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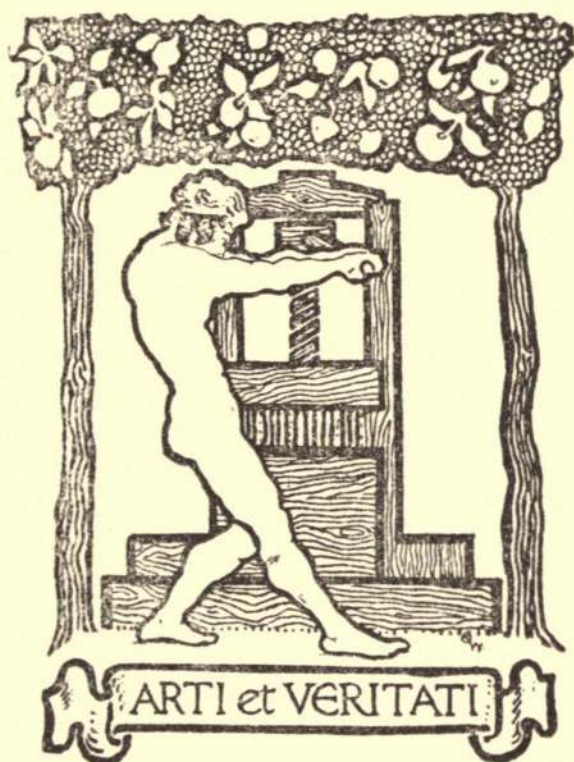
THE DANCERS

THE DANCERS

And Other Legends and Lyrics

BY

EDITH M. THOMAS



BOSTON

RICHARD G. BADGER

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To the Memory of James Thomas

Late of Leon, Nicaragua

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THE DANCERS

A Legend Of Saxony

I

St. Magnus' hoary spires loom dark and still
On skies where, smoldering, sink the fires of day;
And now a hundred uncouth shapes of ill
The gloam-enchanted Gothic eaves portray.
Dim reverie enfolds both plain and hill;
The stream alone in light pursues its way;
The first stars tremble in the afterglow,
And slender Dian bends a noiseless bow.

II

St. Magnus' ancient heart is all alight,
Glad, warm, and glowing, to his inmost shrine;
His windows cast a benediction bright
On frost-bit turf and legendary pine;
His massive doors stand open to the night,
And thence is heard the Nowel hymn benign.
The priest his thank-uplifting censer swings,
And, hid aloft, the choir responsive sings.

III

He for his flock with fervor intercedes;
But oft unseemly sounds of mirth, outside,
Do jar on pious souls bent o'er their beads;
And youthful worshippers their thoughts divide
'Twixt temporal delights and spirit needs.
The priest himself no longer will abide
The heedless troop that dance and sing without;
So sends to bid them cease their revel-rout.

IV

But Youth and Holiday, conspiring twain!
 Their heady course they will not intermit,
 Impelled like the free steed once given rein.
 Counsel the morning zephyrs as they flit
 In ceaseless play across the bearded grain!
 But Youth, when once of grave decorum quit,
 Stays not his feet, till, of their own accord,
 Grown folly-tired, they sink upon the sward.

V

'T was so. The ghostly father might upbraid—
 The merry Dancers heeded not at all;
 But wilder yet the measures that they swayed.
 Then on St. Magnus' self the priest did call;
 In open door he stood, and thus he prayed:
 "Oh, grant thy servant that it shall befall
 To these, who will not hear the word of grace,
 That they shall *dance a twelvemonth in this place!*"

.

VI

The dawn is red upon St. Magnus' spires,
 His chimes ring in the holy Christmas morn,
 Whilst, thin and light, the smoke from village fires
 Into the windless sky is slowly borne.
 Night-fallen snow the turf, the branch, attires
 In raiment white as wool new-washed and shorn;
 But in the drifted churchyard there's a spot
 The silent loom of Heaven hath mantled not.

VII

They're dancing yet, who danced on yester-eve!
They're singing yet, who trilled the careless song!
And where they circle (if ye will believe!)
No snow hath fallen there, the whole night long!
Still hand in hand, the dance they gaily weave;
Nor do they heed the gathering anxious throng,
The prayers of these, the angry threats of those,
Who vainly strive locked fingers to uncloze.

VIII

'T is "Margarethe—Bertha—Marie, child!
Come hence; come hence! You break your mother's
heart!"
But on they dance. Their eyes are bright and wild;
Their rosy lips with breathless pleasure part.
'T is "Rupert—Franz! what witchcraft has beguiled?
Cease, lest beneath your father's wrath you smart!"
Nor ear, nor glance aside, the revelers lend:
The day wears late; the nightly shades descend.

.

IX

Heigh-ho! Once more peeps out the blushing May,
Once more the primrose leans beside the brook;
And hither, glad, the swallow wings her way,
To haunts that in the autumn she forsook.
St. Magnus' hoary eaves invite her stay;
But now intruders must she chide—for look!
They're dancing still, who danced on Christmas eve!
They're singing still, to suit the dance they weave!

X

"Are ye not hungry? Bread and meat I bring:
 Eat, children; otherwise ye perish soon."
 "Are ye not thirsty? Water from the spring
 I've brought, to slake your thirst this blazing noon."
 Good souls! down on the ground themselves they fling,
 And weep to see the unregarded boon;
 The summer days are long and fiercely bright:
 Sweet Heaven, would that endless were the night!

XI

And now 't is Margarethe! late yestreen
 Thy sister died, and dying, prayed for thee.
 They soon will bring her to the churchyard green;
 Yonder the heaped-up clods thyself may'st see."
 "My Bertha! thou a bride this day hadst been;
 But now for ay unwedded must thou be!"
 "My Marie, little one! come, rest thee, sweet!"
 Meseems, but faster move those choric feet.

.

XII

Whoso to Colewiz Town comes pilgrim-wise,
 Or rider halting but to taste the ale,
 He must the Dancers see with his own eyes;
 Then ready credence lends he to the tale
 How luckless stranger, under twilight skies,
 Did fall in swoon before St. Magnus' pale,
 Believing that the Willis, circling there,
 Advanced to close him in their eddyng snare.

XIII

On frost-bit turf and legendary pine
Gleams the late moon, and winds are weird and shrill.
The fireside gossips know, by many a sign,
The winter early comes. So, if ye will,
Have store of apples and of spiced sweet wine,
For evening cheer, to melt the brumal chill.
“Ye shiver?” — “’T is that I cannot forget
The Dancers. They, alas, are dancing yet!”

XIV

Then answer makes the goodman to his wife:
“But well ye know nor frost nor fire they feel.
They (if they living be) lead not the life
We daily lead, of mingled woe and weal.
They would not shrink, though with the keenest knife
One minded so a deadly stroke should deal.”
Spake then a stranger guest: “I have heard tell
How Herebertus can reverse the spell;

XV

“He, the great bishop dwelling at Cologne,
Whom I myself once saw when I was young—
The mighty Herebertus, he alone
Dissolves the charm a wizard wand has flung,
Revokes the curse in sudden anger thrown.”
Thus talk good folk until, with droning tongue,
St. Magnus’ midnight bell bids all around
Sleep well—save those who tread enchanted ground.

.

XVI

It is the winter, and the little town
Once more is buried to its eyes in snow;
And still a few last, loitering flakes come down,
Albeit, in the western heavens low,
A rosy smile redeems the zenith frown.
And touched with rose the dreaming faces show
Of them who, never worn, retire, advance,
Singing the song that times their mazy dance.

XVII

Yet is St. Magnus' ancient heart alight,
Glad, warm, and glowing, to his inmost shrine.
For, if God wills it so, this Holy Night
There shall be wrought a miracle divine,
As those of old were wrought, in all men's sight.
Therefore, devoutly let each one incline;
And if there lurk a secret thought of ill,
That thought dislodge, and entertain good will.

XVIII

Down the long aisle he comes, that saintly man
From far Cologne, our comfort to restore.
His face, attentive, all the people scan—
That blessing smile, the prophet-looks of yore.
Close follows him the priest who laid the ban
(Since then advanced in years a double score),
With piteous livid cheek and bowèd frame—
God wot his sin hath brought its lustral flame!

XIX

Not here availeth candle, book, and bell,
Or mystic waving, or the muttered verse
Which studious brethren of the cloister-cell
In rubric down the labored page disperse.
For this was not some baleful sorcerer's spell;
But piety itself pronounced the curse.
How, then, can aught but piety supreme
The hapless Dancers from their fate redeem?

XX

Now hath he crossed the threshold of the door;
Now, silently, in hushed, expectant bands,
Into the torch-lit dusk the people pour;
And round good Herebertus, where he stands,
They throng, with wonder ever growing more.
He nothing holds in his grave, reverend hands
Save the bent staff that shepherds used, of old,
To bring the strayed or weakling to the fold.

XXI

That staff from charm and malison sets free.
That staff no greater miracle hath done,
In all the ages past, than now ye see.
Behold the Dancers!—how he smites each one,
And, smiting, gently saith, “Absolvèd be
From henceforth, thou my daughter, thou my son!”
The song dies out; and slack the dizzy reel,
As when, unbanded, turns the spinning-wheel.

