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# SMOKY ROSES

BY

LYMAN BRYSON



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
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no!



To

MY FATHER AND MOTHER





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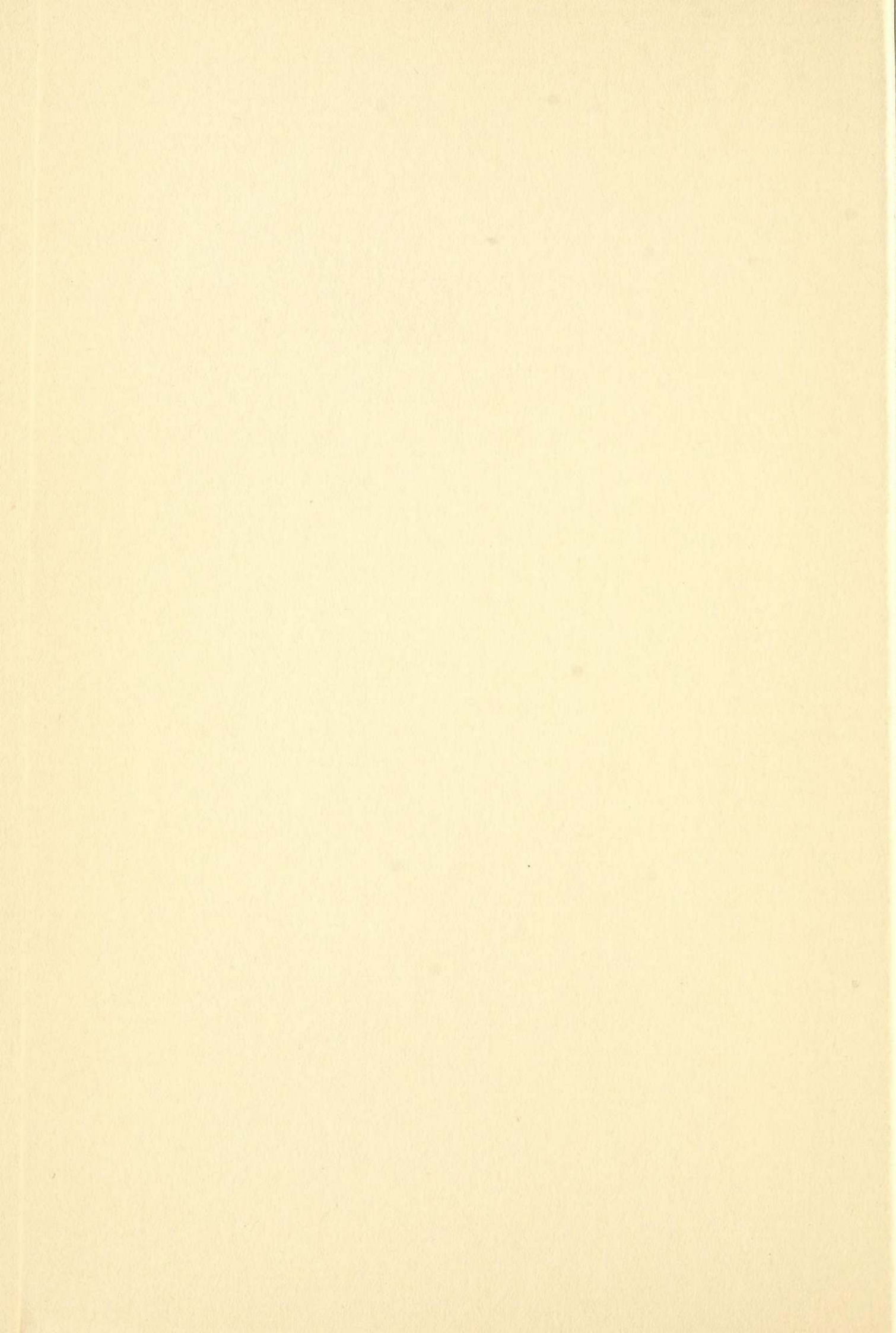
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# Smoky Roses





## SMOKY ROSES

THE "mogul" rides the east wind,  
Cleaving the dust and heat,  
Speeding from dawn to twilight  
With thunder and lightning feet.

The smoky roses wither  
Breathing the dust and sand  
Where the old man guards a crossing  
With a red flag in his hand.

He coaxes from the waste heaps  
A meagre garden space,  
And brushes the tearing cinders  
From the rose's tender face.

His smoky roses wither  
Under the cinder and ash,  
And the red rose dims to greyness  
In the joy of her first red flash.

The long days are contentless,  
The yards are a small, tight world;  
He watches trains for Frisco  
That over the plains are hurled.



## CONDEMNED

FROM dawning the joy of your spirit  
Was touched with the dread  
Of the wan hidden hand stretching near it,  
The hand of the dead—  
From those who have struggled before you  
And sinned for their bread.

Behind the high piles of fine raiment  
In the luxury mart,  
You dream of your own limbs' adornment,  
And guiltily smart  
With the first growth of infamy's planting  
Taking root in your heart.

When your sweet body, spent and pain-broken,  
Is weary past rest,  
And the words of your soul, yet unspoken,  
Shall die unexpressed,  
And the heart that God gave you for loving  
Is iron in your breast,

Then they that have kissed you shall curse you,  
And invoke from their lair  
Their own sheltered women, who loathe you,  
Who see snakes in your hair,  
Who shall drive you to hide with Medusas  
And imprison you there.

## Condemned

3

Your brothers, who boast of their city,  
For you have no name.  
Too busy with progress for pity,  
Too careful for blame,  
They weave your red shroud out of silence:  
Their cost—and their shame.



## THE GARMENT

'Tis I who ask forgiveness, I, who bought  
The garment when I did not know  
That its maker hungered as he wrought  
And patterned it with sweat marks in a row  
And fought  
The little mists of red, that come and go.

Little mists of red in blistered eyes,  
That never close for rest or sleep,  
Save when despair with heavy menace lies  
And palsies of exhaustion onward creep,  
And dies  
The haggard will that this last watch would keep.

No bitter word of mine, no burning deed  
Had ever helped him face this woe.  
I had been all oblivious of his need,  
I had not seen his weary hands move slow,  
And bleed  
With needle stabs as they sagged to and fro.

And still I wore as decent Sunday best  
My brother's handiwork of pain;  
While his wan soul a stranger was to rest,  
And his heart's blood a futile sop for gain.  
Confessed—  
My late repentance shall not be in vain.



## WHISPERS

SOFT black against the sky, whose evening green  
Is sharp and pale with autumn chill, the towers  
Go swinging up with many yellow eyes.  
One star shows at the skyline, facet-keen,  
And in the close of their enslavèd hours  
The crowds creep on the pavements, insect-wise.

Out over moving workers, whispers go  
Like the insistent, quiet, secret, tone  
Of thought to thought, across wide silence heard.  
Why is there never one, of those who know,  
To catch the heavy meaning of that moan  
And feel the godhead in his spirit stirred?

Have we not asked you the secret,  
You, who are high and serene?  
Venturing toward your far wisdom,  
Falling in chasms between?

Have we not sent up our prayers,  
Inarticulate—begging for speech?  
What have you done to bring beauty,  
Or love of it, nearer our reach?

Out of the whirl we are clamorous,  
What have we heard that was sweet?  
What fire is brought to our spirit?  
What torch is set for our feet?

## Whispers

Guideless and hopeless we follow—  
Why should you wince from our fall?  
You have not beckoned above us;  
Can it be—Heaven is small?

These faces move like bubbles on a tide,  
Breaking upon eager trolley cars,  
And vanishing like bubbles on a beach.  
But may there not in these film bubbles ride  
Strange ancient greatness in dim avatars,  
Struggling in such whispers for its speech?



## OLD MAN LAKS

THEY tell me Old Man Laks is dead!  
Old man Laks—burned in his bed;  
Dropped a lighted cigarette;  
Now his neighbours can't forget  
How, after midnight beer discussion,  
They had drunk and rolled and chattered,  
How their stupid doze was shattered  
By his screaming oaths in Russian.  
I'd been in his unkempt store,  
Went to try his cigarette.  
When I slammed the loose-hung door  
I heard an old voice thinly fret,  
"Well, what would you?"—from the dark.  
He told me where his wares were kept  
But to serve me did not deign,  
So I explored his musty ark.  
When no buyers came he slept  
Or lay silent, with his pain.  
Through the curtained door was seen  
His red table and his lamp.  
It smelled of fish and kerosene  
And the outer room was damp,  
But when buyers were so few  
There was scarce enough to eat;  
He could not buy comfort, too.



And he seldom left his cot,  
And was never on the street,  
Lay there silent and forgot  
With a rug across his feet.  
But I never saw him read  
Though he seemed to know by heart  
All the heavy Hebrew tomes  
That were heaped in those two rooms;  
And he knew each subtle part  
Of his strict and ancient creed.  
He had cigarettes for sale—  
Were they smuggled?—That's a pale,  
Weak transgression, if you please.  
Every stranger can't be taught  
That to break a law in Kiev  
May be virtue, but deceive  
On this side the swarming seas  
And it's deadly sin—if caught.  
So his life was sordid, yet  
He deserved a nobler death  
Than to choke in flaming breath  
From a burning cigarette.  
Once I looked at his white hair  
Out upon his dingy bed,  
And I saw the shadow there  
Of some blessing on his head.  
There was something, some denial,  
Some great thought he locked within,  
Or some undiscovered passion,  
Ghost of some long-conquered sin,



That had given him his trial  
In no overt, common fashion  
But in secret. Or some power  
Lay forever unaroused  
And the breast where it was housed  
Never throbbed in one great hour.  
That was all. But it was there  
In that face and outflung hair.  
But he lived and burned. God mocks  
Greatness, in such men as Laks.  
My soul with searching has grown lean  
But this moment has been mine  
To see the smudge of fire divine  
In life so pitifully mean.



## GRATITUDE

MIST has hung for chilling hours;  
Mud is cold upon the street;  
And the daylight slinks away  
In defeat.

By the dripping, bricky walls  
An old woman weakly drags,  
With no comfort but her scant  
Clammy rags.

Greeted by a bleary light  
Through a green door, left ajar,  
In she totters, half afraid,  
To the bar.

When they fill her flask for pence,  
Back she goes to her damp hole,  
Where the gin will sink and burn  
To her soul.

But when one is very old,  
And rag blankets get so thin,  
There is heartfelt thanks for drink—  
Hot as gin!

## THE STREET CLEANER

THERE you go with your broad shovel  
Heaping them in gutter-sheaves,  
Though a heart that ached for beauty  
Thanked his God for scattered leaves.

Let them follow whispering journeys,  
Droop and rest in tan decay,  
Swirl and rustle on the pavement,  
Hide the road of asphalt grey.

