



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library

A CYCLE OF SONNETS

A

CYCLE OF SONNETS

EDITED BY

MABEL LOOMIS TODD

Stone), Mrs Cara Elizabeth (Harrison) Whiton -



22706 - B² - 1

BOSTON

ROBERTS BROTHERS

1896

2

PS 2943
.S3C8

Copyright, 1896,
BY ROBERTS BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

DEDICATION

*To my Immortal Love, who soareth fair
Wrapt in the clouding of her golden hair,
Who lookest down on me with shining eyes
Transfigured with the joy of Paradise,
With light transcending light, as to sustain
My darkened soul so shrivelled with its pain —
Who was so happy that Heaven hushed to sleep,
Nor can awaken howsoe'er I weep,
Nor can come back, whatever my despair,
I send this message — it will reach her there.*

A CYCLE OF SONNETS

P R E F A C E

THESE sonnets, bequeathed to me by one the tragedy of whose life it has been mine to know, were written in mature years, and in the splendor of his first great love for the fair girl who died during the second year of their engagement.

It is evident that the poems had not been seen by her, — perhaps because of his high spiritual reserve, perhaps because he wished at a later season to lay them all at her feet.

It is evident, too, that they were intended for publication eventually, and among them was found the dedication.

Seeing her first in spring, the days of Nature's awakening surrounded him with an atmosphere of joy, through which the pathos of his former life sometimes penetrated. On Memorial Day especially, the pain of a past loss broke forth in a lament which even the presence of his absorbing love had hardly power

to soothe. But the summer was transfigured with magical light, and the short winter days were no more dull and cold. Another spring dawned upon this rare and radiant love, and then the great darkness fell.

When she died, those who knew him knew that he died also.

M. L. T.

AMHERST, October, 1896.

A CYCLE OF SONNETS

I

I FELT a new strange Presence at my side
That radiant-plumaged followed where I went,
And as if near to Heaven my heart was sent
To swift wild beating like a swollen tide ;
Glory encompassed me — I could not hide,
But blinded as with suns, mine eyes I bent,
Nor could deny the Power omnipotent
That from my soul swept all the dark aside :
Like golden shadows flung from gates on high
The solemn splendor sudden fell apart,
And straight I was sharp hewn with ecstasy,
And knew thee mine, O angel that thou art,
Whose name is Love, whose flaming sword dost lie
Plunged to the hilt — here, here within my heart.

II

IF thou hadst come to me in any guise
Save that thou wearest, sweet, I should have known
The vision strange, and kept thy vacant throne
Still tenantless ; but when I saw thine eyes
Compelling mine with their high truth to rise
And scan Life's noblest peaks, the light that shone
My dazzled soul o'ercame ; prostrate and prone
I fell before thee — smitten with ecstasies.
Love ! hadst thou sooner come, it were too soon ;
I needed sight of one more spring aflame,
One April's miracles, ere the May moon
Should on the azure crescent write thy name ;
My soul were all too cramped held it not boon
Of Heaven thou broughtest, I, through Love can claim.

III

WHEN first I saw thee, sweet, the sunlight fell
 Flooding thy brow ; and dazzled with its gleam
I thought, ' Some saint of Guido's, in a dream
Of mounting wings, has broken the canvas spell,
And flown to earth the heavenly dream to tell ;'
Now, that I worship, should the worship seem
For saint too human, let my love redeem
Till to the saint's high stature it shall swell.
Before thou camest, lo ! I was as nought ;
Into my soul the revelation came
Like a great rush of splendid music, caught
From swing of worlds and stars created new.
I live again — the miracle is wrought
Because, O sweet, Love's gates I have passed through.

IV

THE Spring has broken to flowers beneath thy feet,
And lilies in thy virgin pathway grow,
And the young violets awakening, show
Their sky-enamoured souls to thee, O sweet,
With passion of divine insistence, meet
From flower to flower. The purple hyacinths blow
'Neath thine eyes' sunshine, and I hear the flow
Of the near river — like thy pulses' beat.
O my beloved, lo ! thy presence fair
Exalts me as the sun exalts the day ;
I am upswept on impulse high as prayer
Into the ether of thy heavenly way,
And should'st thou deign to love me, I will bear
Thy liliated heart on mine as earth bears May.

V

THE trees were only budded yesterday,
Hiding their souls in a mysterious haze.
To-day their snowy blossoms star the ways,
And Spring is rushing onward fleet and gay :
— So with my love, O sweet! I could not stay
Its sudden flower, but in a heavenly maze
I borrowed of the Spring what Spring repays,
The transport of its music-hearted May.
Ah ! this vast joy is all too vast to tell : —
Go watch the flowers that in the sunshine glow,
And let their speech be mine ; the asphodel,
The rose, the pansy's purple deeps, may know
Language more fit for Love — yet listening well
Hear'st thou not Love in all the flowers that blow ?

VI

BECAUSE it rains to-day the flowers are sad ;
They know, perchance, that smiling soft and gay
My happy sweetheart will not pass their way,
So weep : — I too should weep, unless I had
Her presence like a flower to make me glad ;
— The book she bids me read aside I lay
For the great book of Love, and smiling say,
'Not strange that such sweet knowledge maketh mad.'
Outside, upon the flowers the rain still beats,
We watch the wind-blown grass, yet do not know,
Love, in vague way, but that the sunshine greets
The daisies' eyes from sun that floods us so,
And should I pluck from out those marguerites
One bloom for her, its tears would cease to flow.

VII

A PROTEST

WHY should I covet, since Love places bar,
The clear, thin ice of your reserve to break?
Perhaps my soul may too supremely make
Its needs apparent, and appealing jar
A fine, pure silence purest speech would mar.
Yet if the sunshine's turbulence can shake
Roses' deep hearts to view, then I may take
A swift survey, and know you as you are.
Therefore I am content, though to my sight
The splendor of your dreams you may deny.
Yet sometime should there come a moonless night,
You may not weep so long, that I am nigh,
And should I read your silences aright,
The light might blind as from some sun on high.

VIII

MEMORIAL DAY

INSURGENT beats my heart to-day, at sound
Of wailing instruments that slay the air
With requiems sharp and vivid as despair ;
And to mine eyes there comes a vision crowned
With lilies, snowy as were strewn around
My silent dead's unbreathing bosom, where
They lay, nor half so beautiful and fair
As he, calm smiling in his sleep profound.
I plant, while flowers on countless graves are strewn,
This flower of Grief, because he will not wake.
I weep in Love's Gethsemane alone.
O Love, thou art too pitying to forsake,
Be with me till my weeping is outgrown,
And yet, O Love, it seems my heart must break.

