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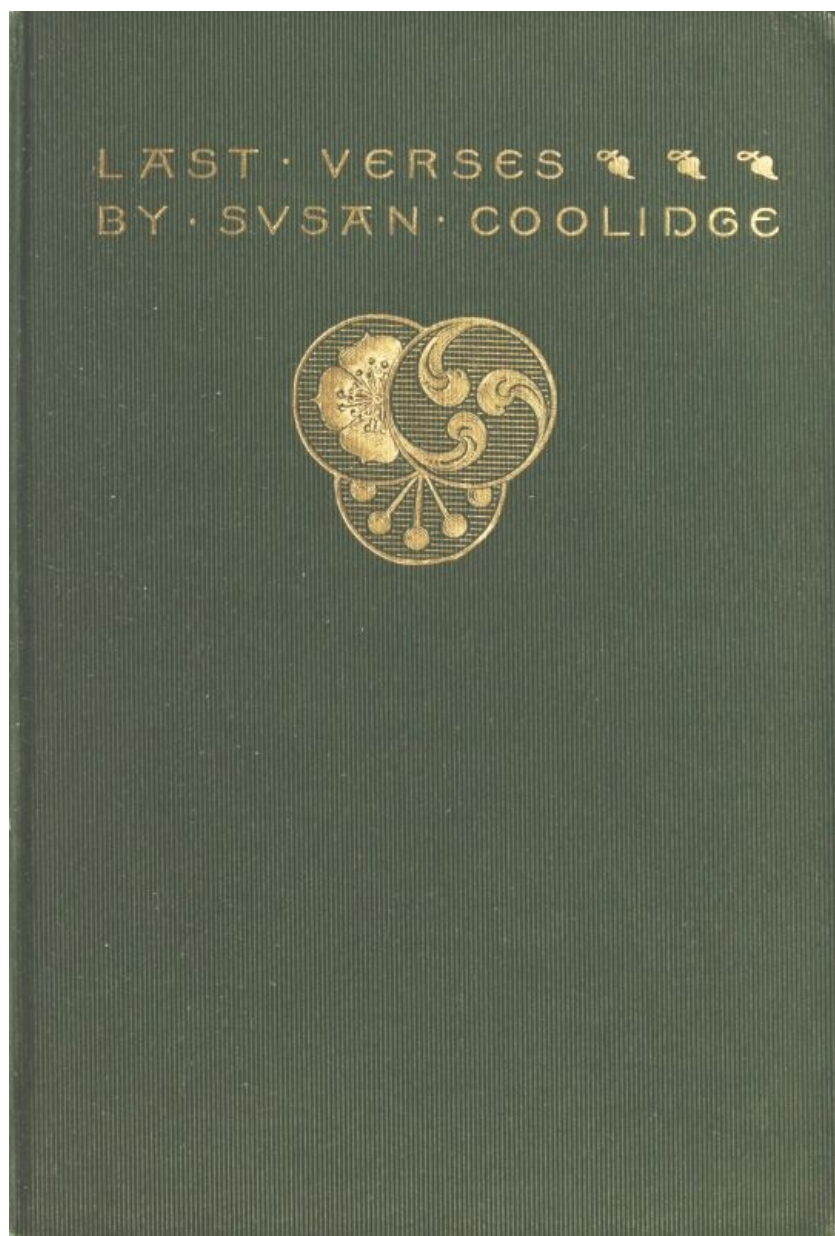
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LAST VERSES ***



LAST VERSES

BY
SUSAN COOLIDGE

AUTHOR OF
"VERSES," "MORE VERSES," "THE KATY DID
SERIES," ETC.



BOSTON
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SUSAN COOLIDGE

SARAH CHAUNCEY WOOLSEY (Susan Coolidge) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, January 29, 1835. Her father, John M. Woolsey, a New Yorker, had come to Cleveland to attend to property owned by his father, and had there met Jane Andrews, a charming and graceful girl from Connecticut, whom he made his wife.

Their home was on Euclid Avenue, and comprised about five acres in house-lot, garden, orchard, pasture, and woodland. Here came into the world a family of four girls and a boy,—all vigorous and active and full of life. Sarah was the eldest and the predestined leader of the little tribe. They grew up as children of that day did under similar conditions. There was the regular old-fashioned schooling, not too exacting or strenuous, and much wholesome out-of-door life. There were horses and dogs and cattle and birds for the children to care for and play with, and much climbing and romping were permitted in a place where no near neighbors could be disturbed. To the other children life was a joyous holiday, diversified with small disappointments and dismays; but to Sarah the sky and the earth held boundless anticipations and intentions, and the world was a place of enchantment.

She was always individual from the moment she first opened her big brown eyes—passionately loving and passionately wilful, with heroic intentions and desires, and with remorse and disappointments in proportion. Part of the woodland where the axe had not yet done its work of cutting and clipping was given to the children for a playground. They called it "Paradise," and for all of them it was a place of rapture and mystery. To the others it was full of hiding places,—to little Sarah the hiding places were bowers. They looked for eggs and birds' nests, and had thrilling encounters with furry wild creatures, which fled at their approach; but her intercourse was all with the fairies and elves and gnomes which peopled the place. After a time they felt the

presence of the fairies too; but it was under the influence of her enthusiastic imagination, which controlled their own more mundane perceptions. With her for a leader they often passed into a new world of romance and adventure and high undertakings. They lived in battlemented castles, attended by knights and squires, with danger on all sides met by lofty courage; or they rode on elephants in India, always on dignified missions, attended by great pomp and ceremony; or they lived with fairies, whose gifts might crop up under every toadstool. To be sure, the elephant on which they made their proud progress might at other times, stripped of his trappings, be serviceable as a nursery table, and the fairy gifts were apt to bear a prosaic resemblance to certain well-known and well-worn nursery properties; but invested with the mystery and romance cast upon them by Sarah's vivid imagination, the little band went, as she led them, into the land of dreams, and felt no incongruity.

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Her education went on much as she chose. The best teachers available were employed, and to each in turn she became a favorite and interesting pupil; but though her quick intelligence enabled her to pass excellent examinations and gave her a foremost place in her classes, she really assimilated and retained only what she enjoyed. Mathematics she ignored entirely. All scientific problems fascinated her by their results; but she would not open her mind to the processes by which the results were reached. For languages she had no predilections, though she used her own with singular grace and precision, drawing her words from an apparently limitless vocabulary. Through life this charming use of language, combined with her keen humor and sympathetic appreciation of all that makes life stirring and vital, made her a most fascinating companion. Her delight in literature was her real education. From her early youth she revelled in books, reading so rapidly that it seemed impossible that she could remember what she read; but, in fact, remembering it all! To have looked over a poem two or three times was enough to make it a permanent possession. She devoured history, biography, romances, and poetry, and with intuitive judgment and taste revelled in what was really beautiful and interesting, and discarded the second-rate and commonplace. She began writing at a very early age,—fairy stories, verses, and romances,—but she never published anything until she had reached full maturity. Meantime she grew to vigorous, active womanhood, full of interests and friendships and delightful experiences of one sort and another. She was much loved, and gave such a wealth of self-forgetting, idolizing, ardent affection in return that her friends were all lovers. She drew a circle of loving admirers about her wherever she went, and was always totally unconscious of the charm she worked by her very sweet voice and manner, brilliant fun, and warm sympathy.

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The Civil War broke out just as she passed from girlhood to young womanhood. It aroused in her a passion of enthusiasm and devotion, and she threw herself with all her heart and soul into work for the soldiers at home and afield. In the Soldiers' Hospital at New Haven she was an enthusiastic helper, in the wards, or storeroom, or linen closet, wherever her energy was most needed. And her leisure was filled with knitting or sewing or preparing special diet for the sick and wounded. She was a tireless worker then and ever, and nature had endowed her with great practical gifts. She was an excellent cook and an expert needlewoman, both in plain sewing and the most dainty embroidery, and all work was done with such rapidity and perfection that it was a despair for the race of plodders even to watch her swift achievements.

[x]

From New Haven she went to the Convalescent Hospital established at Portsmouth Grove, and was one of a band of excellent workers there during the second year of the war. It was a very developing and vivid experience, and one which she counted among the greatest points of interest in her life.

When the war was over, her old career of busy, never-slackening industry and purpose began again. It was full, as ever, of friendships which could not possibly claim more than she was willing to give. She naturally drew around her the cleverest men and women of her acquaintance, and her society was sought far and near.

But she did not really begin her life as an author until a few years later, when in a grove at Bethlehem, N. H., sitting on a fallen tree, she sketched the outline of "The New Year's Bargain." She had sent a few fugitive articles to certain magazines before this, but only now did she take up writing as a real work. That dainty little book, with its fantastic and graceful imaginings, was so well received by the public that she went on in a different vein, through the series of the "Katy Did" books, where fact and fiction, experience and fancy, were so blended that it was hardly possible to say in answer to the eager questionings of some of her little readers where the one ended and the other began. Katy found a large audience, and her biographer went on from children's books to verses or historical studies, such as "Old Convent Days," or mere editor's work, like the condensations of those famous old diaries of Mrs. Delany and Miss Burney. She was consulting reader for Roberts Company in the days when the hall-mark of that firm was a proof of excellence. She was very industrious, but her literary work never seemed the most absorbing part of her life. This was partly because of her intense and vivid interest in the rest of life,—the journeys, the visits, and above all the friends,—and largely because she was absolutely devoid of literary vanity or self-consciousness. She seldom talked of her work or referred in any way to her success. Her verses found a warm welcome in many hearts whose owners were all unknown to her, and sometimes she acknowledged, with a sort of tender surprise, that it was a great reward to have been able to help and encourage others. But anything like flattery or mere compliment was very distasteful to her, and she sometimes owned impatiently that "Susan Coolidge" bored her to death, and she wished she had never heard of her!

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[xii]

While literature became the chief occupation of her life, her artistic temperament and love of the beautiful found expression in many other ways. She instinctively surrounded herself with

beautiful objects and colors. Her taste was almost unerring, and harmony of design and softly shaded tints seemed to be her natural setting. She transformed every room she lived in, were it for a week only.

She thought little of her drawings in water color. They were all flower pieces studied from life, and she was conscious of the little instruction she had received and her ignorance of technique. But all the same these lovely panels were a joy to those who were fortunate enough to possess them. As was once said by one who was no mean artist himself, "She can do what many artists—adepts in technique—fail in. She gives us the flower in all its life and spirit." Her china painting—necessarily more conventional—was still charming, holding something of her individuality.

[xiii]

This vivid life of purpose and energy and never-failing zest appeared to bubble up from such an inexhaustible fountain of vitality that it seemed as if it might go on for ever. But gradually a shadow stole over it—not a very dark one at first, but inexorable. She fought with it, played with it, defied it, but it was always there! She could not acknowledge defeat and was always planning for the future with gay self-confidence; but the shadow grew! By and by the narrowing limits shut her in her chamber, but even then she looked out upon the days to come with undaunted courage. The chamber was not like a sick room. It was bright with sunshine and the sparkle of fire, and scented and gay with the flowers she so dearly loved. Here she read and wrote and saw her many friends. From hence came words of rejoicing for all her dear ones who were happy, and words of truest sympathy for those who were sad. She was one of the few people to whom the joys and sorrows of others are of equal importance to their own. She pondered over the lives of her friends with never-ending interest, and gave at every turn and crisis the truest and most comprehending sympathy. No wonder that so many warmed hands and hearts by that generous flame!

[xiv]

Slowly the shadow deepened. She was disturbed by it, but still wrote happily of the future and filled it with plans and purposes. But one day, April 9, 1905, very gently, Death's finger touched her. She was not conscious of pain or trouble, "only a new sensation," but she closed her eyes, and without a word of farewell, was gone away from us.

It is hard to sum up such a life. It was a very full and happy one. She gave much, but received much. She loved beauty, and she was always surrounded by it. She loved friendship, and nobody had more or better friends. She gave them of her best, but she drew their best from them. Hers was an ideal companionship, so full of appreciative interest and sympathy, so illuminated by wit and humor. She was ardent and eager in her plans of life. Nothing could exceed the absorption and energy with which she carried them out. But she accepted disappointment, after a little struggle, with a gay *insouciance*. So when the final defeat came she seemed to resign herself without struggle to the inevitable, and to those of us who loved her best it seemed as if that sweet and brilliant and unwearied spirit had only folded its wings for a moment before taking a longer and surer flight.

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E. D. W. G.

APRIL, 1906.

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LAST VERSES

HELEN KELLER

[xx]
[1]
[2]
[3]

BEHIND her triple prison-bars shut in
She sits, the whitest soul on earth to-day.
No shadowing stain, no whispered hint of sin,
Into that sanctuary finds the way.
There enters only clear and proven truth
Apportioned for her use by loving hands
And winnowed from all knowledge of all lands
To satisfy her ardent thirst of youth.

