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DREAMS & DUST

**POEMS BY DON MARQUIS**

## **TO MY MOTHER VIRGINIA WHITMORE MARQUIS**

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# PROEM

"SO LET THEM PASS, THESE SONGS OF MINE"

So let them pass, these songs of mine,  
Into oblivion, nor repine;  
Abandoned ruins of large schemes,  
Dimmed lights adrift from nobler dreams,

Weak wings I sped on quests divine,  
So let them pass, these songs of mine.  
They soar, or sink ephemeral—  
I care not greatly which befall!

For if no song I e'er had wrought,  
Still have I loved and laughed and fought;  
So let them pass, these songs of mine;  
I sting too hot with life to whine!

Still shall I struggle, fail, aspire,  
Lose God, and find Gods in the mire,  
And drink dream-deep life's heady wine—  
So let them pass, these songs of mine.

# DAYLIGHT HUMORS

## THIS IS ANOTHER DAY

I AM mine own priest, and I shrive myself  
Of all my wasted yesterdays. Though sin  
And sloth and foolishness, and all ill weeds  
Of error, evil, and neglect grow rank  
And ugly there, I dare forgive myself  
That error, sin, and sloth and foolishness.  
God knows that yesterday I played the fool;  
God knows that yesterday I played the knave;  
But shall I therefore cloud this new dawn o'er  
With fog of futile sighs and vain regrets?

This is another day! And flushed Hope walks  
Adown the sunward slopes with golden shoon.  
This is another day; and its young strength  
Is laid upon the quivering hills until,  
Like Egypt's Memnon, they grow quick with song.  
This is another day, and the bold world  
Leaps up and grasps its light, and laughs, as leapt  
Prometheus up and wrenched the fire from Zeus.

This is another day—are its eyes blurred  
With maudlin grief for any wasted past?  
A thousand thousand failures shall not daunt!  
Let dust clasp dust; death, death—I am alive!  
And out of all the dust and death of mine  
Old selves I dare to lift a singing heart  
And living faith; my spirit dares drink deep  
Of the red mirth mantling in the cup of morn.

## APRIL SONG

FLEET across the grasses  
Flash the feet of Spring,  
Piping, as he passes  
Fleet across the grasses,  
"Follow, lads and lasses!  
Sing, world, sing!"  
Fleet across the grasses  
Flash the feet of Spring!

*Idle winds deliver  
Rumors through the town,  
Tales of reeds that quiver,  
Idle winds deliver,  
Where the rapid river  
Drags the willows down—  
Idle winds deliver  
Rumors through the town.*

In the country places  
By the silver brooks  
April airs her graces;  
In the country places

Wayward April paces,  
Laughter in her looks;  
In the country places  
By the silver brooks.

*Hints of alien glamor  
Even reach the town;  
Urban muses stammer  
Hints of alien glamor,  
But the city's clamor  
Beats the voices down;  
Hints of alien glamor  
Even reach the town.*

### **THIS EARTH, IT IS ALSO A STAR**

WHERE the singers of Saturn find tongue,  
Where the Galaxy's lovers embrace,  
Our world and its beauty are sung!  
They lean from their casements to trace  
If our planet still spins in its place;  
Faith fables the thing that we are,  
And Fantasy laughs and gives chase:  
This earth, it is also a star!

Round the sun, that is fixed, and hung  
For a lamp in the darkness of space  
We are whirled, we are swirled, we are flung;  
Singing and shining we race  
And our light on the uplifted face  
Of dreamer or prophet afar  
May fall as a symbol of grace:  
This earth, it is also a star!

Looking out where our planet is swung  
Doubt loses his writhen grimace,  
Dry hearts drink the gleams and are young;—  
Where agony's boughs interlace  
His Garden some Jesus may pace,  
Lifting, the wan avatar,  
His soul to this light as a vase!  
This earth, it is also a star!

Great spirits in sorrowful case  
Yearn to us through the vapors that bar:  
Canst think of that, soul, and be base?—  
This earth, it is also a star!

### **THE NAME**

IT shifts and shifts from form to form,  
It drifts and darkles, gleams and glows;  
It is the passion of the storm,  
The poignance of the rose;  
Through changing shapes, through devious  
ways,  
By noon or night, through cloud or flame,  
My heart has followed all my days  
Something I cannot name.

In sunlight on some woman's hair,  
Or starlight in some woman's eyne,  
Or in low laughter smothered where  
Her red lips wedded mine,  
My heart hath known, and thrilled to know,

This unnamed presence that it sought;  
And when my heart hath found it so,  
*"Love is the name,"* I thought.

Sometimes when sudden afterglows  
In futile glory storm the skies  
Within their transient gold and rose  
The secret stirs and dies;  
Or when the trampling morn walks o'er  
The troubled seas, with feet of flame,  
My awed heart whispers, *"Ask no more,  
For Beauty is the name!"*

Or dreaming in old chapels where  
The dim aisles pulse with murmurings  
That part are music, part are prayer—  
(Or rush of hidden wings)  
Sometimes I lift a startled head  
To some saint's carven countenance,  
Half fancying that the lips have said,  
*All names mean God, perchance!"*

### **THE BIRTH**

THERE is a legend that the love of God  
So quickened under Mary's heart it wrought  
Her very maidenhood to holier stuff...  
However that may be, the birth befell  
Upon a night when all the Syrian stars  
Swayed tremulous before one lordlier orb  
That rose in gradual splendor,  
Paused,  
Flooding the firmament with mystic light,  
And dropped upon the breathing hills  
A sudden music  
Like a distillation from its gleams;  
A rain of spirit and a dew of song!

### **A MOOD OF PAVLOWA**

THE soul of the Spring through its body of earth  
Bursts in a bloom of fire,  
And the crocuses come in a rainbow riot of mirth....  
They flutter, they burn, they take wing, they  
aspire....  
Wings, motion and music and flame,  
Flower, woman and laughter, and all these the  
same!  
She is light and first love and the youth of the  
world,  
She is sandaled with joy ... she is lifted and  
whirled,  
She is flung, she is swirled, she is driven along  
By the carnival winds that have torn her away  
From the coronal bloom on the brow of the  
May....  
She is youth, she is foam, she is flame, she is  
visible Song!

### **THE POOL**

REACH over, my Undine, and clutch me a reed—  
Nymph of mine idleness, notch me a pipe—  
For I am fulfilled of the silence, and long

For to utter the sense of the silence in song.

Down-stream all the rapids are troubled with pebbles  
That fetter and fret what the water would utter,  
And it rushes and splashes in tremulous trebles;  
It makes haste through the shallows, its soul is  
aflutter;

But here all the sound is serene and outspread  
In the murmurous moods of a slow-swirling pool;  
Here all the sounds are unhurried and cool;  
Every silence is kith to a sound; they are wed,  
They are mated, are mingled, are tangled, are  
bound;  
Every hush is in love with a sound, every sound  
By the law of its life to some silence is bound.

Then here will we hide; idle here and abide,  
In the covert here, close by the waterside—  
Here, where the slim flattered reeds are aquiver  
With the exquisite hints of the reticent river,  
Here, where the lips of this pool are the lips  
Of all pools, let us listen and question and wait;  
Let us hark to the whispers of love and of death,  
Let us hark to the lisplings of life and of fate—  
In this place where pale silences flower into sound  
Let us strive for some secret of all the profound  
Deep and calm Silence that meshes men 'round!  
There's as much of God hinted in one ripple's  
plashes—  
There's as much of Truth glints in yon  
dragon-fly's flight—  
There's as much Purpose gleams where yonder  
trout flashes  
As in—any book else!—could we read things  
aright.

Then nymph of mine indolence, here let us hide,  
Learn, listen, and question; idle here and abide  
Where the rushes and lilies lean low to the tide.

### "THEY HAD NO POET ..."

"Vain was the chief's, the sage's pride!  
They had no poet and they died."—POPE.

By Tigris, or the streams of Ind,  
Ere Colchis rose, or Babylon,  
Forgotten empires dreamed and sinned,  
Setting tall towns against the dawn,

Which, when the proud Sun smote upon,  
Flashed fire for fire and pride for pride;  
Their names were ... Ask oblivion! ...  
*"They had no poet, and they died."*

Queens, dusk of hair and tawny-skinned,  
That loll where fellow leopards fawn ...  
Their hearts are dust before the wind,  
Their loves, that shook the world, are wan!

Passion is mighty ... but, anon,  
Strong Death has Romance for his bride;  
Their legends ... Ask oblivion! ...  
*"They had no poet, and they died."*

Heroes, the braggart trumps that dinned  
Their futile triumphs, monarch, pawn,  
Wild tribesmen, kingdoms disciplined,  
Passed like a whirlwind and were gone;

They built with bronze and gold and brawn,  
The inner Vision still denied;  
Their conquests ... Ask oblivion! ...  
*"They had no poet, and they died."*

Dumb oracles, and priests withdrawn,  
Was it but flesh they deified?  
Their gods were ... Ask oblivion! ...  
*"They had no poet, and they died."*

## NEW YORK

SHE is hot to the sea that crouches beside,  
Human and hot to the cool stars peering down,  
My passionate city, my quivering town,  
And her dark blood, tide upon purple tide,  
With throbs as of thunder beats,  
With leaping rhythms and vast, is swirled  
Through the shaken lengths of her veined streets...  
She pulses, the heart of a world!

I have thrilled with her ecstasy, agony, woe—  
Hath she a mood that I do not know?  
The winds of her music tumultuous have seized  
me and swayed me,  
Have lifted, have swung me around  
In their whorls as of cyclonic sound;  
Her passions have torn me and tossed me and  
brayed me;  
Drunken and tranced and dazzled with visions  
and gleams,

I have spun with her dervish priests;  
I have searched to the souls of her hunted beasts  
And found love sleeping there;  
I have soared on the wings of her flashing dreams;  
I have sunk with her dull despair;  
I have sweat with her travails and cursed with  
her pains;  
I have swelled with her foolish pride;  
I have raged through a thick red mist at one  
with her branded Cains,  
With her broken Christs have died.

O beautiful half-god city of visions and love!  
O hideous half-brute city of hate!  
O wholly human and baffled and passionate town!  
The throes of thy burgeoning, stress of thy fight,  
Thy bitter, blind struggle to gain for thy body a  
soul,  
I have known, I have felt, and been shaken  
thereby!  
Wakened and shaken and broken,  
For I hear in thy thunders terrific that throb  
through thy rapid veins  
The beat of the heart of a world.

## A HYMN

(1914)

CLOTHED on with thunder and with steel  
And black against the dawn  
The whirling armies clash and reel....  
A wind, and they are gone  
Like mists withdrawn,  
Like mists withdrawn!

Like clouds withdrawn, like driven sands,  
Earth's body vanisheth:  
One solid thing unconquered stands,  
The ghost that humbles death.  
All else is breath,  
All else is breath!

Man rose from out the stinging slime,  
Half brute, and sought a soul,  
And up the starrier ways of time,  
Half god, unto his goal,

He still must climb,  
He still must climb!

What though worlds stagger, and the suns  
Seem shaken in their place,  
Trust thou the leaping love that runs  
Creative over space:  
Take heart of grace,  
Take heart of grace!

What though great kingdoms fall on death  
Before the stabbing blade,  
Their brazen might was only breath,  
Their substance but a shade—  
Be not dismayed,  
Be not dismayed!

Man's dream which conquered brute and clod  
Shall fail not, but endure,  
Shall rise, though beaten to the sod,  
Shall hold its vantage sure—  
As sure as God,  
As sure as God!

## **THE SINGER**

A LITTLE while, with love and youth,  
He wandered, singing:—  
He felt life's pulses hot and strong  
Beat all his rapid veins along;  
He wrought life's rhythms into song:  
He laughed, he sang the Dawn!  
So close, so close to life he dwelt  
That at rare times and rapt he felt  
The fleshly barriers yield and melt;  
He trembled, looking on  
Creation at her miracles;  
His soul-sight pierced the earthly shells  
And saw the spirit weave its spells,  
The veil of clay withdrawn;—  
A little while, with love and youth,  
He wandered, singing!

A little while, with age and death,  
He wanders, dreaming;—

No more the thunder and the urge



Of earth's full tides that storm the verge  
Of heaven with their sweep and surge  
Shall lift, shall bear him on;  
Where is the golden hope that led  
Him comrade with the mighty dead?  
The love that aureoled his head?—  
The glory is withdrawn!  
How shall one soar with broken wings?  
The leagued might of futile things  
Wars with the heart that dares and sings;—  
It is not always Dawn!  
A little while, with age and death,  
He wanders, dreaming.