IX

LOVE, ere thou cam'st, in happy dreams of night
I saw thine eyes of Heaven the heavens look
through,
So when thy hands within mine own I drew,
My heart was shak'n to rapture infinite
In that old time when young springs broke to sight,
And, violet-stirred, their loosened pulses flew ;
When morning's scimitar the white mists slew
I searched in vain for that mysterious light ;
Something intangible seemed always nigh
That shaped to vision only when I slept,
I caught the fluttering echoes of a sigh,
As air that moved with great tears softly wept.
Now thou art here — nor wilt thy love deny,
And every chord within my soul is swept.

X

O RADIANT maiden with thy radiant eyes
That even through their drooping lashes, seem
— Like shut-in suns — to send out mystic gleam,
Constant, thou breathest ether of the skies ;
Thou art thyself the breath of Paradise,
Thou art the fair white lily of my dream,
Thou art the very flower of Love, supreme —
Thou art my soul's perfected harmonies.
I take thee to this happy heart of mine,
This happy heart of mine, whose swiftened beat
Is of my lofty worship but a sign,
And hold thee templed there as saint, O sweet.
Thou art the lily of my dream, divine
Thou art my dream of Heaven, fulfill'd, complete.

XI

DEAR, not because the new-blown lilies fling
Their golden-hearted welcomes as you go
Your happy way, nor that you smiling show
The wild flower's grace, nor yet because you sing
In chorus with the birds, unwondering
As a young Nightingale at overflow
Of your own joy, is why I love you so —
But that one April morning when you wept
Some April grief away, you let me see
— Like an unsullied treasure ocean-kept —
How starry white a woman's soul might be ;
It is, that then some force within me leapt
And smote to life the God that slept in me.

XII

BECAUSE the lilacs, purple unaware,
And hawthorn buds divinely opening, show
A thousand tender blushes on their snow,
Because the morning-glories climbing, bear
Their soundless chimes exultant thro' the air,
And butterflies their secrets whisper low
To cowslips in the valleys, as they go,
I tell my love to thee, who art most fair,
Because the busy swallows dart away,
The soft young grasses for their nests to bring,
Because the blue-birds, fired with joy of day,
Sweeping to meet the coming sunrise sing,
I dare to sing, lured by the eyes of May,
To thee, to *thee* who art the soul of Spring.

XIII

LOVE, listen to the Spring — what can I say
That would be half as wonderful as this —
Its many voices breathing out their bliss
In outspread arms of the enchanting day ;
Something bewildering seems to find its way
Into the blossoming flowers, the wind's soft kiss,
The sky with its o'er-azuring abyss,
The buttercups that toward the sunshine sway,
And one gold bird, diviner than the rest,
Sings with a wild, mad sweetness that is new,
Nor even knows how the strange longing grew,
As if my love's white passion sweeping through
Had poured itself to Spring's unconscious breast.

XIV

I CANNOT sleep ; O Love, with Love's unrest
I watched the infant moon that knew the Day
Shine for a little while, then go away
Cradled upon the Night's majestic breast ;
And I, in this new darkness, am impressed
As with a glory hidden, like the play
Of rainbows never to be flashed away,
Nay, even the stars throb as with power repressed.
What is it stirs the illimitable Night
As if a great heart in its bosom beat ?
I am perplexed, O Love, but it is sweet
To know perplexment that is all delight,
And in the dim, mysterious Night to meet
The unveiled wonder of Love's infinite.

XV

O SAD-MOUTHED virgin with thy perfect face,
And mystic glory of thy gleaming hair,
With thy rapt eyes, I wonder how I dare
Do aught, than silent kneeling as for grace
Before thy soul's white shrine, my own abase
And with Love's rosary to count a prayer!
For every thought of thee, who art so fair,
May win for me at last some lowly place.
Around thy lips the tender shadows play,
Prophetic of some woe that may be thine,
Smile till thou shalt have smiled them all away —
And in thine eyes the look is so divine
I need a thousand rosaries to pray,
Poor human pilgrim, at thy heavenly shrine.

XVI

L OVE — let me call you Love, for I can say
No other word that will my soul express —
Why have you come to me so late, unless
The perfect chord were reached but through delay?
Now I can watch you in Love's closest way,
And let my restless heart its needs confess
In mighty hushing of your tenderness.
And yet I sigh that for your golden day
I can but give you twilight, wet with rain.
Sweet, why so late that I can give no more —
Yet scorched and scarred with fires of burning pain,
I know Love's value better than before,
And from your affluence I will seek to gain
Only one moonlit ray, from bliss brimmed o'er.

XVII

I HAD not learned Life's vastness to descry,
Nor knew what it could bring, until I read
In thy dear eyes, brimming with tears unshed,
Love's breadth and depth. Then in a transport high
As the strong currents of a river fly
From narrow boundaries to the sea outspread,
So I, impetuous, to thy heart was led,
Glad and content forever to be nigh.
Ah! since thou lov'st me, I can understand
What depth of poverty was mine before.
Yet now, as with a miser's grasping hand,
Less than the whole I should outreach for more,
But, giving all may make my soul expand
Till chance I shall be worthier to adore.

XVIII

O THOU who holdest Heaven within thine eyes,
Vouchsafe to grant my prayer, and let their light
That yesterday shone radiant to my sight,
To-day be not withdrawn. For in them lies
All that I dream and hope of Paradise,
And thou art Queen of all the world by right
As Queen of Spring, and I will be thy knight,
Ready to make for thee all sacrifice.
How swiftly pass the days ! Two moons ago
I had not met thee — then on Dawns outspread
It seemed as if the rose forgot to blow,
As if across the heavens the line of red
Barred in its fairer light, but now I know
All that was hidden, by thee interpreted.

XIX

THE DEAD BIRD

O GENTLE heart, with tears to raining sent
At sight of thy dead bird, be comforted ;
For all its life was song, thy lips have said,
And saidst thou this of me where'er I went,
Then to be dead were only to be sent
Into new song, but sung by thee instead,
And I will be thy bird. Lift up thine eyes,
And let me hush thee back to thy content.
Yes ! I will be thy singer, though with voice
Like a poor linnets, not the voice divine,
Yet thou hast lifted me, because thy choice —
To where I see the wings of music shine,
And in thy pure devotion, I rejoice.
Faint-voiced or clear, the lark's high Heaven is mine.