XXII

And now, in many a quavering, smothered call,
 'Tis "Margarethe—Bertha—Marie, love!"
 And "Franz, my boy!" The dreamer stands in thrall.
 Down from the disenchanted boughs above,
 Dislodged, the feathery snow-wreaths lightly fall,
 Like shedded plumes. At the cold touch thereof,
 The dreamer starts into this waking world,
 And tears, unaware, lie on the cheek impearled.

XXIII

Their year-long dance at last is done. But they,
 Young creatures all, they can remember naught
 Save that in Fairyland they were a day;
 A piper piped, and his sweet tunes they caught.
 To this, "It bodes no good," the gossips say.
 But at his word, who such release hath wrought,
 All hearts uplift, and put away all fears;
 And the sad priest throws off his load of years.

XXIV

Now might be seen the Yule fire blazing bright—
 Unfailing oasis in winter's waste;
 And now, the joyous revel at its height,
 Beneath the Druid branch the guests have paced.
 Ere one can think, St. Magnus sounds good night.
 Good night! Once more the spiced sweet wine they taste.
 Then gleams awhile the lantern's wandering spark;
 It sinks, a homeward star—and all is dark.

THE ENCHANTED RING

A Tale of Halloween

I

You ask me for a tale of Halloween?
'Tis well. I lately read a treasure tome
Within whose legend-haunted lone demesne
The free, wild Fancy finds herself at home.
Now, while the night wind wings the starlit dome,
And while the dead leaves eerie converse hold,
Through the rich Conjuror's Kingdom with me roam;
And, wandering there, the story shall be told
Of what befell in Leinster in the days of old.

II

In Leinster in the days of old, I wis,
There was no maiden of the countryside
But on All Hallows (such a night as this!)
In Love's dim chancery her fortune tried.
The bursting nut upon the hearth she plied;
Or, while a lighted candle she would bear,
Gazed in her glass with eyes intent and wide;
Or, with weird mutterings, like a witch's prayer,
She sowed three rows of nothing on the empty air!

III

All rites had little Barbara performed,
Yet nothing did she see, and nothing hear;
Her busy thoughts soon into dreamland swarmed.
The rosy apple lay, untasted, near
For him who, ere another rounded year,
Should taste Love's feast with her. And now the wind
(As on this very night) with sighings drear,
Spake close beneath her latticed window-blind
Such dreamwise things as it hath spoke time out of mind.

IV

Why moans our little sister? "Rest thee, rest!
Fear naught." Soon careful arms have clasp'd her round,
And a soft cheek against her own is pressed.
For thus, since childhood, Barbara hath found
In mother-love with sister's love upbound,
Swift respite from the terrors of the night.
But now, what sleep so restless, yet so sound,
That not for touch or tone will take its flight,
Or aught at all except the broadcast morning light!

V

"My precious one, such troubled dreams were thine;
Yet, though I strove, I could not waken thee."
"Dear mother-sister—dearest sister mine—
Methought an unknown guide did beckon me
Far, far from here. My will I could not free;
I needs must follow through weald and waste.
Outworn I reached a manor fair to see;
Outworn, alone, through a long hall I paced,
That was with many a speaking, stately portrait graced.

VI

“Then, stilly as a spirit loosed from earth,
I climbed a stair, and to a chamber came,
Rich hung with broidered cloths. Upon the hearth
Dull embers held a little fitful flame.
A sudden trembling ran through all my frame,
When, from amidst those silken hangings rare,
A voice pronounced: ‘Reveal thy face and name,
I conjure thee! At least, some token spare
That I may trace thee when thou goest I know not where!’

VII

“It was a grievous and a sinful thing—
But over me was sovereign, stern command
I must obey. Thy gift, the birthday ring,
With my own name engraved within the band—
The ring, alas! I drew it from my hand,
And laid it on the marble mantel high.
Then died the flame from out the falling brand,
Then were the four walls darkling earth and sky;
And, once again, till dawn a wanderer was I.

VIII

“But, Agatha, thou art not vexed at me?
Thou dost not mourn the ring? ’Twas mine last eve,
This morning it is gone, as thou canst see!”
“Nay, darling, thou no reason hast to grieve:
I may not tell thee why, but I believe
That ere another wingèd year is flown
Some brightest threads for thee will Fortune weave.”
So spake her sister, sage of look and tone,
And held the little, fevered hand within her own.

IX

The Winter long is over in the land,
 And mellow is the furrowed soil, and quick
 With hopeful promise to the toiler's hand.
 He, too, that toils not, leaning on his stick,
 Is cheered to see the bean-flowers set so thick,
 And thick the blossoms on the orchard bough.
 How sweet the air! Hath any soul been sick?
 Oh, let that soul drink health from beauty now;
 Stand forth beneath the sky; unknit the careworn brow!

X

“Say, children, if ye guess, what aileth him—
 The stranger who oft leans beyond the hedge
 To see our budding roses? Yet so dim
 His eye, he knows them not from ragged sedge!
 The black ox's hoof hath trod on him, I pledge
 My hopes beyond the grave, he seeketh aye
 For that which flees him to the world's far edge!
 Come, children, tell me what the gossips say:
 Your grandsire nothing hears—the old at home must stay!”

XI

Good Agatha replies with playful look:
 “Let Barbara speak. And if she be the rose
 (To us the sweetest flower in any nook—
 Or tame or wild—that in our Leinster grows)
 Hath drawn the stranger to our garden-close,
 With what true eye hath he the best discerned.”
 (A blush-rose, on the moment, springs and blows!)
 “Ay, sister, grandsire, all that I have learned,
 I freely tell you; since deceit I always spurned.

XII

“But twice have I had speech with him—no more,
First time he asked a rose, and spake me fair,
I gave it him, so sad a look he wore;
And on he passed, as one who doth not care.
Again, as I was searching everywhere
My bracelet that had fallen to the ground,
He leaped the hedge-row ere I was aware;
And he it was that, searching, quickly found
My bracelet. Surely, I to courtesy was bound.”

XIII

“Ay, surely, child. Your grandsire taught you that,
What said you then?” “I bade him stay and rest;
And down upon the old oak bench we sat.
He spake of losses—how another’s quest
’Twas ever his to aid, for he was blest
With wizard sight, save for the thing he sought—
A thing not lost, since never yet possessed;
He had but dreamed of it! I answered naught;
But much, in truth, since then of what he said have
thought.”

XIV

By this time closed are the ears of age,
And lid-fast are the eyes. And now, alone,
Spake carelessly good Agatha the sage:
“Great prudence, little Barbe, thou hast shown;
But I have heard the stranger well is known,
That gentle is his birth, and the estate
Is broad and fair, which singly he doth own.
’Tis said his health hath suffered much of late;
Wholesome this air; so he prolongs his visit’s date.”

XV

Then subtly did fond Agatha contrive:
 "Thou doest but a charitable deed,
 If from his soul this withering gloom thou drive.
 Lightly along the self-same channel lead
 Thy talk. Say that thou gav'st his words good heed;
 Since back to thee thy bracelet he could bring,
 Thou would'st, once more, consult his wizard rede,
 For thou hast lost a yet more precious thing—
 Thy sister's gift to thee—the name, too, on the ring!"

XVI

"That dare I not—!" broke in the little maid;
 "For well thou knowest how the ring was lost,
 And all the tricks at Halloween I played.
 Alas, those charms were wrought at heavy cost,
 To be, as I have been, a homeless ghost—
 A shadow of myself—of self bereft!"
 "Then, child, tell only what importeth most—
 A ring of thine was somewhere lost, or left;
 And thou, once more, art fain to seek his counsel deft."

XVII

The Rose sends challenge to the flower-world all:
What bloom like mine—at once both proud and sweet?
 Unstored do the Rose's burning accents fall
 Upon the twain within the garden-seat.
 Yet, what can make the Rose's color fleet
 From a young maiden's cheek—what sudden stress?
 What words are these a young man may repeat,
 While light springs up in eyes long lustreless?
 But come, let us o'erhear—'twere idle, still to guess?

XVIII

It thus had chanced: when came the moment fit,
Full simply little Barbara broached the theme
Directed by her sister's subtler wit:
Since he had found her bracelet, it would seem
A yet more precious loss he might redeem:
A ring of hers had vanished—left no trace.
So great a wizard might some potent scheme
Devise, to bring it from its hiding-place.”
She lightly spake. Intent, her comrade scanned her face.

XIX

“Speak thou the truth, no word from me withhold;
Lift up thine eyes, and they the truth shall speak,
For it must be that slender ring of gold
Bounds the whole world of happiness I seek.
Tell me when thou this ring didst lose, and eke
All circumstance that did the time attend.”
'Twas then the Rose's color fled her cheek;
But since her tongue to guile she could not lend,
She told straightforwardly her story to the end.

XX

“As thou hast spoken truth, and naught beside”
He said, “I'll speak the living truth to thee.
That night some charms of Halloween I tried,
Dared thus to do by a blithe company
In mine old hall, far in the West Countree.
The charms performed, I thought of them no more;
Yet deemed it strange that sleep came not to me;
And as the rising wind shook blind and door,
I watched with half-shut eyes the firelight on the floor.