Like a strange alabaster mask her face,
Rayless and sightless, set in patience dumb,
Until like quick electric currents come
The signals of life into her lonely place;
Then, like a lamp just lit, an inward gleam
Flashes within the mask's opacity,
The features glow and dimple suddenly,
And fun and tenderness and sparkle seem
To irradiate the lines once dull and blind,
While the white slender fingers reach and cling
With quick imploring gestures, questioning
The mysteries and the meanings:—to her mind

[4]

The world is not the sordid world we know;
It is a happy and benignant spot
Where kindness reigns, and jealousy is not,
And men move softly, dropping as they go
The golden fruit of knowledge for all to share.
And Love is King, and Heaven is very near,
And God to whom each separate soul is dear
Makes fatherly answer to each whispered prayer.
Ah, little stainless soul, shut in so close,
May never hint of doubt creep in to be
A shadow on the calm security
Which wraps thee, as its fragrance wraps a rose.

“A CLOUD OF WITNESSES”

[5]

ON Calais sands the breakers roar
In fierce and foaming track;
The screaming sea-gulls dip and soar,
White seen against the black;
And shuddering wind and furling sail
Are making ready for the gale.

Ho, keeper of the Calais Light!
See that your lamps burn free;
For, if they should go out to-night,
There will be wrecks at sea.
Fill them and trim them with due care,
For there is tempest in the air.

“Go out? My lamps go out, you say?
What words are on your lips?
There, in the offing far away,
Are sailing countless ships,
Beyond my ken, beyond my sight,
But all are watching Calais Light.

[6]

“If but a single lamp should fail,
A single flame burn dim,
How could they ride the gathering gale,
Or justly steer and trim?
To right, to left, would equal be,
There are no road-marks in the sea.

“I should not hear their drowning cry,
Or see the ship go down,
And weeks and months might pass us by,
Ere came to Calais town
The word—‘A ship was lost one night,
And all for want of Calais Light.’

“Here in my tower, my lamps in row,
I sit the long hours through;
There is no soul to mark or know
If I my duty do;
Yet oftentimes I seem to see
A world of eyes all bent on me!

“Go out! My lamps go out! alas!
It were a woeful day
If ever it should come to pass
That I must live to say,
A ship went down in storm and night,
Because there failed it Calais Light.”

[7]

Ah, Christian, in your watch-tower set,
Fill all your lamps and trim;
For though there seem no watchers, yet
Far in the darkness dim,
Where souls are tossing out of view,
A hundred eyes are fixed on you!

COR CORDIUM

[8]

ALL diamonded with glittering stars
The vast blue arch of air;
Pent in behind these mortal bars
We strain our eyes to where,
Oh noblest heart, thou walkest apart
Amid thy heavenly kin.
Though blinded with the veils of sense,
We may not look within.

Oh eyes so tender with command!
Oh eloquent lips and true,
Whose speech fell like a quickening fire,
Fell like a healing dew!
Oh zeal so strong to right the wrong,
Oh rich, abounding heart!
Oh stintless, tireless, kindest hand,—
God bless thee where thou art!

[9]

Not thine the common fate to live
Through life's long weary days,
And give all that thou had'st to give
Uncheered by love and praise.
Men did not wait to call thee great
Till death had sealed thy brow.
They crowned thy living head with bays;
What does it matter now?

Thy grave mound is a shrined place,
Where pilgrim hearts may go,
With loving thoughts and thankful prayers,
Soft passing to and fro.
Seldom with word the air is stirred,
Seldom with sob or sigh;
All silently and ceaselessly
The march of hearts goes by.

Now half our lives seems lived on earth,
And half in heaven with thee.
Our heart-beats measure out the road
To where we fain would be,—
Beyond this strife of mortal life,
This lonely ache and pain,
Where we who miss and mourn thee so
May find thee once again.

[10]

MARTHA

[11]

HOT on the pavement burns the summer sun,
In the deep shadow of the ilex tree
The Master rests, while gathering one by one
The neighbors enter, crowding silently
To hear His words, which drop like honey-dew;
I may not hear, there is too much to do.

How can I pause? I seem the only one
To take a thought about this multitude
Who, the day past and all the preaching done,
Will need to be refreshed with wine and food;
We cannot send the people home unfed—
What words were those? "I am the living bread."

There is my sister sitting the day long
Close to His side, serene and free from care,
Helping me not; and surely it is wrong
To leave to me the task that she should share.
Master, rebuke her, just and true Thou art—
What do I hear? "She hath the better part."

If all chose thus then all would go unfed—
Souls hunger, yes! but bodies have their need.
Some one must grind and mix the daily bread,
Some one wake early that the rest may feed,
Some one bear burdens, face the summer sun—
But must I always, always be the one?

"Cumbered with serving," thus the Master spake;
But 'twas to serve Him that I worked so hard
(And I would serve the year long for His sake).
I dare not take the rest which is reward
Lest He should suffer while I stay my hand.
How hard it is, how hard to understand!

What does a voice say? "He whose power divine
Could feed the thousands on the mountain side
Needeth no fretting, puny aid like thine.
One thing is needful, trust him to provide;
The Heavenly Chance comes once nor tarries long"—
Master, forgive me, teach me, I was wrong!

[12]

CAEN

[13]

1894

IN the quaint Norman city, far apart,
A width of humming distance set between,
They rest who once lived closely heart to heart,
William the conquering Duke and his fair Queen.

Too near of kin to wed, the Church averred,
And barred the way which joy was fain to tread;
But hearts spoke louder than the priestly word,
And youth and love o'erleaped the barrier dread.

No will of wax had England's future King;
With iron hand he brushed the curse aside,
As 'twere a slight and disregarded thing,
And asking leave of no man, claimed his bride.

And they were happy, spite of ban and blame,
Rich in renown, estate, in valiant deed;
And the sweet Duchess at her broidery frame
Wrought her lord's victories for all men to read.

[14]

But as the years of wedlock ebbed and flowed,
And still the Church averted her stern face,
The royal pair grew weary of the load
Of unrepented sin and long disgrace,

And bought a peace from late relenting Rome.
Two stately abbeys built they, and endowed,
With carven pinnacle and tower and dome,
And soaring spire and bell-chimes pealing loud.

Within the crypt of one they buried her,
True wife and queen, when her time came to die;
And when strong death conquered the Conqueror,
He slept beneath the other's altar high.

Was it of love's devising that to-day,
With all the wide-grown city space to bar,
Across the roofs and towers from far away
St. Etienne looks upon La Trinita?

Was it some subtle prescience of the heart,
Which laid on time and change resistless spell,
Forbidding both to hide or hold apart
The resting-place of those who loved so well?

[15]

For still defying distance, day and night
The spires like beckoning fingers seem to rise,
The bells to call, as perished voices might,
"Love is not dead, Beloved; love never dies!"

TEMPERAMENTS

[16]

JACOB BOEHME, Sage and Mystic, wert thou right or wert thou wrong,
In believing and upholding that all human souls belong
To some elemental structure, be they weak or be they strong?

That each separate spirit made is of one element, and shows,
By its power or by its weakness, its unrest or its repose,
Whether earth, air, fire, or water is the Source from which it flows?

'Tis a difficult conclusion; but, as in the jewel's blue,
Red and rose and green and amber flash and leap and sparkle through,
Through your speculative fancy seems to scintillate the true.

[17]

For the variance of the creature whom we call our fellow-man,
Framed alike in needs and passions, on the self-same human plan,
Grows more wide, more past believing, as we study it and scan.

Ah, the temperaments, the fateful, how they front us and surprise,
Looking with bewildering distance out of wistful, alien eyes,
Never drawing any nearer, or to hate or sympathize.

Eager, dominant, all unresting are the spirits born of Fire,
Burning with a fitful fever, ever reaching high and higher,
Shrivelling weaker wills before them in the heat of their desire.

Cool, elusive, fluctuating, hard to fix and strangely fair
Are the difficult, grievous, grieving souls which born of Water are—
Ours to-day, not ours to-morrow; never ours to hold and wear.

[18]

Vainly love and passion battle 'gainst their unresisting chill,
Like the oar-stroke in the water which the drops make haste to fill,
The impression melts and wavers, the cool surface fronts us still.

But the souls of Air! ah, sweetest, rarest of the human kind,
They the poets are, the singers, making music for the mind,
Lifting up the weight of living like a fresh and rushing wind.

And the souls of Earth, dear, steadfast, firm of root and sure of stay,
Not disdaining commonplaces, not afraid of every day,
Taking from the air and water and the sunshine what they may.

Theirs the dower of happy giving, theirs the heritage of Fate
Which, when faith has grown to fulness, and the little is made great,
Brings to love its true rewarding, harvested or soon or late.

[19]

Jacob Boehme, by-gone mystic, gifted with a strange insight,
As I read your yellowed pages, which in former times were white,
And review my men and women, half I deem that you were right.

THE HOLY NAME

[20]

TIS said when pious Moslem walk abroad,
If on the path they spy a floating bit
Of paper, reverently they turn aside
And shun the scrap, nor set a foot on it,
Lest haply thereupon the awful name
Of mighty Allah should by chance be writ.

We smile at the vain dread; but blind and dull
The soul that only smiles, and cannot see
A thought of perfect beauty folded in
The zealot's reverent fear, as in some free
And flaunting flower-cup may be hived and held
One drop of precious honey for the bee.

Small wind-blown things there are, which any day
Float by in air or on our pathway lie,
Swift-winged moments speeding on their way,
Brief opportunities, which we pass by
Heedless and smiling, little subtle threads
Of influence—intimations soft and sly.

[21]

Careless we tread them down, as, pressing on,
Our eager inconsiderate feet we set
On the unvalued treasures where they lie.
We are too blind to prize or to regret,
Too dull to recognize the mystic Name
Graven upon them as on amulet.

Ah! dears, let us no longer do this thing,
And thus the sweeter life lose and let fall;
But with anointed eyes and reverent feet
Pass on our way, noting and prizing all,
Knowing that God's great token-sign is set,
Not on the large things only, but the small.

"I AM THE WAY"

[22]

ART Thou the way, Lord? Yet the way is steep!
And hedged with cruel thorns and set with briars;
We stumble onward, or we pause to weep,
And still the hard road baffles our desires,
And still the hot noon beats, the hours delay,
The end is out of sight,—Art Thou the way?

Art Thou the way, Lord? Yet the way is blind!
We grope and guess, perplexed with mists and suns;
We only see the guide-posts left behind,
Invisible to us the forward ones;
The chart is hard to read, we wind and stray,
Beset with hovering doubts,—Art Thou the way?

Art Thou the way, Lord? Yet the way is long!
Year follows year while we are journeying still,
The limbs are feeble grown which once were strong,
Dimmed are the eyes and quenched the ardent will,
The world is veiled with shadows sad and gray;
Yet we must travel on,—Art Thou the way?

[23]

Art Thou the way, Lord? Then the way is sweet,
No matter if it puzzle or distress,
Though winds may scourge, or blinding suns may beat,
The perfect rest shall round our weariness,
Cool dews shall heal the fevered pulse of day;
We shall find home at last through thee, the way.

HER HEART WAS LIKE A GENEROUS FIRE

[24]

(S. P. C.)

HER heart was like a generous fire,
Round which a hundred souls could sit
And warm them in the unstinted blaze.
Those who held nearest place to it
Had cheer and comfort all their days;
Those who, perforce, were further still
Yet felt her radiance melt their chill,
Their darkness lightened by her rays.

Her heart was like a generous fire!
The trivial dross of thought and mind
Shrivelled when brought too near its heat,
The hidden gold was caught, refined;
A subtle effluence keen and sweet
From every creature drew its best;
Gave inspiration, strength, and rest,
Quickened the moral pulse's beat.

[25]

Her heart was like a generous fire!
Circled by smaller fires in ring,
Each lit by her infectious spark
To send forth warmth and comforting
Into hard paths and by-ways dark.
The little fires, they still burn on;
But the great kindling flame is gone,
Caught up past our imagining.

Her heart was like a generous fire!
How changed the summer scenes, how chill,
How coldly do the mornings break,
Since that great heart is quenched and still,
Which kept so many hearts awake!
O Lord the Light! shine Thou instead,
Quicken and trim the fires she fed,
And make them burn for her dear sake.

THE LEGEND OF THE ALMOST SAVED

[26]

FROM THE RUSSIAN

ONCE a poor soul, reft from a dull, hard lot
 (Which yet was dear, as even dull life may be),
Found herself bodiless in that dread spot
Which mortals know as "Hell" and fearfully
 Name in a whisper, while the Saints name not.

"I was not wicked; they have told God lies
 To make him send me here," she moaned in pain,
Then suddenly her wan, reproachful eyes,
Raised to the Pity never sought in vain,
 Beheld a hovering shape in aureoled guise.

It was Saint Peter, guardian of the gate,
 The shining gate where blessed ones go in.
"Why thus," demanded he, "bewail your fate?
What good deed did you in your life to win
 The right to Heaven? Speak ere it be too late!"

[27]

Then the poor soul,—all downcast and dismayed,
 Scanning the saint's face and his austere air,
In vain reviewed her life, in vain essayed
To think of aught accomplished which might bear
 Heaven's scrutiny. At length she answer made.

"Poor was I," faltered she, "so very poor!
 Little I had to spare, yet once I gave
A carrot from my scanty garden store
To one more poor than I was." Sad and grave
 Saint Peter questioned, "Didst thou do no more?"