XX

THE expectant Dawn watches the coming sun
Pale with the mists that in the east delay,
Haunted ineffably with dreams of Day,
Till at last meeting, Dawn and Day are one.
Thou art the Day, O sweet, with songs o'errun,
And I the Dawn, glad in thy light to stay ;
Glad, though the glory should be borne away —
Glad, though the wondrous singing should be done,
For whatsoe'er Life brings, though tears should flow,
I shall believe its mystery divine,
And by Love's power to grieve, Love's power shall know,
Nor question aught denied, if thou art mine.
Nay! even if the fickle sun should go,
The splendor still in thy dear eyes will shine.

XXI

UNLOCK thy gates, O Day, and spill the wine
From out thy mighty press, till it shall run
And drown the heavens, and red engulf the sun,
Struggling to rise ; then with a noiseless sign
Let the full stream subside, and leave divine
The rescued sun enthroned ; and not yet done
Melt all thy heavenly jewels into one,
And in thy sapphire splendor, radiant shine,
And I and my beloved, hand in hand,
Thy coming will await, and with thy light
Burning above us, in a hush will stand
Rapt and exultant at the shining sight,
As of the wonders of a promised land,
And be baptized of thee, as angels might.

XXII

LOOK deep down in my soul and you will see
The color of the June — the radiant play
Of yester's sun, the passion of the Day
Outwrought in gold, and every bud and bee,
And floods of butterflies that poured past me
In rain of yellow splendor winged away
Till buried in syringas' snow they lay.
I hold them all in memory, as free
To take as June to give. No flower that grew
And glittered in the grass escaped my eyes ;
The buttercups, gay nodding, softly blew —
A tinge of rose half blushed behind the skies —
All June was mine, and yet the June I knew
Shone forth transfigured in your radiant eyes.

XXIII

AND we will wander, this imperial day,
Like happy children in the fields and lanes,
And listen to the locusts' jubilant strains,
And breathe the perfume of the new mown hay,
And see the barberries clustering by the way —
Not scarlet lit, but flecked with scarlet stains, —
And watch the azure that the sky attains,
And see the hills in their divine array ;
And 'mid the beauty wilt thou lift thine eyes,
And let me joy of Love within them read —
Not with the look that sometimes in them lies,
As if thy coming wings had been decreed,
But as some angel who great Love can prize —
Angel, more heavenly for this heavenly need.

XXIV

ALL hail, O Queen, that comest with Summer's
tread,
Whose eyes outrival the noonday skies, in blue,
Whose face is like the sun's uprising through
Morn's golden clouds, that stream above its head,
I see the birds with bosoms flashing red
Hover above thee, as if listening to
Thy happy voice, and hear them trill anew
Diviner notes that they have borrowéd. —
How shall I, fitting, my allegiance show?
The wild rose opens as thou passest by,
The daisy bares for thee its breast of snow,
The winds salute thee tenderly — but I
Can only kiss thy hand, that thou mayst know
Thou rulest well, since at thy feet I lie.

XXV

O CRUEL life ! so prodigal of pain,
If pitiless to some, you scatter blight,
Forget your craft, and only through delight
Let my soft dove be taught. Keep unprofane
Her gentle eyes, from the tempestuous rain
That beats from anguish that is infinite —
Nor let her wings be pierced in upward flight.
Willing, my soul the arrow's wound would gain,
If she to the blue heavens might scarless rise.
My heart would break, if in the opening day
The glory should be quenched in her young eyes.
Yet left to judge, how should I dare to say
O Life, that I would have it otherwise,
Come joy, come anguish, than the Supreme way !

XXVI

WERE I a cloud lifted above the heat,
Swept by the impassioned Summer breezes by,
And wert thou, best beloved, but the sky,
Then I would drift, drift, drift — the Dawn to meet —
Until I heard thy great heart softly beat
In the broad wonderment of blue on high,
And there, with joy ineffable would lie
Hushed in majestic refuge and retreat.
But when the larks' songs should no longer flow,
And darkness like a shadow seemed to sway,
Then higher, higher, higher, I would go
Dreaming new love to tell the coming Day,
And all of bliss as all of Heaven should know,
Bearing with me thine azure kiss away.

XXVII

I LOVE thee as the Summer loves the sky,
As night the rising of the crescent moon,
As butterflies the splendor of the noon,
As the wild rose the thrushes' ecstasy ;
For thou art Nature's own to sing or sigh,
Giving to every mood responsive tune.
Thou art a minstrel with the hope of June
Flooding my heart with constant melody.
The flowers with thee their happy secrets share,
And bloom as if thy sunshine to requite,
And orioles, lured by glitter of thy hair,
With thee are intimate and stay their flight
As knowing thou art Empress of the air,
With song outrivalling theirs in its delight.

XXVIII

LAST night as moonlight down the mountain steep
Fell noiselessly upon the lilies blown,
I wondered if its light more saintly shone
For having kissed thee in thy saintly sleep.
I wondered if the tinkling bells of sheep
Roused as with day, into thy dreams had grown
Like the vague music of some mystic zone,
Or if thou heard'st the night dews softly weep.
Haply the night was so supremely fair
Thou wert awake, and wistful watched the moon
That seemed to sail toward thee, as to compare
Its heart with thine, and heard'st æolian tune
Swept from the pines, and breathed a virgin prayer
Whiter than all the lilies blown in June.

XXIX

I WAITED Summer while the hyacinths blew : —
I thought I knew its affluence and grace,
Ere, O beloved, I had seen your face,
And yet, till now, Summer I never knew :
Beneath the sky's magnificence of blue
The light-winged swallows dart, as if to trace
A pathway for my soul that needs more space
And rarer air, to fit itself for you : —
The wild-rose flush is fairer, and the breeze,
Tossing white daisy billows to and fro,
Murmurs strange secrets, while upon the trees
Trembles a light, divine as overflow
From some immortal sun, and thrushes seize
And bear to Heaven, sweet raptures that I know.