## WORDS ARE NOT GUNS

*Put by the sword* (a dreamer saith),  
*The years of peace draw nigh!*  
*Already the millennial dawn*  
*Makes red the eastern sky!*

Be not deceived. It comes not yet!  
The ancient passions keep  
Alive beneath their changing masks.  
They are not dead. They sleep.

Surely peace comes. As sure as Man  
Rose from primeval slime.  
That was not yesterday. There's still  
A weary height to climb!

And we can dwell too long with dreams  
And play too much with words,  
Forgetting our inheritance  
Was bought and held with swords.

*But Truth* (you say) *makes tyrants quail—*  
*Beats down embattled Wrong?*  
If truth be armed! Be not deceived.  
The strife is to the strong.

Words are not guns. Words are not ships.  
And ships and guns prevail.  
Our liberties, that blood has gained,  
Are guarded, or they fail.

Truth does not triumph without blows,  
Error not tamely yields.  
But falsehood closes with quick faith,  
Fierce, on a thousand fields.

And surely, somewhat of that faith  
Our fathers fought for clings!  
Which called this freedom's hemisphere,  
Despite Earth's leagued kings.

Great creeds grow thews, or else they die.  
Thought clothed in deed is lord.  
What are thy gods? Thy gods brought love?  
They also brought a sword.

Unchallenged, shall we always stand,  
Secure, apart, aloof?  
Be not deceived. That hour shall come  
Which puts us to the proof.

Then, that we hold the trust we have

Safeguarded for our sons,  
Let us cease dreaming! Let us have  
More ships, more troops, more guns!

## WITH THE SUBMARINES

ABOVE, the baffled twilight fails; beneath, the  
blind snakes creep;  
Beside us glides the charnel shark, our pilot  
through the deep;  
And, lurking where low headlands shield from  
cruising scout and spy,  
We bide the signal through the gloom that bids  
us slay or die.

All watchful, mute, the crouching guns that guard  
the strait sea lanes—  
Watchful and hawklike, plumed with hate, the  
desperate aeroplanes—  
And still as death and swift as fate, above the  
darkling coasts,  
The spying Wireless sows the night with troops  
of stealthy ghosts,

While hushed through all her huddled streets the  
tide-walled city waits  
The drumming thunders that announce brute  
battle at her gates.

Southward a hundred windy leagues, through  
storms that blind and bar,  
Our cheated cruisers search the waves, our captains  
seek the war;  
But here the port of peril is; the foeman's  
dreadnoughts ride  
Sullen and black against the moon, upon a sullen  
tide.  
And only we to launch ourselves against their  
stark advance—  
To guide uncertain lightnings through these  
treacherous seas of chance!

. . . . .

And now a wheeling searchlight paints a signal on  
the night;  
And now the bellowing guns are loud with the  
wild lust of fight.

. . . . .

And now, her flanks of steel apulse with all the  
power of hell,  
Forth from the darkness leaps in pride a hateful  
miracle,  
The flagship of their Admiral—and now God help  
and save!—  
We challenge Death at Death's own game; we  
sink beneath the wave!

. . . . .

Ah, steady now—and one good blow—one straight  
stab through the gloom—  
Ah, good!—the thrust went home!—she founders—  
flounders to her doom!—

Full speed ahead!—those damned quick-firing guns  
—but let them bark—  
What's that—the dynamos?—they've got us, men!  
—*Christ! in the dark!*

## NICHOLAS OF MONTENEGRO

(1912)

HE speaks as straight as his rifles shot,  
As straight as a thrusting blade,  
Waiting the deed that shall trouble the truce  
His savage guns have made.

"You have dared the wrath of a dozen states,"  
Was the challenge that he heard;  
"We can die but once!" said the grim old King  
As he gripped his mountain sword.

"For I paid in blood for the town I took,  
The blood of my brave men slain,—  
And if you covet the town I took  
You must buy it with blood again!"

Stern old King of the stark, black hills,  
Where the lean, fierce eagles breed,  
Your speech rings true as your good sword rings—  
And you are a king indeed!

## DICKENS

"The only book that the party had was a volume of Dickens. During the six months that they lay in the cave which they had hacked in the ice, waiting for spring to come, they read this volume through again and again."—*From a newspaper report of an antarctic expedition.*

HUDDLED within their savage lair  
They hearkened to the prowling wind;  
They heard the loud wings of despair ...  
And madness beat against the mind....  
A sunless world stretched stark outside  
As if it had cursed God and died;  
Dumb plains lay prone beneath the weight  
Of cold unutterably great;  
Iron ice bound all the bitter seas,  
The brutal hills were bleak as hate....  
Here none but Death might walk at ease!

Then Dickens spoke, and, lo! the vast  
Unpeopled void stirred into life;

The dead world quickened, the mad blast  
Hushed for an hour its idiot strife  
With nothingness....

And from the gloom,  
Parting the flaps of frozen skin,  
Old friends and dear came trooping in,  
And light and laughter filled the room....  
Voices and faces, shapes beloved,  
Babbling lips and kindly eyes,  
Not ghosts, but friends that lived and moved ...  
They brought the sun from other skies,  
They wrought the magic that dispels  
The bitterer part of loneliness ...  
And when they vanished each man dreamed  
His dream there in the wilderness....

One heard the chime of Christmas bells,  
And, staring down a country lane,  
Saw bright against the window-pane  
The firelight beckon warm and red....  
And one turned from the waterside  
Where Thames rolls down his slothful tide  
To breast the human sea that beats  
Through roaring London's battered streets

And revel in the moods of men....  
And one saw all the April hills  
Made glad with golden daffodils,  
And found and kissed his love again....

.....

By all the troubled hearts he cheers  
In homely ways or by lost trails,  
By all light shed through all dark years  
When hope grows sick and courage quails,  
We hail him first among his peers;  
Whether we sorrow, sing, or feast,  
He, too, hath known and understood—  
Master of many moods, high priest  
Of mirth and lord of cleansing tears!

## A POLITICIAN

LEADER no more, be judged of us!  
Hailed Chief, and loved, of yore—  
Youth, and the faith of youth, cry out:  
*Leader and Chief no more!*

We dreamed a Prophet, flushed with faith,  
Content to toil in pain  
If that his sacrifice might be,  
Somehow, his people's gain.

We saw a vision, and our blood  
Beat red and hot and strong:  
*"Lead us (we cried) to war against  
Some foul, embattled wrong!"*

We dreamed a Warrior whose sword  
Was edged for sham and shame;  
We dreamed a Statesman far above  
The vulgar lust for fame.

We were not cynics, and we dreamed  
A Man who made no truce  
With lies nor ancient privilege  
Nor old, entrenched abuse.

We dreamed ... we dreamed ... Youth dreamed  
a dream!  
And even you forgot  
Yourself, one moment, and dreamed, too—  
Struck, while your mood was hot!

Struck three or four good blows ... and then  
Turned back to easier things:  
The cheap applause, the blatant mob,  
The praise of underlings!

Praise ... praise ... was ever man so filled,  
So avid still, of praise?  
So hungry for the crowd's acclaim,

The sycophantic phrase?

O you whom Greatness beckoned to ...

O swollen Littleness

Who turned from Immortality

To fawn upon Success!

O blind with love of self, who led

Youth's vision to defeat,

Bawling and brawling for rewards,

Loud, in the common street!

O you who were so quick to judge—

Leader, and loved, of yore—

Hear now the judgment of our youth:

*Leader and Chief no more!*

## **THE BAYONET**

(1914)

THE great guns slay from a league away, the death-bolts  
fly unseen,

And bellowing hill replies to hill, machine to brute  
machine,

But still in the end when the long lines bend and  
the battle hangs in doubt

They take to the steel in the same old way that  
their fathers fought it out—

It is man to man and breast to breast and eye  
to bloodshot eye

And the reach and twist of the thrusting wrist, as  
it was in the days gone by!

Along the shaken hills the guns their drumming  
thunder roll—

But the keen blades thrill with the lust to kill  
that leaps from the slayer's soul!

For hand and heart and living steel, one pulse of  
hate they feel.

Is your clan afraid of the naked blade? Does it  
flinch from the bitter steel?

Perish your dreams of conquest then, your swollen  
hopes and bold,

For empire dwells with the stabbing blade, as it  
did in the days of old!

## **THE BUTCHERS AT PRAYER**

(1914)

EACH nation as it draws the sword

And flings its standard to the air

Petitions piously the Lord—

Vexing the void abyss with prayer.

O irony too deep for mirth!

O posturing apes that rant, and dare

This antic attitude! O Earth,

With your wild jest of wicked prayer!

I dare not laugh ... a rising swell

Of laughter breaks in shrieks somewhere—

No doubt they relish it in Hell,

This cosmic jest of Earth at prayer!

# SHADOWS

## HAUNTED

### (THE GHOST SPEAKS)

A GHOST is the freak of a sick man's brain?  
Then why do ye start and shiver so?  
That's the sob and drip of a leaky drain?  
But it sounds like another noise we know!  
The heavy drops drummed red and slow,  
The drops ran down as slow as fate—  
Do ye hear them still?—it was long ago!—  
But here in the shadows I wait, I wait!

Spirits there be that pass in peace;  
Mine passed in a whorl of wrath and dole;  
And the hour that your choking breath shall cease  
I will get my grip on your naked soul—  
Nor pity may stay nor prayer cajole—  
I would drag ye whining from Hell's own gate:  
To me, to me, ye must pay the toll!  
And here in the shadows I wait, I wait!

The dead they are dead, they are out of the way?  
And a ghost is the whim of an ailing mind?  
Then why did ye whiten with fear to-day  
When ye heard a voice in the calling wind?  
Why did ye falter and look behind  
At the creeping mists when the hour grew late?  
Ye would see my face were ye stricken blind!  
And here in the shadows I wait, I wait!

Drink and forget, make merry and boast,  
But the boast rings false and the jest is thin—  
In the hour that I meet ye ghost to ghost,  
Stripped of the flesh that ye skulk within,  
Stripped to the coward soul 'ware of its sin,  
Ye shall learn, ye shall learn, whether dead men  
hate!  
Ah, a weary time has the waiting been,  
But here in the shadows I wait, I wait!

### A NIGHTMARE

LEAGUES before me, leagues behind,  
Clamor warring wastes of flood,  
All the streams of all the worlds  
Flung together, mad of mood;  
Through the canon beats a sound,  
Regular of interval,  
Distant, drumming, muffled, dull,  
Thunderously rhythmical;

Crafts slip by my startled soul—  
Soul that cowers, a thing apart—  
They are corpuscles of blood!  
That's the throbbing of a heart!

God of terrors!—am I mad?—  
Through my body, mine own soul,  
Shrunken to an atom's size,  
Voyages toward an unguessed goal!

## THE MOTHER

THE mother by the gallows-tree,  
The gallows-tree, the gallows-tree,  
(While the twitching body mocked the sun)  
Lifted to Heaven her broken heart  
And called for sympathy.

Then Mother Mary bent to her,  
Bent from her place by God's left side,  
And whispered: "Peace—do I not know?—  
My son was crucified!"

"O Mother Mary," answered she,  
"You cannot, cannot enter in  
To my soul's woe—you cannot know—  
For your son wrought no sin!"

(And men whose work compelled them there,  
Their hearts were stricken dead;

They heard the rope creak on the beam;  
I thought I heard the frightened ghost  
Whimpering overhead.)

The mother by the gallows-tree,  
The gallows-tree, the gallows-tree,  
Lifted to Christ her broken heart  
And called in agony.

Then Lord Christ bent to her and said:  
"Be comforted, be comforted;  
I know your grief; the whole world's woe  
I bore upon my head."

"But O Lord Christ, you cannot know,  
No one can know," she said, "no one"—  
(While the quivering corpse swayed in the wind)—  
"Lord Christ, no one can understand  
Who never had a son!"

## IN THE BAYOU

LAZY and slow, through the snags and trees  
Move the sluggish currents, half asleep;  
Around and between the cypress knees,  
Like black, slow snakes the dark tides creep—  
How deep is the bayou beneath the trees?  
"Knee-deep,  
Knee-deep,  
Knee-deep,  
Knee-deep!"

Croaks the big bullfrog of Reelfoot Lake  
From his hiding-place in the draggled brake.