XXI

“Then glidingly, and noiseless as a dream,
 A figure stoled in white, with floating hair,
 Touched faintly by the embers’ fitful gleam,
 Approached the fireplace and stood wavering there—
 Stood piteously, with tender feet all bare,
 And tender palms reached out above the coals
 (As they had borne too long the frosty air).
 Then, I remembered me the time—All Souls,
 When visions vanish as the hour of midnight tolls!

XXII

“Already was the clock upon the stroke,
 Already had the vision turned to go
 When, in a voice I scarcely knew, I spoke,
 Desiring that the presence should bestow
 Some sign, or constant pledge of truth, to show
 When daylight should to disbelief incline.
 The vision faded. On the mantel, lo!
 This ring I found. And surely, it is thine,
 And surely, maiden, both the ring and thou art mine!”

XXIII

Needs not to say what afterwards befell—
 How smiled the mother-sister sage and dear,
 When came the fine confession, guessed full well;
 Or how, before the rounding of the year,
 She saw—through many a rainbow-lighted tear—
 Her darling pace the aisle, a happy bride!
 Nay!—rather must I counsel all who hear
*Leave juggling wiles of Halloween untried,
 Lest no such powers benign your doubtful venture guide!*

THE GRAY PACER

Two neighbor cliffs two Rhenish castles crown;
Alike they look upon the rushing stream;
Alike they stand to take the tempest's frown;
Alike, in sunset's glamour wrapt, they dream.
Beneath them, early shut from western beam,
Unfathomed by the eagle, lies a dell:
St. Clement's spires amidst its quiet gleam;
To Rheinstein and to Reichenstein, his bell
Hath rung for centuries wedding peal and funeral knell.

Yet nearer, as the bird or arrow flies,
Are Rheinstein's towers to those of Reichenstein,
Than either's bastions to the church that lies
Deep buried in the many-folding chine.
So near those windowed towers, by air-drawn line,
That when all winds be dumb and skies are gold,
A mutual ear may mutual speech divine.
Such converse Gerda might with Kuno hold,
But Fate had lessoned them to be more wise than bold!

To Gerda the Gray Pacer came a gift—
A birthday gift from Reichenstein he came,
A letter round his neck: *As true as swift,*
He'll fail thee not—Fidele is his name.
Thus Kuno wrote, fanning more bright the flame
Of long-increasing fancies—how the steed,
Which his own hand to one high hest did tame,
Should bear her, serve her, though himself, indeed,
Might not so much as touch her hand, for utmost need!

And, since that birthday morn, his dear last hope
Was stolen hence; for at the trial-tilt,

He one had met, with whom he might not cope—
Dark Kurt, whose hand was ever on the hilt,
Prompt still to deeds of violence and guilt,
To him the prize, old Sifrid's daughter, passed.
Sweet Gerda! Many tears her blue eyes spilt,
Her heart was holden, and its doors were fast;
Yet what avails? Her father's will in iron was cast.

The bridal day was set—too soon arrived!
The Castle maidens robed her as they would—
In veil and vestment by deft hands contrived—
In gems and laces of the antique mood.
In splendor tired—yet in their midst she stood
Like some fair chosen creature without stain,
That, thus bedecked, in early times and rude,
Was led unto the altar to be slain,
Where the lean priest stood waiting pitiless and fain.

And flesh had failed her in that deathly hour,
But that, to Mother Mary she had knelt,
At dawn of day, to ask her saving power;
And, rising up, a nameless cheer had felt,
That even yet within her bosom dwelt.
Joyous she seemed, whom sorrow late consumed;
But, here and there, an eye did sudden melt,
Of such as judged to madness she was doomed,
Unless, ere long, a broken heart should be entombed!

One dartling glance toward the neighboring cliff!
For well her heart divined who watched her there;
Then spake she gayly, "'Twere great favor if
Mine own good gray my maiden self might bear
Once more to Clement's shrine.'" They grant her prayer.

Into the sell she springs; and all descend
By winding, stony way that asks for care.
The wedding chimes their downward march attend;
And Clement's flower-wreathed altar waits them at the end.

The watcher lone, on lonely Reichenstein,
By tantalizing glimpses, often barred
By jutting crag or by thick-bodied pine,
Beheld the wedding guests ride chapelward,
And, in their van—as one in Heaven starred,
Past mortal speech, his love and sorrow moved—
Life lay before him a fair picture marred;
Nor knew he yet, if vengeance most behoved;
Or choice of holy wars, or convent shades removed.

But as keen thought its many edges turned,
Wounding alike (yet wounds no more he fears!)
His outward eye a wondrous sight discerned;
For, as the bridal train the chapel nears,
And all would now alight, the gray horse rears,
Strikes with sharp hooves whoe'er would stay his course.
Streamward he makes, the while his rider hears
The welcome call of waters, deep and hoarse,
Wooing to death no hand away from her can force!

No hand save Heaven's that death can now forestall,
But, reared to plunge, the pacer wheels around
(As though from far aloft, a master call
He héeds—a voice whereof he knows the sound),
And lo! with flying feet, with bound on bound,
By road no charger's hoof before hath traced,
He takes the steep, as it were level ground!

To Reichenstein he mounts! "No time to waste!"
('Tis Kuno's voice) "Let down the drawbridge in all
haste."

Soon, in the Castle's court, Fidelé stands,
With quivering, foam sprent-flank, with drooping head.
Unclaspèd from his neck are Gerda's hands,
And from his back his burden dear is shed.
Can ye not guess what tenderest words are said
(What love-names, also, for the gallant gray)?
But it behooves me to recount, instead,
How Kuno orders all in armed array,
To meet whatever foes the castle's walls essay.

But even as the hurried order goes,
A gathering rumor runs about the place,
And soon the barred and massive doors unclose,
And henchmen four, with slow, regardful pace,
Bear hither Sifrid. He, in the mad chase,
Unseated from his horse, 'mid rocks was thrown.
But he, while suffering sharpens all his face,
Is fain to speak: "My children, I atone:
Ye shall each other's be; and both be as mine own!"

Thus spake sweet Gerda's father in remorse.
Nor knew his vow was loosed the while he spake.
Though even then, the Kurt—an unwept corse—
Down the swift Rhine his drownèd way did take.
But, while the new-found joy cures past heartache,
The gray approaches, and with neck a-droop
(As one but glad or sorry for their sake),
Pushes his loving way into the group,
While a brave cheer runs round the Castle's yeoman troop!

THE SOUL OF THE VIOLET

Whenever, betimes, the warm winds blow
And drive underground the lingering snow;
Whenever, amid such breathing space,
The brown earth raises a wistful face—
Whenever about the fields I go,
The soul of the violet haunts me so!

I look—there is never a leaf to be seen;
In the pléached grass is no thread of green;
But I walk as one who would chide his feet
Lest they trample the hope of something sweet!
Here can no flower be blooming, I know—
Yet the soul of the violet haunts me so!

Again and again that thrilling breath,
Fresh as the life that is snatched out of death,
Keen as the blow that Love might deal
Lest a spirit in trance should outward steal—
So thrilling that breath, so vital that blow—
The soul of the violet haunts me so!

Is it the blossom that slumbers as yet
Under the leaf-mould dank and wet,
And visits in dreams the wondering air
(Whereof the passing sweetness I share)?
Or is it the flower shed long ago?
The soul of the violet haunts me so!

IS IT SPRING AGAIN IN OHIO

Is it Spring again in Ohio?
Is the sleep of the Winter over?
Far in the heavens, the bluebird,
Low in the marshland, the plover,
A near, in the orchard, the redbreast,—
Wherever one looks, the hover
Of wings—wherever one listens,
The note of the homing rover!
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

Is it Spring again in Ohio,
And the sleep of the Winter over?
Blooms in the woods the wild service?
Where Zephyr bendeth above her,
Gleams the faint dawn of the wind-flower?
Breaks from the turf cover
The tender star of the thistle,—
The dew-cradling leaf of the clover?
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

Is it spring again in Ohio,
And the sleep of the Winter over?
Are these the rare days—O my comrade—
Blithest for homing rover?
Once would we forth—and follow
Far as the cry of the plover—
By stream, and by greening pasture,
By fallow, and breezy cover!
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

Is it Spring again in Ohio—
Is the sleep of the Winter over?
Say to each wakening beauty,
I am, as ever, its lover,
Hourly, from far saluting:
I, too, were a homing rover,
If I, from the sleep of the Winter,
All that I loved might recover!
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

HEART-BREAK IN SPRING

When the earliest violets ope
On the sunniest southward slope,
When the cress and windflower slim
Palely light the woodpath dim,
When the air is sweet and keen
Ere the full-blown flower is seen,
When that blithe forerunning air
Breathes more hope than thou canst bear,
Thou, O buried, broken heart,
Into quivering life shall start!
Thou shalt ask the flower-loved breeze,
“Wherefore waken these—and these,—
Soulless gazers on the light,
Wherefore lead these up from night,
And not send a thrilling call
Waking eyes more sweet than all.”

MIDNIGHT BREAD

Above the canon of the street
The gleaming files of Heavens climb:
One almost hears his own heart beat—
So silent and so dead the time!

Far, far away the tide has drawn,
That, sounding, filled this canon's cleft;
The city's myriad soul is gone,
And but its empty frame is left.

But what is yonder moving line—
Scarce moving line, in human guise,
Near by where Grace Church lifts her sign
That fostering care is in the skies?

