress of sighs,

She passed, as shadows pass, among the sheep;
While the earth dreamed, and only I was ware
Of that faint fragrance blown from her soft hair.

[Pg 39]

The land lay steeped in peace of silent dreams;
There was no sound amid the sacred boughs,
Nor any mournful music in her streams:
Only I saw the shadow on her brows,
Only I knew her for the yearly slain,
And wept; and weep until she come again.

[Pg 40]

STILL LIFE

Pale globes of fragrant ripeness, amber grapes
And purple, on a silver dish; a glass
Of wine, in which light glows, and fires to pass
Staining the damask, and in dance escapes;
Two Venice goblets wrought in graceful shapes;
A bowl of velvet pansies, wherein mass
Blues, mauves, and purples; plumes of meadow-grass;
And one ripe pomegranate, that splits and gapes,
Protruding ruby seeds: a feast for eyes
Better than all those topaz, beryl fruits
Aladdin saw and coveted: these call,
To minds contented and in leisure wise,
Visions of blossoming boughs, and mossy roots,
And peaches ripening on a sunny wall.

[Pg 41]

BLODEUWEDD

Math, upon a summer day,
Gathered blossoms of the May;
Cherry-blossom, too, which fell
On the surface of a well;
Silver froth, and foam of flowers,
Golden rays on drifting showers;
Dew, and frost, and flames of fire,
And he fashioned his desire:
Made a woman, slim and fair,
Blodeuwedd of the lovely hair.

Blodeuwedd of the shining face
Ranged the forest, with the grace
Of a forest-thing, as wild,
Wilful as a wanton child.
How could men withhold their eyes
From her? She was light, the skies,
Dawn, and dew to them. It seemed,
Looking at her, that they dreamed
All the joys of heaven had been
Hidden her twin breasts between,
Bound upon her tranquil brows
That were white as winter snows,
Hidden in her curving lips,
Folded round her flowing hips.
Yea! for them she seemed to shine
With a beauty all divine.

[Pg 42]

Blodeuwedd of the little ears
Had, alas! no gift of tears,
Had no heart at all to love,
Knew not what deep sorrows move
Through the dim ways of our heart,
Knew of mortal grief no part.
She, like sunlight through the rain,
Drifted through our world of pain,
Fed her joy with myriad kisses,
Stolen pleasures, honeyed blisses;
Then danced on her wanton way
Like a gleam of gold through gray.
Men fell, knowing they would fall,

For Math gave no heart at all.

[Pg 43]

Blodeuwedd, I have made in thee
Of my love's deep sorcery,
Even as Math made the gay
Heartless one from flowers of May,
Foam, and frost, and shining dew,
Shall I find a heart in you?

[Pg 44]

HELGI OF LITHEND

TO ALFRED FOWLER

What are ye women doing? Get ye hence,
Nor weary God with prayers. But when I die,
Lay me not there among the peaceful graves
Where sleep your puny saints. I would go hence,
Over the loud ways of the sea again,
In my black ship, with all the war-shields out,
Nor, beaten, crawl unto the knees of God,
To whine there a whipped hound. Yea, send me forth
As when I sought rich lands, and glittering gold,
And warm, white-breasted women, and red wine,
And all the splendour and the lust of war.

[Pg 45]

Your Eden lies among soft-slipping streams,
Green meadows, orchards of o'er-laden boughs,
Red with ripe apples. It hath lofty walls
Beyond our scaling, that the peaceful folk
May sleep each night securely: white-faced priests,
And convent women, such as wail all day
Before lit candles, in the idle fume
Of incense rising. I would go where sit
Tall Odin, and his golden-mailed sons,
Thor, Hermod, Tyr and Heimdail, Frey and Niord,
With the blue-vestured Mother of the Gods,
And saffron-snooded Freya, and Idun,
And Brage, harping. There the heroes are,
Whose armour rusts in ocean; and young men
Who fared with me adventuring, and lie
Now in an alien earth, or derelict drift
Upon the washings of the eternal tides.
But they still live in Asgard, drinking joy
Of battle, and of music, and of love.

