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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SUNLIT HOURS ***

THE SUNLIT HOURS

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

CHARLES R. MURPHY

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THE SUNLIT HOURS

I

O the splendour of this joy of ours,
Woven of gold of the sun-lit hours!
Here stands the house in soft repose,
The garden and the orchard-close.
Here is the bench beneath the apple trees
Where lazily the blanched spring
Its petals now doth fling.
And here the luminous birds one sees
Soaring, like presages of light,
In the clear heaven of their flight.
And here, as of caresses rained in showers
From the lips of the higher blue,
Two lovely tarns of softest hue,
Bordered naively with involuntary flowers.
O the splendour of our joy, for we
Live doubly, in ourselves, and day's high ecstasy.

II

What tho' we see it break before us into flowers,
This garden where we pass the clear and silent hours?
In our two hearts are spirit-flow'rs unfurled,
Where blooms the fairest garden in the world.

For as flow'rs we live and breathe
When in laughter love breaks forth,
And our sorrows sigh like trees
In the dark winds from the North;

For we live as limpid lakes at calm
That mirror roses heavy with their balm,
And rich vermilion lilies of the South,
Each like a warm red mouth;
For we utter all delight
That leaps in feasts and in the spring
When in vows our words take flight,
Soar exultant on the wing.

Oh! what flowers are in our hearts unfurl'd
Within the fairest garden in the world!

III

This carven column whereon monsters cling
And twist among themselves with ravening jaws,
They seem to pant, and grip with mighty claws,
And from each other anguished cries to wring—
This was my soul before it knew thyself,

Oh, thou the ever new, the ever old!
Who earnest forth to me from deeps of self

Ardour between thy hands and joy untold.

I breathe a scent of faint familiar flow'rs
 Within thy heart that sleep;
And thirsty memory drinks deep
Of kindred echoes from past years of ours;
At the same instants in our childhood, tears,
Unknowing, we have wept;
We must have known like gladness and like fears,
Like trysts with grief have kept;
Long since was I bound to thee as thine own
By One who came, inscrutable, unknown,
Upon my life's adventurous battle field.
Oh! had I searched His face, forgetting fear,
I should have known thine eyes this many a year,
That there between his eyelids were reveal'd!

IV

The night, unfolding, banishes the day;
The moon seems, in its long survey,
To brood upon the sleeping silences;
All the air is pure and clear,
Pure and pale afar and near,
And clear the waters in the friendly mead;
What agony is in the slow
And steady drip of water from a reed,
That sounds and then is hushed below!

But in my hands thy hands I hold;
Thy steadfast eyes enfold
Mine eyes; I see
Thy peace like purest water undefiled
By cloudy fear, undimmed by hovering wraith
Of doubt, and oh, I see
The perfect faith
That rests within us like a sleeping child.

V

Remembering thy gracious gift to me,
 So simple, so profound,
My wondering heart is lost in prayer to thee.
How long it seemed before
I, groping, found
And knocked at thy heart's door;
And from how far I came at last to thee
Whose hands were stretched in silent
search for me.
My heart was eaten by corroding rust
That preyed upon my strength,
Defiled my trust;
I was weary, I was old with long mistrust,
I sickened of the roadway's empty length.
When thy feet wandered into my life's way
They brought a joy so exquisite to me
That, trembling and in tears, I can but stay
To worship silently.

VI

At times thou art the spacious light and air
Of all this tranquil morning garden, where

Sinuous paths wind in the blue haze
Like swans upon the deep blue water-ways.
At other times thou art the shivering wind
Exultant, cool,
Who passes, running fingers light and kind
Along the clear brow of the pool.
When with thy two hands thou touchest me,
I feel the brushing of cool leaves
Against my cheek;
 When midday cleaves
The dimness, all the shadows secretly
Meditate the words that thou didst speak.
So all the hours pass by some sweet grace
 Of thine, into my heart;
And when at last the wan night comes apace
And rapt in sleep and still, apart,
 Thy spirit lies,
Feel thro' thy closed eyelids how mine eyes
Dwell on thee with a love beyond compare,
More humble and more clinging than a prayer.