Let them huddle through the winter,  
Patient under snow and rain,  
Till their chemistry of wood-mould  
Turns the road to earth again.

Then some poet of the grass stems,  
Strong and brave through winter night,  
May wake and thrust a green blade upward  
Through the pavement into light.



## MY TOWN

My town is freckled green and gold  
In the pleasant summer-shine,  
When the day is jewel-bright  
Over elm and ivy vine

But the streets are grey and cold,  
When the snow blows, swift and fine—  
How the shanties, gaunt and old,  
Cower along the river line!



## SUMMER IN THE TENEMENTS

They have cried war on sunlight. Their fair  
fields  
Are builded over with dark alley sheds.  
Once fertile earth now nothing living yields,  
And sweats beneath the tenement's hot weight.  
Grey ash-heaps have usurped the violet beds.  
These people hold the sun from earth. Their fate  
For this unkindness is that every breath  
Is a weariness and burning taste of death.

For these were green fields once. These trodden  
stones,  
These cluttered hives are over ancient graves  
Of apple trees and roses. Dully drones  
Life now among these smothered little rooms.  
They have cried war on sunlight; nothing saves  
Them from his searing wrath. His hot gaze  
dooms  
Their children to the torture of this heat.  
They balked the sunlight and they know defeat.

The sunlight loved the fields but cannot love  
These sullen walls and streets. He blazes down  
In deathful protest. From a sweep above  
He strikes some men to death and some go mad,

## 14 Summer in the Tenements

Suffering for the sin of their grim town,  
Which robs the sun of sweet fields he once had.  
But men who built these sheds to insult the eye  
Of the sun, are not the men who pay—and die.



## THE FLOOD

THE cold black water lapping at her face,  
That I remember. There were others too,  
Many others, but most died in fear,  
And muddy waters choked them in their prayers,  
Curseful, unholy prayers for their mean lives.  
Some died in fury, some in pain, none prayed  
As she did, for another, as she felt  
The cold black water lapping at her face.  
My friends were out of danger. At the foot  
Of the little hill we stood on water swirled  
Full of foul broken things. We searched and  
searched  
To find some floating help to send to those  
Who cried across to us. We swam for two  
And pulled them, sodden, up to where we  
breathed.  
We could have done no more, but if my eyes  
Had wandered sooner over that black tide  
And seen her white face as she held on high  
Her baby, I'd have jumped, chance or no  
chance.  
When I first got the shock of grief that was  
Her distant face, I saw her clinging close  
To a swaying wall and holding by one hand,



As the water, breast-high, rocked her on her  
perch,  
To a little raft, some drawer or table top,  
Enough to float her baby. As her lips  
Moved in the very anguish of her prayer  
The water reached her throat. She set the  
raft,  
Frail tipping bit of wreckage, on its way.  
Without a farewell kiss, or touch, she gave  
Her baby to the flood and as she watched  
The raft careened, as if afraid to bear  
Its dear freight over such a deadly road.  
The cold black water lapping at her face—  
It was no more than half a moment's time  
She clung there, swaying, but I saw the hope  
That filled the moment, saw how unafraid  
She tasted death, and how she thought her  
prayers  
For the baby's life were answered.

Then she sank,  
Not as the others died, not in despair,  
Nor fear, nor fury, but with sweet content  
Austere and holy on her face. The flood,  
Black hideous moving death, rose up and  
crushed  
The baby's raft before the moving light,  
Where her white happy face had been, was gone.



## THE PROPHET

JEREMIAH, will you come?

Will you gather up the multitudes and wake  
them with a drum?

Will you dare anoint the chosen ones from all  
the cattle-kind?

And threaten with the fire of God the foolish  
and the blind?

Jeremiah, Jeremiah, we have waited for you  
long

To see the flaming fury of your hate against the  
wrong,

For we dally in the Temple and we flee the eye of  
Truth,

And we waste along the Wilderness the glory of  
our youth.

Jeremiah, Jeremiah, here the lying prophets  
speak,

Here they flatter in their feebleness the gilded  
and the sleek;

But languid pipings die in shame when trumpet  
cries are heard.

Are you coming? Are you coming? O Prophet  
of the Word?

## INVOCATION

GIVE me no guerdon until I have won it  
In love and labour and pain.  
Grant me no peace till my spirit has sung itself  
Out into freedom again.

In days that are full of this slothful distemper,  
Nights that are weary of rest,  
Months sliding by in this vacant monotony,  
I am forgetting my quest.

The candle is guttered before my fond altar;  
I should have leaped to the flame  
And burned up my life as a torch to the angel,  
Whose face turns away from this shame.

Give me no comfort in bitter repentance  
For days that are empty of dream;  
Give me no comfort until my dim vision  
Has wakened again to the gleam.



## FOR ME THE TEARS

IF God will not decree that you and I  
Shall go, thus hand in hand, unto the end,  
If there must come a time when one alone  
Must, shuddering, walk to the darkest brink,  
May that be peace for you—for me the tears.

If it be so, and one of us must turn  
Back into common daylight from the grave,  
Go on with living when there is no life,  
Forlorn of joy in spring, and sun, and night,  
Because of springs remembered and nights gone,  
Uplifting weary eyes with decent calm  
And hearing neighbours say how well 'tis borne,  
That is the bitter portion—death is peace.

If you who go ahead shall find a place  
All filled with calmness, passionless, and sweet,  
And making it more human with yourself,  
Wait there the glad day of my second death,  
All purged of my unworthiness by grief,  
I'll come to you in that eternal place.  
I pray that I may drink the deeper cup;  
Death may be peace for you—for me the tears.



## SOME EVENING

SOME April evening, when the sky  
With a blue and silver fringe  
Lies upon the earth so nigh  
That far hills take on its tinge,  
Under elm trees, black and tall,  
You will stand in this same place  
And a few cool drops may fall  
Soft, upon your upturned face.

If you call them only rain,  
Thinking I am gone past tears,  
Then their falling shall be vain,  
And I'll be gone with my dead years.  
For they shall be tokens sent,  
By a ghostly, fond device,  
From one who finds his heaven spent  
And weeps alone in Paradise.



## IN THE HOUSE OF PAIN

FOR grave I choose a green and sunny slope  
Where apple trees, full fruited, bloom the hill.  
Then may the strength that holds in my still  
    heart

Grow healthily into the sturdy trees,  
And may the apples be as sweet and kind  
As is my grateful farewell to my life.  
If ever friendly plough shall turn my mould  
Into the open sunlight, may the wind  
Scatter the dust across the window-sill  
Of some contented cottage, where a child  
May trace the foolish pattern of a man  
In my forgotten, ancient dust—and smile.

## DEDICATION

BECAUSE I remember that day in March,  
We stood alone in our secret place,  
The winds that wrestled in elm and larch  
Were helping the sun's keen ray efface  
The lingering snow, the last spent trace  
Of winter's beauty; because your face  
With hair blown back and eyes sprung free  
Illumined the world and compassed me  
With the glory that none but you could see;  
Because I have found for my soul's emprise,  
Holding on vision in dawn and night,  
No other sanction than faith which lies  
Like an unfed flame in your face, the light  
On my face lifted up to your height,  
Making me worthier in your sight;  
Though my heart learn iron—as the world is  
shod—  
I know that my one faith cannot nod.  
I give to you what I have from God.



## PHANTOMS

### LOST

THE mist came up and choked the street;  
I could not flee through there,  
For an iron lamp post grinned at me  
And waved its yellow glare.  
A woman sobbed and almost saw  
When I hurried through her hair.

I could not go the way I came—  
That door was bolted fast;  
And those who threw me out from home  
Set heel against the past,  
Not knowing I had heard them count  
My breathing till the last.

How could a phantom face the dawn?  
My grey limbs shrank in fright.  
I could not find the way, there was  
So little left of night.  
Terror strangled me, I smelled  
The coming of the light.

There was no time! There was no time!  
Why was I born so late?



I looked in through a door and saw  
A banquet set in state;  
A man with thick and greasy smile  
Worshipped at each plate.

I drew the breeze in through my heart  
And laughed—no flesh was there!  
My hands were clasped before my face  
But each of them held air.  
Terror stopped my eerie laugh—  
I was not anywhere.

I knew no way, I knew no way,  
Let loose too near the morn,  
There was no time to find the way;  
I wound about forlorn,  
Wondering at my weariness,  
For I was yet new-born.

I saw the light cut through the mist,  
The dawn, blood-thirsty, broke.  
Too late—I'd lost the way for those  
Whose souls are made of smoke,  
And I was mist and in my throat  
The misty air did choke.

I saw my own thin hands dissolve  
And turned me to the wall;  
The sneering sun seared out my face,  
There was nought left to fall.  
Only this wailing memory  
Floats—and remembers all.



## TRIUMPH

At my first touch his head fell back,  
I saw his eyeballs shine.  
I froze the warm blood at his heart,  
The marrow in his spine,  
And put him in the fear of death,  
To tell him he was mine.

I came upon him in the night  
And knew him for my own.  
I saw the everlasting soul,  
That through his body shone;  
And knew that when all else was mist  
He'd cling to me alone.

Mine for æons yet unborn.  
The love he knows on earth  
Shall seem a joyless, puny, thing  
When I, with solemn mirth,  
Welcome him among the stars,  
When his dead self has birth.

Then he will feel no bitter trace  
Of wife-things left behind,  
Nor see the shadow of a face,  
When we ride on the wind.  
And he will give me fleshless love,  
But I will not be kind.



## THE BUILDERS

Close to the earth he is building his towers,  
Towers of vapours that shift and surge,  
Vapours of damp, poor ghosts of showers,  
Materials meet for the intricate powers  
Of one who is master, not mere demiurge.

Out of the trimmings that fall from his planing,  
Trimmings of vapour that fall in the street,  
I have been fashioning eagerly, feigning  
That my vapours weren't what the Builder,  
          disdaining,  
Had dropped from his work and spurned out  
          with his feet.

I have been fashioning halos for lanterns,  
And veils for the gas-lamps. I almost believe  
There are hearts in the flickering women my  
          hand turns  
Out of the mist; but the step of a man turns  
Them chilly with fear—they congeal on his  
          sleeve.

But the Builder—*he* sees me at work with the  
          vapours  
And gathers the rubbish before I have done.  
He stirs up the morning and snuffs the star  
          tapers,  
Awaking the world to go on with its capers,  
And fills up my streets with the wind and the  
          sun.



## FINGER TIPS

OUT on the rim of the mist of my soul  
Linger thy finger tips;  
And I, in the shadows that whirl and roll,  
Am trying to reach to the rim of my soul  
And bless them with my lips.

Words cannot go to them, but the unspoken,  
Echoless, vague, and murmuringly sweet,  
Wait in a silence forever unbroken,  
Wait, and wistfully long to be spoken,  
Thy name to repeat.