[Pg 46]

Only I, I grow old, and bowed in head,
While the dark hour approaches and the night,
Exploring mine own soul, and lost therein.
I too would go and eat of Idun's apples,
The golden fruit, whereof the taste gives youth
Perpetual, and strength of hands renewed;
Be praised by Brage, and see Freya there,
The saffron-snooded, whose deep eyes are lit
With all love's perilous pleasures. I would ride
Over the glittering Bifrost bridge with Thor
And the great host of heroes; with the wind
Playing upon our banners, and the dawn
Leaping as flame from all the lifted swords,
And press of spears: and some day we shall come
Battering at the crystal walls of Heaven,
With brazen clangour of arms, and burn the towers
To be our torches, and make all the streets
Of jasper, and chalcedony, and pearl,
Slippery with the bloodshed. Will your saints
Pray back the onslaught of our lusting swords
With any prayers? I would not lie in earth
Under the sheep; but send me once again
Out through the storms, and though I lie there cold,
And stiff in my bronze harness, I shall hear
The exultation of the waves, the might
Of Aegir, and the creaking of the helm,
And dream the helm is in mine hands again,
While my long ship leaps up, like a live thing,
Against the engulfing waters, and triumphing rides,

[Pg 47]

Through thunder of turbulent surges and streaming seas,
Lifting and swaying, from trough to crest and trough,
With tense and grinding timbers, while the wind
Screams in the cordage and the splitten sail.

Ye have loved women, some of ye, and know
Therefore how I have loved the fickle sea,
Blue in the sunlight, sometimes, as the eyes
Of laughing children, wanton as a girl,
And then all hunger for us men, all fierce
Passionate longing, and then gray with rain,
Sullen. A very harlot is the sea,
A thing for men to master, full of moods,
Traacherous, as you see it when it crawls
Snakily over sunken rocks, or slinks
Furtively by, and snarls to show its teeth
Like a starved wolf. Many a goodly man
Women have loved and slain, but more the sea!
Though I forget, they are meeker women here,
Submissive to their master. They are not
The wild things that men warred with in my youth,
Haggards to gentle! These soft-bosomed doves
Who flutter round our footsteps, croon and coo
Amorous music through the languorous nights,
Low laughter stifled by close kisses shut
Hot on the laughing lips, love being a game
Now of your tamer men-folk with soft speech.
But love to me was no light laughter heard
Under a sickle moon, when blossoming brakes
Thrill with the nightingales, and eve is hushed
Like a blind maid, whose eyes are shut, and seem
To shut within herself her secret thoughts
Lest men should know them, and be ware of love,
And waken, eager. Eager! Love to me
Pulsed in the fingers and would clasp what seems
So aerial a vision: to have, to hold,
To drink of: and I knew how flesh could bound
Spirit; so that we lay drowsed, close to sleep,
Near as our bodies might, yet sundered thus
With how irreparable loss! All time,
Unborn or buried, meeting with our mouths
In a swift marriage, and the sacred night
Sweet with the song of arrowy desires
Shot from the bow of life into our quick,
And rooted there. Yea, life in one full pulse,
And then the glory darkened, withered, dead,
With lips dissevered, and with sundered limbs,
And two, where had been one, in the gray dawn.

Sigurd, my son, look where thy mother sits,
In the round archway, on her carven chair,
And gazes over the unquiet waves
Toward the horizon's calm, as if there lay
Peace, and the heart's desire, after much pain,
Fulfilled at last. Quietly sitting there,
She peoples all the blue of sea and skies
With golden hopes of youth, giving them life
From her own yearning, though they are long dead
And havened where dead years are. Such still eyes
She hath; and that strange patience women have
Whose dreams are broken. Love, with a keen sword,
Smote me; I saw the blue flame leap and fall,
When first I saw her eyes: and dim the earth,
And warfare, and seafaring, and the life
Which sang, and went with joyful colours clad,
Became until they were as frail as dreams;
While, as they died in dusk, her face grew fair
Swimming upon tired senses, as there swims
Up from the wreck of day the night's first star
Quickening through the silence. So, in her,
The music and the colour of the world,
The splendours of the earth and sky and sea,
Were shadowed: all of life was in her eyes.

Her house a shambles; and I, standing there,

A beast all red with slaughter. One white face
Like a white star! Was it not kingly spoil?
What man had not felt hunger in his hands
To flutter over the smooth flesh, and know
The wonder breathing? So even I must grasp
That winged, brief, fragile beauty, with rude strength
Fierce from the haste of hunger, ere I knew
What God had breathed his fire into my clay.

[Pg 51]

Yea! ere I knew, while yet I thought the gold
Mere dross for traffic in the market-place,
Such ware as I had dealt in. Mine eyes now
See her, as she was then: the tall, slim grace,
The golden head upon its silver stalk,
As frail as April's dewy lilies are,
Upon some wakening lawn; or as she lay
With long, smooth, supple thighs and little breasts
Bared, while mine eyes drank all the beauty in,
As earth drinks dawn with gladness: but her eyes
Veiled suddenly, and quick red stained her cheeks,
Flickering, and the bright soul fled from sight
To its obscure recesses, while my heart
Filled, drop by drop, with that strange wine of joy
Which raced like fire through me, until each sense
Ached, for the joy it gave, and thirsted more,
In plundering such pleasure. But her soul
Fled beyond reach of hands, remote, and veiled.

