

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Poems, by Madison Julius Cawein

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POEMS

BY

MADISON CAWEIN

(SELECTED BY THE AUTHOR)

WITH A FOREWORD BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

1911

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The verses composing this volume have been selected by the author almost entirely from the five-volume edition of his poems published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company in 1907. A number have been

included from the three or four volumes which have been published since the appearance of the Collected Poems; namely, three poems from the volume entitled "Nature Notes and Impressions," E. P. Button & Co., New York; one poem from "The Giant and the Star," Small, Maynard & Co., Boston; Section VII and part of Section VIII of "An Ode" written in commemoration of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and published by John P. Morton & Co., Louisville, Ky.; some five or six poems from "New Poems," published in London by Mr. Grant Richards in 1909; and three or four selections from the volume of selections entitled "Kentucky Poems," compiled by Mr. Edmund Gosse and published in London by Mr. Grant Richards in 1902. Acknowledgment and thanks for permission to reprint the various poems included in this volume are herewith made to the different publishers.

The two poems, "in Arcady" and "The Black Knight" are new and are published here for the first time.

In making the selections for the present book Mr. Cawein has endeavored to cover the entire field of his poetical labors, which extends over a quarter of a century. With the exception of his dramatic work, as witnessed by one volume only, "The Shadow Garden," a book of plays four in number, published in 1910, the selection herewith presented by us is, in our opinion, representative of the author's poetical work.

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THE POETRY OF MADISON CAWEIN

When a poet begins writing, and we begin liking his work, we own willingly enough that we have not, and cannot have, got the compass of his talent. We must wait till he has written more, and we have learned to like him more, and even then we should hesitate his definition, from all that he has done, if we did not very commonly qualify ourselves from the latest thing he has done. Between the earliest thing and the latest thing there may have been a hundred different things, and in his swan-long life of a singer there would probably be a hundred yet, and all different. But we take the latest as if it summed him up in motive and range and tendency. Many parts of his work offer themselves in confirmation of our judgment, while those which might impeach it shrink away and hide themselves, and leave us to our precipitation, our catastrophe.

It was surely nothing less than by a catastrophe that I should have been so betrayed in the volumes of Mr. Cawein's verse which reached me last before the volume of his collected poems.... I had read his poetry and loved it from the beginning, and in each successive expression of it, I had delighted in its expanding and maturing beauty. I believe I had not failed to own its compass, and when—

"He touched the tender stops of various quills,"

I had responded to every note of the changing music. I did not always respond audibly either in public or in private, for it seemed to me that so old a friend might fairly rest on the laurels he had helped bestow. But when that last volume came, I said to myself, "This applausive silence has gone on

long enough. It is time to break it with open appreciation. Still," I said, "I must guard against too great appreciation; I must mix in a little depreciation, to show that I have read attentively, critically, authoritatively." So I applied myself to the cheapest and easiest means of depreciation, and asked, "Why do you always write Nature poems? Why not Human Nature poems?" or the like. But in seizing upon an objection so obvious that I ought to have known it was superficial, I had wronged a poet, who had never done me harm, but only good, in the very terms and conditions of his being a poet. I had not stayed to see that his nature poetry was instinct with human poetry, with *his* human poetry, with mine, with yours. I had made his reproach what ought to have been his finest praise, what is always the praise of poetry when it is not artificial and formal. I ought to have said, as I had seen, that not one of his lovely landscapes in which I could discover no human figure, but thrilled with a human presence penetrating to it from his most sensitive and subtle spirit until it was all but painfully alive with memories, with regrets, with longings, with hopes, with all that from time to time mutably constitutes us men and women, and yet keeps us children. He has the gift, in a measure that I do not think surpassed in any poet, of touching some smallest or commonest thing in nature, and making it live from the manifold associations in which we have our being, and glow thereafter with an inextinguishable beauty. His felicities do not seem sought; rather they seem to seek him, and to surprise him with the delight they impart through him. He has the inspiration of the right word, and the courage of it, so that though in the first instant you may be challenged, you may be revolted, by something that you might have thought uncouth, you are presently overcome by the happy bravery of it, and gladly recognize that no other word of those verbal saints or aristocrats, dedicated to the worship or service of beauty, would at all so well have conveyed the sense of it as this or that plebeian.

If I began indulging myself in the pleasure of quotation, or the delight of giving proofs of what I say, I should soon and far transcend the modest bounds which the editor has set my paper. But the reader may take it from me that no other poet, not even of the great Elizabethan range, can outword this poet when it comes to choosing some epithet fresh from the earth or air, and with the morning sun or light upon it, for an emotion or experience in which the race renews its youth from generation to generation. He is of the kind of Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth and Coleridge, in that truth to observance and experience of nature and the joyous expression of it, which are the dominant characteristics of his art. It is imaginable that the thinness of the social life in the Middle West threw the poet upon the communion with the fields and woods, the days and nights, the changing seasons, in which another great nature poet of ours declares they "speak in various language." But nothing could be farther from the didactic mood in which "communion with the various forms" of nature casts the Puritanic soul of Bryant, than the mood in which this German-blooded, Kentucky-born poet, who keeps throughout his song the sense of a perpetual and inalienable youth, with a spirit as pagan as that which breathes from Greek sculpture—but happily not more pagan. Most modern poets who are antique are rather over-Hellenic, in their wish not to be English or French, but there is nothing voluntary in Mr. Cawein's naturalization in the older world of myth and fable; he is too sincerely and solely a poet to be a *posseur*; he has his eyes everywhere except on the spectator, and his affair is to report the beauty that he sees, as if there were no one by to hear.

An interesting and charming trait of his poetry is its constant theme of youth and its limit within the range that the emotions and aspirations of youth take. He might indeed be called the poet of youth if he resented being called the poet of nature; but the poet of youth, be it understood, of vague regrets, of "tears, idle tears," of "long, long thoughts," for that is the real youth, and not the youth of the supposed hilarity, the attributive recklessness, the daring hopes. Perhaps there is some such youth as this, but it has not its home in the breast of any young poet, and he rarely utters it; at best he is of a light melancholy, a smiling wistfulness, and upon the whole, October is more to his mind than May.

In Mr. Cawein's work, therefore, what is not the expression of the world we vainly and rashly call the inanimate world, is the hardly more dramatized, and not more enchantingly imagined story of lovers, rather unhappy lovers. He finds his own in this sort far and near; in classic Greece, in heroic England, in romantic Germany, where the blue flower blows, but not less in beautiful and familiar Kentucky, where the blue grass shows itself equally the emblem of poetry, and the moldering log in the cabin wall or the woodland path is of the same poetic value as the marble of the ruined temple or the stone of the crumbling castle. His singularly creative fancy breathes a soul into every scene; his touch leaves everything that was dull to the sense before glowing in the light of joyful recognition. He classifies his poems by different names, and they are of different themes, but they are after all of that unity which I have been trying, all too shirkingly, to suggest. One, for instance, is the pathetic story which tells itself in the lyrical eclogue "One Day and Another." It is the conversation, prolonged from meeting to meeting, between two lovers whom death parts; but who recurrently find themselves and each other in the gardens and the woods, and on the waters which they tell each other of and together delight in. The effect is that which is truest to youth and love, for these transmutations of emotion form the disguise of self which makes passion tolerable; but mechanically the result is a series of nature poems. More genuinely dramatic are such pieces as "The Feud," "Ku Klux," and "The Lynchers," three out of many;

but one which I value more because it is worthy of Wordsworth, or of Tennyson in a Wordsworthian mood, is "The Old Mill," where, with all the wonted charm of his landscape art, Mr. Cawein gives us a strongly local and novel piece of character painting.

I deny myself with increasing reluctance the pleasure of quoting the stanzas, the verses, the phrases, the epithets, which lure me by scores and hundreds in his poems. It must suffice me to say that I do not know any poem of his which has not some such a felicity; I do not know any poem of his which is not worth reading, at least the first time, and often the second and the third time, and so on as often as you have the chance of recurring to it. Some disappoint and others delight more than others; but there is none but in greater or less measure has the witchery native to the poet, and his place and his period.

It is only in order of his later time that I would put Mr. Cawein first among those Midwestern poets, of whom he is the youngest. Poetry in the Middle West has had its development in which it was eclipsed by the splendor, transitory if not vain, of the California school. But it is deeply rooted in the life of the region, and is as true to its origins as any faithful portraiture of the Midwestern landscape could be; you could not mistake the source of the poem or the picture. In a certain tenderness of light and coloring, the poems would recall the mellowed masterpieces of the older literatures rather than those of the New England school, where conscience dwells almost rebukingly with beauty....

W. D. HOWELLS.

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POEMS

HYMN TO SPIRITUAL DESIRE

I

Mother of visions, with lineaments dulcet as numbers
Breathed on the eyelids of Love by music that slumbers,
Secretly, sweetly, O presence of fire and snow,
Thou comest mysterious,
In beauty imperious,
Clad on with dreams and the light of no world that we know:
Deep to my innermost soul am I shaken,
Helplessly shaken and tossed,
And of thy tyrannous yearnings so utterly taken,
My lips, unsatisfied, thirst;
Mine eyes are accurst
With longings for visions that far in the night are forsaken;
And mine ears, in listening lost,
Yearn, waiting the note of a chord that will never awaken.

II

Like palpable music thou comest, like moonlight; and far,—
Resonant bar upon bar,—
The vibrating lyre
Of the spirit responds with melodious fire,
As thy fluttering fingers now grasp it and ardently shake,
With laughter and ache,
The chords of existence, the instrument star-sprung,
Whose frame is of clay, so wonderfully molded of mire.

III

Vested with vanquishment, come, O Desire, Desire!
Breathe in this harp of my soul the audible angel of Love!
Make of my heart an Israfel burning above,
A lute for the music of God, that lips, which are mortal, but stammer!
Smite every rapturous wire
With golden delirium, rebellion and silvery clamor,
Crying—"Awake! awake!
Too long hast thou slumbered! too far from the regions of glamour
With its mountains of magic, its fountains of faery, the spar-sprung,
Hast thou wandered away, O Heart!"

Come, oh, come and partake
Of necromance banquets of Beauty; and slake
Thy thirst in the waters of Art,
That are drawn from the streams
Of love and of dreams.

IV

"Come, oh, come!
No longer shall language be dumb!
Thy vision shall grasp—
As one doth the glittering hasp
Of a sword made splendid with gems and with gold—
The wonder and richness of life, not anguish and hate of it merely.
And out of the stark
Eternity, awful and dark,
Immensity silent and cold,—
Universe-shaking as trumpets, or cymbaling metals,
Imperious; yet pensive and pearly
And soft as the rosy unfolding of petals,
Or crumbling aroma of blossoms that wither too early,—
The majestic music of God, where He plays
On the organ, eternal and vast, of eons and days."

BEAUTIFUL-BOSOMED, O NIGHT

I

Beautiful-bosomed, O Night, in thy noon
Move with majesty onward! soaring, as lightly
As a singer may soar the notes of an exquisite tune,
The stars and the moon
Through the clerestories high of the heaven, the firmament's halls:
Under whose sapphire walls,
June, hesperian June,
Robed in divinity wanders. Daily and nightly
The turquoise touch of her robe, that the violets star,
The silvery fall of her feet, that lilies are,
Fill the land with languorous light and perfume.—
Is it the melody mute of burgeoning leaf and of bloom?
The music of Nature, that silently shapes in the gloom
Immaterial hosts
Of spirits that have the flowers and leaves in their keep,
Whom I hear, whom I hear?
With their sighs of silver and pearl?
Invisible ghosts,—
Each sigh a shadowy girl,—

Who whisper in leaves and glimmer in blossoms and hover

In color and fragrance and loveliness, breathed from the deep
World-soul of the mother,
Nature; who over and over,—
Both sweetheart and lover,—
Goes singing her songs from one sweet month to the other.

II

Lo! 'tis her songs that appear, appear,
In forest and field, on hill-land and lea,
As visible harmony,
Materialized melody,
Crystallized beauty, that out of the atmosphere
Utters itself, in wonder and mystery,
Peopling with glimmering essence the hyaline far and the near....

III

Behold how it sprouts from the grass and blossoms from flower and tree!
In waves of diaphanous moonlight and mist,
In fugue upon fugue of gold and of amethyst,
Around me, above me it spirals; now slower, now faster,
Like symphonies born of the thought of a musical master.—
O music of Earth! O God, who the music inspired!
Let me breathe of the life of thy breath!
And so be fulfilled and attired
In resurrection, triumphant o'er time and o'er death!

DISCOVERY

What is it now that I shall seek
Where woods dip downward, in the hills?—
A mossy nook, a ferny creek,
And May among the daffodils.

Or in the valley's vistaed glow,
Past rocks of terraced trumpet vines,
Shall I behold her coming slow,
Sweet May, among the columbines?

With redbud cheeks and bluet eyes,
Big eyes, the homes of happiness,
To meet me with the old surprise,
Her wild-rose hair all bonnetless.

Who waits for me, where, note for note,
The birds make glad the forest trees?—
A dogwood blossom at her throat,
My May among th' anemones.

As sweetheart breezes kiss the blooms,
And dews caress the moon's pale beams,
My soul shall drink her lips' perfumes,
And know the magic of her dreams.

O MAYTIME WOODS!

From the idyll "Wild Thorn and Lily"

O Maytime woods! O Maytime lanes and hours!

And stars, that knew how often there at night
Beside the path, where woodbine odors blew
Between the drowsy eyelids of the dusk,—
When, like a great, white, pearly moth, the moon
Hung silvering long windows of your room,—
I stood among the shrubs! The dark house slept.
I watched and waited for—I know not what!—
Some tremor of your gown: a velvet leaf's
Unfolding to caresses of the Spring:
The rustle of your footsteps: or the dew
Syllabbling avowal on a tulip's lips
Of odorous scarlet: or the whispered word
Of something lovelier than new leaf or rose—
The word young lips half murmur in a dream:

Serene with sleep, light visions weigh her eyes:
And underneath her window blooms a quince.
The night is a sultana who doth rise
In slippered caution, to admit a prince,
Love, who her eunuchs and her lord defies.

Are these her dreams? or is it that the breeze
Pelts me with petals of the quince, and lifts
The Balm-o'-Gilead buds? and seems to squeeze
Aroma on aroma through sweet rifts
Of Eden, dripping through the rainy trees.

Along the path the buckeye trees begin
To heap their hills of blossoms.—Oh, that they
Were Romeo ladders, whereby I might win
Her chamber's sanctity!—where dreams must pray
About her soul!—That I might enter in!—

A dream,—and see the balsam scent erase
Its dim intrusion; and the starry night
Conclude majestic pomp; the virgin grace
Of every bud abashed before the white,
Pure passion-flower of her sleeping face.

THE REDBIRD

From "Wild Thorn and Lily"

Among the white haw-blossoms, where the creek
Droned under drifts of dogwood and of haw,
The redbird, like a crimson blossom blown
Against the snow-white bosom of the Spring,
The chaste confusion of her lawny breast,
Sang on, prophetic of serener days,
As confident as June's completer hours.
And I stood listening like a hind, who hears
A wood nymph breathing in a forest flute
Among the beech-boles of myth-haunted ways:
And when it ceased, the memory of the air
Blew like a syrinx in my brain: I made
A lyric of the notes that men might know:

He flies with flirt and fluting—
As flies a crimson star
From flaming star-beds shooting—
From where the roses are.

Wings past and sings; and seven
Notes, wild as fragrance is,—
That turn to flame in heaven,—

Float round him full of bliss.

He sings; each burning feather
Thrills, throbbing at his throat;
A song of firefly weather,
And of a glowworm boat:

Of Elfland and a princess
Who, born of a perfume,
His music rocks,—where wincens
That rosebud's cradled bloom.

No bird sings half so airy,
No bird of dusk or dawn,
Thou masking King of Faery!
Thou red-crowned Oberon!

A NIËLLO

I

It is not early spring and yet
Of bloodroot blooms along the stream,
And blotted banks of violet,
My heart will dream.

Is it because the windflower apes
The beauty that was once her brow,
That the white memory of it shapes
The April now?

Because the wild-rose wears the blush
That once made sweet her maidenhood,
Its thought makes June of barren bush
And empty wood?

And then I think how young she died—
Straight, barren Death stalks down the trees,
The hard-eyed Hours by his side,
That kill and freeze.

II

When orchards are in bloom again
My heart will bound, my blood will beat,
To hear the redbird so repeat,
On boughs of rosy stain,
His blithe, loud song,—like some far strain
From out the past,—among the bloom,—
(Where bee and wasp and hornet boom)—
Fresh, redolent of rain.

When orchards are in bloom once more,
Invasions of lost dreams will draw
My feet, like some insistent law,
Through blossoms to her door:
In dreams I'll ask her, as before,
To let me help her at the well;
And fill her pail; and long to tell
My love as once of yore.

I shall not speak until we quit
The farm-gate, leading to the lane
And orchard, all in bloom again,
Mid which the bluebirds sit

And sing; and through whose blossoms flit
The catbirds crying while they fly:
Then tenderly I'll speak, and try
To tell her all of it.

And in my dream again she'll place
Her hand in mine, as oft before,—
When orchards are in bloom once more,—
With all her young-girl grace:
And we shall tarry till a trace
Of sunset dyes the heav'ns; and then—
We'll part; and, parting, I again
Shall bend and kiss her face.

And homeward, singing, I shall go
Along the cricket-chirring ways,
While sunset, one long crimson blaze
Of orchards, lingers low:
And my dead youth again I'll know,
And all her love, when spring is here—
Whose memory holds me many a year,
Whose love still haunts me so!

III

I would not die when Springtime lifts
The white world to her maiden mouth,
And heaps its cradle with gay gifts,
Breeze-blown from out the singing South:
Too full of life and loves that cling;
Too heedless of all mortal woe,
The young, unsympathetic Spring,
That Death should never know.

I would not die when Summer shakes
Her daisied locks below her hips,
And naked as a star that takes
A cloud, into the silence slips:
Too rich is Summer; poor in needs;
In egotism of loveliness
Her pomp goes by, and never heeds
One life the more or less.

But I would die when Autumn goes,
The dark rain dripping from her hair,
Through forests where the wild wind blows
Death and the red wreck everywhere:
Sweet as love's last farewells and tears
To fall asleep when skies are gray,
In the old autumn of my years,
Like a dead leaf borne far away.

IN MAY

I

When you and I in the hills went Maying,
You and I in the bright May weather,
The birds, that sang on the boughs together,
There in the green of the woods, kept saying
All that my heart was saying low,
"I love you! love you!" soft and low,—
And did you know?
When you and I in the hills went Maying.

II

There where the brook on its rocks went winking,
There by its banks where the May had led us,
Flowers, that bloomed in the woods and meadows,
Azure and gold at our feet, kept thinking
All that my soul was thinking there,
"I love you! love you!" softly there—
And did you care?
There where the brook on its rocks went winking.

III

Whatever befalls through fate's compelling,
Should our paths unite or our pathways sever,
In the Mays to come I shall feel forever
The wildflowers thinking, the wild birds telling,
In words as soft as the falling dew,
The love that I keep here still for you,
Both deep and true,
Whatever befalls through fate's compelling.

AUBADE

Awake! the dawn is on the hills!
Behold, at her cool throat a rose,
Blue-eyed and beautiful she goes,
Leaving her steps in daffodils.—
Awake! arise! and let me see
Thine eyes, whose deeps epitomize
All dawns that were or are to be,
O love, all Heaven in thine eyes!—
Awake! arise! come down to me!

Behold! the dawn is up: behold!
How all the birds around her float,
Wild rills of music, note on note,
Spilling the air with mellow gold.—
Arise! awake! and, drawing near,
Let me but hear thee and rejoice!
Thou, who keep'st captive, sweet and clear,
All song, O love, within thy voice!
Arise! awake! and let me hear!

See, where she comes, with limbs of day,
The dawn! with wild-rose hands and feet,
Within whose veins the sunbeams beat,
And laughters meet of wind and ray.
Arise! come down! and, heart to heart,
Love, let me clasp in thee all these—
The sunbeam, of which thou art part,
And all the rapture of the breeze!—
Arise! come down! loved that thou art!

APOCALYPSE

Before I found her I had found
Within my heart, as in a brook,
Reflections of her: now a sound
Of imaged beauty; now a look.

So when I found her, gazing in
Those Bibles of her eyes, above

All earth, I read no word of sin;
Their holy chapters all were love.

I read them through. I read and saw
The soul impatient of the sod—
Her soul, that through her eyes did draw
Mine—to the higher love of God.

PENETRALIA

I am a part of all you see
In Nature; part of all you feel:
I am the impact of the bee
Upon the blossom; in the tree
I am the sap,—that shall reveal
The leaf, the bloom,—that flows and flutes
Up from the darkness through its roots.

I am the vermeil of the rose,
The perfume breathing in its veins;
The gold within the mist that glows
Along the west and overflows
With light the heaven; the dew that rains
Its freshness down and strings with spheres
Of wet the webs and oaten ears.

I am the egg that folds the bird;
The song that beaks and breaks its shell;
The laughter and the wandering word
The water says; and, dimly heard,
The music of the blossom's bell
When soft winds swing it; and the sound
Of grass slow-creeping o'er the ground.

I am the warmth, the honey-scent
That throats with spice each lily-bud
That opens, white with wonderment,
Beneath the moon; or, downward bent,
Sleeps with a moth beneath its hood:
I am the dream that haunts it too,
That crystallizes into dew.

I am the seed within the pod;
The worm within its closed cocoon:
The wings within the circling clod,
The germ, that gropes through soil and sod
To beauty, radiant in the noon:
I am all these, behold! and more—
I am the love at the world-heart's core.

ELUSION

I

My soul goes out to her who says,
"Come, follow me and cast off care!"
Then tosses back her sun-bright hair,
And like a flower before me sways
Between the green leaves and my gaze:
This creature like a girl, who smiles
Into my eyes and softly lays
Her hand in mine and leads me miles,
Long miles of haunted forest ways.

II

Sometimes she seems a faint perfume,
A fragrance that a flower exhaled
And God gave form to; now, unveiled,
A sunbeam making gold the gloom
Of vines that roof some woodland room
Of boughs; and now the silvery sound
Of streams her presence doth assume—
Music, from which, in dreaming drowned,
A crystal shape she seems to bloom.

III

Sometimes she seems the light that lies
On foam of waters where the fern
Shimmers and drips; now, at some turn
Of woodland, bright against the skies,
She seems the rainbowed mist that flies;
And now the mossy fire that breaks
Beneath the feet in azure eyes
Of flowers; now the wind that shakes
Pale petals from the bough that sighs.

IV

Sometimes she lures me with a song;
Sometimes she guides me with a laugh;
Her white hand is a magic staff,
Her look a spell to lead me long:
Though she be weak and I be strong,
She needs but shake her happy hair,
But glance her eyes, and, right or wrong,
My soul must follow—anywhere
She wills—far from the world's loud throng.

V

Sometimes I think that she must be
No part of earth, but merely this—
The fair, elusive thing we miss
In Nature, that we dream we see
Yet never see: that goldenly
Beckons; that, limbed with rose and pearl,
The Greek made a divinity:—
A nymph, a god, a glimmering girl,
That haunts the forest's mystery.

WOMANHOOD

I

The summer takes its hue
From something opulent as fair in her,
And the bright heaven is brighter than it was;
Brighter and lovelier,
Arching its beautiful blue,
Serene and soft, as her sweet gaze, o'er us.

II

The springtime takes its moods
From something in her made of smiles and tears,
And flowery earth is flowerier than before,

And happier, it appears,
Adding new multitudes
To flowers, like thoughts, that haunt us evermore.

III

Summer and spring are wed
In her—her nature; and the glamour of
Their loveliness, their bounty, as it were,
Of life and joy and love,
Her being seems to shed,—
The magic aura of the heart of her.