VII

Oh, let it knock upon our door,
That hand that taps with futile touch;
We have our joy, the rest—what can it offer more?
The rest with futile, listless touch?
Let them pass our door,
The wearied, mirthless joys
With their tinsel and their toys.
Let laughter rise and sound and disappear;
The crowd move on with million voices clear.

The moment is so fair with light
In this garden all about;
The moment is so rare with new-born light
Deep within us and without!
Ah, 'tis the part of wisdom, dear;
No longer seek we those who go
By the long highway drear,
With heavy feet and singing low.
But stay we here, contented as of old,
Though night itself strike out the sky above,
Loving within us the idea we hold
Of this most wondrous, steadfast thing, our love.

VIII

I have given all my heart to thee
As simply as a child
Giving a dewy flower, fresh and wild;
I pressed it to my lips and gave it thee—
I broke the flower's stem with burning hand;
Speak not, for words may hurt; but with thine eyes
Speak to my soul that it may understand.

The flow'r that is my heart, my sacrifice,
Tells thee quite simply that one must
Confide in virgin love, as children trust
In God who is so good and great and wise.

Let the bold spirit revel in the hills
In wilful dalliance and vanity,
But let us worship in simplicity
The very truth that holds our hearts and wills;
Nor can love be more fully said
Than when soul speaks to soul at night, and overhead

The innumerable silent stars like eyes
Burn each on each,
A speaking that surpasses speech,
Amid the barking silence of the skies.

IX

The youthful spring with wondrous might
Bursts out in all its clarity
Upon our wistful words and sight,
And bathes them deep in purity.
The wind and the slender lips of the flowers,
Trembling, scatter abroad in showers
Their syllables of light.

But the soul of us will not be caught
Within the chains that language wrought;
One simple flight of spirit doth enshrine,
Better than word or fitful thought,
Our joy in its abiding place divine,—
That heaven of thine wherein thy soul
Kneels gently down to mine,
And that where wistfully my soul
Kneels humbly there to thine.

X

Come out into the garden fair
Where now the brooding eve
Has closed the flowers with its tranquil light,
And in thy soul let sink the peaceful night;
For no longer may its gloom achieve
To trouble our deep prayer.

Above, the crystal stars are shining forth
With light translucent and more pure
Than ever came from out the frozen North;
Beyond them all, the peaceful skies endure.

The million voices of this mystery
Murmur around thee,
The million laws of nature's realm
Are stirring about thee.
The silver tides from all the universe o'erwhelm
Thy heart, but thou hast naught of fear or strife,
For thy soul knows—it is that love may be,
The love that is the work of life
And its mystery in thee.

Take then this peace the skies have sent,
And lay it to thy soul, since fear has gone,
This peace that floats, like some strange dawn,
Across the midnight of the firmament.

XI

How swiftly is she caught in ecstasy,
With her clear eyes of leaping flame;
She, so sweet with clarity,
Meek before life's sternest claim.
This eve how sudden fervour rayed
Her eyes! A simple word did entrance yield
To the garden where she stood revealed

Both queen and serving maid!
So meek herself, but for us two on fire;
To her must kneel whoever doth desire
The harvest of that joy that rolls
From out our two surchargèd souls.
We heard exulting love within us seek
The quiet refuge of our hearts once more,
And the living silence speak
Words we dreamed not of before!

XII

At that time when in loneliness I stood,
And desolation deep within me froze
My life, you shone from out the multitude—
A glowing window on a winter eve
Across the windy surface of the snows.
Your piteous heart brought sweet reprieve,
 Caressingly, to me in need,
Like breath of spring from off some warmèd mead.
 And faith did then command
That frankness, tenderness and troth
Should dwell with friendly hand in hand
Within the wind-hushed stillness of us both.
Since then, though summer melts the winter cold
Within, and under skies whose leaping fire
 Designs with gold
All the winding pathways of our thought;
Though flaming love itself is brought
To far-flung blossoms of desire,
That endlessly, to gain in might,
 Seek endless birth anew;
Always I look to that dear light
Whose sweetness first I knew.