[Pg 52]

She lay there as if dead, and all my love
Was no more to her than the idle strength
Which breaks upon the beaches. I could feel,
Sometimes, she breathed beside me, and her breath
Came soft, and warm, through the red parted lips,
Fragrant upon my face. That night was filled
With myriad voices, myriad stars, and dews,
All choric! Yea, the very darkness glowed
With secret heat, as if the night were quick
By Love's own lord, and pregnant with a flame.

[Pg 53]

So was she mine, by the sword's right, whose heart
Went dreaming out over the unquiet sea
To Bergthorsknoll; and Sigurd, Olaf's son,
Such an one as the hearts of maids desire,
Being tall, and straight, and comely: never a man
Made such a friend or foe, on land or sea
His hands were skilful. I can love such men
In friendship or in fighting. He had come
To Swinefell in his fighting-ship, when Spring
Was white and ruddy in the fields and woods;
And they, perchance, had bent down o'er the fire
As day was closing, and had spoken low
In the dim light; and he had sailed in June
Southward for prey, descending toward the Seine
With help from Thrain the White in ships and men.
And I had come in autumn with my swords
For vengeance of a wrong, and left Thrain's stead
And town a heap of ash, being in wrath:
Though it were shame to burn so tall a town,
As men said; but the heart of me was grieved
For some slight he had put on me, and black
Is a man's anger; so I gave his stead
A prey to the red flames; and fighting died
Thrain, a man's death! But when I throned her here
Men came and said, "Lo, now will Sigurd come
For love of her, to take her hence again
And burn Lithend for vengeance." But I said,
Running my fingers down the smooth, keen blade,
"Sigurd will come! Why then, let Sigurd come."

[Pg 54]

But they all feared him, and again one spoke,
Saying, "Thy love will burn us, and our town.
Are there not many women in the world
To mate with, but the one he loves?" I struck
The craven fool a damned blow in the face,
Whereat they kept their counsel, and were still.
But one man, riding over a wild moor

When the black night was blacker with a storm
Saw in the play of lightnings from the clouds
Twelve armoured women riding, and they swooped
Eagle-wise on the earth, and riding came
To a lone house; and, spying through a chink,
He saw them weave a scarlet web of war,
With swords for shuttles, and men's heads for weights,
And they sang at their weaving. In those days
We sowed our corn with axes in our belts,
And each man armoured, and my people went
Fearfully, gazing out with anxious eyes
Over the seas for an unfriendly sail,
While I sat silent, eating mine own heart,
Until one ran with speed to me, as night
Came, dropping silence on the shining sea,
A man with lucky eyes, who cried, "They come!"
Pointing toward the rim of ocean, red
With the sun's blood; and that sight gladdened me,
To see their slack sails, idle, in a gore
Of dying glories, while their oars dripped fire,
Labouring up against the ebbing tide.

[Pg 55]

"They will come weary," said I, "and, perchance,
Lack water." And I set an ambush, there
Where Rangriver turns bitter with the sea,
If thirst should lure them; and they came with skins
To fill; and there we played a little while
With knives and axes, while they ran, and tripped
Over gnarled roots and boulders in the dark,
Calling their friends, and knew not where they ran,
For we would call the names we heard them call
In feigning, and thus lure them from the path.
Twenty tall fellows slew we in this wise,
Making the odds more even, and that night

[Pg 56]

They watched their ships, and lit the beach with fires
So that they might not fight an unseen foe,
Who struck them through the darkness. But I went
Homeward, and to the chamber where she lay
Sleeping, with tears upon her face; but sleep
Had stilled her troubles. As I looked on her,
Her breath came softly, like a child's. I watched,
Wondering if death might hold as fair a thing,
Hungering, though I would not break her dreams.
All night I watched her, that mine heart might keep
One face to dream of through the dark of death
If he should slay me. Then a sense of dawn
Stole gradually through the blue, wet air;
Cool dawn, with dew and silence, fair and fresh!