THE IDYLL OF THE STANDING STONE

The teasel and the horsemint spread
The hillside as with sunset, sown
With blossoms, o'er the Standing-Stone
That ripples in its rocky bed:
There are no treasures that hold
Gold richer than the marigold
That crowns its sparkling head.

'Tis harvest time: a mower stands
Among the morning wheat and whets
His scythe, and for a space forgets
The labor of the ripening lands;
Then bends, and through the dewy grain
His long scythe hisses, and again
He swings it in his hands.

And she beholds him where he mows
On acres whence the water sends
Faint music of reflecting bends
And falls that interblend with flows:
She stands among the old bee-gums,—
Where all the apiary hums,—
A simple bramble-rose.

She hears him whistling as he leans,
And, reaping, sweeps the ripe wheat by;
She sighs and smiles, and knows not why,
Nor what her heart's disturbance means:
He whets his scythe, and, resting, sees
Her rose-like 'mid the hives of bees,
Beneath the flowering beans.

The peacock-purple lizard creeps
Along the rail; and deep the drone
Of insects makes the country lone
With summer where the water sleeps:
She hears him singing as he swings
His scythe—who thinks of other things
Than toil, and, singing, reaps.

NOËRA

Noëra, when sad Fall
Has grayed the fallow;
Leaf-cramped the wood-brook's brawl
In pool and shallow;
When, by the woodside, tall
Stands sere the mallow.

Noëra, when gray gold
And golden gray
The crackling hollows fold
By every way,
Shall I thy face behold,
Dear bit of May?

When webs are cribs for dew,
And gossamers
Streak by you, silver-blue;
When silence stirs
One leaf, of rusty hue,
Among the burrs:

Noëra, through the wood,
Or through the grain,
Come, with the hoiden mood
Of wind and rain
Fresh in thy sunny blood,
Sweetheart, again.

Noëra, when the corn,
Reaped on the fields,
The asters' stars adorn;
And purple shields
Of ironweeds lie torn
Among the wealds:

Noëra, haply then,
Thou being with me,
Each ruined greenwood glen
Will bud and be
Spring's with the spring again,
The spring in thee.

Thou of the breezy tread;
Feet of the breeze:
Thou of the sunbeam head;
Heart like a bee's:
Face like a woodland-bred
Anemone's.

Thou to October bring
An April part!
Come! make the wild birds sing,
The blossoms start!
Noëra, with the spring
Wild in thy heart!

Come with our golden year:
Come as its gold:
With the same laughing, clear,
Loved voice of old:
In thy cool hair one dear
Wild marigold.

THE OLD SPRING

I

Under rocks whereon the rose
Like a streak of morning glows;
Where the azure-throated newt
Drowzes on the twisted root;
And the brown bees, humming homeward,

Stop to suck the honeydew;
Fern- and leaf-hid, gleaming gloamward,
Drips the wildwood spring I knew,
Drips the spring my boyhood knew.

II

Myrrh and music everywhere
Haunt its cascades—like the hair
That a Naiad tosses cool,
Swimming strangely beautiful,
With white fragrance for her bosom,
And her mouth a breath of song—
Under leaf and branch and blossom
Flows the woodland spring along,
Sparkling, singing flows along.

III

Still the wet wan mornings touch
Its gray rocks, perhaps; and such
Slender stars as dusk may have
Pierce the rose that roofs its wave;
Still the thrush may call at noontide
And the whippoorwill at night;
Nevermore, by sun or moontide,
Shall I see it gliding white,
Falling, flowing, wild and white.

A DREAMER OF DREAMS

He lived beyond men, and so stood
Admitted to the brotherhood
Of beauty:—dreams, with which he trod
Companioned like some sylvan god.
And oft men wondered, when his thought
Made all their knowledge seem as naught,
If he, like Uther's mystic son,
Had not been born for Avalon.

When wandering mid the whispering trees,
His soul communed with every breeze;
Heard voices calling from the glades,
Bloom-words of the Leimoniäds;
Or Dryads of the ash and oak,
Who syllabled his name and spoke
With him of presences and powers
That glimpsed in sunbeams, gloomed in showers.

By every violet-hallowed brook,
Where every bramble-matted nook
Rippled and laughed with water sounds,
He walked like one on sainted grounds,
Fearing intrusion on the spell
That kept some fountain-spirit's well,
Or woodland genius, sitting where
Red, racy berries kissed his hair.

Once when the wind, far o'er the hill,
Had fall'n and left the wildwood still
For Dawn's dim feet to trail across,—
Beneath the gnarled boughs, on the moss,
The air around him golden-ripe
With daybreak,—there, with oaten pipe,

His eyes beheld the wood-god, Pan,
Goat-bearded, horned; half brute, half man;
Who, shaggy-haunched, a savage rhyme
Blew in his reed to rudest time;
And swollen-jowled, with rolling eye—
Beneath the slowly silvering sky,
Whose rose streaked through the forest's roof—
Danced, while beneath his boisterous hoof
The branch was snapped, and, interfused
Between gnarled roots, the moss was bruised.

And often when he wandered through
Old forests at the fall of dew—
A new Endymion, who sought
A beauty higher than all thought—
Some night, men said, most surely he
Would favored be of deity:
That in the holy solitude
Her sudden presence, long-pursued,
Unto his gaze would stand confessed:
The awful moonlight of her breast
Come, high with majesty, and hold
His heart's blood till his heart grew cold,
Unpulsed, unsinewed, all undone,
And snatch his soul to Avalon.

DEEP IN THE FOREST

I. SPRING ON THE HILLS

Ah, shall I follow, on the hills,
The Spring, as wild wings follow?
Where wild-plum trees make wan the hills,
Crabapple trees the hollow,
Haunts of the bee and swallow?

In redbud brakes and flowery
Acclivities of berry;
In dogwood dingles, showery
With white, where wrens make merry?
Or drifts of swarming cherry?

In valleys of wild strawberries,
And of the clumped May-apple;
Or cloudlike trees of haw-berries,
With which the south winds grapple,
That brook and byway dapple?

With eyes of far forgetfulness,—
Like some wild wood-thing's daughter,
Whose feet are beelike fretfulness,—
To see her run like water
Through boughs that slipped or caught her.

O Spring, to seek, yet find you not!
To search, yet never win you!
To glimpse, to touch, but bind you not!
To lose, and still continue,
All sweet evasion in you!

In pearly, peach-blush distances
You gleam; the woods are braided
Of myths; of dream-existences....

There, where the brook is shaded,
A sudden splendor faded.

O presence, like the primrose's,
Again I feel your power!
With rainy scents of dim roses,
Like some elusive flower,
Who led me for an hour!

II. MOSS AND FERN

Where rise the brakes of bramble there,
Wrapped with the trailing rose;
Through cane where waters ramble, there
Where deep the sword-grass grows,
Who knows?
Perhaps, unseen of eyes of man,
Hides Pan.

Perhaps the creek, whose pebbles make
A foothold for the mint,
May bear,—where soft its trebles make
Confession,—some vague hint,
(The print,
Goat-hoofed, of one who lightly ran,)
Of Pan.

Where, in the hollow of the hills
Ferns deepen to the knees,
What sounds are those above the hills,
And now among the trees?—
No breeze!—
The syrinx, haply, none may scan,
Of Pan.

In woods where waters break upon
The hush like some soft word;
Where sun-shot shadows shake upon
The moss, who has not heard—
No bird!—
The flute, as breezy as a fan,
Of Pan?

Far in, where mosses lay for us
Still carpets, cool and plush;
Where bloom and branch and ray for us
Sleep, waking with a rush—
The hush
But sounds the satyr hoof a span
Of Pan.

O woods,—whose thrushes sing to us,
Whose brooks dance sparkling heels;
Whose wild aromas cling to us,—
While here our wonder kneels,
Who steals
Upon us, brown as bark with tan,
But Pan?

III. THE THORN TREE

The night is sad with silver and the day is glad with gold,
And the woodland silence listens to a legend never old,

Of the Lady of the Fountain, whom the faery people know,
With her limbs of samite whiteness and her hair of golden glow,
Whom the boyish South Wind seeks for and the girlish-stepping Rain;
Whom the sleepy leaves still whisper men shall never see again:
She whose Vivien charms were mistress of the magic Merlin knew,
That could change the dew to glowworms and the glowworms into dew.
There's a thorn tree in the forest, and the faeries know the tree,
With its branches gnarled and wrinkled as a face with sorcery;
But the Maytime brings it clusters of a rainy fragrant white,
Like the bloom-bright brows of beauty or a hand of lifted light.
And all day the silence whispers to the sun-ray of the morn
How the bloom is lovely Vivien and how Merlin is the thorn:
How she won the doting wizard with her naked loveliness
Till he told her dæmon secrets that must make his magic less.

How she charmed him and enchanted in the thorn-tree's thorns to lie
Forever with his passion that should never dim or die:
And with wicked laughter looking on this thing which she had done,
Like a visible aroma lingered sparkling in the sun:
How she stooped to kiss the pathos of an elf-lock of his beard,
In a mockery of parting and mock pity of his weird:
But her magic had forgotten that "who bends to give a kiss
Will but bring the curse upon them of the person whose it is":
So the silence tells the secret.—And at night the faeries see
How the tossing bloom is Vivien, who is struggling to be free,
In the thorny arms of Merlin, who forever is the tree.

IV. THE HAMADRYAD

She stood among the longest ferns
The valley held; and in her hand
One blossom, like the light that burns
Vermilion o'er a sunset land;
And round her hair a twisted band
Of pink-pierced mountain-laurel blooms:
And darker than dark pools, that stand

Below the star-communing glooms,
Her eyes beneath her hair's perfumes.

I saw the moonbeam sandals on
Her flowerlike feet, that seemed too chaste
To tread true gold: and, like the dawn
On splendid peaks that lord a waste
Of solitude lost gods have graced,
Her face: she stood there, faultless-hipped,
Bound as with cestused silver,—chased
With acorn-cup and crown, and tipped
With oak leaves,—whence her chiton slipped.

Limbs that the gods call loveliness!—
The grace and glory of all Greece
Wrought in one marble shape were less
Than her perfection!—'Mid the trees
I saw her—and time seemed to cease
For me.—And, lo! I lived my old
Greek life again of classic ease,
Barbarian as the myths that rolled
Me back into the Age of Gold.

PRELUDES

There is no rhyme that is half so sweet
As the song of the wind in the rippling wheat;
There is no metre that's half so fine
As the lilt of the brook under rock and vine;
And the loveliest lyric I ever heard
Was the wildwood strain of a forest bird.—
If the wind and the brook and the bird would teach
My heart their beautiful parts of speech,
And the natural art that they say these with,
My soul would sing of beauty and myth
In a rhyme and metre that none before
Have sung in their love, or dreamed in their lore,
And the world would be richer one poet the more.

II

A thought to lift me up to those
Sweet wildflowers of the pensive woods;
The lofty, lowly attitudes
Of bluet and of bramble-rose:
To lift me where my mind may reach
The lessons which their beauties teach.

A dream, to lead my spirit on
With sounds of faery shawms and flutes,
And all mysterious attributes
Of skies of dusk and skies of dawn:
To lead me, like the wandering brooks,
Past all the knowledge of the books.

A song, to make my heart a guest
Of happiness whose soul is love;
One with the life that knoweth of
But song that turneth toil to rest:
To make me cousin to the birds,
Whose music needs not wisdom's words.

MAY

The golden discs of the rattlesnake-weed,
That spangle the woods and dance—
No gleam of gold that the twilights hold
Is strong as their necromance:
For, under the oaks where the woodpaths lead,
The golden discs of the rattlesnake-weed
Are the May's own utterance.

The azure stars of the bluet bloom,
That sprinkle the woodland's trance—
No blink of blue that a cloud lets through
Is sweet as their countenance:
For, over the knolls that the woods perfume,
The azure stars of the bluet bloom
Are the light of the May's own glance.

With her wondering words and her looks she comes,
In a sunbeam of a gown;
She needs but think and the blossoms wink,
But look, and they shower down.
By orchard ways, where the wild bee hums,
With her wondering words and her looks she comes
Like a little maid to town.

WHAT LITTLE THINGS!

From "One Day and Another"

What little things are those
That hold our happiness!
A smile, a glance, a rose
Dropped from her hair or dress;
A word, a look, a touch,—
These are so much, so much.

An air we can't forget;
A sunset's gold that gleams;
A spray of mignonette,
Will fill the soul with dreams
More than all history says,
Or romance of old days.

For of the human heart,
Not brain, is memory;
These things it makes a part
Of its own entity;
The joys, the pains whereof
Are the very food of love.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BEECHES

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the fragile wildflowers bloom;
Where the pensive silence pleaches
Green a roof of cool perfume,
Have you felt an awe imperious
As when, in a church, mysterious
Windows paint with God the gloom?

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the rock-ledged waters flow;
Where the sun's slant splendor bleaches
Every wave to foaming snow,
Have you felt a music solemn
As when minster arch and column
Echo organ worship low?

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the light and shade are blent;
Where the forest bird beseeches,
And the breeze is brimmed with scent,—
Is it joy or melancholy
That o'erwhelms us partly, wholly,
To our spirit's betterment?

In the shadow of the beeches
Lay me where no eye perceives;
Where,—like some great arm that reaches
Gently as a love that grieves,—
One gnarled root may clasp me kindly,
While the long years, working blindly,
Slowly change my dust to leaves.

UNREQUITED

Passion? not hers! who held me with pure eyes:
One hand among the deep curls of her brow,

I drank the girlhood of her gaze with sighs:
She never sighed, nor gave me kiss or vow.

So have I seen a clear October pool,
Cold, liquid topaz, set within the sere
Gold of the woodland, tremorless and cool,
Reflecting all the heartbreak of the year.

Sweetheart? not she! whose voice was music-sweet;
Whose face loaned language to melodious prayer.
Sweetheart I called her.—When did she repeat
Sweet to one hope, or heart to one despair!

So have I seen a wildflower's fragrant head
Sung to and sung to by a longing bird;
And at the last, albeit the bird lay dead,
No blossom wilted, for it had not heard.

THE SOLITARY

Upon the mossed rock by the spring
She sits, forgetful of her pail,
Lost in remote remembering
Of that which may no more avail.

Her thin, pale hair is dimly dressed
Above a brow lined deep with care,
The color of a leaf long pressed,
A faded leaf that once was fair.

You may not know her from the stone
So still she sits who does not stir,
Thinking of this one thing alone—
The love that never came to her.

A TWILIGHT MOTH

Dusk is thy dawn; when Eve puts on its state
Of gold and purple in the marbled west,
Thou comest forth like some embodied trait,
Or dim conceit, a lily bud confessed;
Or of a rose the visible wish; that, white,
Goes softly messengering through the night,
Whom each expectant flower makes its guest.

All day the primroses have thought of thee,
Their golden heads close-haremed from the heat;
All day the mystic moonflowers silkenly
Veiled snowy faces,—that no bee might greet,
Or butterfly that, weighed with pollen, passed;—
Keeping Sultana charms for thee, at last,
Their lord, who comest to salute each sweet.

Cool-throated flowers that avoid the day's
Too fervid kisses; every bud that drinks
The tipsy dew and to the starlight plays
Nocturnes of fragrance, thy wing'd shadow links
In bonds of secret brotherhood and faith;
O bearer of their order's shibboleth,
Like some pale symbol fluttering o'er these pinks.

What dost them whisper in the balsam's ear
That sets it blushing, or the hollyhock's,—
A syllabled silence that no man may hear,—

As dreamily upon its stem it rocks?
What spell dost bear from listening plant to plant,
Like some white witch, some ghostly ministrant,
Some specter of some perished flower of phlox?

O voyager of that universe which lies
Between the four walls of this garden fair,—
Whose constellations are the fireflies
That wheel their instant courses everywhere,—
Mid faery firmaments wherein one sees
Mimic Boötes and the Pleiades,
Thou steerest like some faery ship of air.

Gnome-wrought of moonbeam-fluff and gossamer,
Silent as scent, perhaps thou chariotest
Mab or King Oberon; or, haply, her
His queen, Titania, on some midnight quest.—
Oh for the herb, the magic euphrasy,
That should unmask thee to mine eyes, ah me!
And all that world at which my soul hath guessed!

THE OLD FARM

Dormered and verandaed, cool,
Locust-girdled, on the hill;
Stained with weather-wear, and dull-
Streak'd with lichens; every sill
Thresholding the beautiful;

I can see it standing there,
Brown above the woodland deep,
Wrapped in lights of lavender,
By the warm wind rocked asleep,
Violet shadows everywhere.

I remember how the Spring,
Liberal-lapped, bewildered its
Acres orchards, murmuring,
Kissed to blossom; budded bits
Where the wood-thrush came to sing.

Barefoot Spring, at first who trod,
Like a beggermaid, adown
The wet woodland; where the god,
With the bright sun for a crown
And the firmament for rod,

Met her; clothed her; wedded her;
Her Cophetua: when, lo!
All the hill, one breathing blur,
Burst in beauty; gleam and glow
Blent with pearl and lavender.

Seckel, blackheart, palpitant
Rained their bleaching strays; and white
Snowed the damson, bent aslant;
Rambow-tree and romanite
Seemed beneath deep drifts to pant.

And it stood there, brown and gray,
In the bee-boom and the bloom,
In the shadow and the ray,
In the passion and perfume,
Grave as age among the gay.

Wild with laughter romped the clear
Boyish voices round its walls;
Rare wild-roses were the dear
Girlish faces in its halls,
Music-haunted all the year.

Far before it meadows full
Of green pennyroyal sank;
Clover-dotted as with wool
Here and there; with now a bank
Hot of color; and the cool

Dark-blue shadows unconfined
Of the clouds rolled overhead:
Clouds, from which the summer wind
Blew with rain, and freshly shed
Dew upon the flowerkind.

Where through mint and gypsy-lily
Runs the rocky brook away,
Musical among the hilly
Solitudes,—its flashing spray
Sunlight-dashed or forest-stilly,—

Buried in deep sassafras,
Memory follows up the hill
Still some cowbell's mellow brass,
Where the ruined water-mill
Looms, half-hid in cane and grass....

Oh, the farmhouse! is it set
On the hilltop still? 'mid musk
Of the meads? where, violet,
Deepens all the dreaming dusk,
And the locust-trees hang wet.

While the sunset, far and low,
On its westward windows dashes
Primrose or pomegranate glow;
And above, in glimmering splashes,
Lilac stars the heavens sow.

Sleeps it still among its roses,—
Oldtime roses? while the choir
Of the lonesome insects dozes:
And the white moon, drifting higher,
O'er its mossy roof reposes—
Sleeps it still among its roses?

THE WHIPPOORWILL

I

Above lone woodland ways that led
To dells the stealthy twilights tread
The west was hot geranium red;
And still, and still,
Along old lanes the locusts sow
With clustered pearls the Maytimes know,
Deep in the crimson afterglow,
We heard the homeward cattle low,
And then the far-off, far-off woe
Of "whippoorwill!" of "whippoorwill!"

II

Beneath the idle beechen boughs
We heard the far bells of the cows
Come slowly jangling towards the house;
And still, and still,
Beyond the light that would not die
Out of the scarlet-haunted sky;
Beyond the evening-star's white eye
Of glittering chalcedony,
Drained out of dusk the plaintive cry
Of "whippoorwill," of "whippoorwill."

III

And in the city oft, when swims
The pale moon o'er the smoke that dims
Its disc, I dream of wildwood limbs;
And still, and still,
I seem to hear, where shadows grope
Mid ferns and flowers that dewdrops rope,—
Lost in faint deeps of heliotrope
Above the clover-sweetened slope,—
Retreat, despairing, past all hope,
The whippoorwill, the whippoorwill.

REVEALMENT

A sense of sadness in the golden air;
A pensiveness, that has no part in care,
As if the Season, by some woodland pool,
Braiding the early blossoms in her hair,
Seeing her loveliness reflected there,
Had sighed to find herself so beautiful.

A breathlessness; a feeling as of fear;
Holy and dim, as of a mystery near,
As if the World, about us, whispering went
With lifted finger and hand-hollowed ear,
Harkening a music, that we cannot hear,
Haunting the quickening earth and firmament.

A prescience of the soul that has no name;
Expectancy that is both wild and tame,
As if the Earth, from out its azure ring
Of heavens, looked to see, as white as flame,—
As Perseus once to chained Andromeda came,—
The swift, divine revealment of the Spring.

HEPATICAS

In the frail hepaticas,—
That the early Springtide tossed,
Sapphire-like, along the ways
Of the woodlands that she crossed,—
I behold, with other eyes,
Footprints of a dream that flies.

One who leads me; whom I seek:
In whose loveliness there is
All the glamour that the Greek
Knew as wind-borne Artemis.—
I am mortal. Woe is me!
Her sweet immortality!

Spirit, must I always fare,
Following thy averted looks?
Now thy white arm, now thy hair,
Glimpsed among the trees and brooks?
Thou who hauntest, whispering,
All the slopes and vales of Spring.

Cease to lure! or grant to me
All thy beauty! though it pain,
Slay with splendor utterly!
Flash revelation on my brain!
And one moment let me see
All thy immortality!

THE WIND OF SPRING

The wind that breathes of columbines
And celandines that crowd the rocks;
That shakes the balsam of the pines
With laughter from his airy locks,
Stops at my city door and knocks.

He calls me far a-forest, where
The twin-leaf and the blood-root bloom;
And, circled by the amber air,
Life sits with beauty and perfume
Weaving the new web of her loom.

He calls me where the waters run
Through fronding ferns where wades the hern;
And, sparkling in the equal sun,
Song leans above her brimming urn,
And dreams the dreams that love shall learn.

The wind has summoned, and I go:
To read God's meaning in each line
The wildflowers write; and, walking slow,
God's purpose, of which song is sign,—
The wind's great, gusty hand in mine.

THE CATBIRD

I

The tufted gold of the sassafras,
And the gold of the spicewood-bush,
Bewilder the ways of the forest pass,
And brighten the underbrush:
The white-starred drifts of the wild-plum tree,
And the haw with its pearly plumes,
And the redbud, misted rosily,
Dazzle the woodland glooms.

II

And I hear the song of the catbird wake
I' the boughs o' the gnarled wild-crab,
Or there where the snows of the dogwood shake,
That the silvery sunbeams stab:
And it seems to me that a magic lies
In the crystal sweet of its notes,
That a myriad blossoms open their eyes
As its strain above them floats.

III

I see the bluebell's blue unclose,
And the trillium's stainless white;
The birdfoot-violet's purple and rose,
And the poppy, golden-bright!
And I see the eyes of the bluet wink,
And the heads of the white-hearts nod;
And the baby mouths of the woodland-pink
And sorrel salute the sod.

IV

And this, meseems, does the catbird say,
As the blossoms crowd i' the sun:—
"Up, up! and out! oh, out and away!
Up, up! and out, each one!
Sweethearts! sweethearts! oh, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Come listen and hark to me!
The Spring, the Spring, with her fragrant feet,
Is passing this way!—Oh, hark to the beat
Of her beelike heart!—Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Come! open your eyes and see!
See, see, see!"

A WOODLAND GRAVE

White moons may come, white moons may go—
She sleeps where early blossoms blow;
Knows nothing of the leafy June,
That leans above her night and noon,
Crowned now with sunbeam, now with moon,
Watching her roses grow.

The downy moth at twilight comes
And flutters round their honeyed blooms:
Long, lazy clouds, like ivory,
That isle the blue lagoons of sky,
Redden to molten gold and dye
With flame the pine-deep glooms.

Dew, dripping from wet fern and leaf;
The wind, that shakes the violet's sheaf;
The slender sound of water lone,
That makes a harp-string of some stone,
And now a wood bird's glimmering moan,
Seem whisperings there of grief.