What is the secret the slim reeds know  
That makes them to shake and to shiver so,  
And the scared flags quiver from plume to foot?—  
The frogs pipe solemnly, deep and slow:  
"Look under  
the root!

Look under  
the root!"

The hoarse frog croaks and the stark owl hoots  
Of a mystery moored in the cypress roots.

Was it love turned hate? Was it friend turned foe?  
Only the frogs and the gray owl know,  
For the white moon shrouded her face in a mist  
At the spurt of a pistol, red and bright—  
At the sound of a shriek that stabbed the night—  
And the little reeds were frightened and whist;  
But always the eddies whimper and choke,  
And the frogs would tell if they could, for they  
croak:

"Deep, deep!

Death-deep!

Deep, deep!

Death-deep!"

And the dark tide slides and glisters and glides  
Snakelike over the secret it hides.

### THE SAILOR'S WIFE SPEAKS

YE are dead, they say, but ye swore, ye swore,  
Ye would come to me back from the sea!  
From out of the sea and the night, ye cried,  
Nor the crawling weed nor the dragging tide  
Could hold ye fast from me:—  
Come, ah, come to me!

Three spells I have laid on the rising sun  
And three on the waning moon—  
Are ye held in the bonds of the night or the day  
Ye must loosen your bonds and away, away!  
Ye must come where I wait ye, soon—  
Ah, soon! soon! soon!

Three times I have cast my words to the wind,  
And thrice to the climbing sea;  
If ye drift or dream with the clouds or foam  
Ye must drift again home, ye must drift again  
home—

Wraith, ye are free, ye are free;  
Ghost, ye are free, ye are free!

Are the coasts of death so fair, so fair?  
But I wait ye here on the shore!  
It is I that ye hear in the calling wind—  
I have stared through the dark till my soul is blind!  
O lover of mine, ye swore,  
Lover of mine, ye swore!

### HUNTED

*Oh, why do they hunt so hard, so hard, who have  
no need of food?  
Do they hunt for sport, do they hunt for hate, do  
they hunt for the lust of blood?*

.....

If I were a god I would get me a spear, I would  
get me horse and dog,  
And merrily, merrily I would ride through covert



and brake and bog,

With hound and horn and laughter loud, over the  
hills and away—

For there is no sport like that of a god with a  
man that stands at bay!

Ho! but the morning is fresh and fair, and oh!  
but the sun is bright,

And yonder the quarry breaks from the brush and  
heads for the hills in flight;

A minute's law for the harried thing—then follow  
him, follow him fast,

With the bellow of dogs and the beat of hoofs  
and the mellow bugle's blast.

. . . . .

\_Hillo! Halloo! they have marked a man! there is  
sport in the world to-day—

And a clamor swells from the heart of the wood that  
tells of a soul at bay!

### **A DREAM CHILD**

WHERE tides of tossed wistaria bloom  
Foam up in purple turbulence,  
Where twining boughs have built a room  
And wing'd winds pause to garner scents  
And scattered sunlight flecks the gloom,  
She broods in pensive indolence.

What is the thought that holds her thrall,  
That dims her sight with unshed tears?  
What songs of sorrow droop and fall  
In broken music for her ears?  
What voices thrill her and recall  
The poignant joy of happier years?

She dreams 'tis not the winds which pass  
That whisper through the shaken vine;  
Whose footstep stirs the rustling grass  
None else that listened might divine;  
She sees her child that never was  
Look up with longing in his eyne.

Unkissed, his lifted forehead gains  
A grace not earthly, but more rare—  
For since her heart but only feigns,  
Wherefore should love not feign him fair?  
Put blood of roses in his veins,  
Weave yellow sunshines for his hair?

All ghosts of little children dead  
That wander wistful, uncaressed,  
Their seeking lips by love unfed,  
She fain would cradle on her breast  
For his sweet sake whose lonely head  
Has never known that tender rest.

And thus she sits, and thus she broods,  
Where drifted blossoms freak the grass;  
The winds that move across her moods  
Pulse with low whispers as they pass,  
And in their eerier interludes  
She hears a voice that never was.

## ACROSS THE NIGHT

MUCH listening through the silences,  
Much staring through the night,  
And lo! the dumb blind distances  
Are bridged with speech and sight!

Magician Thought, informed of Love,  
Hath fixed her on the air—  
Oh, Love and I laughed down the fates  
And clasped her, here as there!

Across the eerie silences  
She came in headlong flight,  
She stormed the serried distances,  
She trampled space and night!

Oh, foolish scientists might give  
This miracle a name—  
But Love and I care but to know  
That when we called she came.

And since I find the distances  
Subservient to my thought,  
And of the sentient silences  
More vital speech have wrought,

Then she and I will mock Death's self,  
For all his vaunted might—  
There are no gulfs we dare not leap,  
As she leapt through the night!

## SEA CHANGES

### I

#### MORNING

WE stood among the boats and nets;  
We saw the swift clouds fall,  
We watched the schooners scamper in  
Before the sudden squall;—  
The jolly squall strove lustily  
To whelm the sheltered street—  
The merry squall that piled the seas  
About the patient headland's knees  
And chased the fishing fleet.

She laughed; as if with wings her mirth  
Arose and left the wingless earth  
And all tame things behind;  
Rose like a bird, wild with delight  
Whose briny pinions flash in flight  
Through storm and sun and wind.

Her laughter sought those skies because  
Their mood and hers were one,  
For she and I were drunk with love  
And life and storm and sun!

And while she laughed, the Sun himself  
Leapt laughing through the rain  
And struck his harper hand along  
The ringing coast; and that wind-song  
Whose joy is mixed with pain

Forgot the undertone of grief  
And joined the jocund strain,  
And over every hidden reef  
Whereon the waves broke merrily  
Rose jets and sprays of melody  
And leapt and laughed again.

## II

### MOONLIGHT

We stood among the boats and nets ...  
We marked the risen moon  
Walk swaying o'er the trembling seas  
As one sways in a swoon;

The little stars, the lonely stars,  
Stole through the hollow sky,  
And every sucking eddy where  
The waves lapped wharf or rotten stair  
Moaned like some stricken thing hid there  
And strangled with its own despair  
As the shuddering tide crept by.

I loved her, and I hated her—  
Or did I hate myself because,  
Bound by obscure, strong, silken laws,  
I felt myself the worshiper  
Of beauty never wholly mine?  
With lures most apt to snare, entwine,  
With bonds too subtle to define,  
Her lighter nature mastered mine;  
Herself half given, half withheld,  
Her lesser spirit still compelled  
Its tribute from my franker soul:  
So—rebel, slave, and worshiper!—  
I loved her and I hated her.

I gazed upon her, I, her thrall,  
And musing, murmured, *What if death*

*Were just the answer to it all?—  
Suppose some dainty dagger quaffed  
Her life in one deep eager draught?—  
Suppose some amorous knife caressed  
The lovely hollow of her breast?"—*  
She turned a mocking look to mine:  
She read the thought within my eyne,  
She held me with her look—and laughed!

Now who may tell what stirs, controls,  
And shapes mad fancies into facts?  
What trivial things may quicken souls  
To irrevocable, swift acts?  
Now who has known, who understood,  
Wherefore some idle thing  
May stab with deadlier sting  
Than well-considered insult could?—  
May spur the languor of a mood  
And rouse a tiger in the blood?—

Ah, Christ!—had she not laughed just when  
That fancy came! ... for then ... and then ...  
A sudden mist dropped from the sky,

A mist swept in across the sea ...

A mist that hid her face from me ...  
A weeping mist all tinged with red,  
A dripping mist that smelt like blood ...  
It choked my throat, it burnt my brain ...  
And through it peered one sallow star,  
And through it rang one shriek of pain ...  
And when it passed my hands were red,  
My soul was dabbled with her blood;  
And when it passed my love was dead  
And tossed upon the troubled flood.

### III

#### MOONSET

But see! ... the body does not sink;  
It rides upon the tide  
(A starbeam on the dagger's haft),  
With staring eyes and wide ...  
And now, up from the darkling sea,  
Down from the failing moon,  
Are come strange shapes to mock at me ...  
All pallid from the star-pale sea,  
White from the paling moon ...

Or whirling fast or wheeling slow  
Around, around the corpse they go,  
All bloodless o'er the sickened sea  
Beneath the ailing moon!

And are they only wisps of fog  
That dance along the waves?  
Only shapes of mist the wind  
Drives along the waves?  
Or are they spirits that the sea  
Has cheated of their graves?  
The ghosts of them that died at sea,  
Of murdered men flung in the sea,  
Whose bodies had no graves?—  
Lost souls that haunt for evermore  
The sobbing reef and hollowed shore  
And always-murmuring caves?

Ah, surely something more than fog,  
More than starlit mist!  
For starlight never makes a sound  
And fogs are ever whist—  
But hearken, hearken, hearken, now,  
For these sing as they dance!

As airily, as eerily,  
They wheel about and whirl,  
They jeer at me, they flee at me,  
They flout me as they swirl!  
As whirling fast or swaying slow,  
Reeling, wheeling, to and fro,  
Around, around the corpse they go,  
They chill me with their chants!  
These be neither men nor mists—  
Hearken to their chants:

*Ever, ever, ever,  
Drifting like a blossom  
Seaward, with the starlight  
Wan upon her bosom—  
Ever when the quickened*

*Heart of night is throbbing,  
Ever when the trembling  
Tide sets seaward, sobbing,  
Shall you see this burden  
Borne upon its ebbing:  
See her drifting seaward  
Like a broken blossom,*

Ever see the starlight  
Kiss her bruised bosom.

Flight availeth nothing ...  
Still the subtle beaches  
Draw you back where Horror  
Walks their shingled reaches ...  
Ever shall your spirit  
Hear the surf resounding,  
Evermore the ocean  
Thwarting you and bounding;  
Vainly struggle inland!  
Lashing you and hounding,  
Still the vision hales you  
From the upland reaches,  
Goading you and gripping,  
Binds you to the beaches!

Ever, ever, ever,  
Ever shall her laughter,  
Hunting you and haunting,  
Mock and follow after;  
Rising where the buoy-bell  
Clangs across the shallows,

*Leaping where the spindrift  
Hurtles o'er the hollows,  
Ringing where the moonlight  
Gleams along the billows,  
Ever, ever, ever,  
Ever shall her laughter,  
Hounding you and haunting,  
Whip and follow after!*

#### **IV**

##### **SUNSET**

I stood among the boats  
The sinking sun, the angry sun,  
Across the sullen wave  
Laid the sudden strength of his red wrath  
Like to a shaken glaive:—  
Or did the sun pause in the west  
To lift a sword at me,  
Or was it she, or was it she,  
Rose for an instant on some crest  
And plucked the red blade from her breast  
And brandished it at me?

##### **THE TAVERN OF DESPAIR**

THE wraiths of murdered hopes and loves  
Come whispering at the door,  
Come creeping through the weeping mist  
That drapes the barren moor;  
But we within have turned the key

'Gainst Hope and Love and Care,  
Where Wit keeps tryst with Folly, at  
The Tavern of Despair.

And we have come by divers ways  
To keep this merry tryst,  
But few of us have kept within  
The Narrow Way, I wist;  
For we are those whose ampler wits  
And hearts have proved our curse—  
Foredoomed to ken the better things  
And aye to do the worse!

Long since we learned to mock ourselves;  
And from self-mockery fell

To heedless laughter in the face  
Of Heaven, Earth, and Hell.  
We quiver 'neath, and mock, God's rod;  
We feel, and mock, His wrath;  
We mock our own blood on the thorns  
That rim the "Primrose Path."

We mock the eerie glimmering shapes  
That range the outer wold,  
We mock our own cold hearts because  
They are so dead and cold;  
We flout the things we might have been  
Had self to self proved true,  
We mock the roses flung away,  
We mock the garnered rue;

The fates that gibe have lessoned us;  
There sups to-night on earth  
No madder crew of wastrels than  
This fellowship of mirth....  
(Of mirth ... drink, fools!—nor let it flag  
Lest from the outer mist  
Creep in that other company  
Unbidden to the tryst.

We're grown so fond of paradox  
Perverseness holds us thrall,  
So what each jester loves the best  
He mocks the most of all;  
But as the jest and laugh go round,  
Each in his neighbor's eyes  
Reads, while he flouts his heart's desire,  
The knowledge that he lies.