[Pg 57]

In the white light she lay there, and I looked
Long on her: and I left her then, and went,
Calling my men, and led them thence afield
To a smooth level sward, for fighting made,
Between the gray bents and the leafy woods,
A dancing-ground for maidens. Such a stir
Came from the beached black ships, as April, hears
About the populous hives, when the blown scents
Lure, to their garnering, the frugal bees,
And they swarm forth: so swarmed upon the shore
Sigurd's well-armoured men: some by the fires
Eating, some buckling on their gleaming arms,
Shouting their war-songs, beating on their shields
Full of rude jests; and I saw Sigurd there,
Standing apart, long-haired, and great of limb,
With a soft silken kirtle, and his helm,
Winged, flaming in the sunlight. Then my men
Halted, for vantage of the broken ground,
While I strode out upon the sward, and called
To Sigurd; but blind rage gat hold of him,
And he came at me, whirling his bright axe.

[Pg 58]

And I leapt out to meet him, so men say,
Laughing, and ran upon him, and his blow
Broke down my guard, and bit the shoulder-bone,
But mine axe clove clean through the angry face,
Right to the brain; and, as I drew it back,
He swayed, and fell, and his bronze armour rang
Loudly; and from both armies came a shout

Crying, "Sigurd is slain! Sigurd is slain!"
One mourning and one joyous, while my men
Stood round him prone, and marvelled at his strength,
And no one feared him now. But they came on
Avenging, and the crashing of their shock
Broke round us; and the ringing blows, and shouts,
And screams of dying men were born aloft
With dust of battle; and lightening axes whirled,
Lifting and falling: keen, and bright, and blue
They fell, but they were lifted dull and red,
While we rolled backward and forward in waves of fight,
And fluctuating chance, and those who fell,
Drowned there, amid the press of trampling feet.

[Pg 59]

So, all day long, the uncertain combat flowed,
Between the gray bents and the broken ground;
And the smooth sword was cumbered with the dead,
On whom we stumbled. But at last the night
Came, shadowing with her blue veils the sea,
And we and they drew off; and when the noise
Of war was stilled, and only moans of men
Broke silence, with the laughter of the sea
That curled, and foamed, and rippled on the beach,
I hailed them, and they answered me, and sent
Tall Flosi, son of Gunnar, their best man
Since Sigurd fell. Over the level sward,
Now with the dead strown thick as shocks of corn
After a reaping, strode he; and the moon
Tipped his bright spear with silver, lit his helm
And burnished shield; but when his eyes and mine
Met, and he knew me, he stood waiting there.
And I spoke, pointing, with my spear, to those
White faces staring sightless to the moon
From the smooth sward: "Lo! let us make a truce
And mourn these dead, for they were goodly men.
My friends or thine, who lie there strengthless now
With Sigurd whom I slew. Him men shall mourn
In Bergthorsknoll, as the bright gods in heaven
Mourn golden Balder; but his praise shall be
Within the hearts and on the lips of men
A song for ever. Him I hated not,
Nay, rather loved! Though he bore hate to me
For Swinefell's spoiling, and for Gudrun's sake,
Her, whom mine eyes beholding, straight mine heart
Desired with all its strength. So for one prize
Strove we, nor could we yield, but one must die:
Whence lies he there. The gods have willed it so!
But let us build a pyre within his ship
Heaped up with spoil, and let us mourn for him,
And launch him, burning, on the eternal sea.
And when the dawn of the third day is red,
If your mind is for fighting, we shall fight
Again; or ye shall launch your ships and go
Over the bright ways of the shining sea."
I spake, and Flosi answered, gazing down
Upon the dead, whose armour glimmered there
Under the shining moon, as glimmer pools
Innumerable in the leafless woods:
"Yea, one slim maid hath slain too many men.

[Pg 60]

[Pg 61]

Well is she Gudrun called, unto men's hearts
A snare and peril! What is in one face
That men should die for it? A kitchen slut
To some dull clown is royal. But he lies
There, and I cannot hold mine heart from tears
So loved I him: I count all women light
As flax beside his loss. Why didst not thou,
When we two met amid the ringing blows
And mine axe failed me, strike?" And I, to him,
Impatient, for my wound was cold and irked
My shoulder: "Go, and boast among the ships
That Helgi fled thee. Helmsdale held me once.
I could not slay thee for Kiartan's sake."
And he, astonished, stood there, as if light
Fell on remembered places in his heart:

[Pg 62]

"Kiartan! O Kiartan!" broke from him
In one long sigh; and he drew in his breath
Quickly, remembering his brother's stead
Above the land-locked bays; and his heart saw
His mother bend down over the bright hearth,
With her sweet, patient face, so old and wise,
Lit by the flickering firelight. Thus he stood,
Forgetting war and death; and when he spoke
Again, his voice was changed, and soft in speech,
While we went down toward the twinkling fires
That lit the shore, and set a watch with brands
To scare the wolves, who barked within the woods,
Snuffing the tainted air. And Flosi came,
Alone of all the Jarls, up to mine house,
While they abode there. And when dawn was red
Upon the third day, launching their black ships,
They went upon the bright ways of the sea.