Her garden, where the lilacs grew,
Where, on old walls, old roses blew,
Head-heavy with their mellow musk,
Where, when the beetle's drone was husk,
She lingered in the dying dusk,
No more shall know that knew.

Her orchard,—where the Spring and she
Stood listening to each bird and bee,—
That, from its fragrant firmament,
Snowed blossoms on her as she went,
(A blossom with their blossoms blent)
No more her face shall see.

White moons may come, white moons may go—
She sleeps where early blossoms blow:
Around her headstone many a seed

Shall sow itself; and brier and weed
Shall grow to hide it from men's heed,
And none will care or know.

SUNSET DREAMS

The moth and beetle wing about
The garden ways of other days;
Above the hills, a fiery shout
Of gold, the day dies slowly out,
Like some wild blast a huntsman blows:
And o'er the hills my Fancy goes,
Following the sunset's golden call
Unto a vine-hung garden wall,
Where she awaits me in the gloom,
Between the lily and the rose,
With arms and lips of warm perfume,
The dream of Love my Fancy knows.

The glowworm and the firefly glow
Among the ways of bygone days;
A golden shaft shot from a bow
Of silver, star and moon swing low
Above the hills where twilight lies:
And o'er the hills my Longing flies,
Following the star's far-arrowed gold,
Unto a gate where, as of old,
She waits amid the rose and rue,
With star-bright hair and night-dark eyes,
The dream, to whom my heart is true,
My dream of Love that never dies.

THE OLD BYWAY

Its rotting fence one scarcely sees
Through sumac and wild blackberries,
Thick elder and the bramble-rose,
Big ox-eyed daisies where the bees
Hang droning in repose.

The little lizards lie all day
Gray on its rocks of lichen-gray;
And, insect-Ariels of the sun,
The butterflies make bright its way,
Its path where chipmunks run.

A lyric there the redbird lifts,
While, twittering, the swallow drifts
'Neath wandering clouds of sleepy cream,—
In which the wind makes azure rifts,—
O'er dells where wood-doves dream.

The brown grasshoppers rasp and bound
Mid weeds and briars that hedge it round;
And in its grass-grown ruts,—where stirs
The harmless snake,—mole-cricket sound
Their faery dulcimers.

At evening, when the sad west turns
To lonely night a cheek that burns,
The tree-toads in the wild-plum sing;
And ghosts of long-dead flowers and ferns
The winds wake, whispering.

"BELOW THE SUNSET'S RANGE OF ROSE"

Below the sunset's range of rose,
Below the heaven's deepening blue,
Down woodways where the balsam blows,
And milkweed tufts hang, gray with dew,
A Jersey heifer stops and lows—
The cows come home by one, by two.

There is no star yet: but the smell
Of hay and pennyroyal mix
With herb aromas of the dell,
Where the root-hidden cricket clicks:
Among the ironweeds a bell
Clangs near the rail-fenced clover-ricks.

She waits upon the slope beside
The windlass'd well the plum trees shade,
The well curb that the goose-plums hide;
Her light hand on the bucket laid,
Unbonneted she waits, glad-eyed,
Her gown as simple as her braid.

She sees fawn-colored backs among
The sumacs now; a tossing horn
Its clashing bell of copper rung:
Long shadows lean upon the corn,
And slow the day dies, scarlet stung,
The cloud in it a rosy thorn.

Below the pleasant moon, that tips
The tree tops of the hillside, fly
The flitting bats; the twilight slips,
In firefly spangles, twinkling by,
Through which *he* comes: Their happy lips
Meet—and one star leaps in the sky.

He takes her bucket, and they speak
Of married hopes while in the grass
The plum drops glowing as her cheek;
The patient cows look back or pass:
And in the west one golden streak
Burns as if God gazed through a glass.

MUSIC OF SUMMER

I

Thou sit'st among the sunny silences
Of terraced hills and woodland galleries,
Thou utterance of all calm melodies,
Thou lutanist of Earth's most affluent lute,—
Where no false note intrudes
To mar the silent music,—branch and root,—
Charming the fields ripe, orchards and deep woods,
To song similitudes
Of flower and seed and fruit.

II

Oft have I seen thee, in some sensuous air,
Bewitch the broad wheat-acres everywhere
To imitated gold of thy deep hair:
The peach, by thy red lips' delicious trouble,
Blown into gradual dyes

Of crimson; and beheld thy magic double—
Dark-blue with fervid influence of thine eyes—
The grapes' rotundities,
Bubble by purple bubble.

III

Deliberate uttered into life intense,
Out of thy soul's melodious eloquence
Beauty evolves its just preëminence:
The lily, from some pensive-smitten chord
Drawing significance
Of purity, a visible hush stands: starred
With splendor, from thy passionate utterance,
The rose writes its romance
In blushing word on word.

IV

As star by star Day harps in Evening,
The inspiration of all things that sing
Is in thy hands and from their touch takes wing:
All brooks, all birds,—whom song can never sate,—
The leaves, the wind and rain,
Green frogs and insects, singing soon and late,
Thy sympathies inspire, thy heart's refrain,
Whose sounds invigorate
With rest life's weary brain.

V

And as the Night, like some mysterious rune,
Its beauty makes emphatic with the moon,
Thou luteest us no immaterial tune:
But where dim whispers haunt the cane and corn,
By thy still strain made strong,
Earth's awful avatar,—in whom is born
Thy own deep music,—labors all night long
With growth, assuring Morn
Assumes with onward song.

MIDSUMMER

I

The mellow smell of hollyhocks
And marigolds and pinks and phlox
Blends with the homely garden scents
Of onions, silvering into rods;
Of peppers, scarlet with their pods;
And (rose of all the esculents)
Of broad plebeian cabbages,
Breathing content and corpulent ease.

II

The buzz of wasp and fly makes hot
The spaces of the garden-plot;
And from the orchard,—where the fruit
Ripens and rounds, or, loosed with heat,
Rolls, hornet-clung, before the feet,—
One hears the veery's golden flute,
That mixes with the sleepy hum
Of bees that drowsily go and come.

III

The podded musk of gourd and vine
Embower a gate of roughest pine,
That leads into a wood where day
Sits, leaning o'er a forest pool,
Watching the lilies opening cool,
And dragonflies at airy play,
While, dim and near, the quietness
Rustles and stirs her leafy dress.

IV

Far-off a cowbell clangs awake
The noon who slumbers in the brake:
And now a pewee, plaintively,
Whistles the day to sleep again:
A rain-crow croaks a rune for rain,
And from the ripest apple tree
A great gold apple thuds, where, slow,
The red cock curves his neck to crow.

V

Hens cluck their broods from place to place,
While clinking home, with chain and trace,
The cart-horse plods along the road
Where afternoon sits with his dreams:
Hot fragrance of hay-making streams
Above him, and a high-heaped load
Goes creaking by and with it, sweet,
The aromatic soul of heat.

VI

"Coo-ee! coo-ee!" the evenfall
Cries, and the hills repeat the call:
"Coo-ee! coo-ee!" and by the log
Labor unharnesses his plow,
While to the barn comes cow on cow:
"Coo-ee! coo-ee!"—and, with his dog,
Barefooted boyhood down the lane
"Coo-ees" the cattle home again.

THE RAIN-CROW

I

Can freckled August,—drowsing warm and blond
Beside a wheat-shock in the white-topped mead,
In her hot hair the yellow daisies wound,—
O bird of rain, lend aught but sleepy heed
To thee? when no plumed weed, no feathered seed
Blows by her; and no ripple breaks the pond,
That gleams like flint within its rim of grasses,
Through which the dragonfly forever passes
Like splintered diamond.

II

Drouth weights the trees; and from the farmhouse eaves
The locust, pulse-beat of the summer day,
Throbs; and the lane, that shambles under leaves
Limp with the heat—a league of ruddy way—

Is lost in dust; and sultry scents of hay
Breathe from the panting meadows heaped with sheaves—
Now, now, O bird, what hint is there of rain,
In thirsty meadow or on burning plain,
That thy keen eye perceives?

III

But thou art right. Thou prophesiest true.
For hardly hast thou ceased thy forecasting,
When, up the western fierceness of scorched blue,
Great water-carrier winds their buckets bring
Brimming with freshness. How their dippers ring
And flash and rumble! lavishing large dew
On corn and forest land, that, streaming wet,
Their hilly backs against the downpour set,
Like giants, loom in view.

IV

The butterfly, safe under leaf and flower,
Has found a roof, knowing how true thou art;
The bumblebee, within the last half-hour,
Has ceased to hug the honey to its heart;
While in the barnyard, under shed and cart,
Brood-hens have housed.—But I, who scorned thy power,
Barometer of birds,—like August there,—
Beneath a beech, dripping from foot to hair,
Like some drenched truant, cower.

FIELD AND FOREST CALL

I

There is a field, that leans upon two hills,
Foamed o'er of flowers and twinkling with clear rills;
That in its girdle of wild acres bears
The anodyne of rest that cures all cares;
Wherein soft wind and sun and sound are blent
With fragrance—as in some old instrument
Sweet chords;—calm things, that Nature's magic spell
Distills from Heaven's azure crucible,
And pours on Earth to make the sick mind well.
There lies the path, they say—
Come away! come away!

II

There is a forest, lying 'twixt two streams,
Sung through of birds and haunted of dim dreams;
That in its league-long hand of trunk and leaf
Lifts a green wand that charms away all grief;
Wrought of quaint silence and the stealth of things,
Vague, whispering' touches, gleams and twitterings,
Dews and cool shadows—that the mystic soul
Of Nature permeates with suave control,
And waves o'er Earth to make the sad heart whole.
There lies the road, they say—
Come away! come away!

OLD HOMES

Old homes among the hills! I love their gardens;
Their old rock fences, that our day inherits;
Their doors, round which the great trees stand like wardens;
Their paths, down which the shadows march like spirits;
Broad doors and paths that reach bird-haunted gardens.

I see them gray among their ancient acres,
Severe of front, their gables lichen-sprinkled,—
Like gentle-hearted, solitary Quakers,
Grave and religious, with kind faces wrinkled,—
Serene among their memory-hallowed acres.

Their gardens, banked with roses and with lilies—
Those sweet aristocrats of all the flowers—
Where Springtime mints her gold in daffodillies,
And Autumn coins her marigolds in showers,
And all the hours are toilless as the lilies.

I love their orchards where the gay woodpecker
Flits, flashing o'er you, like a wingéd jewel;
Their woods, whose floors of moss the squirrels checker
With half-hulled nuts; and where, in cool renewal,
The wild brooks laugh, and raps the red woodpecker.

Old homes! old hearts! Upon my soul forever
Their peace and gladness lie like tears and laughter;
Like love they touch me, through the years that sever,
With simple faith; like friendship, draw me after
The dreamy patience that is theirs forever.

THE FOREST WAY

I

I climbed a forest path and found
A dim cave in the dripping ground,
Where dwelt the spirit of cool sound,
Who wrought with crystal triangles,
And hollowed foam of rippled bells,
A music of mysterious spells.

II

Where Sleep her bubble-jewels spilled
Of dreams; and Silence twilight-filled
Her emerald buckets, star-instilled,
With liquid whispers of lost springs,
And mossy tread of woodland things,
And drip of dew that greenly clings.

III

Here by those servitors of Sound,
Warders of that enchanted ground,
My soul and sense were seized and bound,
And, in a dungeon deep of trees
Entranced, were laid at lazy ease,
The charge of woodland mysteries.

IV

The minions of Prince Drowsihead,
The wood-perfumes, with sleepy tread,
Tiptoed around my ferny bed:
And far away I heard report

Of one who dimly rode to Court,
The Faery Princess, Eve-Amort.

v

Her herald winds sang as they passed;
And there her beauty stood at last,
With wild gold locks, a band held fast,
Above blue eyes, as clear as spar;
While from a curved and azure jar
She poured the white moon and a star.

SUNSET AND STORM

Deep with divine tautology,
The sunset's mighty mystery
Again has traced the scroll-like west
With hieroglyphs of burning gold:
Forever new, forever old,
Its miracle is manifest.

Time lays the scroll away. And now
Above the hills a giant brow
Of cloud Night lifts; and from his arm,
Barbaric black, upon the world,
With thunder, wind and fire, is hurled
His awful argument of storm.

What part, O man, is yours in such?
Whose awe and wonder are in touch
With Nature,—speaking rapture to
Your soul,—yet leaving in your reach
No human word of thought or speech
Commensurate with the thing you view.

QUIET LANES

From the lyrical eclogue "One Day and Another"

Now rests the season in forgetfulness,
Careless in beauty of maturity;
The ripened roses round brown temples, she
Fulfills completion in a dreamy guess.
Now Time grants night the more and day the less:
The gray decides; and brown
Dim golds and drabs in dulling green express
Themselves and redden as the year goes down.
Sadder the fields where, thrusting hoary high
Their tasseled heads, the Lear-like corn-stocks die,
And, Falstaff-like, buff-bellied pumpkins lie.—
Deepening with tenderness,
Sadder the blue of hills that lounge along
The lonesome west; sadder the song
Of the wild redbird in the leafage yellow.—
Deeper and dreamier, aye!
Than woods or waters, leans the languid sky
Above lone orchards where the cider press
Drips and the russets mellow.
Nature grows liberal: from the beechen leaves
The beech-nuts' burrs their little purses thrust,
Plump with the copper of the nuts that rust;
Above the grass the spendthrift spider weaves

A web of silver for which dawn designs
Thrice twenty rows of pearls: beneath the oak,
That rolls old roots in many gnarly lines,—
The polished acorns, from their saucers broke,
Strew oval agates.—On sonorous pines
The far wind organs; but the forest near
Is silent; and the blue-white smoke
Of burning brush, beyond that field of hay,
Hangs like a pillar in the atmosphere:
But now it shakes—it breaks, and all the vines
And tree tops tremble; see! the wind is here!
Billowing and boisterous; and the smiling day
Rejoices in its clamor. Earth and sky
Resound with glory of its majesty,
Impetuous splendor of its rushing by.—
But on those heights the woodland dark is still,
Expectant of its coming.... Far away
Each anxious tree upon each waiting hill
Tingles anticipation, as in gray
Surmise of rapture. Now the first gusts play,
Like laughter low, about their rippling spines;
And now the wildwood, one exultant sway,
Shouts—and the light at each tumultuous pause,
The light that glooms and shines,
Seems hands in wild applause.

How glows that garden!—Though the white mists keep
The vagabonding flowers reminded of
Decay that comes to slay in open love,
When the full moon hangs cold and night is deep;
Unheeding still their cardinal colors leap
Gay in the crescent of the blade of death,—
Spaced innocents whom he prepares to reap,—
Staying his scythe a breath
To mark their beauty ere, with one last sweep,
He lays them dead and turns away to weep.—
Let me admire,—
Before the sickle of the coming cold
Shall mow them down,—their beauties manifold:
How like to spurts of fire
That scarlet salvia lifts its blooms, which heap
With flame the sunlight. And, as sparkles creep
Through charring vellum, up that window's screen
The cypress dots with crimson all its green,
The haunt of many bees.
Cascading dark old porch-built lattices,
The nightshade bleeds with berries; drops of blood
Hanging in clusters 'mid the blue monk's-hood.

There is a garden old,
Where bright-hued clumps of zinnias unfold
Their formal flowers; where the marigold
Lifts a pinched shred of orange sunset caught
And elfed in petals; the nasturtium,
Deep, pungent-leaved and acrid of perfume,
Hangs up a goblin bonnet, pixy-brought
From Gnomeland. There, predominant red,
And arrogant, the dahlia lifts its head,
Beside the balsam's rose-stained horns of honey,
Lost in the murmuring, sunny
Dry wildness of the weedy flower bed;
Where crickets and the weed-bugs, noon and night,
Shrill dirges for the flowers that soon shall die,
And flowers already dead.—
I seem to hear the passing Summer sigh:

A voice, that seems to weep,—
"Too soon, too soon the Beautiful passes by!
And soon, among these bowers
Will dripping Autumn mourn with all her flowers"—

If I, perchance, might peep
Beneath those leaves of podded hollyhocks,
That the bland wind with odorous murmurs rocks,
I might behold her,—white
And weary,—Summer, 'mid her flowers asleep,
Her drowsy flowers asleep,
The withered poppies knotted in her locks.

ONE WHO LOVED NATURE

I

He was not learned in any art;
But Nature led him by the hand;
And spoke her language to his heart
So he could hear and understand:
He loved her simply as a child;
And in his love forgot the heat
Of conflict, and sat reconciled
In patience of defeat.

II

Before me now I see him rise—
A face, that seventy years had snowed
With winter, where the kind blue eyes
Like hospitable fires glowed:
A small gray man whose heart was large,
And big with knowledge learned of need;
A heart, the hard world made its targe,
That never ceased to bleed.

III

He knew all Nature. Yea, he knew
What virtue lay within each flower,
What tonic in the dawn and dew,
And in each root what magic power:
What in the wild witch-hazel tree
Reversed its time of blossoming,
And clothed its branches goldenly
In fall instead of spring.

IV

He knew what made the firefly glow
And pulse with crystal gold and flame;
And whence the bloodroot got its snow,
And how the bramble's perfume came:
He understood the water's word
And grasshopper's and cricket's chirr;
And of the music of each bird
He was interpreter.

V

He kept no calendar of days,
But knew the seasons by the flowers;
And he could tell you by the rays

Of sun or stars the very hours.
He probed the inner mysteries
Of light, and knew the chemic change
That colors flowers, and what is
Their fragrance wild and strange.

VI

If some old oak had power of speech,
It could not speak more wildwood lore,
Nor in experience further reach,
Than he who was a tree at core.
Nature was all his heritage,
And seemed to fill his every need;
Her features were his book, whose page
He never tired to read.

VII

He read her secrets that no man
Has ever read and never will,
And put to scorn the charlatan
Who botanizes of her still.
He kept his knowledge sweet and clean,
And questioned not of why and what;
And never drew a line between
What's known and what is not.

VIII

He was most gentle, good, and wise;
A simpler heart earth never saw:
His soul looked softly from his eyes,
And in his speech were love and awe.

Yet Nature in the end denied
The thing he had not asked for—fame!
Unknown, in poverty he died,
And men forget his name.

GARDEN GOSSIP

Thin, chisel-fine a cricket chipped
The crystal silence into sound;
And where the branches dreamed and dripped
A grasshopper its dagger stripped
And on the humming darkness ground.

A bat, against the gibbous moon,
Danced, implike, with its lone delight;
The glowworm scrawled a golden rune
Upon the dark; and, emerald-strewn,
The firefly hung with lamps the night.

The flowers said their beads in prayer,
Dew-syllables of sighed perfume;
Or talked of two, soft-standing there,
One like a gladiole, straight and fair,
And one like some rich poppy-bloom.

The mignonette and feverfew
Laid their pale brows together:—"See!"
One whispered: "Did their step thrill through
Your roots?"—"Like rain."—"I touched the two
And a new bud was born in me."

One rose said to another:—"Whose
Is this dim music? song, that parts
My crimson petals like the dews?"
"My blossom trembles with sweet news—
It is the love of two young hearts."

ASSUMPTION

I

A mile of moonlight and the whispering wood:
A mile of shadow and the odorous lane:
One large, white star above the solitude,
Like one sweet wish: and, laughter after pain,
Wild-roses wistful in a web of rain.

II

No star, no rose, to lesson him and lead;
No woodsman compass of the skies and rocks,—
Tattooed of stars and lichens,—doth love need
To guide him where, among the hollyhocks,
A blur of moonlight, gleam his sweetheart's locks.

III

We name it beauty—that permitted part,
The love-elected apotheosis
Of Nature, which the god within the heart,
Just touching, makes immortal, but by this—
A star, a rose, the memory of a kiss.

SENORITA

An agate-black, your roguish eyes
Claim no proud lineage of the skies,
No starry blue; but of good earth
The reckless witchery and mirth.

Looped in your raven hair's repose,
A hot aroma, one red rose
Dies; envious of that loveliness,
By being near which its is less.

Twin sea shells, hung with pearls, your ears,
Whose slender rosiness appears
Part of the pearls; whose pallid fire
Binds the attention these inspire.

One slim hand crumples up the lace
About your bosom's swelling grace;
A ruby at your samite throat
Lends the required color note.

The moon bears through the violet night
A pearly urn of chalice light;
And from your dark-railed balcony
You stoop and wave your fan at me.

O'er orange orchards and the rose
Vague, odorous lips the south wind blows,
Peopling the night with whispers of
Romance and palely passionate love.

The heaven of your balcony
Smiles down two stars, that say to me
More peril than Angelica
Wrought with her beauty in Cathay.

Oh, stoop to me! and, speaking, reach
My soul like song that learned sweet speech
From some dim instrument—who knows?—
Or flower, a dulcimer or rose.

OVERSEAS

Non numero horas nisi serenas

When Fall drowns morns in mist, it seems
In soul I am a part of it;
A portion of its humid beams,
A form of fog, I seem to flit
From dreams to dreams....

An old château sleeps 'mid the hills
Of France: an avenue of sorbs
Conceals it: drifts of daffodils
Bloom by a 'scutcheoned gate with barbs
Like iron bills.

I pass the gate unquestioned; yet,
I feel, announced. Broad holm-oaks make
Dark pools of restless violet.
Between high bramble banks a lake,—
As in a net

The tangled scales twist silver,—shines....
Gray, mossy turrets swell above
A sea of leaves. And where the pines
Shade ivied walls, there lies my love,
My heart divines.

I know her window, slimly seen
From distant lanes with hawthorn hedged:
Her garden, with the nectarine
Espaliered, and the peach tree, wedged
'Twixt walls of green.

Cool-babbling a fountain falls
From gryphons' mouths in porphyry;
Carp haunt its waters; and white balls
Of lilies dip it when the bee
Creeps in and draws.

And butterflies—each with a face
Of faery on its wings—that seem
Beheaded pansies, softly chase
Each other down the gloom and gleam
Trees interspace.

And roses! roses, soft as vair,
Round sylvan statues and the old
Stone dial—Pompadours, that wear
Their royalty of purple and gold
With wanton air....

Her scarf, her lute, whose ribbons breathe
The perfume of her touch; her gloves,
Modeling the daintiness they sheathe;
Her fan, a Watteau, gay with loves,

Lie there beneath

A bank of eglantine, that heaps
A rose-strewn shadow.—Naïve-eyed,
With lips as suave as they, she sleeps;
The romance by her, open wide,
O'er which she weeps.

PROBLEMS

Man's are the learnings of his books—
What is all knowledge that he knows
Beside the wit of winding brooks,
The wisdom of the summer rose!

How soil distills the scent in flowers
Baffles his science: heaven-dyed,
How, from the palette of His hours,
God gives them colors, hath defied.

What dream of heaven begets the light?
Or, ere the stars beat burning tunes,
Stains all the hollow edge of night
With glory as of molten moons?

Who is it answers what is birth
Or death, that nothing may retard?
Or what is love, that seems of Earth,
Yet wears God's own divine regard?

TO A WINDFLOWER

I

Teach me the secret of thy loveliness,
That, being made wise, I may aspire to be
As beautiful in thought, and so express
Immortal truths to Earth's mortality;
Though to my soul ability be less
Than 'tis to thee, O sweet anemone.

II

Teach me the secret of thy innocence,
That in simplicity I may grow wise;
Asking of Art no other recompense
Than the approval of her own just eyes;
So may I rise to some fair eminence,
Though less than thine, O cousin of the skies.

III

Teach me these things; through whose high knowledge, I,—
When Death hath poured oblivion through my veins,
And brought me home, as all are brought, to lie
In that vast house, common to serfs and thanes,—
I shall not die, I shall not utterly die,
For beauty born of beauty—*that* remains.

VOYAGERS

Where are they, that song and tale

Tell of? lands our childhood knew?
Sea-locked Faerylands that trail
Morning summits, dim with dew,
Crimson o'er a crimson sail.