Not one of us but had some pearls  
And flung them to the swine,  
Not one of us but had some gift—  
Some spark of fire divine—  
Each might have been God's minister  
In the temple of some art—  
Each feels his gift perverted move  
Wormlike through his dry heart.

If God called Azrael to Him now  
And bade Death bend the bow  
Against the saddest heart that beats  
Here on this earth below,  
Not any sobbing breast would gain  
The guerdon of that barb—

The saddest ones are those that wear

The jester's motley garb.

Whose shout aye loudest rings, and whose  
The maddest cranks and quips—  
Who mints his soul to laughter's coin  
And wastes it with his lips—  
Has grown too sad for sighs and seeks  
To cheat himself with mirth;  
We fools self-doomed to motley are  
The weariest wights on earth!

But yet, for us whose brains and hearts  
Strove aye in paths perverse,  
Doomed still to know the better things  
And still to do the worse,—  
What else is there remains for us  
But make a jest of care  
And set the rafters ringing, in  
Our Tavern of Despair?

## COLORS AND SURFACES

### A GOLDEN LAD

(D. V. M.)

"Golden lads and lasses must  
Like chimney-sweepers come to dust."  
—SHAKESPEARE.

So young, but already the splendor  
Of genius robed him about—  
Already the dangerous, tender  
Regard of the gods marked him out—

(On whom the burden and duty  
They bind, at his earliest breath,  
Of showing their own grave beauty,  
They love and they crown with death.)

We were of one blood, but the olden  
Rapt poets spake out in his tone;  
We were of one blood, but the golden  
Rathe promise was his, his alone.

And ever his great eye glistened  
With visions I could not see,  
Ever he thrilled and listened  
To voices withholden from me.

Young lord of the realms of fancy,  
The bright dreams flocked to his call  
Like sprites that the necromancy  
Of a Prospero holds in thrall—

Quick visions that served and attended,

Elusive and hovering things,  
With a quiver of joy in the splendid  
Wild sweep of their luminous wings;

He dwelt in an alien glamor,  
He wrought of its gleams a crown,—  
But the world, with its cruelty and clamor,  
Broke him and beat him down;

So he passed; he was worn, he was weary,  
He was slain at the touch of life;—  
With a smile that was wistful and eerie  
He passed from the senseless strife;—

So he ceased (is their humor satiric,  
These gods that make perfect and blight?)—  
He ceased like an exquisite lyric  
That dies on the breast of night.

## THE SAGE AND THE WOMAN

'TWIXT ancient Beersheba and Dan  
Another such a caravan  
Dazed Palestine had never seen  
As that which bore Sabea's queen  
Up from the fain and flaming South  
To slake her yearning spirit's drouth  
At wisdom's pools, with Solomon.

With gifts of scented sandalwood,  
And labdanum, and cassia-bud,  
With spicy spoils of Araby  
And camel-loads of ivory  
And heavy cloths that glanced and shone  
With inwrought pearl and beryl-stone  
She came, a bold Sabean girl.

And did she find him grave, or gay?  
Perchance his palace breathed that day  
With psalters sounding solemnly—  
Or cymbals' merrier minstrelsy—  
Perchance the wearied monarch heard  
Some loose-tongued prophet's meddling word;—  
None knows, no one—but Solomon!

She looked—with eyne wherein were blent  
All ardors of the Orient;  
She spake—all magics of the South  
Were compassed in the witch's mouth;—  
He thought the scarlet lips of her  
More precious than En Gedi's myrrh,  
The lips of that Sabean girl;

By many an amorous sun caressed,  
From lifted brow to amber breast  
She gleamed in vivid loveliness—  
And lithe as any leopardess—  
And verily, one blames thee not  
If thine own proverbs were forgot,  
O Solomon, wise Solomon!

She danced for him, and surely she  
Learnt dancing from some moonlit sea

Where elfin vapors swirled and swayed  
While the wild pipes of witchcraft played



Such clutching music 'twould impel  
A prophet's self to dance to hell—  
So spun the light Sabean girl.

He swore her laughter had the lilt  
Of chiming waters that are spilt  
In sprays of spurted melody  
From founts of carven porphyry,  
And in the billowy turbulence  
Of her dusk hair drowned soul and sense—  
Dark tides and deep, O Solomon!

Perchance unto her day belongs  
His poem called the Song of Songs,  
Each little lyric interval  
Timed to her pulse's rise and fall;—  
Or when he cried out wearily  
That all things end in vanity  
Did he mean that Sabean girl?

The bright barbaric opulence,  
The sun-kist Temple, Kedar's tents,—

How many a careless caravan  
'Twixt Beersheba and ruined Dan,  
Within these forty centuries,  
Has flung their dust to many a breeze,  
With dust that was King Solomon!

But still the lesson holds as true,  
O King, as when she lessoned you:  
*That very wise men are not wise  
Until they read in Folly's eyes  
The wisdom that escapes the schools,  
That bids the sage revise his rules  
By light of some Sabean girl!*

## NEWS FROM BABYLON

"Archaeologists have discovered a love-letter among the ruins  
of Babylon." —Newspaper report.

*The world hath just one tale to tell, and it is very old,  
A little tale—a simple tale—a tale that's easy told:  
"There was a youth in Babylon who greatly loved a  
maid!"  
The world hath just one song to sing, but sings it  
unafraid,  
A little song—a foolish song—the only song it hath:  
"There was a youth in Ascalon who loved a girl in  
Gath!"*

Homer clanged it, Omar twanged it, Greece and  
Persia knew!—  
Nimrod's reivers, Hiram's weavers, Hindu, Kurd,  
and Jew—  
Crowning Tyre, Troy afire, they have dreamed  
the dream;  
Tiber-side and Nilus-tide brightened with the  
gleam—

Oh, the suing, sighing, wooing, sad and merry  
hours,  
Blisses tasted, kisses wasted, building Babel's  
towers!  
Hearts were aching, hearts were breaking, lashes

wet with dew,  
When the ships touched the lips of islands Sappho  
knew;  
Yearning breasts and burning breasts, cold at last,  
are hid  
Amid the glooms of carven tombs in Khufu's  
pyramid—  
Though the sages, down the ages, smile their cynic  
doubt,  
Man and maid, unafraid, put the schools to rout;  
Seek to chain love and retain love in the bonds of  
breath,  
Vow to hold love, bind and fold love even unto  
death!

*The dust of forty centuries has buried Babylon,  
And out of all her lovers dead rises only one;  
Rises with a song to sing and laughter in his eyes,  
The old song—the only song—for all the rest are lies!*

*For, oh, the world has just one dream, and it is very  
old—  
'Tis youth's dream—a silly dream—but it is flushed  
with gold!*

### **A RHYME OF THE ROADS**

PEARL-SLASHED and purple and crimson and  
fringed with gray mist of the hills,  
The pennons of morning advance to the music of  
rock-fretted rills,  
The dumb forest quickens to song, and the little  
gusts shout as they fling  
A floor-cloth of orchard bloom down for the flashing,  
quick feet of the Spring.

To the road, gipsy-heart, thou and I! 'Tis the  
mad piper, Spring, who is leading;  
'Tis the pulse of his piping that throbs through  
the brain, irresistibly pleading;  
Full-blossomed, deep-bosomed, fain woman,  
light-footed, lute-throated and fleet,  
We have drunk of the wine of this Wanderer's song;  
let us follow his feet!

Like raveled red girdles flung down by some  
hoidenish goddess in mirth  
The tangled roads reach from rim unto utter-most  
rim of the earth—  
We will weave of these strands a strong net, we  
will snare the bright wings of delight,—  
We will make of these strings a sweet lute that  
will shame the low wind-harps of night.

The clamor of tongues and the clangor of trades  
in the peevish packed street,  
The arrogant, jangling Nothings, with iterant,  
dissonant beat,  
The clattering, senseless endeavor with dross of  
mere gold for its goal,  
These have sickened the senses and wearied the  
brain and straitened the soul.

"Come forth and be cleansed of the folly of strife  
for things worthless of strife,  
Come forth and gain life and grasp God by foregoing

gains worthless of life"—

It was thus spake the wizard wildwood, low-voiced  
to the hearkening heart,  
It was thus sang the jovial hills, and the harper  
sun bore part.

O woman, whose blood as my blood with the fire  
of the Spring is aflame,  
We did well, when the red roads called, that we  
heeded the call and came—  
Came forth to the sweet wise silence where soul  
may speak sooth unto soul,  
Vine-wreathed and vagabond Love, with the goal  
of Nowhere for our goal!

What planet-crowned Dusk that wanders the  
steeps of our firmament there  
Hath gems that may match with the dew-opals  
meshed in thine opulent hair?  
What wind-witch that skims the curled billows  
with feet they are fain to caress  
Hath sandals so wing'd as thine art with a  
god-like carelessness?

And dare we not dream this is heaven?—to wander  
thus on, ever on.  
Through the hush-heavy valleys of space, up the  
flushing red slopes of the dawn?—  
For none that seeks rest shall find rest till he  
ceaseth his striving for rest,  
And the gain of the quest is the joy of the road  
that allures to the quest.

## THE LAND OF YESTERDAY

AND I would seek the country town  
Amid green meadows nestled down  
If I could only find the way  
Back to the Land of Yesterday!

How I would thrust the miles aside,  
Rush up the quiet lane, and then,  
Just where her roses laughed in pride,  
Find her among the flowers again.  
I'd slip in silently and wait  
Until she saw me by the gate,  
And then ... read through a blur of tears  
Quick pardon for the selfish years.

This time, this time, I would not wait  
For that brief wire that said, *Too late!*—  
If I could only find the way  
Into the Land of Yesterday.

I wonder if her roses yet  
Lift up their heads and laugh with pride,  
And if her phlox and mignonette  
Have heart to blossom by their side;  
I wonder if the dear old lane  
Still chirps with robins after rain,  
And if the birds and banded bees  
Still rob her early cherry-trees....

I wonder, if I went there now,  
How everything would seem, and how—

But no! not now; there is no way  
Back to the Land of Yesterday.

## OCTOBER

CEASE to call him sad and sober,  
Merriest of months, October!  
Patron of the bursting bins,  
Reveler in wayside inns,  
I can nowhere find a trace  
Of the pensive in his face;  
There is mingled wit and folly,  
But the madcap lacks the grace  
Of a thoughtful melancholy.  
Spendthrift of the seasons' gold,  
How he flings and scatters out  
Treasure filched from summer-time!—  
Never ruffling squire of old  
Better loved a tavern bout  
When Prince Hal was in his prime.  
Doublet slashed with gold and green;  
Cloak of crimson; changeful sheen,  
Of the dews that gem his breast;  
Frosty lace about his throat;

Scarlet plumes that flaunt and float  
Backward in a gay unrest—  
Where's another gallant drest  
With such tricky gaiety,  
Such unlessoned vanity?  
With his amber afternoons  
And his pendant poets' moons—  
With his twilights dashed with rose  
From the red-lipped afterglows—  
With his vocal airs at dawn  
Breathing hints of Helicon—  
Bacchanalian bees that sip  
Where his cider-presses drip—  
With the winding of the horn  
Where his huntsmen meet the morn—  
With his every piping breeze  
Shaking from familiar trees  
Apples of Hesperides—  
With the chuckle, chirp, and trill  
Of his jolly brooks that spill  
Mirth in tangled madrigals  
Down pebble-dappled waterfalls—  
(Brooks that laugh and make escape  
Through wild arbors where the grape

Purples with a promise of  
Racy vintage rare as love)—  
With his merry, wanton air,  
Mirth and vanity and folly  
Why should he be made to bear  
Burden of some melancholy  
Song that swoons and sinks with care?  
Cease to call him sad or sober,—  
He's a jolly dog, October!

## CHANT OF THE CHANGING HOURS

THE Hours passed by, a fleet, confused crowd;  
With wafture of blown garments bright as fire,

Light, light of foot and laughing, morning-browed,  
And where they trod the jonquil and the briar  
Thrilled into jocund life, the dreaming dells  
Waked to a morrice chime of jostled bells;—  
They danced! they danced! to piping such as  
flings

The garnered music of a million Springs  
Into one single, keener ecstasy;—  
One paused and shouted to my questionings:  
"Lo, I am Youth; I bid thee follow me!"

The Hours passed by; they paced, great lords and  
proud,  
Crowned on with sunlight, robed in rich attire;  
Before their conquering word the brute deed  
bowed,  
And Ariel fancies served their large desire;

They spake, and roused the mused soul that dwells  
In dust, or, smiling, shaped new heavens and  
hells,  
Dethroned old gods and made blind beggars kings:  
"And what art thou," I cried to one, "that brings  
His mistress, for a brooch, the Galaxy?"—  
"I am the plumed Thought that soars and sings:  
Lo, I am Song; I bid thee follow me!"