XIII

Of what avail the hectic reasoning
Of what we were and what we may attain?
All doubt is dead within this close where spring
Unfolds within us far from life and pain.
I reason not, nor do I seek to know,
For naught can trouble that within whose scope
Are all of sweet impulse and sudden fervour's glow,
And tranquil flight to sanctuaried hope.
Before I knew, I felt thy clarity;
 And 'tis my joy above
All else to fill my heart with love
Nor question why thy voice so calls to me.
Come, let our hearts be true—the day insure
To us the tenderness without the strife,
 And let them say that life
Was never made to reach a love so pure.

XIV

Quietly, like stately queens of old
Who, step by languid step, descend the stairs of gold
In fairy tales, thou movest in my dream;
Names I give thee, such as must beseem
All beauty and all radiance; names that soothe,
Resounding silken-smooth,
Sounds that wind and waver, glide and glance,

Weaving my poems, as in subtle dance.

Ah, but how soon I leave this play
When I behold thy wistful way,
Thine unadorned, profoundly wistful way;
Thy forehead unafraid and calmer than the day,
Thy peaceful child-like hands laid open on thy knees,
Thy breathing bosom and the dreamful ease
That on thy deep and limpid spirit lies.
How useless and how little in the sight
Of this are all things—all things, save the naked light
That wells up from thy heart and gathers in thine eyes.

XV

To all thy smiles and tears
My sweetest thoughts I give,
Those from a brimming heart,
And those that live
Too deep for language to impart.

To all thy smiles and tears,
And to thy soul, my soul,
With all its smiles and tears,
And its caress.

See thou, how dawn has blanched all the earth,
The shades of gloom seem put to flight,
To vanish comfortless;
The lonely lakes have caught the morning's light,
The wet flow'rs glisten and are filled with mirth,
And the golden woods have swept away the night.

Oh, that I might at last
Enter upon the joyous way,
Oh, that I might at last,
With a victor's joy and a victor's pride,
And thou by my side—
Oh, that I might at last
Enter with thee into love's full day!

XVI

I bathe in thy two eyes my soul entire,
As tho' in purest water it were laid,
And in their sanctities I quench its fire
That tempered and more keen it may be made.
Oh, to join in utter purity,
As two stain'd windows, smitten by the sun,
Mingle their lights in separate clarity
And melt to one!

I am sometimes impatient of my lot
As being one who has not and can not
Attain the perfectness he would espouse;
My heart beats on the bars that are its vows—
My heart whose evil blossoms push their way
Between the rocks of blind brutality
And flaunt shamefacedly
Their swarthy flow'rs in sinister array.
My heart so false—so true—as change the years,
My heart of very contradiction made—
Exaggerating heart where merge and shade
Immensities of joy and startl'd fears.

XVII

That love within our eyes may be
Uttered with all clarity;
Oh, let us cleanse our looks from those
That chose
The way of life's brutality.

The dawn has flowered in red and gold,
Strange softened light
And mist;
It seems as though some tender down of gold
And silver through the twilight kissed,
With dim caresses, all our garden-ways;
Our mysterious lake displays
Its trembling sheen of golden light;
Beneath the trees swoon birds in emerald flight;
And dawn, from off the gloomy plain, the hillside steep,
Doth sweep
The last grey ashes of unwilling night.

XVIII

Mid-summer blooms within our quiet garden-ways;
A golden peacock down the dusky alley strays;
Gay flower petals strew
—Pearl, emerald and blue—
The curving slopes of fragrant summer grass;
The pools are clear as glass
Between the white cups of the lily-flowers;
The currants are like jewelled fairy-bowers;
A dazzling insect worries the heart of a rose,
Where a delicate fern a filmy shadow throws,
And airy as bubbles the thousands of bees
Over the young grape-clusters swarm as they please.