Where in dreams we entered on
Wonders eyes have never seen:
Whither often we have gone,
Sailing a dream-brigantine
On from voyaging dawn to dawn.

Leons seeking lands of song;
Fabled fountains pouring spray;
Where our anchors dropped among
Corals of some tropic bay,
With its swarthy native throng.

Shoulder ax and arquebus!—
We may find it!—past yon range
Of sierras, vaporous,
Rich with gold and wild and strange
That lost region dear to us.

Yet, behold, although our zeal
Darien summits may subdue,
Our Balboa eyes reveal
But a vaster sea come to—
New endeavor for our keel.

Yet! who sails with face set hard
Westward,—while behind him lies
Unfaith,—where his dreams keep guard
Round it, in the sunset skies,
He may reach it—afterward.

THE SPELL

"We have the receipt of fern seed: we walk invisible."
—HENRY IV

And we have met but twice or thrice!—
Three times enough to make me love!—
I praised your hair once; then your glove;
Your eyes; your gown;—you were like ice;
And yet this might suffice, my love,
And yet this might suffice.

St. John hath told me what to do:
To search and find the ferns that grow
The fern seed that the faeries know;
Then sprinkle fern seed in my shoe,
And haunt the steps of you, my dear,
And haunt the steps of you.

You'll see the poppy pods dip here;
The blow-ball of the thistle slip,
And no wind breathing—but my lip
Next to your anxious cheek and ear,
To tell you I am near, my love,
To tell you I am near.

On wood-ways I shall tread your gown—
You'll know it is no brier!—then
I'll whisper words of love again,
And smile to see your quick face frown:

And then I'll kiss it down, my dear,
And then I'll kiss it down.

And when at home you read or knit,—
Who'll know it was my hands that blotted
The page?—or all your needles knotted?
When in your rage you cry a bit:
And loud I laugh at it, my love,
And loud I laugh at it.

The secrets that you say in prayer
Right so I'll hear: and, when you sing,
The name you speak; and whispering
I'll bend and kiss your mouth and hair,
And tell you I am there, my dear,
And tell you I am there.

Would it were true what people say!—
Would I *could* find that elfin seed!
Then should I win your love, indeed,
By being near you night and day—
There is no other way, my love,
There is no other way.

Meantime the truth in this is said:
It is my soul that follows you;
It needs no fern seed in the shoe,—
While in the heart love pulses red,
To win you and to wed, my dear,
To win you and to wed.

UNCERTAINTY

"He cometh not, ' she said."—MARIANA

It will not be to-day and yet
I think and dream it will; and let
The slow uncertainty devise
So many sweet excuses, met
With the old doubt in hope's disguise.

The panes were sweated with the dawn;
Yet through their dimness, shriveled drawn,
The aigret of one princess-feather,
One monk's-hood tuft with oilets wan,
I glimpsed, dead in the slaying weather.

This morning, when my window's chintz
I drew, how gray the day was!—Since
I saw him, yea, all days are gray!—
I gazed out on my dripping quince,
Defruited, gnarled; then turned away

To weep, but did not weep: but felt
A colder anguish than did melt
About the tearful-visaged year!—
Then flung the lattice wide, and smelt
The autumn sorrow: Rotting near

The rain-drenched sunflowers bent and bleached,
Up which the frost-nipped gourd-vines reached
And morning-glories, seeded o'er
With ashen aiglets; whence beseeched
One last bloom, frozen to the core.

The podded hollyhocks,—that Fall

Had stripped of finery,—by the wall
Rustled their tatters; dripped and dripped,
The fog thick on them: near them, all
The tarnished, haglike zinnias tipped.

I felt the death and loved it: yea,
To have it nearer, sought the gray,
Chill, fading garth. Yet could not weep,
But wandered in an aimless way,
And sighed with weariness for sleep.

Mine were the fog, the frosty stalks;
The weak lights on the leafy walks;
The shadows shivering with the cold;
The breaking heart; the lonely talks;
The last, dim, ruined marigold.

But when to-night the moon swings low—
A great marsh-marigold of glow—
And all my garden with the sea
Moans, then, through moon and mist, I know
My love will come to comfort me.

IN THE WOOD

The waterfall, deep in the wood,
Talked drowsily with solitude,
A soft, insistent sound of foam,
That filled with sleep the forest's dome,
Where, like some dream of dusk, she stood
Accentuating solitude.

The crickets' tinkling chips of sound
Strewed dim the twilight-twinkling ground;
A whippoorwill began to cry,
And glimmering through the sober sky
A bat went on its drunken round,
Its shadow following on the ground.

Then from a bush, an elder-copse,
That spiced the dark with musky tops,
What seemed, at first, a shadow came
And took her hand and spoke her name,
And kissed her where, in starry drops,
The dew orbbed on the elder-tops.

The glaucous glow of fireflies
Flickered the dusk; and foxlike eyes
Peered from the shadows; and the hush
Murmured a word of wind and rush
Of fluttering waters, fragrant sighs,
And dreams unseen of mortal eyes.

The beetle flung its burr of sound
Against the hush and clung there, wound
In night's deep mane: then, in a tree,
A grig began deliberately
To file the stillness: all around
A wire of shrillness seemed unwound.

I looked for those two lovers there;
His ardent eyes, her passionate hair.
The moon looked down, slow-climbing wan
Heaven's slope of azure: they were gone:
But where they'd passed I heard the air

Sigh, faint with sweetness of her hair.

SINCE THEN

I found myself among the trees
What time the reapers ceased to reap;
And in the sunflower-blooms the bees
Huddled brown heads and went to sleep,
Rocked by the balsam-breathing breeze.

I saw the red fox leave his lair,
A shaggy shadow, on the knoll;
And tunneling his thoroughfare
Beneath the soil, I watched the mole—
Stealth's own self could not take more care.

I heard the death-moth tick and stir,
Slow-honeycombing through the bark;
I heard the cricket's drowsy chirr,
And one lone beetle burr the dark—
The sleeping woodland seemed to purr.

And then the moon rose: and one white
Low bough of blossoms—grown almost
Where, ere you died, 'twas our delight
To meet,—dear heart!—I thought your ghost....
The wood is haunted since that night.

DUSK IN THE WOODS

Three miles of trees it is: and I
Came through the woods that waited, dumb,
For the cool summer dusk to come;
And lingered there to watch the sky
Up which the gradual splendor clomb.

A tree-toad quavered in a tree;
And then a sudden whippoorwill
Called overhead, so wildly shrill
The sleeping wood, it seemed to me,
Cried out and then again was still.

Then through dark boughs its stealthy flight
An owl took; and, at drowsy strife,
The cricket tuned its faery fife;
And like a ghost-flower, silent white,
The wood-moth glimmered into life.

And in the dead wood everywhere
The insects ticked, or bored below
The rotted bark; and, glow on glow,
The lambent fireflies here and there
Lit up their jack-o'-lantern show.

I heard a vesper-sparrow sing,
Withdrawn, it seemed, into the far
Slow sunset's tranquil cinnabar;
The crimson, softly smoldering
Behind the trees, with its one star.

A dog barked: and down ways that gleamed,
Through dew and clover, faint the noise
Of cowbells moved. And then a voice,
That sang a-milking, so it seemed,

Made glad my heart as some glad boy's.

And then the lane: and, full in view,
A farmhouse with its rose-grown gate,
And honeysuckle paths, await
For night, the moon, and love and you—
These are the things that made me late.

PATHS

I

What words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well?—
The path that takes me in the spring
Past quince-trees where the bluebirds sing,
And peonies are blossoming,
Unto a porch, wistaria-hung,
Around whose steps May-lilies blow,
A fair girl reaches down among,
Her arm more white than their sweet snow.

II

What words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well?—
Another path that leads me, when
The summer time is here again,
Past hollyhocks that shame the west
When the red sun has sunk to rest;
To roses bowing a nest,
A lattice, 'neath which mignonette
And deep geraniums surge and sough,
Where, in the twilight, starless yet,
A fair girl's eyes are stars enough.

III

What words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well?—
A path that takes me, when the days
Of autumn wrap the hills in haze,
Beneath the pippin-pelting tree,
'Mid flitting butterfly and bee;
Unto a door where, fiery,
The creeper climbs; and, garnet-hued,
The cock's-comb and the dahlia flare,
And in the door, where shades intrude,
Gleams bright a fair girl's sunbeam hair.

IV

What words of mine can tell the spell
Of garden ways I know so well?—
A path that brings me through the frost
Of winter, when the moon is tossed
In clouds; beneath great cedars, weak
With shaggy snow; past shrubs blown bleak
With shivering leaves; to eaves that leak
The tattered ice, whereunder is
A fire-flickering window-space;
And in the light, with lips to kiss,
A fair girl's welcome-smiling face.

THE QUEST

I

First I asked the honeybee,
Busy in the balmy bowers;
Saying, "Sweetheart, tell it me:
Have you seen her, honeybee?
She is cousin to the flowers—
All the sweetness of the south
In her wild-rose face and mouth."
But the bee passed silently.

II

Then I asked the forest bird,
Warbling by the woodland waters;
Saying, "Dearest, have you heard?
Have you heard her, forest bird?
She is one of music's daughters—
Never song so sweet by half
As the music of her laugh."
But the bird said not a word.

III

Next I asked the evening sky,
Hanging out its lamps of fire;
Saying, "Loved one, passed she by?
Tell me, tell me, evening sky!
She, the star of my desire—
Sister whom the Pleiads lost,
And my soul's high pentecost."
But the sky made no reply.

IV

Where is she? ah, where is she?
She to whom both love and duty
Bind me, yea, immortally.—
Where is she? ah, where is she?
Symbol of the Earth-Soul's beauty.
I have lost her. Help my heart
Find her! her, who is a part
Of the pagan soul of me.

THE GARDEN OF DREAMS

Not while I live may I forget
That garden which my spirit trod!
Where dreams were flowers, wild and wet,
And beautiful as God.

Not while I breathe, awake, adream,
Shall live again for me those hours,
When, in its mystery and gleam,
I met her 'mid the flowers.

Eyes, talismanic heliotrope,
Beneath mesmeric lashes, where
The sorceries of love and hope
Had made a shining lair.

And daydawn brows, wherever hung

The twilight of dark locks: wild birds,
Her lips, that spoke the rose's tongue
Of fragrance-voweled words.

I will not tell of cheeks and chin,
That held me as sweet language holds;
Nor of the eloquence within
Her breasts' twin-moonéd molds.

Nor of her body's languorous
Wind-grace, that glanced like starlight through
Her clinging robe's diaphanous
Web of the mist and dew.

There is no star so pure and high
As was her look; no fragrance such
As her soft presence; and no sigh
Of music like her touch.

Not while I live may I forget
That garden of dim dreams, where I
And Beauty born of Music met,
Whose spirit passed me by.

THE PATH TO FAERY

I

When dusk falls cool as a rained-on rose,
And a tawny tower the twilight shows,
With the crescent moon, the silver moon, the curved
 new moon in a space that glows,
A turret window that grows alight;
There is a path that my Fancy knows,
A glimmering, shimmering path of night,
That far as the Land of Faery goes.

II

And I follow the path, as Fancy leads,
Over the mountains, into the meads,
Where the firefly cities, the glowworm cities, the faery
 cities are strung like beads,
Each city a twinkling star:
And I live a life of valorous deeds,
And march with the Faery King to war,
And ride with his knights on milk-white steeds.

III

Or it's there in the whirl of their life I sit,
Or dance in their houses with starlight lit,
Their blossom houses, their flower houses, their elfin
 houses, of fern leaves knit,
With fronded spires and domes:
And there it is that my lost dreams flit,
And the ghost of my childhood, smiling, roams
With the faery children so dear to it.

IV

And it's there I hear that they all come true,
The faery stories, whatever they do—
Elf and goblin, dear elf and goblin, loved elf and goblin,
 and all the crew

Of witch and wizard and gnome and fay,
And prince and princess, that wander through
The storybooks we have put away,
The faerytales that we loved and knew.

V

The face of Adventure lures you there,
And the eyes of Danger bid you dare,
While ever the bugles, the silver bugles, the far-off
bugles of Elfland blare,
The faery trumpets to battle blow;
And you feel their thrill in your heart and hair,
And you fain would follow and mount and go
And march with the Faeries anywhere.

VI

And she—she rides at your side again,
Your little sweetheart whose age is ten:
She is the princess, the faery princess, the princess fair
that you worshiped when
You were a prince in a faerytale;
And you do great deeds as you did them then,
With your magic spear, and enchanted mail,
Braving the dragon in his den.

VII

And you ask again,—“Oh, where shall we ride,
Now that the monster is slain, my bride?”—
“Back to the cities, the firefly cities, the glowworm
cities where we can hide,
The beautiful cities of Faeryland.
And the light of my eyes shall be your guide,
The light of my eyes and my snow-white hand—
And there forever we two will abide.”

THERE ARE FAERIES

I

There are faeries, bright of eye,
Who the wildflowers' warders are:
Ouphes, that chase the firefly;
Elves, that ride the shooting-star:
Fays, who in a cobweb lie,
Swinging on a moonbeam bar;
Or who harness bumblebees,
Grumbling on the clover leas,
To a blossom or a breeze—
That's their faery car.
If you care, you too may see
There are faeries.—Verily,
There are faeries.

II

There are faeries. I could swear
I have seen them busy, where
Roses loose their scented hair,
In the moonlight weaving, weaving,

Out of starlight and the dew,

Glinting gown and shimmering shoe;
Or, within a glowworm lair,
From the dark earth slowly heaving
Mushrooms whiter than the moon,
On whose tops they sit and croon,
With their grig-like mandolins,
To fair faery ladykins,
Leaning from the windowsill
Of a rose or daffodil,
Listening to their serenade
All of cricket-music made.
Follow me, oh, follow me!
Ho! away to Faërie!
Where your eyes like mine may see
There are faeries.—Verily,
There are faeries.

III

There are faeries. Elves that swing
In a wild and rainbow ring
Through the air; or mount the wing
Of a bat to courier news
To the faery King and Queen:
Fays, who stretch the gossamers
On which twilight hangs the dews;

Who, within the moonlight sheen,
Whisper dimly in the ears
Of the flowers words so sweet
That their hearts are turned to musk
And to honey; things that beat
In their veins of gold and blue:
Ouphes, that shepherd moths of dusk—
Soft of wing and gray of hue—
Forth to pasture on the dew.

IV

There are faeries; verily;
Verily:
For the old owl in the tree,
Hollow tree,
He who maketh melody
For them tripping merrily,
Told it me.
There are faeries.—Verily,
There are faeries.

THE SPIRIT OF THE FOREST SPRING

Over the rocks she trails her locks,
Her mossy locks that drip, drip, drip:
Her sparkling eyes smile at the skies
In friendship-wise and fellowship:
While the gleam and glance of her countenance
Lull into trance the woodland places,
As over the rocks she trails her locks,
Her dripping locks that the long fern graces.

She pours clear ooze from her heart's cool cruse,
Its crystal cruse that drips, drips, drips:
And all the day its limpid spray
Is heard to play from her finger tips:

And the slight, soft sound makes haunted ground
Of the woods around that the sunlight laces,
As she pours clear ooze from her heart's cool cruse,
Its dripping cruse that no man traces.

She swims and swims with glimmering limbs,
With lucid limbs that drip, drip, drip:
Where beechen boughs build a leafy house,
Where her eyes may drowse or her beauty trip:
And the liquid beat of her rippling feet
Makes three times sweet the forest mazes,
As she swims and swims with glimmering limbs,
With dripping limbs through the twilight hazes.

Then wrapped in deeps of the wild she sleeps,
She whispering sleeps and drips, drips, drips:
Where moon and mist wreath neck and wrist,
And, starry-whist, through the dark she slips:
While the heavenly dream of her soul makes gleam
The falls that stream and the foam that races,
As wrapped in the deeps of the wild she sleeps,
She dripping sleeps or starward gazes.

IN A GARDEN

The pink rose drops its petals on
The moonlit lawn, the moonlit lawn;
The moon, like some wide rose of white,
Drops down the summer night.
No rose there is
As sweet as this—
Thy mouth, that greets me with a kiss.

The lattice of thy casement twines
With jasmine vines, with jasmine vines;
The stars, like jasmine blossoms, lie
About the glimmering sky.
No jasmine tress
Can so caress
Like thy white arms' soft loveliness.

About thy door magnolia blooms
Make sweet the glooms, make sweet the glooms;
A moon-magnolia is the dusk
Closed in a dewy husk.
However much,
No bloom gives such
Soft fragrance as thy bosom's touch.

The flowers blooming now will pass,
And strew the grass, and strew the grass;
The night, like some frail flower, dawn
Will soon make gray and wan.
Still, still above,
The flower of
True love shall live forever, Love.

IN THE LANE

When the hornet hangs in the hollyhock,
And the brown bee drones i' the rose;
And the west is a red-streaked four-o'clock,
And summer is near its close—

It's oh, for the gate and the locust lane,
And dusk and dew and home again!

When the katydid sings and the cricket cries,
And ghosts of the mists ascend;
And the evening star is a lamp i' the skies,
And summer is near its end—
It's oh, for the fence and the leafy lane,
And the twilight peace and the tryst again!

When the owlet hoots in the dogwood tree,
That leans to the rippling Run;
And the wind is a wildwood melody,
And summer is almost done—
It's oh, for the bridge and the bramble lane,
And the fragrant hush and her hands again!

When fields smell sweet with the dewy hay,
And woods are cool and wan,
And a path for dreams is the Milky Way,
And summer is nearly gone—
It's oh, for the rock and the woodland lane,
And the silence and stars and her lips again!

When the weight of the apples breaks down the boughs,
And muskmelons split with sweet;
And the moon is a light in Heaven's house,
And summer has spent its heat—
It's oh, for the lane, the trysting lane,
The deep-mooned night and her love again!

THE WINDOW ON THE HILL

Among the fields the camomile
Seems blown mist in the lightning's glare:
Cool, rainy odors drench the air;
Night speaks above; the angry smile
Of storm within her stare.

The way that I shall take to-night
Is through the wood whose branches fill
The road with double darkness, till,
Between the boughs, a window's light
Shines out upon the hill.

The fence; and then the path that goes
Around a trailer-tangled rock,
Through puckered pink and hollyhock,
Unto a latch-gate's unkempt rose,
And door whereat I knock.

Bright on the oldtime flower place
The lamp streams through the foggy pane;
The door is opened to the rain:
And in the door—her happy face
And outstretched arms again.

THE PICTURE

Above her, pearl and rose the heavens lay:
Around her, flowers flattered earth with gold,
Or down the path in insolence held sway—
Like cavaliers who ride the king's highway—

Scarlet and buff, within a garden old.

Beyond the hills, faint-heard through belts of wood,
Bells, Sabbath-sweet, swooned from some far-off town:
Gamboge and gold, broad sunset colors strewed
The purple west as if, with God imbued,
Her mighty palette Nature there laid down.

Amid such flowers, underneath such skies,
Embodying all life knows of sweet and fair,
She stood; love's dreams in girlhood's face and eyes,
Fair as a star that comes to emphasize
The mingled beauty of the earth and air.

Behind her, seen through vines and orchard trees,
Gray with its twinkling windows—like the face
Of calm old age that sits and dreams at ease—
Porched with old roses, haunts of honeybees,
The homestead loomed within a liliated space.

For whom she waited in the afterglow,
Star-eyed and golden 'mid the poppy and rose,
I do not know; I do not care to know,—
It is enough I keep her picture so,
Hung up, like poetry, in my life's dull prose.

A fragrant picture, where I still may find
Her face untouched of sorrow or regret,
Unspoiled of contact; ever young and kind;
The spiritual sweetheart of my soul and mind,
She had not been, perhaps, if we had met.

MOLY

When by the wall the tiger-flower swings
A head of sultry slumber and aroma;
And by the path, whereon the blown rose flings
Its obsolete beauty, the long lilies foam a
White place of perfume, like a beautiful breast—
Between the pansy fire of the west,
And poppy mist of moonrise in the east,
This heartache will have ceased.

The witchcraft of soft music and sweet sleep—
Let it beguile the burthen from my spirit,
And white dreams reap me as strong reapers reap
The ripened grain and full blown blossom near it;
Let me behold how gladness gives the whole
The transformed countenance of my own soul—
Between the sunset and the risen moon
Let sorrow vanish soon.

And these things then shall keep me company:
The elfins of the dew; the spirit of laughter
Who haunts the wind; the god of melody
Who sings within the stream, that reaches after

The flow'rs that rock themselves to his caress:
These of themselves shall shape my happiness,
Whose visible presence I shall lean upon,
Feeling that care is gone.

Forgetting how the cankered flower must die;
The worm-pierced fruit fall, sicklied to its syrup;
How joy, begotten 'twixt a sigh and sigh,

Waits with one foot forever in the stirrup,—
Remembering how within the hollow lute
Soft music sleeps when music's voice is mute;
And in the heart, when all seems black despair,
Hope sits, awaiting there.

POPPY AND MANDRAGORA

Let us go far from here!
Here there is sadness in the early year:
Here sorrow waits where joy went laughing late:
The sicklied face of heaven hangs like hate
Above the woodland and the meadowland;
And Spring hath taken fire in her hand
Of frost and made a dead bloom of her face,
Which was a flower of marvel once and grace,
And sweet serenity and stainless glow.
Delay not. Let us go.

Let us go far away
Into the sunrise of a fairer May:
Where all the nights resign them to the moon,
And drug their souls with odor and soft tune,
And tell their dreams in starlight: where the hours
Teach immortality with fadeless flowers;
And all the day the bee weights down the bloom,
And all the night the moth shakes strange perfume,
Like music, from the flower-bells' affluence.
Let us go far from hence.

Why should we sit and weep,
And yearn with heavy eyelids still to sleep?
Forever hiding from our hearts the hate,—
Death within death,—life doth accumulate,
Like winter snows along the barren leas
And sterile hills, whereon no lover sees
The crocus limn the beautiful in flame;
Or hyacinth and jonquil write the name
Of Love in fire, for each passer-by.
Why should we sit and sigh?

We will not stay and long,
Here where our souls are wasting for a song;
Where no bird sings; and, dim beneath the stars,
No silvery water strikes melodious bars;
And in the rocks and forest-covered hills
No quick-tongued echo from her grotto fills
With eery syllables the solitude—
The vocal image of the voice that wooed—
She, of wild sounds the airy looking-glass.
Our souls are tired, alas!

What should we say to her?—
To Spring, who in our hearts makes no sweet stir:
Who looks not on us nor gives thought unto:
Too busy with the birth of flowers and dew,
And vague gold wings within the chrysalis;
Or Love, who will not miss us; had no kiss
To give your soul or the sad soul of me,
Who bound our hearts to her in poesy,
Long since, and wear her badge of service still.—
Have we not served our fill?

We will go far away.

Song will not care, who slays our souls each day
With the dark daggers of denying eyes,
And lips of silence! ... Had she sighed us lies,
Not passionate, yet falsely tremulous,
And lent her mouth to ours in mockery; thus
Smiled from calm eyes as if appreciative;
Then, then our love had taught itself to live
Feeding itself on hope, and recompense.
But no!—So let us hence.

So be the Bible shut
Of all her Beauty, and her wisdom but
A clasp for memory! We will not seek
The light that came not when the soul was weak
With longing, and the darkness gave no sign
Of star-born comfort. Nay! why kneel and whine
Sad psalms of patience and hosannas of
Old hope and dreary canticles of love?—
Let us depart, since, as we long supposed,
For us God's book was closed.

A ROAD SONG

It's—Oh, for the hills, where the wind's some one
With a vagabond foot that follows!
And a cheer-up hand that he claps upon
Your arm with the hearty words, "Come on!
We'll soon be out of the hollows,
My heart!
We'll soon be out of the hollows."