Friend out there on that misty sea,  
Lost where my vision dips,  
Seal one touch to the heart of me;  
Reach, ah, reach, through the misty sea,  
Just with thy finger tips.



## THE STIRRING

SEE yonder little, fleecy, summer's cloud  
That lazily blows in the passing breeze  
Across horizons of a hundred hills  
In aimless travel on the vapour seas,  
The sport of every breath of wind that blows,  
As if it could but sail and cared not where;  
Think you that in some mystic way it knows  
That it must wander in the lower air?  
Think you that ever, nebulous and faint,  
In that dim shadow soul of skyey things,  
It does not long with longing half conceived,  
To mount into the height with billowy wings,  
Into the blue—blue—azure deep as life—  
Far, far immensities of open sky?  
Would it not soar in that ethereal  
That never-ending space, and never die,  
If but the strength of an unknown desire  
Could work in deeds as does the grosser fire;  
Think you it may thus, impotent, aspire?

When life throbs slow, and slower still, and faint,  
And like a watchful sentinel Death waits  
To strike the spirit groping in the dark,  
Think you the captive Essence never hates  
The struggle to remain ill-housed and bound,



When far above, and deep below, and vast,  
A Chaos, limitless and ever new,  
Stretches ahead when once the door is passed?  
Think you that e'er the warm full life returns,  
Bringing back the mortal cloak that clings,  
And life's too fair illusions place regain  
And lull the dormant call of final things,  
Think you that in the moment's glimpse beyond,  
The soul unfettered does not stir from sleep  
And wake to longing for the far, far, flight  
When loosed from earthy bonds across the deep,  
From sphere to sphere it wings a tireless way?  
Does it not long to go before it may,  
And dread the sordid dawning of a day?

## MOONWRAITH

MOONWRAITH lies along the floor;  
Swooning shadows in the street  
Tremble as they pass the door,  
For the white print of her feet,  
On the steps and ancient floor,  
Left Perfume sweet.

And the very air she breathes,  
Through the quiet of the room,  
In its silent moving wreathes  
Odorous sweetness in the gloom,  
As in springtime when she breathes  
Orchard bloom.

Moonwraith lies so still and pale  
That I hold my lips in pain,  
Lest the silver vision fail,  
And my eyes with sorrow vain  
Gaze on stones where, lily-pale,  
She hath lain.



## THE GUEST

NIGHT came, and wind  
And after that the rain,  
Falling like the memory  
Of long-worn pain.

Open was the door,  
And open wide my heart,  
Eager for the guest from whom  
I shall not part.

All the sound I heard  
In all the dripping pain,  
Was never eager footsteps  
But sad, cool rain.

## VENGEANCE

I SENT my enemy to Hell  
And, for the evil he had done  
To me and everyone  
Who came within his cruel clutch,  
They made him suffer overmuch.

Then, after he had burned a while,  
I went to visit Hell again,  
To smile at him in pain.  
He made me see his face all singed.  
I'll not forget—now he's revenged.



## THE CHILD IN SUMMER

I WONDER why the wind runs on the hedge  
In just the way I'd have it run,  
And why it moves among the friendly trees  
As if it had no one but me to please.

Everything I see the breezes do  
Seems always just the way I want it done.

Whenever all the flowers droop and die  
And I make blossoms of my own,  
I'll make them just like these a-growing now;  
I love them so, I will remember how.

And if there's no one else to call them sweet  
They'll still keep growing sweet for me alone.

## SONG OF THE ROAD

How shall I know what lies beyond  
Where the long road turns to blue  
Save that I travel that way myself  
And follow the long road through?

For I was born on the broad highway,  
And the moving wind is kin.  
What is a house but a prison wall  
To keep my heart shut in?

And I have a house at the end of the road,  
Where my secret way doth lie,  
And there I shall go when I quit my song  
And cover my face to die.

But how shall I know why over there  
The long road meets the sky  
Save that I travel that way myself  
And ask the last hill why?



## A NAMELESS BIRD

I HAVE no name to call one loveliest bird,  
Which at my sunlit morning window sings  
His first fresh carolling, though I have heard  
Each song with grateful rapture as it brings  
Day and dew and breezes to my eyes,  
And bids me go forth to accept the earth  
When Summer offers it for my surprise.  
He celebrates our wonder in sweet mirth  
While we look out together on the green.  
For this I call him Brother, and I praise  
Him, nameless, for the exquisite and keen  
Bright beauty of his greeting to my days.  
If he had any name he'd be but one  
Of many like him, and not mine alone.



## WET JUNE DAYS

WHAT strange god's weeping makes our June  
so sad?

Whose tears must overflow so fast,  
Like misty traces of all Aprils past,  
Long since forgotten? Once we had  
A radiant brother Sun, who made us glad  
With cheerly given greeting. Hills  
Which now the grey-green vapour hides and  
chills

Danced in the flaming sunbeams, mad  
With beauty, as of old danced the Mænad.

But now the skies are all dissolved in rain.  
The river has grown hostile; black,  
It hurries like a serpent, and its track  
Will mark its banks with serpent stain.  
One lonesome bird, wet-feathered, tries with pain  
Just to remember how he thrilled  
His friends, the leaves, before spring-song was  
killed,

Drowned all in fog. He tries in vain,  
And young trees shake with agues in the lane.



## SONG

MAIDEN, thou and this bright day  
Would make me wish that I  
Might here my wayward hours spend  
And rest me, till I die,  
For here I've found my journey's end,  
Where beauty sweet doth lie.

Oh, give me not an idle smile  
That vanishes with day,  
And kiss me not, or I shall weep  
When kisses pass away,  
But bless me with one kindling glance  
And at thy feet I'll stay.

TO A CERTAIN FAIR LADY

YOUR heart is like a poplar tree,  
Full of sunlit greenery,  
A thin lace pattern on the sky  
That trembles when the winds go by.

And every zephyr, every day,  
That comes adventuring its way,  
Feels it as tremulously waken  
As if it never had been shaken.



## GOLDEN ROD

“HAS the wide green plain been fruitful?”

Ask the gods of wind and rain.

“Has the bounty of maize been all fulfilled?”

“Is labour repaid for them that tilled?”

“We bear witness!” answers the grain.

“The bursting sod has yielded,

“And wherever the green stalks nod,

“With dim new glory of dusty gold,

“The plain is fringed with a glow—Behold!

“The blessing of Golden Rod!”

## MOTHER OF A SON

O WOMEN who mourn in the cities above me,  
On the farms, in the towns, by the lakes,  
Wherever the folly of man sows wind  
And the heart breaks,  
This is my son!  
This is my sacrifice unto your sorrows!  
His sinews are born of the nights of my weeping,  
They are strong for unnumbered and mist-  
laden morrows.  
Entrust all your secret tears into his keeping  
As his mother has done.  
My love shall be soul of his love and shall heal  
you,  
In your pain, or in shame, or in pride,  
For in him the heart of my heart lived on  
When my youth died.  
O women who mourn in the dawn glow or twi-  
light,  
By the hearth, at the well, in the field,  
Whenever the stir of your grief moans, pray  
That my faith yield—  
Blessing the rack of God's tear-stricken plan—  
From manchild—a man!



## MORNING

THE bright-vestured morning comes singing,  
singing

Into the world of sleep.

Its song of sweet silence is bringing  
A spirit of joyousness into the hills,  
A fresh wakened sparkle into the rills,  
An open sky for the things that fly,  
And day for the things that creep.

The song of the morning is ringing, ringing

In the bells of a thousand flowers.

The dew that is mistily clinging

Is shaken and shines in the new gold sun,

While into the day, hours lustily run,  
And over the down the waking town

Sits smiling among her towers.

## BALLAD

THEY stirred me from my bed at morn;  
The sword they brought was red.  
They hissed of where my father lay,  
Stricken dead.

I fought the damp mist in my soul;  
My heart was small and cold.  
Though blood was reeking on the blade,  
Revenge was old.

I fingered with shut eyes the nicks  
Where foes had left their mark,  
Like features on a dead man's face,  
Touched in the dark.

I found the lonely, lonely room  
And touched the silent thing;  
I had not known how much like gall  
Cold lips can sting.

Then forth into the stranger world,  
Bold in a sudden breath,  
I went to find my foe and make  
Another death.



There is no hatred in my breast  
And wan sick is my eye;  
But cold steel must be warmed again—  
A man must die.

## WINTER

THE wide white hill is cold and far,  
    Why must I go?  
Daylight pales to the ice-point star;  
When thin lone winds that whistle weird  
Come after, I shall be afeard  
    Of the snow.

You never will find me on that white hill  
    Though you search till day,  
And the sun come over when I am still;  
Though my heart take courage and start to beat,  
Winter will turn your friendly feet  
    Away.

You never have told me why I must go,  
    And you do not see  
Where the path is lost in the waste of snow;  
You know not the winds that haunt my fear,  
Nor the friend that searches that wide, white bier  
    For me.



MRS. COBURN IN THE "ELEKTRA"

O FRAGILE woman, shaken with the heart  
That was a stricken Titan, how camest thou  
Within the glory of the antique art  
That faded to its twilight, long ere now?  
There lies a Greek sereneness on thy brow  
Though all the meaning of thy mouth is woe,  
A woe begun before thy murderous vow,  
E'en when thy rude gods struck thee, blow on  
    blow

Around thee, slowly, Argive shadows go  
But for thy bruised soul no comfort hold.  
Now he who hears thy living voice can know  
The deathless tears that pity wept, of old;  
And in the strength of thy pale passion sees  
The ancient fire that burned Euripides.

## RULERS

So have you walked in sorrow,  
So have you walked apart,  
For the first word of creation  
Stirs in your brooding heart.

The power-stained hands of rulers  
By sword, or voice, or votes,  
Tear at the law's confusion  
With prayers that burn their throats.

But the ancient faith of the spirit  
In your soul was planted deep;  
The thrill and thrall of the lasting flesh  
Were given your hands to keep.

Men-children talked of ruling  
And fought for the futile rod,  
While you lay beyond their knowing  
Discussing my birth with God.

So shall you walk in sorrow,  
So may you walk apart,  
For the whisper of creation  
Stirs in your brooding heart.



## HYMN TO BAAL (1914)

OH, Baal, God of battles, God of blood,  
Have we not sacrificed unto Thy name?  
Have we not given tithe of all things good  
And worshipped Thee in everlasting shame?

Have not high greed and lust been honoured  
arts?

Do we not make for hate unhindered room?  
Have we not given little children's hearts,  
Worn out in torture at the clucking loom?

Have we not driven woman souls, distraught,  
Hating them for beauty and for pain,  
To death? See what our righteousness has  
wrought—

Such bloody immolation at Thy fane.