The air is pearly, iridescent, pure;
These profound and radiant noons mature,
Unfolding even as odorous roses of clear light;
Familiar roads to distances invite
Like slow and graceful gestures, one by one
Bound for the pearly-hued horizon and the sun.

Surely the summer clothes, with all her arts,
No other garden with such grace and power;
And 'tis the poignant joy close-folded in our hearts
That cries its life aloud from every flaming flower.

XIX

May thy dear eyes, thy clear eyes, be
To me on earth
The pledges of felicity.
And may our kindled souls, in showers,
Clothe with gold each flaming thought of ours.
That my two hands against thy heart ne'er cease
To be to thee on earth
The emblem of all peace.
And may we live as two lost prayers implore,
One to the other yearning evermore.

May our kisses be, on lips in strife,
To us on earth
The symbols of our life.

XX

Tell me, oh my tranquil friend,
How absence of a day untuned
And brought our song of love to end,
And wakened every sleeping wound.
I go to meet all those that come
From out that land of mystery
Where thou did'st go toward the red sun-rise;
Beneath a tree I sit, and cold and dumb,
Down the long road spy eagerly;
And long I look with fervour on the eyes
Still lustrous with the sight of thee;
I'd kiss those fingers, for thy touch less wearisome;
I'd utter words whose meaning none perceive;
But, dumb, I listen, hear their footfalls reach
The shadows where the aged eve
Holds the black night in leash.

XXI

In those hours when we seem shut out
From all that is not part of us,
What cleansing flood is it, so nebulous,
That bathes and circles our two hearts about?
Joining our hands, without a prayer,
Arm to arm, without a cry,
Seeking we know not what nor where,
Something far off, more pure than thou or I—
Thou fervent soul, oh say
How does one live in this yearned-for day?

In those high hours how deep doth grow our will
In front of life's supremacies!
What need of other heavens still,
Wherein with newer gods to cope!
What anguish and what ecstasies,
And what unflinching hope
 To be, one day,
Through death itself, the prey
Of these far silent agonies!

XXII

Oh, this happiness,
Sometimes so rare, so frail,
It brings us near distress!
In vain we strive, as our hearts fail,
To make for us a screening tent
With all thy wondrous hair
To shelter us from care—
Yet deep within does anguish still ferment.

But love, a kneeling angel prays,
 Asking alone for this,
That Fate may give to others equal days
 Of tenderness and bliss.

And on those stormy days when evenings share
With highest heaven all their cruel despair,
We seek forgiveness as the night unrolls—
Forgiveness for the sweetness in our souls.

XXIII

Oh, let us live out love with all our powers,
Aspire audaciously in thoughts most high,
That they may interweave in harmony
In the supremest ecstasy of ours.
Because within our twined souls
Something more pure than aught in us,
More sacred, mightier, unrolls—
Join we our hands, and let us seek it thus.

What matters it that naught but tears,
Our halting speech avail
For that whose puissant beauty, as it nears,
Doth make our two hearts quail?
Oh, may we thus forever meet

Love's stern, ensweetened pains,
Kneeling, by fervour overcome,
Before the sudden god within that reigns,
So violent and so burning sweet,
Our very souls succumb.

XXIV

No sooner lip to lip, than we are fraught
With sun-lit fervour that o'erpowers,
As though two gods within us sought
A god-like union in these souls of ours;
Ah, how we feel divinity is near—
Our hearts so freshened by their primal might
Of light,
That in their clarity the universe shines clear.
Ah, joy alone, the ferment of the earth,
Doth bring to life and stir
To far, illimitable birth;
As there above, across the bars
Of heaven, where voyage veils of gossamer,
Are born the myriad-flowering stars.

How for us is design of life profound!
All seems as pure as leaping fire—
Our words so filled with fair desire
We say them o'er to hear them ceaseless sound.
We are the ones, victorious and sublime,
Who seek eternity,
With humble pride;—our love shall ever be
Free from the bonds of time.