It's—Oh, for the songs, where the hope's some one
With a renegade foot that doubles!
And a jolly lilt that he flings to the sun
As he turns with the friendly laugh, "Come on!
We'll soon be out of the troubles,
My heart!
We'll soon be out of the troubles!"

PHANTOMS

This was her home; one mossy gable thrust
Above the cedars and the locust trees:
This was her home, whose beauty now is dust,
A lonely memory for melodies
The wild birds sing, the wild birds and the bees.

Here every evening is a prayer: no boast
Or ruin of sunset makes the wan world wroth;
Here, through the twilight, like a pale flower's ghost,
A drowsy flutter, flies the tiger-moth;
And dusk spreads darkness like a dewy cloth.

In vagabond velvet, on the placid day,
A stain of crimson, lolls the butterfly;
The south wind sows with ripple and with ray
The pleasant waters; and the gentle sky
Looks on the homestead like a quiet eye.

Their melancholy quaver, lone and low,
When day is done, the gray tree-toads repeat:
The whippoorwills, far in the afterglow,
Complain to silence: and the lightnings beat,

In one still cloud, glimmers of golden heat.

He comes not yet: not till the dusk is dead,
And all the western glow is far withdrawn;
Not till,—a sleepy mouth love's kiss makes red,—
The baby bud opes in a rosy yawn,
Breathing sweet guesses at the dreamed-of dawn.

When in the shadows, like a rain of gold,
The fireflies stream steadily; and bright
Along the moss the glowworm, as of old,
A crawling sparkle—like a crooked light
In smoldering vellum—scrawls a square of night,—

Then will he come; and she will lean to him,—
She,—the sweet phantom,—memory of that place,—
Between the starlight and his eyes; so dim
With suave control and soul-compelling grace,
He cannot help but speak her, face to face.

INTIMATIONS OF THE BEAUTIFUL

I

The hills are full of prophecies
And ancient voices of the dead;
Of hidden shapes that no man sees,
Pale, visionary presences,
That speak the things no tongue hath said,
No mind hath thought, no eye hath read.

The streams are full of oracles,
And momentary whisperings;
An immaterial beauty swells
Its breezy silver o'er the shells
With wordless speech that sings and sings
The message of diviner things.

No indeterminable thought is theirs,
The stars', the sunsets' and the flowers';
Whose inexpressible speech declares
Th' immortal Beautiful, who shares
This mortal riddle which is ours,
Beyond the forward-flying hours.

II

It holds and beckons in the streams;
It lures and touches us in all
The flowers of the golden fall—
The mystic essence of our dreams:
A nymph blows bubbling music where
Faint water ripples down the rocks;
A faun goes dancing hoiden locks,
And piping a Pandean air,
Through trees the instant wind shakes bare.

Our dreams are never otherwise
Than real when they hold us so;
We in some future life shall know
Them parts of it and recognize
Them as ideal substance, whence
The actual is—(as flowers and trees,
From color sources no one sees,
Draw dyes, the substance of a sense)—

Material with intelligence.

III

What intimations made them wise,
The mournful pine, the pleasant beech?
What strange and esoteric speech?—
(Communicated from the skies
In runic whispers)—that invokes
The boles that sleep within the seeds,
And out of narrow darkness leads
The vast assemblies of the oaks.

Within his knowledge, what one reads
The poems written by the flowers?
The sermons, past all speech of ours,
Preached by the gospel of the weeds?—
O eloquence of coloring!
O thoughts of syllabled perfume!
O beauty uttered into bloom!
Teach me your language! let me sing!

IV

Along my mind flies suddenly
A wildwood thought that will not die;
That makes me brother to the bee,
And cousin to the butterfly:
A thought, such as gives perfume to
The blushes of the bramble-rose,
And, fixed in quivering crystal, glows
A captive in the prised dew.

It leads the feet no certain way;
No frequent path of human feet:
Its wild eyes follow me all day;
All day I hear its wild heart beat:
And in the night it sings and sighs
The songs the winds and waters love;
Its wild heart lying tranced above,
And tranced the wildness of its eyes.

V

Oh, joy, to walk the way that goes
Through woods of sweet-gum and of beech!
Where, like a ruby left in reach,
The berry of the dogwood glows:
Or where the bristling hillsides mass,
'Twixt belts of tawny sassafras,
Brown shocks of corn in wigwam rows!

Where, in the hazy morning, runs
The stony branch that pools and drips,
The red-haws and the wild-rose hips
Are strewn like pebbles; and the sun's
Own gold seems captured by the weeds;
To see, through scintillating seeds,
The hunters steal with glimmering guns!

Oh, joy, to go the path which lies
Through woodlands where the trees are tall!
Beneath the misty moon of fall,
Whose ghostly girdle prophesies
A morn wind-swept and gray with rain;
When, o'er the lonely, leaf-blown lane,

The night-hawk like a dead leaf flies!

To stand within the dewy ring
Where pale death smites the boneset blooms,
And everlasting's flowers, and plumes
Of mint, with aromatic wing!
And hear the creek,—whose sobbing seems
A wild-man murmuring in his dreams,—
And insect violins that sing.

Or where the dim persimmon tree
Rains on the path its frosty fruit,
And in the oak the owl doth hoot,
Beneath the moon and mist, to see
The outcast Year go,—Hagar-wise,—
With far-off, melancholy eyes,
And lips that sigh for sympathy.

VI

Towards evening, where the sweet-gum flung
Its thorny balls among the weeds,
And where the milkweed's sleepy seeds,—
A faery Feast of Lanterns,—swung;
The cricket tuned a plaintive lyre,
And o'er the hills the sunset hung
A purple parchment scrawled with fire.

From silver-blue to amethyst
The shadows deepened in the vale;
And belt by belt the pearly-pale
Aladdin fabric of the mist
Built up its exhalation far;
A jewel on an Afrit's wrist,
One star gemmed sunset's cinnabar.

Then night drew near, as when, alone,
The heart and soul grow intimate;
And on the hills the twilight sate
With shadows, whose wild robes were sown
With dreams and whispers;—dreams, that led
The heart once with love's monotone,
And memories of the living-dead.

VII

All night the rain-gusts shook the leaves
Around my window; and the blast
Rumbled the flickering flue, and fast
The storm streamed from the dripping eaves.
As if—'neath skies gone mad with fear—
The witches' Sabbath galloped past,
The forests leapt like startled deer.

All night I heard the sweeping sleet;
And when the morning came, as slow
As wan affliction, with the woe
Of all the world dragged at her feet,
No spear of purple shattered through
The dark gray of the east; no bow
Of gold shot arrows swift and blue.

But rain, that whipped the windows; filled
The spouts with rushings; and around
The garden stamped, and sowed the ground
With limbs and leaves; the wood-pool filled

With overgurgling.—Bleak and cold
The fields looked, where the footpath wound
Through teasel and bur-marigold.

Yet there's a kindness in such days
Of gloom, that doth console regret
With sympathy of tears, which wet
Old eyes that watch the back-log blaze.—
A kindness, alien to the deep
Glad blue of sunny days that let
No thought in of the lives that weep.

VIII

This dawn, through which the Autumn glowers,—
As might a face within our sleep,
With stone-gray eyes that weep and weep,
And wet brows bound with sodden flowers,—
Is sunset to some sister land;
A land of ruins and of palms;
Rich sunset, crimson with long calms,—
Whose burning belt low mountains bar,—
That sees some brown Rebecca stand
Beside a well the camel-band
Winds down to 'neath the evening star.

O sunset, sister to this dawn!
O dawn, whose face is turned away!
Who gazest not upon this day,
But back upon the day that's gone!
Enamored so of loveliness,
The retrospect of what thou wast,
Oh, to thyself the present trust!
And as thy past be beautiful
With hues, that never can grow less!
Waiting thy pleasure to express
New beauty lest the world grow dull.

IX

Down in the woods a sorcerer,
Out of rank rain and death, distills,—
Through chill alembics of the air,—
Aromas that brood everywhere
Among the whisper-haunted hills:
The bitter myrrh of dead leaves fills
Wet valleys (where the gaunt weeds bleach)
With rainy scents of wood-decay;—
As if a spirit all the day
Sat breathing softly 'neath the beech.

With other eyes I see her flit,
The wood-witch of the wild perfumes,
Among her elfin owls,—that sit,
A drowsy white, in crescent-lit
Dim glens of opalescent glooms:—
Where, for her magic, buds and blooms
Mysterious perfumes, while she stands,
A thornlike shadow, summoning
The sleepy odors, that take wing
Like bubbles from her dewy hands.

X

Among the woods they call to me—
The lights that haunt the wood and stream;

Voices of such white ecstasy
As moves with hushed lips through a dream:
They stand in auread radiances,
Or flash with nimbused limbs across
Their golden shadows on the moss,
Or slip in silver through the trees.

What love can give the heart in me
More hope and exaltation than
The hand of light that tips the tree
And beckons far from marts of man?
That reaches foamy fingers through
The broken ripple, and replies
With sparkling speech of lips and eyes
To souls who seek and still pursue.

XI

Give me the streams, that counterfeit
The twilight of autumnal skies;
The shadowy, silent waters, lit
With fire like a woman's eyes!
Slow waters that, in autumn, glass
The scarlet-strewn and golden grass,
And drink the sunset's tawny dyes.

Give me the pools, that lie among
The centuried forests! give me those,
Deep, dim, and sad as darkness hung
Beneath the sunset's somber rose:
Still pools, in whose vague mirrors look—
Like ragged gypsies round a book
Of magic—trees in wild repose.

No quiet thing, or innocent,
Of water, earth, or air shall please
My soul now: but the violent
Between the sunset and the trees:
The fierce, the splendid, and intense,
That love matures in innocence,
Like mighty music, give me these!

XII

When thorn-tree copses still were bare
And black along the turbid brook;
When catkined willows blurred and shook
Great tawny tangles in the air;
In bottomlands, the first thaw makes
An oozy bog, beneath the trees,
Prophetic of the spring that wakes,
Sang the sonorous hylodes.

Now that wild winds have stripped the thorn,
And clogged with leaves the forest-creek;
Now that the woods look blown and bleak,
And webs are frosty white at morn;
At night beneath the spectral sky,
A far foreboding cry I hear—
The wild fowl calling as they fly?
Or wild voice of the dying Year?

XIII

And still my soul holds phantom tryst,
When chestnuts hiss among the coals,

Upon the Evening of All Souls,
When all the night is moon and mist,
And all the world is mystery;
I kiss dear lips that death hath kissed,
And gaze in eyes no man may see,
Filled with a love long lost to me.

I hear the night-wind's ghostly glove
Flutter the window: then the knob
Of some dark door turn, with a sob
As when love comes to gaze on love
Who lies pale-coffined in a room:
And then the iron gallop of
The storm, who rides outside; his plume
Sweeping the night with dread and gloom.

So fancy takes the mind, and paints
The darkness with eidolon light,
And writes the dead's romance in night
On the dim Evening of All Saints:
Unheard the hissing nuts; the clink
And fall of coals, whose shadow faints
Around the hearts that sit and think,
Borne far beyond the actual's brink.

XIV

I heard the wind, before the morn
Stretched gaunt, gray fingers 'thwart my pane,
Drive clouds down, a dark dragon-train;
Its iron visor closed, a horn
Of steel from out the north it wound.—
No morn like yesterday's! whose mouth,
A cool carnation, from the south
Breathed through a golden reed the sound
Of days that drop clear gold upon
Cerulean silver floors of dawn.

And all of yesterday is lost
And swallowed in to-day's wild light—
The birth deformed of day and night,
The illegitimate, who cost
Its mother secret tears and sighs;
Unlovely since unloved; and chilled
With sorrows and the shame that filled
Its parents' love; which was not wise
In passion as the day and night
That married yestermorn with light.

XV

Down through the dark, indignant trees,
On indistinguishable wings
Of storm, the wind of evening swings;
Before its insane anger flees
Distracted leaf and shattered bough:
There is a rushing as when seas
Of thunder beat an iron prow
On reefs of wrath and roaring wreck:
'Mid stormy leaves, a hurrying speck
Of flickering blackness, driven by,
A mad bat whirls along the sky.

Like some sad shadow, in the eve's
Deep melancholy—visible
As by some strange and twilight spell—

A gaunt girl stands among the leaves,
The night-wind in her dolorous dress:
Symbolic of the life that grieves,
Of toil that patience makes not less,
Her load of fagots fallen there.—
A wilder shadow sweeps the air,
And she is gone.... Was it the dumb
Eidolon of the month to come?

XVI

The song birds—are they flown away?
The song birds of the summer time,
That sang their souls into the day,
And set the laughing hours to rhyme.
No catbird scatters through the bush
The sparkling crystals of its song;
Within the woods no hermit-thrush
Thridding with vocal gold the hush.

All day the crows fly cawing past:
The acorns drop: the forests scowl:
At night I hear the bitter blast
Hoot with the hooting of the owl.
The wild creeks freeze: the ways are strewn
With leaves that clog: beneath the tree
The bird, that set its toil to tune,
And made a home for melody,
Lies dead beneath the snow-white moon.

OCTOBER

Far off a wind blew, and I heard
Wild echoes of the woods reply—
The herald of some royal word,
With bannered trumpet, blown on high,
Meseemed then passed me by:

Who summoned marvels there to meet,
With pomp, upon a cloth of gold;
Where berries of the bittersweet,
That, splitting, showed the coals they hold,
Sowed garnets through the wold:

Where, under tents of maples, seeds
Of smooth carnelian, oval red,
The spice-bush spangled: where, like beads,
The dogwood's rounded rubies—fed
With fire—blazed and bled.

And there I saw amid the rout
Of months, in richness cavalier,
A minnesinger—lips apout;
A gypsy face; straight as a spear;
A rose stuck in his ear:

Eyes, sparkling like old German wine,
All mirth and moonlight; naught to spare
Of slender beard, that lent a line
To his short lip; October there,
With chestnut curling hair.

His brown baretta swept its plume
Red through the leaves; his purple hose,
Puffed at the thighs, made gleam of gloom;

His tawny doublet, slashed with rose,
And laced with crimson bows,

Outshone the wahoo's scarlet pride,
The hawk, in rich vermilion dressed:
A dagger dangling at his side,
A slim lute, banded to his breast,
Whereon his hands were pressed.

I saw him come.... And, lo, to hear
The lilt of his approaching lute,
No wonder that the regnant Year
Bent down her beauty, blushing mute,
Her heart beneath his foot.

FRIENDS

Down through the woods, along the way
That fords the stream; by rock and tree,
Where in the bramble-bell the bee
Swings; and through twilights green and gray
The redbird flashes suddenly,
My thoughts went wandering to-day.

I found the fields where, row on row,
The blackberries hang dark with fruit;
Where, nesting at the elder's root,
The partridge whistles soft and low;
The fields, that billow to the foot
Of those old hills we used to know.

There lay the pond, all willow-bound,
On whose bright face, when noons were hot,
We marked the bubbles rise; some plot
To lure us in; while all around
Our heads,—like faery fancies,—shot
The dragonflies without a sound.

The pond, above which evening bent
To gaze upon her gypsy face;
Wherein the twinkling night would trace
A vague, inverted firmament;
In which the green frogs tuned their bass,
And firefly sparkles came and went.

The oldtime place we often ranged,
When we were playmates, you and I;
The oldtime fields, with boyhood's sky
Still blue above them!—Naught was changed:
Nothing.—Alas! then, tell me why
Should we be? whom the years estranged.

COMRADERY

With eyes hand-arched he looks into
The morning's face; then turns away
With truant feet, all wet with dew,
Out for a holiday.

The hill brook sings; incessant stars,
Foam-fashioned, on its restless breast;
And where he wades its water-bars
Its song is happiest.

A comrade of the chinquapin,
He looks into its knotty eyes
And sees its heart; and, deep within,
Its soul that makes him wise.

The wood-thrush knows and follows him,
Who whistles up the birds and bees;
And round him all the perfumes swim
Of woodland loam and trees.

Where'er he pass the silvery springs'
Foam-people sing the flowers awake;
And sappy lips of bark-clad things
Laugh ripe each berried brake.

His touch is a companionship;
His word an old authority:
He comes, a lyric on his lip,
The woodboy—Poesy.

BARE BOUGHS

O heart,—that beat the bird's blithe blood,
The blithe bird's strain, and understood
The song it sang to leaf and bud,—
What dost thou in the wood?

O soul,—that kept the brook's glad flow,
The glad brook's word to sun and moon,—
What dost thou here where song lies low,
And dead the dreams of June?

Where once was heard a voice of song,
The hautboys of the mad winds sing;
Where once a music flowed along,
The rain's wild bugle's ring.

The weedy water frets and ails,
And moans in many a sunless fall;
And, o'er the melancholy, trails
The black crow's eldritch call.

Unhappy brook! O withered wood!
O days, whom Death makes comrades of!
Where are the birds that thrilled the blood
When Life struck hands with Love?

A song, one soared against the blue;
A song, one silvered in the leaves;
A song, one blew where orchards grew
Gold-appled to the eaves.

The birds are flown; the flowers, dead;
And sky and earth are bleak and gray:
Where Joy once went, all light of tread,
Grief haunts the leaf-wild way.

DAYS AND DAYS

The days that clothed white limbs with heat,
And rocked the red rose on their breast,
Have passed with amber-sandaled feet
Into the ruby-gated west.

These were the days that filled the heart
With overflowing riches of
Life, in whose soul no dream shall start
But hath its origin in love.

Now come the days gray-huddled in
The haze; whose foggy footsteps drip;
Who pin beneath a gypsy chin
The frosty marigold and hip.

The days, whose forms fall shadowy
Athwart the heart: whose misty breath
Shapes saddest sweets of memory
Out of the bitterness of death.

AUTUMN SORROW

Ah me! too soon the autumn comes
Among these purple-plaintive hills!
Too soon among the forest gums
Premonitory flame she spills,
Bleak, melancholy flame that kills.

Her white fogs veil the morn, that rims
With wet the moonflower's elfin moons;
And, like exhausted starlight, dims
The last slim lily-disk; and swoons
With scents of hazy afternoons.

Her gray mists haunt the sunset skies,
And build the west's cadaverous fires,
Where Sorrow sits with lonely eyes,
And hands that wake an ancient lyre,
Beside the ghost of dead Desire.

THE TREE-TOAD

I

Secluded, solitary on some underbough,
Or cradled in a leaf, 'mid glimmering light,
Like Puck thou crouchest: Haply watching how
The slow toadstool comes bulging, moony white,
Through loosening loam; or how, against the night,
The glowworm gathers silver to endow
The darkness with; or how the dew conspires
To hang, at dusk, with lamps of chilly fires
Each blade that shrivels now.

II

O vague confederate of the whippoorwill,
Of owl and cricket and the katydid!
Thou gatherest up the silence in one shrill
Vibrating note and send'st it where, half hid
In cedars, twilight sleeps—each azure lid
Drooping a line of golden eyeball still.—
Afar, yet near, I hear thy dewy voice
Within the Garden of the Hours apoise
On dusk's deep daffodil.

III

Minstrel of moisture! silent when high noon
Shows her tanned face among the thirsting clover
And parching meadows, thy tenebrious tune
Wakes with the dew or when the rain is over.
Thou troubadour of wetness and damp lover
Of all cool things! admitted comrade boon
Of twilight's hush, and little intimate
Of eve's first fluttering star and delicate
Round rim of rainy moon!

IV

Art trumpeter of Dwarfland? does thy horn
Inform the gnomes and goblins of the hour
When they may gambol under haw and thorn,
Straddling each winking web and twinkling flower?
Or bell-ringer of Elfland? whose tall tower
The liriodendron is? from whence is borne
The elfin music of thy bell's deep bass,
To summon Faeries to their starlit maze,
To summon them or warn.

THE CHIPMUNK

I

He makes a roadway of the crumbling fence,
Or on the fallen tree,—brown as a leaf
Fall stripes with russet,—gambols down the dense
Green twilight of the woods. We see not whence
He comes, nor whither (in a time so brief)
He vanishes—swift carrier of some Fay,
Some pixy steed that haunts our child-belief—
A goblin glimpse upon some wildwood way.

II

What harlequin mood of nature qualified
Him so with happiness? and limbed him with
Such young activity as winds, that ride
The ripples, have, dancing on every side?
As sunbeams know, that urge the sap and pith
Through hearts of trees? yet made him to delight,
Gnome-like, in darkness,—like a moonlight myth,—
Lairing in labyrinths of the under night.

III

Here, by a rock, beneath the moss, a hole
Leads to his home, the den wherein he sleeps;
Lulled by near noises of the laboring mole
Tunneling its mine—like some ungainly Troll—
Or by the tireless cricket there that keeps
Picking its rusty and monotonous lute;
Or slower sounds of grass that creeps and creeps,
And trees unrolling mighty root on root.

IV

Such is the music of his sleeping hours.
Day hath another—'tis a melody
He trips to, made by the assembled flowers,
And light and fragrance laughing 'mid the bowers,
And ripeness busy with the acorn-tree.

Such strains, perhaps, as filled with mute amaze
(The silent music of Earth's ecstasy)
The Satyr's soul, the Faun of classic days.

THE WILD IRIS

That day we wandered 'mid the hills,—so lone
Clouds are not lonelier, the forest lay
In emerald darkness round us. Many a stone
And gnarly root, gray-mossed, made wild our way:
And many a bird the glimmering light along
Showered the golden bubbles of its song.

Then in the valley, where the brook went by,
Silvering the ledges that it rippled from,—
An isolated slip of fallen sky,
Epitomizing heaven in its sum,—
An iris bloomed—blue, as if, flower-disguised,
The gaze of Spring had there materialized.

I have forgotten many things since then—
Much beauty and much happiness and grief;
And toiled and dreamed among my fellow-men,
Rejoicing in the knowledge life is brief.
"Tis winter now," so says each barren bough;
And face and hair proclaim 'tis winter now.

I would forget the gladness of that spring!
I would forget that day when she and I,
Between the bird-song and the blossoming,
Went hand in hand beneath the soft May sky!—
Much is forgotten, yea—and yet, and yet,
The things we would we never can forget.

Nor I how May then minted treasuries
Of crowfoot gold; and molded out of light
The sorrel's cups, whose elfin chalices
Of limpid spar were streaked with rosy white:
Nor all the stars of twinkling spiderwort,
And mandrake moons with which her brows were girt.

But most of all, yea, it were well for me,
Me and my heart, that I forget that flower,
The blue wild iris, azure fleur-de-lis,
That she and I together found that hour.
Its recollection can but emphasize
The pain of loss, remindful of her eyes.

DROUTH

I

The hot sunflowers by the glaring pike
Lift shields of sultry brass; the teasel tops,
Pink-thorned, advance with bristling spike on spike
Against the furious sunlight. Field and copse
Are sick with summer: now, with breathless stops,
The locusts cymbal; now grasshoppers beat
Their castanets: and rolled in dust, a team,—
Like some mean life wrapped in its sorry dream,—
An empty wagon rattles through the heat.

II

Where now the blue wild iris? flowers whose mouths
Are moist and musky? Where the sweet-breathed mint,
That made the brook-bank herby? Where the South's
Wild morning-glories, rich in hues, that hint
At coming showers that the rainbows tint?
Where all the blossoms that the wildwood knows?
The frail oxalis hidden in its leaves;
The Indian-pipe, pale as a soul that grieves;
The freckled touch-me-not and forest rose.

III

Dead! dead! all dead beside the drouth-burnt brook,
Shrouded in moss or in the shriveled grass.
Where waved their bells, from which the wild-bee shook
The dewdrop once,—gaunt, in a nightmare mass,
The rank weeds crowd; through which the cattle pass,
Thirsty and lean, seeking some meager spring,
Closed in with thorns, on which stray bits of wool
The panting sheep have left, that sought the cool,
From morn till evening wearily wandering.