"No," said the trembling soul. He bent his head.
 "Wait thou until I bear thy plea on high;
The angel there who judges quick and dead
Shall weigh thee in his scales, and rightfully
 Decide thy final place and doom," he said.

So the soul waited till Hell's doors should ope.
 It opened never, but adown the sky
There swung a carrot from a slender rope,
And a voice reached her, sounding from on high,
 Saying, "If the carrot bear thee, there is hope."

[28]

She clutched the rescue by the Heavens sent.
 The carrot held—small good has mighty strength;
But one, and then another, as she went
Caught at her flying garments, till at length
 Four of the lost rose with her, well content.

The smoke of Hell curled darkly far beneath,
 The blue of Heaven gleamed fair and bright in view,
Life quivered in the balance over Death.
Almost had life prevailed when, "Who are you,"
 The soul cried out with startled, jealous breath,

"Who hang so heavily, going where I go?
 God never meant to save *you*! It is I,
I whom he sent for from the Place of Wo.
Loosen your hold at once!" Then suddenly
 The carrot yielded, and all fell below.

The pitiful, grieved angels overhead
 Watched the poor souls shoot wailing through the air
Toward the lurid shadows darkly red,
And sadly sighed. "Heaven was so near, so fair,
 Almost we had them safely here," they said.

BESIDE a grave two Angels sit,
Set there to guard and hallow it;
With grave sweet eyes and folded wings
They watch it all the day and night,
And dress the place and keep it bright,
And drive away all hurtful things.

And one is called in heavenly speech,
Used by the Blessed each to each,
"The Angel of the Steadfast Heart":
Those hearts which still through storm and stress,
Strong in a perfect faithfulness,
Keep the firm way and better part.

Unto the other has been given
The loveliest name is known in Heaven,
"The Guardian of the Selfless Soul,"—
Those dear souls who through joy and pain
Lose their own lives to find again,
Bearing the weight of other's dole.

A crown of roses snowy white
Surrounds one Angel's brow of light,—
Sweet, sweet the odor that it breathes;
A starry band of asphodels,
Which shake out dim, mysterious smells,
The other's statelier forehead wreathes.

"She is of mine," one Angel saith;
"Her heart was faithful unto death,"—
His voice has a triumphant tone.
"Mine, too," the other soft replies;
"By her whole life's self-sacrifice
I mark and claim her as mine own."

And then the voices blend and vie
In clear, celestial harmony:
"Both in the task may rightly share,
For she whose gentle rest we tend
Was brave and constant to the end,
With never a selfish thought or care.

"The quiet earth wherein she lies
Is holy-ground in heavenly eyes;
It well befits for such as she
That we should quit all other task;
Nor better could an angel ask
Than be the guard of such as she."

Beside a grave two Angels sit,
Set there to tend and hallow it;
Unseen by men they sit alway;
With folded wings and eyes of light
They make it dewy-sweet all day,
And balm it subtly every night.

[30]

[31]

LIMITATION

[32]

"Let us accept from God even our own nature, and treat it charitably."—HENRI AMIEL.

GREATER than Fate ordains we fain would be;
Wiser and purer, strung with life and power
And insight and compelling energy;
But with the first breath of our first faint hour
The limit line is set, vain our endeavor,
Our longing and our hope; we pass it never.

Since this is so, since this indeed is so,
Let us accept ourselves as God has made,—
The lagging zest, the pulse which beats too slow,
Dull wit, and scanty joy,—nor be afraid
That we shall thwart the purpose of our living
By such self-tolerance and such forgiving;

For the least spark which fires the mortal clod,
And wakes the hunger and the thirst divine
In the least soul, as truly is of God
As the great flame which burns a beaconing sign
To light the nations when their hope is dim,
Set in the darkness as a type of Him.

Take courage then, poor soul, so little worth
In thine own eyes, so puny and afraid,
And all unfit to combat the fierce earth;
Forgive thyself because the Master made
And meant thee meeker than thy wish and will,
And knows, and understands, and loves thee still.

[33]

THE MIRACLE OF FRIENDSHIP

[34]

OUT of the width of the world, out of the womb of Fate,
The souls that are meant for each other shall meet, and shall know and embrace.
Age or youth are nothing, are nothing or soon or late,
When the heart to heart makes answer and joyful face to face.

Where hast thou tarried, my Love, while I waited and missed thee long,
One of the two shall question, and the other shall make reply,
In a voice of gladness and triumph, less like unto speech than song,
"I knew not that I was a hungered till God sent thee as supply."

The world may crowd and question, but friends are always alone,
Set in bright atmosphere, like a planet in far-off skies;
A touch, a glance, a sigh, love comprehends its own,
And words are feeble and poor compared with the spark of the eyes.

The undug gold in the mine, the pearl in the deep, deep seas,
The gem which lies undiscovered, are the daydreams of the earth;
But the love unreckoned, un hoped for, which is mightier far than these,
Is the miracle of Heaven for the souls which it counts as worth.

[35]

ROSE TERRY COOKE

[36]

OUT of the life that was so hard to bear,
Clouded by sorrow and perplexed by care,
Out of the long watch and the heavy night,
She has gone forth into the light of light.

A tropic-blossom, warm with sun and scent,
Set in New England's chill environment;
Through beat of storm and stress of winter's cold,
She kept the summer in her heart of gold.

Love was the life which pulsed her being through;
No task too hard if set by Love to do,
No pain too sharp if Love called to endure,
No weariness she knew if Love was sure.

Her rose of Love was set with many a thorn,
Clouds veiled and hid the promise of her morn;
Thirsting and spent, she journeyed on unfed,
While Love, too often, gave her stones for bread.

[37]

But still 'mid waning hopes and deepening fears
And brave, hard strivings through the ebbing years,
Lifting her up when she was like to fall,
Love led her to the land where Love is all.

Heaven has received her as a welcome guest,
Balming earth's tire with compensating rest,
Healing earth's grievous wound with sure content,—
The sense of home after long banishment.

But more to her than smile of vanished kin,
Or hands outstretched to greet and draw her in,
Or "Bonded Walls" of amethyst unpriced,
Is the clear vision of the Face of Christ!

That Face Divine, which, in her girlhood's day
Seeing, she loved, and never looked away,
Which, like a star in the dim firmament,
Guided her steps and moved where'er she went.

Out of the life that was not always sweet,
Out of the puzzle and the day's defeat,
Out of earth's hindering and alien zone,
The Lord of Love has led her to her own.

INTO THE DEEP

[38]

“LORD, we have toiled all day and taken naught.”

Thus spoke the fishers by the darkling sea,
While the dusk deepened, and the shadows drew
Over the desert sand-dunes and the blue
Waters of Galilee.

“What shall we do, Lord?” And the Master said:
“Spread sail, and let the breeze of evening waft
To the deep seas; quit the familiar shore,
And let your nets down fearlessly once more,
As for a certain draught.”

Lord, *we* have toiled in vain, even as these,
Dragging our nets unfruitful waters through;
Not one poor fish rewards our pains all day,
And, like the twelve of old, we come and say,
“Master, what shall we do?”

[39]

And still for us, as then, the answer sounds,
Making the very hearts within us leap:
“Leave the safe shallows where the ripples play,
The sluggish inlet and confining bay—
Push out into the deep.

“Strain toward the mighty ocean of God’s love,
His great Love’s all unfathomed energies,
Where never plummet reached or bound was set.
Quit ye like valiant fishermen, and let
Your nets down in deep seas.

“Those rich, rewarding waters shall not fail,
Till the nets break the fish shall crowd therein;
And I, the Master, waiting other where,
Will lend My strength to land the precious fare
Which ye have toiled to win.”

Lord, Thou hast spoken, and we trust Thy word;
We will push out and leave the safe, known land,
And count it full reward if, coming back
Laden at nightfall, o’er the waters black
We see Thee on the strand.

THROUGH THE CLOUD

[40]

THE morning was chill and misty,
And a white and drifting veil
Hid all the mountain passes
And the elm-fringed intervals.

We gazed in a puzzled wonder,
And looked to the left and the right,
For it seemed that some spell had seized the world
And had changed it during the night.

Was there ever a mountain yonder,
We asked, or a pine-clad stream?
Or red-gold trees in the hollow?
Or were all these things a dream?

Then suddenly as we questioned
The mists turned thin and blue,
And up in the far, high heaven
A mountain outline grew.

Like a vision it gleamed and vanished,
But its beckon was seen and caught,
And one peak after another
Flashed out with the speed of thought;

And the mist wreaths floated higher,
And drifted off one by one,
And the wet, green autumn meadows
Shone out in the yellow sun;

And the scarlet and dun of the hillsides
Had borrowed a fresher hue,
And the purple gate of the notch swung wide,
And a pink cloud floated through.

And I thought of some heavy-hearted ones
Whose world had suddenly changed
To a whirl of mist and driving cloud
From all fair things estranged,

And who sat and wearily wondered
If ever the world seemed bright,
And half believed that joy was a dream
Which fled with the flying night;

And how, by little and little,
The clouds were tinged with sun,
And the former joys of living
Dawned out of them one by one,—

The hope and the work and the loving,
The zest of thought and plan,
The old-time strength of friendship,
The old-time need of man.

And the world which was changed for a morning
Was the same dear world again,
With only an added ripeness, caught
From its brief eclipse of pain.

[41]

[42]

NEARER HOME

[43]

THE wind is like an armèd foe,
Drawn up to bar the way,
The strong seas smite us blow on blow,
The decks are lashed with spray;
High-crested tower above the ship
The waves with lips afoam,
But welcome every plunge and dip
Which brings us nearer home.

The dear West beckons from afar
With gold gleams in her eyes,
The glinting stars familiar are
High hung in clear cool skies;
We send an answering smile for smile
Up to the airy dome,
And welcome every weary mile
So it but bring us home.

[44]

Sweet hope which lifts the dull, long hour
And makes it light to bear,
Sweet waiting welcome which has power
To make the dark seem fair,
Sweet hands held out across the sea
To reach us where we roam,—
We can bear hardest things since we
Have turned our face toward home.

ROOTED

[45]

WE rail at fate which holds us bound
To duty's dull and narrow round,
To face as bravely as we may
The common cares of every day.

Our wandering wishes urge and fret,
But circumstance is mightier yet,
And curbs and checks the restless will,
And bids the impatient heart be still.

And while we vainly strive and chide,
Little by little, undescried,
The tiny roots of life take hold,
Anchoring their fibres in the mould.

The roots of habit, tough and long,
Of deathless love, than death more strong,
Of order measuring out the days,
And duty's sweet, recurrent ways,—

[46]

They bind us when we fain would fly,
They check and thwart till, by and by,
The narrow plot which they control
Becomes the home-ground of the soul;

And stormy, mutinous youth, grown wise,
Looks out and in, with older eyes,
And in his limitations sees
His helpers, not his hindrances.

THE BURIED STATUE

[47]

DEEP in the earth long years it lay;
Its marble eyes were sealed to day,
Its marble ears were deaf and dull,
Yet it was wondrous beautiful.

A vineyard grew above its head;
The grapes they knew, and whispered
Each unto each, as evening fell:
"Brothers, keep counsel, nothing tell!"

There was no record left, or trace
Of sculptor or of hiding-place;
The hand that shaped it lay in dust,
His cunning chisel turned to rust.

The hands that dug the grave so deep,
And laid the statue to its sleep,
While hearts beat quick with haste and fear,
And ears were strained a step to hear;

[48]

The foe who threatened them that day—
All, all were dead and passed away.
The world had turned and turned it o'er;
Nothing was as it was before.

Still through all change of war or peace,
New men, new laws, new dynasties,
The buried statue kept its place,
With the same smile upon its face.

The years to centuries gave birth;
Heavier and heavier pressed the earth;
Autumn and spring enriched the vine
Whose purple grapes were crushed for wine;

And then, in search of gain or spoil,
Men came to dig the aged soil;
And after half a thousand years
In silence spent, the statue hears!

How did it feel when, fine and thin,
The first long ray of light broke in,
And gilt the gloom with glory new,
And let the imprisoned beauty through?

[49]

Say, did it tremble, as a heart
Long pent in darkness and apart
Trembles, with fear and rapture stirred
At love's low signal long unheard?

Or did it blench as, sharp and clear,
The urgent spade-strokes drew more near,
Blindly directed, fraught with harm
To marble breast and marble arm?

No answer, save the subtle smile,
Baffling and tempting in its guile,
Which seems all wordlessly to say:
"Darkness was safe, but fairer, day."

FAR AND NEAR

[50]

"From every point on earth we are equally near to heaven and the infinite."—HENRI AMIEL.

OUT of the depths that are to us so deep,
Up to the heights so hopelessly above,
Past storms that intervene and winds that sweep,
Unto thine ear, O pitying Lord of love,
We send our cry for aid, doubtful and half afraid
If thou, so very far, canst hear us or canst aid.

Out of the dull plane of our common life,
Beset with sordid, interrupting cares,
And petty motives and ignoble strife,
We dimly raise our hesitating prayers,
And question fearfully if such a thing can be
That the great Lord can care for creatures such as we.