XXV

That nothing may elude our close embrace,
This depth of holy love,
That through the body love be clear with grace,
I seek with thee the garden of our love.
Thy breast is there, an offering,
Thy hands reach out to me,
Naive and tender whispering
Is breathed and heard by thee.
The shadows from the branches now
O'er thy throat and visage pass,
Thy hair has spread its blossoms low
In garlands, on the grass.

All blue and silver broods the night,
A silent, sleeping bed, this hour—
Sweet night! whose breezes one by one deflower
The lilies trembling in the low moon's light.

XXVI

Although, these Autumn eves,
So wistfully,
Between the trees, all down the paths
Fall the listless yellow leaves
Between the trees and down the paths,
Although while Autumn grieves,
The night-wind reaps a harvest pale,
So wistfully,
Where the late-blown roses fail
Loosing petals wan in showers—
Ah, let no petal from our love
Fall and wither with the flowers.
But let us both lean close above
The smouldering hearth of memory—
But let us tend and feed the glowing coals
And reach our hands and warm our souls
Against the winter-cold and misery,
Against the hour that tolls the death of all desire,
Against our very selves, our stricken passion—
Oh, lean with me above the blessed fire
That Memory's hands have kindled in compassion.
And if the skies be drowned
While passionate Autumn roams the world and rakes
The woods and the wild lakes,
No echo of the madness shall be found
In that safe garden, inmost and supreme,
here in the breathing stillness sound
The quiet footfalls of our Dream.

XXVII

The gift of body, when the soul is given,
Is naught but harmony
Of two tendernesses driven
One to the other, fervidly.
Glory in thyself thou findest sweet.
So fair in thy fresh purity,
Only to offer me
The wondrous gift complete.
I come to thee, and know
Exaltation in this gift of thine;
Always the truer, the more pure I grow
Since thy dear body gave itself to mine.
Love! oh, may it overflow
Our hearts and be the reason in our lives,
Whose maddest happiness is one that strives
Toward the madness of a trust divine.

XXVIII

Was there ever in us one caress,
One joyous laugh, or tenderness
We dared not strew before us on our way?
Or ever prayer in silence heard,
Whose dim, unuttered word
We sought to stay?

A single yearning of compassion.
A quiet vow or one of passion
We sought to slay?
So, loving thus,
Our hearts, like two apostles, went
Seeking the lowly ones with timid brow,
Who, feeling then so bound to us,
Proclaimed on high love's ravishment,
As a flowery people loves the bough
That holds them bathed in the sun's warm ray;
Our souls, grown greater still by this re-birth,
Began to glory those who feel love's sway,
Increasing love by love's own might,
To cherish thus divinely the whole earth
That seemed reflected in our own souls' light.

XXIX

This fair garden flowering to flame,
That seems the wondrous beauty to proclaim
Of that clear garden whereunto we cleave,
Is crystallised in frosted gold this eve.
A great white silence drops athwart the sky,
Out there where gleams a marble hue,
Whither, one by one, the tall trees stride,
Each with its shadow, long and blue
 And lonely, by its side.
No stir of wind; but soundlessly
The blanched veils of cold alone
Unfold themselves mysteriously
On the marshes' silver or the roads' white stone.
The stars are lustrous with desire;
Like furbished steel the rime
Within the cold, translucid air.
From some infinity sublime,
Across the paleness of a waning moon,
 Falls shower on shower of fire—
 Star-dust that there
Sinks in a scintillating swoon.
It is the hour divine, when wistfully
A million eyes look down upon the earth—
Upon the hazards of our human birth—
From out immutable eternity.

XXX

If it ever be
That thou and I should bring
One to the other suffering
Of loss and sorrow; or if fate decree
That weariness of banal joys unstring
The golden bow within us of desire;
If thought's clear crystal vase entire
Must in our spirits fall and break below;
If, spite of all, I lie at last supine,
Vanquish'd for not having been enough
The prey of great, divine,
Utter nobility—
Oh! let us be like maddened fools that climb the height
Beneath the ruin'd sky; and let us closer, closer cling,
 And in one monstrous flight,
With sun-drenched souls, cleave the on-rushing night!

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