Give ear, oh Baal, unto Thy worshippers,  
They who have prated other Gods than Thee,  
Still labouring beneath Thy potent curse,  
Their deeds have helped Thy various Hells to be.

Withhold Thy hand, must we give all—all—all  
Our youth unto Thy holy murder rites?  
Must they be bayoneted as they crawl  
To rot in alien trenches for the kites?



We bow at Thy command. Too long our days  
Were given to the seed of this despair  
For us to shudder, loathing Thy dark ways.  
We bow—but lift our purpled hands in prayer.

Grant us that in the greatest of Thy feasts,  
When half the earth is shambles, the black doors  
Of Thy fell heaven shall open for Thy priests,  
Thy czars and bloody-fingered emperors.

Take to Thyself, oh Baal, in Thy red hour,  
Thy chosen children, high-put priests of war,  
With escort of our young sons, slain in flower—  
And keep them in Thy bosom evermore.

Take to Thyself Thy kings. The peoples yet  
Will worship in Thy temples. Now they reel  
For they have seen Thy face. Let them forget  
This cataclysmic fury of their zeal.

Thy kings can do no more to honour Thee,  
For now as men stalk over desolate lands  
Their dark, blood-shot imaginations see  
Christ, with a levelled carbine in his hands.



## CATALPAS

CATALPA blooms, that are always dying,  
Falling leprous on the lawn,  
Were you stirred at my secret crying  
When I walked before the dawn?

Catalpa blooms, that live for an hour,  
Was my sigh but a windy breath,  
Blowing down one more cold flower,  
Wan and white and fain of death?

How could you know—your life is but giving  
One faint scent as a day goes by—  
That some buds flame with the glory of living  
And blaze their hearts to the open sky?

Catalpa blooms, that no graves are kept for,  
Lying leprous on the lawn,  
How could you know what flowers I wept for  
When I shuddered at the dawn?



## THE POPPY

ASTARTE'S face in the blood-red moon astare.  
No breath—all silence in the heated gloom.  
Shuddering in a swoon the passionate air  
Holds in the garden as a narrow room;  
And down the path, the bending poppy-bloom  
Burns through the velvet dusk a crimson flare.

The poppy has no words, but potent fire,  
Bold in the darkness, rises in her heart,  
Makes throbbing anguish of her soul, entire;  
Sears the thin petals of her face apart.  
Her slight stem, shrinking from the unseen dart,  
Betrays the ardour of her vain desire.

An alien wind is questing on the path;  
The swinging, swaying poppy petals hold  
A languor that no other love-flower hath.  
The stranger wind knows how the tale is told,  
Scatters the poppy suddenly, with cold—  
Astarte bleeds the moon in futile wrath.



## A PORTRAIT

HE'S one of those on whom the Muses smile,  
But never shall make mad. His discontent  
Awaits him at the corners of the day.  
We never hear him whimper, but he scolds  
At sterner friends, or for a broken gleam  
Of beauty, half-achieved, mourns fretfully.  
So faintly touched with grace that fineness bears  
The calumny of weakness, but too fond.  
He thinks the Muses' smile will give him fame.

## THE LOVE-WROUGHT WORD

THEY say that where the Titan condor swings  
Above the bleakest Andes' misty blue,  
Gazing down the valleys of Peru,  
Alone, returning from far wanderings,  
Sometimes a humming bird, mere moth which  
brings

A breath of flowers and a taste of dew,  
Comes fluttering up the ice on webbed wings.  
So into pale austerity of mind,  
Where logic conquers as a taloned bird,  
A poet's gossamer device may find  
A perilled way when, with ambition stirred,  
It mounts to mirror in the ice behind  
The flashing beauty of a love-wrought word.



## EVERY PILGRIM

WITH eyes that strain for morrows  
And for searching sin and woe,  
With a mouth that sweetness borrows  
From the smile that greets a blow,  
With hands too light for toiling,  
And feet too swift for soiling,  
With no dread of despoiling,  
    With no staff shall he go.

Into the heat and sweating  
And clinging grime of day,  
Into the heat, forgetting  
The clean morn as he may;  
With uncertain brows that tighten  
When the first load will not lighten,  
And a gaze that cannot brighten  
    On a goal too far away.

Though the fresh dew on his shoulders  
Will soon vanish in the sun,  
He must smell the dust that moulders  
On the graves, ere he is done.  
The West hoots his desires,  
And the East must mend her Fires,  
And the North and South are liars;  
    Nowhither may he run.



But it is not useless going  
That the gods would fain forget,  
Nor the false seed of his sowing,  
Nor the tears his eyes shall wet;  
For they must know in their musing  
That he loves, and fears not losing,  
That he dreads no death in choosing,  
And laughs at sure regret.

There is no need for weeping  
Because life will grow stale,  
There is no need for keeping  
Young lips from growing pale;  
But sadder than all sadness,  
And wearier than madness,  
Seems youth who laughs with gladness  
Though knowing he must fail.



## THE EXILE

A LONG low shaking wind ran through the grass,  
And overhead the all-but-silent leaves  
Touched one another gently as afraid  
Of the unwonted silence in the wood.  
Then slow across the edge of open land,  
Forspent with wanderings and still alone,  
Lifting his bright feet through the meadow  
    blooms

And scenting with tired joy the evening air,  
There came the god Apollo, shut from Heaven,  
And cast upon a wonder-hating world.  
Very sad and strange as was his sigh,  
His voice a promise seemed of all delight.  
The ancient tree he leaned on conscious grew  
Of his divinity but trembled not,  
Just bending on the radiance of his head  
Its listening branches as he paused and spoke:

“I have not loved these shaded hills in vain  
Nor ever have returned to this dim wood  
Without remembrance and a kindlier welcome;  
This green earth woos me freshly to my rest;  
So were the earth and hills in ancient summers.  
But an unwelcome change is in my brothers,  
These weary sons of women who, in toil,



Forget their kinship. My own song has come  
Like a sweet whisper and their clanging ears  
Have never heeded it. So loud they shout  
Their need of corn and wine, and clamour long  
Within the markets, music knows them not.  
Pan's pipes are fallen unto bastard satyrs,  
And careless Bacchus sleeps, his dull-eyed crew  
Drinks and drinks and drinks, but still is dumb.  
A god may weary in such weary days  
And I am weary with their misery.  
They have not loved Olympus; all the gods  
That once ranged over Heaven from that hill  
Are wandering forlorn and not a shrine  
But pilfered ruins on Athenian hills  
Is open to them, and no worshippers  
Wait there to keep a sacrificial flame.  
How can they know that nectar does not bide  
Within the cup they never dare to lift?  
Though dryad trees go screaming through the  
mills  
Their spirit, breathless, broods in every wall  
That men have raised against the muse of  
song.  
Still Triton's hair entangles in the whirl  
Of their great ships that lash a heavy way  
Over seas, still Neptune's own dominion.  
Exiled in immortality we wait  
Until the face of man be lifted up  
And from his lips, pain-scarred of laboured days,  
Breaks forth again the glory of his song."



The god ceased speaking as his chariot sun  
In slow diminished radiance on the sky  
Proclaimed his greatness to the dark-hushed  
world.

But from the city whose irreverent towers  
Were glimmering with futile glow-worm stars  
Came surging heavy smoke, a thick oblivion,  
That dulled and then obscured the sun's farewell.  
It stalked into the wood where Apollo rested  
And as the little leaves shrank and upcurled,  
And tainted was the sweet breath of the wood  
He fled to find a holier resting place.



## ANDREA'S MORNING

("Andrea del Sarto" by Robert Browning.)

LAST night, perhaps, I may have been more  
kind.

Musing in the evening's sober quiet,  
A peaceful melancholy cradled me  
And soothed self-questioning. Now, my love,  
The brackish dregs of old desires, astir,  
Taste bitter, when the morning brings a pale  
And virgin day, which I must soil and mar.  
Sit here; let the fresh day-beams illumine you.  
They may light new beauty in your eyes,  
Your tired indifferent eyes, I call my stars.  
No, I am not pettish, 'tis my mood.  
My eyes are tired, too, my body's eyes,  
And so my soul's eyes smart with too much  
seeing.

Last night, I gazed upon a twilight piece,  
"Silvered," I think I called it, well content.  
This morning all seems like a tinsel screen  
Whose charms are sick and tawdry, seen by day.  
Last night I mused; this morning a harsh truth  
Bids me to see. Ah, love, look not so wan—  
You should not waste your beauty on those  
friends.



Sometimes, Lucrezia, they ask too much  
And yet you will content them. Guard yourself.  
You are my model, now, as well as wife.  
Do you remember that I wondered why  
A beauty such as yours could not have soul?  
I thought your sweet perfection lacked a mind.  
I blamed you, since in such half-thinking, blame  
And praise are shades of the same melancholy—  
It mattered not. But now my thinking's clear.  
The lack is in myself; the fault is mine.  
Not art—my service in her name is great  
In being only what they call it, "faultless,"  
Though it were soulless still, which it is not  
To those who see. The soul is in a hand  
That draws aright, whatever it may draw,  
And I have drawn aright. Too well I know  
There is soul in the struggle not the deed.  
My fight has been to live, not to paint.  
Painting was too easy, but the soul  
Has had a sorry battle in my life.  
Aye, they will sneer at what I call my fight,  
They—for whom we do not care—will think  
Losing was so simple; and winning, hard.  
But the thing I've lost is not my art.  
You, my love, I've lost. That is my sin.  
You do not care. Even now your head,  
Turned aside with a forgotten smile,  
Proves we do not love. Proves I have failed.  
Those who can do the godlike deed, who feel  
In their own hands the power to execute,



Know, as I know, that what they do is naught:  
Know that when their work falls, finished, done,  
To them it is indifferent. Within,  
Within their own breasts is the loss and gain.  
The execution of our hands is naught  
When 'tis complete. In it there is meaning  
Only when it stops, midway to truth.  
So I have lost, not what I might have done  
Which were too much—but what I might have  
been.