One—two—the bell-tower now has dealt,
'Tis late, but later yet shall be
Ere this slow moving line shall melt
Which nightly Heaven's watchers see.

These are my brothers scorned of Fate—
My brothers of the Empty Hand:
Their turn in silence they await,
Patient, half-sleeping, as they stand.

Into the dark, at length, they fade,
Bearing their dole of Midnight Bread;
And when the hunger-pang is stayed
God knows where each shall lay his head!

THE WOLVES OF THE WIND

A Burden of the Season

Bare are my walls, and low is my roof,
Yet, heaven be praised! they are winter-proof!
Hark, how the wolves of the wind rush by!
(Was the sound I heard a human cry?)

The fire on my hearth is blazing bright
Within is cheer, without is the Night
Blanching with fear from earth to sky—
Hark, how the wolves of the wind rush by!

They are swift, they are fell, and they never tire,
But they shun the light of my blazing fire,
So blest is my portion, so safe am I.
(Was the sound I heard a human cry?)

They have broken the leash that held them back,
And the whole world dreads the fierce, wild pack!
To shelter, to shelter, let all things fly—
Hark, how the wolves of the wind rush by!

Matters not where, the heath, or the town,
Whatever they meet they're trampling down:
And the veins of the victim they're draining dry!
(Was the sound I heard a human cry?)

The sound, too plain it rises again,
The myriad wailing of outcast men:
In the path of the pack they stricken lie—
Hark, how the wolves of the wind rush by!

Who is it knocks at the door of my heart?
Open I must, though in terror I start,
At the blue-cold lip and the hollow eye.
(The sound I heard was a human cry!)

Whoever hath shelter, whoever hath store,
Slide the bolt of the grudging door;
Be the poor with us, lest they should die—
Hark, how the wolves of the wind rush by!

THE DOVES OF THE DUOMO

Said the brooding dove to her mate,
“Whenever the great bell tolls
(And it tolls both early and late)
The good folk pray for their souls.”

“What matters to thee and to me?
We have no souls, men say,
(And wiser are men than we;)
So, therefore, we need not to pray.”

“Then,” said the brooding dove,
“Let us pray—let us pray for their souls—
For the city we so much love—
Whenever the great bell tolls!”

THE BLOSSOM WIND

Like a fair pavilion dropped from heaven,
Is the wonder of the orchard trees.
Like the music heard in dreams of heaven,
Is the honey-buried murmur of the bees.
Rosy light o'erlaps the shadow,
Blissful mornings come and go,
And the evenings die of beauty,
Till the Blossom Wind begins to blow.

Somewhere, all unseen, the orchard Spirit
Midst the billowy tree-tops dwells apart;
But she hears the oriole's silvery fluting,
And the bee within the blossom's honeyed heart.
And the yeoman trees, to shield her,
Trail their snowy branches low,
As she leans, to look and listen,
When the Blossom Wind begins to blow.

At the first, 'tis but the lightest sighing,
Lifting not the downball from the grass;
But the Spirit of the place has heard it,
And she knows the hour of Beauty soon must pass!
Down a single petal falters,
Like the earliest flake of snow—
On the bough its comrades tremble,
As the Blossom Wind begins to blow!

Borne along the hollow fragrant tempest,
Drifts the orchard Spirit to her doom.
Faintly heard, a fairy dirge is chanting,—
Faintly glimpsed her face amid the eddy bloom.
Blown afar the fair pavilion;
Then the rain comes soft and slow;
Sober green the flower replaces,
When the Blossom Wind has ceased to blow.

GRAY WEATHER

I

All the world's in love with May Day—
Open, laughing weather;
Is there one to praise the gray day—
Mist-drops in the heather?

Said the poet:

“Let the world praise only May Day,
I am here to praise the gray day!
I, mine ear attuning
To its faint communing,
I, its sun divining,
Veiled with mist, yet shining—
I will praise the gray day.”

II

All the world's in love with roses;
Who bestows attention
On the bud that ne'er uncloses—
Flower of dim, wild gentian?

Said the poet:

“Let the world praise only roses,
I the bud that ne'er uncloses!
Though its heart deep-centered
Never bee has entered,
Fancy, tired of roaming,
In its violet gloaming
Sinks down and reposes!”

III

All the world pays court to famed ones
High in honor seated.
Who will praise the great unnamed ones
And the brave defeated?

Said the poet:

“Let the world pay court to famed ones,
I will praise the great unnamed ones,
Sing their viewless trophies—
Word their silent strophes—
I their own true lover;
Till the world discover
These its great unnamed ones!”

MIRAGE

Treasure the shadow. Somewhere, firmly based,
Arise those turrets that in cloud-land shine;
Somewhere, to thirsty toilers of the waste,
Yon phantom well-spring is a living sign.

Treasure the shadow. Somewhere, past thy sight,
Past all men's sight, waits the true heaven at last:
Tell them whose fear would put thy hope to flight,
There are no shadows save from substance cast.

NATURE AND MAN

Oh, the glance of the dew! Oh, the flame of the rose
springing forth of the thorn!

Oh, the song of the arrow-marked finch singing love in
the front of the morn!

Who will speak to them all of the rapture they wake in
the children of men?

Who will so lovingly speak, they will heed, and answer
again?

The glance of the dew but repeateth the liquid glance of
the sky,

And the flame of the rose is not brighter, in token, as man
passes by,

And the song of the finch, though his little heart with
ecstasy break,

From the answering rapture of man no quickening impulse
shall take.

O drops of the dew! O pride of the thorn! O singing
bird!

Is there never a mutual tongue, is there never a common
word,

Wherein to give thanks, wherein to give praise, from the
hearts ye have filled?

With the pure distilment of joy which your cup, over-
brimming, has spilled?

If but one moment, in all the swift season giddy with
change,
We that are God's one creation, yet strangers, might be
less strange!
But this is the pain of the pleasure—the bitter-sweet which
man drains:
Unconscious-glad Nature unconscious of man forever re-
mains!

WHEN HOPE IS DONE

Who turns away from gazing at the sun
Sees its dusk images fill all the air.
It is not otherwise when Hope is done:
Her darkling phantoms make the heaven of Despair.

THE LIFE OF A BIRD

Thou art clothed on with plumes, as with leaves,
Fronde-like, and lighter than air;
Thy pinions are arrows in sheaves,
That carry thee none knoweth where.

Thou fliest, and none gives pursuit,
Thy realm both the earth and the sky;
Thou hast in thy bosom a flute,
The glance of a soul in thine eye.

Thou obeyest a sovran power
That sets thee on Summer's track;
Thou knowest the tide and the hour
When to advance, or turn back.

Into the world thou art flung,
Thou herald of rapture and light.
Thou weavest a home for thy young—
And none but thyself hath the sleight.

Out of the world thou art gone,
And who shall say where is thy rest?
A rapture and light are withdrawn
Into some Heaven-side nest.

For who of my kind hath beheld
Where, stricken, were any of thine?
Hast thou not been, from of old,—
A spirit unscathed and divine?

A LIGHT SLEEPER

By his lov'd nest and hopes, sits fast asleep
The sedge-bird in some dewy covert deep;
Throw the least pebble there, he quickly wakes
Quickly the long bright day's refrain uptakes.

So is it with the Muse's slumbering child;
His couch is made upon Parnassus wild;
If Sleep depart, Song springs within his breast,
And wakes the old melodious unrest.

“NO NESTS AND NO SONGS”

Why are ye silent, ye dryads of thicket and grove?
Perchance from the fowler ye hide and brood o'er
your wrongs.

“Nay; careless and songless at close of the season we rove,
Mute are we all, after springtime—*no nests and no songs!*”

Wise were ye ever, ye dryads of thicket and grove!
To the fullness of life and its struggle all joyance belongs:
And we—when no longer we strive, as blithely we strove—
Is it so with ourselves as with you—*no nests and no
songs?*

THE HERITAGE OF SONG

Children of that great Light which fills the sphere,
And of the Goddess with the shaded eyes,
Dwelling on scenes long past, and passing dear,—
Such are the Muses: hence their kingdom lies
Neither beneath the noon nor midnight skies;
A blended heritage,—to them belong
The regions where the mistful daybeam dies
And cloud-wrought purple pageants richlier throng:
Pensive the poet's lot, for twilight broods o'er song.

THE VINTAGE OF SORROW

Yet, know ye not where fire the soil hath charred,
One moon shall scarcely fill her golden round.
Before the sweet white clover shall have starred
With myriad beauty all the chastened ground!

What if the rubric of the sword have sealed
A more imperial harvest to yon plain?
Each soul hath, also, some such battle-field—
It hath the vintage, too, of Thrasymene!

LEX TALIONIS

Say the finny folk who glide in the stream,
 “‘We could be happy the whole day long
Were it not that in sun or in shadow we dream
 Of pinions that hover to do us wrong!’”

Say the people whose pathways are through the sky,
 “‘We could sing our songs, we could brood our nests,
Were it not we have seen our fellows lie
 With a strange red plume on their silent breasts!’”

The fowler mused as he bagged the game,
 “‘How careless and free were man’s estate
Were it not for the fear he scarce can name—
 Were it not for the arrows of lurking Fate!’”