Up from the radiant heights of just-won bliss,
Achieved through pain and toil and struggle long,
We raise our thanks, nor fear that God will miss
One least inflection of the happy song.
Heaven seems so very near, the earth so bright and dear,
The Lord so close at hand, that surely he must hear!

[51]

But the great depth that was to us so dark,
And the dull place that was to us so dull,
And the glad height where, singing like a lark,
We stood, and felt the world all-beautiful,
Seen by the angels' eyes, bent downward from the skies,
Were just as near to heaven and heaven's infinities.

So out of sunshine as of deepest shade,
Out of the dust of sordid every-days,
We may look up, and, glad and unafraid,
Call on the Lord for help, and give him praise;
No time nor fate nor space can bar us from his face,
Or stand between one soul and his exhaustless grace.

GREECE

[52]

AH, little David! least of all thy kin,
Fresh from the thyme-sweet meads of Thessaly,
Where the cool pastures overhang the sea,
Leaving thy sheep to join the battle's din:
Here is Philistia, here the chosen hosts
Wavering half-hearted on the unfought plain,
Chiding thy zeal as "premature" and "vain,"
The while the turbaned giant struts and boasts.
We catch the shining of thy brave young face,
We watch thee fit the pebble to the sling
With straight, true aim and heart that knows no fear,
And turn to see, O wonder of disgrace,
The serried soldiery of Christ the King
Skulking, protesting, squabbling in the rear!

IF YOUTH COULD KNOW

[53]

IF youth could know, what age knows without teaching,
Hope's instability and Love's dear folly,
The difference between practising and preaching,
The quiet charm that lurks in melancholy;
The after-bitterness of tasted pleasure;
That temperance of feeling and of words
Is health of mind, and the calm fruits of leisure
Have sweeter taste than feverish zeal affords;
That reason has a joy beyond unreason;
That nothing satisfies the soul like truth;
That kindness conquers in and out of season,—
If youth could know—why, youth would not be youth.

If age could feel the uncalculating urgency,
The pulse of life that beats in youthful veins,
And with its swift, resistless ebb and surgence
Makes light of difficulties, sport of pains;
Could once, just once, retrace the path and find it,
That lovely, foolish zeal, so crude, so young,
Which bids defiance to all laws to bind it,
And flashes in quick eye and limb and tongue,
Which, counting dross for gold, is rich in dreaming,
And, reckoning moons as suns, is never cold,
And, having naught, has everything in seeming,—
If age could do all this—age were not old!

[54]

THE SOUL'S CLIMATE

[55]

“Every soul has a climate of its own, or rather *is* a climate.”—HENRI AMIEL.

O HEART beloved, O kindest heart!
Balming like summer and like sun
The sting of tears, the ache of sorrow,
The shy, cold hurts which sting and smart,
The frets and cares which underrun
The dull day and the dreaded morrow—
How when thou comest all turns fair,
Hard things seem possible to bear,
Dark things less dark, if thou art there.

Thou keepest a climate of thine own
‘Mid earth's wild weather and gray skies,
A soft, still air for human healing,
A genial, all-embracing zone
Where frosts smite not nor winds arise;
And past the tempest-storm of feeling
Each grieved and weak and weary thing,
Each bird with numbed and frozen wing,
May sink to rest and learn to sing.

[56]

Like some cathedral stone begirt,
Which keeps through change of cold and heat
Still temperature and equal weather,
Thy sweetness stands, untouched, unhurt
By any mortal storms that beat,
Calm, helpful, undisturbed forever.
Dear heart, to which we all repair
To bask in sunshine and sweet air,
God bless thee ever, everywhere.

THE BETTER PRAYER

[57]

WHEN I sit and think of heaven so beautiful and dear,
Think of the sweet peace reigning there and the contentions here,
Think of the safe, sure justice beside the earthly wrong,
And set our ringing discords against celestial song,
And all the full securities beside "O Lord, how long?"
Oh, then I long to be there, and in my heart I pray,
"Lord, open thou the pearly gates, and let me in to-day."

And then I turn to earth again, and in my thoughts I see
The small, unnoted corner given in charge to me,
The work that needs be done there which no one else will do,
The briars that rend, the tares that spring, the heartease choked with rue,
The plants that must be trained and set to catch the sun and dew;
And there seems so much to do there, that in my heart I pray,
"Lord, shut thy gate, and call me not, and let me work to-day."

SUPPLY

[58]

"Why does all heaven move toward beseeching souls?"

NATHANIEL BURTON.

EMPTY the brook-fed basin high on the mountain side,
Drain it drop by drop, and make it dry as you will,
The forces that guide the waters no vacuum can abide;
They rush, they join, they link their threads in a foaming tide,
And down they hurry and hasten the spent pool to re-fill.

Empty the sphere of glass, exhaust its last spent air,
Seal it and make it sure, and deem your work complete,
Let but a pin pierce through the fabric anywhere,
And the urgent and crowding ether, for all your guarding care,
Will enter and fill the space, and laugh at your swift defeat.

[59]

So to the empty chambers of these craving souls of ours
Comes the invisible grace which breathes from the Lord of heaven,
Comes as comes to the sand the tide with its freshening powers,
Comes as come to the harvest the solacing summer showers,
As to thirst of the desert the draft which is life is given.

Only be ready and wait, and Heaven shall haste to bless.
Empty thy old wine out and make a place for the new;
Swifter than rushing wind shall the force divine down press,
And the pitiful Lord, instead of the want and the loneliness,
Shall give the peace of peace and the fulness of joy to you.

A THOUGHT

[60]

"It is better to be lost than to be saved all alone."

HENRI AMIEL.

WHAT! heaven all to one's self and the rest of men shut out?
Better were hell than that, with a share in the common doom,
Than to bask and smile content, with never a fear and doubt,
In the vast, vast Paradise space with the countless flowers abloom.

To lie by the River of Life and see it run to waste,
To eat of the Tree of Heaven while the nations go unfed,
To taste the full salvation—the only one to taste—
To live while the rest are lost,—oh, better by far be dead!

[61]

For to share is the bliss of heaven, as it is the joy of earth,
And the unshared bread lacks savor, and the wine unshared lacks zest,
And the joy of the soul redeemed would be little, little worth,
If, content with its own security, it could forget the rest.

HOLGER DANSKE

[62]

WHERE the mighty walls of Kronberg
Tower o'er the cold blue tides,
Like a couching lion set to guard
A treasure which he hides,
In a deep, deep vault shut out from day,
In the heart of the dungeon place,
There sleepeth Holger Danske,
The noblest of his race.

There sleeps he in his rusted mail,
With his sword across his knees,
His snowy beard has grown ell long
Through the long centuries.
And if ever a faint, far murmur stirs,
Or the sound of a bell's dim chime,
He moves, and fumbles at the hilt,
And mutters, "Is it time?"

A peasant once of old, 'tis said,
Lost in the labyrinth ways,
Chanced on the door and raised the bar,
And stared with a wild amaze. [63]
And, "Is it time?" he heard the shape
In an awful voice demand;
Trembling he answer made, "Not yet!"
"Then reach to me thy hand."

But the frightened hind dares not approach
To touch that form of eld,
And laid instead in the mailed grasp
The iron bar he held.
Like wax the iron bent and snapped,
And the grim lips moved to smile.
"Ha! There are men in Denmark still;
I may rest me yet a while."

Never since then has mortal man
Trod the forgotten stair,
Or lifted the bar of the hidden vault
To rouse the sleeper there.
But whenever the Danish blood is hot,
Or the land for a hero cries,
Men think of Holger Danske,
And they look to see him rise. [64]

For the runes have read and the sagas sung
That whenever the worst shall be,
And the Raven standard flutter low
Above the Northern Sea,
And the Danish blade be broken short,
And the land be rent with grief,
The genius of the Danes shall wake
And come to his relief.

Before his cold and frozen look,
Before his blasting blade,
The armies of the foe shall flee,
The alien shrink, afraid;
And the Paladin of ancient days
Shall rule with the ancient might,
And all the bitter be made sweet,
And all the wrong made right.

Out of the throes of the heaviest pain
This new peace shall be born,
Out of the very heart of night
Break the unlooked-for morn,
When the nation's need shall answer
In one deep, according chime,
To the voice of Holger Danske,
Demanding, "Is it time?"

SILENT he sits upon the Cretan height,
 A girdling ring of fleets and forts below;
 He sees the war-ships gliding to and fro,
 Hears distant, summoning trumpets through the night.
 Far off is Greece, the enemy is near;
 To her he speaks, to him he nothing says;
 Borrowing the lightning's language for his phrase,
 With fiery flash he talks, in utterance clear.
 In the old time a monarch through the murk
 Stared shuddering, and watched while fiery lines
 Traced on the wall a word of destiny;
 And so the "Christian" kings who serve the Turk
 May read like message in those flashing signs:
 "Weighed, wanting, lo! thy power is taken from thee."

MUTINY

[66]

THE heart of the world beats slow,
 And the pulse of life is low,
 And the shrunk earth powerless lies, and prone in the clutches of the frost;
 And the short, short days go by,
 And the sun in the wintry sky
 Shoots a cold ray into the noon as if its heat were lost.

But put your ear to the ground,
 And a stir of dim-heard sound
 Will reach it,—a murmur of slow revolt, like the hiss of a rising tide.
 No rootlet faint and chill
 But shares the quivering thrill;
 And mutinous whispers come and go where the thralls of the winter hide.

Ah, despot, hoary and old!
 Your fetters are strong and cold,
 But stronger the slender slaves they bind, and they shall conquer thee.
 A little longer still
 You may urge your cruel will,
 Then the dungeon-doors shall open wide and the prisoners go free.

[67]

Bluebird and robin then
 Shall sing your requiem.
 The moon shall laugh at your defeat, the teasing winds deride;
 For your icicles on eaves
 Shall dance the happy leaves
 And the bayonets of the daffodils thrust all your frosts aside.

For while the stars endure
 This sweet truth standeth sure,—
 That life is ever lord of death, and love o'ercometh hate.
 So, though the months seem long,
 And the icy fetters strong,
 We will abide in patience, come the springtime soon or late.

UNFORGOTTEN

[68]

WHERE the long pastures skirt the bay
And sober-eyed New England keeps
The leisure of its old-time way,
Among her buried kin, she sleeps.

Blown o'er by winds or heaped with snow,
That little mound and headstone rude
Is all that marks for us below
A flower of sweetest womanhood.

Twenty swift years of sun and shade
Have fleeted past, half unperceived,
Since her delightful presence made
Our lives seem worthier to be lived.

The dust of days, the sands of years
Have hidden her fair memory deep,
And eyes once blind with bitterest tears
Have long forgotten how to weep;

[69]

And death and love and life have whirled
To orbits new and strange since she
Who was the heart of that old world
Made room for these changed things to be.

Past her still resting-place all day,
With rush and flash and resonant roar,
The tide of travel takes its way
Along the bay-indented shore.

Shrill sounds the flying clamor, blent
With softer surge of dim-heard surf,
Across the orchard closes sent
To break upon her graving turf.

And hearts that loved her once speed fast,
Idly intent on shore and skies,
Nor turn to give a look or cast
A thought toward her where she lies!

It is the usual lot! We live
Too strenuously for long regret,
Too occupied and taxed to give
Our minds to perished pain; but yet,

[70]

Borne on the vibrant, clanging wheels,
I never pass that half-seen place,
But flashing o'er my memory steals
The vision of that sweet, lost face;

And my heart whispers low to her,
Across the distance dim and chill:
"Sleep softly, dearest, do not stir,
I love you—I remember still."

DENIAL

[71]

NOT only Peter in the judgment-hall,
Not only in the centuries gone by,
Did coward hearts deny Thee, Lord of all,
But even in our time, and constantly;
For feeble wills, and the mean fear of men,
And selfish dread, are with us now as then.

To-day we vow allegiance to Thy name;
To-day our souls, ourselves, we pledge to Thee,
Yet if a storm-wind of reproach or blame
Rises and beats upon us suddenly,
Faltering and fearful, we deny our Lord,
By traitorous silence or by uttered word.

We close our lips when speech would wake a sneer;
We turn aside and shirk the rougher path;
We gloss and blink as if we did not hear
The scoffing word which calls for righteous wrath.
All unrebuked we let the scoffer go,
And we deny our Lord and Master so.

[72]

Come Thou, as once of old Thou camest in
And "looked on Peter" in the judgment-hall;
Let that deep, grievéd gaze rebuke our sin,
Questioning, recalling, wakening, pardoning all,
Till we go out and weep the whole night long,
Made strong by sorrow as He was made strong.

ASTORIA BY TWILIGHT

[73]

ALL pale the daffodil-tinted sky;
The dusky shores that 'neath it lie
 Are set like an etching against the color,
As the great steamship plunges by.

There is the road I used to know,
There are the windows still aglow,
 As when in those old days of welcome
They lit the visitants to and fro.

There are the gates I used to pass,
The belts of flowers, the shaven grass,
 The casements behind which well-known faces
Smiled softly at me through the glass.

No other eye than mine could see
If that dim shape be house or tree;
 The true heart hath its inner vision,
It is all clear as day to me.