XXX

FOR ROSES

YOU brought a dream of beauty, wondrous fair,
Hid in your roses, with their blush and bloom —
Something that thrilled the twilight's violet gloom
As gold-winged butterflies the Summer air.
I needed but to close my eyes, and where
Darkness was slowly gathering in the room,
There fell a flush of light that seemed to loom
And to the o'erhanging clouds its color bear :
Perchance perfumes of flowers some charm may own
Shadows to lift — for when I turned to see
Whether the night were moonless still, there shone
The moon of your sweet love to answer me,
And though its light upon the flowers was thrown
Its very splendor made me turn — and sigh.

XXXI

O THOU who wear'st the Summer's smiling grace,
Whose golden hair shines like the daffodils,
Whose voice is like a joyous lark that trills
Its matins to the east, and whose fair face
Holdest among the lilies fairest place,
To know that I am in thy presence fills
My soul with gladness, as when 'neath the hills
Through veins of earth the Spring's warm currents race.
The flower bells that thou gav'st me yesterday,
With words that never more can be unsaid,
All night in sweet delirium seemed to sway
As if the chimes elysian that they played
Proclaimed to angels in mysterious way
All earth, through Love, into all Heaven is made.

XXXII

THE sunset light fell on my Love and me ;
My Love, whose eyes are like a summer day,
Flushing the gloom of purple clouds that lay
Like fire-winged birds, sailing the sky and sea.
From scabbard of the night drawn silently,
A flaming sword the horizon seemed to slay,
And radiant-shafted rainbows shot away
And the day died in opal ecstasy.
I saw her smile as chance the angels do,
Who, calm in Heaven, eternal beauty know ;
Nor yet could speak, the while the darkness grew,
And, black-winged, blotted out the world below.
Yet with her hand in mine, a light I knew
More wonderful than sky or sea could show.

XXXIII

GIVEN the lily of your love, O sweet,
I take it as I might some violet star
Plucked from the Heavens immeasurably far,
And brought to me with all its light replete,
Piercing my inmost soul, with gladness meet
For such high gift — yet lest some breath should mar
As lily's petals touched profanely are,
I hide it 'neath my bosom's surging beat
Sacred as death — this infinite unrest
Bears me to such high transport I can keep
The sweet remembrance even in my sleep,
Nor dare I lift my drooping eyelids, lest
Shining through mists of Love — for Love must weep —
You see the lily trembling in my breast.

XXXIV

YESTERDAYS

BELOVED, yesterdays in which you came
Are counted all, and often I have said
This Summer holds a thousand Junes, and red
Of its great burning roses, puts to shame
All those that bloomed before this oriflamme
Swept the whole world to glow : — Now I can thread
The labyrinth of your soul and be Love-led,
Find erewhile hidden place for which I aim,
Nor need long wander, for by lilies strewn
And lifted by your heart-beats into heap
Of white and shining beauty, will be shown
Where with your own soul's sacredness you keep
Myself — Myself whom you have made your own,
And all unworthy, I can only weep.

XXXV

LOVE, Love, I said, and straightway o'er my heart,
A passion'd sea with marvellous flooding swept,
And on the shore, where I had stood apart
And o'er the waves outgoing ceaseless wept
Sudden my tears fell faster, for the tide
Had swelled to turning — Beloved, I have known
Rapture's whole scale and have been crucified
With Love's renunciation till alone
Weeping remained. Often I would have died,
That death with its forgetfulness might heal ;
I fear despair so much that I would hide
From this sweet knowledge even lest it reveal
Through throbbing waves of exquisite delight,
The after coming of forlornest night.

XXXVI

GO not so soon away, dear heart, because
When you are gone, I feel some note estray.
Music, upswelling, seems to drop away
Into chromatics, and the sadness awes.
I find, in what was fairest morning, flaws,
And even the sunshine, struggling, seems to play
As conscious of some want, and will not stay
But follows you — obeying natural laws.
Then when I look in your calm eyes, behold
Their violet infinitudes in sight,
The sun again grows passionate with gold,
The Heavens seem palpitating with delight,
And as the brooding shadows mountains fold,
My Love enwraps, unwondering at your height.

XXXVII

AND day by day the mountain seems to grow
Enwrapt more royally in robes of state,
As if with sight of thy young face elate,
And the sun's flush is brighter, so to show
It kissed thee first, to all the world below,
And mountest guard at noontide, as to wait
And know thy happy footsteps are not late,
To bid the azure still more azure grow.
And dost thou feel the joy, O sweet, and sing,
And pluck the daisies in the flowery ways,
And watch the butterflies on airy wing,
Or some white cloud that tender o'er thee stays,
Or dost thou, absent, turn thy golden ring
Sad with increasing splendor of the days?

XXXVIII

IN ABSENCE

HOW can I bear the waiting, till you lay,
In tender need, your pale pure hands in mine?
As Night lamenting crescent moon's decline
I weary, in my liveness for one ray
Of the great glory that is hidden away.
Wherefore delay, when darkest dark is mine?
Thou art the presence making Night divine,
Nor this alone — thou art the sun for Day,
Thou art the star of Morning shining high,
Thou art the Evening star with light intense,
Thou art the stars' path flung across the sky
Bridging all Heaven with its magnificence.
Yet were not earth so low and Heaven so high,
How could I measure Love's omnipotence?

XXXIX

HOW long it seems, Love, since your last good-
night!

To-morrows and to-morrows yet have flown
And thrice the lily's chalices have known
The morning dews, and on their petals white
The butterflies with wings of dazzling light
Have stooped, enthroned, and drank the drops that
shone,

And then with life's new knowledge upward flown: —
So I, in these June days, have gained a height
Larger than when that last good-night I spake.
I have stood radiant on Love's sweet brink,
Seeing the waters rise that I might drink
And my soul's thirst in its pure waters slake,
Nor doubted power of Love's new wings, to break
To a new Heaven divine as angels think.

XL

I WENT and looked up to the summer sky
When you were gone, O sweet, that I might stay
Unreached by words, and life's new fulness lay
Beyond the snowy clouds that drifted by ;
I could not place you in my thoughts too high,
You were inseparate from the golden day,
And Nature veined with you, in some sweet way,
I felt its strong, swift pulses swifter fly : —
Ah, since I know you all the world is fair,
The notes I miss in harmonies you lend,
I say I love you, almost unaware,
Yet say it as some message I might send
Across the skies through Heaven's diviner air
To saintly soul of some immortal friend.