THE BEES IN FLORIDA

To that soft, floral land, where lurks no storm,
 Where hides the quest of Ponce de Leon,
Bring from the north your murmuring, busy swarm—
 No sweets they’ll hive where wintry want is none!

So with the Muse’s child; where pleasures are,
 Where new delights arise, unnamed, unsought,
No song he makes for days and ears afar,
 But hovers idly in the sunshine of his thought!

IN THE CHILDHOOD OF THE MAY

There is joy and there is pain,
In the childhood of the May;
But so subtly blent the twain,
That more one-in-one are they
Than the song and its refrain,
Or the sun-flecked shadows' play!

There is pain and there is joy
In the childhood of the May,—
Pain obscure and pleasure coy:—
Which is dearer who can say?
If the pain we would destroy,
Pleasure, also, we must slay!

There is joy and there is pain
In the childhood of the May;
There are thoughts we cannot chain,
Yet they hold ethereal sway;
Sunlit gossamer—beaded rain—
Half conceal them, half betray!

Dreams once dreamed by girl and boy,
Half-remembered dreams are they,
Time can never quite destroy.
Give them welcome, give them way,—
Subtle pain and subtler joy,
In the childhood of the May!

THE LOVER'S WORLD

They were all more subtle than I,
Who moved in blind rapture among them,
“That our notes are new, we deny,
A thousand times over we've sung them,
Be it thrush, or linnet, or dove!”
“Nay, but ye birds, one and all,
Now sing, with a rounded completeness,
From matin to vesper call;
Where got ye that marvelous sweetness?”
“*From the voice of the soul of thy love!*”

They were all more subtle than I,
Who knelt in rapt worship before them,
“The roses of summers gone by,
Didst thou so praise, so adore them,
And set them all roses above?”
“Nay; but ye are not the same—
Ye bloom with a beauty suppremer;
Where got ye that delicate flame,
Half veiling your petals?” “O dreamer.
From the light of the soul of thy love!”

A LONE WOMAN'S WATCH-NIGHT

All the dull winter day, until its close,
With fingers lithe and skilled—
All day she'd toiled to shape the mimic rose,
Whose petals, never chilled,
Are Beauty's challenge in our wintry clime.
Now in her attic nook above the world,
While the bright city to its pleasures whirled,
By one lone lamp a slender glass she filled,
And held it, waiting for the midnight chime,
The while she mused with absent eye and ear:

There was a joyous time—
Ah, time, how long, how long gone by!
When in her father's house, with cups of cheer
The laughing guests had sped the parting year . . .
And now, from belfry high,
The chime rang out against a tingling sky;
And while the crystal solitude grew tense,
She raised the chalice clear
And with mute pledging intimate and dear
She drank to those she loved, of sundered lot;

She drank to those she loved—but who forgot
(A memory, Memory's only recompense);
She drank to those whose lips in dust are dry,
Whose spirits, as she mused, with kindling eye,
Seemed leaning from the starlit vague immense,
Though veiled to sense!

And if, of these one face all peerless shone,—
One face,—long-lost in youth, such spell it wrought
Her own grew younger with so dear a thought!
Thus, lonely, yet forever not quite lone
Her clear face lit from far within the soul,
With Love that temporizeth not with Doubt—
With memories deathless while the long years roll,
She watched the Old Year out.

FORBEARANCE

He said—oft questioned why his wit's keen lance,
Strikes right and left, his bosom-friend perchance,
While traitor and deserter scathless go—
“We speak no evil of the dead, you know!”

THE LINING OF THE GLOVES

'Twas in the stately days of yore—
Of courtly lore and loves,
At New Year's tide, Sir Thomas More
Received a gift of gloves.

No other gloves so fine, I wist,
Were sent that New Year's Day!
For from each finger-tip to wrist,
Well-filled and plump were they.

Each glove—a purse—was filled with gold
(With *angels* from the mint);
And as each piece from ambush rolled,
It shot a laughing glint;

As though to say: On New Year's Day,
'Twixt earnest thought and sport,
A client fair her fee would pay
For suit well-won at court.

A dainty missive, too, there was
(Ah, days of daintyhood!)
"Fair Sir, for favor shown my cause,
Have proof of gratitude."

The glistening store Sir Thomas scanned,
And read the dainty note;
Then took his subtle pen in hand,
And, smilingly, he wrote:—

“Lady, upon a New Year’s Day,
No gift of grace we spurn;
But, while your gloves I keep for aye,
The *lining* I return.”

Thus, in the gracious days of old,
They spake in gracious phrase:
'Twas golden speech from hearts of gold—
Ah, bring me back those days!

HOW MANY A YEAR

How many a year I've loved thee—

How many a year,
Whose seasons seemed like one—
The promissory Spring,
With glints of hope, of fear,
With faint, fair blossoming,
In shadow or in sun.

How many a year I've loved thee,

How many a year
Of summers all foregone!
For me, may yet be June;
And yet, the golden sphere
Of the full harvest moon
In the sad east may dawn!

How many a year I loved thee—

How many a year!
So late to love art thou,
Then love me more for this;
Beyond the desert drear,
Be fount and oasis
And nectar-laden bough!

SIEGE

If I should come knocking, knocking
At the door of your little heart,
You in soft haste would be locking
The portal that kept us apart;
And then you would sit at some window, on high,
—Would smile, from your turret—and even defy!

But the Loves to my aid would be flocking—
Would besiege you on every side;
And soon would your turret be rocking,
And soon would the portal swing wide;
And the Loves, my true liegemen, will hasten to bring
The royal sweet captive down to their king.

So, instead of such smiling and mocking,
There might even be sighs on your part,
—As on mine—if I should come knocking
At the door of your little heart!
Why not a truce?—Oh! why not then yield,
And peace, with a kiss, at the doorway be sealed?

THREE WOMEN IN WAR TIME

I

One said, with a smile on her proud young lips:
“I have brothers three; they are far on the sea,
For they serve on the decks of the fighting ships!
Is it strange that the war comes home to me?”

II

“And I, had I father, brothers, or friend,
I would give them all at my country's call!
My sorrow is, I have none to send,
And my share in the glorious war is small!”

III

But the third arose with face aglow:
“Mine are a hundred thousand strong,—
Wherever my countryman meets the foe,—
And my heart's in the war the whole day long!”

ONE WOMAN'S VOICE AGAINST WAR

I

The voice of my sisters I hear (Oh voice of the summer
leaves!
Oh voice of the murmuring waters! Oh, light if it laughs
or it grieves!)
They are sending you forth, O men; they are bidding you
arm straightway;
But they see not, as I can see, men biting the dust in the
fray,
They see not, as I can see, men pouring the blood of the
brave—
And the craven, at home, survives, while the hero sleeps
in his grave!
They see not, as I can see—that their daughters' daugh-
ters shall wed
With the sons of the craven, born of the blood too pale
to be shed!
They see not, the money-changers unscourged in the
temple remain,
When those that were fearless to strike—the best of the
nation are slain;
For the veins of a race once shrunken, the hearts of the
race beat low,
And the valor we worshipped—a flame unfed—no longer
shall glow!

II

The voice of my sisters I hear: "*We offer our dearest, our
all,
Father, and brother, and lover, for country, if need be, to
fall!*"

*What more can we pledge than we pledge—as daughters,
as sisters, as wives?”*

Let the voice of my sisters be mute, for they hold their in-
volute lives!

Not a hair of their heads shall be stirred by the wind of the
winnowing shot;

They shall not languish in prison, nor in the dull earth be
forgot!

One is the life of each mortal—and that is not theirs, which
they yield!

Let them be hushed to remember the breast of the man is
their shield:

Not till her life she shall peril on battle's shivering edge,
The soul of a woman shall waken, to know how costly the
pledge!

III

The voice of my sisters forgive! Forgive them, ye men
who are theirs;

For they know not the words they utter, sending ye forth,
though with prayers.

I have none of my own to send forth; but, for swordmen
doomed to the sword,

Tears were my daily drink, were the blood of the meanest
out-poured!

Awake, or asleep, I should see the dark stream with the
life taking flight—

The damp of the death-dew beading—the eye without
vision or light!

My sisters—they see not the sight, or their lips would
be holden of speech,

And the voice of their hearts, ever sleepless, for “peace,”
and but “peace!” would beseech.

THE HEALING HAND

As some faint, rosy cloud at even drifts
O'er lands of death and wild volcanic rifts,
She came (the battle past); she bent her head;
"Thou art my country's foe, and mine," she said,
"But yet my human brother, though at strife;
So must I balm thy wounds and give thee back thy life!"

So well did she the healing balm outpour
She gave him back his life—Gave she no more?
As some faint, rosy cloud at even blends,
Blends with the rosy sea, as it descends,
Love touched the heart as Pity bent the head;
"Thou art my country's foe—not mine!" she softly said.

GUARDING THE PASS

There, as thou liest, beloved, thy lips at parley with naught,
There, as thou liest, beck'ning to naught with thy
wavering hand,—

Thine eyes unbeholding or filled but with pageants by
fantasy wrought.—

Thy legions of life in revolt and fain at a sign to disband,
To be gone at a breath,—

There, as thou liest, I, all the night, like a sentinel stand,
Guarding the Pass that leads to the Land of the Shadow
of Death!