[74]

I see the forms so long unseen,
Stately in age, of reverend mien,
 Gay youth, and flower-like baby faces,
And manhood's aspect grave and keen.

And, beautiful beyond compare,
Mysteriously, strangely fair,
 Like some clear star high-hung in heaven
And sweet as summer roses are,—

One dear face hovers o'er the spot,
Which knew her once and knows her not;
 And still from out the deathly shadows,
Looks forth, beloved and unforgot.

All vain are beauty, worth, and wit,
The hours come, the hours flit;
 Time's wheel inexorably turneth,
And carries all our hopes with it.

It is life's common end and way;
Nothing abides and naught may stay;
 And strangers in the kinsmen's places
Front us with alien eyes to-day.

[75]

If Grief were not Joy's earthly stem,
And Time Eternity's brief hem,
 I could not bear it to sit in shadow
And watch that shore—remembering them!

THE PRICE OF FREYA

[76]

[Freya, in the Scandinavian mythology, was the goddess of Youth and Hope. While she remained with the gods and fed them daily with her golden apples they were all-powerful; but when Wodin parted with her as the price for the building of Walhalla, they suddenly became weak and weary, and a shadow rested over the world. Walhalla was of no worth without Freya.]

THE towers are strong and the towers are fair
As they rise and gleam in the sunlit air,
With bastion and battlement and spire
Built for one rule and one desire;
Fain would we enter there and sway,
But the giant builder the door secures,
And mutters his price as he bars the way:
"Give up Freya, and all is yours."

There in the citadel fancy built
Are the riches of ages heaped and spilt;
Diamonds glitter and rubies gleam,
And moon-like pearls front the pale moonbeam.
Golden the roof and gold the floor;
The glittering splendor woos and lures;
And the tempting voice repeats once more:
"Give up Freya, and all is yours."

What! give up hope with its rainbow sheen,
Give up the sparkle, the song, the jest,
The vision of something dreamed, not seen,
Which is sweeter by far than the thing possessed?
The flowers of May and the roses of June,
The sweet spring-breath of the April breeze,
The dew of morn and the light of noon—
When we give up Freya, must we give all these?

But we give; and we enter the towers of pride,
And we thread our gems and we count our gold;
And we bid our hearts to be satisfied
With so much to have and so much to hold.
But the smile is faded from the day;
Our drink is bitter, our bread is stone—
And amid the shadows we sit and say:
"Nothing is worth with Freya gone."

A SUMMER SONG

SING thyself out, sweet summer, leave not a note unsung;
Smile to the end, dear summer, dimpling on land and sea,
Voice all the praise of the roses, O bells of the lily which rung
The holiday signal for the world, heard by my heart and me!

The earth it was weary of winter, of the frost and the tingling snow,
Of winds which blew from the icy Pole, daunting the faint sun-ray;
And the pulse of life beat fainter, and the fire of hope burned low,
And we yearned for thy coming, summer, and thou wert so far away.

Then the shy, cool noon shone warmer, and the shrunken veins of earth
Pulsed with a quicker current which glowed in the willow's stem,
And the frozen graves were opened, and death gave place to birth,
And the drowsy flowers reared their heads, and called the birds to them.

Back they came trooping blithely, the oriole and the wren,
Robin and jay and hermit-thrush, to twilight-haunted grove;
New nests, new music, and new hopes, in upland and in glen,
And all the winter discords turned to harmonies of love.

O hearts that failed and doubted, and eyes that were blind and wet,
And dared not trust the heavenly love which giveth each good thing,
The Lord he never forgets his world, and he never will forget,
And year by year from the graving snows he builds his blessed spring!

Tell thyself out then, summer, leave not a word unsaid,
Give sun to sky, and dew to earth, and moon to silver sea;
Give faith to sore and sorrowing hearts who grieve beside their dead,
And tell them God can bring them back, even as he brought back thee.

[77]

[78]

[79]

[80]

AN EVENING PRIMROSE

[81]

WHEN all the west is red at set of sun,
And cool airs waken which were hushed at noon,
And crickets chirr and trill, and one by one
The birds' songs die away to sleepy croon,
And each white lily on the garden walk,
Dew-heavy, hangs its head upon its stalk;

When dawning soft and faint upon the blue,
The vague, mysterious, dreamy blue of night,
The first dim planet glimmers into view,
'Tis then it opens with a shy delight
Its pale gold, wayside blossoms near and far,
Holding them up to greet the evening star.

The freshness of the morning tempts it not,
Nor fervid noon, nor the warm wind's caress;
It envies not the royal rose's lot,
Choosing, as background for its loveliness,
The dewy shadows and the twilight lone;
Making the hush of eventide its own.

[82]

The blaze and sunshine of the summer hours
Know not nor prize the blooms they never see;
None of the jubilant and day-lit flowers
Hail it as sister, but the drowsy bee
And the night-moth, just roused from his repose,
They love it better than the fair, proud rose.

A type it seems of some shy human hearts,
Which palely shrink from joy and shun renown,
But when the sun grows colder and departs,
And the dim, hovering night shuts darkly down
And all the happy things which feed on day
Shiver and shrink and hide themselves away—

Then, like the primrose with its pale gold star,
They open sudden blooms of love and cheer,
Giving out fragrance where no others are,
Gilding the heavy hours of doubt and fear,
Fronting the shadows, till with dawn ends pain,
Then folding silently their buds again.

A ROSE IN A GLASS

[83]

ONLY a rose in a glass,
Set by a sick man's bed;
The day was weary, the day was long,
But the rose it spoke with a voice like song,
And this is what it said:

"I know that the wind is keen,
And the drifted snows lie deep;
I know that the cruel ice lies spread
O'er the laughing brook and the lake's blue bed,
And the fountain's rush and leap.

"I know, I know all this;
Yet here I sit—a rose!
Smiling I sit, and I feel no fear,
For God is good and the Spring is near,
Couched in the shrouding snows.

"Canst thou not smile with me?
Art thou less strong than I?
Less strong at heart than a feeble flower
Which lives and blossoms but one brief hour,
And then must droop and die?

"Surely, thou canst endure
Thy little pains and fears,
Before whose eyes, all fair and bright,
In endless vistas of delight
Stretch the Eternal Years!"

Then over the sick man's heart
Fell a deep and hushed repose.
He turned on his pillow and whispered low,
That only the listening flower might know:
"I thank thee, Rose, dear Rose."

[84]

SNOWBOUND

[85]

IT looks so cold, this drifted snow,
So cruelly, deadly cold, and yet
The hidden bulbs and roots below
Deem it their friendliest coverlet.

Wrapped warmly in its fleecy veil
They hear, unshuddering where they lie,
The patter and the hiss of hail,
The angry storm-wind whirling by.

Above, the world is tempest-tossed;
Buried too deep for doubts and fears,
The detonations of the frost
Come dumb and softened to their ears.

Sleeping, they smile as children do,
Secure of shield and covering,
And trust the Promise, proved and true,
The unforgetting pledge of spring.

Their veins a slumbering pulse informs,
The life within them stirs and grows,
And fed and sheltered so by storms,
They wait content beneath the snows.

Life has its storms; its hard, cold days,
When blasts of grief and frosts of care
Drift in upon the happy ways,
And blight the blooms that made them fair.

Cheerless we scan the wastes of white
Which seem of Hope the high-heaped grave,
Nor guess that hidden far from sight
Lie germs of joy, secure and brave;

And that, when comes God's blessed spring,
(As surely it shall come at last
To every grieved and patient thing!)
And all the winter-time is past,—

And the snow melts, and hands unseen
Set buds and blossoms on each stem,
We shall note growths which had not been
If Sorrow had not sheltered them!

[86]

SHELTERED

[87]

“Fear no more the heat of the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages.”

THE piercing blast blows from the pole,
The panes are glazed with ice,
All etched and freaked in fairy lines,
With many a strange device;
The hard snow echoes underfoot
To tread of hurrying feet,
And every freezing breath is charged
With particles of sleet.

But thou, my darling, who till late
Endured the winter's sting,
And faded yearly with the flowers,
And shared their suffering,
Out of the storm wind and the frost,
Like birds which southward soar,
From the chill world which hurt thee so
Hast flown forevermore.

In sheltered and eternal spring,
Where never cold wind blew,
Amid the all-contented saints,
Thou sittest, contented too.
The hard things are forgotten quite,
The heavenly rest is fair,
And we who shiver still on earth
Are glad that thou art there.

[88]

THE OLD PINE

[89]

UPON the lonely, wind-swept crest,
Where the hill-summit fronts the west,
Set like gaunt sentinels in row
To watch the seasons come and go,
In stalwart and unbending lines,
There stands a row of hoary pines.

Long have they stood, and much have seen,
Deer couched once in their coverts green,
The Indian paused his bow to string,
The wild cat crouched before its spring,
And from deep hollows far below
The wolf's long howl rang o'er the snow.

Sleek kine and browsing sheep now stray
Where once was heard the wolves' wild bay,
The red man fading slow made place
For an encroaching, stronger race,
And on the once lonely, rocky height
A church uprears its steeple white.

[90]

Scorning such human accidents,
Broadening their green circumference,
Each year made taller, statelier still,
The pine trees topped the wind-swept hill,
And surged responsive melodies
Like simulated sounds of seas.

Till yesterday their century long
Companionship held firm and strong,
Then a wild bolt of lightning sped
And smote their leader's lofty head,
Plunging a ghastly deep-scarred line
Down the brown trunk of the old pine.

Still does he rear his head on high,
Still stanchly fronts the sun and sky,
Still do his needles in soft tunes
Make sea songs for the summer moons,
Veiling the deadly wound and blight;
But all the same he died last night.

For a brief space his stricken form
May bide the buffet of the storm,
While the deep rift within his heart
Widens and tears his trunk apart,
Then, with a crash from overhead,
He falls, and all men know him dead.

[91]

Ah, gallant heart, so firm to bear,
So resolute to face despair,
Hiding the grievous hurt away
Which saps thy being day by day,
And simulating with hard strife
The bearing and the look of life.

Patience is strong, and strong is faith,
But mightier still the power of death;
Thy flesh is weaker than thy pain,
Vain is the struggle, all in vain.
Heaven's bolt of doom was surely sped,
And even to-day we count thee dead.

ONCE a small, childish dancing company,
We ran behind the ranks of older ones
Half seen, half noticed, very proud to be
Part of the grown procession with the drums;
Each manly stride they covered cost us three
Of our small steps,—that was small price to pay
For sharing in the glory of the day.

Where are the ranks that seemed to us so tall,
So full of fire and force and valor brave,
So full of wisest wisdom, knowing all
That man can know, or children dumbly crave
To understand with their weak powers, and small?
It seems a little time since thus we ran,
Yet we, the children then, now lead the van.

The stately forms which towered like forest trees,
The limbs which never tired, (as we supposed!)
The wills which ruled our infant destinies,
The strength beneath whose shadow we reposed,
Authority, love, shelter,—all of these,
Yielding like straws in tempest to the brunt
Of Time's fierce wind, have left us in the front.

[93]

'Tis we who are the stalwart leaders now
(Or seem so to the little ones behind),
The tireless marchers whom the gods endow
With the keen vision, the all-judging mind,
The will, which questions not of why or how,
But rules and dominates all lesser fates,
Regardless of their puny loves or hates!

How strange it seems to lead, who once were led!
To feel the pressure of the quick young race
Following and urging on behind our tread,
Ready and eager to usurp our place,
Crowding us forward,—though no word be said!
'Tis but the natural law which stars obey,
Following in order due through night, through day.

O march which seemed so long and is so brief!
Whether by rough ways led or smooth greensward,
Under clear sun or hovering clouds of grief,
What matter, so they end in thee, O Lord!
Who art of mortal toils the full reward?
We will keep on content and fearlessly,
Nor seek for rest until we rest in Thee.

INTERRUPTED

[94]

I PLANNED a plan, and duly made
A plan to fill one little day.
Pleasure and toil were gauged and weighed,
This hour for work and that for play,
And each for each made room and way.

I set my wilful feet to tread
The wilful path self-chosen as right,
Resolved to walk unhinderèd,
Nor turn to left, nor turn to right,
Until the coming of the night.

But interruptions all day long,
And little vexing hindrances,
Each weak, but all together strong,
Came one by one to fret and tease,
And balk my purpose, and displease.

Friendship laid fetters on the noon,
And fate threw sudden burdens down,
And hours were short and strength failed soon,
And darkness came the day to drown,
Hope changed to grief and smile to frown.

Then I said sadly: "All is vain;
No use there is in planning aught,
Labor is wasted once again,
And wisdom is to folly brought,
And all the day has gone for naught."

Then spoke a voice within my soul:
"The day was yours, and will was free,
And self was guide and self was goal,
Each hour was full as hour could be—
What space was left, my child, for *Me*?

"Where was the moment in your plan
For work of Mine which might not wait?
The need, the wish of fellow man,
The little threads of mutual fate
Which touch and tangle soon or late?

"These 'hindrances' which made you fret,
These 'interruptions,' one by one,
They were but sudden tasks I set,
My errands for your feet to run,
Will you disdain them, child, or shun?"