IV

No bird is heard; no throat to whistle awake
The sleepy hush; to let its music leak
Fresh, bubble-like, through bloom-roofs of the brake:
Only the green-gray heron, famine-weak,—
Searching the stale pools of the minnowless creek,—
Utters its call; and then the rain-crow, too,
False prophet now, croaks to the stagnant air;
While overhead,—still as if painted there,—
A buzzard hangs, black on the burning blue.

RAIN

Around, the stillness deepened; then the grain
Went wild with wind; and every briery lane
Was swept with dust; and then, tempestuous black,
Hillward the tempest heaved a monster back,
That on the thunder leaned as on a cane;
And on huge shoulders bore a cloudy pack,
That gullied gold from many a lightning-crack:
One big drop splashed and wrinkled down the pane,
And then field, hill, and wood were lost in rain.

At last, through clouds,—as from a cavern hewn.
Into night's heart,—the sun burst angry roon;
And every cedar, with its weight of wet,
Against the sunset's fiery splendor set,
Frightened to beauty, seemed with rubies strewn:
Then in drenched gardens, like sweet phantoms met,
Dim odors rose of pink and mignonette;
And in the east a confidence, that soon
Grew to the calm assurance of the moon.

AT SUNSET

Into the sunset's turquoise marge
The moon dips, like a pearly barge
Enchantment sails through magic seas
To faeryland Hesperides,

Over the hills and away.

Into the fields, in ghost-gray gown,
The young-eyed Dusk comes slowly down;
Her apron filled with stars she stands,
And one or two slip from her hands
Over the hills and away.

Above the wood's black caldron bends
The witch-faced Night and, muttering, blends
The dew and heat, whose bubbles make
The mist and musk that haunt the brake
Over the hills and away.

Oh, come with me, and let us go
Beyond the sunset lying low;
Beyond the twilight and the night,
Into Love's kingdom of long light,
Over the hills and away.

THE LEAF-CRICKET

I

Small twilight singer
Of dew and mist: thou ghost-gray, gossamer winger
Of dusk's dim glimmer,
How chill thy note sounds; how thy wings of shimmer
Vibrate, soft-sighing,
Meseems, for Summer that is dead or dying.
I stand and listen,
And at thy song the garden-beds, that glisten
With rose and lily,
Seem touched with sadness; and the tuberose chilly,
Breathing around its cold and colorless breath,
Fills the pale evening with wan hints of death.

II

I see thee quaintly
Beneath the leaf; thy shell-shaped winglets faintly—
(As thin as spangle
Of cobwebbed rain)—held up at airy angle;
I hear thy tinkle
With faery notes the silvery stillness sprinkle;

Investing wholly
The moonlight with divinest melancholy:
Until, in seeming,
I see the Spirit of Summer sadly dreaming
Amid her ripened orchards, russet-strewn,
Her great, grave eyes fixed on the harvest-moon.

III

As dewdrops beady;
As mist minute, thy notes ring low and reedy:
The vaguest vapor
Of melody, now near; now, like some taper
Of sound, far-fading—
Thou will-o'-wisp of music aye evading.
Among the bowers,
The fog-washed stalks of Autumn's weeds and flowers,
By hill and hollow,

I hear thy murmur and in vain I follow—
Thou jack-o'-lantern voice, thou pixy cry,
Thou dirge, that tellest Beauty she must die.

IV

And when the frantic
Wild winds of Autumn with the dead leaves antic;
And walnuts scatter
The mire of lanes; and dropping acorns patter
In grove and forest,
Like some frail grief with the rude blast thou warrest,
Sending thy slender
Far cry against the gale, that, rough, untender,
Untouched of sorrow,
Sweeps thee aside, where, haply, I to-morrow
Shall find thee lying—tiny, cold and crushed,
Thy weak wings folded and thy music hushed.

THE WIND OF WINTER

The Winter Wind, the wind of death,
Who knocked upon my door,
Now through the keyhole entereth,
Invisible and hoar:
He breathes around his icy breath
And treads the flickering floor.

I heard him, wandering in the night,
Tap at my windowpane;
With ghostly fingers, snowy white,
I heard him tug in vain,
Until the shuddering candlelight
Did cringe with fear and strain.

The fire, awakened by his voice,
Leapt up with frantic arms,
Like some wild babe that greets with noise
Its father home who storms,
With rosy gestures that rejoice,
And crimson kiss that warms.

Now in the hearth he sits and, drowned
Among the ashes, blows;
Or through the room goes stealing round
On cautious-creeping toes,
Deep-mantled in the drowsy sound
Of night that sleets and snows.

And oft, like some thin faery-thing,
The stormy hush amid,
I hear his captive trebles sing
Beneath the kettle's lid;
Or now a harp of elfland string
In some dark cranny hid.

Again I hear him, implike, whine,
Cramped in the gusty flue;
Or knotted in the resinous pine
Raise goblin cry and hue,
While through the smoke his eyeballs shine,
A sooty red and blue.

At last I hear him, nearing dawn,
Take up his roaring broom,

And sweep wild leaves from wood and lawn,
And from the heavens the gloom,
To show the gaunt world lying wan,
And morn's cold rose a-bloom.

THE OWLET

I

When dusk is drowned in drowsy dreams,
And slow the hues of sunset die;
When firefly and moth go by,
And in still streams the new moon seems
Another moon and sky:
Then from the hills there comes a cry,
The owlet's cry:
A shivering voice that sobs and screams,
With terror screams:—

"Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?
Who rides through the dusk and dew,
With a pair of horns,
As thin as thorns,
And face a bubble-blue?—
Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?"

II

When night has dulled the lily's white,
And opened wide the moonflower's eyes;
When pale mists rise and veil the skies,
And round the height in whispering flight
The night-wind sounds and sighs:
Then in the wood again it cries,
The owlet cries:
A shivering voice that calls in fright,
In maundering fright:—

"Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?
Who walks with a shuffling shoe
'Mid the gusty trees,
With a face none sees,
And a form as ghostly, too?—
Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?"

III

When midnight leans a listening ear
And tinkles on her insect lutes;
When 'mid the roots the cricket flutes,
And marsh and mere, now far, now near,
A jack-o'-lantern foots:
Then o'er the pool again it hoots,
The owlet hoots:
A voice that shivers as with fear,
That cries with fear:—

"Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?
Who creeps with his glowworm crew
Above the mire
With a corpse-light fire,
As only dead men do?—

Who, who, who!
Who is it, who is it, who-o-o?"

EVENING ON THE FARM

From out the hills where twilight stands,
Above the shadowy pasture lands,
With strained and strident cry,
Beneath pale skies that sunset bands,
The bull-bats fly.

A cloud hangs over, strange of shape,
And, colored like the half-ripe grape,
Seems some uneven stain
On heaven's azure; thin as crape,
And blue as rain.

By ways, that sunset's sardonyx
O'erflares, and gates the farm-boy clicks,
Through which the cattle came,
The mullein-stalks seem giant wicks
Of downy flame.

From woods no glimmer enters in,
Above the streams that, wandering, win
To where the wood pool bids,
Those haunters of the dusk begin,—
The katydids.

Adown the dark the firefly marks
Its flight in gold and emerald sparks;
And, loosened from his chain,
The shaggy mastiff bounds and barks,
And barks again.

Each breeze brings scents of hill-heaped hay;
And now an owlet, far away,
Cries twice or thrice, "T-o-o-w-h-o-o";
And cool dim moths of mottled gray
Flit through the dew.

The silence sounds its frog-bassoon,
Where, on the woodland creek's lagoon,—
Pale as a ghostly girl
Lost 'mid the trees,—looks down the moon
With face of pearl.

Within the shed where logs, late hewed,
Smell forest-sweet, and chips of wood
Make blurs of white and brown,
The brood-hen cuddles her warm brood
Of teetering down.

The clattering guineas in the tree
Din for a time; and quietly
The henhouse, near the fence,
Sleeps, save for some brief rivalry
Of cocks and hens.

A cowbell tinkles by the rails,
Where, streaming white in foaming pails,
Milk makes an uddery sound;
While overhead the black bat trails
Around and round.

The night is still. The slow cows chew

A drowsy cud. The bird that flew
And sang is in its nest.
It is the time of falling dew,
Of dreams and rest.

The beehives sleep; and round the walk,
The garden path, from stalk to stalk
The bungling beetle booms,
Where two soft shadows stand and talk
Among the blooms.

The stars are thick: the light is dead
That dyed the west: and Drowsyhead,
Tuning his cricket-pipe,
Nods, and some apple, round and red,
Drops over-ripe.

Now down the road, that shambles by,
A window, shining like an eye
Through climbing rose and gourd,
Shows Age and young Rusticity
Seated at board.

THE LOCUST

Thou pulse of hotness, who, with reedlike breast,
Makest meridian music, long and loud,
Accentuating summer!—Dost thy best
To make the sunbeams fiercer, and to crowd
With lonesomeness the long, close afternoon—
When Labor leans, swart-faced and beady-browed,
Upon his sultry scythe—thou tangible tune
Of heat, whose waves incessantly arise
Quivering and clear beneath the cloudless skies.

Thou singest, and upon his haggard hills
Drouth yawns and rubs his heavy eyes and wakes;
Brushes the hot hair from his face; and fills
The land with death as sullenly he takes
Downward his dusty way. 'Midst woods and fields
At every pool his burning thirst he slakes:
No grove so deep, no bank so high it shields
A spring from him; no creek evades his eye:
He needs but look and they are withered dry.

Thou singest, and thy song is as a spell
Of somnolence to charm the land with sleep;
A thorn of sound that pierces dale and dell,
Diffusing slumber over vale and steep.
Sleepy the forest, nodding sleepy boughs;
Sleepy the pastures with their sleepy sheep:
Sleepy the creek where sleepily the cows
Stand knee-deep; and the very heaven seems
Sleepy and lost in undetermined dreams.

Art thou a rattle that Monotony,
Summer's dull nurse, old sister of slow Time,
Shakes for Day's peevish pleasure, who in glee
Takes its discordant music for sweet rhyme?
Or oboe that the Summer Noontide plays,
Sitting with Ripeness 'neath the orchard tree,
Trying repeatedly the same shrill phrase,
Until the musky peach with weariness
Drops, and the hum of murmuring bees grows less?

THE DEAD DAY

The west builds high a sepulcher
Of cloudy granite and of gold,
Where twilight's priestly hours inter
The Day like some great king of old.

A censer, rimmed with silver fire,
The new moon swings above his tomb;
While, organ-stops of God's own choir,
Star after star throbs in the gloom.

And Night draws near, the sadly sweet—
A nun whose face is calm and fair—
And kneeling at the dead Day's feet
Her soul goes up in mists like prayer.

In prayer, we feel through dewy gleam
And flowery fragrance, and—above
All earth—the ecstasy and dream
That haunt the mystic heart of love.

THE OLD WATER MILL

Wild ridge on ridge the wooded hills arise,
Between whose breezy vistas gulfs of skies
Pilot great clouds like towering argosies,
And hawk and buzzard breast the azure breeze.
With many a foaming fall and glimmering reach
Of placid murmur, under elm and beech,
The creek goes twinkling through long gleams and glooms
Of woodland quiet, summered with perfumes:
The creek, in whose clear shallows minnow-schools
Glitter or dart; and by whose deeper pools
The blue kingfishers and the herons haunt;
That, often startled from the freckled flaunt
Of blackberry-lilies—where they feed or hide—
Trail a lank flight along the forestside
With eery clangor. Here a sycamore
Smooth, wave-uprooted, builds from shore to shore
A headlong bridge; and there, a storm-hurled oak
Lays a long dam, where sand and gravel choke
The water's lazy way. Here mistflower blurs
Its bit of heaven; there the ox-eye stirs
Its gloaming hues of pearl and gold; and here,
A gray, cool stain, like dawn's own atmosphere,
The dim wild carrot lifts its crumpled crest:
And over all, at slender flight or rest,
The dragonflies, like coruscating rays
Of lapis-lazuli and chrysoprase,
Drowsily sparkle through the summer days:
And, dewlap-deep, here from the noontide heat
The bell-hung cattle find a cool retreat;
And through the willows girdling the hill,
Now far, now near, borne as the soft winds will,
Comes the low rushing of the water-mill.

Ah, lovely to me from a little child,
How changed the place! wherein once, undefiled,
The glad communion of the sky and stream
Went with me like a presence and a dream.
Where once the brambled meads and orchardlands,
Poured ripe abundance down with mellow hands
Of summer; and the birds of field and wood

Called to me in a tongue I understood;
And in the tangles of the old rail-fence
Even the insect tumult had some sense,
And every sound a happy eloquence:
And more to me than wisest books can teach
The wind and water said; whose words did reach
My soul, addressing their magnificent speech,—
Raucous and rushing,—from the old mill-wheel,
That made the rolling mill-cogs snore and reel,
Like some old ogre in a faerytale
Nodding above his meat and mug of ale.

How memory takes me back the ways that lead—
As when a boy—through woodland and through mead!
To orchards fruited; or to fields in bloom;
Or briery fallows, like a mighty room,
Through which the winds swing censers of perfume,
And where deep blackberries spread miles of fruit;—
A wildwood feast, that stayed the plowboy's foot
When to the tasseling acres of the corn
He drove his team, fresh in the primrose morn;
And from the liberal banquet, nature lent,
Plucked dewy handfuls as he whistling went.—

A boy once more, I stand with sunburnt feet
And watch the harvester sweep down the wheat;
Or laze with warm limbs in the unstacked straw
Near by the thresher, whose insatiate maw
Devours the sheaves, hot-drawing out its hum—
Like some great sleepy bee, above a bloom,
Made drunk with honey—while, grown big with grain,
The bulging sacks receive the golden rain.
Again I tread the valley, sweet with hay,
And hear the bobwhite calling far away,
Or wood-dove cooing in the elder-brake;
Or see the sassafras bushes madly shake
As swift, a rufous instant, in the glen
The red fox leaps and gallops to his den:
Or, standing in the violet-colored gloam,
Hear roadways sound with holiday riding home
From church or fair, or country barbecue,
Which half the county to some village drew.

How spilled with berries were its summer hills,
And strewn with walnuts all its autumn rills!—
And chestnuts too! burred from the spring's long flowers;
June's, when their tree-tops streamed delirious showers
Of blossoming silver, cool, crepuscular,
And like a nebulous radiance shone afar.—
And maples! how their sappy hearts would pour
Rude troughs of syrup, when the winter hoar
Steamed with the sugar-kettle, day and night,
And, red, the snow was streaked with firelight.
Then it was glorious! the mill-dam's edge
One slope of frosty crystal, laid a ledge
Of pearl across; above which, sleeted trees
Tossed arms of ice, that, clashing in the breeze,
Tinkled the ringing creek with icicles,
Thin as the peal of far-off elfin bells:
A sound that in my city dreams I hear,
That brings before me, under skies that clear,
The old mill in its winter garb of snow,
Its frozen wheel like a hoar beard below,
And its west windows, two deep eyes aglow.

Ah, ancient mill, still do I picture o'er
Thy cobwebbed stairs and loft and grain-strewn floor;
Thy door,—like some brown, honest hand of toil,
And honorable with service of the soil,—
Forever open; to which, on his back
The prosperous farmer bears his bursting sack,
And while the miller measures out his toll,
Again I hear, above the cogs' loud roll,—
That makes stout joist and rafter groan and sway,—
The harmless gossip of the passing day:
Good country talk, that says how so-and-so
Lived, died, or wedded: how curculio
And codling-moth play havoc with the fruit,
Smut ruins the corn and blight the grapes to boot:
Or what is news from town: next county fair:
How well the crops are looking everywhere:—
Now this, now that, on which their interests fix,
Prospects for rain or frost, and politics.
While, all around, the sweet smell of the meal
Filters, warm-pouring from the rolling wheel
Into the bin; beside which, mealy white,
The miller looms, dim in the dusty light.

Again I see the miller's home between
The crinkling creek and hills of beechen green:
Again the miller greets me, gaunt and brown,
Who oft o'erawed my boyhood with his frown
And gray-browed mien: again he tries to reach
My youthful soul with fervid scriptural speech.—
For he, of all the countryside confessed,
The most religious was and goodliest;
A Methodist, who at all meetings led;
Prayed with his family ere they went to bed.
No books except the Bible had he read—
At least so seemed it to my younger head.—
All things of Heaven and Earth he'd prove by this,
Be it a fact or mere hypothesis:
For to his simple wisdom, reverent,
"The Bible says" was all of argument.—
God keep his soul! his bones were long since laid
Among the sunken gravestones in the shade
Of those dark-lichened rocks, that wall around
The family burying-ground with cedars crowned:
Where bristling teasel and the brier combine
With clambering wood-rose and the wildgrape-vine
To hide the stone whereon his name and dates
Neglect, with mossy hand, obliterates.

ARGONAUTS

With argosies of dawn he sails,
And triremes of the dusk,
The Seas of Song, whereon the gales
Are myths that trail wild musk.

He hears the hail of Siren bands
From headlands sunset-kissed;
The Lotus-eaters wave pale hands
Within a land of mist.

For many a league he hears the roar
Of the Symplegades;
And through the far foam of its shore
The Isle of Sappho sees.

All day he looks, with hazy lids,
At gods who cleave the deep;
All night he hears the Nereids
Sing their wild hearts asleep.

When heaven thunders overhead,
And hell upheaves the Vast,
Dim faces of the ocean's dead
Gaze at him from each mast.

He but repeats the oracle
That bade him first set sail;
And cheers his soul with, "All is well!
Go on! I will not fail."

Behold! he sails no earthly bark
And on no earthly sea,
Who down the years into the dark,—
Divine of destiny,—

Holds to his purpose,—ships of Greece,—
Ideal-steered afar,
For whom awaits the Golden Fleece,
The fame that is his star.

"THE MORN THAT BREAKS ITS HEART OF GOLD"

From an ode "In Commemoration of the Founding of the
Massachusetts Bay Colony."

The morn that breaks its heart of gold
Above the purple hills;
The eve, that spills
Its nautilus splendor where the sea is rolled;
The night, that leads the vast procession in
Of stars and dreams,—
The beauty that shall never die or pass:—
The winds, that spin
Of rain the misty mantles of the grass,
And thunder raiment of the mountain-streams;
The sunbeams, penciling with gold the dusk
Green cowls of ancient woods;
The shadows, thridding, veiled with musk,
The moon-pathed solitudes,
Call to my Fancy, saying, "Follow! follow!"
Till, following, I see,—
Fair as a cascade in a rainbowed hollow,—
A dream, a shape, take form,
Clad on with every charm,—

The vision of that Ideality,
Which lured the pioneer in wood and hill,
And beckoned him from earth and sky;
The dream that cannot die,
Their children's children did fulfill,
In stone and iron and wood,
Out of the solitude,
And by a stalwart act
Create a mighty fact—
A Nation, now that stands
Clad on with hope and beauty, strength and song,
Eternal, young and strong,
Planting her heel on wrong,
Her starry banner in triumphant hands....

Within her face the rose
Of Alleghany dawns;
Limbed with Alaskan snows,
Floridian starlight in her eyes,—
Eyes stern as steel yet tender as a fawn's,—
And in her hair
The rapture of her rivers; and the dare,
As perishless as truth,
That o'er the crags of her Sierras flies,
Urging the eagle ardor through her veins,
Behold her where,
Around her radiant youth,

The spirits of the cataracts and plains,
The genii of the floods and forests, meet,
In rainbow mists circling her brow and feet:
The forces vast that sit
In session round her; powers paraclete,
That guard her presence; awful forms and fair,
Making secure her place;
Guiding her surely as the worlds through space
Do laws sidereal; edicts, thunder-lit,
Of skyed eternity, in splendor borne
On planetary wings of night and morn.

* * * * *

From her high place she sees
Her long procession of accomplished acts,
Cloud-winged refulgences
Of thoughts in steel and stone, of marble dreams,
Lift up tremendous battlements,
Sun-blinding, built of facts;
While in her soul she seems,
Listening, to hear, as from innumerable tents,
Æonian thunder, wonder, and applause
Of all the heroic ages that are gone;
Feeling secure
That, as her Past, her Future shall endure,
As did her Cause
When redly broke the dawn
Of fierce rebellion, and, beneath its star,
The firmaments of war
Poured down infernal rain,
And North and South lay bleeding mid their slain.
And now, no less, shall her great Cause prevail,
More so in peace than war,
Through the thrilled wire and electric rail,
Carrying her message far:
Shaping her dream
Within the brain of steam,
That, with a myriad hands,
Labors unceasingly, and knits her lands
In firmer union; joining plain and stream
With steel; and binding shore to shore
With bands of iron;—nerves and arteries,
Along whose adamant forever pour
Her concrete thoughts, her tireless energies.

A VOICE ON THE WIND

I

She walks with the wind on the windy height

When the rocks are loud and the waves are white,
And all night long she calls through the night,
"O my children, come home!"
Her bleak gown, torn as a tattered cloud,
Tosses around her like a shroud,
While over the deep her voice rings loud,—
"O my children, come home, come home!
O my children, come home!"

II

Who is she who wanders alone,
When the wind drives sheer and the rain is blown?
Who walks all night and makes her moan,
"O my children, come home!"
Whose face is raised to the blinding gale;
Whose hair blows black and whose eyes are pale,
While over the world goes by her wail,—
"O my children, come home, come home!
O my children, come home!"

III

She walks with the wind in the windy wood;
The dark rain drips from her hair and hood,
And her cry sobs by, like a ghost pursued,
"O my children, come home!"
Where the trees loom gaunt and the rocks stretch drear,
The owl and the fox crouch back with fear,
As wild through the wood her voice they hear,—
"O my children, come home, come home!
O my children, come home!"

IV

Who is she who shudders by
When the boughs blow bare and the dead leaves fly?
Who walks all night with her wailing cry,
"O my children, come home!"
Who, strange of look, and wild of tongue,
With wan feet wounded and hands wild-wrung,
Sweeps on and on with her cry, far-flung,—
"O my children, come home, come home!
O my children, come home!"

V

'Tis the Spirit of Autumn, no man sees,
The mother of Death and of Mysteries,
Who cries on the wind all night to these,
"O my children, come home!"
The Spirit of Autumn, pierced with pain,
Calling her children home again,
Death and Dreams, through ruin and rain,—
"O my children, come home, come home!
O my children, come home!"

REQUIEM

I

No more for him, where hills look down,
Shall Morning crown
Her rainy brow with blossom bands!—

The Morning Hours, whose rosy hands
Drop wildflowers of the breaking skies
Upon the sod 'neath which he lies.—
No more for him! No more! No more!

II

No more for him, where waters sleep,
Shall Evening heap
The long gold of the perfect days!
The Eventide, whose warm hand lays
Great poppies of the afterglow
Upon the turf he rests below.—
No more for him! No more! no more!

III

No more for him, where woodlands loom,
Shall Midnight bloom
The star-flowered acres of the blue!
The Midnight Hours, whose dim hands strew
Dead leaves of darkness, hushed and deep,
Upon the grave where he doth sleep.—
No more for him! No more! No more!

IV

The hills, that Morning's footsteps wake:
The waves that take
A brightness from the Eve; the woods
And solitudes, o'er which Night broods,
Their Spirits have, whose parts are one
With him, whose mortal part is done.
Whose part is done.

LYNCHERS

At the moon's down-going let it be
On the quarry hill with its one gnarled tree.

The red-rock road of the underbrush,
Where the woman came through the summer hush.

The sumac high and the elder thick,
Where we found the stone and the ragged stick.

The trampled road of the thicket, full
Of footprints down to the quarry pool.

The rocks that ooze with the hue of lead,
Where we found her lying stark and dead.

The scraggy wood; the negro hut,
With its doors and windows locked and shut.

A secret signal; a foot's rough tramp;
A knock at the door; a lifted lamp.