XLI

O NIGHTINGALE that singest to the rose,
Lend me thy voice my Love's return to sing,
And blow, ye breezes, and the tidings bring
To every flower that in the valley grows.
The humming-bird may hear it, as he blows
His scarlet trumpet, and on airy wing
The whole vine's trumpets sound until they ring
All through the air sweet secret that he knows.
But thou, O sky, ineffably divine,
Thou wilt not need be told, for thou wilt lean
And see her kneeling at thy azure shrine,
And she will meet thine eyes with look serene
Waiting her welcome, till with flushing fine
Thou smil'st, as queen who meets another queen.

XLII

AND thou, O butterfly with yellow wings
Like banners for some festal day unfurled,
Go, flaunt them in the sunshine through the world,
As one that news of some great jubilee brings,
And O ye wild bees with your golden rings
Decked as for marriage, ere the dews are hurled
From out the lilies in their cups impearled,
Tell it to Heaven that knows divinest things,
And I will walk the ways with noiseless feet
As in a temple sacred set apart,
Where feast of Love is spread, and I will meet
This solemn glory with a solemn heart,
And Thou wilt not reproach me that I eat
O Thou sweet Christ — because all Love Thou art.

XLIII

THOU gavest me a flower last time we met,
A shining lily, and then turned away,
And all the glory faded from the day,
And even the lily died with its regret.
And since — I count the suns that rise and set
To know thy coming, and oft turn to stray
Along the river's brink, and watch the sway
Of lilies rocked as rocks my amulet.
And when the moon wakes, and the current's flow
Upon the shore in sweet beseeching dies,
I wonder if the moon's base heart will show
The love and longing in mine own that lies,
If in some occult moment thou wilt know
More than the river's music or its sighs?

XLIV

O WIND, blow softly 'cross the mountain peaks,
Blow softly south till thou shalt kiss the gold
Of my beloved's hair: thou canst be bold
To touch her brow, or lightly fan her cheeks,
Be bold, and waft me back each word she speaks,
Yet but to Heaven her dreams she may unfold,
To whip-poor-will alone her heart be told,
And chance some higher messenger she seeks.
Softly blow, soft darkness floods the west,
And a pale star is shining soft and clear,
And through the purple distance, from its nest,
The voice of a lone whip-poor-will I hear
Plaintive with pain of its love-laden breast;
And hush! yon great star shines like Heaven's warm
tear.

XLV

HERE is midsummer — let midsummer, bold
In its omnipotence of beauty, say
What is too high for words — let golden lay
Of some new radiant-plumaged bird, down rolled
In notes of silvery tenderness, unfold
Love's mighty power — let morning sunbeams stay
Transfixed in the azalias' breasts, till they
Are turned with rapture's passion into gold.
Let scarlet moons, like Night's great hearts of fire,
Beat silently o'er roses, till they know
Their tides run red, and life's new forces throw
To perfumes beating upward higher and higher,
Nor even then can all the Summer show
Pathos of my ineffable desire.

XLVI

O VIRGIN moon, upclimbing in the sky
To waiting breast of Heaven, thou guardest fair
The ocean's secrets, and with holy air,
Like a pale nun that holds the cloister key,
Thou lookest down in thy serenity
Impenetrably deep, as to declare
Thy light outstretched has barred in mysteries there
Nor eyes of Night, nor even thyself can see.
And from thy face I turn to the pure face
Of my young Love, who knowest in her rapt way
Secrets than thine more mighty, and whose place
Is higher than thine, and yet consents to stay
And flood my love's great sea with her white grace,
Shining as thou, with light transcending day.

XLVII

O MY beloved, when I feel the glow
Of thy pure radiant spirit meeting mine,
I am uplifted to a joy divine,
And in thy presence holier-hearted grow.
All things are new — I feel the rush and glow
Of mighty currents, and am drowned in shine
Of an immortal Sun, nor can give sign,
But only into trembling silence go.
'Deep answers unto deep' — listening I hear
Through spaces far, a voice star-noted rise,
And to its glittering height am lifted near,
With the full glory falling on mine eyes
I know no limits — all the way is clear.
My soul with thine, song-plumaged, sweeps the skies.

XLVIII

THE birds are seeking refuge, and the sky
Like a great soul in travail shrouds its woe
In sheets of blackness, and cold, shuddering, blow
The affrighted leaves — and in the pastures by,
The shrinking kine are huddling helplessly,
And like huge monuments set up to show
Some giant monarch's awful overthrow,
In sable gulfs the crests of mountains lie.
And thou, beloved — dost thou shrink to see
Upon the horizon through great fissures break
Blue flames, as if from fires of Hell set free,
Or with the thunders' loosed artillery quake?
Or dost thou, holding in thy heart Love's key
At feet of Christ, the sacrament partake?

XLIX

THE birds are singing, and the storm is done,
And the great soul of Heaven is hushed to rest,
And the wet leaves are shining joy confessed,
And the young lambs are glad, and one by one
The herds go westward as to meet the sun —
And a great glory lights the mountains' crest,
As if the sleeping King were shriven and blessed,
And had at last peace and oblivion won :
Where art thou, best beloved? dost thou hear
The happy birds that sing, or see shine fair
Upon the azure, growing deep and clear
The great sun shaking out his sunset hair —
Or dost thou to some messenger lend ear
Whose name is Love, clad like thyself in prayer?

L

I BRING to you a rose divinely fair,
By suns and moons and gentle dews caressed,
To wear, beloved, on your happy breast
That holdest all of summer unaware.
Swift opening, it will throw upon the air
Passion of fragrance, in divine unrest —
As haunting thoughts, that written with tears, attest
The song divine is altar of despair :
O love, the rose is tragedy — to-day
In mystery of its bloom it may uncloset,
To-morrow crushed, it may be flung away,
Yet if at last, from your young heart it goes
However brief its joy, who would not say
Better than life less sweet to be a dead, dead rose.

LI

THE August moon in the pale sky hangs low
As yearning to thy heart, beloved, where
All summer beauty lies, and shining fair
Floods thy dear face with a mysterious glow ;
Thou seem'st a vision 'mid the flowers that blow,
And leaves above thee tremble in the air
As of the moonlight and of thee aware,
And from thy lips strange music seems to flow.
O vision beautiful, I breathe a sigh
Lest thou be wafted like some saint away : —
Nearer thy heart the young moon seems to lie,
As if to pierce it with some Heavenly ray,
Yet were the moon out-blotted from the sky
The void would pulse with light if thou but stay.