Oh, blind of heart and dull of soul!
I only felt, the long day through,
That I was thwarted of my goal,
And chafed rebelliously, nor knew
The Lord had aught for me to do!

Forgive me, Lord, my selfish day,
Touch my sealed eyes, and bid them wake
To see Thy tasks along the way,
Thy errands, which my hands may take,
And do them gladly for Thy sake.

[95]

[96]

SAINT CHRISTOPHER

[97]

NOT only in the legend does he stand
Beside the river current rushing fast,
A dim-drawn giant figure, strong and vast,
His staff within his hand;

But in our own day visible, beside
The darker stream of human pain and sin,
Our eyes have watched him, battling hard to win
For weaker souls a pathway through the tide.

Upheld by him and safely carried o'er
The waves which else had overwhelmed and drowned,
How many a faint and doubting heart hath found
Glad footing on the unhoped-for, distant shore!

And still as his strong, tireless arm again
And yet again their burden raised and took,
You read in the deep reverence of his look
He did the work for God and not for men.

[98]

Christophorus our saint, named now with tears.
The deeds he did were Christ's, the words he said,
All his strong, vital, splendid strength he laid
At the Lord's feet through the unstinting years.

And now beside that Lord in highest Heaven,
Past the dark stream of Death, which all must tread,
He rests secure, with joy upon his head,
And a "New Name" which hath to him been given.

But still to memory's eye he stands the same,
A stalwart shape where the deep waters run,
Upbearing, aiding, strengthening every one,
Carrying them onward in his Lord's dear name.

CONQUEROR

[99]

J. S. W.

THE voice of Duty, low, but clarion clear,
Found her, safe seated in the golden haze
Of youth and ease, living luxurious days.
She roused to listen; her enchanted ear
Heard nevermore the music of the earth—
The dancing measure, or the reveler's call,
Or flute note of Apollo, nor the fall
Of Orphic melodies. As nothing worth
She counted them; in vain her ear to please
They rang their varied changes, urged and wooed,
Following swift Duty, leader to all good,
She went thenceforward;—so she conquered Ease.

Then fell her tender feet on harder road,
With stones beset and briars and many a thorn;
And there, her woman's strength all overborne,
She sank at length, fainting beneath her load.
And time went by, while helpless still she lay,
Shackled by weakness, vexed with hopes and fears,
Watching the long and tantalizing years
Built from the salt sands of her every day;
But still she bravely smiled through loss and gain;
Through the slow ebb of cheer and fortune's frown,
Her quenchless soul no chilling waves could drown,
No fires exhaust;—and so she conquered Pain.

And, last, the dim, mysterious shape drew near,
Whom men name "Death," with pale, averted eyes;
(But whom the Heavenly ones call otherwise!)
She met his hovering presence without fear.
Long time they strove; and as the Patriarch cried,
"Except thou bless, I will not let thee go!"
So she; until at dawn the vanquished foe
Utterly blessed, and left her satisfied.
Oh, sweet to her the first, long, rapturous breath
Of Heaven, after life's pent and prisoning air;
Freedom unstinted, power to will and dare
The victory won from Life and over Death.

[100]

THE YEAR AND THE CENTURY

[101]

THE New Year came surrounded with Hope and Joy and Song,
And he smiled like dawning sunrise as he stood amid the throng.
The hopeful months they followed expectantly and slow;
But the Old Year went companionless, as all the Old Years go.

All sad and stern the Old Year went, along the unknown way;
His heart was full of bitterness, he had no word to say.
Then wonder seized upon his heart, for he was not alone;
A mighty shadow step by step was gliding by his own!

He turned to face a vast dark shape with eyes like clouded day,
And, "Who art thou, O wondrous one?" the Old Year, awed, did say.
"I am thy fellow pilgrim up the pathway of the sky;
Together bound, thou the dead year, I the dead century." [102]

The Old Year bared his forehead, and bent his feeble knee.
"I am unworthy of such grace, such august company."
The other raised him gently. "Kneel not to me," he said;
"The less, the larger, are as one when numbered with the dead.

"A hundred of thy fellows have gone to swell my tale;
A hundred centuries such as I, poured in the mighty scale
In which God swings eternity, shall count for nothing more
Than the dust borne by the wind away, the fleet foam on the shore.

"Centuries or years or cycles, we fleet and disappear;
But the Lord who is the source of time, and builds each growing year,
Abides. Within His sight you and I are shadows dim;
Yet He made us both, He loves us both, and now we go to Him." [103]

The Old Year shivered as he heard these words of lofty cheer;
Then light came to his faded eyes, and courage chased his fear.
He felt a strong hand clasp his own, and, held and guided so,
He went forth with the Century to where the dead Years go.

A. V. C.

[104]

[JUNE, 1898]

IT did not seem unmeet that she whose heart
Had doors wide open always for each friend,
And held no lonely corners set apart,
Should go, companioned closely, to the end.

It was not strange she left without farewell;
That was a word she never loved to say.
Her gentle lips, whatever fate befell,
Parted more readily for glad "Good-day."

Heart of the home wherein her presence made
Perpetual sunshine for each shady place,
Centre of kindly thought, of kindly aid,
And hospitality's long practised grace.

Dear friend, who did not tarry for good-byes
But swiftly trod the heavenward path of air,
God keep thee in His safe, sure Paradise,
And let us, following, find thy welcome there.

"THE LAND THAT IS VERY FAR OFF"

[105]

SO far! Is it so far then, that dear country
Which homesick hearts expectant claim as theirs,
Chiding the years as slow which patient come and go,
And make no answer to reproach or prayers?

Is it so far then? For at times it seemeth
More dear, familiar, close than aught beside,
Bounding our mortal day, lying beside our way,
Only the little veil of flesh to hide.

Is it so far? When those who have gone thither
Seem so near always, always near and sure,
Loving and aiding still, sharing our joy and ill,
Lifting our burdens, helping to endure.

Is it so far then? I cannot believe it.
When the veil parts and rends and lets us through,
The first surprise of bliss, I think, will be in this,
That the far off was nearer than we knew;

[106]

That what we mourned as lost was close beside us,
Touching us every day in every spot,
While, blinded with dull tears, groping through faithless years,
We were upheld and led and knew it not.

Let us not call it far—the heavenly country;
It bounds our little space like viewless air,
And while we sorrowing say that it is far away
We touch it, all unknowing, everywhere.

THE HEAVENLY AIRS

[107]

WORK is the fresh air of the soul!
It clears the heavy brain,
Quickens the pulses of the mind,
Warms thought to action, and the blind
And sluggish will sunk into ease
Of ineffective lethargies
It stirs to life again.

Grief is the cold air of the soul!
It chills and blights the flowers,
In urgent gusts it sways and smites,
Freezing the source of all delights;
But roots grow strong by dint of storm,
And, when the spring awakes, they form
The growth of happier hours.

Love is the warm air of the soul!
It reacheth far and wide,
Clasping all life with healing touch,
Wooing the little into much,
Making brown branch and buried root
To bud and blossom and bear fruit
Like the sweet summer-tide.

[108]

Blow, heavenly winds, on every soul!
And stir them constantly;
Sting us and quicken us and bless,
Relax not in thy urgent stress,
Till out of toil and love and pain
Full strength and stature we attain,
And are led home by thee.

[109]

IN THE FOG

VEILS of pallid mist and gray
Wrap the world of yesterday;
Fir-fringed island, rocky cape,
Yellow sands, and mountain shape,
Sun and sky, and waters blue,
All are blotted from the view.
Out to sea we blindly stare;
Did we dream that such things were?

No; untouched, and safe and sure,
All these lovely things endure;
Underneath that hovering mist,
All the blue and amethyst,
All the rocky cliffs and sea,
All the surf-lines rippling free,
Mountain forms and islands green,—
All are there, although unseen.

If we bravely bide and wait
Through this brief eclipse of Fate,
Smile through the unsmiling noon,
Keeping heart and hope in tune,—
Shadow shall give place to sun,
And, out-stealing, one by one,
All the fair things mourned in vain
Shall be made our own again.

[110]

Dear heart, faint heart, who in shade
Sitteth, pale, perplexed, afraid,
At the brief evanishment
Of thy yesterday's content,—
Courage take; for hope endures,
Though a little mist obscures,
And behind the fog-wreaths dun
Brightens the eternal sun.

THE PORCH OF LIFE

[111]

WITHIN the Porch of Life we sit,
The access to the heavenly door,
The shadowy porch where cold rains pour,
And every bleak wind blows on it.
And those who crowd to stand thereon
Smiling with youth grow grave anon.

We sit among our fellows so,
Shivering a little in the wind,
And still our eyes reach out to find
The faint beam of an inward glow—
A home-like ray, which through the door
Steals, softly beckoning, evermore.

There in sure comfort, safe and warm;
They sit who have an entrance won,
Smiling and glad; each dearest one
Who once endured the bitter storm,
And shared our patience and our pain,
But come not forth to share again.

Dear door, which never is shut tight,
And knows no bolt and needs no bar,
But through all ages stands ajar
To bless the eyes which yearn for sight,
And keep the souls that wait without
From the slow desolate death of doubt!

The Porch of Life is hard and bare,
And long the waiting sometimes seems.
But while we catch the out-reaching beams,
Making the darkness subtly fair,
And know the door is open still,
We can endure it with goodwill.

[112]

THE LIGHTHOUSE

[113]

HIGH lifted on the island cliff
Its lantern fronts the sea,
And sendeth forth a fine, straight ray
Of dazzling light to me—
A slender line of shimmering shine
Across night's mystery.

It is the path set for my eyes
To travel to the light,
And warm their darkness in the blaze,
And be made glad and bright.
None other may catch just that ray,
Or have the self-same sight.

And yet, a hundred other eyes,
Bent on that central blaze,
Find each its separate, shining path,
Its line of guiding rays;
And all eyes meet in concord sweet
By all these differing ways.

No voice shall say: "The Light is mine,
All other eyes are dim!"
No hand the glory hold or hide
Which streams to ocean's rim,
None claim or seize one ray as his
More than belongs to him.

O Light of Truth, which lighteneth all,
And shineth all abroad,
What favored soul or souls shall say,
"Mine is the only road?"
Each hath his own, to him made known,
And all lead up to God.

[114]

ONCE AND FOREVER

[115]

OUR own are our own forever, God taketh not back his gift.
They may pass beyond our vision, but our souls shall find them out,
When the waiting is all accomplished, and the deathly shadows lift,
And glory is given for grieving, and the surety of God for doubt.

We may find the waiting bitter, and count the silence long,
God knoweth we are dust, and he pitieth our pain;
And when faith has grown to fulness, and the silence changed to song,
We shall eat the fruit of patience, and shall hunger not again.

So sorrowing hearts who dumbly in darkness and all alone
Sit missing a dear lost presence and the joy of a vanished day,
Be comforted with this message that our own are forever our own,
And God, who gave the gracious gift, he takes it never away.

LIGHTS

[116]

ALITTLE lamp can send but a brief and feeble ray,
The great lights bravely beam, and their radiance far away
Is the comfort of the nations and the furtherance of the day.

All men remember when the great lights were lit,
The day is kept in honor, and they name it as they sit
And watch the guiding flame, thanking and blessing it.

But the small and struggling lights which a breath of storm might kill,
Each fain to light a continent, but doomed to smallness still,
Is there no one to praise them for their service of goodwill?

Yes, one, the Lord of all, who is the source of Light;
He sees them where they burn in the blackness of Earth's night,
And the larger and the less alike are precious in his sight.

[117]

He is the secret source by which their flames are fed,
From the beacon's wide, white ray which flashes overhead,
To the intermittent ray which the half-spent tapers shed;

And to each he says, "Well done," which has bravely sought to burn.
And when the dawn ariseth, and each is quenched in turn,
Absorbed into the perfect day for which pure spirits yearn;—

Each little flame that struggled to make the night more fair
Shall find its place in Paradise and burn in heavenly air,
And the Father of all Lights shall be its welcome there.

ON THE LAWN

[118]

ON the half-frozen lawn, where the early grass was springing,
In the sunny days just over, and where now the frost is lying,
I hear a happy chorus of little voices singing,
A hopeful, cheery call and a hopefuller replying.

'Tis the bluebird and the robin,—what brings them back so early
From the sunny southern meadows, and the fields of honeyed clover,
From the stately tall magnolias, hung with blossoms sweet and pearly,
And the starry yellow jasmine which the wood-bee hovers over?

And now that they have come, beguiled and led a-straying
By Mother Nature, who would seem to joy in such deceiving,
How can they sing so blithely, with frost and famine playing,
As if the world were never meant to be a place for grieving?
What is the secret of the hope that bears them up so bravely
In the shelterless unfed to-day, the unprovided morrow?
Oh, would that I might learn it,—I who sit here looking gravely
With an apprehensive shiver for the shape of coming sorrow!

[119]

Say, bluebird, and say, robin? They answer but by singing,
As with a whirr of fluttering wings the small shapes dart and fly;
But my sadness rises with them, and all my cares seem winging,
And leaving me as glad as they, but I cannot tell you why.