All the long night, O beloved, I listen and watch in my
place;

There is none that is with me,—not one; but single of
hand I must fight;

Even the stars that were wont to look down with compas-
sioning grace,

Now brighten and glow with desire to draw into heaven
thy light;

And the wind at the casement saith,

“Release the loved soul!”—I am one against many,—
alone in the night,

Guarding the Pass that leads to the land of the Shadow
of Death!

LOST OPPORTUNITY

“There is a nest of thrushes in the glen;
When we come back, we’ll see the glad young things,”
He said. We came not by that way again;
And Time and thrushes fare on eager wings!

“Yon rose”—she smiled—“but no, when we return,
I’ll pluck it then.” ’Twas on a summer day.
The ashes of the rose in Autumn’s urn
Lie hidden well. We came not back that way.

We do not pass the selfsame way again,
Or, passing by that way, nothing we find
As it before had been; but death, or stain,
Hath come upon it, or the wasteful wind.

The very earth is envious, and her arms
Reach for the beauty that detained our eyes;
Yea, it is lost, beyond the aid of charms,
If, once within our grasp, we leave the prize.

Thou traveller to the unknown Ocean’s brink,
Through Life’s fair fields, say not, “Another day
This joy I’ll prove:” for never, as I think,
Never shall we come back this selfsame way!

AT A NORTH WINDOW

One morning only of the gradual year
The sunshine on her window-ledge may fall;
Oh, marvel not her heart is full of fear
Lest clouds that morning keep the sun in thrall!

THE GUEST OF A SUMMER

I was a poet's guest.
He bade me be free with his treasure,
With all that made mirth, or gave pleasure,
Soothed sorrow, or ministered rest.
He bade such as ran at his hest
Serve mine, without stinting or measure.

Sightly his fair demesne
Set well on the verge of the land.
And he said: "From this cliff thou mayst lean
And hearken the while the gray sea,
Pacing all day the bright strand,
Makes a lute of each scattered shell.
And hereby I cede unto thee
This, my cool sylvan cell,
All around curtained with green —
Live green of the evergreen tree;
All above, frescoes divine,
Shot in the changeable woof
Of the magical music-swayed roof.
All this, with its service, be thine."

I was a simple guest,
To think he could make such bequest,
Or my hands with his treasure be crowned!
For soon, that the master was one,
And the servant another—I found,
Unfain at my bidding to run.

The sea on the shingle did beat—
No lute-tone I heard in the sound!

The wind through the pine tops ran fleet;
The stars through the pine-tops did shine;
But I saw not the frescoes divine!

Wherefore, I now understand
None but himself can have seen
How fair is the poet's demesne,
Set well on the bourne of the land;
And none but himself can have heard
The sounds that his spirit have stirred!

THE PERFECT HOUR

Lo! the fleeting Perfect Hour!
Spring and Summer lend their dower;
All that either can bestow
To her dear adornment go:
Therefore is such subtle art
Joined with childhood's simple heart.
Sweet inheritor of joy—
Ever beckoning, ever coy!

Lo! the winged Perfect Hour,
Poised between the fruit and flower,
Sees the cherished apple set
'Mid the branches dewy-wet—
Sees the tardy quince-tree last
Her shell-tinted flower to cast—
Sees the down-ball lightly plumed
Where the golden disc hath bloomed;
While the June-grass breaks in spray,
As the soft breeze takes its way,
And the ripple of the wheat
Rises round her blessing feet.

Lo! the fleeting Perfect Hour,
Hath from May and June her dower!
In the thicket she hath heard
Hymeneal pipe of bird,
And the dim-voiced woodland dove
Hath not hushed her plaint of love.
Yet she hears the fledgling throat
Utter its first matin note

Full of wonder and amaze,
Heard no more in riper days.

Lo! the affluent Perfect Hour!
All things feel her sovran power
Swift across the vanward rose
Tender flame of crimson blows,
That no later bloom may share;
Holist holies centre there;
In its heart a censer breathes,
In its heart a passion sheathes;
Passion into song must flower—
Sing, all hearts, the Perfect Hour.

BEYOND MEMORY

'Tis not that I forget thee gone from here,—
All things on earth are speaking still of thee;
But thou—what sight or sound can bring earth near?
Soul of my soul, canst thou remember me?

THE EVENING ROAD

"Sublustris noctis in umbra"

Before me, in the waning light,
The Evening Road lay straight and white,
Muffled in summer dust.

The surging trees rose left and right,—
Black billows in the gathering night,
And whispered the light gust.

As the wheel drove with rapid gyre
I saw upon the whirling tire
A phosphorescent gleam;
At the tenth round, I saw expire
The firefly's little spark of fire,
The night could not redeem.

I saw, upon a naked mound
Where forest-fire had swept the ground,
A tree bare and alone;
Tossing his mightless arms around,
He stood like some old king discrowned
And driven from his throne.

I saw, against the haunted sky,
A small, belated bird dart by,
Far straying from the nest,
While in pursuit, with ravin-cry,
Night-favored wings did swiftly fly,
And ever closelier pressed.

I saw, (deserted long ago)
A cot with crannied roof sunk low
 And doors that stood ajar;
Beyond, like ghostly taper's glow,
Those rifted chambers searching slow,
 I saw the evening star.

I saw—but all I saw without
Still imaged forth the inner doubt,
 The dread, the restless goad,—
The griefs, that in a hovering rout
Compass that lonely soul about,
 Who takes The Evening Road.

SILENT AMYCLÆ

(Virgil, *Æneid* 10, v. 564.)

I

In Silent Amyclæ

They fear not the foray invading by night,
The lance flashing challenge afar on the height,
The vessels of war swift-cleaving the foam,
The spy from without, nor the traitor at home;
They fear but false rumor and panic alarms,
When the fool and the craven would rally to arms,
In Silent Amyclæ.

II

In Silent Amyclæ

They have sworn by the Gods and the Brothers divine
Who white through the dust of the battle shine—
By the Brothers they swear, that who raiseth the cry,
“Arm! for the foe is upon us!” shall die—
Be he priest of the temple, or bondsman, or lord,
He dies if he utters the warning abhorred
In silent Amyclæ!

III

In Silent Amyclæ

Now Fear is afraid and the voices of Fear
Are quiet this many and many a year;
No oracle threats, no presage is heard,
They scan not the victim nor flight of the bird;
No pilgrim may enter with tidings of ill;
At the gate the voice of the warder is still
In silent Amyclæ.

IV

In Silent Amyclæ

One midnight the sound of a legion tread!
All hear, but they speak not nor whisper their dread,
Alike do they tremble—dastard and brave,
From the sword and the torch swift runs the red wave—
By mornlight a city all voiceless and drear!
How art thou undone through thy scorn of all fear,
Ah, silent Amyclæ!

THE LAND OF LOST HOPES

“A traveler in this land of lost hopes, where I have wasted most that is precious in life.”

(FROM A LETTER)

And journeying on, we came to that wide land
Where seldom any sought or forced return;
For either breaks the trembling bridge that spanned
The torrent stream (that country's restless bourn),
Or word will come, the friend we used to mourn
Dwells there, and if but far enough we roam,
We, surely, in good time must tidings learn:
At last, in glooming peace, we make our home,
And please the alien god with vows and hecatomb.

When first we came, we marveled much to see
Innumerable paths that wound by dale and hill—
That here might pause beneath the nooning tree,
And there might wander by some pleasant rill;
So on through sun and shade they bent until
They suddenly to darksome dells would sink;
Yet there the pastoral pipes were playing still!
The Shepherd of Lost Hopes by some green brink
Poured the sweet stream from which the crowding flock
would drink!

'That Shepnerd takes a tithe from every flock
In every land—the fairest and the best.
He shelters them beneath the hollow rock;
He folds the young and wayworn to his breast.
But one shall wander east and wander west,
Who thus hath lost his white and fairest hope,
Yet never meet the darling of his quest,
Not though he searched the wood and sunshine slope,
Or down those music-haunted depths should dare to grope.

Now, harkening to that unseen Melodist,
This would we note: how brave so e'er the strain,
We evermore the close and cadence missed;
Nor died in happy languor the refrain,
But even as those paths broke off amain,
So all at once would cease the lovely sound!
Yet, like a lapsing wind, it rose again,
Elusive, borne from some remoter ground:
Alas! naught in that land is with fruition crowned.

For where the brooding bird sat yestermorn,
And her mate fed her, warbling his delight,
There was at evening-time a cry forlorn,
And quivering wings, and unreturning flight;
While fragments, all of shelly blue or white,
Were scattered on the ground beneath the nest;
Or else, unbrooded, to the chill of night
Those orphaned treasures lay, while the soft breast
That cherished them was now in piteous crimson dressed.

And where the bladed corn, in sunny green,
 Stood tiptoe waiting for the evening dew,
In darkness there was swung a sickle keen,
 Or else from out the south a hot flame blew,
 Whereat those tender legions downward drew.
And in the orchard, where the willing bough
 Had lately smiled in flowers, a canker grew.
Thus, peerless Summer broke her golden vow;
All promise failed all hearts, yet none knew why nor how.