There must be some unknowing lack in me  
Else you would love me. Though I choose to  
hold

You dearer than all else, I cannot gain  
More favour than is given any cousin.  
Forgive me if my words are plain. But there,  
You were not listening to them. Better so.  
The glory you must fail to understand,  
Royal favour, praise, and ease for work,  
All these are worthless to me, for I know  
How my hands could gain them if my heart  
Thus could be satisfied. But no, the dream  
That sometimes I have dared to look upon,  
Knowing how wistful far it was from truth,  
Has had no king, nor king's gold—only you.  
If but once, Lucrezia, you could come  
Unbidden to my arms, if your soft voice  
Could call me, losing softness in desire,  
If passion could but once flame in your eyes  
And circle us with fire, and burn me through,



Then in that searing baptism of love  
I might be once divine and reach my height.  
Yes, many men have this, who have no art.  
I fail, because a being formed as I,  
Tuned to a higher key, gifted with clearer sight,  
Should feel it more—and feel it not at all.  
Such little gifts as deeds are paltry cheap  
To God, who gave us souls, souls to feel.  
And such as I who might have felt His breath  
Once in my life, ecstatic in my being,  
Would fill His purpose if I knew His touch,  
And like a harp, when struck, gave true response.  
I would not thus have failed if my desire  
For your love could but once be all fulfilled.  
Here, you see, the lack and fault is mine,  
For somewhere in your heart must be a chord  
I might have touched and won you. Failing  
here,

I paint the perfect pictures men will buy.  
Last night the quietude of twilight peace  
Made all seem just, and I was sad—content.  
But now my fancies shrivel in the sun;  
The guilt is mine and mine the punishment;  
But punishment is not my "soulless" art.  
If you would give yourself, all, all, but once,  
That were enough, and end of earth's desire—  
The painting I could do in Paradise.



## MIST

It was a vaporous midnight, and the dark  
Unfriendly street forbade my journey home,  
Put out grey questioning fingers, wet and cold,  
That touched my face and scattered in my breath  
Like filmy outposts of retreating gloom.  
Beleaguered lights, with feeble yellow shine  
Were brave, then craven, cheering as I came,  
But shrinking from me, faithless, as I passed.

Then out of that white darkness came a shape,  
Not stranger to me, yet not one I knew,  
And seemed to lag before me as if loth  
To turn and greet me openwise, but held  
Unwillingly from flight. There was a sway  
Of woman garments and small drops like dew  
Shone on them, silverly. I saw no face;  
My pace had eagerness, but not a step  
Was gained in my pursuit, for still beyond  
My reach and ken she moved. A yellow lamp  
Glowed dimly on her though the darkness took  
Her shadow gluttonously. She was—was not—  
Was not—and was—until I tired of chase  
And called aloud. My words came back to me  
In little echoes and the night was still;  
It was more chilly silent for my noise.



She turned then, pausing, searching me with eyes  
I felt the gaze of but could not discern  
Except as living shadows in damp gloom.  
I feared to lose her utterly in the dark.  
“Who are you, oh, who are you?” So my lips  
Spoke out my question ere I knew.

“I am

“One whom you seek, and have sought, many  
years,”

She answered, but I could not see her face.  
Her voice was sweet and like a fountain fallen  
From such a height that there is scarcely sound  
But only vapours, rainbow-struck, to fall.  
It came, heart-reaching, but no memory  
Awoke to tell me who had such a voice.  
I was still groping. “Did I know you once?”  
Boldly I spoke. “And did I lose the grace  
“Of your forgotten presence which now comes  
“Disquieting?”

“You have not known me yet;

“Although you seek me. I am but the shade  
“Of long desires, your own; a prophecy;  
“A portent, and fulfilment. I have come  
“To tell you that the end of fevered prayers  
“Will soon be granted you, for even now  
“Your soul is on the brink of your delight.  
“One hour is given. For one hour the depth  
“And height of all your destined joy shall be  
“Before you. In that hour be bravely glad,  
“For after it come other hours.”



The night

Which had been chill and cloud-enveloped,  
 glowed  
 Now with a sudden splendour, for was born  
 A fire in my own eyes, dispelling dark.  
 So bright my eager vision was that moist  
 Uncertain flickering was trustworthy light  
 To judge a messenger of heaven by.  
 My soul believed.

“Bring me that hour,” I cried.  
 “Bring me that single hour of all. Hold back  
 “No moment from fulfillment. Let all joy  
 “That I am heir to drown me in a flood.”  
 She swayed and swept a hand out toward me.

“Wait;  
 “Remember that your all comes in that hour,  
 “All you shall ever know of love, of peace,  
 “Belief in heaven’s kindness, recompense  
 “For all that is thereafter, or before.”  
 And there was some far warning, but my soul  
 Surged upward in a clamour of desire  
 To know my all, to gather in one hour  
 My fruit of laughter. Never could my soul  
 Be braver than it was that moment, brave  
 To spend my greatest hour. But the un-  
 known  
 Who waited, silent, shrinking, turned away  
 And sadness faintly touched me.

“I am she—  
 “Unhappy—who shall bring you in that hour



“The taste of love, the one breath you may know  
“Of passion without shadow, taint, or pain.”

The vapours moving as she spoke brought chill  
Rebuke to my fierce eagerness. There grew  
A slow distrust of the moment and of her.

“I have not chosen fate for you,” she said,

“But tears of mine are futile as your own.”

“Give what is mine,” I begged. “I have not  
feared.

“Give me my own; be it bitter, I can drink

“The bitterness with a smile; or if that hour

“Shall come when all of joy—”

“Not all,” she broke

My speech. “Not all of joy, but all that you

“May ever know.” Again the dark drew down.

I saw her bending toward the yellow lamp

As if to keep within the light, as if

The night dragged at her garments; and I strode,

Though fear was on me, with an arm outheld

To clutch at her and keep her. “When will  
come

“This hour? How shall I know it?” But my  
hand

Struck hard the wet iron post beneath the  
lamp.

“When comes this hour?” My cry was an-  
guished. Slow

She drew aside from me. “When comes this  
hour?”

The heavy fog grew heavier and the lamp,

As if affrighted by the chill advance,  
Gave up its guttered life. An answer came  
From somewhere to my echoed "When the  
hour?"

"Now! Now!" her voice sobbed, and she fled  
away,  
And there were cold wet kisses on my mouth.



## THE PATRIARCH

A COTTAGE in the dulness of mean streets,  
By pavements flint and dusty, is a home  
Of patriarchal dignity, and peace  
Has rested on its dingy eaves. A Jew  
Whose spirit still by far Siloam dwells  
With stalwart sons keeps here his ancient faith;  
And deep content abode with faith, but now  
Grim sorrow is the steward of his house.  
It was a shingled tabernacle set  
With houses faced the same in outward look  
But lacking in this hidden holiness.  
Not in the eastern city's fetid slum  
But in a street, a street where wagons passed  
And hucksters cried and some few children ran;  
But still it was a desert and no soul  
Of fellowship was there, no kindly shade,  
No welcome neighbour friendships and no love.

Into the patriarchal house, a boy  
Came out of deepest Russia, ignorant.  
In his own race he knew no straight-eyed pride,  
And things he knew of Western life and ways  
Were half imaginary; still unlearned  
He boasted knowledge. Feverish for trade,  
Thin money sounds made all his music. Here



He found the quietness of antique pride  
For in this arid meanness was upheld  
The sanctity and consciousness of race.  
The sons were seven and to fill a purse  
Lean-sprung and empty, all did heavy toil,  
Save only little Aaron still in school.  
They held each penny with more painful care  
Than Anglo-Saxon stature would allow  
But paid to every bargainer his due.  
And often when some sordid, shrewish wife  
Called their dealings false in loud complaint  
They quietly gave up the profit small  
To save the name of Jew from one more curse.  
Patiently the Patriarch would teach  
His sons to mould their lives unto his own;  
And often when they gathered to their home,  
Too weary of their merchandise, he read  
Talmudic lore and conned the ancient law.  
The small house, burdened with so many lives  
Was never ordered but no fretfulness  
Broke its contentment and the mother's face  
Was full of quiet smiles and austere love.  
By zeal the wayward stranger might have  
reached  
Their kindly calmness but he heeded not.  
When Irish lads of alien faith were by  
He mocked the rabbi with them, and of nights,  
He dipped in vice—half understanding it.  
So recklessness was gathered. Some few months  
He dwelt within the house, but still a stranger,



Not sensing its one common well-based thought  
To lead a life as pleased the Patriarch.  
To him the old Jew was a kinsman, poor  
Like himself, and gilded with no glitter  
That could attract his eye. The seven sons  
Regarded him as one who tarried not,  
A guest but for a day.

Once returned  
From some late vigil in the city streets  
The boy came home aflame and eager deeds  
Leaped, all chaotic, in his heart. He stole  
Into the bedroom where the eldest son  
Lay reading on his cot. "Jacob," he called,  
And poured in Jacob's patient ear the tales  
Of lurid dramas seen in nickel shows.  
The boy would reproduce each deed as done  
And in description of a murder scene  
Snatched from a shelf a weapon long unused,  
The relic of a noisy festal day.  
He flourished it in mad recital, sprung  
The rusty trigger, and sent heavy death  
Into drowsy Jacob's heart.

That sound,  
Reverberating in the little house,  
Burst like thunder in the Patriarch's dreams;  
Roused the other sons to fear; the mother,  
Knowing disaster in its first footstep,  
With face gone grey, lay on her bed and waited.  
Into the room, heart-hesitant in speed,  
Came all the brothers who set up a cry



Over Jacob gasping in his pain.  
In hurried dignity the father came,  
Stumbled, heart-stricken, in the door and cried  
One cry of anguish. There was then no need  
To tell how had this sudden reckless death  
Come with devastation to his house.  
The boy, still pointing with his murderous hands,  
In silence waited for the wrath to break,  
But storm came not, and silent were they all.  
Suddenly the sons would have put hands  
Upon the interloper and one went  
Screaming to the doorway, but a word  
Checked him and he stood. The Patriarch  
Knelt down and cast his arms about his son  
And tears fell in his beard. Nothing moved  
But sobbing grief. At last he turned to him  
Who stood with blood upon his thankless hands.  
"Go now," he said. "Go far from here. I  
would  
That never should I see your face again.  
Go now—go quickly, no one holds you—go."  
But as he went by in the gas-lit hall  
The stranger shrank before the Patriarch  
Fearing the dark menace of his eyes,  
Not knowing how they blazed of other fires.  
"Father," Jacob called. The stranger passed.  
Then quietly, but with fear-sickened haste,  
The father sent for doctors who might wrest  
Young Jacob back from death, and while he  
prayed



They ministered. A thin grey morning broke  
And in a van they took the son from home  
To that grey, silent, pain-soaked pile, where  
tears

Make everlasting mist, the hospital.  
The Patriarch and his six sons went on  
Day after day, with drudging toil and grief  
Fit heartmates. But no word was ever spoke  
To any stranger or to any friend  
Of Jacob or the lodger who had gone.

Two weeks lay Jacob in the house of pain  
Communing with his torture. At his door  
He saw the silent trundle carts go by  
With white-wrapped bodies to the ether pit,  
Where surgeons, garbed like bakers, warmed  
their knives  
And scattered wounds like dice—to play with  
death.

When Jacob went into the pit, death won.

Then when faith tottered in the father's heart,  
They came, the flies of city carrion,  
Reporters, undertakers, crass police  
And buzzed about him. There they pressed his  
grief

To tell the story o'er and o'er until  
His brain was mad to bursting and his heart  
Was crushed and sodden with his agony.