[Pg 63]

Softly the sails dropped down that sea of light
Under the milky skies; all liquid gold
The pure fire broken by the cleaving prows
And whitening in their wake; as I watched them
I thought all life went thus, man's voyaging heart,
Over the loud, glad, golden ways of time.
With oars taugth by a song, to seek some joy,
Some rapture, some warm isle in happy seas,
Adventuring. A lure there is for us
In far horizons, dreamed-of, misty lands.
A voice that calls us. Yea, but look on love!
She lay there who, but two nights past, had watched
One burning ship drift over the sea's rim
Into the dark. Was she not mine indeed,
Now, whom mine arm had won? All mine! all mine!
The long, bright braids of hair; the little breasts,
Like cups of carven ivory; the smooth,
Cool, marble whiteness; curves one knew by touch
Only, too gradual for eyes: it seemed
God's hands, there, had felt joy in them, and wrought
Delighting: and the blue eyes, brimmed with light;
And thee, my son, forged in the intense hour's flame
And inmost heat of whiteness. Mine! all mine!
All mine: and yet some shadow slipped from me,
Some frail, soft, sweet, intangible delight
Escaping from mine hands. So have I gone
Over blue windless seas, bare of all life,
And urged the labouring oars; but every dawn
Showed still the same blue, stainless shield, whose boss
Was our one ship, until it hushed our songs,
That deep, vast, desolating blue of sky
And tranquil waters. I had all of her
But some few drops of joy she yielded not,
They being hers to give or keep, a dew
Distilled within her soul. Yea, I loved her!
I think no love is peace, and we but break
Against each other; and our hands are vain
To grasp what is worth holding; and our sense
Too coarse a net to snare what no speech saith,
We go alone through all our days, alone
Even when all is given! But him she loved;
And dreamed upon his face, remembering.

[Pg 64]

[Pg 65]

Even so, I am glad! Yea, all my heart is glad
I had her for mine own. I grasped the joy,
The quick, warm, breathing life; and if the dream
Fled from me, yet mine hands held priceless things,
And dreams are winged to fly. They are poor fools
Who deem the better love is a bowed heart
And silent lips. If thou hadst beauty close,
Because the white bird fluttered on thy breast,
Wouldst loose it? Or would not a quicker pulse
Beat in thine heart, and eager fingers close
More firmly on the snowy, ruffled plumes,
Till the thing yielded, panting? Will ye win?
Then must ye dare. There is a lean saint stalled
Somewhere among my scullions, in the stead:

A half-drowned rat we haled from out the sea,
Who says God saved him! He stakes his poor life,
Having not strength enough to lift mine axe,
Against a greater glory. Love to him
Is as a golden net to snare his feet,
And women perilous lures: he would keep them maids,
Nor make one mother, but would rather see
Life, which the gods made lovely, fade and die
Ashen as winter woods, nor break again
In all the foaming blossom of the spring,
Whitening every field. He never knew
The keen, sweet joy that smites through every sense
Into the shuddering soul, and whelms the world
In an immortal glory, while God builds
Life beyond us, creating out of clay
The world's imperishable dream, the hope,
The wonder, the desire, that gives us sight
Beyond our mortal doom. I have little wit;
I only know that in the looms of time
God's will moves like a shuttle to and fro.
I have heard him in the waves, and on the wind;
I have seen his splendour shine among the swords,
Soften the eyes of women, light and smile
On a child's lips; and know his presence there
Where all the waves stream eagerly to lick
The sunset's bloody splendours. Balder, the bright
Beautiful Balder, whose eyes hold our hope,
Who hath made love a light, and life a song,
In all men's eyes, and on their lips, who hath sown
The fields of heaven thick with golden fires,
As men sow corn: and forges in this flame,
Of life, with ringing blows, a strong man's soul
As swords are fashioned, keen-edged, straight, and blue,
How shall I die dispraising thee, whose praise
Comes, laden with the blown scents of the spring,
Opening dewy eyelids of bright buds,
And brings the swallows? Thee I will not curse,
Nor life, nor women, nor the fool himself
Who blinks weak eyes, and calls the glory vain.