An oath; a scuffle; a ring of masks;
A voice that answers a voice that asks.

A group of shadows; the moon's red fleck;
A running noose and a man's bared neck.

A word, a curse, and a shape that swings;
The lonely night and a bat's black wings.

At the moon's down-going let it be
On the quarry hill with its one gnarled tree.

THE PARTING

She passed the thorn-trees, whose gaunt branches tossed
Their spider-shadows round her; and the breeze,
Beneath the ashen moon, was full of frost,
And mouthed and mumbled to the sickly trees,
Like some starved hag who sees her children freeze.

Dry-eyed she waited by the sycamore.
Some stars made misty blotches in the sky.
And all the wretched willows on the shore
Looked faded as a jaundiced cheek or eye.
She felt their pity and could only sigh.

And then his skiff ground on the river rocks.
Whistling he came into the shadow made
By that dead tree. He kissed her dark brown locks;
And round her form his eager arms were laid.
Passive she stood, her secret unbetrayed.

And then she spoke, while still his greeting kiss
Ached in her hair. She did not dare to lift
Her eyes to his—her anguished eyes to his,
While tears smote crystal in her throat. One rift
Of weakness humored might set all adrift.

Fields over which a path, overwhelmed with burrs
And ragweeds, noisy with the grasshoppers,
Leads,—lost, irresolute as paths the cows
Wear through the woods,—unto a woodshed; then,
With wrecks of windows, to a huddled house,
Where men have murdered men.

A house, whose tottering chimney, clay and rock,
Is seamed and crannied; whose lame door and lock
Are bullet-bored; around which, there and here,
Are sinister stains.—One dreads to look around.—
The place seems thinking of that time of fear
And dares not breathe a sound.

Within is emptiness: The sunlight falls
On faded journals papering the walls;
On advertisement chromos, torn with time,
Around a hearth where wasps and spiders build.—
The house is dead: meseems that night of crime
It, too, was shot and killed.

KU KLUX

We have sent him seeds of the melon's core,
And nailed a warning upon his door:
By the Ku Klux laws we can do no more.

Down in the hollow, 'mid crib and stack,
The roof of his low-porched house looms black;
Not a line of light at the door-sill's crack.

Yet arm and mount! and mask and ride!
The hounds can sense though the fox may hide!
And for a word too much men oft have died.

The clouds blow heavy toward the moon.
The edge of the storm will reach it soon.
The kildee cries and the lonesome loon.

The clouds shall flush with a wilder glare
Than the lightning makes with its angled flare,
When the Ku Klux verdict is given there.

In the pause of the thunder rolling low,
A rifle's answer—who shall know
From the wind's fierce hurl and the rain's black blow?

Only the signature, written grim
At the end of the message brought to him—
A hempen rope and a twisted limb.

So arm and mount! and mask and ride!
The hounds can sense though the fox may hide!—
For a word too much men oft have died.

EIDOLONS

The white moth-mullein brushed its slim
Cool, faery flowers against his knee;
In places where the way lay dim
The branches, arching suddenly,
Made tomblike mystery for him.

The wild-rose and the elder, drenched
With rain, made pale a misty place,—
From which, as from a ghost, he blenched;
He walking with averted face,
And lips in desolation clenched.

For far within the forest,—where
Weird shadows stood like phantom men,
And where the ground-hog dug its lair,
The she-fox whelped and had her den,—
The thing kept calling, buried there.

One dead trunk, like a ruined tower,
Dark-green with toppling trailers, shoved
Its wild wreck o'er the bush; one bower
Looked like a dead man, capped and gloved,
The one who haunted him each hour.

Now at his side he heard it: thin
As echoes of a thought that speaks
To conscience. Listening with his chin
Upon his palm, against his cheeks
He felt the moon's white finger win.

And now the voice was still: and lo,
With eyes that stared on naught but night,
He saw?—what none on earth shall know!—
Was it the face that far from sight
Had lain here, buried long ago?

But men who found him,—thither led
By the wild fox,—within that place
Read in his stony eyes, 'tis said,
The thing he saw there, face to face,
The thing that left him staring dead.

THE MAN HUNT

The woods stretch deep to the mountain side,
And the brush is wild where a man may hide.

They have brought the bloodhounds up again
To the roadside rock where they found the slain.

They have brought the bloodhounds up, and they
Have taken the trail to the mountain way.

Three times they circled the trail and crossed;
And thrice they found it and thrice they lost.

Now straight through the trees and the underbrush
They follow the scent through the forest's hush.

And their deep-mouthed bay is a pulse of fear
In the heart of the wood that the man must hear.

The man who crouches among the trees
From the stern-faced men who follow these.

A huddle of rocks that the ooze has mossed,
And the trail of the hunted again is lost.

An upturned pebble; a bit of ground
A heel has trampled—the trail is found.

And the woods re-echo the bloodhounds' bay
As again they take to the mountain way.

A rock; a ribbon of road; a ledge,
With a pine tree clutching its crumbling edge.

A pine, that the lightning long since clave,
Whose huge roots hollow a ragged cave.

A shout; a curse; and a face aghast;
The human quarry is laired at last.

The human quarry with clay-clogged hair
And eyes of terror who waits them there.

That glares and crouches and rising then
Hurls clods and curses at dogs and men.

Until the blow of a gun-butt lays
Him stunned and bleeding upon his face.

A rope; a prayer; and an oak-tree near,
And a score of hands to swing him clear.

A grim, black thing for the setting sun
And the moon and the stars to gaze upon.

MY ROMANCE

If it so befalls that the midnight hovers
In mist no moonlight breaks,
The leagues of the years my spirit covers,
And my self myself forsakes.

And I live in a land of stars and flowers,
White cliffs by a silvery sea;
And the pearly points of her opal towers
From the mountains beckon me.

And I think that I know that I hear her calling
From a casement bathed with light—
Through music of waters in waters falling
Mid palms from a mountain height.

And I feel that I think my love's awaited
By the romance of her charms;
That her feet are early and mine belated
In a world that chains my arms.

But I break my chains and the rest is easy—
In the shadow of the rose,
Snow-white, that blooms in her garden breezy,
We meet and no one knows.

And we dream sweet dreams and kiss sweet kisses;
The world—it may live or die!
The world that forgets; that never misses
The life that has long gone by.

We speak old vows that have long been spoken;
And weep a long-gone woe:
For you must know our hearts were broken
Hundreds of years ago.

A MAID WHO DIED OLD

Frail, shrunken face, so pinched and worn,
That life has carved with care and doubt!
So weary waiting, night and morn,
For that which never came about!
Pale lamp, so utterly forlorn,
In which God's light at last is out.

Gray hair, that lies so thin and prim
On either side the sunken brows!
And soldered eyes, so deep and dim,
No word of man could now arouse!
And hollow hands, so virgin slim,
Forever clasped in silent vows!

Poor breasts! that God designed for love,
For baby lips to kiss and press;
That never felt, yet dreamed thereof,
The human touch, the child caress—
That lie like shriveled blooms above
The heart's long-perished happiness.

O withered body, Nature gave
For purposes of death and birth,
That never knew, and could but crave
Those things perhaps that make life worth,—
Rest now, alas! within the grave,
Sad shell that served no end of Earth.

BALLAD OF LOW-LIE-DOWN

John-A-Dreams and Harum-Scarum
Came a-riding into town:
At the Sign o' the Jug-and-Jorum
There they met with Low-lie-down.

Brave in shoes of Romany leather,
Bodice blue and gypsy gown,

And a cap of fur and feather,
In the inn sat Low-lie-down.

Harum-Scarum kissed her lightly;
Smiled into her eyes of brown:
Clasped her waist and held her tightly,
Laughing, "Love me, Low-lie-down!"

Then with many an oath and swagger,
As a man of great renown,
On the board he clapped his dagger,
Called for sack and sat him down.

So a while they laughed together;
Then he rose and with a frown
Sighed, "While still 'tis pleasant weather,
I must leave thee, Low-lie-down."

So away rode Harum-Scarum;
With a song rode out of town;
At the Sign o' the Jug-and-Jorum
Weeping tarried Low-lie-down.

Then this John-a-dreams, in tatters,
In his pocket ne'er a crown,
Touched her, saying, "Wench, what matters!
Dry your eyes and, come, sit down.

"Here's my hand: we'll roam together,
Far away from thorp and town.
Here's my heart,—for any weather,—
And my dreams, too, Low-lie-down.

"Some men call me dreamer, poet:
Some men call me fool and clown—
What I am but you shall know it,
Only you, sweet Low-lie-down."

For a little while she pondered:
Smiled: then said, "Let care go drown!"
Up and kissed him.... Forth they wandered,
John-a-dreams and Low-lie-down.

ROMANCE

Thus have I pictured her:—In Arden old
A white-browed maiden with a falcon eye,
Rose-flushed of face, with locks of wind-blown gold,
Teaching her hawks to fly.

Or, 'mid her boar-hounds, panting with the heat,
In huntsman green, sounding the hunt's wild prize,
Plumed, dagger-belted, while beneath her feet
The spear-pierced monster dies.

Or in Brécéliand, on some high tower,
Clad white in samite, last of her lost race,
My soul beholds her, lovelier than a flower,
Gazing with pensive face.

Or, robed in raiment of romantic lore,
Like Oriana, dark of eye and hair,
Riding through realms of legend evermore,
And ever young and fair.

Or now like Bradamant, as brave as just,

In complete steel, her pure face lit with scorn,
At giant castles, dens of demon lust,
Winding her bugle-horn.

Another Una; and in chastity
A second Britomart; in beauty far
O'er her who led King Charles's chivalry
And Paynim lands to war....

Now she, from Avalon's deep-dingled bowers,—
'Mid which white stars and never-waning moons
Make marriage; and dim lips of musk-mouthed flowers
Sigh faint and fragrant tunes,—

Implores me follow; and, in shadowy shapes
Of sunset, shows me,—mile on misty mile
Of purple precipice,—all the haunted capes
Of her enchanted isle.

Where, bowered in bosks and overgrown with vine,
Upon a headland breasting violet seas,
Her castle towers, like a dream divine,
With stairs and galleries.

And at her casement, Circe-beautiful,
Above the surgeless reaches of the deep,
She sits, while, in her gardens, fountains lull
The perfumed wind asleep.

Or, round her brow a diadem of spars,
She leans and hearkens, from her raven height,
The nightingales that, choiring to the stars,
Take with wild song the night.

Or, where the moon is mirrored in the waves,
To mark, deep down, the Sea King's city rolled,
Wrought of huge shells and labyrinthine caves,
Ribbed pale with pearl and gold.

There doth she wait forever; and the kings
Of all the world have wooed her: but she cares
For none but him, the Love, that dreams and sings,
That sings and dreams and dares.

AMADIS AND ORIANA

From "Beltenebros at Miraflores"

O sunset, from the springs of stars
Draw down thy cataracts of gold;
And belt their streams with burning bars
Of ruby on which flame is rolled:
Drench dingles with laburnum light;
Drown every vale in violet blaze:
Rain rose-light down; and, poppy-bright,
Die downward o'er the hills of haze,
And bring at last the stars of night!

The stars and moon! that silver world,
Which, like a spirit, faces west,
Her foam-white feet with light empearled,
Bearing white flame within her breast:
Earth's sister sphere of fire and snow,
Who shows to Earth her heart's pale heat,
And bids her mark its pulses glow,
And hear their crystal currents beat

With beauty, lighting all below.

O cricket, with thy elfin pipe,
That tinkles in the grass and grain;
And dove-pale buds, that, dropping, stripe
The glen's blue night, and smell of rain;
O nightingale, that so dost wail
On yonder blossoming branch of snow,
Thrill, fill the wild deer-haunted dale,
Where Oriana, walking slow,
Comes, thro' the moonlight, dreamy pale.

She comes to meet me!—Earth and air
Grow radiant with another light.
In her dark eyes and her dark hair
Are all the stars and all the night:
She comes! I clasp her!—and it is
As if no grief had ever been.—
In all the world for us who kiss
There are no other women or men
But Oriana and Amadis.

THE ROSICRUCIAN

I

The tripod flared with a purple spark,
And the mist hung emerald in the dark:
Now he stooped to the lilac flame
Over the glare of the amber embers,
Thrice to utter no earthly name;
Thrice, like a mind that half remembers;
Bathing his face in the magic mist
Where the brilliance burned like an amethyst.

II

"Sylph, whose soul was born of mine,
Born of the love that made me thine,
Once more flash on my eyes! Again
Be the loved caresses taken!
Lip to lip let our forms remain!—
Here in the circle sense, awaken!
Ere spirit meet spirit, the flesh laid by,
Let me touch thee, and let me die."

III

Sunset heavens may burn, but never
Know such splendor! There bloomed an ever
Opaline orb, where the sylphid rose
A shape of luminous white; diviner
White than the essence of light that sows
The moons and suns through space; and finer
Than radiance born of a shooting-star,
Or the wild Aurora that streams afar.

IV

"Look on the face of the soul to whom
Thou givest thy soul like added perfume!
Thou, who heard'st me, who long had prayed,
Waiting alone at morning's portal!—
Thus on thy lips let my lips be laid,

Love, who hast made me all immortal!
Give me thine arms now! Come and rest
Weariness out on my beaming breast!"

v

Was it her soul? or the sapphire fire
That sang like the note of a seraph's lyre?
Out of her mouth there fell no word—
She spake with her soul, as a flower speaketh.

Fragrant messages none hath heard,
Which the sense divines when the spirit seeketh....
And he seemed alone in a place so dim
That the spirit's face, who was gazing at him,
For its burning eyes he could not see:
Then he knew he had died; that she and he
Were one; and he saw that this was she.

THE AGE OF GOLD

The clouds that tower in storm, that beat
Arterial thunder in their veins;
The wildflowers lifting, shyly sweet,
Their perfect faces from the plains,—
All high, all lowly things of Earth
For no vague end have had their birth.

Low strips of mist that mesh the moon
Above the foaming waterfall;
And mountains, that God's hand hath hewn,
And forests, where the great winds call,—
Within the grasp of such as see
Are parts of a conspiracy;

To seize the soul with beauty; hold
The heart with love: and thus fulfill
Within ourselves the Age of Gold,
That never died, and never will,—
As long as one true nature feels
The wonders that the world reveals.

BEAUTY AND ART

The gods are dead; but still for me
Lives on in wildwood brook and tree
Each myth, each old divinity.

For me still laughs among the rocks
The Naiad; and the Dryad's locks
Drop perfume on the wildflower flocks.

The Satyr's hoof still prints the loam;
And, whiter than the wind-blown foam,
The Oread haunts her mountain home.

To him, whose mind is fain to dwell
With loveliness no time can quell,
All things are real, imperishable.

To him—whatever facts may say—
Who sees the soul beneath the clay,
Is proof of a diviner day.

The very stars and flowers preach
A gospel old as God, and teach
Philosophy a child may reach;

That cannot die; that shall not cease;
That lives through idealities
Of Beauty, ev'n as Rome and Greece.

That lifts the soul above the clod,
And, working out some period
Of art, is part and proof of God.

THE SEA SPIRIT

Ah me! I shall not waken soon
From dreams of such divinity!
A spirit singing 'neath the moon
To me.

Wild sea-spray driven of the storm
Is not so wildly white as she,
Who beckoned with a foam-white arm
To me.

With eyes dark green, and golden-green
Long locks that rippled drippingly,
Out of the green wave she did lean
To me.

And sang; till Earth and Heaven seemed
A far, forgotten memory,
And more than Heaven in her who gleamed
On me.

Sleep, sweeter than love's face or home;
And death's immutability;
And music of the plangent foam,
For me!

Sweep over her! with all thy ships,
With all thy stormy tides, O sea!—
The memory of immortal lips
For me!

GARGAPHIE

"Succinctae sacra Dianae".—OVID

There the ragged sunlight lay
Tawny on thick ferns and gray
On dark waters: dimmer,
Lone and deep, the cypress grove
Bowered mystery and wove
Braided lights, like those that love
On the pearl plumes of a dove
Faint to gleam and glimmer.

II

There centennial pine and oak
Into stormy cadence broke:
Hollow rocks gloomed, slanting,
Echoing in dim arcade,
Looming with long moss, that made

Twilight streaks in tatters laid:
Where the wild hart, hunt-affrayed,
Plunged the water, panting.

III

Poppies of a sleepy gold
Mooned the gray-green darkness rolled
Down its vistas, making
Wisp-like blurs of flame. And pale
Stole the dim deer down the vale:
And the haunting nightingale
Throbbled unseen—the olden tale
All its wild heart breaking.

IV

There the hazy serpolet,
Dewy cistus, blooming wet,
Blushed on bank and boulder;
There the cyclamen, as wan
As first footsteps of the dawn,
Carpeted the spotted lawn:
Where the nude nymph, dripping drawn,
Basked a wildflower shoulder.

V

In the citrine shadows there
What tall presences and fair,
Godlike, stood!—or, gracious
As the rock-rose there that grew,
Delicate and dim as dew,
Stepped from boles of oaks, and drew
Faunlike forms to follow, who
Filled the forest spacious!—

VI

Guarding that Boeotian
Valley so no foot of man
Soiled its silence holy
With profaning tread—save one,
The Hyantian: Actæon,
Who beheld, and might not shun
Pale Diana's wrath; undone
By his own mad folly.

VII

Lost it lies—that valley: sleeps
In serene enchantment; keeps
Beautiful its banished
Bowers that no man may see;
Fountains that her deity
Haunts, and every rock and tree
Where her hunt goes swinging free
As in ages vanished.

THE DEAD OREAD

Her heart is still and leaps no more
With holy passion when the breeze,
Her whilom playmate, as before,

Comes with the language of the bees,
Sad songs her mountain cedars sing,
And water-music murmuring.

Her calm white feet,—erst fleet and fast
As Daphne's when a god pursued,—
No more will dance like sunlight past
The gold-green vistas of the wood,
Where every quailing floweret
Smiled into life where they were set.

Hers were the limbs of living light,
And breasts of snow; as virginal
As mountain drifts; and throat as white
As foam of mountain waterfall;
And hyacinthine curls, that streamed
Like crag-born mists, and gloomed and gleamed.

Her presence breathed such scents as haunt
Moist, mountain dells and solitudes;
Aromas wild as some wild plant
That fills with sweetness all the woods:
And comradeships of stars and skies
Shone in the azure of her eyes.

Her grave be by a mossy rock
Upon the top of some wild hill,
Removed, remote from men who mock
The myths and dreams of life they kill:
Where all of beauty, naught of lust
May guard her solitary dust.

THE FAUN

The joys that touched thee once, be mine!
The sympathies of sky and sea,
The friendships of each rock and pine,
That made thy lonely life, ah me!
In Tempe or in Gargaphie.

Such joy as thou didst feel when first,
On some wild crag, thou stood'st alone
To watch the mountain tempest burst,
With streaming thunder, lightning-sown,
On Latmos or on Pelion.

Thy awe! when, crowned with vastness, Night
And Silence ruled the deep's abyss;
And through dark leaves thou saw'st the white
Breasts of the starry maids who kiss
Pale feet of moony Artemis.

Thy dreams! when, breasting matted weeds
Of Arethusa, thou didst hear
The music of the wind-swept reeds;
And down dim forest-ways drew near
Shy herds of slim Arcadian deer.

Thy wisdom! that knew naught but love
And beauty, with which love is fraught;
The wisdom of the heart—whereof
All noblest passions spring—that thought
As Nature thinks, "All else is naught."

Thy hope! wherein To-morrow set

No shadow; hope, that, lacking care
And retrospect, held no regret,
But bloomed in rainbows everywhere,
Filling with gladness all the air.

These were thine all: in all life's moods
Embracing all of happiness:
And when within thy long-loved woods
Didst lay thee down to die—no less
Thy happiness stood by to bless.

THE PAPHIAN VENUS

With anxious eyes and dry, expectant lips,
Within the sculptured stoa by the sea,
All day she waited while, like ghostly ships,
Long clouds rolled over Paphos: the wild bee
Hung in the sultry poppy, half asleep,
Beside the shepherd and his drowsy sheep.

White-robed she waited day by day; alone
With the white temple's shrined concupiscence,
The Paphian goddess on her obscene throne,
Binding all chastity to violence,
All innocence to lust that feels no shame—
Venus Mylitta born of filth and flame.

So must they haunt her marble portico,
The devotees of Paphos, passion-pale
As moonlight streaming through the stormy snow;
Dark eyes desirous of the stranger sail,
The gods shall bring across the Cyprian Sea,
With him elected to their mastery.

A priestess of the temple came, when eve
Blazed, like a satrap's triumph, in the west;

And watched her listening to the ocean's heave,
Dusk's golden glory on her face and breast,
And in her hair the rosy wind's caress,—
Pitying her dedicated tenderness.

When out of darkness night persuades the stars,
A dream shall bend above her saying, "Soon
A barque shall come with purple sails and spars,
Sailing from Tarsus 'neath a low white moon;
And thou shalt see one in a robe of Tyre
Facing toward thee like the god Desire.

"Rise then! as, clad in starlight, riseth Night—
Thy nakedness clad on with loveliness!
So shalt thou see him, like the god Delight,
Breast through the foam and climb the cliff to press
Hot lips to thine and lead thee in before
Love's awful presence where ye shall adore."

Thus at her heart the vision entered in,
With lips of lust the lips of song had kissed,
And eyes of passion laughing with sweet sin,
A shimmering splendor robed in amethyst,—
Seen like that star set in the glittering gloam,—
Venus Mylitta born of fire and foam.

So shall she dream until, near middle night,—
When on the blackness of the ocean's rim

The moon, like some war-galleon all alight
With blazing battle, from the sea shall swim,—
A shadow, with inviolate lips and eyes,
Shall rise before her speaking in this wise:

"So hast thou heard the promises of one,—
Of her, with whom the God of gods is wroth,—
For whom was prophesied at Babylon
The second death—Chaldaean Mylidoth!
Whose feet take hold on darkness and despair,
Hissing destruction in her heart and hair.

"Wouldst thou behold the vessel she would bring?—
A wreck! ten hundred years have smeared with slime:
A hulk! where all abominations cling,
The spawn and vermin of the seas of time:
Wild waves have rotted it; fierce suns have scorched;
Mad winds have tossed and stormy stars have torched.

"Can lust give birth to love? The vile and foul
Be mother to beauty? Lo! can this thing be?—
A monster like a man shall rise and howl
Upon the wreck across the crawling sea,
Then plunge; and swim unto thee; like an ape,
A beast all belly.—Thou canst not escape!"

Gone was the shadow with the suffering brow;
And in the temple's porch she lay and wept,
Alone with night, the ocean, and her vow.—
Then up the east the moon's full splendor swept,
And dark between it—wreck or argosy?—
A sudden vessel far away at sea.

ORIENTAL ROMANCE

I

Beyond lost seas of summer she
Dwelt on an island of the sea,
Last scion of that dynasty,
Queen of a race forgotten long.—
With eyes of light and lips of song,
From seaward groves of blowing lemon,
She called me in her native tongue,
Low-leaned on some rich robe of Yemen.

II

I was a king. Three moons we drove
Across green gulfs, the crimson clove
And cassia spiced, to claim her love.
Packed was my barque with gums and gold;
Rich fabrics; sandalwood, grown old
With odor; gems; and pearls of Oman,—
Than her white breasts less white and cold;—
And myrrh, less fragrant than this woman.

III

From Bassora I came. We saw
Her eagle castle on a claw
Of soaring precipice, o'erawe
The surge and thunder of the spray.
Like some great opal, far away

It shone, with battlement and spire,
Wherefrom, with wild aroma, day
Blew splintered lights of sapphirine fire.

IV

Lamenting caverns dark, that keep
Sonorous echoes of the deep,
Led upward to her castle steep....
Fair as the moon, whose light is shed
In Ramadan, was she, who led
My love unto her island bowers,
To find her.... lying young and dead
Among her maidens and her flowers.