The egg unquickened and the futile bloom
 Are types repeated there forevermore:
Unfinished is the fabric in the loom;
 Unroofed to heaven the palace built in yore,
 Unmatched the gleaming marbles of its floor.
And as wild Nature, and the works of man,
 So is the man unto his bosom's core:
His words die off that with warm speech began,
His thoughts defiled away, a visionary clan.

And while, elsewhere, may tears be dropped for him,
 That tears can be, he hath himself forgot,
Long feeding on that music, dear and dim,
 Loosed from the sunken world of dell and grot.
 He is become enamoured of his lot.
And hence, while others follow other clues,
 One care hath he—to reach the tuneful spot
Where, freshened by Elysian winds and dews,
The Shepherd of Lost Hopes a broken strain renews!

TIMON TO THE ATHENIANS

“But the roof is so low!” they said.
He smiles in return,—“Is it so?
Well, were it high as ’tis low
(The roof that covers my head),
I should look through it still to the sky!”

“But the walls,” they said with a sigh—
“The walls of your house are so narrow,
Fit only to cage in a sparrow!”
“Yet I take, when I list to fly,
A thousand-league journey in thought!”

“On your table,” they said, “there is naught
But some bread and wild fruit from the waste.”
“But how, if the flavor I taste?
Do they so whose dainties, far-brought,
With the mere seeing can sate?”

“But,” they said, “here are none to wait—
To heed—and to run, at thy call!”
“The master is servant to all,
Being slave to the master’s estate;
If myself I can serve, I am free,—
Say this to your masters from me.”

WHERE GOEST THOU

I

“Where goest thou?”

“To help the Weak, who throng
My gates and cry continually for aid:
Where goest thou?”

“To help the unpitied Strong,
Whom those that thou wouldst help do overlade.”

II

“Where goest thou?”

“To judge the souls that stray;
They best can judge who spotless hands can show.”
“Fall back! The rod of judgment I will sway;
They judge of evil best who do and know.”

III

“Where goest thou?”

“To see the laughing mime;
I go for respite—sorrow haunts my hearth.
And thou?”

“To look on pageant grief sublime;
Joy dwells with me, and I am cloyed with mirth.”

IV

“Thou goest to mold thy life, brave youth? Well, go:
But whosoever thou shalt take to friend,
And wheresoever thou shalt turn thee—know
'T is Life itself shall mold thee, in the end.”

A KNIGHT ERRANT OF THE SOUL

From many cups have I drunk deep delight,—
A favored guest where free the revel flowed;
But sometime, either at the dead of night,
Or when the first faint rose of morning glowed,
I heard the Call, howe'er so far, so light,
That bade me rise and take the lonely road;
“Pass on,” it sighed—“pass on!”

Or if with joy, in dreadless arms, I spurred
To fields where honor's edge is kept from rust;
Or if the beating heart of love I heard,
Pillowed upon a breast all warmth, all trust,—
Mid clash of swords, or throb of hearts, I heard
The rising whisper of the Underword;
“Pass on,” it said—“pass on!”

Or when before the altar I would lift
My prayer for grace which erring men implore
(And as their need, so measured is the gift),
Ere yet my soul received of heavenly store,
Ere yet had holy lips pronounced my shrift,
The goading Voice was heard, oft heard before:
“Pass on,” and still—“pass on!”

This was the Voice my pleasures loathed to hear;
This Voice dispelled my griefs like morning mists;
This Voice hath played with hope, and flouted fear,
Both won and lost for me in bannered lists.
But where my youth would heed with varying cheer,
Mine age obeys, yet woos not, nor resists:
“Pass on!” (I hear.) “Pass on!”

Of many cups have I drunk deep delight—
I drank the bead, nor ever touched the lees!
And, nearing now the low door hid from sight,
I shall not cross the bound by slow degrees;
One way of Life, of Death, I deem aright,
The Voice supreme with steadfastness decrees:—
To me it saith, “Pass on!”

AS I WENT FORTH

As I went forth
That morn, they but forgot to show
The signal from the great hall door
They turned them to their task or play;
They but forgot,—no more.

As I went forth,
The lamp within the windowed tower
That eve they but forgot to set;
Yet wherefore doubt, when well I know
(True hearts!) they love me yet?

As I go forth,—
As I go forth upon that road
Where none are passed and none are met,—
Will it be so! Will they still love,
And will they but forget?

As we go forth,
Such wistful looks we backward throw,
To see if yet their signal flies;
For thus 'twill be when we have said
The last of all good-bys.

THE DEEP-SEA PEARL

The love of my life came not
As love unto others is cast;
For mine was a secret wound—
But the wound grew a pearl, at last.

The divers may come and go,
The tides, they arise and fall;
The pearl in its shell lies sealed,
And the Deep Sea covers all.

THE DIAMOND

Oh, liken not the diamond to a star,
Nor to a dewdrop clear; for, from the one
Looks down a soul beloved, though gone afar;
And in the other are the tears that run,
All silently, for Sorrow's sweet relief;
Oh, liken not the diamond to a star,
Nor to a dewdrop flickering in the sun—
The diamond keen knows neither Love nor Grief!

CAPRICE OF THE MUSES

Of old the Muses sat on high,
And heard and judged the songs of men;
On one they smiled, who loitered by:
Of toiling ten, they slighted ten.

“They lightly serve who serve us best,
Nor know they how the task was done;
We Muses love a soul at rest,
But violence and toil we shun.”

If men say true, the Muses now
Have changed their ancient habitude,
And would be served with knitted brow,
And stress and toil each day renewed.

So each one with the other vies,
Of those who weave romance or song:
“On us, O Muse, bestow the prize,
For we have striven well and long!”

And yet methinks I hear the hest
Come murmuring down from Helicon:
“They lightly serve who serve us best,
Nor know they how the task was done!”

RANK-AND-FILE

You might have painted that picture,
I might have written that song:
Not ours, but another's the triumph,
'Tis done and well done—so 'long!

You might have fought in the vanguard,
I might have struck at foul Wrong:
What matters whose hand was the foremost?
'Tis done and well done—so 'long!

So 'long, and into the darkness,
With the immemorial throng—
Foil to the few and the splendid:
All's done and well done—so 'long!

Yet, as we pass, we will pledge them—
The bold, and the bright, and the strong
(Ours was never black envy):
All's done and well done—so 'long!

THE FLUTES OF THE GOD

Oh that I knew where to find thee,—to fall, and
encompass thy knees,—
Thou, as thou art, austere, with thy turrets and dun-
geoning keys,
Thou, with the frondage of oak, that enshadows thy
grave, straight brows!
I would cling to thy knees till thou wouldst absolve the
Corybant's vows,—
Even his vows, who was mine, ere the voice from the
forested hill,
With the flutes and the cymbals, he followed, and them
he followeth still!
He follows, he dreams, with wide eyes all bare of the
curtains of sleep;
He heeds not the dawn on the height, nor the shadows
as upward they creep,—
If the arrows of winter be forged, or the flame of the
summer be fanned!
He feels not the thong of the priest, nor the blade in
the lean, wild hand;
Crimson the thorn-set path where the foot unsandaled
hath trod.
He stayeth for none he shall meet,—he hears but the
flutes of the God!

The mother that bore him, the father that guided afield
his young feet,
Into the wilderness journey, they come to thy desolate
seat.
At the foot of a fir tree they find him. Trembling,
their knees and their speech:

“Come away, thou, our support! Like the vine in the
wind we outreach;
Prop have we none; we are stripped, we are shaken by
every gust;
Withers unripened our fruit, and we stoop to be gathered
to dust.
Leave thy dark seat by the fir tree, and hear us while
yet thou mayst hear!”
Their voices die off on the waste, and the sigh of the fir
tree comes drear.
They wait for the voice in response; he uprears his thin
form from the sod:
“What say ye? Who speaketh? I hear—I hear but
the flutes of the God!”

I was the maiden betrothed, and “Surely,” they said,
“thou shalt go,
Shalt touch his dead heart into life, and his eyes shall
regain their lost glow!”
Breathless, I trod the lone ways. Among the mad
priests, as he ranged,
I beheld whom I loved, but ah! I beheld him how
changed, how estranged!
I had drawn him apart from their throng, I had whispered
the words that are charms,
Had touched his dead heart into life, and pillowed his
head in my arms;
But farther and farther aloof, to the notes of wild music
he trod.
“Who follows?” he cried,—“who follows? I hear
but the flutes of the God!”

Oh that I knew where to find thee! Whether, 'mid
autumn's increase,
With the young of the year around thee, thou givest
them plenty with peace;
Or whether, dark-thoughted, remote through the waste,
thy deity roves,
And the eyes of thy lions glance fire, in the twilight of
dells and of groves.
Bright are their eyes impatient, the blast of the desert
their breath;
Who crosseth their path, without thee, shall surely be
doomed unto death.
Yet, mother of gods and of men, of the broods of the
earth and the rocks,—
Thou, Berecynthia, hear! by thy love, by his dark
flowing locks,
By the smile on his lips, by the dream in his eyes, thou
sendest at will,
By the soft-drawn sigh while thou watchest his slumber
amid the high hill!
Thine Atys thou hast, though a sleeper; the care from
his forehead is smoothed;
But he whom I love never sleeps, and his wild eyes
never be soothed!
Give him but peace and my arms, and quiet supreme,
in the end;
Bid some old fir tree his branches above us in shelter
extend;
Then, the life to the air, the frail substance that held it
awhile to the clod:
So shall he waken and madden no more to the flutes of
the God!