“You must tell who has done this thing,” they  
said,

“You must put into motion all the powers  
Of coroners, police, publicity,  
To find the man and fix the lasting stain  
Of crime upon his head.”

The Patriarch

Sat with his sons and answered not. He gave  
Old funeral wines and funeral cakes and fed  
The other bearded Jews who came to him.  
But to their questions and the hectic quiz  
Of small officials he gave one reply,  
In saying, “Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord.”  
That was the antique mercy of his race  
And in that he was fixed. These alien powers  
Who whirled their speedy city round his home,  
And moved in countless ways he did not sense,  
And fought for prizes he would still have scorned,  
Serving many other gods than Yahwe,  
He despised, and would not traffic with them.  
“Thus saith the Lord, Vengeance is Mine,” he  
said

In his own speech, and turned to his own  
prayers.

One of Hebraic blood had done him wrong;  
Between them should that score remain. His  
race,

Close interlocked, close blooded, shut the town  
From gazing on this cruel dishonour. Bowed  
To grief his head was low, but lifted up



To breathe a slow defiance to the law  
Of aliens who would help avenge his wrong.  
These had not cost him any thought before  
Nor should they come to sanctuary now,  
Nor move the vestments of despair. His silence  
Brought on his head their pettiness but left  
Them no resource but anger. Unhurt, unmoved,  
He wrapped himself in grief and held his peace.  
He stood secure and in defeat went by  
The whole machinery of pettiness.  
None knew the far-fled boy. None could  
disturb

The peace of Jacob's soul with clumsy justice.  
Serene in the confusion of small gods  
The Patriarch feared One and kept the Word.

Bred in lowly trafficking and trained  
In ancient miseries of hate, the line  
Of Moses lives from Nebo to a day  
When city streets are deserts of despair.



## THE CARDINAL DANCES

LIFE at the court of France was stiff brocade,  
And Louis revelled in its banal sheen.  
Basking in his smiles, his gallants played  
For hearts or jewels. The king's eye was keen  
At prizing trifles, but this pomp was mean  
While Louis walked alone and knew no pride  
Of sharing glory with a glorious queen.  
So ministers into great kingdoms hied  
To seek one, young, and fair enough to walk  
beside.

But many grievous plans of state held back  
The consummation of the king's desire  
And kept him waiting till he filled the lack  
Of queenly counsel with a giddy choir  
Of chirping mistresses. None could aspire  
To sit co-regent on his carven throne,  
So each one gave her loveliness entire  
(He told himself) for his love's sake alone.  
He laughed at queens and said his fancy needed  
none.

Too nimble in these follies was the king,  
And if sometimes his mood grew slow and cold,



His counsellor could whisper hints to bring  
His blood up, and his nymphs were always bold.  
His counsellor, red-hatted, white, and old,  
Dried up with scheming for imperious France,  
Kept Louis blind, lest he might fear the hold  
Of the cardinal's rule, and by an evil chance  
See more than pleased him in one swift and kingly  
glance.

The queen came on from Austria in spring,  
And like the spring she was, like some young tree  
Which feels a bursting gladness and the fling  
Of sap that hastens upward. She could be  
Like tear-wet April apple trees and she  
Was young as a slim sapling to the core.  
Into her changing days she could not see,  
And gave, unthrifty, from her beauty's store  
As if the spring and sun could shine for evermore.

You would have thought no hard magnificence  
Could ever waste her freshness, and no cirque  
Of gold could bind such brows in the intense  
Unlovely lines of majesty. The smirk  
Of painted courtiers would be fruitless work  
To change a girl so wholesomely athrill  
With sunlight, and no shadow things could lurk  
About her feet, who lived with dauntless will  
And a soft smile on the Fates who shatter or  
fulfil.



Caparisoned to greet the Austrian queen  
The court and town were restless till she came.  
And when her beauty bloomed there and was  
    seen,  
The wide streets gladdened with her shouted  
    name.

Her car was followed by a wild acclaim  
And on their silken easy knees to fall  
All court-bred Frenchmen fled. The shallow  
    game  
Was played to win her smiles. One last of all  
To pay his loyal homage stalked the cardinal.

He was no more than any red-robed priest;  
There was no friend to whisper her, "Be kind."  
And so before her cool hand was released  
She drew it sharp away, and from her mind  
Put memory of the tense, drawn face whose  
    lined  
And sinister remembrance was a fear  
To those who begged his pity and resigned  
Their feeble faith in God, saw ruin near,  
When he condemned them silently with solemn  
    sneer.

The cardinal rose up from his thin knees.  
The colour scarcely flickered in his cheek;  
His flush of shame went deeper. But with ease  
He turned and chose one from the gallants  
    sleek



As if he might of some state matter speak,  
But told him nothing, until, with a start  
Dismissed him in excuses almost meek.  
And ever eyed the queen and stood apart  
Because her beauty stirred the beating of his  
heart.

The cardinal's youth had withered; it had not  
died,  
And he was prey of sudden passions. The queen  
Was in his dreams from that first night. He tried  
To free himself, but her young face, once seen,  
Was a provoking memory and a keen  
Suggestion of desire. He filled his days  
With enterprises mighty but between  
His eye and France her face arose. A haze  
Of thoughts too mad for thinking hung on his  
austere ways.

He spied the queen from angles in the halls,  
When she went by and her high laughter rang  
To waken echoes from the dull gilt walls.  
He listened, hidden, when she trilled and sang  
Among the garden hedges, and a pang  
Of jealous envy struck him when to each  
Pert courtier who at her sweet bidding sprang  
She gave a smile. Though priest he could not  
preach  
To his own passion which would some day find  
its speech.



She never cared to know how Louis' power  
Was gathered in the hands of this one  
priest,  
This gaunt red shadow whose thin brows could  
lower  
With such a tragic hatred, and whose least  
Disdain could ruin lives. His love increased  
Into a desperate tenderness, too like  
The fawning of a silent scarlet beast,  
Or like the intent slow whirring of a shrike,  
Poised, with its talons loosened, ere they curl  
and strike.

One day the queen walked, thoughtful, and  
her maids  
Chattered unheard behind her. She had caught  
A mood of homesick longing for the glades  
And green-lit woods she once knew, and she  
thought  
Unhappily of old days. This court had taught  
Her heart that bravest smiling may not gain  
The love and honour of a king, for nought  
Of all her loveliness could end the reign  
Of favourites who'd have scorned to spare her  
any pain.

Silently, from behind the maidens, came  
The cardinal, and in his deep eyes shone  
The unearthly faggots of his soul in flame.  
He signalled maids to go. He was alone,



Alone with his sad queen, and in a tone  
Which made her turn and stare, he asked her  
leave

To speak of enterprises, not his own,  
But of great import. She could not believe  
That any man might dare thus pluck her by the  
sleeve.

He spoke with haggard gentleness of mien  
But his hot gaze was searching for her eyes.  
Her dignity was held up as a screen,  
And when she deigned to give him brief replies  
She looked across the garden absent-wise.  
She knew he trembled but she never turned,  
Nor cared to know if he spoke truth or lies.  
She had not listened and she had not learned  
That there were dangers in this man, yet  
undiscerned.

But, growing incoherent, he looked away  
And lips which had been eloquent before  
Were stiffened harshly. They were used to  
sway  
And were not schooled to plead or to implore.  
He stammered in embarrassment and tore  
His sleeve with nervous fingers. In his rage  
He cursed in whispers his poor lack of lore  
Of such speech as was known to any page  
And cursed in bitterness the stigma of his age.



He left the queen, amazed at his despair,  
And sought release to cool his stammering  
wrath,

Thinking thereafter, for his peace, to share  
A place with her familiars, haunt her path  
And then as if to save her from the scath  
Of Louis' coldness (though she was above  
Mere admiration or the aftermath  
Of jealousy-awakened spouse's love)  
To offer his devotion—ask her to be the glove

In which his hand ruled France. Thus by  
degrees

He put himself within her reach. The sight  
Of his gaunt eager face ceased to displease  
The lonely young queen. His uncleric might  
She carelessly leaned on as royal right,  
And swayed grim cruelty with unthinking grace.  
Then his hot hopes grew up again from blight;  
Serene indifference left her sweet face,  
He saw a haughty friendship growing in its  
place.

There came a day when some affair of state  
Had caught the Austrian's fancy and they  
spoke

Secretly together on the fate  
Of a noble who grew impudent. Then broke  
The cardinal's control. She saw him choke



With a fierceness of entreaty, saw him fall  
And push his white face in her broidered cloak.  
But, seeing pain, she pitied not at all  
And her light laugh went chiming coolly through  
the hall.

A month before she might have called the  
guard,  
Nor doubted that her word would stronger be.  
But now although her sweet young eyes were  
hard  
She listened when he stammered love, and she  
Rested her hands in his, nor pulled them free.  
“Be gracious, let me end deceit,” he said,  
“Give me but leave to ease my heart to thee.  
“Be gracious.” Then his fear and shame were  
fled;  
He towered compelling in his priestly robes of red.

“I am not one who could love any queen,  
“For I have all of France to take my heart.  
“But you are that one different who has seen  
“Me anguished, with sweet eyes which melt  
apart  
“The red veil on my soul. Bid me depart  
“Or bid me hope, you cannot wipe away  
“This honour for your glorious self. No art  
“Of praising have I, but my deeds can say  
“The speeches for me, and make great your  
royal day.



“Bid me serve France for you as I have served  
“Her for herself. For your sake bid me turn  
“Her kingdoms into empires. My arm, nerved  
“With thinking on you, can make beacons burn  
“On a thousand mountains so the world may  
learn

“That Anne is empress!” With a distant smile  
Anne heard his sounding speech. She did not  
spurn

His importunate fierce hands but for a while  
Looked slowly on him, with a face too sweet for  
guile.

“But, my lord cardinal,” she spoke at last,  
“I am too young. My heart and loves are  
swift.

“In council with you I am grave; once past  
“The council door, I am a child. The gift  
“Of my love must be given one who’ll lift  
“My heaviness of sorrow. Can you dance?  
“Make merrier sport with me? Can your eyes  
shift

“This solemn pleading for a happier glance?  
“I have not seen you laugh. You do, sometimes,  
perchance?”

“Aye, I might laugh again, if the queen would  
smile.”

“Laugh then and she might smile to see you lose  
“The grimmest visage in her empire. While  
“A lover frowns so thickly, she could choose



“No answer but her scorn. She’d not refuse  
“To think on you, lord cardinal, as her friend  
“If you would aid her weary days to amuse.  
“Make sport for her and fate will kindness send.  
“Her love?—Who knows what may reward  
you in the end?”

The quick grey light leaped in the cardinal’s  
eye.