[Pg 66]

[Pg 67]

The sea is darkened now; and I can hear
The long moan of the waves upon the shore.
Some fret is on me! I would go again
Over the gray fields of the restless sea,
Among the vexed waves and the stinging spray.
Nay, one drowns here in death; and why not there
To wash about among the changing tides
Under the changing moon? I would not rest
Within a little earth. As Sigurd went,
Send me; and she will watch me burning, drift
Over the rim of Ocean, ere I sink
Into the dark still deeps, where are ribbed wrecks
And strong men dead. Lo! it is time to die,
For the old glory fades out of the world
And the swords rust in peace. Yea, I would go
Now, for this death is but another sea
To venture on; a strong man will win through
And cast up somewhere on another shore
With his old lust for fighting. All of life
I have seen, and many cities of proud kings,
And I have gotten gold, and wine, and fame,
Among strange peoples, and white girls were mine
To love a little while on drowsy nights,
When a low, yellow moon lights up a land
Full of ripe stooks. Now it is time to go,
Regretting nothing. Gudrun, come to me!
Come to me, Gudrun! Lean thy lovely face
Over me once again. 'Tis wet with tears:
We have grown close together. Weep no more;
Let the old wonder light up in thine eyes;
Death will be dark without it.

[Pg 68]

[Pg 69]

*Tout homme à s'expliquer se diminue. On se doit
son propre secret. Toute belle vie se compose
d'heures isolées.*

HENRI DE RÉGNIER.

[Pg 70]

THE POOL

My soul is like a lake, whose waters glass
Stars, and the silver clouds which uncontrolled
Sail through the heavens, and the hills which fold
Its valley in a peace, tall reeds, and grass,
And all the wandering flights of birds, that pass
Through the bright air; and, in itself, doth hold
Naiads with smooth white limbs and hair of gold:
So is my dreaming soul. And yet, alas!
It holds but visions, unsubstantial things.
Transient, momentary; and the feet
Of winds that smite the waters, blur the whole.
Shattering with the hurrying pulse of wings
That crystal quiet, which hath grown so sweet
With fragile reveries. Such is my soul.

[Pg 71]

NOON

TO ANITA FOCKE

Charmed into silence lay
The forest, dimly lit;
No wind that summer day
Moved the least leaf of it;

No choric branches stirred
Its calm profound and deep,
Nor voice of any bird,
But silence dreamed like sleep.

Like dew upon the grass
It fell upon my soul,
Loosed it to soar, and pass
Beyond the stars' control.

Vague memories it woke,
Shapes far too frail for touch;
And then the silence broke,
Lest I should learn too much.

[Pg 72]

BEAUTY'S WISDOM

As light, as fragrance from her face,
A beauty is distilled
More deep and tranquil than Youth's grace,
The love that is fulfilled.

Nor transient this: the touch of years
But strengthens it with peace;
She reaps the moments as the ears
Are reaped, of Earth's increase.

[Pg 73]

THE HOUSE IN THE WOOD

I build of fair and fleeting things
A little home for Love,
In thickets where the linnet sings;
My house is roofed above
With aspen leaves, that never cease

Their whispering, though winds have peace.

And when the Autumn comes, the roof
Is shed in golden showers;
So sing I this for thy behoof,
Love passes with the flowers:
Ruined our house with wind and rain
Till Spring shall build it up again.

But though old age may dim our fire,
This first close kiss will keep
Sacred for us our old desire;
And though the heavens weep,
Its fragile memory will be
All of our life for thee and me.

[Pg 74]

BUTTERFLIES

Fluttering, haphazard things,
Delicate as flowers ye fly,
Wandering on airy wings,

Creatures of a tranquil sky,
Born for one brief, golden day,
Dying ere the roses die.

Butterfly of colours gay
Flutter in capricious flight,
Hover in thy wanton play,

Gather honey of delight!
Not such harvest as the bee
Carries to his hive at night.

Night shall keep no place for thee,
Death at dusk shall mock thy wings,
So our poor souls seem to me

Fluttering, haphazard things.

[Pg 75]

THE SWALLOW

O swallow, thou art come at last!
The rain is sweet upon the leaves
Now Winter's wrath is overpast,
A wreath of blossom April weaves.

Swift through the air thy light wings pass,
Young willows droop their garlands green
Over the tranquil pool, thy glass
Where silver lilies float serene,

O songless bird! The cuckoo sings,
Filling the valley with his voice;
The larks, on their exultant wings,
In the blue deep of skies rejoice.

There is more music in thy flight,
Through sun or showers, swift and strong,
A creature of the air and light
Thou art, the very soul of song.

[Pg 76]

LIGHT

Hills that are bleak and bare
Lit by the light of noon,
Grow like a vision rare
In radiance of the moon.

So have I seen thy face,

Beautiful ever, lit
By some informing grace
Which all transfigured it.