The Hours passed by, with veiled eyes endowed  
Of dream, and parted lips that scarce suspire,  
To breathing dusk and arrowy moonlight vowed,  
South wind and shadowy grove and murmuring  
lyre;—  
Swaying they moved, as drows'd of wizard spells  
Or tranc'd with sight of recent miracles,  
And yet they trembled, down their folded wings  
Quivered the hint of sweet withholden things,  
Ah, bitter-sweet in their intensity!  
One paused and said unto my wonderings:  
"Lo, I am Love; I bid thee follow me!"

The Hours passed by, through huddled cities loud  
With witless hate and stale with stinking mire:

So cowed monks might march with bier and shroud  
Down streets plague-spotted toward some cleansing pyre;—  
Yet, lo! strange lilies bloomed in lightless cells,  
And passionate spirits burst their clayey shells  
And sang the stricken hope that bleeds and clings:  
Earth's bruised heart beat in the throbbing strings,  
And joy still struggled through the threnody!  
One stern Hour said unto my marvelings:  
"Lo, I am Life; I bid thee follow me!"

The Hours passed by, the stumbling hours and  
cowed,  
Uncertain, prone to tears and childish ire,—  
The wavering hours that drift like any cloud  
At whim of winds or fortunate or dire,—  
The feeble shapes that any chance expells;  
Their wisdom useless, lacking the blood that swells  
The tensed vein: the hot, swift tide that stings  
With life. Ah, wise! but naked to the slings  
Of fate, and plagued of youthful memory!  
A cracked voice broke upon my pityings:  
"Lo, I am Age; I bid thee follow me!"

Ah, Youth! we dallied by the babbling wells  
Where April all her lyric secret tells;—  
Ah, Song! we sped our bold imaginings  
As far as yon red planet's triple rings;—  
O Life! O Love! I followed, followed thee!  
There waits one word to end my journeyings:  
"Lo, I am Death; I bid thee follow me!"

## DREAMS AND DUST

## SELVES

*My dust in ruined Babylon  
Is blown along the level plain,  
And songs of mine at dawn have soared  
Above the blue Sicilian main.*

We are ourselves, and not ourselves ...  
For ever thwarting pride and will  
Some forebear's passion leaps from death  
To claim a vital license still.

Ancestral lusts that slew and died,  
Resurgent, swell each living vein;  
Old doubts and faiths, new panoplied,  
Dispute the mastery of the brain.

The love of liberty that flames  
From written rune and stricken reed  
Shook the hot hearts of swordsmen sires  
At Marathon and Runnymede.

*What are these things we call our "selves"? ...  
Have I not shouted, sobbed, and died  
In the bright surf of spears that broke  
Where Greece rolled back the Persian tide?*

Are we who breathe more quick than they  
Whose bones are dust within the tomb?  
Nay, as I write, what gray old ghosts  
Murmur and mock me from the gloom....

They call ... across strange seas they call,  
Strange seas, and haunted coasts of time....  
They startle me with wordless songs  
To which the Sphinx hath known the rhyme.

Our hearts swell big with dead men's hates,  
Our eyes sting hot with dead men's tears;  
We are ourselves, but not ourselves,  
Born heirs, but serfs, to all the years!

*I rode with Nimrod ... strove at Troy ...  
A slave I stood in Crowning Tyre,  
A queen looked on me and I loved  
And died to compass my desire.*

## THE WAGES

EARTH loves to gibber o'er her dross,  
Her golden souls, to waste;  
The cup she fills for her god-men  
Is a bitter cup to taste.

Who sees the gyves that bind mankind  
And strives to strike them off  
Shall gain the hissing hate of fools,  
Thorns, and the ingrate's scoff.

Who storms the moss-grown walls of eld  
And beats some falsehood down  
Shall pass the pallid gates of death  
*Sans* laurel, love or crown;

For him who fain would teach the world  
The world holds hate in fee—  
For Socrates, the hemlock cup;  
For Christ, Gethsemane.

### IN MARS, WHAT AVATAR?

"In Vishnu-land, what avatar?"  
—BROWNING.

PERCHANCE the dying gods of Earth  
Are destined to another birth,  
And worn-out creeds regain their worth  
In the kindly air of other stars—  
What lords of life and light hold sway  
In the myriad worlds of the Milky Way?  
What avatars in Mars?

What Aphrodites from the seas  
That lap the plunging Pleiades  
Arise to spread afar  
The dream that was the soul of Greece?  
In Mars, what avatar?

Which hundred moons are wan with love  
For dull Endymions?  
Which hundred moons hang tranced above  
Audacious Ajalons?

What Holy Grail lures errants pale  
Through the wastes of yonder star?  
What fables sway the Milky Way?  
In Mars, what avatar?

When morning skims with crimson wings  
Across the meres of Mercury,  
What dreaming Memnon wakes and sings  
Of miracles on Mercury?  
What Christs, what avatars,  
Claim Mars?

### THE GOD-MAKER, MAN

NEVERMORE  
Shall the shepherds of Arcady follow  
Pan's moods as he lolls by the shore  
Of the mere, or lies hid in the hollow;  
Nevermore  
Shall they start at the sound of his reed-fashioned  
flute;

Fallen mute  
Are the strings of Apollo,  
His lyre and his lute;  
And the lips of the Memnons are mute  
Evermore;  
And the gods of the North,—are they dead or  
forgetful,  
Our Odin and Baldur and Thor?  
Are they drunk, or grown weary of worship and  
fretful,  
Our Odin and Baldur and Thor?

And into what night have the Orient dieties  
strayed?  
Swart gods of the Nile, in dusk splendors arrayed,  
Brooding Isis and somber Osiris,  
You were gone ere the fragile papyrus,  
(That bragged you eternal!) decayed.

The avatars  
But illumine their limited evens  
And vanish like plunging stars;  
They are fixed in the whirling heavens  
No firmer than falling stars;  
Brief lords of the changing soul, they pass  
Like a breath from the face of a glass,  
Or a blossom of summer blown shallop-like over  
The clover  
And tossed tides of grass.

Sink to silence the psalms and the paeans  
The shibboleths shift, and the faiths,  
And the temples that challenged the aeons  
Are tenanted only by wraiths;  
Swoon to silence the cymbals and psalters,  
The worships grow senseless and strange,

And the mockers ask, "*Where be thy altars?*"  
Crying, "*Nothing is changeless—but Change!*"

Yes, nothing seems changeless, but Change.  
And yet, through the creed-wrecking years,  
One story for ever appears;  
The tale of a City Supernal—  
The whisper of Something eternal—  
A passion, a hope, and a vision  
That peoples the silence with Powers;  
A fable of meadows Elysian  
Where Time enters not with his Hours;—  
Manifold are the tale's variations,  
Race and clime ever tinting the dreams,  
Yet its essence, through endless mutations,  
Immutable gleams.

Deathless, though godheads be dying,  
Surviving the creeds that expire,  
Illogical, reason-defying,  
Lives that passionate, primal desire;  
Insistent, persistent, forever  
Man cries to the silences, *Never*

*Shall Death reign the lord of the soul,  
Shall the dust be the ultimate goal—  
I will storm the black bastions of Night!  
I will tread where my vision has trod,  
I will set in the darkness a light,*



*In the vastness, a god!"*

As the forehead of Man grows broader, so do  
his creeds;  
And his gods they are shaped in his image, and  
mirror his needs;  
And he clothes them with thunders and beauty,  
he clothes them with music and fire;  
Seeing not, as he bows by their altars, that he  
worships his own desire;  
And mixed with his trust there is terror, and  
mixed with his madness is ruth,  
And every man grovels in error, yet every man  
glimpses a truth.

For all of the creeds are false, and all of the creeds  
are true;  
And low at the shrines where my brothers bow,  
there will I bow, too;

For no form of a god, and no fashion  
Man has made in his desperate passion  
But is worthy some worship of mine;—  
Not too hot with a gross belief,  
Nor yet too cold with pride,  
I will bow me down where my brothers bow,  
Humble—but open-eyed!

## **UNREST**

A FIERCE unrest seethes at the core  
Of all existing things:  
It was the eager wish to soar  
That gave the gods their wings.

From what flat wastes of cosmic slime,  
And stung by what quick fire,  
Sunward the restless races climb!—  
Men risen out of mire!

There throbs through all the worlds that are  
This heart-beat hot and strong,  
And shaken systems, star by star,  
Awake and glow in song.

But for the urge of this unrest  
These joyous spheres were mute;  
But for the rebel in his breast  
Had man remained a brute.

When baffled lips demanded speech,  
Speech trembled into birth—  
(One day the lyric word shall reach  
From earth to laughing earth)—

When man's dim eyes demanded light  
The light he sought was born—  
His wish, a Titan, scaled the height  
And flung him back the morn!

From deed to dream, from dream to deed,  
From daring hope to hope,  
The restless wish, the instant need,  
Still lashed him up the slope!

.....

I sing no governed firmament,  
Cold, ordered, regular—  
I sing the stinging discontent  
That leaps from star to star!

### **THE PILTDOWN SKULL**

WHAT was his life, back yonder  
In the dusk where time began,  
This beast uncouth with the jaw of an ape  
And the eye and brain of a man?—  
Work, and the wooing of woman,  
Fight, and the lust of fight,  
Play, and the blind beginnings  
Of an Art that groped for light?—

In the wonder of redder mornings,  
By the beauty of brighter seas,  
Did he stand, the world's first thinker,  
Scorning his clan's decrees?—  
Seeking, with baffled eyes,  
In the dumb, inscrutable skies,  
A name for the greater glory  
That only the dreamer sees?

One day, when the afterglows,  
Like quick and sentient things,

With a rush of their vast, wild wings,  
Rose out of the shaken ocean  
As great birds rise from the sod,  
Did the shock of their sudden splendor  
Stir him and startle and thrill him,  
Grip him and shake him and fill him  
With a sense as of heights untrod?—  
Did he tremble with hope and vision,  
And grasp at a hint of God?

London stands where the mammoth  
Caked shag flanks with slime—  
And what are our lives that inherit  
The treasures of all time?  
Work, and the wooing of woman,  
Fight, and the lust of fight,  
A little play (and too much toil!)  
With an Art that gropes for light;  
And now and then a dreamer,  
Rapt, from his lonely sod  
Looks up and is thrilled and startled  
With a fleeting sense of God!

### **THE SEEKER**

THE creeds he wrought of dream and thought  
Fall from him at the touch of life,  
His old gods fail him in the strife—  
Withdrawn, the heavens he sought!

Vanished, the miracles that led,  
The cloud at noon, the flame at night;  
The vision that he wing'd and sped  
Falls backward, baffled, from the height;

Yet in the wreck of these he stands  
Upheld by something grim and strong;

Some stubborn instinct lifts a song  
And nerves him, heart and hands:

He does not dare to call it hope;—  
It is not aught that seeks reward—

Nor faith, that up some sunward slope  
Runs aureoled to meet its lord;

It touches something elder far  
Than faith or creed or thought in man,  
It was ere yet these lived and ran  
Like light from star to star;

It touches that stark, primal need  
That from unpeopled voids and vast  
Fashioned the first crude, childish creed,—  
And still shall fashion, till the last!

For one word is the tale of men:  
They fling their icons to the sod,  
And having trampled down a god  
They seek a god again!

Stripped of his creeds inherited,  
Bereft of all his sires held true,  
Amid the wreck of visions dead  
He thrills at touch of visions new....

He wings another Dream for flight....  
He seeks beyond the outmost dawn  
A god he set there ... and, anon,  
Drags that god from the height!

.....

But aye from ruined faiths and old  
That droop and die, fall bruised seeds;  
And when new flowers and faiths unfold  
They're lovelier flowers, they're kindlier creeds.

## THE AWAKENING

THE steam, the reek, the fume, of prayer  
Blown outward for a million years,  
Becomes a mist between the spheres,  
And waking Sentience struggles there.

Prayer still creates the boon we pray;  
And gods we've hoped for, from those hopes  
Will gain sufficient form one day  
And in full godhood storm the slopes  
Where ancient Chaos, stark and gray,  
Already trembles for his sway.