IF ONLY

[120]

IF only—shadow did not follow sun,
If only—tempests lurked not in blue weather,
If only—life did not so swiftly run
And dreams need not be waked from altogether.

If only—hearts were not attuned to ache,
If only—joy and mirth turned not to grieving,
If only—we could seize and overtake
The rainbow Hope which lures us on deceiving!

If only—love were not poured out to waste,
If only—discord spared sweet music's closes,
If only—blight and canker did not haste
To mar the lily's white, the stainless roses!

If only—sentinels beside the ways,
Death, suffering, and sin stood not to daunt us,
If shadows from the vanished yesterdays
And fears for the to-morrows did not haunt us.

If only!—human grief unceasingly
Repeats in myriad tongues the wistful sighing.
Mighty and mournful is the mingled cry,
But never comes there any full replying,

Except when, o'er the tumult and the pain,
Above the upraised, questioning, tear-stained faces,
We catch at times a half heard, answering strain,
An antiphone from the high, heavenly places.

"If only, Lord," the happy voices sing,
"If only—we have Thee, who faileth never,
Nor life, nor death, nor any other thing
Can hurt our joy forever and forever.

"If men could know how quickly pain is spent,
What compensations heaven has in keeping,
What home means after earth's bleak banishment,
If only—they would smile instead of weeping."

Sing louder, radiant host, wake our dull ears,
Till, though the path be hard and the day lonely,
We, too, shall answer through the mists of tears,
"If only—we have Thee, Lord, have Thee only."

[121]

PRELUDE

[122]

A FEW notes, half harmonious
And half discordant, subtly blent,
The master sounds and touches, thus
To test and try his instrument.

Not music's self, but its presage;
Not tune, but hint of tune it is;
Of better things the pledge and gage,
And prized for what it promises.

Just so the sweet musician, Spring,
'Mid blowing winds and dropping rains,
Tightens and sounds each vagrant string,
In odd, capricious, sudden strains.

It is not music she essays,
But just a hint of what shall be
When earth and sky and nights and days
Join in the summer harmony.

And do we dream, or is it true,
The grass so brown but yester-morn
Has caught a subtly greener hue
In sheltered corners of the lawn?

Can there be buds upon the hedge—
Wee, starry pointlets half unrolled?
And were we blind to read the pledge
Written in the willow's pencilled gold?

And is it fancy that there breathes
A vagrant perfume in the air,
A scent of freshly opened leaves?
There are no leaves yet anywhere.

Ah, dear Spring, stay thy flying feet;
Try all thy chords; play leisurely;
Though if thy preludes are so sweet
What will the finished music be?

[123]

WHOM NO MAN HATH HIRED

[124]

EACH soul must serve some master. Everywhere,
Alike in wilderness and market places,
They stand and wait all the long hours of day.
They wait with expectation in their faces
And mutely question each new wayfarer,
And "Art thou he?" their asking glances say.

Then some with downcast aspect take their wage
And follow after shapes of darksome mien,
Evil and doubtful, leading from the light;
And some with radiant eyes alight are seen,
Crowding, as bound on common pilgrimage,
Behind a peaceful Leader robed in white.

And Pain calls one to serve him at his will,
And cloudy Doubt another claims for slave,
And wingéd Riches offer specious fees
And brightly gild a pathway to the grave,
And Patience, with a forehead veiled and still,
Enrols a few, making no promises.

[125]

Some at the early dawning go their way,
Some when the suntides wave the morning sky,
And some at heat of noon and harvest-tide,
While others with dull, disappointed eyes
Watch the long shadows creep and dim the day,
And still unhired and unemployed abide.

Lord of the vintage, recompensing Lord,
Behold these waiting ones and call them in,
Let them not choose another Lord than Thee,
Made the despairing thralls of self and sin,
Losing the joy of toil and full reward
Which make Thy service perfect liberty.

Send forth the servants of Thy love and power,
These whom no man hath hired make Thine own.
Before the spent sun vanish in the west
Let the brief toil the ill-spent day atone,
And though not called till the eleventh hour,
Give them like blessed wages with the rest.

ON EASTER EVEN

[126]

WHEN the sun sets, let me say,
"Each day is an Easter day,
When the Lord may rise in me,
Bringing life and victory;
Every eve an Easter eve,
When my heart a glorious guest
Must make ready to receive,
Swept and cleansed and duly dressed.

"On its altar there shall lie
Lilies white of purity;
Roses white and roses red
Shall their grateful odors shed;
Passion flowers with cross on breast,
Violet purple sweet, I'll lay
Where my Lord's dear feet may rest,
Haply—on this Easter day."

No long waiting need we know,
While the slow months come and go;
No set Lent observe, if we
Make all time our Lent to be;
Not one festal, brief and bright, [127]
But a year, where every morn
Hearts made ready over night
Wake to find an Easter dawn.

So each night, O faithful heart,
Keep thy vigil, draw apart,
Dress thy altar fair and fit,
Sure the Lord will hallow it!
Death in vain forbids Him rise,
Sin in vain would bar His way,
And, each morrow, in the skies,
There shall dawn an Easter day!

PALM SUNDAY

THE King is coming! All the road
With branches of the palm is strewed;
The multitudes are thronging fast
To see him as he rideth past.
They look for pomp and sovereignty,
Purple and gold and crown to see,
They bring the sick, the halt, the dumb.
The King is coming! Let him come.

The Christ is coming! Coarsely dressed
With sandalled feet and fisher's vest,
His steed the lowly ass's foal,
His crown the viewless aureole;
No sword, no seal, no royal cloak;
Twelve tired and dusty working folk
Make of his court the tale and sum.
The Christ is coming! Let him come.

The King is coming! Every year
He comes for hearts that hold him dear,
Borne in as on that by-gone day
With palm-boughs strewed along his way,
No longer clad in lowly guise,
But King of Kings to faithful eyes.
To every heart that gives him room
The Lord of Love vouchsafes to come.

[129]

The Christ is coming! Heart of mine,
What fitting gift, of love the sign,
Hast thou to lay as offering
Upon the pathway of the King?
No palm-branch hast thou? Nothing meet?
Then lay thyself before his feet.
His smile can make thy dryness bloom.
The Christ is coming! Let him come!

THE PASCHAL FEAST

[130]

IN travelling guise they held the Paschal Feast
In olden days.
With loins girt about, and shoes on feet,
And staves in hand, they met and shared the meat,
And gave God praise.

No lingering at the banquet; each man took
His portion due,
And swiftly hied him forth, even as did
His fathers, worn slaves of the pyramid,
Zion in view.

A single morsel might suffice for some,
Snatched as they went;
On promise and on type their souls were fed,
So, though their bodies lacked a little bread,
They were content.

And even thus, my soul, be it with thee,
This Easter Day.
With loins girt about, and staff in hand,
As one made ready for the Promised Land,
Who may not stay;

[131]

Come, then. The feast is spread which angels still
Desire to taste;
Take thou thy crumb, nor wait for farther good,
To bask and batten on immortal food,
But rise in haste;

And get thee forth to the hard-trodden way,
The toil and tire,
The wilderness with many thorns beset,
O'er which the cloudy pillar hovers yet,
The guiding fire.

The Promised Land it beckons fair and far,
Beyond thy view.
And though the foe be fierce, and travail long,
The Lord shall hold thee up, and keep thee strong,
And guide thee through.

Then, at the upper table, safely set,
Thou mayst abide
In full security and rest at last,
With all the thirst and hunger of the past
Quite satisfied.

[132]

A NEW YEAR PRAYER

[133]

THE Christmas moon rides bravely in the skies,
The young and untried year is at the gate.
We tremble at his aspect grave with fate,
At his inscrutable, unsmiling eyes,
Subtle with hope and full of prophecies.
Lord, he is all unknown, but Thou art true;
As in the old year, guide us in the new.

The clock has struck—with the last clanging knell
Comes in the new year, goeth out the old;
To-morrow is to-day, to have and hold;
The future binds us with her mystic spell.
For bliss? for bale? what man shall ask or tell?
Forward we look with wistful, questioning eyes;
Lord, who art wisdom's fountain, make us wise.

The old year's love shall live on in the new.
But love is weak and ignorant and blind,
Led by each wandering fancy of the mind,
Enticed by song of bird and scent of dew,
Misleading still where fain it would be true.
O Lord, whose love fails never night or day,
Teach us to love in Thine own perfect way.

That comes to end which now is just begun.
To wax, to wane, it is the common fate,
The new year must be old year; soon or late
The hovering shadow wrappeth every one,
And hides him from the day and from the sun.
Darkness and light are Thine, O Lord, Most High;
Make us content to live and glad to die.

[134]

HOW SHALL I PRAY?

[135]

FATHER, how can I thus be bold to pray
That thou shalt grant me that or spare me this?
How should my ignorance not go astray,
How should my foolish lips not speak amiss
And ask for woe when fain they would ask bliss?

How shall I dare to prompt thee, the All-wise,
To show me kindness? Thou art ever kind.
What is my feeble craving in thine eyes
Which view the centuries vast, before, behind,
And sweep unnumbered worlds like viewless wind?

Thy goodness ordereth what thing shall be,
The wisdom knoweth even my inmost want;
Why should I raise a needless prayer to thee,
Or importune Omnipotence to grant
My wishes, dim, short-sighted, ignorant?

And yet I come,—for thou hast bidden and said,
But not to weary thee, or specify
A wish, but rather with this prayer instead:
“O Lord, thou knowest:—give it or deny,
Fill up the cup of joy, or pass me by.”

Just as thou wilt is just what I would will;
Give me but this, the heart to be content,
And if my wish is thwarted to lie still,
Waiting till puzzle and till pain are spent,
And the sweet thing made plain which the Lord meant.

[136]

[137]

GOOD-NIGHT

“GOOD-NIGHT, Beloved,” I softly cry
Across the chill immensity,
The unmeasurable star-hung space
Which hides the smiling of thy face.
The echoless air is all unstirred,
But yet I feel that thou hast heard,
Somehow, somewhere, the old-time word,
And smiled, perhaps, that I should say
“Good-night,” when all with thee is Day.

“Good-night, Beloved,”—for near and far
And separate and together are
But mortal phrases, little worth
Except in the dull speech of earth,
The ignorant speech which doubts and fears.
God is the sun of all the spheres,
The source and centre of our years.
Our little lives, so brief, so dim,
Are only lit when lit by him.

[138]

His ear can catch the lightest call
Who heedeth even the sparrow’s fall;
As clear to him the sobbing prayer
Of grief, as heavenly praises are
When angels veil their eyes and bow.
Through him I reach to thee, and thou
Through him art nearer to me now
Than in the days of lost delight
When each to each could say, “Good-night.”

Oh, comfort of the sorrowing heart!
Where’er I am, where’er thou art,
Linked in this heavenly unison
We still are near, we still are one!
God is our meeting-place and goal,
The safe, sure shelter of the soul.
Let the wide heavens between us roll;
Still fearlessly, though out of sight,
I still may say, “Beloved, good-night.”

A SPRING PARABLE

[139]

TILL yesterday one tree was brown,—
One only, mid the green of spring;
Wearing her dead leaves like a crown
She stood, and seemed to gloom and frown
On every glad rejoicing thing,

Till yesterday! When, touched at last,
The slow buds quickened and uncurled,
And the poor tree forgave her past,
And learned to hope, and thick and fast
Showered her dry leaves on the world.

Swift sudden hope replaced despair;
The brown leaves dropped, the green leaves grew,
And clothed upon, and fresh and fair,
The happy boughs swung all in air,
And drank the sunshine and the dew.

Souls have their dead leaves, sere and dry,
Dead hopes, dead visions, dead delight,
Relics of gladder days gone by,
Worthless to every human eye;
But yet we clasp the poor things tight,

[140]

And feel that life were bare indeed
If we should lose them, or let fall,
And all the old-time hurts would bleed,
And we unwrapped from sorrowing weed
Like mourners dragged to carnival.

Then in a moment suddenly
God's blessed sunshine, all unguessed,
Reaches and heals our hearts, and we,
Tasting its sweetness, know that he
Bids us be happy with the rest.

"THY RIGHTEOUSNESS IS LIKE THE STRONG MOUNTAINS"

[141]

STRONG are the mountains, Lord, but stronger thou!
They rise, a bulwark to the guarded land,
Which foes pass not, nor traitors undermine;
For children's children's safety they shall stand;
And so, O Lord, thou standest unto thine,
A mighty guardian, a defence divine.

Strong are the mountains, Lord, but stronger thou!
Where beats the tempest on the hither side,
Beneath their shelter blooms the vine and rose;
So do thy chosen ones in thee abide,
Nor fear the storm-wind though it wildly blows,
All undisturbed in their secure repose.

Strong are the mountains, Lord, but stronger thou!
Their far, fair snowy summits fountains are,
Whence fertilizing streams begin their race;
So, from thy might of mercy stream afar
The over-brimming rivers of thy grace,
Gladdening the wilderness and desert place.

[142]

Strong are the mountains, Lord, but stronger thou!
Immutable they stand from age to age
Though the world rock and empires shift and pale;
So, though the people war and heathen rage,
The safety of thy promise shall prevail,
Nor ever once thy love and goodness fail.