[Pg 77]

LOVE'S HOUSE

Build for this little hour
A house where Love may sleep,
Some tranquil, fragrant bower.

A place where Grief may weep
Build for a little while,
In thine heart's hidden deep;

A place where Joy may smile
To make the hours fly fast,
And time and tears beguile.

Build not a house to last;
Perishes every flower
When Autumn once is past.

Build for this little hour.

[Pg 78]

FOREST MURMURS

Lyres of the woods, that awaken
Longings and infinite tears,
Memories stretching, forsaken,
Hands through the mist of the years,
Crowd through the branches that listen,
Shining with tears of the skies,
Dew-silvered branches that glisten,
Pools where the radiance lies,
Lighting a shadowy chamber
With glory of magical dreams,
Pearl, crystal, and wavering amber
In arrowy gleams.

[Pg 79]

Myriad lyres! O voices
Of Earth, and Ocean, and Air,
The pulse of thy music rejoices
With passion, the heart of despair;
Singing, eternally singing.
Ye are wasted with pain as with fire,
But voyaging ever and winging,
Arrayed in the wings of desire,
Through the ocean of light to the portals
Shining with silver that bar
The house of the deathless immortals,
Divine but afar.

[Pg 80]

THE CRYSTAL DREAMER

Sweet white mother of rose-white dreams,
Through my windows the song of birds pours in
And the sunlight on to my table streams.

As a clear globe prisons the golden light,
So I prison the dreams you shed on me,
Sweet white mother of dreams rose-white.

In a crystal globe I prison all things:
Sound is frozen to silence there;
Cover me over with wide white wings,
Prison my life in thy crystal sphere,
As a clear globe prisons the golden light,
Sweet white mother of dreams rose-white.

[Pg 81]

SOLEIL COUCHANT

Love is but a wind that blows
Over waves, or fields of corn,
Floating petals, falling snows,
The swift passing of the dawn.

These are all Love's signs, perchance,
Floating, fragile, drifting things!
Dead leaves are we in the dance,
Moved by his unresting wings.

Love is light within thine eyes,
Dearest! Love is all thy tears.
Let us for this hour be wise:
What have we to hope from years?

[Pg 82]

TOUT PASSE

Like foam and fire and frost
The hours dissolve and go;
Let not our time be lost.

Though the day seemeth slow,
Its feet are shod with fire.
Ceaseless the minutes flow.

Love, let us slake desire
At Life's deep well. Alas!
Full soon our Youth will tire

And we be mown like grass.
Make of this hour the most,
Ere on light wings it pass

Like foam and fire and frost.

[Pg 83]

LOVE ALONE

TO RONALD GRAY

Breathe soft, my flute, to-night thy wonted melody
Until, with careful hands, she lift the lattice-bars,
Showing her face among the faces of the stars;
Breathe soft, my flute, to-night till she come forth to me.

The choirs of birds are hushed within their bower of leaves,
But thou must pierce the darkness and the gathered gloom,
Climbing toward the lattice of her little room,
Where the sweet vines have hung their garlands from the eaves.

[Pg 84]

Surely no cheating dream, nor sightless depth of sleep
Will close her sense to music wrought for her delight;
Bid her come forth, like Cynthia, into the night;
Tell her, my flute, that here I sit alone and weep.

Fill the green orchard paths with music wrought of tears,
With kisses hot, with love my lips have left unshed,
Stretch hands for me through all this darkness to her bed,
Touch her soft hair, and breathe my message in her ears.

*Lo! I have gifts for thee, gifts from Amyclae brought,
Shoes for the feet I love, and shawls of scarlet wool,
Come, my beloved! we shall sit beside the pool
And watch within its glass the heavens star-inwrought.*

[Pg 85]

*Sleep hath thy mother lapped in heavy shrouds of peace;
Steal forth on silent feet, mine arms leap out for thee....
Shy as the moon she comes and bends her face to me,
Heavy with love to give my heart from love release.*

[Pg 86]

LARK AND NIGHTINGALE

When light wells up from her secret springs
And the stars are quenched in a purer fire,
From the blue of the heavens a blithe bird sings
Of the day's delight and the earth's desire.
Heart of my being, reply, reply!
 So Love singeth
Out of the deep of a dawning sky,
A little moment is all he bringeth.

When silver rays into shadows swoon,
A bird sings out of the calm of night
To the wandering sail of the wasted moon
And the stars that jewel the skies with light.
Heart of my being, rejoice, rejoice!
 Night hath given
To all thy yearnings one faultless voice,
A prayer to trouble the peace of heaven.