THE MAMELUKE

I

She was a queen. 'Midst mutes and slaves,
A mamluke, he loved her.—Waves
Dashed not more hopelessly the paves
Of her high marble palace-stair
Than lashed his love his heart's despair.—
As souls in Hell dream Paradise,
He suffered yet forgot it there
Beneath Rommaneh's houri eyes.

II

With passion eating at his heart
He served her beauty, but dared dart
No amorous glance, nor word impart.—
Taïfi leather's perfumed tan
Beneath her, on a low divan
She lay 'mid cushions stuffed with down:
A slave-girl with an ostrich fan
Sat by her in a golden gown.

III

She bade him sing. Fair lutanist,
She loved his voice. With one white wrist,
Hooped with a blaze of amethyst,
She raised her ruby-cruled lute:
Gold-welted stuff, like some rich fruit,
Her raiment, diamond-showered, rolled
Folds pigeon-purple, whence one foot
Drooped in an anklet-twist of gold.

IV

He stood and sang with all the fire
That boiled within his blood's desire,
That made him all her slave yet higher:
And at the end his passion durst
Quench with one burning kiss its thirst.—
O eunuchs, did her face show scorn
When through his heart your daggers burst?
And dare ye say he died forlorn?

THE SLAVE

He waited till within her tower
Her taper signalled him the hour.

He was a prince both fair and brave.—
What hope that he would love *her* slave!

He of the Persian dynasty;
And she a Queen of Araby!—

No Peri singing to a star
Upon the sea were lovelier....

I helped her drop the silken rope.
He clomb, aflame with love and hope.

I drew the dagger from my gown
And cut the ladder, leaning down.

Oh, wild his face, and wild the fall:
Her cry was wilder than them all.

I heard her cry; I heard him moan;
And stood as merciless as stone.

The eunuchs came: fierce scimitars
Stirred in the torch-lit corridors.

She spoke like one who speaks in sleep,
And bade me strike or she would leap.

I bade her leap: the time was short:
And kept the dagger for my heart.

She leapt.... I put their blades aside,
And smiling in their faces—died.

THE PORTRAIT

In some quaint Nurnberg *maler-atelier*
Uprummaged. When and where was never clear
Nor yet how he obtained it. When, by whom
'Twas painted—who shall say? itself a gloom
Resisting inquisition. I opine
It is a Dürer. Mark that touch, this line;
Are they deniable?—Distinguished grace
Of the pure oval of the noble face
Tarnished in color badly. Half in light
Extend it so. Incline. The exquisite
Expression leaps abruptly: piercing scorn;
Imperial beauty; each, an icy thorn
Of light, disdainful eyes and ... well! no use!
Effaced and but beheld! a sad abuse
Of patience.—Often, vaguely visible,
The portrait fills each feature, making swell
The heart with hope: avoiding face and hair
Start out in living hues; astonished, "There!—
The picture lives!" your soul exults, when, lo!
You hold a blur; an undetermined glow
Dislimns a daub.—"Restore?"—Ah, I have tried
Our best restorers, and it has defied.

Storied, mysterious, say, perhaps a ghost
Lives in the canvas; hers, some artist lost;
A duchess', haply. Her he worshiped; dared
Not tell he worshiped. From his window stared
Of Nuremberg one sunny morn when she

Passed paged to court. Her cold nobility
Loved, lived for like a purpose. Seized and plied
A feverish brush—her face!—Despaired and died.

The narrow Judengasse: gables frown
Around a humpbacked usurer's, where brown,
Neglected in a corner, long it lay,
Heaped in a pile of riff-raff, such as—say,
Retables done in tempera and old
Panels by Wohlgemuth; stiff paintings cold
Of martyrs and apostles,—names forgot,—
Holbeins and Dürers, say; a haloed lot
Of praying saints, madonnas: these, perchance,
'Mid wine-stained purples, mothed; an old romance;
A crucifix and rosary; inlaid
Arms, Saracen-elaborate; a strayed
Niello of Byzantium; rich work,
In bronze, of Florence: here a murderous dirk,
There holy patens.

So.—My ancestor,
The first De Herancour, esteemed by far
This piece most precious, most desirable;

Purchased and brought to Paris. It looked well
In the dark paneling above the old
Hearth of the room. The head's religious gold,
The soft severity of the nun face,
Made of the room an apostolic place
Revered and feared.—

Like some lived scene I see
That Gothic room: its Flemish tapestry;
Embossed within the marble hearth a shield,
Carved 'round with thistles; in its argent field
Three sable mallets—arms of Herancour—
Topped with the crest, a helm and hands that bore,
Outstretched, two mallets. On a lectern laid,—
Between two casements, lozenge-paned, embayed,—
A vellum volume of black-lettered text.
Near by a taper, winking as if vexed
With silken gusts a nervous curtain sends,
Behind which, haply, daggered Murder bends.

And then I seem to see again the hall;
The stairway leading to that room.—Then all
The terror of that night of blood and crime
Passes before me.—

It is Catherine's time:
The house De Herancour's. On floors, splashed red,
Torchlight of Medicean wrath is shed.
Down carven corridors and rooms,—where couch
And chairs lie shattered and black shadows crouch
Torch-pierced with fear,—a sound of swords draws near—
The stir of searching steel.

What find they here,
Torch-bearer, swordsman, and fierce halberdier,
On St. Bartholomew's?—A Huguenot!
Dead in his chair! Eyes, violently shot
With horror, glaring at the portrait there:
Coiling his neck a blood line, like a hair
Of finest fire. The portrait, like a fiend,—
Looking exalted visitation,—leaned
From its black panel; in its eyes a hate
Satanic; hair—a glowing auburn; late
A dull, enduring golden.

"Just one thread

Of the fierce hair around his throat," they said,
"Twisting a burning ray; he—staring dead."

THE BLACK KNIGHT

I had not found the road too short,
As once I had in days of youth,
In that old forest of long ruth,
Where my young knighthood broke its heart,
Ere love and it had come to part,
And lies made mockery of truth.
I had not found the road too short.

A blind man, by the nightmare way,
Had set me right when I was wrong.—
I had been blind my whole life long—
What wonder then that on this day
The blind should show me how astray
My strength had gone, my heart once strong.
A blind man pointed me the way.

The road had been a heartbreak one,
Of roots and rocks and tortured trees,
And pools, above my horse's knees,
And wandering paths, where spiders spun
'Twixt boughs that never saw the sun,
And silence of lost centuries.
The road had been a heartbreak one.

It seemed long years since that black hour
When she had fled, and I took horse
To follow, and without remorse
To slay her and her paramour
In that old keep, that ruined tower,
From whence was borne her father's corse.
It seemed long years since that black hour.

And now my horse was starved and spent,
My gallant destrier, old and spare;
The vile road's mire in mane and hair,
I felt him totter as he went:—
Such hungry woods were never meant
For pasture: hate had reaped them bare.
Aye, my poor beast was old and spent.

I too had naught to stay me with;
And like my horse was starved and lean;
My armor gone; my raiment mean;
Bare-haired I rode; uneasy sith
The way I'd lost, and some dark myth
Far in the woods had laughed obscene.
I had had naught to stay me with.

Then I dismounted. Better so.
And found that blind man at my rein.
And there the path stretched straight and plain.
I saw at once the way to go.
The forest road I used to know
In days when life had less of pain.
Then I dismounted. Better so.

I had but little time to spare,
Since evening now was drawing near;
And then I thought I saw a sneer
Enter into that blind man's stare:

And suddenly a thought leapt bare,—
What if the Fiend had set him here!—
I still might smite him or might spare.

I braced my sword: then turned to look:
For I had heard an evil laugh:
The blind man, leaning on his staff,
Still stood there where my leave I took:
What! did he mock me? Would I brook
A blind fool's scorn?—My sword was half
Out of its sheath. I turned to look:

And he was gone. And to my side
My horse came nickering as afraid.
Did he too fear to be betrayed?—
What use for him? I might not ride.
So to a great bough there I tied,
And left him in the forest glade:
My spear and shield I left beside.

My sword was all I needed there.
It would suffice to right my wrongs;
To cut the knot of all those thongs
With which she'd bound me to despair,
That woman with her midnight hair,
Her Circe snares and Siren songs.
My sword was all I needed there.

And then that laugh again I heard,
Evil as Hell and darkness are.
It shook my heart behind its bar
Of purpose, like some ghastly word.
But then it may have been a bird,
An owlet in the forest far,
A raven, croaking, that I heard.

I loosed my sword within its sheath;
My sword, disuse and dews of night
Had fouled with rust and iron-blight.
I seemed to hear the forest breathe
A menace at me through its teeth
Of thorns 'mid which the way lay white.
I loosed my sword within its sheath.

I had not noticed until now
The sun was gone, and gray the moon
Hung staring; pale as marble hewn;—
Like some old malice, bleak of brow,
It glared at me through leaf and bough,
With which the tattered way was strewn.
I had not noticed until now.

And then, all unexpected, vast
Above the tops of ragged pines
I saw a ruin, dark with vines,
Against the blood-red sunset massed:
My perilous tower of the past,
Round which the woods thrust giant spines.
I never knew it was so vast.

Long while I stood considering.—
This was the place and this the night.
The blind man then had set me right.
Here she had come for sheltering.
That ruin held her: that dark wing
Which flashed a momentary light.
Some time I stood considering.

Deep darkness fell. The somber glare
Of sunset, that made cavernous eyes
Of those gaunt casements 'gainst the skies,
Had burnt to ashes everywhere.
Before my feet there rose a stair
Of oozy stone, of giant size,
On which the gray moon flung its glare.

Then I went forward, sword in hand,
Until the slimy causeway loomed,
And huge beyond it yawned and gloomed
The gateway where one seemed to stand,
In armor, like a burning brand,
Sword-drawn; his visor barred and plumed.
And I went toward him, sword in hand.

He should not stay revenge from me.
Whatever lord or knight he were,
He should not keep me long from her,
That woman dyed in infamy.
No matter. God or devil he,
His sword should prove no barrier.—
Fool! who would keep revenge from me!

And then I heard, harsh over all,
That demon laughter, filled with scorn:
It woke the echoes, wild, forlorn,
Dark in the ivy of that wall,
As when, within a mighty hall,
One blows a giant battle-horn.
Loud, loud that laugh rang over all.

And then I struck him where he towered:
I struck him, struck with all my hate:
Black-plumed he loomed before the gate:
I struck, and found his sword that showered
Fierce flame on mine while black he glowered
Behind his visor's wolfish grate.
I struck; and taller still he towered.

A year meseemed we battled there:
A year; ten years; a century:
My blade was snapped; his lay in three:
His mail was hewn; and everywhere
Was blood; it streaked my face and hair;
And still he towered over me.
A year meseemed we battled there.

"Unmask!" I cried. "Yea, doff thy casque!
Put up thy visor! fight me fair!
I have no mail; my head is bare!
Take off thy helm, is all I ask!
Why dost thou hide thy face?—Unmask!"—
My eyes were blind with blood and hair,
And still I cried, "Take off thy casque!"

And then once more that laugh rang out
Like madness in the caves of Hell:
It hooted like some monster well,
The haunt of owls, or some mad rout
Of witches. And with battle shout
Once more upon that knight I fell,
While wild again that laugh rang out.

Like Death's own eyes his glared in mine,
As with the fragment of my blade

I smote him helmwise; huge he swayed,
Then crashed, like some cadaverous pine,
Uncasqued, his face in full moonshine:
And I—I saw; and shrank afraid.
For, lo! behold! the face was mine.

What devil's work was here!—What jest
For fiends to laugh at, demons hiss!—
To slay myself? and so to miss
My hate's reward?—revenge confessed!—
Was this knight I?—My brain I pressed.—
Then who was he who gazed on this?—
What devil's work was here!—What jest!

It was myself on whom I gazed—
My darker self!—With fear I rose.—
I was right weak from those great blows.—
I stood bewildered, stunned and dazed,
And looked around with eyes amazed.—
I could not slay her now, God knows!—
Around me there a while I gazed.

Then turned and fled into the night,
While overhead once more I heard
That laughter, like some demon bird
Wailing in darkness.—Then a light
Made clear a woman by that knight.
I saw 'twas she, but said no word,
And silent fled into the night.

IN ARCADY

I remember, when a child,
How within the April wild
Once I walked with Mystery
In the groves of Arcady....
Through the boughs, before, behind,
Swept the mantle of the wind,
Thunderous and unconfined.

Overhead the curving moon
Pierced the twilight: a cocoon,
Golden, big with unborn wings—
Beauty, shaping spiritual things,
Vague, impatient of the night,
Eager for its heavenward flight
Out of darkness into light.

Here and there the oaks assumed
Satyr aspects; shadows gloomed,
Hiding, of a dryad look;
And the naiad-frantic brook,
Crying, fled the solitude,
Filled with terror of the wood,
Or some faun-thing that pursued.

In the dead leaves on the ground
Crept a movement; rose a sound:
Everywhere the silence ticked
As with hands of things that picked
At the loam, or in the dew,—
Elvish sounds that crept or flew,—
Beak-like, pushing surely through.

Down the forest, overhead,

Stammering a dead leaf fled,
Filled with elemental fear
Of some dark destruction near—
One, whose glowworm eyes I saw
Hag with flame the crooked haw,
Which the moon clutched like a claw.

Gradually beneath the tree
Grew a shape; a nudity:
Lithe and slender; silent as
Growth of tree or blade of grass;
Brown and silken as the bloom
Of the trillium in the gloom,
Visible as strange perfume.

For an instant there it stood,
Smiling on me in the wood:
And I saw its hair was green
As the leaf-sheath, gold of sheen:
And its eyes an azure wet,
From within which seemed to jet
Sapphire lights and violet.

Swiftly by I saw it glide;
And the dark was deified:
Wild before it everywhere
Gleamed the greenness of its hair;
And around it danced a light,
Soft, the sapphire of its sight,
Making witchcraft of the night.

On the branch above, the bird
Trilled to it a dreamy word:
In its bud the wild bee droned
Honeyed greeting, drowsy-toned:
And the brook forgot the gloom,
Hushed its heart, and, wrapped in bloom,
Breathed a welcome of perfume.

To its beauty bush and tree
Stretched sweet arms of ecstasy;
And the soul within the rock
Lichen-treasures did unlock
As upon it fell its eye;
And the earth, that felt it nigh,
Into wildflowers seemed to sigh....

Was it dryad? was it faun?
Wandered from the times long gone.
Was it sylvan? was it fay?—
Dim survivor of the day
When Religion peopled streams,
Woods and rocks with shapes like gleams,—
That invaded then my dreams?

Was it shadow? was it shape?
Or but fancy's wild escape?—
Of my own child's world the charm
That assumed material form?—
Of my soul the mystery,
That the spring revealed to me,
There in long-lost Arcady?

Whether it be that we in letters trace
The pure exactness of a wood bird's strain,
And name it song; or with the brush attain
The high perfection of a wildflower's face;
Or mold in difficult marble all the grace
We know as man; or from the wind and rain
Catch elemental rapture of refrain
And mark in music to due time and place:
The aim of Art is Nature; to unfold
Her truth and beauty to the souls of men
In close suggestions; in whose forms is cast
Nothing so new but 'tis long eons old;
Nothing so old but 'tis as young as when
The mind conceived it in the ages past.

MARCH

This is the tomboy month of all the year,
March, who comes shouting o'er the winter hills,
Waking the world with laughter, as she wills,
Or wild halloos, a windflower in her ear.
She stops a moment by the half-thawed mere
And whistles to the wind, and straightway shrills
The hyla's song, and hoods of daffodils
Crowd golden round her, leaning their heads to hear.
Then through the woods, that drip with all their eaves,
Her mad hair blown about her, loud she goes
Singing and calling to the naked trees;
And straight the oilets of the little leaves
Open their eyes in wonder, rows on rows,
And the first bluebird bugles to the breeze.

DUSK

Corn-colored clouds upon a sky of gold,
And 'mid their sheaves,—where, like a daisy-bloom
Left by the reapers to the gathering gloom,
The star of twilight glows,—as Ruth, 'tis told,
Dreamed homesick 'mid the harvest fields of old,
The Dusk goes gleaning color and perfume
From Bible slopes of heaven, that illumine
Her pensive beauty deep in shadows stoled.
Hushed is the forest; and blue vale and hill
Are still, save for the brooklet, sleepily
Stumbling the stone with one foam-fluttering foot:
Save for the note of one far whippoorwill,
And in my heart *her* name,—like some sweet bee
Within a rose,—blowing a faery flute.

THE WINDS

Those hewers of the clouds, the Winds,—that lair
At the four compass-points,—are out to-night;
I hear their sandals trample on the height,
I hear their voices trumpet through the air:
Builders of storm, God's workmen, now they bear,
Up the steep stair of sky, on backs of might,
Huge tempest bulks, while,—sweat that blinds heir sight,—
The rain is shaken from tumultuous hair:
Now, sweepers of the firmament, they broom,

Like gathered dust, the rolling mists along
Heaven's floors of sapphire; all the beautiful blue
Of skyey corridor and celestial room
Preparing, with large laughter and loud song,
For the white moon and stars to wander through.

LIGHT AND WIND

Where, through the myriad leaves of forest trees,
The daylight falls, beryl and chrysoprase,
The glamour and the glimmer of its rays
Seem visible music, tangible melodies:
Light that is music; music that one sees—
Wagnerian music—where forever sways
The spirit of romance, and gods and fays
Take form, clad on with dreams and mysteries.
And now the wind's transmuting necromance
Touches the light and makes it fall and rise,
Vocal, a harp of multitudinous waves
That speaks as ocean speaks—an utterance
Of far-off whispers, mermaid-murmuring sighs—
Pelagian, vast, deep down in coral caves.

ENCHANTMENT

The deep seclusion of this forest path,—
O'er which the green boughs weave a canopy;
Along which bluet and anemone
Spread dim a carpet; where the Twilight hath
Her cool abode; and, sweet as aftermath,
Wood-fragrance roams,—has so enchanted me,
That yonder blossoming bramble seems to be
A Sylvan resting, rosy from her bath:
Has so enspelled me with tradition's dreams,
That every foam-white stream that, twinkling, flows,
And every bird that flutters wings of tan,
Or warbles hidden, to my fancy seems
A Naiad dancing to a Faun who blows
Wild woodland music on the pipes of Pan.

ABANDONED

The hornets build in plaster-dropping rooms,
And on its mossy porch the lizard lies;
Around its chimneys slow the swallow flies,
And on its roof the locusts snow their blooms.
Like some sad thought that broods here, old perfumes
Haunt its dim stairs; the cautious zephyr tries
Each gusty door, like some dead hand, then sighs
With ghostly lips among the attic glooms.
And now a heron, now a kingfisher,
Flits in the willows where the ruffle seems
At each faint fall to hesitate to leap,
Fluttering the silence with a little stir.
Here Summer seems a placid face asleep,
And the near world a figment of her dreams.

AFTER LONG GRIEF

There is a place hung o'er of summer boughs
And dreamy skies wherein the gray hawk sleeps;
Where water flows, within whose lazy deeps,
Like silvery prisms where the sunbeams drowse,
The minnows twinkle; where the bells of cows
Tinkle the stillness; and the bobwhite keeps
Calling from meadows where the reaper reaps,
And children's laughter haunts an oldtime house:
A place where life wears ever an honest smell
Of hay and honey, sun and elder-bloom,—
Like some sweet, simple girl,—within her hair;
Where, with our love for comrade, we may dwell
Far from the city's strife, whose cares consume.—
Oh, take my hand and let me lead you there.

MENDICANTS

Bleak, in dark rags of clouds, the day begins,
That passed so splendidly but yesterday,
Wrapped in magnificence of gold and gray,
And poppy and rose. Now, burdened as with sins,
Their wildness clad in fogs, like coats of skins,
Tattered and streaked with rain; gaunt, clogged with clay,
The mendicant Hours take their somber way
Westward o'er Earth, to which no sunray wins.
Their splashing sandals ooze; their footsteps drip,
Puddle and brim with moisture; their sad hair
Is tagged with haggard drops, that with their eyes'
Slow streams are blent; each sullen fingertip
Rivers; while round them, in the grief-drenched air
Wearies the wind of their perpetual sighs.

THE END OF SUMMER

Pods the poppies, and slim spires of pods
The hollyhocks; the balsam's pearly bredes
Of rose-stained snow are little sacs of seeds
Collapsing at a touch: the lote, that sods
The pond with green, has changed its flowers to rods
And discs of vesicles; and all the weeds,
Around the sleepy water and its reeds,
Are one white smoke of seeded silk that nods.
Summer is dead, ay me! sweet Summer's dead!
The sunset clouds have built her funeral pyre,
Through which, e'en now, runs subterranean fire:
While from the east, as from a garden bed,
Mist-vined, the Dusk lifts her broad moon—like some
Great golden melon—saying, "Fall has come."

NOVEMBER

The shivering wind sits in the oaks, whose limbs,
Twisted and tortured, nevermore are still;
Grief and decay sit with it; they, whose chill
Autumnal touch makes hectic-red the rims
Of all the oak leaves; desolating, dims
The ageratum's blue that banks the rill;
And splits the milkweed's pod upon the hill,
And shakes it free of the last seed that swims.

Down goes the day despondent to its close:
And now the sunset's hands of copper build
A tower of brass, behind whose burning bars
The day, in fierce, barbarian repose,
Like some imprisoned Inca sits, hate-filled,
Crowned with the gold corymbus of the stars.

II

There is a booming in the forest boughs;
Tremendous feet seem trampling through the trees:
The storm is at his wildman revelries,
And earth and heaven echo his carouse.
Night reels with tumult; and, from out her house
Of cloud, the moon looks,—like a face one sees
In nightmare,—hurrying, with pale eyes that freeze
Stooping above with white, malignant brows.
The isolated oak upon the hill,
That seemed, at sunset, in terrific lands
A Titan head black in a sea of blood,
Now seems a monster harp, whose wild strings thrill
To the vast fingering of innumerable hands—
Spirits of tempest and of solitude.

THE DEATH OF LOVE

So Love is dead, the Love we knew of old!
And in the sorrow of our hearts' hushed halls
A lute lies broken and a flower falls;
Love's house stands empty and his hearth lies cold.
Lone in dim places, where sweet vows were told,
In walks grown desolate, by ruined walls
Beauty decays; and on their pedestals
Dreams crumble and th' immortal gods are mold.
Music is slain or sleeps; one voice alone,
One voice awakes, and like a wandering ghost
Haunts all the echoing chambers of the Past—
The voice of Memory, that stills to stone
The soul that hears; the mind, that, utterly lost,
Before its beautiful presence stands aghast.

UNANSWERED

How long ago it is since we went Maying!
Since she and I went Maying long ago!—
The years have left my forehead lined, I know,
Have thinned my hair around the temples graying.
Ah, time will change us: yea, I hear it saying—
"She too grows old: the face of rose and snow
Has lost its freshness: in the hair's brown glow
Some strands of silver sadly, too, are straying.
The form you knew, whose beauty so enspelled,
Has lost the litheness of its loveliness:
And all the gladness that her blue eyes held
Tears and the world have hardened with distress."—
"True! true!" I answer, "O ye years that part!
These things are chanced—but is her heart, her heart?"

UNCALLED

As one, who, journeying westward with the sun,
Beholds at length from the up-towering hills,
Far-off, a land unspeakable beauty fills,
Circean peaks and vales of Avalon:
And, sinking weary, watches, one by one,
The big seas beat between; and knows it skills
No more to try; that now, as Heaven wills,
This is the helpless end, that all is done:
So 'tis with him, whom long a vision led
In quest of Beauty; and who finds at last
She lies beyond his effort; all the waves
Of all the world between them: while the dead,
The myriad dead, who people all the past
With failure, hail him from forgotten graves.

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