LIVING OR DEAD

[143]

THEY are not dead to us, who keep
Their long, unvexed, reposeful sleep
 'Neath grassy coverlets, flower-bespread:
For love abides though graves are deep,
 And those who love are never dead.

They are not dead while heart to heart
Still hold communion though apart,
 The visible with the unseen,
And faith and longing know the art
 Of bridging the wide space between.

They are not dead who, folded fair
In the kind Shepherd's steadfast care,
 Await our coming in sure faith,
When we shall see them as they are,
 Made yet more beautiful by death.

[144]

But they *are* dead whose love has grown
To be the ghost of love alone,
 Who meet us with averted eyes,
And air constrained and altered tone,
 And chill and alien courtesies.

They move, they accost us, and they seem
Like creatures of some weary dream;
 So dead, so lost, so all-estranged,
The fire which cheered us with its gleam
 Into the veriest ashes changed.

While if our dear and living dead,
With soft, still smiles and noiseless tread,
 Should come, some day, to the old place,
There would not be a thought of dread
 In their first rapture of embrace!

Oh, strangely blended joy and pain!
Death turned to naught, and life made vain,
 Love's shade and substance still at strife,
Who shall decide between the twain,
 Or which is death, and which is life?

A MORNING SONG

[145]

AWAKE, awake, dull heart, and sing
The praises of thy Lord and King,
Who gives the new day and the sun,
Hope, health, and every pleasant thing.

He scatters all the shades of night,
Out of the darkness builds the light,
And on man's ignorance and wrong
Founds his eternal law of right.

If he one hour withdrew his care
The Earth would stagger in blind air,
And laughter would give place to wail,
And hope to horror, everywhere.

Angels and saints, the white-robed choir,
Praise God all day, and never tire,
And weaker voices from below
May join and swell the chorus higher.

[146]

For praise is privilege there as here,
And each in his own place and sphere,
Angel or man, or high or low,
May take his share and count it dear.

Then wake, my heart, remembering this,
That truest praise true service is,
And take thy new day from God's hands,
And work therein for him and his.

THE STONE OF THE SEPULCHRE

[147]

“HOW shall the stone be rolled away?”

Thus questioned they, the women three,
Who at dim dawn went forth to see
The sealed and closely guarded cell
Where slept the Lord they loved so well.
First of all Easter sacrifice,
The linen and the burial spice,
They carried, as with anxious speech
They sadly questioned, each to each:
Still, as they near and nearer drew
The puzzle and the terror grew,
And none had word of cheer to say;
But lo, the stone was rolled away!

“How shall the stone be rolled away?”
So, like the Marys, question we,
As looking on we dimly see
Some mighty barrier raise its head
To bar the path we needs must tread.
Our little strength seems weakness made,
Our hearts are faint and sore afraid;
Drooping we journey on alone.
We only mark the heavy stone,
We do not see the helping Love
Which moves before us as we move,
Which chides our faithless, vain dismay,
And rolls for us the stone away!

[148]

“How shall the stone be rolled away?”
Ah, many a heart, with terrors pent,
Has breathed the question as it went,
With faltering feet and failing breath,
In the chill company of death,
Adown the narrow path and straight,
Which all must traverse soon or late,
And nearing thus the dreaded tomb,
Just in the thickest, deepest gloom,
Has heard the stir of angel wings,
Dear voices, sweetest welcomings,
And, as on that first Easter day,
Has found the dread stone rolled away!

TOO LITTLE AND TOO MUCH

[149]

SOME pine with wistful hunger all their years,
Watering their scanty crumb of joy with tears;
And some there are who, feasting long lives through,
Frighted at over-happiness, weep too.

The sense of undesert, a constant sting,
Pierces and stabs through every pleasant thing,
They shrink before the cup filled to the brim,
Lest through God's very gift they forfeit him.

Ah! dear hearts, heavy with this nobler woe,
This pain divine, which even saints may know,
There is this thought to balm and still your pain:
"God gives to us that we may give again."

"I am unworthy!" do you, trembling, say?
Strive to be worthier, then, and day by day
Heap corn and wine, and stand with open door,—
A granary of heaven to feed the poor.

Put of your sweet into each bitterer cup;
Halve every loaf, that some one else may sup,—
Till in the crumbs and fragments of your good
The miracle of old shall seem renewed.

And so, all fearless of the gift of heaven,
Give gladly out that which to you is given,
Sure that to be God's cup-bearer is meant
For privilege, and not for punishment.

[150]

THE MESSENGER WITH THE BOW-STRING

[151]

INTO the banquet-hall of all delights
Grimly he forced his way,
Amid the perfumes and the fairy lights,
And trickling fountain-spray,
Where mandolins were sounding low and sweet,
And on the marble tiles
Twinkled and shone the dancers' slender feet,
And all was joy and smiles.

One dark blot on the joyous life and stir,
There stood he, fierce and still,
Holding his token out as messenger
Of the stern Caliph's will—
A loosened bow-string from the bow untied.
Laughter was changed to wail,
And all the happy song in silence died
On lips grown mute and pale.

Death's sudden summons! Still the flowers fair
Proffered their cups of bloom;
Still rose the mazy fountain in the air,
Scattering its soft perfume;
But in one moment, though these bright things stayed,
Death's shape, all grimly gray,
Entered the hall with soundless step and laid
A shadow on the day.

Into our summer palace of delight,
Flower-hung and fairy-fanned,
Entered the ghastly messenger last night,
The bow-string in his hand.
Amid the fulness of full life he stood,
A spectral form to see,
And held the signal out with gesture rude
And beckoned silently.

Still smile the late pink roses on their stem,
And heliotropes, thick set,
Woo every passing hand to gather them;
The brown, sweet mignonette
Still spreads a fragrant carpet, and the gay
Nasturtiums flaunt and soar,
Making a mimic sunshine on the gray;
But death is at the door!

O messenger! have patience for a space.
Summer is fresh and strong;
Never so beautiful her radiant face,
Never so sweet her song.
Wait but a little, till our shivering souls
Are strong to bear. He stands
Speechless, unheeding, answers not, and holds
The bow-string in his hands.

[152]

[153]

RELEASED

[154]

ONLY a few short weeks ago,
All icy bound and packed with snow,
This rocky cleft, through which to-day
Runs the glad brooklet on its way;
The merry brook which leaps and flows,
Flashing and singing as it goes,
To find and join and make a part
Of the great river's urgent heart.
Could it have dreamed so sweet a thing
In all those months of prisoning?
O happy brook! made glad, made free,
Shall you not find at last the sea?

Only a few short months ago,
A harder frost, a deeper snow,
Lay on my soul and held it tight
Away from hope, away from light.
Now God's sweet sun has entered in
And melted all the chains of sin,
And led by his dear hand to-day
My soul goes singing on its way,
To link its little thread of good
With the vast, over-brimming flood!
O happy soul! made glad, made free,
Shalt thou not find at last thy sea?

[155]

A PARADISE SONG

[156]

THE day was hot, the way was long, the feet were tired, so tired;
The goal is won toward which we strove, the goal so long desired,
The eyes which sought the distant hope through wavering mists of care,
See it at last, oh close, so close in Paradise the Fair.

The black, black night through which we groped is turned to radiant day,
The doubt to certainty more glad than song or speech can say;
The baffling winds which buffeted beyond our strength to bear,
Blew us along the blessed way to Paradise the Fair.

We doubted and we fainted, and we seemed to miss the road
As, stumbling on and painfully, we toiled beneath our load;
And the uphill left us breathless, and the tempest stripped us bare;—
What matter, since they bore us up to Paradise the Fair?

[157]

We who were lonely once and found the silence very sore,
Companioned round by our beloved are lonely never more;
The puzzles all are now explained, and the griefs which grieved us there
Are proved to be the Lord's sure path to Paradise the Fair.

LITTLE BY LITTLE

[158]

HOW does the Spring come? With many mischances.
Now the frost pricketh sore, then the sun glances;
Now the rain beateth down, then the snow falleth,
Nothing the cheery, brave Springtime appalleth.
Bravely she smiles through the somber chill weather,
Smiles on the blight and the promise together;
And at the end of the long suffering
All the world over is ruled by the Spring.

How does the tide come? Not all in one rising,
Daunting the land and the heavens surprising;
Here a wave, there a wave, rising and falling,
Billow to billow still beckoning and calling,
Heaving, receding, now farther, now nigher,
Now it is lower, and now it is higher;
Now it seems spent and tired; then, with insistence,
Gaily and strongly it comes from the distance;
Till, at the end of the plunge and the roar,
It is full tide, and the sea rules the shore.

[159]

How does the soul grow? Not all in a minute:
Now it may lose ground, and now it may win it;
Now it resolves, and again the will faileth;
Now it rejoiceth, and now it bewaileth;
Now its hopes fructify, then they are blighted;
Now it walks sunnily, now gropes benighted;
Fed by discouragements, taught by disaster,
So it goes forward, now slower, now faster,
Till, all the pain past, and failures made whole,
It is full grown, and the Lord rules the soul.

TWO YEARS

[160]

THE Old Year knew him, but the New knows not,
And all our joy and welcome for the New
Is clouded by the thought, which, like a blot
Stains and obscures the gladness through and through.

Old Year, which barely touched him as he passed,
This grace abides with thee now thou art dead,
Of Time's brief vanished heirs thou wert the last
To lay a blessing on his honored head.

We saw thee greet him with mysterious smile,
We did not mark how sad the smile and strange,
But deemed all well, then in a little while
The skies grew dark with swift tempestuous change.

Led by thy hand he vanished from our eyes,
And thou fulfilled thy date day after day,
And still to grief and question and surmise
Made never answer, keeping on thy way.

[161]

But still we love thee, for thou wert the last
To see the face which we no longer see,
And all the grace and glory of his past
Completes and ends and culminates in thee.

The New Year's hands with good gifts may be full,
The New Year's heart with love and peace may brim,
He cannot be to us as beautiful
As the old years which caught their best from him.

TEMPERED

[162]

WHEN stern occasion calls for war,
And the trumpets shrill and peal,
Forges and armories ring all day
With the fierce clash of steel.
The blades are heated in the flame,
And cooled in icy flood,
And beaten hard, and beaten well,
To make them firm and pliable,
Their edge and temper good;
Then tough and sharp with discipline,
They win the fight for fighting men.

When God's occasions call for men,
His chosen souls he takes,
In life's hot fire he tempers them,
With tears he cools and slakes;
With many a heavy, grievous stroke
He beats them to an edge,
And tests and tries, again, again,
Till the hard will is fused, and pain
Becomes high privilege;
Then strong, and quickened through and through,
They ready are his work to do.

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Like an on-rushing, furious host
The tide of need and sin,
Unless the blades shall tempered be,
They have no chance to win;
God trusts to no untested sword
When he goes forth to war;
Only the souls that, beaten long
On pain's great anvil, have grown strong,
His chosen weapons are.
Ah souls, on pain's great anvil laid,
Remember this, nor be afraid!

VIRGINIA

[164]

DEAR eyes, so full of kindness for us all,
Of sympathy's sweet cheer, of glinting fun,
Of tenderness for creatures weak and small,
And welcomes never failing any one:—

Dear busy hands, to which all work seemed play,
Defeat impossible, and taste a dower,
Making the common things of every day
Unfold to beauty like an opening flower;

Dear heart, whose every beat until the end
Was quick and ardent with affection's thrill;
Whose ample chambers sheltered many a friend,
And opened at a touch for others still,—

The world seems colder than it used to be
Since those sweet hands were folded on her breast,
Since the eyes closed in death's deep mystery
And that great loving heart was stilled to rest.

[165]

But like a star she hovers through our tears,
And the Eternal world, so dim, so fair,
Which holds the secret of our mortal years,
Nearer and friendlier seems now she is there.

THE spent nerve and the lowered pulse,
The sluggish current of the blood
Which feels no glad abounding flow,
No bound or joyousness, but slow,
And, as it were, reluctantly,
Fills the dull veins,—all these may be
Reasons why life should not seem good.

Happiness is an easy thing
When summer airs fan summer skies,
And birds in all the branches sing;
Or in the budding days of spring,
When life springs up renewed and fair,
And joy is in the very air,
And laughter readier is than sighs.

But in the ebb-times of the soul,
When Hope's bright tide has turned and fled,
Leaving bare sands and thirsting shells,
When dried are the sweet water-wells,
And leaden moments, slow with pain,
Pass, and the wave turns not again,
And life seems all uncomforted,—

Then is the time of test, when Faith
Cries to the heart which inly fails:
"Courage! nor let thy forces dim.
Although He slay thee, trust in Him
Who giveth good and tempereth ill,
And never fails, and never will,
To be the refuge of his saints.

"To yield to grief without a blow
Is to doubt God: with him for guide,
The pleasant pathway, and no less
The hot and thorn-set wilderness,
Alike are roads to heaven, and He,
Even where thou waitest beside the sea,
Can with a word recall the tide."

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Transcriber's Notes:

Page 66, "murmer" changed to "murmur" (it,—a murmur of slow)

Page 122, "muscian" changed to "musician" (sweet musician, Spring)

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