When that the restless worlds would fly  
Their wish created rapid wings,  
But not till aeons had passed by  
With dower of many idler things;  
And when dumb flesh demanded speech  
Speech struggled to the lips at last;—  
Now the unpeopled Void, and vast,

Clean to that uttermost blank beach  
Whereto the boldest thought may reach  
That voyages from the vaguest past—  
(Dim realm and ultimate of space)—

Is vexed and troubled, stirs and shakes,  
In prescience of a god that wakes,  
Born of man's wish to see God's face!

The endless, groping, dumb desires,—  
The climbing incense thick and sweet,  
The lovely purpose that aspires,  
The wraiths of vapor wing'd and fleet  
That rise and run with eager feet  
Forth from a myriad altar fires:  
All these become a mist that fills  
The vales and chasms nebular;  
A shaping Soul that moves and thrills  
The wastes between red star and star!

### **A SONG OF MEN**

OUT of the soil and the slime,  
Reeking, they climb,

Out of the muck and the mire,  
Rank, they aspire;

Filthy with murder and mud,  
Black with shed blood,

Lust and passion and clay—  
Dying, they slay;

Stirred by vague hints of a goal,  
Seeking a soul!

Groping through terror and night  
Up to the light:

Life in the dust and the clod  
Sensing a God;

Flushed of the glamor and gleam  
Caught from a dream;

Stained of the struggle and toil,  
Stained of the soil,

Ally of God in the end—  
Helper and friend—

Hero and prophet and priest  
Out of the beast!

### **THE NOBLER LESSON**

CHRIST was of virgin birth, and, being slain,  
The creedists say, He rose from death again.  
Oh, futile age-long talk of death and birth!—  
His life, that is the one thing wonder-worth;  
Not how He came, but how He lived on earth.  
For if gods stoop, and with quaint jugglery  
Mock nature's laws, how shall that profit thee?—  
The nobler lesson is that mortals can  
Grow godlike through this baffled front of man!

### **AT LAST**

EACH race has died and lived and fought for the  
"true" gods of that poor race,

Unconsciously, divinest thought of each race  
gilding its god's face.  
And every race that lives and dies shall make itself  
some other gods,  
Shall build, with mingled truth and lies, new icons  
from the world-old clods.  
Through all the tangled creeds and dreams and  
shifting shibboleths men hold  
The false-and-true, inwoven, gleams: a matted  
mass of dross and gold.  
Prove, then, thy gods in thine own soul; all others'  
gods, for thee, are vain;  
Nor swerved be, struggling for the goal, by bribe  
of joy nor threat of pain.

As skulls grow broader, so do faiths; as old tongues  
die, old gods die, too,

And only ghosts of gods and wraiths may meet  
the backward-gazer's view.  
Where, where the faiths of yesterday? Ah,  
whither vanished, whither gone?  
Say, what Apollos drive to-day adown the flaming  
slopes of dawn?  
Oh, does the blank past hide from view forgotten  
Christs, to be reborn,  
The future tremble where some new Messiah-Memnon  
sings the morn?  
Of all the worlds, say any earth, like dust  
wind-harried to and fro,  
Shall give the next Prometheus birth; but say—at  
last—you do not know.

How should I know what dawn may gleam beyond  
the gates of darkness there?—  
Which god of all the gods men dream? Why  
should I whip myself to care?  
Whichever over all hath place hath shaped and  
made me what I am;  
Hath made me strong to front his face, to dare  
to question though he damn.

Perhaps to cringe and cower and bring a shrine  
a forced and faithless faith  
Is far more futile than to fling your laughter in  
the face of Death.  
For writhe or whirl in dervish rout, they are not  
flattered there on high,  
Or sham belief to hide a doubt—no gods are mine  
that love a lie!  
Nor gods that beg belief on earth with portents  
that some seer foretells—  
Is life itself not wonder-worth that we must cry  
for miracles?  
Is it not strange enough we breathe? Does every-  
thing not God reveal?  
Or must we ever weave and wreath some creed  
that shall his face conceal?  
Some creed of which its prophets cry it holds  
the secret's all-in-all:  
Some creed which ever by and by doth crumble,  
totter, to its fall!  
Say any dream of all the dreams that drift and  
darkle, glint and glow,  
Holds most of truth within its gleams; but say

—at last—you do not know.

Oh, say the soul, from star to star, with victory  
wing'd, leap on through space  
And scale the bastioned nights that bar the secret's  
inner dwelling-place;  
Or say it ever roam dim glades where pallid  
wraiths of long-dead moons  
Flit like blown feathers through the shades, borne  
on the breath of sobbing tunes:  
Say any tide of any time, of all the tides that ebb  
and flow,  
Shall buoy us on toward any clime; but say—at  
last—you do not know!

## LYRICS

### "KING PANDION, HE IS DEAD"

"King Pandion, he is dead;  
All thy friends are lapp'd in lead."  
—SHAKESPEARE.

DREAMERS, drinkers, rebel youth,  
Where's the folly free and fine  
You and I mistook for truth?  
Wits and wastrels, friends of wine,  
Wags and poets, friends of mine,  
Gleams and glamors all are fled,  
Fires and frenzies half divine!  
King Pandion, he is dead!

Time's unmannerly, uncouth!  
Here's the crow's-foot for a sign!  
And, upon our brows, forsooth,  
Wits and wastrels, friends of wine,  
Time hath set his mark malign;  
Frost has touched us, heart and head,  
Cooled the blood and dulled the eyne:  
King Pandion, he is dead!

Time's a tyrant without ruth:—  
Fancies used to bloom and twine  
Round a common tavern booth,  
Wits and wastrels, friends of wine,  
In that youth of mine and thine!  
'Tis for youth the feast is spread;  
When we dine now—we but dine!—  
King Pandion, he is dead!

How our dreams would glow and shine,  
Wits and wastrels, friends of wine,  
Ere the drab Hour came that said:  
King Pandion, he is dead!

### DAVID TO BATHSHEBA

VERY red are the roses of Sharon,  
But redder thy mouth,  
There is nard, there is myrrh, in En Gedi,

From the uplands of Lebanon, heavy  
With balsam, the winds  
Drift freighted and scented and cedarn—  
But thy mouth is more precious than spices!

Thy breasts are twin lilies of Kedron;  
White lilies, that sleep  
In the shallows where loitering Kedron  
Broadens out and is lost in the Jordan;  
Globed lilies, so white  
That David, thy King, thy beloved  
Declareth them meet for his gardens.

Under the stars very strangely  
The still waters gleam;  
Deep down in the waters of Hebron

The soul of the starlight is sunken,  
But deep in thine eyes  
Stirs a more wonderful secret  
Than pools ever learn of the starlight.

## THE JESTERS

A TOAST to the Fools!  
Pierrot, Pantaloon,  
Harlequin, Clown,  
Merry-Andrew, Buffoon—  
Touchstone and Triboulet—all of the tribe.—  
Dancer and jester and singer and scribe.  
We sigh over Yorick—(unfortunate fool,  
Ten thousand Hamlets have fumbled his skull!)—  
But where is the Hamlet to weep o'er the biers  
Of his brothers?  
And where is the poet solicits our tears  
For the others?  
They have passed from the world and left never  
a sign,  
And few of us now have the courage to sing  
That their whimsies made life a more livable  
thing—  
We, that are left of the line,  
Let us drink to the jesters—in gooseberry wine!

Then here's to the Fools!  
Flouting the sages  
Through history's pages  
And driving the dreary old seers into rages—  
The humbugging Magis  
Who prate that the wages  
Of Folly are Death—toast the Fools of all ages!  
They have ridden like froth down the whirlpools  
of time,  
They have jingled their caps in the councils of  
state,  
They have snared half the wisdom of life in a  
rhyme,  
And tripped into nothingness grinning at fate—  
Ho, brothers mine,  
Brim up the glasses with gooseberry wine!

Though the prince with his firman,  
The judge in his ermine,  
Affirm and determine  
Bold words need the whip,

Let them spare us the rod and remit us the  
sermon,  
For Death has a quip

Of the tomb and the vermin  
That will silence at last the most impudent lip!  
Is the world but a bubble, a bauble, a joke?  
Heigho, Brother Fools, now your bubble is broke,  
Do you ask for a tear?—or is it worth while?  
Here's a sigh for you, then—but it ends in a smile!  
Ho, Brother Death,  
We would laugh at you, too—if you spared us the  
breath!

### **"MARY, MARY, QUITE CONTRARY"**

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary,  
How does your garden grow?  
With silver bells and cockle-shells  
And pretty maids all in a row!"  
—Mother Goose.

MARY, Mistress Mary,  
How does your garden grow?  
From your uplands airy,  
Mary, Mistress Mary,  
Float the chimes of faery  
When the breezes blow!  
Mary, Mistress Mary,  
How does your garden grow?

With flower-maidens, singing  
Among the morning hills—  
With silvern bells a-ringing,  
With flower-maidens singing,  
With vocal lilies, springing  
By chanting daffodils;  
With flower-maidens, singing  
Among the morning hills!

### **THE TRIOLET**

YOUR triolet should glimmer  
Like a butterfly;  
In golden light, or dimmer,  
Your triolet should glimmer,  
Tremble, turn, and shimmer,  
Flash, and flutter by;  
Your triolet should glimmer  
Like a butterfly.

### **FROM THE BRIDGE**

HELD and thrilled by the vision  
I stood, as the twilight died,  
Where the great bridge soars like a song  
Over the crawling tide—

Stood on the middle arch—  
And night flooded in from the bay,  
And wonderful under the stars  
Before me the city lay;

Girdled with swinging waters—  
Guarded by ship on ship—



A gem that the strong old ocean  
Held in his giant grip;

There was play of shadows above  
And drifting gleams below,  
And magic of shifting waves  
That darkle and glance and glow;

Dusky and purple and splendid,  
Banded with loops of light,  
The tall towers rose like pillars,  
Lifting the dome of night;

The gliding cars of traffic  
Slid swiftly up and down  
Like monsters, fiery mailed,  
Leaping across the town.

Not planned with a thought of beauty;  
Built by a lawless breed;  
Builded of lust for power,  
Builded of gold and greed.

Risen out of the trader's  
Brutal and sordid wars—  
And yet, behold! a city  
Wonderful under the stars!

#### **"PALADINS, PALADINS, YOUTH NOBLE-HEARTED"**

GALAHADS, Galahads, Percivals, gallop!  
Bayards, to the saddle!—the clangorous trumpets,  
Hoarse with their ecstasy, call to the mellay.  
Paladins, Paladins, Rolands flame-hearted,  
Olivers, Olivers, follow the bugles!

Girt with the glory and glamor of power,  
Error sits throned in the high place of justice;  
Paladins, Paladins, youth noble-hearted,  
Saddle and spear, for the battle-flags beckon!  
Thrust the keen steel through the throat of the liar.

Star (or San Grael) that illumines thy pathway,  
Follow it, follow that far Ideal!—  
Thine not the guerdon to gain it or grasp it;  
Soul of thee, passing, ascendeth unto it,  
Augmenting its brightness for them that come  
after.

Heed then the call of the trumpets, the trumpets,  
Hoarse with the fervor, the frenzy of battle,—  
Paladins, Paladins, saddle! to saddle!  
Bide not, abide not, God's bugles are calling!—  
Thrust the sharp sword through the heart of the  
liar.

#### **"MY LANDS, NOT THINE"**

MY lands, not thine, we look upon,  
Friend Croesus, hill and vale and lawn.  
Mine every woodland madrigal,  
And mine thy singing waterfall  
That vaguely hints of Helicon.

Mark how thine upland slopes have drawn  
A golden glory from the dawn!—

*Fool's gold?*—thy dullness proves them all  
My lands—not thine!

For when all title-deeds are gone,  
Still, still will satyr, nymph, and faun  
Through brake and covert pipe and call  
In dances bold and bacchanal—  
For them, for me, you hold in pawn,  
My lands—not thine!

### TO A DANCING DOLL

FORMAL, quaint, precise, and trim,  
You begin your steps demurely—  
There's a spirit almost prim  
In the feet that move so surely,  
So discreetly, to the chime  
Of the music that so sweetly  
Marks the time.

But the chords begin to tinkle  
Quicker,  
And your feet they flash and flicker—  
Twinkle!—  
Flash and flutter to a tricksy  
Fickle meter;  
And you foot it like a pixie—  
Only fleeter!