THE VOICE OF THE LAWS

This from that soul incorrupt whom Athens had doomed
to the death,

When Crito brought promise of freedom: "Vainly thou
spendest thy breath!

Dost remember the wild Corybantes? feel they the knife or
the rod?

Heed they the fierce summer sun, the frost, or winterly
flaws?—

If any entreat them, they answer, 'We hear but the flutes
of the God!'

"So even am I, O my Crito! Thou pleadest a losing cause!
Thy words are but sound without import—I hear but the
voice of the Laws;

And, know thou! the voice of the Laws is to me as the
flutes of the God."

Thus spake that soul incorrupt; and wherever, since hemlock
was quaffed,

A man has stood forth without fear—has chosen the dark
deep draught—

Has taken the lone one way, nor the path of dishonor has
trod—

Behold! he, too, hears but the voice of the Laws, the
flutes of the God.

A VISION OF BRAVE MEN

A vision of brave men. From eldest time,
Of alien speech, of every race and clime!
Their deeds of valor flow and shine,
Like wind-blown torches in long line.

A vision of brave men. These were, who marched,
At great Cambyses' hest, through deserts parched.
The driving sands make dark the air,
The drifting sands their couch prepare.

A vision of brave men. These were, whose swords
By gulf and pass repelled the Persian hordes;
Nor can the hero sleep for thought
Of deeds Miltiades has wrought.

A vision of brave men. Toward Palestine
These strive, pale faces lit as from the shrine;
The cross goes down before their eyes.
They sleep,—to wake in Paradise.

A vision of brave men. The Six who came
(Round their strong necks the hempen cord of shame),
And of the conqueror lowly craved
That their loved city might be saved.

A vision of brave men. Closed in by craft,
These drink from Mexique waters death's dark draught.
In the still Lake they clash and fall—
Trist Night receives them one and all!

A vision of brave men. These follow Him
Whose star has led through lands the snow makes dim;
With richer drops the snow has blushed
Than ever from the grape were crushed!

A vision of brave men. These were, whose hands
Were lifted up to smite off servile bands—
My country! these, the latest birth
Of godlike, warring men on earth!

A vision of brave men. The shadowy plain
Resounds to many a mingled martial strain;
And deeds of valor flow and shine,
Like wind-blown torches in long line!

These were, whose cause the God of Battles crowned
These were on whom incensèd Heaven frowned;
But all is now by them forgot,
Save that in fight they faltered not.

“There is one language of the brave,” they cry,
“*We fought! Valor lives on, tho’ causes die!*
There is one kindred of the brave,—
Howe’er we fought, ’twas Life we gave!”

THE COMPASS

Touch but with gentlest finger the crystal that circles the
Mariner's Guide—

To the East and the West how it drifts, and trembles,
and searches on every side!

But it comes to its rest, and its light lance poises only one
self-same way

Since ever a ship spread her marvellous sea-wings, or
plunged her swan-breast through the spray—

For North points the needle!

Ye look not alone for the sign of the lode-star; the lode-
stone too lendeth cheer;

Yet one in the heavens is established forever, and one is
compelled through the sphere.

What! and ye chide not the fluttering magnet that seemeth
to fly its troth,

Yet even now is again recording its fealty's silent oath—
As North points the needle!

Praise ye bestow that, though mobile and frail as tremu-
lous spheret of dew,

It obeys an imperial law that ye know not (yet know
that it guideth most true);

So, are ye content with its fugitive guidance—ye, but the
winds' and waves' sport!—

So, are ye content to sail by your compass, and come in
fair hour to your port;

For North points the needle!

And now, will ye censure, because, of compulsion, the
spirit that rules in this breast,
To show what a poet must show, was attempered, and
touched with a cureless unrest,
Swift to be moved with all human mutation, to traverse
Passion's whole range?
Mood succeeds mood, and humor fleets humor, yet never
heart's drift can they change,
For North points the needle!

Inconstant I were to that Sovereign Bidding (why or
whence given unknown),
Failed I to tent the entire round of motive ere sinking back
to my own:
The error be yours, if ye think my faith erring or deem
my allegiance I fly;
I follow my law and fulfil it all duly—and look! when
your doubt runneth high—
North points the needle!

VOYAGERS

Cras ingens iterabimus æquor

Comrades, over the deep without name,—
Over the deep, unwitting we came!
Never one knew from whence he sailed,
And the hither shore from his sight was veiled
 With the surging vapors of sleep;
 And to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow,
 Again we shall sail the great deep.

Sweet is the shore where we tarry a day.
Let us live as brave men what time we shall stay,
The wreath of the poplar thereof be the sign;
And weave in the myrtle, all ye who resign
 Your hearts to some fond one to keep!
 But to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow,
 Again we shall sail the great deep.

Fair was the morn, and the noon, fleeting fast;
But the sky of the undertime grew overcast!
As the leaf of the poplar, that shakes in the wind,
So grief, for a time, may oppress the firm mind,
 Nor the hero be shamed, though he weep;—
 But to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow,
 Again we shall sail the great deep.

Ye have wrought as ye wrought, and the day is far spent,
Well have ye borne whatever fate sent:
Now, wine for the even, and, lying at ease,
The glimpse of red sails on Hesperian seas;
 Then the shadows of night,—then a sleep,—

And to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow,
Again we are on the great deep.

Oh, comrades, there be who would tarry to store
The treasure they find on this wave-beaten shore;
There be who would trace, with a feverish hand,
Some name on the scroll of the silvery sand:

But the tides, all oblivious, sweep,—
And to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow,
Again we are on the great deep.

To-morrow—and after-to-morrow? Who knows
What isle or what mainland the sea shall disclose,
Or whether, since wanderers, we ever have been,
The signal and watch-tower of home we shall win,
When, at last, on the strand we shall leap?
But to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow,
Again we are on the great deep.

PALINGENESIS

I dwelt with the God, ere He fashioned the worlds with
their heart of fire,
Ere the vales sank down at His voice or He spake to the
mountains, "Aspire!"
Or ever the sea to dark heaven made moan in its hunger
for light,
Or the four winds were born of the morning and missioned
on various flight.

In a fold of His garment I slept, without motion, or knowl-
edge, or skill,
While age upon age the thought of creation took shape at
His will;
Sleeping I lay by the right hand that framed it—this
wonderful earth—
Nor heard I the stars of the morning, chanting its anthem
of birth.

Part had I not in the scheme till He sent me to work on
the reef.
Nude, in the seafoam, to clothe it with coralline blossom
and leaf.
Patient I wrought—as a weaver that blindly plyeth the
loom,
Nor knew that the God dwelt with me, there as I wrought
in the gloom.

Strength had I not till chieftom supreme of the waters he
gave;
Joyous I went—tumultuous; the billows before me I drave—

Myself as a surge of the sea when impelled by the driving.
storm;
Nor knew that the God dwelt with me, there in leviathan's
form.

Lightness I had not till, decked with light plumes, he
endued me with speed—
Buoyant the hollow quill as the hollow stem of the reed!
And I gathered my food from the ooze, and builded my
home, at his word;
Nor knew that God dwelt with me clothed in the garb of
a bird.

I trod not the earth till on plains unmeasured He sent me
to rove,
To taste of the sweetness of grass and the leaves of the
summer grove.
For shelter He hollowed the cave; fresh springs in the rock
He unsealed;
But I knew not the God dwelt with me that ranged as a
beast of the field.
Foresight I had not, nor memory, nor vision that sweeps
in the skies,
Till he made me man, and bade me uplift my marvelling
eyes!
My hands I uplifted—my cries grew a prayer—on the
green turf I knelt.
And knew that the God had dwelt with me wherever of
old I had dwelt!

Wild is the life of the wave, and free is the life of the
air,
And sweet is the life of the measureless pastures, unbur-
dened of care;
They have all been mine, I upgather them all in the be-
ing of man,
Who knoweth, at last, that the God hath dwelt with him
since all life began!

My heritage draw I from these—I love tho I leave them
behind;
But shall I not speak for the dumb, and lift up my sight
for the blind?
I am kin to the least that inhabits the air, the waters, the
clod;
They wist not what bond is between us, they know not
the Indwelling God!
For under my hands alone the charactered Past hath he
laid,
One moment to scan ere it fall like a scroll into ashes and
fade!
Enough have I read to know and declare—my ways he
will keep,
If onward I go, or again in a fold of his garment I sleep!

THE MISTAKES OF A DAY

I rode my dearest champion to the ground,
I made the smiling traitor mine ally,
I gave my faithful love a lethal wound,
Truth read I in a wanton-glancing eye.

I made a darkness of the noontide sun,
I took the swamp-fire for a guiding light:
My little day of days is almost done—
Mine errors rush into the rushing night.

SHIELD ME, DARK NURSE

Shield me, dark nurse,—outworn, defeated, and undone!
Shield me from memories sweet or bitter 'neath the sun;
From glance of scorn, for love's long gaze, from pity's
tear,
Shield me alike from blame, from praise, from hope, from
fear!
Shield me, dark nurse, with charm and woven pace
surround,
Shield me from sight, from sound—from dream of sight
or sound!



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