LII

FROM out my dreaming soul — kept all unseen —
I take its warmest colors, to portray
Thy happy face, beloved, that day by day
Is lifted into beauty more serene,
And wear'st unconsciously a loftier mien
As if thou heard'st the planets on their way,
And to their music tuned, could'st scarcely stay
Thy wings from traversing the height between ;
And yet howe'er I strive the tints seem cold.
What is divine, O sweet, I cannot paint —
Thy mouth's curve, eyes' expression may be bold,
But hues of Love itself were all too faint,
Unless from out Love's sun I take the gold
And round thy brow draw halo of a Saint.

LIII

O SAPHIRE Ocean stretching to the sky,
Whereon the white ships glide, and glide from
sight,
Let thy great heart heave with supreme delight,
And, on the shore where pebbles glittering lie,
Let thy soft waves sing with new ecstasy,
And break upon the rocks with foam more white,
And gentler rock the sea-gulls stayed in flight —
For my beloved unto thee is nigh,
And does her hair upon the wind-blown beach
Like rays of gold in the deep sunlight shine,
And does she hear thy undertone beseech,
And list the sea-shells that the hollows line,
And does she, as she hears their murmuring speech,
Ponder if it is Love's deep tone or thine?

LIV

THOU wert stretched motionless, O sea, in maze
Of light ineffable, borne from the west,
And the red sun had bared his burning breast
Ere he should plunge to thee, and his last rays
Had flung great opals o'er thy chrysoprase
In dazzling lines of changing fires to rest,
And one great ship, as if in glory quest,
Moved slowly on, with rainbows all ablaze ;
And we, we watched the crimson clouds go by,
And flush to rose the shore erewhile so white,
And saw a phantom ship that sailed on high,
Mirage of rainbowed ship still left in sight,
And through the channel of the sunset sky
Seemed sailing in that Heavenly ship to light.

LV

AND like a ship on fire adown the west
The red sun sailed and sailed, and still we stayed
To watch the coming of the twilight shade,
And lo! the moon came up, as if in quest
Of the slow sinking ship, that seemed to breast
The heated waves until the wreck was laid, —
And even then the scattered fires essayed
Of the whole sky's expanse to be possessed,
And when the fires died out, and calm and white
Shone out the tranquil moon, I drew thee nigh,
And saw upon thy face a mystic light,
A happy look, unutterably high,
And kissed thee, trembling lest from out my sight
Thou, too, should'st melt like glory from the sky.

LVI

AS scarlet flowers upon the coast give sign
— When in wild, fragile loveliness they grow —
Of the day's coming sun or shadow, so
Love can, when watched by Love, its moods divine,
Feeling the distant rain's o'erhanging line,
As leaves that into sudden shrinking go
With countless dreams all tingled into woe
It cannot clear, yet cannot half define.
Who can gainsay this subtle power that sweeps
Two souls to harmony so fine and true
That while one measures loss, the other weeps
As o'er a darkened grave whose sods are new!
My heart with thine such perfect measure keeps
Thy pangs are borne as in mine own they grew.

LVII

I SAT one day with ocean at my feet
Dreaming, O my beloved, of Love and thee,
And saw the passion of the fuller sea
As into it the wild waves madly beat,
And heard the music of their slow retreat
Smiting the shore like sighs of ecstasy,
That left thereon the sea-shell, as for me,
Pink with the ocean's secrets vast and sweet,
The blushing sea-shells, lying on the shore,
— Though dreaming still, I can no longer see.
The surges with their sobbing and their roar,
Now thou art here, are silent unto me,
And ocean at my feet cries out no more ;
But I, I evermore cry out for thee.

LVIII

LOVE, when I say 'I love you' you will know
It means a passion hotter than despair ;
It means, when skies are blue and days are fair,
That clouds write out in shadows, as they go,
My blissful secret on the grass below, —
That sunsets flame it to the skies aware, —
That thrushes sing it in the summer air, —
That torrents tell it in their overflow :
Yet should I say it, Love, it were in vain
Unless your soul knew the same strange delight,
Felt the same sweet, divine, unresting pain.
And when I say it, all the heavens in sight
With forkéd lightnings will be rent in twain,
For storms alone can show my passion's might.

LIX

GOOD-NIGHT, belovéd, let the dark enfold,
And brooding shadows in their purple grace
Fall soft as sunshine on thy noble face,
And all secure, as if the morning bold
Were watching thee upon its throne of gold ;
Let solemn night encompass and embrace,
Let the moon watch thee from its lofty place,
And the stars hush thy soul to peace untold :
Sleep well, sleep well, and let thy silent palms
— Like some white saint's, chance folded on thy
breast —

Shut softly in, the while you softly rest,
Snowy infinities of snowy calms,
A flood of dreams as heavenly sweet as psalms,
And yet — wake, Love — I want the dreams expressed.

LX

IF thou wouldst stay the tumult of my heart,
Kiss me with thy calm lips so angel-wise
Where Peace ineffable divinely lies,
And on my brow, whose shadows will depart,
A star will shine ; and drawn by Love's strange art
To Love's new zone, kiss me as one who buys
The bliss of Heaven from an abyss of sighs,
And following thy wings will need no chart ;
O virgin pure ! Kiss me to-day, to-night,
To-morrow, all the days that come and go,
Until my soul shall grow divinely white.
Then kiss me, dead, and lend my spirit's flight
Passion of impetus that I may know
First, last, forever — Love is infinite.

LXI

AND yesterday the fleeting Summer went,
And I was tender sad, because I knew
That the wild roses' blooming time was through.
But to my sadness thou wouldst not consent,
And thou wert beautiful in thy content,
And looking in thine eyes so gentian blue,
I saw June stayed as things divinest do ;
And in its perfect heart a Heaven was pent.
And now to thee, gay plumes waft welcomes bold,
As Spring's white lilies wafted welcomes shy ;
And I look down upon the shining gold
Of thy young sun-kissed hair, nor can deny
This day is fair as Summer's self could hold
Divine refrain to Summer's ecstasy.