“To win your favour, I’d play harlequin,”  
He jested. “Play it then,” was her reply.  
He raised the query with his eyebrows thin,  
But she was earnest. “She may see you in  
“Her chamber at the stroke of ten. The door  
“Will open only to Pierrot. Sin  
“May please a queen with laughter. Then no  
more  
“Of frowns, my lord. Let us hear your laughter  
roar.”

That night before the stroke of ten o’clock  
A bony jester, white clad, left the suite  
Of the mighty cardinal and slipped the lock  
Behind him cautiously. As he might meet  
The warders, he was masked. Some vision sweet  
Made him a grinning ghost. His soft footfalls  
Were stealthy and unheard as his thin feet  
Went shuffling on the stone floor of the halls,  
And his gaunt spindle shadow danced upon the  
walls.



Before the perfumed doorway to his queen,  
He paused and tentatively bent a knee,  
Looked back, askance, to know if he'd been  
seen,

Tried his old joints as if he meant to be  
Impetuous and airy. She should see  
His capering would not lack fire. The gloom  
Behind him shadowed his thin-jowled glee.  
The clock began the stroke of ten to boom;  
He tapped. The door swung inward on an  
empty room.

He bowed and there was laughter, a light sound  
From some sweet throat behind the arras hid.  
Its echoes faintly chiming sped around  
The windy curtains. Scented tapers did  
A flickering obeisance, as if bid  
To laugh because a queen could laugh. The  
space  
Of half a heart-beat waited he, then slid  
Like a contorted wraith to find the place  
Whence came the queen's bright greeting, cried  
he'd see her face.

“Hold back, Pierrot. Rein thy eager heart.  
“Before the royal innocence be killed  
“Pierrot must cavort and play his part.  
“Or else—a bargain may not be fulfilled.  
Dance now, lord cardinal.” Her voice was  
stilled



And he shook in an ague of delight  
For all the shadows of the room were thrilled  
With the seduction of a lover's night.  
His queen was fairer even—hidden from his  
sight.

In a servile bow his stern old back was bent—  
Such a salute as he would give no king.  
There came the music of some instrument,  
A thin picked tune which tinkled on a string.  
And he began his angled limbs to fling  
About him in a grotesque mirthfulness.  
He made a trial, rashly inspired, to sing.  
A crooked whiteness in a jester's dress,  
His dancing seemed the throes of some uncouth  
distress.

He tried to whirl upon his wavering toes.  
His arms went round like an unsteady wheel,  
White-spoked and spinning on its hub. He rose  
In spirals like a dervish, but one heel  
Caught and he stumbled. He began to reel  
But saved him from disaster by a fall  
On his old knees; pretended then to kneel  
And on his sovereign lady wildly call  
To come if she could ever pity him at all.

He heard no answer but the curtain's sigh.  
Her silence urged his fever like a lash.  
He rose again and cast a desperate eye  
At the deluding arras. In one dash



Across the room he made a gesture rash  
And struck a vase, one of the royal toys,  
Knocking it from its table with a crash.  
He stopped and strove to gain his happy poise,  
Most disconcerted by that sharp unhappy noise.

One would have thought it was not love but rage  
Which gave his sallow cheek a flaming hue.  
He sneered as if the vase had been a gage  
From some unworthy foe. The fragments flew  
Across the floor as he spurned them with his  
shoe.

The giddy tune began again; he stood  
Sullen a moment, then more crafty grew,  
Willing to dance on gaily if he could.  
His aching legs were slow and stiff as ancient  
wood.

He made a few more awkward steps. His ear  
Was straining to discover where she lay.  
He circled and approached and felt her near.  
The hand which picked his tune out ceased to  
play.

"I have been mad. We love now as we may,"  
He said and put his lean hand on his side,  
Was fit to sob or curse his pride away.  
He knew he was abased, but took one stride  
And with a gasp of passion tore the curtains  
wide.



There was a laughing roar, hysterical,  
Long pent, from many throats. It smote his  
face

With the scorn of Austrian courtiers, for all  
The queen's own countrymen stood in that  
place.

And they upon his foolish lack of grace  
Had grinned and winked, behind the arras nook,  
Spied on his fell lust, traitorous and base.  
But the queen with her light laughing no more  
shook.

She paused and shrank and blanched in the horror  
of his look.

They were all reckless Austrians, no French,  
Knowing the eager fury of his hate,  
Would ever mock the cardinal nor entrench  
Upon his secret passions. And their fate  
Lay now before them, pitiless and straight.  
So shuddering they slunk away; the while  
Queen Anne tried to assume her regal state,  
But flushed and trembled in a peasant style,  
And the cardinal looked on her with a worm-  
wood smile.

Once more the jester bowed, and left the room.  
And a warder, come on suddenly, screaming fled,  
Before the stalking ghastly face of doom  
Pierrot wore to sanctuary. Dread



Lay on the stricken queen. His love was dead,  
Was shame and ashes to him, and his power  
Began that night in plots upon her head  
To bring unnamed disasters and the glower  
Of his red evil spite was on her from that hour.

King Louis' lush affections never turned  
To Anne's surpassing loveliness, and nights  
Of weeping took her bloom, and her eyes burned  
Red and affrighted, gazing on grim sights.  
Her thinking withered up her youth as blights  
A febrile summer wind upon the field.  
The king bestowed on many maids the rites  
Of love which to his spouse he'd never yield.  
Anne was afraid. Her secret never was revealed.

She never dared defy her fear and tell  
Whence rumours of wild faithless revels came.  
The cardinal's cold hate was like a spell  
And she stood silent under lies and shame.  
All enterprise was balked that bore her name,  
For Louis gulped the lies and gave an ear  
To all traducers, cast on her the blame  
For his own sins. And the cardinal was near  
To stir king's lechery and mock the queen's pale  
fear.

He watched her heart-beats. When some  
recompense,  
Some comfort for her sorrowing hovered by,  
And she reached piteous hands, he scattered hence



The beckoning occasion. His grey eye  
Stalked her desires; he struck and watched  
them die.

Her loneliness was like a desert; friends  
Held to her bravely but a curse hung nigh  
To tear them off. She sought to make amends  
For scorn, but all her kind deeds came to bitter  
ends.

So Anne the queen played harlequin. Dull  
years

Went by in waiting on the cardinal's word.  
Red hats ran in her nightmares and with tears  
She stormed his heart, which never once was  
stirred

With any weakening pity. Long deferred,  
Choked with despair her hopes died, one by one.  
Her queenly name was jested with and slurred.  
Thus in one penance for the insult done  
Her days in endless, futile weariness were spun.



## THE WRECKER

THE sun rose slow and could not shake  
A dull thick mist that veiled the lake  
Nor warm the pale and chilling day;  
For all night long the waves had clomb  
Up the shoreways, spitting foam;  
And on each wave the wind's white hand  
Had lashed the water-beast to land.  
Long thunders dinned and the Titan's spark  
Split blinding caverns in the dark.  
But now repentant for the night  
Water and sky in one grey light  
Shivered in dawn breath, misty cold.  
The wave-lapped sands were wan and old.  
At morn Raoul, the habitant,  
Came out to loose his boat  
And felt the dawn's reluctant breath  
As a shudder in his throat.  
Never before had harsh wind stirred  
His sleep. Their rage went by unheard.  
His boat was chained above the reach  
Of clutching flow along the beach  
And never rain sheets, lashing fierce  
Against his cabin's side, could pierce  
The chink-filled logs. So he had slept  
With wife and son until dawn crept



Behind the mist and slowly paled  
To find the earth so coldly veiled.  
But, strangely, while this storm had torn  
The bosomed lake, his sleep had borne  
Dark terrors and he faced the air,  
The spray-fresh air, as if to find  
Some riddle-reading clearness there  
And shake the phantoms from his mind.  
Within the hut, his wife, Collette,  
Began with breakfast fires to fret.  
She clattered bowls and coughed in smoke  
Till little René, too, awoke  
And came half-clad to see the sun;  
His day with wonder was begun.  
“Oh, Mother, did you hear the wind?”  
He shouted. “Did you see  
“The big clouds in the thunder-light  
“Come swooping after me?  
“I hid my face, and held my breath  
“When thunder-guns were fired.  
“This morning I am brave again.  
“See how the lake seems tired.”  
“No, no, my child,” said vain Collette,  
“The waves are feeble here.  
“When I was young in Brittany  
“We waked to silent fear  
“When scattered wrecks rolled up the sands  
“In the springtime of the year.  
“Scattered wrecks rolled up the sands—  
“My little sisters went



“Out upon those treasure fields  
“With sodden glory spent.  
“Treasures fell of silken robes  
“And garments, smooth and fine,  
“Jewels set in braces bright,  
“And casks of yellow wine.  
“No great ships go by this place,  
“Only winds go by.”

She sighed and watched the wide grey lake  
With an old dream in her eye.

“But then you saved the people, too.  
“Did they give all their gold to you  
“Because you saved them?”

“No, René,

“The poor folk always drowned.  
“They lay among their splintered boats  
“Tide-scattered on the ground.  
“And sometimes when the fearful night  
“Had held us locked indoors for fright,  
“At morn we found their corpses wet  
“With eyeballs rolled in terror yet.  
“We wept to think that shrieking wild  
“Which we had called the storm  
“Had been the anguish of a child  
“While we were safe and warm.”  
And René smiled—“But there was gold—”  
“Aye, there was gold—and wine.”  
His mother heaped up memories  
To see his wide eyes shine.  
The dream was old ere she was born



And lived in all her line.  
But as his mother told the tale  
With childish conning o'er,  
As her own sire had told to her,  
And his own sire before,  
The boy looked out, his eyes at strain,  
As if he saw a wreck-strewn main  
And knew his treasures by their gleam  
Beside the dipping spar and beam.  
Athwart the shingle as he gazed  
He saw his father's form upraised  
And turning toward the door. The boy  
Shrilled to Collette excited joy  
And felt a thrill in his young soul.  
His father bore a silken roll.  
He carried it across his breast,  
But the misted light was dim,  
And the boy saw only muddy silks  
That trailed on after him.  
"There's treasure—treasure from the lake."  
He ran, all eagerness, to take  
His first touch of the dripping prize—  
He did not see his father's eyes.  
But as Collette flung wide the door  
She shuddered for the wind before  
Raoul, who entered, filled the room  
With the clinging damp chill of a tomb.  
Raoul stooped to his straight hewn chair  
And sighed, but nothing said.  
His hands were twined with dripping hair,



He bore a woman—dead.  
Slow drops slid from her drowned black hair  
To the floor in a reptile pool  
That writhed and ran on the ragged boards.  
“The lake sends gifts,” said Raoul.  
His wife cried, “Drowned?” with a sign of fear.  
“There are no ships—how came she here?”  
And as his father pulled a fold  
Of silk across the eyes to hold  
The last dark secret from their gaze,  
And Collette stood in awed amaze,  
The boy spoke out with impious lips,  
“Where is the treasure from the ships?  
“There were great ships that broke last night;  
“Where are the jewels in braces bright?  
“Where are the casks? Where are the—?”  
“Hush!”