[Pg 87]

REVENANTS DES ENFANTS

Softly, on little feet that make no sound,
With laughter that one does not hear, they tread
Upon the primroses that star the ground,
Latticed by shade from branches overhead,
Swaying in moonlight; but their footsteps make
A twinkling like the raindrops on the lake.

The shy things that love silence and the night
Are fearless at their coming; as they pass,
Neither the nightingale nor owl take flight,
So gentle is each footfall on the grass;
They are a part of silence, and a part
Of sweetness sprung from tears hid in the heart.

[Pg 88]

Their faces we may not caress, nor hear
The little bodies that are soft as dreams;
Their life is rounded by another sphere,
They are as frail as shadows seen in streams:
A ripple might efface them, but they keep
Shadows of their existence in our sleep.

[Pg 89]

AD CINARAM

Sweet, though death may have thee utterly,
 Thou art with me:
For when I sleep, mine ear
 Wakes for thy voice, to hear
Thee; and I know at last that thou art near.

My soul then seems to put out hands,
 At thy commands,
Through the thin veils of flesh
 That hold it in a mesh,
For thy two hands to consecrate afresh.

Thoughts that all day are hidden deep
 Rise up in sleep:
The reconciling night
 Holds thee for my delight,
Beyond the senses or of sound or sight.

[Pg 90]

PAST

The wind is still
 And the night full of sighs.
Hast thou drunk thy fill

Of mine eyes?

Yea, of thine eyes;
But my heart is a-thirst
For what stirred first,
Like a light in the skies

Like a light that flows
Over barriers:
It has come and it goes,
Love full of tears.

[Pg 91]

SERENADE

Sleep, sleep, curtained round
By dim-coloured tapestries,
Wrought of dreams, nor let the sound
Stir thee of my melodies.
May sleep come to thee as slow
And as soft as falling snow!

Stars set in their spheres
Presage for thee all delight;
Sleep fall soft as tears
Of the stars the dews of night;
All fair things about thee keep,
Music that doth mix with sleep.

Dreams come, shining things,
Through the curtains of thy bed;
Doves fly with soft wings
Round thy golden, drowsy head:
Sleep, dream, dreaming smile,
Curtained from the world awhile.

[Pg 92]

MEMORY

Sweet as the lutes of love, from fields of sleep
Come murmurs of the rain; and reveries
Haunt the green ways their tryst with eve to keep.

Slumberous music, fragile melodies,
Move in the chiming leaves, like that loved pain,
Which fills the heart with restless memories.

Chime of the leaves and murmur of the rain
In mine own soul there are, and voices sweet,
Which help me the lost moments to regain.

The hours dance round me on their slender feet
With joys that pierce my heart, as keen as spears
Remembered sorrows, pleasures that were fleet

[Pg 93]

To vanish, or dissolve in dew of tears:
Seeing them thus, I cannot choose but weep.
Surely in this wise God shall reap the years.

Sweet with the fruits of love, from fields of sleep.

[Pg 94]

L'AUBE

Yea, it is dawn, alas!
Gray is the earth, and cold;
Swift was our night to pass.

Thy hair is like fine gold,
Over the pillows spread
And on the sheet's white fold

The light falls on thine head

And trembles in thine eyes
From which the dreams have fled.

But they keep memories;
Love burnt us up like grass:
Surely Love never dies!

Yea, it is dawn, alas!

[Pg 95]

DEATH AND MEMORY

Death hath not slain thee all: when twilight spends
Her liquid amber in the latest ebb
Withdrawing, and the day in silence ends,
Expectant of the stars, when through the web
Of woven boughs fall glimmering silver spears,
Our dreaming heart will stir, as if a light
Caress had touched it, and fill up with tears,
Remembering: nor only with the night
Fall that sweet sadness, light in a dark place,
Memory. Shrouded in her shrine of flesh,
The soul sits brooding, veiled of form and face
By Time, and in our mortal nature's mesh
Trammelled, yet sometimes hears the sound of wings
And sees, far off, divine, immortal things.

[Pg 96]

DEATH AND NATURE

When my poor bones are hearsed in quiet clay,
And final sleep hath sealed my wondering eyes,
The moon as now will sail through tranquil skies;
The soft wind in the meadow-grasses play;
And sacred Eve, with half-closed eyelids, dream;
And Dawn, with rosy fingers, draw the veils
Of silver from her shining face; and gales
Sing loudly; and the rain from eaveshoots stream
With bubbling music. Seek my soul in these;
I am a part of them; and they will keep
Perchance the music which I wrought with tears.
When the moon shines above the silent trees
Your eyes shall see me; and when soft as sleep
Come murmurs of the rain, ah, bend your ears!

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