LXII

CHRISTMAS

REVERENT I come, O sweet, with head bent low,
To bring to you a gift more consecrate
Than all beside : — I will ope wide the gate
To Love's eternal anguish, and thus show
What it will cost you if herein you go,
That even rapture wrings and tears await
The eyes that visions see : — nor yet too late
— If shrinking from the shadow of my woe
You say farewell, and turn from Love away —
Yet if you stay, then I will be as true
— Touching your lips in Christ's sweet name to-day —
As life itself, as death itself, to you.
Nor howsoe'er divine shall I dare say
Worn on thy heart, Love's gift will not pierce through.

LXIII

ALTHOUGH the pallid sun delays to rise,
And swift declines as if to shun the snow,
It is not Winter — nay, though tempests blow,
And rifts of fallen sleet may frozen rise
To crown the hills, and 'neath the lowering skies
Beckon weird trees, yet like a sun I know
The warmth of thy dear presence, and its glow
Lights up my way, and to my happy eyes
No June where blooms the rose, though set apart
For its resplendent skies — were half as fair.
Divinest dreams shape radiant in my heart
The perfect Summer, and Love's rose is there.
O rose from Heaven, a fugitive thou art,
And as still left in Heaven thy thorns forbear.

LXIV

I READ a legend in my earlier years
Of Moorish princess decked, when lying dead,
With rose that on her silent heart grew red
— Though white when placed — wet with her lover's
tears.

O sweet ! the legend unto me appears
But as a truth, for shouldst thou bend thy head,
And breathe my name with sighs, I should be led
To break death's seal and smile, as one who hears.
And shouldst thou, like that poet lover, place
A white rose on my heart, I should forget
That I were dead, and feel the red blood race
Through my chilled veins until the rose it met.
And though I died again, of thy fair face
Should dream in Heaven, and even in Heaven regret.

LXV

AS print of noiseless centuries is shown
On the veined crystal — so, dear, I would lead
Through my soul's eras to its present need ;
You are so dear to me that you have known
How each new vein within my heart has grown
— Wrought from the force of pain — nor do I heed
That side by side with pain this joy you read ;
Nay ! I am glorified my Love to own.
Dear, I have known such anguish it may mark
My Love a crystal, chance you will not scorn ;
I am no longer compassed with the dark,
But thy great love across my heart is borne
Spanning it with radiance of an arc
Transfiguring it as the sun transfigures morn.

LXVI

I SOMETIMES think, O love, it would be sweet
To be a statue, hewn to marble sleep,
And never through my veins to feel the sweep
Of passionate emotions running fleet ;
Never again life's tragedies to meet,
Never above belovéd graves to weep,
Nor even again to see thine eyes that keep
Heaven's light, as if my longing to complete.
But empty then the silence that were mine,
And peace were nought to an untired breast.
Nay! rather let death lift to sleep divine,
But do not stoop, O Love, to kiss me, lest
— While in thy heavenly eyes hot tears might shine —
My loosened heart should beat, won from its new-found
rest.

LXVII

I SENT thee roses that they might unfold,
And tender breathe what I can never say ;
Yet only when their leaves have dropt away,
And they have bared to thee their hearts of gold,
Giving thee all, belovéd, shall I hold
That they the longings of my soul obey :
Thus, with supreme devotion, I would lay
My whole heart down, and then weep Love untold.
Love ! Let Love weep ! or else its joy might make
A burden too divinely sweet to bear,
Yet who would shrink one pang the more to take
— Breasting a tide tumultuous as despair —
If tired with sorrow, bliss the heart should break,
And Death, eternity of Love declare.

LXVIII

I AM not fretted, though I oft recall
I am thy slave, yet chosen thy slave to be
Were more than if all others should decree
A royal sceptre mine, for I might fall
From sovereignty, and seek to hide like Saul,
Yet in some silent way to watch o'er thee,
To worship thee as star, yet leave thee free,
What kingdom could compare with such sweet thrall !
Heavy upon thy soul the world's woes rest,
Thy pitying hands are constant reached to save.
If I could bear thy pangs within my breast
Wounded to death, this only would I crave
For my great love that thou shouldst stand confessed
I died as King who lived content as slave.

LXIX

OFT when I look in thy young eyes that beam
With the remembered joys of Heaven, and hear
Thy words' sweet music fit for angel's ear,
I wonder not that Beatrice was theme
Of Dante's song, or that in every dream
She held celestial sway, for it is clear
Thy love has the same spell, and lights appear
As from their Paradise on me to shine.
Ah, through what wondrous spheres I have been led :
And could my soul gain stature fit for thine,
The living were eclipsed, and all the dead,
For Genius nor any fame is mine,
But thou hast placed upon my uncrowned head
A crown than even Dante's more divine.

LXX

I OFTEN think, Love, you were waked from sleep
Of some white Goddess so divinely fair
Your beauty smote to life ; and all aware
You blushed and smiled and could no longer keep
The cold white silence, but with sudden leap
To fire divine, drew to your flooding hair
— As if the glory of the sun to share —
Its dazzling rays above your brow to sweep.
And looking at the pathos of your eyes,
I dreamed that Heaven so all-enamored grew,
It gave back all the light that in it lies,
And wakened ecstasy of life in you,
Till stirred by music of the centuries,
In your tranced marble veins the blood poured through.

LXXI

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

LOVE has no country, sweet, Love has no place
In dim cathedral, where the shadows bide,
And the majestic dead sleep side by side.
From Poets' sculptured calm I turn to trace
How their immortal voices rolled through space,
How all the muffling mists of Time defied,
And smitten by their echoes, like a tide
My thoughts engulf me — as in high embrace
I feel thy living warmth — I sweep the air —
I cleave the sea — I melt to thee afar.
My heart's fire bursts to flame and in its glare,
The sun's rays but as arrowed shadows are :
Awhile the heavens enwrap me, and I share
On its blue breast white mystery of a star.

LXXII

GO, restless world, whose pleasures are not new,
And careless of my presence pass me by.
I want to lay my heart against the sky,
And let Love's mighty symphony beat through.
Nay more, I want to kiss away its blue
And find myself ethereal, in a high
White dream of my beloved, that will fly
And silently her happy thoughts pursue.
The very sun has softly veiled its light,
As if it knew that I would shun its glare,
And when in darkness I am hidden from sight
Ere the sweet, loitering moon shines out aware,
Then I will kiss, unseen, the air of night,
And let it float itself to Heaven, a prayer.