His mother clipped his speech.  
The boy crept stealthy, as they stood,  
And vanished down the beach.  
Collette broke stillness with a laugh,  
“Come, eat. Here’s breakfast set.  
“I can’t wait all the day for you  
“Because her eyes are wet.”  
But Raoul held his peace, nor spoke,  
And watched the dripping silken cloak,  
And saw the pitiful smooth line  
Of limbs beneath the silk entwine,  
Wondering, patient but doubt-tossed,  
From what far bourne this life was lost.



He knew too well there were no ships;  
He turned to speak once but his lips  
Were too aghast to breathe a sound  
Before the presence of this veiled  
And silent being who was drowned  
In a lake where no ships sailed.  
And Collette laughed again, her fear  
Had left her giddy. "Come, my dear,  
"What care you for women dead?  
"Come to your morning's food," she said.  
Her laugh was mirthless and her face  
Was empty as a desert place.  
Raoul turned toward her his gaunt head  
And answered her, "Vex not the dead."  
His lips were stiffened then with grief  
As if the lake had been the thief  
Of one he treasured. "Wife," he said,  
"Last night when rain was scourging earth  
"And we were dreaming in our bed,  
"There were long screams of death and birth.  
"I heard them and I tried to wake,  
"I prayed them cease for Jesus' sake,  
"I groped to find you, but I dreamed  
"And your place cold and empty seemed.  
"Then when the dawn stir came to me  
"I saw upon your eyes  
"The shadow of some fearful loss.  
"I thought those hideous cries  
"Had been the death pang of your soul;  
"I did not hope to find you whole.



“Even now I—” Collette’s fear  
Came back upon her in his stare  
And she felt the horror sweat  
Stirring underneath her hair.  
“Raoul, my husband, turn your eyes  
“From off that cursèd body. See—  
“I am not changed from what I was.  
“The night brought no such dreams to me.  
“Give over sick thoughts.” But Raoul  
Held his eyes still upon the pool,  
Distraught and helpless to declare  
The meaning of his strange despair.  
He too had thoughts of Brittany  
And the storms of that remembered sea;  
The winds and wreckage and the heave  
Of fathom-stirring waves that leave  
A thin caress along the sand  
Cruel as a treacherous hand;  
Where gaunt cliffs, endlessly attacked  
By the long coil and splash impact,  
Imperishably stand; where men  
Build up each shattered hope again  
From endless devastation, hold  
To ancient dreams of too much gold  
And seek among their iron days  
Brief bitter gleams of princelier ways.  
From there Raoul had sundered faith  
And gone, unhindered, to find breath  
In wildernesses, and Collette  
Had followed querulous, but met



The wave and wilderness unhurt  
With wifely resolution girt.  
Deep in the stillness of the wood  
And in the wideness of the lake  
Raoul had found the reach and space  
He had sought for his soul's sake.  
He homed him by an inland sea  
With a fruitful wooded shore  
Where man had never ploughed before.  
But as poison lurks concealed  
After wounds are over-healed,  
After leeches draw and go,  
And no red scars the blemish show,  
When a swift convulsive stab  
Betrays corruption working deep;  
So old avarice may keep  
Even after many days,  
Though over-glossed, its venomous ways.  
Raoul knew not what nameless deed  
The night had done, nor what vile seed  
Long planted in his destiny  
Had of a sudden dared to be;  
But hideous nightmares wracked his brain.  
He thought that in the whirl of rain  
The soul that he had brought to life  
Within the child mind of his wife  
Had slipped beyond his grasp, had drowned,  
With dripping silk was lying wound.  
"Perhaps there are ships then," a light  
Gleamed in Collette's eye, fever bright.



A sudden sweeping soul-sprung thought  
Made all her awe-struck silence nought.  
“Perhaps there are ships then, and she  
“Is one of many who may be  
“Washing ghastly on our shore.  
“Though they have never sailed before  
“There may be tall ships sailing now,  
“And tempest-struck, one drove her prow  
“Shuddering, helpless into doom—”  
She paused, her mind outran her speech.  
But Raoul gazed across the room  
With eyes, like fingers, set to reach  
And all the formless wishes find  
That stirred a hot mist in her mind.  
So ere she knew her hopefulness  
He knew. It was not vague distress  
In shattered galleons she saw,  
But sodden gain; no pious awe  
For storming fury; no regret  
For piteous faces stark and wet,  
But finery with anguish wreathed  
And wealth by slimy death bequeathed.  
Collette was dizzy with desire,  
Forgotten now was breakfast fire,  
Forgotten was her silent guest,  
Raoul’s deep question, half expressed,  
She stepped once toward the sandy shore.  
Her husband stood up in the door.  
“There are no ships,” he whispered, rent  
With passioned questioning still pent



Behind the barrier of his words.

“The wide grey lake is bare

“And sleeps, unrippled by a keel.

“There are no ships out there,

“No sailing ships.” From Collette’s heart

She felt an angry torrent start

And hate-spiced words of old complaint

Now crowding broke their long restraint.

“Why must we live outside of life?

“Why must we see but lake and sky?

“I’d rather never have been wife

“If in this wilderness I die.

“My mother and my sisters sit

“Beside the shore in Brittany,

“And wonder when the storms drive on

“What far lone wood is housing me.

“They wonder why you never come

“Heavy with riches to your home.

“They think we seek in this harsh land

“Some hoard of comfort, but your hand

“Is never turned to any gain

“And all our wandering has been vain.”

Raoul was silent. “Speak,” she cried,

“We have found labour—what beside?

“My hands break with the tasks I do

“To make hell habitable for you.”

Raoul knew pity. “I have worked

“To ease the heavy toil that irked

“Your woman’s strength. I did not see

“How weary you were, spite of me.



“And I have loved you.” He had spoken  
As if his hopes had now been broken.  
Collette mistook his final tone,  
Thought his decision was her own,  
And looked at him in still surprise,  
A wan hope struggling in her eyes.  
“We will go back—to Brittany?  
“Where my poor mother weeps for me,  
“Where my beloved big seas clamour,  
“And all my childhood’s love puts glamour  
“Over granite, sand, and coast?”  
But she saw his eyes turn cold  
And she knew her plea was lost.  
“Then we linger here till old,  
“Feeble, broken, in despair,  
“We creep back to pity there!”  
Raoul spoke gently, “We have found  
“Peace and freedom here. Around  
“The fruited lake shore lives there none  
“Who has not left as we have done  
“All desire of gain behind,  
“Content with space for soul and mind.”  
Collette impatiently replied  
And sneered, “Aye—space, and what beside?”  
Raoul turned to the sodden roll  
And thought again of that calm soul  
He’d hoped to wake in Collette’s breast  
While she was sharing his long quest.  
All trace of understanding gone,  
Collette raged like a pettish child



And all his stern desires reviled  
In fury. Raoul was alone.  
Then came René, with noisy speed,  
Home to his mother in his need  
Of comfort for his broken hope—  
“I searched the long beach and the slope,  
“I walked as far as I could go  
“And still see home. There was no gold,  
“There was no treasure. Mother told  
“Me how the wrecks lay in a row  
“With all their jewels and treasures thrown  
“Where I could get them for my own.”  
Then Raoul seized his son and turned  
The boy’s face to his own and burned  
A long, long question into eyes  
Where he saw tears of anger rise,  
But through the mist of childish tears  
Shone deadly answer to the fears  
Of the dark father. There was nought  
Of Raoul’s soul in this boy’s soul.  
All his hue of life had caught  
From his fond mother old-world taint.  
Raoul spoke out with edged constraint  
To his harsh wife, “I thought our child,  
“Nurtured, rooted in the wild,  
“Would be unsmirched and fancy whole  
“From any poison of desire.  
“The fevered stories that you told  
“To your René were falsehoods old  
“Learned in Brittany from your sire.



“There are no ships. There never were  
“On these clean shores, nor over there—  
“No treasure ships. The foolish myth  
“You’ve nursed and filled his young mind with  
“Was festering in your father’s thought.  
“It stains my son; and you have wrought  
“Unending restless misery  
“In him, for greed has even now  
“Set her dull mark upon his brow  
“And her hot groveller must he be.”  
Collette raged on and would not hark,  
And Raoul’s face set grim and stark  
And stony. Over all the three  
There fell a silence. Fury spent,  
Collette sank down and René went  
To hide his hot face in her skirt,  
To hide his terror and his hurt.  
The woman, wearied now but still  
Uneased and pettish, spoke in shrill  
Tired fretfulness, “Take from my sight  
“That stranger’s dripping body. Free  
“Your house of this dissension. Blight  
“And fierce suspicions did not lurk  
“Within your door before the murk  
“Of death and drowning troubled you,  
“When you found this corpse. Go strew  
“The pine boughs over her and deep  
“Dig her a grave and let her sleep.”  
Raoul took kindly from the floor  
The silken sodden one.



He set his flint face toward the shore  
But for reply gave none.  
And still Collette saw puzzled pain  
Burn heavy in his eyes, but vain  
Repentant pity. He passed on  
And as she called him he was gone.  
She saw him near the beach as if  
To take his burden in the skiff  
To some far burial. But he passed  
The long boat's mooring and the last  
Extending point of land. Collette  
Saw that he splashed unheeding yet  
Could not believe. Then sudden dread  
Came down upon her and she sped  
Screaming after and René  
Came stumbling. Out upon the grey  
Face of the lake they saw Raoul  
Swim on unheeding and the cool  
Wind blew their shouts back in their faces  
And echoes came from wooded spaces.  
He never turned. Collette took strength  
From terror and the long boat's length  
Went grating over sand. The sail  
Went rattling out and like a pale  
Bird, stiff with cold, the boat swung round.  
Wind-shaken, standing in the stern  
Collette, with eyes set to discern  
The speck her husband had become,  
Held hard the rudder and René  
Knelt in the bow beneath the spray



Crouching, staring, scared, and dumb.  
Collette had ceased to call. The sound  
Of parted waters rippling by  
Filled up the silence.

One tense cry  
Came from the woman, then she sank  
Inert beside her rudder. Blank  
And empty was the water's face.  
The speck was gone. And René shrank  
Whimpering in his lookout place.  
The sail flapped and the boat swung. Back  
It pointed to the shore. A track  
Of sunlight sifted through the clouds;  
The wind stirred restless in the shrouds.  
The sun broke through and up the lake  
The dull grey mist was thinned;  
But Raoul's hut, with breakfast set,  
Was tenanted by wind.









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