Now our current, dowdy  
Things—

"Turkey-trots" and rowdy  
Flings—  
For they made you overseas  
In politer times than these,  
In an age when grace could please,  
Ere St. Vitus  
Clutched and shook us, spine and knees;—  
Loosed a plague of jerks to smite us!

Well, our day is far more brisk  
And our manner rather slacker),  
And you are nothing more than bisque  
And lacquer—  
But you shame us with the graces  
Of courtlier times and places  
When the cheap  
And vulgar wasn't "art"—  
When the faunal prance and leap  
Weren't "smart."

Have we lost the trick of wedding  
Grace to pleasure?  
Must we clown it at the bidding  
Of some tawdry, common measure?

Can't you school us in the graces  
Of your pose and dainty paces?—  
Now the chords begin to tinkle  
Quicker—  
And your feet they flash and flicker—  
Twinkle!—  
And you mock us as you featly  
Swing and flutter to the chime  
Of the music-box that sweetly

Marks the time!

### **LOWER NEW YORK—A STORM**

WHITE wing'd below the darkling clouds  
The driven sea-gulls wheel;  
The roused sea flings a storm against  
The towers of stone and steel.

The very voice of ocean rings  
Along the shaken street—  
Dusk, storm, and beauty overwhelm the world  
Where sea and city meet—

But what care they for flashing wings,  
Quick beauty, loud refrain,  
These huddled thousands, deaf and blind  
To all but greed and gain?

### **AT SUNSET**

THE sun-god stooped from out the sky  
To kiss the flushing sea,  
While all the winds of all the world  
Made jovial melody;  
The night came hurrying up to hide  
The lovers with her tent;  
The governed thunders, rank on rank,  
Stood mute with wonderment;  
The pale worn moon, a jealous shade,  
Peered from the firmament;  
The early stars, the curious stars,  
Came peering forth to see  
What mighty nuptials shook the world  
With such an ecstasy  
Whenas the sun-god left the sky  
To mingle with the sea.

### **A CHRISTMAS GIFT**

ALACK-A-DAY for poverty!  
What jewels my mind doth give to thee!

Carved agate stone porphyrogene,  
Green emerald and beryl green,  
Deep sapphire and pale amethyst,  
Sly opal, cloaking with a mist  
The levin of its love elate,  
Shy brides' pearls, flushed and delicate,  
Sea-colored lapis lazuli,  
Sardonyx and chalcedony,  
Enkindling diamond, candid gold,  
Red rubies and red garnets bold:  
And all their humors should be blent  
In one intolerable blaze,  
Barbaric, fierce, and opulent,  
To dazzle him that dared to gaze!

Alack-a-day for poverty:  
My rhymes are all you get of me!  
Yet, if your heart receive, behold!  
The worthless words are set in gold.

### **SILVIA**

I STILL remember how she moved  
Among the rather, wild blooms she loved,  
(When Spring came tip-toe down the slopes,  
Atremble 'twixt her doubts and hopes,  
Half fearful and all virginal)—  
How Silvia sought this dell to call  
Her flowers into full festival,  
And chide them with this madrigal:

— "The busy spider hangs the brush  
With filmy gossamers,  
The frogs are croaking in the creek,  
The sluggish blacksnake stirs,  
But still the ground is bare of bloom  
Beneath the fragrant firs.

"Arise, arise, O briar rose,  
And sleepy violet!  
Awake, awake, anemone,  
Your wintry dreams forget—

— For shame, you tardy marigold,  
Are you not budded yet?

"The Swallow's back, and claims the eaves  
That last year were his home;  
The Robin follows where the plow  
Breaks up the crusted loam;  
And Red-wings spies the Thrush and pipes:  
'Look! Speckle-breast is come!'

"Up, blooms! and storm the wooded slopes,  
The lowlands and the plain—  
Blow, jonquil, blow your golden horn  
Across the ranks of rain!  
To arms! to arms! and put to flight  
The Winter's broken train!"

She paused beside this selfsame rill,  
And as she ceased, a daffodil  
Held up reproachfully his head  
And fluttered into speech, and said:

*"Chide not the flowers! You little know  
Of all their travail 'neath the snow,*

*Their struggling hours  
Of choking sorrow underground.  
Chide not the flowers!  
You little guess of that profound  
And blind, dumb agony of ours!  
Yet, victor here beside the rill,  
I greet the light that I have found,  
A Daffodil!"*

And when the Daffodil was done  
A boastful Marigold spake on:

*"Oh, chide the white frost, if you choose,  
The heavy clod, so hard to loose,  
The preying powers  
Of worm and insect underground.  
Chide not the flowers!  
For spite of scathe and cruel wound,  
Unconquered by the sunless hours,  
I rise in regal pride, a bold  
And golden-hearted, golden-crowned*

*Marsh Marigold!"*

And when she came no more, her creek  
Would not believe, but bade us seek

Hither, yon, and to and fro—  
Everywhere that children go  
When the Spring  
Is on the wing  
And the winds of April blow—  
"I will never think her dead;  
"She will come again!" it said;  
And then the birds that use the vale,  
Broken-hearted, turned the tale  
Into syllables of song  
And chirped it half a summer long:

*"Silvia, Silvia,  
Be our Song once more,  
Our vale revisit, Silvia,  
And be our Song once more:  
For joy lies sleeping in the lute;  
The merry pipe, the woodland flute,  
And all the pleading reeds are mute  
That breathed to thee of yore.*

*"Silvia, Silvia,  
Be our Moon again,*

Shine on our valley, Silvia,  
And be our Moon again:  
The fluffy owl and nightingale  
Flit silent through the darkling vale,  
Or utter only words of wail  
From throats all harsh with pain.

"Silvia, Silvia,  
Be Springtime, as of old;  
Come clad in laughter, Silvia,  
Our Springtime, as of old:  
The waiting lowlands and the hills  
Are tremulous with daffodils  
Unblown, until thy footstep thrills  
Their promise into gold." \_

And, musing on her here, I too  
Must wonder if it can be true  
She died, as other mortals do.  
The thought would fit her more, to feign  
That, full of life and unaware  
That earth holds aught of grief or stain,  
The fairies stole and hold her where  
Death enters not, nor strife nor pain;—

That, drowsing on some bed of pansies,  
By Titania's necromancies  
Her senses were to slumber lulled,  
Deeply sunken, steeped and dulled,  
And by wafture of swift pinions  
She was borne out through earth's portals  
To the fairy queen's dominions,  
To some land of the immortals.

## **THE EXPLORERS**

AND some still cry: *"What is the use?"*

*The service rendered? What the gain?  
Heroic, yes!—but in what cause?  
Have they made less one earth-borne pain?  
Broadened the bounded spirit's scope?  
Or died to make the dull world hope?"*

Must man still be the slave of Use?—  
But these men, careless and elate,  
Join battle with a burly world  
Or come to wrestling grips with fate,  
And not for any good nor gain  
Nor any fame that may befall—  
But, thrilling in the clutch of life,  
Heed the loud challenge and the call;—  
And grown to symbols at the last,  
Stand in heroic silhouette  
Against horizons ultimate,  
As towers that front lost seas are set;—

The reckless gesture, the strong pose,  
Sharp battle-cry flung back to Earth,  
And buoyant humor, as a god  
Might say: "*Lo, here my feet have trod!*"—  
There lies the meaning and the worth!

They bring no golden treasure home,  
They win no acres for their clan,  
Nor dream nor deed of theirs shall mend  
The ills of man's bedeviled span—  
Nor are they skilled in sleights of speech,  
(Nor overeager) to make plain  
The use they serve, transcending use,—  
The gain beyond apparent gain!

## **EARLY AUTUMN**

WITH half-hearted levies of frost that make foray,  
retire, and refrain—  
Ambiguous bugles that blow and that falter to  
silence again—

With banners of mist that still waver above them,  
advance and retreat,  
The hosts of the Autumn still hide in the hills,  
for a doubt stays their feet;—

But anon, with a barbaric splendor to dazzle the  
eyes that behold,  
And regal in raiment of purple and umber and  
amber and gold,

And girt with the glamor of conquest and scarved  
with red symbols of pride,  
From the hills in their might and their mirth on  
the steeds of the wind will they ride,

To make sport and make spoil of the Summer,  
who dwells in a dream on the plain,  
Still tented in opulent ease in the camps of her  
indolent train.

## **"TIME STEALS FROM LOVE"**

TIME steals from Love all but Love's wings;  
And how should aught but evil things,  
Or any good but death, befall

Him that is thrall unto Time's thrall,  
Slave to the lesser of these Kings?

O heart of youth that wakes and sings!  
O golden vows and golden rings!  
Life mocks you with the tale of all  
Time steals from Love!

O riven lute and writhen strings,  
Dead bough whereto no blossom clings,  
The glory was ephemeral!  
Nor may our Autumn grief recall  
The passion of the perished Springs  
Time steals from Love!

## THE RONDEAU

YOUR rondeau's tale must still be light—  
No bugle-call to life's stern fight!  
Rather a smiling interlude  
Memorial to some transient mood  
Of idle love and gala-night.

Its manner is the merest sleight  
O' hand; yet therein dwells its might,  
For if the heavier touch intrude  
Your rondeau's stale.

Fragrant and fragile, fleet and bright,  
And wing'd with whim, it gleams in flight  
Like April blossoms wind-pursued  
Down aisles of tangled underwood;—  
Nor be too serious when you write  
Your rondeau's tail!

## VISITORS

THEY haunt me, they tease me with hinted  
Withheld revelations,  
The songs that I may not utter;  
They lead me, they flatter, they woo me.  
I follow, I follow, I snatch  
At the veils of their secrets in vain—  
For lo! they have left me and vanished,  
The songs that I cannot sing.

There are visions elusive that come  
With a quiver and shimmer of wings;—  
Shapes shadows and shapes, and the murmur  
Of voices;—  
Shapes, that out of the twilight  
Leap, and with gesture appealing  
Seem to deliver a message,  
And are gone 'twixt a breath and a breath;—  
Shapes that race in with the waves  
Moving silverly under the moon,

And are gone ere they break into foam on the rocks  
And recede;—  
Breathings of love from invisible  
Flutes,  
Blown somewhere out in the tender  
Dusk,  
That die on the bosom of Silence;—  
Formless,

And fleeter than thought,  
Vaguer than thought or emotion,  
What are these visitors?

Out of the vast and uncharted  
Realms that encircle the visible world,  
With a glimmer of light on their pinions,  
They rush ...  
They waver, they vanish,  
Leaving me stirred with a dream of the ultimate  
    beauty,  
A sense of the ultimate music,  
I never shall capture;—

They are Beauty,  
Formless and tremulous Beauty,

Beauty unborn;  
Beauty as yet unapparelled  
In thought;  
Beauty that hesitates,  
Falters,  
Withdraws from the verge of birth,  
Flutters,  
Retreats from the portals of life;—  
O Beauty for ever uncaptured!  
O songs that I never shall sing!

## THE PARTING

WE have come "the primrose way,"  
    Folly, thou and I!  
Such a glamor and a grace  
Ever glimmered on thy face,  
Ever such a witchery  
Lit the laughing eyes of thee,  
Could a fool like me withstand  
Folly's feast and beckoning hand?  
Drinking, how thy lips' caress  
Spiced the cup of waywardness!  
So we came "the primrose way,"  
    Folly, thou and I!

But now, Folly, we must part,  
    Folly, thou and I!  
Shall one look with mirth or tears  
Back on all his wasted years,  
Purposes dissolved in wine,  
Pearls flung to the heedless swine?—

Idle days and nights of mirth,  
Were they pleasures nothing worth?  
Well, there's no gainsaying we  
Squandered youth right merrily!  
But now, Folly, we must part,  
    Folly, thou and I!

## AN OPEN FIRE

THESE logs with drama and with dream are rife,  
For all their golden Summers and green Springs  
Through leaf and root they sucked the forest's life,  
Drank in its secret, deep, essential things,  
Its midwood moods, its mystic runes,  
Its breathing hushes stirred of faery wings,



Its August nights and April noons;  
The garnered fervors of forgotten Junes  
Flare forth again and waste away;  
And in the sap that leaps and sings  
We hear again the chant the cricket flings  
Across the hawthorn-scented dusks of May.

## REALITIES

### REALITIES

WE are deceived by the shadow, we see not the  
substance of things.  
For the hills are less solid than thought; and  
deeds are but vapors; and flesh  
Is a mist thrown off and resumed by the soul, as  
a world by a god.  
Back of the transient appearance dwells in  
ineffable calm  
The utter reality, ultimate truth; this seems and  
that is.