LXXIII

I STAND abased at your great love for me,
Because your soul is mountains higher than mine.
And yet, O Love, I count it not as sign
Of worth in me, though I can better see
Lifted to your Love's height what Love may be,
But only from the sun's rays comes the shine
On sighing seas, — and hand that pours the wine
Sets what were else the prisoned sparkle free.
Knowing where you have placed me, I could weep
The impotence that holds me lower down,
I would aspire if but your love to keep,
And so made royal, wear it for my crown.
Nay, dying, it will be enough renown
If you but sigh for me the while I sleep.

LXXIV

O TENDER eyes with meanings infinite,
‘Look into mine again,’ I turned to say
In the pale golden light of dying day —
Look up once more and say to me, Good-night,
For I have fever-thirst that only sight
Of thy young face, soft smiling, can allay.
And for the music bluebirds make in May
I languish, till I hear thy footsteps light.
Ah! such a wistful, foolish heart is mine,
I half forget how long the way that lies
Betwixt the Spring’s first coming and its sign.
Sweet! say good-night once more ere sunset dies,
And hidden joy of Spring I may divine,
Seeing the early violets in thine eyes.

LXXV

OFT-TIMES, belovéd, when I waken at night,
I eager search my soul, and scan it well,
That I some loftier thoughts to thee may tell,
When I shall see thee in the morning's light.
I cannot scale Olympus, and the sight
Of dreams that baffle me, is like a knell
Rung over mighty graves : there is no Hell
Like that to which men sink from ungained height.
I would be great thy greater soul to read,
To better understand thine eyes divine
That are to me the proofs of Heaven indeed ;
I am unworthy to worship at thy shrine,
Yet gods might envy, since thou hast decreed,
Despite my failures, that thy heart is mine.

LXXVI

MY Love awaits me with expectant eyes,
Lest on her threshold I unseen should stand,
And she be not the first to take my hand,
And give me countless welcomes such as rise
From souls of angels needing no disguise.
My heart is by her Love auroral spanned,
And I forget the pleasures I have planned
In greater one that being near her, lies,
And as upon the heavens the planets shine,
Her soul holds sphere on sphere of high desire
That 'neath her bosom's snow are rayed in fire,
And place in every radiant sphere is mine.
Nor can I fitting sing, until divine
In Love's own place I hold Love's perfect lyre.

LXXVII

THOU took'st me once to an Arcadian dell
To hear a waterfall its music throw
In rushing symphonies to gulfs below ;
And what the path we took I cannot tell,
I only know each wild-flower held a spell
As blown in Heaven, and that thy feet below
The shadows into rainbows seemed to grow,
And every rainbow led to Heaven as well.
There must be days in Love, as days in Spring,
When light is so omnipotent, it stays
With hush of splendor, bluebirds poised to sing ;
But mine was hush that falls on one who prays,
For at thy feet I seemed to see outswing
Two noiseless gates with jasper all ablaze.

LXXVIII

DEAR ! In some larger life your soul will know
How fathomless the Love that in me lies,
And I shall look with calm, untroubled eyes
Into your own, and starry-winged shall go
— Shaping my course with yours — the while I know
The space's magnitudes through which we rise,
Unmarvelling at the white infinities
That round and in us both will seem to flow.
Then with the mystic glory angels share,
Heart of my heart, you will look down on me,
And know the earthly shackles that we bear
From pinnacles of Pain are smitten free,
That in the great eternal otherwhere
Love's largest power is Love's large liberty.

LXXIX

YOU brought me as an Easter offering
Annunciation lilies pure and fair ;
Haply you knew that brighter flowers might bear
My memories to pain, awakening
Significant regrets these would not bring —
Sweet, when they shall have died they will not share
The fate of other flowers, for I shall wear
Forever in my heart their hint of spring.
Haunted with their sweet perfumes I shall keep,
And as some gift divine your love shall hide,
What wonder holding that I cannot sleep,
And sleepless that I seem to stand beside
A sea whose waves are gathering force to leap
And drown my heart with joy's unfathomed tide.

LXXX

I WONDER not, sweet, that my words convey,
Because less high than thine, a sense of wrong :
Thou'rt like a soaring lark, that stayest song
Because its mate Heaven-lifted cannot stay,
Yet who is so song-brimmed that the delay
Tears its own bosom till the sweet notes throng,
And spite the shadow it is borne along
To a fine rapture, as is oft thy way —
And I am shriven, sweet, when my heart I show,
Thou knowest what pain is mine to hear thy sighs.
Thou art the golden light to which I go,
The Heaven-swept lark within whose music lies
Divinest pathos of divinest woe,
Poured to an avalanche of melodies.

LXXXI

O LOVE, how shall I celebrate this day! —
This day when thy sweet angelhood began,
When earth was all so glad its joy o'erran
In lilies clustering round the new-born May.
The Heaven's great banner spreads above thy way,
And music multiplies, and bluebirds scan
The sunrise o'er thee singing as Love can
In Love's great chorus, with no note astray;
And were the voices of the Spring all mine,
Ecstatic voices with ecstatic themes,
Too faint my song to lay upon thy shrine,
Though higher than birds or winds or loosened streams;
For thou art tuned to music more divine
And hearest fairer, even in thy dreams.

LXXXII

IF I should be pursued by dark-winged Pain,
And stand 'neath shadow of his awful eyes,
What power would come to soothe my burning sighs —
How should I ever smile at Peace again?
For in Pain's grasp, my stony face I fain
Should wish to hide, lest the old tragedies
Might in the whirlpool of new anguish rise,
And bring me back my dead despairs again.
Then still and cold as death if I should show
Passion of an illimitable woe,
So great, nor even your love could bear away,
So strong, nor even the Heaven above could sway —
Hide me within your heart — and let me stay
Till warmed to life my frozen tears should flow.

LXXXIII

O PITYING Christ, couldst not this cup forbear?
Where shall I wander in my quenchless woe?
Not where the moon with pallid heart yearns low
— Wasted and wan — as of some loss aware,
Not where the lights of countless stars will flare
As hurrying toward a fairer star they go,
Not where the cruel Sun will dazzling show,
To flowers that still can bloom, its wanton glare.
What shall assuage this tearless agony?
Canst Thou not touch her heavy-lidded eyes,
Canst Thou not bid her rise and speak to me
Who liest smiling as with glad surprise?
Hast Thou too died, O Christ? then let me flee
Into the night — made black with Calvarys.



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library