### THE STRUGGLE

I HAVE been down in a dark valley;  
I have been groping through a deep gorge;  
Far above, the lips of it were rimmed with moonlight,  
And here and there the light lay on the dripping  
rocks  
So that it seemed they dripped with moonlight,  
not with water;  
So deep it was, that narrow gash among the hills,  
That those great pines which fringed its edge  
Seemed to me no larger than upthrust fingers  
Silhouetted against the sky;  
And at its top the vale was strait,  
And the rays were slant  
And reached but part way down the sides;  
I could not see the moon itself;  
I walked through darkness, and the valley's edge  
Seemed almost level with the stars,  
The stars that were like fireflies in the little trees.

It was the midnight of defeat;  
I felt that I had failed;  
I was mocked of the gods;  
There was no way out of that gorge;  
The paths led no whither  
And I could not remember their beginnings;  
I was doomed to wander evermore,  
Thirsty, with the sound of mocking waters in

mine ears,  
Groping, with gleams of useless light  
Splashed in ironic beauty on the rocks above.  
And so I whined.

And then despair flashed into rage;  
I leapt erect, and cried:  
*"Could I but grasp my life as sculptors grasp the clay  
And knead and thrust it into shape again!—  
If all the scorn of Heaven were but thrown  
Into the focus of some creature I could clutch!—  
If something tangible were but vouchsafed me  
By the cold, far gods!—  
If they but sent a Reason for the failure of my life  
I'd answer it;  
If they but sent a Fiend, I'd conquer it!—*

*But I reach out, and grasp the air,  
I rage, and the brute rock echoes my words in  
mockery—  
How can one fight the sliding moonlight on the cliffs?  
You gods, coward gods,  
Come down, I challenge you!—  
You who set snares with roses and with passion,  
You who make flesh beautiful and damn men through  
the flesh,  
You who plump the purple grape and then put poison  
in the cup,  
You who put serpents in your Edens,  
You who gave me delight of my senses and broke me  
for it,  
You who have mingled death with beauty,  
You who have put into my blood the impulses for  
which you cursed me,  
You who permitted my brain the doubts wherefore  
you damn me,  
Behold, I doubt you, gods, no longer, but defy!—  
I perish here?  
Then I will be slain of a god!  
You who have wrapped me in the scorn of your silence,  
The divinity in this same dust you flout*

*Flames through the dust,  
And dares,  
And flings you back your scorn,—  
Come, face to face, and slay me if you will,  
But not until you've felt the weight  
Of all betrucked humanity's contempt  
In one bold blow!—  
Speak forth a Reason, and I will answer it,  
Yes, to your faces I will answer it;  
Come garmented in flesh and I will fight with you,  
Yes, in your faces will I smite you, gods;  
Coward gods and tricksters that set traps  
In paradise!—  
Far gods that hedge yourselves about with silence  
And with distance;  
That mock men from the unscalable escarpments of  
your Heavens."*

Thus I raved, being mad.  
I had no sooner finished speaking than I felt  
The darkness fluttered by approaching feet,  
And the silence was burned through by trembling  
flames of sound,

And I was 'ware that Something stood by me.

And with a shout I leapt and grasped that Being,  
And the Thing grasped me.  
We came to wrestling grips,  
And back and forth we swayed,  
Hand seeking throat, and crook'd knee seeking  
To encrook unwary leg,  
And spread toes grasping the uneven ground;  
The strained breast muscles cracked and creaked,  
The sweat ran in my eyes,  
The plagued breath sobbed and whistled through  
my throat,  
I tasted blood, and strangled, but still struggled  
on—  
The stars above me danced in swarms like yellow  
bees,  
The shaken moonlight writhed upon the rocks;—  
But at the last I felt his breathing weaker grow,  
The tense limbs grow less tense,  
And with a bursting cry I bent his head right  
back,  
Back, back, until  
I heard his neck bones snap;  
His spine crunched in my grip;  
I flung him to the earth and knelt upon his breast

And listened till the fluttering pulse was stilled.  
Man, god, or devil, I had wrenched the life from  
him!

And lo!—even as he died  
The moonlight failed above the vale,—  
And somehow, sure, I know now how!—  
Between the rifted rocks the great Sun struck  
A finger down the cliff, and that red beam  
Lay sharp across the face of him that I had slain;  
And in that light I read the answer of the silent  
gods  
Unto my cursed-out prayer,  
For he that lay upon the ground was—I!  
I understood the lesson then;  
It was myself that lay there dead;  
Yes, I had slain my Self.

## **THE REBEL**

No doubt the ordered worlds speed on  
With purpose in their wings;  
No doubt the ordered songs are sweet  
Each worthy angel sings;  
And doubtless it is wise to heed  
The ordered words of Kings;

But how the heart leaps up to greet  
The headlong, rebel flight,  
Whenas some reckless meteor  
Blazes across the night!  
Some comet—Byron—Lucifer—  
Has dared to Be, and fight!

No doubt but it is safe to dwell  
Where ordered duties are;  
No doubt the cherubs earn their wage  
Who wind each ticking star;

No doubt the system is quite right!—  
Sane, ordered, regular;

But how the rebel fires the soul  
Who dares the strong gods' ire!  
Each Byron!—Shelley!—Lucifer!—  
And all the outcast choir  
That chant when some Prometheus  
Leaps up to steal Jove's fire!

### **THE CHILD AND THE MILL**

BETTER a pauper, penniless, asleep on the kindly  
sod—  
Better a gipsy, houseless, but near to the heart  
of God,

That beats for ears not dulled by the clanking  
wheels of care—  
Better starvation and freedom, hope and the good  
fresh air

Than death to the Something in him that was  
born to laugh and dream,  
That was kin to the idle lilies and the ripples of  
the stream.

For out of the dreams of childhood, that careless  
come and go,  
The boy gains strength, unknowing, that the Man  
will prove and know.

But these fools with their lies and their dollars,  
their mills and their bloody hands,  
Who make a god of a wheel, who worship their  
whirring bands,

They are flinging the life of a people, raw, to the  
brute machines.  
Dull-eyed, weary, and old—old in his early teens—

Stunted and stupid and twisted, marred in the  
mills of grief,  
Can your factories fashion a Man of this thing—  
a Man and a Chief?

Dumb is the heart of him now, at the time when  
his heart should sing—  
Wasters of body and brain, what race will the  
future bring?

What of the nation's nerve whenas swift crises  
come?  
What of the brawn that should heave the guns on  
the beck of the drum?

Thieves of body and soul, who can neither think  
nor feel,  
Swine-eyed priests of little false gods of gold and  
steel,

Bow to your obscene altars, worship your loud  
mills then!  
Feed to Moloch and Baal the brawn and brains  
of men—

But silent and watchful and hidden forever over

all

The masters brood of those Mills that "grind  
exceeding small."

And it needs no occult art nor magic to foreshow  
That a people who sow defeat they will reap the  
thing they sow.

#### "SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI"

CONQUERORS leonine, lordly,  
Princes and vaunting kings,  
Ye are drunk with the sound of your braggart  
trumps—  
\_But lo! ye are little things!

Earth ... it is charnel with monarchs!  
And the puffs of dust that start  
Where your war steeds stamp with their ringing hoofs  
Were each some warrior's heart.\_

Peoples imperial, mighty,  
Masterful, challenging fate,  
The tread of your cohorts shakes the hills—  
\_But lo! ye are not great!

Nations that swarm and murmur,  
Ye are moths that flutter and climb—  
Ye are whirling gnats, ye are swirling bees,  
Tossed in the winds of time!\_

Earth that is flushed with glory,  
A marvelous world ye are!  
\_But lo! in the midst of a million stars  
Ye are only one pale star!

A breath stirs the dark abysses....  
The deeps below the deep  
Are troubled and vexed ... and a thousand worlds  
Fall on eternal sleep!\_

#### THE COMRADE

##### I

HATH not man at his noblest  
An air of something more than man?—  
A hint of grace immortal,  
Born of his greatly daring to assist the gods  
In conquering these shaggy wastes,  
These desert worlds,  
And planting life and order in these stars?—  
So Woman at her best:  
Her eyes are bright with visions and with dreams  
That triumph over time;  
Her plumed thought, wing for wing, is mate with  
his.

##### II

The world rolls on from dream to dream,  
And 'neath the vast impersonal revenges of its  
going,

Crushed fools that cried defeat  
Lie dead amid the dust they prophesied—

Ye doubters of man's larger destiny,  
Ye that despair,  
Look backward down the vistaed years,  
And all is battle—and all victory!  
Man fought, to be a man!  
Through painful centuries the slow beast fought,  
Blinded and baffled, fought to gain his soul;—  
Wild, hairy, shag, and feared of shadows,  
Yet the clouds  
Made him strange signals that he puzzled o'er;—  
Beast, child, and ape,  
And yet the winds harped to him, and the sea  
Rolled in upon his consciousness  
Its tides of wonder and romance;—  
Uncouth and caked with mire,  
And yet the stars said something to him, and the  
sun  
Declared itself a god;—  
The lagging cycles turned at last  
The pictures into thought,  
Thought flowered in soul;—  
But, oh, the myriad weary years  
Ere Caliban was Shakespeare's self  
And Darwin's ape had Darwin's brain!—  
The battling, battling, and the steep ascent,  
The fight to hold the little gained,  
The loss, the doubt, the shaken heart,  
The stubborn, groping slow recovery!—  
But looking backward toward the dim beginnings,  
You that despair,  
Hath he not climbed and conquered?  
Look backward and all's Victory!  
What coward looks forward and foresees defeat?

### III

Who climbed beside him, and who fought  
And suffered and was glad?  
Is she a lesser thing than he,  
Who stained the slopes with bloody feet, or stood  
Beside him on some hard-won eminence of hope  
Exulting as the bold dawn swept  
A harper hand along the ringing hills?  
Flesh of his flesh, and of his soul the soul,  
Hath she not fought, hath she not climbed?

And how is she a lesser thing?—  
Nay, if she ever was  
'Twas we that made her so, who called her queen  
But kept her slave.

### IV

Had she not courage for the fight?  
Hath she not courage for the years to come?  
Hath she not courage who descends alone—  
(How pitifully alone, except for Love!)  
Where man's thought even falters that would  
follow,  
Into the shadowy abyss  
(Through vast and murmurous caverns dark with  
crowding dread  
And terrible with hovering wings),  
To battle there with Death?—to battle

There with Death, and wrest from him,  
O Conqueror and Mother,  
Life!

## V

Hath she too long dwelt dream-bound in the world  
of love,

Unconscious of the sterner throes,  
The more austere, impersonal, wide faith,  
The urge that drives Christs to the cross  
Not for the love of one beloved,  
But for the love of all?  
If so, she wakes!  
Wakes and demands a share in all man's bolder  
destinies,  
The high, audacious ventures of the soul  
That thinks to scale the bastioned slopes  
And strike stark Chaos from his throne.  
We still stand in the dawn of time.  
Not meanly let us stand nor shaken with low  
doubts!  
For there beyond the verge and margin of gray cloud  
The future thrills with promise  
And the skies are tremulous with golden light;—  
She too would share those victories,  
Comrade, and more than comrade;—  
New times, new needs confront us now;  
We must evolve new powers  
To battle with;—  
We must go forward now together,  
Or perchance we fail!

## ENVOI

### A LITTLE WHILE

\_A little while the tears and laughter,  
The willow and the rose—  
A little while, and what comes after  
No man knows.

An hour to sing, to love and linger ...  
Then lutanist and lute  
Will fall on silence, song and singer  
Both be mute.

Our gods from our desires we fashion....  
Exalt our baffled lives,  
And dream their vital bloom and passion  
Still survives;

But when we're done with mirth and weeping,  
With myrtle, rue, and rose,  
Shall Death take Life into his keeping? ...  
No man knows.\_

\_What heart hath not, through twilight places,  
Sought for its dead again  
To gild with love their pallid faces? ...  
Sought in vain! ...

Still mounts the Dream on shining pinion ...  
Still broods the dull distrust ...

Which shall have ultimate dominion,  
Dream, or dust?

A little while with grief and laughter,  
And then the day will close;  
The shadows gather ... what comes after  
No man knows!\_

Note: In "The Parting," page 161, line 4, I have changed "they face" to "thy face"; in "The Struggle," page 173, line 4, I have changed "!o" to "lo!"

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DREAMS AND DUST \*\*\*

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